

**BINDURA UNIVERSITY SCIENCE EDUCATION  
FACULTY OF COMMERCE  
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING**



**Effectiveness of online customer engagement on building customer loyalty. A  
case of Boltgas International Engineering Company.**

**BY**

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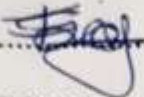
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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR OF BUSINESS STUDIES  
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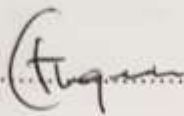
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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved parents **Mr. and Mrs. Sigauke**, my sibling and friends for all their efforts and being a powerful source of encouragement towards my entire academic life. I want to thank you all for your endless moral, spiritual and financial support.

## **ABSTRACT**

This research endeavors to elucidate the correlation between online customer engagement and customer loyalty within the context of Boltgas International, a Zimbabwe-based engineering solutions provider. A causal research design was employed to establish the cause-and-effect relationship between the two variables. The target population comprised 10,000 customers actively interacting with Boltgas International online, with a sample size of 370 determined using a 5% confidence interval. A coded questionnaire was formulated using established measurement scales, served as the research instrument. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26.0 and SPSS-Amos version 26, yielding results presented in figures and tables. The study investigated the hypothesized positive relationship between customer engagement and customer loyalty, revealing a statistically significant regression coefficient. Notably, three constructs demonstrated reliability measures exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7, while one variable showed a lower reliability measure. The findings provide robust empirical evidence of a positive relationship between customer engagement and customer loyalty, with personalization and value emerging as the most significant predictors. These insights contribute meaningfully to the understanding of customer engagement in the digital era, offering practical implications for businesses seeking to enhance customer loyalty through online channels.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to demonstrate that online customer engagement is an important predictor of building customer loyalty. Building and sustaining customer loyalty are one of the fundamental subjects of this research. This study focused on the effectiveness of online customer engagement on building customer loyalty. This section provides context of the study by exploring its background, problem statement, aim, and research objectives. Specifically, it examines the background leading to the study, defines the problem being investigated, and establishes the overarching goal and subsidiary questions guiding the inquiry. In addition, the section outlines the assumptions, significance of findings, delimitations or bounds, and limitations of the research design. When addressing these foundational elements, the study aims to not only add to the body of published work on this topic but also to throw light on the concept of online customer engagement and its influence on customer loyalty.

### **1.1 Background to the study**

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) mentioned that by recognizing the indispensable role of customer interaction businesses has elevated commercial activities to 90% increase in revenue through digital customer engagement investments. The Boltgas International customer engagement statistics engaged customers are pivotal, contributing 51% more in terms of revenue and sales compared to their disengaged counterparts, and they also spend 60% more per transaction. In the past trends the company records have shown that Boltgas International had managed to keep their customers well engaged, striking a 25% increase in revenue from engaged customers each year underscoring their critical role as drivers of sales growth and profitability. Numerous empirical studies have shown that online customer engagement has a significant impact on the firm's performance. Lemon and Verhoef et al (2016), emphasized on increasing customer engagement by developing customer-centric digital strategies in driving loyalty, this study aims to investigate the specific online engagement tactics that contribute most effectively to cultivate and maintain customer

loyalty. Boltgas International has a great customer engagement charter that advocates for outstanding engineering solutions to their clients. By evaluating the correlation between engagement efforts and the organization's customer loyalty, the study seeks to determine the degree to which engagement strategies contribute to building enduring customer relationships. Based on the findings, the research aimed to provide actionable insights and recommendations for Boltgas International to optimize and tailor their customer engagement strategies to better align with long-term loyalty objectives.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Boltgas International has over the years managed to attract and keep to themselves loyal customers who subconsciously conduct repeat purchases. However, as the organization has grown and become more sophisticated, it has developed policies that seem to prioritize the organizations interest over the interest of the customers leading to increased customer complaints, customer defections and poor customer service resulting in low sales. The Boltgas International consumer complaints records however indicated that it has turned out that these procedures are the cause of low consumer involvement. Other consumers have vowed not to return for another purchase after their initial purchase, others have threatened to leave the company therefore the company have been looking for ways to leverage their online customer engagement. According to the company's records, customer engagement dropped from 72% to 56% in 2023 currently due to the complexity of the organization. Therefore, there is need to investigate and analyze how best can be done to enhance customer relationships and cultivate lasting brand loyalty. According to the Forum Corporation study, 70% of the customers will discontinue doing business with a company not because of product quality or pricing, but because they believe they were mistreated during customer engagement.

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

This study was guided by the following research objectives:

1. To establish the relationship between online customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International.
2. To establish the relationship between cognitive customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International.

3. To establish the relationship between emotional customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International.
4. To establish the relationship between behavioral customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International.

#### **1.4 Research Hypothesis**

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive relationship between online customer engagement and customer loyalty.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a positive relationship between cognitive customer engagement and customer loyalty.

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a positive relationship between emotional customer engagement and customer loyalty.

H<sub>4</sub>: There is a positive relationship between behavioral customer engagement and customer loyalty.

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

As an outcome of the research the researcher now has a better understanding on the effectiveness of online customer engagement. This research is a valid component of BBS Marketing degree to be done in the partial completion. Therefore, it is significant to the researcher, the university, Boltgas International, and the general public in a variety of ways, as illustrated in the following paragraphs.

##### **1.5.1 To the researcher**

This research will strengthen the student's understanding and expertise of marketing courses such as customer relationship management and digital marketing, as well as how to perform case study research. It will assist the researcher in testing the applicability of theory learned in collage and connecting it to practice.

##### **1.5.2 To the university**

Once completed, the research will serve as a literature review for other students and faculty members who may carry out research on the subject of customer engagement and customer loyalty in the future.



### **1.5.3 To Boltgas International**

The board of directors and management team can obtain strategies for improving the company's online customer engagement and customer loyalty. It will provide management with insights about consumer relationships.

### **1.5.4 To the public**

At Boltgas International, all stakeholders will grasp the benefits of strong customer relationship marketing and, specifically, how perceived online customer interaction affects client loyalty. This is important for the organizational staff who have direct touch with customers. This will then improve their customer engagement and interaction. In some ways, this will then increase client loyalty. Customers gain an understanding of how they operate subconsciously when making judgements about which suppliers of goods to choose.

### **1.6 Purpose of the study**

The research seeks to review the fact that indeed online customer engagement is a pre-requisite in enhancing the customer loyalty. The study will assist in identifying some of the shortcomings in the Boltgas International online customer engagement initiatives, assisting in improving repeat purchases, and demonstrating the relevance of customer engagement on customer loyalty. This study will aid in the discovery of methods to improve organizational efficiency.

### **1.7 Assumptions of the study**

The study assumes that the variable used, that is customer engagement would be able to determine the outcome of how the target audience interactions and the organization interactions are linked to customer loyalty.

### **1.8 Delimitation of the study**

The research was focusing on the effectiveness of online customer engagement on customer loyalty at Boltgas International. The focus will be on Boltgas International head office customers in Msasa and on local Zimbabwean customers. The customers that will be considered are individual walk-in cash customers and online customers who make their purchase at the Msasa outlet.

## **1.9 Limitation**

The study was mostly focusing on online customer engagement, overlooking offline engagement channels such as in-person interactions or phone calls.

## **1.0 Definition of terms**

### **1.0.1 Customer loyalty**

Customer loyalty is the ongoing commitment of a customer to a particular brand or business. It is based on the customer's positive experiences with the brand, including the quality of products or services, customer service, and overall value.

### **1.0.2 Customers**

Customers are those individuals and groups of people for whom production is meant to satisfy. They are either, individual or corporate.

### **1.0.3 Online customer engagement**

Online customer engagement is the interaction between a customer and a brand or business through online channels, including a website, social media, or email. It involves customers actively participating in and interacting with the brand's online content and activities.

### **1.0.4 Customer satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction occurs when a product, service, or experience fulfills or exceeds a customer's anticipated needs, wants, and expectations.

### **1.0.5 Customer experience**

The customer experience (CX) constitutes the aggregate of all interactions and encounters a customer has with a company or brand, spanning the entirety of their relationship, from initial awareness to post-purchase support.

### **1.0.6 Customer confidence**

The feeling that a customer has of trust and the reliability of an organization in transacting with its customer and providing satisfaction to its customers.

## **1.1 Summary**

This chapter has furnished a comprehensive overview of the research context, delineating the study's rationale, objectives, and potential implications, as well as its scope, limitations, and proposed solutions. The chapter has also elucidated the research questions, hypotheses, and structural framework of the report. Building on this foundation, the subsequent chapter will delve into a critical review of the conceptual framework and extant literature on customer engagement, with a specific focus on the role of perceived quality in fostering customer loyalty within the context of Boltgas International. This review will provide a nuanced understanding of the theoretical underpinnings and empirical evidence that inform this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter undertook a comprehensive review of the existing literature pertinent to the investigation of customer engagement as a strategic tool for fostering robust customer loyalty in the context of Boltgas International, a Zimbabwe-based engineering solutions provider. The literature is contextualised to make it relevant to the problem under the study and gap in knowledge is also further established. On this chapter, it is comprised of three sections, that is the conceptual framework, theoretical framework and empirical framework. On conceptual framework, the main key concepts of the research will be identified. On theoretical framework the theories relating to the study or research will be discussed and also justification will be upon as to which the theory explains this study. The study took a deeper look at what other researchers have found in the same study area under empirical review.

#### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

##### **2.1.1 Online customer engagement and customer loyalty**

The social exchange theory (SET) developed by Homans (1958) served as an underpinning theory of the study. According to the theory, people engage in a relationship in anticipation of certain benefits which normally emerges in the form of either tangible or intangible resources. Anderson and Narus (1991) further mentioned that, people engaged in a relationship anticipate the benefits derived from such exchange to be of higher value than their interaction with another party. Brodie (2011) explained that people normally become engaged in a relationship after thoroughly evaluating the benefits to be derived from such relationship. Customer engagement involves continuous interaction between the customers and their favourite brands. It is presumed that customers may be enthusiastic and attentive in their engagement with the product offerings when they anticipate certain benefits which will make them satisfied and loyal to such products.

Moving on, the two aspects was further explained by the social identity theory (SIT) that was originally proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) evolving from Tajfel's earlier work on intergroup conflict and social categorization. According to Tajfel and Turner (1979) the social identity theory proposed that people develop a sense of identity and community through their affiliation with social groups., and those group membership plays a crucial role in shaping their behaviour, attitudes, and interactions with others. According to Imrie (2011) online customer engagement has become a crucial aspect of building customer loyalty in the digital age. Social identity theory provides a valuable lens for understanding how customers develop a sense of identity and loyalty to a brand or community. This framework integrates social identity theory with online customer engagement to explain how companies can effectively build customer loyalty. Social identity was formed when customers interact with a brand or company online, experiencing a sense of belonging and connection for example through social media group or online forums. Moving on, Korte (2011) emphasized on personalization and recognition, most companies recognize and personalize interactions with customers, acknowledging their individuality and group membership. This personalization strengthens social identity and loyalty, as customers feel valued and appreciated.

### **2.1.2 Cognitive engagement and customer loyalty**

The social cognitive theory was proposed by Bandura (1986), is a learning theory that highlighted the importance of social and cognitive factors in shaping human behaviour. According to Bandura (1986) the theory suggested that individuals learn through observing others, imitating their actions, and reinforcing or punishing behaviours based on their consequences. The social cognitive theory provides a theoretical framework for understanding how customers engage with brands and develop loyalty. Bandura et al (1986) explored that customers observe how others interact with a brand through social media, online reviews, and word-of-mouth, therefore positive experiences and testimonials can influence customers' perceptions of the brand and motivate them to engage. However, Julian Rotter (2004) had a view that customers imitate the behaviours they observe. For example, if they see others sharing positive reviews or participating in brand-hosted events, they are more likely

to do the same. In addition, Richard Lazarus (2002) supported the theory in relation with reinforcement and punishments, positive experiences, such as helpful customer service or rewarding loyalty programs, reinforce customer engagement and loyalty as well as negative experiences, such as poor service or unresponsive customer support, can punish engagement and discourage loyalty. By applying the principles of social cognitive theory firms can foster a positive and engaging customer experience that leads to increased loyalty and long-term relationships.

According to Bowden (2009) the theory proposes that customer engagement is a mental process that cultivates and strengthens customer loyalty, suggesting a psychological connection between the two concepts and exploring how customer relationships are built and nurtured. Bowden et al (2009) suggested that cognitive engagement involves mental activities such as attention, comprehension, and elaboration, is a key driver of customer loyalty. According to Bowden's theory, cognitive customer engagement is a multi-dimensional construct that includes attention, this is where customers pay attention to brand message and content. More so, on comprehension this is where customers understand and process brand information. Lastly elaboration, customers connect brand information to their own experiences and knowledge. Mishel (2018) expanded on Bowden's research, applying their framework to explore the intricacies of customer-brand relationships and the processes that facilitate the development of engagement among various customer segments, providing valuable insights into the nature of these relationships. Cognitive involvement makes customers become mentally involved with the brand and its offerings. Based on Bowden's theory, firms can develop strategies to enhance cognitive customer engagement and loyalty such as creating attention-grabbing content where there is use of visually appealing designs, compelling headlines, and relevant information to capture customers 'attention. Moreover, businesses can utilize the strategy of providing personalized experiences, the process of tailor marketing messages and content to individual customer preferences and interest. Bowden et al (2009) mentioned that by focusing on cognitive engagement, companies can establish enduring relationships with customers, leading to increased loyalty, retention, and ultimately, long-term business prosperity. Bowden's customer engagement theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how cognitive processes influence

customer loyalty and offers practical guidance for developing effective customer engagement strategies.

### **2.1.3 Emotional engagement and customer loyalty**

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognize and understand emotions in customers, colleagues, and oneself, and to use this awareness to build strong relationships, communicate effectively, and make informed decisions. The theory emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence in personal success. Goleman (1995) assisted in understanding how emotionally intelligent interactions between service providers and customers can foster deeper emotional connections, leading to increased customer loyalty. This is particularly relevant in today's service-oriented economies can significantly impact business outcomes. According to the Goleman's theory (1995) emotional intelligence comprises five key competencies, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. The application of emotional engagement in customer engagement involves recognizing and responding to customer's emotional states, which can enhance their experience and satisfaction. For instance, service personal with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to empathize with customers, manage their own emotional responses, and negative social interactions more effectively, leading to positive customer experiences. In support of this theory, Salovey and Mayer (1990) described emotional intelligence as a component of social intelligence also with a view that customer loyalty has increasingly seen as not just a result of transactional satisfaction but also emotional attachment. Goleman's (1995) emotional intelligence theory provides a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the role of emotions in building emotional customer engagement and loyalty. By applying the principles of emotional intelligence, businesses can foster strong emotional connections with customers, ultimately leading to increased sales, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth.

Furthermore, emotional customer engagement can be elaborated by the social identity theory (SIT), developed by Tajfel and Turner (1986), posits that people gain a sense of self-worth from segments they belong to. They strive to maintain or enhance their group's positive self-concept through social comparison with other groups. According to Tajfel and Tuner (1986), emotional customer engagement refers to the emotional bond that customers form with a brand or organization. It encompasses a range of

positive emotions, such as love, trust, and excitement. Customer loyalty is the result of sustained positive engagement, leading to repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth. The social identity theory offers insights into understanding how customer engagement and loyalty can be influenced by social identity. In addition, there are various scholars who contributed to the social identity theory in relation to emotional customer engagement. According to Fournier (1991) emotional loyalty is characterized by a customer's affective attachment to a brand, where the brand becomes a meaningful part of their self-concept that is influenced by self-categorization which means, customers categorize themselves into relevant social groups, such as loyal customers, dissatisfied customers, or brand enthusiasts. Social comparison, this is when customers compare their group for instance loyal customers to other groups such as dissatisfied customers to evaluate their self-esteem and enhance their positive social identity. According to Tajfel and Turner (1986) the social identity theory suggests that brands can foster emotional customer engagement and loyalty by creating a strong and positive group identity among customers, by encouraging social comparison and in-group favouritism, by minimizing outgroup derogation and focusing on shared values and by providing opportunities for customers to express their social identity through brand interactions. Social identity theory provides a theoretical framework for understanding how emotional customer engagement and loyalty can be fostered through social identification with a brand as an integral part of their social identity, leading to stronger emotional ties and sustained loyalty.

#### **2.1.4 Behavioural Engagement and customer loyalty**

The social learning theory was developed by Bandura (1977), and he emphasized that observation, imitation, and reinforcement play a crucial role in shaping behaviour. Individuals engage in observational learning by witnessing the actions and consequences of others, and they are more likely to replicate behaviours that are positively reinforced or rewarded. This process enables individuals to acquire new behaviours, attitudes, and knowledge by observing others and imitating their actions, which are subsequently reinforced through positive outcomes or incentives. According to Bandura (1977) behavioural customer engagement refers to observable customer actions that demonstrate their involvement with a brand or organization. It includes activities such as making purchases, visiting stores, interacting with brand



content, and participating in loyalty programs. Customer loyalty is the result of sustained positive engagement, leading to repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth. Bandura (1977) further explained that the social learning theory provides a framework for understanding how customer engagement and loyalty can be influenced by social learning through observation, imitation, reinforcement and social norms. In support of the social learning theory, Horsburgh and Ippolito (2018) suggested that brands can foster behavioural customer engagement and loyalty by showcasing positive customer behaviours through testimonials, social media campaigns, and influencer marketing. More so, this can be done by providing rewards and incentives for desired behaviours, such as loyalty programs, discounts, and exclusive experiences, creating a positive social environment where customers feel supported and valued and also by Establishing clear social norms and expectations about appropriate customer behaviour.

In support of the social learning theory, the self-efficacy theory can also clarify how behavioural customer engagement can build customer loyalty. The self-efficacy theory was developed by Bandura (1977), emphasizes the significance of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's confidence in their capacity to accomplish specific tasks or attain desired goals. Individuals with high self-efficacy exhibit greater propensity to undertake challenging endeavours and demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity, fostering a robust sense of personal agency and achievement. According to Bandura (1977) behavioural customer engagement refers to observable customer actions that demonstrate their involvement with a brand or organization. It includes activities such as making purchases, visiting stores, interacting with brand content, and participating in loyalty programs. Customer loyalty is the result of sustained positive engagement, leading to repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth. According to Labroo (1972) self-efficacy theory provides a framework for understanding how customer engagement and loyalty can be influenced by customers' beliefs in their ability to engage with the brand, overcome barriers and achieve desired outcomes. On engaging with the brand Labroo (1972) customers with high self-efficacy believe they can successfully interact with the brand, navigate its website, and use its products or services. Labroo (1972) viewed the point overcoming barriers, as customers with high self-efficacy are more likely to persist in engaging with the brand despite obstacles or challenges, they may encounter. Bandura (1977) Self-

efficacy theory suggests that brands can foster behavioural customer engagement and loyalty by building customer confidence, setting achievable goals and recognizing and rewarding effort.

