The process of customer brand engagement in interactive contexts:

Prerequisites, conceptual foundations, antecedents, and outcomes

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a conceptual and theoretical understanding of customer brand engagement (CBE) that is useful for practitioners, particularly for service firms utilizing interactive platforms in building customer-brand relationships. Arguably, there is a need for more research to construct theories of the role of CBE in brand relationships and to test theories of antecedents and outcomes of CBE. This thesis provides an overview of the CBE and the consumer/customer engagement (CE) literature, and four articles applying different theoretical perspectives that together provide a comprehensive understanding of CBE in interactive contexts. CBE is investigated in relation to customers as the engagement subjects, and brands (i.e., brand relationships, brand activities) as the engagement objects.

The aims of the four articles are to (1) provide an understanding of the motivational factors underlying people's usage of social media contexts, functioning as prerequisites for CBE, (2) theoretically conceptualize CBE's unique characteristics and dimensions, (3) provide a practically useful multidimensional measurement scale of CBE as a psychologically anchored concept and (4) theoretically explore antecedents and outcomes of CBE, by linking conceptual relationships. Through the ongoing process, continually working with, and investigating CBE, this thesis suggests that CBE should comprise a psychological state of multiple dimensions (i.e., emotional, cognitive and intentional) and engagement behavior beyond exchange. Thus, as an overall concept, CBE should encompass both a state and a behavioral part, each consisting of separate engagement processes. The work with the four articles of this thesis led to the final definition of CBE as "a customer's obligation to invest his/her emotions, cognitions, and behavioral intentions in a brand relationship and the invested engagement behavior in the brand relationship".

All four articles use social media (Facebook) as the particular interactive context for the empirical studies of CBE. Further, all of the articles concern insurance firms and their attempts to use social media in customer-brand relationships. Using insurance firms that are considered to offer intangible, high-involvement and negatively motivated services, provides the possibility of testing theory under the most critical conditions possible, which is a good strategy for providing theory development, testing and generalization.

Article 1 relates to the appropriation of social media (i.e., Facebook) as a contextual frame for CBE to be stimulated and to develop in customer-brand relationships, with positive results for service firms. Following the premises of the uses and gratification (U&G) perspective, gratifications of Facebook use in the context of service brand relationships are characterized primarily by instrumental values and user empowerment, as in remuneration seeking,

information collection, and problem solving for customers. These results are promising for insurance firms offering low-involvement and negatively motivated services, because they can benefit from using social media as well as from focusing on instrumental values in their social media communication strategies.

Article 2 provides a conceptual framework section that contributes to a deeper theoretical insight into the CBE construct. The fundamental conceptual basis is that CBE (1) is complex and multidimensional, (2) consists of psychological states in ongoing service processes, (3) is based on two-way relationships in interactive contexts, and (4) is positively valenced. This article derives a multidimensional scale for measuring CBE in generic brand settings and when services are offered in social media, considered as a psychological concept, incorporating emotional, cognitive and intentional engagement states. The article demonstrates that customer participation and brand involvement are positive antecedents of CBE. Further, CBE produces positive brand experiences and thereby increases brand satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Article 3 introduces CBE as an explanatory factor for brand relationships in interactive contexts by applying a value co-creation perspective. Two studies (i.e., one cross-sectional and one longitudinal) further theorize as to the short-term and long-term effects of customer participation and CBE in social media on brand loyalty through brand satisfaction. The cross-sectional study showed positive short-term effects of customer participation on brand loyalty, mediated by satisfaction. Among customers using social media, positive customer participation effects gained from CBE resulted in positively strengthened brand satisfaction. Interestingly, the longitudinal study did not report the same positive long-term effects from customer participation as the cross-sectional study did.

Finally, article 4 was conducted using an experimental field study of different processual engagement effects gained from the brand activities of a Nordic insurance company. This study suggests that regulatory fit is one of the main drivers of CBE and brand value experience. Regulatory fit theory assumes that promotion orientation (i.e., a promotion-focused brand activity) fits best with eager customer strategies, while prevention orientation (i.e., a prevention-focused brand activity) fits best with vigilant customer strategies. The study identifies both regulatory fit and regulatory non-fit effects on psychologically anchored CBE (emotions, cognitions, behavioral intention) and CBE behavior, and thus challenges regulatory engagement theory and regulatory fit theory. As social media (i.e., Facebook) offered the empirical context of the experiment, the findings imply that service firms can benefit from the use of both promotion- and prevention-oriented activities in social media, having positive

emotional, cognitive, intentional and behavioral engagement effects on eager and/or vigilant customers.

Over the course of the progressive work on this thesis, I gained more and more knowledge of CBE and its fundamental characteristics and position, and thus the later articles build on the findings from the earlier ones. In particular, the fourth article shows that it is possible to test theories, and thus challenge existing ones, with its initial attempt to construct new theories of CBE as a unified state and behavioral concept within the topic of motivational processes.

My fellow PhD students and other colleagues have been an important source of both social and academic inspiration. In particular, Umar, Seidali, Irmelin, Liv-Kirsti, Thomas, Are, Nina and Susann have motivated me with their friendship and support.

Since this has been a long journey, my dear friends outside the academic "walls" have also been important, letting me know that my life consists of more than the PhD work. I wish to thank my husband, Stig, and my children, Amalie, Helena and Markus for being my best inspiration in life. My always-supportive father and mother, who have learned me about drive and persistence, and who I admire most, deserve more gratitude than can be expressed here. It is to them that this dissertation is dedicated.

Horten, November 2015, Birgit A. A. Solem

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Solem, B. A. A.

Brand relationships in the social media context:

Underlying gratifications, motivations, and user mode differences

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The role of customer brand engagement in social media:

Conceptualization, measurement, antecedents and outcomes

Submitted to International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising

Article 3

Solem, B. A. A.

Influences of customer participation and customer brand engagement on brand loyalty

Submitted to Journal of Consumer Marketing

Article 4

Solem, B. A. A. & Pedersen, P. E.

The effects of regulatory fit on customer brand engagement:
An experimental study of service brand activities in social media

Submitted to Journal of Marketing Management

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

"Put simply, engagement involves investing the "hands, head, and heart".

(Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995, p. 110)

Brand building is considered more challenging for service firms than for product providers. This is due to the inseparability of the service firm and the customer, as well as the heterogeneity of the service delivery process (Berry, & Parasuraman, 2004; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985). Further, product brands, which as a rule are tangible, rely on their physical attributes to help the customer to engage with the brand. More challengingly, for brands that are mostly intangible, the firm itself and all it stands for is the link to brand building (Kaltcheva et al., 2014). Further, many service firms offer services that, because of the service complexity, uncertainty and perceived risk related to the service outcomes, require high involvement from customers (Eisingerich & Bell, 2007; Percy & Elliot, 2012). At the same time, these services can also be coupled with customers' negative motives, where the goal is to solve or avoid a problem (e.g., insurance services) (Percy & Elliot, 2012). Given these challenges (i.e., intangibility, high involvement, negative motivation), successful attempts at brand building are based on customers' interactions with the service firm *beyond exchange* (purchase and usage) (Bowden, 2009). Arguably, knowing the underlying engagement processes involved in cultivating relationships with customers beyond exchange, and how to stimulate engagement in the right way, can aid service firms with their brand building (Kaltcheva et al., 2014).

Social media channels are especially relevant for the encouragement of engagement on other premises than exchange, because they are designed for regular interactive two-way communication that provides firms with the opportunity to become more customer-driven (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Hoffman & Novak, 2011; Schamari & Schaefers, 2015). Through social media, service firms can succeed in materializing their offerings mentally, before the services are used or realized (Laroche et al., 2012), providing them with the possibility of reducing customer-perceived uncertainty and risk.

Further, the vast reach, low cost, and popularity of social media encourage most practitioners to take advantage of this context. As do the majority of firms, many service firms establish self-hosted platforms (e.g., Facebook brand pages) so as to obtain a bigger share of customers' engagement (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). However, according to Hoffman and Fodor (2010), effective social media usage should start by turning the traditional return on investment (ROI) approach on its head. Instead of emphasizing their own marketing investments and calculating the returns in terms of customer response, managers should begin by considering customer *motivations* to use social media and then measure the social media investments customers make as they engage with the marketers' brand.

Having an engaged customer base is quickly becoming one of the key objectives of marketing managers (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2015). Service marketing

practitioners have come to realize that understanding how customers participate and engage with brands in social media is important when developing integrated brand and communication strategies (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010; Hollebeek, 2011a; Keller, 2001; Porter et al., 2011) in terms of the possibility of establishing emotional bonds such as great brand experiences (Hollebeek, 2011a) and brand loyalty (Hollebeek, 2011a; Jahn & Kunz, 2012). In 2010 and in 2014, the Marketing Science Institute Program (MSI) asked for further research on the conceptualization, definition, and measurement of engagement (MSI, 2014-2016). It also asked for more insight regarding how social media could be an effective platform for engagement creation, in direct response to managerial needs. Although the body of engagement research in the field of marketing has been growing (Brodie et al., 2011b; Calder & Malthouse, 2008; Calder, Malthouse, & Schaedel, 2009; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b; Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009), this thesis argues that limited focus has been dedicated to the contextual aspects of customer brand engagement (CBE), and particularly interactive contexts (Gambetti, Graffigna, & Biraghi, 2012; Chandler & Lusch, 2014; Dessart et al., 2015).

The marketing literature claims that engagement can entail specific *subjects* as well as *objects* (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). Key engagement subjects cited in this literature include users, customers and consumers (Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). In line with Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014), this thesis argues that the concepts of consumer engagement, customer engagement (both shortened to CE) and CBE may reflect a highly similar conceptual scope, despite employing differing concept names or designations. Specific engagement objects cited in the marketing literature have included products, firms, activities, media channels, etc. (Patterson, Yu, & De Ruyter, 2006; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Hollebeek et al., 2014). This thesis considers *customers* as the engagement subjects of investigation, and *brand* or *brand activities* as the engagement objects of investigation, referred to from now on as CBE.

This thesis is founded on the idea that CBE emerges from interactive service processes (i.e., is process-based), and argues for the importance of capturing how CBE and different related service and brand concepts affect one another in these ongoing fluctuating engagement processes. CBE corresponds directly with the series of interactions between a customer and a brand in a state of reciprocal alliance, following the ideas in social exchange theory (SET) (Homans, 1958). This take on CBE has its roots in relationship marketing (Fournier, 1998). Contending that CBE is best understood in interactive contexts that foster engagement beyond exchange, the interactive component is implicitly presented by the social media context, which is chosen as the context for investigation. This research is founded in the perspective of value co-creation (Ranjan & Read, 2014) and service-dominant (S-D) logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004,

2008), which posits that customer behavior is centered on active participants gaining interactive experiences within complex, co-creative contexts. In addition, consumer culture theory (CCT) highlights the importance of experiential, social and cultural aspects of interactive contexts as central frames for consumer behavior. Service marketers need to know that they are providers contributing to the culture of their customers (Deighton & Kornfeld, 2008). Thus, for service marketers to play this role, they need to be welcomed, not resisted (Fournier & Avery, 2011). In social media, customers hold the power, and service marketers are challenged to be customer-centered, and thus to provide platforms for value creation (Ranjan & Read, 2014).

Despite the significant interest in CBE among practitioners and in the marketing research field, the literature on engagement shows a number of shortcomings. First, there is disagreement over how to interpret CBE, regarding both the dimensionality and other conceptual characteristics (Dessart et al., 2015). Arguably, there is a need for clarification of what CBE is all about, and how to measure it properly, particularly in interactive contexts, such as social media. Although Hollebeek et al. (2014) recently developed a CBE measurement scale, this thesis argues that there is a need for a CBE scale that is not restricted to brand-use situations, and that takes into account social media as the interactive context of CBE. Second, the marketing literature remains scant when it comes to empirical research on CBE's position as a unique relational concept, as well as regarding its antecedents and outcomes (Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). Thus, there is a need for more clarification of CBE in comparison to other service and brand concepts, and of the factors that explain CBE, as well as the outcomes of CBE. Based on these aspects, this thesis addresses the following overall research questions:

(1) What are the underlying gratifications and motivations for brand-related engagement in social media, necessary as a prerequisite for the stimulation of brand engagement through targeted media communication strategies?

(2) What is CBE? How can CBE be conceptualized and measured as a multidimensional concept, particularly in interactive social media contexts?

(3) What is CBE's position within a nomologic network of service and brand concepts?

(4) What are the main positive antecedents of CBE?

(5) What are the main positive outcomes of CBE?

The purpose of this thesis is to answer these research questions. The answers will advance the theoretical, empirical, and practical understanding of CBE. Figure 1 illustrates its contributions.

Figure 1 An overall model for the thesis
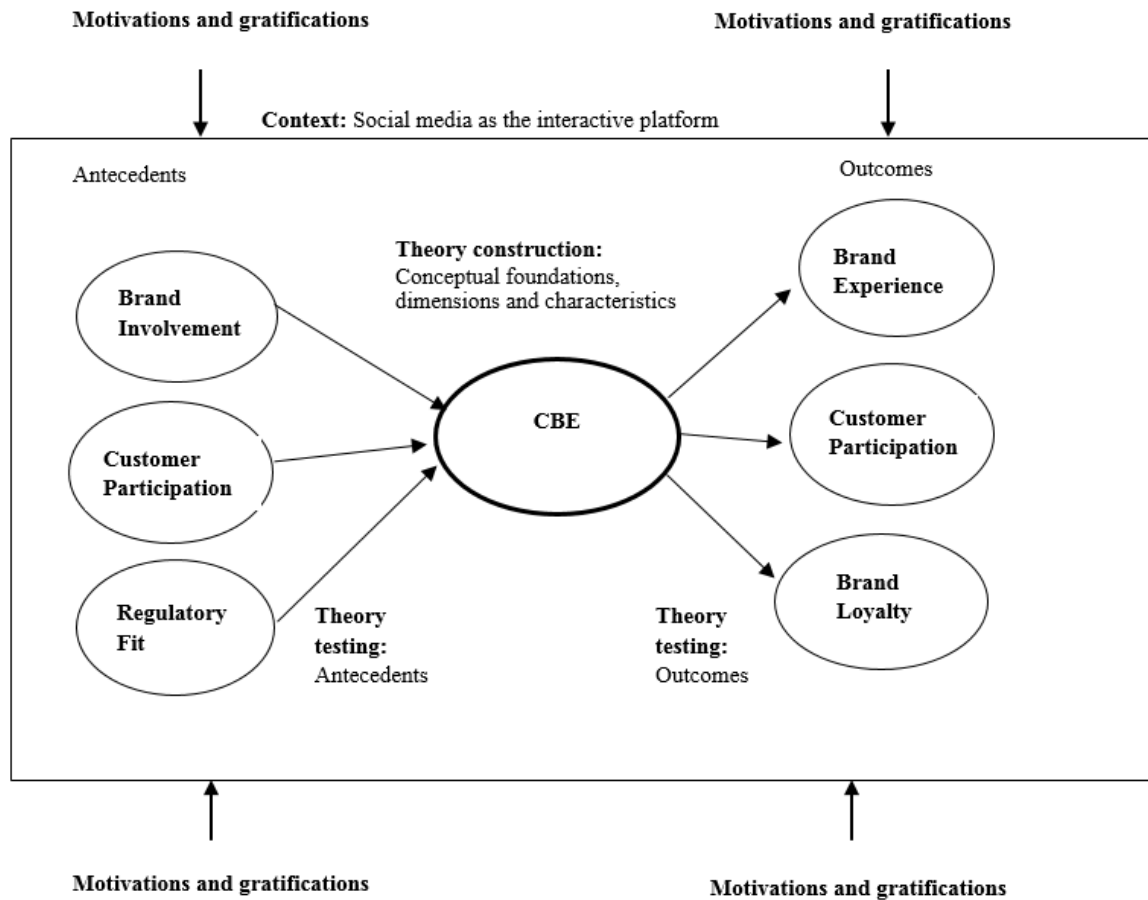
Note: This model is brief and combines different models from the articles. It is not an absolute requirement that CBE is a bridging concept (i.e., a mediator) between all of these relationships.

As illustrated in Figure 1, this thesis argues that CBE holds a central position in interactive contexts, such as social media. The figure also illustrates the main antecedents and outcomes of CBE. This thesis provides theory construction regarding CBE's conceptual aspects, theory application through the adaptation of an appropriate engagement scale from another well-acknowledged research field, and theory testing in terms of antecedents and outcomes of CBE.

This thesis contributes to the fast-growing and fragmented CBE literature by (1) investigating the appropriation of social media as a contextual frame for the stimulation and development of engagement in customer-brand relationships, (2) developing a conceptual understanding of CBE, (3) adapting and developing a multidimensional engagement scale, not

restricted to brand-use situations, (4) testing the theory that engagement is a factor that explains brand experience, customer participation, and brand loyalty, and (5) testing and suggesting theories of several antecedents of CBE, such as involvement, customer participation and regulatory fit (i.e., promotion-oriented versus prevention-oriented brand activities targeted towards customer groups through the application of eager versus vigilant strategies).

This thesis consists of four articles comprising several empirical studies. Primarily, the studies concern insurance service firms, thus focusing on their challenges in brand building and the establishment of solid customer-brand relationships in interactive contexts (i.e., social media). Arguably, insurance firms offer particularly intangible, high-involvement and negatively motivated services. By relating the studies to service firms offering services with such characteristics, this thesis tests and challenges applied theories under the most critical conditions possible. Thus, one of the main purposes of this thesis is to provide valuable advice to service firms in general, and to service marketing practitioners in insurance firms in particular.

In the following chapters, the thesis (1) presents a theoretical overview of perspectives on engagement (i.e., conceptualization, characteristics, nomological position), particularly addressing social media as an important context of CBE, (2) discusses methodological choices, (3) shortly presents the four articles and their findings, and (4) highlights and discusses the overall theoretical and practical contributions and implications, including validity considerations, limitations, and suggestions for future research. The four articles are enclosed.

CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Whetten (1995), the building blocks of theory consist of the following three terms: *what*, *how,* and *why*, in terms of what concepts are included, how they are related, and why we should expect certain relationships. This theoretical framework chapter comprises an overview of the concepts included, primarily focusing on "what" to theorize upon regarding CBE, and also including "how" to approach and measure CBE. Then, at the end of this chapter and through the articles, theoretical relationships and research models are introduced, as the "how" and "why" concepts are theoretically coupled. In other words, the purpose of this thesis in general, and this chapter in particular, is to provide a platform for constructing theory about CBE as a distinct concept, as well as to provide a foundation for testing theory regarding its position in a nomological network of antecedents and outcomes. To be able to answer the *what*, *how,* and *why* questions in the right way, the exact context of CBE requires brief description. Thus, social media, as the particular interactive context of interest, is presented in this theoretical chapter.

2.1 What is engagement? How should one approach and measure it?

The concept of "engagement" can have several meanings. According to the TheFreeDictionary (2015), the most common understanding of engagement refers to a couple's promise to marry, and the period between proposal and marriage. Thus, a key element of engagement is the *alliance* between two parties that commits them to a two-way social relationship. Another key element of engagement that stems from the same source is the *act* of participating and sharing, as well as having the other party's *attention*, *mind,* or *energy*. These different conceptions highlight some important notions of engagement, but also show the versatility and vastness of the phenomenon.

Transferred to the marketing field, the engagement concept is still in its developmental phase. Here, the concept still incurs a lack of clarity and consensus regarding the appropriate definition, form, dimensionality, and operationalization. From Dictionary.com (2015), the following quote related to the term is particularly interesting: "Engagement is the act of engaging or the state of being engaged". Arguably, this statement very well illustrates the challenges in the marketing field to date, with diverse scholars having dealt with engagement in widely differing and sometimes contradictory ways. This can be exemplified by the debate that went on in the Journal of Service Research, Autumn 2011, between researchers taking different perspectives on the concept, either focusing on "the act" of engagement (i.e., engagement behavior) (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Van Doorn, 2011; Bolton, 2011), or on "the state" of being engaged (i.e., engagement considered as an inherent psychological state) (Brodie

et al., 2011a, 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). This disagreement still appears to be present in the marketing literature streams.

