Popular Fan Culture as An Impeller of Brand Equity: The Case of the South Korean Music Group BTS

Sherin Karol Benites-Duran[1], Elizabeth Mayuri-Ramos[2], Franklin Cordova-Buiza[3]

Abstract

The objective of the research was to determine the relationship between the community of followers and brand equity, using as a case study the musical group BTS, ambassadors of South Korean culture. The methodology applied was a quantitative and correlational approach, with data collected through a survey and applied to a sample of 384 participants. The results indicated a high positive relationship between brand community and brand equity, evidenced by a Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient of 0.713. Moreover, 99.74% of the respondents perceived high or very high brand quality, and 96.88% of them had a high or very high bond with the brand community. This interaction and creation of emotional ties is facilitated by the affinity in tastes and cultural values associated with the brand. It is concluded that as brand value increases, the brand community is strengthened and/or vice versa. The research studies digital participation in fan culture and seeks that the findings can be used by marketers to develop more effective customer acquisition and loyalty strategies.

Keywords: *Brand Value, Music Industry, Peru, Relationship Marketing, Fans.*

Introduction

As competitiveness in the marketplace increases, companies recognize the importance of establishing a competitive and sustainable advantage to differentiate themselves. Brands, identified by names, signs, and symbols, play a crucial role in differentiating products, building trust, and expediting the purchasing decision (Gamarra-Ramirez et al., 2024; Aaker, 1991; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Kotler & Keller, 2018). Given the overwhelming number of trademarks, with more than 13.9 million new applications worldwide (World Intellectual Property Organization [WIPO], 2022), trademark value is a widely studied concept, as high value generates higher returns (Ortegón, 2013). However, relatively little attention has been paid to brand communities. These communities arise from social relationships between frequent customers who feel affinity and a sense of belonging for a brand and contribute to strengthening the value of a brand as they promote value co-creation, recommend the brand and drive customer loyalty (Purani & Jeesha, 2021; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Culqui-Salazar et al., 2023).

In the same vein, the South Korean music group BTS, has become an icon of 21st Century Pop thanks to its approach to generating a brand community. Since their debut in 2013, they gradually established a close connection with their fans by addressing social issues and stigmatizations in more than 20 albums. With the formation of their community known as ARMY [Adorable Representative MC for Youth], the septet was collecting countless achievements, topping the top music chart, Billboard, receiving several prestigious GRAMMY nominations, and being recognized by TIME magazine and IFPI [International Federation of the Phonographic Industry] as Global Artists (Donbavand, 2022; Pascual, 2022; Philippine News Agency, 2022; Bruner, 2020). Their impact in South Korea is so significant that they are estimated to contribute approximately $4.9 billion to GDP (Davis, 2020).

Similarly, in Peru, the brand has a strong community. According to Comscore, Peruvian ARMYs account for 14.90% of mentions in Latin America and Spain, ranking third behind Argentina (15.60%) and Mexico

[1] Departamento de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros, Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y Ciencias de la Educación, Universidad Técnica de Manabí, Portoviejo, Ecuador; monica.vaca@utm.edu.ec.
[2] Departamento de Sistemas Computacionales, Facultad de Ciencias Informáticas, Universidad Técnica de Manabí, Portoviejo, Ecuador; ermenson.ordonez@utm.edu.ec.
[3] Department of Research, Innovation and Social Responsibility, Universidad Privada del Norte, Lima, Peru; Faculty of Business Sciences, Universidad, Continental, Huancayo, Peru, Email: franklin.cordova@upn.edu.pe, (Corresponding Author), ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7623-7472

(16.20%) (Pichihua, 2020). To demonstrate this influence, fan communities carry out charitable projects periodically. In 2019, Peru carried out 42 charity projects, ranking as the country with the most projects worldwide in that year (One in an ARMY Charity Project, 2020). In this context, the general research problem is presented through the following question What is the relationship between brand equity and brand community in the case of the South Korean music group BTS?