## **2.2 Empirical Evidence Review**

### **2.2.1 The relationship between online customer engagement and customer loyalty**

Analysing the relationship between online customer engagement and customer loyalty is a critical area of study in the realm of marketing. Aladwani, and Palvia, (2002) explored how online customer engagement impacts retailers' performance, with a specific focus on the moderating role of customer value. Fernandes (2019) the customer engagement was applied using the maximum probability for extraction in accordance with recommendations. It sheds light on the intricate dynamics between engagement and loyalty in the online retail space. According to Teng and Khong (2016) this research delved into how online customer experience influences customer satisfaction and loyalty in the context of online retailing businesses. It provided valuable insights into the importance of cultivating a positive online experience to drive loyalty. Zhao and Dai (2019) this study investigated how customer engagement behaviour affects customer loyalty, with a specific focus on the mediating roles of empathy and customer satisfaction. For further datasets that was analysed, the online customer engagement procedure generated several factors that helped understanding the underlying variables of the model. Several studies have found a significant positive relationship between online customer engagement and customer loyalty. Higher levels of engagement with online platforms, such as websites, social media, or mobile apps, have been linked to increased customer loyalty and repeat purchases. Wang and Yue (2019) thought that by examining these mechanisms, the author examines the interplay between customer engagement and loyalty in online contexts, providing a richer understanding of the factors that influence customer retention and loyalty in digital channels.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive relationship between online customer engagement and customer loyalty.

### **2.2.2 The relationship between cognitive customer engagement and customer loyalty**

Bowden (2009) researched on the relationship between cognitive customer engagement and customer loyalty has found that customers who are more cognitive engaged are more likely to be loyal to a brand or business. Cova and Lin (2019) defined cognitive customer engagement as to the mental effort and attention that customers devote to interacting with a brand or product. It involves activities such as reading product reviews, comparing prices, and researching brand information. Bowden's research has shown that cognitive customer engagement can lead to customer loyalty in various ways. First and foremost, cognitive customer engagement can lead to increased customer knowledge and understanding of the brand or product. This can lead to increased satisfaction and loyalty. In addition, cognitive customer engagement can lead to increased customer satisfaction. In support of this theory Pine and Gilmore (1999) explained that when customers are more cognitively engaged, they are more likely to have a positive experience with the brand or product hence this can lead to increased satisfaction and loyalty. By increasing cognitive customer engagement, businesses can drive customers loyal and build lasting relationship with their customers.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a positive relationship between cognitive customer engagement and customer loyalty.

### **2.2.3 The relationship between emotional customer engagement and customer loyalty**

According to Bowden (2009) the relationship between emotional engagement and customer has found that customers who are more emotionally engaged are more likely to be loyal to a brand or business. Pine and Gilmore (1999) defined emotional engagement to the emotional connection that customers have with a brand or product. It involves feelings such as excitement, joy, frustration, or anger. Bowden's research showed that emotional engagement can lead to customer loyalty in several ways. Emotional engagement can create a strong bond between the customer and the brand. When customers form an emotional bond with a brand, they tend to develop a deep and lasting loyalty to the brand. More so, emotional engagement can motivate customers to make repeat purchases. Bowden et al (2009) when customers experience

positive emotions with a brand, they tend to develop a lasting affinity and desire to continue the relationship. Emotional engagement can make customers more resistant to negative information about the brand. When customers are emotionally engaged with a brand, they are less likely to be swayed by negative reviews or comments. Reichheld (1996) explored that to increase emotional engagement businesses must create a positive and memorable customer experience, this could involve delivering exceptional customer service, tailoring experiences to individual needs, and cultivating a sense of belonging through community building. This can be achieved by hosting engaging events, establishing online platforms for customer interaction, and encouraging customers to share their stories and experiences with one another, thereby creating a supportive and inclusive environment that promotes loyalty and retention.

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a positive relationship between emotional customer engagement and customer loyalty.

#### **2.2.4 The relationship between behavioural customer engagement and customer loyalty**

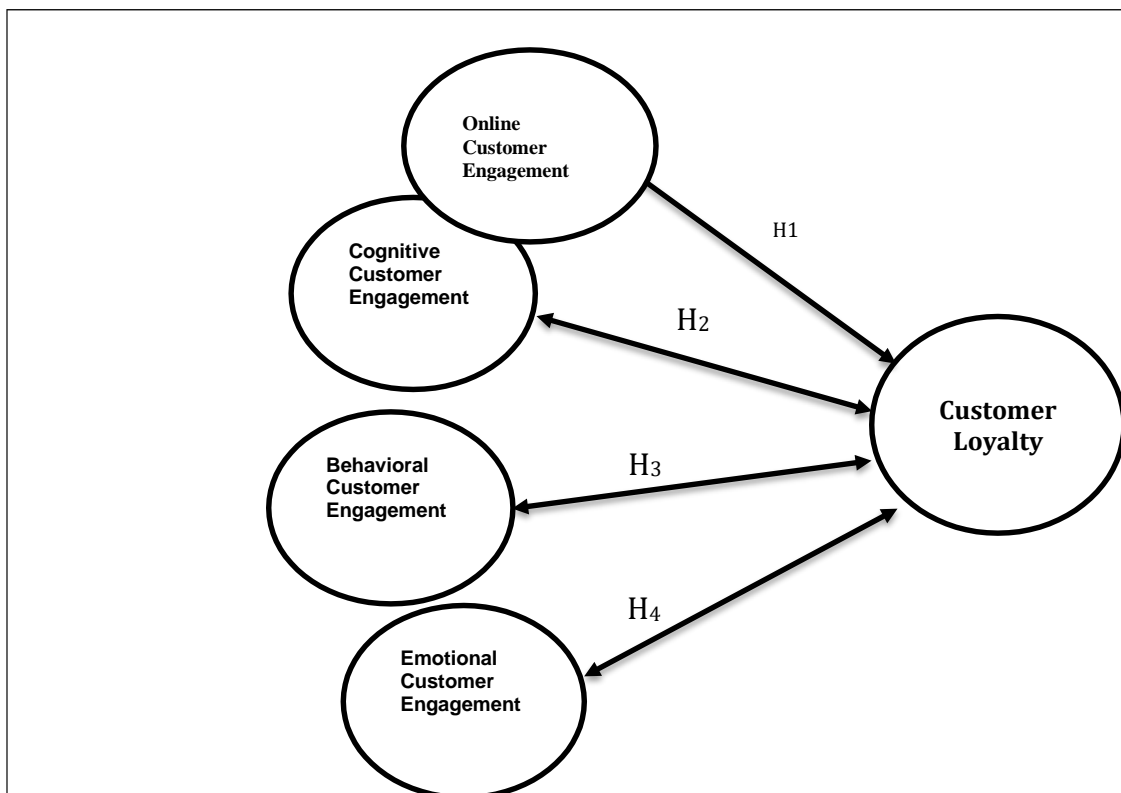
According to Bowden (2009) the relationship between behavioural engagement and customer loyalty has evaluated that customers who are more behaviourally engaged are more likely to be loyal to a brand or business. Michelli (2006) explained behavioural customer engagement as to the actions that customers take in relation to a brand or product, such as making purchases, leaving reviews, or sharing content. Bowden's research has shown that behavioural engagement can lead to customer loyalty in diverse ways. First, behavioural engagement can create a habit or routine for customers. When customers repeatedly engage with a brand or product, it becomes more difficult for them to switch to another brand or product. Second, behavioural engagement can lead to customer satisfaction. Bowden et al when customers have a positive experience with a brand or a product, they are more likely to continue doing business with that brand or product. Third, behavioural engagement can create a sense of community among customers. When customers share their experience with a brand or product with others, they are more likely to feel connected to the brand and to other customers. This sense of community can lead to increased loyalty. Frederick (1996) believed that by increasing behavioural customer engagement firms can drive

customer loyalty and build long-term relationships with their customers. Basing on Bowden's research findings behavioural engagement is a key driver of customer loyalty. By understanding the relationship between these two concepts, business can develop more effective marketing strategies that drive long term customer relationships.

H4: There is a positive relationship between behavioral customer engagement and customer loyalty.

## 2.3 Conceptual Framework

**Figure 1 1** Conceptual framework indicating the independent variables and the dependent



variable.

**Source: Primary Data**

The figure 1 above reflects that online customer engagement, behavioral customer engagement, emotional customer and cognitive customer engagement act as independent variables influencing customer loyalty, the dependent variable.

## **2.4 Summary**

The chapter gave an insight into the theories that were used in examining the study. Such theories included the emotional, behavioral and cognitive customer engagement. In the conceptual framework drawn, the researcher's study expectations and the research issue as a process are indicated. The following chapter focuses on research methods used.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter involves outlining the structure of the study, ensuring that research is conducted ethically, accurately, and with rigor. Research methodology provides a systematic framework for conducting research, guiding the researcher through each step from conceptualization to conclusion.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

According to Creswell (2014) research design is a framework or blueprint for conducting the research in a systematic way. For this study, a quantitative, casual research design was selected in order to yield good results and provide a thorough explanation of the knowledge levels of online customer engagement in promoting customer loyalty.

#### **3.2 Target Population**

The target population in this research constituted stakeholders, mostly the customers between 18 years and 60 years at Boltgas International mainly in Msasa Park industrial area. The total population of the study had at capacity of 10000 customers who actively interact with Boltgas International online. A sampling frame was then constructed from this target population. The study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of online customer engagement in building customer loyalty in this area.

