MK7227 Postgraduate Dissertation

Student Number: U1340642

	Comments	Max Mark	Actual Mark
Introduction *Identification of a valid topic, research question and objectives framed to Masters Level standard with academic rationale developed, clear industry contextualisation of the research topic*	**Supervisor Comments:**	10%	
	2nd marker Comments:		
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“Online Community Variables that Determine its Success.”

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Royal Docks Business School, University of East London for the degree of **MSc International Marketing Management.**

September 2015

Word Count: 14,208

I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award

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Acknowledgements

First of all I would love to thank my sister and the rest of my family for providing me with a constant support and motivation to continuously want to achieve more and push harder in every single aspect of my personal and academic development. I want to thank all of my friends for understanding and for being there for me through the hardest of times. Without them nothing would make sense.

Finally a great thanks to my mentor Aidan J Kelly who was there for me every step of the way, I am very much grateful for his support.

1. Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this research is to determine which elements of an Online Community (OC) are responsible for contributing to its success. This paper focuses on empirically exploring the variables of an online community and the effect these variables have on its success. This project also aims to establish which variables motivate users to start interacting and contributing to an OC. The main aim is to determine what variables if not all contribute to OC success and what it takes for a one-time user to become a loyal member of an OC.

Design/methodology/approach – The research is identified as an exploratory in nature, applied research paradigm is the positivist approach, followed by statistical methods used to examine the data. The scale used was adapted from the existing study by Lin (2008), "Determinants Of Successful Virtual Communities: Contributions From System Characteristics And Social Factors" based on the extensive theoretical research the existing scale deemed appropriate. A questionnaire was administered via SurveyMoneky platform and distributed to a randomly selected sample of 620 users of a leading fashion online community Lookbook.Nu. Further to this, Exploratory Factor Analysis and Standard Multiple Regression Analysis are employed to construct the model that best determined which variables contribute to the success of an OC.

Findings – The research confirms that the most influential variable building a sustainable and successful OC is Member Satisfaction. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) extracted five components: member's satisfaction, information quality, trust, member's loyalty and social usefulness. The research confirmed that members are satisfied when an online community updates its content on a regular basis as well as maintain a high level of morale amongst the members. All of this contributes to members' satisfaction, which plays the most important role in an OC's success.

Research limitations/implications – Since the research is of an exploratory nature, the additional research can be applied to extracted components to further analyze the impact that the same components have on success of an OC. Perhaps a further study that focuses on different geographical segments could be employed in order to establish behavioral elements that impact users interaction.

Practical implications – The result confirmed that OC hosts and managers should focus on satisfying users and their members by continuously updating relevant content, maintain a high morale within a community and keep the conversation flowing.

Originality/value – The research focused on exploring OC variables that influence users behavior. The area has been explored previously however, the paper can be fundamentally used as a base for further examination.

Keywords – online communities, internet users, member satisfaction, information exchange, trust, social usefulness.

2. Table of Contents

"Online Community Variables that Determine its Success."

3. Introduction

3.1 Background of the Study

The rise of the internet and the human need to connect with others, together with the need to increase their knowledge and have continuous access to information has seen an aligned increase in the formation of virtual social groups of people on the internet also knows as an Online communities (OCs) (Plant, 2004; Schneider et.al, 2012).

An OC can be defined as a group of people who share a common interest and communicate through the computer-mediated mechanism when there are enough people to take part in information exchange for long enough to be able to form a relationship (Kim et al. 2008; Dennis et al.1998; Rheingold, 1993). It has been argued that whenever computer mediated communication technology becomes available on the Internet, users will use it to form communities. Members of such social congregations usually share the same interests, appreciation, understanding and even love for the community, as well as its members and the brands that community is developed around (Albert et al. 2008).

Kozinets (1999) estimated that by the year 2000, 40 million people participated in an online community of some sort and it can only be assumed that this figure has significantly increased since 2000. This type of activity tends to occur when Internet users spend a significant amount of time online, therefore the more time users spends online the more likely it is that the same user will join an online community that offers content they perceive as useful. Once the user decides to interact with the existing OC members, it becomes very likely that they will return and use these communities as a source of information and ultimately for social interaction.

3.2 Statement of a Problem

Online communities exist on the Internet to fulfill needs both of businesses and consumers by providing information that users find useful and relevant to their needs. Therefore, finding out the motivation behind users contribution in order to retain them

as existing members has become a norm for an OC that wishes to become and remain successful. OC value loyal members due to their tendency to contribute content and engage with new coming users care for and support the community in order to sustain its affluence (Ren et al., 2012). Understanding what motivates members and knowing more about their desires is essential for community success (Porter & Donthu, 2008; Ren et al., 2012).

According to previous research, 90% of community members are known to be passive or also known as lurkers. Lurkers are the users that frequently visit an OC however, they fail to contribute and join the existing conversations amongst other members (Kozinets, 1999). In addition to understanding existing members behavior and desires, investment in understand what could motivate "lurkers" to start contributing and interacting with an OC can be of great importance to the success of an OC.

Once the loyalty has formed, an OC can have a real affect on their participant's behaviors including their consumer behavior. Therefore, understanding what motivates these consumers to interact with an OC can be of increasing importance for contemporary marketers who recognize the importance of the social groups of consumers that constantly form on the Internet. Understanding factors that influence consumer advocacy is the ultimate goal as it can significantly increases brand equity (Kozinets, 2002).

The project identified variables that are an incremental part of an OC and theoretical and empirical understanding of how these variables affect relationships that users have created with an OC and how to leverage their attachment in order to create loyal members. Previous empirical research suggest that there are many obstacles in achieving OC success however, the most important is the engagement of community members since the majority of users, as already discussed contribute almost next to nothing and leave the OC quickly (Arguello et al. 2006). Understanding the elements that contribute to an increase in users contributing and their attachment to an OC are

crucial to gaining the success that an OC requires to remain sustainable. This project will focus on evaluating these variables to understand the motivational factors behind user contributions.

3.3 Research Question

This research has a primary question, which is:

"What elements of an online community, if not all, contribute to its success?"

This research proposes hypothesis discussed in the literature review that are empirically tested in order to determine whether the study is going to accept or reject the current propositions.

3.4 Research Objectives

This study has the main objective of exploring the variables of an online community that contribute to its success and finding out motivational elements behind user's engagement in the context of online communities. Secondly, the empirical test is employed to develop a research model that looks into explaining what elements of an OC contribute to its success. This research represents relatively unexplored areas within the Online Community topic and will aim to add to the existing studies of what determines a successful online community. The Result of this study in addition provides insights that can help marketing professionals to understand the drivers of users engagements. These can be used as guidelines for building brand loyalty as well as assist in developing online strategies that encourage members to engage with an OC. This understanding behind what motivates users to engage in new social platforms can help businesses stay competitive in global markets.
Therefore, the objectives of this study are to:

- Evaluate OC variables that directly or indirectly contribute towards its success.
- Examine users motivational factors that encourage their interaction and contribution with an OC.
- Investigate what elements of an OC, if not all influence users to interact with an OC.

3.5 Research Structure

The research begins with a critical literature review that extensively looked into the:

- The Development of Online Communities
- Key Variables of Online Communities

After discussing the theoretical implication and confirming the research question and hypothesis, the following section is going to look to test proposed hypothesis. Since the research is of an exploratory nature, the positivist paradigm has been applied with a randomly selected convenience sample where 620 personal messages were distributed in a leading fashion online community Lookbook.Nu yielding in 117 collected responses representing a total sample, however only 80 participants fully completed all the questions presented in a survey. The convenience sampling also known as Snowballing is used when the researcher is able to locate an appropriate set of respondents with required characteristics within general public in order to ensure information reliability (Churchhill, Brown and Suter, 2007).

The Data Analysis section of the study employed Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to extract components that tested with the most variance. In addition, each individual component is tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha method. Further to this, to explore the relationship amongst each variable, the Standard Multiple Regression Model is employed.

3.6 Research Significance

This study is significant in many ways but foremost in the aspect of exploration of the significance that individual variable impacts on the success of an OC. The paper looked into the relationship amongst the factors to determine the level each factors has on an OCs success. There is a large amount of literature currently available on the topic of online communities however, a fewer studies look to explore OC elements to determine their relationship in regards to building sustainable online communities. The paper expanded on the research by Lin (2008) "Determinants Of Successful Virtual Communities: Contributions From System Characteristics And Social Factors" and

adapted the same construct however, the difference in the samples geographical location is present. Lin (2008) population is made of Taiwanese students whereas, this studies majority of population is located in the US, UK and Canada.

The paper focused on delivering valuable insight into users preference on OC variables that can be utilized by both academic and marketing practitioners to use as guidelines when creating strategies. It has been determined that knowing OC members desires and preferences on the specific brands can leverage to create advocates out of existing loyal members, ultimately increasing brands equity and gaining competitive advantage in such highly saturated global market.

4. Critical Literature Review

4.1 Introduction

This section will provide a critical review of the current literature and theories linked to the development of Online Communities (OCs). The section will particularly focus on online community variables that help an online community reach success. First of all the chapter will explore the literature that explains the development of OCs, before seeking to explain how different variables affect users' contributions to the same OC. The chapter will then further review in detail how OCs can be utilised as a tool, or a source of information, allowing organisations to gain insights into users' brand and product preferences - consequently incorporating the same knowledge in order to gain competitive advantage in a highly saturated market.

Within this literature several key areas have been identified which are grouped into sections to help structure the literature review. The first section will look into the definition of an OC, an OC's development, and what it takes for an OC to become a successful. It will then focus on key variables that most determine an OCs success. Within this section key areas such as; "System Quality"; "Information Quality"; "Users' Interaction and Social Benefits"; and "Members' Loyalty and Satisfaction" are further explored in order to review articles that seek to explain different elements that influence an OCs success. Within each of the identified key areas, focus is put on gaining further understanding of the elements that will be used in hypothesis development allowing the project to get to the core of what needs to be taken into consideration when designing and maintaining a successful OC.

The final section will be concluded with a few hypotheses derived from the research that will look into testing whether the mentioned variables contribute to an OC's success.

4.2 The Development of Online Communities

Following the introduction, this section's focus is on the definition and development of OCs in order to determine what it takes to be successful in such a highly clustered environment.

With the rise of the Internet and communication technologies, the human need to connect with each other in order to communicate and exchange information promptly followed. This need contributed to the development of a fairly new social phenomenon known as an online community (Plant, 2004). An OC can be defined as a group of people who share a common interest and communicate through the same electronic mailing lists, chat rooms, internet user groups, or any other computer-mediated mechanism (Kim et al. 2008; Dennis et al.1998). Rheingold (1993) further agrees that OC's are social groups formed in an online setting when there are enough people to take part in information exchange for long enough to be able to form a relationship. He argued that whenever computer mediated communication technology becomes available on the Internet, users will use it to form communities. OC members usually share the same interests, appreciation, understanding and even love for the community, as well as its members and the brands that community is developed around (Albert et al. 2008).

Moreover, according to Wagner et al. (2009), it takes much more to create a sustainable OC than to provide a web space for discussion. It is much more complex than that and it requires smart technology and extensive community management. Figallo (1998) suggests that, in a successful OC, observant users become members who feel part of a larger social congregation. They feel a sense of connection with other members and have ongoing conversations about topics that they find in common, consequently creating lasting relationships with others. What is more defining is that conversation amongst the members is persistent, as they grow attached to the community through frequent interaction and numerous visits (Hiltz and Wellman, 1997; Smith, 1999). Therefore, a successful OC will consist of members that are willing to express their views and provide information, allowing other users to

express their feelings by sharing solutions to any present problems (Herring, 1996). An OC can be seen as a vessel that provides a further insight into users' needs, preferences and desires, and can be utilised by companies or brands that look to gain a competitive advantage in a highly saturated market. The information obtained can then be evaluated in order to develop strategies to gain consumers' loyalty and perhaps influence their purchasing behavior (Plant, 2004).

Since the consumer is more knowledgeable and demanding than ever before, and tends to shop on the Internet with a wide access to goods, it has become common practice for consumers to seek and exchange information about brands that they are investing in (Hsu et al. 2007; Kim et al. 2008). Consequently many online communities appeared and expanded on the Internet, allowing users to find information and make comments and communicate their ideas with the existing members of an OC (Ko et al. 2007; Cova, 1997). With a rise in user numbers, a rise in the number of communities on the Internet promptly followed, making it an important task for developers to understand the challenges behind OC user interaction and what prompts their continuous contribution (Zheng et al. 2013). The paper will further explore individual OC variables, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the motivators that prompt users to interact.

4.3 Key Variables of Online Communities

This section will aim to take a more detailed look at the key variables, such as system and information quality, that prompt user interaction resulting in their satisfaction and loyalty, which overall determines an OC's success.

Lu et al. (2010) identified four key characteristics of a successful OC: 1. It exists on the web, 2. It operates via information technology, 3. Most of its content is user generated, used for information sharing, and is based on a common interest, and 4. It supports social relationship formation. Here we can adopt a definition by Lee et al. (2003) that an OC is based in cyberspace, it operates via computer mediated information technology to meet the needs for information exchange in order to form a member driven content that eventually results in their relationship development. We can further

define social relationship as the human communication amongst strangers that seem rather close but in reality are far apart (Fen et al. 2011). Similarly, Brogi et al. (2013) proposes that the most relevant aspects of an online community are: 1.The degree of social involvement of its members (i.e. how many comments, suggestions and opinions are shared within the community etc); 2.To what extent the members recognised their own identity as part of the identity of the community (i.e. to what extent the consumer feels a part of the community); 3.The quality of information exchanged (i.e. is the content relevant enough to entice communication amongst users?).

The social interaction between members is equally as important as the interaction between computer and individuals, making the system an important variable. This should be taken into consideration when designing an OC as system factors, such as system usability and system quality, play an important role in influencing its success (Lin, 2008). Petter et al. (2008) perceived ease of use as the most reliable measure of a system's quality, however other factors such as system reliability, user friendliness, effectiveness and verifiability further apprehend the system quality as a whole. Alongside system quality, users are satisfied with the community when the offered content is reliable, accurate and updated on a regular basis. An OC should offer original information and the system in place should be convenient and user-friendly in order to become sustainable (Lin, 2008).

The process of information exchange should be mutual (Majewski et al. 2011) and to reach this stage trust is the essential element which prompts users to contribute (Hsu et al. 2011). However, the integrity of the community and the genuine personal expectation of fulfillment are as important as trust if users are to interact with other members (Chiu et al. 2011). According to Wasko and Faraj (2000), individual reputation and the joy of helping others are the main motivational elements that aid to the success of OC's. On the other hand, the process of knowledge exchange for mutual benefit may not be as important to members who already regularly post comments. This interpersonal interaction amongst members enables them to feel social support and approval, which aids to relationship development amongst users, leading to a

feeling of belonging to a community which can be perceived as a social benefit (Hsu et al. 2012).

Once members perceive the high credibility of information present in a community, they will consequently perceive the higher usefulness, leading to a higher user satisfaction and loyalty (Shang et al. 2013). Therefore, the next section will further examine information quality, system quality, user interaction, trust, member satisfaction and loyalty as the key variables that contribute to the creation of a successful OC.

4.4 Systems Quality

In their study Shih-Tse Wang et al. (2012) suggest that member commitment is subsequently based on a combination of social factors (member social interactions) and system factors (sites ease of use and ability to perform). This section will explore the system factors that influence user interaction and commitment to an OC.

A number of factors determine the quality of a system, and the most accepted model in the context of user-perceived system quality is TAM (Technology Acceptance Model). TAM measures the performance of a system, including its perceived usefulness, ease of use and user enjoyment or satisfaction. It also evaluates how user personal beliefs and attitudes are dominated by these technical systems characteristics (Davis et al. 1989). In addition to TAM, this paper has adopted DeLone & McLean's (1993) research, as they further looked into criteria that measure a system's quality and the items that help establish user satisfaction. Such items include reliability of the system, online response time, ease of use, the content, system accuracy and human factors. To understand how individuals decide on whether to interact with the OC system is driven by a perceived usefulness that refers to users previous beliefs about system effectiveness and how its use can benefit the user. This is usually based on their previous experience. Another as equally as important element is user satisfaction, which refers to a user's emotional state after being exposed to the system and the experience during the interaction. Both of these elements have a direct impact on users' continuing engagement with the system (Bhattacherjee, 2001; Kim and Son,

2009).

In addition to perceived usefulness, Leimeister et al. (2005) confirms the importance of an OC's design factor, which can influence a user's trust in terms of its transparency, its sponsors, its quality of content, its ability to motivate the host and the accessibility of its information. In order to reach success, OCs need to utilize the right tools that offer the most effective user communication methods that suit not just the technologically advanced users, but also members who find dependable technology of importance (Williams and Cothrel, 2000). Another factor that should be taken into consideration is user-familiarity with the community, as this helps reduce uncertainty between users and members (Kozinets, 2002). If an OC seeks to achieve sustainability, then users' contributions to the community need to be acknowledged by the host as this can help boost a member's self-esteem and strengthen their relationship with the community (Kang et al. 2007)

4.5 Information Quality

Users engage with an OC in order to obtain information from a discussed subject that allows them to gain some form of value (Writz, 2013; Brodie et al. 2013). Information sharing behaviors will determine the success of an OC, and so determining which factors influence this process is of beneficial importance to an OC's successful development (Chiu, Hsu and Wang, 2006).