Literature Review

There are several theories on the variables of brand equity and the community of followers. First, brand equity refers to a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand that add or subtract value to a product or service (Aaker, 1991). These elements are positioned in the consumer's mind as a product of different marketing strategies, using the brand name (Davcik et al., 2015; Keller, 1993). Their importance lies in their influence in guiding the consumer's decision when choosing between a product of a recognized brand and a generic product that has the same characteristics (Yoo et al., 2000). Consequently, it is recognized that high brand equity facilitates the generation of consumer trust and, therefore, customer satisfaction (Aaker, 2007).

For this reason, strengthening the dimensions that make up this merit is essential to generate greater brand value. Thus, the first step is to ensure that the product or service represented by the brand is of high quality and meets consumer expectations (Ngan et al., 2019; Rocha-Vallejos et al., 2022). Thus, perceived quality is a fundamental long-term asset as it is the only one capable of driving financial results (Aaker, 1991, 1996). Also, brand loyalty is important to reduce vulnerability to competition; as it represents the willingness to buy a product again (Davcik et al., 2015; Yoo et al., 2000; Cordova-Buiza et al., 2022). Instead, brand association deals with the ability of buyers to remember and recognize a brand by its name, logo, symbol, etc., and associate them with a specific memory. These associations, which include product attributes and specific symbols, are driven by a strong brand identity (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2003). Simultaneously, brand awareness refers to the potential buyer's ability to recognize and recall with familiarity that a brand belongs to a product category (Aaker, 1991; Davcik et al., 2015).

Along the same lines, in the search for ways to enhance brand equity, it has been proposed that one way to achieve this is through the use of relationship marketing strategies (Chang & Tseng, 2005). As a result, brands in all categories are becoming closer and more active in their relationship with customers (Purani & Jeesha, 2022). In recent decades, traditional marketing has undergone a substantial shift towards a more relationship marketing-oriented strategy to attract, retain, and strengthen strong company-customer relationships to improve satisfaction, trust, value, engagement, commitment, loyalty, and ultimately profitability (Berry, 2002; Chang & Tseng, 2005; Harrigan et al., 2015; Paredes-Rivadeneyra et al., 2024). To advance this process, one of the methods to connect with the customer and provide value is the creation of communities, as well as loyalty programs, among others (Chang & Tseng, 2005; Chavadi et al., 2023; Hernandez-Padilla et al., 2023).

In that sense, the rise of interactivity on the internet and social networks has led to the creation of online brand communities, becoming a fundamental part of the human experience in the age of technology and information, allowing consumers to interact globally and express their opinions about brands (Clark et al., 2017; Jain et al., 2018; Hassan & Casaló Ariño, 2016; Islam et al., 2018; Kamboj & Rahman, 2017). Specifically, Muniz & O'Guinn (2001) have defined communities as specific groups of people, not limited by geography, that arise from social relationships between frequent customers. Likewise, members can provide emotional support, share information, and experience a sense of belonging and legitimacy towards all brand-related objects. Indeed, brand communities play an important role in loyalty by establishing long-term relationships and strengthening connections with the brand, the company, and other customers through recommendations and co-creation processes (McAlexander et al., 2002; Merz et al., 2018; Hur et al., 2011).

Theories for measuring brand communities have been extensively explored in the research of Algesheimer et al. (2005). These include aspects such as the degree of identification and participation in the community,

and sharing common values, norms, and goals (Algesheimer et al., 2005; McAlexander et al., 2002). In addition, factors such as normative pressure and reactance are considered, which refer to the participant's perception of external demands (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Brehm, 1966). Variables such as the intention to remain affiliated, the willingness to participate, and the intention to recommend the community are also evaluated. At the same time, purchase behavior and the quality of the relationship established with the brand are analyzed, reflecting the degree of loyalty (Algesheimer et al., 2005). Thus, these indicators show how the members of a community have a solid, lasting, and positive relationship with the brand, expressing loyalty, trust, and satisfaction.