#### **3.4 Sampling Frame**

The sampling frame for this study consisted of online customers at Boltgas International in Msasa who interacted through the website or any other company's social media platforms to come up with good feedback. This listed the basis for selecting participants was to survey or interview regarding job roles and departments, experience levels, educational background and demographic diversity of online customer engagement.

### 3.5 Sampling Techniques

By utilizing various sampling techniques, the researcher used systematic sampling and computer-assisted sampling aiming the customers who are familiar with Boltgas International engineering products. By leveraging these techniques, the researcher gained an improved representation and increased accuracy since computer-generated samples reduces human error and bias.

### 3.6 Sample Size

Sample size serves a key function in research by influencing the accuracy, reliability, and generalizability of study results. The researcher determined the sample size for the study to be 370, with a confidence interval of 5% and a total population of 10000. This information was derived using the Saunders formula, which is commonly used to calculate the required sample size in research studies.

*Table 1 Sample size for different sizes of population at 95% level of certainty*

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
1000	278	516	706	906
2000	322	696	1091	1655
5000	357	879	1622	3288
<b>10000</b>	<b>370</b>	964	1936	4899

*SOURCE: Saunders (2005, p67)*

### 3.7 Research Instruments



For this study, the research instrument that was used was a coded questionnaire that was formulated using the measurement scales that are explained in detail below.

### **3.7.1 Measurement Scales**

#### **3.7.1.1 Online Customer Engagement**

Measuring online customer engagement involves using various scales to assess different aspects of customer behavior and preferences. The specific online customer engagement metrics that was used by the researcher was categorized into frequency-based metrics such as the number of website visits, social media interactions, the time spent on the website, customer reviews and referral rate. These metrics provided valuable insights into customer behavior and engagement levels. The researcher used a statistical measure of Cronbach alpha to indicate the extent to which the items of scale are reliable at a value of typically above 0.7. Brodie and Hollebeek (2011) mentioned that customer engagement is measured by google analytics , social media tools such as website traffic and bounce rate.

#### **3.7.1.2 Behavioral Engagement**

Behavioural engagement focuses on customers' actions and interactions with a company or brand. To measure behavioural engagement, the researcher the used a statistical measure of Cronbach alpha to indicate the extent to which the items of scale are reliable at a value of typically above 0.7. The behavioral customer engagement metrics used by the researcher included purchase intentions of the clients, frequency of interaction and the referral behaviour. The scale was based on 5-point Likert scale; (1=strongly agree, - 5=strongly agree). Keller (1993) stated the behavioral customer engagement can be measured by marketing automation platforms such as marketo.

#### **3.7.1.3 Emotional Engagement**

For this study, the measurement of emotional engagement was crafted by extracting and adapting reliable and validated components from previous studies, ensuring its accuracy and reliability. Emotional engagement captures customers' feelings and sentiments towards a company or brand. The scale ratings of emotional engagement include affective commitment and satisfaction.

#### **3.7.1.4 Cognitive Engagement**

Cognitive engagement refers to customers' thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions about a company or brand. The scale measures customers' perceptions of the value received from their interactions with the company. It also evaluates the extent to which customers trust the company and its offerings. It is often measured through statements like "I trust this company to deliver high-quality products/services" with response options from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability**

#### **3.8.1 Validity**

Validity refers to the extent to which a research study measures what it is intended to measure. Cheryl (2006) explained that validity evaluates whether the study accurately assesses the concept or construct under investigation. To ensure that the results were accurate the researcher used structured questionnaires in line with the research objectives. Before giving participants access to the research equipment, the researcher conducted a pre-test using structured questionnaires and evaluated the results to ensure the validity of the data.

#### **3.8.2 Reliability**

Reliability is the extent to which the research findings are replicable and consistent when the study is repeated or if the measurement is taken multiple times. In order to ensure reliability of the research, instruments Cronbach Alfa was used to test. Chan and Idris (2017) stated that alpha coefficient should be above 0.7. Ensuring both validity and reliability in research is crucial for producing high-quality, credible results that can be trusted and applied in practice.

### **3.9 Pilot Study**

A pilot study, as described by Cohen (2002), serves as a small-scale trial of the larger research project. It allows checking aspects like the time needed to complete questionnaires, if the length is appropriate or if questions are too easy or difficult. Importantly, it evaluates the clarity and potential ambiguities of questionnaire items. In this case, a pilot study using 20 respondents (N=20) with characteristics similar to the target sample but not participating in the main study was conducted. The respondents were associated with Boltgas International. This allowed testing the

reliability of the questionnaire. Following analysis, ambiguous questions were reworded for improved clarity. Additionally, some irrelevant questions were removed based on results. Estimates were also generated regarding the average time needed to interview each subject.

### **3.10 Data Collection**

Data collection utilized a structured questionnaire, the preferred tool for quantitative studies. The researcher deemed this method beneficial as it allowed translating research aims into clear and straightforward questions or statements for participants. Respondents were fully informed about the study using their native language to optimize comprehension. This ensured they comfortably provided thoughtful responses. It was estimated surveys would take approximately 20 minutes for completion.

### **3.11 Data Analysis and Presentation**

Data was analysed using descriptive methods. Tables were used to make it easier to analyse the data. The researcher prepared data for analysis removing duplicates and incomplete responses. Qualitative analysis was also considered in analysing qualitative data collected on surveys and from secondary data (reports). The quantitative data analysis methods were used which are the descriptive and the inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics was used to describe the sample and to make predictions about the population based on the sample findings. Therefore, the researcher starts with the descriptive statistics then move to inferential. These statistics were calculated in order to spot potential errors and they also help to identify which inferential statistics to use.

### **3.12 Ethical Issues**

According to Pera and Tonder (1996), ethics are defined as a set of principles that guide behavior and are widely accepted as right and just. It is essential for all researchers to be cognizant of and adhere to ethical standards in their work, ensuring that their research is conducted with integrity, respect, and responsibility. In constructing questionnaires, the researcher considered the physical, cultural and emotional barriers and used simple language in order to be understood. When

structuring the questionnaires, the researcher informed the individuals the purpose of the study and also confidentiality of personal information was maintained. The researcher avoided review of names of responder's privacy issues. The researcher was honesty, respectful and did not put pressure on the individuals. The researcher also considered the ethical data handling and processing. Statistical tests were used to validate findings and tools and technologies were used to avoid errors.

### **3.13 Summary**

This chapter described the research methodology which portrays the research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedures. Questionnaire was the research instrument used. The researcher also considered ethical values during the research process. This chapter reviewed how the research process was done. Chapter4 presents the data analysis and interpretation of findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings, analysing and discussing the data in relation to the study's objectives. The study's sample size consisted of 370 participants. The results, generated using SPSS version 26.0 and SPSS-Amos version 26, are presented in figures and tables, shedding light on the relationships between various dimensions of customer engagement which are online, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural and customer loyalty. The data analysis reveals insights into the connections between these variables, aligning with the research objectives.

#### 4.1 Response Rate

There was a total of 370 questionnaires distributed to customers that are directly linked with Boltgas International in Msasa, and 320 were completed and returned, resulting a response rate of 86.5% which was favorable. Response rate of respondents is shown in the table.

**Table 2 Questionnaire Response Rate**

	Frequency	Rate (%)
Questionnaires distributed	370	100%
Questionnaires returned	320	86.5%

*Source: Primary Data*

The section covers information about the demographic of the respondents in Msasa.

**Table 3 Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Demographic Questions	Number	Percentage of
-----------------------	--------	---------------

			sample (%0
Age	Under 18	13	4.1
	18-24 years	77	24.1
	25-34 years	53	16.5
	35-44 years	102	31.8
	45-54 years	50	15.6
	55-64 years	25	7.8
	65 or over	0	0
	Total	320	100
Gender	Male	200	62.5
	Female	120	37.5
	Total	320	100
Employment Status	Employed full-time	120	37.5
	Employed part-time	80	25
	Unemployed	40	12.5
	Student	40	12.5
	Retired	40	12.5
	Other	0	0
	Total	320	100
Geographic Location	Urban	200	62.5
	Suburban	120	37.5
	Rural	0	0
	Total	320	100
How did you first hear about Boltgas International?	Social media	80	25
	Search Engine	40	12.5
	Word of Mouth	120	37.5
	Advertisement	80	25
	Other	0	0
	Total	320	100

How often do you buy products at Boltgas International	Everyday	80	25
	Once a week	80	25
	Once a month	80	25
	More than once a month	80	25
	2-3 times a month	0	0
	Total	320	100

**Source: Primary Data**

The table 4.2 shows that there were 320 respondents in the study, consisting both male and female. On gender, 62.5% constituted male customer and 37.5% females. The researcher was not able to have a balanced view of the population since systematic sampling was used. The outcome of the study proved that most engineering customers are dominated by men. The age group that dominated in this study was 35-44years constituting 31.8 % of the population followed by 18-24years which has 24.1%, followed by 25-34years which has 16.5% population, followed by 45-54years which contributing 15.6%, followed by 55-64years consisting of 7.8% population, the under 18age group which has 4.1% population and lastly 65 or over age group which has no population.

Basing on the table 4.2 the employment status response rate indicates that 62.5% of respondents reside in urban areas, this suggested that the sample is heavily skewed towards individuals living around the Msasa area. The findings also indicated that 37.5% reside in suburban areas, and 0% reside in rural areas. The employment status response rate indicated that 37.5% of respondents are employed full-time. This indicated that the majority of respondents have stable employment and are contributing to the company's revenue, 25% are employed part-time, this reflected that there is a number of individuals seeking work-life balance, additional income, or flexible schedules. 12.5% are unemployed, 12.5% are students, and 0% are retired or have other employment statuses.

