Building Brand Relationships Online

The role of interactivity, relationship motives and Internet experience

By

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Acknowledgements

Judging from the advice – or should I say warnings – I got from both academicians and non-academicians when starting the doctoral program at NHH, pursuing a doctorate is one of the worst things that can happen to a human being. While some persons limited their warnings to saying that it is "hard" and that you might loose some friends and family along the way, others – more bluntly – described the process of writing a dissertation as extremely lonely, and, in sum, utterly hellish.

Frankly, I couldn't disagree more. Although I admit having had some unpleasant experiences the past two years (e.g. an extraordinary long flight to a conference in Hawaii and a staying at a noisy hotel without air condition, once, in Rotterdam.....), the majority of memories associated with the doctorate can only be interpreted as positive. I just don't understand what is so terrible about getting paid good money for working with whatever you like, whenever you like? This is why I have come to the following conclusion: Either I haven't understood the first thing of what writing a dissertation is all about, or I have had undeservedly large amounts of help and luck along the way. For reasons of personal sanity, I've chosen to focus the latter of these two explanations.
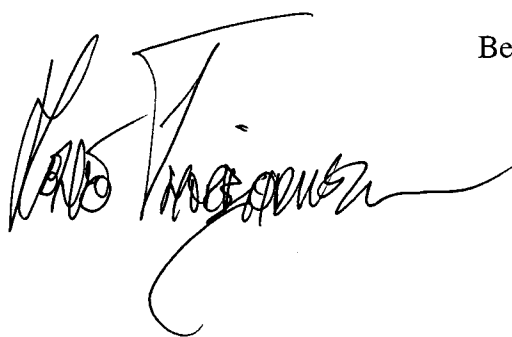
Consequently, a lot of people deserve applause for guiding me through the dissertation work. First, I'd like to express my warmest thanks to Professor Per Egil Pedersen for helping out in designing, and ultimately also doing all the work in programming, the experimental websites used in this dissertation. I know very few Professors besides Prof. Pedersen that would be so altruistic as to spend hours constructing experimental treatments for a doctoral student. Pedersen has also been a huge source of inspiration, given his enormous quantity – and not least quality – of research on this and related subjects. A second round of applause should be extended to the remaining participants of the research group on e-commerce at SNF, and to Professor Leif B. Methlie and Associate Professor Herbjørn Nysveen in particular. Thanks to Prof. Methlie for including me in the research group back in 1999 and for supporting my stipend application for Teleøkonomi-programmet. Thanks to Herbjørn Nysveen for helping and encouraging me all the way and for being the perfect work companion. Also, I would like to thank all the people at the Department of Strategy and Management at NHH for their kind support, and the marketing faculty in particular. A special thanks to Einar Breivik for his

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Abstract

On the most abstract level, this dissertation attempts to integrate two basic concepts: "personal relationship" and "interactivity" into a meaningful conceptual framework at the consumer/brand level. These two concepts have much in common, particularly the fact that they are the focal interest of a wide array of academic disciplines, yet the central focus of none. Accordingly, the conceptual blurring surrounding these concepts is sometimes overwhelming, at least when applying the concepts in a marketing communication context. A partial goal of the dissertation is thus to illuminate the meaning and applicability of "relationships" and "interactivity" at the consumer-brand level, in an Internet marketing setting.

Moreover, the dissertation contributes with specific hypotheses concerning the effects of interactive marketing technologies on the development of online consumer-brand relationship ties. The moderating role of consumers' individual differences is also discussed in detail. Results from two online experiments reveal few overall differences between the chosen interactive technologies (personalized websites and customer community websites) in their ability to improving consumer-brand relationship quality. However, when personal moderators, such as relationship motives and Internet experience are taking into account, several interesting interaction-effects are observed. Most notable is the observation that personalized websites are more effective in building consumer-brand relationships for highly experienced Internet users – compared to less experienced users. Conversely, customer community websites appear more promising for building brand relationships with novice Internet users, as compared to experienced users. The dissertation has several managerial implications in that it re-emphasizes the importance of knowing attributes of each consumer before deciding which interactive marketing tools to apply.

Table of Contents

PART II – Hypotheses

PART III – Methodology and Analysis

Study 1

List of Tables

List of Figures

1 Introduction

Despite the recent Nasdaq massacre and deaths of countless "dot.coms", the Internet is still alive and kicking. In fact, both sales and advertising spending online is yet again increasing and the Internet media continue to penetrate new markets and user segments. Also, the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) are now becoming commonly available through a wide array of new interfaces such as cellular phones, PDAs and digital TV. Along with this continued growth of the Internet media, an increasing body of academic literature addresses the topic of Internet marketing and –communication. Even from its earliest inceptions, this body of literature focused *interactivity* as the key advantage of the Internet media compared to other mass media (cf. Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Deighton, 1996; Alba, Lynch, Witz, Janiszewski, Lutz, Swayer and Wood, 1997; Bezjian-Avery, Calder and Iacobucci, 1998; Roehm and Haugtvedt, 1999).

Evans and Wurster (1997) claim that the interactive and multi-media qualities of the Internet are breaking the traditional trade-off between richness and reach of communication media. Here, richness refers to the level of interactivity and bandwidth of communication, whereas reach pertains to the quantitative distribution qualities of the medium. This traditional trade-off entails that rich media (such as two-way face-to-face dialogue) usually have a very limited reach, whereas mass media (such as TV or newspapers) may reach a large number of people – but with a very lean communication message (no interactivity and low bandwidth). With the introduction of the Internet and WWW, this trade-off collapses as the Internet may reach a large number of people with interactive, high bandwidth messages. In fact, websites can be developed to allow such great levels of interactivity, that it is conceivable that the user thinks s/he is actually having a conversation with the website (Roehm and Haugtvedt, 1999). Moreover, the Internet may facilitate both many-to-many technologies (such as IRC[1], mailing lists and community discussions), as well as one-to-one and one-to-many communication technologies (such as e-mail and personalized websites) (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). Thus, through using the Internet, firms and brands can interactively communicate with a large number of customers at a far lesser price compared to that of other – similarly "rich" – media. This, in turn, opens several new possibilities for brands to engaging consumers in enduring two-way dialogues (Deighton, 1996; Pepper and Rogers, 1997; Holland and Baker, 2001).

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[1] Internet Relay Chat

1

The interactive communication features of the Internet media have also given nurture to an increasing amount of research on *relationship* marketing. Interactivity enables iterative two-way communication between brands and consumers, and such two-way communication is an important prerequisite for developing and maintaining consumer-brand relationships. Accordingly, several researchers focus how various forms of interactive Internet marketing can be applied to strengthen consumer loyalty and –relationships (cf. Holland and Baker, 2001; Davis, Buchanan-Oliver and Brodie, 1999). However, this stream of literature has several shortcomings. First, little empirical research has been conducted in this area, especially at the brand level. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the conceptual content of the concepts of "interactivity" and "relationships" remains rather blurry and fragmented at the consumer-brand level.

1.1 Research questions

The discipline of marketing has always been adopting concepts and theories from other scientific disciplines. However, marketing researchers often lend concepts like "personal relationship" and "interactivity" from e.g. the social psychology- or information systems (IS) literature without thoroughly enough – and explicitly – defining the conceptual content of these constructs. Rather, abstract concepts like "relationships" and "interactivity" are applied as labels of marketing phenomena we do not actually know what are. Moreover, where such concepts *are* explicitly defined, the large discrepancies in conceptual content across studies should advice us that caution must be taken when comparing "relationships" and "interactivity" across different studies and different literature traditions. A substantial part of this dissertation is thus devoted to elaborating on what brand relationships are, what interactivity and interactive marketing technologies are – and how they function. Having derived on a set of conceptual definitions, our main focus then becomes testing the relationship building qualities of different interactive marketing applications. Moreover, the relationship theories of social psychology have taught us that no two relationships are alike, and that differences in the motives and background of humans direct their relationship behavior. Consequently, we focus relationship motives and media (Internet) experience as moderating variables in this dissertation. Previous research in both marketing and IS have revealed motives and media/IS experience as important variables when investigating effects of information/communication technologies.

2

Based on the introduction above, three research questions may be put forth:

RQ1: How do we conceptualize "relationships" and "interactivity" in the context of Internet marketing communication at the brand level?

RQ2: What differences exist between different interactive, Internet based marketing technologies in their effect on consumer-brand relationships?

RQ3: How are the effects of type of interactive marketing technology on consumer-brand relationships affected by the relationship motives and Internet experience of users?

Together, these three research questions will guide our review of existing literature, formulation of hypotheses and the design of empirical studies.

The conceptual model of the dissertation can thus be depicted as follows:

Figure 1.1. Conceptual Model
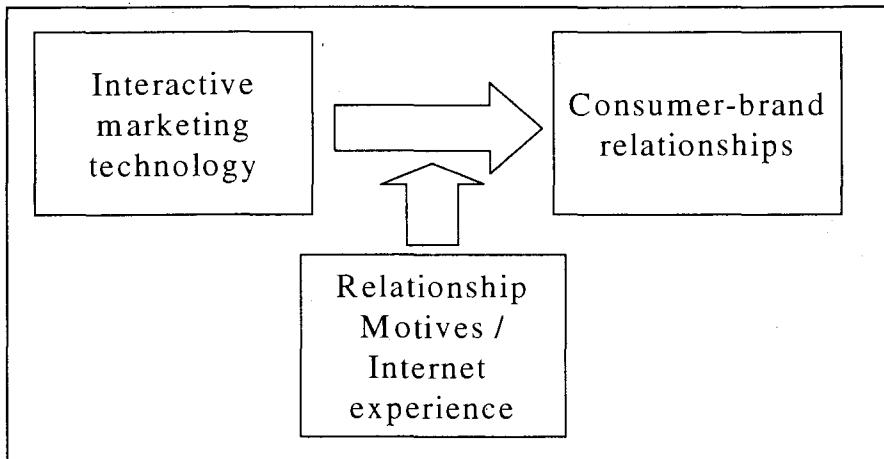
The conceptual content of each of the variables in figure 1.1 will be thoroughly elaborated on in the following chapters.

1.2 Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation is organized into four parts. In part one, we present and discuss the theoretical concepts of the conceptual model. In part two, a set of detailed hypotheses related to the research questions are put forth. Part three is devoted to two experiments designed to test these hypotheses. Lastly, in part four, we discuss the findings and tests of hypotheses.

Part one of the dissertation starts up with chapter 2 – containing a review of the relationship literature and a conceptualization of relationships at the consumer-brand level. Here, we derive on the Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) framework by Fournier (1994;1998) as a viable measurement apparatus of consumer-brand relationships. In chapter 3, we extend the discussion on relationship theory to investigating the motives that may underlie relationship formation and –maintenance. Such motives are important as they guide the consumers' perceptions of the effectiveness and appropriateness of interactive marketing tools for building brand relationships. Thereafter we shift focus towards conceptualizing interactivity and interactivity-enabling technologies in marketing. In chapter 4, two technologies are presented and focused – customer communities and personalized websites – in which are instances of person- and machine- interactive technologies, respectively. These two technologies are compared and contrasted along six communication properties. Lastly, in chapter 5, the concept of Internet experience is discussed and portrayed as a potentially important moderator variable.

The second part of the dissertation, consisting merely of chapter 6, contains the conceptual model and hypotheses of the dissertation. Here, hypotheses on both main effects of type of technology on brand relationship quality is put forth, as well as detailed hypotheses regarding the moderating effects of relationship motives and Internet experience.

The third part of this thesis presents the methodology and data analyses of two experiments that were designed for testing the hypotheses put forth in chapter 6. Chapters 7 and 8 present Study 1, whereas chapters 9 and 10 concentrate on the methods and tests of hypotheses for Study 2.

In the fourth and last section, we discuss the findings and implications of both studies in further detail (chapter 10), as well as limitations and suggestions for future research (chapter 11).

PART I

Literature review

2 Relationship theory

2.1 Introduction

Relationship theory has become a central source of information and inspiration for marketing scholars. Relationships between buyers and sellers, vendors and consumers, and between consumers and brands are frequently researched in marketing. In this chapter, the conceptual foundations of relationship theory in social psychology and later, marketing, are investigated. This investigation serves as a background and introduction to the discussion of the concept of consumer-brand relationships. Lastly, Fourier (1994;1998)'s "Brand Relationship Quality" framework is presented and integrated into the discussion of relationship theory in general.

2.2 Relationship theory in social psychology

The study of interpersonal relationships forms the meeting point of a number of different scientific disciplines, but the central focus of none (Hinde, 1981; Bersheid and Peplau, 1983; Bersheid and Reis, 1998). The great variety of sources that contribute to an understanding of close relationships create obstacles when trying to grasp the essence of any part of relationship theory, especially if one enters this literature from a different discipline – such as marketing and consumer behavior. According to Hinde (1979), these disciplinary differences in terminology, theoretical orientation, and level of analysis can easily produce a situation in which "the conceptual jungle chokes the unwary" (Hinde, 1979, p.6.). Although the disciplines of sociology, of marital and family therapy, and of communication studies are all important in the development of a science of relationships, the most informed and applicable theories – at least in respect to applying relationship theories in a marketing context – are found in psychology. Psychology, and social psychology in particular, is playing a central role in the evolution of a science of relationships (Bercheid and Reis, 1998). One important reason for its great impact is that social psychologists focus on the processes that underlie social behavior, such as interpersonal attraction (Buunk, 1996; Berscheid and Reiss, 1998) and social exchange (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Rusbult, 1980; Brehm, 1985). In the following, we will draw upon theories of interpersonal attraction and social exchange to define and explain the multi-leveled, multi-phased and multi-dimensional concept of interpersonal relationships.

The concept of relationship

Research on personal relationships is directed at one of three levels of analysis: individual, dyadic or systemic. The *systemic* approach is quite rare within social psychology, although more common in sociology where links not only between the two participants in a personal relationship are analyzed, but also the links with other members of their social network. Analysis at the *individual* level do also have some drawbacks in social psychology research, as the observational base in the study of personal relationships concerns the influence that partners have on each other's behavior. Self-reported relationship variables collected at the individual level are thus potentially biased in the favor of either of the members of the dyad and are perhaps more social constructions rather than substitutes for systematic observations of the relationship itself (Bersheid and Reiss, 1998). This implies that a relationship between two people is viewed as residing in neither one of the partners, but in their interaction with each other – at the *dyad* level. Relationship scholars differ, however, on how much interaction, and what kind of interaction, that must take place before they are willing to say that two people are in a relationship (Bersheid and Reis, 1998). Without going into this debate, we can heuristically conclude that as a minimum criterion, people must enter into repeated interactions with the same other before we can begin to speak of a relationship (Homans, 1979). Perhaps even more importantly, most relationship scholars would not view two persons as being in a relationship with each other unless both have represented and organized their past interaction in memory. Hence, the recollection and mental representation of the relationship partner and the relationship history may be at least as important as the scope and frequency of the interaction.

In addition to the arguments of temporality and relationship memory set forth above, two additional elements in defining personal relationships appear to exist in the literature. These are *interdependence* (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Kelley, 1979; Fournier, 1994; Berscheid and Reis, 1998) and *emotional or substantive bonding* (Fournier, 1994). Interdependence is often thought of as an important foundation for all relationships between two individuals. The influential Interdependence Theory (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Kelley, 1979), underlying most social exchange theory, makes the twin assumption that behavior will not be repeated unless it is rewarded in some way, and that the fundamental internal dynamic of social interaction is the partners' exchange of rewards and costs. The theory implies that the behavior of each relationship member to some degree is coordinated with and influenced by the behavior of the other partner. This interdependence between relationship partners can be

either symmetric or asymmetric in power and dependency, facilitating or inferring with respect to goal attainment, and voluntary or imposed with respect to external pressure (Fournier, 1994). Independent of form, however, some level of mutual interdependence must be present for a relationship to exist. In addition to interdependence, Fournier (1994) argues that emotional or substantive bonding is yet another crucial element in constituting a relationship in the most basic sense. These bonds are included in virtually all the theoretical conceptions of relationships and can be divided into instrumental and socio-emotional provisions or bonds. While instrumental provisions are more functionally-tied to the attainment of objective and short-term goals, socio-emotional provisions include identity related functions in addition to rewards of stimulation, security, companionship, social support etc.

Relying on social psychology, we can thus identify four basic elements constituting interpersonal relationships. The first two factors differentiating a relationship perspective from that which considers only discrete transactions between parties, is the recognition of time and relationship memory as important dimensions. The inclusion of time as a factor in a basic relationship definition also recognizes the relationship as a dynamic entity. Further, some form and level of interdependence and emotional or substantive bonding must be apparent in interpersonal interactions before these can be labeled relationships.

Relationship phases
The temporal and dynamic nature of relationships has given nurture to an extensive body of literature on relationship development and –phases. Several stage theories have been proposed, viewing relationships as having to go through a specific set of stages in a certain order (Reiss, 1960; Kerckhoff and Davis, 1962; Lewis, 1972;1973; Murstein, 1976)[2]. Most of these theories share the assumption that completion of one stage is necessary for progress to the next. The focus of these early models was primarily on relationship change, highlighting transformations in form or structure associated with the different relationship stages. E.g. does Murstein's (1970;1977) Stimulus-Value-Role Theory concentrate on the different categories of exchange factors that successively influence progress toward marriage (Fournier, 1994). Newer stage models, such as Scanzoni's (1979) five stage model and Levinger's (1983) ABCDE-model, do in addition to taking into account relationship change, also incorporate

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[2] As cited in Brehm (1985)

relationship growth, which concerns an increase in *size* or *magnitude* with or without a change in relationship *form*. These two newer models also subsume processes of decline and deterioration, which earlier relationship change models did not (Fournier, 1994). Focusing on Levinger's (1983) ABCDE model (i.e. A(wareness) $\Rightarrow$ B(uild-up) $\Rightarrow$ C(ontinuation) $\Rightarrow$ D(ecline) $\Rightarrow$ E(xit)), we see the clear metaphor of the life cycle.

Although this model has several shortcomings (e.g. not explicitly taking into account that relationships may skip certain stages, stagnate or fall back to an earlier stage or perhaps even follow qualitatively different stages) it has proven useful in structuring the diverse knowledge on relationship processes and mechanisms (Fournier, 1994, p.39). The notation proposed in Levinger's (1983) stage model though seems to have been altered slightly in more recent contributions, where the varying number of phases are labeled attraction, initiation/formation, expansion/growth, maintenance, deterioration, and dissolution (Fournier, 1994; Berscheid and Reis, 1998).

Relationship dimensions and taxonomies
The list of different labels found in the literature to describing various relationship forms or types is almost inexhaustible. Among the relationship dimensions listed are (randomly chosen); cooperative/friendly vs. competitive/hostile, equal vs. unequal, intense vs. superficial, socioemotional/informal vs. task-related/formal (Wish, Deutsh and Kaplan, 1976), intimate vs. non-intimate, regulated vs. non-regulated, public vs. private (Marwell and Hage, 1970), kin vs. non-kin, hierarchical vs. egalitarian (Blumstein and Kollock, 1988), romantic vs. non-romantic (Buunk, 1996) and loving vs. non-loving relationships (Cunningham and Antill, 1981). When we further know that e.g. loving relationships can be categorized into at least six sub-facets (Rubin, 1973), the task of identifying some overall, generic relationship taxonomies does not become an easy one. Rather than striving towards a general taxonomy of relationship dimensions, it might then prove more useful to explicitly state the purpose and theoretical bases for each taxonomy and search for dimensions that are appropriate and applicable for each relationship context, phase and discipline - although with a lesser potential for generalizability to other contexts. This point seems especially valid when considering which relationship dimensions that are most applicable at different relationship *phases - within* each discipline or context. According to Bercheid and Reiss (1998) and Fournier (1994), different relationship dimensions are more relevant and salient at different relationship faces. E.g. are interaction voluntariness, partner familiarity and -similarity, partner attractiveness (Berscheid and Reiss, 1998), and complementarity (Fournier, 1994) the

9

most salient dimensions and drivers in relationship *attraction and formation*. In the relationship *development- and expansion* phase, dimensions such as self-disclosure, intimacy and empathy (Bercheid and Reiss, 1998), novelty, ambiguity and arousal (Levinger, 1983), closeness and interdependence (Fournier, 1994) are more important.

Relationship knowledge also remains severely fragmented along the lines of relationship type (e.g. marital, parental, job), and relationship type is confounded with disciplinary approach, as well as with the characteristics of individuals customarily found within that type of relationship and within the relationship phenomena of interest (Bersheid and Reis, 1998).

In sum, interpersonal relationship theory is a heavily researched, albeit fragmented topic within social psychology. The complexity in relationship levels, phases and dimensions makes the topic as exiting as it is difficult to summarize. In the following sections, we will investigate how the theories of interpersonal relationships and social exchange have influenced - and relate to - marketing thought and research.

2.3 Relationships theory in marketing

Theories of social psychology have always been a central source of information for marketing scholars. However, it was not until the 1980s and -90s that the science of marketing on a larger scale began adopting perspectives of personal and social relationships from this discipline. The concept of "relationship marketing" was initially introduced by Berry in 1983 and defined as "attracting, maintaining, and – in multi-service organizations – enhancing customer relationships" (p.25). Berry (1983) stressed that the attraction of new customers should be viewed only as an intermediate step in the marketing process. Other tasks, such as solidifying customer relationships, transforming indifferent customers into loyal ones, and serving customers as clients should also be considered marketing. During the 1990s, relationship marketing thoughts gained more and more support, and some scholars went as far as calling this a new paradigm in marketing (Gröneroos, 1997; Gummeson, 1997). If not a new paradigm, relationship marketing was seen as a departure from the mass-marketing focus of the 1960s and 70s and from the segmentation marketing of the 1980s. Relationship marketing thus represented a shift from *transactions*, focusing on competition, conflict, independence, freedom of choice and short term gains, to *relationships*, focusing on mutual dependence, co-operation, communication, and long term profits (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

Relying heavily on theories of interdependence and social exchange, most research on relationship marketing was initially carried out in the areas of industrial marketing (Jackson, 1985; Heide and John, 1990; Anderson and Narus, 1991; Shapiro, 1991). The long-term nature, investment size, and potential problems of power imbalance and dependency in most industrial marketing relationships made them a perfect analogy for interpersonal relationships as described in social psychology theories. A good amount of relationship research was also conducted in the context of service marketing (Crosby et al., 1990; Czespiel, 1990; Gröneroos, 1990; Berry, 1995). Although the investments and potential power imbalances usually are lower in service relationships than in industrial relationships, the personal nature of service encounters adds important elements of both emotional bonding and relationship memory to service relationships – which in itself should make them more applicable for relationship theory. Recently – mainly with the assistance of new information and communication technologies – the concept of relationship marketing has also been applied to other areas of consumer marketing (Blattberg and Deighton, 1991; Pepper and Rogers, 1993; Gruen, 1995; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999).

Even though the relationship metaphor has been frequently and vividly applied in marketing, empirical investigations on relationship marketing are quite scarce. In fact, a surprisingly large portion of the research on relationship marketing is conducted solely on a theoretical-conceptual level (e.g. Dwyer, Shurr and Oh, 1987; Duncan and Moriarty, 1998, Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995). The reliance on non-empirical studies is especially salient for consumer marketing settings (cf. Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995; Berry, 1995; Bitner, 1995; Benapudi and Berry, 1997; Stern, 1997). Further, in the rather few empirical works that do exist, relationships are conceptualized and measured very similarly to the traditional marketing constructs that relationship marketing supposedly is reforming. The dynamic, multi-dimensional, multi-leveled and multi-phased qualities of relationships that so often are accentuated in theoretical articles are seldom captured in empirical investigations of the same constructs. For instance do virtually none of the dominant academic contributions in relationship marketing employ time-series research designs in order to grasp the change and development in marketing relationships over time. When causal relationships between relationship constructs are suggested, these constructs are always measured (and tested) simultaneously using cross-sectional designs (e.g. the Journal of Marketing articles by Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999). Consequently, there still appear to be

a large potential for better understanding marketing relationships through conducting more thorough empirical investigations, particularly for consumer settings and when longitudinal research designs are applied.

2.4 Relationship theory at the brand level

Parallel to the adoption of relationship theories in consumer markets, a considerable amount of research on brand charisma, brand associations and brand personality was conducted in marketing (cf. Smothers, 1993; Farquahar and Herr, 1993; Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1997). To a larger extent than earlier, brands were animated, humanized and somehow personalized. The concept of animism refers to the practice by which inanimate objects are endowed with qualities that make them somehow "alive" or "humanlike" (Gilmore, 1919, McDougall, 1911)[3]. Research reveals that consumers show no difficulty in consistently assigning personality qualities to inanimate brand objects, or in thinking of brands as if they were human beings (Plummer, 1985; Rook, 1985; Solomon, 1985; Fournier, 1994, Aaker, 1997). The concept of "brand relationships" was introduced by Blackston (1992;1993) as a logical extension of the idea of a brand personality. Blackston animates the brand by not only analyzing the consumer's attitudes and relationships towards the brand, but also by examining the attitudes the consumer perceives *that the brand has towards him/her.* This dyadic view of consumer-brand relationships is clearly, though not explicitly, founded in interpersonal theories. While the analogy was new, much remained unanswered by Blackston concerning the operational definition, identification and measurement of brand relationships. The conceptual content of brand relationships was however thoroughly investigated by Fournier (1994) few years later. Fournier (1994; 1998) builds on the interpersonal analogy proposed by Blackston and argues that 1) brands can and do serve as viable relationship partners, 2) consumer-brand relationships are valid at the level of lived experience, and 3) consumer-brand relationships can be specified in many ways using a rich vocabulary that is both theoretically and managerially useful (Fournier, 1998, p.344). A consumer-brand relationship is defined by Fournier (1994, p.108) as "a voluntary or imposed interdependence between a person an a brand characterized by a unique history of interactions and an anticipation of future occurrences, that is intended to facilitate socio-emotional or instrumental goals of the participants, and that involves some type of consolidating bond."

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[3] As cited in Fournier (1994, p.15)

Although we saw in chapter 2.2 that relationships most often are analyzed on a dyad level, this level of analysis inevitably must shift – from the dyad to the individual level – when we are measuring and analyzing consumer-brand relationships. The reason in fairly obvious: It is both difficult and certainly less interesting to observe relationship behavior of both partners (the consumer and the brand), then it is basing the analysis on self-reported measurements of the consumer. The main purpose when monitoring consumer-brand relationships is not to get an objective description of relationship *behaviors*, but rather assessing the individual consumers' evaluation and lived experience of the brand-relationship.

Faithful to this task, Fournier (1994) develops a framework – Brand Relationship Quality – for conceptualizing consumer-brand relationship, based on theories from interpersonal relationship literature.

2.5 Brand Relationship Quality

Fournier's (1994) Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) -construct is a consumer-based measure of the strength and depth of consumer-brand relationships. Similar to research conducted on buyer-seller relationships (Crosby, Evans and Cowles, 1990; Dwyer and Oh, 1987; Swanson and Kelley, 1998), relationship quality is conceptualized as a higher-order construct consisting of several distinct, although related, dimensions. But whereas the former authors focus on traditional marketing constructs such as trust, satisfaction and commitment, Fournier (1994) does to a larger extent attempt to capture the qualitative and affect-laden ties that exist in such relationships. The conceptual content of BRQ relies heavily on social psychology and the construct consists of six different sub-dimensions: Intimacy, self-connection, brand partner quality, personal commitment, love/passion and behavioral interdependence, see figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: Brand Relationship Quality (Fournier, 1994; 1998).
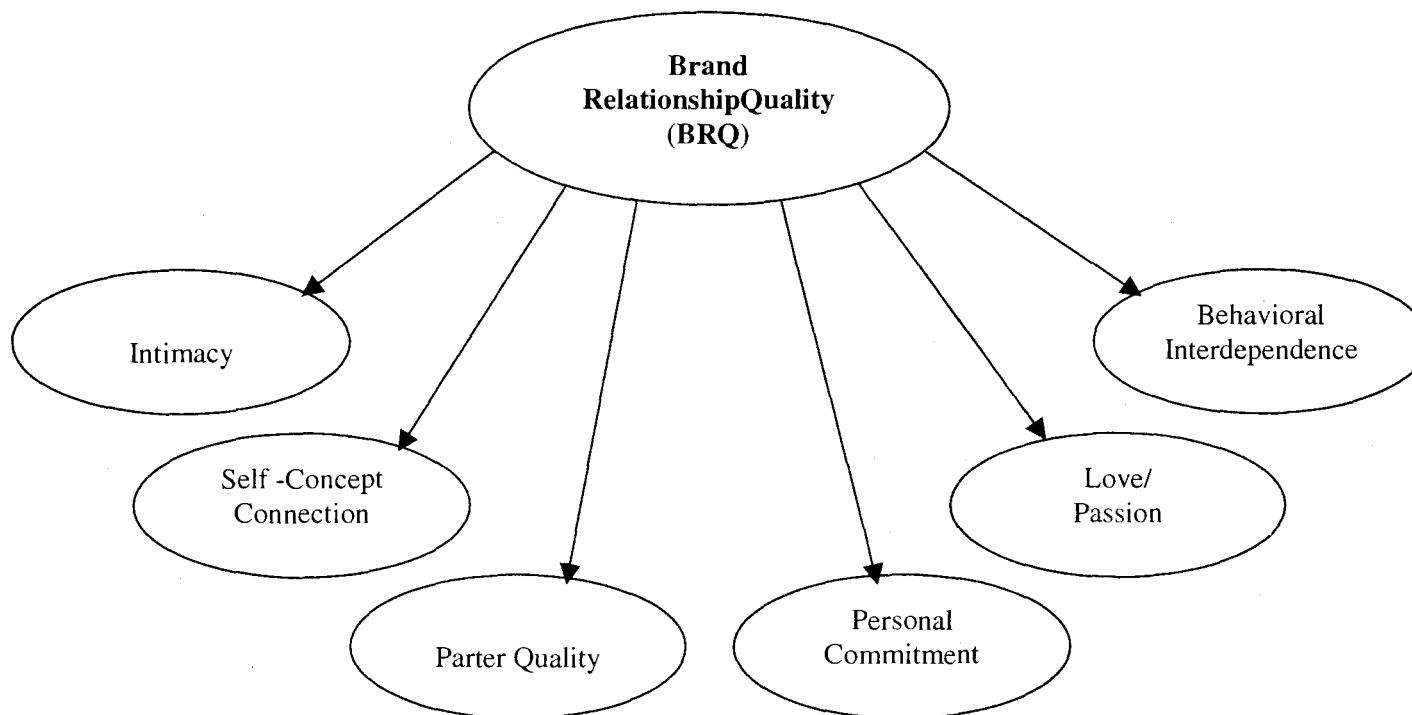
The BRQ model was mainly developed for diagnostic purposes, but some evidence of its predictive validity is also offered in Fournier (1994, p.177). On average, across nine dependent measures[4], R^2 values for the BRQ models are 12% higher than those obtained with brand attitude as a predictor and 8% higher than those using brand satisfaction as predictor. While the personal commitment- and love/passion factors contribute most significantly to the variance explained across response categories, each of the remaining facets makes a unique contribution to the explanation of at least one response outcome.

The direction of influence between BRQ and the relationship facets is not clearly stated in the literature. In her presentation of the BRQ model Fournier (1998) draws the arrows from BRQ to the facets suggesting a reflective model. Thus, BRQ is suggested to influence the levels of the other dimensions. This implies that marketers should attempt to influence BRQ directly, which subsequently should lead to a change in the relationship facets. From a measurement perspective this implies that the relationship facets should be intercorrelated since they stem from a common source. From a managerial perspective the implications of this model is less

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[4] Frequency of use, share of use, repeat purchase intention, relationship duration, supportive customer responses, resistance to competitive threats, insulation from competitive activities, top-of-mind saliency and consideration set size.

actionable, since the model is not specific with respect to what the manager should do to influence BRQ. However, a lot of the material presented on the BRQ suggests a different direction on the arrows linking BRQ with its facets. In her categorization of different types of relationships Fournier (1998) suggests that the facets are sources of BRQ, reflecting a formative conceptualization of the BRQ construct. Thus, there is no requirement that the components should be intercorrelated. BRQ still mediates the effects on the outcome variables, but the model becomes more specific in terms of how to influence BRQ. While this model appears more appealing from a management perspective, it might still be a problem that the same level of BRQ might stem from different configurations of relationship dimensions. This implies that the influences of BRQ on the dependent variables are not affected by how they are formed. For instance, two identical BRQ scores may reflect relationships based either on brand partner quality or commitment. However, the effect on dependent variables may vary depending on the basis for the BRQ score suggesting that identical BRQ scores may have different effects on relationship consequences. We argue that such a model is much more actionable for both diagnostic and prediction purposes and, accordingly, we conceptualize BRQ as a formative, rather than reflective (as depicted in figure 2.1) measurement model. However, the measurement of individual facets will of course follow a reflective measurement model (see chapters 7.5.2 and 9.4.2).

The BRQ model offers a rich potential for extending our knowledge of consumer-brand relationships through the identification and elaboration of the six BRQ dimensions. In the following sections, we will outline the conceptual content of each of these consumer-brand relationship facets and link this content to research conducted in social psychology. We feel that such an elaborate presentation of each the facets is important here for two primary reasons. First, Fournier herself (1994) does not devote too much attention to theoretically conceptualizing each facet. There is thus a need to review prior work on these concepts both within marketing and social psychology. Second, a thorough investigation of the conceptual content of each dimension is necessary when we are to propose hypotheses on differential effects across BRQ-facets (cf. chapter 6).

Intimacy

Intimacy refers to the closeness, mutual understanding and openness between relationship partners (Fournier, 1994;1998). Oden (1974)[5] maintains that intimacy points to a "knowledge of the core of something, an understanding of the inmost parts, that which is indicative of one's deepest nature and marked by close physical, mental and social association". In an attempt to tap the conceptual content of intimacy in the general population, Waring et al. (1980) found eight fundamental facets of intimate relationships. Mutual self-disclosure was identified as the most important aspect, followed by affection, compatibility, cohesion and the ability to resolve conflicts. Self-disclosure is often seen as part of a communication factor defined as "expressiveness", which involves listening to the partner and the capacity to talk about personal relationship issues. Chelune et al (1984) also identified six essential qualities of intimacy in their cognitive interaction model of intimate relationships, including sharing knowledge of the innermost being of one another (self-disclosure), mutuality, interdependence, trust, commitment and caring. Caring is also accentuated by Driscoll et al (1972) as an important facet of intimacy, stating that intimacy may stem from a variety of different motives, but are always characterized by caring and affection between relationship partners.

In line with several other concepts adopted to marketing from disciplines like social psychology, there is no guarantee that intimacy automatically will make sense or add new insight to the science of marketing. Because intimacy primarily is linked to interpersonal relationships and includes highly context dependent variables such as sexuality (Waring et al, 1980), it is evident that intimacy neither can have the came conceptual content, nor gain the same level of intensity or strength in marketing relationships. Some attempts of adopting the concept of intimacy to marketing have been made though, most notably by Stern (1997). Stern (1997) suggested five C's, all describing different aspects of service relationships; Communication, Commitment, Caring, Comfort and Conflict Resolution. Her rationale for introducing intimacy theory to marketing is threefold; 1) it accounts for the influence of emotions in relationships as well as cognition, 2) it allows insight into the deterioration of relationships as well as into their formation and maintenance and 3) it emphasizes the association between relationship phases and persuasive communication in marketing relationships.

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[5] As cited in Pearlman and Fehr (1987)

According to Fournier (1994), intimate marketing relationships can be developed through honest and revealing communication, addressable marketing programs that encourage a one-to-one understanding between parties, and frequency marketing programs that solidify ritualistic interactions (e.g. The CD-a-Month Club).

Self-Concept Connection

Self-Concept Connection (Fournier, 1994; 1998) or attachment (Fournier, 1994 – early model) reflects the degree to which the brand partner has been incorporated in the consumer's concept of self. That is, to what extent the brand maintains the consumer's self-concept or expresses his/her core value system. In marketing, a vast amount of literature has been conducted on self-concept congruity (Jacobsen and Kossoff, 1963; Grubb and Hubb, 1968; Dolich, 1969; Kassarjian, 1971; Sirgy, 1982; Johar and Sirgy, 1991; Brock et al. 1990, Aaker, 1999), which is a concept very similar to self-connection. Self-concept congruity was introduced to marketing by motivation-scholars such as Gardner (1955) and Levy (1959). The essence of their research is that every individual maintain a real and an ideal self (Kassarjian, 1971). This self is "the sum of all that a man can call his – his body, traits, and abilities; his material possessions, his family, friends and enemies; his vocations and avocations and much else" (Hall, 1969, p.467)[6]. An important assumption is that all consumers perceive the products that they own in the form of symbolic value for themselves and others. Congruency between the products' symbolic image and the (real or ideal) self-image of the consumer, leads to a higher probability of positive evaluation and purchase of this product. This effect is fairly robust in marketing (Grubb and Hubb, 1959; Dolich, 1969; Kasserjian, 1971; Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy et al, 1991; Ericksen, 1996; Sirgy and Sue, 2000). Even if the relationship between a positive self-product congruity and consumer attitudes and behavior is well established, the explained variance is fairly low (R^2 usually between 0.05 and 0.3). The reason for this is obvious; other factors – such as the functional attributes of the products – are also very important in consumer-brand evaluations and relationships. Sirgy et al (1991) found that functional congruence had a stronger predictive strength on attitudes and behavior than self-concept congruity. The authors did however find that self-congruity not only had a direct

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[6] As cited in Kasserjian (1971)

effect on behavior, but that the indirect effect (through influencing beliefs about functional attributes) often was at least as strong as the direct effect.

Several findings on the effect of self-concept congruity in advertising can be found. Johar and Sirgy (1990) observed that when the product was value-expressive, persuasion worked mainly through self-congruity, whereas when the product was more utilitarian, persuasion worked mainly through functional congruity. Brock et al (1990), on the other hand, investigated how consumers with different self-images tended to prefer ads that to a higher or lesser extent matched these images. After conducting four experiments, they conclude that when the image of the ad matches the self-image of the consumer, evaluation of the ads improves substantially compared to when there was no such match. By the same token does research conducted by Shavitt and Brock (1986) demonstrate that it is an individual's self-relevant thoughts, in contrast to cognitive responses regarding message elements (i.e., the simple repetition of message elements), in which have the greatest persuasive impact.

Brand Partner Quality

According to Fournier (1994;1998), "brand partner quality" is an indicator of the consumer's evaluation of the brand's performance in its partnership role. Whereas brand relationship quality (BRQ) is an "overall", multidimensional measure of the *relationship* between the consumer and the brand, does brand partner quality refer to the consumer's subjective evaluation of the performance of the brand itself. The *denotation*[7] of the concept (Zaltman, Pinson and Angelmar, 1973) is thus limited to the quality of the partner, and not of the relationship per se. Essential elements of the *intention*[8] (Zaltman et al., 1973) of the partner quality construct is the partner's *"dependability, reliability, faithfulness and predictability,......respect, positive regard for the other, accountability and compassion..."* (Fournier, 1994; p. 132). Fournier (1994) uses research from the marital domain (e.g. Burr, 1973) as a metaphor for conceptualizing the quality of the brand partner, but she makes no further attempts to restrict or delineate the intention of the concept. As a consequence of this, partner quality may encompass the conceptual content of a variety of traditional marketing concepts, including brand satisfaction and brand trust. In fact, if we follow the guidelines offered by e.g. Oliver (1997), brand *satisfaction* may prove to be an even more appropriate and applicable concept label than quality for the context and purpose outlined by Fournier

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[7] Who or what is it that can have quality
[8] What are the properties subsumed in the concept (quality)

(1994). Oliver (1997) systematically de-couples satisfaction from quality by pointing on some core differences, such that 1)an assessment of quality – as opposed to satisfaction – is not dependent upon past experience, 2) quality are evaluated against an ideal, whereas satisfaction against norms or expectations, 3) quality are primarily based on a cognitive evaluation, while satisfaction also have considerable affective elements, 4) an assessment of quality has to a larger extent than satisfaction a long term nature and focus. Given the nature and qualities of relationships discussed in detail in chapter 2.2, and the arguments put forth in Fournier (1994), we might argue that a subjective evaluation of the relationship partner should, in fact; 1) in some respect be linked to the past and present experience with the partner's attributes, 2) be assessed against the consumer's expectations rather than against an ideal partner – in line with most research on social exchange (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Rusbult, 1980), 3) be based also on affect-laden evaluations – not just cognitive assessments, and 4) be more dynamic and transient – given the dynamic nature of relationships – rather than long term and enduring. Thus, brand partner satisfaction may here be a more suitable label than brand partner quality.

However, Fournier's description of partner quality as judgments of the partner's "dependability, reliability, faithfulness and predictability", also encompass important aspects of brand *trust*. A frequent sited definition of trust is "a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence" (Moorman, Zaltman and Deschpande, 1992). Trust is often conceptualized in terms of "dependability, reliability, faithfulness and predictability" (see e.g. Hess, 1995; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999), in addition to dimensions like credibility and benevolence (Ganesan and Hess, 1987), sincerity, equality, consistency and expectations of cooperation (Sullivan and Peterson, 1982)[9], competence (Doney and Cannon, 1997; Butel and Cantrell, 1984)[10], and honesty and information sharing (Crosby et al, 1990).

To a large extent do therefore Fournier (1994; 1998)'s concept "brand partner quality" integrate common conceptualizations of both brand satisfaction and brand trust. This might prove to be somewhat problematic, given that satisfaction is believed to be an antecedent, or causal determinant, of trust (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999).

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[9] As cited in Moorman et al. (1993)
[10] As cited in Urban, Sultan and Qualls (1999)

Personal Commitment

Commitment is, together with trust, regarded as an essential ingredient in successful, long-term relationships (Dwyer, Shurr and Oh, 1987, Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999). The concept of commitment is used across a vide range of different disciplines, and the definitions and understandings of the concept are as varied as the disciplines the concept is applied in. Common for most definitions is their origin in sociology or psychology. While early sociological contributions reflect a clear focus on the societal and social factors that ties the individual to a certain pattern of behavior (Pritchard et al, 1999), psychologists define commitment in terms of choice or cognition that predisposes the individual for a certain type of behavior (Festinger, 1957). Within social psychology, commitment is conceptualized as a property of a relationship, typical in the context of marriage or working life. Organizational commitment is further one of the oldest and most studied concepts in organizational behavior (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), primarily because commitment is found to influence important variables such as turnover, motivation, recruitment and organizational support. Within marketing, commitment is conceptualized as an attitude or behavioral intention. Along with e.g. Morgan and Hunt (1994) and Garbarino and Johnson (1999) we choose to rely on the influential definition of Moorman et al (1992, p.312), stating that "commitment is an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship". Commitment to a relationship goes beyond a simple positive evaluation of the rewards and costs associated with the relationship. This implies that commitment entails adoption of a long-term orientation towards the relationship, where relationship partners may be willing to make small short-term sacrifices in order to harvest the long-term rewards of the relationship (Dwyer et al., 1987). In addition, commitment entails a willingness and confidence in keeping the relationship stable and incessant (Anderson and Weitz, 1992).

Commitment is conceptually close to another marketing concept – namely loyalty. Asseal (1987) goes as far as defining loyalty as "commitment to a brand". Conversely, Oliva, Oliver and MacMillan (1992) state that the two concepts are *not* related and that some kind of chaos-model of non-linear effects exists between them. The truth probably rests somewhere in the middle of these two extremes positions, depending on how the two concepts are measured. Commitment and loyalty are two related – but per definition distinct – concepts, where commitment is believed to lead to loyalty. A clear line of demarcation between the two concepts is difficult to draw, but a simplistic, integrative view may be that loyalty goes

beyond commitment (as loyalty also encompass behavior) and that commitment consists of something more than the "attitude part" of loyalty.

In sum, commitment is an attitude/behavioral intention defined as an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship. The concept of commitment includes properties such as stability, sacrifice and long-term orientation and is believed to be an important determinant of loyalty. In addition, Fournier (1994) noted that a duality of dedication, faith and stated pledge characterized many committed brand relationships in her exploratory study, as did an underlying sentiment of guilt in violating the relationship "contract".

Love/Passion

The love/passion component of BRQ captures a third aspect of psychological closeness, besides intimacy and self-connection (Fournier, 1994). While intimacy reveals the degree of mutual disclosure, understanding and openness between relational partners and self-connection the degree to which the brand's image is congruent with the consumer's image of self, love/passion refers to the *intensity* of the emotional ties between the consumer and the brand. Passionate love combines feelings of strong favorable evaluation with elements of fascination and exclusivity (Davis and Latty-Mann, 1987; Davis and Todd, 1985; Tennov, 1979)[11]. The theories of love and passion are founded in psychology. An essential contribution here is Sternberg (1986)'s "Triangular Theory of Love". Sternberg separates love into three conceptual components; intimacy, passion and commitment/decision. While intimacy here is viewed as the emotional foundation for love and commitment/decision the cognitive aspect, passion is portrayed as the motivational component of love (Shimp and Madden, 1988). This theory is in good harmony with Fournier (1994)'s division of the different BRQ facets. Within the BRQ framework, love and commitment are separate dimensions, and the love/passion facet clearly refers to passion in Sternberg (1986)'s terminology. Shimp and Madden (1988) represent one of the few attempts to adopt – or "translate" – theories of love to a marketing context. In their terminology, passion is exchanged for "yearning" or "longing", both in which are essential components of love/passion, according to Fournier (1994, p.130-131). Sternberg (1986), Berscheid (1983) and Fournier (1994) all point to longing, exclusivity and separation anxiety as essential elements of passionate relationships. Consumers can experience passion-like feelings for

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[11] As cited in Fournier (1994, p.130).

brands and products and go through long periods where they just can't consume enough of certain products/brands. E.g. do Holbrook (1986)'s autobiographical sketch, "I'm Hip", provide anecdotal evidence of one person's passionate relationship with jazz music (Shimp and Madden, 1988, p.164). In Fournier (1994)'s qualitative study, it is strongly indicated that fascination, longing, exclusivity and separation anxiety are prominent elements of some consumer-brand relationships.

Behavioral interdependence

Interdependence concerns the degree to which the actions and reactions of relationship partners are intertwined (Fournier, 1994, p.129). Mutual behavioral dependence is an essential variable in both inter-organizational relationships and research conducted in business-to-business marketing. Degree of dependency are often assumed to predict cooperation between parties in industrial markets (Turner, Hartley, LeMay and Wood, 2000), even if some research goes to show that dependency may lead to conflict (Spekman and Sawhney, 1990)[12]. In the personal relationship field, interdependence is viewed as a behavioral indicator of the closeness attained within a relationship. In measuring degree of interdependence present in a given relationship, Berscheid et al (1989)[13], suggests three important properties; the pattern of interaction between parties, the strength or impact of each occurrence, and the scope of activities involved. Translating these properties to a consumer-brand context, we may argue that interdependence is influenced by the frequency and regularity of brand usage, the meaning or personal influence of each usage occasion, and consumer involvement with multiple products under the same brand umbrella, or same product in multiple usage contexts (Fournier, 1994). Within consumer-brand relationships, different consumption rituals may emerge as a central process through which interdependence is fostered and celebrated (Fournier, 1998). Research conducted on interpersonal relationship suggests that a relationship inextricable woven into the fabric of daily life can endure despite low levels of affective involvement and intimacy (Hinde, 1979). This indicates that behavioral interdependence contributes with substantial qualities to the BRQ-framework that are not necessarily captured in the five other dimensions.