To provide insight into and more familiarity with the CBE concept, this chapter presents how both the practitioner and the academic discipline understand CBE, though with emphasis on the academic field. Brodie, Saren, & Pels (2011c) suggest that general theories can provide potential contributions to the emerging CBE area. Brodie et al. (2011c) highlight the importance of applying an intermediate body of theory, which is referred to as "middle range theory". According to Merton (1967), a middle range theory consists of a set of assumptions from which specific hypotheses are logically derived and confirmed through empirical investigation. The purpose of this theory is to bridge the gap between the theoretical perspective and the business practice and practitioner's perspective, so as to make it more useful (Brodie et al., 2011c). The next section presents the practitioner and academic perspectives on CBE, as a basis for the conceptual understanding of what CBE really is.

2.1.1 The practitioner perspective on CBE

The practitioner perspective primarily focuses on CBE in interactive contexts, such as social media. Thus, the practitioner literature emphasizes an extensive use of virtual communication tools (e.g., Web 2.0 and social media tools) as core to the building of CBE. The argument is that, to be successful in the new media landscape, marketers have to embrace a two-way dialogue approach in which power and control are shared with the customers. According to the practitioner perspective, CBE is mostly defined as active participation, moving customers beyond consumption and making them collaborators integral to the success of the company (Evans, 2010; Reitz, 2012). Social media allows for two-way dialogue and a customer response to firms' marketing activities, such as invitations to events, as well as participation in contests, games, and polls (Levy, 2010). Clearly, the practitioner perspective considers social media to be a distinct participation-centric place, focusing solely on engagement as engagement behavior (Evans, 2010). Thus, most practitioners still seem to be convinced that engagement is the act of participating in the social web, and thus has to be recorded by behavioral measures (e.g., likes, comments, shares) (ARF, 2006; Econsultancy, 2008).

2.1.2. The academic perspective on CBE

The concept of engagement has previously been examined across a range of academic disciplines (Vivek, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a, Reitz, 2012), including education (student engagement) (Skinner & Belmont, 1993), psychology (social engagement)

(Achterberg, Murray, & Trist, 1990), sociology (civic engagement) (Jennings & Stoker, 2004), political science (political engagement) (Galston, 2001), computer systems (user engagement) (O'Brien & Toms, 2008, 2010), and organizational behavior (work/job engagement) (Kahn, 2000; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Despite significant practitioner interest, as well as interest from other scholars, consumer/customer engagement (CE) and CBE have lagged behind, resulting in a limited understanding of the concepts in the marketing field, and their measurement to date (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

As the field of organizational behavior demonstrates a long tradition of empirical research studying work engagement (Kahn, 1990; Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010; Schaufeli et al., 2002, Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003), and particularly of being an inspiration to the marketing field, this thesis provides an overview of selected engagement definitions identified within both the organizational behavior discipline and the marketing discipline.

Table 1 Overview: selected engagement definitions and their subsequent dimensionality

Discipline and author(s)	Concept	Paper type	Engagement dimensionality
Organizational behavior:			
Kahn (1990)	Personal engagement (work-related)	Empirical	Multidimensional: • Physical • Cognitive • Emotional
Schaufeli et al. (2002)	Employee engagement	Empirical	Multidimensional: • Absorption (cognitive) • Dedication (emotional) • Vigor (behavioral)
Rich et al. (2010)	Job engagement	Empirical	Multidimensional: • Physical • Cognitive Emotional
Marketing:			
Algesheimer et al. (2005)	Brand community engagement	Empirical	Multidimensional (inferred): • Utilitarian (cognitive) • Hedonic (emotional) • Social (behavioral)
Patterson et al. (2006)	Customer engagement	Conceptual	Multidimensional: • Absorption • Dedication • Vigor/interaction

Marketing:			
Higgins (2006)	Strength of engagement	Conceptual	Unidimensional: • Cognitive
Heath (2007)	Engagement with an advertisement	Empirical	Unidimensional • Emotional
Calder and Malthouse (2008)	Media engagement	Empirical	Multidimensional: • Stimulation and inspiration • Social facilitation • Temporal • Self-esteem and civic mindedness • Intrinsic enjoyment • Utilitarian • Participation and socializing • Community
Higgins and Scholer (2009)	Engagement	Conceptual	Unidimensional: • Cognitive
Calder et al. (2009)	Online engagement	Empirical	Multidimensional: • Personal • Social-interactive
Sprott et al. (2009)	Brand engagement in self-concept	Empirical	Unidimensional
Bowden (2009a)	Customer engagement	Conceptual	Multidimensional: • Cognitive • Behavioral • Emotional
Pham and Avnet (2009)	Engagement behavior	Conceptual	Multidimensional (inferred): • Cognitive • Behavioral
Vivek (2009)	Consumer engagement	Emprical	Multidimensional: • Awareness • Enthusiasm • Interaction • Activity • Extraordinary experience
Marketing:			

Marketing:			
Vivek et al. (2010)	Consumer engagement	Empirical	Multidimensional: • Cognitive • Behavioral • Emotional
Mollen and Wilson (2010)	Online brand engagement	Conceptual	Multidimensional: • Cognitive • Emotional
Van Doorn et al. (2010)	Customer engagement behavior	Conceptual	Multidimensional: • Valence • Form • Scope • Nature • Customer goals
Kumar et al. (2010)	Customer engagement value	Conceptual	Multidimensional: • Customer lifetime value • Customer referral value • Customer influencer value • Customer knowledge value
Verhoef et al. (2010)	Customer engagement	Conceptual	• Customer-to-customer interactions (i.e word-of-mouth) • Co-creation • Blogging • etc.
Hollebeek (2011)	Customer brand engagement	Conceptual	Multidimensional: • Cognitive • Emotional • Behavioral
Brodie et al. (2011b)	Consumer engagement	Conceptual	Multidimensional: • Cognitive • Emotional • Behavioral
Sashi (2012)	Online brand community engagement	Conceptual	Multidimensional: • Intrinsic motivation • Engagement behavior
Gummerus et al. (2012)	Customer engagement	Empirical	Multidimensional: • Community engagement behaviors • Transactional engagement behaviors
Jahn and Kunz (2012)	Customer engagement behavior	Empirical	In line with Van Doorn et al. (2010)

Marketing:			
Verleye et al. (2013)	Customer engagement behavior	Empirical	In line with Van Doorn et al. (2010)
Wirtz et al. (2013)	Online brand community engagement	Conceptual	Conceptual – not presented
Jaakkola and Alexander (2014)	Customer engagement	Empirical	Conceptual – not presented
Chandler and Lusch (2014)	Engagement	Conceptual	Multidimensional: • Temporal connections • Relational connections
Hollebeek et al. (2014)	Consumer brand engagement	Empirical	Multidimensional: • Cognitive processing • Affection • Activation
Franzak et al. (2014)	Brand engagement	Conceptual	Multidimensional: • Dimensions remain unclear
Wallace et al. (2014)	Consumer engagement	Empirical	Unidimensional: • Number of "likes"
De Villiers (2015)	Consumer brand engagement	Empirical	Multidimensional: • Cognitive • Affective • Conative
Dwivedi (2015)	Consumer brand engagement	Empirical	Multidimensional: • Vigor • Dedication • Absorbtion
Schamari and Schaefers (2015)	Consumer engagement	Empirical	Unidimensional: • Engagement intentions
Dessart et al. (2015)	Consumer engagement	Empirical	Multidimensional: • Affective • Cognitive • Behavioral

In the field of organizational behavior, Kahn (1990) was the first to apply the concept of engagement in a work context. Since then, several authors in the same field have investigated engagement, either as "employee engagement" (Saks, 2006), "work engagement" (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006), or "job engagement" (Rich et al., 2010). Here, employees remain the engagement subject of study, while the work or the job remain the engagement object of study. Common to authors in the organizational behavior field seems to be the consideration of

engagement as a psychological state of mind, as well as a multidimensional concept. This is illustrated by Rich et al.'s (2010) definition of job engagement as "a multidimensional concept reflecting the simultaneous investment of an individual's physical, cognitive, and emotional energy in active, full work performance". The mindset of the organizational behavior discipline has clearly inspired several researchers in the marketing field (Patterson et al., 2006; Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek 2011a, 2011b) when it comes to the conceptual understanding of CE/CBE.

In contrast to the organizational behavior perspective, the marketing researchers differ in how they approach CE/CBE. Table 1 shows that the concepts (and corresponding definitions) in the marketing field vary, particularly because of how the researchers view the *dimensionality* of CE/CBE. Some authors consider engagement as unidimensional. Higgins (2006), in his regulatory engagement theory, considers engagement as a solely cognitive concept. Heath (2007) studies engagement related to advertisements, considering engagement as emotional and investigating a person's feelings when processing an advertisement. On the opposite side, other authors consider engagement as multidimensional. Calder and Malthouse (2008) study "media engagement" as a second source of experience (measured as a high-order factor) resulting from the motivational force of eight lower-order experience factors. In 2009, Calder et al. transferred their conceptualization of engagement to websites, addressing the concept of "online engagement". They still considered experience factors, consisting of one high- and several lower-order factors. Thus, in the marketing discipline there is no consistent approach regarding the dimensionality of CE/CBE. However, from Table 1 we can see that most researchers seem to consider CE/CBE a multidimensional concept, comprising various types of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (e.g., Patterson et al., 2006; Calder &r Malthouse, 2008; Vivek, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011a, 2011b; Hollebeek et al., 2011a, 2011b). Further, this means that, when engaging, customers may devote relevant cognitive, emotional, and/or physical resources based on the value they perceive themselves as obtaining from specific brand interactions (Higgins & Scholer, 2009).

As previously highlighted in the introduction, Table 1 reveals that, in the marketing discipline, cited engagement *subjects* have included consumers (Brodie et al., 2011b; Calder et al., 2009; Calder & Malthouse, 2008; Sprott et al., 2009; Vivek, 2009) and customers (Bowden, 2009; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b; Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Vivek (2009) and Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan (2010) underline that customer engagement and consumer engagement are two different concepts. They contend that the latter incorporates more than the former. Thus, broadening the scope of customer engagement, consumer engagement involves followers as

well as customers, prospects, and potential customers. However, in the marketing field, researchers seem to agree that the engagement subject could comprise either consumers or customers.

What clearly emerges from Table 1 is that the engagement *objects* vary among researchers in the marketing discipline. For example, Algesheimer et al. (2005) studied "brand community engagement" by focusing on community as the engagement object, leaning towards the brand and online community research (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). On the other hand, Patterson et al. (2006) were clearly inspired by the organizational behavioral field (Shaufeli et al., 2002), focusing on "firm relationship" as the main engagement object. As the engagement objects vary from "brand community" to a "firm relationship", it may well be difficult to agree upon a common engagement definition. Table 2 provides an overview of the diverse set of CE/CBE objects investigated within the marketing discipline.

Table 2 Overview: Engagement objects and conceptualization

Engagement object	Engagement behavior	Psychological state	Combination
Brand community		Algesheimer et al. (2005)	Sashi (2012)
Relationship with service firm		Patterson et al. (2006)	
Objects in general		Higgins (2006), Higgins and Scholer (2009) Chandler and Lusch (2014)	Pham and Avnet (2009)
Advertisements		Heath (2007)	
Media			Calder and Malthouse (2008)
Online platforms (websites)			Calder et al. (2009) Reitz (2012)
Brand/brand interactions	De Villiers (2015)	Sprott et al. (2009) Hollebeek (2011a, 2011b) Brodie et al. (2011) Hollebeek et al. (2014) Dwivedi (2015)	Bowden (2009a)
A firm's offerings and activities		Vivek et al. (2010)	Vivek (2009)
Online brand		Mollen and Wilson (2010)	
Brand/firm	Van Doorn et al. (2010) Kumar et al. (2010) Verhoef et al. (2010) Gummerus et al. (2012) Jahn and Kunz (2012) Verleye et al. (2013) Wirtz et al. (2013) Jaakkola and Alexander (2014)		

Table 2 also provides an overview of how CE/CBE is *conceptualized* in the marketing discipline, which remains unclear to date. Several researchers focus attention on the physical aspects, thus considering engagement as engagement behavior (beyond exchange), such as Van Doorn et al. (2010) and Verhoef, Reinartz, & Krafft, 2010). Van Doorn et al. (2010, p. 254) define customer engagement behaviors as "a customer's behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers". Arguably, the behavioral perspective on engagement is in alignment with the practitioner perspective on engagement, for example when focusing on customer-to-customer interactions (i.e word-of-mouth behavior), blogging, etc. in interactive contexts (Verhoef et al., 2010). Challenging this research perspective, and inspired by the organizational behavior research field (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; Kahn, 1990), another research tradition has considered CE/CBE a psychological state (Patterson et al., 2006; Algesheimer, et al., 2005; Mollen & Wilson, 2010; Vivek, Sharon, & Morgan, 2011; Brodie et al., 2011a, 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). Leaning towards the perspective of considering CBE as a psychological state, Hollebeek (2011b, p. 560) define CBE as "the level of a customer's motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioral investment in specific brand interactions".

Other researchers argue for an approach that encompasses both a state and a behavioral part, seeking to align the behavioral engagement with the psychological state perspective (Calder & Malthouse, 2008; Calder et al., 2009; Reitz, 2012) (see Table 2). Implicitly, Calder and Malthouse (2008) do so by combining stimulation and inspiration (i.e., states) with participation and socializing (i.e., engagement behavior). More explicitly, Reitz (2012) argues that CE should comprise measures of state dimensions as well as engagement behavior to capture the totality of the engagement concept.

The engagement concept is highlighted as *context dependent* (Kahn, 1990; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Brodie et al., 2011a; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). CBE involves interaction between individuals in a certain context, and between individuals and their context (Gambetti & Grafigna, 2010). Thus, a given context (e.g., social media) in which CBE occurs, must be understood as a particular context of interactivity (Chandler & Lusch, 2014). In a certain context, engagement levels are informed by the particular engagement dimensions adopted (e.g., cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) and will give rise to various combinations when it comes to intensity effects.

Further, engagement is thought to reflect a *process* in which the intensity of engagement may develop and fluctuate over time (Bowden, 2009a; Sprott et al., 2009; Gambetti et al., 2012).

According to Hollebeek (2011a, 2011b), focal two-way interactions between relevant engagement subjects and objects in specific contexts gives rise to the emergence of specific engagement levels at a particular point in time, representing relevant engagement states, which are fluctuating but comprise the engagement process. Also, in RET (Higgins, 2006), the process perspective of engagement is represented.

Considering *valence*, Van Doorn et al. (2010) argue that the engagement concept has to be classified as positive or negative. Thus, physical contact-based interactions with a focal brand can result in positive or negative thoughts, feelings, or behavior. Thus, CBE can manifest itself as either positively or negatively loaded. However, in the marketing discipline, CBE is generally regarded as something positive (e.g., warm feelings, good thoughts), since high levels of positive engagement are found to improve attitudes and lead to favorable behavior (Brodie et al., 2011a, 2011b; Gummerus et al., 2012; Seraj, 2012; Schamari & Schaefer, 2015).

CBE is arguably founded on *motivation* (Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). Motivation is defined as "an inner state of arousal that provides energy needed to achieve goals" (Higgins & Scholer, 2009) or as "the reasons underlying behavior" (Guay et al., 2010). Motivation to process information, make a decision, or engage in a behavior is enhanced when customers regard something as personally relevant. Touré-Tillery and Fishbach (2011) suggest that motivation can manifest itself as increased effort and persistence towards reaching a goal or desired state (outcome-focused motivation) (Brehm & Self, 1989). Motivation can also manifest itself as an increased desire to use proper means in pursuit of a goal (means-focused motivation). CBE is argued by Brodie et al. (2011a, 2011b) to be a concept founded in means-focused motivation, with intrinsic engagement states developing through a process. Thus, motivation becomes a necessary foundation for CBE states to be activated. However, in line with self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985), motivation is considered both intrinsic and extrinsic. Thus, viewing CBE through the original framework of SDT actually challenges the interpretation that CBE is only an intrinsically motivated concept. According to Deci and Ryan (1987) and Roberts et al. (2006), some motivations are extrinsic, but people can internalize them, so that they are perceived as self-regulating behavior rather than external impositions. Following the idea of von Krogh et al. (2012), it is reasonable to consider CBE a motivationally founded process, formed by intrinsic, internalized intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations. According to von Krogh et al. (2012), the extrinsic motivations also stem from the important aspects of social practice (e.g., social media).

So far, this thesis has provided an overview of how CBE is thought of from a practitioner perspective, but has primarily focused on the academic perspective. Further, to provide an

understanding of what CBE is, engagement conceptualization and characteristics have been highlighted from both the organizational behavior and marketing disciplines. Specific conceptual characteristics have been especially highlighted (i.e., dimensionality, subjects, objects, context dependency, process-based, valence considerations, and motivation as an underlying foundation of CBE).

2.2 CBE in a nomologic network

A pertinent question is "how" and "why" CBE is related to other marketing concepts. In the marketing discipline, CBE is argued to be related to, yet conceptually distinct from, a number of other service and brand concepts (Vivek, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). There are several examples of concepts that have previously been compared to CE/CBE in the marketing literature. Extensive overviews have been provided by Vivek (2009), Hollebeek (2011a, 2011b), and Brodie et al. (2011b), emphasizing differences between CE/CBE and brand involvement, interactivity, brand community, flow, brand attitude, brand image, brand identity, brand personality, brand experience, rapport, co-created value, perceived quality, trust, commitment, customer value, and brand loyalty. This thesis will now provide a presentation of selected concepts, to highlight their similarities to and differences from CBE. Finally, Table 3 will provide an overview of what previous marketing literature has suggested the relationship to be like, between CBE and those selected concepts, either functioning as a foundation for, as antecedents of, or as outcomes of CBE.

2.2.1 CBE versus involvement

Involvement is described as the perceived relevance of an object based on inherent needs, values, and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985), in the exploration of the intrinsic relevance of an object. Several researchers consider involvement as an internal state, indicating arousal, interest, or drive, evoked by a stimulus or a situation (Bloch, 1982). Thus, involvement is conceptualized as a cognitive and affective concept indicating a state of mind (Smith & Godbey, 1991). Given that CBE is considered to comprise a psychological state and is a motivationally anchored concept, it appears to be similar to involvement. However, what seems to separate involvement from engagement is that involvement is more passive and mainly encompasses the duality of emotional and cognitive elements (Mollen & Wilson, 2010; Hollebeek et al., 2014). Given that CBE comprises forms of behavioral intentions and engagement behavior, interactive experiences are incorporated within the concept (Brodie et al., 2011), indicating that CBE comprises dimensions that the concept of involvement does not. Also, Mollen and Wilson

(2010) suggest that CBE extends beyond mere involvement, as it encompasses an interactive relationship with the engagement object and requires the emergence of the experiential value the individual perceives him/herself as obtaining from specific brand interactions. Several authors suggest that brand involvement is a substantial antecedent of CBE (Vivek, 2009; Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010; Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek et al., 2014).