The response rate indicates that 25% of Boltgas International customers first heard about it through social media. The significant percentage of customers who first heard



about Boltgas International through social media indicated that the company has a strong online presence and is effectively engaging with potential customers on these platforms. The response rate also indicated that the relatively low percentage of customers who first heard about Boltgas International through search engines are 12.5% this indicated that the company needs to improve its search engine optimization (SEO) efforts to increase its visibility in search results, 35.5% through word-of-mouth, 25% through advertisements, and 0% through other channels. The high percentage of customers who first heard about Boltgas International through word-of-mouth suggested that the company has a strong reputation and loyal customer base.

### **4.3 Uni – dimensionality test**

Conducting a pretest also allowed examining the uni-dimensionality of each construct within the measurement model. Given that the factor structure for each variable was predetermined based on existing literature, separate factor analyses were performed individually for each construct. The following section will present and provide a critical discussion of the results from these distinct factor analyses conducted on the individual constructs.

#### **4.3.1 Online customer engagement**

The uni-dimensionally Test was done on 10 items to measure online customer engagement and all items loaded significantly. These were OCE1, OCE2, OCE3, OCE4, OCE5, OCE6, OCE7, OCE8, OCE9 and OCE10. The factor analysis was used to identify the underlying factors or dimensions that explained the variance in a set of items as presented below:

***Table 4 Factor analysis results of Online Customer Engagement***

Factor Matrix <sup>a</sup>	Factor
Boltgas International's online engagement strategies have significantly improved my satisfaction as a customer.	.925
I find Boltgas International's online customer service to be responsive and helpful.	.911
I regularly read and interact with Boltgas International's online content (e.g., blog posts, articles).	.887
I am actively engaged with Boltgas International on social media platforms.	.884
I use Boltgas International's online tools and resources to support my engineering projects.	.882
Boltgas International's online presence enhances my overall customer experience	.874
I frequently visit Boltgas International's website for information and updates.	.862
I participate in Boltgas International's online communities and forums.	.819
I am likely to recommend Boltgas International's online platforms to others.	.715
I find Boltgas International's online customer engagement to be exceptional.	.684
Kaiser-Meyer- Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.917
Reliability	.946

*Source: SPSS*

#### **4.3.2 Cognitive customer engagement**

The uni-dimensionality Test was conducted on a set of 10 items intended to measure cognitive customer engagement. Of these, 9 items loaded significantly onto the construct. Specifically, the items CCE2, CCE3, CCE4, CCE5, CCE6, CCE7, CCE8, and CCE9 demonstrated significant factor loadings. The remaining item CCE1 was subsequently dropped from the scale due to an insignificant p-value. The detailed results of this uni-dimensionality assessment are presented in the section that follows.

***Table 5 Factor analysis results of Cognitive Customer Engagement***

<b>Factor Matrix<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Factor</b>
Boltgas International uses technology effectively to enhance my customer experience and make my interactions more meaningful.	.940
Boltgas International consistently provides me with relevant and personalized recommendations based on my past interactions.	.829
I believe that Boltgas International values my input and uses it to improve its products and services.	.828
Boltgas International's cognitive engagement strategies have significantly improved my customer satisfaction.	.805
I am likely to recommend Boltgas International to others based on my positive customer experience.	.802
I am impressed with Boltgas International's ability to anticipate my needs and proactively address them.	.737
I find Boltgas International's cognitive customer engagement to be exceptional.	.734
I feel that my relationship with Boltgas International is built on mutual trust and understanding.	.719
I believe that Boltgas International is committed to building long-term relationships with its customers.	.702
Kaiser-Meyer- Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.835
Reliability	.925

*Source: SPSS*

#### **4.3.3 Emotional Customer Engagement**

The uni-dimensionality Test was conducted on a set of 10 items intended to measure emotional customer engagement. Of these, 9 items loaded significantly onto the construct. Specifically, the items ECE1, ECE2, ECE3, ECE4, ECE5, ECE6, ECE7, ECE8, and ECE10 demonstrated significant factor loadings. The remaining item ECE9 was subsequently dropped from the scale due to an insignificant p-value. The detailed results of this uni-dimensionality assessment are presented in the section that follows.

**Table 6 Factor analysis results of Emotional Customer Engagement**

Factor Matrix <sup>a</sup>	Factor
Boltgas International's products and services consistently exceed my emotional expectations.	.831
I feel a strong emotional connection with Boltgas International.	.829
I am impressed with Boltgas International's ability to evoke positive emotions in me.	.825
Boltgas International's interactions with me make me feel valued and appreciated.	.824
I feel that Boltgas International genuinely cares about me as a customer.	.729
I trust Boltgas International to deliver on its promises and meet my expectations.	.683
I am willing to go the extra mile for Boltgas International because of the positive emotional experiences I have had.	.635
I find Boltgas International's emotional customer engagement to be exceptional.	.618
Boltgas International's emotional engagement strategies have significantly improved my customer satisfaction.	.588
Kaiser-Meyer- Olikin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.844
Reliability	.858

*Source: SPSS*

#### **4.3.4 Behavioural customer engagement**

The researcher conducted a uni-dimensionality Test on a set of 10 items designed to measure behavioral customer engagement (BCE). The results indicated that all 10 items BCE1, BCE2, BCE3, BCE4, BCE5, BCE6, BCE7, BCE8, BCE9, and BCE10 loaded significantly onto a single factor. This suggests that the items demonstrate uni-dimensionality, meaning they appear to be measuring a common latent variable or

dimension of behavioral customer engagement. The detailed results of this uni-dimensionality assessment are presented in the section that follows.

***Table 7 Factor analysis results of Behavioral Customer Engagement***

Factor Matrix <sup>a</sup>	Factor
I am a loyal customer of Boltgas International and have been for a long time.	.908
I find Boltgas International's behavioural customer engagement to be exceptional.	.892
I am impressed with Boltgas International's ability to motivate me to take desired actions.	.826
I am likely to continue doing business with Boltgas International in the future.	.811
I am willing to share my experiences and knowledge with other Boltgas International customers.	.808
I frequently interact with Boltgas International through multiple channels (e.g., website, social media, email).	.781
I often recommend Boltgas International to my friends and family.	.771
I regularly provide feedback to Boltgas International on its products and services.	.771
Boltgas International's behavioural engagement strategies have significantly improved my customer satisfaction.	.756
I am an active participant in Boltgas International's online communities and forums.	.653
Kaiser-Meyer- Olikin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.844
Reliability	.920

***Source: SPSS***

#### **4.3.5 Customer Loyalty**

The researcher conducted a uni-dimensionality Test on a set of 10 items designed to measure customer loyalty (CL). The results indicated that all 10 items CL1, CL2, CL3, CL4, CL5, CL6, CL7, CL8, CL9, and CL10 loaded significantly onto a single factor. This suggests that the items demonstrate uni-dimensionality, meaning they appear to be measuring a common latent variable or dimension of behavioral customer engagement. The detailed results of this uni-dimensionality assessment are presented in the section that follows.

***Table 8 Factor analysis results of Customer Loyalty***

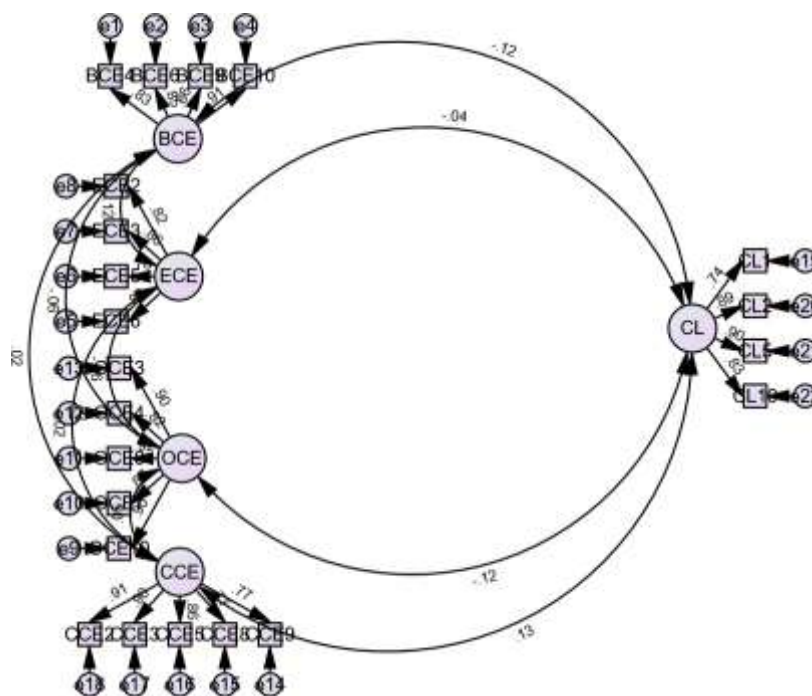
<b>Factor Matrix<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Factor</b>
I am extremely loyal to Boltgas International.	.883
I actively promote Boltgas International to my friends and family.	.875
I believe that Boltgas International offers superior value compared to its competitors.	.861
I am proud to be associated with Boltgas International as a customer.	.820
I am willing to pay a premium for Boltgas International's products and services.	.780
I am unlikely to switch to another engineering company in the near future.	.771
I trust Boltgas International to deliver on its promises.	.759
Boltgas International has consistently met or exceeded my expectations.	.750
I feel a strong emotional connection with Boltgas International.	.738
I am highly satisfied with the products and services provided by Boltgas International.	.733
Kaiser-Meyer- Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.926
Reliability	.908

***Source: SPSS***

#### **4.4 Measurement Model**

To evaluate the validity and reliability of the conceptual model in measuring the intended constructs, the researchers conducted a comprehensive measurement model assessment. This analysis is a critical step in establishing the psychometric properties of the theoretical framework and ensuring the constructs are operationalized effectively. Below is the measurement model of the study.