Previous studies determined that most individuals simply browse without much contribution to the community, however according to Wasko and Faraj (2005) users can be motivated to share information, if factors such as information and communication technology, social benefits and personal cognition are perceived to be available to them in an OC. Therefore Lin et al. (2009) confirms that information sharing behavior can be influenced by utilising contextual and personal factors. Contextual factors are referred to as the norm of reciprocity and trust and are the most influential factors and the personal factors are referred to as self-efficacy, perceived advantage, such as increased efficiency and effectiveness and economic benefits which are the most significant influencers of users behavior. As a result, the higher the level of

communication in the community, the more likely is for members to reciprocate. Reciprocity encourages supportive information exchange, voluntary participations and cooperation - all of which are crucial for successful OC development. With such variables present in the OC, users feel morally obligated to reimburse the information, knowledge and resources that others provide (Shumaker and Brownell, 1984; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

On the other hand, Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002) find that individuals that take part in the information exchange within an OC will attune to the norms of a group and will adjust their attitude to the attitude of the community. Committed users participate by exchanging their opinions with other users, which helps develop and maintain a positive attitude within a community (Gupta, Kim and Shin, 2010). Therefore, Chan and Li (2010) propose that OCs allow members to interact and voluntarily exchange information and valuable resources by matching its content with its members' interpersonal needs. The resources are divided into structural (information and socio-emotional enjoyment) and depending on the quality and amount of the content available, members can be motivated to commit to a community in order to have a regular access to the same information. Furthermore, if the experience of an engagement is positive, the relationship between user and a community will appear stronger. If users continuously engage with a community and successfully interact with other members, then it's safe to say that the user becomes more loyal to the community (Writz, 2013). This process tends to become interactive and experiential and it includes learning, sharing, advocating, socialising and co-developing (Brodie et al. 2013). In addition, Schau, Muñiz and Arnould (2009) suggest that successful communities poise psychological elements (such as social networking, impression management, brand use and community engagement) that encourage collective engagement. These should be optimised by a constant provision of resources such as relevant content that further supports these elements.

Based on members sharing brand related information, Hur et al. (2011) assume that loyalty behaviors, such as opinion offering and knowledge exchange, should be

accounted to as positive effects that lead to an increase in word of mouth thereby enhancing members' loyalty. It is further suggested that such behaviors represent commitment to a community, which can be seen as a mediating mechanism between its trust and its loyalty.

4.6 User Interaction and Social Benefits

As already mentioned in a previous section, users interact with an OC in 2 ways: information consumption and information supply. Information can be consumed and supplied by browsing, positing and interaction with other members of an OC. Both behaviors are considered to have a positive impact allowing users to experience social benefits during the interaction with an OC (Zheng et al. 2013). Social benefits are considered to be a social support to users and are experienced through information exchange in the OC. Social benefits, also known as social usefulness, which apart from perceived support include mutual respect, recognition and approval amongst users, as well as sense of belonging to a community.

Hsu et al. (2012) find that continuous user interaction is one of the biggest challenges of an OC. As first time users of an OC are not familiar with existing members, their attachment to the community will vary on their participation (Blanchard and Markus, 2002). Users begin to interact with the OC when they perceive that it offers valid information which can help to achieve their goal. Hsu et al. (2012) further confirm that users will interact with other users based on a discussion around a common interest. This interaction will then lead to a social approval amongst members ultimately reinforcing a sense of belonging to an OC (Lin, 2008; Casaló, Flavián and Guinalíu, 2008).

On the other hand, Dholakia et al. (2004) suggest that members are willing to participate when a community expresses a form of understanding of various elements that participants may seek to obtain from social interaction with other members. The present member's interaction can eventually lead to an emotional connection.

The final result of user engagement process is presented in user loyalty, satisfaction,

empowerment, trust, commitment and a sense of belonging that has an impact on overall satisfaction and loyalty (Wirtz et al. 2013).

In addition to this, Wasko and Faraj (2005) suggest that social trust amongst users reduces risk during their online interaction, which can increase information sharing. According to Yee (2006) community users who develop social trust through continuous participation are more inclined to engage with other users, or even first time users, especially when they are in a need of their advice. An interaction amongst users helps them to get to know each other (Lu at al. 2010). As a result we can say that if the value system of an OC conforms to the value system of an individual then the individual is willing to engage with other community members after realising that other members share the same goals (Szmigin and Reppel, 2004). It is known that users usually create stronger attachment to the community at the identification phase embracing perceived reliability of the community by identifying feelings of attachment and belongingness (Marzocchi et al. 2013). Once the individual starts the engagement process, the social identity is formed leading to a self-awareness of the one within the group (Cheung and Lee, 2010).

To conclude, in order to become successful, an online community host will focus on building enticing content and will aim to satisfy its members' needs to engage with each other to become recognised as part of a group and relate to a sense of belonging, consequently creating value for the community and its members (Sangwan, 2005).

4.7 Members Satisfaction and Loyalty

As already mentioned, highly satisfied members are likely to interexchange information on a regular basis, which leads to their satisfaction and loyalty to an OC (Royo-Vela and Casamassima, 2011). According to Kang et al. (2007) OCs that optimise interactive communication enhance member-satisfaction as well as their sense of closeness and commitment to other members and the community. Finally, the effects of participating in an OC indirectly influence users' behavior to discuss the community with their peers, which leads to an increased word of mouth (Carpenter and Fairhust, 2005).

Furthermore, members who find OCs convenient, dependable, able to provide up to date relevant information on a regular basis, as well as being user friendly, feel generally satisfied with the OC which leads to their loyalty to the community. In addition, as already mentioned, satisfaction has the strongest impact on a member's feeling of belonging (Lin, 2008; Royo-Vela and Casamassima, 2011).

Satisfaction is considered to be a key factor of a member's loyalty development in the community. It affects a user's involvement and it can motivate them to visit community more frequently. In some cases users will base the feeling of satisfaction on their previous interaction experience (De Valck et al. 2007). Consequently, users who perceive an OC as easy to use and useful in general will continue to return to it. If a community offers effective user support, then this will further enhance the user's satisfaction both of which are important determinants of loyalty (Lin. 2008).

OC's are a valuable source of user related information that links members with similar interests, which can be utilised as a tool to increase the commitment amongst the users (Szmigin and Reppel, 2001; Schau, Muñiz and Arnould, 2009). Therefore unique user-experience is regarded as essential if an OC is to influence their participation (Hsu, et al. 2012). As already mentioned, OCs with active member participation effectively influence users' commitment.

Information circulation and any other activity that entices members to interact and share information contribute to the external impression of a community with present loyalty amongst its members (Laroche et al. 2012). Loyalty is the most prevailing asset and it can lead to the development of a long-term relationship amongst users. Communities that provide users with an environment that allows further relationship development can create sense of obligation amongst users to contribute to interaction with other loyal members (Sangwan, 2005; Pan et al. 2012).

According to Plangger (2012) satisfaction and loyalty don't come together as satisfaction on its own is not enough to keep members loyal to the community. Plangger (2012) further determines that satisfaction is a predecessor of commitment

and that there must be elements of social bonding before loyalty can be secured in the community.

4.8 Summary and Hypothesis

To summarize, the literature has identified the following elements of an OC that directly or indirectly determine its success:

1. System Quality
2. Information Quality
3. Users' Interaction and Social Benefits (Trust & Social Usefulness)
4. Member-Satisfaction and Loyalty (Sense of Belonging, Satisfaction & Loyalty)

The literature confirms that many online communities experience difficulties in achieving continuous user-interaction and member-formation. This is seen as one of the biggest challenges that OCs experience since 90% of the users are usually only observers and chose not to contribute to the information exchange (Mason, 1999). However, based on the literature discussion, the project proposes that an OC that effectively employs all of the above elements will be more successful, in terms of seeing an increase in member numbers and user-contribution, than an OC that employs one or more but not all of the mentioned variables.

Therefore this paper hypothesizes that an OC will influence users' interaction by providing a system that is easy to use, user friendly and effective - as well as transparent and genuinely making users feel satisfied after being exposed to the system.

H1. The success of an OC will depend on system quality

The paper further hypothesizes that the content or information quality is present, which means that the information offered will be accurate and updated on a regular basis, thereby providing value to users. It can be predicted that the content needs to be matched with members' interpersonal needs, which will allow users to recognize

their identity in the identity of an OC, which enables an OC to entice their engagement. Therefore, users will interact based on the quality of information offered. Subsequently, if there is a discussion present between existing members around a common interest, new users will feel more motivated to interact

H2. The success of an OC will depend on information/content quality

This paper also hypothesizes that social interaction leads to more social approval of new users by existing members, which provides new users with a feeling of belonging to a community. A sense of belonging leads to trust building, which ultimately increases social interaction. Social interaction assists users in getting to know each other, which also ultimately leads to users feeling a sense of attachment, belonging and satisfaction.

H3. The success of an OC will depend on users' social usefulness.

H4. The success of an OC will depend on users' trust.

Finally, satisfied users are more likely to become loyal to a community and its members. Loyal members maintain a high level of interactivity within a community, which leads to social bonding amongst users and members which secures a loyalty to a community.

H5. The success of an OC will depend on members' satisfaction.

H6. The success of an OC will depend on member's loyalty

This project shall endeavor to put these variables to empirical test in order to find out which variables, if not all determine a successful and sustainable OC.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Introduction

The literature confirmed that Online Communities (OC's) face potential difficulties with users willingness to interact and exchange information with other members. In most OC's, information is provided by the host who is responsible for community management. In addition, user's attitudes towards an OC are determined based on the existing member's interaction and their motivation to interact, therefore OC managers need to create an amiable environment in order to foster higher interaction between one time users, existing members and an OC itself (Chen, Yang and Tang, 2013) Furthermore to this, it's of high importance to understand factors behind users contribution to an OC in order to establish what drives the success to an OC. Therefore this project aims to establish which variables of an OC motivate users to interact with its existing members and to explore whether each variable carries equal amount of importance.

During the research it has been established that a very few studies looked into every single element of an OC (Casalo et al. 2008; Pan et al. 2012; Royo-Vela et al. 2011; Shang et al. 2013); researchers focus was put mainly on individual elements such as trust and belonging, loyalty, the size and other social and objective elements that add value to an OC. Nevertheless, the research by Lin (2008) looked into various elements and therefore is used as a basis for this research to further expand on.

Based on the extensive literature review the following research objective has been derived:

"What elements of an online community, if not all, contribute to its success?"

Therefore the main research question will be accompanied by the below hypothesis:

H1. The success of an online community will depend on system quality
H2. The success of an online community will depend on information/content quality
H3. The success of an online community will depend on users trust
H4. The success of an online community will depend on users' social usefulness
H5. The success of an online community will depend on member's sense of belonging
H6. The success of an online community will depend on member's satisfaction
H7. The success of an online community will depend on member's loyalty

The research question divided into mentioned hypothesis is designed to test system quality, information quality, trust, social usefulness, sense of belonging, members' satisfaction and members loyalty in order to assist in determining which system characteristics and social factors lead to an OC's success the most.

The identified hypotheses are tested via self-administered online survey with quantitative data collection method. To provide a clear narrative of how the project has been deployed, the research paradigm and the research philosophy will first of all be identified, before providing a reason and justification behind the research method used to best explore and test proposed hypothesis. The following section will further specify methods used to collect the data as well as explain sampling strategies used to gather a broad sample of data across the population that has directly at some stage taken a part in an OC. The focus here is to understand what variables motivate users to interact with an OC in the first place and what variable if not all, prompt users continuous return and contribution to the same. The final section will detail methods used to analyze the collected data. This section will also endeavor to explore the advantages and disadvantages connected with the key determinants in order to highlight any issues and challenges opposed in the whole of the project in particular

any limitations discovered over the course of the research.

5.2 Research Paradigms and Philosophy

To reach the primary aim of the research project based on the literature discussion, an exploratory analysis of each variable is required in order to summarize and establish how these variables affect OC's success. After much consideration, it has been determined that the 'Positivist' approach would be adapted. Positivist approach based on empirical research is used when logical proof is required for a proposed claim that can be justified with provided logical reasoning (Collis and Hussey, 2013). According to Solomon et al. (2013) the positivist theory focuses on a single and objective truth where on the other hand the interpretivism adds accent on socially constructed reality with several truths however, the knowledge extracted via both philosophies is context independent and time free. The past researchers have argued that the difference between the two paradigms is based on the theory, the knowledge and the philosophical assumptions of the research (Bryman, 2012).

The project seeks to statistically analyse individual variables in order to test how elements of an OC i.e. system quality, information quality, interaction and social benefits including trust and social usefulness, sense of belonging satisfaction and loyalty directly or indirectly motivate users to interact with an OC and its users.
The information will be discovered via self-administered online survey presented to individuals that have interacted with an OC in the past.

The survey will seek to determine what elements as mentioned before motivated users interaction as well as continuous contribution, if applicable. The survey will fully detail sub elements evaluated in the literature review in order to provide in-depth understanding of motivational factors behind users decision to interact with an OC. Construct items include systems perceived ease of use, usefulness, users enjoyment and satisfaction, systems reliability, its accuracy and human factor, quality of the content or information offered, users participation, engagement experience, knowledge exchanged, perceived value, social usefulness, member recognition,

members support, sense of belonging, social trust, members commitment and loyalty.

Empirical quantitative approach will provide a quality overview of how each and every variable affects users decision-making, their motivation to interact or potentially become a member of an OC that offers knowledge that is of individual interest. The aim is to discover the variables that affect users the most but in addition to this, the research approach should offer further insight into advantages and disadvantages of an OC and any benefits that users experience when interacting with such.

Questionnaire is designed via Survey Monkey platform using Summated-Ratings or Likert Scale, which is used when attitude-scaling, is required. The research required individuals to express a measurable amount of their feelings toward online communities therefore; Likert Scale is selected as the preferred measurement method (Churchhill, Brown and Suter, 2007). Participants will be presented with a question and are asked to provide a degree of agreement or disagreements with each statement in the questionnaire series that relates to variables that have been previously determined. The variables will further be tested and analysed using EFA and Standard Multiregression Analysis in SPSS.

5.3 Research Methods

5.3.1 Questionnaire Design

The main objective for this project is to determine what makes an OC successful. The project has been broken down into independent variables in order to ascertain and test which of the variables, if not all aid to an OC's success. As already mentioned earlier, quantitative methods are employed to assist in finding out how users feel about OC's and which of the variables motivate users to interact with the community and its members.

The questionnaire is used as a method of communication between the researcher and the participants (Brace, 2013) and in order to assure the reliability and validity of the

study, an existing questionnaire has been introduced into the research. The questionnaire adapted from the study on "*Determinants of Successful Virtual Communities: Contributions from system characteristics and social factors?*" (Lin, 2008) also contained constructs adapted from previous studies however, the constructs were altered to suit data request suitable for online communities. The reproduced instrument was in addition chosen based on the research time constrain as well as because of the lack of thorough knowledge of the research subject.

The Quantitative Methods rendered via Likert Scale which has been proven to be one of the most popular based on the fact that it its easily designed, the result can be directly used for statistic measurements, which have proven good reliability when research is conducted (Li, 2013).

The Likert Scale will ask respondents to indicate their level of agreement in range from 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree for each statement in the questionnaire grouped within sections i.e. System Quality, Information Quality, Trust, Social Usefulness, Sense of Belonging and Members Satisfaction and Loyalty however, questions 14 and 21 are presented in a reversely coded format. Items used as sub-elements to ensure correct construct measure included:

- Information Quality determines OC's information accuracy and availability, range of information available, regularity and the format of available information.
- System Quality determines OC's reliability, accessibility, request responses and its adaptiveness.
- Users Interaction and Social Benefits looks into OC's trust and social usefulness i.e. OC's discussion subject knowledge, mutual help and awareness and social usefulness among members including mutual respect, perception and ideas sharing and relationship forming.
- Members Satisfaction and Loyalty looked into sense of belonging as a dependent variable to discover how belonging to an OC, membership enjoyment, members commitment and OC's morale affect the overall success as well as members

commitment, morale, satisfaction with the interaction, and users willingness to return to the OC.

The rating scale has been selected as the large amount of data can be analysed and collected in less time assisting in ascertaining participant's subjective views regarding selected variables as well as their general experiences with an online community that participants would have previously visited at least once.

The current questionnaire (APPENDIX 1) adapted 29 items in total to ensure full validity of the construct. In addition, the only amendment to the existing instrument is the amendment in the demographic section with the country of residence and employment status and number of weekly OC visits, resulting in the instrument containing gender, age, country of residence, employment status and the number of OC visits per week. All of the items in the demographic section were closed questions due to their sensitivity to respondents.

5.3.2 Data Collection and Sampling

Data is collected via self-administered online survey created using Survey Monkey platform. The target population for this research involves participants of an OC regardless of whether they are users or loyal members of the same. In 2006, Jakob Nielsen who is a web usability expert initiated 90-9-1 rule which states that 90% of users are lurkers (users that observe but don't contribute and never comment), 9% of users contribute from time to time leaving comments however, rather occasionally and 1% of users participate mostly and take credit for all the contributions to the OC, these are also known as influencers (ISCOOP, 2015).