2.2.2 CBE versus customer participation

Recent research emphasizes the active co-producer role of the customer (Pralahad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Dabholkar (1990) defines customer participation "as the degree to which the customer is involved in producing and delivering the service". Similar to CBE, participation is considered especially relevant in interactive service contexts, and thus it is natural to consider both concepts as developing within ongoing service processes. However, customer participation, and the related concepts of co-production, have viewed customers' connection with the firm primarily in exchange situations. What seems to differentiate participation from CBE is the activity-related and behavioral aspect underlying participation, while CBE focuses on experiences, and not exchange, as the underlying conceptual premises. Gambetti and Graffigna (2010) and Brodie et al. (2011) state that participation is a required antecedent of CE. The engagement concept can also be useful for linking the effects of participation to other relational concepts, such as brand and customer experience, as a moderating or mediating concept (Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014).

2.2.3 CBE versus brand experience

Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) define brand experience as "sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments". Both CBE and brand experience are considered as particularly important concepts for understanding interactive service contexts (Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014). Brand experience is based on responses evoked by brand-related stimuli, and does not necessarily presume a motivational state, which is the main basis for CBE (Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek et al., 2014). While brand experience can be evoked by indirect communication activities (e.g. advertising) outside the focal context (Brakus et al., 2009), CBE is more customer-proactive during service processes (Hollebeek, 2011a). When the CBE state is evoked, this is suggested to positively affect customers' brand experiences (Vivek, 2009; Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014).

2.2.4 CBE versus flow

Flow is defined as "a state of optimal experience that is characterized by focused attention, a clear mind, mind and body unison, effortless concentration, complete control, loss of self-consciousness, distortion of time, and intrinsic enjoyment" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow is a psychological state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter. The experience is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The flow concept has been proposed by Hoffman and Novak (1996) as essential to understanding consumer experiences in online environments. Arguing that CBE is a state with a fluctuating character, especially relevant in interactive social media contexts (Brodie et al., 2011a), makes it similar to flow. However, given that CBE incorporates several state dimensions, it differs from flow in that the latter is considered a unidimensional cognitive concept. While CBE is seen as a process-related concept, which decreases or amplifies over time (Hollebeek, 2011), flow is suggested to consist of short-term peak experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Some researchers have suggested that flow is an antecedent of CBE in particular interactive contexts, and others that it is a potential, rather than a required, antecedent. In the organizational behavior field, Schaufeli et al. (2002) operationalize the engagement concept using absorption as part of the cognitive dimension. Being fully absorbed in work goes beyond merely feeling efficacious, and comes close to the concept of flow. Patterson et al. (2006) present absorption as a possible dimension of CBE. Thus, CBE can incorporate flow, by reflecting it in its cognitive dimension.

2.2.5 CBE versus trust

Trust is defined as "a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence" (Moorman et al., 1993, p. 82). In a customer-brand relationship setting, trust is a customer's willingness to be vulnerable to a brand's action (Ha and Perks, 2005). Regarding trust's similarities with CBE, both are relevant in customer-brand relationships (Hsu et al., 2012). The main differences between these two concepts is that trust puts the focus more on the customer him/herself, while CBE focuses more on customers' interactive participation in brand-related service processes (Brodie et al., 2011b). The assumption that CBE is particularly important in interactive contexts, based on an expanded domain of relationship marketing theory (Brodie et al., 2011b; Vivek et al., 2012), differentiates CBE from trust. Trust is argued to be a consequence of CBE, for both new and existing customers, and it may also act as an antecedent, primarily for existing customers (Hollebeek, 2011a).

2.2.6 CBE versus customer delight

Many service marketing practitioners have addressed the importance of delighting the customer as an extension of providing basic satisfaction. Yet the concept of customer delight does not have a clear foundation, and its antecedents and outcomes, when manifested in specific service contexts, have not been explored empirically (Oliver, Rust, & Varki, 1997). Customer delight has been conceptualized either as a summary evaluative judgment, consistent with the early view that it was primarily cognitive (Howard & Sheth, 1969), as primarily emotional (Westbrook & Reilly, 1983), or as comprising both cognitive and emotional dimensions (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000). While customer delight is considered a psychological state with a unidimensional nature (Oliver et al., 1997) or a two-dimensional nature combining pleasure and arousal (Arnold et al., 2005), CBE is argued to be a multidimensional concept comprising a behavioral notion as well. When it comes to valence, customer delight is a positively loaded concept, while CBE may take a positive or negative direction (van Doorn et al., 2011). Finally, according to the criterion of temporality (Arnold et al., 2005), customer delight has a more short-term character, while CBE is process-based, and comprises fluctuating states.

2.2.7 CBE versus commitment

Marketing scholars have conceptualized commitment as an attachment between two parties that leads to a desire to maintain a relationship (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1993) or as the motivation to stay with a supplier (Geyskens & Steenkamp, 1995).

Intra-organizational studies split commitment into different categories or dimensions – affective, calculative and normative (Meyer & Allen, 1984; Mathiew & Zajac, 1990), while inter-organizational studies primarily focus on two main types – affective and calculative commitment. In the consumer behavior literature, there is a tendency for commitment to be considered synonymous with loyalty to objects (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995; Martin & Goodell, 1991). As with commitment, it seems difficult for the marketing discipline to agree about the dimensionality of CBE. One criterion that distinguishes the two concepts is the interactive frame in which CBE is founded (Brodie et al., 2011a). Commitment is not likely to be dependent on interactive contexts, as CBE is. Given that affective commitment is the same as true loyalty (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995), affective commitment/loyalty is a possible CBE effect (Brodie et al., 2011b; Vivek, 2009; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b).

To summarize this section, Table 3 provides an overview of the marketing concepts presented above, and the ways in which previous literature has considered the focal relationships between them and CBE.

Table 3 CBE's conceptual relationships with selected marketing concepts

Concept	Suggested relationship in the marketing literature
Involvement	Involvement is a required CBE antecedent (Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a; Vivek, 2009; Hollebeek et al., 2014).
Participation	Participation is a required CBE antecedent (Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014; Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010; Vivek, 2009).
Motivation	CBE is considered a motivational state (Brodie et al., 2011b).
Flow	Flow is considered to be a potential CBE antecedent in particular online contexts (Brodie et al., 2011a). Alternatively, flow (i.e., absorption) can be integrated into the cognitive dimension of CBE (Patterson et al., 2006).
Trust	Trust can be an outcome, for both new and existing customers, or act as an antecedent, primarily for existing customers (Hollebeek, 2011b; Hsu et al., 2012).
Brand experience	Brand experience is suggested to be a potential outcome of CBE (Vivek, 2009; Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014; Chandler & Lusch, 2014).
Customer delight	The antecedents and outcomes of customer delight are empirically unclear (Oliver et al., 1997). Customer delight may be an outcome of CBE.
Commitment	Commitment is a possible outcome (Brodie et al., 2011b; Vivek, 2009; Hollebeek, 2011b). Among existing consumers, commitment can have a function as an antecedent (Hollebeek, 2011a).

In this section, it has been highlighted how the marketing literature relates CBE to other service and brand concepts in a nomologic network of relationships. Selected concepts have been presented briefly, regarding their similarities to and differences from CBE, and whether they can act as foundations for, antecedents of, or outcomes of CBE. In the next section, social media is presented as the contextual interactive frame for CBE.

2.3 Social media

As highlighted previously in this theoretical framework section, CBE is considered a context-dependent concept (Brodie et al., 2011a, 2011b). Further, it is suggested that it includes two-way interactivity, making it important primarily in interactive contexts (Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). Following the premises of CTT (Arnould & Thompson, 2005), this thesis takes into account the importance of experiential, social, and cultural aspects of particular virtual interactive contexts (i.e., social media) as a platform for CBE.

Social media employs mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms, on which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content (Kietzman et al., 2011). Several definitions of social media exist in the marketing literature, but Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010, p. 61) is well recognized and makes the following statement about social media as an interactive platform: "a group of internet based applications that builds on the ideological and technological foundation of Web 2.0, and it allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content". This statement implies that the

content is not consumed by people passively. Instead, it is produced, shared, and consumed by users who actively generate content (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013). There are many different social media platforms, such as social networking, text messaging, photo sharing, wikis, weblogs, and forums. However, the term social media is mostly coined with respect to internet-based applications such as YouTube, Wikipedia, Twitter, and Facebook (Laroche et al., 2013). As of the second quarter of 2015, Facebook, a hallmark of social media, had 1.49 billion active users monthly (Statista.com).

Along with other forms of computer-mediated communication, social media has transformed customers from silent, isolated, and invisible individuals, into a noisy, public, and even more unmanageable group than before (Zaglia, 2013). On the positive side, the advantages of social media for firms are that it is (1) a highly efficient communication and service channel, (2) a powerful context for influencing customers' motivation and behavior, and (3) appropriate for reaching a wide range of people (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). These advantages certainly provide the motivation to marketing managers to participate in social media (Laroche et al., 2013).

Due to the ability of social media to reach out to a large number of people (both customers and their friends and followers), brands have been encouraged by advisors and brand consultants to be present in these channels in order to establish long-term relationships with customers, as well as to reach potential new ones (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In the social media universe of user-generated content, brands still play a pivotal role. Customers share their enthusiasm about their favorite brands via Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. Some of them even help other customers to solve product-related problems for free, which reduces service costs for firms (Mathwick, Wiertz, & De Ruyter, 2008). Undoubtedly, social media offers firms multiple ways to reach customers, communicate with them, and measure their communication, browsing, and purchase-related behaviors (i.e., behavior beyond exchange) (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). These options are of particular relevance for customer-brand relationship management, which employs knowledge of individual customers to plan marketing activities (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Making use of the opportunities of social media requires a thorough understanding of why customers are attracted to social media and how they influence other customers' feelings and behavior. Thus, new marketing approaches must be developed, which are in line with the characteristics of social media and their effects on customers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). An important notion of social media is that value comes not from the platform itself but from how a particular social media platform is used, as any given platform can be used for a variety of purposes (Culnan, McHugh, & Zubillaga, 2010).

Many marketers are eager to establish and facilitate brand communities in social media, based on the capabilities and advantages of both brand communities and social media (Laroche et al., 2012). The influence and effects of brand communities on customer behavior are well documented in the literature, for example in the pioneering research of McAlexander et al. (2002) and Muniz and O'Guinn (2001). According to the latter (p. 412), a brand community is a "specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand". McAlexander et al. (2002) take the perspective that brand community is customer-centric, that the existence and meaningfulness of the community lies in the customer experience rather than in the brand. They argue that the most important thing shared in a brand community is the creation and negotiation of meaning.

The concept of *social-media-based brand community* has developed from two different research streams (Laroche et al., 2013): that on brand communities (e.g. Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al., 2002) and that on social media platforms (e.g. Kaplan & Henlein, 2010). The main essence of both these perspectives is that the focus lies on customers, who are involved with a brand (online), with other customers, and with brand employees (Laroche et al., 2012; Laroche et al., 2013). Self-hosted Facebook brand pages are considered social-media-based brand communities (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). Customers can become followers of those dedicated Facebook brand pages (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012). They can voluntarily decide to visit the brand page, or they can receive information, invitations, etc. via sponsored brand posts on their newsfeed. Even though social media (e.g., Facebook) allows for brand attention via reach, marketers must focus on both capturing and retaining attention via engagement (Hanna et al., 2011).

2.3.1 Research on CBE in social media

As highlighted in the introduction, research on CE/CBE in the context of social media remains scarce to date. However, some research has been conducted over the past several years. Table 4 provides an overview.

Table 4 An overview of CBE and CE research in the context of social media

Author(s)	Concept	Paper type	Theme/content
Sawhney et al. (2005)	Customer engagement	Conceptual	The internet as a platform for customer engagement
Algesheimer et al. (2005)	Community engagement	Empirical	Stronger brand community identification leads to greater community engagement
Schau et al. (2009)	Community engagement	Empirical (depth interviews and netnography)	Community engagement as a part of the process of collective value creation in brand communities
Calder et al. (2009)	Online engagement	Empirical (experimental)	Relationship between online engagement and advertising effectiveness
Libai et al. (2010)	Customer engagement	Conceptual	How customer engagement influences the bottom line and its role in creating value within customer-firm relationships
Mollen & Wilson (2010)	Engagement	Conceptual	Positioning of engagement along an experiential continuum, and clarification of its relationship with interactivity, flow, and telepresence
Porter et al. (2011)	Engagement	Conceptual	How to foster and sustain engagement in virtual communities
Hsu et al. (2012)	Community engagement	Empirical (descriptive)	How experience-driven community identification generates trust and engagement
Brodie et al. (2011a)	Consumer engagement	Empirical (netnography)	Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community
Gummerus et al. (2012)	Customer engagement (behaviors)	Empirical	Customer engagement in a Facebook brand community and effects of engagement behaviors
Sashi (2012)	Customer engagement	Conceptual	Develops a model of the customer engagement cycle, with connection, interaction, satisfaction, retention, loyalty, advocacy, and engagement as stages in the cycle
Jahn and Kunz (2012)	Customer engagement	Empirical (descriptive)	Address gratification as antecedents of fan page participation (i.e., fan page engagement) and brand loyalty as the outcome
Wirtz et al. (2013)	Online brand community engagement	Conceptual	Address a wide range of drivers (brand-related, social, and functional) and customer and organizational outcomes of online brand community engagement
Habibi et al. (2014)	Community engagement	Empirical (qualitative)	The roles of brand community and community engagement in building brand trust on social media
Hollebeek et al. (2014)	Consumer brand engagement	Empirical (descriptive)	Customer brand engagement in social media: conceptualization, scale development and validation
Wallace et al. (2014)	Consumer engagement	Empirical (descriptive)	Consumer engagement with self-expressive brands: brand love and word-of-mouth outcomes
Schamari and Schaefers (2015)	Consumer engagement	Empirical (experimental)	How brands can use webcare (i.e., online consumer care) on consumer-generated platforms to increase positive consumer engagement
Dessart et al. (2015)	Consumer engagement	Empirical (semi-structured interviews)	Address brand-related, social, and community value as drivers of consumer engagement, and brand loyalty as the outcome of consumer engagement

The impression gained is that the contributions are fragmented, entailing different scopes and purposes. Further, the research on customers' engagement with brands and/or brand activities

as engagement objects remains unexplored to date. Only a few studies empirically investigate the explanatory factors (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Schamari & Shaefers, 2015) and consequent effects (Calder et al., 2009; Hsu et al., 2012; Gummerus et al., 2012; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014) of CE/CBE in social media. This therefore provides a fertile ground for further exploration of the antecedents and outcomes of CBE in social media as the interactive context. Clearly, the understanding of CBE in such conditions requires further research.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

This chapter presents the methodological foundations on which this thesis rests. It provides a discussion of the research paradigm, as well as an overview of the research design, studies, sampling procedures, data collection methods, and data analysis applied. Special focus is dedicated to a discussion of the research design.

3.1 Research paradigm

In science, a paradigm is a distinct set of thought patterns that comprises theories, research methods, postulates, and standards for what constitutes legitimate contributions to a field. Paradigms are "ways of looking at the world" (Laudan, 1977). The researcher's foundation in a certain paradigm unconsciously guides his/her philosophical perspective and research. Research consists of choices that we have to make in order to pursue values as truthfulness, usefulness, and understanding. This thesis rests on the *critical realism* approach that combines transcendental realism with critical naturalism, as developed largely by Bhaskar (2013). Critical realism claims that there is a reality existing independent of the perceivers' knowledge of it, and that accurate facts about reality are impossible to obtain (Bhaskar, 2013). Thus, research offers us the possibility of obtaining more or less truthful knowledge by constructing concepts and theories of relationships that reflect reality. Therefore, we have to understand science as an ongoing process in which concepts improve our understanding of mechanisms, especially critical when studying human and social structures and relationships (i.e., in contrast to physical entities) (Lawson, 1996). Thus, according to critical realists, it is possible to gain knowledge about unobservable entities and to make statements about the truth-value of theories that contain these unobservable entities (Hunt, 2005). In marketing, we speak of people's motivation, attitude, and so forth. Although these concepts are not observable, they are used to explain customer behavior (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010).

Contrasting with positivists' claim that it is only possible to explain through causality, critical realists' argument is that a non-realization of an assumed mechanism does not mean that it does not exist. Further, contrasting with the positivistic paradigm that knowledge generation is independent of context, the critical realism perspective is that research is context dependent. Contrasting with natural systems (e.g., controlled laboratory experiments), however, social systems are open and interactive (Mingers, 2000), which makes testing theories difficult since predicted effects may or may not occur. Thus, attention needs to be focused on a theory's explanatory as well as predictive power. Critical realists accept that there are several methods that are acceptable in both the natural and the social sciences, and that there is room for method triangulation. In critical realism, observations are always theory laden, which means that

research always leans towards and develops new theories based on existing ones. Researchers, through their processes of evaluating and testing theories, produce genuine knowledge about the world, even if those knowledge claims are uncertain (Peter, 1992). Therefore, following Hunt (2005), we must always be critical when evaluating our theories.

3.2 Research design, sampling, and analysis procedure

All of the four articles in this thesis are empirical, and include dedicated methods sections. Rather than repeating these article sections, this method section provides an overview of the chosen designs, studies, sampling procedures, methods and analysis conducted in the articles (see Table 4).

Table 4 Overview of research design, studies, sampling, methods, and analysis

Article (title)	Research design	Studies	Sampling and methods	Analysis
Article 1 Brand relationships in the social media context: Underlying gratifications, motivations, and user mode differences	Multi-method design, comprising exploratory design and descriptive design	Study 1: An inductive study using an open enquiry to solicit gratifications of interpersonal and brand-related Facebook use Study 2: Panel survey to structure gratifications into motivational factors Study 3: Panel survey to further evaluate motivational factors	Study 1: N=42 third-year graduates in Marketing November, 2011 Study 2: N=300 participants in an online panel survey February, 2012 Study 3: N=961 insurance customers in an online panel survey April, 2012	Study 1: Sorting data through protocolling Categorizing gratifications Study 2 and study 3: Estimation of underlying structures of motivations through EFA in SPSS; Bartlett's test of sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin for sampling adequacy; Kaiser criterion and scree-elbow test for number of factors Paired-sample t-test
Article 2 The role of customer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, measurement, antecedents and outcomes	Preliminary qualitative study combined with descriptive design (cross-sectional)	Study 1: A repertory grid technique consisting of constructed interviews Study 2: Scale adaptation and item validation Preliminary classroom survey	Study 1: N=16 third-year graduates in Services Marketing November, 2011 Study 2: N=95 first-year college students January, 2012	Study 1: 40-minute-long individual exercise on a personal computer in a laboratory setting using WebGrid 5. Repertory grid data were analyzed using SPSS and a paired sample t-test Study 2: item validation using EFA in SPSS, and Bartlett's test of sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin for sampling adequacy; reliability analysis; test of convergent and discriminant validity using Fornell & Larcker procedure

Article 2 continued		Study 3: Scale validation with services in a social media context and test of antecedents and effects of CBE Online panel survey	Study 3: N=203 Combined sample of insurance customers Online panel surveys April, 2012 February, 2013	Study 3: CFA in AMOS to assess nomological validity. Test of convergent and discriminant validity using Fornell & Larcker prodecure; SEM analysis for hypothesis testing and for competing nomological model
Article 3 Influences of customer participation and customer brand engagement on brand loyalty	Multi-method design, with descriptive design combining a cross-sectional and a longitudinal survey	Study 1: Effects of customer participation and CBE in social media on brand loyalty through brand satisfaction Study 2: Within-subject study Effects of customer participation on brand loyalty through brand satisfaction	Study 1: N= 954 insurance customers and N=145 social-media-using insurance customers Online panel survey April, 2012 Study 2: N=376 of insurance customers Online panel survey T_0=August 2011 T_1=Spring 2012 T_2=Spring 2013	Study 1: Reliability and validity test in AMOS and using Fornell & Larcker procedure. Measurement model and hypothesis testing with SEM using AMOS. Mediation testing using bootstrapping in SPSS. Study 2: Longitudinal study using SEM in Mplus for between-variable effects and auto-correlational effects.
Article 4 The effects of regulatory fit on customer brand engagement: An experimental study of service brand activities in social media	Causal design Quasi-experimental design (natural experiment)	Study: Field experiment with 2*2 between-subject design Investigating CBE as a motivational process, with regulatory fit as an antecedent Social media (Facebook) as the interactive context of CBE	Pretest: N=16 third-year college students Test of manipulations (activity posts) and questionnaire Study: N=429 Data collected from a Nordic insurance company's Facebook profile/newsfeed 10-13 February 2015	Analysis in SPSS Manipulation check EFA for construct clarification Test of hypotheses using univariate analysis of variance

As illustrated in Table 4, this thesis contains four articles and nine studies. In the process of working towards this thesis, the research questions and research purposes, as presented in the introduction, guided the choice of research design and appropriate method for each study.