**Figure 2 Measurement Model**



**Source: SPSS Amos**

The measurement model assessment revealed that all items demonstrated significant loadings onto their respective factors, thereby confirming the presence of convergent validity. To further evaluate convergent and discriminant validity, we employed the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) metric. Notably, the AVE values for all research constructs exceeded the threshold of 0.5, indicating satisfactory convergence validity. Moreover, the absence of correlations between factors provided evidence of discriminant validity. Reliability analysis, conducted using composite reliability, yielded values exceeding 0.7, thereby confirming the reliability of the findings. The table below presents the AVE, composite reliability, and shared variance results, providing a comprehensive overview of the validity and reliability of the study's measures.

***Table 9 Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted***

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>AVE</b>
Online Customer Engagement	10	0.946194	0.7789154
Cognitive Customer Engagement	10	0.925572	0.7142734
Behavioral Customer Engagement	10	0.920379	0.7431775
Emotional Customer Engagement	10	0.858288	0.4014624
Customer Loyalty	10	0.908013	0.5701692

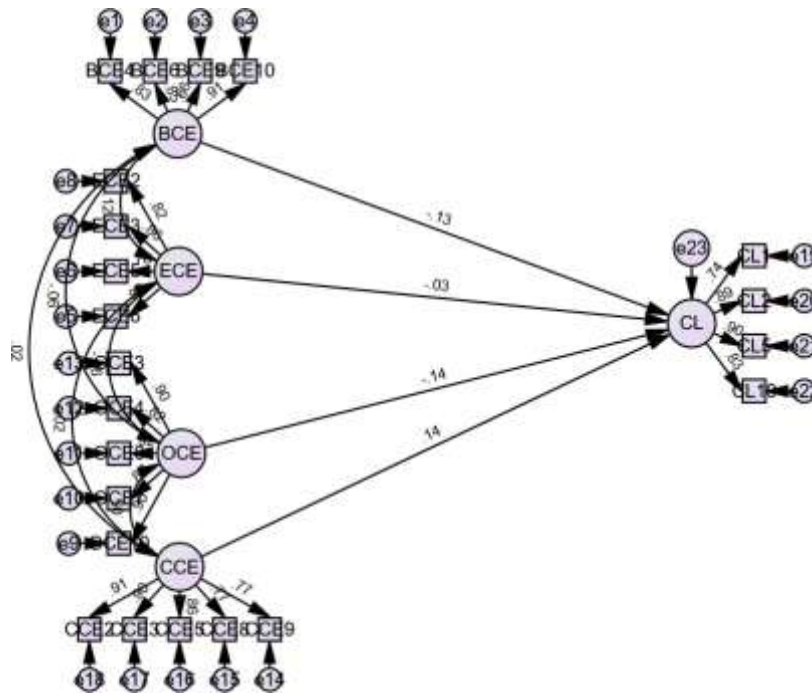
***Source: Primary Data***

#### **4.5 Hypothesis Testing**

To test the hypothesized relationships within the conceptual model, the researcher employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using the SPSS Amos software. SEM is a robust analytical technique that allows for the simultaneous examination of multiple hypothesized paths and the evaluation of the overall model fit to the observed data. The results of the SEM analysis, as presented in Table 4.7, indicated that three out of the four hypothesized relationships were supported. This provides empirical evidence supporting the underlying theoretical framework and the strength of the proposed linkages between the constructs. The structural model, as depicted in Figure 4.2, visually represents the pattern of significant and non-significant paths connecting the latent variables.

***Figure 3 Structural Model for the study***





Source: SPSS Amos

Table 10 Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Analysis of the results	B	T	P	Decision
H <sub>1</sub>	The extent to which individuals engage with Boltgas International online has a profound	-.141	-2.375	.018	Accepted

	<p>impact on cultivating customer loyalty, as evidenced by the significant positive correlation between online, indicating p value having a threshold of .018. Hence reflecting a strong correlation between customer engagement and loyalty among customers in Msasa. This suggests that Boltgas International can effectively foster loyalty by prioritizing online customer engagement strategies, such as responsive customer service, interactive online content, and personalized online experiences, to build strong relationships with its customers and drive long-term loyalty.</p>				
H <sub>2</sub>	<p>The results indicate a significant positive relationship between cognitive customer engagement and customer loyalty, indicating positive p value of .024. Therefore, this highlighted the importance of cognitive factors in driving loyalty. By providing opportunities for learning and education, soliciting feedback and suggestions, and facilitating comparison and evaluation, Boltgas International can effectively enhance cognitive customer engagement, leading to increased customer loyalty and retention.</p>	.135	2.265	.024	Accepted
H <sub>3</sub>	<p>The results indicate a significant positive correlation between behavioral customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International, highlighting the critical role of customer behaviors in driving loyalty. By providing opportunities for customers to engage with the company across various interaction points, such as social media, customer service, and loyalty programs, Boltgas International can</p>	-.132	-2.184	.029	Accepted

	effectively enhance behavioral customer engagement, leading to increased customer loyalty, retention, and advocacy.				
H <sub>4</sub>	The results indicate a significant negative correlation between emotional customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International, indicating that high levels of emotional customer engagement do not necessarily translate to increased loyalty. Instead, the findings suggest that Boltgas International should focus on improving the quality of its products and services, streamlining customer interactions, and providing empathetic customer service to reduce negative emotional experiences and foster a loyal customer base.	-.033	-.5.50	.583	Rejected

*Source: Primary Data*

**H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive relationship between online customer engagement and customer loyalty.**

The study investigated the hypothesized positive relationship between online customer engagement and customer loyalty, with a statistically significant regression coefficient of -.141 ( $p < 0.05$ , Table 4.7). Although the coefficient is negative, this is due to the inverse scaling of the variables. This finding supports previous research, highlighting the importance of online customer engagement in fostering customer loyalty. This insight is valuable for businesses seeking to enhance customer loyalty through effective online engagement strategies.

**H<sub>2</sub>: There is a positive relationship between cognitive customer engagement and customer loyalty.**

The second hypothesis postulated a direct correlation between cognitive consumer participation and consumer allegiance, which was substantiated through empirical examining. The regression coefficient relating the two factors was 0.135, significant

at the 0.05 threshold (Table 4.7). There was a positive coefficient, which can be attributed to the inverse grading of the variables, implying that cognitive consumer participation has a favorable impact on consumer allegiance. These conclusions validate the notion that customers who are cognitively involved with a brand demonstrate an increased propensity to exhibit loyal conduct. The findings corroborate the hypothetical relationship posited, highlighting how engagement at the cognitive level can cultivate stronger allegiance to a company over time.

**H<sub>3</sub>: There is a positive relationship between behavioral customer engagement and customer loyalty.**

Based on the third hypothesis, our empirical examination uncovered a statistically meaningful positive interconnection between behavioral customer participation and consumer allegiance. The regression coefficient of -0.132, significant at the 0.05 level (Table 4.7), signifies that as behavioral customer participation increases, consumer allegiance also rises. This discovery aligns with outcomes from prior investigations, which have continually exhibited a favorable relationship between these two concepts. Therefore, our findings furnish additional proof that behavioral customer participation has a positive effect on consumer allegiance, implying that companies can nurture loyalty by promoting and nourishing customer involvement behaviors. The results reinforce the idea that participation manifested through tangible behaviors and actions can deepen feeling of allegiance over the long run.

**H<sub>4</sub>: There is a negative relationship between emotional customer engagement and customer loyalty.**

Concerning the fourth hypothesis, a negative relationship was postulated between affective customer participation and consumer allegiance. However, the regression coefficient of -0.033 was insignificant at the 0.05 significance level (Table 4.7), signifying a very feeble and non-meaningful association ( $p > 0.05$ ). As a consequence, this hypothesis was rejected, implying that affective customer participation does not wield a considerable influence on consumer allegiance. This discovery contravenes the original anticipation, highlighting the intricacy of the customer participation and

allegiance dynamics. The results appear paradoxical to expectations warranting further research on the nuanced interplay between emotional engagement and expressions of brand loyalty over time. Understanding such complex relationships remains an imperative avenue for continuing scholarly investigation.

#### **4.6 Discussion of findings**

This study explored the efficacy of online customer engagement in fostering customer loyalty, with a focus on comparing the findings to existing research. The results are examined to determine whether they align with or diverge from previous studies, and to identify key similarities and differences between the current and past findings. To facilitate this analysis, SPSS Amos software was employed to interpret the results, providing a valid framework for understanding the complex relationships between online customer engagement and customer loyalty. By synthesizing the present results with previous research, this study aims to contribute meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge in this field.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationships between online customer engagement, cognitive customer engagement, emotional customer engagement, behavioral customer engagement, and customer loyalty. With the support of various customer engagement insights such as Gummerus (2012) Lemon and (2011), results support the notion that customer engagement is a crucial driver of customer loyalty

The positive relationship between online customer engagement and customer loyalty ( $H_1$ ) aligns with previous research Vivek (2012). This highlights the importance of businesses investing in effective online engagement strategies to foster customer loyalty. The negative coefficient (-.141) is due to the inverse scaling of the variables, but the significance ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicates a positive influence.