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[12] As cited in Turner et al. (2000)
[13] As cited in Fournier (1994)

Brand Relationship Quality discussion

Fournier (1994;1998)'s Brand Relationship Quality concept provides a truly insightful conceptualization of the affect-laden ties that exists between consumers and their brands. Relying heavily on social psychology, the BRQ-concept is rich, integrative and multi-dimensional. *"Researchers that have applied interpersonal theories to the study of consumer-brand relationships have been highly selective in their treatments. Theories of love (Shimp and Madden (1988), commitment (Dick, 1998), and trust (Hess, 1995) receive the bulk of researcher's attention to the exclusion of other important relationship concepts"*, Fournier (1998, p. 344) argues. Although a very valid argument, one could perhaps accuse Fournier for extending the brand relationship concept *too far*. In the BRQ-concept, Fournier may encompass *too many* relationship concepts and dimensions, on the cost of the diagnosticity of, and discriminant validity between, the BRQ facets. Further, the BRQ model does not specify any structural paths between the relationship dimensions other than their common association with BRQ. The lack of internal relationships between the different dimensions is contrary to what is proposed in the previous literature on both business-to-business relationships and interpersonal relationships (cf. e.g. Thibaut and Kelley (1959)'s Interdependency model and Rusbult (1980)'s Investment model). Previous studies have found a causal relationship between, for instance, intimacy and commitment, and partner quality (satisfaction) and commitment (cf. Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Rusbult, 1980).

However, despite the problems of BRQ identified in the sections above, we choose to focus this framework as our conceptualization and measure of consumer-brand relationship ties. The reason for this is fourfold. First, this framework appears to be conceptually richer than most other measures of relationships and loyalty, encompassing a wide array of facets. The multi-dimensionality of the BRQ construct makes it easier for us to identify unique determinants, or antecedents, of each facet. Second, and related to this point, BRQ appear promising also for prediction purposes, entailing a variety of dimensions that has proven to have a strong, yet differential, predicting power of various relationship outcome variables. Third, the concept of consumer-brand relationship makes more sense to apply to marketing relationships that not necessarily are monogamous (cf. Thorbjørnsen and Breivik, 2002). Most conceptualizations of brand loyalty have problems explaining the behavior of consumers with multiple brand relationships within the same product category. Fourth, and last, the BRQ-concept better captures the emotional- and affect-laden ties between consumers and their brands than do other relational or loyalty measures.

In the following, we will extend our discussion on the relationship concept in marketing by investigating existing literature on relationship *motives*. Understanding the motives underlying why consumers engage in – and maintain – relationships with products and brands are essential for understanding how to tailor and utilize relationship marketing programs and - technologies.

3 Relationship Motives

3.1 Introduction

The studies of *motives* in relationship marketing theory are very scarce. Few academic studies can be found, and the studies that do mention relationship motives seldom provide any empirical investigation of these motives. The topic is still very important, both for understanding the nature of marketing relationships and for explaining why some forms of relationship marketing are more effective then others. In the following chapter, we will define what motives are, briefly review some relationship motive theories of social psychology, and investigate the relationship motives listed in marketing. Lastly, we will attempt to derive on a general taxonomy for categorizing relationship motives at the *brand level*.

3.2 What are motives?

In his tripartite division of personality disposition, McClelland (1951, 1981) distinguishes among the personality *trait*, the *schema* and the *motive*. While personality trait is a stylistic variable that indicates *how* an individual behaves or experiences his or her world, personality schema refers to *what* that individual characteristically "sees" (what inferences or conclusions he or she draws) when interacting in the world (McAdams, 1984). A schema is a thus a cognitive frame imposed by the individual upon experience as to make sense of that experience. Motives, on the other hand, reflect the *why* of behavior and experience, that is, the underlying reasons for behavior or the "internal springs of action". According to McClelland (1951, 1981), motives exist within the person as affectively-toned cognitive clusters centered around general experiential preferences. A motive is then seen as a need that is sufficiently pressing to direct the person to seek satisfaction. These needs can be biological, arising from states of tension such as hunger or discomfort, or psychological, arising from need for recognition, belonging etc. Psychological needs can further be sub-categorized into utilitarian needs (the desire to achieve some functional benefits) or hedonic needs (i.e. an experiential need involving emotional responses or fantasies) (Solomon, Bamossy and Askegaard, 1999). Such needs become a motive when they are aroused to a sufficient level of intensity. Motivation can thus be defined as goal-directed arousal (Park and Mittal, 1985).

3.3 Relationship motives in social psychology

When consulting the basic tenet of social exchange theory, the answer to *why* people engage in a relationship should be quite self-evident: Because the relationship is believed to be *rewarding*. According to social exchange theory, people enter and continue to stay in a given relationship as long as relationship rewards are perceived to be higher than the costs, and as long as the relationship outcome is as least as high as one would expect from alternative relationship partners (CL_{alt}) (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Brehm, 1985). The problem lies – of course – in identifying the content and nature of these rewards. Given that motives are aroused by goal-directed needs, identifying some basic human relationship needs will be fruitful in trying to categorize different relationship motives and rewards. In Murray's (1938) influential taxonomy of "psychogenic needs", 20 different needs are detected, including the needs for achievement, affiliation, dominance, nurturance and understanding (McAdams, 1984). On the other end of the continuum are theorists such as Adler (1927), who identifies that the core tendency of personality is the striving toward superiority or perfection. This single primary need may assume manifold forms, though. Between the poles of Murray's 20 needs and Adler's single need, a large number of need- and -motive -taxonomies have been put forth, including Freud's need hierarchy, Rogers' (1951) self-actualization motives, and McClelland's (1961) achievement motives. Most of these need- and motivation theories are still very broad in the sense that they are not restricted to motives underlying *interpersonal* relationships only, but are rather descriptive of human motives in general. Relationship motive taxonomies that are more limited to an interpersonal context, include Schutz's (1966) theory of inclusion-, control- and affection- motives, McAdams' (1984) power- and intimacy- motives, and Buunk's (1996) affiliation motives. All these theories differ in both context and on level of abstraction – and thus in degree of generalizability to other situations of interpersonal motivation. As with the relationship dimensions in chapter 2.2, the challenge lies more in finding concepts and theories that are appropriate for the context, than finding "The" generic taxonomy for relationship motives. Different theories and taxonomies are needed for different situations and contexts. Take for instance Buunk's (1996) work on motives of affiliation, which is almost exclusively denoted to situations involving some form of stress. From a marketing point of view, this theory would be applicable in a wide variety of contexts, as stress – in the form of money or time constraints, social pressure etc. – is salient in many marketing choice situations. Buunk (1996) suggests that three underlying motives are driving the affiliation of individuals in stressful or ambiguous situations. These are; social comparison, anxiety reduction and information seeking. According to *social comparison*

theory (Festinger, 1954), people do in ambiguous situations affiliate with others facing the same situation because they are then given the opportunity to compare one's responses with those of others. In addition to a desire to reduce uncertainty through social comparison, a desire for *anxiety reduction* may also play an important role in affiliation under stress: High fear subjects often turn to sympathetic others who might offer them reassurance and emotional support (Wills, 1991)[14]. Buunk's (1996) last motive, *information seeking*, is based upon attachment theory. According to e.g. Shaver and Klinnert (1982), people faced with a new stimulus or a stressful situation, will seek out someone knowledgeable who may provide information to enable them to assess the attributes and risks implied in the situation.

While Buunk's (1996) affiliation motives are essential in situations involving stress and/or ambiguity, other motives may be more prominent in other situations. McAdams' (1994) theories on power and intimacy motives seem highly appropriate for all close relationships, albeit less relevant for interpersonal relationships that are less significant or less volunteer in nature.

The context-dependency of each of the above theories makes them less directly applicable to other contexts, such as marketing. In the following sections we will briefly review the relationship motives listed in the marketing literature, and investigate how these motives relate to the theories mentioned above. Lastly, we propose a general taxonomy for relationship motives at the brand level.

3.4 Relationship motives in marketing

Although there is a vast amount of research on motivation in marketing (Sheth, 1976; van Raaij and Wandwossen, 1978; Kassarjian and Robertson, 1981; MacInnis and Moorman, 1991), academic contributions on *relationship motives* in marketing are more scarce. As with most research in relationship marketing, the majority of insights are found within the context of industrial marketing. In line with the theories of social exchange, Dwyer, Shurr and Oh (1987) argue that all buyer-seller relations involve analogous benefits and costs, and that the motivation of engaging in such relational activity thus can be found the perceived benefits of marketing relationships. These benefits include reduced uncertainty, managed dependence, exchange efficiency and social satisfaction (Dwyer, Shurr and Oh, 1987; Spekman, Strauss

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[14] As cited in Buunk (1996).

and Smith, 1985). Following a transaction cost framework, Soellner (1994) maintains that the general conclusion to why firms engage in relational behavior are their need for safeguarding transaction-specific assets and adapting to uncertainty. Most work on relationship motives in industrial marketing appears to focus on reducing risk, safeguarding assets and managing the dependence to its suppliers and customers.

The topic of relationship motives in consumer markets was practically nascent before Sheth and Parvatiyar in 1995 published an article on antecedents and consequences of relationship marketing in consumer markets. Although their fundamental axiom – that the consumer's need for reducing choice underlies all relational behavior – is controversial (cf. Peterson, 1995; Bagozzi, 1995), their discussion of personal motives for engaging in relational market behavior has become influential. Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) list several important drivers or antecedents for relational behavior in consumer markets. Consumers propensity to engage in relational market behavior will, according to the authors, be greater: a) in buying situations where there is a great need to routinize choice because of an efficiency potential, b) when the opportunity to generalize response to other purchase situations is large, c) when the expectation for future positive reinforcements is great, d)when there is a large potential for consumer inertia, e) when there is a large need for information, knowledge and expertise in choice making, f) when perceived risk is high, g) when the potential for a market choice to upset cognitive consistency is great, and h) then there is a large potential for post-purchase rationalization. In addition, Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) also list several institutional and sociological reasons for engaging in relational market behavior. The most prominent sociological reasons listed are fulfilling social aspirations and reducing social risk – both referring to reference group related consumer behavior. What seem to be lacking in the works of Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) though, is the more fundamental social motives underlying relational behavior – as described by scholars of social psychology. Some attempts of including social determinants of why consumers engage in marketing relationships do exist, especially within service marketing. Researchers accentuate the personal contact and - interaction that exists between market actors, suggesting that motives such as the need to be dealt with on a one-to-one basis (Barlow, 1992), to feel important (Jackson, 1993), to make friends (Goodwin and Gremler, 1996), to feel familiar with others, to get recognized, to experience friendship and social support (Barnes, 1994; Berry, 1995), may drive commercial relationships. Although these motives are all linked to the theories of affiliation, attraction and

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close relationships (cf. Buunk, 1996), the conceptual pillars underlying them appear less well founded.

However, the largest challenge in identifying the motives of why individual consumers engage in and maintain marketing relationships are neither the relatively small amount of literature on the topic, nor the controversies listed in this literature, but rather the lack of empirical studies in this field. With the notable exception of Gwinner, Gremler and Bitner (1998), few – if any – researchers have empirically investigated the relational benefits consumers experience from marketing (here: service-) relationships. Although Gwinner et al (1998) investigated consumers' perceived *benefits* of maintaining on-going relationships, we can expect these benefits to be highly correlated to the *motives* consumers have of maintaining these relationships. After conducting both a qualitative and quantitative study of service customers, Gwinner et al (1998) identified three basic relational benefit factors; confidence benefits, social benefits and special treatment benefits. These basic benefits can easily be translated into three fundamental motives for maintaining service relationships. Confidence benefits pertain mainly to risk-reducing motives. Here, respondents indicated that there is a substantial element of comfort and feeling of security of having developed a relationship with a provider. Social benefits refer to motives of affiliating and making friends with service employees. Special treatment benefits - on the other hand - mainly refer to efficiency motives. This includes the potential for price- and time efficiency, as well as getting a higher priority than other customers.

When analyzing the literature on relationship motives in marketing, several observations can be made: The first, and most obvious, is that relationships are complex. Given the multiple levels, dimensions and phases of relationships, most relationship motives listed are very contingent on context. In order to derive on some generic, overall motives, the level of abstraction must be very high – if such a taxonomy should be applicable across contexts. Further, given the dynamic nature of relationships, relationship motives will differ substantially across relationships phases. Consumers' motives for engaging in relationships may be different from their motives for maintaining the relationship, and most certainly different from their motives for ending the relationship. The second observation is that the literature on relationship motives in marketing is very limited. Little work on identifying and categorizing consumers motives for engaging, maintaining and braking up relationships has

been conducted, and the work that do exist, appear to be less integrated with the theories of social exchange and interpersonal behavior that in some way or another underlie this work.

Based on the works of Gwinner et al (1998), a tentative tripartite taxonomy of consumer motives for engaging in- and maintaining relationships can be put forth. The three categories of efficiency-, confidence- (here labeled "risk reducing") and social motives empirically identified by Gwinner et al (1998) also appear to be well in alignment with the theoretical works of other scholars in relationship marketing. The efficiency motive includes the a)-d) motives set forth by Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) above and the exchange efficiency motive proposed by Dwyer et al. (1987). Risk reducing (confidence-) motives encompass Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995)'s motives f)-h), Dwyer et al (1987)'s motive of uncertainty reduction and Soellner (1994)'s motives of safeguarding assets and adapting to uncertainty. Social motives can include a variety of dimensions including the need to feel familiar with others, to get recognized, to experience friendship and social support (Barnes, 1994; Berry, 1995) as well as Dwyer et al (1987)'s more general motive of social satisfaction. Table 3.1 below illustrates how our tripartite taxonomy of relationship motives encapsulates the relationship motives and -benefits listed in previous marketing articles.

Table 3.1 Relationship motives

Author(s)	Efficiency motives	Risk reducing motives	Social motives
Spekman, Strauss, and Smith (1985)[15]		"Reduce uncertainty"	
Dwyer, Shurr and Oh (1987)	"Exchange efficiency"		"Social satisfaction"
Jackson (1993)			"Need to feel important"
Barnes (1994)			"Experience familiarity, personal recognition, friendship and social support"
Soellner (1994)	"Avoid switching costs"	"Safeguarding assets and adapting to uncertainty"	
Berry (1995)		"Risk reducing benefits"	"Social benefits"
Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995)	"Routinize choice", "generalize response to other purchase situations", "utilize potential for consumer intertia"	"Reduce risk", "reduce cognitive inconsistency", "post-purchase rationalization"	"Fulfill social aspirations"
Goodwin and Gremler (1996)			"Friendships over the counter", "experience communal service behavior"
Gwinner, Gremler and Bitner (1998)	"Economic/special treatment benefits"	"Confidence benefits"	"Social benefits"

Although the table above hardly is exhaustive – and the categories not necessarily mutually exclusive – it does illustrate an important point, namely that the tripartite taxonomy of efficiency-, risk reducing-, and social relationship motives constitutes an applicable tool for categorizing consumers' motives for engaging in, and maintaining, marketing relationships. In the following paragraph, we discuss the applicability of this taxonomy for describing relationship motives at the brand level.

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[15] As cited in Dwyer et al. (1987), p.14.

3.5 Relationship motives at the brand level

At first thought, the relationship motives of interpersonal relationships may intuitively be very different from relationships in which one participant is inanimate. Although Fournier (1994) and others argue that brands can and do serve as viable and animate relationship partners, brands obviously have several shortcomings compared to humans in terms of their ability of interacting and communicating. Still, the general relationship motives set forth above may be as relevant for consumer-brand relationships as for human-human relationships, although the reciprocity in terms of motives are different. Brands are not perceived to have a rich specter of needs and goals that seek fulfillment, but consumers most certainly do. Consumers may have similar classes of motives for engaging in a relationship with a brand that they do for engaging in relationships with other humans. No attempts of categorizing different relationship motives at the brand level have been conducted. Still, when looking with the spectacles of Gwinner et al (1998) at the ideographic case analyses provided by Fournier (1994), Fournier and Yao (1997) and Fournier (1998), most of the relationship motives listed appear to fit this relationship motive taxonomy nicely. In the following paragraphs we will illustrate how the three relationship motives derived from Gwinner et al (1998) may be applicable for categorizing relationship motives described in Fournier's case analyses.

The *efficiency* motive is most salient in the case of Charles (Fournier and Yao, 1997) - a busy professional in his early thirties - in his relationship to Coffee Connection: *"It's convenient. The shop has good coffee. It's relatively easy to get there and offers good quality"* (Fournier and Yao, 1997, p.465). Conversely, Tom (Fournier and Yao, 1997) focuses on efficiency on price, rather than convenience, because his financial resources are more limited. He remains loyal to three "in-home coffee brands", and buys whichever is cheapest: *"Oh I like Starbucks, sure! The best coffee I ever had! But there is no way I could use that with the gallons of coffee we consume...If the coupons are good, Maxwell House, Folgers, Chock Full, I buy the couponed coffee instead. I go broader on coffee choices because of finances"* (Fournier and Yao, 1997, p.462).

Risk-reducing-, or confidence-, motives are also prominent in many of Fournier's case analyses. A good example would be the case of Jean (Fournier, 1998), a strong believer in tradition and heritage, which prefers "the old way of doing things" and has no doubt that "things made 20 years ago are better than the junk they sell today" (Fournier, 1998, p.351). The predictability of brands is important to her, and she only become committed to brands

that have demonstrated their reliability over time. A classic brand also represents truthfulness, for with long-standing brands there is no hiding behind falsity or pretension. *"Well, Skippy is the best peanut butter. I have had all the other ones because someone says, you know, "Try it! It has less fat grams or whatever". But, I always, I go back to Skippy every time"* (Fournier, 1998, p.352). Similar to many of Jeans brand relationships are Anna's previous 25 years long relationship to the Yuban Coffee brand (Fournier and Yao, 1997). Yuban offered Anna stability and security during a *"very repetitious lifestyle period"* when she was *"young, married, and raising kids, and needed everything she possibly could find to bolt (her) down during a marriage that was itself very volatile"* (Fournier and Yao, 1997, p.466).

The *social* relationship motives are nicely illustrated by the case of Henry (Fournier and Yao (1997) and his loyalty towards Dunkin Donuts: *"I had my first cup of coffee when I was 15. It was about the same time I got my first job at the record store. If you work, you have coffee, so you can have a coffee break. It is a work related ritual here (in the U.S.). There is a work/coffee-break parallel in the American Culture. We went to Dunkin' Donuts. People always go to Dunkin' Donuts. It's the classic: Chrome swivel chairs, Wanda the waitress pouring coffee into white porcelain mugs, the mailman relaxing with a cigarette and a cup of Joe. The perfect working class diner for the perfect working class coffee break"* (Fournier and Yao, 1997, p.464.). The social relationship benefits listed in Gwinner et al (1998) refer mainly to these kinds of direct social links to the brand or brand representatives. However, in the context of brand relationships, as opposed to service relationships (in Gwinner et al, 1998), the *indirect* social motives may also be more salient. That is, the social motivation may pertain as much to the social benefits one experience as a *consequence* of the brand relationship. A good example of such indirect social motives can be found in the case of Vicky (Fournier, 1994;1998), who basically constructs her self-identity with the help of brands in a social setting. Brands are seen as highly value-expressive for Vicky, and do compose an efficient meaning-based communication system towards her environment; *"Me, I have perfumes, that I have, like, different labels for them for when I want to wear them. They say different things about me. You know, like, I wear Opium, it is my nighttime seductive scent. And my friendly everyday scent is Intimate musk. And, I love Giorgio. It is one of the few scents that I wear and people come up to me and say, "You smell good!......That is my all around "get noticed" scent"* (Fournier, 1998, p.357).

Among all the cases described in Fournier (1994), Fournier and Yao (1997) and Fournier (1998), several are difficult to place in just *one* of the three broad relationship motive categories derived from Gwinner et al (1998). The reason for this is twofold. First, the relationship motive categories are not 100 percent mutually exclusive. Second, many relationships are driven by several underlying motives. Both efficiency- and confidence motives may be prominent in the same brand relationship. This is not necessarily a problem, though, but rather a consequence of the complexity of human motives. Our tripartite relationship motive taxonomy may still prove helpful and diagnostic in analyzing and categorizing why consumers engage in, and maintain, relationships with brands. The taxonomy encompasses most relationship motives listed in the literature and appears to fit a brand context nicely. To the extent that motives from several different categories exist in a relationship, handling this within the tripartite model is mainly a measurement problem – not primarily a conceptual one. Sub-dimensions of each motive category exist, and the required level of accuracy in determining the configuration of individual consumer motive-profiles may vary substantially depending on the research purpose.

Concluding remarks

Although conducted in a service marketing setting, the relational benefits identified by Gwinner et al (1998) appear applicable also for consumer-brand relationships. Three fundamental relationship motives can be derived from the works of Gwinner et al (1998), namely efficiency-, risk reducing-, and social motives. This tripartite relationship motive taxonomy can, at least at first glance, be successfully applied to categorizing the different relationship motives present in Fournier's brand relationship case analysis. Some warnings and limitations of applying such a framework may deserve to be mentioned, though. First, all relationship research must be acutely sensitive to variations in form. This also goes for analyzing consumer relationship motives. The applicability of the motive taxonomy may vary substantially across relationship types (e.g. "brand friendship", vs. "arranged marriage") and across relationship phase (e.g. relationship formation vs. dissolution). Second, not all interactions are "relationships" as defined in chapter 2.2. E.g. is it questionable whether we can speak about a true relationship between Tom and all his coffee brands above (cf. Fournier and Yao, 1997), as Tom constantly switches brands depending on price-deals. The motives for choosing a certain brand over another in a *transaction* are qualitatively different from the motives of engaging in a long-term relationship with a brand.

In the following chapters we will now shift focus, and direct our attention towards the concept of interactivity and interactivity-enabling technologies in marketing. The communication concept of interactivity may be portrayed as a close relative to the inter-personal concept of relationship. Interactivity can be regarded as a prerequisite for constituting a marketing relationship and these two concepts are often defined and applied in similar ways. After having presented and discussed the various properties of interactivity-enabling technologies, we merge the discussion of relationships, relationship motives and interactivity-enabling technologies into a set of hypotheses concerning the effect of interactivity-enabling technologies on brand relationship quality (BRQ). Relationship motives and Internet experience are included as important moderator variables in this discussion.

4 Interactivity and interactivity-enabling technologies

4.1 Introduction

Interactivity has become a truly essential concept in Internet Marketing theory and practice, simply because it is regarded as the key advantage of this medium (Morris and Ogan, 1996; Pavlik, 1996; Rafaeli and Sudweeks, 1997; Ghose and Dou, 1998; BezjianAvery et al. 1998; Roehm and Haugtvedt, 1999). Before the Internet era, the concept of interactivity was less frequently applied in marketing and primarily associated with direct-, and dialogue marketing practice. After access to the Internet became more and more common among consumers in general, the concept of interactivity more frequently appeared in marketing journals, as well as in industry seminars all over the world. The transformation of Journal of Direct Marketing into Journal of Interactive Marketing in 1997/98 nicely mirrors this development. In the late 1990s, several marketing articles – more or less academic in nature – argued that the interactive features of the Internet media would revolutionize modern marketing communications (Briones, 1998; Geller, 1998; Levins, 1998; Loro, 1999). Despite this broad consensus on the importance of the interactivity construct in marketing, the conceptual content of this construct is surprisingly far from unanimous. In the following, we will investigate the disparities in the conceptual definitions of interactivity in the literature and attempt to derive on an applicable conceptual basis for this construct in an Internet marketing communication context.

4.2 Existing definitions of interactivity

In table 4.1, we have gathered several conceptual definitions of interactivity, most in which are frequently cited in both marketing-, and communication science journals. These definitions vary on several aspects – the most prominent being their implicit view of interactivity as either an interpersonal process or a process that primarily iterates between a person and a machine. This distinction is analogue to Hoffman and Novak (1996)'s separation between person-, and machine interactivity, respectively. According to Hoffman and Novak, the large potential value of Internet-based interactive marketing lies in applications enabling consumers and firms to interactively access hypermedia content (machine-interactivity) and communicate through the medium (person-interactivity).

Table 4.1. Definitions of Interactivity

Rogers (1986)[16]	"The capability of new communication applications to "talk back" to the user, almost like an individual participating in a conversation"
Blattberg and Deighton (1991)[17]	"The facility for individuals and organizations to communicate with one another regardless of distance and time"
Steuer (1992, p.84)	"The extent to which users can participate in modifying the form and content of a mediated environment in real time"
Rogers (1995, p.314)	"The degree to which participants in a communication process can exchange roles and have control over their mutual discourse"
Deighton (1996, p.151)	"The ability to address an individual and the ability to gather and remember the response of that individual"
Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997, p.3)	"The extent to which messages in a sequence is related to each other, and especially the extent to which later messages recount the relatedness of earlier messages"
Robbet et al. (1997, p.5)	"The combination of rich content, active intelligence, collaborative communications to create a compelling consumer experience"
Bezijan-Avery, Calder and Iacobucci (1998, p.23)	"The immediately iterative process which customer needs and desires are uncovered, met, modified and satisfied by the providing firm"
Haeckel (1998, p.64)	"A person-to-person or person-to-technology exchange designed to effect change in the knowledge or behavior of at least one person"

The conceptualizations of interactivity as primarily *person*-interactivity come from the interpersonal communications perspective (cf. Ha and James, 1998). The definitions of both Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997) and Blattberg and Deighton (1991) belong in this category. Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997) define interactivity as "the extent to which messages in a

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[16] As sited in Shih (1998, p.656)
[17] As sited in Ghose og Dou (1998, p.29)

sequence relate to each other, and especially the extent to which later messages recount the relatedness of earlier messages". Here, interactivity is treated as a process-related construct of communication. In line with an earlier definition of Rafaeli (1988), Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997) argue that interactivity vary along a continuum from declarative (one-way) communication to fully interactive communication – which requires that later messages in any sequence take into account not just the messages that preceded them, but also the manner in which previous messages were reactive. Simple reactive (two-way) communication is, according to Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997), positioned between the poles of declarative and true interactive communication. Interactivity describes and prescribes the manner in which conversational interaction as an iterative process leads to jointly produced meaning (Rafaeli and Sudweeks, 1997). Thus, interactivity merges speaking and listening – and primarily encompass person-to-person forums and forms. By the same tokens as Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997), many communication researchers use face-to-face communication as the standard of interactivity and evaluate interactivity of mediated communication (such as the Internet) by how closely it simulates face-to-face communications (cf. Walther and Burgoon, 1992).

The other "school" of defining interactivity focuses on interactivity as something that primarily iterates between a user and a machine (cf. Ha and James, 1998; Coyle and Thorson, 2001). Specifically, Steuer (1992) defines interactivity as "the extent to which users can participate in modifying the form and content of a mediated environment in real time". According to Steuer, interactivity is the function of 1) the speed in which content can be manipulated, 2) the range in ways content can be manipulated; and 3) how similar the controls and manipulation in the mediated environment are to controls and manipulations in a real environment (also called "mapping") (Coyle and Thorson, 2001). This view of interactivity is also evident in the definition by Rogers (1986), where it is implicit that a computer system is capable of giving feedback in response to the actions users perform on the computer, resulting in a sense of engagement with the computer (Shih, 1998).

The distinction between the interpersonal communication perspective on interactivity – advocated by Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997), Coyle and Thorson (2001) and others – and the "mechanical perspective" – here represented by Steuer (1992) and Rogers (1986) –, has a very important consequence regarding the denotation of the interactivity concept. Namely, whether interactivity is a property of the *medium*, or of the *communication* itself. In the first perspective, interactivity is simply a characteristic of communication, regardless whether this

communication is mediated through a medium or not. In the latter perspective, interactivity is specifically defined in terms of media characteristics. This distinction is very apparent in table 4.1 where the definitions by Rogers (1986), Steuer (1992), Robbet et al. (1997) clearly pertains to attributes of the media, whereas the definitions by Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997), Rogers (1995), Blattberg and Deighton (1991) and Deighton (1996) in more general terms refer to attributes of a communication process.

Turning to some less fundamental differences between some of the definitions, the business-setting definition of interactivity by Robbet et al. (1997): *"The combination of rich content, active intelligence, collaborative communications to create a compelling consumer experience"*, certainly sticks out in terms of the level of abstraction of the included concepts and the relative large potential for subjective interpretation entailed in the definition. Different individuals may have a significantly different perception of richness, collaborative communications and "compelling consumer experience", which thus makes it difficult to assess both the conceptual components and consequences of interactivity. The same goes for the definition set forth by Haeckel (1998). According to Haeckel (1998), every person-to-person or person-to-technology exchange that is designed to effect change in the knowledge or behavior of an individual is deemed interactive. This is a fairly broad definition. In fact, the real challenge here lies in identifying exchanges that are *not* designed to effect some form of change in individual attitudes or behaviors. The definition of Haeckel (1998) is still interesting to our setting, given the fact that it is one of the few definitions that explicitly encompasses both person-interactivity and machine-interactivity.

A final point regarding the definitions listed in table 4.1 goes to an implicit assumption underlying many discussions of interactivity, namely that reciprocal, two-way communication is a common desire of both the communicator and the audience (Ha and James, 1998). In their discussion of interactivity, Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997), describe the concept as "a condition of communication in which simultaneous and continuous exchange occur, and these exchanges carry a social, binding force (p.4.). Similarly, the definition of Rogers (1995) refers to the degree participants can "exchange roles and have control over their mutual discourse". The emphasis on mutuality and exchange underlying these definitions assume that all parties are interested in participating in conversations with the communicator. In a business setting, this implies that all consumers would want to communicate with companies/brands (Ha and James, 1998) – something we know is not necessarily true.

4.3 Defining interactivity

Relying on the discussion above, we will – for the purpose of this context – make some demarcations on the intention[18] and denotation[19] of the interactivity construct.

First, we make the assumption that interactivity is value-neutral – in the sense that interactivity per se is neither a positive nor negative property of communication. That is, the presence of interactivity can be both beneficial and detrimental to the involved parties (Burgoon et al, 2000). For the purpose of building brand relationships, the presence of interactivity is more or less a prerequisite, - but one should keep in mind that not all consumers are interested in neither forming intimate relationships with all the brands they are using, nor with a high level of interactivity with all these brands. Exaggerated levels of interactivity may be perceived as distracting, promote aversion against dubious information, and facilitate psychological reactance effects. On the other hand, interactivity may also be highly beneficial for exchanging valuable marketing information, facilitating idea generation and creating strong bonds between consumers and brands. The value of interactivity may also be highly dependent upon which communication format that is being used.

Second, we argue that interactivity is a characteristic of communication, not of a medium. That is, different applications, media and communication formats may *enable* interactivity to a larger or lesser extent – but are themselves not interactive. Interactivity is a process-related, variable characteristic of communication settings. Face-to-face communication, person-machine communication, and different forms of computer-mediated communication have all the capacity of enabling high interactivity (Rafaeli and Sudweeks, 1997). The quality and properties of interactivity is however dependent upon characteristics of each media or application.

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[18] What are the properties subsumed in the concept (interactivity)
[19] Who or what is it that can be interactive

Third, and related to our second point, we argue that when defining interactivity, one should refer to basic properties of communication. Essential constructs would be addressability (Deighton, 1996) and reactiveness (Rafaeli and Sudweeks, 1997). In our view, these constructs are vital in defining whether any given communication is interactive or not.

That is, these two properties define interactivity at the basic (minimum) level:

"Interactivity is an iterative, reactive communication process between two or more addressable participants"

Here "participants" may refer to both human beings and machines, and the communication may be either mediated or unmediated.

Although related to the definition of Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997), our definition of interactivity deviates on two important aspects. First, we do not regard message relatedness – in the sense that all later communication messages (not just the preceding message) must take into account the manner in which *all* previous messages were reactive – to be vital for constituting interactivity. Message relatedness rather goes to the quality of the interactivity process. Rather, we argue that reactivity – meaning later messages in any sequence must take into account the message that preceded them – to be a sufficient prerequisite for constituting interactivity. Second, our definition defines interactivity at the minimum level, and does not view interactivity as a continuum from declarative to fully interactive communication. Our position is rather that some threshold (that is, communication must be reactive and iterate between addressable parties) must be reached before we can begin to speak of interactivity, and that it makes more sense to describe different forms of interactivity based on the its structural properties. These properties – or qualities – of interactivity are discussed in section 4.6, below.

4.4 Interactivity in marketing communications

The definition of interactivity set forth above defines the concept at a general and very basic level. We define interactivity in terms of general characteristics of communications. When narrowing the denotation of the concept to a *marketing* communication setting, the definition deserves to be altered slightly. Whereas most of the definitions listed in table 4.1 also were directed at defining interactivity in general, the definition of Bezjian-Avery et al (1998),

clearly points to a marketing setting. According to Bezjian-Avery et al. (1998), interactivity iterates between the firm and the consumer, eliciting information form both parties, and attempting to align interest and possibilities (p.23). In line with most other definitions of interactivity, Bezjian-Avery et al (1998) conceptualizes this as an iterative process between two (addressable) parties. Since Bezijan-Avery et al. (1998) are defining interactive *marketing*, as opposed to interactivity in general, they go one step further in identifying the participants in this process (the firm and the consumer), and also – to a large extent – describe the purpose of this process: *"...which customer needs and desires are uncovered, met, modified and satisfied by the providing firm"*. Relying partially on the definition of Bezjian-Avery et al (1998), while also being true to our general definition of interactivity set forth above, we suggest the following definition of interactive marketing communication:

"Interactive marketing communication is an iterative, reactive communication process between a consumer and one or more addressable participant(s) by which the consumers needs, interests or desires are uncovered and attempted satisfied"

As for the general definition of interactivity, the participants may be both human or machines – and the communication may be either mediated or unmediated. The denotation of the construct is here being limited – compared to the general definition – to a process iterating between a *consumer* and other participants. These other addressable participants may be brand websites, brand representatives, or even other consumers (in which the consumers for instance meet through an on-line community). The intention of the interactivity concept is also narrowed down to communication concerning customers' needs, interests and desires.

This definition of interactive marketing communication encompass the definition of interactivity set forth above, while it at the same time clearly points to the context of marketing communications. While relying partially on the definition of Bezjian-Avery et al. (1998), several distinctions should be noted. First, the word "immediately" is not present in our definition. As argued below, synchronicity (real-time) communications may improve the quality of the interactivity, but this not a prerequisite for constituting interactivity. Asynchronous communication may still be interactive. Second, our definition stresses that consumer needs are *attempted* satisfied in interactive marketing. Whether the consumer actually is satisfied or not goes to the expectations of the consumer, as well as to the quality of information being exchanged. Hence, this is not an attribute of interactivity itself. Lastly, as

noted above, the consumers' communication counterpart may not necessarily be a salesperson, a brand representative or the brand itself. A fellow consumer may also serve as a viable participant in an interactive marketing communication process, by sharing information, services or advice valuable to the other communication participant(s).

4.5 Interactivity-enabling technologies

As we have seen, the focal differences between the interpersonal communication perspective and the mechanical perspective have given nurture to two fundamental different ways of conceptualizing interactivity – either as person-person communication or person-machine communication. Often, the terms "person-interactivity" and "machine-interactivity" are used interchangeably with the terms "computer-mediated communication" (CMC) and "human-computer communication" (HCC), respectively. We argue that this is a somewhat imprecise use of the constructs, and that CMC and HCC are lower level concepts compared to person-interactivity and machine-interactivity. Specifically, CMC is only one of many forms of person-interactivity that may exist. Person-to-person communication may also be unmediated (face-to-face) or tele-mediated (mediated through telecommunication such as phone or fax). The majority of the literature on CMC and HCC, focuses on how these constructs influence attitudinal and behavioral variables in different (or similar) ways. Often, communication via different "interactive media" or "interactive applications" is compared with each other – or with unmediated communication – to assess the impact on important relational variables. This is similar to the task outlined in our study. However, given our definitions of interactivity and interactive marketing communication as process-related constructs of communication, the terms "interactive media", "interactive applications" and so on, make less sense – since media and applications per se can not be interactive. These media or applications may to a larger or lesser extent *enable* interactivity though, depending on their abilities to facilitate interactivity related properties like synchronicity, message relatedness, and so on. See figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1. Interactivity-enabling technologies
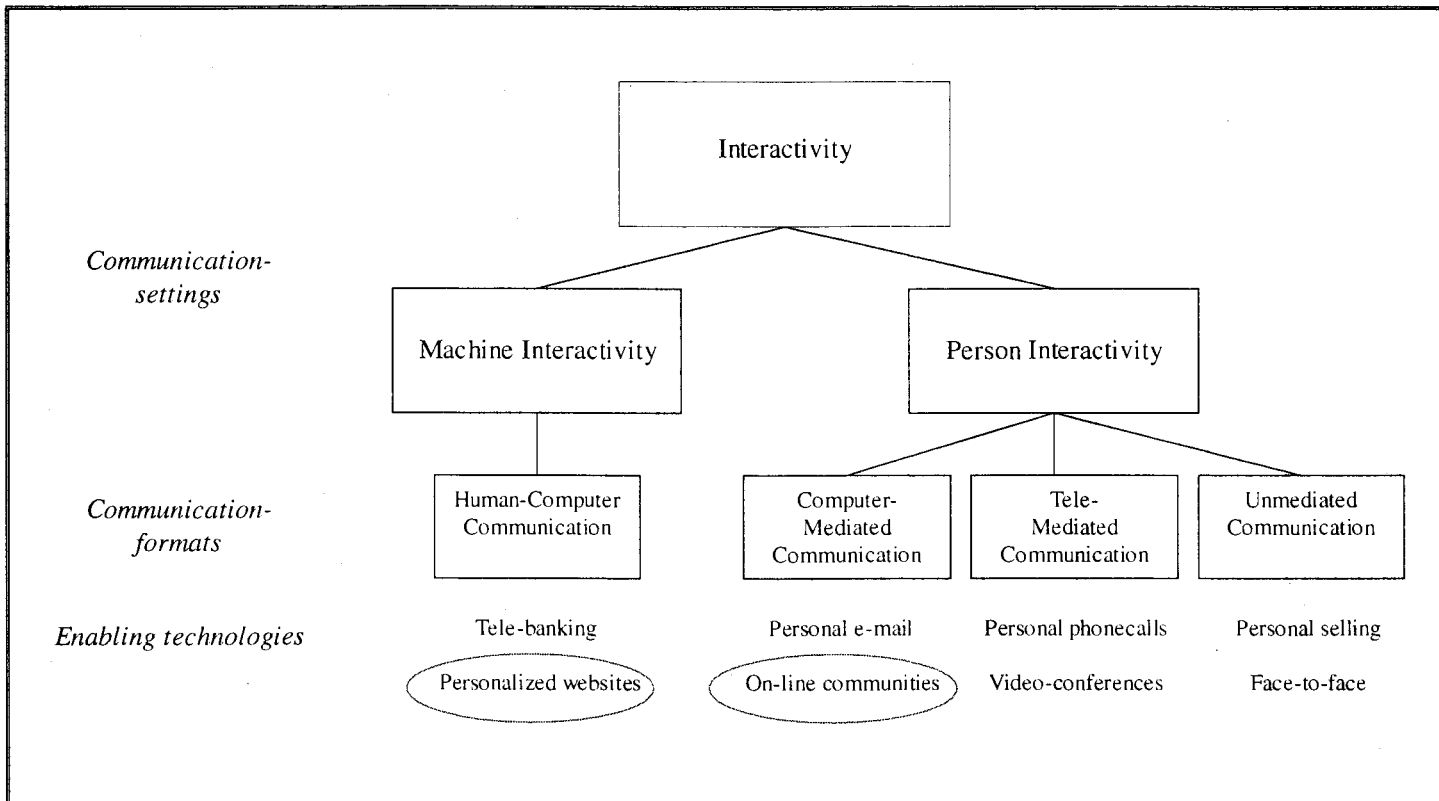
Figure 4.1 illustrates how interactivity can appear in different settings and through different formats. Further, interactive communication can occur via different technologies or media, which to a varying degree will support and enable interactivity. For the purpose of this study, we have chosen to focus on two of the most common interactivity-enabling technologies of the Internet today, namely personalized websites and on-line communities. While a personalized website is a form of HCC enabled machine-interactivity, on-line communities represent a frequently used form of computer-mediated communication (CMC) on the Internet.

When discussing Internet-based applications, it is important to stress two points related to the presentation of interactive marketing communication above. First, that there do exist several Internet-based applications in addition to web-personalization and customer communities that may enable interactivity. Specifically, e-mail is perhaps the most common and widely used online interactivity-enabling application. In this study, the main reason for focusing on online community as example of CMC instead of e-mail, is the fact that *personal* e-mail does not serve as a very promising marketing tool for brand managers. The cost for a brand to engage in *personal* conversations with individual customers through e-mail is far higher than

44

allowing consumers and brand representatives to interact on a web-based community site. Second, it should also be noted that a large amount of websites and web-applications would *not* be deemed "interactivity-enabling" given our definition of interactivity. The majority of brand websites contains merely static presentations of the companies' products and brands, and allows no form in interactivity (cf. Cano and Prentice, 1998; Murphy et al, 1996; Rachman and Richins, 1997; Ghose and Dou, 1998). Also, popular web-marketing efforts such as banner ads, spam[20] and so on, do not allow any form of interactivity or interactive marketing communication as defined above.

The reason for choosing web-personalization and customer community applications when trying to assess the impact of online, interactive communication on consumer-brand relationship is threefold. First, personalized websites and customer communities are very frequently used applications on brand websites throughout the word wide web today. Millions of dollars are spent each year on these interactivity-enabling technologies for building strong consumer-brand relationships. The widespread use of these applications on brand websites leads us to assume that they serve important functions for brand managers. Further, these two applications are relatively generic – in the sense that they can appear in many forms and through many different interfaces. Web-personalization and community building are hypothesized to become of great (marketing-) importance also in future web-based interfaces such as mobile phones, PDA's, and web-TV (cf. Kalakota and Robinson, 2002). Thus, these applications are both widely used by brands today, and probably will be even more common as the Internet converge with other media. Second, web-personalization and online customer communities are propositioned to be highly effective tools for building relationships and emotional ties between consumers and brands (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Deighton, 1996; Armstrong and Hagel, 1997; Bezjian-Avery et al, 1998; Roehm and Haugtvedt, 1999; Hagel and Singer, 1999; Hanson, 2000). This is a strong motivation for looking into this area of research, especially since the present research on the effects of web-personalization and customer communities on relationship variables still is rather nascent. In fact, we have found virtually no experimental research conducted in this area. The third and last reason for choosing these two applications is naturally that they are good instances of human-computer communication (HCC) and computer mediated communication (CMC), respectively. Given that streams of research in both the interpersonal communication perspective and the

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[20] Unsolicited, standardized e-mail messages.

mechanical perspective have addressed the isolated effect of either HCC or CMC on communication effectiveness, we find it interesting to compare the two applications in terms of their effect on brand relationship outcome variables.

In the following, we will briefly present the main features of personalized websites and online customer communities. Thereafter, we will derive on some key properties for evaluating the interactivity enabling technologies and apply these properties for contrasting the two technologies.

4.5.1 Personalized websites

Interactive marketing communication entails the possibility of personalizing information and content to each customer's unique preferences and needs (Rohm and Haugtvedt, 1999; Bezjian-Avery et al., 1998). Personalized websites are simply dynamic websites where each consumer can get personally tailored information and services based on his/her personal user profile. In order to successfully execute web-personalization, the brand website must in some way profile the user and also be able to recognize this user when s/he enters the website. A user profile consists of information about the users individual interests, preferences and demographics, which are stored in a database. These data can be obtained through the company's existing consumer databases, by asking the consumer for profile data on the website, or by logging consumer behavior on the net. Usually, the consumer will be able to access, alter and even remove his/her profile; after all – preferences, interests and desires are highly dynamic variables. Still, the gathering and use of user profiles for online marketing purposes is a controversial issue, especially when it comes to protecting customer privacy. Currently, the World Wide Web Consortium is planning to implement a joint industry platform for handling and storing user profiles online (see www.w3.org/P3P). Such a standard will make it more easy for individual consumers to control and protect their profiles, as well as make it more efficient for commercial websites to collect, interpret and use such data – given that the individual consumer gives his/her consent. In order to make use of any user profile for web-personalization, the brand must also be able to identify each consumer online. Such identification is easily managed through log-on procedures on the brand website (by using passwords or other forms of signatures) or by using cookies[21]. Through identifying each customer and matching the identity to the existing user profile, several personalization

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[21] A cookie is a small text-file located on the users hard-disc, serving as an "identification card"

applications are made possible. One often distinguishes between unique and non-unique personalization (Pedersen, 1999). In non-unique personalization, the website simply segments the users based on their attributes on some core profile variables, and provide each segment with different forms of communication, information and services. The most common form of non-unique personalization is rule-based matching, where the users are classified in different categories based on their attributes or preferences. This classification procedure is executed on the basis a set of *predefined* business principles. Rule-based matching in its most simple form would be for a brand to design two different versions of the same web-shop – let's say one for people under 50 years of age, and a different version for people over 50 – and simply guide people to the proper storefront based on this profile information. Unique personalization – on the other hand – provides each individual consumer with a specially tailored service through the use of matching agents. Such "agents" starts off by investigating the consumers profile data and then attempts to find information, products or services matching the users needs and wants. A good example could be an online broker suggesting a tailored portfolio to each individual investor based on information about their total investment size, time horizon, degree of risk aversion, sector preference and so on. Another form of web-personalization is collaborating filtering – also called community knowledge. While rule-based matching and matching agents simply link consumer profiles with appropriate products, information and content, collaborating filtering goes one step further: It personalizes content based on the profile of *other* consumers with similar profiles. For instance, http://www.amazon.com/ recommends books on the basis of previous purchases of other consumers with a similar profile.

4.5.2 Customer communities

A community is basically a website with possibilities of communication between multiple parties. This dialogue can proceed in real-time - called chatting - or asynchronously by members posting messages on a bulletin board. The so-called "Chat-rooms" have become immensely popular on the Internet, but these are seldom used for promoting commercial products. Bulletin boards, however, are found on more and more company- and brand websites throughout the world (see e.g. http://www.palm.com/community/ or http://thorntree.lonelyplanet.com/). These boards are usually categorized according to topics, and consumers can search for postings relevant to his or her interests. According to Armstrong and Hagel (1996), electronic communities meet four basic types of consumer needs, namely the need for transaction, fantasy, relationships and for sharing and obtaining information. This

classification is fairly in accordance with a recent study conducted by Mathwick (2002), which identified four basic clusters of online community users: Transactional Community Members, Socializers, Personal Connectors and Lurkers. While Transactional members are especially high in exchange/transaction traits, Socializers are dominantly communal and socially oriented, thus expecting less repayment for their contributions on the forums. Personal Connectors appear to be more instrumental and primarily use forums to stay in contact with friends, family and professional associates, while Lurkers seldom participate on the forums themselves, but rather observe and learn from the information being posted.

The content of the information being exchanged on on-line communities may vary a lot. Hagel (1999) identifies three major categories of communities according to content, namely business-to-business forums, demographical- or geographical oriented forums, and forums based on shared interest for a common topic. Physicians Online (http://www.po.com) is a good instance of the former – a forum devoted to professional issues among medical doctors. As many as 25% of all physicians in USA are actually members of this online community. Turning to the second category, http://www.parentsoup.com/ would be a good example. Parentsoup is a community demographically targeted at parenting. The latter category of Hagel (1999) would probably cover the majority of communities present on the Internet today, namely those devoted to special interest issues, hobbies, brands or commercial products and so on. Such communities may be operated by the commercial vendor itself (such as http://www.palm.com/community/), by an affiliated institution (such as http://www.handheldnews.com/), or by an independent person or institution devoted to a specific topic or brand (such as http://www.xlr8yourmac.com/). Typically, independent parties often start their own community if the brand website itself does not contain such a community, or if the participants on the community are unsatisfied with the response of brand representatives or with other aspects of the on-line community. The (in-)famous worse case scenario is http://www.untied.com/, a community entirely devoted to harassing United Airlines and channeling complaints from customers to the United Airlines' complaints department.