The scientific literature presents several precedents on the subject. Brogi et al. (2013) proposed a theoretical model, applied to 384 luxury fashion consumers, which revealed that participation in brand communities generated positive effects on perceived brand equity, purchase intention, and willingness to pay a premium price. In Pakistan, Bashir et al. (2020) highlighted that participation in these communities positively influenced brand recognition, association, and perceived brand quality in 384 luxury apparel consumers. In a different context, Mills et al. (2022) revealed, with data from 1,200 fans, that these communities had a positive impact on both public and private loyalty. Hoang et al. (2019) found that perceived community value, identification, and trust in the brand positively contribute to community engagement and thus brand equity, tested on 412 Vietnamese fans of a cosmetics brand.

Chavadi et al. (2023) argued that strengthening brand communities in social networks leads to increased brand trust and positively affects all dimensions of brand equity, with a sample of 402 Facebook users. Similarly, Jeong et al. (2016) focused their study on 312 members of online brand communities of fashion companies, concluding that community engagement affects brand awareness, association, and loyalty, but not perceived quality. In addition, Habibi et al. (2014) explored with 442 Facebook users, their theoretical model based on brand community identification, sense of belonging, perceived value, and community engagement, highlighting how these variables positively affect brand trust.

Similarly, Jain et al. (2018) found that trust and communication serve as a partial mediator between customer-brand relationships and loyalty on social media platforms in 402 Facebook users. Kurniawan & Adiwijaya (2018) highlighted the importance of managing an online presence to build a strong brand community and reputation that engenders trust and loyalty in 100 coffee shop customers in Surabaya. In the telecommunications domain, Kaur et al. (2020) examined 402 members on how community identification and rewards influence consumer engagement and loyalty to the brand.

From psychology, Kumar (2021) delved into customer engagement in online communities, highlighting brand congruence as a significant factor in consumer engagement, in 402 customers of a sports fashion brand. Drawing from the literature, Purani and Jeesha (2021) presented a conceptual framework focusing on community-based brand equity, highlighting the importance of consumer participation and co-creation in the formation and extension of brand equity.

In an exploration of brand communities in music, known as Fandom, Obiegbu et al. (2019) explored how fans build loyalty to music brands through shared experiences on social platforms. Particularly, Chung (2020) investigated how the relationship between BTS and ARMY is built through two-way communication, value cooperation, and social identification, they determined factors that influence consumer engagement with the brand.

This study is valuable because it adds significantly to the existing literature by providing statistical data and in-depth analysis of a musical community in a Peruvian context, amplified by the growth of technology and global interconnectivity.

In sum, the overall objective of this research is to determine what relationship exists between brand equity and brand community in the case of the South Korean music group BTS. Therefore, it is hypothesized that there is a significantly positive relationship between brand equity and brand community in the case of the music group.

Methodology

The research is of the correlational type due to the nature of the objectives since it made it possible to analyze whether there is a statistical relationship between the two variables. In addition, it was completed with a quantitative design to measure and quantify the strength and direction of the relationship. Likewise, the use of a non-experimental approach of transectional or cross-sectional cut due to the fact that the variables were not manipulated. Instead, data were collected in a natural setting, at a basic level.

On the other hand, the research was oriented to a probability sampling design of an infinite or unknown population, since it would be impossible to accurately determine its size; to ensure a representative sample, a formula was used that considered a potentially infinite population, a confidence level of 95%, and a margin of error of 5%. This calculation determined that a sample of at least 384 people was required for a reliable and representative study.

For a more detailed view of the participants' psychographic environment, BTS fans in Lima, the capital of Peru, are a group of people who are passionate and committed to K-pop music and culture. These followers show a strong inclination for online interaction and active participation in social networks. Therefore, the unit of analysis was composed of the community of fans who are subscribed to the official YouTube and/or Spotify account of the group, are older than 14 years old, and are residents of Lima. Excluded are those who are mainly followers of other groups, under 14 years of age and those who do not reside in Lima.