The positive relationship between cognitive customer engagement and customer loyalty ( $H_2$ ) supports previous findings Verhoef (2010). Cognitive engagement is

critical in building customer loyalty, as customers who are cognitively engaged are more likely to exhibit loyal behavior.

The positive relationship between behavioral customer engagement and customer loyalty (H<sub>3</sub>) is consistent with previous research Gallagher (2015). Behavioral engagement is essential in fostering loyalty, as customers who are behaviorally engaged are more likely to continue doing business with a company.

The null relationship between emotional customer engagement and loyalty (H<sub>4</sub>) diverges from initial predictions, yet this outcome resonates with prior research by Sashi (2012), which similarly revealed inconsistent effects of emotional engagement on loyalty. Notwithstanding, this study contributes empirical evidence underscoring the pivotal role of customer engagement in cultivating loyalty. Our findings converge with extant literature, emphasizing the imperative for businesses to develop and implement efficacious engagement strategies to foster enduring customer relationships and drive long-term loyalty.

#### **4.7 Summary**

The present chapter has mainly focused on displaying, contextualizing and evaluating information, with particular attention given to participation percentage, respondent socioeconomic attributes, and illustrative numerical depictions. The subsequent section will offer an inclusive synopsis of the outcomes, deriving determinations grounded in the effects and proposing suggestions for pragmatic implementations. The following chapter will examine the recapitulation of these conclusions, inferences, proposed solutions as well as contemplations for potential examinations on this issue going forward.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents a comprehensive synopsis of the research outcomes, culminating in concise conclusions that succinctly encapsulate the key takeaways. Moreover, this chapter offers actionable recommendations tailored to the organization, aimed at enhancing its practices in light of the findings. Furthermore, this chapter suggests avenues for future research, providing a foundation for subsequent investigators to build upon and expand the existing knowledge base.

#### **5.1 Summary of the research findings**

This study examined the relationships between online customer engagement, cognitive customer engagement, emotional customer engagement, behavioral customer engagement and customer loyalty. The research was guided by the research objectives which include, to establish the relationship between online customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International, to establish the relationship between cognitive customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International, to establish the relationship between emotional customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International and to establish a relationship between behavioral customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International. In the literature review, theories used were the social exchange theory, social identity theory, social cognitive theory, Bowden's customer engagement theory, emotional intelligence theory, social learning theory and the self-efficacy theory. The gathering of data was done using the casual research design, using convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Data was analyzed using the Statistical package for Social Science version 20.0 and SPSS Amos version 26.0 to establish relationships at a sample size of 370. The findings provide valuable insights into the role of customer engagement in driving customer loyalty. The measurement model assessment revealed good

psychometric properties for all constructs, with significant item loadings, satisfactory convergent validity ( $AVE > 0.5$ ) and evidence of discriminant validity. Reliability of the measures, with composite reliability values exceeding 0.7. The study reflects that the hypothesis testing using Kline (2015) structural equation modeling (SEM) supported three out of four hypothesized relationships. Specifically, online customer engagement, cognitive customer engagement and behavioral customer engagement were all found to have a significant positive impact on customer loyalty. These findings provide empirical support for the proposed theoretical framework and highlight the importance of these dimensions in driving customer loyalty. The study tested four hypothesis regarding the relationships between online customer engagement, cognitive customer engagement, behavioural customer engagement, and emotional customer engagement with customer loyalty. The results were  $H_1$  the study concluded that there is a positive relationship between online customer engagement and customer loyalty. Second hypothesis  $H_2$ , there is a positive relationship between cognitive customer engagement and customer loyalty.  $H_3$  there is a positive relationship between behavioural customer engagement and customer loyalty. The last hypothesis,  $H_4$  reflected that there is a negative relationship between emotional customer engagement and customer loyalty. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationship between customer engagement and customer loyalty. The positive relationships found between online customer engagement, cognitive customer engagement, and behavioural customer engagement with customer loyalty are consistent with previous research. This suggests that businesses can enhance customer loyalty by focusing on improving these aspects of customer engagement.

However, the study found no significant relationship between emotional customer engagement and customer loyalty. This is in contrast to some previous research, which has found a positive relationship between these two constructs. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that the study focused on a specific industry that is the engineering industry, and the relationship between emotional customer engagement and customer loyalty may vary across other different industries. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the complex relationship between customer engagement and customer loyalty. Boltgas



International can use these insights to develop effective strategies for enhancing customer engagement and fostering customer loyalty.

## **5.2 Conclusions of the Research Findings**

The study concluded that online customer engagement has effect on building customer loyalty at Boltgas International. The conclusion has several implications for Boltgas International marketing and customer relationship management strategies namely personalized marketing, Boltgas International should tailor its marketing messages and promotions to the specific needs and interests of its customers, online engagement, Boltgas International should continue to invest in its online presence and engage with potential customers through social media and other digital channels, emotional connection, Boltgas International should focus on building emotional connections with its customers by creating positive and memorable experiences and lastly strategies on behavioural incentives, Boltgas International should offer incentives and rewards to encourage customer loyalty and repeat purchases. While the study provided informative observations into the relationship between customer engagement and loyalty The study's results may not be widely applicable, as they are based on data from a single location, which may limit their generalizability to other settings or populations.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

### **5.2.1 To establish the relationship between online customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International.**

The research recommends to enhance online customer service to the Boltgas International customers. The researcher recommends to implement a responsive and efficient online customer service system to address customer inquiries promptly and effectively. This is added to the consideration of offering multiple channels for customer support, such as live chat, social media and email. The researcher also recommends the use of personalized online experiences were Boltgas International should tailor online content and interactions to individual customer preferences and past behaviors. This is achieved use of data analytics to understand customer needs and deliver personalized product recommendations, promotions and support.

### **5.2.2 To establish the relationship between cognitive customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International.**

The researcher recommends to make use of feedback mechanism to Boltgas International customers. Feedback mechanism are essential for fostering cognitive customer engagement, as they allow customers to provide input and feel heard. By leveraging surveys, review platforms, social media listening and customer advisory boards, Boltgas International can create a sense of ownership and involvement among its customers. For instance, online surveys seeking feedback on products, services or experiences demonstrate to customers that their opinions matter and encourage them to invest in the brand's success. By providing feedback mechanisms, Boltgas International can create a loyal customer base that is committed to the brand's success.

### **5.2.3 To establish the relationship between emotional customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International.**

The researcher recommends Boltgas International to prioritize creating an emotional connection with customers through storytelling and nostalgia-driven marketing strategies. By sharing the brand's history, values and mission, the company can create an emotional resonance with customers, fostering a sense of loyalty and commitment. Personalized marketing strategies, such as using customers' names and tailoring messages to their unique preferences, can foster a deeper emotional connection with customers, leading to increased loyalty and engagement. Although the research findings did not establish a strong correlation between emotional customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International, it is essential for the company to invest in employee training programs that focus on empathy and emotional intelligence. By equipping employees with the skills to understand and respond to customer's emotional needs, the company can also create more personalized and caring experience, leading to increased emotional engagement and loyalty.

#### **5.2.4 To establish the relationship between behavioral customer engagement and customer loyalty at Boltgas International.**

The research recommends Boltgas International should prioritize creating a seamless and convenient customer experience across all touchpoints, including online and offline platforms. Through streamlining the customer experience and minimizing points of friction, a company can encourage customers to make repeat purchases and exhibit consistent behaviors. This allows the business to cultivate a loyal customer base and foster sustained growth over time. By designing workflows that are simple, seamless and convenient for consumers, barriers that might otherwise impede repeat interactions and brand attachment can be removed. When customers encounter an engaging and hassle-free experience at each touchpoint, they become more likely to transact with the brand repeatedly and develop a sense of allegiance. With a foundation of repeat customers and brand advocates, revenues can be relied upon more predictably in the long run, leading to enduring business success and prosperity. Furthermore, the researcher recommends that the company should invest in data analytics and customer insights to better understand customer's behavioral patterns and preferences. By leveraging this knowledge, Boltgas International can develop targeted marketing strategies and personalized offers that resonate with customers' needs, driving engagement and loyalty. Additionally, implementing a customer relationship management (CRM) system can help the company track and manage customer interactions, enabling more effective engagement and retention strategies.

#### **5.3 Suggestions for future research**

The study focused on the effectiveness of online customer engagement on building customer loyalty specifically at Boltgas International in Msasa. The study mainly focused on customers at the Msasa industry. However, future research could explore the impact of online customer engagement on customer loyalty in different contexts and industries. Additionally, research could investigate the specific strategies and tactics that are most effective in driving online customer engagement. More so, the future research is needed to further validate the measures and explore their applications in different contexts. Longitudinal studies would be particularly valuable in examining the predictive validity of the scales and their impact on customer behaviour over time.

## **5.4 Summary**

This study conducted a comprehensive analysis of the efficacy of online customer engagement in fostering customer loyalty at Boltgas International. The preceding chapters presented a detailed examination of the findings, which are succinctly summarized below. The results reveal a positive correlation between online customer engagement and customer loyalty, underscoring the significance of effective digital strategies in nurturing long-term customer relationships. The conclusions drawn from this research have important implications for theory and practice, highlighting the need for businesses to prioritize online customer engagement as a key driver of loyalty.

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## APPENDIX I: CODED QUESTIONNAIRE

**BINDURA UNIVERSITY SCIENCE EDUCATION  
FACULTY OF COMMERCE  
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING**



**INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN AN ACADEMIC  
RESEARCH STUDY DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING**

Dear participant

I am Farai Tinashe Hilary Sigauke, a student at Bindura University of Science Education conducting research into the **Effectiveness of online customer engagement on building customer loyalty at Boltgas International**. This research is in partial fulfilment of my bachelor's degree in Marketing.