The non-probability convenience approach is applied to the sample selection. The convenience sample has been selected predominantly via LOOKBOOK.nu, also known as a leading fashion online community without offering any monetary incentives, however, due to a time constraint social media i.e. Facebook and Twitter were used to promote the survey and encourage users to take the part. A total of 620 personal messages (APPENDIX 2) were distributed which yielded in 117 collected responses

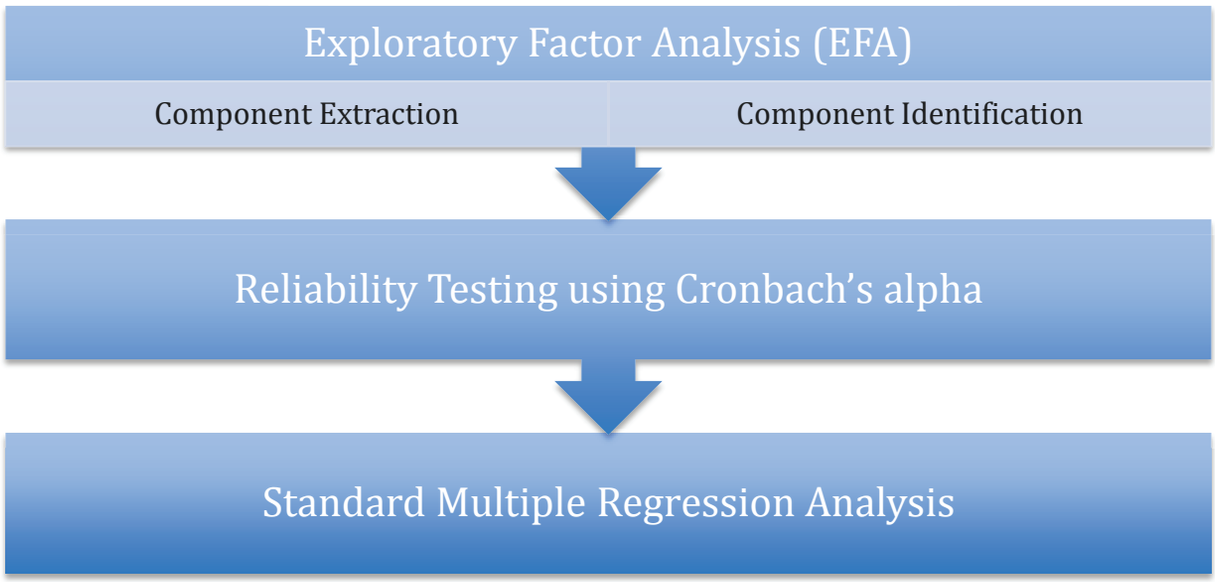
representing a total sample, however only 80 participants fully completed all the questions presented in a survey. The convenience sampling also known as Snowballing is used when the researcher is able to locate an appropriate set of respondents with required characteristics within general public in order to ensure information reliability (Churchhill, Brown and Suter, 2007).

Despite the population size, the response received equaled to 117 responses, which constitutes the total sample. Out of total sample size 80 respondents fully completed the survey and are therefore kept for further analysis. This is significantly smaller than the population and it can be considered as a limitation to this research. The achieved response rate is 12.9% based on the fully completed questionnaire calculations, and is considered low, based on standard average survey response rate (Couper, 2000).

5.3.3 Data Analysis

Data collected is easily accessible via Survey Monkey platform that stored every single response, which is imported in SPSS package 22 for further analysis. Responses were imported to SPSS in words however, the variable view of SPSS allowed coding process to numbers with 1 representing strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree and 5 strongly agree. Variables were imported in SPSS variable view under the labels IQ1-5 (information quality), SQ1-4 (system quality), TR1-6 (trust), SU1-4 (social usefulness), SB1-4 (sense of belonging), MS1-3 (members satisfaction), and ML1-3 (members loyalty) with an applied ordinal measure appropriate for Likert scale. All incomplete response data is removed from the SPSS data view in order to ensure Factor Analysis accuracy.

The data analysis process further entails the following steps:



First step reduced set of 29 variables to their common value that is grater than 1 using Kaisers' Criterion to extract factors with the value <1. To ensure that the most accurate factor extraction method is used, Scree plot and Pattern Matrix is in addition utilised to demonstrate correct factor extraction.

To determine to what degree variables load onto extracted factors and to show a clearer picture of behavioral elements the Oblique rotation method (direct Oblimin) is employed based on theoretical grounds that independent variables can correlate with one another (Malhotra and Birks, 2007). Correlations between variables and the factor loadings are set to be significant at a minimum value of 0.512 as according to Field (2009) this minimum is related to 100 responses on average and since the instrument achieved just under 100 responses. This resulted in all the factors with the loadings below 0.512 excluded as recommended by Field (2009) with the final solution containing five components representing a Members Satisfaction, Information Quality, Trust, Members Loyalty and Social Usefulness.

The second step of the analysis is further testing the five-component solution for

reliability using the Cronbach's Alpha method, which tested each component separately.

The Cronbach's Alpha value for the Component 1(Members Satisfaction) is 0.858; Component (Information Quality) 0.788; Component 3 (Trust) is at 0.597; Component 4 (Members Loyalty) is at 0.733; Component 5 (Social Usefulness) is at 0.599
The average scores higher than 0.700, apart from trust which scored 0.597 and social usefulness, which scored comparatively low reliability with 0.599. The table that presents the five component factor loadings, total variance and eigenvalue to help summarise the research findings is included in the following section. Following the extraction, five-component solution is then evaluated to determine each components characteristics and user profiles. Consequently, this step eases the comprehensibility of the research findings. The data ascertained with the each OC element is systematized in the most relevant manner confirming which elements contribute to OC's success.

Three components that proved reliable are Members Satisfaction, Information Quality and Members Loyalty however, to further explore the relationship amongst each variable, the standard multiple regression model is employed.

Based on theoretical value Members Loyalty is selected as a dependent variable or an outcome to assist in determining the variance between independent variables or predictors i.e. Members Satisfaction, Information Quality, Trust and Social Usefulness.

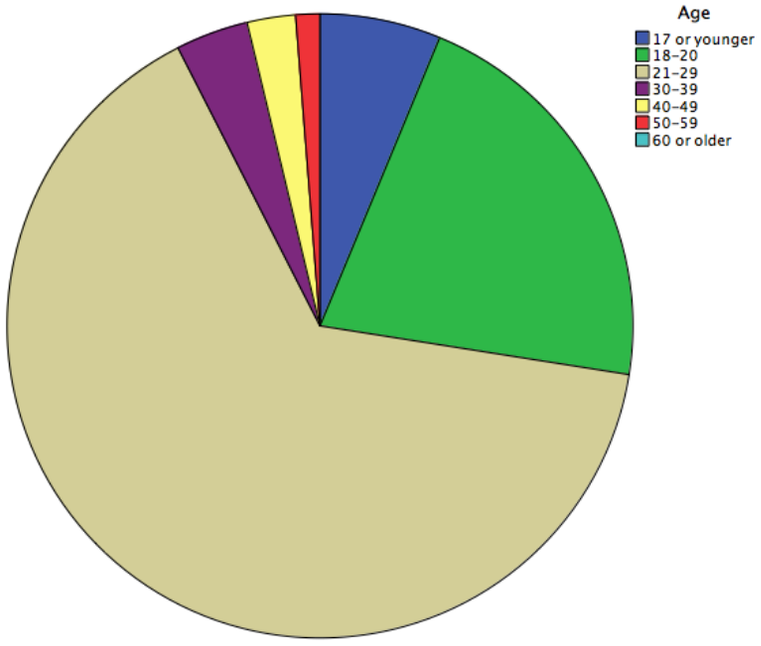
The following section will focus on explaining methods used and results achieved.

6. Research Findings

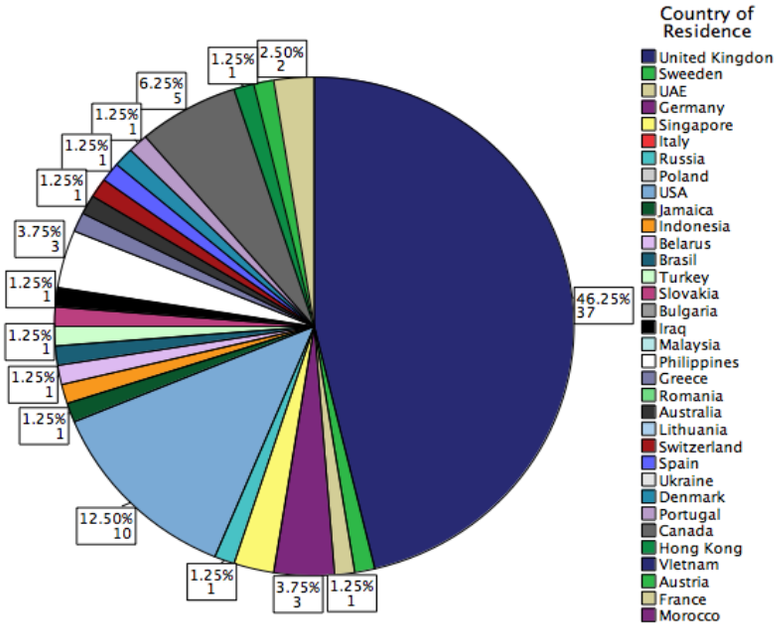
6.1 Sample Description

The sample consists of 57 female respondents, which equals to 70.4% and 23 male respondents equaling to 28.4% showing an evidence of gender distribution deviating from normal; histogram in APPENDIX 3 shows positively skewed distribution, which is considered as a random sampling error.

The age distribution shows a 5 respondents (6.2%) that are 17 or younger; 17 respondents (21%) between ages of 18-20; 52 respondents (64.2%) between ages of 21-29; 3 respondents (3.7%) between the age of 30-39; 2 respondents (2.5%) between the ages of 40-49; and 1 respondent (1.2%) between the age of 50-59. This distribution also deviates from normal with an evidence of positive kurtosis (APPENDIX 3). 64.2% of correspondents are aged 21-29 also known as Gen Y users who are more involved in online activities and social networks, blogs etc. and are in generally characterized as technologically savvy and more immersed in online behaviors (Lester et al., 2006) subsequently the research findings can only apply to users within this age group.

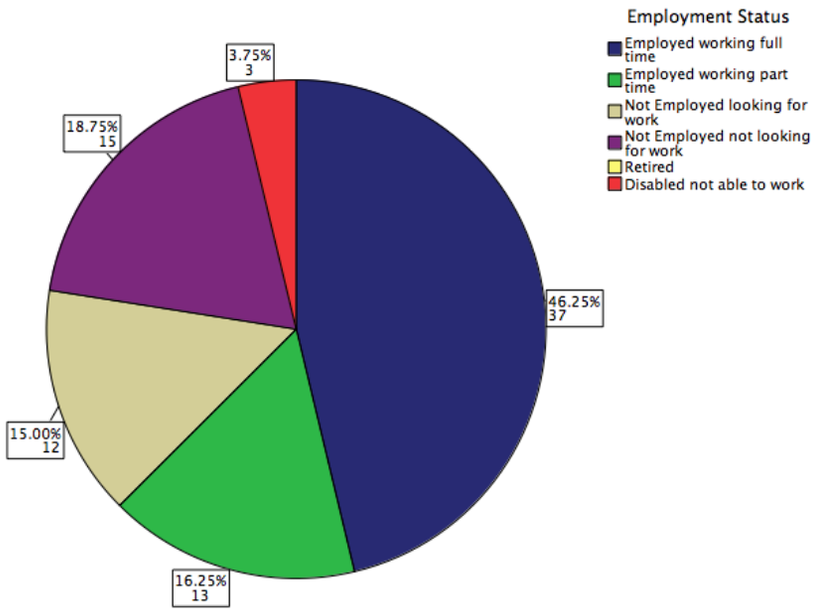


Moreover, since the Lookbook.Nu is a global OC, the respondents that took part in a survey belonged to the countries presented in a Pie Chart below.

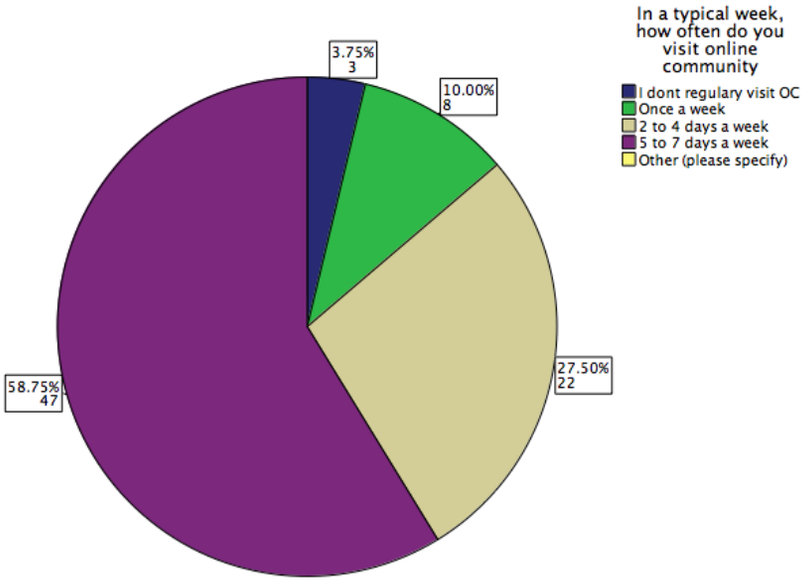


37 respondents (45.7%) reside in the UK; 10 respondents (12.3%) reside in the US; 5 respondents (6.2%) in Canada; 3 respondents (3.7%) reside in Germany; 3 respondents (3.7%) are from Philippines; 2 respondents (2.5%) are from France and 2 (2.5%) are from Singapore; The following countries only had one res 1 respondent (1.2%) each: Sweden, UAE, Russia, Jamaica, Indonesia, Belarus, Brazil, Turkey, Slovakia, Iraq, Greece, Australia, Switzerland, Spain, Denmark, Portugal, Hong Kong and Austria. There is also a prof of uneven distribution amongst participant's country of residence (APPENDIX 3).

Out of all participants who took part in the research 37 (45.7%) are employed and working full time; 15 (18.5%) are not employed and not looking for work; 13 (16%) are employed working part time; 12 (14.8%) are not employed and looking for work and 3 (3.7%) are disabled and not able to work (APPENDIX 3).



In addition, 47 participants (58%) visits an OC 5-7 times per week on average; 22 participants (27.2%) visits an OC 2-4 times per week; 8 participants (9.9%) once per week and 3 participants (3.7%) don't regularly visit online communities. Histogram (APPENDIX 3) of this frequency shows an evidence of negatively skewed distribution.



This demographic description shows a clearer picture of the sample where a pattern is recognized that describes the segments in a better light. It is clear that users aged 21-29 are the most frequent members of OC's and since the Lookbook.Nu is a fashion community its members are predominantly female mainly residing in the UK and the US.

Exploratory Factor and Standard Multiple Regression analysis will further test hypothesis and discover which elements of an OC motivate users to become members.

6.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis

6.2.1 Introduction

The instrument by Lin (2008) containing 29 items provides a good basis for EFA. The research seeks to explore the data in order to test proposed hypothesis with the structure of latent variables and their relationships to each others using principal component analysis (Field, 2009).

Therefore, the technique Principal Component Analysis (PCA) will assist in developing a manageable number of linear combinations within the original variable so that the project is able to capture as much of variability as possible within the available correlations, since the main interest is to develop empirical data set summary. The project will refer to factors set as the set of components; it's most common to use this type of terminology when using the PCA technique (Malhotra and Birks, 2007).

Not all factors are going to be extracted as according to Kaiser's Criterion, the best practice is to extract factors that have eigenvalue larger than 1 in order to show the importance of relative factors that represents a substantial amount of variation. In addition, Scree Plot is also used to show the point of inflection i.e. the place on the graph where the slope of the line drastically changes and it occurs at the factor point therefore, aiding the factor extraction process and making the interpretation easier.

The step following the factor extraction is going to determine to what degree variables

load onto extracted factors and to show a clearer picture of behavioral elements. This can be accomplished with using the rotation of items, which maximizes the number of variables loaded onto one factor. The rotation type used is oblique rotation due to a fact that rotated factors can correlate and are interdependent in theoretical terms (Malhotra and Birks, 2007). Oblique rotation (Direct Oblimin) is able to confirm whether OC elements are correlating together and reveal more of the affect that this correlation may have on overall success of an OC. In addition, the Direct Oblimin is more appropriate as the sample size is small.

Further to this, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling at 0.724 indicates that sample size is adequate to give reliable result, as values between 0.7 and 0.8 produce a good result. In addition, Bartlett's measure shows that there is a relationship between the variables as the test proved high significance with the p value less than .001, and therefore the factor analysis deemed appropriate (Field, 2009). This figure can be found in APPENDIX 4.