3.3 Research design

Overall, the thesis is based on a multi-method design (method triangulation) (Webb et al., 1966), which is argued to be suitable for gaining deeper and more reliable perspectives on a particular phenomenon of interest (Boudreau, Boswell, & Judge, 2001; Cyr et al., 2009). In this thesis, the method triangulation combines the use of exploratory design, descriptive design, and causal design. According to Iacobucci and Churchill (2010), the major emphasis in exploratory design is on the discovery of ideas and insight, while descriptive research is typically concerned

with determining the frequency with which something occurs and/or the relationship between variables. Finally, a causal research design is concerned with determining cause-and-effect relationships, primarily studied via experiments.

Denzin (1978, p. 291) broadly defines method triangulation as "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon". The foundation of multi-method design/method triangulation is that qualitative and quantitative methods are viewed as complementary rather than as rivals, underscoring the desirability of mixing methods given the strengths and weaknesses found in single-method design (Jick, 1979). In the social sciences, the use of triangulation can be traced back to Campbell and Fiske (1959), who developed the idea of "multiple operationism". They argued that more than one method should be used in the validation process to ensure that the variance reflected that of the trait and concepts, and not of the method. Integrating a variety of data and methods, as triangulation demands, can be viewed as a continuum that ranges from simple to complex designs (Smith, 1975). An example of such triangulation can be found in article 1, whose study 1 is preliminary and open (i.e., simple), with qualitative measures of gratifications becoming more quantifiable in studies 2 and 3, as the gratifications become structured into motivational factors by means of the quantitative method and survey research. In this thesis, method triangulation is also used as a vehicle for cross-validation (Denzin, 1978), where two distinct methods yield comparable data. In article 3, multiple methods (i.e., a cross-sectional and a longitudinal study) are chosen to examine the same dimension of a research problem (i.e., the same hypotheses).

Although two of the studies are explorative and inductive (study 1 in article 1 and study 1 in article 2), this thesis is primarily confirmatory in nature. In confirmatory research, data are gathered to test a priori alternative hypotheses (Jeager & Halliday, 1998). Thus, except in article 1, hypotheses are tested regarding antecedents and/or outcomes of CBE.

CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION OF ARTICLES

This chapter provides a short presentation of each article, particularly focusing on their purposes and main findings.

4.1 Article 1

Brand relationships in the social media context: Underlying gratifications, motivations, and user mode differences

The purpose of article 1 was to clarify whether social media (Facebook) was an appropriate interactive contextual frame in which to develop CBE in customer-brand relationships. The main idea was that people's use of social media is a prerequisite for engagement to be present. The research procedure in article 1 followed the premises of the uses and gratification (U&G) perspective, by collecting gratifications and defining motivations of Facebook use in the context of service brand relationships.

An initial exploratory study (study 1, $n = 42$) identified gratifications characterizing interpersonal and brand relationships. Building on these results, studies 2 ($n = 300$) and 3 ($n = 961$) provided evidence supporting theories of user mode differences in consumer behavior between interpersonal and brand relationships. To start with, an open enquiry was used to gather rich and open information on "why" people would use Facebook in their interaction with friends versus brands, and "why" they would use Facebook in their interaction with friends about brands. The goal was to encourage the interviewees to elaborate on their motivations for engaging in specific relationship types, thereby revealing uses and gratifications.

The result was a huge set of gratifications explaining and distinguishing between the natures of interpersonal and brand relationships. The gratifications were then grouped into motivational factors via studies 2 and 3. Examination of the underlying motivational structure of the gratifications allowed the degree of motivational relevance in interpersonal versus brand relationships, as different user modes, to be determined. The findings based on studies 2 and 3 showed that, while interpersonal relationships were mainly characterized by socialization, sharing, and entertainment, brand relationships were mainly characterized by customer motivations related to instrumental values and user empowerment, such as remuneration seeking, information collection, and problem solving. Overall, these results are particularly promising for service firms offering intangible, high-involvement, and negatively motivated services, because they imply that such firms can actually benefit from focusing on instrumental values in their social media communication strategies.

4.2 Article 2

The role of customer brand engagement in social media: conceptualization, measurement, antecedents and outcomes

The purpose of article 2 was multifaceted. The article was designed to conceptualize CBE, to provide an appropriate measurement scale, and to position CBE in a nomologic network of brand and service relationships. First, the article highlights the uniqueness and main characteristics of CBE, thus contributing to theory construction for the CBE concept, by providing a broad conceptual framework section and by conducting a repertory grid study. The fundamental basis for CBE is that it (1) is complex and multidimensional, (2) consists of motivational states in ongoing (service) processes, (3) is based on two-way relationships in interactive contexts, and (4) is positively valenced.

The article reports on research consisting of two empirical studies ($n = 95$ and $n = 203$). A CBE scale was developed through the adaptation of an existing scale from the acknowledged research field of organizational behavior. Thus, the main contribution of this research is the adequate adaptation, development, and empirical evaluation of a tripartite motivationally founded, psychological, and positively valenced nine-item measurement scale. In study 1, the article suggested a generic version of the CBE scale, and in study 2 the scale was further refined to fit the interactive context of social media, through the use of Facebook brand pages as the empirical context of validation. In study 2, the analysis also verified the internal consistency, reliability, and construct validity of the CBE scale. The scale is suitable for measuring CBE in other social media channels than Facebook, and also for measuring CBE in offline contexts (as documented in study 1) as long as they are interactive.

The article positioned CBE between other service and brand relationship concepts through hypothesis testing. Five out of six addressed hypotheses were supported through SEM analysis, and the empirical results demonstrate significant effects of customer participation and brand involvement on CBE, and of CBE on brand loyalty, through brand experience and brand satisfaction.

4.3 Article 3

Influences of customer participation and customer brand engagement on brand loyalty

The purpose of article 3 was to investigate the effects of customer participation on brand loyalty, from both a short-term and a long-term perspective, as well as the effects of customer participation in social media, with CBE included as an antecedent of customer participation. Article 3 was founded in the value co-creation perspective, assuming that customers take an active role and create value together with the firm. Service brands were the objects of two studies conducted among insurance customers: (1) a cross-sectional study using a nationwide sample ($n = 954$) to look at short-term effects, including an analysis of a subsample of social-media-using customers ($n = 145$); (2) a longitudinal study utilizing three assessment time points ($n = 376$) to provide an empirically stronger long-term test.

The cross-sectional study documented substantially positive effects of customer participation on brand loyalty, flowing through brand satisfaction as a bridging factor. Despite being based on only a limited subsample of customers who were using social media, the results further indicated that CBE was an important positive driver of customer participation and enhanced the positive effects of customer participation on brand satisfaction. When customers engage emotionally, cognitively, and/or intentionally in certain brand activities and content on a brand's Facebook page, they show more interest in participating with the brand. The customer participation effects on brand satisfaction were more substantial among customers that were using social media than among those that were not, which is a promising result for service firms that are strategically using social media as a marketing and service channel.

Although the expectation of the paper was that the longitudinal study would show weaker effects than the cross-sectional (due to the incorporation of auto-correlational effects), the non-significant customer participation effects that were actually found were unexpected. The findings shed light on the nature of customer participation, in terms of substantial differences between long-term and short-term effects. This study can help deepen service marketers understanding of the possible positive short-term effects of customer participation and CBE, as well as warn them to be careful of expecting long-term positive satisfaction and loyalty effects from customer participation.

4.4 Article 4

The effects of regulatory fit on customer brand engagement: An experimental study of service brand activities in social media

The purpose of article 4 was to provide service firms that are using social media with an understanding of the kind of brand activities that stimulate different types of CBE and brand value experience. Service brands (in contrast to product brands) are mostly intangible (i.e., telecom, banking, insurance), which is challenging. Another challenge for many service brands is that they offer services that, because of the service complexity, uncertainty, and perceived risk related to the service outcomes, require high involvement from customers. However, the same services can also be coupled with negative motives on the part of the customers, where the goal is to solve or avoid a problem (e.g., insurance services). Given these characteristics of certain services, the brands providing them need to know which communication strategies to choose when planning brand activities beyond exchange. This study recognized that social media channels are especially relevant for such purposes, because they are interactive two-way communication platforms appropriate for the encouragement of CBE on premises other than exchange. Thus, social media provides the opportunity for firms to become more customer-centric, and to encourage engagement in certain brand activities.

An experimental field study of a Nordic insurance firm's brand activities on Facebook (*N*=429) suggested that regulatory fit was one of the main drivers of CBE and brand value experience. Regulatory fit theory assumes that promotion orientation (i.e., promotion-focused brand activity) fits with eager customer strategies, while prevention orientation (i.e., prevention-focused brand activity) fits with vigilant customer strategies.

The findings from the experimental field study showed that, even for service firms offering services whose outcomes were intangible and unclear, brand activities on social media produced positive results for CBE and brand value experience. The engagement process seems therefore to be complex, incorporating both regulatory fit and regulatory non-fit effects on psychologically anchored CBE and CBE behavior, which challenges regulatory engagement theory and regulatory fit theory. The findings imply that service firms can benefit from the use of both promotion- and prevention-oriented activities in social media, having positive emotional, cognitive, intentional, and behavioral engagement effects on customers applying eager or vigilant strategies.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

"Instead of calculating the ROI, managers should assess customer motivations to use social media and measure the social media investments customers make as they engage with the marketers' brands".

(Hoffman & Fodor, 2010, p. 41)

This chapter provides an overview of the main findings covered by this thesis, followed by sections discussing validity concerns, theoretical implications, practical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

5.1 Overall findings

This thesis finds that CBE arises in contexts wherein customers actively interact and communicate with brands. Thus, the emergence of CBE is argued to be founded in the value co-creation perspective (Ranjan & Read, 2014) and S-D logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008), which consider customers active participants in service development, particularly in interactive contexts. The different studies conducted for this research primarily concerned service brands that offer services characterized as intangible, high-involvement, and negatively motivated, which makes it challenging for them to encourage CBE in social media. However, overall, the results obtained are promising for service brands.

First, through the study of user gratifications and motivations for social media use among people in general, and insurance customers in particular, important knowledge of their willingness to engage with brands in social media was obtained. The argument is that motivation to use social media (Facebook) becomes an important *prerequisite* for people's willingness to engage in social-media-based relationships with brands. This thesis has shown that people's user modes and behavior differ when it comes to interpersonal and brand relationships, and that people willingly use social media (Facebook) in relation to brands. Further, the studies show that brand relationships are mainly considered as instrumental, motivated by factors such as empowerment, remuneration, and information collection. However, insurance customers could to a certain degree be motivated by socialization, sharing, and entertainment in brand relationships as well, and could be willing to develop close relationship with particular brands to demonstrate their connection to them. The findings are promising for service firms, which can actually benefit from encouraging a variety of customer motivations in the social media context (for example, through self-hosted Facebook brand pages), thus gaining an important foundation on which CBE can be established.

Second, to utilize CBE as a tool for brand building in social media, there is a need to gain knowledge of what CBE is (i.e., its dimensions and characteristics), and how it should properly be measured. Founded in diverse perspectives on CBE drawn from the literature, as well as through a preliminary conceptual Repgrid-study, this thesis highlights CBE's dimensions and characteristics, fundamental for its measurement in interactive contexts (i.e., social media). This thesis considers CBE as (1) having a high degree of mental complexity, which seems to support

a multidimensional understanding of the concept, (2) being process-based, (3) being predominantly prominent in interactive contexts, and (4) being positively or negatively valenced. The conceptual distinction between CBE and other marketing concepts remains unclear among marketing scholars to date. This thesis documents that CBE is significantly distinct from brand involvement, participation, motivation, flow, trust, customer delight, and commitment, in terms of one or several of the foundational characteristics.

Third, a comprehensive way to measure CBE in the interactive frame of social media contexts was needed and this thesis provides a suitable scale for that purpose, based on the multidimensional conceptualization of CBE as a psychological state. By adapting an existing job engagement scale from the acknowledged research field of organizational behavior, a nine-item scale was developed for customers' engagement with brands beyond exchange in interactive contexts, such as social media. Based on the theoretical overview provided in the theoretical framework chapter, this thesis argues that CBE is conceptually founded on motivation. It also argues that the cognitive state of CBE should incorporate the concept of flow, reflecting a customer's absorption or loss of self-consciousness related to a certain brand activity or content (e.g., in social media). Although the CBE measurement scale was tested and validated using empirical studies of customers who were following service brands on Facebook (i.e., Facebook brand pages), arguably the scale is also suitable for measuring CBE in other social media channels, such as Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, and also in offline contexts, if interactive. Importantly, this thesis provides a measurement scale for capturing CBE as a psychological state, which may supplement the measurement of CBE behavior (e.g., "likes", comments, "shares"), something that would be particularly useful to practitioners. The CBE measurement scale developed in article 2 and tested in articles 2 and 3 was solely psychologically founded, consisting of three dimensions (i.e., cognitive, emotional, and intentional), while the CBE measurement in article 4 additionally incorporated measures of CBE behavior. While the CBE measurement scale (i.e., in article 2) considered valence as solely positive, article 4 considered the CBE concept as either negative or positive. However, the results from article 4 show that CBE does entail a positive direction, such as through warm feelings, and good thoughts and intentions. While CBE was measured holistically in articles 2 and 3, processual effects were studied separately for the different CBE dimensions in article 4. Consequently, the earlier studies conducted provided important knowledge and expertise that was utilized as a basis for the later studies. Thus, this thesis shows a knowledge progression from the start to the end (i.e., from the first to the last article).

Fourth, although the measurement scale was developed for CBE as a psychological state, the author of this thesis is convinced that, to capture CBE in its entire form, the concept should comprise more than the state part. The study findings indicate that the engagement process is complex, providing different levels of psychological and behavioral CBE as a result of brand activities. Thus, as an overall concept, CBE should encompass both a state and a behavioral part, each consisting of separate engagement processes, supporting Calder and Malthouse (2008), Calder et al. (2009), Bowden (2009a), and Reitz (2012). This thesis defines CBE as "a customer's obligation to invest his/her emotions, cognitions, and behavioral intentions in a brand relationship and the invested engagement behavior in the brand relationship".

Lastly, several service and brand concepts were proposed as either antecedents or outcomes of CBE, and this thesis provide several interesting results in this area. The study results document brand involvement, customer participation and regulatory fit as antecedents of CBE. When customers increase their involvement (e.g., with brand-related topics), their engagement will subsequently increase. Regarding customer participation, the argument is that, when a customer makes an effort to participate with a firm/brand, their engagement in social media will positively enhance. Regulatory fit (promotion-oriented brand activity/eager strategy and prevention-oriented brand activity/vigilant strategy) was documented to affect cognitive CBE positively. In addition, this thesis found other combinations of motivational orientation and customer strategy to provide significant effects on psychologically anchored CBE dimensions and CBE behavior, respectively.

Regarding the outcomes of CBE, this thesis documents that customer participation, customer experience, and brand loyalty are positive outcomes. Interestingly, in addition to being an antecedent of CBE, customer participation can also act as an outcome of CBE in social media, bridging the effects of CBE on brand satisfaction. When customers engage emotionally, cognitively, and/or intentionally in certain brand activities and content on social media (Facebook), they show more interest in participating with the brand. From a value co-creation perspective, it seems that customer participation and CBE affect one another in ongoing service processes, giving support to the process perspective on CBE as well. CBE is also documented by this thesis to be a substantial antecedent of brand experience. Thus, when customers engage in brand activities in social media, they will enhance their experience with that particular brand. Contradicting several previous studies (Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a; Dessart et al., 2015), this thesis could not confirm a positive direct effect of CBE on brand loyalty. CBE needs to work through bridging variables (i.e., brand experience and brand satisfaction), in a complex

affect chain, in order to positively affect brand loyalty. Figure 2 gives an overview of the documented antecedents and outcomes of CBE.

Figure 2 Theory-testing results

Note: This model is brief and combines different models from the articles. It is not an absolute requirement that CBE is a bridging concept (i.e., a mediator) between all of these relationship concepts.
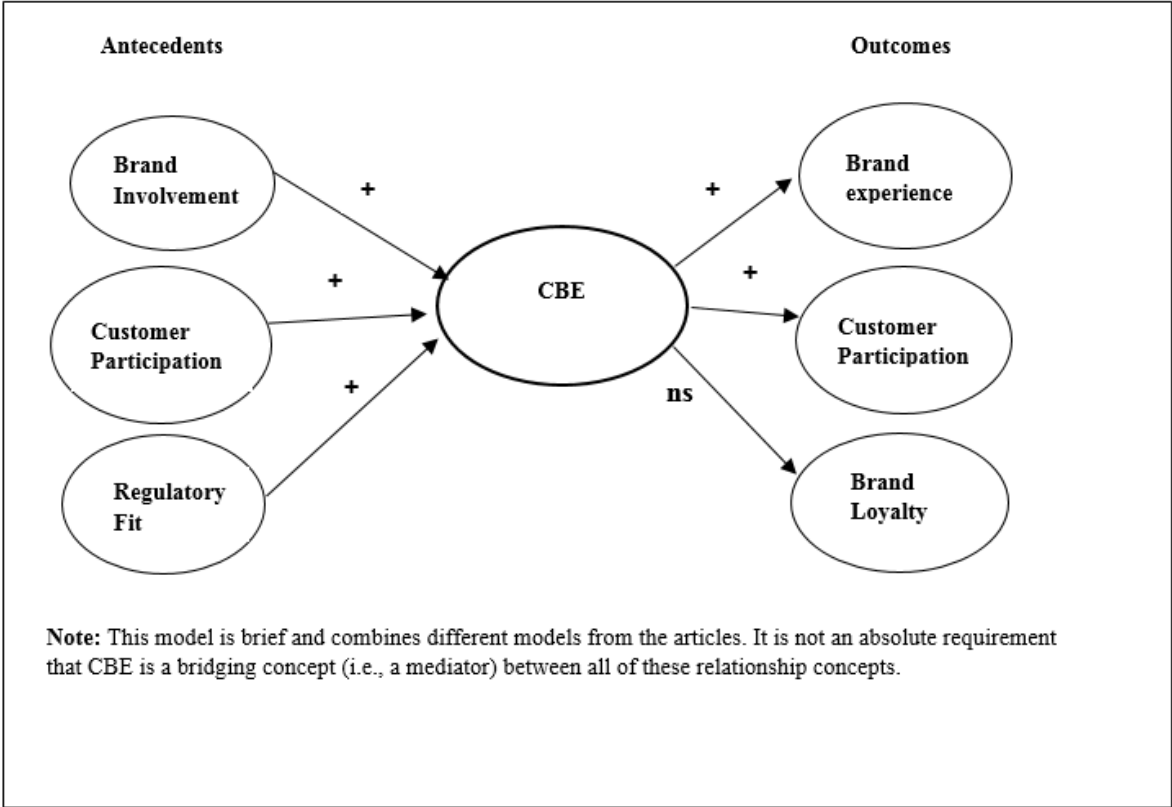
Against the background of the theoretical conceptualization of CBE, and by using rich and varied empirical data, this thesis refines the understanding of CBE, its distinct domain, its antecedents, and its outcomes.

