

**BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION**

**FACULTY OF COMMERCE**

**DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING**



**Impact Of Online Brand Community Participation On Corporate Reputation:  
Case Study Of Cossy Rules Furniture**

**BY**

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## **DEDICATION**

I thank Jehovah for His grace throughout my academic period. I dedicate this research to my mother, father, Mrs Mukono and Mr and Mrs T. Chimwanja for their unwavering support throughout my academic journey.

## **ABSTRACT**

The study explored the impact of online brand community participation on corporate reputation, and it took consideration the consumer's perspective. The study sought to understand how consumers involved in online brand communities discussions affected corporate reputation, online brand community was the dependant variable while corporate reputation was the dependant variable. The research design of the study was a causal research, target population was 1200 and a sample size of 300 consumers in Waverley Kadoma was selected. Systematic sampling was used to select the participants of the study. A questionnaire was used in collecting data, using a scales adapted from Baldus (2015) for online brand community and using a scale from Walsh and Beatty (2007) for corporate reputation. The data was analysed using SPSS-AMOS version 27, and the results obtained were presented in form of a table. The hypothesis results obtained from the study were that there is a relationship between online brand resonance and corporate reputation as the p value was .006. Online brand enthusiasm had a p value of .149 and online brand impact had a p value of .470 and these are not significant as they are above 0.05.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

The aim of the study was to explore the impact of online brand community participation on corporate reputation and it focused on the customer's perspective. This chapter covered background of the study, the problem statement, research objectives, hypothesis, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study, assumptions of the study definition of key terms and a summary are at the end of the chapter.

#### **1.1 Background of the study**

The furniture industry has witnessed a dramatic shift on online platforms. The rise of online shopping and virtual showrooms has become increasingly popular with consumers. This trend was further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, where many turned to online platforms for furniture purchases due to safety concerns and these online spaces have fostered the growth of online brand communities. These communities, built around shared interests in furniture design and home décor, provided a unique platform for consumers to connect, share experiences, and exchange valuable information. Most consumers leveraged online communities for in-depth research before they made significant home and office furniture purchases (Herald,2021). The research done by customers involved assessing a company's after-sales service online, customer care effectiveness, the efficiency of purchasing furniture online and delivery experiences shared by other community members. Furniture companies like Elite Homes, Nash Furnishers, and TV Sales and Home have actively invested in their online presence. By creating user-friendly virtual showrooms, these companies

made online furniture purchases easier and more convenient for customers (Dailynews,2021). Additionally, their efforts to promptly respond to customer queries through online channels and social media platforms had a positive impact on their corporate reputation. The digital landscape presented a significant opportunity for furniture companies to cultivate thriving online brand communities. These communities, consisted of engaged customers, design enthusiasts, and potential buyers, became a powerful tool for building brand loyalty, brand enthusiasts and a strong corporate reputation.

The rapid growth of online brand communities has revolutionized the way most business interacted with their existing and potential customers. These online communities provided a platform for customers to engage with the company, express opinions and connect with like-minded customers. However, Cossy Rules Furniture has decreased interaction with its online community and this has affected the company's customer engagement online and the company has lagged behind its competitors lost a significant following and popularity on Facebook, as they neglected their online community by not being consistent and meeting customer's needs on time.

Cossy Rules Furniture online showroom ceased to exist towards end of 2021 and this has hindered customer visualization and purchase decisions of home furniture. To add, most of the queries and questions were not being effectively attended to on the company's social media page and group that is on Facebook. Inconsistent posting and engagement on Facebook resulted in a decrease in customer engagement on the online community (Cossy Rules Holdings, 2021).

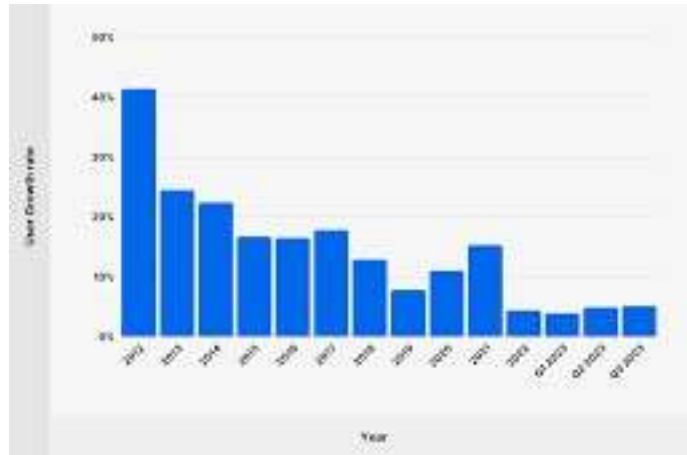


Figure 1 Cossy Rules Facebook engagement statistics

The graph above shows the declining numbers of customer engagement on the company's facebook page from the period 2012-2023.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The study sought to understand the extent to which Cossy Rules Furniture's decreased online engagement had an impact on its corporate reputation and understand how consumers involved in online brand communities discussions contributed on corporate reputation building or destroying the reputation of the company. There was a lack of comprehensive research on the impact of online brand community participation on corporate reputation in previous studies. While some studies have explored the relationship between online brand community participation on brand loyalty, there is a gap in understanding how online brand enthusiasm, online brand impact and online brand resonance contributed to the overall corporate reputation of a company.

## 1.3 Objectives

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To ascertain the relationship between online brand impact on corporate reputation.

2. To establish the relationship between online brand enthusiasm and corporate reputation.
3. To determine the relationship between online brand resonance and corporate reputation.

## **1.4 Hypothesis**

The study hypothesized that:

H<sub>1</sub>: online brand impact has a positive effect on company reputation.

H<sub>2</sub>: online brand enthusiasm has a positive effect on company reputation.

H<sub>3</sub>: online brand resonance has a positive effect on company reputation.

## **1.5 Significance of the study**

### **1.5.1 to the company**

This study provided an insight on how Cossy Rules Furniture as a company has to thrive and survive in such a competitive environment which has quickly adopted the changes in the furniture market. It gave the company the direction to focus more efforts in creating and maintaining an effective relationship between the brand experience online and customer's perception of the company.

### **1.5.2 to the university**

This study acted as reference literature and provided a guide on how to deeply research further for future students who wished to explore in the same area of interest.

### **1.5.3 to the researcher**

The findings from the study assisted the researcher to have a thorough understanding of how the knowledge of online branding community participation can be of importance in understanding customer expectations and how it impacts

on corporate reputation. The researcher developed more expertise, which is extremely beneficial in future investigations.

### **1.6 Assumptions of the study**

The study assumed that the variables used, that is online brand impact, online brand enthusiasm and online brand resonance would determine the outcome of how people perceived the organization interactions and customer care through its online brand communities. Negative engagement with online brand communities such as complaints or negative reviews can ruin corporate reputation, and the opposite is true.

### **1.7 Delimitations of the study**

The research was restricted to Cossy Rules Furniture Kadoma. Granting of necessary documents was approved but however following the company's rules and regulations.

### **1.8 Limitations**

The study failed to control variables since online brand community participation was not the only variable that affected corporate reputation.

### **1.9 Definition of terms**

#### **1.9.1 Brand community.**

A brand community is a non-bound geography community, built on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). A brand community invests in a brand genuinely and emotionally and they are eager to see what the brand has to give them on a regular basis that is something new. According to (Sullivan, Richardson, & Collins, 2011), they stated that one of the more intriguing features of brand communities is that their formation happens often without company input or organisation. They usually originate from consumers rather than companies.

#### **1.9.2 Online brand community**

An online brand community is a brand community that takes place in a virtual setting in which the members' interaction is primarily internet-mediated (Fuller,



Jawecki, & Muhlabacher, 2007). These consumer communities differ from traditional communities due to their commercial nature and members common interest, admiration, sympathy and even love for a brand (Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2008). Online brand community such as Facebook create a brand community, for example Facebook page or Facebook chat room, surpassing the boundaries that are created by physical communities. Even if the members of the community do not know each other, there is a possibility that members will likely to develop a sense of belonging as they will have same values and interests. (Fuller, Jawecki, & Muhlabacher, 2007).