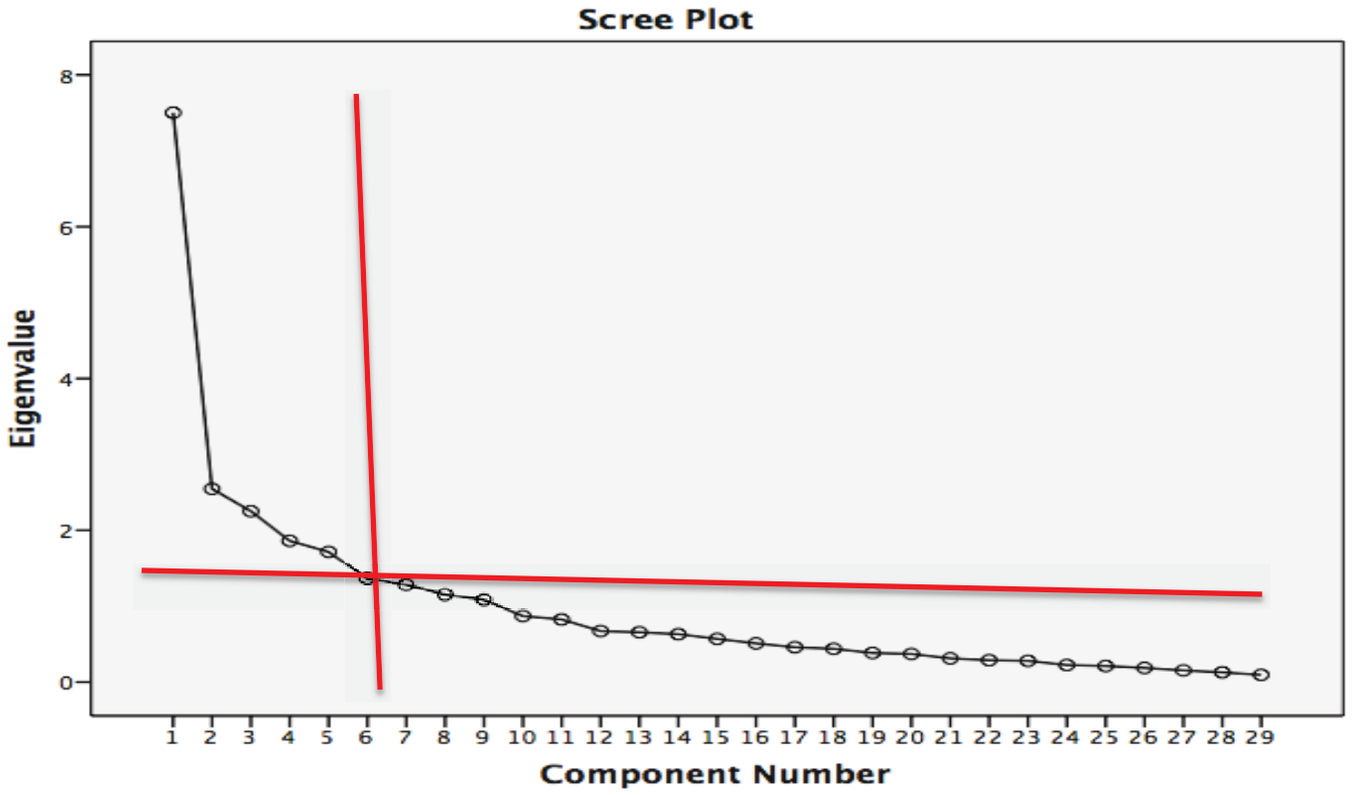
6.2.3 Component Extraction

To determine how many components to extract, the Kaiser's criterion method is selected which extracts all the factors with eigenvalue grater than 1. Total Variance Explained table can be found in the APPENDIX 5.

Based on the Kaiser's Criterion method factors represent the substantial amount of variation; the SPSS extracted 9 components in total with 7.502 as the highest eigenvalue and 1.082 as the lowest eigenvalue. Given the fact that there is less than 30 variables and the average communality after extraction is 0.715 (20.737/29=0.715), making a nine-factor solution the best choice based on the eigenvalue grater than 1 (Field, 2009). The nine-factor solution explains the total of 71.5% of the total variance.

However, the nine-factor component extracted with the Kaiser's Criterion method is considered abundant and therefore the project is going to employ a Scree Plot as a tool to assist in retaining components that capture much more variance over the other

components and to confirm the correct number of components to extract. Scree Plot presented below shows the point of inflection where the lines inclination is dramatically changed or where the 2 straight lines that represent horizontal and vertical part meet. Components to the left of point of infection are extracted therefore according to the Scree Plot five-component solution should be retained.



The unrotated component matrix (Direct Oblimin) revealed uneven item loadings with most variables all above 0.40 loading highly onto the first five components with very few components loading onto sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth component. In addition, most components load onto more than one variable, which show relationship between the components as all components are interrelated to some degree. Therefore this method also confirms that five components would be the most appropriate to retain for
further analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues Total	Initial Eigenvalues % of Variance	Initial Eigenvalues Cumulative %	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings Total	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings % of Variance	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings Cumulative %	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings[a] Total
1	7.502	25.870	25.870	7.502	25.870	25.870	4.384
2	2.547	8.781	34.651	2.547	8.781	34.651	3.278
3	2.251	7.763	42.414	2.251	7.763	42.414	2.012
4	1.861	6.416	48.830	1.861	6.416	48.830	2.786
5	1.715	5.914	54.745	1.715	5.914	54.745	2.320
6	1.356	4.675	59.419	1.356	4.675	59.419	2.862
7	1.274	4.394	63.813	1.274	4.394	63.813	4.063
8	1.148	3.957	67.770	1.148	3.957	67.770	2.805
9	1.082	3.730	71.500	1.082	3.730	71.500	2.504
10	.870	3.000	74.500				
11	.825	2.846	77.346				
12	.672	2.317	79.663				
13	.656	2.263	81.926				
14	.631	2.177	84.104				
15	.569	1.963	86.066				
16	.510	1.759	87.825				
17	.459	1.582	89.407				
18	.439	1.512	90.920				
19	.383	1.322	92.242				
20	.370	1.278	93.519				
21	.313	1.078	94.597				
22	.288	.993	95.590				
23	.279	.963	96.553				
24	.225	.775	97.328				
25	.212	.730	98.058				
26	.187	.643	98.702				
27	.154	.530	99.231				
28	.128	.441	99.673				
29	.095	.327	100.000				

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

In order to make the final decision as to how many components should be extracted the project will refer to the rotated component solution in the Pattern Matrix (APPENDIX 6).

The Pattern Matrix shows the largest item loadings, which resulted in a few suppressed items. The items with factor loadings below 0.512 are suppressed due to the fact that the factor loading value is depended on a sample size, according to Stevens (2002) for the sample of 100 participants loadings of 0.512 are considered significant (Field, 2009). By doing so the increase in the total variance can be expected improving the efficiency of the analysis altogether. As mentioned, while examining the latent psychographics, factor loadings below .0512 were excluded and ideally components that have 3 or more items loading are kept, as otherwise the solution would fail to produce any meaningful insight in relation to all of 29 variables.

Components three, four, six and nine were excluded from the EFA as after eliminating loadings below 0.512, these factors contained only 2 item loadings and therefore were eliminated to further ease the interpretation process. Finally, the five-component solution is selected for the further analysis with four loadings above 0.512 loading onto Component 1, three loadings onto Component 2, three loadings onto Component 5, four loadings onto Component 7 and three loadings onto Components 8.

6.2.4 Component Identification

As discussed the five-component solution is finally selected. To optimize the interpretation process the factor analysis is rerun in SPSS however, the extraction process is slightly different in this time as the Fixed Number of Factors is selected to 5 Factors to Extract. Total Variance Explained is foremost interpreted below:

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues Total	Initial Eigenvalues % of Variance	Initial Eigenvalues Cumulative %	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings Total	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings % of Variance	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings Cumulative %	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings[a] Total
1	7.502	25.870	25.870	7.502	25.870	25.870	5.915
2	2.547	8.781	34.651	2.547	8.781	34.651	4.357
3	2.251	7.763	42.414	2.251	7.763	42.414	2.564
4	1.861	6.416	48.830	1.861	6.416	48.830	2.814
5	1.715	5.914	54.745	1.715	5.914	54.745	3.087
6	1.356	4.675	59.419				
7	1.274	4.394	63.813				
8	1.148	3.957	67.770				
9	1.082	3.730	71.500				
10	.870	3.000	74.500				
11	.825	2.846	77.346				
12	.672	2.317	79.663				
13	.656	2.263	81.926				
14	.631	2.177	84.104				
15	.569	1.963	86.066				
16	.510	1.759	87.825				
17	.459	1.582	89.407				
18	.439	1.512	90.920				
19	.383	1.322	92.242				
20	.370	1.278	93.519				
21	.313	1.078	94.597				
22	.288	.993	95.590				
23	.279	.963	96.553				
24	.225	.775	97.328				
25	.212	.730	98.058				
26	.187	.643	98.702				
27	.154	.530	99.231				
28	.128	.441	99.673				
29	.095	.327	100.000				

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

Total Variance Table for the five factors solution explains total of 54.74% compared to

the 71.5% explained by the nine-factor solution. Component Correlation Matrix (Appendix 7) shows that relationship between components is not extremely high and there is a high probability that the same result can be expected, if the Orthogonal rotation is performed. However, the components are correlating which provides a good basis for using Direct Oblimin rotation.

To further understand the strength of factor loadings and to identify and label extracted components, the project will refer to the Pattern Matrix below:

Pattern Matrix[a]

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
MS1 I am satisfied with my interaction with the online community	.842				
MS3 Overall, I am satisfied with the online community	.838				
SB2 I enjoy being a member of the online community	.755				
MS2 The online community's information content meets my needs	.650				
SB1 I feel a strong sense of belonging to the online community	.630				
SB3 I am very committed to the online community	.568				
SB4 Overall, the online community has a high level of morale	.554				
ML1 I believe it is worthwhile for me to return to use the online community	.417				
SU3 Using the online community gives me the opportunity to recommend ideas to other virtual community members					
IQ4 The online community provides me with all the information I need		-.760			
IQ2 The virtual community provides me with a complete set of information		-.738			
IQ1 The information provided by the online community is accurate		-.642			
IQ5 The information provided by the online community is well formatted	.407	-.587			
SQ1 The online community operates reliably		-.552			
IQ3 The information from the online community always up to date		-.539			
TR5 Online community members try hard to be fair in dealing with each other		-.409			
SU2 Using the online community improves how I am perceived by the other virtual community members		-.405			
TR1 I feel more confident about discussion skills than the other online community members			.716		
TR4 Online community members will do everything within their capacity to help others			.693		
SQ3 It takes too long for the online community to respond to my requests (reverse coded)			.540		

SQ2 The online community allows information to be readily accessible to me		.626	.457
ML3 I am willing to communicate with other community members		-.515	
ML2 I am willing to participate in community operations		-.513	
TR3 Online community members are concerned about what is important to others	.421	-.424	
SU1 Using the online community helps me to obtain respect from other virtual community members		-.409	
SQ4 The online community can be adapted to meet a variety of needs			.710
TR6 Other online community members do not behave consistently			.630
SU4 Using the online community helps me to form warm relationships with other online community members			.535
TR2 The other online community members know a lot about the discussion subject			.523

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 14 iterations.

As previously established in the part one, item loadings below 0.512 are suppressed. The Pattern Matrix shows the factor loadings for each component. The items that highly loaded onto Component 1 (MS1, MS3, SB2, MS2, SB1, SB3, SB4) suggest that these components based on the actual item description can be labeled as "Members Satisfaction"; Component 2 contains (IQ4, IQ2, IQ, IQ5, SQ1, IQ3) and is labeled as "Information Quality"; Component 3 contains (TR1, TR4, SQ3) labeled as "Trust"; Component 4 contains (SQ2, ML3, ML2) labeled as "Members Loyalty"; and finally Component 5 contains (SQ4, TR6, SU4, TR2) labeled as "Social Usefulness".

All the items loaded over 0.500 making it safe to assume that convergent validity is present. In addition there aren't any significant cross loadings present amongst components assuming no discriminant validity. Further correlation between coefficients and variables can be found in the Structure Matrix (APPENDIX 8), (Field, 2009).

6.2.5 Reliability Testing - The Cronbach's Alpha

The selected five-component solution will further be tested for reliability using the Cronbach's Alpha method. The Cronbach's Alpha value is tested for each component separately since the instrument contains a few sub elements.

The Cronbach's Alpha value for the Members Satisfaction is 0.858 (APPENDIX 9); the Information Quality is at 0.788 (APPENDIX 10). Consequently component 1 Members Satisfaction and Component 2 Information Quality scored above 0.7, which is a cut off score for reliability testing, are therefore considered reliable (Field, 2009).

Trust score at 0.597 (APPENDIX 11); Members Loyalty is at 0.733 (APPENDIX 12); Social Usefulness is at 0.599 (APPENDIX 13). The 3 components Trust, Members Loyalty and Social Usefulness are tested unreliable. However, after examining Item-Total Statistics (APPENDIX 12), the item SQ2 loaded below 0.3 and was therefore removed from the factor analysis in order to improve the reliability. This change did not affect component structure after EFA is rerun. However, the reliability of Component 3 (Trust) increased to 0.733, which means that it can be accepted.

The change can be reported in KMO, which currently measures 0.726, total, variance reposted is at 55.6%, which is a slight increase from 54.7%. The final five-component solution contains a minimal Eigenvalue of 1.557 and explains the total variance of 55.66 %, which adjoins recommendations of 60 % (see APPENDIX 14).

The table below summarizes factor loads, eigenvalues, total variance and Cronbach's alpha for each component extracted.

Summary of the components and items, factor loadings, eigenvalue, total variance and component reliability

COMPONENTS AND ITEMS	FACTOR LOADINGS	EIGENVALUE	VARIANCE	
1. MEMBERS SATISFACTION				
MS1 I am satisfied with my interaction with the OC	.842			
MS3 Overall, I am satisfied with an OC	.838			
SB2 I enjoy being a member of the OC	.755			
MS2 The OC's information content meets my needs	.650	7.472	26.685	0.858
SB1 I feel a strong sense of belonging to the OC	.630			
SB3 I am very committed to the OC	.568			
SB4 Overall, the OC has a high level of morale	.554			
2. INFORMATION QUALITY				
IQ4 The online community provides me with all the information I need	-.760			
IQ2 The virtual community provides me with a complete set of information	-.738			
IQ1 The information provided by the online community is accurate	-.642	2.498	8.922	0.788
IQ5 The information provided by the online community is well formatted	-.587			
SQ1 The online community operates reliably	-.552			
IQ3 The information from the online community always up to date	-.539			
3. TRUST				
TR1 I feel more confident about discussion skills than the other online community members	.716			
TR4 Online community members will do everything within their capacity to help others	.693	2.205	7.874	0.597
SQ3 It takes too long for the online community to respond to my requests (reverse coded)	.540			
4. MEMBERS LOYALTY				
ML3 I am willing to communicate with other community members	-.515	1.854	6.621	0.733
ML2 I am willing to participate in community operations	-.513			

5. SOCIAL USFULNESS				
SQ4 The online community can be adapted to meet a variety of needs	**.710**			
TR6 Other online community members do not behave consistently	**.630**	**1.557**	**5.561**	**0.599**
SU4 Using the online community helps me to form warm relationships with other online community members	**.535**			
TR2 The other online community members know a lot about the discussion subject	**.523**			

6.2.6. Component Evaluation

In order to understand the extracted components characteristics this part of the project is going to evaluate the attributes of the items that belong to all five components. In the following section detailed explanation of components attributes, the norms and values of user groups and statistical findings including correlations amongst components is presented in order to further determine what users within the specific groups value the most. This information can be incorporated into OC building strategies to faster achieve the success.

6.2.6.1 Members Satisfaction

The first component is named after the instruments sub element "Members Satisfaction" accredits 26.685% of the total variance. The component indicates that users of this group most value the information content, the interaction with the community and other OC members. Also it is quite important that OCs updates its content on regular basis as well as maintain a high level of morale amongst the members. All of this contributes to Members' Satisfaction, which plays the most important element in an OC's success. In addition, members' satisfaction with an OC increases with their satisfaction with interaction with other OC members as well as the OC host. The satisfaction subsequently increases users visit frequency, which strengthens the positive outcome of member and the host interactions (De Valck et al., 2007). In addition, Lin (2008) empirically proves that members' satisfaction is measured with an OC satisfying their social needs, information adequacy and an overall satisfaction with the OC. Accordingly there is a strong belief that users satisfaction leads to the increased motivation to visit an OC more frequently which

subsequently increases their loyalty to an OC. There seems to be a positive correlation amongst all items apart from Information Quality and Members Satisfaction, which means that if both of these components increase in value, the Members Satisfaction will not necessarily increase with them. However, high correlation amongst all items shows that Members Satisfaction plays an important element in an OC's success. The 3rd component "Trust" has a low loading with .093 and we can say that this factor doesn't affect the member satisfaction to a large degree. (Appendix 8 contains Structure Matrix table). According to project findings Members Satisfaction plays the most important part in determining the success of an OC and its safe to accept the first proposed hypothesis:

H1. The success of an online community will depend on member's satisfaction

6.2.6.2 Information Quality

Second component is equivalent to 8.92% the total variance is the "Information Quality". This component is present in OC's that demonstrate that content is accurate and complete and suits users needs. Information quality is argued to influence users satisfaction and willingness to participate which ultimately leads to their loyalty to an OC. This component determines users intention to continue using an OC and therefore is an important element in determining OC's success (Zheng et al., 2013). Information Quality is highly correlated with "Members Satisfaction" at -0.254 however the correlation is negative which means that if the quality of information improves, the members satisfaction will not consequently increase. Information Quality correlated positively with Members Loyalty and its safe to assume that members loyalty is affected by the information quality of an OC. Similar to this, many previous researchers also argued that the quality and quantity of the information on its own is not sufficient to make users to return to an OC. The information offered needs to be seen as a beneficial and valuable for users (Butler, 2001) however, Gu et al., (2007) confirmed that the users associate OC's as valuable based on the number of high-quality postings, which can users consider beneficial since it meets their needs. In addition, high quality information enhances OC's reputation and members loyalty and is considered to be an important tool for attracting and retaining members (Lin, 2008). Judging by the scores and theory Information Quality also plays an

important part in an OC's success. Therefore, the project is going to accept the fourth proposed hypothesis:

H4. The success of an online community will depend on information/content quality

6.2.6.3 Trust

Moreover, component three stands for "Trust" with 7.87% of the total variance. These users are concerned about what is important to others, they will go out their way to assist other members', and will always remain fair in dealing with each others. The element of trust is a third factor that influences OC's success. OCs that are able to give an idea of high quality information and prove competent of recognizing users needs are more likely to gain members' trust. Users satisfaction with an OC is also based on their past experiences of interaction with an OC and if the interaction was negative this may impact their commitment via trust (Wu et al., 2010). There seems to be a relatively high correlation between "Trust" and "Social Usefulness" at 0.121 and rather low and negative correlation between "Trust" and "Members Loyalty" at -.048, which indicates that Trust doesn't affect Members Loyalty. A negative correlation between Trust and Information is also present -.074.