5.2. Validity concerns

Campbell and Stanley (1966) and Cook and Campbell (1979) address four types of validity - statistical conclusion validity, construct validity, internal validity, and external validity. Below, the different forms of validity are discussed in relation to this research.

5.2.1 Statistical conclusion validity

Statistical conclusion validity is the degree to which conclusions about the relationships among the included variables are correct or reasonable (Cozby, 2009). It involves ensuring the use of (1) adequate sampling procedures, (2) appropriate statistical tests, and (3) reliable measurement procedures (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

Data were collected through several national panel surveys in cooperation with Norstat (the largest online panel data provider in Norway), which made the sample representative and the procedure trustworthy. There are always reasons to question self-reported questionnaire responses, the argument being that they could reflect customers' memories of engagement states, and thus may not adequately capture them "in situ". Even though one study was longitudinal, data were collected through surveys, reflecting "snapshots" of CBE, which is a known challenge when applying survey research.

In some of the studies, the samples of social-media-using customers were small, which may prevent consideration of the findings as definitive evidence of CBE effects. However, when the results obtained using the same CBE measurement scale pointed in the same direction, they were considered trustworthy. Students were used as subjects in some of the studies, a practice that has been suggested by some researchers to threaten the generalizability of findings due to the non-representativeness of the population (Wells, 1993). However, in line with Hollebeek et al. (2014), the argument of this thesis is that, since students are also customers and since they were provided with clear guidelines, the results gained from these studies can be considered credible and trustworthy.

Regarding the statistical tests used, this thesis combines different test procedures, due to the multi-method design/method triangulation used. The combination of exploratory (e.g., Rep-grid), descriptive (surveys), and causal (field experiment) design strengthens the statistical conclusion validity, in comparison to the use of a more "strict" causal design (i.e., fully controlled lab experiments).

Concerning measurement procedures, it is always important to question the level of reliability of the measures applied. For the CBE measurement scale developed here, an acknowledged measurement scale was adapted from the organizational behavior research field (i.e., the JES scale developed by Rich et al., 2010). A challenge could relate to the fact that the engagement subjects (employees vs. customers), objects (job vs. brand), and contexts (firm vs. social media) of the two scales are different. This issue could be argued to harm the statistical conclusion validity. However, because the original scale was carefully based on brief theoretical

assumptions, one could argue that the scale is suitable for measurement in the marketing field as well.

5.2.2 Construct validity

According to Cronbach and Meehl (1955), construct validity is the degree to which a test measures what it claims to be measuring. It relates to questions regarding the inappropriate interpretation of scores. It covers whether (1) the items appear to be measuring the concept of interest, (2) the suggested dimensions correlate well with the construct of interest, (3) the theoretical foundation underlying the construct seems reasonable, and (4) the tests have convergent, discriminant, and predictive quality.

Regarding the measurement, the items were carefully chosen through the validation of the JES scale, finally producing a nine-item scale consisting of three dimensions (emotional, cognitive, and intentional) represented by three items each. All dimensions showed acceptable reliability, and convergent validity, indicating that the items correlated well within each dimension. However, the three-dimensional scale showed a possible lack of discriminant validity, due to high correlations. Two alternative models were tested, a two-factor model and a unidimensional model, and the weaker model results of both models confirmed that the three-dimensional model should be retained. It is noteworthy that the results that showed a lack of discriminant validity were in line with Hollebeek et al.'s (2014) test of their CBE scale, which challenges both scales' stability. Arguably, a future scale that captured the overall CBE in social media should more accurately comprise engagement behavior measures as well.

This thesis also documents some challenging issues regarding the lack of discriminant validity between CBE, brand experience, and customer participation, which could mean that those three concepts are difficult to separate conceptually.

5.2.3 Internal validity

Internal validity refers to the validity of declarations regarding the effects of variables on other variables (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991), and that they are not being disturbed by other variables. It addresses whether or not an observed covariation should be considered a causal relationship. Arguably, a multiple-method design is more trustworthy than a single-method design when it comes to the assessment of internal validity, because the phenomenon of interest and the theorized relationships are investigated from different angles. Based on advice from Iacobucci and Churchill (2010), a concept should be measurable and covariances determined using several different methods. Otherwise, the results could be considered as nothing more

than artifacts of the measurement procedure. In attempts to triangulate, the methods should be independent, if possible.

An important question to ask is whether all the methods used in a multi-method approach should be weighted equally regarding their usefulness. If not, then it is not clear on what basis the data should be weighted, aside from personal preference (Jick, 1979). Given the differing nature of multi-method results, thus, the determination is likely to be subjective. While statistical tests can be applied to a particular method, there are no formal tests for discriminating between the different methods so as to judge their applicability. For example, in article 3, while the cross-sectional study confirmed that customer participation positively affects brand satisfaction in the short term, the longitudinal study did not confirm long-lasting effects. Even though the differences can be explained by the temporal aspect as a factor (short-term vs. long-term), there is a need to be aware of the possible internal validity problems deriving from the research complexity when applying multi-method designs.

5.2.4 External validity

External validity is the extent to which the effects from studies can be generalized to or across target populations, settings, times, and the like (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). Clearly, one of the main purposes of confirmatory research is to approve proposed theoretical models by testing hypotheses.

Following Calder, Phillips, and Tybout (1981), this thesis argues that two distinct types of generalizability exist. One entails the generalization of specific effects, the other the generalization of scientific theory. Further, this thesis argues that these generalizations will have different methodological implications. The first type, termed *effects generalization*, maps observed data directly into events beyond the research setting, assuming that correspondence between the subjects and the context used and those in the total population is a necessary condition for the effects. Thus, relevant representative samples and field settings (e.g., social media) are needed when effects generalization is the goal. Regarding effects generalization in this thesis, the goal is to generalize from the chosen sample of insurance customers to all insurance customers in the population (i.e., all Norwegian insurance customers). Considering context, the social-media-using insurance customers in the sample will need to be representative of all social-media-using customers. Then, we can ask ourselves the following: Is it possible to generalize from the documented research effects to (1) other customers than insurance customers, (2) other firms/brands/services than insurance, (3) other off-line contexts, and (4) other social media platforms than Facebook?

If the goal is *theory generalization*, then the answer to this question is yes. Its primary goal is to identify scientific theories that provide a general understanding of a phenomenon and to explain events *beyond* the research setting. Thus, it is the theoretical explanation that is expected to be generalizable and not the particular effects obtained. One uses the methodological procedures to test a theory by creating a context and measuring effects within that context that could disprove or refute the theory. Thus, the research context and effects are not of interest in their own right. Their significance lies in the information they provide about the theory's adequacy. According to Calder et al. (1981), it is a mistake to assume that the people, events, and objects in a theory test should reflect the situations in the population. Rather, the test circumstances should simply provide the strongest test of the theory possible. Testing theory among insurance customers and insurance firms/brands offering intangible, high-involvement and negatively motivated services means that a positive result provides an even stronger finding. Rather than using customers who are more representative of service customers in general, and rather than using more regular service brands, this thesis provides extreme testing of the theories to see whether they hold. To the extent that they do hold, they should also hold for customers and/or service customers, as well as for brands and/or service brands, in general. In addition to providing practical advice to the marketers of insurance firms/brands, the primarily goal of this thesis was to conduct research so as to gain a more theoretical understanding of CBE as a phenomenon, as well as to test theory on the explanatory factors and outcomes of CBE at a more general theoretical level.

5. 3 Theoretical implications

It is by conducting studies of peoples' motivations and gratifications of social media use that theories of the appropriateness of social media for customer-brand relationships are developed. This thesis contributes to the U&G approach, not only by documenting people's motivation for social media use in brand relationships, but also by providing evidence of user mode differences in interpersonal and brand relationships, supporting theories suggested by Yoon et al. (2006), as well as documenting that brand relationships are primarily instrumental, supporting theories of Liu and Gal (2011). These theories regarding people's motivations for social media use become important *prerequisites* for CBE to occur. CBE has relevance in central theoretical perspectives focusing on two-way interactive customer-brand relationships, supporting social exchange theory (SET) (Homans, 1958), the value co-creation perspective (Ranjan & Read, 2014), the service-dominant (S-D) logic perspective (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008), and the expanding domain of relationship marketing theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In line with S-D

logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), this thesis posits that CBE in social media is centered on interactive experiences with complex, co-creative *contexts*, and thus theorizes that social media is an appropriate platform for the encouragement of CBE on other premises than exchange.

This thesis provides *theory construction* by developing knowledge of "what" CBE is. Through a brief theoretical overview, in combination with various studies, the thesis identifies CBE's conceptual foundations and characteristics and argues that CBE is a concept that is distinct from other service and brand concepts. Regarding "how" we should measure CBE, this thesis develops a scholarly understanding of CBE as a motivationally founded, psychological, and multidimensional concept. As the CBE measurement scale was adapted from another acknowledged research field, this thesis also provides *theory application*. Finally, this thesis develops an understanding of theoretical relationships involving CBE, and thus provides *theory testing* of antecedents and outcomes and "why" these relationships occur. The results provide support for several antecedents that positively explain CBE and for positive outcomes of CBE, thus extending the existing consumer behavior theory. By introducing regulatory fit as an explanatory factor for CBE, this thesis tests regulatory fit theory and regulatory engagement theory. Although positive cognitive CBE was found to result from regulatory fit, supporting Higgins (2006) and Higgins and Scholer (2009), this thesis argues that regulatory fit does not fully explain CBE. Supporting Pham and Avnet's (2009) constructive criticism of regulatory fit, this thesis finds regulatory orientation and customer strategies to have positive interaction effects on both emotional and intentional CBE. As such, this thesis contributes to research that suggests extending regulatory fit theory into regulatory engagement theory. This thesis theorizes that customers are using diverse customer strategies based on situations and contexts, exemplified by the assumption that customers will apply either eager or vigilant strategies in social media. This study challenges traditional marketing communication theories (Percy & Elliot, 2012) by showing that diverse brand activities can create different CBE effects among customers applying different strategies.

By considering CBE as a multidimensional concept, comprising a state and a behavioral part, this thesis helps unify the theoretical and practitioner perspectives of CBE. Thus, it helps in the construction of "middle range theories" (Brodie et al., 2011c). Through studies conducted in the context of social media, this thesis helps bring the theoretical perspective closer to the practitioners', providing useful information to service marketing practitioners on how they can utilize social media for CBE in their brand-building strategies.

5.4 Practical implications

As service firms strategically use social media for brand building and communication purposes, they need insight into consumer behavior, as well as information about people's interest in using social media in relation to firms/brands. After that, they need insight into the activities that provoke customers' engagement, as well as the consequences of the latter. This thesis offers several implications that are useful for service marketing practitioners.

First, it confirms that social media channels are appropriate not only for interpersonal relationships with friends, but also for the establishment of customer-brand relationships. With regard to service firms' planning of brand activities in social media that motivate customers, they can arguably expect customers to engage willingly in the next phase. As this thesis indicates that people are motivated primarily by instrumental values in brand relationships in social media, service firms should develop and implement media strategies and activities that primarily focus on those values, providing opportunities for customers to obtain benefits, remuneration, and/or information.

Second, the results of this thesis should encourage service firms to involve customers in their value-adding processes, as well as inviting them into co-creative actions and activities (innovative initiatives, service improvements, etc.), which would provide positive CBE effects, and the consequent positive brand experience, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty effects. Due to the "new" value co-creation perspective, service marketers need to take seriously the consequences of letting customers participate. They will need to strategically develop systems and network platforms that recognize customers' concerns and interests, and that facilitate CBE and customer participation. Based on customer input, they will need to systemize the changes, so that customers can personally benefit from them. The positive consequences may very well be enhanced satisfaction and loyalty.

Third, this thesis would encourage service firms to establish Facebook brand pages as an excellent tool for CBE. Social media (Facebook) is suggested to be a perfect channel for car sales, interior design, and luxury products, but what about less flashy, intangible, and abstract service industries, such as banking, telecoms, and insurance? By applying a critical empirical test using insurance service firms as the engagement objects, this research has shown that diverse types of brands have the possibility of engaging customers intentionally, emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally in social media. Service firms offering intangible and abstract services that are difficult for customers to comprehend in advance are recommended to use social media (Facebook brand pages) to engage customers in activities beyond service purchase and usage. Different brand activities seem to evoke different CBE processes among different

customer groups (eager vs. vigilant). Service marketing practitioners are advised to use promotion-oriented brand activities to evoke positive emotional CBE (warm feelings), among both customers applying eager and those applying vigilant strategies. On the other hand, they should apply a prevention-oriented brand activity to evoke positive cognitive CBE (good thoughts) among customers applying vigilant strategies, and to evoke positive intentional CBE and engagement behavior among customers applying eager strategies. These positive results deriving from the use of prevention-oriented brand activities are especially promising for service brands offering intangible, high-involvement, and negatively motivated services. They show that such service brands can "stick" to their brand values (e.g., on injury prevention, risk-reduction, etc.) in social media, by strategically focusing on prevention-oriented activities and content in their current brand building.

Fourth, service marketing practitioners can apply the CBE measurement scale developed in this thesis, both in general brand contexts (e.g., offline) and in social media channels, to assess the current level of psychological CBE among customers. In the context of social media, this psychological CBE scale is particularly valuable for capturing CBE states (feelings, thoughts, and intentions), in addition to CBE behavior (e.g., "likes", comments, "shares"). An important implication of this research is that a large numbers of "likers" or "followers" is not enough for brand-building purposes. Customers' levels of psychological (warm feelings, good thoughts, and good intentions) and behavioral CBE are of the highest importance.

5.5 Limitations and suggestions for future research

As is the case with all research projects, this thesis has several limitations, but they do offer promising possibilities for future research.

Both the cross-sectional studies and the longitudinal panel study were conducted using self-reported questionnaires, only reflecting customers' memories of CBE. However, taking into consideration that CBE is considered a fluctuating state and behavior, "in situ" data could be collected using an appropriate methodological design, such as netnography (Kozinets, 2002) and content analysis, so as to study CBE on a more continual basis. For the analysis of CBE behavior on an individual level, the use of social media statistics should be utilized more effectively, while following the ethical guidelines provided for analysis in social media (Facebook).

Another challenge when using cross-sectional data and a descriptive survey design is that this design only provides a "snapshot" of all the variables measured at the same time point. A longitudinal study design would provide more control and an opportunity to determine which

variable is the explanatory and which the outcome, based on the time of their occurrence. One limitation of the longitudinal study (article 3) concerned the limited sample size of social-media-using customers, which meant that CBE could not be measured at three time-points. Unfortunately, a longitudinal study could not be utilized to test the antecedents and outcomes of CBE. This thesis documents the CBE effects through the use of a field experimental study (i.e., a quasi-experimental design) (article 4). Although this design did not provide the possibility of taking account of a non-manipulated control group, the study was appropriate for conducting experiments in social media contexts. A clear benefit of using a field experimental study is that people do not actually need to know that they are being manipulated (e.g., when responding to brand activity posts), providing that any anonymity concerns are dealt with for the participating individuals.

This thesis confirms that there are high correlations between CBE and customer participation and CBE and brand experience, thus questioning the discriminant validity between those concepts. The scale applied for measuring brand experience (Brakus et al., 2009) contained several items using the term "engage", which makes it reasonable to question whether CBE and brand experience are to some extent conceptually confounded. Future studies should more fully test whether these two concepts are distinct from each other, or whether in fact they contain the same meaning, despite having different conceptual names. Rather than measuring customer participation using a questionnaire, the concept would benefit from being manipulated in an experimental setting, to test the subsequent effect on CBE. Such manipulations could consist of different participation-oriented activities (e.g., innovation initiatives, ideas about service improvements, etc.). The CBE (state and CBE behavior levels) gained from those different manipulated activities could provide useful information to service marketing practitioners.

This thesis suggests that customer participation, brand experience, and brand loyalty are outcomes of CBE. Several other service and brand concepts have been addressed in the marketing literature as possible outcomes of CBE, although mostly by conceptual studies. Future studies would benefit from introducing and testing the effects of CBE on additional outcome variables, such as trust, commitment, satisfaction, and customer delight.

When applying the broader ideas about CBE as a multidimensional concept in interactive environments (e.g., social media) to test regulatory engagement theory (Higgins, 2006; Higgins & Scholer, 2009), this research only found an effect of regulatory fit (Higgins, 2005) on CBE cognitions. This implies that regulatory engagement theory should be further developed to include a more complex set of effects of regulatory fit *and* regulatory non-fit. Future

development of that theory in a social media context could benefit from the incorporation of social context as a moderator (e.g., other participating customers in the social media context) (Dessart et al., 2015). This idea of taking extrinsic motivation into account in addition to intrinsic motivation is in line with the main ideas of SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

This thesis focuses on different customer groups that are assumed to take either eager or vigilant strategies in their goal motivation. Future study possibilities could include conducting a more explicit analysis of extended customer groups/internet user types, already known from the social media literature. For example, Mathwich (2002) developed four internet user types: lurkers, socializers, personal connectors, and transactional community members. Bernoff and Li (2008) distinguished between six types of social media users: inactive users, spectators, joiners, collectors, critics, and creators, while Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011) highlighted three user groups of brand-related social media: consuming, contributing, and creating. Inspired by these studies, future studies should contain more specific customer grouping analysis, coupled with different sets of brand activities in social media, so as to investigate the resulting outcomes for CBE state and behavior.

Although this thesis evaluated a generic CBE scale in addition to a social-media-adapted scale, the studies that empirically measured CBE and tested antecedents and outcomes of CBE were conducted in the context of social media. Future studies would benefit from measuring CBE in other social media channels, as well as in interactive offline channels (for effect generalization purposes). The samples of social-media-using customers were limited, preventing this research from obtaining definitive evidence on CBE effects. Future work should consider the CBE measurement scale's applicability to larger customer samples.

The objects of engagement in this thesis were either brands or brand activity (in social media). Service firms played the brand role, and insurance firms were the primary objects of investigation. Future studies would benefit from using other categories of brands in the empirical testing, both product brands and other types of service brands, for further validation of the CBE measurement scale and of the conceptual relationships between CBE and its antecedents and outcomes. As this thesis assumes that CBE lies in a continuum ranging from non-engaging to highly engaging, future studies should investigate more deeply which brand characteristics or types of brand activities produce different positive effects on CBE state and behavior. An interesting question for future research is related to the factors that encourage people to engage with some brands rather than others.

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CHAPTER 6
ARTICLES

Article 1

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Brand relationships in the social media context:

Underlying gratifications, motivations, and user mode differences

Submitted to Journal of Interactive Advertising

Abstract

As firms give priority to social media, a deeper understanding of people's motivations to engage in brand-related social media activities is imperative. This study identified user mode differences in consumer behavior; gratifications and motivations for social media use differed in interpersonal and brand relationship contexts. An initial exploratory study 1 ($n = 42$) identified different gratifications charactering interpersonal and brand relationships. Further, studies 2 ($n = 300$) and 3 ($n = 961$) show that people are motivated more by socialization, sharing, and entertainment in an interpersonal than in a brand relationship. Study 2 show that brand relationships are primarily instrumental, motivated by empowerment, remuneration, and information collection, but that people can develop close relationships with particular brands, showing their self–brand connection through social media.

Keywords: brand relationship; gratification; motivation; social media

Introduction

From a consumer-brand perspective, products and brands play important roles in people's everyday life, and thus become natural subjects of engagement and discussion in social media (Fournier and Avery 2011). Firms realize that consumers gain power and largely control conversations concerning the firm, products, and brand(s) in social media channels. However, whether social media platforms exist only for interpersonal relationships, or are suitable for the establishment of consumer–brand relationships, is an intriguing question. According to Fournier and Avery (2011), social media are designed to link people in personal, collective, conversational networks, not to sell branded products or to build brand relationships.