After having set up a community, the web-hosts must choose whether they allow messages to be posted anonymously or if it is compulsory for consumers to reveal their real, registered log-in name. Communities may also differ in degree of openness, for example, whether reading and posting messages are allowed for non-members. However, bulletin boards are usually open to the general public, at least for reading messages. Finally, the company must

decide if communication should be limited to customers only, or whether the company (brand) actively should participate in posting messages and answering questions. In this dissertation we consider customer communities as publicly accessible bulletin boards where brand representatives participates in answering postings.

Before going into more details on the differences between customer communities and personalized websites, we need to derive on some basic dimensions to compare the technologies across. In the communication literature, interactivity (and interactivity enabling communication formats) is often characterized in terms of several key properties.

4.6 Properties of interactive communication

A common way to describe interactivity is according to the structural properties that characterize any given interactive communication process or –format (Burgoon et al, 2000). These properties can further be identified and evaluated for different media and technologies, and thus serve as a good proxy of how viable these media/technologies are – or could be – in enabling interactivity. Such properties may individually and/or collectively account for observed differences in cognitions, communication, and outcomes observed across mediated and non-mediated, human-human or human-computer interactions (Burgoon et al, 2000). However, the identification and evaluation of such properties for different communication formats are problematic for several reasons. First, the majority of research on these issues are focused on *either* human-computer communication (machine interactivity) *or* computer-mediated communication (person interactivity). Each of these streams of research focuses in turn on different properties and evaluative dimensions of the respective communication formats. For instance, while the research on HCC focuses on concepts like response latency (synchronicity), contingency, message relatedness and anthropomorphism (Moon and Nass, 1996; Moon, 1999; Burgoon et al, 2000; Moon, 2000), scholars of CMC research do to a larger extent rely on properties like media richness, degree of social presence, lack of social context cues, participation and identification (Sproull and Kiesler; 1986; Walther, 1992; 1995; Burgoon et al, 2000). Second, both HCC and CMC may appear in such a variety of forms and formats (for instance may particularly "rich" HCC formats lead the user to believe that s/he is actually interacting with a live human being) that there seem to be few properties that are highly diagnostic in delineating HCC formats from CMC formats. There are thus no "correct" answer in which properties to highlight when comparing HCC with CMC formats – it all depends on the context and purpose of the study. The quest pursued in this dissertation –

comparing personalized websites with customer community websites – requires us to derive on some general properties of interactive communication that are relevant for both these communication formats and at the same time have potentially important implications for the effectiveness of (marketing) communication outcomes. We have chosen to focus on the following six properties, all in which are relevant for all forms of HCC and CMC interactivity, yet at the same time may prove diagnostic in evaluating the differential effects of the two chosen interactivity-enabling technologies and its moderators on brand relationship quality (BRQ-facets):

1) **Degree of social presence/anthropomorphism.** Social presence theory defines social presence as the feeling one has that other persons are involved in a communication exchange (Short et al, 1976; Walther, 1995). The concept of social presence has often been applied to describe CMC phenomena, and is – together with Sproull and Kiesler (1986)'s lack of social cues hypothesis – frequently used to delineate face-to-face (FtF) and CMC differences as a result of the social information available (Dubrovsky et al, 1991; Sproull and Kiesler, 1986; Walther, 1992; 1995). The majority of this research concludes that FtF interactions are richer and – in many respects – more effective than CMC, due to the fact that the degree of social presence and amount of social cues (such as facial expressions and other nonverbal or auditory cues) inherent in FtF communication are much higher than in CMC (Hiltz et al., 1986; Connolly, Jessup and Vlacich, 1990; Walther, 1992). In HCC-settings however, the concept of anthropomorphism appear to replace social presence theory when evaluating the degree of human/personal presence in communication exchanges. Anthropomorphism is defined as the process of assigning human qualities to inanimate objects (such as a computer interface) (Takaki, 2000; Burgoon et al, 2000). This concept has been used to explain why highly animate and human-like computer interfaces (as well as FtF contexts) are considered more influential than less anthropomorphized interfaces (Bengtsson et al, 1999; Burgoon et al. 2000). Due to the purpose of the presence study of comparing instances of HCC and CMC, respectively, we choose to evaluate the technologies in terms of a "merged concept" of social presence and anthropomorphism defined as the extent to which the communication partner(s) simulates or behaves like a social human being.

2) **Degree of self-disclosure.** Interactive communication processes differ in the degree to which the communication partners are allowed or required to disclose information about their thoughts, feelings and personalities. Conceptually, self-disclosure can be defined as any

personal information a person communicates (Altman and Taylor, 1973; Derlega et al, 1993). Although self-disclosure intuitively may appear to be a property of interactivity only relevant for human-human communication, there is increasing evidence of intimate self-disclosures also in human-computer communication settings (cf. Weisband and Kiesler, 1996; Moon, 2000). Experiments conducted by Moon (2000) show that consumers reveal considerable amounts of personal information to computers, and – more interestingly – that such information-disclosure influences how consumers behave in subsequent interactions. Specifically, Moon found that consumers scored significantly higher on attraction and purchase intentions when they were presented with an interactive shopping task on a computer they previously had revealed personal information to, then when they used an unfamiliar computer for the same shopping task. This goes to show that consumers not only are willing to share intimate information with inanimate computers (machine interfaces), but that they also make indirect social attributions towards these computers in later interactions. The degree of self-disclosure inherent on personalized websites and customer community websites is thus included here as an important property and evaluative dimension of the respective technologies. The reason is, of course, that degree of self-disclosure has proven to be vital in determining various outcomes of interactive communication.

3) **Degree of message relatedness**. In our view, the concept of message relatedness in the communication literature is closely tied to the concept of relationship memory in the relationship literature. As we saw in chapter 2, relationship memory is regarded as a key variable in defining relationships – in the sense that no relationship between two parties can exist unless the memory of past encounters in some way are represented and stored in the memory of the relationship partners. However, message relatedness – as defined in this study – goes one step further than both relationship memory and reactivity. Reactivity is – as we have seen – a prerequisite for constituting interactivity. Message relatedness on the other hand, pertaining to the quality of interactivity – refers to whether (all) later communication messages (not just the preceding message) take into account the manner in which all previous messages were reactive. A high degree of message relatedness (and thus a high degree of relationship memory) will mean that the communication partner remembers *all* past interactions and can relate all messages, requests and answers to previous interactions. In a marketing communication setting, high levels of message relatedness implies that the commercial partner remembers the customers' previous purchases, interactions and – to the

extent the customer agrees to reveal personal information – the preferences of each individual consumer.

4) **Degree of source credibility**. Source credibility is an important and often researched topic in the area of message persuasion (Cacioppo and Petty, 1984; Cialdini, 1988; Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Petty and Cacioppo, 1981; Petty, Wegener, and Fabrigar 1997; Sternthal, Dholakia, and Leavitt 1978). The majority of this research concludes that a more credible source will have greater influence on consumer evaluation and choice than a less credible source. The communication property of source credibility is of interest here because personalized websites and customer communities websites most likely will vary substantially across this concept. This is given by the fact that person-interactive technologies like customer communities open the possibility for communicating also with other customers – not just the brand. In offline environments, similarity to the consumers self (Byrne, 1971; McGuire, 1969) and the sources' attractiveness (Chaiken, 1979) have been shown to be two of the main determinants of source credibility. We build upon these findings and argue that in general, consumer word-of-mouth information is regarded as more credible sources of brand/product information than the vendor itself. This argument is supported by Richins (1983), which points out that "non-marketing dominated sources of information are given substantial weight by consumers in forming opinions and making product decisions" (p.69). Further, Bone (1995) argues that it is likely that word-of-mouth is given such "substantial weight" because it is viewed by consumers as coming from a credible source with little vested interest in the outcome of the decision at hand. Following arguments set forth by Elliott (forthcoming), we state that the reason behind the superior effect of WOM (word-of-mouth) over brand/vendor information on consumer persuasion is twofold. First, as also pointed out by Byrne (1971) and Cialdini (1993), people are more inclined to like people who are more similar to themselves. Fellow members of an online brand community would most likely share several characteristics, such as common interests or hobbies, or – at the very least – a common interest in information about the brand. Further, several studies of online brand communities have found the members to be quite homogeneous in respect to demographical background (Thorbjørnsen et al, 2002; Pedersen et al, 2002). The second, and more essential point, relates to the polarity of information from (online) word-of-mouth sources. That is, WOM-sources are more likely to reveal both positive and negative information about the brand/product in question than the brand/vendor itself would be. Supportive of this argument is also the extensive research in the area of two-sided versus one-sided advertising, generally

stating that the credibility and effectiveness of two-sided messages supersedes that of one-sided advertising messages (Kamins, 1989; Kamins and Assael, 1987; Kamins and Marks, 1987; Pechmann 1992).

5) **Degree of communication synchronicity**. Synchronicity refers to whether communication occurs in real time, which permits immediate bi-directional feedback, or whether it is asynchronous, which only allows delayed response between the parties. The concept of temporal synchronicity in communication is here more or less equated with the concept of response latency, which is also frequently applied in communication research (see e.g. Burgoon, Birk and Pfau, 1989 and Moon, 1999). In interpersonal communication, response latency has been shown to affect people's impression of others in various ways. For instance, long speech pauses have been found to decrease perceptions of credibility (Burgoon et al, 1989; Engstrom, 1994), increase perceptions of deceit (deTurck and Miller, 1985) and adversely affect personality impressions (Burgoon et al, 1990)[22]. However, conflicting findings do exist, for example the fact that speech hesitations also are regarded as a reliable proxy of increased thoughtfulness. Given these contrasting findings of response latency in the physical world, Moon (1999) sought to investigate the effect of response latency on persuasion in both CMC and HCC. She found a non-monotonic relationship between the two variables, such that persuasion is greatest when response latencies are neither too short nor too long. However, the degrees to which these findings can be fruitfully extended to other CMC-setting, such as online communities, are rather questionable, given that "long" response time in her study was operationalized as 13-18 seconds. In most cases, there will go minutes, hours and even days before community postings are answered by company representatives or by other fellow community members. Regardless of this however, response latency or communication synchronicity is considered a key variable in differentiating interactivity-enabling media. In their influential 1996 JM-article, Hoffman and Novak argue that temporal synchronicity is an essential property for evaluating different machine-interactive and person-interactive media, permitting a relatively error-free classification of different technologies, as well as being an important antecedent of the concept of flow.

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[22] As cited in Moon (1999, p.381).

6) **Communication interface complexity.** The complexity of a given communication technology or interface will influence the perceived ease of using this technology, which in turn will determine the quality and outcome of the communication process. Anyone who has experienced trouble using a particular communication technology (whether it is a fax, cellular phone or AOL instant messaging), knows that a certain congruence between ones abilities and the complexity of the communication format must exist in order for the communication to be successful and ultimately repeated. The complexity and lack of a user-friendly interface of the WAP cellular phones in Europe lead more people than this author to bury his WAP-phone for good. Within the information systems and human-computer communication literature, a large body of research deals with the issues of user friendliness and easy of use as important determinants of both the adoption and effectiveness of information- and communication technologies (e.g. Davis et al. 1989; Venkatesh, 2000). In particular, the influential Technology Acceptance Model by Davis (1989) has produced a large amount of empirical evidence on the important role of perceived ease of use on subsequent behavior towards the communication technology. Perceived ease of use is the extent to which a person believes that using a technology or a communication interface will be free of effort. This construct has been found to be influenced by variables such as system design characteristics and interface complexity (Davis, 1993; Igbaria et al., 1997). That is, the complexity of a communication technology/interface influences the perceived ease of using the technology, which in turn influences subsequent behavior. Although these studies were not conducted in an Internet marketing setting, Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw (1989) describe the variables of the model as universal for different types of computer systems as well as for different user populations. Moreover, several recent studies have applied the TAM model in Internet settings, all in which points to the validity of the model in an online context – indicating that if a company web site is easy to navigate, the user is more likely to take advantage of the services offered on the site (Jung and Butler, 2000; Nysveen and Pedersen, forthcoming).

Concluding remarks

Now, please note that the six properties listed above to some extent may overlap and that causal relationships between them may exist. For instance, as noted by Moon and Nass (1996), Moon (2000) and others, the degree of social presence/anthropomorphism may positively influence both self-disclosure and degree of source credibility in a communication exchange. Other relationships between these six variables will almost certainly also exist. But, since these causal relationships hardly are deterministic, since the chosen technologies may

vary across each of these properties, and since each of these properties may prove to have a differential effect on different BRQ-facets, we chose to include all of them in the further discussion.

When investigating the properties of different interactivity enabling formats, it becomes fairly obvious that the communication format that best enables interactivity is human face-to-face communication. This format will receive a high standing on all the properties listed above. Face-to-face communication is a non-mediated, synchronous, highly personal communication format, that allows for a high degree of message relatedness and mutual self-disclosure. Also, the format complexity of a live conversation between two human beings is as low as it gets. A *mediated* communication between two humans, for instance a telephone-call or Internet chat, accommodates many of the same properties, but lacks the social presence and control over modularity compared to face-to-face interaction. In face-to-face communication one may apply non-verbal cues (facial expression, eye movement or gesture) to express a feeling or to explain a certain point – whereas this would not be possible in most mediated formats. Further, a machine-interactive format – such as a personalized web-site – will also be deemed interactive according to our definition, but probably receive a lower score on anthropomorphism, source credibility and format simplicity (high complexity), and thus prove to facilitate interactivity to a lesser degree than face-to-face communications. We elaborate on these issues in paragraphs 4.6.1 and 4.6.2, below.

4.6.1 Properties of personalized websites

Almost regardless of the personalization application at hand, web-personalization will enable interactive marketing communication, through a "reactive communication process between the consumer and the brand website, by which the consumers need, interests and desires are uncovered and attempted satisfied". The quality of this interactivity will however – as we discussed in chapter 4.6 above – depend on several properties. The first property is to which degree the *interface simulates a human character or includes human/social features*. Several personalized websites, such as http://www.mother.no - operated by Norwegian Telecom-company Netcom -, have attempted to anthropomorphize its services by giving them human-like traits. Initially, Mother.no was branded as a "second Mother" to teenagers, that would be keeping track of their telephone bills, their friends' phone-numbers and e-mail addresses, as well as other social network functions - in addition to suggesting easy meals for "her children" to

prepare at home, which concerts to attend the following week, etc. By endowing the website with qualities that somehow makes it "alive" or "humanlike" – also called animism (Gilmore, 1919, McDougall, 1911; Fournier, 1994) –, the machine-based interaction between the user and the site could become more personal. According to theories of social response, people tend to treat computers as social actors even when they know that machines do not possess feelings, intentions, "selves", or human motivation (Nass et al., 1997; Reeves and Nass, 1996; Moon, 2000). According to Moon, when humans are presented with a technology possessing a set of characteristics normally associated with human behavior, they respond by exhibiting social behaviors and making social attributions (Moon, 2000; Moon and Nass, 1996). Moreover, Moon (2000) found that eliciting information from consumers via a computer was much more successful when 1) the computer initiated the disclosure process by divulging information first and 2) followed the socially appropriate sequence of disclosure by escalating gradually from superficial to intimate disclosures (p.328-329). Regardless of the degree of anthropomorphism endowed on a personalized website however, communication researchers seem to agree that such forms of HCC cannot match the social presence available through CMC formats such as e-mail or bulletin boards (Moon, 1999; Burgoon et al, 2000).

Degree of *self-disclosure* is the second aspect of interactivity focused here. The fact that machine-interactive computer interfaces can elicit highly intimate information from consumers has already been well established by Moon (2000). In addition, the very nature of web-personalization (that is, obtaining consumer profile information for personalizing subsequent online marketing communication and services) requires a certain amount of consumer self-disclosure in able to function – unless the consumer profile is entirely based on logging consumers' online behavior. We therefore argue that personalized websites enable – and usually require – a high degree of consumer self-disclosure.

The third property pertaining to the quality of the interactivity a personalized website may enable, is *message relatedness*. That is, whether later messages recount the relatedness to earlier messages. In a given offline dialogue with a brand representative, the degree of message relatedness may vary a lot, depending on whether the consumers' prior communication with the brand was through the same representative. If the consumer encounters the same representative on each occasion, this representative can recall and relate all the enquiries to earlier encounters and problems the consumer might have experienced –

but if the consumer suddenly has to talk with a new representative such message relatedness will be lost. A personalized website has the advantage of being a computer – with an indefinite amount of memory available as well as complicated database features. As long as the website is able to identify the customer as s/he enters the website, all prior sales, enquiries, preferences, complaints and so on become available. This provides value to the brand as well as to the consumer.

Turning to the property of *source credibility,* personalized websites may not yield such a high standing. In HCC between a consumer and a personalized brand website, the brand is the only communication partner and thus the only source of information. Following the literature on consumer WOM and source credibility listed above, we argue that the personalized websites will, ceteris paribus, yield a lower source credibility than communication formats allowing for information and advice obtained from independent sources (such as websites with customer communities).

The degree of *synchronicity* on a personalized website is usually high, is the sense that an inquiry from the consumer will ignite an immediate response. As for any kind of human-computer interactivity, the only delay on could expect is from the speed of the computer or the communication infrastructure. Any website can be programmed to ask questions to the consumer and give an immediate respond to consumer's answers or other input, such as requests or questions. In fact, websites can be developed to allow such great and immediate levels of interaction that it is conceivable that the consumer thinks s/he is actually having a real-time conversation with the website (Roehm and Haugtvedt, 1999).

Evaluating the *complexity* of the personalized website communication format is a somewhat more difficult task. Although it appears as if communication scholars regard machine-interactive communication formats, in general, to be more complex than person-interactive communication formats, such an assessment will be quite dependent on the execution and design of each instance. Still, and in line with most communication researchers, we argue that personalized websites – as they are being operationalized in this study – are more complex and require a higher degree of proficiency to fully master and comprehend, than customer community websites. Underlying most personalized websites are complex database-technologies, in which stores, organizes and tailors the self-reported information of each consumer. To fully understand the way personalization works, consumers have to

comprehend these processes. Also, in order to make use of and alter the content of his/her personalized webpage, the consumer has to master the technical/navigational features of the site. We will return to the issue of how the two formats are being manipulated and operationalized in this study in later chapters.

In sum, personalized websites appear to be promising tools for enabling interactive marketing communication, in the sense that they allow a reactive communication process between the consumer and the website with a high degree of message relatedness, self disclosure and synchronicity. However, the lack of human presence (even with anthropomorphized features), decreased source credibility and high communication format complexity, lowers the potential quality of the interactive communication compared to that of face-to-face interactions or mediated dialogues through online communities.

4.6.2 Properties of customer communities

As interactivity on a customer community is iterating between two or more human beings, the degree of social presence/anthropomorphism perceived on an online community will most likely exceed by far what is possible through a personalized website. Most communication researchers would agree that almost regardless of how animate a personalized website may appear to the user, it will never be perceived quite as personal and human-like as a mediated dialogue between human beings. Still, CMC formats, like that of online customer communities, are far from the most animate and personal communication format available. Experimental research has reported that CMC is less personal or socio-emotional than is face-to-face communication – although parts of this literature are relatively old considering the recent development in communication technologies (cf. Hiltz et al., 1986; Connolly, Jessup and Vlacich, 1990; Walther, 1992).

The property of *message relatedness* is difficult to generalize upon for any form of CMC. The degree to which other communication participants (both brand representatives or fellow consumers) are able to recount earlier messages and the relatedness of these earlier messages, will evidently depend upon the continuity and activity of the community members. Given that the same brand representative always answers postings on the board, the message relatedness will be high, but a higher turnover (and higher number) of community participants will

58

decrease the message relatedness dramatically. Overall, it would seem like a personalized website would entail a far higher degree of message relatedness than a customer community.

The *source credibility* arguments regarding customer communities vs. personalized websites are perhaps more conclusive. In addition to the theoretical arguments set forth above in section 4.6 that online WOM exchanged in online customer communities are regarded as being more credible than information given on a brand website, initial empirical evidence behind this claim is also beginning to emerge. Specifically, Dellaert (2000) found tourists to attach a higher confidence and value to information found on online customer communities than most other online information sources. This finding is particularly relevant since the services investigated in this dissertation are all tourism services. Similarly, Metha and Sivadas (1995) found that members of virtual communities placed high levels of confidence and trust in the advice given to them by fellow community members.

Given that we in this study have conceptualized an on-line customer community as a brand website bulletin board, this will entail that the communication process in question is *asynchronous*. That is, the interaction will not be in real-time and the speed of message feedback will depend upon the activity on the bulletin board, the brand representatives' involvement and the relevance of the posting to the remaining members of the community. Thus, the synchronicity of interaction will be lower on an on-line community compared to that of a personalized website.

Returning to the issue of communication format *complexity*, we argue that customer communities are less complex and easier to use and comprehend than web-personalization. On a community website, consumers may engage in two distinct activities; reading and posting messages. Reading a message is by far the least complex activity, where one simply click on the relevant folder and read the information listed. This demands no other skills than navigating on your everyday website. Posting a message requires the user to log in an type his/her message into a textbox. However, this activity in itself, as well the process of understanding the basic functions of a bulletin board, appear less demanding than comprehending the functions of web-personalization.

To conclude, an online customer community (as defined here) would allow for a more personal, animate and "human" form of interactivity than a personalized website, but with a

lesser degree of synchronicity, message relatedness and self-disclosure. Moreover, we portray online community communication as being less complex than web-personalization, and entail a higher level of source credibility.

4.6.3 Conclusion

To conclude the discussion in the previous two sections, we argue that personalized websites require higher levels of consumer self-disclosure, allow for greater degree of message relatedness (relationship memory), and imply higher levels of synchronicity in communication than do customer communities. Conversely, we expect customer community websites to entail greater levels of social presence/anthropomorphism online, higher source credibility, and lower levels of communication format complexity than personalized websites.

Now, before turning our focus towards the conceptual model and hypothesis underlying the empirical studies of the dissertation, we devote some time to investigate the concept of Internet experience. Experience with the communication technology (Internet) is hypothesized to be a significant moderator of the effect of the interactive communication on brand relationship outcomes.

5 Internet experience

5.1 Introduction

The ability for consumers to take advantage of the various interactivity-enabling technologies on the Internet will depend on several individual and situational factors. The concept of consumer experience is portrayed as an essential factor in understanding consumer information processing and in determining consumers' attitudes and behavior, both offline and online (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987; Thompson and Higgins, 1994; Bruner and Kumar, 2000). Within the context of marketing, researchers have devoted considerable time to studies of product experience, product familiarity and consumer expertise and to the effect of these concepts on information search activities, attitudes and behavior (Brucks, 1985, Alba and Hutchinson, 1987; Selnes and Troye, 1989). So far, only a very limited amount of research has been focused on Internet experience and its impact on attitudes and choice in online environments.

Why then, is Internet experience an important variable to consider in our context?
Unlike the traditional marketing communication media, such as TV or print, we cannot assume the majority of consumers to be familiar and experienced with the Internet. Therefore, communication format experience probably plays a more important role in advertising effectiveness online than offline (Bruner and Kumar, 2000). Because the Internet is still a relatively new media, we would expect a large variation in Internet experience among consumers in the general population, and this variable may thus play a central role in marketing effectiveness. Also, as the Internet is a much more complex media format then TV and print, we expect there is a larger span in users' proficiency of this medium.

The few studies that have been conducted on Internet experience, have concluded that this is a vital variable to consider when trying to understand people's attitudes and behavior on the net (Bruner and Kumar, 2000; Takacs, Reed, Wells and Dombrowski, 1999). Moreover, information system (IS) researchers have found that experts and novices use IS differently (DeLone, 1988; Kraemer, Danzinger, Dunkle, and King, 1993) and that experience with the information technology is a strong predictor of both attitudes and behavior towards the technology (Thompson and Higgins, 1994).

5.2 Existing literature

When trying to understand the (moderating) effect of Internet experience on interactive marketing communication outcomes, several streams of research can be consulted. The already mentioned theories of product experience within the marketing discipline do – at first glance – not appear directly applicable to this setting. Whereas product experience is viewed as domain specific experience (Mitchell and Dacin, 1996), Internet experience is construed more in terms of process specific experience. Hölster and Strube (2000) found these two concepts to be very distinct and to have significant different effects on consumer online (search-) behavior. However, the cognitive theories underlying most research on product experience will most likely also have considerable validity in the area of Internet experience. In more general terms, level of experience/expertise is found to influence the *amount* of information people search for before making a decision (Jacoby et al, 1978; Brucks, 1985), the *type* of information being acquired (high versus low relevance) (Taylor and Crocker, 1981; Jacoby et al, 1986), as well as the *framing* of decision problems (Chi et al, 1981; Bouwman, 1982)[23]. Although the findings regarding the amount of information search are mixed and thus non-conclusive, one can conclude that experts are more capable of acquiring information that is relevant to the problem and that they thus focus on different attributes than novices (Selnes and Troye, 1989). Moreover, Bowman (1982) found non-experts to be more passive and non-analytic in their search behavior than experts. Also, novices were more inclined to employ inductive strategies in decision-making processes. These general findings should be applicable also in online contexts. Accordingly, we expect highly experienced Internet users to be more active, goal-directed and analytic in their search behavior, and more inclined to apply deductive decision strategies.

The second potential source on information regarding the impact of Internet experience on communication outcomes can be found within the management information systems (MIS) literature. Studies undertaken in organizational contexts indicate that education and training in using information technology have positive effects on the users' attitude toward information systems and performance (Cheney, Mann, Amoroso, 1986). This suggests that increasing user experience make users more capable of taking advantage of an information system. Experience is assumed to increase users' confidence in their ability to master and use computers supporting their task performance (Delone, 1988; Kraemer et al, 1993). However,

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[23] As cited in Selnes and Troye (1989)

62

evidence also suggests that *type* of experience is of essence when evaluating the effects of information system experience. Specifically, Agarwald, Prasad and Zanino (1996), found that structured learning experience were more beneficial than self-training among less educated individuals. Moreover, Karsten and Roth (1998) found that *relevance*, rather than *quantity* of computer experience was most predictive of performance in computer training. These findings suggest that individual characteristics as well as type of experience are potential moderators of the effects of information system experience, and they put renewed emphasis on the importance of employing multiple measures of experience. Although not universal, results from information system studies generally indicate a positive relationship between information system experience and ease of use, usefulness and attitude to using an information system. Even though one should be careful in generalizing these results to all interactivity-enabling applications, Bruner and Kumar (2000) argue that websites that appear complicated to customers with low Internet experience are probably not that difficult to handle for customers with high Internet experience. Accordingly, liking of a complex website/technology may increase as experience with this technology increases. Supportive of such a claim is also the research conducted by Cox and Cox (1988) and Srivastava (1994), showing that liking of complex stimuli may improve over time. Further, Bruner and Kumar (2000) also found support for a positive relationship between Internet experience and users' attitudes toward the website.

Before proceeding, we should perhaps emphasize that the literature often draws a quite clear distinction between the concepts of experience and expertise. In the sections above, these concepts have been used interchangeably. Although a users' experience and expertise of a given technology often are highly correlated, conceptual differences between the concepts exists. Whereas experience (or familiarity) refers to the total length of time an individual have devoted to an activity, expertise can be defined as the ability to perform a given task. Is this study we have chosen to concentrate on Internet experience. Arguments can be set forth for using either concept. We maintain that using a self-reported measure of skills (expertise) may have more substantial limitations than using a similar measure of experience. A consumer that has a short history of using the Internet and only rudimentary skills may after a short period of time believe that he masters the Internet use perfectly, while another consumer with similar experience and skills may report a totally different level of Internet expertise. Consequently, in this study, we focus on Internet experience and rely on self-reported measures of such experience, supplemented by measures of objective measures of actual Internet usage.

5.3 Conclusions

Several academic contributions both within the marketing and information systems literature points to Internet/IS experience as an essential variable when assessing the effect of online communications on various attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Following previous literature on experience/expertise in general, and the more recent – but scarce – research on the concept of Internet experience, we argue that experienced Internet users are more comfortable in using complex Internet communication formats and more inclined to like such complex formats than non-experienced users. Moreover, we expect higher levels of Internet experience to be associated with more analytic, efficient, and goal-directed online behavior.

PART II

Hypotheses

6 Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter we present the conceptual model underlying the dissertation and derive on a set of detailed hypothesis regarding the differential effect of the two interactivity-enabling technologies on the BRQ-facets, as well as the potential moderating effects of individual differences between consumers.

The chapter is organized as follows: First, we briefly present and discuss the conceptual model. Second, we propose the potential main-effects of type of interactivity-enabling technology on Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ)- facets. This discussion is based on an analysis of how the six properties inherent in the two different interactivity-enabling applications will influence each of the six dimensions subsumed in the BRQ construct. This discussion serves as a necessary basis for, and bridge to, the subsequent hypotheses. Lastly, we present the hypotheses relating moderating (interaction-) effects of the independent variables on the BRQ-dimensions.

6.2 Conceptual model

The research questions addressed in this dissertation focuses on the potential positive impact of different interactivity-enabling technologies for building brand relationships online. Moreover, we position individual differences, such as relationship motives and Internet experience, to be important moderators of this relationship. In chapter 2, we derived on Fournier (1994;1998)s' Brand Relationship Quality as a viable conceptualization of consumer-brand relationship ties. Moreover, we proposed a tripartite taxonomy of brand relationship motives consisting of efficiency, confidence, and social motives. Later, in chapter 4, our discussion of interactivity-enabling technologies lead us to narrow the focus down to two interactivity-enabling technologies, namely personalized websites (machine-interactivity) and customer community websites (person-interactivity). Lastly, the discussion on Internet experience in chapter 5, positioned such experience (in addition to relationship motives) as a significant potential moderator on the relationship between interactivity-enabling technology and brand relationship outcomes. Thus, the conceptual model underlying the dissertation can be depicted as follows (see figure 6.1):

Figure 6.1. Conceptual model
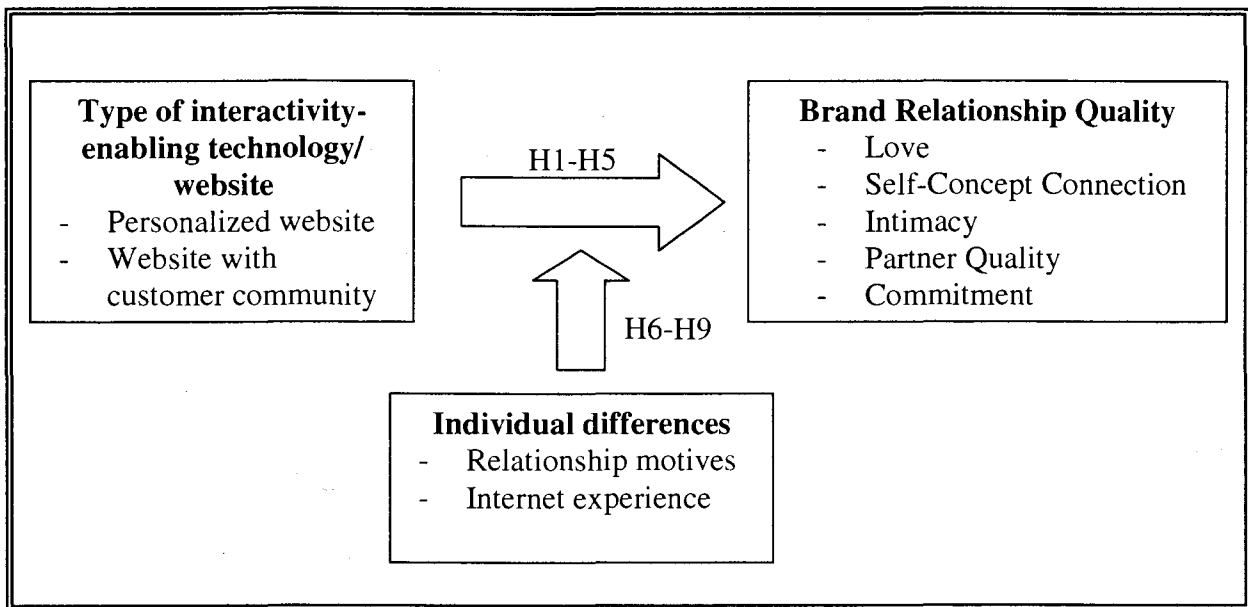
This model implies a causal effect of marketing-communication conducted through two different interactivity-enabling technologies on the development of brand relationship quality online (see hypotheses H1 through H5, below). Further, the model depicts this causal relationship to be moderated by two individual differences variables, namely relationship motives and Internet experience (see hypotheses H6-H9, below). Consequently, our model is in many ways similar to the conceptual model recently proposed by Holland and Baker (2001), in which states that personal factors (such as experience, etc.) influence the relative effect of web-personalization and customer communities in developing online brand loyalty. The model of Holland and Baker (2001) has not been empirically tested.

The dependent variable(s), BRQ, subsumes five facets. Each of these facets has different conceptual contents (see chapter 2), different antecedents and predicts different relationships outcomes (see Fournier, 1994, p.171-178). Instead of treating BRQ as a con-generic, higher-order concept, we thus propose hypotheses on dimensional differences between the five facets. Please note that we have excluded the sixth BRQ-dimension, behavioral interdependence, from our model. The focus of this dissertation is on the initial phases of consumer-brand relationships (initiation and build-up), and the empirical investigations are thus limited to relationships starting from scratch (i.e. no prior relationship history between the consumer and the brand are assumed). The behavioral interdependence-facet implicitly assumes the presence of prior relationship encounters (measures include e.g. "I feel like

something is missing when I haven't used this brand for awhile", Fournier; 1994, p.138), and this dimension is thus removed from the measurements altogether.

6.3 Hypotheses – Main effects

In chapter 4.6, we concluded that customer community web-sites entail greater levels of social presence/anthropomorphism online, higher source credibility, and lower levels of communication format complexity than personalized web-sites. Conversely, we argued that personalized websites require higher levels of consumer self-disclosure, allow for higher degrees of message relatedness (relationship memory), and imply higher levels of synchronicity in communication than do customer communities. In order to derive on specific hypotheses concerning the main-effects of the applications on BRQ-facets, we need to link the communication properties with the BRQ-framework. That is, we need to investigate which properties that may be portrayed as the most prominent determinants of which relationship dimensions. In the following, we discuss each of the BRQ-facets, and through linking each of these to the relevant communication properties, we derive on a set of detailed hypotheses.

6.3.1 Effects on Intimacy

Intimacy has a very obvious tie to a particular communication property, namely communication self-disclosure. While intimacy is a relationship characteristic, referring to the closeness, mutual understanding and openness between relationship partners (Fournier, 1994; 1998), self-disclosure is portrayed as a communication characteristic, referring to the partners' capacity and willingness to share thoughts and feelings that reveal personal aspects of the self (Stern, 1997; Derlega, 1994). As we saw in chapter 2, self-disclosure is regarded by most relationship scholars as either an important determinant of Intimacy (Waring and Chelune, 1983) or as an important facet of intimate relationships (Hinde, 1979; Waring et al., 1980; Derlega, 1984). Within the context of marketing, Hotchshild (1983), Moon (2000), Stern (1997) and others deal – in various ways – with the issue of consumer self-disclosure and the effect of self-disclosure on intimacy and relationship outcomes. The effectiveness of conveying self-disclosure is also well known in business practice, and Stern (1997) cite Delta Airlines as a firm that has designed training programs to encourage flight attendants to display feelings usually associated with private relationships (such as nurturance and affection) in relationship with consumers. The purpose of this is to overcome "consumer alienation". Within marketing academia there also appear to be a growing interest in how the increasing

amount of personal information that firms collect from consumers (especially online) influences the intimacy between the consumer and these vendors (Zahay, 2001; Moon, 2000).

Although we thus expect – almost by definition – a strong positive relationship between consumer self-disclosure and the intimacy-dimension of BRQ, how does Intimacy relate to the remaining communication properties? The communication property of message relatedness also has some interesting links to the concept of Intimacy. The fact that the brand partner remembers prior encounters and the information previously disclosed by the consumer, might lead the consumers to evaluate the level of Intimacy with the partner as being higher than if such message relatedness is not present. Further, the fact that the brand actually listens to the preferences and personal information disclosed by the consumer and attempts to accommodate these preferences, may facilitate feelings of sympathetic listening – which is an important aspect of intimacy (Davis, 1982; Stern, 1997). Sympathetic listening has been found useful in e.g. self-esteem advertising (Durgee, 1986), as it conveys the firm's respect for the disclosure as someone worth listening to (Davis and Perkowitz, 1979).

In sum, and in line with research conducted in social psychology (Waring and Chelune, 1983; Berscheid and Reiss, 1998), we propose *self-disclosure* to be a significant determinant of Intimacy. Moreover, we argue that increasing levels of *message relatedness* also is coupled with increasing levels of consumer-brand Intimacy. Here, self-disclosure is conceptualized as the amount and depth of personal information revealed by the consumer to the brand partner. Although consumers have the possibility of disclosing unlimited amounts of personal information also in customer communities, we argue that the overall level of such self-disclosure will be greater in communication with personalized websites. This argument is given by the simple fact that such consumer information disclosure is a prerequisite for web-personalization to work. Accordingly, we expect personalized websites to be more effective in building intimate online brand relationships than customer communities. Moreover, following the arguments set forth in chapter 4.6.1, we construe personalized websites as entailing higher levels of message relatedness than community sites. Message relatedness is, by the same tokens as self-disclosure, hypothesized to be associated with increasing levels of Intimacy. This line of reasoning thus strengthens the argument of personalized sites being more capable of enhancing consumer-brand Intimacy than customer communities.

H1: *Personalized websites will be more effective than customer community websites in strengthening the Intimacy-dimension of BRQ.*

6.3.2 Effects on Self-concept Connection

Although the communication property of message relatedness is proposed as a determinant of Intimacy, it probably has a stronger link to another BRQ-dimension, namely Self-concept connection. In communication theory, the concept of message relatedness is often applied in the context of computer mediated group interaction (Rafaeli and Sudweeks, 1997). In this literature, one assesses the effect such message relatedness has on internal group dynamics, relational tone in conversations as well on group output efficiency. In a marketing communication setting however, the central focus becomes whether marketing messages that recount earlier consumer responses are more effective than messages where such links to prior consumer responses (i.e. profile information) are not available. Everybody who has interacted with a commercial vendor and experienced the frustration of communicating with a new company representative on each occasion (who thus has no knowledge of your prior inquiries), knows how easy the lack of message relatedness in communication may deteriorate marketing relationships. Conversely, the works by Brock et al. (1990) and others (see chapter 2.5), nicely illustrates how much consumers appreciate it when marketing communication from the brand/vendor is tailored according to prior information and preferences revealed by the consumer. In this sense, the concept of message relatedness is closely intertwined with the concept of message personalization. The personalization of marketing communication has previously proven to be a determinant of self-concept congruity in marketing (Brock et al, 1990; Moon; forthcoming). Accordingly, we expect message relatedness and -personalization to be positively correlated with the Self-concept connection dimension of BRQ. It is not hard to imagine that when products, services and information are personalized according to the consumers' own profile, the congruence between the consumers' and the brands identity will increase.

Following the arguments set forth in chapter 4.6.1 and 4.6.2, we argue that personalized websites entail higher levels of message relatedness than customer community web-sites. Consequently, we expect personalized websites to do a better job in strengthening this BRQ-dimension than community web-sites would. The fact that personalized web-sites tailor information, products and services according to the preferences of each individual consumer,

should imply that the self-relevance of such marketing communication is substantially increased.

H2: *Personalized websites will be more effective than customer community websites in strengthening the Self-concept Connection dimension of BRQ.*

6.3.3 Effects on Partner Quality

Among the six communication properties discussed in chapter 4.6, we hypothesize source credibility to be the most salient determinant of the Partner Quality facet of BRQ. In general, the literature on source credibility primarily points to one main consequence of this concept in a marketing communication setting, namely persuasion effectiveness (Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Cacioppo and Petty, 1984; Petty and Cacioppo, 1981; Petty, Wegener, & Fabrigar 1997). When investigating the effect of source credibility on relationship quality facets (BRQ), we should though take one step back and attempt to analyze the underlying mechanisms driving this possible boost in partner persuasion. Research has identified source credibility as comprised of two underlying dimensions: perceived expertise and trustworthiness (Dholakia and Sternthal, 1977). Expertise refers to whether the receiver perceives the source as knowledgeable. Trustworthiness reflects the receiver's belief that the source's opinions are unbiased. We argue that both of these constructs are highly related to the concept of brand partner quality in the BRQ framework. As argued in chapter 2, trust is an essential component of partner quality. Expertise relates to trust in the sense that information and advice given by expert sources are regarded as more informed and accurate than information obtained from a non-expert source. The relationship between trustworthiness and trust should be quite self-evident: If a consumer deems an information source as trustworthy, s/he would trust the information coming from this source. Accordingly, we expect there to be a positive effect of source credibility on the partner quality dimension of BRQ. In an online setting, this implies that a brand website which communicates a higher degree of source credibility, will be more effective in strengthening Partner Quality.

Multiple articles in the popular press points to the fear of fraud and lack of security online as the primary reasons behind consumers' aversion against making transactions on the Internet. However, recent studies reveal that lack of trust in the vendor is a more important issue for consumers than the potential security hazards online (MMI, 1999; Dayal and Landesberg,

1999). While security hazards here primarily refer to the potential misuse of credit-card information etc. online, lack of trust pertains to the consumers' lack of confidence regarding the quality of the product, the quality of delivery/distribution, and the service of the online vendor. Consequently, consumer trust has been portrayed as a very essential variable in building consumer relationships online (Urban et al, 1999; Bauer, Grether and Leach, 1999).

As discussed above, source credibility has been found to be an important determinant of consumer trust, and thus also of Partner Quality. Consequently, we expect marketing communication that enhances source credibility to be effective tools in strengthening the Partner Quality dimension of BRQ. To a certain extent, we also expect *complexity* to be correlated with Partner Quality, albeit in a negative direction. Customer Communities are hypothesized to score higher on of both source credibility and format simplicity (complexity inversed), and thus on the Partner Quality dimension of BRQ. However, since Partner Quality also captures important elements of brand partner satisfaction, we might expect the consumers' overall satisfaction with each interactivity-enabling technology to blur or complicate this potential relationship somewhat. Still, we have no reasons to expect overall differences in level of satisfaction across the two technologies, and can thus formulate the following hypothesis:

H3: *Customer Community websites will be more effective than personalized websites in strengthening the Partner Quality-dimension of BRQ.*

6.3.4 Effects on Personal Commitment

The potential effects of the properties of interactivity on Personal Commitment are rather difficult to assess. The reason behind this can be tracked back to our discussion of the BRQ-construct in chapter 2. In this chapter, we argued that personal commitment to a large extent appear to be a consequence of the remaining BRQ-constructs. Previous research, both in social psychology (cf. Rusbult, 1980) and business-to-business marketing (cf. Morgan and Hunt, 1994), suggest that commitment rather is a mediator between some, or all, of the remaining relationship dimensions (especially Partner Quality and Intimacy) and relationship behavior. This issue is discussed in further detail in Thorbjørnsen, Breivik and Supphellen (2002). Consequently, we expect the level of personal commitment in a marketing relationship, in part, to be causally determined by other BRQ-facets, especially Intimacy and

Partner Quality. As we expect community websites and personalized websites to have different directional impacts on the Intimacy and Partner Quality-facets, we have few reasons to expect any overall directional differences between the two technologies in influencing consumer-brand commitment.

H4: *There are no differences between personalized websites and customer community websites in their effect of strengthening the Commitment-dimension of BRQ.*

6.3.5 Effects on Love

Love refers to the strength of the emotional ties between the consumer and the brand. Such emotional attachment may be enhanced by several communication properties, but we argue that the level of social presence/anthropomorphism is particularly essential. Support for this claim can be found in research on social presence theory (Short et al, 1976) and the lack of social context cues hypothesis (Sproull and Kiesler, 1986). These two theories have been labeled the "cues filtered out"-approach by Culnan and Markus (1987), since they assume that changes in bandwidth and types of social cues alone "will result in predictable changes in intrapersonal and interpersonal variables" (p.423)[24]. This perspective asserts that the structure of the medium alters the nature and interpretation of messages, and thus implies that such effects are inherent and constant whenever people communicate using computers. Hiemstra (1982) suggests that as social presence decreases and more social cues are filtered out, the communication is likely "to be experienced as less friendly, emotional and personal, and more serious, businesslike, depersonalized and task-oriented" (p.883). The fact that communication becomes more impersonal as social presence declines, is supported by both Culnan and Markus, 1987; Hiltz et al, 1986; Rice, 1984 and Steinfeld, 1986. Given that personalized websites are perceived as entailing less social presence and being less anthropomorphized than websites with customer communities, such personalized sites are also most likely perceived as more task-oriented, businesslike and less emotional and personal than community websites.

When consulting basic tenets of both communication research and social psychology, it seems obvious that higher levels of social presence and anthropomorphism will be positively related

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[24] As cited in Walther (1995, p.188).

to the strength of emotional attachment towards the communication partner. Consumers will, ceteris paribus, develop more personal and emotional bonds towards communication partners when the social presence and level of anthropomorphism is high, rather than low. Consequently, we argue that degree of social presence/anthropomorphism will have a positive impact on the Love-dimension of BRQ. Remember that Love refers to the strength of the emotional ties between the partners, and is denoted by feelings of exclusivity and fascination (cf. chapter 2.5). This argument is in line with Rice and Love (1987), Hiemstra (1982), Walther (1992;1995) and others, arguing that higher levels of social presence/presence of social context cues lead to more emotional, friendly and personal communication and interactions.

Accordingly, we propose the degree of social presence/anthropomorphism inherent in communication to be a strong determinant for developing strong emotional bonds and Love toward brands. Interactive communications that involve other human beings, such as customer communities, are more capable of generating such feelings than are human-machine communication formats. Although other properties of communication, such as self-disclosure – which are more salient on personalized websites – also may enhance the strength of the passionate attachment between a consumer and a brand, we argue that the social and personal nature of human-human communication cannot be overturned by machine-interactive formats for this BRQ-facet. Since customer communities contain higher levels of social presence than personalized websites (cf. chapter 4.6), we propose the following hypothesis:

H5: *Customer Community websites will be more effective than personalized websites in strengthening the Love-dimension of BRQ.*

6.3.6 Discussion

In the sections above we derived on a set of specific hypotheses concerning the main effects of interactivity enabling application on BRQ facets. In doing so, we linked each facet to one or two primary antecedents (communication properties). This investigation may appear somewhat simplified and one can easily argue that we ignore some of the complex relationships between communication properties, between relationship facets, and between communication properties and relationship facets. For instance, according to social psychology, self-disclosure is one of several important predictors also of love and attraction –

74

not just of intimacy (as written in chapter 6.3.1 above). People not only tend to be more attracted to those who disclose to them (Collins and Miller, 1994), but they also tend to be more attracted and passionate to whom they disclose (Collins and Miller, 1994; Taylor and Hinds, 1985)[25]. Accordingly, we may expect self-disclosure to have a positive impact on the Love-dimensions of BRQ. However, this effect is believed to be far weaker than the direct relationship between self-disclosure and Intimacy. Also, the relationship between social presence and Love is probably stronger than the potential relationship between self-disclosure and Love. Given the lack of past research on this issue and the accordingly exploratory nature of our research, we find it somewhat premature to discuss the potentially very complex interactions between communication properties and BRQ-facets.

Moreover, two of the five communication properties discussed in chapter 4.6 – communication synchronicity and -complexity – were not even mentioned as determinants of BRQ in the preceding hypotheses sections. The reason for this is simple: The properties of communication synchronicity and -complexity have – per se – no isolated direct impact on BRQ-facets, but rather become essential when we are to discuss the role of potential moderator variables. Accordingly, we elaborate on the potential role of these two communication properties in the following sections, before turning the focus to the hypotheses on moderating effects.