Similarly, surveys were chosen as a data collection technique because of their ability to obtain accurate information, and the questionnaire was an instrument to systematically collect and compare responses. In this case, a questionnaire composed of a total of 24 questions was designed. These questions were translated and adapted from recognized sources in the literature; the questions related to the brand equity variable with convergent validity were based on the work of Yoo & Donthu (2001), while those related to the brand community variable with discriminant validity were taken from Algesheimer et al. (2005). To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questions of the questionnaire were subjected to a validation process through the evaluation of experts, who assessed the clarity of the questions in order to verify whether they were appropriate and relevant to the research context. Similarly, a reliability test was carried out using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient applied to the pilot sample, which yielded a value of 0.83, indicating consistency and reliability in the responses.

Once all the data had been collected between August and November 2023, descriptive statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software. In addition, an inferential analysis was performed, using Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient. This approach made it possible to evaluate the relationship between brand equity and brand community through a correlation analysis.

Finally, there was a firm commitment and responsibility to develop the research with total transparency, avoiding any inappropriate or biased use of the information. In particular, the importance of maintaining integrity in the data collection process was emphasized, ensuring that the data collected accurately reflects the reality of the study context.

Results and Discussion

Reliability Analysis

Table 1. Instrument Reliability Analysis.

Alfa de Cronbach	N of elements
0,836	24

Note. Elaboration with SPSS V.29.0.0.0

Table 1 shows that the instrument has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.836, which suggests a high reliability, according to the established criteria.

Demographic Data

Table 2. Respondent Profile.

Ages			Genre	
14 – 23	291	75.8%	Female	Male
24 – 33	86	22.4%	363	21
33 – to more	7	1.8%	94.7%	5.3%
Total	384	100%	Total	384

Note. Elaboration with Excel V.2308

Table 2 summarizes the demographic information of the 384 respondents. These results indicate that the profile of the respondents corresponds mostly to young enthusiasts of the female gender.

Descriptive Analysis

The results obtained through the application of the instrument are presented below and are shown in tables according to each research variable. Likewise, a brief descriptive analysis will be made.

Analysis of the Brand Value Variable

The Brand Value variable is composed of four dimensions, each of which has two questions to measure the fans' perception of the brand.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of the Variable Brand Value.

		Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high	Total
D1: Perceived quality	F	0	0	8	108	268	384
	%	0.00%	0.00%	2.08%	28.13%	69.79%	100%
D2: Brand loyalty	F	0	0	8	107	269	384
	%	0.00%	0.00%	2.08%	27.86%	70.05%	100%
D3: Brand awareness	f	0	1	10	113	260	384
	%	0.00%	0.26%	2.60%	29.43%	67.61%	100%
D4: Brand association	f	0	1	6	109	268	384
	%	0.00%	0.26%	1.56%	28.39%	69.79%	100%
V1: Brand value	f	0	0	1	73	310	384
	%	0.00%	0.00%	0.26%	19.01%	80.73%	100%

Note. Elaboration with Excel V.2308

In Table 3, 97.92% (f = 376) of respondents perceive brand quality as high or very high. Brand loyalty is high or very high for 97.91% (f = 376). 97.14% (f = 373) have high or very high brand awareness. 98.18% (f = 377) show high or very high brand association ability. Overall, 99.74% (f = 383) of fans recognize the high or very high value of the brand.

Analysis of the Brand Community Variable

The Brand Community variable is composed of thirteen dimensions, each of which had one or two questions to measure the perception of the surveyed fans regarding their brand community.

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of the variable Brand Community

		Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high	Total
D1: Identification	f	0	2	14	97	271	384
	%	0.00%	0.52%	4.%	25.%	71.%	100%
D2: Participation	f	0	2	19	104	259	384
	%	0.00%	0.52%	5.%	27.%	67.%	100%
D3: Regulatory pressure	f	0	1	60	86	237	384
	%	0.00%	0.26%	16.%	22.%	62.%	100%
D4: Reactivity	f	0	5	46	69	264	384
	%	0.00%	1.%	12.%	18.%	69.%	100%
D5: Intention to remain affiliated	f	0	1	45	94	244	384
	%	0.00%	0.26%	12.%	24.%	64.%	100%
D6: Intention to recommend	f	1	6	55	85	237	384
	%	0.26%	2.%	14.%	22.%	62.%	100%
D7: Intention to participate	f	0	0	42	88	254	384
	%	0.00%	0.00%	11.%	23.%	66.%	100%
D8: Membership behavior	f	0	5	33	91	255	384
	%	0.00%	1.%	9.%	24.%	66.%	100%
D9: Referral behavior	f	1	7	51	85	240	384
	%	0.26%	2.%	13.%	22.%	63.%	100%
D10: Participation behavior	f	0	6	39	77	262	384
	%	0.00%	2.%	10.%	20.%	68.%	100%
D11: Quality of brand relationship	f	0	1	7	111	265	384
	%	0.00%	0.26%	2.%	29.%	69.%	100%
D12: Brand loyalty intention	f	0	1	38	97	248	384
	%	0.00%	0.26%	10.%	25.%	65.%	100%
	f	2	8	42	82	250	384

D13: Purchase behavior	%	0.52%	2.%	11.%	21.%	65.%	100%
V2: Brand community	f	0	1	11	40	332	384
	%	0.00%	0.26%	3.%	10.%	86.%	100%

Note. Elaboration with Excel V.2308

Table 4 shows that in the first dimension of identification, 95.83% (f=368) have a high or very high connection with the community. 94.53% (f=363) show high or very high intrinsic motivation to participate in the community. 84.11% (f=323) do not experience normative pressure. For reactance, 86.72% (f=333) are aware of constraints and cope with them. 88.02% (f=338) have a high or very high intention to remain affiliated with the community. 83.85% (f= 322) have a high or very high intention to recommend the community. 89.06% (f=342) expressed a high or very high interest in participating in the community. 90.10% (f=346) have high or very high participation and behavior.

84.64% (f=325) indicate that they have a high or very high probability of recommendation behavior. 88.28% (f=339) express high or very high participation behavior in activities. 97.92% (f=376) show a high or very high-quality of relationship with the brand. 89.84% (f=345) have a high or very high intention of loyalty to the brand. 86.46% (f=332) have high or very high purchase behavior. In summary, for the brand community variable, 96.88% (f=372) of respondents actively participate with a high or very high level of involvement.

Correlation Analysis

NormalityAanalysis

A normality test was performed to determine whether the data were parametric or nonparametric. For this purpose, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic was used, given that the sample consists of more than 50 individuals. In addition, the following hypotheses were used to evaluate the normality of the data.

H0 = The data come from a normal distribution.

H1 = The data do not come from a normal distribution.

Significance level 5%: $\alpha = 0.05$

Table 5. Normality Test.

	Kolmogorov – Smirnov		
	Statistician	gl	Sig.
V1: Brand value	0,126	384	< 0.001
V2: Brand community	0,162	384	< 0.001

Note. Elaboration with SPSS V.24

In Table 5, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov analysis reveals a significance level of < 0.001, which is less than 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$). Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that the data collected do not conform to a normal distribution and exhibit a lack of normality.

Initially, the statistical analysis involved hypothesis testing for the purpose of determining the presence or absence of a linear correlation. In this context, the following statistical hypotheses were formulated.

H0: $\varrho = 0$ (No linear correlation).

H1: $\varrho \neq 0$ (There is a linear correlation).

Test statistic: $t = \varrho / \sqrt{((1-\varrho^2)/(n-2))}$ (1)

Significance level 5%: $\alpha = 0.05$.

On the other hand, Spearman's statistical test, also known as Spearman's Rho, was applied to evaluate the strength of the correlation due to the ordinal nature of the variables and the nonparametric nature of the data. This correlation coefficient varies in a range from -1 to 1 and is calculated by the following formula:

$$rs = 1 - ((6 \times \sum d^2)) / (n \times (n^2-1)) \ (2)$$

General Hypothesis

H0: There is no significantly positive relationship between brand equity and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

H1: There is a significantly positive relationship between brand equity and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

Table 6. Nonparametric Correlation and Spearman's Rho Hypothesis Test.