Increasing numbers of firms and marketing managers are convinced that they need to participate in social media – for example, by establishing firm profiles and brand pages on Facebook. Thus, from a firm perspective, interactions with consumers *via* social media actualise the importance of enhancing and sustaining consumer/customer engagement to create deeper and longer-lasting brand relationships (Kumar et al. 2010; Gambetti and Grafigna 2010; Libai 2011; Sashi 2012). Despite the interest in consumer/customer engagement as an important online phenomenon (Jahn and Kunz 2012; Brodie et al. 2013; Baldus, Voorhees, and Calantone 2014; Mull and Lee 2014; Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie 2014; Habibi, Laroche, and Richard 2014), however, little attention has been given to the dimensions and motivations *underlying* brand-related engagement in social media. We argue that firms' discovery of these underlying motivations is prerequisite for the stimulation of customer brand engagement through targeted media communication strategies. Firms should ascertain *why* people want to use a particular social media channel for different purposes and in relationships with different participants (e.g. friends, brands), based on *what* they want to obtain from interaction with these actors in these channels. Thus, we argue that further research on why people use social media channels in relationships with brands is needed.

The underlying argument of this paper is that people apply different user modes in interpersonal and brand relationships. Thus, by comparing these two user modes, the purpose of the three studies described here was to clarify whether social media use in interpersonal and brand relationships can be explained by different gratifications and motivations. Furthermore, we argue that people are motivated primarily by instrumental values in brand relationships in social media. However, we assume that people who feel especially connected to a certain brand willingly show support for and loyalty to that brand in social media. Answer to these assumptions will provide insight for marketing managers that are contemplating the use of social media for the establishment of solid customer-brand relationships.

To gain insight into gratifications and motivations among people applying different user modes, this research utilized a user-focused perspective drawn from the uses and gratifications (U&G) framework (Katz 1959). The U&G approach was developed to explain consumers' motivation to use mass-communication (e.g. television, radio) media channels. A user's specific motivations to consume a given media type are considered to drive his/her seeking out and engagement with a media channel (Mull and Lee 2014). The U&G approach postulates that consumers select media types based on the gratifications, or satisfactions, that they receive from them (Katz 1959). Although several studies have used the U&G approach to investigate online media channels (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke 2008; Courtois et al. 2009; Quan-Haase and Young 2010; Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011), the present research is the first to utilize the U&G framework to investigate user mode differences by contrasting gratifications and motivations in interpersonal and brand relationships.

In the theoretical section, we highlight theories on gratifications and motivations, and the nature of interpersonal and brand relationships, identifying dimensions that we argue can describe user mode differences. Then, we describe three studies in which we explored the differences between these relationship types and associated gratifications and motivations in the context of Facebook use, using a mixed-method approach inspired by Mull and Lee (2014). Elements of the preliminary exploratory analysis (study 1) led to two follow-up quantitative analyses (studies 2 and 3) (Churchill 1979; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner 2007), which explored how relationship-specific gratifications identified in study 1 could be structured as motivational dimensions/factors and contrasted their underlying importance in interpersonal and brand relationships. In the discussion section, we summarise and discuss the findings from the three studies, consider their implications and study limitations, and provide suggestions for future research.

Theoretical framework

Users' gratifications and motivations

This research applied a user-centric perspective drawn from the functionalistic perspective of U&G (Katz 1959). In contrast to effect-oriented research, which takes a marketer-centric perspective, the U&G approach to communication research examines media effects from the viewpoint of the individual user (Aitken, Gray and Lawson 2008; Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011). Traditionally, U&G approach was used to examine how and why people use media and new media types, considering people as active and selective users (Ruggiero 2000). This approach assumes that people take an active role in media consumption and have a certain goal

in mind when using a particular media channel. Based on the U&G approach, and in the context of 'media usage', we understand motivations as the incentives that drive people's selection and use of media channels and media content (Rubin 2002). In line with Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011), we consider motivation (gratification seeking) to be the key driving force of consumer behavior. If media behavior is a means to attain goals (i.e. gratifications), then motivation is the activation of that goal-directed behavior (Pervin 1989).

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) proposed the theory of reasoned action, derived from social psychology, which highlights three components explaining people's behavior: behavioral intention, attitude, and subjective norm. From the U&G perspective, we consider motivations to be reasons for actions, consisting of beliefs about the consequences of performing a behavior. Based on U&G theory, we thus consider motivation to be an internal cognitive and emotional psychological state that is not governed by subjective norms or perceived expectations of relevant individuals or groups.

Researchers have applied the U&G approach widely to understand people's motivations for using media channels, such as television (Palmgreen and Rayburn 1979), telephones (O'Keefe and Sulanowski 1995), the internet (LaRose, Mastro, and Eastin 2001), and social media (Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011; Quan-Haase and Young 2010; Raacke and Bonds-Raacke 2008; Kwon, D'Anngelo, and McLeaod 2013). McQuail (1983) introduced a highly regarded general U&G categorisation with the following motivations for media use: information, entertainment, integration and social interaction, and personal identity. Several social media motivation studies have indicated that McQuail's (1983) classification is also applicable to brand relationships in social media. For example, Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011) extended McQuail's research by suggesting two additional motivations for consumers' online brand-related activities: remuneration and empowerment. Inspired by McQuail (1983) and Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011), the present research sought to discover appropriate U&G motivations for consumer behavior and brand engagement in the Facebook context by identifying user mode differences between interpersonal and brand relationships.

Interpersonal and brand relationships

Temporality distinguishes a relationship from an isolated transaction (Berscheid and Peplau 1983). A relationship is a series of repeated exchanges between two parties known to each other; it evolves in response to interactions and fluctuations in contextual environments (Fournier 1998). Many daily activities occur in the context of social relationships, through direct or indirect interaction with others. Following Liu and Gal (2011), Clark, Fitness, and

Brissette (2001) and Kelley et al. (1983), we define an *interpersonal relationship* as a type of relationship in which a member feels a special sense of responsibility for the other party's welfare, and members consider each other to be closely connected. Interpersonal relationships typically include friendships, romantic relationships, and family relationships, which are often characterized by social and community motivations (Liu and Gal 2011).

Liu and Gal (2011) argued that exchange relationships, as the opposite of interpersonal relationships, involve interactions in which benefits are exchanged between parties with the expectation of equivalent remuneration; these relationships thus involve a greater focus on instrumental values. Exchange relationships include those between firms and consumers/customers. We characterize a *brand relationship* as an exchange relationship because a participating person remains relatively independent, with his/her interests separate from that of the brand. In line with Fournier (1998), we consider a brand to have a non-objective existence, as a collection of perceptions held in the mind of a consumer. People often consider products and firms to be brand representatives (i.e. product brands and corporate brands). The brand can function through touch-points and activities initiated by a firm, a marketer, or an employee responsible for the administration of social media channels.

Motivational differences between user modes

Although several studies have suggested that consumer–brand relationships broadly resemble interpersonal relationships (Aggarwal 2004; Fournier 1998), Yoon et al. (2006) showed that people's judgements about products and brands differ from their judgements of persons, and activate different regions of the brain. Accordingly, we suggest that people apply different user modes, which activate different motivations for social media channel use, in interpersonal relationships and brand relationships, with some processes and motivations influencing one relationship type more than the other. That is, firms cannot assume that people consider brands to be equivalent to friends in social media. We argue that people shape the forms of usage based largely on different motivations and desired gratifications underlying interpersonal and brand relationships.

Although the assumption that pure, theoretical, motivational dimensions of interpersonal and brand relationships exist is useful, in this research we took the perspective that a combination of motivations may underlie a given relationship. We thus expected that the theoretical motivational dimensions underlying consumer behavior in interpersonal relationships also might, to a certain extent, explain such behavior in brand relationships. Although the relationship between a firm and a consumer is defined predominantly by an

economic exchange, it may also have motivational characteristics in common with an interpersonal relationship, although their influence is weaker. As people's interests evolve over time, they may come to feel especially connected to a particular brand, identifying with it and engaging in behaviors such as recommending it to other contacts (Escalas and Bettman 2005). Liu and Gal (2011) found that (thinking about) spending time with a brand may reduce the instrumental relationship distance between consumers and the firm, enabling a closer relationship with the firm/brand. We investigated these assumptions further in the three studies described below.

Study 1: gratifications of Facebook use in different user modes

Research design, sample, and data collection

Study 1 was conducted to examine the following research question: *What are the main gratifications obtained from social media (Facebook) use in the contexts of interpersonal and brand relationships?* This study was based on the U&G approach, whereby people's motivations for media use are identified using gratification recording. To minimize the influence of preconceptions while enabling comparison of the findings with the assumptions described in the previous section, we used open enquiries to solicit gratification data related to interpersonal and brand relationships. We conducted the study in Norway in February 2012 with a convenience sample of 42 third-year graduate students in marketing (50% men; age 21–26 years). Interviewees completed the pencil-and-paper exercise (duration ~30 min) individually. They were asked to respond to the following two items, with two versions of item 1 administered to separate groups:

1. When interacting with *my personal friends* ($n = 19$) / *a brand (product or corporate brand)* ($n = 23$), I would use Facebook to:
2. When interacting with *my friends about brands* ($n = 42$), I would use Facebook to:

We assumed that these items would lead interviewees to elaborate on their motivations for engaging in specific behaviors, thereby revealing uses and gratifications. The interviewees had little trouble verbalizing their statements; we thus considered the items to be readily understood and to encourage participants to answer in the best way possible.

Analysis

First, we noted all responses to each item in a protocol, categorized and sorted the data obtained in relation to user mode (interpersonal *vs*. brand relationships).

Results and discussion

Table 1 summarizes responses to item 1. Interviewees characterized their Facebook use in the context of interpersonal relationships by referring to gratifications representing 'closeness' and interest in socializing with other people (i.e. friends, family), supporting the findings of Liu and Gal (2011) and McQuail (1983). The following gratifications represented aspects of interpersonal relationships: 'get to know more people (in a community)', 'share ideas that I have', and 'tell others when something new happens'. Keeping updated about friends' statuses also seemed to be important. In addition, interviewees highlighted interest in expressing themselves to others, as well as having fun and killing time.

Table 1 Gratifications of Facebook use in interpersonal and brand relationship contexts

User modes	Gratifications
Interpersonal-related Facebook use (*n*=19)	Get to know more people (in a community) Share ideas that I have Tell others when something new happens Capture and spread news Look at pictures Comment on others' posts Keep track of others' comments Look at other people's status updates Get quick answers when I wonder about something Build self-esteem Kill time Have fun Show others that I am using new media Obtain attention
Brand-related Facebook use (*n*=23)	See who other likers/followers are Communicate with other customers Comment on others' messages and pictures Get information about brands Obtain information about products/services Get problems solved Find interesting links Obtain information about product releases Participate in contests Get special offers Achieve personal gains Show others that I like a particular brand Complain Tell others when I am dissatisfied with something Steer the conversation in a preferred direction

In contrast, instrumental values predominantly guided people's use of Facebook in the context of brand relationships. These results, reflecting the instrumental nature of brand relationships, are in agreement with previous findings and theoretical assumptions (Liu and Gal 2011; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011). The following gratifications reflected aspects of brand relationships: 'get special offers', 'achieve personal gains', and 'complain'. These responses characterize social media as a context in which powerful consumers and customers act. Several interviewees highlighted the importance of finding information about a brand and other brand likers/followers. However, brand relationships can also have more-positive hedonic characteristics, similar to interpersonal relationships. With the response 'show others that I like a particular brand', one participant indicated a desire to express his/her closeness to a brand (self–brand connection) to other people. We assume that people's special sense of responsibility for a brand's welfare increases with the time spent engaging in brand relationships *via* social media, following Liu and Gal (2011).

Responses to item 2 (Table 2) indicated a broad spectrum of gratifications related to Facebook use in the context of brand-related interaction in interpersonal relationships. Interviewees indicated that Facebook can be useful for discussions about brands, and to gain recommendations and support for particular brands, represented by gratifications such as 'discuss particular brands with others', 'find out friends' opinions and evaluations', and 'post a brand's website link on my friends' walls to invite them to firm/brand happenings'. Facebook thus seems to be useful for expressions of self–brand connection, loyalty, and the sharing of brand interest through word of mouth.

Table 2 Gratifications obtained from interaction with friends about brands ($n = 42$)

Gratifications
Discuss particular brands with others
Find out friends' opinions and evaluations
Post a brand's website link on my friends' walls to invite them to firm/brand happenings
Obtain information about products/services
Get recommendations
Warn my friends about 'bad' brands
Create a buzz
Show that I am up to date
Obtain acknowledgement from other people
Show what I am interested in
Compare information about brands
Convince other people that a brand is worth buying

The results of study 1 allowed us to identify gratifications explaining and distinguishing the nature of interpersonal and brand relationships. They showed that not only interpersonal relationships, but also brand relationships, can be created and maintained through the social media channel of Facebook. Thus, the responses indicated that people apply different user modes to obtain particular gratifications in Facebook interactions. To explore whether these gratifications could be grouped into motivational factors, we conducted studies 2 and 3. Our argument was that examination of the gratifications' *underlying motivational structure* would allow us to determine the degrees of the motivations' *relevance* in interpersonal and brand relationships, respectively. We thus proposed the following three propositions:

> **P₁:** *Based on the assumption of user mode differences in interpersonal and brand relationships, motivational factors will have different levels of importance in these two relationship types.*
>
> **P₂:** *Brand relationships are characterized primarily by instrumental motivations.*
>
> **P₃:** *People are willing to support particular brands and to express self–brand connections and loyalty to others* via *social media.*

Study 2: panel-based evaluation of gratifications and underlying motivations

Research design, sample, and data collection

The purpose of study 2 was to investigate the relative importance of gratifications related to Facebook use in the contexts of interpersonal and brand relationships. We examined 35 gratifications identified as descriptive terms in study 1 (Tables 1 and 2) using a questionnaire (Appendix 1).

In March 2012, Norstat (the largest online panel-data provider in Norway) facilitated the conduction of a nationwide online survey with 300 participants (52% male) aged ≥ 15 years (13% aged 15–24 years, 17% aged 25–34 years, 13% aged 35–44 years, 22% aged 45–54 years, 19% aged 55–64 years, 14% aged ≥ 65 years). Participants were asked to rate the perceived level of importance of each gratification in interpersonal and brand relationships on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (to a very low degree) to 7 (to a very high degree) (Stafford, Staffors, and Schkade 2004). The following guiding question was provided:

'On Facebook, we usually interact with friends. However, we recognise that firms, represented by their brands (Apple, Coca Cola, Stabburet, DNB, Tryg, etc.) are also present

on Facebook. In relation to [friends] / [brands], to what extent can Facebook be suitable for:…?'

Analysis

Following the U&G approach, gratifications were grouped into motivational dimensions. We used exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to estimate the preliminary underlying structure of factors/motivations. Following the U&G method (e.g. Papacharissi and Mendelson 2007), we approached the analysis with no clear *a priori* expectation of the number of factors or pattern of gratifications.

Principal component analysis and varimax rotation (Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma 2003) were performed using IBM SPSS software (ver. 21; IBM, Armonk, NY, USA) to identify the underlying factor structure. We used Bartlett's test of sphericity (BS) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy to assess the suitability of data for EFA. We determined the number of motivational factors to retain using the Kaiser criterion (eigenvalue > 1; Kaiser 1960) and the scree elbow test (i.e. a scree plot; Cattel 1966). Gratifications/items that did not load above 0.35 (Hair et al. 2006) with a difference of at least 0.20 from other factors were eliminated from further analysis (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994; Kim and Mueller 1978). We performed separate analyses of gratifications of Facebook use for interpersonal and brand relationships, then examined user mode differences between these relationship types using the paired sample *t*-test.

Results and discussion

The analysis of Facebook use in the context of interpersonal relationships yielded a three-factor solution that explained 73% of the total variance, indicating that the overall factor structure consisted of three motivations. The scree elbow test also indicated the presence of three factors. The KMO measure (0.97) and BS results ($p < 0.001$) indicated the suitability of EFA. Factor loadings in the rotated component matrix ranged from 0.47 to 0.84. The pattern of motivations was largely in agreement with those proposed in previous U&G research (McQuail 1983; Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011), but the pattern of the interpersonal relationship factor structure was unclear.

The analysis of Facebook use in the context of brand relationships yielded a three-factor solution that explained 75% of the variance, indicating the presence of three motivations. The scree elbow test also yielded a three-factor solution. The KMO measure (0.97) and BS results ($p < 0.001$) indicated the suitability of EFA, and factor loadings ranged from 0.46 to 0.80. Like

the interpersonal relationship factor structure, the factor structure for brand relationships was not clear.

Given the lack of a clear pattern allowing us to contrast user modes, we performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) based on the difference in value structure between interpersonal and brand relationships. The initial stage of CFA yielded a seven-factor structure, supported by scree elbow test results. However, the requirement of 0.20 between cross-loading gratifications to ensure discriminant validity (Kim and Mueller 1978) resulted in four replications. Ultimately, CFA yielded a three-factor structure explaining 62% of the total variance (KMO statistic = 0.83; BS results, $p < 0.001$). Loadings ranged from 0.70 to 0.86. Table 3 shows the 13 gratifications that fulfilled the requirements for factor loading and convergent and discriminant validity. Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the 0.70 cut-off value for two of the three factors (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994), indicating good internal consistency for two of the three motivations.

Table 3 Results of factor analysis[1] of user modes (study 2, $n = 300$)

Gratifications	Factor loading			Cronbach's alpha	Motivation
Read what other people write Comment on others' posts Keep track of others' comments See who other friends/followers are Capture and spread news	0.86 0.76 0.85 0.78 0.70			0.88	Socialisation, sharing
Obtain information about products/services Get special offers Get information about brands Show others that I support a particular brand		0.81 0.82 0.85 0.63		0.80	Instrumentality (empowerment, remuneration, information collection) and self-brand connection
Discuss particular brands with others Show others that I am using new media Obtain acknowledgment from other people Have fun			0.60 0.67 0.69 0.73	0.65	Self-identity (self-presentation, self-enhancement), entertainment

Note: [1]Exploratory factor analysis with principal component analysis and varimax rotation.

We interpreted the first gratification factor to comprise socialization (e.g. 'read what other people write', 'comment on others' posts') and interest in sharing content with other members of a community or social networking site (e.g. 'capture and spread news'). We considered the second factor to reflect instrumentality, comprising motivations such as empowerment, remuneration (i.e. 'get special offers'), and information collection (e.g. 'obtain information about products/services'). This motivational factor also captured self–brand connection (i.e. 'show others that I support a particular brand'). The third factor comprised gratifications

reflecting a combination of self-identity and entertainment, such as self-presentation (i.e. 'show others that I am using new media'), self-enhancement (i.e. 'obtain acknowledgement from other people'), and entertainment (i.e. 'have fun').

Table 4 shows the relative importance of the 13 gratifications and motivations according to user mode. Socialization and sharing, related to community, were more important in Facebook use in the context of interpersonal relationships, compared with brand relationships. Self-identity and entertainment were also more important in the interpersonal relationship setting. Conversely, instrumentality and empowerment motivations were significantly more important in brand relationships than in interpersonal relationships, with the exception of self–brand connection ('show others that I like a particular brand'). Remuneration ('get special offers') seemed to be of exceptional interest for people using Facebook in the context of brand relationships.