6.3.7 The role of communication synchronicity

In section 4.6, we briefly discussed the findings of Moon (1999), concerning the effect of response latency on persuasion. In addition to Moon's findings, several predictions on the effect of interactivity speed[26] can be found in the literature. In Hoffman and Novak (1996)'s initial conceptual model of hypermedia navigation, interactivity speed is hypothesized to be positively related to 1) the level of attention focused on the navigation task, 2) telepresence and 3) flow. Telepresence is conceptualized as the degree to which a person perceives that s/he is physically present in the computer-mediated environment (Schloerb, 1995). Flow on the web is defined as a cognitive state experienced during online navigation which is; 1) characterized by a seamless sequence of responses facilitated by machine interactivity, 2)

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[25] As cited in Moon (2000)

[26] The concept of interactivity speed (Novak, Hoffman and Yung, 1999; Shih, 1998) is conceptually almost identical to the concepts of response latency and communication synchronicity. These three concepts are thus equated here.

intrinsically enjoyable, 3) accompanied by a loss of self-consciousness, and 4) self-reinforcing (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). By the same token (but without even mentioning the article of Hoffman and Novak), Shih (1998) portrays the speed of and control over interactivity to be an important antecedent of telepresence on the Internet. According to Shih (1998), the faster and more efficient users are able to interact with the medium, the more likely they will feel a sense of being present in the virtual environment. Further, Shih (1998) also argue that the speed of and control over interactivity is an important determinant of "bricolage" in online consumer behavior. Bricolage is "a soft mastery of objects, a learning process typified by flexible, nonhierarchical style that allows a close connection with one's object of study" (Shih, 1998, p.660)[27]. According to Turkle (1995) bricolage helps people categorize concepts and facilitates the learning process. Without going into more details regarding the essence of this somewhat fuzzy concept, we merely recite Shih (1998) and his conceptual model in which response latency influences information retention through the process of increased "bricolage". That is, the higher degree of synchronicity in communication (and control over the interactivity process), the longer the user will retain the information acquired (Shih, 1998). One of the few *empirical* investigations relating to the effect of communication synchronicity (interactivity speed) online, was conducted by Novak, Hoffman, and Yung (2000). In this study, Novak and his colleagues found no support for the direct relationship between interactivity speed and focused attention or telepresence suggested by Hoffman and Novak (1996) and Shih (1998). However, they found interactivity speed to be a significant predictor of both flow and challenge/arousal experienced online.

The transformation of the findings listed above into potential effects of communication synchronicity on *brand relationship dimensions*, is not a particularly straightforward process. Also, as we shall soon discuss, the concept of synchronicity becomes far more relevant when we deal with the potential *moderating effects* of individual differences on brand relationship facets, than when we merely look at the main effects of type of interactivity-enabling technology on BRQ. Despite the lack of relevant empirical findings to rely on, we can derive on some more general and basic effects the property of communication synchronicity will have in the context of Internet marketing. Both communication scholars (Burgoon et al, 2000) and marketing scholars (Novak, Hoffman and Yung, 2000; Moon, 1999; Shih, 1998) alike seem to agree that synchronicity/immediate response, as compared to asynchronicity/long

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[27] An even *less* comprehensible conceptualization of "bricolage" is: "the tinkering and manipulation of objects around one's immediate environment to develop and assimilate ideas" (Shih, 1998; p.660).........

response latency, increases the efficiency in communication, as well as feelings of telepresence/flow. That is, synchronous communication is less time-consuming, more efficient and facilitates iterative dialogues more effectively then asynchronous communication. Taking this for granted, we expect communication synchronicity to influence the relative effect several of the other properties on BRQ, but propose that synchronicity, per se, has no direct link to any of the BRQ-facets. Rather, the effect of consumer self-disclosure and message relatedness on Intimacy and Self-concept Connection may be substantially boosted the faster and more timely the partner feedback. Moreover, the evaluation of the importance of synchronicity may vary substantially across individual consumers. Thus, the role of synchronicity appears to be central when evaluating the role of potential moderators in our model.

6.3.8 The role of communication format complexity

The complexity of the communication format influences the effectiveness of the communication process and -message. Within the context of Internet advertising, Stevenson, Bruner and Kumar (2000), found that website complexity had a negative impact on brand attitude, attitude toward the ad on the website, attitude toward the website, and purchase intention. In their study, website complexity was operationalized as the number of items, colors and movements on the website. Analogously, findings within the Technology Acceptance Model research reported in chapter 5, also point to the fact that the complexity of the communication format influences the attitude towards the communication technology/interface as well as the outcome of the communication process. In line with Stevenson et al. (2000), we may expect format complexity to have a negative impact on the evaluation of the website. Within the BRQ-framework, evaluation of the performance of the brand is best captured by the partner quality-dimension. As we have seen, partner quality encapsulates important aspects of satisfaction (as well as trust). That is, the complexity of the interactivity-enabling technology could potentially have a negative influence on partner quality. However, the perception of what is a complex website or technology will be very different from consumer to consumer, and we thus expect this relationship to be highly dependent on individual differences.

6.3.9 Conclusions

To sum up, we argue that the various communication properties are potentially strong determinants of different BRQ-facets. In particular, self-disclosure is hypothesized to be highly correlated with the Intimacy-dimension of BRQ, message relatedness to be associated with increasing levels of Self-concept Connection, source credibility is portrayed as a strong determinant of Partner Quality, and the degree of social presence/ anthropomorphism in communication formats is particularly tied to the Love-facet of consumer-brand relationships. Several other, albeit weaker, relationships are also suggested – such as a positive relationship between message relatedness and Love and Intimacy, and between self-disclosure and Love. When merging these postulated relationships with the discussion of the properties of personalized websites and customer communities in chapter 4.6, we were able to derive on a set of detailed hypothesis concerning the main effect of type of application on BRQ.

Moreover, we argue that few direct links between synchronicity and complexity and the BRQ-facets exist. Rather, these two properties become more central when we are to consider the moderating role of individual differences on BRQ.

6.4 Hypotheses – Moderating effects

Here, we focus on two individual differences variables, namely relationship motives and Internet experience. These two variables are hypothesized to be significant moderators of the main-effects of type of interactivity-enabling technology on BRQ-facets proposed above. The discussion in this section will, as above, be focused around the six properties of interactive communication. Specifically, we investigate which properties that are more valued by and central to consumers with different motives and levels of Internet experience.

6.4.1 The moderating effect of relationship motives

Both within marketing (Sheth, 1976; Kassarjian and Robertson, 1981; MacInnis and Moornab, 1991) and personal- and social psychology (McClelland, 1985; Winter, John, Stewart, Klohnen and Duncan, 1998), have motives been found to be highly predictive of behavior. In chapter 3.5, we derived on a tripartite taxonomy of relationship motives, consisting of efficiency, risk reducing (confidence) and social motives. In line with Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995), Barnes (1994), Berry (1995) and others, we argue that relationship motives will play an essential role in influencing the relative impact of relationship building efforts on

consumer response. Specifically, we construe type of relationship motive to be a strong moderator of the relative effect of personalized websites and customer community websites on brand relationship quality. That is, the effect of type of interactivity-enabling technology on BRQ-facets may be highly different depending on whether the consumer has efficiency-, risk reducing- or social motives for using the brand and its website. In the following, we investigate which communication properties that are most central and important for each of the three motives. Consequently, we propose a set of hypotheses regarding the moderating effect of relationship motives on BRQ.

Efficiency motives

Efficiency motives primarily refer to consumers' goal-directed arousal towards getting a marketing- or information exchange executed as price-, effort-, and/or time-efficient as possible. Since the consumers' monetary costs of using the two interactivity-enabling technologies are fairly equal, we limit the discussion below to how interactive communication technologies may influence the effort and time consumed when communicating with the brand online. Personalized websites and customer community websites each hold different properties that may facilitate communication efficiency to a higher or lesser extent. In terms of increasing the efficiency of communication, two properties stick out – namely *synchronicity* and *message relatedness*. The synchronicity of communication clearly points to the speed of interactivity, and we find it fairly obvious that higher speed of interactivity/lower response latency is associated with more time-efficient communication. Moreover, higher levels of message relatedness (and subsequent personalization of communication) are also positively related to increased efficiency. Think for instance of an Internet Bank or the features present on the My Yahoo! website. When accessing his/her Internet Bank the consumer gets instant access to all prior transactions, the address and account information of all recipients of past payments, and so on. The presence of such "relationship memory" makes Internet banking, for most people, a more efficient way to pay bills than traditional methods – where such prior relationship information is not readily available. Similarly, on My Yahoo!, the presence of personalized news-information, personalized weather-forecasts, bookmarks, search-engines etc. makes this site far more efficient for accessing relevant information and services than a standardized portal, such as the regular Yahoo.no site. A customer community site lacks such message relatedness and personalization features and does also entail lower levels of synchronicity then personalized sites.

However, the *complexity*-dimension of communication formats may also be relevant when discussing efficiency motives. A more complex site may be perceived as demanding more efforts when using than would less complex formats – especially for less experienced users. Clearly, any 80-year-old person could rightfully argue that Internet Banking is not a particularly efficient way for him/her to pay bills, given that s/he never before has used the Internet. We return to the moderating effects of Internet experience below. With respect to complexity, personalized websites achieve a lower score than customer community sites. Still, we argue that the advantages of personalized websites contra community sites regarding the properties of synchronicity and message relatedness, do more than make up for the fact that community sites probably are less complex. For consumers with strong efficiency motives, we thus expect personalized websites to be more effective in strengthening BRQ-facets than customer community sites.

The final question now goes to which BRQ-facets that would be more strongly influenced due to the relationships proposed above. As we saw in chapter 6.3.2, message relatedness is portrayed as an important determinant of self-concept connection. However, synchronicity is hypothesized to have no direct effect on either BRQ-facets. Rather, and in line with the arguments set forth in section 6.3.7, we argue that higher levels of synchronicity will boost the quality of self-disclosure and message relatedness (which in turn are determinants of intimacy and self-concept connection). Consequently, we expect higher levels of message relatedness and synchronicity to be positively related to Intimacy and Self-concept connection. Since efficiency-induced consumers will put a stronger emphasis on these two communication properties than respondents with other motives, we expect such motives to moderate the causal relationship described in hypotheses H1 and H2:

H6: *The superior effect of personalized websites over customer community websites in strengthening the intimacy and self-concept connection facets of BRQ, proposed in H1 and H2, will be stronger for consumers with efficiency motives, versus risk-reducing or social motives.*

Risk reducing motives pertain to the consumers' goal directed arousal towards minimizing the uncertainty, risk and/or discomfort associated with specific marketing transactions or - relationships. In general, risk-reducing motives would lead to risk-reducing behavior such as extensive information search, buying insurances, safeguarding assets, or engaging in long-term relationships with credible and trustworthy partners. In terms of accommodating risk-reducing motives through interactivity-enabling technologies, the most relevant communication property to investigate would be *source credibility*. Because information from a credible source (per definition) is regarded as more unbiased and trustworthy than information from a less credible source, such source credibility would be an important factor in reducing consumers perceived risk in marketing communication (Richins, 1983; Cialdini, 1993; Petty et al., 1997). That is, increased source credibility may reduce consumers' perceived risk through enhancing consumer trust in the brand/vendor. In line with Metha and Sivadas (1995), Dellaert (2000) and others, we argue that WOM-information obtained in customer communities will be regarded as being more trustworthy and unbiased than information provided by the brand/vendor. In fact, the mere existence of a customer community on a brand website may signal that the brand is taking consumer feedback seriously and that it has nothing to hide from its consumers. Given that trust is an important aspect of Partner Quality, we argue that customer communities will be more effective in strengthening Partner Quality for consumers with dominantly risk-reducing motives, than would personalized websites. Although arguments have been put forth that also personalized websites are effective tools for building trust online (Dayal and Landeberg, 1999), these arguments are less substantial and are not backed by empirical evidence. Concurrently, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H7: *The superior effectiveness of customer community websites over personalized websites in strengthening the partner quality facet of BRQ, proposed in H3, will be stronger for consumers with risk-reducing motives, versus efficiency- or social motives.*

Social motives

Social motives include a variety of dimensions, including affiliating and "making friends" with a brand/representatives, the need to feel familiar with others, to get recognized, and to experience friendship and social support/prestige (Barnes, 1994; Berry, 1995; Gwinner et al.,

1998). Following theories of communication, we argue that the property of *social presence/anthropomorphism* would be more central and important to persons with high levels of socio-emotional and affiliation motives, than to persons with dominantly efficiency or task-oriented motives. Socially induced consumers will rely more on social cues and prefer a high degree of human "presence" in the communication process. Accordingly, we expect consumers with dominantly social motives to prefer interactivity-enabling communication formats that are high in social presence/anthropomorphism over formats with lesser degree of social presence, which concurrently are "as less friendly, emotional and personal, and more serious, businesslike, depersonalized and task-oriented" (Hiemstra, 1982, p.883). That is, socially induced consumers will prefer customer community websites over personalized websites. In section 6.3.5, we argued that social presence/anthropomorphism would be most strongly tied to the Love-dimension of BRQ. Accordingly, we expect the following hypothesis to be true:

H8: *The superior effectiveness of customer community websites over personalized websites in strengthening the love facet of BRQ, proposed in H5, will be stronger for consumers with social motives, versus efficiency- or risk-reducing motives.*

Conclusion

Based on the idea that different properties of communication will be more or less important and salient for consumers with different relationship motives, we above proposed three hypotheses on differential moderating effects between consumes with efficiency, risk-reducing and social motives on the main-effects of type of application on BRQ. In general, we expect consumers with dominantly efficiency motives to prefer personalized websites over customer community websites and consumers with dominantly risk-reducing or social motives to prefer community sites over personalized sites. However, and in line with the arguments of which community property that are determinants of which BRQ-facet, we have been quite detailed in arguing which BRQ-facets will be influenced by each of these moderators.

6.4.2 The moderating effect of Internet experience

In chapter 5, we argued that Internet experience is an essential variable to consider when evaluating the effectiveness of various Internet-based marketing communication formats. The findings of Bruner and Kumar (2000), as well as of Liang and Huang (1998), points to the fact that experienced and inexperienced Internet users differ substantially in the attributions, attitudes and behavior they exert on commercial Internet sites. As pointed out by Ariely (2000), marketers should thus pay careful attention to the customers' experience with the same and similar systems when designing a marketing communication system. In the following, we discuss how the concept of Internet experience relates to the properties of Interactive communication and how such experience thus may moderate the relationship between type on interactivity-enabling technology and BRQ-facets.

First, let us investigate which communication properties consumers with *low* levels of Internet experience will value the most. Given their lack of experience with the medium and thus with using commercial websites altogether, consumers with low rather than high Internet experience should be less at ease with using the Internet and with booking/purchasing on-line. As for consumers with risk-reducing motives, a dominant strategy for reducing such uncertainty could be obtaining (process-) information from *credible sources* (i.e. on-line word-of-mouth communication posted at customer communities). We argue that novices on the Internet are more prone to search out and exploit such information than experts for two main reasons. First, novices (as opposed to experts) are more likely to find new information in customer communities. Communities typically contain expert advice and comments from experienced users. This would be old information to many experts. This line of reasoning is supported by findings in research on personal influence and word-of-mouth communication, showing that novices are more susceptible to such information sources (e.g., Cialdini, 1993). Also supportive of this explanation is the finding within persuasion research that novices are more influenced by peripheral cues than experts (e.g., Petty and Cacioppo, 1981). The comments or advice of spokespersons/peers in communities may function as peripheral cues in our context. Moreover, less experienced users would probably also prefer higher levels of *social presence/anthropomorphism*, as opposed to dominantly machine-interactive interfaces. Although we find no empirical support for such a claim, indirect arguments can be put forth. For instance, Foulger (1990) reported that highly experienced computer users rated CMC-media, such as e-mail and computer conferencing, as being "richer" and more preferable than telephone conversations and face-to-face interactions. Consistent with arguments made within

83

the social presence theory (Walther, 1992; 1995) and lack-of-context cues theory (Sproull and Kielser, 1986), we could argue that experienced Internet users to a larger extent would tolerate and be comfortable with the lack of social presence inherent in machine-interactive formats, while inexperienced users would depend far more on such human/social presence in communication. Further, we expect the *complexity* of the communication format to be vital for discriminating the effects of the communication formats between expert and novice users. Specifically, we expect novice users, as opposed to expert users, to be particularly sensitive to (too) high levels of complexity of the websites. This argument is fairly well documented within the TAM-research and – within an Internet marketing setting – also supported by Bruner and Kumar (2000)'s observation that websites in which appear complicated to customers with low Internet experience are probably not that difficult to handle for customers with higher levels of experience.

Consequently, we expect inexperienced Internet users to pay particular attention to and to put extra emphasis on the social presence/anthropomorphism, source credibility and complexity properties of communication formats. That is, inexperienced users prefer interactivity-enabling technologies with higher levels of social presence, higher source credibility and lower levels of complexity, than do more experienced users – and will thus prefer customer community websites over personalized websites.

Turning to the preferences and attitudes of *highly experienced* Internet users, who experience less risk and uncertainty when interacting with, or on, an Internet site, we certainly expect risk-reducing-, or information search motives to be less prominent. These users may not find much useful information on a customer community site. Rather, experienced users would be more interested in making the search for information and the purchase/booking process as efficient and expedient as possible. Thus, analogous to the arguments set forth in section 6.4.1 we argue that synchronicity and message relatedness are more important to experienced users then to inexperienced users. The presence of relationship memory and the personalization of information and bookings, in addition to an immediate communication response, would make both present and future transactions/communications more swift and easy. Also, as pinpointed above, we may expect experienced Internet users to find complex machine-interactive communication formats more preferable than person-interactive formats. Machine-interactivity – such as web-personalization – will demand a higher level of technological understanding and experience from the users than person-interactivity and could thus be

perceived as being more useful to experienced users. Although speculative at this point, we might also expect experienced users – rather than less experienced users – to become more easily seduced (Deighton and Grayson, 1995) by attributes like technological elegance, complexity and degree of innovation on a site. Khaslavsky and Shedroff (1999) provide anecdotal evidence as to how technologies might seduce users through a process of enticement, relationship and fulfillment. By personalizing content, fulfilling promises and connecting to the consumers' needs and personal goals, personalized websites might contain an element of seduction. Such a technological seduction, rather than personal persuasion, may appeal more to experienced Internet users than to less experienced users, who are more concerned with human contact, with alleviating uncertainty and being "cared for" by the brand on-line.

In sum, we argue that inexperienced Internet users value higher levels of social presence/ anthropomorphism and source credibility in interactive communication, and lower levels of complexity. Conversely, highly experienced users put more emphasis on high levels of message relatedness, synchronicity and tolerate higher levels of communication format complexity. Consequently, inexperienced Internet users will more strongly value the properties inherent on customer community websites, while experienced users prefer communication properties that are associated with personalized websites. We can thus put forth the following hypotheses:

H9a: *The superior effect of personalized websites over customer community websites in strengthening the intimacy and self-concept connection facets of BRQ, proposed in H1 and H2, will be stronger for consumers with high-, rather than low Internet Experience.*

H9b: *The superior effect of customer community websites over personalized websites in strengthening the partner quality and love facets of BRQ, proposed in H3 and H5, will be stronger for consumers with low-, rather than high Internet Experience.*

Conclusion

Above, we have derived on five hypotheses concerning the main-effects of type of interactivity-enabling technology on Brand Relationship Quality facets, as well as five hypotheses relating to the moderating effect of relationship motives and Internet experience. Please note that the references to hypotheses H1-H5 within the hypotheses on moderating effects (H6-H9) do not imply that such main-effects must exist in order for the moderating hypotheses to be valid. Rather, H1-H5 may all be rejected without this influencing the subsequent tests of H6-H9. Next, in chapters 7 through 10, we present the research design, operationalizations and results from two experiments designed to test these hypotheses.

PART III
Methodology and Analysis

STUDY 1

7 Methodology

This chapter is organized as follows: First, we discuss and present the research design of study 1. Second, we devote our attention to the operationalization of independent- and dependent measures. We follow up on the discussion of the BRQ-facets from chapter 2, and derive on a set of indicators for each BRQ dimension.

7.1 Purpose of Study 1

The primary goal of study 1 was to test hypotheses H1-H5 regarding the main effects of interactivity-enabling technology on brand relationship quality (BRQ), as well as hypotheses H9a and H9b relating to the possible moderating effect of Internet experience. Hypotheses H6-H8 on the moderating effects of brand relationship motives are tested in study 2, in which also are designed to replicate the findings of study 1.

7.2 Research Design

The research problem addressed in this dissertation is relatively new to the extent that there is a weak theoretical frame of reference that specifically addresses the differential effect of different interactivity-enabling technologies on consumer-brand relationship ties. Although both the marketing- and communication literature addresses the topic of interactivity in communication, the existing body of knowledge remains fragmented and not very well empirically founded. Similarly, the literature on relationship quality at the consumer-brand level still remains rather nascent. In spite of this, it was deemed appropriate to use an experimental design in the study. The reasons for this are twofold:

First, a substantial part of this dissertation is devoted to structuring the problem by integrating findings from marketing-, IS-, relationship-, and communication research into a common conceptual framework. Consequently, we have been able to formulate specific hypotheses concerning both the main-effects of interactivity-enabling technologies and the moderating effects of Internet experience and relationship motives on brand relationship quality. These hypotheses are well structured and contain a clear distinction between independent variables (interactivity-enabling technologies, relationship motives and Internet experience) and dependent variables (BRQ-facets). Accordingly would an experimental design provide a stronger test of differences between the independent variables than would an explorative or descriptive design.

Second, our goal of investigating causal relationships between the variables is best attained through using an experimental design. The variables under consideration, as well as the specific form of the hypotheses, meet the requirements of Cook and Campbell (1979) for using such a design:

- the ability to *control* 1) the situation in which the experiment is conducted, 2) which experimental units receive a particular treatment at a particular time and 3) the extraneous variables that can be a threat to valid inference (internal validity)
- the ability to *manipulate* the treatment (or independent) variable, and
- the possibility of making *comparisons* between treatment conditions.

In this study, the primary independent variable (type of interactivity-enabling technology) can easily be manipulated in an experimental setting through assigning respondents to either a personalized web-site or a web-site containing a customer community and through task instructions. By assigning the respondents randomly to experimental groups and through holding all other factors on the web-sites constant, the issues related to experimental control may also be accommodated. A factorial between-subject design will further allow for comparisons across independent variables and tests of combined effects on the dependent variables.

Most experimental designs are executed as one-shot studies where the knowledge, opinions, attitudes etc. of the consumers are measured once, and most often directly after a single exposure to the experimental treatment. Taking into consideration that relationships develop over time (cf. chapter 2), such a one-shot approach to measurement was not deemed appropriate for this study. Rather, the design should allow for measuring the *development* in consumer-brand relationships, and the experiment should accordingly be longitudinal. The research design chosen can thus be described as a (semi-longitudinal) experimental panel study.

7.3 Outline of Experimental Design

Brands used in the study

The traveling industry is, along with e.g. the bank industry, one of the industries that have been most pro-active and – by many parameters – among the most successful in utilizing interactivity-enabling technologies for marketing, sale and distribution of its services. According to the GVU WWW User Surveys, traveling services are among the most frequently searched, visited and purchased products/services online. Accordingly, we chose to focus on traveling-services brands in our study. The main reason for this was to focus on a product category in which the respondents most likely had previous online experiences. In order to avoid mono-operationalization, and thus strengthening external validity, two different services (airline ticket and restaurant meal) were used. Both brands used in the experiment, The Blue@Gold (restaurant chain) and The Blue@Gold Air (airline), were fictitious. The reason for using a "virtual brand" was to control for existing relationships between the respondents and the brand and to avoid possible uncontrollable interactions between the respondents and the brand during the experimental period.

Procedure

The experiment was designed as a 2 (interactivity-enabling technologies) x 2 (tourism services) between-subjects design. Accordingly, the respondents were randomly assigned to four experimental treatments, see figure 7.1, below.

Figure 7.1. Experimental groups

	Customer Community	Personalized website
Airline	Group 1	Group 2
Restaurant	Group 3	Group 4

The experiment was framed as a test of a new product and the respondents were given incentives to participate by winning prizes. These incentives were tied to the participation in (and completion of) the experiment per se and we do not regard this as a threat to the validity of the study because no interactions with experimental treatments were expected.

The real purpose of the experiment was revealed to the respondents after the experiment was finished. Apart from the briefing and debriefing of the respondents, which were executed in

the "physical world", the whole experiment – including measurements – was carried out online.

Together with the briefing, respondents were given an envelope that contained information about the experiment, an assigned web-address, username, password, and a credit card with which they could pay for their purchased brand service (see appendix 1).

Each respondent could log on to the assigned site whenever and from whatever location they wanted, but they were instructed to visit the site at least once a day. The reason for using such a non-laboratory setting was to increase the external validity of the study. When being allowed to access and interact with the brand web-site on their preferred location (either home-, school-, or office computer) and preferred time (24 hours a day), the respondents' context of use would resemble the context normally present when browsing and interacting with tourism web-sites. The alternative – using a laboratory setting on a fixed timeslot – would impose an artificial context to the online consumer-brand relationship.

To gain access to the website, respondents had to register their name and e-mail address the first time they visited the website. The respondents were further instructed to book either an airline ticket or a restaurant visit on the first day of the experiment and were encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site and the brand.

To book an airline ticket or a restaurant visit, the respondents in the personalization groups had to register their preferences for predefined dimensions of personalization. Four dimensions for personalization were presented both for the Blue & Gold Air and for The Blue & Gold (see table 7.1). Dimensions for personalization were not presented to the respondents with access to customer community.

**Table 7.1:** Dimensions for personalization

Blue & Gold Air

1. Where do you prefer to be seated?	__Back	__Middle	__Front
2. Window or aisle seating?	__Window	__Aisle	
3. What do you prefer to read?	__Newspaper	__Business Magazines	__Lifestyle magazines
4. What is your dining preference?	__Meat	__Seafood	__Vegetarian

Blue & Gold

1. Smoking preferences?	__Non-smoking	__Smoking	
2. Music preferences?	__Background classics	__Silent dining	
3. What kind of apertif do you prefer?	__Gin & Tonic	__Bitter	__Wine
4. Are you allergic to any ingredients?	__None	__Seafood	__Nuts,milk or eggs

The experiment lasted 10 days. As can be seen from figure 7.2, BRQ was measured on three occasions. The first measurement was conducted after the reservation, the second measurement after the first event, while the third measurement was conducted at the end of the experiment, after event 4. Four different messages, or events, were sent by email to the respondents during the experiment to increase the activity, involvement and realism in the experiment (see figure 7.2, below).

Figure 7.2. Experiment structure
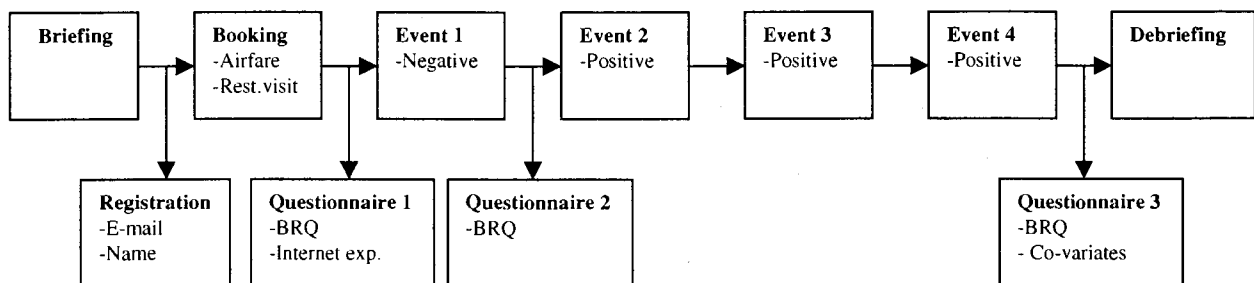
The first message had a negative connotation. Respondents were informed that their scheduled departure or restaurant booking was delayed. Such a negative event was used to induce interaction between the customer and the brand, and to avoid possible ceiling-effects in questionnaire responses. The three latter messages were either positive or neutral. In the second message, the brand offered a compensation for the delay, whereas the third and fourth messages contained valuable information about the upcoming trip or restaurant visit. The four messages for The Blue & Gold Air and for The Blue & Gold are presented in table 7.2. As can be seen, the last part of message 2 and message 3 is personalized according to preferences

revealed by the customers earlier in the experiment for the groups receiving personalized services. This part of message 2 and 3 were not sent to the groups with access to customer community.

Table 7.2: Messages (Events)

Blue & Gold Air

Event 1 Unfortunately, we have trouble with our engines. All flights will be transferred from our Boeing 737 machines to our Saab 340 and Cessna machines. Consequently, you should expect a 30 min. delay in your scheduled departure.

Event 2 We apologize for the inconvenience of transferring you to our smaller aircraft. To make your flight more comfortable, you will receive "Royal"-class service on your upcoming flight. Gourmet meals are among the "Royal"-class services.

According to your preferences, you will be seated near the window in the back of the aircraft*.

Event 3 We confirm that all arrangements regarding change of aircraft now has been made. According to our schedule, captain Persson and first officer Stenberg will be responsible for your upcoming flight, while Nina, Peter and Anniken will assist in the cabin.

For your comfort, newspapers will be available at your seat*.

Event 4 Everything is now ready for your upcoming flight. Please show up at the airport at least 30 minutes before departure. If you need further assistance, show your Blue & Gold Air card to our support personnel at the airport. We wish you a pleasant flight.

Blue & Gold

Unfortunately, there is a problem with your upcoming dining reservation. Your table preferences could not be met, and you should expect a 30 min. delay in your scheduled reservation time.

We apologize for the problems with your upcoming reservation. To make your dining experience as pleasant as possible, seats will be reserved for your party in the bar where we will serve you a free apertif while you wait to be seated.

According to your preferences, Gin & Tonic will be served and seats will be available in the non-smoking area of the bar*.

We confirm that all arrangements regarding change of reservation now has been made. According to our schedule, managing chef will be Christian Courtot, while Nina and Peter will serve Your table.

For your comfort, you will be seated in the non-smoking area of the restaurant*.

Everything is now ready for your upcoming dining arrangement. The restaurant can be reached using both bus and Underground. Use the London Bridge or Tower Hill Stations. We will do our best to make your visit an unforgettable experience.

* : Personalized based on dimensions for personalization presented above.

7.4 Sample

Given the fact that this study investigates phenomena not previously researched, we had few hints as to what effect sizes to expect. Concurrently, a conservative strategy would be to expect small to medium effect sizes and thus scale the sample size accordingly (Hair et al, 1998). To achieve the suggested power of 0.80 when assessing medium effect-sizes in a four-group design with four dependent variables, 64 subjects per groups are required (Läuter, 1979)[28]. Accordingly, the ambition when recruiting respondents was to reach a total sample of approximately 250 respondents. Unfortunately, the final sample totaled 123 respondents, less than half of this suggested amount.

In order to increase the external validity of the study and the variance in the subjects' Internet experience, two different sample-frames were selected. The first sample (totaling n=62) was drawn from several classes of tourism management at a regional University in Sweden; Mitthögskolan in Östersund. The students had been informed of the experiment by the management of the University and were encouraged to participate. Approximately 100 students volunteered to participate in the experiment, although only 62 actually participated. The second sample (totaling n=61) was recruited among employees at travel agencies and hotels participating in the national Swedish tourism organizations RTS (Rese och Turistindustrin i Sverige), SRF (Svenska Resebyråföreningen) and SHR (Sveriges Hotell- och Restaurantföretag). An invitation to participate in the study was distributed by ETOUR[29] via these three umbrella-organizations to individuals employed at its participating firms.

Hence, the total sample consisted of 123 subjects from two different but internally homogenous sub-samples. The subjects' knowledge and interest in tourism products and services was expected to increase their interest in the products in question and thus enhance their overall involvement in the experiment.

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[28] As cited in Hair et al. (1998)
[29] European Tourism Research Institute

7.5. Measurements

7.5.1 Independent variables

Type of interactive web-site
The design and navigation on each of the websites were held constant between the two different interactive applications. Basically, the two sites were identical, with the following exceptions:

The web-sites with customer community contained an element in the navigation pane labeled "Discussions", guiding the respondents to a bulletin board, which contained existing postings among the consumers themselves as well as those between the consumers and the brand. Of course, the respondents also had the opportunity of posting new messages on the forum. The personalized websites did not have such a customer community.

What the personalized web-site did have, was an element in the navigation pane labeled "My Blue@Gold". By clicking on the element, respondents were guided into a personalized web page, where they were greeted by name, had a complete overview of the relationship history and their registered preferences as well as a full overview of the messages that were sent to the respondents during the experiment. When booking either the flight or the restaurant visit on the first day of the experiment, respondents were also asked about their personal preferences on a given set of attributes for the product/service in question (see table 7.1 above). Both the service itself and the compensation offered later in the experiment were personalized based on each respondent's preferences. The respondents assigned to the websites with customer communities did not receive such personalized services. Examples of the personalized- and community features on the websites are found in appendix 2.

Type of service
The content of the web-sites was also held constant between the two different traveling services, at least with regard to design, the number of web pages and amount of information (the content of the information displayed was, of course, adjusted to the nature of the service).

The Blue&Gold Airline was framed as a newly founded airline, particularly targeted at the population in smaller cities and regions in Sweden. The airline had recently started some "pre-

operational flights" in collaboration with governmental institutions and Universities in Sweden for test purposes. The website of "Skyways", a similar airline, was used as a frame of reference when designing the site.

The Blue&Gold Restaurant was framed as a London Restaurant, part of a newly founded restaurant-chain called Blue&Gold. The concept and website illustrations were based partly on "The Blue" in Liverpool and "The Blackbird" in New York.

The opening website for both The Blue & Gold Air and The Blue & Gold is presented in figure 7.2. The presented websites are for the community groups. For the groups receiving personalized services the button in the navigation pane labeled "Discussion" was replaced by a button labeled "My Blue & Gold", see Figure 7.3.

Figure 7.3 Websites for Blue & Gold Air and Blue & Gold (restaurant)
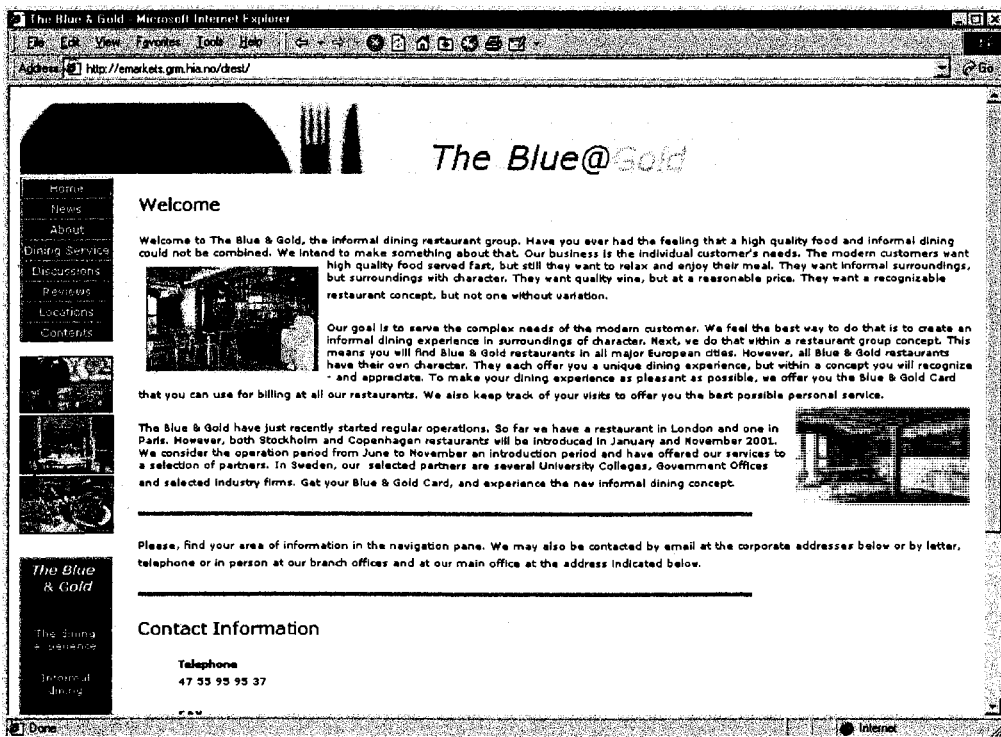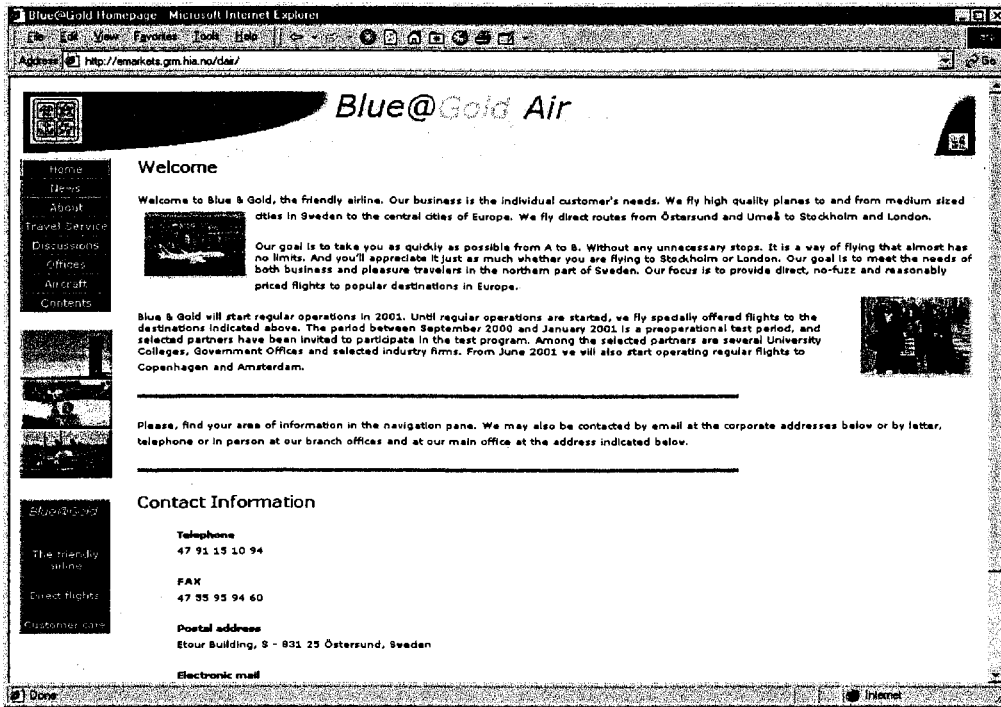
Internet experience

Internet experience was measured by a single item referring to the respondents' subjective evaluation: "I feel that I am an experienced user of the Internet". The response was measured on a seven point Likert-scale with endpoints "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree". The variable was dichotomized according to the median into low Internet experience (1 - 4) and high Internet experience (5 - 7).

7.5.2 Dependent variables

No measures or validated scales of BRQ are offered in the literature, and the development and conceptualizations of the BRQ-construct in both Fournier (1998) and Fournier and Yao (1997) are qualitatively derived. As a consequence, our only source of information about the BRQ scale development, was Fournier's 1994 dissertation. The majority of items was thus adopted from Fournier (1994), although several indicators were replaced, removed or slightly altered on the basis of either Fournier's own recommendations for improvements of the scale (1994, p.193) or on the basis of the limitations in Fournier's framework we discussed in chapter 2. In the following, we briefly discuss and present the operational measures of each BRQ facet.

Intimacy

When measuring an abstract concept like intimacy in marketing/branding – a concept in which is adopted from the discipline of psychology – one should put a strong emphasis on accommodating all issues related to the content validity (Frankford-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996) and construct validity (Cook and Campbell, 1979) of the concept. It is important that the (new) theoretical content of the concept does not deviate too much from its original content[30] (in social psychology), yet at the same time discriminates from related constructs in marketing. In doing so, one should first attempt to identify the "core elements" of the concept. According to the definition, should the degree of mutual openness and understanding between relationship partners be central properties of Intimacy, along with caring and abilities of conflict resolution. Moreover, should the properties of intimacy related to sexuality in social psychology (Waring et al, 1980) naturally be excluded in a marketing setting. Similarly would commitment (cf. Chelune et al. 1984) not be regarded as a core property of intimacy within the context of marketing, since this is an already well-established concept within this

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[30] Also related to the "semantic validity" of the concept.

discipline and a separate dimension in the BRQ framework. On the other hand, the operationalizations of Intimacy in Fournier (1994) appear to narrow the conceptual content of Intimacy too far. This is probably also one of the reasons why Intimacy plays such a limited role in Fournier's quantitative study (1994, p.193). For instance, the importance of duality in marketing relationships (cf. Blackston, 1992; 1993) is ignored in Fournier (1994). Fournier only measures the consumers' knowledge and understanding of the brand, not to what extent (the consumer perceives) the brand knows and understands the consumer (as do Blackston, 1992; 1993). Moreover, Fournier excludes caring, sympathetic listening and abilities of conflict resolution in her measures of Intimacy. Along with research conducted in social psychology, we feel that these facets deserve to be included in a measure of Intimacy. Inclusion of these facets would probably not constitute a large threat to the discriminant validity of the concept, since these aspects of Intimacy have little in common with the conceptual content of the remaining BRQ dimensions.

Accordingly, do we suggest the following measures of Intimacy:

"I know a lot about Blue&Gold"	(Knowledge1)*
"Blue&Gold knows a lot about me"	(Knowledge2)
"I feel like Blue&Gold actually cares about me"	(Caring)
"I have no trouble revealing personal information to Blue&Gold"	(Self-discl.1)
"I know things about Blue&Gold that many people just don't know"	(Self-discl.2)*
"Blue&Gold really listens to what I have to say"	(Listening)
"I feel as though I really understand Blue&Gold"	(Understanding1)*
"I feel as though Blue&Gold really understands me"	(Understanding2)
"I feel certain Blue&Gold satisfactory will resolve any conflict we might experience"	(Conflict resolution)

* = Original measures from Fournier (1994)

Self-concept connection

An important prerequisite for measuring self-concept connection is deciding on *which* self-concept to measure. While early contributions within the self-concept congruity research (Grubb and Hupp, 1968; Grubb and Stern, 1971; Birdwell, 1968; Bellenger et al, 1976)[31] treated self-concept as a single variable ("actual self", "real self", "basic self" etc.), more recent contributions focus on self-concept as a multi-dimensional construct (Sirgy, 1982; Ericksen, 1996; Sirgy and Su, 2000). In this latter tradition is self-concept viewed as consisting of two or more self-concepts. In his influential review article, Sirgy (1982) even identifies seven different self-concepts. In line with Sirgy and others do we choose to measure self-concept based on two components: real self and ideal self. The reason for this is threefold: First, these are the two versions of self-concept applied in most studies of self-concept congruity (Sirgy, 1982). Second, these are the components of self-concept congruity that explains the largest variance of consumer behavior and –choice (Sirgy, 1982). The third reason is to take into account the attributes of the products/services in question in our study. According to Solomon (1994) and Ericksen (1996) is ideal self a more relevant frame of reference for socially visible products, while real self is more relevant for your everyday, functional products. Given that tourism services such as airline trips and restaurant visits are highly socially visible services, we choose to include ideal self in our measures – in addition to real self.

Fournier (1994) only includes one measure of ideal self in her study – the remaining indicators pertain to real self. However, the problem with the measure of ideal self is that it is a part of another indicator: "This brand says a lot about the kind of person I am or want to be" (1994, p.217). In our opinion, this is a double-barreled question (Frankford-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996) where a bias in response may occur due to discrepancies between ideal and real self among respondents. Accordingly, we split this indicator into two, and also include some additional indicators from other studies.

"Blue&Gold says a lot about the kind of person I am"   (Actualself1)*

"Blue&Gold says a lot about the kind of person I'd like to be"   (Idealself1)*

"Blue&Gold's image is consistent with how I see myself"   (Actualself2)**

"Blue&Gold's image is consistent with how I'd like to see myself"   (Idealself2)**

"Blue&Gold helps me make a statement about what is

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[31] As cited in Sirgy (1982)

important to me in life"   (Statement)*

"I feel related to the type of people who are Blue&Gold customers"   (Typical)

* = Original measures from Fournier (1994), with changes discussed above.

** = Revised versions of measures adopted from Sirgy and Su (2000) and Sirgy et al. (1997).

Partner Quality

Partner Quality pertains to the consumers' evaluation of the quality of – and trust in – the relationship partner. Fournier (1994) appear to tie Partner Quality primarily to reliability and respect – both important facets of trust. Such a demarcation of the theoretical content of the concept may though appear too narrow, at least compared to dominant conceptualizations of both trust (cf. Hess, 1995; Larzelere and Huston, 1980; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999) and quality (cf. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988) in marketing. Trust can be decomposed into several dimensions; Altruism, honesty, reliability and knowing what to expect (Hess, 1995). It might though seem appropriate to include indicators also of altruism, honesty and knowing what to expect in the measure of partner quality. Also, while trust is an important facet of (partner) quality, quality also subsumes the partners' cognitive evaluation of each others' performance and attributes. The measures in Fournier (1994) appear to lack measures directly tapping evaluation of partner performance.

The discussion above again illustrates some of the validity issues associated with the BRQ discussed in chapter 2.5. Two, often conflicting, interests direct the construction of operational measures of theoretical constructs. First, how do we construct the measures in order to make them tap the whole theoretical domain of the relevant construct? Second, how do we prevent the measures to overlap with measures of related, although distinct, concepts (discriminant validity). In our view, is the construct validity of partner quality somewhat weak in Fouriner (1994). The main reason for this is the lack of a conceptual definition of the construct. The conceptual content of partner quality remains somewhat fuzzy, which may lead to relevant aspects of the concept not being measured, and for measures of partner quality also to tap related, but conceptually distinct, concepts. For instance, Fournier (1994) includes "This partner takes good care of me" as a measure of partner quality. Along with Stern (1997) and others, we construe caring as an important property of *Intimacy* – and this measure is accordingly removed from the operationalizations of Partner Quality. This line of reasoning is also in accordance with Fourniers' (1994, p.193) own recommendations for improving the

validity of the Intimacy facet of BRQ. Accordingly, we keep most of the remaining indicators from Fournier (1994), although we also include some indicators tapping the facets of trust (Hess, 1995) discussed above – as well as an indicator more directly measuring overall partner quality:

"Blue&Gold treats me like an important and valuable customer" (Respect1)*

"I have a lot of respect for Blue&Gold" (Respect2)*

"I trust Blue&Gold" (Trust)

"Blue&Gold is dependable and reliable" (Reliability)*

"Blue&Gold has always been good to me" (Quality)*

"Blue&Gold is a high-quality brand" (Quality)***

"Blue&Gold is interested in more than just selling me a product
and making a profit" (Altruism)**

"If Blue&Gold makes a claim or promise about its products, its
probably true" (Honesty)**

"I feel like I know what to expect from Blue&Gold" (Expect)**

* = Original measures from Fournier (1994)

** = Measures adopted from Hess (1995)

*** = New measure of overall partner quality

Personal Commitment

As discussed in chapter 2.5, most marketing scholars consider commitment as a behavioral intention to maintain a valued relationship. In her qualitative analysis, Fournier (1994; 1998) argues that to regard commitment merely as a behavioral intention entails a too narrow conceptualization of the concept. A fuller range of manifestations of commitment was uncovered in the data, she claims. Moreover, Fournier argues that a duality of dedication, faith and stated pledge characterize committed brand relationship, as do an underlying sentiment of guilt when violating the relationship contract (1994; p.132). These facets of commitment are often lacking in existing operationalizations of commitment. However, if we investigate Fournier's own operationalizations in greater detail, we find that these are quite in line with existing measures, and also consistent with the conceptual content of commitment discussed in chapter 2.5. Although some researchers, such as Anderson and Weitz (1992), treat pledge as determinant of commitment rather than a facet of commitment itself, we feel that the definition of commitment allows for pledge to be considered a property of the

concept. This is supported by the strong convergent validity apparent in Fournier's measures of commitment.