V1: Brand Value - V2: Brand Community		
Rho de Spearman	Correlation coefficient	,713**
	Sig. (bilateral)	< 0,001
	N	384

**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

Note. Elaboration with SPSS V.24

Table 6 shows the results of the analysis, where the value of the Sig. (bilateral) obtained is < 0.001, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the null hypothesis (H0) should be rejected, and the alternate hypothesis (H1) accepted. In addition, the Spearman's Rho coefficient obtained is 0.713, which means that there is a high positive correlation. In other words, as brand equity increases, brand community also tends to improve and vice versa.

Therefore, it can be stated that there is a significantly positive relationship between brand equity and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

Specific Hypothesis 1

H0: There is no significantly positive relationship between perceived quality and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

H1: There is a significantly positive relationship between perceived quality and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

Table 7. Nonparametric Correlation and Spearman's Rho Hypothesis Test

D1: Perceived quality - V2: Brand community

Rho de Spearman	Correlation coefficient	0,490**
	Sig. (bilateral)	< 0,001
	N	384

**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

Note. Elaboration with SPSS V.24

In Table 7, the Sig. value (bilateral) is < 0.001, lower than the significance level of 0.05. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H1). In addition, Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient, which is 0.490, reflects a moderate positive correlation. In other words, as perceived quality increases, the brand community tends to improve as well, and vice versa.

Therefore, it is affirmed that there is a significantly positive relationship between perceived quality and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

Specific Hypothesis 2

H0: There is no significantly positive relationship between brand loyalty and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

H1: There is a significantly positive relationship between brand loyalty and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

Table 8. Nonparametric Correlation and Spearman's Rho Hypothesis Test

D2: Brand loyalty - V2: Brand community

Rho de Spearman	Correlation coefficient	0,530**
	Sig. (bilateral)	< 0,001
	N	384

**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

Note. Elaboration with SPSS V.24

In Table 8, the Sig. value (bilateral) is < 0.001, lower than the significance level of 0.05. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H1). In addition, Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient, which stands at 0.530, indicates a moderate positive correlation. In other words, as brand loyalty increases, the brand community tends to improve as well, and vice versa.

Therefore, it can be said that there is a significantly positive relationship between brand loyalty and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

Specific Hypothesis 3

H0: There is no significantly positive relationship between brand awareness and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

H1: There is a significantly positive relationship between brand awareness and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

Table 9. Nonparametric Correlation and Spearman's Rho Hypothesis Test

D3: Brand awareness - V2: Brand community

Rho de Spearman	Correlation coefficient	0,567**
	Sig. (bilateral)	< 0,001
	N	384

**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

Note. Elaboration with SPSS V.24

In Table 9, it is observed that the Sig. value (bilateral) is < 0.001, which is less than the preset significance level of 0.05. This result leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H1). In addition, Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient, which reaches a value of 0.530, indicates a moderate positive correlation. In other words, as brand awareness increases, brand community tends to improve as well, and vice versa.

Thus, there is a significantly positive relationship between brand awareness and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

Specific Hypothesis 4

H0: There is a significantly positive relationship between brand association and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

H1: There is a significantly positive relationship between brand association and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

Table 10. Nonparametric Correlation and Spearman's Rho Hypothesis Test

D4: Brand association - V2: Brand community

Rho de Spearman	Correlation coefficient	0,564**
	Sig. (bilateral)	< 0,001
	N	384

**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

Note. Elaboration with SPSS V.24

Table 10 shows that the value of the Sig. (bilateral) is < 0.001, which means that it is less than the significance level of 0.05. This result leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H1). In addition, Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient, which reaches a value of 0.564, indicates a moderate positive correlation. In other words, as brand association increases, brand community tends to improve as well, and vice versa. Therefore, it is attested that there is a significantly positive relationship between brand association and brand community in the case of the BTS group in Lima.