### **1.9.3 Online brand impact**

Online brand impact also known as online brand influence is the ability of a brand to shape customer's perception, preferences, and behaviors of its target audience. . It is measured by the extent to which a brand's online activities resonate with customers resulting to loyalty and conversion (Andersen, 2005). Online brand impact takes into consideration how to influence social networks such as LinkedIn and Facebook as they enforce individuals to imitate community behavior (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). According to (Kelman, 1958) he identified three levels of influence that impact individuals attitude and behavior such as compliance, identification and internalization. Kelman (et al ) defined compliance as the adapting behavior to gain rewards or avoid negative consequences such as community disapproval. Identification occurs when the individual wants a satisfying relationship with the influencing group because it is associated with the desired relationship (D'lima, 2018). Internalization is when an individual adopts the influence and it controls their thinking and feeling and this influence last for a long time (Kelman et al). Brand impact enables a firms to place a degree of trust in its brand, permitting them a guide on how to benefit easily from services and how they are unique to other service providers.

#### **1.9.4 Online brand Enthusiasm**

Online brand enthusiasm or online brand passion is defined as a component of loving the brand as the concept is strongly related to interpersonal feelings in psychology literature (D'lima, 2018). For instance Cossy Rules Furniture should ensure that the customers must feel attached to the online brand by offering unique promotions which must make customers curious, passionate and keep the community engaged (Ahuvia, 1993). (Sternberg, 1997) included passion as one major component of the triangular love. The theory stated that there are three parts to love and each of these belong to each of the vertices. These also seem to correspond well with public implicit theories of love (Curran, 2015).

#### **1.9.5 Online brand resonance**

According to (Keller, 2013) online brand resonance is when customers feel that they are in 'sync' with the brand. It includes psychological bond that the customers have with the brand, and level of activity engaged by this loyalty. (Chaplin & John, 2005) defined online brand resonance as the degree to which consumers incorporate the brand into themselves, resulting in varied intensity level of consumer brand relationships. Customers may feel a sense of connection with the brand thus this creates mental connections that link the brand and themselves. Brand self-linkage, though cognitive in its representation is emotional (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2007), involving a variety of complex feelings about the brand. This may include sadness and anxiety from brand self-separation, happiness and comfort from brand self-proximity and pride from brand self-display. Customers are likely to identify with a brand because it reflects who they are or it has significance in light of their life plans or concerns, thus resulting in a positive brand reputation (Mittal, 2006).

#### **1.9.6 Community Participation**

Community participation is intellectualized as the basic motivation felt by community members to collaborate and cooperate with each other (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Hermann, 2005).

### **1.10 Summary**

Since the brief introduction of research has been already elaborated, remaining work is organized under the following chapters. Chapter 2 focus on the analytical account of related work on the influence of online branding community on corporate reputation. Chapter 3 focuses on different research methodologies used in the study. Chapter 4 focused on data analysis and presentation. Lastly chapter 5 focused on summary of the research and giving recommendations on area of study in the future.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter is focused on giving literature review which will include the existing theoretical literature on online brand impact, online brand enthusiasm and online brand resonance. A focus on the empirical studies that are related to the study are included in this chapter. A conceptual model is included in the study and a summary is at the end of the chapter.

#### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

##### **2.1.1 Online brand impact and corporate reputation**

The Stakeholder theory provided a simplified framework which explain online brand impact and corporate reputation. The Stakeholder theory stated that a company's reputation is influenced by the evaluations and perceptions of its stakeholders including customers or the general public (Freeman E., 1984). It outlined the importance of considering interests and needs of customers, employees, communities and financiers in order to create value for all parties involved (Philips, 2003). When a company effectively engages with its stakeholders through online platforms it is able to enhance its brand influence, reputation and create a positive impact by listening to suggestions and concerns and feedback of stakeholders (Jeon & Ann, 2009). By doing so the company will adjust and focus to provide what the community need, that is relevant and valuable content, maintaining transparency and authenticity in its online communication (Jian, 2019).

Online brand impact factors such as positive reviews and customer feedback can enhance corporate reputation by signaling trustworthiness and quality to its stakeholders (Freeman E. , 1984). The reputation of a company is built based on perceptions and evaluations of its stakeholders (Freeman D. , 2008). By

prioritizing stakeholder interest and engaging in responsible business practices a company can enhance its corporate reputation. This results in a positive impact of its brand image and influences stakeholder's perceptions and behaviors. Stakeholder theory emphasized the creation of value for stakeholders. In the context of online brand impact and corporate reputation, this means delivering value to stakeholders through the company's online brand presence, such as providing relevant and engaging content, addressing customer concerns promptly, and demonstrating corporate social responsibility (Martinez-Lopez, 2017). A strong corporate reputation can contribute to a positive online brand impact by attracting and retaining customers, building trust and loyalty, and generating positive online reviews and recommendations (Kim & Keane, 2023). Conversely, a negative online brand impact, such as negative customer reviews or social media backlash, can harm a company's corporate reputation (Martinez, et al). Therefore, it is crucial for companies to actively manage their online brand presence and reputation by aligning their actions and communications with stakeholder expectations and needs (Maignan, Ferrel, & Ferrel, 2005).

Information Integration theory is a psychological theory that explains how individuals process and integrate information to make decisions and forming attitudes (Anderson N. , 1971). It stated that individuals integrate information from various sources to form attitudes and make decisions (Anderson et al). In the context of online brand impact and corporate reputation, consumers gather information from online platforms on social media (such as Facebook and Instagram) and review websites to form perceptions about a company's reputation and other websites and this information influences their attitudes towards the brand (Jian et al). Information integration theory emphasized the importance of information accessibility, relevance, consistency and credibility as these factors help in attitude formation of customers (Anderson, et al). Online brand information that is easily accessible and salient to consumers is more likely to have a significant impact on their attitudes (Park & Kim, 2016). This accessibility can be influenced by factors such as search engine rankings, social media visibility, and online advertising. Positive online brand impact can lead to

favorable reputation leading to increased trust (Gensler, Volckner, Liu-Thompkins, & Wiertz, 2013).

Information integration theory suggests that individuals strive for cognitive consistency, seeking to align their attitudes and beliefs (Anderson, 1968). When consumers encounter online brand information that is consistent with their existing attitudes and beliefs, it reinforces their positive perception of the brand (Hamzah, Alwi, & Othman, 2014). On the other hand, inconsistent information may lead to cognitive dissonance and a negative impact on brand attitude (Maignan, Ferrel, & Ferrel, 2005)

The third theory which supports online brand impact and corporate reputation is the Trust development theory. Trust development theory emphasizes that trust is built through consistent and reliable interactions between a brand and its consumers (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In the online context, this includes factors such as secure transactions, transparent communication, proper handling of customer's confidential data and fulfilling consumer expectations (Jeon & Ann, 2009). This means that firms have to ensure that there is consistency in brand values and customer experience on all online platform, which contribute to the positive brand impact and enhances corporate reputation. Trust building theory suggest that online brand impact such as positive customer experiences and transparent communication build trust among consumers. (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995).

Gibb's trust theory emphasized ten levels of trust, ranging from manipulation to mutual trust. When conducting business, it is mandatory to be open, authentic brand voice and transparent so as to gain mutual trust from customers and endorsements. These are illustrated from level 6 to level 9 on Gibbs level of trust model (Gibbs, 1978). These factors enhances trust and serve as social proof and

build trust. However if trust is broken through misleading adverts, fake reviews. Ignoring customer complaints and negative social media mentions this has a negative outcome on corporate reputation as public criticism can damage trust as demonstrated clearly by level 3 and 4 (Gibbs et al).

Level	Theme	Focus Of Energy
1	Punitive	Survival, retribution
2	Autocratic	Power, obedience ,control
3	Benevolent	Reward or punishment
4	Advisory	Communication, validity of data processing.
5	Participative	Influence, choosing, resolving conflict
6	Emergent	Being ,freedom, searching
7	Organic	Expression, intregration, sensing
8	Holistic	Creativity, spontaneity
9	Transcendent	Transcending sensory and body states
10	Cosmic	Cosmic being

**Table 1 Gibbs level of trust**

To add the theory also underscored the role of trust in fostering long term relationships between brands and consumers (Gibbs et al).By fostering online communication through online interactions, brands can cultivate loyal customer relationships thus solidifying a positive corporate reputation. Trust influences corporate reputation as consumers perceive the company as reliable and credible.