However, we make some slight adjustments to Fournier's operationalizations. In line with our discussion in chapter 2 on the differences between commitment and loyalty, we choose to remove the indicator "I feel very loyal to this brand" (1994, p.139) from the measurements. Moreover, we choose to remove "I have always been faithful to this brand in spirit", due to the fact that no prior relationship history exists in this experimental setting. This leaves us with the following measures of Personal Commitment:

"I will stay with Blue&Gold through good times and bad"   (Staying)*
"I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep   (Sacrifice)*
  using Blue&Gold"
"Blue&Gold can count on me to always be there"   (Count-on)*
"I have a lot of faith in my future with Blue&Gold"   (Future)*
"I have made a pledge of sorts to stick with Blue&Gold"   (Pledge)*

* = Original measures from Fournier (1994)

Love

According to Sternberg (1986) does love consist of three components: Intimacy, Passion and Commitment. Passion represents the affective, motivational components of love not accounted for by Intimacy and Commitment (Shimp and Madden, 1988). This tripartite taxonomy of love is well in accordance with Fournier's conceptualization of "passionate love" as a separate relationship dimension – in addition to Intimacy and Commitment. Love refers to the intensity of emotional ties between the consumer and the brand and is denoted by properties like fascination, exclusivity and longing (David and Latty-Mann, 1987; Davis and Todd, 1985; Shimp and Madden, 1988). Fournier's measures of love/passion do not satisfactory capture the content of "exclusivity", so one item is added in order to capture this sub-concept.

The limited experimental period (10 days), in addition to the somewhat artificial setting consumers are put in in every form of experiment, may contribute to consumers perceiving questions on "love" as rather odd. Usually, a certain amount of usage, shared history and positive encounters should be present before one even can begin to speak of passionate

feelings toward an object. Accordingly, items related to previous use, existing "feelings" or items that were considered as to0 context-specific were removed from the measures. However, the love-dimension per se was of course included in the study – especially due to its strong predictive strength on behavioral measures apparent in Fournier (1994). The following indicators of Love was used in study 1:

"I have a powerful attraction toward Blue&Gold"   (Attraction)*

"I feel my relationship with Blue&Gold is exclusive and special"   (Exclusive)

"I have feelings for Blue&Gold that I don't have for

  many other brands"   (Feelings)*

"No other brand in the category can quite take the place of Blue&Gold"   (Category)*

"I feel that Blue&Gold and I were really "meant for each other""   (Destiny)*

* = Original measures from Fournier (1994)

The questionnaires used in study 1 are found in appendix 3.

8 Data Description and Analysis

8.1 Data description

The total sample consisted of 123 subjects from two different sub-samples (n=62 and n=61). Of this initial sample, did 123 subjects complete questionnaire 1, 116 completed questionnaire 2, while a total of 102 subjects completed all three questionnaires and thus the whole experiment. This leaves us with a minimum total of 48 respondents in the customer community condition and 54 respondents in the personalized web-site condition for the third and last questionnaire.

An overview of the descriptive statistics for the sample, for all three questionnaires, is presented in appendix 4. Only one item had a kurtosis value (slightly) above the suggested critical level of |1| (Kaplan, 1990). No items contained skewness levels exceeding 1 (absolute level). Accordingly, we deem the quality of the descriptive data as satisfactory.

8.2 Measurement models

A confirmatory strategy was undertaken to test the hypothesized dimensionality of the BRQ framework. We chose to use LISREL 8.50 for analyzing the measurement model.

Please remember that our BRQ measurement scale contained no indicators of the sixth BRQ-dimension, Behavioral Interdependence. The measures of this dimension implicitly assume a relationship history between the consumer and the brand (e.g. "I feel like something is missing when I haven't used the brand for a while") (Fournier, 1994). Given that the products and brands in this study were fictitious – and the experiment was framed as a test of new products – no such prior relationship history existed, and this dimension was removed from the measure. Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) was thus measured through 33 indicators initially designed to represent five different BRQ dimensions (Intimacy, Self-concept Connection, Partner Quality, Personal Commitment and Love/Passion) (Fournier, 1994). Since BRQ was measured on three different occasions, there was a need to find a measurement model that was stable over time, and yet fit the data well at all three points of measurement. In order to find such an overall measurement model, a confirmatory factor analysis – testing the factor structure proposed in chapter 7.5.2 – was run on the data from all three measurements jointly. Indicators that did not fit the measurement model were then

removed in order to achieve a satisfactory goodness-of-fit. The removal of indicators was based on inspection of factor loadings and modification indices for Lambda-X[32] and Theta-Delta[33]. Interestingly, all items of personal commitment had to be removed from the BRQ measurement due to poor discriminant validity with the items of the four remaining BRQ dimensions (with love/passion in particular). The final measurement model – containing 16 indicators – received acceptable fit (RMSEA=.069, CFI=0.97, GFI=0.92, IFI=0.97)[34]. The model fit is thus better compared to Fourniers' (1994, p.144) saturated model of seven correlated first-order factors (CFI=0.90).

All constructs in our model had average variance extracted values above 0.5, as recommended by Bagozzi and Yi (1988). Furthermore, convergent and discriminant validity was tested and found acceptable according to the recommended approach by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). The final measurement model is displayed in table 8.1 below, see also appendix 5.

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[32] Coefficients relating items to (all) latent variables (factors)

[33] Covariance matrix for measurement errors of items

[34] In addition, we tested the overall measurement model revealed in table 8.1 on each of the three different BRQ-measurements, through confirmatory factor analysis. This resulted in the following goodness-of-fit indices: Measurement 1: RMSEA= .085, CFI=.95, measurement 2: RMSEA=.091, CFI=.95, measurement 3: RMSEA= .109, CFI=.94. With the possible exception of measurement 3, the model fit seems acceptable considering the low sample sizes.

Table 8.1 Final measurement model

Intimacy
> "I feel like Blue&Gold actually cares about me"
> "Blue&Gold really listens to what I have to say"
> "I feel as though I really understand Blue&Gold"
> "I feel as though Blue&Gold really understands me"

Self Connection
> "Blue&Gold says a lot about the kind of person I am"
> "Blue&Gold's image is consistent with how I'd like to see myself"
> "Blue&Gold helps me make a statement about what is
> important to me in life"
> "I feel related to the type of people who are Blue&Gold customers"

Partner Quality
> "Blue&Gold treats me like an important and valuable customer"
> "Blue&Gold is dependable and reliable"
> "Blue&Gold has always been good to me"
> "If Blue&Gold makes a claim or promise about its products, it's probably true"

Love/Passion
> "I have a powerful attraction toward Blue&Gold"
> "I feel my relationship with Blue&Gold is exclusive and special"
> "I have feelings for Blue&Gold that I don't have for
> many other brands"
> "I feel that Blue&Gold and I were really "meant for each other""

Note that the factor analyses performed above were based on a somewhat larger sample (N=181) than the other analyses (N=123). This was because three groups of respondents were originally recruited for investigation of responses to three different web-sites (the third web-site was a non-interactive, static site). The data collected in the third group was used for a different purpose. However, because these subjects also responded to the BRQ measures three times in a manner similar to our two experimental groups, their responses to the BRQ-scale were included in the factor analyses.

Based on the results from the confirmatory factor analysis, four (for each time of measurement, which totals 12) new variables were computed – one for each BRQ dimension – for the purpose of conducting MANOVA analyses. All indicators were given equal weight. Cronbachs Alpha was used to test the internal consistency of the new aggregated BRQ-measures, cf. Table 8.2.

Table 8.2 Reliability – Cronbach's Alpha

	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3
Intimacy	0,902	0,911	0,931
Self-C. Connect.	0,893	0,922	0,944
Partner Quality	0,884	0,913	0,934
Love	0,941	0,952	0,965

As can be seen from table 8.2, the reliability of the composite BRQ-dimension measures is high and fairly stable across the different points of measurement.

8.3 Test of MANOVA Assumptions

The hypotheses formulated in this dissertation calls for examination of differences between (and within) independent variables in their effect of BRQ-dimensions. Since the BRQ-facets are highly correlated, MANOVA analyses were preferred over ANOVA. The literature suggests use of MANOVA in situation were dependent variables are correlated (cf. Iacobucci, 1994; Bray and Maxwell, 1985). According to Hair, Andersson, Tarham and Black (1998), do MANOVA analyses assume data to be normally distributed, the variance and variance-covariance matrices to be homogeneous (homoscedasticity), as well as observations to be independent from each other. Tests of these assumptions are performed below.

8.3.1 Test of Normality

Relevant statistics for testing the normality of distribution of the data are skewness and kurtosis values. As noted in section 8.1 above, were all BRQ-indicators but one within acceptable skewness and kurtosis values (<|1|). Accordingly, all composite BRQ facet measures were found normally distributed with skewness and kurtosis values below |1|.

8.3.2 Test of Homogeneity of Variance

An additional assumption for MANOVA analyses is the homogeneity of variance of dependent variables. Violations of this assumption may seriously threaten the credibility of the statistical findings (Winer, Brown and Michel, 1991; Hair et al, 1998). Levene's test of homogeneity was used to assess the homogeneity of variance between groups for each BRQ-facet at all three points of measurement (see table 8.3 below).

Table 8.3 Levene's Test of Equality of Variance

	F	df1	Df2	Sig.
INT1	1,196	3	96	0,315
INT2	0,589	3	96	0,624
INT3	0,101	3	96	0,959
SELF1	0,681	3	96	0,566
SELF2	1,302	3	96	0,278
SELF3	0,611	3	96	0,610
P.QUAL1	0,085	3	96	0,968
P.QUAL2	0,720	3	96	0,542
P.QUAL3	0,277	3	96	0,842
LOVE1	0,756	3	96	0,522
LOVE2	0,484	3	96	0,694
LOVE3	0,640	3	96	0,591

The number behind each BRQ-facet abbreviation refers to time of measurement.
INT2 refers thus to the second measurement of the Intimacy dimension of BRQ.

As shown in table 8.3, there are no significant differences in variance between groups on any of the BRQ facets.

However, as will be elaborated on in section 8.4 below, GLM repeated measure procedure was applied for testing the hypothesis. When using this analysis procedure, SPSS (1999) recommends performing the Mauchly's test of sphericity on the data. Mauchly's test of sphericity tests the null hypothesis that the error covariance matrix of the orthonormalized transformed dependent variables is proportional to an identity matrix (SPSS, 1999). The results from this test are displayed below.

Table 8.4. Mauchly's test of Sphericity

	Mauchly's W	Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Epsilon Huynh-Feldt
INTIMACY	0,901	9,914	2	**0,007**	0,955
SELF-C.	0,836	17,007	2	**0,000**	0,901
P.QUALITY	0,916	8,319	2	**0,015**	0,969
LOVE	0,920	7,969	2	**0,018**	0,972

As can clearly be seen from table 8.4, several violations of Mauchly's test of Sphericity are found in the data. Fortunately, SPSS (1999) offers several remedies for correcting such violations though adjustments made to the numerator and denominator degrees of freedom. Estimates of such adjustments are called epsilon, and one frequently used method is that of Huynh-Feldt (see last column of table 8.4). When violating the Mauchly's test of Sphericity, both the numerator and denominator degrees of freedom must be multiplied by epsilon, and

the significance of the F-ratio must be evaluated with the new degrees of freedom. Accordingly, F-ratios, degrees of freedom and significance levels of within-subject analysis listed in the hypothesis section 8.4 below are adjusted for Huynh-Feldt epsilon.

Also, a multivariate approach (MANOVA) assumes the variance-covariance matrices to be the same across the cells formed by the between-subjects effects (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1983). When more than one metric variable is being tested, so that the comparison involves the equality of variance-covariance matrices, the Box's M test is applicable (Hair et al, 1998). The Box's M statistic – testing the null hypothesis that the observed co-variance matrices of the dependent variable are equal across groups – showed a p-value of .622, and was thus far from significant. Accordingly, no violations of the Box's M statistic were found.

8.3.3 Independence between observations

Analysis of variance assumes independence between observations. This was primarily assured through random assignment of respondents to different experimental groups. Further, interaction between respondents were minimized through 1) instructing subjects not to speak to each other about the experiment during the experimental period 2) through sampling subjects from different classes (sample 1) and different firms (sample 2) and 3) through selecting a experimental setting where subjects participated in the experiment on different locations and at different times. The use of different website addresses (URLs), personal passwords and credit-card numbers assured that respondents could not be shifting from one experimental group to another.

8.4 MANOVA - Test of Hypotheses

In this experimental design, the same measurement (BRQ) is made three times for each subject. There are two ways of analyzing this data material in SPSS 10.0 – the statistical software chosen in these analyses. One option would be to perform separate MANOVA analyses for each time of measurement and compare between-subject effects. The second option would be to use the GLM[35] repeated measures procedure to analyze both overall between-subject effects and within-subject effects. We chose to use this second option for two main reasons. First, performing multiple MANOVAs for testing the different hypotheses could inflate the risk of type 1 errors. This is especially a potential problem in study 2, where

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[35] General Linear Model

additional factors are included in the design, and thus more MANOVAs must be conducted. In multivariate GLM repeated measures, all analyses can be executed simultaneously. Second, GLM repeated measures allow for testing both between-subject effects and within-subject effects. That is, we are able to analyze both the absolute differences between the independent variables (interactivity-enabling technologies and Internet experience) and the *development* in the independent variables during the experiment. When testing the relative impact of interactivity-enabling technologies on consumer-brand relationships, we are naturally interested in both overall differences between experimental groups and whether the development in BRQ-score is different across groups over time.

8.4.1 Main effects

Hypotheses H1-H5 concerned main effects of the interactivity-enabling technology on Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) –facets. Since the Personal Commitment dimension of BRQ was removed from the measurement model in this study – due to poor discriminant validity with the remaining facets – we are not able to test H4 in this study. Rather, this hypothesis is tested in study 2. The results from the between-subjects test of type of technology on BRQ-facets are depicted in table 8.5 below:

Table 8.5. Main effects – between subjects

Variable	F-Value	p	GROUP MEANS Customer Community	Personalized Website
Intimacy	$F_{1,100}=.258$	.612	3,69 (n=47)	3,82 (n=53)
Self-C. Connection	$F_{1,100}=.100$	.753	2,95 (n=47)	2,87 (n=53)
Partner Quality	$F_{1,100}=.000$	.999	4,46 (n=47)	4,46 (n=53)
Love	$F_{1,100}=.002$	.967	3,07 (n=47)	3,08 (n=53)

As can be seen from table 8.5, there are no significant differences between the two interactivity-enabling technologies in their score on any of the BRQ-dimensions. Accordingly, we find no support for hypotheses H1, H2, H3 or H5.

However, within-subject factors may also provide us with information regarding the differential effect of interactivity-enabling technologies on consumer-brand relationship

quality. In a panel-like experimental setting such as this, we are interested not only in absolute differences between groups, but also in differences in the development of relationship strength (increase/decrease) across groups over time. GLM repeated measures allow us to investigate such within-factor differences, that is, how the score of independent variables on BRQ facets change over the course of the experiment. The results show no significant within-factor differences between technologies for the Intimacy-, Self-Concept Connection-, or Partner Quality dimensions. On the Love-dimension, however, is there a significant difference in the development in score across the two interactivity-enabling technologies ($F_{1.945,100}=3.114$, $p=.048$)[36]. Specifically, there is a significant difference in development across the two technologies from measurement 2 (T2) to measurement 3 (T3) (p=.059) and from measurement T1 to T3 (p=.037), see figure 8.1 below.

Figure 8.1. Within-factor of Interactivity-enabling technology
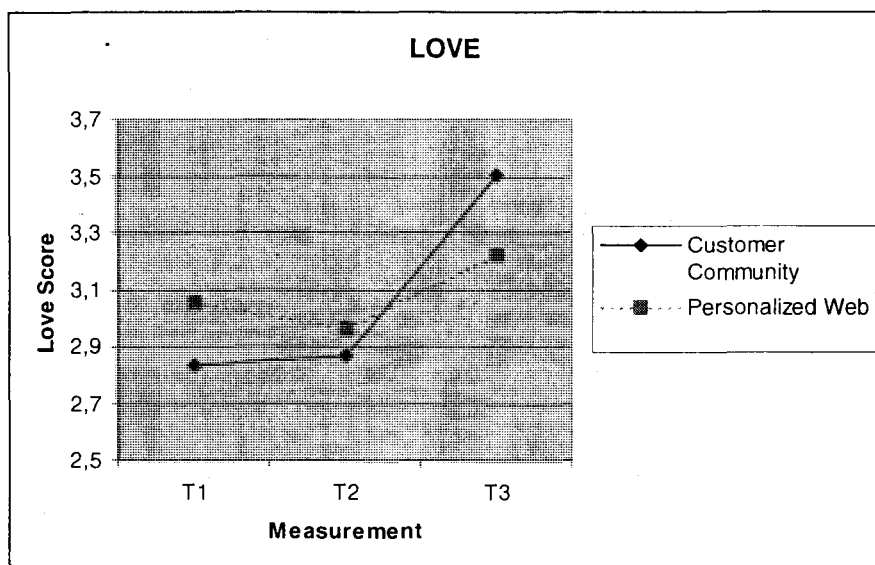
In sum, none of hypotheses H1, H2, H3 or H5 are strengthened according to the between-subject analyses. When looking at the results from the within-subject analysis, however, there is some initial evidence of H5. The Customer Community website did a better job in strengthening the Love-dimension of BRQ during the experimental period than did the personalized website. Since this experiment is limited to a 10 days timeframe and thus is focused on the initial phase of consumer-brand relationships, we have no way of telling whether this differential effect on the Love facets of BRQ would continue to develop if relationships were allowed to grow further.

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[36] Adjusted for Huynh-Feldt's epsilon.

113

8.4.2 Interaction effects

Hypotheses H9a and H9b concerned the possible interaction effect between type of technology and Internet experience on BRQ-facets. Overall, customer community websites were hypothesized to be more effective than personalized websites in enhancing brand relationships for inexperienced Internet users, whereas personalized websites were hypothesized to be more effective for highly experienced users. The results from the test of between-subject effects for this interaction-effect are displayed below.

Table 8.6. Interaction effects – Internet Experience – between subjects

| | | | GROUP MEANS | | | |
| | | | Customer Community | | Personalized Website | |
Variable	F-Value	p	Low	High	Low	High
Intimacy	$F_{1,100}=3.354$	.070*	3,94 (n=15)	3,44 (n=32)	3,59 (n=19)	4,04 (n=34)
Self C. Con.	$F_{1,100}=8.367$	.005***	3,30 (n=15)	2,59 (n=32)	2,54 (n=19)	3,21 (n=34)
Partner Qual.	$F_{1,100}=3.614$	.060*	4,73 (n=15)	4,18 (n=32)	4,28 (n=19)	4,64 (n=34)
Love	$F_{1,100}=4.853$	.030**	3,29 (n=15)	2,85 (n=32)	2,69 (n=19)	3,47 (n=34)

* $p < .10$
** $p < .05$
*** $p < .01$

Here, several significant effects occur, and all effects are in the hypothesized direction. Overall, we expected the customer community to be more effective in strengthening BRQ dimensions for novice Internet users, and personalized websites to be more effective in building brand relationships for highly experienced users. While the effects on Intimacy and Partner quality only are significant at the 90 percent level, are the effects on the remaining two BRQ dimensions significant at the 95 percent level or higher. Thus, hypotheses H9a and H9b are supported. As expected, there were no main effects of Internet experience on BRQ-facets. In order to display the above interaction-effects in a lucid and simple manner, figure 8.2 plots the averaged groups means for all four BRQ facets.

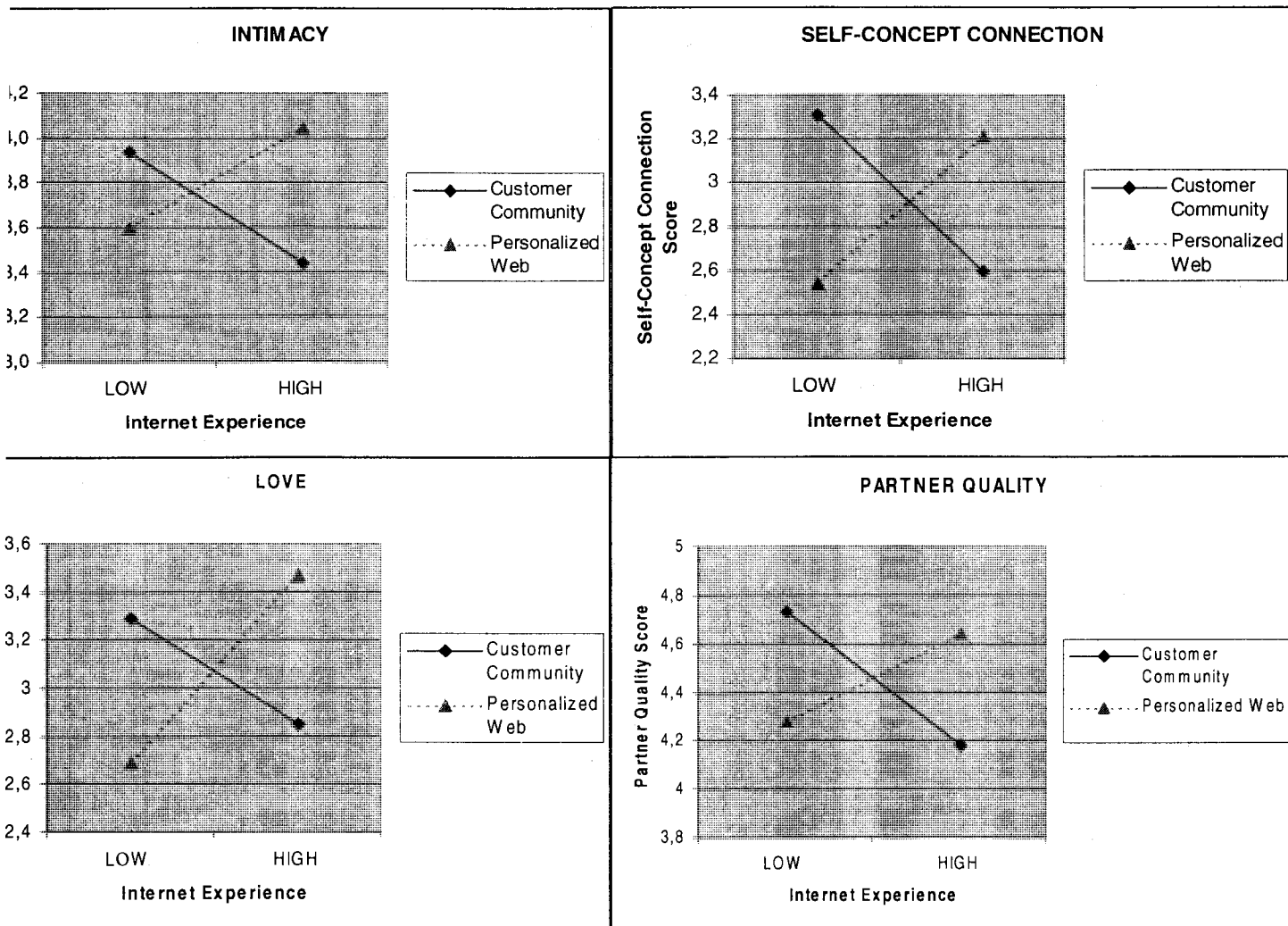**Figure 8.2.** Interaction Effects – Internet Experience

Figure 8.2 illustrates the interaction-effect hypothesized in H9a and H9b nicely. The effect is uniform across BRQ-facets, although the absolute scores vary substantially. There were no significant interaction effects of application and Internet experience over time (within subjects effects).

Control variables

As expected, we found no significant main- or interaction effects of either type of product (airline vs. restaurant), or consumer demographics (sex, age) on BRQ-facets in this study. Some differences between sample 1 and 2 were found with regards to these variables though, also in Internet experience. However, one of the main reasons for including two different samples in this study was to maximize the variance in consumers' Internet experience. The

observed differences between samples pose thus no threat to the validity of the findings. Also, a test of differences between the two services (airline and restaurant chain) was conducted. As expected, we found no significant differences (neither direct nor interactive effects) between the two services in their score on BRQ-facets.

8.5 Discussion of findings

Virtually no main effects of interactivity-enabling technology on BRQ-dimensions were found in this study. The type of technology only mattered when experienced users of the Internet were compared to the less experienced. Whereas web-sites with customer communities (person-interactivity) were more effective than personalized web-sites (machine-interactivity) in strengthening all BRQ-facets when consumer Internet experience was low, personalized web-sites were more effective than the customer community sites when Internet experience was high.

The lack of main-findings in this study has several potential explanations. The first, and most obvious, explanation is that the manipulations may have been too weak. The navigation panes on the websites contained seven links (submenus) of which the links to the customer community and the personalized website made up one out of seven links. In sum did the customer community and the personalized website comprise a small part of the total websites. The main reason for this was to increase the realism in the experiment and to design the websites as similar as possible to comparable real brand websites. Looking back, these accommodations for maximizing the external validity of the experiment may have jeopardized the strength of the experimental manipulations.

The second potential explanation is the relatively low number of subjects participating in the experiment. Conventional rule of thumb indicates that 30 subjects per experimental cell are appropriate to meet the assumptions of statistical analysis performed on experimental data through ANOVA or MANOVA analysis (Hair et al, 1998; Swayer and Ball, 1981). When comparing main-effects, the smallest cell in out experiment contained 47 respondents – which is well above this heuristic recommendation. However, if a treatment has a small or medium expected effect size (which is the case here), it is going to take a much larger sample size to achieve the same statistical power as a treatment with a larger effect-size. Accordingly, one can argue that a larger sample would increase the statistical strength and thus the level of significance in our MANOVAs. Still, the p-values revealed in analyses of the main findings

are not even close of being significant. Although the power is inversely related to the alpha level, it is highly doubtful whether a larger sample would have revealed significant differences across the two interactivity-enabling technologies in this study.

The third and last possible explanation behind the non-findings is, of course, that no differences actually exist. Perhaps the relative effectiveness of interactivity-enabling technologies are crucially dependent upon individual differences variables and that no aggregated differences between consumers exist? Accordingly, we may have to reconsider the importance of the six communication properties in determining overall consumer differences in response to interactive marketing – and rather focus on their role as potential individual difference moderators.

The strong and consistent interaction-effect between type of technology and Internet experience on all BRQ-facets, points to source credibility, social presence/anthropomorphism, synchronicity and complexity as essential communication properties for evaluating the moderating effects of individual differences on the relationship between type of technology and consumer-brand relationship quality. Specifically, we argue that inexperienced Internet users put more weight to the level of social presence, source credibility and communication format simplicity when communicating online – and thus prefer customer communities over personalized websites. Conversely, we argue that experienced Internet users put more emphasis on higher levels of message relatedness and synchronicity, and tolerate higher levels of communication format complexity than less experienced users. These latter properties are inherent in personalized websites and thus the most probable reason for experienced consumers scoring systematically higher on BRQ-facets in the personalized website condition than in the community condition.

8.6 Limitations and Suggestions for Study 2

Studying the development of consumers' relationships to fictitious brands in an experimental setting necessarily entails certain limitations to the external validity of the findings. However, the use of fictitious brands was imperative in order to preserve the internal validity in this study, especially because of the longitudinal nature of the design. Also, allowing respondents to log onto the site whenever and from whatever location they wanted, increased the external validity of the study compared to other experimental settings. The context of the respondent's

encounters with the brand online was more realistic than it would have been in a common laboratory setting.

Another important issue regarding the validity of the study is the duration of the experiment. Ten days is a short period for developing consumer-brand relationships. However, the decision of making this a 10 days experiment was a trade-off between preserving the internal validity and minimizing respondents' tediousness (and thus mortality) on the one side, and accommodating external validity issues on the other. We would argue that the timeframe was sufficient for developing brand relationships, especially since the interaction between the consumer and the brand was quite intense and frequent in the experimental period. The amount of interaction that took place between the consumers and the brand in the experiment would equal several months of interaction in a real-life setting.

The dimensional analysis of BRQ in this study also has some implications for future research. Interestingly, all items of personal commitment had to be removed from the BRQ measurement due to poor discriminant validity with the items of the remaining BRQ dimensions, and with the love/passion-facet in particular. Attempts should thus be made to increase the discriminant validity of personal commitment towards the remaining BRQ-facets through altering the operationalization of concept(s). If such discriminant validity is not successfully attained, one should consider removing this facet from the BRQ measurement altogether. Also, evidence of the nomological and predictive validity of the BRQ measurement should be attained in study 2. Specifically, measures of relationship outcomes (behavioral intention) should be included in this study for validation purposes.

Also, based on the discussion of non-findings in the previous section, we suggest some changes for study 2. In particular, we argue that manipulations of type of interactivity-enabling technology should be strengthened. The customer community and personalized web-page should become more visible to the respondents on the websites and subjects should also actively be encouraged to use these interactivity-enabling technologies.

Finally, the impact of Internet experience observed in this study points to interesting avenues for research in study 2. First, the next study should apply a multi-item measure of Internet experience to avoid mono-operationalization of the concept. Also, we should investigate whether different kind of experience yields different effects. Measures should tap both

perceived and actual Internet usage, and perhaps different forms of usage. Knowledge about such differences could help web managers better segment their target market and tailor Internet applications accordingly.

STUDY 2

9 Methodology

This chapter is organized similarly to the methodology chapter of study 1 (chapter 7). First, we discuss the research design and choice of sample frame. Second, we elaborate on the operationalizations of theoretical constructs applied in the study. In this latter section we also devote some time to present the pre-tests of relationship motives, which was an experimental treatment (manipulation) in study 2.

9.1 Purpose of Study 2

The purpose of study 2 was two-fold. First, we wanted to retest and possibly replicate the results of study 1, with the accommodations in research design suggested in section 8.4 and elaborated on below (in section 9.2). Second, we wanted to test the remaining three hypotheses concerning the moderating effects of relationship motives, that is, hypotheses H6-H8.

9.2 Outline of Experimental Design

Since study 2 builds upon the research design of study 1, we do in this chapter merely elaborate on the *differences* between the two designs, rather than recite all the details of the experimental setup.

In study 2 we applied the same longitudinal experimental research approach as in study 1, in order to test causal effects and be able to track changes in consumer-brand relationship quality over time. As for study 1, we focused on traveling industry services. However, in contrast to study 1, we chose to only focus on one brand exclusively – the Blue&Gold Airline –, as compared to two brands – the Blue and Gold Airline and Blue and Gold Restaurant chain – in study 1. The reason for this was threefold. First, we had no a priori assumptions of differential effects across the two services in the first place. The main argument for including two different services in the first study was to avoid possible mono-operationalizations. As no significant differences in BRQ-score or –development between the restaurant brand and airline brand were discovered in study 1, the threat of mono-operationalization appeared less salient in study 2. Second, since study 2 was designed to also manipulate relationship motives – in addition to type of interactivity-enabling technology – this second study implied expanding the research design with three additional experimental groups, compared to study 1. Thus, in order to minimize the factorial design and maximize the probability of reaching a
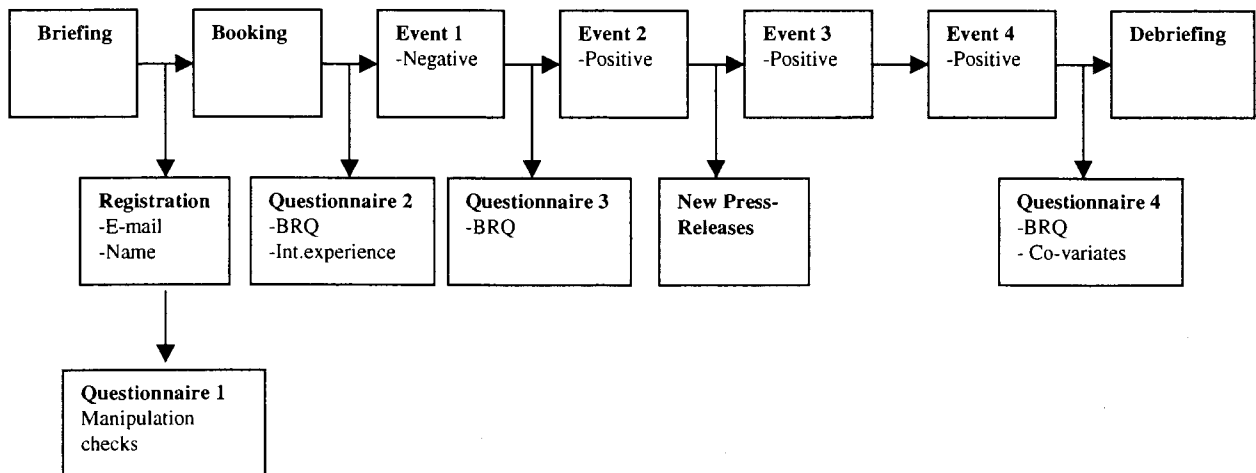
satisfactory number of respondents in each cell, we chose to remove type of service as an experimental treatment. The third and last reason for focusing on one service only, instead of two, was time- and monetary constraints on the development of an additional website. Accordingly, the experiment was designed as a 2 (interactivity-enabling technologies) x 3 (relationship motives) between-subjects design. The respondents were randomly assigned to six experimental groups as follows (see figure 9.1 below).

Figure 9.1. Experimental Groups

	Customer Community	Personalized Website
Efficiency motives	Group 1	Group 2
Risk reducing motives	Group 3	Group 4
Social motives	Group 5	Group 6

The framing, briefing, time period, structure and practical organization of the experiment were identical to that of study 1, as was the dimensions for personalization. However, several adjustments were made in order to accommodate the limitations of study 1 discussed in chapter 8.6. In light of the non-findings of main-effects, the manipulation of type of interactivity-enabling application was strengthened through implementing three measures. First, during the briefing the respondents were encouraged and explicitly instructed to use and explore all interactive applications and features on the website. Second, in the messages sent to the respondents by mail (cf. table 7.2) they were reminded of the existence of either the customer community or the personalized website, depending on which treatment they received. Third, an additional, flashing, navigation-element was included on the main-page of the website, reading either "Discussions" or "My Blue&Gold". This was assumed to increase the respondents' awareness of the applications and make these features more integrated parts of the total websites. Other, more minor, adjustments were made as well. In addition to the changes in content, the content was also made more dynamic. To make the website less "static" and thus reduce respondents tediousness, new press-releases from the brand were posted in the "News" section of the site during the course of the experiment (see appendix 6). Also, as we will discuss in further detail in section 9.4.1 below, the manipulation of relationship motives imply that the design should entail manipulation checks of these motives. These manipulation checks were implemented immediately after the online registration, before the actual experiment had started. Consequently, the experimental structure of study two can be illustrated as following (see figure 9.2, below)

Figure 9.2. Experimental structure

| Briefing | | Booking | | Event 1
-Negative | | Event 2
-Positive | | Event 3
-Positive | | Event 4
-Positive | | Debriefing |

| Registration
-E-mail
-Name | | Questionnaire 2
-BRQ
-Int.experience | | Questionnaire 3
-BRQ | | New Press-
Releases | | | | Questionnaire 4
-BRQ
- Co-variates |

| Questionnaire 1
Manipulation
checks |

9.3 Sample

As in the first study, two internally homogeneous but externally heterogeneous sample frames were selected. The first sample-frame consisted of employees in all of the participating firms of Bergen Chamber of Commerce (Bergen Næringsråd) in Bergen, Norway. An agreement was reached with the director of Bergen Chamber of Commerce to send an invitation to participate in the study to the managers of all participating firms in the Chamber (N=932). The letter of invitation entailed an instruction to distribute the enclosed invitation to the firms employees, in which could register to participate on a specially designed website. There was an incentive for employees to participate through winning prizes. The letters, in which were sent by both regular mail and e-mail to all 932 firms, were signed by the director of Bergen Chamber of Commerce and by Professor Leif B. Methlie at NHH. A total of 87 employees volunteered to participate in the study, of which only 40 actually took part.

The second sample frame consisted of students at NHH in Bergen, Norway. Two classes, one in Marketing Research (MAR200) and one in Electronic Commerce (SOL314) were targeted due to the relevance of the experiment for the course curriculum. Students were encouraged by the class-instructor to participate in the experiment and given extra incentives through winning prizes. Also, in the MAR 200 course, they were informed that a lecture – summing up the purpose and methodology of the experiment – would be given later in the course. A final sample of n=228 students participated in the experiment.

Consequently, the total sample consisted of 268 respondents from two different, but internally homogeneous sub-samples.

9.4 Measurements

9.4.1 Independent variables

Type of interactive website

As in study 1, the design and navigation pane on the websites were held constant between the two interactivity-enabling applications/technologies. However, as presented in section 9.2, several measures were taken in order to strengthen the manipulation of type of technology (i.e. website). By strengthening the presence of and focus on the personalized-, and community features of the respective sites, the probability of detecting overall differences between the technologies would increase compared to study one. However, the content and dimensions of personalization was identical across the two experiments, as was the amount of pre-posted messages on the bulletin boards.

Relationship motives

In chapter 3, we derived on a tripartite taxonomy of relationship motives at the consumer/brand level, consisting of *efficiency motives, risk reducing motives* and *social motives*. Several scenario/task descriptions for each motive were developed in order to induce motives to respondents. All scenario descriptions consisted of a general introduction focusing on the properties and advantages of the Internet medium, bridging to a more specific task description in which the respondents were encouraged and instructed to get involved in. Both the general introduction and the later task description were tailored according to relationship motives. Hence, a double manipulation was applied. For instance, the general introduction for efficiency motives highlighted the cost-efficiency and time-efficiency associated with using the Internet, while the general introduction on risk-reducing motives focused on the relative advantages of the Internet when it comes to accessing information and relieving uncertainty associated with the price, safety and quality of online -products and -services. Analogously, the consequent task description for efficiency-induced respondents put the respondents in a mindset where their main reasons for engaging in-, and maintaining the brand relationship was *efficiency* driven (saving money and time when booking online), whereas the task

description for risk-reduction motives presented a scenario where the *risk-reducing* qualities of the brand partner (getting there safely and on time) were most essential.

A pen-and-pencil pretest was undertaken in order to construct scenarios discriminating the three motives from each other, and to find suitable indicators of each motive (manipulation checks). An exploratory pretest was conducted on 26 MBA- and doctoral students at NHH and BI[37], Oslo. Based on written and oral feedback from these students, a preliminary measurement apparatus consisting of 35 indicators representing the three motives was developed. A second, larger, pretest was then undertaken, testing six different scenario/task descriptions. A total of 236 respondents (all in the Information Management class, INF 200, at NHH, autumn 2001) completed this pen-and-pencil pretest. The scenario/task descriptions of efficiency-, risk-reducing- and social motives discriminating *the most* were then selected for further pretests. Also, the three scenarios and its indicators (manipulation check variables) were slightly altered, before submitting the relationship motives manipulations to a final pretest. This final test was conducted at BI, Bergen, in a basic marketing communication course (autumn, 2001), in which a total of 167 responses were collected. Here, the ordering of questions/indicators was randomized in order to eliminate possible priming or ordering effects in the manipulation checks. The scenarios and questionnaires used in this last pretest can be found in appendix 7.

Confirmatory factor analysis conducted in LISREL 8.50 was used for testing the hypothesized factor-structure of the data and for removing non-fitting indicators. The final measurement model, consisting of three indicators for each factor (efficiency-, risk-reducing- and social motives) fit the data satisfactory (RMSEA=0.069, CFI=0.94, GFI=0.94, IFI=0.94), see also appendix 8. More importantly, the MANOVA analyses showed a significant different score on the three motives (manipulation checks) across the three relationship motive treatments (p<.000). The mean scores of the manipulation checks are displayed in table 9.1 below.

Table 9.1. Manipulation checks

| Experimental groups	F-value	p	Mean scores - Manipulation checks		
			Efficiency	Risk reduction	Social
Efficiency motives	$F_{2,167}=14,4$	.000	**5,39**	4,55	4,34
Risk reduction motives	$F_{2,167}=12,8$	.000	3,74	**4,64**	3,64
Social motives	$F_{2,167}=14,2$	.000	3,91	3,66	**4,83**

[37] Norwegian School of Management

125

Accordingly, these scenario/task descriptions and manipulation-checks were used in the final experimental study (for final brief and information letter, please consult appendix 9). However, since the experiment lasted for 10 days, there was a need to make sure that respondents would remember the relationship motives and task instructions throughout the whole experimental period. In order to maximize the probability that the motives induced to the respondents would be salient to them during the entire 10-day period, respondents were exposed to reminders after having answered questionnaire 2 and 3, see appendix 10. For instance, for efficiency-induced respondents, the following message appeared on the screen immediately after they had completed questionnaire 2:

> Questionnaire 2 has been received. Thank you!
> When returning to the Blue&Gold web-site, please keep in mind your task of *making this and future flights as efficient and expedient as possible.*

Type of product

Study 2 focused exclusively on Blue & Gold Air, the airline brand, for reasons discussed in section 9.2. Still, several accommodations had to be made to the content of the site, due to the fact that this latter study was conducted on Norwegian respondents, as compared to Swedish residents in study 1. The design and cover-story of the site was kept unchanged, but the destinations and flight schedule had to be altered completely. Blue&Gold air was now framed as a newcomer on the Norwegian aviation marked, focused on offering direct flights from cities in western Norway to major domestic and international cities. The fact that several respondents thought the experiment actually was a marketing pre-test conducted by British Ryanair or Easyjet, supports the credibility of the experimental setup. Figure 9.3 below illustrates the main-page of Blue&Gold Air (community condition).

Figure 9.3. Experimental website (community condition)
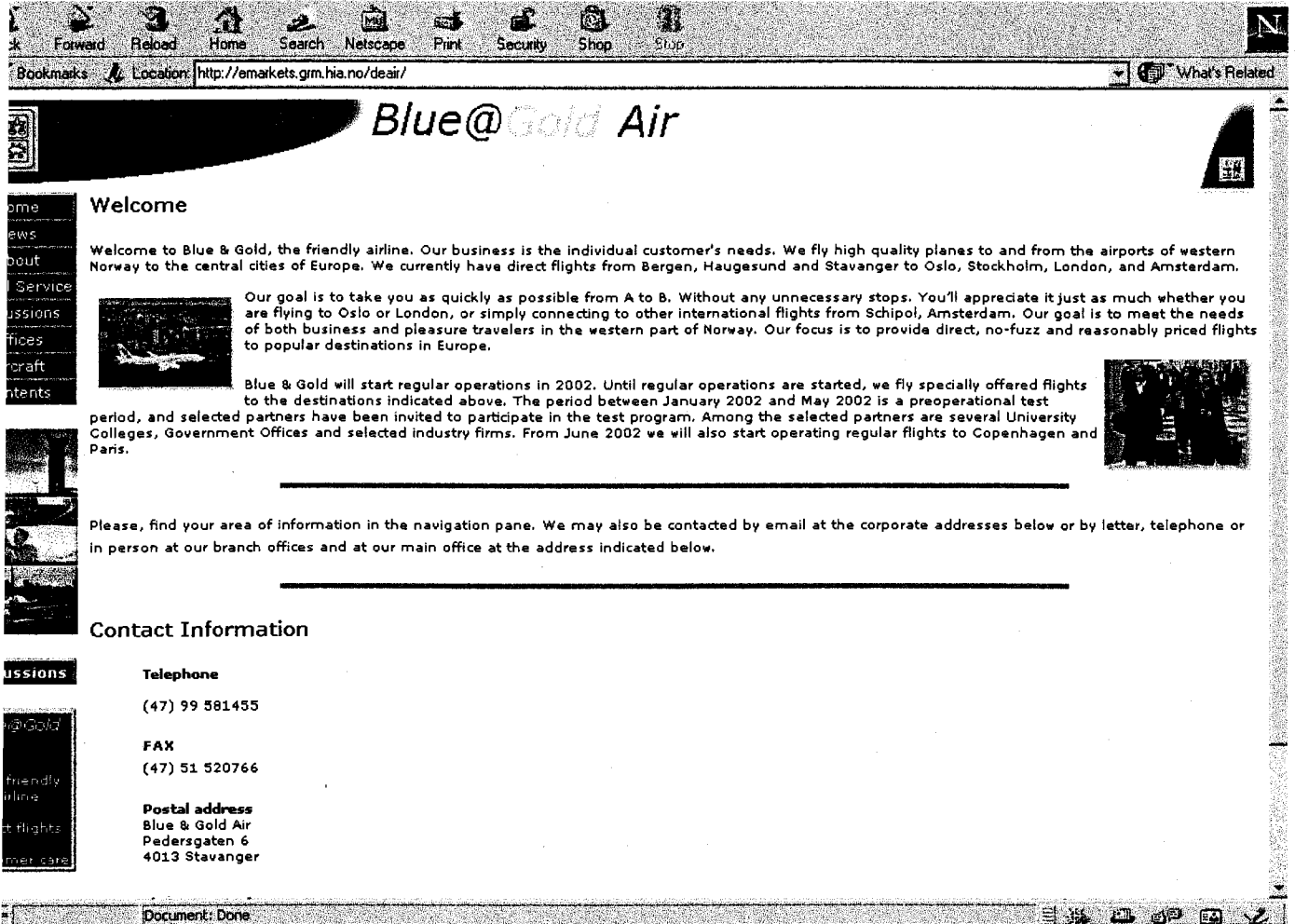
Internet experience

Internet experience was measured by a two-indicator construct referring to respondents subjective evaluation: "I feel that I am an experienced user of the Internet" and "Compared to most other people, I am very experienced in using the Internet". As all other metric variables in the two studies, the response was measured on a seven point Likert scale. The variable was then dichotomized according to the median into low Internet Experience (1-4) and high Internet Experience (5-7). In addition, several constructs tapping *actual* Internet usage were included in the questionnaire.

9.4.2 Dependent variables

The operationalizations and measurement model from study 1 was used as the most important source of reference when operationalizing BRQ-facets for study 2. Also, a large-scale descriptive study conducted by Thorbjørnsen, Breivik and Supphellen (2002) provided additional insights into how to measure consumer-brand relationships. Following the results of Thorbjørnsen et al (2002), arguments could be set forth concerning the increased applicability of Rusbults' (1980) relationship investment model over Fourniers' (1994;1998) BRQ-model when measuring relationships at the brand level. However, arguments of comparability across the two experimental studies of the dissertation were given stronger weight. Consequently, the BRQ-model was applied also in study 2 and the measurements of relationship facets were refined based partially on study 1, as well as on Thorbjørnsen et al (2002)'s BRQ measure[38].

Intimacy

Indicators of Intimacy with poor discriminant validity towards other BRQ-facets were removed in study 2. Compared to the somewhat elaborate conceptual content of Intimacy in study 1, this facet was refined to exclude e.g. abilities of conflict resolution and self-disclosure. The removal of this latter sub-concept in well in accordance with both Waring and Chelune (1983) and Bercheid and Reiss (1998) as well as with the discussion in chapter 6.4, stating that self-disclosure is a *communication* property, conceptually distinct from the *relationship* property of Intimacy. Rather, self-disclosure is treated as a determinant of Intimacy.

The following indicators were used for measuring intimacy:

"I feel like Blue&Gold actually cares about me"	(Caring)*
"Blue&Gold really listens to what I have to say"	(Listening)*
"I feel as though Blue&Gold really understands me"	(Understanding2)*
"Blue and Gold have a sincere interest in my thoughts and feelings"	(Interest)**

* Measures from Study 1

** New measure adopted from Thorbjørnsen, Breivik and Supphellen (2002)

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[38] In this study, the BRQ model attained close to satisfactory fit (RMSEA=0.075, GFI=0.87, CFI=0.93).