Since Members Loyalty and Satisfaction are the crucial elements that determine OC's success and Trust testing unreliable based on Cronbach's Alpha, the third hypothesis **H3. The success of an online community will depend on users trust** is rejected.

6.2.6.4 Members Loyalty

The fourth component labeled "Members' Loyalty" responsible for the total variance of 6.62% indicates that loyal users are willing to participate in OC's operations and are willing to communicate with other members. Users continuous commitment and various social norms including the attitude towards an OC as an entity positively influence users loyalty behavior within the community (Lin, 2010). Members' Loyalty correlation with other components isn't significantly high as correlations amongst other components. The highest correlation is between "Members Loyalty" and "Information Quality" at 0.150 which the research assumed in the literature review,

which mentioned that highly satisfied members are more likely to interexchange information on regular basis which ultimately leads to satisfaction and loyalty (Royo-Vela and Casamassima, 2011). Another significant correlation in the fourth component is the correlation between "Members Loyalty" and "Members Satisfaction" at -0.188, as the literature mentioned earlier that Satisfaction and Loyalty don't come together as satisfaction on its own is not enough to keep members loyal to an OC (Plangger, 2012). The satisfaction with an OC leads to members loyalty. OC's that retain loyal members who eventually start acting as its advocates are considered successful (Hsiu-Fen, 2008). The project will according to these facts therefore, accept fifth proposed hypothesis that:

H5. The success of an online community will depend on member's loyalty

6.2.6.5 Social Usefulness

"Social Usefulness" addresses the fifth component representing 5.56% of the total variance. Users within this group feel that OC and its members can affect how they are perceived by other users and help them to obtain the respect from other OC members. This component had the lowest correlations with other factors and appears unreliable at α0.599. As already mentioned, Social Usefulness represent social support to users which includes mutual respect, recognition and approval amongst users and as well as sense of belonging to a community (Zheng et al., 2013); preliminarily social usefulness is perceived when users initially consume information supplied by an OC. This is also expressed with the highest correlation between "Social Usefulness" and "Members Satisfaction" at 0.230 and the second highest between "Social Usefulness" and "Trust". However, "Social Usefulness" negatively correlates with "Information Quality" at -.077 and "Members Loyalty" -.088. According to these correlations it can be safe to assume that users are more likely to value satisfaction and trust within the social usefulness context over the information quality and members loyalty. Based on this information, the project will therefore reject fourth proposed hypothesis that states that **H4. The success of an online community will depend on users' social usefulness**

The Component Correlation Matrix below provides more information on correlation

coefficients amongst extracted variables.

Component Correlation Matrix

Component	1	2	3	4	5
1	**1.000**	**-.254**	**.093**	**-.188**	**.230**
2	**-.254**	**1.000**	**-.074**	**.150**	**-.077**
3	**.093**	**-.074**	**1.000**	**-.048**	**.121**
4	**-.188**	**.150**	**-.048**	**1.000**	**-.088**
5	**.230**	**-.077**	**.121**	**-.088**	**1.000**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

To summarise, according to EFA and Reliability analysis 3 hypotheses in this study should be accepted:

H1. The success of an online community will depend on member's satisfaction
H4. The success of an online community will depend on information/content quality
H5. The success of an online community will depend on member's loyalty

The other 2 components "Trust" and "Social Usefulness" tested unreliable and therefore are rejected.

To decide whether or not selected hypothesis are to be accepted, the project will further look into the relationship amongst multiple variables using Standard multiple regression analysis.

6.3 Standard Multiple Regression Analysis

6.3.1 Introduction

EFA confirmed that following hypothesis are accepted by the project therefore, this part

of regression analysis will look into the level and the degree to which dependent variable is affected by the independent variables. The hypotheses below have been ranked by the importance as confirmed in EFA.

H1. The success of an online community will depend on member's satisfaction
H4. The success of an online community will depend on information/content quality
H5. The success of an online community will depend on member's loyalty

Various literature has confirmed that OC user commitment i.e. willingness to take part in OC operations leads to the loyalty to an OC which is the most prevailing asset and it can lead to the development of a long term relationship amongst users, which ultimately leads to an OC's success. (Laroche et al. 2012; Sangwan, 2005). The attachment to an OC (users commitment) is especially important, as members that feel committed are very likely to develop positive attitude that leads to the loyalty towards an OC (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

Based on this theory, Members Loyalty (ML3, ML2) is selected as a dependent variable or an outcome to assist in determining the variance between independent variables or predictors. Therefore all five previously extracted components are going to be further tested with standard multiple regression analysis against the outcome variable:

Given the fact that the sample is relatively small and the standard multiple regression analysis require 15 participants per predictor for a reliable equitation (Stevens, 1996), the predictors are grouped as follow:

- MEMBERS SATISFACTION TOTAL SCORE: MS1, MS3, SB2, MS2, SB1, SB3 SB4,
- INFORMATION QUALITY TOTAL SCORE: IQ4, IQ2, IQ1, IQ5, SQ1, IQ3
- TRUST TOTAL SCORE: TR1, TR4, SQ3
- SOCIAL USFULNESS TOTAL SCORE: SQ4, TR6, SU4, TR2

Prior to running the analysis in SPSS all variables are checked for outliers to ensure the accuracy of analysis.

This part of the project is focused on exploring the individual impact Member's s Satisfaction; Information Quality, Trust, Members' Loyalty and Social Usefulness have on the commitment to an OC.

Standard Multiple Regression is used to assess the ability of 4 control measures (Members Satisfaction, Information Quality, Trust, Social Usefulness) to predict members Loyalty to an OC.

6.3.2 Preliminary Analysis

Preliminary analysis were conducted to ensure that no violation of the assumption of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity.

The correlation is present amongst Members satisfaction and Members Loyalty at .467 and Social Usefulness and Members Loyalty at .324. Other predictors correlated below .3 with Trust scoring quite low at .003 and Information Quality at .178, which is slightly higher. The correlation amongst predictors is below .7 therefore all variables will be retained fur further analysis (Appendix 15).

The tolerance value for each predictor is Member Satisfaction at .729, Information Quality .835 Trust at .874 and Social Usefulness at .867, which is not less than .10 therefore, no violation on the multicollinearity assumption. This is also supported by a VIF value, which is Member Satisfaction at 1.371, Information Quality 1.197, Trust at 1.145 and Social Usefulness at 1.153, which is below the cut off point of 10 (Appendix 16)

The Normal P-P Plot suggests that there is no major deviation from normality and the Scatterplot revealed that there is a perfect linear relationship amongst all cases (APPENDIX 17).

The case with the largest Mahal Distance value appeared to be at 17.14, which is below the critical value of 18.47 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013) showing no outliers present. In addition, maximum Cook's Distance at .337 also suggests no major problems (APPENDIX 18).

6.3.3 Model Evaluation

The model, which includes predictors Social Usefulness, Information Quality, Trust and Member Satisfaction, explains 28.7% of the variance in Members Loyalty. Since the sample is small the Adjusted R Square value of 24.9% is reported to provide a better estimation of the true population value.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	**.536[a]**	**.287**	**.249**	**1.092**

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Usefulness Total Score, Information Quality Total Scores, Trust Total Scores, Member Satisfaction Total Scores

b. Dependent Variable: Members loyalty Total Scoe

In addition, the model reaches statistical significance, as the multiple R in the population equals 0. The table below provides more information regarding models significance (Sig. = .000, p<.005).

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	**36.066**	**4**	**9.017**	**7.562**	**.000[b]**
	Residual	**89.421**	**75**	**1.192**		
	Total	**125.487**	**79**			

a. Dependent Variable: Members loyalty Total Score

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Usefulness Total Score, Information Quality Total Scores , Trust Total Scores, Member Satisfaction Total Scores

6.3.4 Predictor Evaluation

The data in the table below assists in comparing the contribution of Members Satisfaction, Information Quality, Trust and Social Usefulness towards Members Loyalty.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B Lower Bound	95.0% Confidence Interval for B Upper Bound	Correlations Zero-order	Correlations Partial	Correlations Part	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance	Collinearity Statistics VIF
1	(Constant)	**3.241**	**1.151**		**2.816**	**.006**	**.949**	**5.534**					
	Member Satisfaction Total Scores	**.142**	**.035**	**.459**	**4.018**	**.000**	**.072**	**.213**	**.467**	**.421**	**.392**	**.729**	**1.371**
	Information Quality Total Scores	**-.005**	**.039**	**-.013**	**-.119**	**.905**	**-.082**	**.073**	**.178**	**-.014**	**-.012**	**.835**	**1.197**
	Trust Total Scores	**-.127**	**.067**	**-.198**	**-1.898**	**.062**	**-.261**	**.006**	**.003**	**-.214**	**-.185**	**.874**	**1.145**
	Social Usefulness Total Score	**.147**	**.066**	**.235**	**2.241**	**.028**	**.016**	**.278**	**.324**	**.251**	**.218**	**.867**	**1.153**

a. Dependent Variable: Members loyalty Total Score

The largest beta coefficient .459 belongs to Members Satisfaction making this variable contribute the most towards explaining the Members Loyalty outcome, when the variance explained by all other predictors in this model is controlled for. Social usefulness is another predictor with the second largest beta coefficient at .235 that contributes towards explaining the outcome. Information Quality proved significantly less at -.013 indicating smaller unique contribution. In addition, Trust scored -.198, which again contributed less towards Members Loyalty. Interestingly only Members Satisfaction made a unique and statistically significant contribution to the prediction of Member Loyalty score (Sig. value at 000, < .05) and all the other predictors tested statistically insignificant.

Members Satisfaction uniquely explains 15% (Part .392 squared) of the variance in Members Loyalty scores, where Information Quality explains 0.1% (Part .012 squared),

Trust explains 3% (Part .185 squared) and Social Usefulness explains 5% (Part .218 squared) of a unique contribution.

To conclude the model proposed that variables Members Satisfaction, Information Quality, Trust and Social Usefulness explain 29% (refer to the Model Summary table above) of the variance in Members Loyalty. Out of all 4 predictors Members Satisfaction makes the largest unique contribution (beta = .459) with any other predictors are not making any statistically significant contributions. In addition, the project can make a prediction based on Standardized Coefficients that if predictors Members Satisfaction and Social Usefulness increase, the outcome Members Loyalty will also increase since their positively correlate. On the other hand predictors Trust and Information Quality increase would not contribute towards Members Loyalty increase due to negative correlation amongst variables. Fielding & Hogg (2000) confirm that individuals that find OC significant and come to use it as a communication platform where members engage with others are very likely to build friendships with each other's based on shared common interest (Hagel and Armstrong, 1997). In other words satisfied members tend to adapt to existing OC group norms and therefore groups specific thoughts and behaviors become the individuals own which, contributed to members participation and loyalty to an OC.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Findings and Implications

The project focused on exploring OC elements individually with an aim to discover which of the elements contribute towards an OC's success. OC's have existed on the Internet for almost 30 years and are gaining more recognition as an effective approach for user relationship development within a business world (Cothrel, 2000). The project explored the engagement with an OC from users perspective in order to discover the impact on its success.

The study by Lin (2008) has guided OC elements literature exploration incorporating the construct used in the study as a validated scale for further exploration. During the extensive literature review, the project explored the role of key areas such as System Quality, Information Quality, Users Interaction and Social Benefits (Trust & Social Usefulness) and Members Satisfaction and Loyalty (Sense of Belonging, Satisfaction & Loyalty) in order to explain how these individual variables impact the success of an OC. Based on the literature review the following research objective has been derived:

"What elements of an online community, if not all, contribute to its success?"

The research findings suggest that success of an online community will foremost depend on members satisfaction, information/content quality and members loyalty.

The project employed Exploratory Factor Analysis in order to obtain the most influential factors or components from the construct, to understand the relationship amongst the variables. The most important component extracted that credited 26.7% of total variance and tested the most reliable element with α 0.858 is members satisfaction; the Information Quality is the second strongest component with the total of 8.92% variance and reliability of α 0.788 however variables that belong to this component (IQ1, IQ2, IQ3, IQ4, IQ5, SQ3) negatively correlated with the variables of

other components; Trust is the third extracted component that scored the total of 7.87% variance however it was tested with poor reliability at α 0.597 which is below a 0.700 cut of point required for components to be considered reliable; furthermore, Members Loyalty is responsible for 6.62% of the total variance and tested reliable at α 0.733; and finally Social Usefulness is responsible for 5.56% of the total variance however, the reliability tested poor at α 0.599.

EFA confirmed that Members Satisfaction is credible when OC's content is updated on regular basis, the interaction with the community and other OC members is present as well as the high level of morale amongst members. In addition, members' satisfaction with an OC increases with their satisfaction with interaction with other OC members as well as the OC host. The satisfaction subsequently increases users visit frequency, which strengthens the positive outcome of member and the host interactions (De Valck et al., 2007). Online businesses and OC hosts should incorporate these elements when building and maintain an OC. In addition, the host to encourage further discussion should respond to all comments made by users.

The project found a positive correlation amongst all the items apart from Information Quality and Members Satisfaction, this means that if both of these components increase in value, the members satisfaction will not necessarily increase with them. However, high correlation amongst all items shows that Members Satisfaction plays an important element in OC's success.

The next most important element is Information Quality, present in OC's that demonstrate the content is accurate and complete and suits users needs. This element can influence users satisfaction and willingness to participate, which ultimately leads to their loyalty to an OC. Information quality, determines users intention to continue using an OC and therefore is an important element in determining an OC's success (Zheng et al., 2013). This finding shows that the content provided by an OC hosts increases the chances of OC's success. However, this project found that Information

Quality is highly correlated with “Members Satisfaction” at -0.254 however the correlation is negative which means that if the quality of information improves, the members satisfaction will not consequently increase. Information Quality correlated positively with Members Loyalty and its safe to assume that members loyalty is affected by the information quality of an OC. Therefore, online businesses can create loyal members by providing a constant stream of quality content that meets their needs.

The element of Trust concerns itself with users wellbeing and what is important to others. The OC’s that are able to recognize users needs are most likely to gain users trust (Wu et al., 2010). “Trust” and “Social Usefulness” highly correlate at 0.121, however “Trust” and “Members Loyalty” negatively correlate at -.048, which indicates that trust doesn’t affect members loyalty. A negative correlation between Trust and Information is also present -.074. This information shows that OC that maintains high information exchange flow is more likely to improve users trust in an OC>

Members loyalty also plays an important element in OC’s success as loyal user are willing to participate in OC’s operations and communicate with other members. There seems to be a high correlation between members loyalty and information quality at 0.150 assuming that highly satisfied members are more likely to interexchange information on regular basis which ultimately leads to satisfaction and loyalty (Royo-Vela and Casamassima, 2011). Another significant correlation in the fourth component is the correlation between “Members Loyalty” and “Members Satisfaction” at -0.188, as the literature mentioned earlier that Satisfaction and Loyalty don’t come together as satisfaction on its own is not enough to keep members loyal to the community (Plangger, 2012). Therefore OC hosts need to recognize how valuable loyal users are and should provide high quality content to encourage users to interact.

Finally Social Usefulness is present when users are concerned with how they are perceived by other users and it represents social support to users including mutual

respect, recognition and approval amongst users in a community (Zheng et al., 2013). . According item correlations it can be assumed that users are more likely to value satisfaction and trust in this context over the information quality and members loyalty.

According to EFA it is clear that three elements are accepted by the project, however all five components are further evaluated using standard multiple regression method to confirm the relationship amongst each other. The literature confirmed the importance of users commitment and member's loyalty (Laroche et al. 2012; Sangwan, 2005). Therefore, Members loyalty component is selected to act as an outcome in multiple regression analysis.

The model evaluated with the Multiple Regression analysis found that that variables Members Satisfaction, Information Quality, Trust and Social Usefulness explain 29% of the variance in Members Loyalty. Out of all four variables Members Satisfaction makes the largest unique contribution making a prediction based on Standardized Coefficients that if predictors Members Satisfaction and Social Usefulness increase, the outcome Members Loyalty will also increase since they positively correlate. However the increase in variables Trust and Information Quality would not contribute towards Members Loyalty increase due to negative correlation amongst variables.

7.2 Limitations

The project considered elements that lead to OC's success and despite a valuable insight into the subject, it has its limitations. First of all the sample size of 80 participants with the response rate of 12.9% is considered low, based on standard average survey response rate (Couper, 2000). The second limitation is the nature of an OC studies (the Lookbook.nu), which is a global fashion OC where members upload their daily outfits and exchange comments. The content provided is mainly visual therefore, the Information Quality element might have tested differently, should the OC nature have been different. Lastly the project focus on behavioral elements that entice users contribution and might have not considered some elements of successful OC's.

8. Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this project was to empirically determine which elements of an Online Community contribute to its success and what motivates users to engage, exchange information, return on regular basis and most importantly become loyal members. The findings agree with the existing literature in terms of members finding the online community beneficial and valuable to their needs when it offers quality content updated on regular basis, accurate, reliable, when the engagement amongst members is present.

The result implies that member's satisfaction is present when users perceive that the OC offers a high level of valuable and useful content. However, on the contrary to Lin (2008) study that suggests that users who find website design, quality and its functions satisfactory will express their loyalty to an OC, this study suggested that information quality is more important than the system quality since the system quality affect on overall OC success wasn't accepted for further analysis.

The findings present in this project have agreed with the existing theory regarding the literature of online communities and the research expands the knowledge of the studied subject. The key elements findings show a positive relationship amongst member's satisfaction, social usefulness and loyalty, which is consistent with Lin (2008) study. Trust negatively correlated with members loyalty and information quality however, it had a strong connection with social usefulness, which does not significantly influence members loyalty.

8.2 Theoretical Implication

The research focused on exploring all variables of an OC that are able to influence users behavior and interaction. The literature explored mainly focused on individual elements such as information and knowledge sharing or social characteristics of an OC. Therefore, future studies that look into OC characteristics that endeavor to

increase users willingness to interact and contribute and understand how to retain users can be useful to enhance the understanding of the predictors of member commitment patterns. The OC's success can be measured by behavioral indicators such as regularity of visits, number of active users, members and continuity of membership (Kraut and Resnick, 2011; Preece, 2001) as well as members psychological dimension such as users satisfaction, sense of belonging and users identification with an OC (Blanchard and Markus, 2004). Theoretical implication of this study suggests that members' satisfaction is credible when the OC offers valuable content updated on regular basis, when the interaction is present amongst OC members and high morale is maintained by the host subsequently increasing users visit frequency, which strengthens the positive outcome of member and the host interactions (De Valck et al., 2007).

As the project confirmed member's satisfaction and loyalty are two main indicators of users commitment to an OC and the future research should focus on evaluation of these elements to further explore and understand the influencers that promote users contribution. The study makes a theoretical contribution by providing insights into a relationship between variables, improving theoretical understanding of users motivation to engage with an OC however, despite many conceptual frameworks available, further studies should be performed to purely understand members satisfaction with hopes to further enrich the existing literature and provide even more insights into the behavioral elements behind users motivation to engage with an OC.

8.3 Managerial Implications

Regarding the managerial perspective, online businesses and OC hosts should incorporate the variables confirmed in the research when building and maintain an OC. In addition, the host to encourage further discussion should respond to all comments made by users. The number of OC hosted by businesses is growing at a fast rate and many are seeking to establish a place on the Internet where consumers are able to communicate to other consumers about their brand preferences and desires. Various companies and brands can capitalize on the OC information exchange by incorporating it into their strategy. The ultimate goal here is to increase brands equity through OC's

loyal members and reinforce their brands. In the study designed by the Sloane Review, they confirmed that the increased communication in an OC consequently increases user's confidence. They found that OC members who obtained higher level of relevant and frequent information experienced increased feelings of certainty and developed confidence and strong relationship with brands. MIT Sloan Management Review (2012) also found that to encourage users to purchase certain associated brands, OC host must provide a space for relevant communications amongst users, information exchange must be frequent, relevant and timely (MIT Sloan Management Review, 2012).

OC hosts need to ensure that reliable and relevant information is offered on a frequent basis, the conversation amongst users needs to be acknowledged and encouraged. The conversation should be kept on topic to ensure that it doesn't does not get cluttered with irrelevant information that is not of interest to general readership. Personal relationship building in addition, should also be encouraged to ensure member's satisfaction at all times (Ren et al., 2007).

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APPENDIXE'S

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

INFORMATION QUALITY

IQ1: The information provided by the online community is accurate.
IQ2: The virtual community provides me with a complete set of information.
IQ3: The information from the online community always up to date.
IQ4: The online community provides me with all the information I need.
IQ5: The information provided by the online community is well formatted.

SYSTEM QUALITY

SQ1: The online community operates reliably.
SQ2: The online community allows information to be readily accessible to me.
SQ3: It takes too long for the online community to respond to my requests (reverse coded).
SQ4: The online community can be adapted to meet a variety of needs.

TRUST

TR1: I feel more confident about discussion skills than the other online community members.
TR2: The other online community members know a lot about the discussion subject.
TR3: Online community members are concerned about what is important to others.
TR4: Online community members will do everything within their capacity to help others.
TR5: Online community members try hard to be fair in dealing with each other.
TR6: Other online community members do not behave consistently (reverse coded).

SOCIAL USFULNESS

SU1: Using the online community helps me to obtain respect from other virtual community members.
SU2: Using the online community improves how I am perceived by the other virtual community members.
SU3: Using the online community gives me the opportunity to recommend ideas to other online community members.
SU4: Using the online community helps me to form warm relationships with other online community members.

SENSE OF BELONGING

SB1: I feel a strong sense of belonging to the online community.
SB2: I enjoy being a member of the online community.
SB3: I am very committed to the online community
SB4: Overall, the online community has a high level of morale.

MEMBERS' SATISFACTION

US1: I am satisfied with my interaction with the online community.
US2: The online community's information content meets my needs.
US3: Overall, I am satisfied with the online community.

MEMBERS' LOYALTY

ML1: I believe it is worthwhile for me to return to use the online community.
ML2: I am willing to participate in community operations.
ML3: I am willing to communicate with other community members.

Appendix 2

Questionnaire Invitation

Dear participant,

Thank you for participating in our survey. Your feedback is important.

This survey is part of my dissertation which intends to provide more insight into what elements of an Online Community motivate users to interact with the community and its members.

Online community can be defined as a group of people who share a common interest and communicate the same through electronic mailing lists, chat rooms, Internet user groups or any other computer-mediated mechanism such as blogs, social media pages and groups.

Please only take part in this survey if you have previously engaged with an online community at least once or more. The engagement is considered by positing comments or asking for advice on any topic of interest. Your answers should be based on the online community of your choice and this is usually the community that you engage most with or that you visit on regular basis. The online community should be based on the topic of your choice.

Please be as honest as possible when answering following questions.

Survey shouldn't take longer than 15 minutes to complete and your help would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks in advance.

Tania Bunic

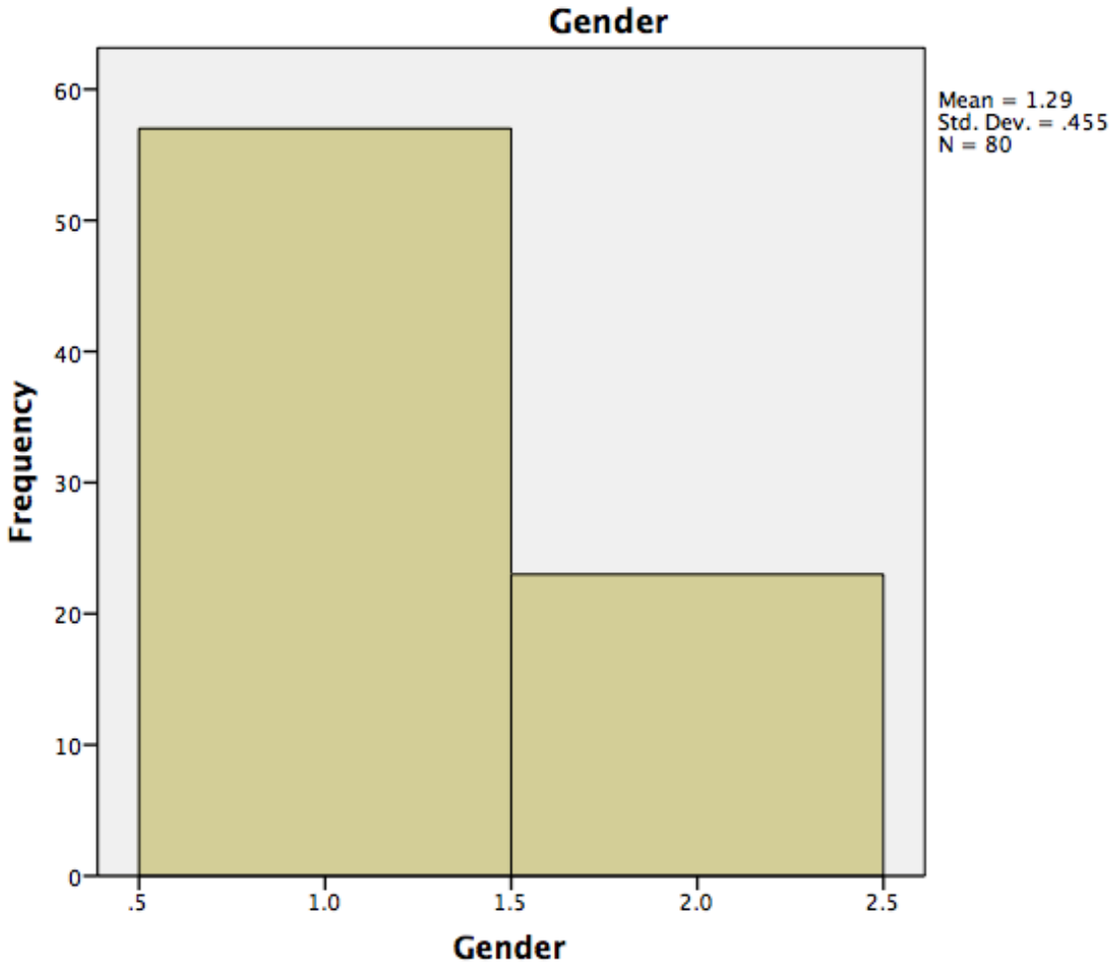
University of East London

Appendix 3

Gender Frequency Table and Histogram

Gender

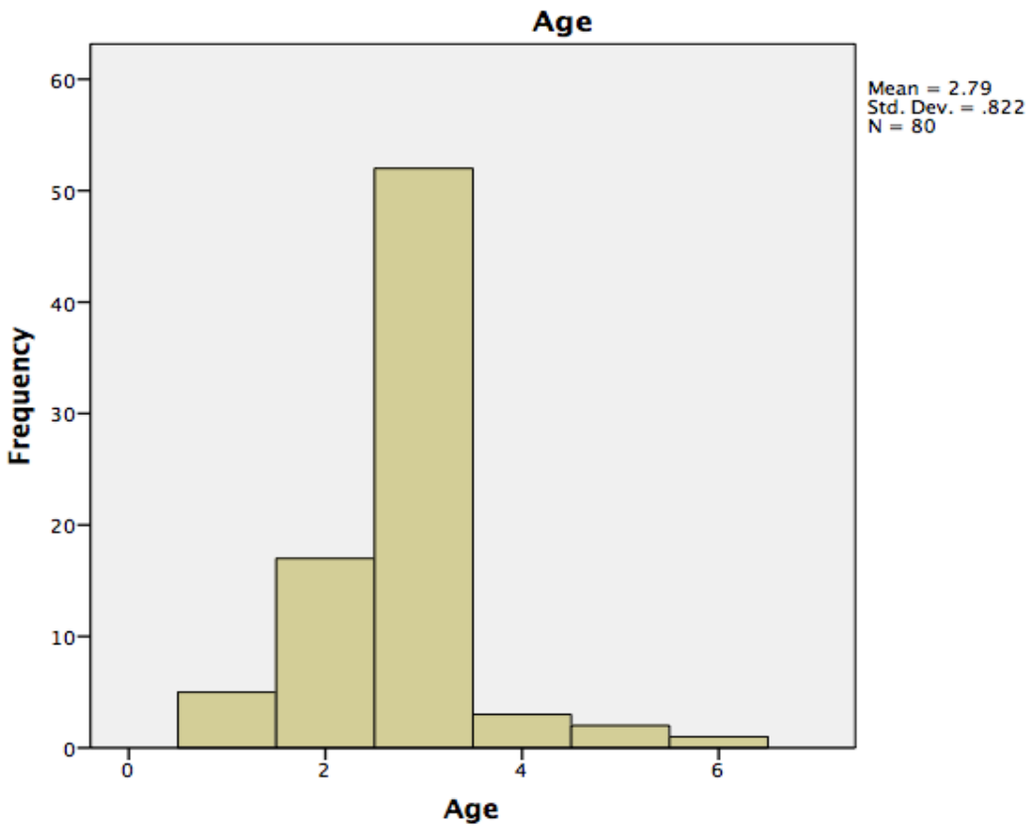
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	57	70.4	71.3	71.3
	Male	23	28.4	28.7	100.0
	Total	80	98.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.2		
Total		81	100.0		



Age Frequnecy Table and Histogram

Age

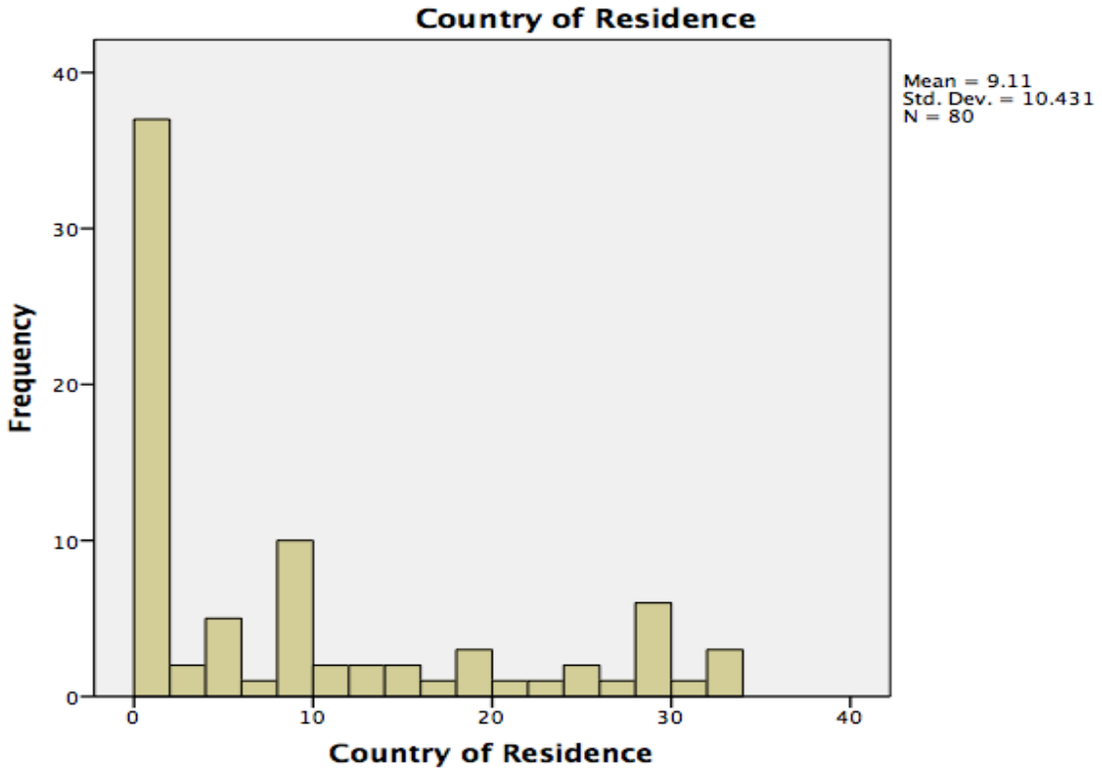
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	17 or younger	5	6.2	6.3	6.3
	18-20	17	21.0	21.3	27.5
	21-29	52	64.2	65.0	92.5
	30-39	3	3.7	3.8	96.3
	40-49	2	2.5	2.5	98.8
	50-59	1	1.2	1.3	100.0
	Total	80	98.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.2		
Total		81	100.0		