### **2.2.2 Online brand enthusiasm and corporate reputation**

Online brand enthusiasm has an effect on company reputation because most brands believe that in building something which last for decades and which go beyond profits (D'lima, 2018). (Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2015) defined brand enthusiasm as an ardent positive affection a community member has for the brand. This relationship between online brand enthusiasm and corporate reputation is supported by the Triangular theory of love, proposed by (Sternberg, 1997) can be applied to brand love which is a psychological construct representing a customer's deep emotional attachment. This theory suggested that brand love is influenced by three components which are intimacy, passion and commitment. When customers have a strong emotional connection with a brand, it can positively impact brand and company reputation. This will mean that they will become brand ambassadors of the corporate. This theory has been applied to the concept of brand passion, implying that it entails emotional attachment, dedication, and extreme favourable feelings for a brand(Sternberg et al).

Theory of emotional contagion emphasized the relationship between online brand enthusiasm and corporate reputation. Emotional contagion theory stated the group dynamics, relationships that are influenced and the positive or negative mood is contagious amongst community members (Schoenewolf, 1990).When brand enthusiasts expresses enthusiasm and positive emotion towards a brand within online community, none community members can feel it and chances are high that none community members can be influenced by community members emotions (Cohen-Cole & Fletcher, 1993).Enthusiasts act as advocates of a brand, and due to the popular use of social media that is Facebook, they can prove their



enthusiasm on their “newsfeed or timeline”. If the individual has many friends and relatives they are likely to see the post faster and get to know about the brand. As positive emotions spread within the online brand community overall brand perception improves, thus contributing to a favorable corporate reputation (Keller, 2013).

Another theory which explains the relationship between online brand enthusiasm and corporate reputation is Self-determination theory. This theory suggested that when individuals develop a strong passion for a brand it reflects intrinsic motivation, which arises through the fulfillment of the three psychological needs which are autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Individuals' online brand enthusiasm grows as they engage with it on their own volition, feel a sense of choice and control (autonomy), perceive themselves as capable and effective in their interactions with the brand (competence), and experience a connection and sense of belonging with the brand and its community (relatedness). To add, individuals that exhibit true love for a company online not only represent their emotional connection, but also demonstrate the business's ability to produce products or services that resonate with its target demographic. Furthermore, the relatedness factor comes into play as the brand's online presence and communication techniques reveal an awareness of its target audience's values, goals, and wants, creating a sense of connection and belonging (Vivek & Codey, 2010). This interconnection of brand enthusiasm online, business competence, and relatedness adds to a positive reputation, which in turn drives consumer loyalty and advocacy, both of which are critical components for long-term success in today's competitive market scenario (Ryan et al). This passionate engagement, which stems from meeting these psychological demands, has the potential to have a big impact on the corporate reputation. Brands that effectively address these psychological demands through their products, services, and interaction tactics are more likely to build a positive reputation because they are believed to be addressing their audience's underlying motivations and aspirations (Ryan et al). As a result, self-determination theory gave useful insights into the mechanisms by which online brand enthusiasm effects corporate reputation, emphasizing the necessity of

generating intrinsic drive and psychological well-being in the brand-consumer connection.

### **2.3.3 Online brand resonance and corporate reputation**

Festinger theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) explained the relationship between online brand resonance and corporate reputation. In terms of online brand resonance and corporate reputation, when customers acquire a strong emotional attachment to an online brand, they create a cognitive and emotional connection that is consistent with their self-image and beliefs. This profound resonance with the brand instills a sense of continuity and harmony in the consumer's mind, decreasing cognitive dissonance and strengthening their positive image of the brand. As a result, the brand's ability to elicit such resonance online helps to build a positive corporate reputation since it demonstrates the brand's effectiveness in connecting with consumers' underlying ideas and establishing a sense of congruence and authenticity. Social media platforms created by Cossy Rules Furniture and groups serve customers with knowledge of products and customers can give their honest reviews about the products. If Cossy Rules Furniture fail to satisfy and deliver what it promises, people lose connection for the brand. This will in turn affect the corporate negatively and customers emotionally detach themselves from the brand since they will be disappointed (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

The second theory is of Brand Resonance Pyramid by Keller. It showed all the stages a customers goes through in knowing about a particular brand (Keller, 2013). Resonance is the stage where customers have the relationship with a brand and are aware of the brand and introduce the brand to other non-members of the community on behalf of the company online or offline (Olins, 2014). Customers who would have resonated with the brand would have considered it unique. In the online context, active engagement is an indicator how people are engaged with the brand even when they are not making the purchases that is they will be social media followers, participating marketing events and online chats (Liu, Liu, Lee, & Chen, 2019). To add people have love and connection with the brand and habitually purchase from it. This also promotes sense of community among

customers who use the brand. When the customers perceive the company as reputable, they are more likely to engage with the brand online and they highly recommend it to others. Online brand resonance influences corporate reputation by generating a positive online buzz, attracting new customers and promoting brand visibility (Keller et al).



Figure 2.1 Keller's Brand Resonance Pyramid

The relationship between online brand resonance and corporate reputation, as seen via the customer engagement model, is critical in shaping a company's perspective and status (Bowden, 2009). The customer engagement model stressed the interactive and emotional connection between customers and a brand, which includes several touch points and exchanges across time. When a brand effectively nurtures online connections with its customers using social media, tailored experiences, and responsive interaction, it may have a substantial impact on customer attitudes, brand awareness, and loyalty (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). This heightened level of connection, when consistently nurtured, contributes to a positive corporate reputation as it demonstrates the brand's commitment to understanding and meeting the needs of its customers (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999). By actively engaging with customers and creating meaningful experiences at every stage of the customer journey, a brand can build a reputation for being customer-centric, trustworthy, and responsive, ultimately enhancing its overall corporate reputation and fostering long-term loyalty and advocacy (Bowden et al).

## **2.4 Empirical review**

### **2.4.1. The relationship between online brand impact and corporate reputation**

(Wang, 2018) study suggested that the media shaped public opinion because the media controls, filters and shares information. It also highlighted the role of media in shaping public perceptions and understanding. When applied to online brand impact, media coverage and the brand and corporate activities affect corporate reputation. Corporates have adopted the concept of being diligent on social media platforms so as to maintain a favorable online influence. To add, news travel faster on online communities through posts and it suffers the negative consequences such as negative reviews, decreased engagement, a decline in number of followers and likes on online platforms.

Noorwijk (2018) study investigated how social media “likes” and online brand advocacy impact on corporate reputation. Social media was proven to be convenient when it comes to sharing brand experience and opinions to non-members. Generally if the company’s social media platforms have high engagement, comments and shares, it is a signal that a brand has a strong online influence. The study outlined that if consumers engaged with a brand’s content by advocating for it online, it leads to increased visibility and exposure to non-brand members. Increased visibility shapes consumer perceptions about a brand and influences others to trust and engage with a brand. When trust and loyalty are achieved through positive impact online in a positive manner, indicating that favorable online brand impact can improve or destroy corporate reputation. Online brand impact is an important aspect, therefore companies should maintain consistency with their posts.

Jung and Seok (2016) study explored the relationship between consumer perception and corporate reputation. It suggested that consumer perception of a brand can have a significant impact on the reputation of the company. Jung and Seok highlighted that consumer perception about a brand has an effect on corporate reputation as consumers of these digital age rely on online forums to

gather information and also form opinions about brands. If the brand has a significant positive impact online this will have an effect on corporate reputation as non-members will be influenced to purchase the products or services. Online brand influence and corporate reputation are intertwined, if online brand impact is negative this affects the corporate reputation in a negative and the opposite is true.

A study by Smith, Dinev and Xu (2011) examined the influence of privacy concerns. The study concluded that risk of privacy loss was negatively related to trust and privacy concerns matter as they influence brand image online. Although this study did not focus on online brand impact and corporate reputation, the ability of a corporate to maintain privacy issues when carrying out financial transactions online strengthen online brand influence on social media platforms. When a brand handles privacy issues on websites and their mobile applications with diligence, more purchases are done and more satisfied customers are referred to the brand. This results in a positive corporate reputation and a powerful brand influence online (Lourerro and Koffeman, 2016).

Lou and Yuan (2019) study explored how message value and credibility affect consumer trust of brand content on social media. This study highlighted that message value and credibility influenced consumer trust of branded content and when content is authentic, this built a positive brand reputation. Although the study did not focus on online brand impact and corporate reputation, the outcome of the study helped to conclude that a strong brand influence is built by valuable message carried by the brand and credibility.