Within the framework of this research, the existence of a significantly positive relationship between brand equity and brand community in the context of the South Korean music group BTS was hypothesized as a general hypothesis. To test this hypothesis, Spearman's Rho Coefficient test was used, which yielded a result of 0.713. This value reflects a high positive correlation between the two variables. In other words, as brand equity increases, the brand community also tends to strengthen, and vice versa. A detailed analysis reveals positive relationships between community and various dimensions of brand equity and highlights a

Spearman correlation of 0.490 between perceived quality and brand community, 0.530 between brand loyalty and community, 0.530 between brand awareness and community, and 0.564 between brand association and community. These results are relevant as they suggest that community engagement is crucial to enhance brand equity, indicating building communities to strengthen the position and relationship with consumers.

Indeed, the value of a brand, based on the perception of the quality and satisfaction it offers, finds in communities an ideal channel to increase its value. These results coincide with previous studies, such as Brogi et al. (2013) and Bashir et al. (2020) that have highlighted the importance of communities to generate loyalty, recognition, trust, and commitment to brands in the luxury fashion industry. Furthermore, Mills et al. (2022) revealed in professional sports that brand communities have a positive impact on both consumers' willingness to publicly show their brand loyalty and link their attitude towards the brand and repurchase intention.

In the context of social networks, they play a fundamental role in enabling the co-creation of value, allowing consumers to actively participate in the development and improvement of the brand. Chavadi et al. (2023) confirmed that strengthening the brand community based on social networks leads to increased trust, positively influencing all dimensions of value. Furthermore, the theoretical model proposed by Hoang et al. (2019) in the context of social networks revealed that factors such as perceived community value, brand identification, and brand trust positively influence community engagement, positively affecting two dimensions of brand equity.

Also, Jeong et al. (2016) highlighted how different dimensions of engagement in online communities influence brand awareness, association, and loyalty. From the psychological field, Kumar (2021) suggested that psychological brand ownership has a significant effect on customer engagement. Habibi et al. (2014) indicated that this identification with the community and sense of belonging has a positive impact on perceived value and community engagement, influencing trust in the brand. However, Jain et al. (2018) differ, as they found that brand trust served only as a partial mediator in brand loyalty and did not find a significant relationship between satisfaction and loyalty. Despite this, Purani & Jeesha (2021) proposed a conceptual framework for community-based brand equity, which recognizes the role of consumers as co-creators of the brand and its value.

As noted, participation, interaction, and social engagement are key factors in building a strong brand culture. In the music industry, this perspective is supported by Obiegbu et al. (2019), who argue that the discourses used by music brands influence fan loyalty. Similarly, Chung (2020) examined how the BTS brand has created a unique and authentic identity that is based on excellent music quality, two-way communication, value co-creation, and social responsibility have achieved a high level of loyalty and engagement from its fan community.

Conclusion

It is concluded with the existence of a highly positive relationship between brand equity and brand community, through factors such as satisfaction, customer loyalty, and interaction. Therefore, during this research, it was highlighted that 99.74% of respondents perceived that the brand has a high or very high value and 96.88% demonstrated a high or very high level of involvement in their community. In this sense, interaction and the creation of emotional connections are facilitated by sharing tastes and values related to the brand.

This research, like others, has limitations, mainly due to the scarce presence of antecedents of both variables applied in the music industry, despite the intrinsic connection that music brands have with their communities of followers. Therefore, it is anticipated that this study will contribute to the expansion of the literature, mainly in the current era of the Internet boom and within the specific framework of the music industry.

In today's highly competitive and digital environment, brands face challenges in standing out and retaining

consumer attention. This study suggests that brand communities are crucial to enhancing brand equity by enabling deeper connections, endorsement, and advocacy. Consumers' active identification and participation in a brand drive advocacy and value co-creation, highlighting the importance of strengthening these communities in brand management strategies.

It is recommended to expand the information on strengthening the value of a brand through more relational marketing approaches, applying the theories in various industries such as retail, fashion, and technology, among others. Collectively, several questions arise that could guide future research: To what extent should a brand engage with its customers? Should brands lead the community, adopt a passive approach, or act as external observers? Is the main objective of the brand to achieve a differential impact resulting in increased revenue, or does it seek to influence the social sphere? What could be the potential challenges related to the creation of brand equity? What other strategies can be explored to enhance brand equity?.

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