Country of Residence Frequency Table and Histogram

Country of Residence

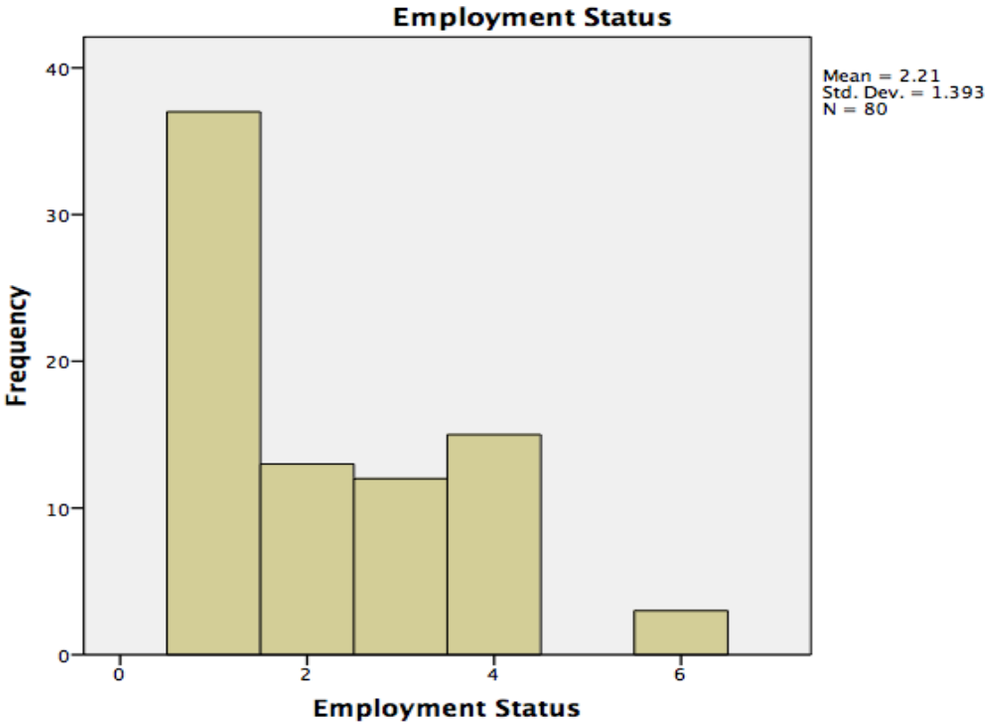
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	United Kingdon	37	45.7	46.3	46.3
	Sweeden	1	1.2	1.3	47.5
	UAE	1	1.2	1.3	48.8
	Germany	3	3.7	3.8	52.5
	Singapore	2	2.5	2.5	55.0
	Russia	1	1.2	1.3	56.3
	USA	10	12.3	12.5	68.8
	Jamaica	1	1.2	1.3	70.0
	Indonesia	1	1.2	1.3	71.3
	Belarus	1	1.2	1.3	72.5
	Brasil	1	1.2	1.3	73.8
	Turkey	1	1.2	1.3	75.0
	Slovakia	1	1.2	1.3	76.3
	Iraq	1	1.2	1.3	77.5
	Philippines	3	3.7	3.8	81.3
	Greece	1	1.2	1.3	82.5
	Australia	1	1.2	1.3	83.8
	Switzerland	1	1.2	1.3	85.0
	Spain	1	1.2	1.3	86.3
	Denmark	1	1.2	1.3	87.5
	Portugal	1	1.2	1.3	88.8
	Canada	5	6.2	6.3	95.0
	Hong Kong	1	1.2	1.3	96.3
	Austria	1	1.2	1.3	97.5
	France	2	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	80	98.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.2		
Total		81	100.0		



Employment Status Frequency Table and Histogram

Employment Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Employed working full time	37	45.7	46.3	46.3
	Employed working part time	13	16.0	16.3	62.5
	Not Employed looking for work	12	14.8	15.0	77.5
	Not Employed not looking for work	15	18.5	18.8	96.3
	Disabled not able to work	3	3.7	3.8	100.0
	Total	80	98.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.2		
Total		81	100.0		



Appendix 4

KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		**.724**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	**1055.440**
	df	**406**
	Sig.	**.000**

Appendix 5

Component Matrix Table

Component Matrix[a]

	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Overall, I am satisfied with the online community	**.726**								
I believe it is worthwhile for me to return to use the online community	**.693**								
The online community's information content meets my needs	**.682**								
I enjoy being a member of the online community	**.676**								
Online community members try hard to be fair in dealing with each other	**.665**								
I feel a strong sense of belonging to the online community	**.644**						**-.435**		
The information provided by the online community is well formatted	**.617**								
I am satisfied with my interaction with the online community	**.604**								
Using the online community gives me the opportunity to recommend ideas to other virtual community members	**.583**						**-.405**		
I am very committed to the online community	**.578**								
Overall, the online community has a high level of morale	**.535**								
The virtual community provides me with a complete set of information	**.527**	**-.493**							
Using the online community helps me to obtain respect from other virtual community members	**.524**								
I am willing to communicate with other community members	**.523**			**-.415**					
Online community members are concerned about what is important to others	**.499**							**-.440**	
The other online community members know a lot about the discussion subject	**.498**								
I am willing to participate in community operations	**.461**			**-.423**					
The information from the online community always up to date	**.441**			**.430**					

The online community provides me with all the information I need		**-.592**						
The information provided by the online community is accurate		**-.440**						
Using the online community helps me to form warm relationships with other online community members	**.416**	**.434**						
I feel more confident about discussion skills than the other online community members			**.626**					
Online community members will do everything within their capacity to help others	**.538**		**.601**					
The online community allows information to be readily accessible to me				**.636**				
It takes too long for the online community to respond to my requests (reverse coded)				**.423**				
The online community can be adapted to meet a variety of needs					**.511**		**-.409**	
Using the online community improves how I am perceived by the other virtual community members						**-.456**		
Other online community members do not behave consistently			**.424**				**.438**	
The online community operates reliably	**.497**	**-.411**						**.517**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 9 components extracted.

Appendix 6

Pattern Matrix Table

Pattern Matrix[a]

	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
MS1 I am satisfied with my interaction with the online community	.807								
MS2 The online community's information content meets my needs	.746								
MS3 Overall, I am satisfied with the online community	.696								
SB4 Overall, the online community has a high level of morale	.670								
IQ3 The information from the online community always up to date	.439								
IQ4 The online community provides me with all the information I need		-.860							
IQ2 The virtual community provides me with a complete set of information		-.765							
IQ1 The information provided by the online community is accurate		-.664							
SQ3 It takes too long for the online community to respond to my requests (reverse coded)			.830						
TR1 I feel more confident about discussion skills than the other online community members			.746						
ML2 I am willing to participate in community operations				-.764					
ML3 I am willing to communicate with other community members				-.703					
ML1 I believe it is worthwhile for me to return to use the online community				-.474					
SQ4 The online community can be adapted to meet a variety of needs					.864				
SQ2 The online community allows information to be readily accessible to me					.611				
TR2 The other online community members know a lot about the discussion subject					.568				
SU2 Using the online community improves how I am perceived by the other virtual community members						-.756			

SU1 Using the online community helps me to obtain respect from other virtual community members			**-.695**		
SB1 I feel a strong sense of belonging to the online community				**-.792**	
SU3 Using the online community gives me the opportunity to recommend ideas to other virtual community members				**-.671**	
SB3 I am very committed to the online community				**-.656**	
SB2 I enjoy being a member of the online community	**.403**			**-.642**	
SU4 Using the online community helps me to form warm relationships with other online community members				**-.445**	
TR3 Online community members are concerned about what is important to others					**-.836**
TR4 Online community members will do everything within their capacity to help others					**-.570**
TR5 Online community members try hard to be fair in dealing with each other					**-.567**
TR6 Other online community members do not behave consistently			**-.484**		**.504**
SQ1 The online community operates reliably					**.752**
IQ5 The information provided by the online community is well formatted					**.666**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 23 iterations.

Appendix 7

Component Correlation Matrix Table

Component Correlation Matrix

Component	1	2	3	4	5
1	**1.000**	**-.254**	**.093**	**-.188**	**.230**
2	**-.254**	**1.000**	**-.074**	**.150**	**-.077**
3	**.093**	**-.074**	**1.000**	**-.048**	**.121**
4	**-.188**	**.150**	**-.048**	**1.000**	**-.088**
5	**.230**	**-.077**	**.121**	**-.088**	**1.000**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

Appendix 8

Structure Matrix Table

Structure Matrix

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
MS3 Overall, I am satisfied with the online community	**.842**				
MS1 I am satisfied with my interaction with the online community	**.790**				
SB2 I enjoy being a member of the online community	**.785**				
MS2 The online community's information content meets my needs	**.705**	**-.462**			
SB1 I feel a strong sense of belonging to the online community	**.681**				
SB3 I am very committed to the online community	**.616**				
ML1 I believe it is worthwhile for me to return to use the online community	**.583**				**.469**
SB4 Overall, the online community has a high level of morale	**.571**				
SU3 Using the online community gives me the opportunity to recommend ideas to other virtual community members	**.488**			**-.406**	**.435**
IQ2 The virtual community provides me with a complete set of information		**-.751**			
IQ4 The online community provides me with all the information I need		**-.729**			
IQ5 The information provided by the online community is well formatted	**.519**	**-.663**			
IQ1 The information provided by the online community is accurate		**-.637**			
SQ1 The online community operates reliably		**-.611**			
IQ3 The information from the online community always up to date	**.409**	**-.565**			
TR5 Online community members try hard to be fair in dealing with each other	**.421**	**-.545**	**.430**	**-.486**	

SU2 Using the online community improves how I am perceived by the other virtual community members		**-.443**			
TR4 Online community members will do everything within their capacity to help others			**.739**		
TR1 I feel more confident about discussion skills than the other online community members			**.718**		
SQ3 It takes too long for the online community to respond to my requests (reverse coded)			**.535**		
ML3 I am willing to communicate with other community members	**.456**			**-.586**	
ML2 I am willing to participate in community operations	**.429**			**-.568**	
SQ2 The online community allows information to be readily accessible to me				**.527**	**.457**
TR3 Online community members are concerned about what is important to others			**.457**	**-.495**	
SU1 Using the online community helps me to obtain respect from other virtual community members				**-.486**	
SQ4 The online community can be adapted to meet a variety of needs					**.677**
TR6 Other online community members do not behave consistently					**.608**
SU4 Using the online community helps me to form warm relationships with other online community members					**.589**
TR2 The other online community members know a lot about the discussion subject					**.576**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

Appendix 9

Cronbach's Alpha for Component 1

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.848	**.858**	**7**

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I am satisfied with my interaction with the online community	**21.84**	**12.568**	**.662**	**.556**	**.821**
The online community's information content meets my needs	**21.66**	**13.619**	**.581**	**.499**	**.834**
Overall, I am satisfied with the online community	**21.55**	**12.048**	**.739**	**.645**	**.809**
I feel a strong sense of belonging to the online community	**22.00**	**11.772**	**.601**	**.516**	**.830**
I enjoy being a member of the online community	**21.56**	**12.376**	**.679**	**.540**	**.818**
I am very committed to the online community	**22.05**	**11.896**	**.569**	**.493**	**.836**
Overall, the online community has a high level of morale	**22.11**	**12.481**	**.508**	**.368**	**.844**

APPENDIX 10

Cronbach's Alpha for Component 2

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.788	**.788**	**6**

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
The information provided by the online community is accurate	**17.71**	**9.600**	**.475**	**.362**	**.772**
The virtual community provides me with a complete set of information	**17.86**	**8.095**	**.608**	**.488**	**.738**
The information from the online community always up to date	**17.61**	**9.025**	**.440**	**.227**	**.779**
The online community provides me with all the information I need	**17.96**	**7.733**	**.620**	**.463**	**.735**
The information provided by the online community is well formatted	**17.69**	**8.369**	**.594**	**.509**	**.742**
The online community operates reliably	**17.66**	**9.011**	**.507**	**.466**	**.763**

APPENDIX 11

Cronbach's Alpha for Component 3

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.581	**.597**	**3**

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I feel more confident about discussion skills than the other online community members	**5.96**	**2.062**	**.531**	**.283**	**.298**
Online community members will do everything within their capacity to help others	**5.86**	**1.968**	**.334**	**.162**	**.582**

It takes too long for the online community to respond to my requests (reverse coded)	**5.95**	**2.175**	**.335**	**.172**	**.562**

APPENDIX 12

Cronbach's Alpha for Component 4

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.387	**.351**	**3**

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
The online community allows information to be readily accessible to me	**7.74**	**1.588**	**-.068**	**.005**	**.733**
I am willing to participate in community operations	**7.84**	**.821**	**.426**	**.335**	**-.154[a]**
I am willing to communicate with other community members	**7.70**	**.820**	**.399**	**.337**	**-.099[a]**

a. The value is negative due to a negative average covariance among items. This violates reliability model assumptions. You may want to check item codings.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.733	**.733**	**2**

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I am willing to participate in community operations	**3.94**	**.515**	**.579**	**.335**	**.**
I am willing to communicate with other community members	**3.80**	**.491**	**.579**	**.335**	**.**

APPENDIX 13

Cronbach's Alpha for Component 5

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.580	**.599**	**4**

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Other online community members do not behave consistently	**11.01**	**2.494**	**.346**	**.129**	**.524**
The other online community members know a lot about the discussion subject	**10.70**	**2.491**	**.415**	**.182**	**.466**
The online community can be adapted to meet a variety of needs	**10.36**	**2.968**	**.404**	**.168**	**.502**
Using the online community helps me to form warm relationships with other online community members	**10.60**	**2.370**	**.328**	**.114**	**.548**

APPENDIX 14

Total Variance Explained Table

Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	**7.472**	**26.685**	**26.685**	**7.472**	**26.685**	**26.685**
2	**2.498**	**8.922**	**35.607**	**2.498**	**8.922**	**35.607**
3	**2.205**	**7.874**	**43.481**	**2.205**	**7.874**	**43.481**
4	**1.854**	**6.621**	**50.102**	**1.854**	**6.621**	**50.102**
5	**1.557**	**5.561**	**55.664**	**1.557**	**5.561**	**55.664**
6	**1.354**	**4.837**	**60.500**			
7	**1.245**	**4.446**	**64.946**			
8	**1.082**	**3.864**	**68.810**			
9	**.986**	**3.523**	**72.333**			
10	**.850**	**3.034**	**75.368**			
11	**.806**	**2.880**	**78.248**			
12	**.656**	**2.344**	**80.592**			
13	**.636**	**2.271**	**82.863**			
14	**.601**	**2.146**	**85.008**			
15	**.523**	**1.867**	**86.875**			
16	**.500**	**1.787**	**88.662**			
17	**.449**	**1.602**	**90.264**			
18	**.404**	**1.444**	**91.708**			
19	**.376**	**1.342**	**93.050**			
20	**.353**	**1.260**	**94.310**			
21	**.297**	**1.060**	**95.370**			
22	**.287**	**1.024**	**96.394**			
23	**.225**	**.804**	**97.197**			
24	**.217**	**.776**	**97.973**			
25	**.187**	**.670**	**98.643**			
26	**.156**	**.557**	**99.199**			
27	**.128**	**.458**	**99.657**			
28	**.096**	**.343**	**100.000**			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

APPENDIX 15

Multiple Regression Correlations Table

Correlations

		Members loyalty Total Score	Member Satisfaction Total Scores	Information Quality Total Scores	Trust Total Scores	Social Usefulness Total Score
Pearson Correlation	Members loyalty Total Score	**1.000**	**.467**	**.178**	**.003**	**.324**
	Member Satisfaction Total Scores	**.467**	**1.000**	**.405**	**.304**	**.315**
	Information Quality Total Scores	**.178**	**.405**	**1.000**	**.132**	**.133**
	Trust Total Scores	**.003**	**.304**	**.132**	**1.000**	**.270**
	Social Usefulness Total Score	**.324**	**.315**	**.133**	**.270**	**1.000**
Sig. (1-tailed)	Members loyalty Total Score	**.**	**.000**	**.057**	**.489**	**.002**
	Member Satisfaction Total Scores	**.000**	**.**	**.000**	**.003**	**.002**
	Information Quality Total Scores	**.057**	**.000**	**.**	**.121**	**.120**
	Trust Total Scores	**.489**	**.003**	**.121**	**.**	**.008**
	Social Usefulness Total Score	**.002**	**.002**	**.120**	**.008**	**.**
N	Members loyalty Total Score	**80**	**80**	**80**	**80**	**80**
	Member Satisfaction Total Scores	**80**	**80**	**80**	**80**	**80**
	Information Quality Total Scores	**80**	**80**	**80**	**80**	**80**
	Trust Toal Scores	**80**	**80**	**80**	**80**	**80**

Social Usefulness Total Score	**80**	**80**	**80**	**80**	**80**

APPENDIX 16

Multiple Regression Coefficients Table

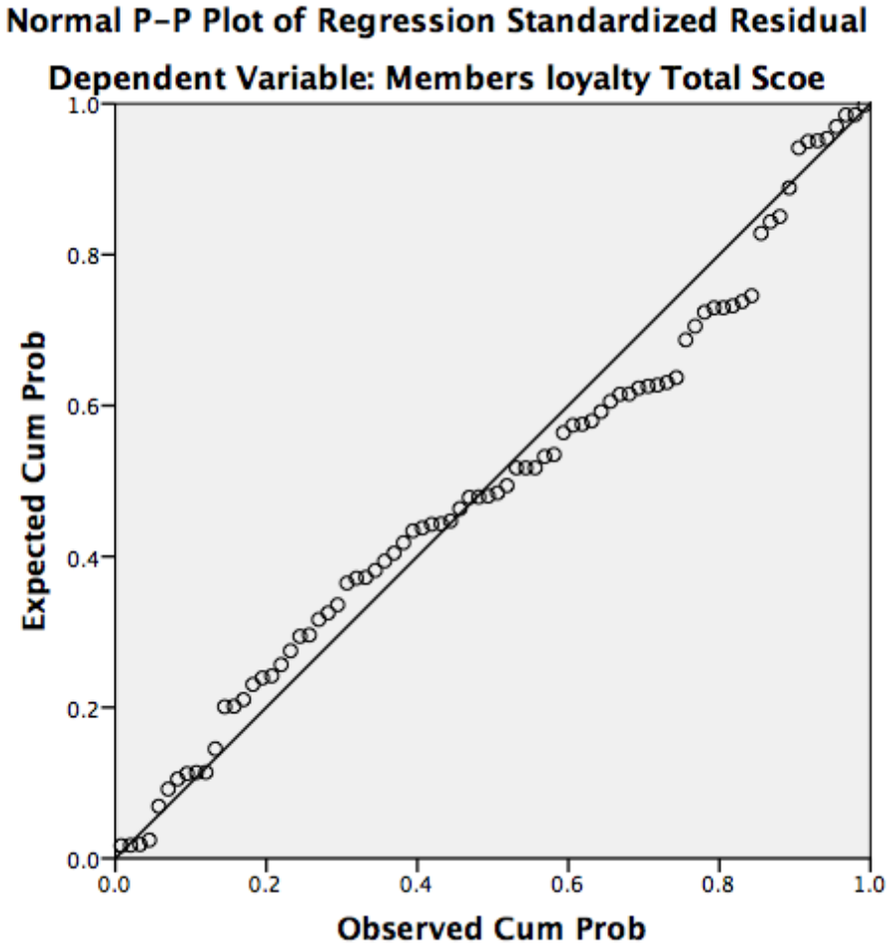
Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	**3.241**	**1.151**		**2.816**	**.006**	**.949**	**5.534**					
	Member Satisfaction Total Scores	**.142**	**.035**	**.459**	**4.018**	**.000**	**.072**	**.213**	**.467**	**.421**	**.392**	**.729**	**1.371**
	Information Quality Total Scores	**-.005**	**.039**	**-.013**	**-.119**	**.905**	**-.082**	**.073**	**.178**	**-.014**	**-.012**	**.835**	**1.197**
	Trust Total Scores	**-.127**	**.067**	**-.198**	**-1.898**	**.062**	**-.261**	**.006**	**.003**	**-.214**	**-.185**	**.874**	**1.145**
	Social Usefulness Total Score	**.147**	**.066**	**.235**	**2.241**	**.028**	**.016**	**.278**	**.324**	**.251**	**.218**	**.867**	**1.153**