Self-concept connection

The facet of self-concept connection turned out to be quite unproblematic in study 1, overall discriminating satisfactory from related facets. Still, due to high correlation in some error terms, two new indicators were adopted from Thorbjørnsen, Breivik and Supphellen (2002):

"Being a Blue&Gold customer says a lot about the kind of person I am (Relevance1)**

"Blue&Gold's image is consistent with how I'd like to see myself" (Idealself2)*

"Blue&Gold helps me make a statement about what is
important to me in life" (Statement)*

"I feel related to the type of people who are Blue&Gold customers" (Typical)*

"Blue&Gold and I have a lot in common" (Common)**

* Measures from Study 1

** New measures adopted from Thorbjørnsen, Breivik and Supphellen (2002)

Partner Quality

The majority of measures of partner quality from study 1 were kept, although several items with poor convergent validity were removed (such as the altruism item; "Blue&Gold is interested in more than just selling me a product and making a profit").

"Blue&Gold treats me like an important and valuable customer" (Respect1)*

"Blue&Gold is dependable and reliable" (Reliability)*

"Blue&Gold has always been good to me" (Quality)*

"If Blue&Gold makes a claim or promise about its products, its
probably true" (Honesty)*

"I feel like I know what to expect from Blue&Gold" (Expect)*

* Measures from Study 1

Personal Commitment

Even though Personal Commitment had to be removed from the measurement apparatus due to poor discriminant validity in study 1, the study conducted by Thorbjørnsen, Breivik and Supphellen re-confirmed Fourniers' (1994) arguments of including this as a separate facet in the BRQ measure. Accordingly, we applied the measures from Thorbjørnsen et al (2002) also when operationalizing the Commitment facet. (Please note that the measures in Thorbjørnsen et al (2002), in turn, were based on the results from study 1, so all items below were applied in the model of Thorbjørnsen et al, 2002):

"I will stay with Blue&Gold through good times and bad"   (Staying)*

"I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep   (Sacrifice)*

  using Blue&Gold"

"I have made a pledge of sorts to stick with Blue&Gold"   (Pledge)*

"I am committed to continue using Blue&Gold   (Committed)**

* Measures from Study 1

** New measure adopted from Thorbjørnsen, Breivik and Supphellen (2002)

Love

The Love, or Love/Passion,-facet of BRQ was measured identically to that of study 1, except for one item being removed ("No other brand in the category can quite take the place of Blue&Gold"):

"I have a powerful attraction toward Blue&Gold"   (Attraction)*

"I feel my relationship with Blue&Gold is exclusive and special"   (Exclusive)*

"I have feelings for Blue&Gold that I don't have for

  many other brands"   (Feelings)*

"I feel that Blue&Gold and I were really "meant for each other""   (Destiny)*

* Measures from Study 1

130

10 Data Description and Analysis

10.1 Data Description

The total sample of study 2 consisted of 268 respondents from two different sub-samples (n=40 and n=228) of which 268 completed the first questionnaire (manipulation checks), 239 completed the second questionnaire, 217 the third, and a total of 202 respondents completed all four questionnaires.

As can be observed in appendix 11, very few items had kurtosis- or skewness levels above the suggested critical value of |1| (absolute level). No items exceeded kurtosis- or skewness levels of |1,5|. Consequently, the quality of the descriptive data appeared satisfactory.

10.2 Manipulation checks

The test of whether the experimental treatments of relationship motives was working as expected, was performed in the same manner as in the pretest. First, a confirmatory factor analysis of the manipulation checks was conducted, in which some items were removed. The final measurement model, consisting of nine indicators representing three theoretical constructs (efficiency motives, risk reducing motives and social motives) received satisfactory model fit (RMSEA = 0.069, CFI=0.96, GFI=0.96, IFI=0.96), see also appendix 12. The manipulation check showed significant differences across the three treatments, although the absolute differences in mean scores were smaller compared to that of the pretest, see table 10.1 below.

Table 10.1. Manipulation checks

| Experimental Groups | F-value | p | Mean scores - Manipulation checks | | |
			Efficiency	Risk reduction	Social
Efficiency motives	$F_{2,268}$=5,80	.003	**5,76**	5,04	5,30
Risk reduction motives	$F_{2,268}$=27,6	.000	3,66	**4,64**	3,42
Social motives	$F_{2,268}$=8,80	.000	3,39	3,75	**4,19**

Still, we deem the manipulation of relationship motives as successful, and treat the three different motives as separate experimental conditions.

10.3 Measurement models and scale validation

The dimensionality of the BRQ-scale was, as in study 1, tested through confirmatory factor analysis in LISREL 8.50. The fit of the overall model, testing the structure for all three measurements jointly, improved substantially compared to study 1. After having removed indicators based on modifications indices, the final measurement model – consisting of 15 indicators representing five facets – received excellent fit (RMSEA= 0.049, CFI=0.99 and IFI=0.99)[39]. This model is found in appendix 13. The problem of poor discriminant validity between Commitment and the remaining facets were also eliminated in study 2, giving nurture to Fourniers' (1994) argument that the concept do deserve to be included in the BRQ measurement apparatus. However, although empirical analyses re-confirm the validity of including commitment in the measurement model, future studies should investigate whether this concept rather is a mediator between some, or all, of the remaining facets and behavioral variables (cf. Thorbjørnsen, Breivik and Supphellen 2002; Thorbjørnsen, Supphellen, Nysveen and Pedersen, 2002). Other theories on relationships in business-to-business settings, and also the Investment model (Rusbult, 1980), suggest that commitment is mediating some or all the effects from the other relationship dimensions (cf. Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Rusbult, 1980, Garbarino and Johnson, 1999).

Convergent and discriminant validity of the BRQ measure was tested and found acceptable according to the approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Also, all constructs were reasonably reliable, exceeding the recommended criterion of 0.5 for Average Variance Extracted (cf. Bagozzi and Yi, 1988).

Furthermore, as discussed in the limitations section of study 1, we also wanted to investigate the nomological and predictive validity of the BRQ framework. Appendix 14 displays the collective predictive power of BRQ-facets on behavioral intentions (word of mouth, tolerance for price deviations and tolerance for brand partner mishaps/mistakes). While apparently fairly robust in predicting consumer responses of interest, high correlations among the facets could give rise to questions regarding the diagnostic and predictive capabilities of each individual facet. Of course, for the facets to be truly useful, they must engage themselves in

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[39] Additional analyses of goodness-of-fit, using the same aggregated model at each point of measurement, resulted in the following indices: Measurement 1: RMSEA=0.065, CFI=0.97, measurement 2: RMSEA=0.071, CFI=0.97, measurement 3: RMSEA=0.103, CFI=0.94). Considering the low sample sizes, the model fit seems satisfactory.

different ways or occupy different roles in explaining and predicting the different response outcomes (Fournier, 1994). Accordingly, the regression summary in appendix 14 also displays the differential predictive power of each facet. Interestingly, positive word-of-mouth is predicted solely by the Love and Partner Quality dimensions, whereas tolerance for price deviation and partner mishaps is determined by a larger diversity of BRQ-facets. The differential predictive role of each BRQ-facet on behavioral intention variables lends support to the predictive validity, as well as the discriminant validity (cf. Singh, 1991) of the measurement apparatus.

The final measurement model was used as input when computing composite BRQ-facet variables for the MANOVA analyses. Five aggregated BRQ-variables for each point of measurement were constructed. Reliability analyses showed high and stable internal consistency in the measures, see table 10.2 below.

Table 10.2 Reliability – Cronbach's Alpha

	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3
Intimacy	0,913	0,919	0,931
Self-C. Connect.	0,904	0,913	0,921
Partner Quality	0,875	0,901	0,922
Pers. Commitment	0,885	0,881	0,916
Love	0,884	0,895	0,943

10.4 Test of MANOVA Assumptions

The MANOVA analyses required for testing the hypotheses assume normality of distribution, homogeneity of variance and independence of observations. Tests of these assumptions are performed below.

10.4.1 Test of Normality

Skewness and kurtosis statistics for individual BRQ-facet indicators were reported in section 10.1. Only minor violations of normality were found and, accordingly, all composite BRQ-facet measures were found normally distributed with skewness and kurtosis values below |1|.

10.4.2 Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Levene's test of homogeneity is reported below in table 10.3. As can be seen, several violations of the assumption of homogeneity can be found. Fortunately, a violation of this assumption has minimal impact if the groups are of approximately equal size (as is the case here) (Hair et al, 1998).

Table 10.3. Levene's test of Equality of Variance

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Intimacy T1	3,535	5	189	**0,004**
Intimacy T2	1,416	5	189	0,220
Intimacy T3	1,208	5	189	0,307
Self Connection T1	1,288	5	189	0,271
Self Connection T2	3,193	5	189	**0,009**
Self Connection T3	2,030	5	189	0,076
Partner Quality T1	0,586	5	189	0,711
Partner Quality T2	1,533	5	189	0,181
Partner Quality T3	0,480	5	189	0,791
Commitment T1	1,731	5	189	0,129
Commitment T2	2,775	5	189	**0,019**
Commitment T3	3,179	5	189	**0,009**
Love T1	3,035	5	189	**0,012**
Love T2	2,066	5	189	0,071
Love T3	1,571	5	189	0,170

Since the GLM repeated measures procedure was applied for testing the hypothesis also in study 2, Mauchly's test of sphericity was performed on the data. The results from this test are displayed below.

Table 10.4. Mauchly's test of Sphericity

	Mauchly's W	Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Epsilon Huynh-Feldt
LOVE	0,882	23,015	2	**0,000**	0,932
SELF-C.	0,927	13,934	2	**0,001**	0,972
INTIMACY	0,996	0,726	2	0,695	1
P.QUALITY	0,995	0,842	2	0,656	1
COMMITMENT	0,938	11,748	2	**0,003**	0,982

As can be seen from table 10.4, several violations of the test are present in the data and, accordingly, the Huynh-Feldt epsilon statistic offers adjustments for the numerator and denominator degrees of freedom. Following the advice of SPSS (1999), we adjust all F-ratios,

degrees of freedom and significance levels of the within-subject tests performed in the hypothesis section with the Huynh-Feldt epsilon.

Moreover, whereas Levenes test is appropriate for assessing whether the variances of a single metric variable are equal across experimental groups, the Box's M test is applicable for comparisons that involve the equality of variance/co-variance matrices when more than one metric variable is being tested. The Box's M statistic – testing the null hypothesis that the observed variance/co-variance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups, revealed a p-value of .053, thus just above significant levels.

10.5 MANOVA – Test of Hypotheses

As for study 1, the GLM repeated measures procedure in SPSS 10.0 was used for analyzing both overall between-subject effects and within-subject effects. This procedure thus allows for a simultaneous analysis of the direct and interactive effects of all independent variables (type of interactivity-enabling technology, relationship motives and Internet experience) on BRQ facets score and –development. Tests of all hypotheses are performed below.

10.5.1 Main effects

Study 2 allowed for tests of all main effects, including those of type of technology on Commitment – a facet that was not included in study 1 due to problems with discriminant validity in dependent measures. The results from the between-subjects test of type of interactivity-enabling technology on BRQ-facets are depicted in table 10.5 below.

Table 10.5. Main effects

Variable	F-value	p	GROUP MEANS Customer Community	Personalized Website
Intimacy	$F_{1,191}=.432$	.512	3,28 (n=96)	3,39 (n=95)
Self-concept C.	$F_{1,191}=.412$	.522	2,94 (n=96)	2,83 (n=95)
Partner Quality	$F_{1,191}=1.122$	.291	3,92 (n=96)	4,07 (n=95)
Commitment	$F_{1,191}=.647$	.387	2,50 (n=96)	2,38 (n=95)
Love	$F_{1,191}=.075$	.798	2,75 (n=96)	2,79 (n=95)

As can be clearly seen from table 10.5, there are no significant differences between the two interactivity-enabling technologies in their score on any of the BRQ-facets. Accordingly, and in line with study 1, we find no support for hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H5. Hypothesis 4, which proposed that there would be no differences between the customer community website and the personalized website in their effect of strengthening Commitment, is strengthened.

When inspecting the within-subject analysis, testing whether there was a difference in development across technology-groups in strengthening BRQ dimensions *over time*, we also found no significant effects. Consequently, and despite the fact that the manipulation of type of technology was strengthened in study 2 compared to study 1, no differences in effect across type of interactivity-enabling technology were found.

Now, before turning our focus to the interaction-effects, some general comments on the findings of study 2 deserve to be mentioned. First, the development of overall BRQ score throughout the experiment was quite different in study 2 compared to study 1. This was primarily due to the negative event (implemented just before BRQ questionnaire 2) in which had a much stronger impact in this second study. Most likely did the introduction of the quite elaborate task/scenario -instructions in study 2 leverage the respondents' involvement in – and perceived "risk" of – the experimental task, thus increasing the impact of the negative relationship occurrence. Figure 10.1 below depicts the overall development in BRQ facet during the course of the experiment.

Figure 10.1. Overall BRQ development

136
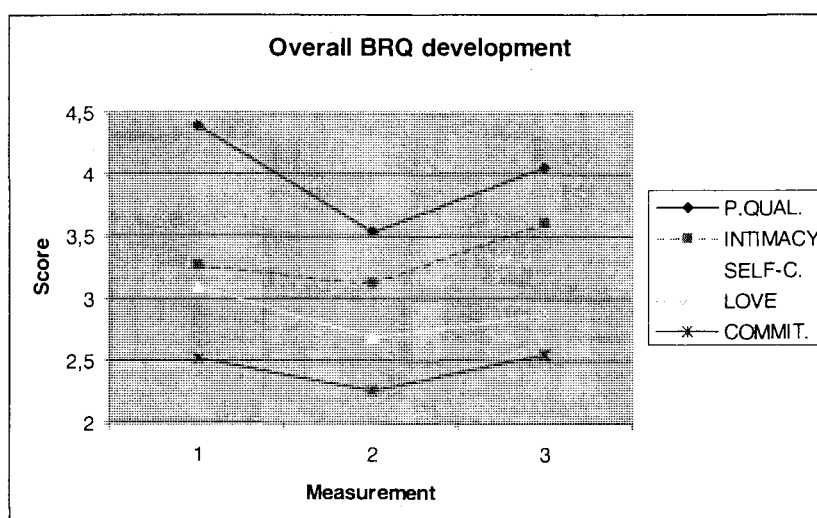
Figure 10.1 nicely illustrates the significant drop in all BRQ facets occurring after the negative event (from measurement 1 to 2). Interestingly, Intimacy is the only dimension with a significantly positive development from measurement 1 to 3. Accordingly, and in contrast to most other studies of consumer-brand loyalty and –relationship, this study is an empirical study entailing both negative and positive relationship development. Although this situation was neither planned – nor wanted – a priori, it does not jeopardize the testing of hypotheses. Rather, we are now – in addition – able to pinpoint the differential interactive effects of type of technology and individual difference variables on consumer-brand relationship quality for positive and negative relationship occurrences.

10.5.2 Interaction effects

Both relationship motives and Internet experience were hypothesized to be significant moderators of the effect of type of technology on brand relationship facets. The proposed interaction effects are tested below, starting with Internet Experience.

Internet experience

The two items measuring subjective Internet Experience were collapsed into one aggregated, reliable measure (Cronbachs' Alpha = 0,826), split according to the median, and included in the factorial model. The between subject analysis revealed the following effects, see table 10.6

Table 10.6 Interaction effects – Internet Experience – Between subjects

| | | | GROUP MEANS | | | |
| | | | Customer Community | | Personalized website | |
Variable	F-value	p	Low	High	Low	High
Intimacy	$F_{1,191}$=3.068	.082*	3,37 (n=42)	3,18 (n=54)	3,19 (n=47)	3,58 (n=48)
Self-C. C.	$F_{1,191}$=.055	.814	3,01 (n=42)	2,87 (n=54)	2,94 (n=47)	2,72 (n=48)
P. Qual.	$F_{1,191}$=3.385	.067*	4,02 (n=42)	3,83 (n=54)	3,92 (n=47)	4,22 (n=48)
Commit.	$F_{1,191}$=.1.481	.225	2,54 (n=42)	2,47 (n=54)	2,24 (n=47)	2,53 (n=48)
Love	$F_{1,191}$=.430	.513	2,77 (n=42)	2,72 (n=54)	2,72 (n=47)	2,86 (n=48)

* p<.10

** p<.05

The strong interaction effect of Internet Experience observed in study 1 is weakened in study 2 – at least for the between-subject analysis. Here, only two interactions are significant, and only at the 90 percent level. The direction of the results is consistent with that of study 1: The customer community does a better job in strengthening Intimacy and Partner Quality for respondents with low Internet experience, whereas the personalized website does a better job in strengthening these BRQ-facets for highly experienced users. These findings are consistent with hypotheses 9a and 9b.

Turning to the within-subject findings, significant interactions occur for two out of the five BRQ-facets. Specifically, there is a significant different development in BRQ-score for the Intimacy dimension ($F_{2,191}=7.143$, p=.001) and Self-Concept Connection ($F_{1.988,191}=2.958$, p=.054)[40] across Internet Experience and type of technology. Figure 10.2 and 10.3 illustrate these effects.

Figure 10.2 Interaction effect – Intimacy – Within subjects
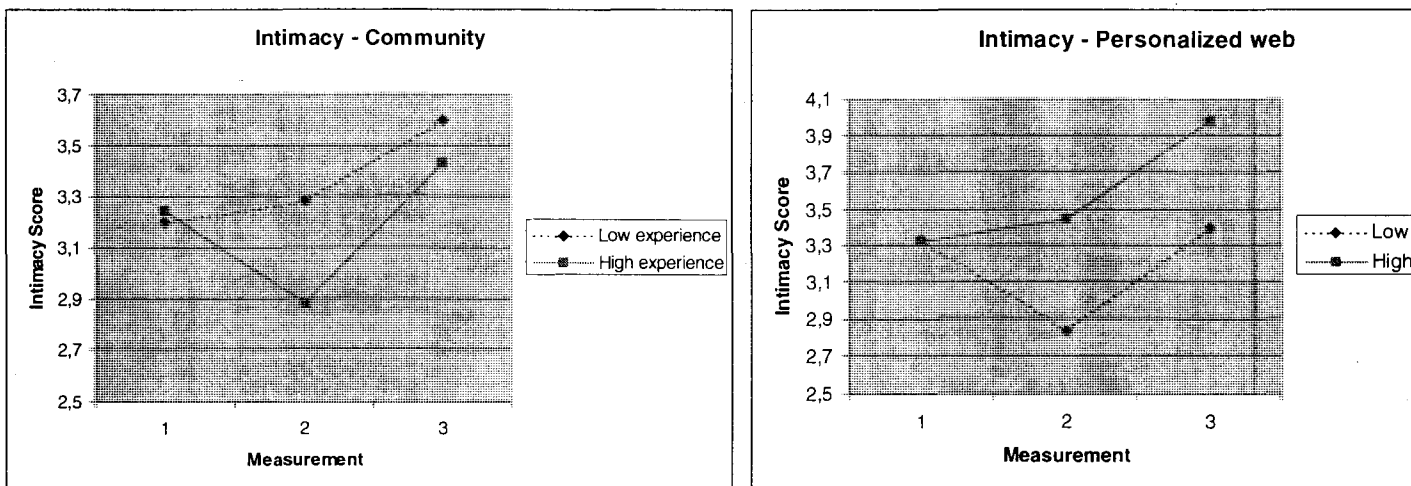
The left side figure here depicts the development in Intimacy-score for the Community condition, whereas the right side picture illustrates the development in Intimacy for users of the personalized website. The differential development in Intimacy between Internet novices and more experienced users are quite evident across the two technologies. Specifically, there is a significant different development in score between the four conditions from measurement 1 to 2 (p=.000) and from measurement 1 to 3 (p=.008). The reason why the mean differences in absolute scores (the between-subject effects) are so modest, now becomes easier to

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[40] Adjusted for Huynh-Feldt epsilon.

138

understand: There are no differences in score between the low and high Internet experience groups at measurement 1. Rather, the whole effect is materialized between measurement 1 and 2. This observation does, in part, support hypothesis H9a. This interaction effect is still significant, though less evident for self-concept connection, see figure 10.3

Figure 10.3 Interaction effect – Self Concept Connection – Within subjects
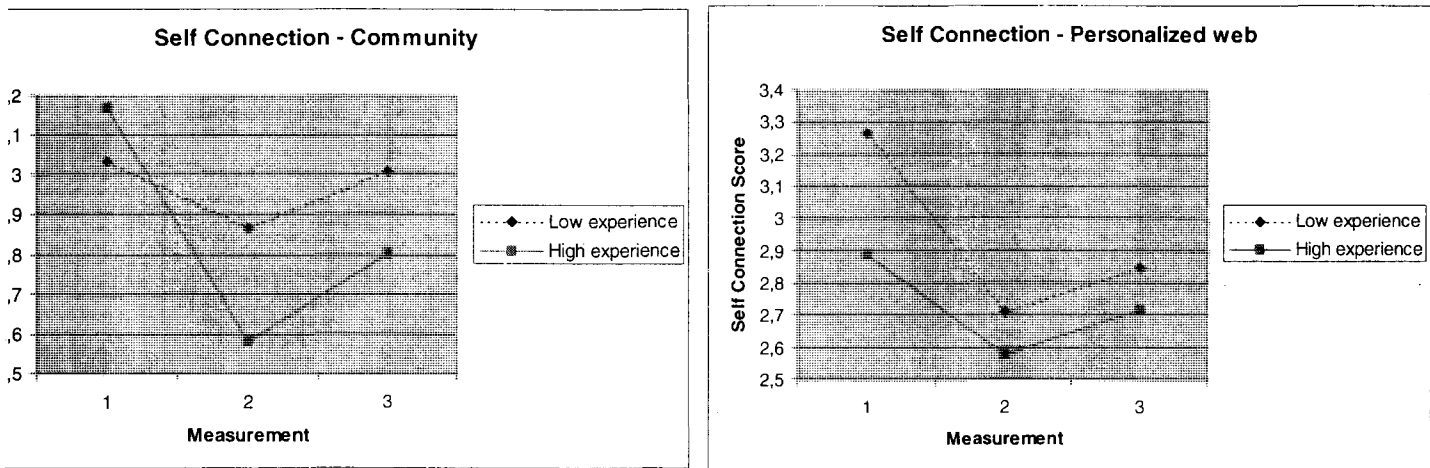
As for the Intimacy dimension, we clearly see a differential pattern across level of Internet experience between the two technologies from measurement 1 to 2 (p=.023). There is a significant lesser decrease in self-concept connection for inexperienced users in the Community condition, whereas the same is true for highly experienced users in the personalized condition. Consequently is the *development* in self-concept connection score across the four experimental cells in accordance with hypothesis 9b, although the absolute scores are not.

Relationship motives

Hypothesis H6-H8 concerned the moderating role of relationship motives. We hypothesized that respondents with efficiency-, risk reducing-, and social motives would focus and appreciate different properties of the two interactivity-enabling technologies and, consequently, that the different relationship motives would yield different relationship outcomes for the two technologies. However, as table 10.7 shows, no significant interaction effects were discovered in the between subject analysis.

Table 10.7. Interaction effects – Relationship Motives – Between subjects

| | | | GROUP MEANS | | | | | |
| | | | Customer Community | | | Personalized website | | |
Variable	F-value	p	Effic.	Risk	Social	Effic.	Risk	Social
Intimacy	$F_{2,191}=.330$	.719	3,22	3,23	3,37	3,32	3,39	3,45
Self-C. C.	$F_{2,191}=.050$	.951	3,08	2,99	2,74	2,98	2,91	2,69
P. Qual.	$F_{2,191}=.019$	.981	4,01	3,70	4,07	4,00	3,93	4,28
Commit.	$F_{2,191}=.340$	.712	2,65	2,40	2,45	2,51	2,42	2,22
Love	$F_{2,191}=.223$	.800	2,86	2,60	2,77	2,80	2,82	2,75

Yet, when consulting the within-subject analysis, significant effects occur for the commitment facet ($F_{4,191}=2.906$, p=.022), see figure 10.4.

Figure 10.4. Interaction Effect – Commitment – Within subjects
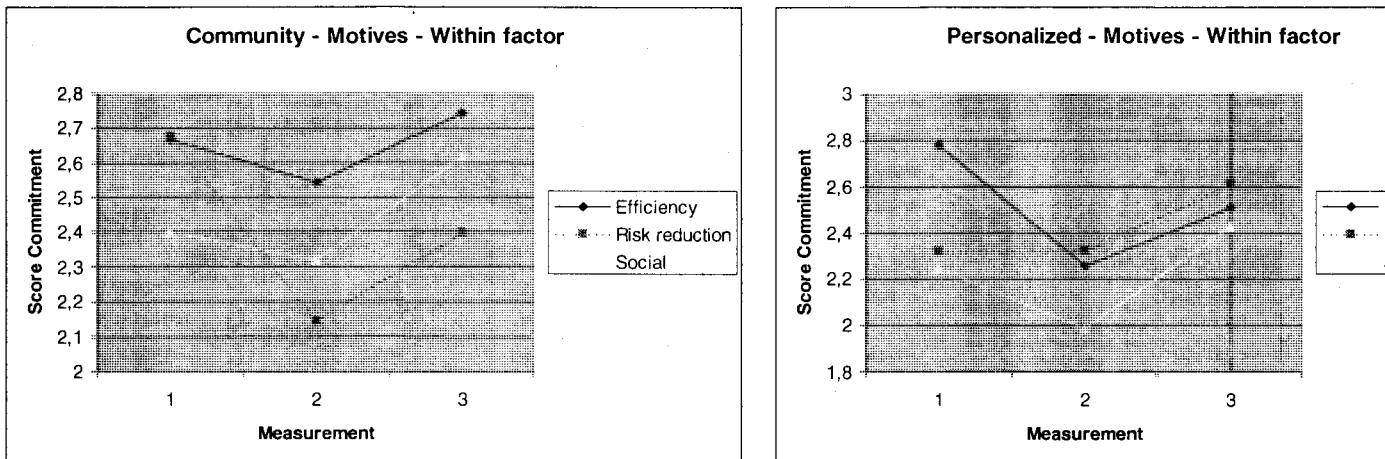
As for the previously mentioned interaction effects, the entire difference between groups occurs from measurement 1 to 2. Here, the effect is caused solely by the risk-reduction groups (dotted line). Specifically, respondents induced by risk reduction motives have a significant and large drop in Commitment in the community group between measurement 1 and 2, whereas no such decrease in score is observed for the personalized website. This effect

appears counter-intuitive and do in many ways contradict the arguments set forth in section 6.4. We elaborate on the possible reasons underlying this effect in chapter 11.3.

Control variables

In accordance with expectations, no significant main effects, or interaction effects of consumer demographics (sex, age and education) and experimental treatments, on BRQ-facets were found. However, when analyzing the impact of actual Internet usage, several effects occurred. Two measures of Internet usage was included in the study – one measure tapping the number of hours respondents spent online each week, and one measure tapping how many years the respondents had been using the Internet. The response on these two measures were split according to the mean and included as co-variates in the GLM analysis.

For hours spent on the Internet, no interaction effects were found – but the variable had a significant between-subjects main effect on four BRQ-facets. That is, respondents in which spent few hours online every week had an overall significant higher score on the Self-concept Connection (p=.001), Intimacy (p=.01), Commitment (p=.007) and Love (p=.083) facets than respondents in which spent more hours online. Thus, it appears as if users with low current volumes of Internet usage – overall – tend to more easily develop emotional ties to the brands in which they interact with online.

The number of years users had been using the Internet also yielded one significant effect. Specifically, number of years online interacted significantly with type of application in the within-subject analysis of the effects on Partner Quality (p=.034). The direction of the effects is different from T1 to T2 and from T2 and T3, though, so the interpretation of the finding becomes difficult and perhaps not particularly interesting.

The above listed findings put renewed focus on the importance of distinguishing between different measures of Internet experience and usage (see chapter 5). Whereas several interaction effects on BRQ-facets occurred for the self-reported measures of Internet experience, few such effects were observed for measures of actual usage. The relatively low correlation between the measures of experience and usage is not very difficult to explain. For instance, early adopters of the Internet may be highly experienced users of the Internet, yet use the medium less extensively today. Also, some users more quickly become proficient and experienced in using the Internet medium than others, at the same amount of time. Individual

Internet users vary in the actual use of the medium throughout their lifespan, and may (correctly) report different levels of personal Internet experience even for identical levels of usage. We argue that subjective Internet experience is a more applicable and diagnostic concept to apply when investigating individual differences effects in this study than objective (and perhaps more volatile) measures of actual usage.

10.6 Additional analyses

The manipulation of type of interactivity-enabling technology (customer community website vs. personalized website) was, a priori, assumed to be satisfactory due to the random assignment of respondents to experimental treatments. However, ex post inspections of website traffic-logs revealed differences in the level of exposure to treatments across experimental conditions. As it turned out, the experimental setup contained a bias in the degree of control over manipulation exposure across the two experimental treatments. Whereas all respondents in the personalized condition had to reveal their preferences when booking and also received personalized messages by e-mail, the experiment entailed no such control over treatment exposure for the community group(s). Accordingly, all respondents in the personalized condition were exposed to the experimental treatment, whereas being exposed to customer community features in the community condition was voluntarily. In the terminology of Cook and Campbell (1979), we used randomized *invitation* to treatments in the community condition and randomized *assignment* to treatments in the personalized condition. Traffic logs from the customer community website revealed that 16 respondents in the community condition never actually visited the community features and, consequently, never were exposed to the experimental treatment. This inevitably lowers the chances of inferring a treatment effect in our study because some units are considered to have received the treatment whereas they did not. Accordingly, we have underestimated the potential effects of the experimental treatments (Cook and Campbell, 1979, p.363).

Simply put, two solutions can be found for this problem. The first is to preserve the original assignment to treatments and include all units that originally were invited to participate in the experiment. This is by far the most conservative strategy and the results of these analyses are consequently found in section 10.5 above. The second solution is to exclude the respondents that did not visit the customer community web-site and hence were untreated. Such a strategy may entail jeopardizing the internal validity of the study, since selection effects occur after randomization. However, we chose to follow such a strategy in this additional analysis section

in order to get hints on potential effects, given that all effects may be underestimated in chapter 10.5. In order to minimize the threats to internal validity, we chose to match the pre-treatment scores of the untreated group with that of the treated groups, thus making a stronger case for the lack of systematic differences across these groups. Also, additional logistic regression analysis was performed in order to control for possible systematic biases across treated and untreated groups when it comes to individual- and demographic differences.

10.6.1 Excluding and comparing cases

Analyses of website user-logs were performed in WebTrends and revealed that 16 out of 98 respondents in the customer community condition never visited the customer community on the website. Matching analyses (MANOVAs in SPSS 10.0) were then performed in order to reveal whether there were any *initial* differences between visitors and non-visitors of the community on initial response variables (pretests and initial BRQ measures). No significant differences between the treated and untreated respondents were found, thus strengthening the argument that no systematic differences between them exist. Moreover, logistic regression analysis (with treated vs. untreated groups as dependent variable) were performed in order to investigate whether other individual difference variables or demographic variables would predict visiting/non-visiting the community website. Two significant predictors were found, one being Hours spent on the Internet (p=.054) and the other predictor being Involvement in the Experiment (p=.014). Consequently, the more time a respondent, in general, spends online and the less s/he was involved in the online experiment per se, the higher the probability of *not* visiting the customer community. This latter finding is by no means surprising, merely stating that the less involved the respondent is in the experiment, the less likely s/he is to visit the community. The first finding, although worrying in respect to systematic biases between groups, can actually be interpreted as supportive of our hypothesis that frequent Internet users are less interested in Customer Community websites. However, the explanatory power of these variables is very marginal (Coz and Snell R Square=.066, Nagelkerke R Square =.152), having minimal impact on the dependent variable.

In sum, the matching procedure (as well as the results of the logistic regression of potential predictors of non-treatment), reveal few threats to the internal validity of analyses, giving increased nurture to the argument of running additional analysis where untreated respondents are removed. However, such a matching procedure only controls for differences across a certain number of variables – many unexplained factors might still influence the results.

Caution should be taken when generalizing these findings to other settings or populations. Our main point of conducting these analyses is not deriving on a set of detailed predictions, but rather to examine whether effects are weakened or strengthened when untreated respondents are removed – thus providing us with hints on possible effects.

10.6.2 MANOVA – Tests of Hypotheses

In this section we report on the results of the GLM repeated measures analysis when the 16 untreated community respondents were removed.

Main effects

As one would expect, only minor changes in the overall group means of Customer Community respondents were revealed, leaving the F- and p-values still far from significant levels. See table 10.8 below.

Table 10.8. Main effects

| | | | GROUP MEANS | |
Variable	F-value	p	Customer Community	Personalized Website
Intimacy	$F_{1,175}=.327$	.568	3,29 (n=80)	3,39 (n=95)
Self-concept C.	$F_{1,175}=.567$	.452	2,96 (n=80)	2,83 (n=95)
Partner Quality	$F_{1,175}=.370$	.564	3,92 (n=80)	4,07 (n=95)
Commitment	$F_{1,175}=.378$	.540	2,48 (n=80)	2,38 (n=95)
Love	$F_{1,175}=.055$	.815	2,75 (n=80)	2,79 (n=95)

Interaction effects – Internet Experience

The between-subjects interaction effects on Intimacy and Partner revealed in section 10.5.2 improved when the 16 untreated respondents were removed from the analysis. The level of significance increased substantially for both Intimacy ($F_{1,175}=4.383$, p=.038) and Partner Quality ($F_{1,175}=5.669$, p= .018), reaching the 95 percent level. This strengthens the support for hypotheses 9a and 9b.

Table 10.9 Interaction effects – Internet Experience – Between subjects

| | | | GROUP MEANS | | | |
| | | | Customer Community | | Personalized website | |
Variable	F-value	p	Low	High	Low	High
Intimacy	$F_{1,175}$=4.383	.038**	3,45 (n=33)	3,11 (n=47)	3,19 (n=47)	3,56 (n=48)
Self-C. C.	$F_{1,175}$=.003	.960	3,08 (n=33)	2,85 (n=47)	2,94 (n=47)	2,72 (n=48)
P. Qual.	$F_{1,175}$=5.669	.018**	4,16 (n=33)	3,81 (n=47)	3,92 (n=47)	4,22 (n=48)
Commit.	$F_{1,175}$=2.221	.138	2,57 (n=33)	2,39 (n=47)	2,24 (n=47)	2,53 (n=48)
Love	$F_{1,175}$=.718	.398	2,81 (n=33)	2,69 (n=47)	2,72 (n=47)	2,86 (n=48)

* p<.10

** p<.05

Also, the within-subject interaction effect on Intimacy revealed in section 10.5.2, continues to be salient when the non-visitors of the community site are removed ($F_{1,175}$=4.383, p=.003). Specifically, there is a significant different development in score between the four conditions from measurement 1 to 2 (p=.001) and from measurement 1 to 3 (p=.032). However, the within-subject effect on Self-Concept connection disappeared compared to the analyses including all respondents.

Interaction effects – Relationship motives

The analyses of interactive effects of relationship motives and interactivity-enabling technology on BRQ yielded few significant results in chapter 10. No between-factor effects were revealed, yet a significant within-factor interaction effect was discovered for the Commitment facet of BRQ. Specifically, respondents with risk-reducing motives had a severe and significant larger drop in Commitment from measurement 1 to 2 for the community condition than for the personalized condition. This directional effect is contrary to hypothesis, and in chapter 11.3 we will try to explain this effect.

The new analysis of between-subject effects is displayed in table 10.10 below.

Table 10.10. Interaction effects – Relationship Motives – Between subjects

| | | | GROUP MEANS | | | | | |
| | | | Customer Community | | | Personalized website | | |
Variable	F-value	p	Effic.	Risk	Social	Effic.	Risk	Social
Intimacy	$F_{2,175}=.202$	.817	3,14	3,22	3,50	3,32	3,39	3,45
Self-C. C.	$F_{2,175}=.095$	.910	3,00	3,01	2,88	2,98	2,91	2,69
P. Qual.	$F_{2,175}=.197$	.821	3,97	3,73	4,25	4,00	3,93	4,28
Commit.	$F_{2,175}=.639$	.529	2,56	2,33	2,55	2,51	2,42	2,22
Love	$F_{2,175}=.657$	.520	2,75	2,60	2,93	2,80	2,82	2,75

As can be clearly seen from table 10.10, no significant between-subject effects are present. However, when investigating the within-subject effects, significant interactions occur for tree out of five relationship facets. There is a significant effect on the Love- ($F_{3.857,175}=2.446$, p=.049)[41], Self-concept connection ($F_{4,175}=2.513$, p=.042) and Commitment ($F_{3.975,175}=2.069$, p=.085)[42] facets. While the effects on the first two facets are significant at the 95 percent level, is the effect on Commitment only significant at the 90 percent level. First, we concentrate on the effect on the Love dimension, see figure 10.5

Figure 10.5. Interaction effect – Love – Within subjects

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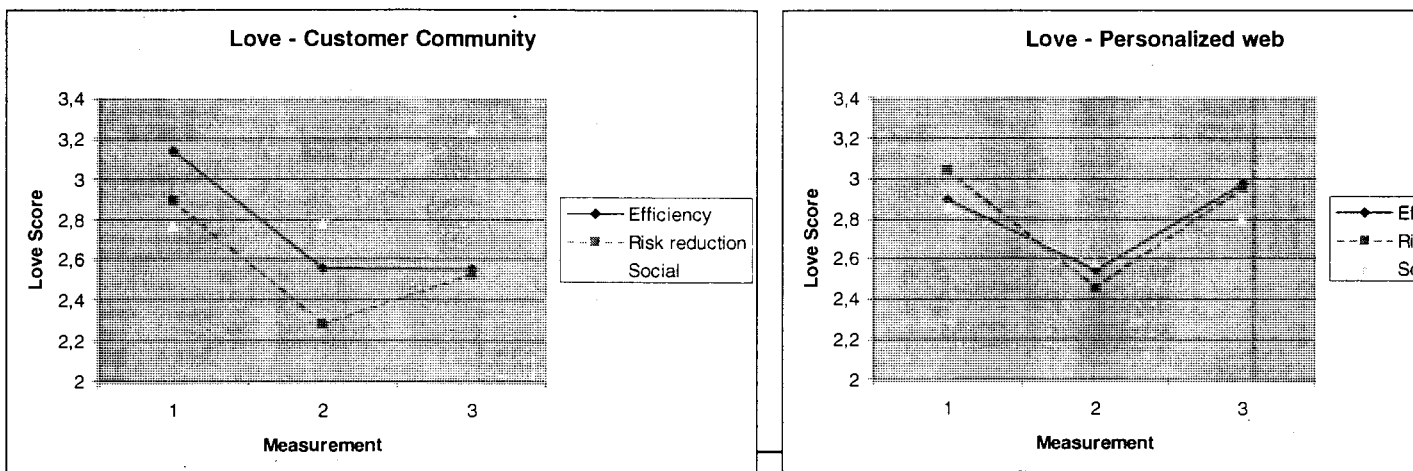
[41] Adjusted for Huynh-Feldt epsilon
[42] Adjusted for Huynh-Feldt epsilon

Figure 10.5 nicely illustrates how the Customer Community website better facilitates the Love-facet of BRQ than does the Personalized website. Whereas there are practically no differences across motives for the Personalized website, are the increase in Love from measurement 1 to 3 very evident for the Community website. The planned contrast of level 1 vs. level 3 for this effect is significant at p=.027. This effect was expected and is well in accordance with H8. Also, the development in Love-score for the efficiency-induced respondents appears to follow distinct patterns for each of the two technologies, however only from measurement 2 to 3. Whereas efficiency induced respondents with access to the community show no increase in brand love from T2 to T3, such an increase is evident for respondents with access to personalized web services. This differential pattern of development can be interpreted in light of personalized websites' superior score in the communication properties of message relatedness (relationship memory) and synchronicity compared to that of customer community websites. Efficiency focused respondents would value these properties more and, accordingly, develop stronger emotional ties to the personalized site than to the non-personalized one. However, as focused in chapter 6.3.1 and 6.3.2, we believe this effect to be more salient for the Intimacy and Self-concept connection of BRQ. Fortunately, turning to the interactive effect of relationship motives and technology on the Self-Concept Connection facet, a resembling pattern unfolds, see figure 10.6.

Figure 10.6 Interaction effect – Self Concept Connection – Within Subjects
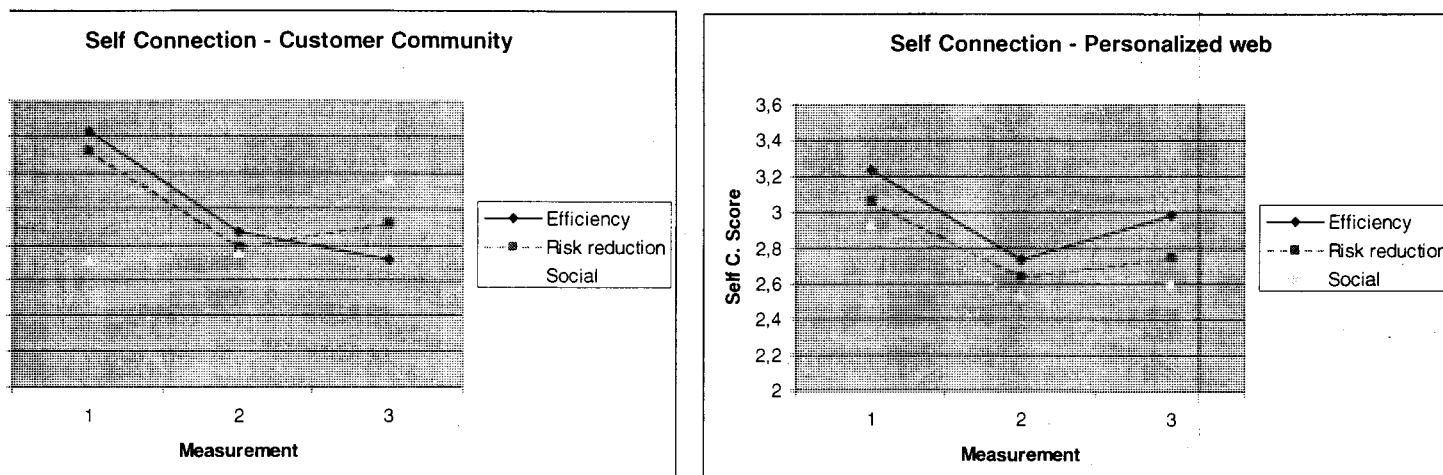
As for the Love dimension, the customer community does a better job in strengthening relationship ties for socially induced respondents than does the personalized website.

Moreover, H6 predicted the personalized website to better accommodate respondents' self-concept connection than the personalized website for respondents with efficiency motives. Although no such effects can be observed between measurement 1 and 2, a pattern supporting the hypothesis can be seen from measurement 2 to 3. Specifically, respondents with efficiency motives have a significantly different development from T2 to T3 across type of technology. Whereas the efficiency group is the only experimental group with a decrease in Self Connection from measurement 2 to 3 in the community condition, is the opposite directional effect observed for the personalized website condition. Thus, personalized websites appear to be more applicable than customer communities in strengthening the Self-concept connection- (and Love-) facet of BRQ for respondents with efficiency (versus risk reducing- or social-) motives. This directional effect is supportive of H6. However, the effect is not uniform across all three measurements, nor is it particularly strong.

The effect on the Commitment-facet can be seen in figure 10.7 below.

Figure 10.7. Interaction effect – Commitment – Within subjects
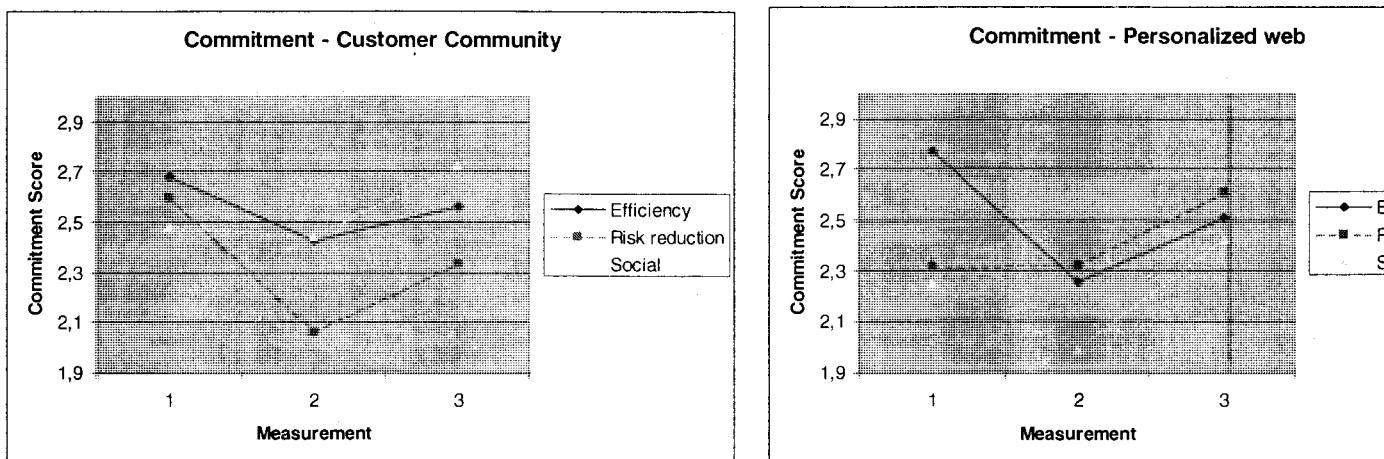
For the Commitment dimension of BRQ, significant differences across the experimental conditions are only present in the development from measurement 1 to 2 (p=.026). No hypotheses were put forth concerning the interactive effect of relationship motives and type of technology on Commitment. However, as can be seen from figure 10.7, respondents with efficiency and social motives have a larger drop in Commitment from T1 to T2 in the personalized website condition compared to the community condition, whereas respondents with risk reducing motives have a larger drop in brand Commitment for the community group. Although no hypotheses regarding effects on Commitment have been put forth, two of these

148

effects intuitively appear to be contrary to theoretical expectations. In general, we would expect personalized websites to better accommodate respondents with efficiency motives, and the community website to better accommodate respondents with risk-reducing and social motives. Although the latter effect is observed, the directional effects of both risk-reducing and efficiency -induced respondents are contrary to these expectations. These findings are discussed in further detail in chapter 11.3.

10.7 Summary of study 2

No main effects of interactivity-enabling technology were found in study 2. This reconfirms the observation from study 1 and contributes to rejecting hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H5. We elaborate on the possible explanations behind this in chapter 11. Significant interactions between type on technology and Internet experience was discovered in study 2, replicating the findings of study 1. Although the effects in study 2 were not as strong and unanimous as in study 1, the joint evidence across the two studies lends substantial support to hypotheses H9a and H9b.

Few interactive effects of relationship motives and type of technology on relationship facets were found in the initial analyses of study 2. However, when removing the untreated respondents several effects occurred, most of them in the hypothesized directions. The removal of non-visitors of the community website also strengthened the interactive effect of Internet experience and type of interactivity technology on BRQ facets.

In the following – final – chapters, we will discuss the findings in greater detail and elaborate on the implications and limitations of the results revealed in these two experiments.

PART IV

Discussion

11 Discussion and Implications

In this chapter we will first sum up the findings of both experiments. Thereafter we will discuss the main effects and interactive effects in separate sections. Lastly, before turning the focus towards implications for managers, we will briefly address the impact of the experimental results for the BRQ framework.

11.1 Synopsis of findings

In chapter 6, five hypotheses concerning the main effects of interactivity-enabling technologies on brand relationship facets were put forth, as well as three hypotheses on the interactive effects of type of technology and relationship motives on BRQ, and two hypotheses concerning the interactive effect of type of technology and Internet experience on the same consumer-brand relationship dimensions. Table 11.1 sums up the results from tests of all hypotheses for both studies.