**H<sub>1</sub>: Online brand impact has a positive effect on company reputation.**

#### **2.4.2 The relationship between online brand enthusiasm and company reputation**

According to the study of Hollebeek and Chen, consumers who engaged in enthusiastic behavior showed a high level of dedication to a brand. There are often called brand fanatics as they are actively involved in co creating value. Hollebeek and Chen mentioned that consumers would passionately be involved in positive or negative brand enthusiasm both online and offline communities through word of mouth communication. Based on Hollebeek and Chen's (2014) findings, it can be evaluated that consumers who express high levels of online brand enthusiasm are more likely to be loyal to the brand. This dedication is seen in their cognitive processing, affection, and activation with the brand. When consumers are excited about a brand online, they are more likely to actively engage with it, make positive emotional connections, and process brand-related information in more depth. On the other hand, customers with negative experiences with the brand and have negative attitude on the brand during the engagement process contribute to the company's reputation.

A study by (Petina, Guilloux, & Pullins, 2019) clearly outlined how social media marketing worked effectively to enhance consumer intimacy with luxurious brands and brand evangelists. Social media platforms provide luxury brands with an opportunity to showcase their products, values, and unique selling propositions to a wider audience. By actively engaging with consumers and sharing compelling content, brands can generate enthusiasm and interest in their offerings. In the context of online brand enthusiasm, it can be applied because brand enthusiasm benefit the corporate to have customers who advocate for the brand at no cost. To add, the study reaped out a result that most customers become brand enthusiasts online because they would have experienced value of the brand online, thus resulting the corporate to have brand advocates online.

A study by Jackson and Berry highlighted the importance of developing and maintaining long term relationships, rather focus on one time transactions (Harker & Egan, 2006). Relationship marketing involves providing value, personalized experience and excellent customer service to foster loyalty and satisfaction (Harker, et al ). In the online brand enthusiasm context, engagement is key aspect of relationship marketing and brand enthusiasts who are satisfied by the brand through reviews, comments and social media interactions signify there is connection between brand and customers (Zineldin, 2000). Furthermore, relationship marketing aims to build trust and loyalty towards the brand online by delivering secure transactions and meeting expectations of customers that is protecting sensitive data securely. Online brand enthusiasm serves as social proof of the brand and strengthening the trust customers have in the brand (Andersen, 2005).

Risitano, Romano, Somentino, and Quintanno (2017) study investigated the impact of consumer brand engagement and brand experience on behavioral intentions. The study also highlighted that consumer engagement is goal oriented and the study analyzed this issue from another perspective, from seeing online brand enthusiasm as quality of love to seeing it as a consumer behavior. Online brand enthusiasm can be seen as a manifestation of consumer brand engagement, as enthusiastic members of online brand communities actively engage with the brand and express their positive sentiments. Consumers who have positive brand experiences are more likely to express enthusiasm and engage with the brand online. This online brand enthusiasm, in turn, can contribute to a positive corporate reputation by attracting new customers, building trust, and fostering positive word-of-mouth.

Zalgia (2013) studied sub groups with bigger online brand communities. Online brand communities can play a role in shaping corporate reputation by influencing the perceptions and attitudes of community members towards the brand and the company behind it. When community members are enthusiastic about a brand, they are more likely to spread positive word-of-mouth, suggest it to others, and

defend it from bad criticism. These good behaviors and sentiments can contribute to a positive corporate reputation because they demonstrate the brand's capacity to develop a deep emotional connection and give value to its customers.

**H<sub>2</sub>: Online brand enthusiasm has a positive effect on corporate reputation.**

#### **2.4.3. The relationship between online brand resonance and company reputation**

A study conducted by (Zyminkowska & Barlow, 2019) focused on the dimension of affective engagement, where positive emotional experiences through online interactions such as contests, interactive and personalized communication strengthened emotional connection. A consistent affective engagement enhanced brand image, as the multidimensional engagement online portrays the brand as customer centric (Zyminkowska et al). Firms have to strategically build personalization and relevance in online engagement. Tailoring communication and content to individual customer needs and interests lead to meaningful experience therefore results in resonance in the long run as the customer keeps on interacting and using the brand. Tracking and measuring online engagement metrics across different dimensions that is social media mentions and sentiment analysis allowed brands to gauge effectiveness of their strategies on improving the online brand resonance (Zyminkowska et al).

Shaari and Ahmad (2016) study attempted to understand whether online brand community activities influence brand referral and intention to purchase a new product in the future. The results of the study outlined that socialization of online communities have an impact on potential and existing customer's perception about the brand. This affects the level of resonance of the customers and the probability of making regular purchases of the brand. Companies have to work hard and prove that their brand is worth using on a regular basis and customers should feel the need to deeply resonate with the brand online. This means that a company has to understand online community culture which benefit its reputation, so that it implements necessary strategies to keep on strengthening connection with online community.



Shier (2017) study aimed to understand experiential events on how they influenced brand loyalty while the customer is aligned with brand resonance. When marketers developed strategies according to needs of customers they were likely to experience a positive reaction as customers would be inclined to be loyal to the brand as it would be meeting their needs and they would not be shy to affiliate themselves from the brand. Loyalty programs induced a sense of joy and being wanted and this had a possibility of deepening the online brand resonance. When brand resonance has deepened, customers invested time, energy and more resources beyond what is expected in educating and sharing experiences online on how they have benefited from resonating with the brand. This had a positive effect on corporate reputation and image.

Jayanti and Singh (2010) study had the learning through information transfer. Consumers' impressions of online brand resonance and business reputation can be influenced by the information they acquire from various internet sources. Positive information about a business, such as positive reviews, endorsements, or social media posts helped to increase online brand resonance and improved the company's reputation. Consumers that had a high online brand resonance were more inclined to share positive experiences and thoughts about the brand, both online and offline. Favourable word-of-mouth and online engagement helped to build a favourable company reputation by demonstrating to other stakeholders that the company is trustworthy, reliable, and provided value. This automatically supported the fact that when an individual has experienced online brand resonance in a positive or negative way, he is likely to share with other community member or none community member.

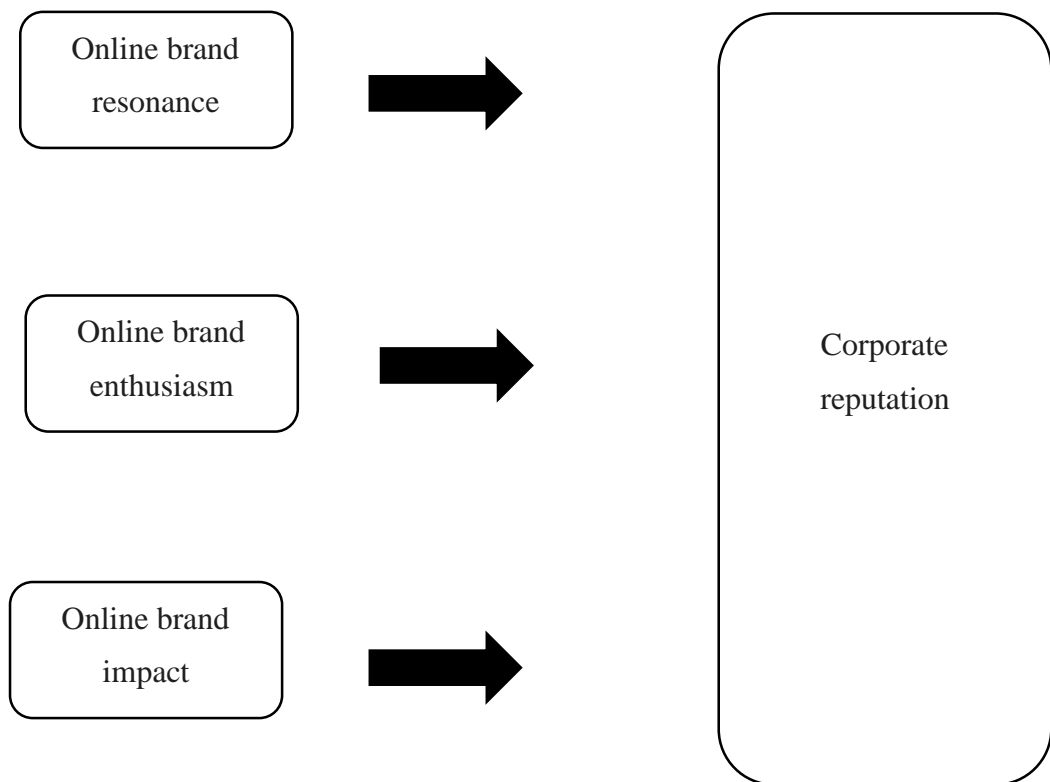
Wirts, Ambtman, Bloemer and Horvarth (2013) study explored online brand communities from customer and company perspective. It outlined that people who participate in online brand communities shared knowledge to non-members and how deeply they resonated with the brand. Drivers of consumer online brand consumer engagement such as brand identification, brand satisfaction and brand commitment helped in building online brand resonance. Corporates ensured that support incentives can be provided on online brand communities so as to deepen

connection with existing members of the online brand communities. These incentives had the probability of attracting new customers and possibly creating a deeper online brand resonance thus having loyal customers.