Table 4 Statistics for the gratifications and motivations of Facebook use (study 2, $n = 300$)

Gratifications	Importance in interpersonal relationships		Importance in brand relationships		Paired Mean diff.[1]			Motivation
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Paired Mean diff.	SD	Sig. (two-tailed)[2]	
Comment on others' posts	5.0	1.9	3.9	2.0	1.1	1.6	***	
Capture and spread news	4.8	1.9	3.5	1.8	0.7	1.4	***	Socialisation, sharing
Read what other people write	5.2	1.9	4.1	2.0	1.1	1.6	***	
Keep track of others' comments	5.1	1.9	4.0	2.0	1.1	1.6	***	
See who other friends/followers are	4.7	1.9	3.9	2.0	0.7	1.3	***	
Obtain information about products/services	3.9	1.8	4.1	2.0	- 0.2	1.3	***	Instrumentality (empowerment, remuneration, information collection) and self-brand connection
Get special offers	3.2	1.8	3.9	2.0	- 0.6	1.6	ns	
Show others that I support a particular brand	4.4	2.1	4.3	2.1	0.1	1.3	***	
Get information about brands	3.8	1.8	4.1	2.0	- 0.3	1.2	***	
Discuss particular brands with others	4.0	1.9	3.7	1.8	0.3	1.4	***	Self-identity (self-presentation, self-enhancement), entertainment
Show others that I am using new media	4.4	1.8	3.7	1.7	0.7	1.5	***	
Obtain acknowledgment from other people	4.3	1.9	3.3	1.8	0.9	1.6	***	
Have fun	4.5	1.9	3.1	1.7	1.4	1.7	***	

Note: Gratifications were rated using a seven-point Likert-type scale (1, to a very low degree; 7, to a very high degree).
[1]Negative mean differences represent gratifications that are more important in brand relationships.
[2]Paired-sample *t*-test. Sig. (2-tailed): *p < .1, **p <.05, ***p <.01

The results of study 2 indicated that motivational factors have different degrees of importance in interpersonal and brand relationships, supporting P_1. These results are in agreement with theoretical arguments that people apply different user modes of behavior in interpersonal and brand relationships (Liu and Gal 2011; Yoon et al. 2006). We found that Facebook use in the context of brand relationships was motivated primarily by instrumental values, such as information collection and remuneration, supporting P_2. The motivation of self–brand connection seemed to be important in both relationship types, implying that people are willing to proclaim their special brand connections among friends. This result is in agreement with the theoretical concept of motivational combinations (Liu and Gal 2011) and confirms the finding from study 1 regarding people's interest in communicating and sharing experiences about brands among friends *via* social media. Thus, P_3 was supported.

Study 3: motivations underlying Facebook use in interpersonal and relationships with brands offering insurance services

Research design, sample, and data collection

Study 3 was conducted to determine whether the motivational structure identified in study 2 underlay customer–brand relationships in a broader sample of customers of brands offering utility services. Our argument is that many service firms (e.g., telecom, banking, insurance, etc.) offer services that by their nature are characterized with high utility values (e.g., preventive, security seeking, risk reducing). We conducted the study related to insurance firms. Thus, to test the gratifications in this insurance brand context provides an extreme test of the theory of user mode differences among interpersonal and brand relationships. We consider the use of social media channels to be beneficial and potentially profitable for almost every industry, provided focus on the "right" motivational factors when planning communication strategies.

The 13 gratifications derived from factor analysis in study 2 were incorporated into a nationwide panel survey of 961 insurance customers of seven of the largest insurance firms/brands in Norway. In April 2012, Norstat facilitated the conduction of the survey with the insurance customers (54% male) aged $\geq$ 15 years (10% aged 15–24 years, 14% aged 25–34 years, 17% aged 35–44 years, 18% aged 45–54 years, 19% aged 55–64 years, 22% aged $\geq$ 65 years). To make the sample representative, Norstat controlled recruitment according to age, gender, education, income, and non-disclosed customer-related variables. Thirty-eight percent of participants had completed college or university and 56% had household incomes > 600,000 NOK. Respondents were rewarded *via* the Norstat system. To ensure recruitment of a sufficient

number of Facebook users, we placed survey links on the insurance firms' recently established Facebook brand pages.

As in study 2, participants were asked to rate the importance of the 13 gratifications on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (to a very low degree) to 7 (to a very high degree) with regard to Facebook use in interpersonal and insurance brand relationship contexts. Survey items related to interpersonal relationships were introduced with the following leading question:

'Imagine that you are using Facebook. On Facebook, we usually interact with friends. In relation to friends, to what extent can Facebook be suitable for:…?'

Items related to brand relationships were prefaced with the following question:

'In recent times we have recognized that firms, represented by their brands (e.g. Apple, Coca Cola, Stabburet, DNB, Tryg, etc.), are also present on Facebook. In relation to [insurance brand], to what extent do you think that Facebook can be suitable for:…?'

Each participant responded to survey questions about brand relationships with reference to the insurance firm/brand with which s/he had a customer relationship.

Analysis

In the same manner as for study 2, we analyzed the study 3 data using EFA with principal component analysis and varimax rotation (SPSS ver. 21; IBM) (Netemeyer *et al*., 2003) to detect differences in gratifications related to Facebook use in the contexts of interpersonal and insurance brand relationships. We explored user mode differences using the paired sample *t*-test.

Results and discussion

Although we expected a three-factor solution, EFA yielded a two-factor solution with two motivations explaining 67% of the variance (KMO statistic = 0.84; BS results, $p < .001$). In contrast, a scree elbow test indicated the presence of three factors. The first rotated component matrix showed a high degree of cross loading for some gratifications. Analysis performed after the exclusion of those gratifications showed that eight gratifications had high distinct loadings on two factors. Based on the scree-elbow test results, we performed factor analysis to extract three factors. The resulting factor structure is shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Results of factor analysis[1] of user modes (study 3, $n = 961$)

Gratifications	Factor loading			Cronbach's alpha	Motivation
Comment on others' posts Read what other people write Keep track of others' comments	0.87 0.86 0.88			0.93	Socialisation, sharing
Get special offers Compete with others Get information about brands		0.81 0.82 0.77		0.77	Instrumentality (empowerment, remuneration, information collection)
Kill time Have fun			0.81 0.74	0.85	Entertainment

Note: [1]Exploratory factor analysis with principal component analysis and varimax rotation.

Factor loadings ranged from 0.74 to 0.88, substantially above the recommended critical loading of >0.35 (Hair et al. 2006). Cronbach's alpha values for the three factors exceeded the 0.70 cut-off value (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994), indicating acceptable internal consistency. As in study 2, the analysis yielded a pattern largely in agreement with interpretations reported in previous U&G studies. We interpreted the first factor as reflecting socialization and sharing motivations. The second factor was related to instrumentality, consisting of motivations such as empowerment, remuneration, and information collection. We interpreted the third factor as related to entertainment motivation.

As in study 2, the socialization and sharing and entertainment motivations were clearly more important in interpersonal than in insurance brand relationships, with mean differences ranging from 1.0 to 1.2 (Table 6). These results support P_1. However, we found that instrumental values were almost equally important in both user modes of customer behavior in this sample; of the three gratifications in this category, only 'compete with others' was significantly more important in brand relationships than in interpersonal relationships (mean difference = –0.1). Given the importance of instrumental values in both relationship types, the results of study 3 do not support P_2. Given the exclusion of the self–brand connection gratification from analysis, P_3 could not be evaluated in study 3.

Table 6 Statistics for the gratifications and motivations of Facebook use (study 3, $n = 961$)

Gratifications	Importance in interpersonal relationships		Importance in brand relationships		Paired Mean diff.[1]			Motivation
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Paired Mean diff.**	**SD**	**Sig (two-tailed)[2]**	
Comment on others' posts	5.0	1.9	3.9	1.9	1.1	1.9	***	Socialisation, sharing
Read what other people write	5.2	1.8	4.2	1.9	1.0	1.7	***	
Keep track of others' comments	5.2	1.8	4.1	1.9	1.0	1.7	***	
Get special offers	3.6	1.6	3.6	1.7	0.0	1.5	ns	Instrumentality (empowerment, remuneration, information collection)
Compete with others	3.4	1.7	3.5	1.8	-0.01	1.4	*	
Obtain information about brands	3.9	1.7	3.9	1.8	0.0	1.4	ns	
Kill time	4.8	1.9	3.5	1.9	1.2	1.9	***	Entertainment
Have fun	4.2	1.8	3.3	1.8	1.0	1.7	***	

Note: Gratifications were rated using a seven-point Likert-type scale (1, to a very low degree; 7, to a very high degree).
[1]Negative mean differences represent gratifications that are more important in brand relationships.
[2]Paired-sample t-test. Sig. (2-tailed): *$p < .1$, **$p < .05$, ***$p < .01$

Discussion and implications

This research explored the gratifications and motivations underlying people's social media (Facebook) use in the contexts of brand and interpersonal relationships. We investigated whether these relationship types were associated with different gratifications (study 1) and motivations (studies 2 and 3). The research was conducted from a user-focused perspective drawing on the U&G theoretical framework (Katz 1959). The results of studies 1–3 indicate that people's Facebook user modes and behavior differ in the contexts of interpersonal and brand relationships. The results of this research show that people use social media (Facebook) in the context of relationships with brands, as well as in interpersonal relationships, challenging Fournier and Avery's (2011) questioning of the suitability of social media for the establishment and maintenance of brand relationships.

In study 1, we solicited gratifications from graduate students related to their imagined use of Facebook in the settings of relationships with friends and brands, and when sharing with their friends about brands. We identified different gratifications related to brand and interpersonal relationships. Gratifications of Facebook use in the context of brand relationships were characterized primarily by instrumental values. In contrast, gratifications in the context of interpersonal relationships were related to warmth and closeness. The results of study 1 also

indicated that people use Facebook to express self–brand connections, share information, and demonstrate loyalty to a particular brand in *both* relationship contexts.

The results of studies 2 and 3 were constructed based on findings in study 1. These studies incorporated the majority of gratifications from study 1. Based on the assumption that people apply different user modes, we conducted separate EFAs of data pertaining to interpersonal and brand relationships. Gratifications loaded on the following three motivational factors: (1) socialization and sharing; (2) empowerment, remuneration, and information collection; and (3) self-identity and entertainment. The main factors and component motivations identified in the surveys were largely similar to those found in previous U&G research, including McQuails' (1983) traditional classification and studies of particular social media channels (Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011; Heinonen 2011; De Valck, van Bruggen, and Wierenga 2009; Raacke and Bonds-Raacke 2008; Park, Kee, and Valenzuela 2009).

Study 2 showed that the socialization/sharing and self-identity/entertainment factors were more important in interpersonal than in brand relationships, although they were important to some degree in both contexts. In contrast, instrumental values and empowerment motivations were more important in brand relationships than in interpersonal relationships. These results are in agreement with those of Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011), who reported that remuneration and empowerment motivations were particularly important in consumers' online brand-related activities. Our finding that people apply different user modes in interpersonal and brand relationships supports theories proposed by Yoon et al. (2006). Confirming the results of study 1, study 2 also showed that the self–brand connection motivation seemed to be important in both relationship contexts, reflecting people's interest in communicating and sharing experiences about brands among friends *via* social media.

Study 3, which documented the existence of user mode differences in a broad sample of insurance brand customers, largely supported the findings of studies 1 and 2. Again, we found that socialization/sharing and entertainment motivations were more important in interpersonal than in brand relationships. In contrast to study 2, however, study 3 showed that instrumental values (empowerment, remuneration, and information collection motivations) were equally important in brand and interpersonal relationships in this sample. Thus, study 3 did not provide evidence of user mode differences in the importance of instrumental values and empowerment motivations. Although we found that social media use related to brand relationships is highly motivated by instrumental values, we cannot conclude that these values are more important in brand relationships than in interpersonal relationships. However, with mean values ranging from 3.3-4.2 on a seven-point Likert scale, we can conclude that insurance customers to a

certain extent are motivated by socialization, sharing, and entertainment, as well as of instrumental factors in brand relationships. These findings indicate that service firms in general, and insurance firms offering utility services in particular, actually can benefit from encouraging a variety of customer motivations in social media contexts.

Theoretical implications

This research is an important contribution to the U&G approach, not only documenting people's motivations for social media use, but also providing evidence for user mode differences between the interpersonal and brand relationship contexts (Yoon et al. 2006). According to Ruggieros' (2000) review of U&G research, U&G studies of traditional offline media channels have not considered possible differences in user mode related to particular channels. We argue that online media are more feature rich than traditional media, which implies the utility of extending the U&G perspective to entail different user modes when studying particular media channels.

Thus, the main theoretical implication of this research is related to the advantage gained by contrasting user modes related to interpersonal and brand relationships, each of which is associated with different *gratifications* and relative importance of *underlying motivations*. Our findings support theories suggesting that brand relationships are instrumental, based on evidence that people are motivated mainly by instrumentality (empowerment, remuneration and information collection) when interacting with brands in social media (Liu and Gal 2011). The findings also support theories suggesting that interpersonal relationships are characterized by hedonic values, such as friendliness and closeness, given evidence of people's motivations to socialize and share with other people (Kelley et al. 1983; Clark, Fitness, and Brissette 2001; Liu and Gal 2011), as well as to develop and express personal identity and be entertained. However, our results support the theory suggesting that people can develop close relationships with particular brands to a certain extent, reflected in the communication of self–brand connection and brand loyalty to other people (Escalas and Bettman 2005; Liu and Gal 2011).

Practical implications

As firms use social media channels (e.g. Facebook brand pages) for communication purposes, they need insight into consumer behavior and information regarding people's interest in using social media in the brand relationship context. Our research has several practical implications, as it shows that social media channels are appropriate for the establishment of consumer/customer–brand relationships, not only for interpersonal relationships with friends.

We argue that the identification of gratifications and motivations is a prerequisite for firms' stimulation of consumer/customer engagement with brands.

As this research showed that people are motivated primarily by instrumental values in the context of brand relationships in social media, firms must develop and implement media strategies and activities that focus on these values, providing opportunities for people to obtain economic benefits, remuneration, and information. Our results also indicate that people are motivated to a certain extent by self–brand connection, brand loyalty, and a willingness to share brand information with other people. These findings imply that people can feel closeness to brands in the social media context, and thus that firms can benefit from the establishment of long-lasting relationships with their customers. With regard to firms' planning of activities that meet consumer/customer motivations, we assume that people will willingly engage in the next phase; that is, we consider motivation to be a prerequisite for people's engagement in social media channels. The insurance companies targeted in this study had recently invested resources in the establishment of Facebook brand pages, and we assume that they will profit from this research by obtaining useful insight into people's motivations to use social media (Facebook) in the context of brand relationships. Based on the study results, especially those of study 3, insurance firms offering utility services should accommodate the right motivations when planning and implementing targeted and engaging Facebook activities. Based on acceptable levels of customer motivation to participate with brands offering utility services, marketing managers of those services should consider social media as important channels for the encouragement of customer engagement.

Limitations and future research

Despite suitable sample selection and size, this research has some limitations. We instructed participants to imagine that they were using Facebook; thus, they were not necessarily Facebook users with active accounts. Future studies should measure gratifications and motivations among Facebook users, for example by recruiting participants via Facebook. We applied a between-subject design to the comparison of interpersonal and brand relationships in study 1, but we used a within-subject design in studies 2 and 3; these studies would have benefitted from the use of a between-subject design, as well.

Study 3 focused on customers' motivations related to insurance brands. To enable broader generalization, future studies should examine motivations related to different product categories, brand types, and industries.

This research was based on the categorization of user modes with respect to interpersonal and brand relationships. Several previous U&G studies have classified online consumer behavior based on various user or usage types associated with specific gratifications and motivations (Mathwich 2002; Bernoff and Li 2008; Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011). Mathwich (2002) developed four internet user types: lurkers, socializers, personal connectors, and transactional community members. Lurkers observe other people's conduct and contributions in online communities, whereas socializers engage with other people, providing feedback and maintaining relationships. Bernoff and Li (2008) distinguished six types of social media users: inactive users, spectators, joiners, collectors, critics, and creators. Inspired by Shao (2009), Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011) described a continuum ranging from high to low brand-related activity, with three brand-related types of social media use: consuming, contributing, and creating. We recommend the combined examination of user types and user modes in future research, given the variation in the importance of different sets of motivations according to both classifications. Such research will enable firms and marketing managers to anticipate and stimulate the 'right' motivations for different user types and modes through social media activity implementation.

Furthermore, we argue that future U&G studies would benefit from the use of mixed-methods approaches, combining qualitative and quantitative research with stepwise analysis (as in the present research) to examine different user modes for social media in general and social media channels in particular. Given our findings, we also recommend that U&G studies examine differences in gratification patterns among media channels in more detail, for example by contrasting online social media channels (e.g. blogs, Facebook, Pinterest) with traditional offline media channels (television, radio, telephone).

Appendix 1 Gratifications

Gratifications
Show others that I am using new media
Look at other people's status updates
Discuss brands with others
Have fun
Build self-esteem
Get quick answers when I wonder about something
Obtain acknowledgment from other people
Tell others when something new happens
Find interesting links
Convince other people that a brand is worth buying
Share ideas that I have
Obtain attention
Find out what other people like ('like' clicks)
Write about things that interest me
Relax
Look at pictures
Find interesting films/videos
Comment on others' posts
Discuss new products/services
Get to know more people (in a community)
Achieve personal gains
Obtain information about products/services
Get special offers
Capture and spread news
Compete with others
Read what other people write
Steer the conversation in a preferred direction
Tell others when I am dissatisfied with something
Show others that I like a particular brand
Get information about brands
Get problems solved
Keep track of others' comments
See who other friends/followers are

Note: $n = 300$. Participants were asked to rate gratifications/statements on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (to a very low degree) to 7 (to a very high degree) for interpersonal and brand relationship contexts.

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Article 2

Solem, B. A. A. & Pedersen P. E.

The role of customer brand engagement in social media:

Conceptualization, measurement, antecedents and outcomes

Abstract

Purpose – Customer brand engagement (CBE) is a timely and important concept, particularly for service brands using interactive social media channels. This paper highlights the main characteristics of CBE, describes the development and evaluation of a social-media-adapted CBE measurement scale, and positions CBE among other relational concepts through hypotheses testing.

Design/methodology/approach – By method triangulation we report on three empirical studies: an exploratory repertory grid (study 1) identifying characteristics of CBE as a unique concept, and two descriptive studies in which a three-dimensional scale is adapted from the field of organizational behaviour, and validated using questionnaires and panel data (in study 2 and 3).

Findings – We derived a reliable scale for measuring CBE in brand- and social media contexts, incorporating intentional, emotional, and cognitive psychological engagement states, using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. Five out of six addressed hypotheses were supported and the empirical results demonstrate significant effects of customer participation and brand involvement on CBE and of CBE on brand loyalty through brand experience and brand satisfaction.

Originality/value – This paper demonstrates the complexity of the CBE concept, by documenting its multidimensional structure, and shows how it relates to other relationship concepts.

Keywords – Customer brand engagement; Social media; Facebook brand page; Repertory grid technique

Paper type – Research paper

Introduction

Service brands and service marketing practitioners have recently shown interest in consumer/customer brand engagement (CBE) (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006; Brodie et al., 2011a, 2011b; Vivek, 2009), and particularly in social media when it is used as marketing and/or service channels (Brodie et al., 2011a; Dessart et al., 2015; Fournier and Avery, 2011; Gummerus et al., 2012; Habibi et al., 2014; Hsu et al., 2011; Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Wirtz et al., 2013;). Service marketing practitioners have come to realize that understanding how customers participate and engage with brands in social media is important when developing integrated brand and communication strategies (Gambetti and Graffigna, 2010; Hollebeek, 2011a; Keller, 2001; Porter et al., 2011) for the purpose of establishing emotional bonds, such as great brand experiences (Hollebeek, 2011a), brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty (Hollebeek, 2011a; Jahn and Kunz, 2012).