Table 11.1. Synopsis of findings

Hypothesis	Study 1	Study 2
Main Effects		
Hypotheses 1,2,3,5	No support	No support
Hypothesis 4	Not tested	Supported
Relationship Motives		
Hypothesis 6	Not tested	Partial support
Hypothesis 7	Not tested	No support
Hypothesis 8	Not tested	Partial support
Internet Experience		
Hypothesis 9a	Supported	Partial support
Hypothesis 9b	Supported	Partial support

No main effects of type on interactivity-enabling technology (personalized web-site vs. customer community web-site) on relationship facets were found in either study. Accordingly, hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H5 must be rejected at this point. Although hypothesis 4 was supported, this hypothesis predicted that no differences existed between technologies in their effect on Commitment – and the direction of results are accordingly in line with the remaining main effects.

Analyses of the interactive effects of relationship motives and interactivity-enabling technology on brand relationship quality facets revealed more promising results than those of main effects. In study 2, both efficiency motives and social motives interacted with type of technology to produce results in accordance with theoretical predictions. Although no between-subject effects were found, within-subject effects for both the Love-, Self-concept Connection-, and Commitment facets were discovered. The effects on the two former BRQ-dimensions were only significant in the additional analyses (were untreated respondents were removed), but this still lends some support for the directional effects proposed in our hypotheses H6 and H8.

An important point to consider when evaluating the experimental findings listed above is that lack of *between-subject* effects not has to be interpreted as lack of support for the hypotheses. Whereas between-subject analyses test whether there are overall (averaged across all measurements) differences across experimental groups, do within-subject analyses test whether the *development* in BRQ-facet scores are different across treatments throughout the course of the experiment. Since relationships in this experiment are started from scratch and as it takes time for some experimental treatments (such as relationship motives) to work, one may expect no or minor differences across experimental conditions in the beginning of the experiment (measurement 1), but rather a different directional development in BRQ score across treatments over time. Although between-subject effects in some ways may be interpreted as "stronger" in the sense that effects occur immediately and/or remain strong throughout the experiment (such as for the individual difference measure of Internet experience), a longitudinal relationship perspective also assumes effects to be manifested as changes that develop over time. Accordingly, the within-subject effects found for e.g. relationship motives may constitute valid support for our hypotheses even if between-subject effects are not present.

Turning to the interactive effects of interactivity-enabling technology and Internet Experience on BRQ facets, both hypotheses 9a and 9b receive a considerable amount of support. In study 1, between-subject effects for all BRQ-dimensions were found, although effects on Intimacy and Partner Quality were significant only at the 90 percent level. In study 2, significant between-subject effects were found for the Intimacy and Partner Quality dimensions (p<.10), and within-subject effects were revealed for the Intimacy and Self-concept connection facets. Consequently, customer community websites appear as more promising tools for building

brand relationships to novice Internet users, whereas personalized websites stand out as more effective in building brand relationships to consumers with higher levels of Internet experience.

11.2 Main effects

In chapter 8.5, we discussed three potential reasons for the non-findings in study 1. The first potential reason being that manipulations may have been too weak, the second that sample sizes might have been too small and the third potential reason being – of course – that no differences actually exist. After having completed two studies, with a total sample of 391 respondents, the sample size argument does not appear plausible. First, because p-values are very far from significant levels for both studies, and second because interaction effects are found where cell-sizes are considerably lower than for the tests of main effects. Although small to medium effect sizes were expected, the sample size of study 2 (n=191 and cell sample sizes of n=95 and n=96) should secure sufficient statistical power to discovering even marginal differences between experimental groups. The argument of too weak manipulations may be valid, although stronger manipulations would most likely have been limiting the generalizability and applicability of the findings for the context of real brand websites. The manipulation of type of interactivity-enabling technology was designed in such a manner that the two integrated websites (treatments) would resemble those of equivalent real brands. By strengthening the manipulation further, thus making the personalized-, and community features even more salient on the websites, we would risk jeopardizing external validity through removing the experimental setting far from that of existing online settings.

Taking for granted that the tests of main effects are valid then, the difficult task now becomes explaining the lack of findings. Since the explanatory mechanisms underlying the hypotheses (presence and importance of various communication properties) were not tested directly, all such post hoc explanations will be based on speculations. Relying on the findings of the interaction effects, we clearly see that individual differences between consumers guide to what extent consumers value, and are able to make use of, the different interactivity-enabling technologies. When individual differences are not taken into consideration, no differences between technologies are found. In chapter 4, we described and categorized the two technologies according to six communication properties. The subsequent hypotheses were set forth on the basis of 1) the link between each communication property and perceived relational outcomes (relationship facets) and 2) the presence and salience of the six

communication properties in the two technologies. Consequently, three different explanations may be put forth for theoretically explaining the non-findings.

The first potential explanation is that the theoretical arguments linking communication properties to specific relationship facets entail errors or are imprecise. As argued in chapter 6.3.6, the causal relationships between the communication properties and relationship facets are complex and intertwined, and we may thus be (over-) simplifying the "true" mechanisms underlying the hypotheses. If the properties, in our theoretical discussion, for some reason are linked to the "wrong" relationship facets, we risk evening out – or even inverting – the (hypothesized) directional differences between the two technologies. Let us for a moment assume that we have perfect knowledge of the "true" relationships between variables and that we all of a sudden discover that social presence/anthropomorphism is a strong facilitator of the Intimacy-facet of BRQ, and *not* of the Love-facet – as was hypothesized in chapter 6.3. Based on the theoretical arguments set forth in the hypotheses chapter, we would now suddenly expect *no differences* between the customer community and personalized website in their effect on the Intimacy and Love facets of BRQ. This prediction is given by the fact that we then would have no communication properties influencing the Love facet- (cf. chapter 6.3.5), and opposing effects of the various communication properties determining the technologies' effect on Intimacy (cf. chapter 6.3.1) (in which probably would result in no or small differences across technologies).

The second potential explanation could be that we have misjudged the presence and salience of communication properties inherent in the two technologies. Although most of the properties can be evaluated fairly "objectively" or inter-subjectively (Burgoon et al. 2000), properties like "communication interface complexity" and "degree of social presence/anthropomorphism" certainly leave room for interpretation and subjectivity. Accordingly, we might have been assuming the presence of certain properties in the two technologies, whereas this should rather have been empirically pre-tested.

The third explanation is that the applicability of the two technologies for building brand relationships is solely dependent on individual differences and contexts. That is, the various theoretical arguments set forth in chapter 6 will be more or less important depending on context and person, and the proposed directional effects will thus on average "even out" and produce no overall main effects.

Given that our theoretical discussion in chapters 4 through 6 is coherent, we would argue that this third and last explanation is most plausible. This, in turn, has several implications for managers, as will be discussed in section 11.6, below.

11.3 Interaction effects – Relationship motives

When all respondents were included in the analysis, significant within-subject effects were found only for the Commitment facet of BRQ (cf. figure 10.4). Figure 10.4 clearly reveals how the personalized website better accommodates respondents with risk-reducing motives than does the customer community website. This effect is contrary to what we would expect. We originally hypothesized customer community websites – in general – to better accommodate respondents with risk reducing motives than would personalized websites, due to the presence of higher source credibility and community knowledge on bulletin board websites. Here, the opposite effect is observed, as risk reducing users of the personalized website have no drop in Commitment at all after the negative event, whereas a large decrease in Commitment for the Community users are observed. In general, we would expect a larger decrease in relationship quality and commitment for respondents with risk reducing motives, than for respondents with efficiency- or social motives. The reason behind this argument can be found in the content of the task/scenario description for the risk reducing respondents. In this description it was focused on the severe consequences it would have for the respondent if s/he did not reach the destination on time. As the negative event included a delay in the flight schedule, this would reflect worse on the respondents in the risk reducing condition than on the remaining respondents. Nevertheless, it does – at first glance – seem puzzling that this severe drop in Commitment only applies to the community group. If the communication properties of source credibility and social presence (inherent in customer communities) did not reduce the perceived risk and uncertainty of respondents, what did?

Most likely, the answer is found within the communication property of message relatedness (relationship memory) in which is very present and salient for personalized websites. Personalized websites contain information about previous encounters and communications between the consumer and the brand, as well as the respondents own profile information. In this case, the easy access to respondents' personal itinerary made it easy for them to check whether the announced delay would impact the scheduled meeting on the flight destination. Consequently, the comfort respondents experienced through consulting their profile

information (relationship memory) at the personalized website, most likely override the risk-reducing features of word-of-mouth information present on the customer community.

Although the effect on Commitment was the only significant effect observed when all cases were included in the analyses, additional analyses where untreated respondents were removed yielded more promising results. Specifically, significant differences across type of technology and relationship motives were found for the Love-, Self-concept Connection- and Commitment facets of BRQ. The effects on Love supports H8, in which states that the Customer Community website better would facilitate the Love facet of BRQ than would the Personalized website for respondents with social motives. Our prediction that the increased social presence in customer communities compared to that of machine-interactive technologies like personal websites will lead to stronger feelings of brand love for socially induced respondents (compared to efficiency induced and risk reducing respondents) thus appear justified. Also, the effects on Love revealed a significant differential impact of the efficiency-induced respondents across technologies. Specifically, evidence suggests that the personalized website, compared to the community website, is more effective in strengthening the Love facet for efficiency-induced respondents. This observation is in line with our argument that the communication properties of message relatedness (relationship memory) and synchronicity inherent in personalized websites is more important to efficiency focused respondents than for risk-reducing or socially oriented respondents. This same directional effect is observed for the Self-Connection facet, thus lending support to H6. However, no support is found for H7, concerning the effect of risk-reducing motives. Rather, as discussed in the previous paragraph, evidence suggests the direction of effects suggested in H7 may be inversed. That is, the effects on Commitment suggest that personalized websites are more promising for accommodating respondents with risk reducing motives than are customer communities. However, this effect may be the result of a rather special occurrence in this experiment (interactions with the negative event – as discussed above) or of the lack of active involvement in the customer community – something we will discuss further in the limitations section.

11.4 Interaction effects – Internet Experience

The hypotheses on interactive effects of type of technology and Internet experience on BRQ-facets were mainly supported in the two experiments. In the first experiment, between subject effects for all BRQ dimensions were found, and in the second experiment within-subject effects for two out of five BRQ facets were revealed. The differences in effects across experiments are not particularly easy to grasp. We have no reasons for expecting the effects to decrease from experiment 1 to 2, especially when knowing that the statistical power is stronger in experiment 2 compared to experiment 1. Looking back, we can identify four possible explanations of this observation. First, although speculative at this point, we may expect general maturation in the Internet proficiency among the general population to play a role (experiment 1 was conducted 14 months prior to experiment 2). This may affect the absolute level as well as the variance in the actual Internet proficiency across samples. Also, since the two experiments were run in different countries, contexts and cultural differences may have impacted the results. A third explanation might be that the small adjustments made in the design and content of the websites in study 2 in some way interacted with attitudes to produce differences in BRQ scores across level of Internet experience. The fourth, and perhaps more plausible explanation, is that the increase in discriminant validity between facets in study 2, compared to study 1, helped crystallize effects on certain BRQ-dimensions. The Intimacy- and Partner Quality dimensions are perhaps more diagnostic than other facets in identifying differences in relationship quality across level of Internet proficiency for the two technologies.

Regardless of differences in effects across experiments however, the *direction* of findings appear uniform across facets, measurements and studies. The differences in mean scores of experimental groups are all in the hypothesized direction, also those who are non-significant. Accordingly, substantial support is lent to hypothesis 9a and 9b. However, as pointed out in section 10.5.2, no interaction effects were found for either length of Internet use or amount of present Internet use (actual usage) in study 2.

The finding that customer communities are more effective in building brand relationships for consumers with low rather than high Internet experience (H9b) may appear surprising to some. Originally, communities evolved as non-commercial, spontaneous and social events (Rheingold, 1993), where the participants were highly *proficient* users - typically discussing technological-oriented issues on news-groups or bulletin boards. Moreover, the social – and

even communal – functions of customer communities are often accentuated by marketing researchers (e.g. Mathwick, 2002; Wellman and Gulia, 1999), giving nurture to the notion of online customer community as a viable and legitimate social construct. However, communities may serve many functions, both social and psychological. For example, Mathwick (2002) recently presented a typology of four "online relationship orientations" based on cluster analyses of various relationship motives. The different profiles reflect both social and psychological motives for online interactions in communities. Interestingly, the second largest cluster, the "Lurkers", scored low on all motives and generally showed a passive pattern of behavior. These consumers are "free-riders" in the sense that they would read postings, yet make no active contributions on the forum. However, the "lurkers" may still gain considerable value from a community. This could be psychological benefits such as perceived confidence in obtained information and perceived efficiency of information search. Thus, an on-line community may also be perceived as a psychological construct, focusing on the value of new information and information source effects for the community users. Notably, we are not saying that customer communities cannot serve as effective relationship building tools also for highly experienced users. We merely suggest that different social and psychological mechanisms could be at work depending on the level of user experience and the general purpose of visiting a community. The present two studies focused primarily on this psychological side of communities. In both study 1 and 2, the number of new postings from the experimental participants was fairly low, indicating that the social functions of the community were less important. Also, in general, the explicit instructions to book a ticket or a restaurant reservation further induced participants to focus the psychological benefits of the community. The observation that consumers with less Internet experience developed stronger brand relationships from communities than personalized websites, points to the relevance of the psychological effects of community information. We have suggested several explanations for this finding. Generally, novice users are more influenced by peripheral cues and third party information sources than experienced users, indicating that customer communities are more effective in building brand relationships for users with low – rather than high – Internet experience. Third-person information is particularly important for tourism services (Dellaert, 2000). Thus, our choice of products (airline and restaurant) may have accentuated the effect of customer communities in our sample. Nevertheless, the empirical results of this study indicate that psychological benefits of communities can be highly relevant for the development of brand relationships among consumers with less Internet experience.

Turning to the partial effects of Internet experience and web-personalization on BRQ, our hypothesis H9a was also partially supported. The personalized sites were found to be more effective in building brand relationships for highly experienced, rather than less experienced, Internet users. We hypothesized two primary explanations for this observation. First, frequent users of the Internet probably put more emphasis on efficiency- and ease of use issues than less frequent users. Experienced users are more likely to be impatient, more goal-directed and more focused on making (future) bookings swift and easy than the more novice users are. The communication properties of synchronicity and message relatedness inherent in personalized websites would facilitate such preferences. Second, personalized websites – being slightly more complex applications than bulletin boards – may demand a certain level of Internet proficiency and user-experience in order to be deemed useful by the consumer. Findings in the IS-literature points to the fact that experience influences whether the user is enabled to make use of the technology, which in turn influences perceived usefulness, enjoyment with, and intention to use the technology (Venkatesh and Davis, 1996; Venkatesh, 2000).

In addition, we suggested that machine-interactive applications, such as personalized websites, might create a seductive-like experience for highly experienced users, by integrating functionality with a visual and interactive design. By seduction we do not necessarily mean that the consumer enters and collaborates in building a new social consensus with the brand (as defined by Deighton and Grayson, 1995), but rather a form of persuasion that is highly personal, intimate, and focused. Highly experienced users are probably more prone to be "seduced" by this kind of machine-interactivity than less experienced users. Also, the concept of flow may offer some potential explanations for the greater effect of personalization among the highly experienced Internet users. Flow refers to experiences that are "intrinsically enjoyable" and that "completely involve the actor with his activity" (Novak, Hoffman, and Yung, 2000, p. 4). Notably, Novak et al. found that skill and perceived control were important determinants of flow on the Internet. Though speculative at this point, we believe that personalization may induce moderate levels of flow for experienced users. Personalized web-sites connect directly to the consumers needs and goals and personalize content in an efficient and functional way, through which experienced consumers may obtain a sense of control. Though participants in our study probably experienced rather low levels of flow in general, there may have been important variation at lower levels, with highly skilled consumers experiencing higher levels of flow than less skilled consumers. The seduction – and flow-inducing capacity of personalization is a legitimate issue for future research.

11.5 Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ)

The studies conducted in this dissertation constitute two out of very few quantitative applications of Fournier's (1994;1998) Brand Relationship Quality framework. In this respect, the dissertation offers substantial insights in, and support to, the convergent, discriminant and nomological validity of the framework. Also, the longitudinal design of the experiments provides us with new knowledge on how the different facets respond to different exogenous factors over time. For instance, we observe that e.g. the Intimacy-facet in these studies show a stronger resistance to the negative event than do the other facets, and it is also the only facet with an overall positive development throughout the second experiment. Further analyses and studies may reveal how the different facets play differential roles in response to other variables and stimuli. Also, since relationships in this study were started from scratch, we can get new information on how the "hierarchy of effects", so to speak, on BRQ facets work. For example, absolute scores tell us that the partner quality dimension is more dominant – and perhaps more appropriate – than other facets when tapping nascent brand relationships, whereas feelings of e.g. Intimacy develop faster as relationships are allowed to grow. If the experiment had lasted for a longer period of time, we would most likely also have seen a larger increase in Commitment and Self-concept connection. Consequently, longitudinal studies of brand relationships may provide us with a more thorough knowledge on the internal hierarchy and dynamics of brand relationship facets. Through applying panel data, we will be able to analyze e.g. which dimensions that most easily are influenced early in a relationship and which dimensions are most vulnerable for negative relationship occurrences.

11.6 Managerial Implications

The results from these experiments call renewed attention to the importance of knowing the motives and on-line experience of online customers. When relationship motives and media experience was not taken into account, we found practically no differences in the interactive applications' effect on brand relationship quality. However, when respondents were split according to their (manipulated) relationship motives and their Internet experience, the two interactive applications proved to have a significantly different impact on the development of consumer-brand relationships. The findings suggest that brand companies should segment on-line users according to individual difference variables. In most cases, it should be an easy task for any brand to make several versions of their web-site, each tailored according to certain user background variables.

For instance, the research findings indicate that for highly experienced Internet users, one should apply personalized applications – or other machine-interactive technologies – to build customer-brand relationships, rather than communities. Experienced users are probably more motivated and able to process the technical and information details of web-sites. The stronger effect of customer communities for novices on the Internet suggests that communities should be used to form relationships with this group. However, according to the discussion of the community findings above, one should interpret these results with caution. The execution of the customer community in this study probably relates mainly to psychological effects of community information – and not necessarily the social and communal functions related to the exchange of such information. One option for managers would be to include *both* personalization and a customer community on their sites. At first glance this seems like a safe compromise. However, this could turn out wrong, especially for novices. Though consumers with less Internet experience scored significantly lower on BRQ facets when the site contained personalization rather than a community, we cannot conclude that a site with *both* personalization and a community would be equally effective as a site containing only a community. In fact, novices could perceive a combined site as more complex, and thus less useful, then sites with only a community. This is an issue for future research.

The differences in effects across measures of Internet experience and different measures of actual Internet *usage* also have some implications for managers. Specifically, caution should be taken when measuring Internet experience and -expertise, and for some purposes are probably self-reported measures more appropriate and diagnostic than objective measures.

Turning to the managerial implications of the interactive effects of relationship motives, we know that this individual difference variable probably is more difficult for brands to assess. Consumers are less comfortable with disclosing their motives and reasons for using a particular brand, then they are revealing demographic and other background data (such as Internet experience) to a brand partner (Zahay, 2001). However, if future studies re-emphasize the importance of relationship motives for determining the relative effect of various interactivity-enabling technologies, different measures should be undertaken by brands for determining their consumers' relationship motives. One simple segmentation strategy could be to ask consumers – when logging on to the website – questions like: "Why are you visiting us today?" or "What is your primary reason for using <name of brand>?" and give them fixed

alternatives linking them to pre-tailored websites. Of course, relationship motives can also be tapped using other on- or offline profiling techniques.

The dimensional analyses of BRQ in these two studies also have several implications for managers. The BRQ framework appears valid also for on-line settings, and its facets have a significant and differential impact on various behavioral intention variables. Also, the multi-dimensionality of the framework makes it richer and more appropriate than traditional loyalty-measures for tapping brand relationships that not necessarily are monogamous. Moreover, through the use of longitudinal designs, managers can utilize the findings and measures developed in this dissertation to developing consumer-brand relationship trackings.

12 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

12.1 Introduction

This chapter is organized as follows: First we discuss limitations of the design of the present studies. Second, we address limitations associated with the way hypotheses were tested in the dissertation. Lastly, we briefly sketch some suggestions for future studies.

12.2 Limitations of the design

Studying the development of consumers' relationships to fictitious brands in an experimental setting necessarily entails certain limitations to the external validity of the findings. However, the use of fictitious brands was imperative in order to preserve the internal validity in this study, especially because of the longitudinal nature of the design. Also, allowing respondents to log onto the site whenever and from whatever location they wanted increased the external validity of the study compared to other experimental settings. The context of the respondents' encounters with the brand online was far more realistic than it would have been in a common laboratory setting. In fact, respondents rated high on overall involvement in the experiment and task at hand, something personal e-mail feedbacks from respondents also confirm. For instance, one subject in the second study wondered if s/he actually had to be at the airport on the time and date of the scheduled departure of the Blue&Gold flight (see appendix 15).

Another important issue regarding the validity of the study is the duration of the experiments. Ten days is a relatively short period for developing consumer-brand relationships. However, the decision of making both studies 10 days experiments was a result of a trade-off between preserving the internal validity and minimizing respondents' tediousness on the one side, and accommodating external validity issues on the other. We argue that the timeframe was sufficient for developing brand relationships, especially since the interaction between the consumer and the brand was quite intense and frequent in the experimental period. The amount of interaction that took place between the consumers and the brand in the experiment could equal several months of interaction in a real-life setting.

Questions can also be put forth regarding the manipulation of relationship motives in study 2. Motives are aroused needs that are deeply founded in a person and which directs that persons

actions. Manipulating relationship motives through task/scenario instructions may thus appear too superficial and not very credible. However, three arguments can be set forth supporting the manner in which this manipulation was conducted in the study. First, given the whole experiment was framed as an "imaginative" setting, the consumers should have no more trouble getting involved in the motive instruction/scenario than they would have relying on the remaining task instruction or framing of the service at hand. Also, the scenarios were framed so that they would resemble settings familiar to the respondents. Second, manipulations were successfully both pre-tested and checked in the experiment. Third, the respondents were reminded of the task at hand during the experiment, so the manipulation of relationship motives would remain salient to them throughout the whole experimental period. However, we have no direct evidence of the validity of the tripartite relationship taxonomy per se, nor have we any evidence of how respondents' "real" motives would interact with type of technology in real life settings.

A comment should also be made regarding the impact of the negative event in the experiments, especially for the second study. As things turned out, the negative event (the flight delay) was reinforced by the manipulation of relationship motives in study 2. Accordingly, study 2 can in many ways be regarded as a study of a service recovery, rather as of positive relationship encounters. Although this in some regards strengthen the design – in the respect that we now were able to investigate the abilities of the two technologies when it comes to handling both negative *and* positive relationship occurrences – the large impact of the negative event was not anticipated a priori. Consequently, the hypotheses implicitly assume an underlying positive development in the consumer-brand relationships, whereas this was not the case in both experiments. Future studies should thus consult the service recovery literature to investigate whether such negative occurrences might have a differential effect on relationship facets across type of technology.

A last, but important, remark should also be made regarding the tests of hypotheses. Although hypotheses regarding the direction of many interaction effects were supported, we have no way of telling for sure whether the explanations put forth in chapters 4 through 6 actually caused these effects. Although the tests add credibility to the arguments, the underlying explanatory mechanisms were not explicitly tested. To improve the internal validity of the study, each argument underlying the hypotheses should in some way be submitted to a test or at least be measured. That is, the subjects' evaluation of the communication properties

inherent in the two communication technologies could in some respect be *measured*, as should the relationship between these properties and each BRQ facet. However, an even stronger case would have been to *manipulate* these mediators (the communication properties) and systematically report changes in BRQ facets. Consequently, the internal validity of the two studies is weakened by the fact that the theoretical arguments underlying the hypotheses have not been tested directly. This last point is also essential when we now are to suggest extensions of this research into future studies.

12.3 Suggestions for future studies

When suggesting improvements and extensions of experimental studies, most articles and dissertations spend considerable time on recommending new settings, samples, products and variables to be added and tested. Although strengthening the external validity of experiments through increasing generalizability of settings and products is important, we would here like to re-emphasize the importance of isolating effects and eliminating alternative explanations (i.e. increasing internal validity) before extending the present study further. Given the lack of literature on these issues, as well as the exploratory nature of the present studies, we argue that there is a stronger need for focusing small parts of the topic dealt with in this dissertation, than there is extending the focus of the research. Little is known about the underlying mechanisms driving the formation and maintenance of online consumer-brand relationships. Accordingly, future studies should rather focus one technology (i.e. customer communities *or* personalized websites) and carefully test how incremental changes in different communication properties affect consumer-brand relationship facets. Also, as mentioned above, *manipulating* communication properties and then test consumer response would constitute a stronger test of these explanatory mechanisms than would merely measuring the presence and evaluation of such properties.

After having conducted additional experimental (and perhaps exploratory) studies, focus can be shifted towards emphasizing external validity issues. To further increase the generalizability of the findings, future research should study BRQ effects of different interactive applications on web-sites for *real brands*. This implies that more mature relationships should be investigated. External validity may then be prioritized over internal validity and, accordingly, pre- or quasi-experimental designs can be applied – or even purely descriptive research designs. Other effects could be observed when investigating "real" and more mature consumer-brand relationships. Also, other interactive Internet applications

should be tested. For example, different forms of dynamic personalization could be more effective for novices than the static type of personalization tested in this experiment. Moreover, as pointed out in section 11.4, studies of customer community effects on brand relationships should be conducted on more *active* communities, such that psychological *and* social functions may be captured.

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Appendices

The Blue@

Etour Building, S - 831 25 Östersund, Sweden

November 17, 2000

Participants in the Blue & Gold Experiment,
Sweden

Dear Participant,

We are very pleased that you are willing to take part in this experiment that will last for 11 days – from Friday, November 17 until Monday, November 27.

First, we want to point out that participating in the experiment is harmless and not unpleasant in any ways. The purpose of the experiment is not to study characteristics about you, your intelligence, your abilities, or your performances. The focus of the experiment is how online companies, such as Blue & Gold use the Internet. Unfortunately, to make the experiment as realistic as possible, we can't tell you more about the purpose of the experiment today. However, you will be given full information about the whole experiment through a letter, sent to you after the experiment is closed. We also want to stress that the experiment has been approved by ETOUR (European Tourism Research Institute in Östersund), and that ETOUR, from a tourism research point of view, request you to take part in the experiment.

When participating in the experiment, you are requested to always visit a particular web site. In your case, the web address of this web site is "http://emarkets.grm.hia.no/drest/", and your user name is "dr041". (The "-signs are not part of the address and user name).

The task
During the experiment you are supposed to accomplish a particular task. To accomplish your task, you should consider yourself in the following situation:

You and your colleagues are going on an excursion to London from December 2 to December 6 this year. You and your colleagues will be visiting a restaurant called The Blue & Gold presented at the web site listed above. However, due to practical reasons, you have to make a reservation for yourself and three other colleagues. Consequently, your task is to visit the Blue & Gold web site listed above, explore the site, and make a reservation at the Blue & Gold restaurant on the evening of December 4. The reservation should be done within 24:00 on November 17.

Important to remember
It is most important that you visit the indicated web site at least once every day during the experiment period, and that you start visiting the web site today. Therefore, keep this paper during the experiment in case you forget the web address. At the web site you will be given further instructions on what to do during the experiment period. To accomplish the experiment in a reliable way, it is most important that you carry out the tasks and answer the questionnaires that will be presented during the experiment. To accomplish the tasks you will need the information presented to you on the Blue & Gold card enclosed in this envelope. Therefore, please take good care of your card during the experiment (you may want to put it in your wallet together with your other personal cards). Please, also keep this letter during the experiment. It is also most important that

you take care of the password given to you on the attached letter enclosed in this envelope. You will need your username (on the Blue & Gold card enclosed) and the password (on the letter enclosed) every day when you visit the Blue & Gold web site.

To make your participation in the experiment worth your efforts, we will have a lottery at the end of the experiment. The prices have a total value of SEK 5.000. Only respondents who have accomplished their task within the given time limit and answered all questionnaires presented during the experiment, will be allowed to take part in the lottery. Winners will be contacted.

NB!
If you loose any of the information enclosed in this envelope, please feel free to contact Blue & Gold by e-mail, and you will be given new information.

Thank you for participating in the experiment!

Sincerely,

Leif B. Methlie   Maria Lexhagen
(professor - SNF)   (ETOUR)

Dear Participant,

Your password is "fihfch". This password is for use when visiting the Blue & Gold web site. It is required when visiting the web site and when using particular web services.

Please, remember that the combination of your username, password and card number may give other people access to your personal services. For security reasons you should always keep your password separate from your username and card number.

Appendix 2: Personalized- and Community websites (respectively)

File   Edit   View   Favorites   Tools   Help

Address http://emarkets.grm.hia.no/pair/customer.asp

Blue@ Gold Air

Home

myBlue@Gold - Herbjørn Nysveen's personal page

I am a "Regular" customer.

Blue@Gold

The friendly airline

Direct flights

Customer care

My bookings:

From	To	Time	Price
Ostersund London	1/12 at 15:00	SEK 1300	

My personal preferences:

I prefer to sit in the back of the plane.

I prefer to sit near the window.

I prefer to read newspapers.

I prefer to eat meat.

My personal messages:

Unfortunately, we have trouble with our engines. All flights will be transferred from our Boeing 737 machines to our Saab 340 and Cessna machines. Consequently, you should expect a 30 min. delay in your scheduled departure.

We apologize for the inconvenience of transferring you to our smaller aircraft. To make your flight more comfortable, you will receive "Royal"-class services on your upcoming flight. Gourmet meals are among the "Royal"-class services. According to your preferences, you will be seated near the window in the back of the aircraft.

We confirm that all arrangements regarding change of aircraft now has been made. According to our schedule, captain Persson and first officer Stenberg will be responsible for your upcoming flight while Nina, Peter and Anniken will assist in the cabin. For your comfort, newspapers will be available at your seat.

Everything is now ready for your upcoming flight. Please show up at the airport at least 30 minutes before departure. If you need further assistance, show your Blue & Gold card to our support personnel at the airport. We wish you a pleasant flight!

Please select from the following options :
- ◆ Return to the Blue & Gold Homepage
- ◆ Flight booking
- ◆ Delete my current bookings
- ◆ Change my personal preferences

Done   Internet

File   Edit   View   Favorites   Tools   Help

Address http://emarkets.grm.hia.no/dair/forum/default.asp

Blue@ Gold Air

BlueGold Forum

profile | register | active topics | members | search | faq

BlueGold Forum

You last Visited - 11/13/2000 4:08:05 PM

16 Posts in -4 Topics by 18 Use

Forum	Topics	Posts	Last Post	Moderator
Customer support				
📁 Airline services Use this forum to discuss Blue & Gold airline services with our support staff.	1	1	11/13/2000 12:04:55 PM	admin
📁 Suggestions Use this forum to post suggestions to our support staff.	3	5	11/24/2000 10:00:28 AM	admin
Customers' experience exchange				
📁 Aircraft forum Use this forum to discuss aircrafts.	2	6	11/13/2000 12:34:23 PM	admin
📁 Flight experience exchange Use this forum to discuss your experiences with Blue & Gold and other airlines.	1	2	11/13/2000 12:39:15 PM	admin
Customers price and service policy discussions				
📁 Price and service policy Use this forum to discuss the Blue & Gold price and service policy.	0	0	11/13/2000 12:54:04 PM	admin
📁 Advantage program Use this forum to discuss the Blue & Gold Card Advantage Program.	1	2	11/13/2000 12:43:07 PM	admin

⊒ Contains new posts since last visit.
◌ No new posts since the last visit.

http://emarkets.grm.hia.no/dair/default.asp   Internet

Appendix 3: Questionnaire 1 – Study 1

Questionnaire 1

Welcome to the first of our questionnaires ! We now want you to think about Blue & Gold as a relationship partner. Please try to play along with the game and not get hung up with individual survey questions. Please, answer all questions and do all assignments as carefully as possible. Notice that you have 30 minutes to answer all questions. If you use more than 30 minutes, you will have to start all over again. Please fill in the form, and hit the "submit form" button when your are ready.

Please express your level of agreement with the following statements	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
I know a lot about Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold knows a lot about me	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel like Blue & Gold actually cares about me	1	2	3	4	5	
I have no trouble revealing personal information to Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I know things about Blue & Gold that many people just don't know	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold really listens to what I have to say	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel as though I really understand Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel as though Blue & Gold really understands me	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel certain Blue & Gold satisfactory will resolve any conflict we might experience	1	2	3	4	5	

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
Being a Blue & Gold customer says a lot about the kind of person I am	1	2	3	4	5	
Being a Blue & Gold customer says a lot about the kind of person I'd like to be	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold's image is consistent with how I see myself	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold's image is consistent with how I'd like to see myself	1	2	3	4	5	
Being a Blue & Gold customer helps me make a statement about what is important to me in life	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel related to the kind of people who are Blue & Gold customers	1	2	3	4	5	

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
Blue & Gold treats me like an important and valuable customer	1	2	3	4	5	
I have a lot of respect for Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I trust Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold is dependable and reliable	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold has always been good to me	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold is interested in more than just selling me a service and making a profit	1	2	3	4	5	
If Blue & Gold makes a claim or promise about its services, it's probably true	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel like I know what to expect from Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
I will stay with Blue & Gold through good times and bad	1	2	3	4	5	
I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep using Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold can count on me to always be there	1	2	3	4	5	
I have a lot of faith in my future with Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I have made a pledge of sorts to stick with this brand	1	2	3	4	5	

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
I have a powerful attraction toward Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel my relationship with Blue & Gold is exclusive and special	1	2	3	4	5	
I have feelings for Blue & Gold that I don't have for many other brands	1	2	3	4	5	
No other brand in the category can quite take the place of this brand	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel that this brand and I were really "meant for each other"	1	2	3	4	5	

Page 1

Questionnaire 1

	Strongly disagree				Strongly ag
The Blue & Gold is a good brand	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
The Blue & Gold is a high-quality brand	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I like The Blue & Gold	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agr
So far, Blue & Gold has fullfilled my expectations	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
So far, I'm satisfied with The Blue & Gold	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
So far, I think The Blue & Gold has acted in a good way	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agr
I have positive emotions toward Blue & Gold	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
Blue & Gold has personal meaning to me	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I feel that I belong to The Blue & Gold	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I want to keep on as a Blue & Gold customer	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I will recommend Blue & Gold to my friends	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5

Please state your sex: ◌ Male ◌ Femal

Please give us information about your sex and age by filling in these form fields:

And your age: [   ] Years

Please express your level of agreement with the following statements	Strongly disagree				Strongly agr
I feel that I am well oriented about airlines	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I have used many different airlines	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I use Internet very often	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I feel that I'm an experienced user of Internet	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I use e-mail very often	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I feel that I'm an experienced user of e-mail	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I often personalize the web-sites I frequently visit (myBank, myMail etc.)	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I feel I'm an experienced user of personalized web-pages (myBank, myMail etc.)	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I often use discussion forums/-groups	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I feel I'm an experienced user of discussion forums/groups	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agre
It is easy to get full information about airfares	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I always worry whether I use the best airline or not	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
It is difficult to get full information about an airline before a flight	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
It is difficult to describe an airline if you don't have any experience with it	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agre
I feel that I'm trapped in my relation with Blue & Gold	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
It will cost a lot of effort to quit my relationship with Blue & Gold	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
Even if I wanted to, I don't think that I would quit my relationship with Blue & Gold	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
I feel that I get a lot of relevant information about Blue & Gold from their web-site	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
The Blue & Gold has a very informative web-site	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5
It will cost a lot of effort to seach for information about Blue & Gold on their web-site	◌ 1	◌ 2	◌ 3	◌ 4	◌ 5

Submit form   Reset

Appendix 3: Questionnaire 2 – Study 1

Questionnaire 2

Welcome to the second of our questionnaires ! We now want you to think about Blue & Gold as a relationship partner. Please try to play along with the game and not get hung up with individual survey questions. Please, answer all questions and do all assignments as carefully as possible. Notice that you have 30 minutes to answer all questions. If you use more than 30 minutes, you will have to start all over again. Please fill in the form, and hit the "submit form" button when your are ready.

Please express your level of agreement with the following statements	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
I know a lot about Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold knows a lot about me	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel like Blue & Gold actually cares about me	1	2	3	4	5	
I have no trouble revealing personal information to Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I know things about Blue & Gold that many people just don't know	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold really listens to what I have to say	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel as though I really understand Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel as though Blue & Gold really understands me	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel certain Blue & Gold satisfactory will resolve any conflict we might experience	1	2	3	4	5	

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
Being a Blue & Gold customer says a lot about the kind of person I am	1	2	3	4	5	
Being a Blue & Gold customer says a lot about the kind of person I'd like to be	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold's image is consistent with how I see myself	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold's image is consistent with how I'd like to see myself	1	2	3	4	5	
Being a Blue & Gold customer helps me make a statement about what is important to me in life	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel related to the kind of people who are Blue & Gold customers	1	2	3	4	5	

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
Blue & Gold treats me like an important and valuable customer	1	2	3	4	5	
I have a lot of respect for Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I trust Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold is dependable and reliable	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold has always been good to me	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold is interested in more than just selling me a service and making a profit	1	2	3	4	5	
If Blue & Gold makes a claim or promise about its services, it's probably true	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel like I know what to expect from Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
I will stay with Blue & Gold through good times and bad	1	2	3	4	5	
I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep using Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold can count on me to always be there	1	2	3	4	5	
I have a lot of faith in my future with Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I have made a pledge of sorts to stick with this brand	1	2	3	4	5	

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
I have a powerful attraction toward Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel my relationship with Blue & Gold is exclusive and special	1	2	3	4	5	
I have feelings for Blue & Gold that I don't have for many other brands	1	2	3	4	5	
No other brand in the category can quite take the place of this brand	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel that this brand and I were really "meant for each other"	1	2	3	4	5	

Questionnaire 2

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agr
The Blue & Gold is a good brand	⊙ 1	⊙ 2	⊙ 3	⊙ 4	⊙ 5
The Blue & Gold is a high-quality brand	⊙ 1	⊙ 2	⊙ 3	⊙ 4	⊙ 5
I like The Blue & Gold	⊙ 1	⊙ 2	⊙ 3	⊙ 4	⊙ 5

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agr
So far, Blue & Gold has ⊡fullfilled⊡ my expectatio	⊙ 1	⊙ 2	⊙ 3	⊙ 4	⊙ 5
So far, ⊡I'm⊡ satisfied with The Blue & Go	⊙ 1	⊙ 2	⊙ 3	⊙ 4	⊙ 5
So far, I think The Blue & Gold has acted in a good way	⊙ 1	⊙ 2	⊙ 3	⊙ 4	⊙ 5

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agr
I have positive emotions toward Blue & Gold	⊙ 1	⊙ 2	⊙ 3	⊙ 4	⊙ 5
Blue & Gold has personal meaning to me	⊙ 1	⊙ 2	⊙ 3	⊙ 4	⊙ 5
I feel that I belong to The Blue & Gold	⊙ 1	⊙ 2	⊙ 3	⊙ 4	⊙ 5
I want to keep on as a Blue & Gold customer	⊙ 1	⊙ 2	⊙ 3	⊙ 4	⊙ 5
I will recommend Blue & Gold to my friends	⊙ 1	⊙ 2	⊙ 3	⊙ 4	⊙ 5

Submit Form   Reset

Appendix 3: Questionnaire 3 – Study 1

Questionnaire 3

Welcome to the third of our questionnaires ! We now want you to think about Blue & Gold as a relationship partner. Please try to play along with the game and not get hung up with individual survey questions. Please, answer all questions and do all assignments as carefully as possible. Notice that you have 30 minutes to answer all questions. If you use more than 30 minutes, you will have to start all over again. Please fill in the form, and hit the "submit form" button when your are ready.

Please express your level of agreement with the following statements	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
I know a lot about Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold knows a lot about me	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel like Blue & Gold actually cares about me	1	2	3	4	5	
I have no trouble revealing personal information to Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I know things about Blue & Gold that many people just don't know	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold really listens to what I have to say	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel as though I really understand Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel as though Blue & Gold really understands me	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel certain Blue & Gold satisfactory will resolve any conflict we might experience	1	2	3	4	5	

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
Being a Blue & Gold customer says a lot about the kind of person I am	1	2	3	4	5	
Being a Blue & Gold customer says a lot about the kind of person I'd like to be	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold's image is consistent with how I see myself	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold's image is consistent with how I'd like to see myself	1	2	3	4	5	
Being a Blue & Gold customer helps me make a statement about what is important to me in life	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel related to the kind of people who are Blue & Gold customers	1	2	3	4	5	

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
Blue & Gold treats me like an important and valuable customer	1	2	3	4	5	
I have a lot of respect for Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I trust Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold is dependable and reliable	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold has always been good to me	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold is interested in more than just selling me a service and making a profit	1	2	3	4	5	
If Blue & Gold makes a claim or promise about its services, it's probably true	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel like I know what to expect from Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
I will stay with Blue & Gold through good times and bad	1	2	3	4	5	
I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep using Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
Blue & Gold can count on me to always be there	1	2	3	4	5	
I have a lot of faith in my future with Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I have made a pledge of sorts to stick with this brand	1	2	3	4	5	

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree	
I have a powerful attraction toward Blue & Gold	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel my relationship with Blue & Gold is exclusive and special	1	2	3	4	5	
I have feelings for Blue & Gold that I don't have for many other brands	1	2	3	4	5	
No other brand in the category can quite take the place of this brand	1	2	3	4	5	
I feel that this brand and I were really "meant for each other"	1	2	3	4	5	

Questionnaire 3

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
The Blue & Gold is a good brand	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
The Blue & Gold is a high-quality brand	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
I like The Blue & Gold	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
So far, Blue & Gold has ⸏fullfilled⸏ my expectatio	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
So far, ⸏I'm⸏ satisfied with The Blue & Go	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
So far, I think The Blue & Gold has acted in a good way	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
I have positive emotions toward Blue & Gold	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Blue & Gold has personal meaning to me	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
I feel that I belong to The Blue & Gold	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
I want to keep on as a Blue & Gold customer	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
I will recommend Blue & Gold to my friends	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
Using the Blue & Gold web-site enables me to establish my relation to Blue & Gold more quickly	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Using the Blue & Gold web-site improves my relation to Blue & Gold	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Using the Blue & Gold web-site increases the quality of my relation to Blue & Gold	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Using the Blue & Gold web-site enhances the effectiveness of my relation to Blue & Gold	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Using the Blue & Gold web-site makes it easier for me to have a relation to Blue & Gold	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
The Blue & Gold web-site is useful in my relation to Blue & Gold	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
Learning to operate the Blue & Gold web-site is easy for me	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
I find it easy to get the Blue & Gold web-site to do what I want it to do	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
My interaction with the Blue & Gold web-site is clear and understandable	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
I find the Blue & Gold web-site flexible to interact with	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
It is easy for me to become skillful at using the Blue & Gold web-site	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
I find the Blue & Gold web-site easy to use	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

Please rate the following statements

	Good				Bad
All things considered, using the Blue & Gold web-site in my relation to The Blue & Gold is	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

	Wise				Foolish
All things considered, using the Blue & Gold web-site in my relation to The Blue & Gold is	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

	Favorable				Unfavorable
All things considered, using the Blue & Gold web-site in my relation to The Blue & Gold is	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

	Beneficial				Harmful
All things considered, using the Blue & Gold web-site in my relation to The Blue & Gold is	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

	Positive				Negative
All things considered, using the Blue & Gold web-site in my relation to The Blue & Gold is	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

Write a few words briefly explaining what you think is the purpose of the experiment you have participated in (max. 255 characters)

Appendix 4: Descriptive Statistics – Study 1

Measurement 1

	N Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Variance Statistic	Skewness Statistic	Skewness Std. Error	Kurtosis Statistic	Kurtosis Std. Error
KNOWLED1	123	3,24	1,48	2,186	,096	,218	-,743	,433
KNOWLED2	123	2,42	1,30	1,689	,833	,218	,343	,433
CARING	123	3,32	1,49	2,218	,271	,218	-,608	,433
SELFDIS1	121	3,94	1,51	2,272	,144	,220	-,460	,437
SELFDIS2	123	3,70	1,83	3,343	,202	,218	-,984	,433
LISTENIN	123	3,45	1,44	2,085	,157	,218	-,273	,433
UNDERST1	123	3,56	1,49	2,232	,023	,218	-,869	,433
UNDERST2	123	3,20	1,45	2,093	,181	,218	-,609	,433
CONFLICT	121	4,03	1,36	1,849	-,404	,220	-,226	,437
ACTUALS1	123	3,13	1,44	2,081	,252	,218	-,589	,433
IDEALSE1	123	2,82	1,54	2,378	,592	,218	-,290	,433
ACTUALS2	123	2,90	1,38	1,908	,273	,218	-,687	,433
IDEALSE2	122	2,83	1,43	2,045	,464	,219	-,396	,435
STATEMEN	123	2,61	1,44	2,060	,495	,218	-,714	,433
TYPICAL	122	2,94	1,45	2,104	,184	,219	-,978	,435
RESPECT1	123	4,11	1,52	2,308	-,125	,218	-,519	,433
RESPECT2	123	3,77	1,45	2,112	-,132	,218	-,373	,433
TRUST	123	4,05	1,45	2,112	-,233	,218	-,352	,433
RELIABIL	123	3,97	1,39	1,933	-,239	,218	-,126	,433
QUALITY	123	4,26	1,71	2,915	-,144	,218	-,684	,433
ALTRUISM	123	3,95	1,49	2,227	-,126	,218	-,502	,433
HONESTY	123	4,37	1,40	1,955	-,277	,218	-,476	,433
EXPECT	123	4,00	1,49	2,213	-,197	,218	-,723	,433
STAYING	123	3,19	1,48	2,186	,259	,218	-,316	,433
SACRIFIC	123	3,01	1,45	2,090	,383	,218	-,500	,433
COUNTON	123	2,64	1,45	2,117	,808	,218	,147	,433
FUTURE	122	3,23	1,54	2,377	,336	,219	-,628	,435
PLEDGE	122	2,83	1,49	2,226	,361	,219	-,659	,435
ATTRACTI	123	2,98	1,41	1,975	,260	,218	-,619	,433
EXCLUSIV	123	3,22	1,61	2,583	,225	,218	-,939	,433
FEELINGS	122	2,84	1,51	2,287	,444	,219	-,713	,435
CATEGORY	123	2,93	1,53	2,340	,293	,218	-,868	,433
DESTINY	122	2,80	1,55	2,391	,486	,219	-,671	,435
Valid N (listwise)	115							