**H<sub>3</sub>: Online brand resonance has a positive effect on corporate reputation.**

## 2.5 The conceptual framework

The purpose of the framework was to prove that online brand impact, enthusiasm and resonance positively relates to company reputation.



**Figure 3 Conceptual model of the study**

## **2.6 Summary**

The study began by presenting the theoretical framework as it clearly highlighted the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables supported by different theories. To add, the chapter sought to clearly present the empirical evidence and findings from previous studies that have investigated this relationship by using various studies conducted by different authors. The conceptual framework was added so as to show how online brand impact, online brand enthusiasm and online brand resonance positively related with corporate reputation.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The research methodology outlined the theoretical aspect on how the study was carried out. The specific methods used include research design, sample size, research instrument data collection procedures and pilot study were used for the study to be successful.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research design adopted for this study was a causal research. For the research to reap out good results a quantitative study was chosen, which had numerically rated items. The study aimed to provide significant insights of the online brand community engagement and corporate reputation and necessary data collection was carried out using a quantitative research design. According to (Check & Schutt, 2011), a research design is a plan or blueprint of the entire project. It is a process of collecting data from a selected population through their responses to the questions. This study was done to understand the relationship between the customer's engagements within the online brand community.

#### **3.2 Target Population**

The study had a target population of 1200 participants and it comprised male and female. (Maholtra & Birks, 2006) indicated that the target population is made up of individuals who have the qualities to bring out expected results. The target population used in the study was limited to Cossy Rules Furniture customers who once purchased furniture on the company's website or physically and customers who joined the Facebook group.

### 3.3 Sampling Frame

The sampling frame consisted of customers who once purchased home furniture and office furniture from the company physically or those who used online methods, taking into consideration that they were members of the company's Facebook group. Most importantly the researcher made sure that all these people followed all the company's social media pages as this was relevant to come up with good feedback. The sampling frame provided an easy target population from which sample was finally drawn.

### 3.4 Sampling Size

The study followed recommendations by (Saunders, 2009) to use a sample size of 300 participants, which was sufficient for a quantitative study with a 5% confidence interval. The reason is that it was easier to gather reliable data from a smaller group that represented the bigger population needs and responses. A well selected sample is more likely to accurately reflect the whole population's response.

**Table 2 Determining sample size for a given population**

Population	5%	3%	2%	1%
50	44	48	49	50
100	79	91	96	99
150	108	132	141	148
200	132	168	185	196
250	151	203	226	244
300	168	234	267	291
400	196	291	434	384
500	217	340	414	475

750	254	440	571	696
1000	278	516	706	906
1200	300	578	810	1071
2000	322	696	1091	1655
5000	357	879	1622	3288
10 0 00	370	964	1936	4899

Adapted from Saunders (2005)

### 3.5 Sampling Technique

Systematic sampling was used in the study. It is a probability sampling used in quantitative research and it was an easier technique to use and relevant for this study this is was process of selecting individuals at a regular interval (McCombes, 2023).The target population was divided by required sample size of the study (1200/300) and the sampling interval was 4 and this was the interval at which addresses of customers who lived in Waverly were selected. The random number selected to begin with was 8 and the approach used was every 4<sup>th</sup> address in the company's database, a customer was selected and it was like 8<sup>th</sup>,12<sup>th</sup>,16<sup>th</sup>,20<sup>th</sup> etc until a sample size of 300 was reached.

### 3.6 Research Instruments

The study used a questionnaire as a research instrument. The questionnaire was developed and modified using the measurement scales, briefly explained below.

### **3.6.1 Corporate Reputation Scale**

The questionnaire was developed using five point likert scale which was developed by (Walsh & Beatty, 2007). It was used to measure the extent to which a customer has confidence in a certain company, its employees, and care about customers and treat them equally. The scale was found to have construct reliability of .91 and validity was 0.7.

### **3.6.2 Online brand community participation**

Measurement of Online brand community participation was measured using online brand impact, online brand enthusiasm and online brand resonance. The subdivisions are explained below:

### **3.6.3 Online brand impact**

The scale was extracted from an article of (Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2015) and it had a construct reliability of 0.87 and validity was 0.6.

### **3.6.4 Online brand enthusiasm**

The scale was adopted from an article Baldus (et al) using a ten point likert scale, which had construct reliability of 0.88 and validity 0.5.

### **3.6.5 Online Brand resonance**

The scale was implemented from an article by Baldus (et al) using a ten point brand resonance likert scale. The scale had a construct reliability 0.82 and validity was 0.6.

## **3.7 Data Collection Procedures**

This study recruited the participants directly from the Cossy Rules Facebook group. The company had a customer database which had home address and

phone numbers of customers. Customers were called on their phones to participate in the study. Questionnaires were distributed physically to customers in Waverley as most people purchased furniture and interacted with the company previously and are in the Facebook group.

### **3.8 Reliability and Validity**

Reliability refers to getting the same results if the study were repeated with the same methods (Maholtra & Birks, 2006). Validity ensures the measures truly capture the intended concepts. Reliability was measured using Cronbach Alpha. Validity was measured using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). An academic supervisor reviewed the questionnaire to see if the questions seemed relevant to the study's goals. To add, pre-tests were conducted to ensure the questionnaire covered all important aspects of the concepts being measured (Hair, 2009).

### **3.9 Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted using 10 students from Kwekwe Polytechnic, specifically who stayed in Kadoma and their profiles were checked to see if they matched the objective of the study before they were given questionnaire to complete and ensured that the questionnaire is well presented and also to fix any errors before it was distributed to target population.

### **3.10 Data Analysis and Presentation**

Regression analysis and hypothesis testing were used to measure the relationship between online brand community engagement and customer based corporate reputation. These presentation techniques enable a clear and simple way of presenting data. The data was captured and was analyzed using computer software SPSS 27 and SPSS Amos 26.



### **3.11 Ethical consideration**

To conduct the research, the researcher first obtained permission from Cossy Rules Furniture, ensuring company regulations were followed. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and it was made clear to participants that they could choose to withdraw at any point. Throughout the process, participants were treated with respect, fairness, and dignity. To further protect participants' privacy, assurance was given to respondents as the questionnaire avoided collecting any personal information such as name and adress.

### **3.12 Summary**

Focus on the research methodology was given, that is strategies and tools put forward to acquire data which answered questions related to the research. It drew special attention to the design of the research itself, sources of data used also techniques for sampling, data presentation and analysis methods as well as reliability and validity of the research tool and also specified ethical considerations of the study. Data analysis and presentation of collected data was outlined in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

The chapter focused on presentation, analysis and discussion of data from the results gained from the study. The primary data was gathered from the residents who stayed in Waverley to find how corporate reputation is affected with the opinions and views of these people who belonged to Cossy Rules Facebook group.

#### **4.1 Response rate**

Response rate is the number of valid replies received from a campaign (Claide, 2024). It is calculated as the number of returned questionnaires divided by total number of distributed multiplied by 100. The study distributed 300 questionnaires in Waverley.

Table 3 Response rate

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Questionnaire distributed</b>	<b>Incomplete Questionnaires</b>	<b>Response Rate/%</b>
Customers	300	16	94.6%
Totals	300	16	94.6%

## 4.2 Demographic profile of the participants

The study examined the demographic profile of the participants. It included age, gender, educational level and occupation of the residents were in the questionnaire. Table 4.2 below has the summary of the demographic statistics.