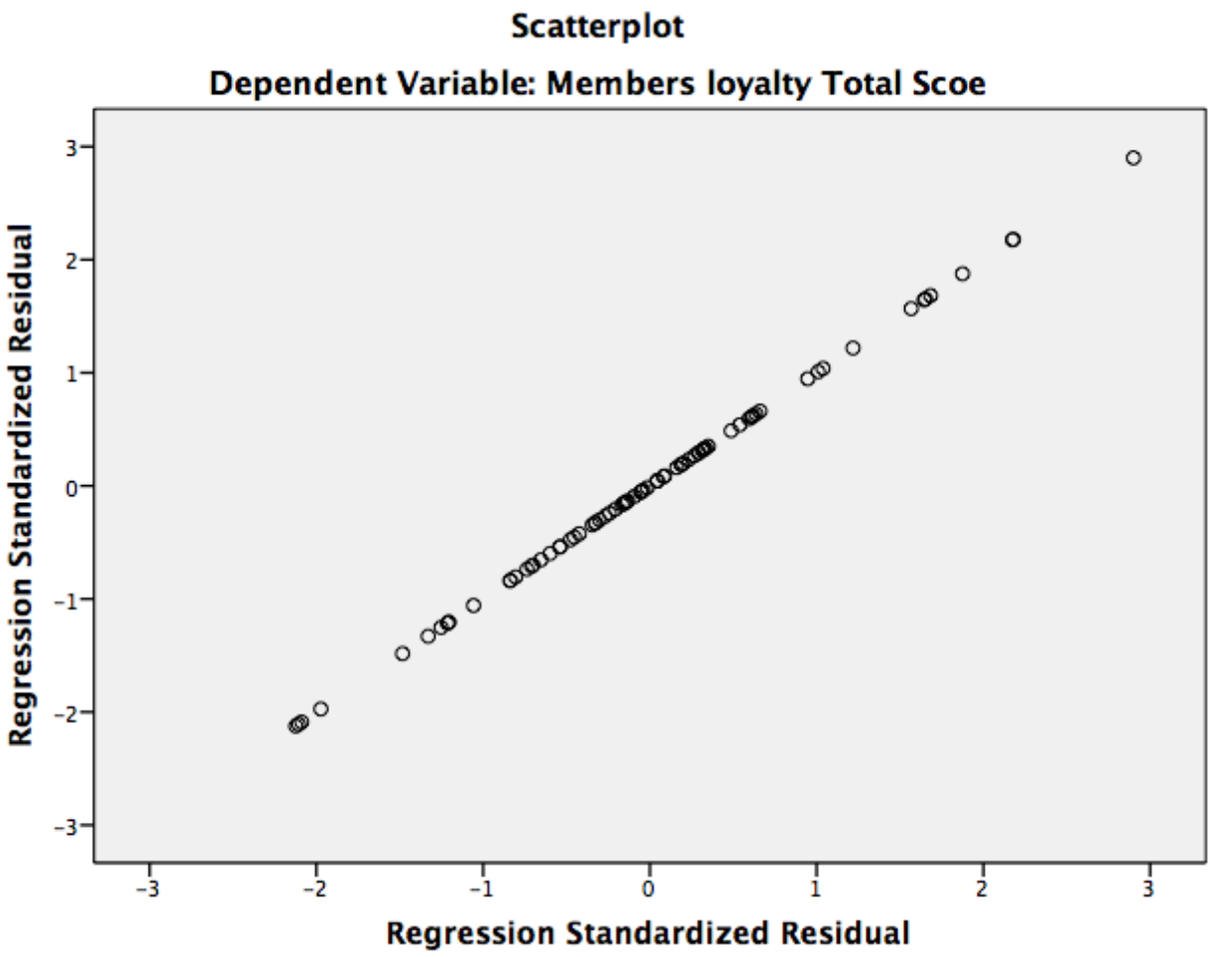
a. Dependent Variable: Members loyalty Total Scoe

APPENDIX 17

Normal P-P Plot



Scatterplot



APPENDIX 18

Multiple Regression Residuals Statistics Table

Residuals Statistics[a]

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	**5.62**	**9.71**	**7.74**	**.676**	**80**
Std. Predicted Value	**-3.134**	**2.915**	**.000**	**1.000**	**80**
Standard Error of Predicted Value	**.124**	**.523**	**.260**	**.084**	**80**
Adjusted Predicted Value	**5.96**	**9.64**	**7.74**	**.682**	**80**
Residual	**-2.319**	**3.167**	**.000**	**1.064**	**80**
Std. Residual	**-2.124**	**2.900**	**.000**	**.974**	**80**
Stud. Residual	**-2.379**	**3.088**	**-.002**	**1.020**	**80**
Deleted Residual	**-2.960**	**3.590**	**-.004**	**1.168**	**80**
Stud. Deleted Residual	**-2.458**	**3.283**	**.001**	**1.041**	**80**
Mahal. Distance	**.035**	**17.144**	**3.950**	**3.357**	**80**
Cook's Distance	**.000**	**.337**	**.021**	**.054**	**80**
Centered Leverage Value	**.000**	**.217**	**.050**	**.042**	**80**

a. Dependent Variable: Members loyalty Total Score

APPENDIX 19

Application of approved Ethics

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS & LAW

Ethical Application for Undergraduate Projects and Postgraduate Dissertations

- **Submission process:**
  - All applications should be submitted online through the Moodle site – **School Research Ethics Committee** (if you find that you do not have access to this site immediately contact the SREC administrator: **TBC**
  - All applications should be uploaded to the SREC POST Moodle Site whether they have been given prior approval by your supervisor or need further approval by SREC.
  - All applications for ethical approval must include the following:
    - A completed **Application Form.** This form includes five sections (A-E). Please ensure that you answer all relevant questions and include the relevant paperwork as requested.
    - **Participant Information Letter** (Appendix 1)
    - Relevant **Consent/Assent Forms** where appropriate (Appendix 2)
    - Where relevant, a **Letter of Permission** from the **Host Organisation/Business** (this must be signed and/or in an email with a verifiable email address). In the case of research in the NHS you must first have clearance for the NHS research and development office: http://www.rdforum.nhs.uk/f44.asp
    - If your project involves overseas travel it is also subject to **'Overseas Travel Approval' and must be approved by the Dean**. Details of this can be found at: http://www.uel.ac.uk/qa/research/fieldwork/
  - Further details on UEL Research Ethics procedures can be found at: http://www.uel.ac.uk/qa/research/

NB: Please ensure that you have read the **School Research Ethics Guidelines 2013-14** notes before completing the form.

Revised October 2014

Application for School Research Ethics Approval

Before completing this form, applicants should read the School Research Ethics Committee Guidance Notes. Sections A to F of this form should not exceed 3 pages using 11pt font size.

1. Applicant Details

Student Name: Tania Bunic

Student ID No: U1340642

Title of Course: Msc International Marketing Management

Dissertation/Project Module Code: MK7227

Supervisor: Dr Aidan Kelly

UEL Email address: u1340642@uel.ac.uk a.j.kelly@uel.ac.uk

2. Project Details

Dissertation/Project Title: The Elements of an Online Fashion Community that influence consumers contribution.
Duration of Dissertation/Project: 10 months

From: Jan 15 to: Sep 15
Project Rationale: (Please provide a brief description of the project, including aims and objectives, rationale, and potential contribution to knowledge) **(Max. 200 words)**
The purpose of the study is to further evaluate online fashion communities in order to better understand what community elements influence consumers to start taking the part in the community; eventually becoming members. The aim is to understand factors that entice content generation and knowledge shared amongst community members which in turn contributes to the degree of social involvement of the community. This is in essence one of the key characteristics. Previous studies have identified that most people simply browse without much contribution to the community. These users hardly ever contribute to the information exchange also known as lurkers and these are reported to make up over 90% of online communities. Therefore, the objective of this study is to break down the key parts of an online fashion community and to find out what motivates lurkers to contribute to information exchange. In addition, online communities are developed around various brands and one part of the research I'm undertaking will evaluate to what extent members loyalty to the community translates in the loyalty to the brand that the community is developed around

Methodology: (Please provide a brief outline of the methodology and research methods to be used, attaching any interview schedules or questionnaires that are to be used. This must include a description of the expected sample/main participants and how this sample will be identified/participants will be selected. Also, you should include information about the precise location where the work will be carried out.) **(Max 150 words)**

Method used is quantitative in form of questionnaires that contain 15 questions related to online fashion community elements i.e. system quality, information validity and convenience to members. The questionnaires is going to be designed and distributed using an online system Survey Monkey to the sample of 200 participant or over that have previously taken a part in an online community. The participants will be both observers and regular contributors and are based in the UK primarily London. Sample will be 18 years or older. The questionnaires will be delivered to the sample that is identified in an online fashion community via social media.

2

3. Ethical Considerations:

3.1 Informed Consent and Anonymity (Please provide details of how informed consent is to be obtained and anonymity of participants is to be protected). **Electronic Consent will be provided to the sample to provide further information on what the research is about and what it aims to achieve in order to better understand the their part in the research. All data will remain anonymous and not shared with anyone.**

3.2 Participant Confidentiality (In order to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998, please provide details of how you will ensure the confidentiality of participants' data, particularly where audio and/or visual data is to be collected) **No personal information will be shared with others and individuals will not be recognizable.**

3.3 Will the project/dissertation involve minors (participants under 18 years old) or other ethically-sensitive methods/issues. **NO**

If carrying out research with minors (although it is strongly advised that you do not) you must obtain parental consent and, where necessary, attach a DBS certificate (previously CRB). For further guidance please see http://www.uel.ac.uk/qa/research/involving-children/, and, http://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check/arranging-checks-on-an-employee.

3.4 Participant Withdrawal/De-Briefing protocol. Please describe briefly the protocol for participant withdrawal from the research and de-briefing of participants once the research is completed. (will participants/participant organizations be given an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the interview and/or request a copy of the final report?) **Participants will have full contact details to contact during and after completion of the study. The copy of the study can be available to anyone who takes part in it.**

3.5 Researcher/Participant Welfare. Will either the researcher or participants themselves be exposed to any risks or distress as a consequence of this research? **NO**

If YES please provide details and complete a risk assessment form (see Appendices) (http://www.uel.ac.uk/hrservices/hs/generalriskassessments/

3.6 Will any inducement (eg. monetary or 'in kind') be offered to participants? **NO**

If YES please provide details.

3.7 Will the research involve access to 'commercially-sensitive' or 'restricted' databases? **NO**
(You must ensure that you have the consent of any business/organisation, to access and publish excerpts from any records or information that is not normally available to the public)

If YES please provide details.

3.8 Will the research involve travel away from UEL/overseas travel **NO**

If YES you will need to ensure that you have completed the Overseas Fieldwork Risk Assessment form: http://www.uel.ac.uk/qa/research/fieldwork/. This form must be approved signed by the Dean of RDBS.

3

4. Data security and disposal

In order that the research is conducted in an ethical manner and that all information remain confidential in lie with the 1998 Data Protection Act, It is vital that participant confidentiality is respected and ensured. Assurances must be given to participants that personal details will securely stored and remain anonymous.

Please confirm by ticking the relevant boxes:-

x☐ Research data, codes and all identifying information to be kept in separate locked filing cabinets.

x☐ Access to computer files to be restricted to the research team (normally researcher and supervisor) and accessible by password only.

x☐ There will be no transfer of data to or via a third party.

x☐ All electronic data will undergo secure disposal.

x☐ All hardcopy data will undergo secure disposal.

x☐ In line with the Data Protection Act (1998), **personal data** shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes for which it was collected. In the case of UG and PG dissertations this is usually **1-2 years,** unless otherwise specified.

Please state how long **personal data** will be retained for: **10 months**

5. Other Documentation check-list:

Please include the following documents with your application – please tick ☐.

Participant invitation/information letter	X
Relevant Consent form(s)	X
Assent Forms	☐

Where applicable:

Permission letter from host business/organisation	☐
Overseas Travel/Fieldwork Risk Assessment	☐
Interview schedule/Copy of questionnaire(s)	X

Is ethical clearance required from any other ethics committee? **NO**

If YES, please state the name of the relevant committee(s)/organisation.

4

Declaration:

- I have read the School guidance notes about application for ethical approval. I am aware of my responsibilities and agree to abide by them.
- I agree to inform my project supervisor and the School Research Ethics Committee of any changes to the proposed programme.
- I undertake to abide by accepted ethical principles and appropriate code(s) of practice in carrying out this research.

Student Name and ID No:……Tania Bunic U1340642……

Student Signature:……Tania Bunic……

Date:…05.02.15.

Supervisor Name:……

Signature:……

Date:……

5

APPENDIX 1

Participant Information Letter

Programme of Study: MSc International Marketing Management

Dissertation Title: The Elements of an Online Fashion Community that influence consumer's contribution.

Dear Participant,

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?
The study will provide valuable insight into further development of a fashion online community context hopefully, contributing to already existing literature. The study will also examine system characteristics and social factors elements that influence consumers to contribution to a community.

What will I have to do if I take part?
The study will take place between February and September 2015. In this period participants will be asked to provide answers to questions related to fashion online community elements i.e. system quality, information validity and convenience, trust and social usefulness to members. The questionnaire is going to be designed and distributed using an online system Survey Monkey to the sample of participant that have previously taken a part in an online community. The participants are required to answer Likert Scale based questions where 1 is strongly disagree and 10 strongly agree.

What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?
The risks of this study are minimal. These risks are similar to those you experience when disclosing work-related information to others. The topics in the survey may upset some respondents. You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose.

Do I have to take part?
You are under no obligation to participate in this study. If you do decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. If you do not take part or withdraw from the study at a later date, it will not disadvantage you. Except in the case of partially completed, anonymous on-line questionnaires, all data related to your responses will also be safely destroyed unless you state otherwise. Submission of a partially completed or fully completed questionnaire implies consent to participate in the study and you will be unable to withdraw your data.

What will happen to the information?
Your participation in this study and all information collected will be kept strictly confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Unless otherwise indicated, all personal information and data collected will be coded and anonymised so that you cannot be recognised from it. The collected data will be securely stored on a password protected computer and safely disposed of once the project/dissertation has been completed.

The results of this study will be reported as part of my degree programme and may be further disseminated for scientific benefit. The results will be available to you on request.

Who should I contact for further information or if I have any problems/concerns?
Should you have any questions about the research or any related matters, please contact the researcher via email address u1340642@uel.ac.uk and the supervisor at a.j.kelly@uel.ac.uk

8

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:

Catherine Fieulleteau, Ethics Integrity Manager, Graduate School, EB 1.43
University of East London, Docklands Campus, London E16 2RD
(Telephone: 020 8223 6683, Email: research@ethics@uel.ac.uk)

APPENDIX 2

CONSENT FORM

(To be used if participants are 18 or over)

Programme of Study: MSc International Marketing Management

Dissertation Title: What Elements of an Online Fashion Community influence members contribution?

Supervisor: Dr Aidan Kelly

i. I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be treated in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998'. (*Please tick in the case of questionnaires/interviews involving the collection of data falling under the Data Protection Act 1998 definition of '**sensitive personal data**'*) **X**

ii. (*Please tick where **anonymous questionnaires** are used*) By taking part in this study I fully understand that 'Submission of a partially completed or fully completed questionnaire implies consent to participate in the study and that I will be unable to withdraw my data'. **X**

iii. I confirm that I have read the participant information sheet for the above study and I have been given a copy to keep. **X**

iv. I understand what the study is about and I have had the opportunity to discuss with the researcher and ask questions about the study. **X**

v. The procedures involved have been explained to me. I know what my part will be in the study and how the study may affect me. **X**

vi. I understand that my involvement in this study and particular data from this research will remain strictly confidential. Only researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. **X**

vii. It has been explained to me what will happen to the data once the study has been completed. **X**

viii. I understand that I have the right to stop taking part in the study at any time without reason or prejudice to myself. **X**

ix. I know who to contact if I have any questions/concerns about my participation and I have their contact details. **X**

x. I fully and freely consent to participate in the study. **X**

Please tick to agree

Participant's name:.....

Participant's signature:.....

Date:.....

Researcher's Name:.....TAMIA BUNIC.....

Researcher's Signature:.....Tamia Bunic.....

Date:....5.02.18.