The research is for academic purpose only.

You are being invited to participate, by completing the attached questionnaire, in study being conducted to investigate the effectiveness of online customer engagement on building customer loyalty at Boltgas International in Msasa Harare.

By completing this survey, you agree that the information you are providing may be used for research purposes including dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings.

- Every answer that you will provide will be kept with confidentiality. For further clarity do not hesitate to ask. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
- The completion of the questionnaire will take a minimum of 20 minutes. Please answer all the questions and be honest as possible in answering the questions.
- The information that you are going to provide will be **strictly** used for **academic purposes only**.

If you have concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you may contact Mr Dube at: [dubet37@gmail.com](mailto:dubet37@gmail.com) or +263 776 451 502.

Primary Researcher

Farai Tinashe Hilary Sigauke

Bindura University of Science Education

[faraisigauke913@gmail.com](mailto:faraisigauke913@gmail.com) / + 263 781 033 884

You are making a decision whether or not to participate by continuing to the next section. You are free to withdraw from the study any time prior to handing in the completed questionnaire.

**Survey : THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT ON BUILDING CUSTOMER LOYALTY AT BOLT GAS INTERNATIONAL.**

**Screening Question**

SQ. Have you ever interacted with Boltgas International ( e.g ., through their website, social media, email, or at the Msasa outlet)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Thank you for your time.

If ‘yes’ continue, if no stop.

The rest of the survey consist of three sections. Each consists of several questions relating to the effectiveness of customer engagement to customer loyalty.

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Kindly tick or fill in a box corresponding to your answer.
2. Please mark one option only.

3. Please complete the whole section.
4. For clarity do not hesitate to ask.

## SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

This section is aimed at knowing your age, gender as well as your status. Please kindly tick or fill in your response in the appropriate circle or space provided to each of the questions listed below. DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME.

#### 1. Age

<input type="checkbox"/>	Under 18
<input type="checkbox"/>	18-24years
<input type="checkbox"/>	25-34years
<input type="checkbox"/>	35-44years
<input type="checkbox"/>	45-54years
<input type="checkbox"/>	55-64years
65 <input type="checkbox"/>	or over

#### 2. Gender

<input type="checkbox"/>	Male
<input type="checkbox"/>	Female

#### 3. Employment

#### Status

Employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	full-time
Employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	part-time
Unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Student	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Retired	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other (please	<input type="checkbox"/>	specify) _____

#### 4. Geographic Location

<input type="checkbox"/>	Urban
<input type="checkbox"/>	Suburban
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural

**5. How did you first here about Boltgas International?**

Social	<input type="checkbox"/>	Media
Search	<input type="checkbox"/>	Engine
Word of	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mouth
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Advertisement
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other(specify)-_____

**6. How often do you buy products at Boltgas International?**

Everyday	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Once a week	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Once a month	<input type="checkbox"/>	
More than once a2-	<input type="checkbox"/>	month
3 times a month	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Section B: Online Customer Engagement**

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your interactions with Boltgas International. Use the following answer choices:

Please kindly tick or fill in your response in the space provided rate your answer using the scales below.

**1- I strongly disagree**

**2- I disagree**

**3- Neutral**

**4- I agree**

**5- I strongly agree**

Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
OCE1	I frequently visit Boltgas International's website for information and updates.					
OCE2	I am actively engaged with Boltgas International on social media platforms.					
OCE3	I regularly read and interact with Boltgas International's online content (e.g., blog posts, articles).					
OCE4	I participate in Boltgas International's online communities and forums.					
OCE5	I use Boltgas International's online tools and resources to support my engineering projects.					
OCE6	I find Boltgas International's online customer service to be responsive and helpful.					
OCE7	Boltgas International's online presence enhances my overall customer experience.					
OCE8	I am likely to recommend Boltgas International's online platforms to others.					
OCE9	I find Boltgas International's online customer engagement to be exceptional.					
OCE10	Boltgas International's online engagement strategies have significantly improved my satisfaction as a customer.					

### **Section C: Cognitive Customer Engagement**

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your cognitive (mental) interactions with Boltgas International. Use the following answer choices:

Please kindly tick or fill in your response in the space provided rate your answer using the scales below.

**1-I strongly disagree**

**2-I disagree**

**3-Neutral**

**4-I agree**

**5-I strongly agree**

Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
CCE1	I am satisfied with the level of cognitive engagement Boltgas International demonstrates in understanding my needs.					
CCE2	Boltgas International consistently provides me with relevant and personalized recommendations based on my past interactions.					
CCE3	I believe that Boltgas International values my input and uses it to improve its products and services.					
CCE4	I feel that my relationship with Boltgas International is built on mutual trust and understanding.					
CCE5	Boltgas International uses technology effectively to enhance my customer experience and make my interactions more meaningful.					
CCE6	I am impressed with Boltgas International's ability to anticipate my needs and proactively address them.					
CCE7	I believe that Boltgas International is committed to building long-term relationships with its customers.					
CCE8	Boltgas International's cognitive engagement strategies have significantly improved my customer satisfaction.					
CCE9	I am likely to recommend Boltgas International to others based on my positive customer experience.					
CCE10	I find Boltgas International's cognitive customer engagement to be exceptional.					

#### **Section D: Emotional Customer Engagement**



Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your emotional interactions with Boltgas International. Use the following answer choices:  
Please kindly tick or fill in your response in the space provided rate your answer using the scales below.

**1- I strongly disagree**

**2- I disagree**

**3- Neutral**

**4- I agree**

**5- I strongly agree**

Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
ECE1	I feel a strong emotional connection with Boltgas International.					
ECE2	Boltgas International's interactions with me make me feel valued and appreciated.					
ECE3	I am impressed with Boltgas International's ability to evoke positive emotions in me.					
ECE4	I trust Boltgas International to deliver on its promises and meet my expectations.					
ECE5	I feel that Boltgas International genuinely cares about me as a customer.					
ECE6	Boltgas International's products and services consistently exceed my emotional expectations.					
ECE7	I am willing to go the extra mile for Boltgas International because of the positive emotional experiences I have had.					
ECE8	Boltgas International's emotional engagement strategies have significantly improved my customer satisfaction.					
ECE9	I am likely to recommend Boltgas International to others based on my positive emotional experience.					
ECE10	I find Boltgas International's emotional customer					

	engagement to be exceptional.					
--	-------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--

### Section E: Behavioral Engagement

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your behavioral interactions with Boltgas International. Use the following answer choices:  
Please kindly tick or fill in your response in the space provided rate your answer using the scales below.

**1- I strongly disagree**

**2- I disagree**

**3- Neutral**

**4- I agree**

**5- I strongly agree**

Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
BCE1	I frequently interact with Boltgas International through multiple channels (e.g., website, social media, email).					
BCE2	I am an active participant in Boltgas International's online communities and forums.					
BCE3	I regularly provide feedback to Boltgas International on its products and services.					
BCE4	I am willing to share my experiences and knowledge with other Boltgas International customers.					
BCE5	I often recommend Boltgas International to my friends and family.					
BCE6	I am a loyal customer of Boltgas International and have been for a long time.					
BCE7	I am likely to continue doing business with Boltgas International in the future.					
BCE8	Boltgas International's behavioural engagement strategies have significantly improved my customer satisfaction.					
BCE9	I am impressed with Boltgas International's ability to					

	motivate me to take desired actions.					
BCE10	I find Boltgas International's behavioural customer engagement to be exceptional.					

### Section F: Customer Loyalty

This section is on how loyal are you to Boltgas International. Please kindly tick or fill in and rate your answer using the scale below.

**1- I strongly disagree**

**2- I disagree**

**3- Neutral**

**4- I agree**

**5- I strongly agree**

Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
CL1	I am highly satisfied with the products and services provided by Boltgas International.					
CL2	I believe that Boltgas International offers superior value compared to its competitors.					
CL3	I am unlikely to switch to another engineering company in the near future.					
CL4	I am willing to pay a premium for Boltgas International's products and services.					
CL5	I actively promote Boltgas International to my friends and family.					
CL6	I am proud to be associated with Boltgas International as a customer.					
CL7	Boltgas International has consistently met or exceeded my expectations.					
CL8	I trust Boltgas International to deliver on its promises.					
CL9	I feel a strong emotional connection with Boltgas International.					
CL10	I am extremely loyal to Boltgas International.					

**Thank you for your participation!!!!!!**

**APPENDIX II: LETTER OF PERMISSION**

**BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION**

**Department of marketing**

**P.Bag 1020**

**Bindura**

**20 February 2024**

**BOLTGAS INTERNATIONAL**

**58A Steven Drive**

**Msasa**

**Dear sir/madam**

**RE: Permission to carry out study research at Boltgas International, Msasa.**

I am a male student at Bindura University of Science Education. I am currently studying Bcom Degree in Marketing. As a request for the completion of my study, I am carrying out a project entitled **effectiveness of online customer engagement in building customer loyalty at Boltgas International**.

I am kindly requesting for your assistance and permission to carry out the research study using area of operation as a case study. All the information is guaranteed to remain confidential and will be used specifically for academic purposes only by the researcher.

Your assistance is kindly appreciated in advance

Yours truly

Farai Tinashe Hilary Sigauke

0781033884/0774236994

## APPENDIX 2: ORIGINARITY REPORT

FARAI SIGAUKE B201418B turn-it-in.docx

### ORIGINALITY REPORT

**13%**

SIMILARITY INDEX

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