**Table 4 Demographic profile of participants**

	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	159	53.7%
	Female	141	46.7%
	Total	300	100%
Age	18-25	64	21.3%
	26-35	82	27.3%
	36-45	76	25.5%
	46-55	43	14.3%
	56 and above	35	11.7%
		300	100%
Educational	Primary	13	4.3%
Qualifications	Secondary	76	25.3%
	Diploma/certificate	80	26.7%
	Degree	64	21.3%
	Masters	42	14%
	PhD	25	8.3%
		300	100%
Employment	Unemployed	100	33.3%
	Employed	130	43.7%
Background	Student	52	17.3%
	Retired	17	5.7%
	Total	300	100%

The table contains the demographic profile of the respondents who participated in the study. As highlighted by the study, males dominated in the participation than females and it is proven by the statistics of 53.3% males compared to 46.7% females. This is so because in most households men made the final decisions of purchasing furniture but they took suggestions and heard what their female relatives and wives had to say which one is the best furniture to purchase.

The age range of the study was assessed and the major highlight was most of the respondents were between the age range of 26-35 years which constituted 27.3% as most people within the age range either move out and start living on their own or some get married and start purchasing furniture. Respondents who were between the age ranges from 18-25 years had 21.3%, 36-45 years had 25.5%, and 46-55 years had 14.3% of the total respondents and 56 years and above had a total of 11.7%.

To add, the educational level of most respondents consisted of individuals who completed their diploma as they constituted 26.7%, secondary level education 25.3% and primary level 4.3%. Masters degree holders constituted 14% of the population, PhD 8.3 % and degree 21.4%. Moreover, formally employed and informally employed participants constituted 43.7% and unemployed had a total of 33.3% .The study was also participated with students which were 17.3% and retired individuals who had a total of 5.7%.

#### **4.3 Uni-Dimensionality Test**

Uni-dimensionality of constructs were assessed using indices these indices were based on the answering patterns, reliability, validity and principal component. Factor analysis was carried out across all items of each construct to determine reliability and appropriate measures were used in determining the items to be

considered in the measurement model which was used for hypothesis testing. The test was carried out for the research constructs and items with significant loadings were considered for the model.

#### **4.3.1 Online Brand Impact**

The uni dimensionality test was done on the 10 likert scale which had four items, to measure online brand impact and corporate reputation. There were OBI1, OBI2, OBI3 and OBI4 and none of the items were rejected. The results were presented below:

**Table 5 Factor Analysis Results of online brand impact**

Item	Factor
I am motivated to participate in Cossy Rules community because I can help improve the brand and its products.	.613
I like to know that my comments and suggestions can influence Cossy Rules	.612
Increasing the influence I have on the brand and its products makes me want to participate more in the brand community	.771
I hope to improve the brand through my participation and expression in this Cossy Rules brand community.	.661
Kaiser Mayer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.714

Source: SPSS

#### **4.3.2 Online brand Enthusiasm**

The uni-dimensionality test was done on the 10 likert scale which had five statements to measure online brand impact and corporate reputation. There were OBE1, OBE2, OBE3, OBE4 and OBE5 and none of the items were rejected. The results are presented in a table.

**Table 6 Factor analysis results for online brand enthusiasm**

Item	Factor
I am passionate to participate in this brand community because I am passionate about Cossy Rules	.568
I participate in this brand community because I care about Cossy Rules.	.581
My passion for Cossy Rules makes me want to participate in this Cossy Rules community online	.679
I would not belong to a brand community if I did not have passion for the brand	.650
I am passionate about Cossy Rules community because I fully support online community.	.529
Kaiser Mayer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.766

Source: SPSS

#### **4.3.3. Online Brand Resonance**

The uni-dimensionality test was done on the 10 likert scale which had four statements to measure online brand impact and corporate reputation. There were OBR1, OBR2,

OBR3 and OBR4 and none of the items were rejected. The results are presented below.

**Table 7 Factor analysis results for online brand resonance**

Item	Factor
Increasing the strength of the connection I have with this Cossy Rules community makes me want to participate more in the online community.	.656
Being part of this Cossy Rules online community makes me feel connected to the brand.	.816
Being part of this Cossy Rules online brand community makes me feel connected to other consumers of the brand.	.800
I like to help new members to feel connected to the online brand community using my past experience and current experience.	.766
Kaiser Mayer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.713

Source: SPSS

#### 4.3.4 Corporate Reputation

The uni-dimensionality test was done on the 5 point likert scale which had seven statements to measure corporate reputation. CR1, CR2 and CR3 loaded significantly whilst CR4, CR5, CR6 and CR7 were dropped because the P values were insignificant. The results are presented below.

**Table 8 Corporate Reputation Factor analysis results**

Item	Factor
I am satisfied with the company's services online.	.685
Cossy Rules has excellent online customer service	.817
Cossy rules has a good relationship with its online community.	.626
Kaiser Mayer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.704

Source: SPSS

#### 4.4 Reliability and Validity

The tables below showed the reliability and validity of the constructs. Reliability was measured using Cronbach Alpha and validity was measured using Average Variance extracted.

**Table 9 Reliability and Validity**

Construct	Number of items	Composite Reliability	Validity
Online brand impact	4	0.75	0.42
Online brand enthusiasm	5	0.73	0.63
Online brand resonance	4	0.8	0.51
Corporate reputation	7	0.75	0.51

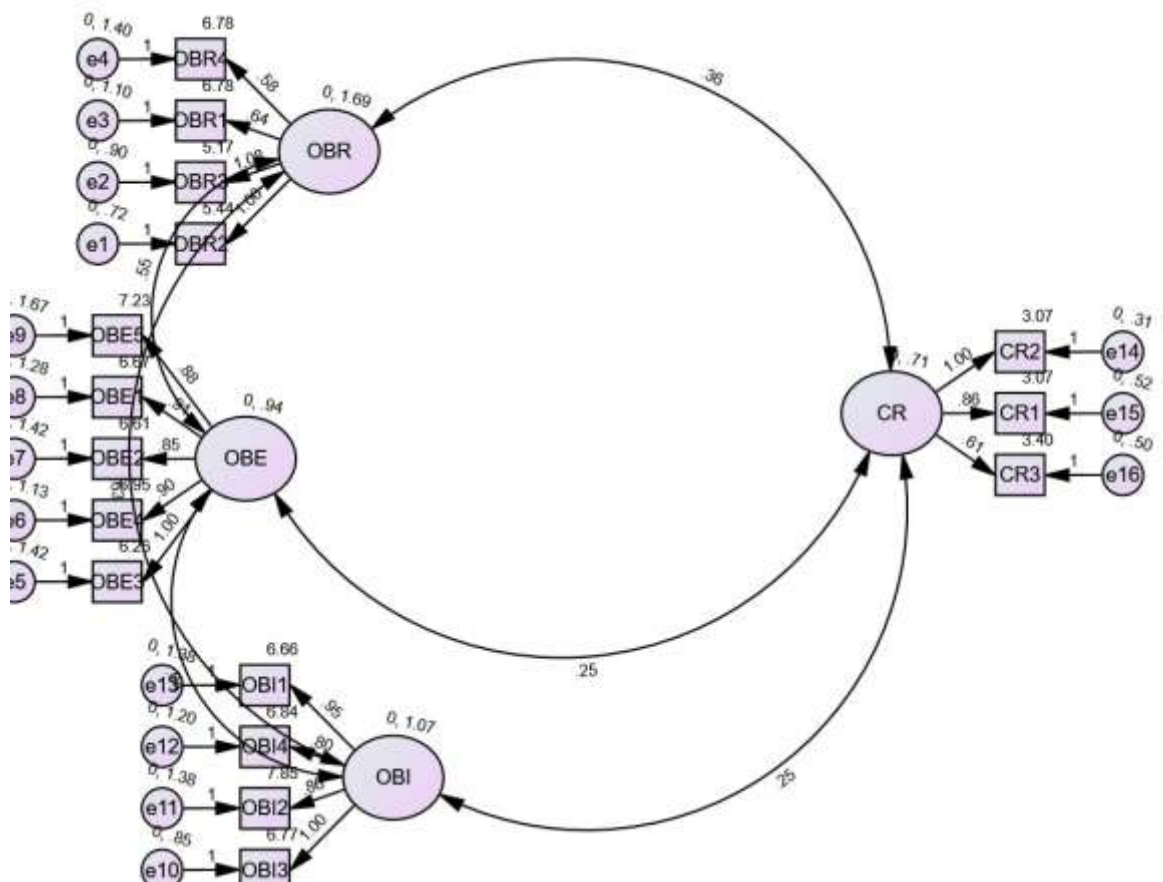
All of the variables above had a reliability measure greater than 0.7. Reliability of the findings was measured by the composite reliability. The results indicated that the data was reliable and this is shown by a composite reliability above 0.7 for all research constructs. Convergent validity was measured using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the AVE values for three research constructs, that is online brand resonance, online brand enthusiasm and corporate reputation were above 0.5. Online brand influence was below 0.5 it does not exhibit convergence validity as postulated by Hair et al.