Measurement 2

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
KNOWLED1	117	3,74	1,49	2,231	,055	,224	-,913	,444
KNOWLED2	117	2,89	1,35	1,824	,569	,224	,044	,444
CARING	117	3,84	1,55	2,413	,009	,224	-,589	,444
SELFDIS1	117	3,85	1,37	1,884	,165	,224	-,333	,444
SELFDIS2	117	3,85	1,56	2,442	-,043	,224	-,676	,444
LISTENIN	116	3,78	1,52	2,310	,146	,225	-,369	,446
UNDERST1	117	3,74	1,47	2,162	,024	,224	-,271	,444
UNDERST2	117	3,46	1,42	2,009	,061	,224	-,187	,444
CONFLICT	117	4,15	1,50	2,246	-,378	,224	-,268	,444
ACTUALS1	117	2,95	1,39	1,946	,364	,224	-,476	,444
IDEALSE1	117	2,72	1,38	1,911	,382	,224	-,747	,444
ACTUALS2	117	2,79	1,33	1,768	,161	,224	-,984	,444
IDEALSE2	117	2,73	1,37	1,890	,345	,224	-,759	,444
STATEMEN	117	2,74	1,43	2,054	,534	,224	-,344	,444
TYPICAL	116	2,82	1,36	1,837	,272	,225	-,731	,446
RESPECT1	116	4,25	1,49	2,207	-,230	,225	-,554	,446
RESPECT2	117	4,06	1,47	2,160	-,006	,224	-,406	,444
TRUST	117	4,27	1,52	2,304	-,145	,224	-,489	,444
RELIABIL	116	4,10	1,51	2,285	-,148	,225	-,709	,446
QUALITY	116	4,31	1,60	2,546	-,183	,225	-,675	,446
ALTRUISM	117	3,98	1,51	2,293	-,046	,224	-,530	,444
HONESTY	117	4,31	1,51	2,267	-,324	,224	-,424	,444
EXPECT	117	4,15	1,48	2,177	-,075	,224	-,484	,444
STAYING	117	2,93	1,39	1,944	,260	,224	-,739	,444
SACRIFIC	117	2,95	1,46	2,135	,411	,224	-,694	,444
COUNTON	117	2,63	1,45	2,114	,700	,224	-,128	,444
FUTURE	117	3,38	1,50	2,256	,172	,224	-,807	,444
PLEDGE	117	2,66	1,30	1,692	,303	,224	-,890	,444
ATTRACTI	116	2,92	1,37	1,863	,247	,225	-,481	,446
EXCLUSIV	116	3,23	1,61	2,580	,291	,225	-,907	,446
FEELINGS	116	2,88	1,46	2,124	,368	,225	-,671	,446
CATEGORY	116	2,92	1,50	2,246	,387	,225	-,713	,446
DESTINY	116	2,72	1,48	2,188	,488	,225	-,475	,446
Valid N (listwise)	112							

Measurement 3

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
KNOWLED1	102	4,23	1,48	2,176	-,135	,239	-,952	,474
KNOWLED2	102	3,16	1,38	1,896	,455	,239	-,297	,474
CARING	102	4,32	1,59	2,538	-,248	,239	-,440	,474
SELFDIS1	102	4,17	1,55	2,417	-,122	,239	-,681	,474
SELFDIS2	102	4,19	1,61	2,589	-,048	,239	-,857	,474
LISTENIN	102	4,07	1,47	2,164	-,006	,239	-,511	,474
UNDERST1	101	4,12	1,44	2,066	-,151	,240	-,446	,476
UNDERST2	101	3,84	1,46	2,135	,006	,240	-,312	,476
CONFLICT	101	4,55	1,47	2,170	-,262	,240	-,231	,476
ACTUALS1	101	3,14	1,50	2,261	,227	,240	-,466	,476
IDEALSE1	101	2,88	1,54	2,366	,439	,240	-,625	,476
ACTUALS2	102	3,05	1,52	2,305	,349	,239	-,571	,474
IDEALSE2	102	2,98	1,57	2,455	,474	,239	-,418	,474
STATEMEN	101	2,93	1,61	2,605	,580	,240	-,414	,476
TYPICAL	102	3,11	1,55	2,394	,143	,239	-,915	,474
RESPECT1	102	4,87	1,46	2,132	-,242	,239	-,563	,474
RESPECT2	102	4,48	1,47	2,153	-,191	,239	-,205	,474
TRUST	102	4,69	1,42	2,019	-,292	,239	-,122	,474
RELIABIL	102	4,55	1,35	1,814	-,218	,239	-,024	,474
QUALITY	102	4,93	1,37	1,867	-,539	,239	,173	,474
ALTRUISM	101	4,40	1,51	2,282	-,081	,240	-,477	,476
HONESTY	101	4,73	1,38	1,918	-,404	,240	-,206	,476
EXPECT	101	4,70	1,49	2,211	-,367	,240	-,339	,476
STAYING	102	3,29	1,50	2,249	,362	,239	-,427	,474
SACRIFIC	101	3,13	1,46	2,133	,401	,240	-,547	,476
COUNTON	102	3,01	1,64	2,683	,563	,239	-,468	,474
FUTURE	102	3,63	1,55	2,394	,190	,239	-,562	,474
PLEDGE	102	3,08	1,58	2,489	,362	,239	-,638	,474
ATTRACTI	101	3,30	1,57	2,451	,178	,240	-,745	,476
EXCLUSIV	100	3,64	1,69	2,859	,022	,241	-,959	,478
FEELINGS	100	3,36	1,71	2,920	,139	,241	**-1,125**	,478
CATEGORY	101	3,41	1,69	2,864	,172	,240	-,942	,476
DESTINY	100	3,06	1,69	2,865	,351	,241	-,946	,478
Valid N (listwise)	90							

Appendix 5: Measurement Model – Brand Relationship Quality

Chi-Square=332.69, df=98, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.069
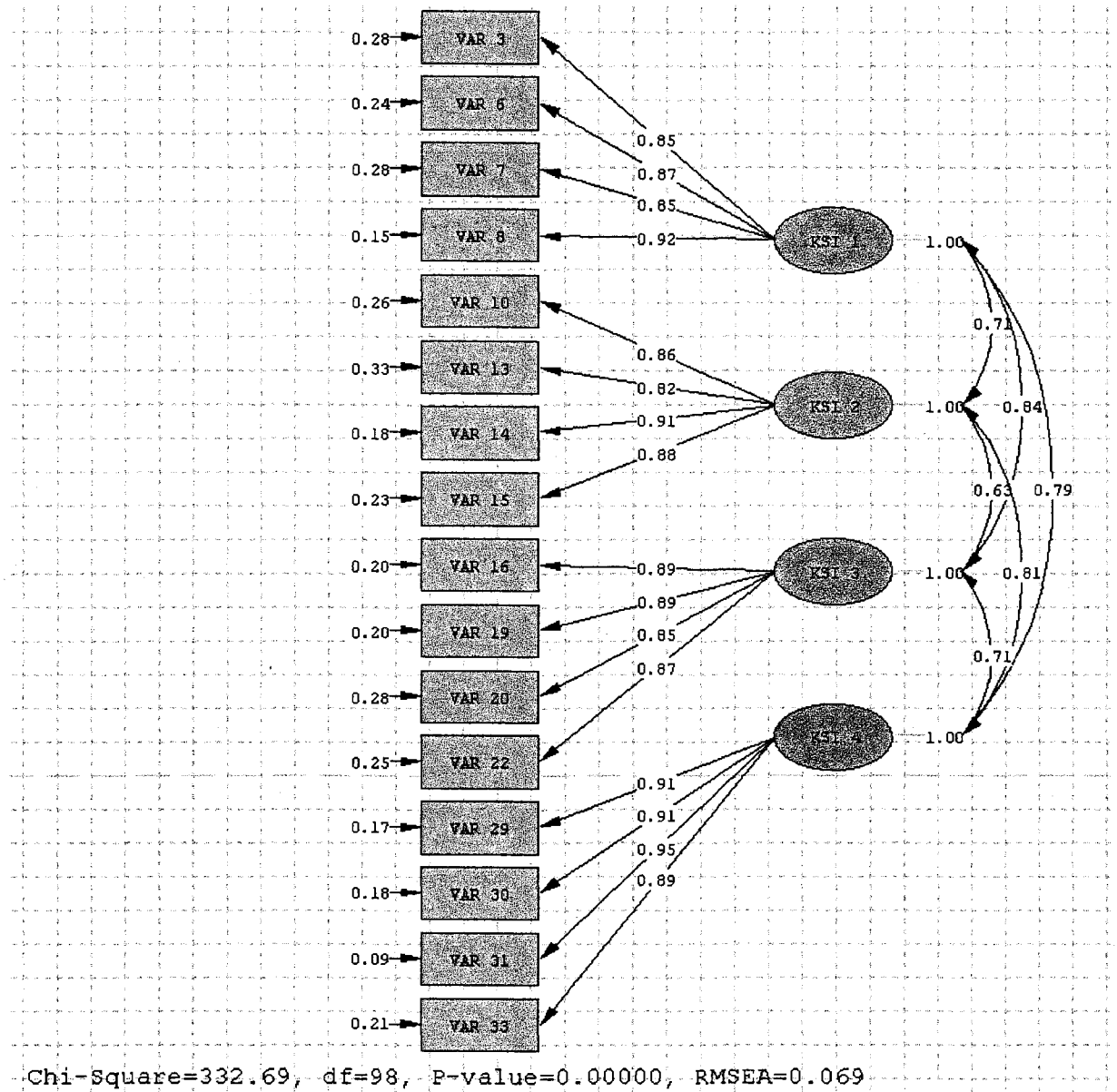
KSI 1: Intimacy
KSI 2: Self Concept Connection
KSI 3: Partner Quality
KSI 4: Love/Passion

Appendix 6: New Press release

The following new press release was posted in the "News"-section of the website after the second event.

Blue@Gold Air

Recent Press Releases from Blue & Gold

- **Blue & Gold, Telia and Tenzing test wireless e-mail and Internet onboard aircraft**
- **No intervention againts KLM equity stake in Blue & Gold Holding**
- **Partner Agreement between Blue & Gold and KLM, Desember 14, 2001**
- **Blue & Gold introduced, November 07, 2001**

Blue & Gold, Telia and Tenzing test wireless e-mail and Internet onboard aircraft

Blue&Gold has signed an agreement with Telia and Seattle-based Tenzing Communications Inc. to test Tenzing's communications system for wireless Internet access onboard aircraft. Blue&Gold passengers will gain access to e-mail and Internet via portable PC or Mac. Blue&Gold is the first airline in the world to test wireless e-mail and Internet for passengers onboard an aircraft. The test will begin during 2001. Blue&Gold is also working to find a solution so that passenge can gain access to their own company's e-mail system behind a firewall.

During the test, passengers will be able to send and receive e-mail and have access to the Internet via an Internet server onboard the aircraft. A LAN (Local Area Network) based on IEEE 802.11b technology, the first standard developed for wireless networks, will be installed in the cabin. Passengers will gain access to the Blue&Gold website and other travel-related Internet portals. The onboard server is linked to a ground station when the aircraft is airborne and the content is transmitted and updated at regular intervals.

"The new wireless technology creates possibilities for our passengers to gain access to e-mail and Internet onboard and on the ground. Our customers alread have access to wireless communications in our KLM/Blue&Gold lounges through Telia HomeRun," says Jan Olson, head of Blue&Gold Products and Service Development. "During 2001, all KLM/Blue&Gold lounges will be equipped with this wireless network. In future, we will also offer Innovative services to make the customer's travel easier. Telia and Tenzing play key roles in this effort." Telia Mobile has installed networks for wireless services at airports and other public areas to provide travelers the possibility of being online throughout their trip. A roaming agreement provides Tenzing Global subscribers and Telia Mobile HomeRun access to each other's wireless network. In future, Tenzing also foresees being able to implement broadband connections

ABOUT Blue & Gold
Blue & Gold Air was formed in Bergen November 2001. The company will focus on becoming a resonable and preferred airline partner for both business and pleasure travelers in the western part of Norway. Today, Blue & Gold is the first and only 100 % online airline company in Norway. The company serves 4 domestic and 3 international destinations. Blue & Gold has 6 aircraft, mainly SAAB 340s, Boeing 737's and Cessna's.

Appendix 7: Final Pretest of Relationship Motives Manipulation

Treatment 1: Efficiency motives

Thank you for participating in this survey!

As you know, Internet and the word wide web (www) have had a profound effect on businesses and consumers all over the world. Buying products and services on-line are often much more efficient and effective than buying the same goods through traditional channels. This is especially true for tourism services like hotels and airfares, where direct on-line bookings normally are both more cost-efficient and time-efficient than bookings conducted through traveling agencies or other intermediaries.

Now, please forget for a moment where you are and who you are, and try to consider yourself in the following situation:

You are working as a consultant in a large firm in Bergen. Most of your projects and clients are located in London. Therefore, you expect to make at least three round trips to London by plane each month. In order to save valuable time and money, your firm has just signed a business carrier contract with the Blue&Gold Air, a new on-line airline company that only permits bookings via the Internet. All of your - and your firm's – future flights will be served by Blue&Gold Air. Your first meeting in London will be held on February 8th this year.

Consequently, you now find yourself in a position where you are to visit the Blue&Gold web-site, explore the site and information listed, and book your first – out of many – round trip tickets to London. You should depart from Bergen at 0800 on February 8th and return from London at 1600.

Please turn the page, read the instructions, and answer the questions listed

Now, imagine that you are about to log-on to the web-site of Blue&Gold Air for the first time in order to get familiar with the web-site and to book your fare.

Keeping the scenario on the previous page in mind, indicate to which extent the following statements describe your expectations and motives for exploring the web-site:

	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree

1) I will put extra efforts into investigating the opportunities of
   making future bookings with Blue&Gold swift and easy   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2) I will do my best to simplify future bookings with Blue&Gold   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3) I will put extra efforts into making my future bookings as efficient
   and expedient as possible   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4) It is more important to me that Blue&Gold bookings are made
   fast and efficient than it is for me to be able to socialize and
   communicate through the Blue&Gold web-site   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5) It is very important to me that the Blue&Gold offers
   a highly competitive frequent flyer program   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6) I am quite nervous about booking the flight and making
   the trip to London   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7) I would appreciate it if the Blue&Gold could help me relieve
   some of the risk and stress I feel about the upcoming flight   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8) I will put extra efforts into making sure that my booking is correct   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9) I would be willing to sacrifice a lot if this could prevent the
   flight to London from being delayed   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10) I will probably devote special attention to safety issues listed on
   the Blue&Gold web-site   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11) I expect the Blue&Gold to be friendlier and more service-
   minded than most other airline companies   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12) I think I will enjoy certain social aspects of my relationship
   with Blue&Gold   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13) It is more important to me to socialize and get familiar with
   Blue&Gold than it is to save a few minutes on my trip to London   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14) I trust the Blue&Gold to behave more friendly and caring towards
   me than most other airlines would   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15) I expect Blue&Gold to be easier to relate to than other
   airline companies   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Thanks you for your time!   A

Treatment 2: Risk-reducing motives

Thank you for participating in this survey!

As you know, Internet and the world wide web (www) have had a profound effect on businesses and consumers all over the world. Experts say that the Internet shifts power from the businesses (sellers) to the consumers, as the amount and accessibility of information on-line is far greater than off-line. This is especially true for tourism services like hotels and airfares, where consumers easily can gain access to information on the price, safety and quality of different providers, as well as on-line feedback from other customers and visitors. By accessing and investigating all this information, consumers may reduce the risk and uncertainty they experience when buying a product or service on the Internet.

Now, please forget for a moment where you are and who you are, and try to consider yourself in the following situation:

You have just started your new job as a consultant in a large firm in Bergen. One of your first assignments is arranging an important presentation in London, where one senior representative of your firm and yourself are to meet with a potential major international client. Your senior representative is well known for his pedantic and irritable character. Besides preparing the meeting agenda, practicalities and background papers, you are to make all flight-arrangements to London for you and your senior colleague. You should take extra care to secure that all bookings are in order, as the past meeting with this client was canceled due to a flight delay. Needless to say, your senior representative was quite unhappy about this incident. The meeting will take place from noon until 2.30 pm on February 6th this year. Flight bookings are to be made through the Blue&Gold Air, a new on-line airline company that only permits bookings via the Internet.

Consequently, you now find yourself in a position where you are to visit the Blue&Gold web-site, explore the site and information listed, and book a suitable round trip ticket for you and your senior colleague. To make sure that there are available seats, you should make the booking no later than January 25th. The morning flight is often fully booked, and by booking the 10am flight you will probably not make the meeting in time. Please also note that the senior representative is afraid of flying after the WTC terror incident. You should therefore take extra care to make the flying experience as safe and stress-free as possible for him.

Please turn the page, read the instructions, and answer the questions listed

Treatment 3: Social motives

Thank you for participating in this survey!

As you know, Internet and the world wide web (www) have had a profound effect on businesses and consumers all over the world. The Internet represents new opportunities and ways for business and consumers to interact and socialize. People from all over the world (and young, highly educated Scandinavians in particular) have started to develop and maintain both personal relationships and business relationships through new communication means such as e-mail, online chatting and other web-based communication platforms. As a consequence of this we observe that many brand web-sites, in addition to delivering their traditional products and services, also serve their consumers' need for social contact, communication and information. This communication and "socialization" revolution is especially salient in the tourism industry, which has been one of the fastest industries in adopting web-based communication.

Now, please try to consider yourself in the following situation:

Imagine that you are going on a weekend trip to London from February 8th to February 10th this year. Several of your friends have recommended this new, 100% Internet-based airline company – the Blue&Gold Air – that recently started regular flights from Bergen to London. The Blue&Gold Airline represents itself with the slogan "the friendly airline", and are focusing on dialogue and direct communication with its customers. In their recommendations, your friends actually highlighted the friendliness and service-mindedness of the Blue&Gold, both when communicating and travelling with the company. After having heard their arguments, you decide to give the Blue&Gold a go and book your flight to London.

Consequently, you now find yourself in a position where you are to visit the Blue&Gold web-site, explore the site and information listed, and order your flight from Bergen to London for February 8th and from London to Bergen for February 10th. Try to communicate and interact with Blue&Gold and "make friends" with the web-site and the Blue&Gold brand.

Please turn the page, read the instructions, and answer the questions listed

Appendix 8: Measurement Model - Relationship Motives - Pretest
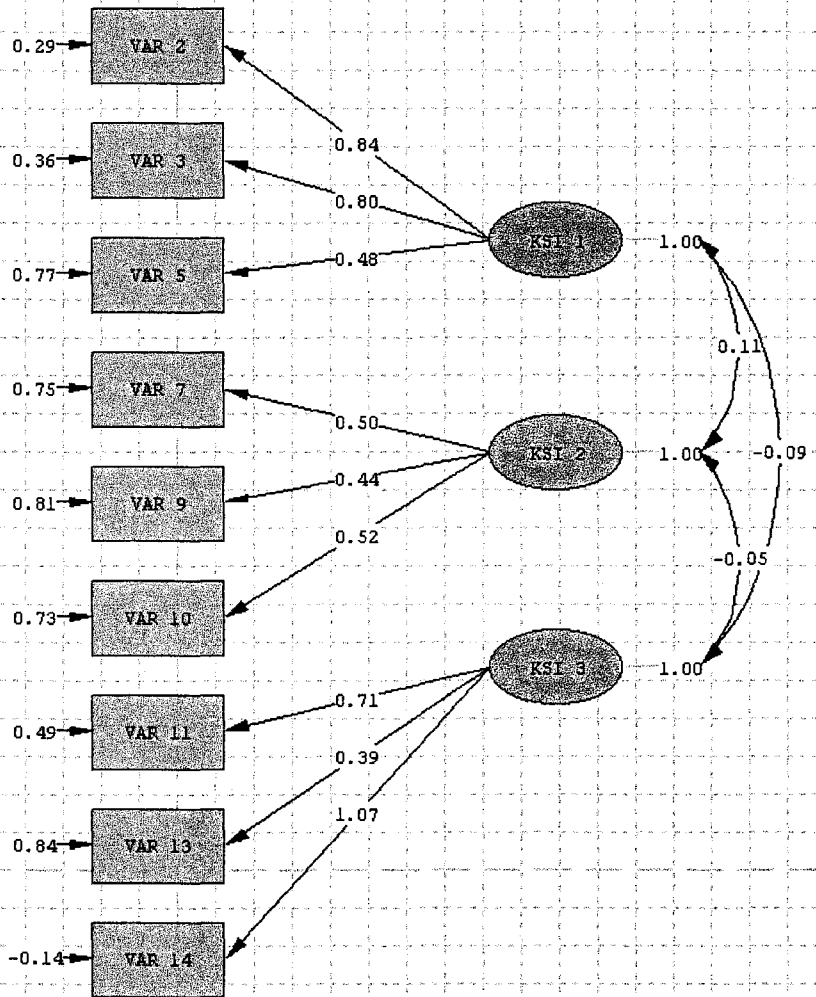
Chi-Square=42.07, df=24, P-value=0.01267, RMSEA=0.069

KSI 1: Efficiency motives
KSI 2: Risk Reducing motives
KSI 3: Social Motives

Appendix 9: Brief/Instruction Study 2 – *Efficiency motives*

Blue@
Air

Stavanger, January 22, 2002

Participants in the Blue & Gold Experiment,

Dear Participant,

We are very pleased that you are willing to take part in this experiment that will last for 12 days – from Thursday, January 24 (today) until Monday, February 4.

First, we want to point out that participating in the experiment is harmless and not unpleasant in any ways. The purpose of the experiment is not to study characteristics about you, your intelligence, your abilities, or your performances. The focus of the experiment is how online companies, such as Blue & Gold Air use the Internet. Unfortunately, to make the experiment as realistic as possible, we can't tell you more about the purpose of the experiment today. However, you will be given full information about the whole experiment in a debriefing later on.

When participating in the experiment, you are requested to always visit a particular web site. In your case, the web address of this web site is "http://emarkets.grm.hia.no/deair/", and your user name is "dae003". (The "-signs are not part of the address and user name).

The task
As you know, Internet and the word wide web (www) have had a profound effect on businesses and consumers all over the world. Buying products and services on-line are often much more efficient and effective than buying the same goods through traditional channels. This is especially true for tourism services like hotels and airfares, where direct on-line bookings normally are both more cost-efficient and time-efficient than bookings conducted through traveling agencies or other intermediaries.

During the experiment you are to accomplish a particular task. To accomplish your task, you should consider yourself in the following situation:

You are working as a consultant in a large firm in Bergen. Most of your projects and clients are located in London. Therefore, you expect to make at least three round trips to London by plane each month. In order to save valuable time and money, your firm has just signed a business carrier contract with the Blue & Gold Air, a new on-line airline company that only permits bookings via the Internet. All of your - and your firm's – future flights will be served by Blue & Gold Air. Your first meeting in London will be held on February 8th this year.

Consequently, you now find yourself in a position where you are to visit the Blue & Gold web-site, explore the site and information listed, and book your first – out of many – round trip tickets to London. You should depart from Bergen at 0800 on February 8th and return from London at 1600.

Important to remember
It is most important that you visit the indicated web site at least once every day during the experiment period, and that you start visiting the web site today. Therefore, keep this paper during the experiment in case you forget the web address. At the web site you will be given further instructions on what to do during the experiment period. To accomplish the experiment in a reliable way, it is most important that you carry out the tasks and answer the questionnaires that will be presented during the experiment. To accomplish the tasks you will need the information presented to you on the Blue & Gold card enclosed in this envelope. Therefore, please take good care of your card during the experiment (you may want to put it in your wallet together with your other personal cards). It is also most important that you take care of the password given to you on the attached letter enclosed in this envelope. You will need your username (on the Blue & Gold card enclosed) and the password (on the letter enclosed) every day when you visit the Blue & Gold web site.

To make your participation in the experiment worth your efforts, we will have a lottery at the end of the experiment. The prices have a total value of NOK 10.000. Only respondents who have accomplished their task within the given time limit and answered all questionnaires presented during the experiment, will be allowed to take part in the lottery.

NB!
If you loose any of the information enclosed in this envelope, please feel free to contact Blue & Gold Air by e-mail (<u>bluegold@inbox.as</u>), and you will be given new information.

Thank you for participating in the experiment!

Sincerely,

Leif B. Methlie   Maria Lexhagen
(SNF)   (Blue & Gold Air)

Dear Participant,

Your password is "abbacd". This password is for use when visiting the Blue & Gold Air web site. It is required when visiting the web site, when using particular web services, and is also required when using other Blue & Gold Services at airports and collaborating partners.

Please, remember that the combination of your username, password and card number may give other people access to your personal services. For security reasons you should always keep your password separate from your username and card number.

Appendix 9: Brief/Instruction Study 2 – *Risk Reducing motives*

Blue@
Air

Pedersgaten 6, 4013 Stavanger, Norway

Stavanger, January 22, 2002

Participants in the Blue & Gold Experiment,

Dear Participant,

We are very pleased that you are willing to take part in this experiment that will last for 12 days – from Thursday, January 24 (today) until Monday, February 4.

First, we want to point out that participating in the experiment is harmless and not unpleasant in any ways. The purpose of the experiment is not to study characteristics about you, your intelligence, your abilities, or your performances. The focus of the experiment is how online companies, such as Blue & Gold Air use the Internet. Unfortunately, to make the experiment as realistic as possible, we can't tell you more about the purpose of the experiment today. However, you will be given full information about the whole experiment in a debriefing later on.

When participating in the experiment, you are requested to always visit a particular web site. In your case, the web address of this web site is "http://emarkets.grm.hia.no/drair/", and your user name is "dar007". (The "-signs are not part of the address and user name).

The task
As you know, Internet and the world wide web (www) have had a profound effect on businesses and consumers all over the world. Experts say that the Internet shifts power from the businesses (sellers) to the consumers, as the amount and accessibility of information on-line is far greater than off-line. This is especially true for tourism services like hotels and airfares, where consumers easily can gain access to information on the price, safety and quality of different providers, as well as on-line feedback from other customers and visitors. By accessing and investigating all this information, consumers may reduce the risk and uncertainty they experience when buying a product or service on the Internet.

During the experiment you are to accomplish a particular task. To accomplish your task, you should consider yourself in the following situation:

You have just started your new job as a consultant in a large firm in Bergen. One of your first assignments is arranging an important presentation in London, where one senior representative of your firm and yourself are to meet with a potential major international client. Your senior representative is well known for his pedantic and irritable character. Besides preparing the meeting agenda, practicalities and background papers, you are to make all flight-arrangements to London for you and your senior colleague. You should take extra care to secure that all bookings are in order, as the past meeting with this client was canceled due to a flight delay. Needless to say, your senior representative was quite unhappy about this incident. The meeting will take place from noon until 2.30 pm on February 8th this year. Flight bookings are to be made through the Blue & Gold Air, a new on-line airline company that only permits bookings via the Internet.

Consequently, you now find yourself in a position where you are to visit the Blue & Gold web-site, explore the site and information listed, and book a suitable round trip ticket for you and your senior colleague. To make sure that there are available seats, you should make the booking no later than January 25th. The morning flight is often fully booked, and by booking the 10am flight you will probably not make the meeting in time. Please also note that the senior representative is afraid of flying after the WTC terror incident. You should therefore take extra care to make the flying experience as safe and stress-free as possible for him.

Important to remember
It is most important that you visit the indicated web site at least once every day during the experiment period, and that you start visiting the web site today. Therefore, keep this paper during the experiment in case you forget the web address. At the web site you will be given further instructions on what to do during the experiment period. To accomplish the experiment in a reliable way, it is most important that you carry out the tasks and answer the questionnaires that will be presented during the experiment. To accomplish the tasks you will need the information presented to you on the Blue & Gold card enclosed in this envelope. Therefore, please take good care of your card during the experiment (you may want to put it in your wallet together with your other personal cards). It is also most important that you take care of the password given to you on the attached letter enclosed in this envelope. You will need your username (on the Blue & Gold card enclosed) and the password (on the letter enclosed) every day when you visit the Blue & Gold web site.

To make your participation in the experiment worth your efforts, we will have a lottery at the end of the experiment. The prices have a total value of NOK 10.000. Only respondents who have accomplished their task within the given time limit and answered all questionnaires presented during the experiment, will be allowed to take part in the lottery.

NB!
If you loose any of the information enclosed in this envelope, please feel free to contact Blue & Gold Air by e-mail (bluegold@inbox.as), and you will be given new information.

Thank you for participating in the experiment!

Sincerely,

Leif B. Methlie   Maria Lexhagen
(SNF)   (Blue & Gold Air)

Dear Participant,

Your password is "idigii". This password is for use when visiting the Blue & Gold Air web site. It is required when visiting the web site, when using particular web services, and is also required when using other Blue & Gold Services at airports and collaborating partners.

Please, remember that the combination of your username, password and card number may give other people access to your personal services. For security reasons you should always keep your password separate from your username and card number.

Appendix 9: Brief/Instruction Study 2 – *Social Motives*

Blue@

Air

Pedersgaten 6, 4013 Stavanger, Norway

Stavanger, January 22, 2002

Participants in the Blue & Gold Experiment,

Dear Participant,

We are very pleased that you are willing to take part in this experiment that will last for 12 days – from Thursday, January 24 (today) until Monday, February 4.

First, we want to point out that participating in the experiment is harmless and not unpleasant in any ways. The purpose of the experiment is not to study characteristics about you, your intelligence, your abilities, or your performances. The focus of the experiment is how online companies, such as Blue & Gold Air use the Internet. Unfortunately, to make the experiment as realistic as possible, we can't tell you more about the purpose of the experiment today. However, you will be given full information about the whole experiment in a debriefing later on.

When participating in the experiment, you are requested to always visit a particular web site. In your case, the web address of this web site is "http://emarkets.grm.hia.no/psair/", and your user name is "pas052". (The "-signs are not part of the address and user name).

The task

As you know, Internet and the world wide web (www) have had a profound effect on businesses and consumers all over the world. The Internet represents new opportunities and ways for businesses and consumers to interact and socialize. People from all over the world (and young, highly educated Scandinavians in particular) have started to develop and maintain both personal relationships and business relationships through new communication means such as e-mail, online chatting and other web-based communication platforms. As a consequence of this we observe that many brand web-sites, in addition to delivering their traditional products and services, also serve their consumers' need for social contact, communication and information. This communication and "socialization" revolution is especially salient in the tourism industry, which has been one of the fastest industries in adopting web-based communication.

During the experiment you are to accomplish a particular task. To accomplish your task, you should consider yourself in the following situation:

Imagine that you are going on a weekend trip to London from February 8th to February 10th this year. Several of your friends have recommended this new, 100% Internet-based airline company – the Blue & Gold Air – that recently started regular flights from Bergen to London. The Blue & Gold Airline represents itself with the slogan "the friendly airline", and are focusing on dialogue and direct communication with its customers. In their recommendations, your friends actually highlighted the friendliness and service-mindedness of the Blue & Gold, both when communicating and traveling with the company. After having heard their arguments, you decide to give the Blue & Gold a go and book your flight to London.

Consequently, you now find yourself in a position where you are to visit the Blue & Gold web-site, explore the site and information listed, and order your flight from Bergen to London for February 8th and from London to Bergen for February 10th. Try to communicate and interact with Blue & Gold and "make friends" with the web-site and the Blue & Gold brand.

Important to remember
It is most important that you visit the indicated web site at least once every day during the experiment period, and that you start visiting the web site today. Therefore, keep this paper during the experiment in case you forget the web address. At the web site you will be given further instructions on what to do during the experiment period. To accomplish the experiment in a reliable way, it is most important that you carry out the tasks and answer the questionnaires that will be presented during the experiment. To accomplish the tasks you will need the information presented to you on the Blue & Gold card enclosed in this envelope. Therefore, please take good care of your card during the experiment (you may want to put it in your wallet together with your other personal cards). It is also most important that you take care of the password given to you on the attached letter enclosed in this envelope. You will need your username (on the Blue & Gold card enclosed) and the password (on the letter enclosed) every day when you visit the Blue & Gold web site.

To make your participation in the experiment worth your efforts, we will have a lottery at the end of the experiment. The prices have a total value of NOK 10.000. Only respondents who have accomplished their task within the given time limit and answered all questionnaires presented during the experiment, will be allowed to take part in the lottery.

NB!
If you loose any of the information enclosed in this envelope, please feel free to contact Blue & Gold Air by e-mail (bluegold@inbox.as), and you will be given new information.

Thank you for participating in the experiment!

Sincerely,

Leif B. Methlie   Maria Lexhagen
(SNF)   (Blue & Gold Air)

Dear Participant,

Your password is "gdeghi". This password is for use when visiting the Blue & Gold Air web site. It is required when visiting the web site, when using particular web services, and is also required when using other Blue & Gold Services at airports and collaborating partners.

Please, remember that the combination of your username, password and card number may give other people access to your personal services. For security reasons you should always keep your password separate from your username and card number.

Appendix 10: Relationship motives reminder

Reminder appearing on screen immediately after having answered questionnaire 1 and questionnaire 2:

For efficiency motives:
Questionnaire 1/2 has been received. Thank you!
When returning to the Blue&Gold web-site, please keep in mind your task of *making this and future flights as efficient and expedient as possible.*

For risk reduction motives:
Questionnaire 1/2 has been received. Thank you!
When returning to the Blue&Gold web-site, please keep in mind your task of *exploring the web-site information of Blue&Gold thoroughly, in order to reduce the uncertainty and risk associated with your upcoming flight.*

For social motives:
Questionnaire 1/2 has been received. Thank you!
When returning to the Blue&Gold web-site, please keep in mind your task of *exploring, communicating and "making friends" with the Blue and Gold brand.*

Appendix 11: Descriptive Statistics – Study 2

Measurement 1

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
LOVE1	239	3,100	1,219	-0,039	0,157	-0,521	0,314
LOVE2	239	3,109	1,380	0,190	0,157	-0,798	0,314
LOVE3	239	2,845	1,383	0,377	0,157	-0,734	0,314
LOVE4	239	2,536	1,324	0,629	0,157	-0,156	0,314
SELF1	239	3,017	1,512	0,266	0,157	-0,979	0,314
SELF2	239	3,238	1,469	0,126	0,157	-0,663	0,314
SELF3	239	2,531	1,425	0,709	0,157	-0,254	0,314
SELF4	239	2,983	1,495	0,371	0,157	-0,669	0,314
SELF5	239	2,879	1,353	0,325	0,157	-0,427	0,314
INTIM1	239	3,218	1,450	0,165	0,157	-0,676	0,314
INTIM2	238	3,437	1,418	0,116	0,158	-0,405	0,314
INTIM3	239	3,238	1,371	0,253	0,157	-0,062	0,314
INTIM4	237	2,958	1,469	0,381	0,158	-0,465	0,315
QUAL1	238	4,092	1,328	-0,280	0,158	-0,034	0,314
QUAL2	239	4,247	1,234	-0,399	0,157	0,638	0,314
QUAL3	239	4,335	1,183	-0,229	0,157	0,815	0,314
QUAL4	236	4,538	1,168	-0,295	0,158	0,477	0,316
QUAL5	239	4,335	1,349	-0,245	0,157	-0,188	0,314
COMMIT1	237	2,519	1,281	0,726	0,158	0,358	0,315
COMMIT2	236	2,758	1,290	0,543	0,158	-0,068	0,316
COMMIT3	236	2,424	1,240	0,581	0,158	-0,338	0,316
COMMIT4	236	2,559	1,438	0,772	0,158	-0,065	0,316

Measurement 2

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	St
LOVE1	216	2,750	1,255	0,312	0,166	-0,597	(
LOVE2	216	2,704	1,314	0,463	0,166	-0,226	(
LOVE3	214	2,486	1,228	0,753	0,166	0,527	(
LOVE4	216	2,181	1,153	**1,074**	0,166	**1,390**	(
SELF1	217	2,604	1,312	0,554	0,165	-0,566	(
SELF2	217	2,779	1,322	0,366	0,165	-0,715	(
SELF3	216	2,310	1,182	0,692	0,166	-0,276	(
SELF4	216	2,579	1,309	0,604	0,166	-0,188	(
SELF5	217	2,419	1,188	0,779	0,165	0,117	(
INTIM1	216	3,125	1,430	0,279	0,166	-0,486	(
INTIM2	217	3,235	1,406	0,230	0,165	-0,280	(
INTIM3	217	3,028	1,343	0,308	0,165	-0,344	(
INTIM4	217	2,774	1,371	0,578	0,165	0,052	(
QUAL1	217	3,843	1,399	-0,230	0,165	-0,425	(
QUAL2	217	3,332	1,298	0,119	0,165	-0,451	(
QUAL3	217	3,525	1,255	-0,306	0,165	-0,238	(
QUAL4	217	3,682	1,271	-0,284	0,165	-0,290	(
QUAL5	214	3,687	1,325	-0,239	0,166	-0,371	0
COMMIT1	217	2,267	1,160	0,758	0,165	-0,121	0
COMMIT2	217	2,548	1,209	0,560	0,165	-0,371	0
COMMIT3	217	2,166	1,072	0,667	0,165	-0,355	0
COMMIT4	216	2,241	1,264	**1,086**	0,166	0,897	0

Measurement 3

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
LOVE1	200	3,010	1,315	0,115	0,172	-0,831	0,342
LOVE2	199	3,181	1,486	0,142	0,172	**-1,007**	0,343
LOVE3	200	2,865	1,399	0,466	0,172	-0,667	0,342
LOVE4	200	2,520	1,307	0,577	0,172	-0,539	0,342
SELF1	202	2,797	1,332	0,340	0,171	-0,763	0,341
SELF2	202	3,005	1,447	0,190	0,171	-0,986	0,341
SELF3	201	2,522	1,281	0,490	0,172	-0,672	0,341
SELF4	200	2,755	1,343	0,318	0,172	-0,764	0,342
SELF5	201	2,721	1,301	0,393	0,172	-0,537	0,341
INTIM1	200	3,825	1,495	-0,143	0,172	**-1,003**	0,342
INTIM2	200	3,645	1,356	0,032	0,172	-0,487	0,342
INTIM3	200	3,400	1,303	-0,006	0,172	-0,467	0,342
INTIM4	200	3,335	1,495	0,013	0,172	-0,894	0,342
QUAL1	202	4,574	1,229	-0,376	0,171	-0,276	0,341
QUAL2	202	3,936	1,309	-0,338	0,171	-0,385	0,341
QUAL3	200	4,075	1,268	-0,247	0,172	-0,079	0,342
QUAL4	201	4,149	1,291	-0,324	0,172	-0,415	0,341
QUAL5	201	4,124	1,241	-0,429	0,172	-0,169	0,341
COMMIT1	202	2,663	1,252	0,507	0,171	-0,385	0,341
COMMIT2	202	2,856	1,314	0,268	0,171	-0,825	0,341
COMMIT3	202	2,436	1,192	0,474	0,171	-0,577	0,341
COMMIT4	202	2,510	1,313	0,591	0,171	-0,482	0,341

Appendix 12: Measurement Model - Relationship Motives

Chi-Square=53.43, df=24, P-value=0.00051, RMSEA=0.069
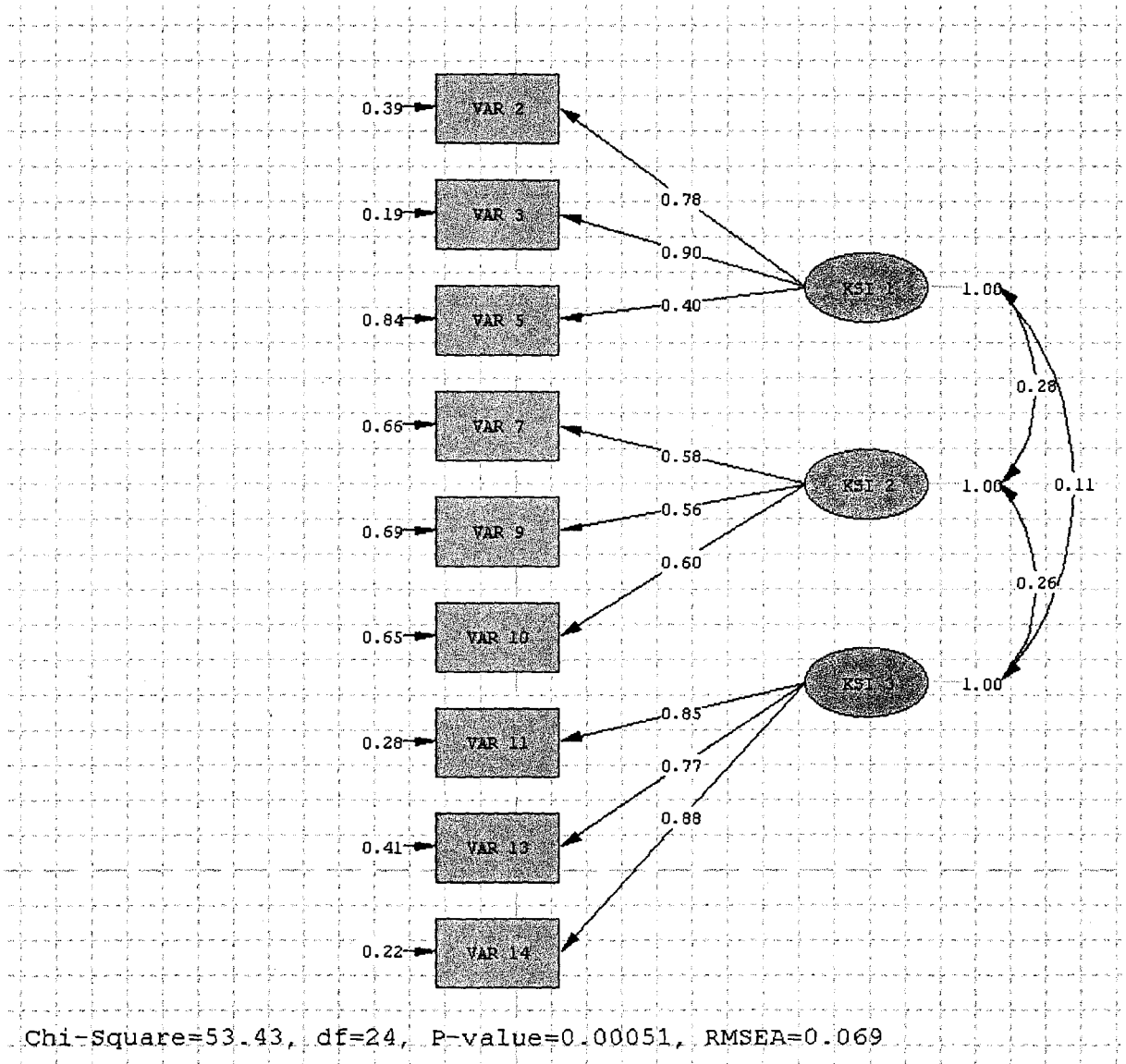
KSI 1: Efficiency motives
KSI 2: Risk Reducing motives
KSI 3: Social Motives

Appendix 13: Measurement Model – Brand Relationship Quality

Chi-Square=198.82, df=80, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.049
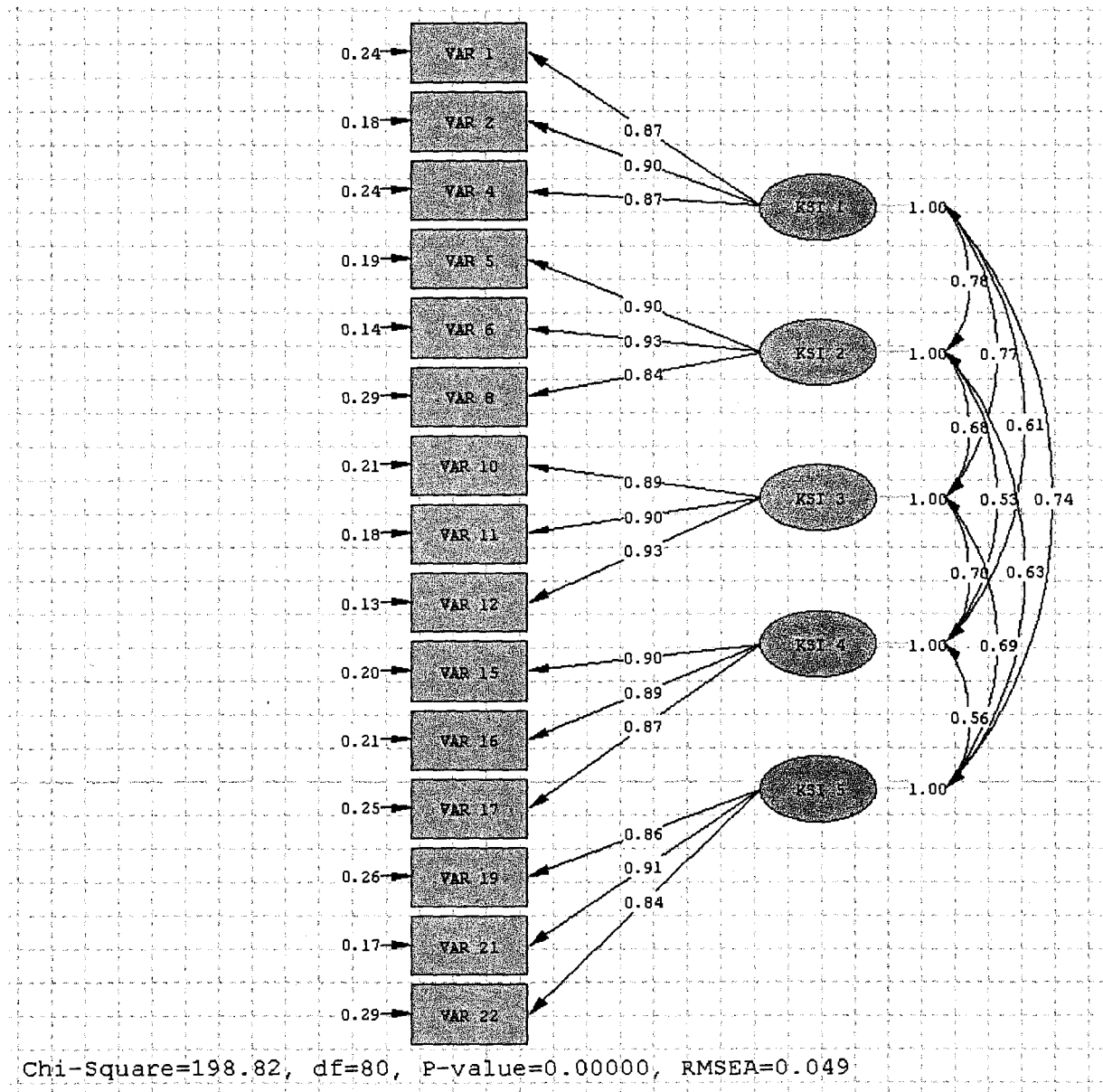
KSI 1: Love/passion
KSI 2: Self Concept Connection
KSI 3: Intimacy
KSI 4: Partner Quality
KSI 5: Commitment

Appendix 14: Predictive strength of BRQ-facets

Displayed below are adjusted R Square values and significant beta-values for each BRQ-facet on each point of measurement (T1,T2 and T3)

		T1	T2	T3
Positive Word-of Mouth	Ad. R Square	0,279	0,517	0,555
	Love	0,35	0,254	0,239
	Self Conn			
	Intimacy			
	Partner Qual	0,302	0,528	0,535
	Commitment			
Tolerance for price deviations	Ad. R Square	0,202	0,484	0,528
	Love	0,196	0,287	0,379
	Self Conn		0,16	
	Intimacy			-0,159
	Partner Qual		0,162	0,143
	Commitment	0,204	0,283	0,416
Tolerance for partner mishaps	Ad. R Square	0,2	0,37	0,441
	Love		0,175*	0,232
	Self Conn	0,17	0,208	
	Intimacy		-0,151	-0,208
	Partner Qual		0,428	0,265
	Commitment	0,154		0,418

*p<.01, all others p<.005. Only significant betas displayed.

As can be clearly seen, positive word of mouth is determined solely by the Love- and Partner quality facets, whereas tolerance for price deviations and partner mishaps are determined by a larger diversity of facets. Interestingly, Intimacy is negatively correlated with both tolerance for price deviations and –partner mishaps at measurement T2 and T3. Important to note is also the fact that the predictive power of BRQ-facet on behavioural intention is significantly strengthened throughout the experiment, from adjusted R Square values in the 0,200s to values of 0,441-0,555.

As can also be seen from the regression summary, some of the BRQ-facets are more powerful than others in a general sense, strengthening predictive abilities across all outcome categories, see e.g. Partner Quality and Love. Although some facets play a more restricted role (e.g Self-concept connection), each makes a significantly and unique contribution to the explanation of at least one response outcome.