#### 4.5 Measurement Model

The measurement model was done to measure the validity and reliability of the conceptual model in what it intends to measure. The diagram below illustrated measurement model of the study. The measurement model assessment above indicated that all some variables loaded significantly

**Figure 4 Measurement Model**



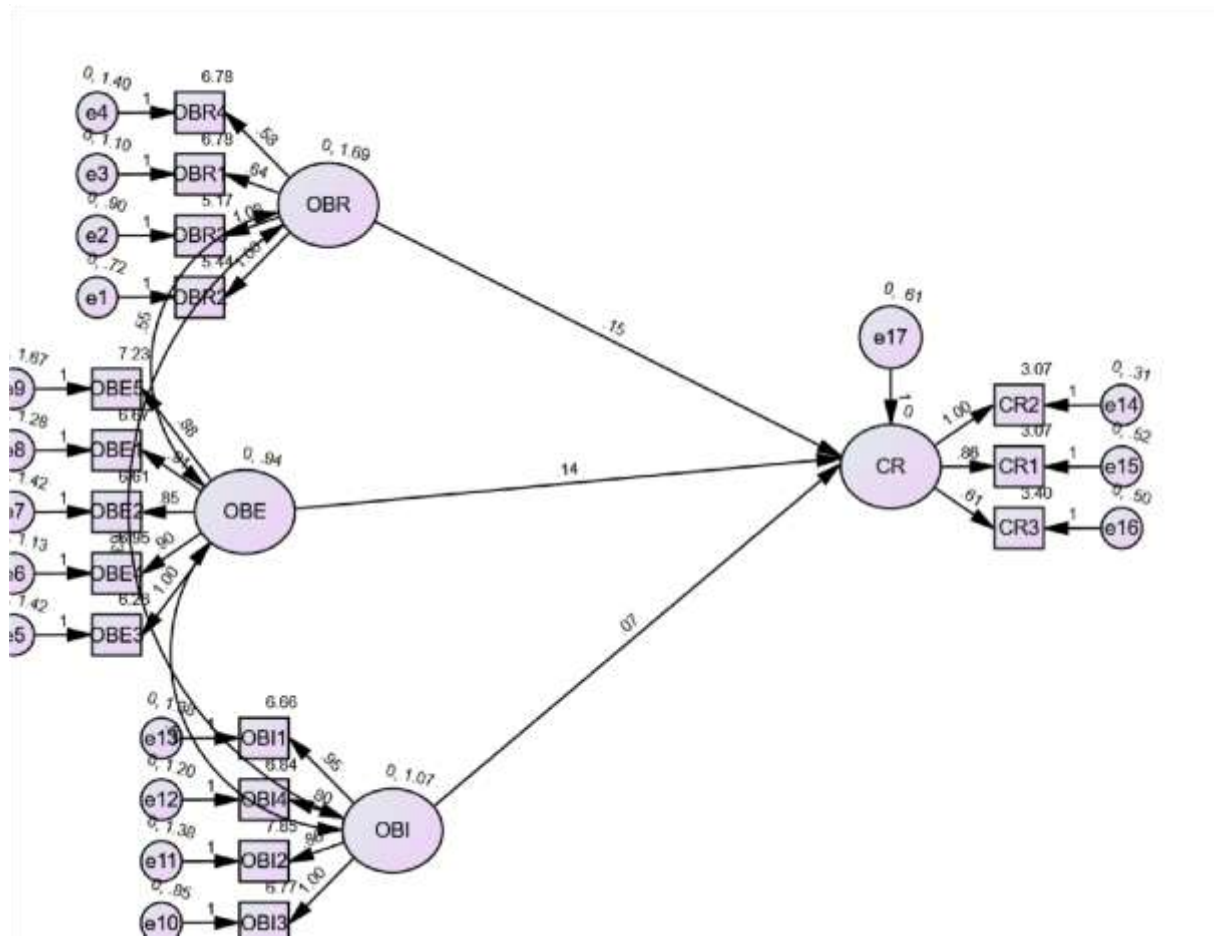


Source: AMOS

#### 4.6 Hypothesis Testing

SPSS Amos software was used to conduct the Structural Equation Modelling to test the hypothesis of this study. The results showed that two out of three hypothesis were rejected and one was accepted. The structural model for the study is shown in fig 5 below.

**Figure 5 Structural Equation Modelling**



**Table 10 Hypothesis Testing**

	Hypothesis statement	B	T	p value	Decision
H <sub>1</sub>	online brand impact has a positive effect on company reputation	.15	.723	.470	Rejected
H <sub>2</sub>	online brand enthusiasm has a positive effect on company reputation	.14	1.444	.149	Rejected
H <sub>3</sub>	online brand resonance has a positive effect on company reputation	.07	2.734	.006	Accepted

Source: AMOS

The first hypothesis of the study stated that online brand impact has a positive effect on company reputation. It was not supported by empirical testing because the regression coefficient was .15 and the p value was .470. This entails that an individual's participation and expression in online brand communities does not affect corporate reputation statistically.

The second hypothesis of the study stated that online brand enthusiasm has a positive effect on corporate reputation and this hypothesis was rejected. The regression coefficient was .14 and p value was .149 and this is above the expected significant 0.05. An individual's motivation to participate in a brand community and their passion about the brand does not have an effect which affects corporate reputation.

The third hypothesis for this research stated that online brand resonance has a positive effect on company reputation and the hypothesis was accepted. The regression coefficient was .07 and p label was 0.006 and it was supported as it lies with the range of 0.05 significance level. This means that if an individual is willing to help new members to feel connected to the online brand community using past experience and increasing strength of connection to Cossy Rules community has an effect on corporate reputation.

#### **4.7 Discussion Of the results**

##### **4.7.1. Relationship between online brand impact and corporate reputation**

The results reflected that influence of online brand impact is not triggered by comments and suggestions made on online brand communities concerning Cossy Rules and its products. It was indicated that people with a positive or negative attitude on online brand communities does not affect any corporate reputation and image. This was indicated by a value of  $P > 0.05$  which show there is a negative relationship. Online brand impact is not a key driver of corporate reputation.

#### **4.7.2 Relationship between online enthusiasm and corporate reputation**

The empirical testing proved a non-significant relationship between online brand enthusiasm and corporate reputation. This was indicated by a p value greater than 0.05. The results suggested that other factors played a significant role in shaping corporate reputation on online brand communities, other than online brand enthusiasm.

#### **4.7.3 Relationship between online brand resonance and corporate reputation**

The results showed a significant association between online brand resonance and corporate reputation since  $P < 0.05$ . This indicated that online brand resonance has a significant impact on corporate reputation. These findings highlight the importance of cultivating a strong online brand resonance and fostering resonance with target audiences to support a positive corporate reputation. Companies should prioritize creating an engaging online brand resonance to enhance corporate reputation.

#### **4.8 Summary**

The chapter presented the results of the study which was carried out using questionnaire. It highlighted the processes used in interpreting the data using software SPSS AMOS 26 which used structure equation modelling for hypothesis testing and SPSS 27 was used for factor analysis. Reliability and validity results were calculated using supplier flexibility excel sheet which had a formula. The study accepted 1 hypothesis test which supported the relationship between online brand resonance on corporate reputation, whilst 2 hypothesis were rejected as they do not affect corporate reputation. Summary, conclusion and recommendations are discussed in chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter was to review the summary of the research as well as recommendations in accordance to the research objectives.

#### **5.1 Summary**

This study's objectives sought to explore the impact of online brand community participation on corporate reputation referring to Cossy Rules Furniture as a case study, using independent variables such as online brand resonance, online brand enthusiasm and online brand impact. The topic was of interest to the researcher because the rise of digital use has led to the increase of online brand communities where customers engage and share their views about brands, usually consumer perception about a brand is shaped by reading and interacting with other consumers who used the brand services or products.

Definition of key terms were clearly outlined. The study went on to highlight several theories which explained the relationship between independent variable (that is online brand enthusiasm, online brand resonance and online brand impact) and dependent variable which is corporate reputation. Empirical studies were included which showed that they supported the relationship between variables. A conceptual framework was presented and it showed relationships of variables and how they related to the research study.

Research design was causal research and a questionnaire was designed. 300 questionnaires were distributed to a sample size in Waverley suburb and it was ensured that people who participated in the study were in the Cossy Rules Facebook page, follow the company's social media pages and they would have purchased furniture on

the company's website or physically. Systematic sampling was used to select participants the study.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Data was analyzed and interpreted using SPSS 27 and AMOS 26. The hypothesis results of the study supported that there is a positive relationship between online brand resonance and corporate reputation. Composite reliability for the research construct was above 0.7 for all research constructs. Validity was measured using average variance extracted (AVE) and it was above 0.5 for the research constructs. The other two hypothesis results were rejected and they do not affect corporate reputation according to the empirical testing. This means that there are other factors which strongly affect corporate reputation greatly.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

Factors which affect corporate reputation on online brand communities other than online brand resonance should be further researched. A future study should analyze how online brand communities influence purchase intention of customers. To add, study further recommends a research should be done to compare the relationship of the constructs considering participants on different social media platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, and X(formerly well known as Twitter) in order to assess if the online brand participation constructs gives the same results on all platforms.

Future research should also broaden the geographical areas by covering more suburbs to come up with good results. The inclusion of focus groups in future studies could potentially be beneficial in getting consumers' views and convictions from different viewpoints. Despite the reality that this study used a quantitative strategy to collect data, qualitative studies such as semi-structured interviews and focus groups will enable future studies to provide answers and improve understanding of the research subject. The researcher also recommends that a mix approach of research designs be used instead of using only quantitative analysis. Furthermore the company should strive to improve its online visibility

such as bringing back the virtual showroom so as to keep the customers interested and should strive to engage with its customer on a regular basis.

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## APPENDIX I QUESTIONNAIRE

### BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

#### DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING



Dear participant

#### RESEARCH SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Regina Fadzai Chimwanja. I am carrying out an academic research on the topic titled: **The Impact of Online Brand Community Participation on Corporate Reputation: Case Study of Cossy Rules Holdings**. This research is in partial fulfilment of my bachelor's degree in Marketing.

I am kindly requesting you to fill the questionnaire below. It comprises 4 sections in which response will be indicated by means of a tick or X. All the answers you will provide will be strictly used for academic purposes only. No personal details such as name and address are required and I would greatly appreciate if you participate in this study.

## Section A: Demographic factors

This section is aimed at knowing your age, level of education as well as employment status.

Please kindly tick ☐ or put an X in the appropriate box to show your response.

### 1. GR Gender

<b>GR1</b>	1.Male	
<b>GR2</b>	2.Female	

### 2. Age

<b>AG1</b>	1.18-25	
<b>AG2</b>	2.26-35	
<b>AG3</b>	3.36-45	
<b>AG4</b>	4.46-55	
<b>AG5</b>	5.56 and above	

### 3. Education Qualifications

<b>EQ1</b>	1.Primary	
<b>EQ2</b>	2.Secondary	
<b>EQ3</b>	3.Tertiary/certificate/diploma	
<b>EQ4</b>	4.Degree	
<b>EQ5</b>	5.Masters	
<b>EQ6</b>	6.PhD	

#### 4. Employment background

<b>EB1</b>	1.Unemployed	
<b>EB2</b>	2.Employed	
<b>EB3</b>	3.Student	
<b>EB4</b>	4.Retired	

#### Section B

**Kindly indicate by a tick ✓ the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements**

Key: 1.Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3.Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree  
5.Strongly agree

#### Corporate reputation

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>CR1</b>	I am satisfied with the company's service online					
<b>CR2</b>	Cossy Rules holdings has excellent online customer service					
<b>CR3</b>	Cossy Rules holdings has a good relationship with its online community					

<b>CR4</b>	Cossy Rules Holdings looks like a good company to work for					
<b>CR5</b>	Cossy Rules Holdings seems to have good employees					
<b>CR6</b>	Cossy Rules seems to have excellent leadership					
<b>CR7</b>	Cossy Rules seems to maintain high standards in the way it treats people.					

Kindly tick ✓ the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements

### Online Brand Impact

**Brand impact means significantly influencing a person's perception of a brand to the extent where they're engaging with them on an emotional level.**

On a scale of 1-10(1= strongly disagree 2= moderately disagree 3=somewhat disagree 4=slightly disagree 5=Neutral 6=slightly agree 7=somewhat agree 8= Agree 9=Strongly Agree 10= Maximum Agreement)

### Online brand impact

	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>OBI 1</b>	I am motivated to participate in Cossy Rules community because I can help improve the brand and its products.										

<b>OBI 2</b>	I like to know that my comments and suggestions can influence Cossy Rules and its products										
<b>OBI 3</b>	Increasing the influence I have on the brand and its products makes me want to participate more in this brand community.										
<b>OBI 4</b>	I hope to improve the brand through my participation and expression in this Cossy Rules brand community										

### Online Brand enthusiasm

**Brand enthusiasm means being passionate about the brand. It means becoming a brand fanatic, encouraging friends and family to trust the brand.**

**On a scale of 1-10, (1= strongly disagree 2= moderately disagree 3=somewhat disagree**

**4=slightly disagree 5=Neutral 6=slightly agree 7=somewhat agree 8= Agree**

**9=Strongly Agree 10= Maximum Agreement**

### Online brand enthusiasm

	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>OBE1</b>	I am motivated to participate in this brand community because I am passionate about Cossy Rules.										

<b>OBE2</b>	I participate in this brand community because I care about Cossy Rules Holdings										
<b>OBE3</b>	My passion for Cossy Rules holdings make me want to participate in this Cossy Rules community										
<b>OBE4</b>	I would not belong to a brand community if I did not have passion for the brand.										
<b>OBE5</b>	I am passionate about Cossy Rules community because I fully support online community.										

### Online brand resonance

**Brand resonance means having a special connection with a brand mentally and emotionally, doing what it takes to remain faithful to the brand**

On a scale of 1-10, (1= strongly disagree 2= moderately disagree 3=somewhat disagree 4=slightly disagree 5=Neutral 6=slightly agree 7=somewhat agree 8= Agree 9=Strongly Agree 10= Maximum Agreement)



	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>OBR 1</b>	Increasing the strength of the connection I have with this Cossy Rules community makes me want to participate more in the online community										
<b>OBR 2</b>	Being part of this Cossy Rules online community makes me feel connected to the brand										
<b>OBR 3</b>	Being part of this Cossy Rules online brand community makes me feel connected to other consumers of the brand										
<b>OBR 4</b>	I like to help new members to feel connected to the online brand community using my past experience and current experience										

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

## **APPENDIX II:LETTER OF PERMISSION**

Bindura University of Science Education

741 Chimurenga road Off Trojan Road

Bindura

21 December 2023

Cossy Rules Executive Management

Cossy Rules Holdings

4742 Waverley Complex

Kadoma

Dear Sir /Madam

**Re: Request for permission to carry out research using organisation's' social media platforms and other resources.**

I am a student at the Bindura University of Science Education studying Bachelor of Commerce Honours Degree in Marketing. It is a requirement of the university that all students must carry out research project in partial fulfilment of the degree. I am therefore kindly seeking for permission to carry out research using your company's social media platforms and database on the following topic: The impact of online brand community participation on corporate reputation.I am doing my research with particular reference to Cossy Rules Holdings. The information gathered will be of academic purposes only.Your approval to this request will be greatly appreciated

Yours faithfully

Regina Fadzai Chimwanja