As service firms offer intangible "products" (Wilson et al., 2012), often described as utilitarian and preventive in character, they seem to struggle to obtain customer engagement in exchange and user situations. However, social media is considered an interactive platform appropriate for the encouragement of CBE on other premises than exchange. These platforms provide the opportunity to become more customer-centric, providing the creation of user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010) that enable customers to engage more with brands (Hoffman and Novak, 2011; Schamari and Schaefers, 2015). In social media, service firms can increase customers' intentional, emotional and cognitive engagement together with engagement behaviour in communication activities related to content *beyond* the actual services offered. As with the majority of firms, service providers establish self-hosted platforms (e.g., Facebook brand pages) to get a bigger share of customer engagement. Thus, it is meaningful to investigate customers' engagement with service firms/brands in social media and support them with appropriate measurement tools of engagement.

Both in 2010 and in 2014, the Marketing Science Institute program (MSI) asked for further research on the conceptualization, definition, and measurement of CBE (MSI, 2014-2016). Further, MSI was asking for more insight regarding how social media could create engagement, in direct response to managerial needs. Although this call generated a growing body of CBE research in the field of marketing (Brodie et al., 2011b; Calder and Malthouse, 2008; Calder et al., 2009; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b; Sprott et al., 2009), we recognize that limited focus has been dedicated to the contextual aspects of CBE, and particularly interactive contexts (Chandler and Lusch, 2014; Dessant et al., 2015; Gambetti et al., 2012). Inspired by these authors, this study is conducted in response to the contextual aspects and develops a

generic brand- and a social media-specific scale for the measurement of CBE, with a high applied value for service marketing practitioners.

Brodie et al. (2011b) identified the need for the development of a CBE scale measuring engagement as a motivationally and psychologically anchored concept. In response, Hollebeek et al. (2014) developed and validated a CBE scale in which engagement is considered to be a psychologically founded construct consisting of fluctuating engagement states. The scale introduced in this paper shares the same fundamental perspective as Hollebeek et al. (2014), thus extending their work by (1) introducing a scale not restricted to brand use situations, (2) that incorporates behavioural intention as a core dimension and (3) taking into account the importance of interactive contexts as a place for customer engagement to occur. While Hollebeek et al. (2014) measure consumer engagement of Twitter and Facebook as interactive brands per se (i.e., engagement objects), we argue that it is a substantial difference between engagement with Facebook or Twitter as brands and engagement with brands using Facebook and Twitter as the *context* of engagement. As this paper focus on the development of brand engagement in the context of social media, we argue that our research contributes to a more thorough understanding of customers' engagement with service brands acting in social media. After all, most brands use social media as the context for increasing customer's engagement with their own brand, not with Facebook or Twitter per se.

The consideration of engagement as a psychological state is not new. Unlike the marketing field, the field of organizational behaviour demonstrates a long tradition of empirical research studying engagement (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010; Schaufeli et al., 2002, 2003). Based on the credibility of the organizational behaviour field's research on work engagement, we chose to adapt the job engagement scale (JES) developed by Rich et al. (2010), which was based on the widely acknowledged research of Kahn (1990), to measure CBE as a psychological state in interactive customer-brand contexts. Hence, inspired by the research tradition of organizational behaviour, considering engagement as multidimensional, we conceptualize the psychological state of CBE as *a customer's motivational and positive state of mind, characterized by behavioural intentions, and emotional and cognitive investments in brand-relationships.*

Despite the importance of the CBE concept, especially in social media marketing, we recognize that a limited amount of empirical research has been conducted to justify its position as a unique relational construct. This paper present a theoretical conceptual framework section and an initial explorative repertory grid study for clarifying CBE's distinct characteristics by comparing it to other relational brand constructs (i.e., brand involvement, participation,

motivation, flow, brand experience, trust, customer delight and commitment). The contributions of this paper are threefold: (1) it theoretically conceptualizes CBE's characteristics and identifies its position through exploratory repertory grid (study 1), (2) it provides research in which we adapt and test a valid multidimensional measurement scale of CBE and of CBE in social media (studies 2 and (3), including hypotheses testing to improve the understanding of CBE's position within a network of brand related constructs (study 3).

Conceptual framework and a preliminary study of CBE's characteristics
Dimensionality of CBE
Marketing practitioners encourage brand-related behaviour (e.g., in social media contexts) and focus mainly on the acts of "liking", commenting, and sharing as main CBE elements (Gambetti et al., 2012; Wong, 2009; Swedowsky, 2009). In line with marketing practitioners' recording of behavioural activity, several academic researchers have studied engagement by solely focusing on engagement behaviour (Gummerus et al., 2012; Kumar et al., 2010; Libai et al., 2009; Libai, 2011; Porter et al., 2011; Sashi, 2012; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010; Verleye et al., 2013; Wallace et al., 2015; Wirtz et al., 2013). While these authors maintain a behavioural focus on engagement, other researchers highlights CBE as a psychological state (Abdul-Ghani et al., 2010; Algesheimer et al., 2005; Brodie et al., 2011a, 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b; Mollen and Wilson, 2010; Patterson et al., 2006; Vivek et al., 2011), inspired by the research field of organizational behaviour (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003). This paper focuses on the "state" part (i.e., dimensions) of CBE that unites cognitive, emotional, and intentional components. Our argument is that when CBE includes internal state dimensions it comprises behavioural intentions (together with emotions and cognitions). Thus, viewing CBE as a process-based concept we consider observed engagement behaviour to be a consequence of the motivationally and psychologically anchored CBE state dimensions.

Engagement as a motivational state in ongoing service processes
Several researchers have characterized engagement as a motivational state (Achterberg et al., 2003; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Kahn, 1990; Skinner and Belmont, 1993). Wadhwa et al. (2008) argue that motivation is an activated state within a person that leads to goal-directed behaviour. Focusing on the "state" part of CBE, we argue for CBE as a motivationally founded psychological concept with a high degree of mental complexity Brodie et al. 2011, Bowden, 2009; Higgins, 2006). Further, Bakker et al. (2007) and Brodie et al.

(2011a) highlight the fluctuating nature of the motivational state dimensions of CBE. Intensity levels of cognitive, emotional, and intentional states can change rapidly, from one moment or situation to another (Hollebeek, 2011a). The fluctuating character of engagement is what makes engagement a state (and not a trait).

Several researchers have examined the process and/or stages of engagement (Bowden, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011a; Porter et al., 2011; Sashi, 2012). Bowden (2009) proposed a comprehensive, dynamic view of CBE as a psychological process in which consumers' brand loyalty increases through different stages of the customer-brand relationship. For example, Porter et al. (2011) described a process by which managers can foster and sustain customer engagement through Facebook brand pages. In this study, we argue that CBE emerges from interactive customer-service processes (i.e., is process-based) and we argue for the importance of capturing how CBE and different related concepts affect one another (i.e., as antecedents and/or outcomes) in these ongoing engagement processes.

CBE based on two-way relationships in interactive contexts

Most researchers have argued that the level of CBE is highly dependent on context (e.g., a physical store, offline media channels, online social media channels) (Brodie et al., 2011a; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b; Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Mollen and Wilson, 2010; Skinner and Belmont, 1993; Van Doorn et al., 2010). We assume that customers' brand engagement is transferable among contexts (e.g., represented by spill over effects between channels) but also varies across contexts. Thus, a given context (e.g., social media) in which CBE is measured must be understood as a particular context of interactivity (Chandler and Lusch, 2014; Gummerus et al., 2012; Laroche et al., 2012). Consumer culture theory (CCT) frames the investigation of CBE in social media, focusing on the importance of experiential, social, and cultural aspects of particular interactive contexts (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Kozinets, 2002). Gambetti and Graffigna (2010) describe engagement as the two-way interaction between employees and customers, focusing on employees' behaviour aimed at enhancing customers' engagement. Here, engagement corresponds directly with the series of interactions between parties in a state of reciprocal interdependence, in line with social exchange theory (SET) (Homans, 1958). We argue that this take on CBE is in line with the expanded domain of relationship marketing theory (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Vivek et al., 2011). In this study, we argue that the context is critical for the understanding of CBE, and that the interactive component is implicitly present by the social media context. This idea is in line with S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008) that posits that customer behaviour is centred

on interactive experiences within complex, co-creative contexts. Thus, the interactive capabilities of social media as a place for customers' brand-related activity provide a natural context for the conceptualization of CBE (Brodie et al., 2011a; Calder et al., 2009; Hanna et al., 2011; Verleye et al., 2013), but the interactions themselves are not synonymous with CBE. We argue that certain brand activities, customer involvement and participation are needed to encourage CBE.

Valence of CBE

Van Doorn et al. (2010) examined the valence of engagement behaviour in certain phases of the engagement process. While engagement is often studied with positive valence, negative valence can be represented by disappointed customers' negative word-of-mouth behaviour (Van Doorn, 2011). Still, few authors have discussed the valence of engagement explicitly (Calder et al., 2009; Hollebeek, 2011a; Vivek, 2009). Studies taking the organizational behaviour perspective have addressed the positive valence of engagement in their scale development (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010), and thus the present study incorporates a positively valenced view of CBE.

In summary, differences in the conceptualization of engagement underscore the importance of adopting a particular approach when studying CBE, especially for scale development. However, how to understand CBE in relation to other relationship concepts and how it should be measured require further clarification.

Distinctions from other relationship concepts

Differences between engagement and other brand relationships seem to be a subject of ongoing discussion in the marketing literature. One question we have heard is the following: is CBE just an old wine in a new bottle? We argue that CBE is related to, yet conceptually distinct from several other concepts, including brand involvement, participation, motivation, flow, brand experience, trust, customer delight, and commitment (Bowden, 2009; Hollebeek, 2011a; Vivek, 2009). Table 1 present these concepts, along with their definitions, similarities to and differences from CBE.

Concept	Definition	Comparison with CBE	Suggested relationship
Brand Involvement	The perceived importance of a stimulus – be that stimulus the product (or brand) itself or the purchase decision task (Mittal, 1995), which encompasses a duality of cognitive and emotional motivational forces (Hollebeek et al., 2014).	**Similarities:** Both are motivationally founded concepts and psychological states (Brodie et al., 2011b). **Differences:** Compared to CBE, brand involvement is considered more passive in nature (Andersen 2005; Mollen and Wilson, 2010). Hence, the behavioral dimension of CBE is thought to extend beyond mere involvement (Brodie et al., 2011b; Mollen and Wilson 2010).	Involvement is a required CBE antecedent (Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a; Vivek, 2009; Hollebeek et al. 2014).
Participation	The degree to which a customer actively contribute with the firm/brand to improve their services, for the purpose of creating value both for themselves and for the firm/brand (Dabholkar 1990).	**Similarities:** Both are considered especially relevant and important in interactive service contexts (Pralahad and Ramaswamy, 2004). **Differences:** Participation is focusing on activity in exchange situations, while CBE may happen with or without an actual exchange (Vivek, 2009).	Participation is a required CBE antecedent (Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014; Ramaswamy and Gouillart, 2010; Vivek, 2009).
Motivation	An inner state of arousal that provides energy needed to achieve goals (Higgins, 2006) or an activated state within a person that leads to goal-directed behavior (Wadhwa et al. 2008).	**Similarities:** Considering CBE as a solely psychometric concept, the similarities between customer brand engagement and motivation is that motivation can be incorporated in the concept (Brodie et al., 2011b; Bowden, 2009). **Differences:** Assuming that CBE is measured as engagement behavior, CBE will not have the same motivational anchor incorporated (Van Doorn et al., 2010).	While considering CBE as a motivational state (Brodie et al., 2011b), we assume that CBE is a motivationally anchored concept.
Flow	A state of optimal experience that is characterized by focused attention, a clear mind, mind and body unison, effortless concentration, complete control, loss of self-consciousness, distortion of time, and intrinsic enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)	**Similarities:** The flow concept (Hoffman and Novak, 1996) is essential to understand consumer navigation behavior in online environments, by its fluctuating nature. Arguing that CBE is a state with a fluctuating character, especially relevant in online contexts (Brodie et al., 2011b) makes it similar to flow. **Differences:** In contrast to flow, which is characterized as high in mental depth, CBE reflects a specific set of not only cognitive and emotional, but also of behavioral characteristics.	Flow is considered to be potential CBE- antecedent in particular online contexts (Brodie et al., 2011a) or flow (i.e., absorption) can be integrated in the cognitive dimension of CBE (Patterson et al., 2006).
Trust	A willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence (Moorman et al., 1993, p. 82).	**Similarities:** Both are both relevant in customer-brand relationships. **Differences:** Trust put focus more on the brand interaction itself, while CBE is focusing more on customers' interactive participation in brand related service processes (Brodie et al., 2011b). Assuming that CBE is interactive in nature, with theoretical roots in the expanded domain of the relationship marketing theory (Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a; Vivek et al., 2012) differentiate CBE from trust.	Trust can be an outcome, both for new and existing customers, or it may act as an antecedent when it comes to existing customers, primarily (Hollebeek, 2011b).

Table 1 Comparison of Customer Brand Engagement with other brand concepts and proposed

Concept	Definition	Comparison with CBE	Suggested relationship
Brand experience	Brand experience is conceptualized as sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments (Brakus *et al.*, 2009).	**Similarities:** Both concepts are considered as particularly important in service contexts. As well as CBE, also brand experience can be interactive in nature. **Differences:** Brand experience is based on responses evoked by brand-related stimuli, and does not presume a motivational state, which explains the main basis for CBE (Brodie *et al.*, 2011b). Brand experience can be evoked by indirect communication activities (e.g. advertising) outside the focal context (Brakus *et al.*, 2009), while CBE is more consumer proactive during services processes (Hollebeek, 2011a).	Brand experience is suggested to be a potential outcome of CBE (Vivek, 2009; Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014; Chandler and Lusch, 2014).
Customer delight	Customer delight is a profoundly positive emotional state generally resulting from having one's expectations exceeded to a surprising degree (Oliver *et al.*, 1997).	**Similarities:** Both concepts are considered as important concepts in service contexts. **Differences:** Customer delight is described as an emotional psychological state of mind, measured as a unidimensional concept, while CBE is mostly argued to be multidimensional in nature.	Antecedents and outcomes of customer delight is empirically unclear (Oliver *et al.*, 1997). Customer delight may be an outcome of CBE.
Commitment	An attachment between two parties that leads to a desire to maintain a relationship (Moorman *et al.*, 1993; Morgan and Hunt, 1994), and the motivation to stay with a supplier (Geyskens and Steenkamp, 1995).	**Similarities:** Disagreement among authors in the marketing field regarding the dimensionality of these two concepts (i.e., uni- *vs.* multidimensional). **Differences:** While CBE is considered to be fluctuating, commitment is thought to be more long-lasting. Unlike commitment, CBE represents an interactive phenomenon based on two-way interactions, while commitment can be viewed more as an effect of an interactive process.	Commitment is a possible outcome (Brodie *et al.*, 2011b; Vivek, 2009; Hollebeek, 2011b). Among existing consumers, commitment can have a function as an antecedent (Hollebeek, 2011a).

Table 1 Comparison of Customer Brand Engagement with other brand concepts and proposed relationships (continues)

For example, while we consider CBE as a psychological state and a motivationally anchored concept, it appears to be similar to brand involvement. However, the intentional and overt directional nature of a customer-brand relationship is what distinguish CBE from brand involvement (Mollen and Wilson, 2010). Compared to CBE, the connotations of involvement are more passive and mainly encompass the duality of emotional and cognitive forces (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Mollen and Wilson, 2010). Thus, engagement appears to be a broader concept than involvement. Both CBE and brand experience are considered as particularly important constructs for understanding interactive service contexts. On the other hand, brand experience is based on responses evoked by brand-related stimuli, and does not necessarily presume a motivational state, which explains the main basis for CBE (Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek et al., 2014). While brand experience can be evoked by indirect communication activities (e.g. advertising) outside the focal context (Brakus et al., 2009), CBE is more customer/consumer proactive during service processes (Hollebeek, 2011a). Participation and brand involvement have been proposed as antecedents of CBE (Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a; Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014; Ramaswamy and Gouillart, 2010; Vivek, 2009, Table 1), and brand experience and customer delight have been proposed as outcomes (Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014; Vivek, 2009, Table 1). However, the relationships between CBE and several other relationship concepts remain unclear; they may be antecedents *or* outcomes, depending on the length of the customer relationship (e.g., trust, and commitment) (Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011b; Vivek, 2009), or considered *equivalent to* or *part of* engagement (e.g., motivation and flow) (Brodie et al., 2011a, 2011b; Patterson et al., 2006; Table 1). To provide in-depth understanding of CBE based on the characteristics introduced and to clarify its distinction from the presented concepts (see Table 1), we conducted a preliminary study, using a repertory grid technique.

Study 1: A preliminary study of CBE's characteristics

For the purpose of giving meanings to concepts and relationships (Lemke et al., 2011), we used a repertory grid technique, a form of structured interviewing derived from Kelly's (1955) psychological personal construct theory. This method aids the separation of complex personal views into manageable sub-components of meaning, and is useful when respondents know answers indirectly. Thus, tacit knowledge about different concepts' meanings can be conveyed through the use of a repertory grid study (Lemke et al., 2011). The expert panel comprised 16 third-year graduate students in services marketing (11 women, 5 men, aged 22–55 years). The panel members were asked to use their personal experience, everyday intuition, and common-

sense thoughts and language as the basis for their understanding of CBE and other conceptual relationships (Pickering and Chater, 1995), while imagining themselves to be customers relating to a particular brand. As researchers, we tried to facilitate the process while not exerting too much control. After a brief introduction of theoretical definitions of the incorporated relationship concepts (see Table 1), the students were asked to compare and contrast CBE with (1) brand involvement, (2) participation, (3) motivation, (4) flow, (5) brand experience, (6) trust, (7) customer delight, and (8) commitment using a five-point Likert scale (Gammack and Stephens, 1994). The concepts were compared and rated based on the following four characteristics:

1) *High degree of mental complexity?* The consideration of mental complexity (of different state dimensions) can be useful for the development of a psychometric measurement scale.

2) *Process-based?* The intensity of CBE is thought to develop over time, with fluctuation in ongoing engagement processes, which may distinguish it from other concepts.

3) *Interactive?* CBE is thought to be social, emerging from two-way interactions between relevant engagement subject(s) and object(s) in particular interactive contexts, which may distinguish it from other concepts.

4) *Valence?* Is CBE solely positive or can it become either positive or negative in nature?

The participants completed the exercise (~40 min) individually on personal computers in a laboratory setting using the windows-based program *WebGrid 5*. Following Kelly's (1955) triadic method, they were asked to consider three concepts at a time, identifying ways in which one concept was distinct from the other two. The procedure continued until all concepts had been described and compared in relation to the four presented characteristics. Then, the repertory grid data were analysed with IBM SPSS statistics 21. Mean scores were calculated and employed to compare CBE with the eight other concepts using paired-sample *t*-tests.

Results

Table 2 show the results for all the eight brand concepts assessed according to the four characteristics, with values ranging between the characteristic poles of 1 and 5. As the results show, CBE was reported to involve a high degree of mental complexity (mean = 3.25). This is natural when considering CBE as consisting of three different state dimensions (i.e., intentional, emotional, and cognitive). Further, Table 2 shows that CBE is mainly considered to be process-based (mean = 2.94) and predominantly prominent in interactive contexts (mean = 3.06). Finally, the participants considered CBE to have the possibility of becoming either positive or negative in valence (mean = 3.38).

Table 2 Repertory Grid Results

Characteristic Pole Value = 1	Mean Values									Contrast Pole Value = 5
	CBE	Brand Involvement	Participation	Motivation	Flow	Brand Experience	Trust	Customer Delight	Commitment	
Low Degree of Mental Complexity	3.25	2.33	3.00	2.21	3.00	2.88	2.44	2.94	2.56	High Degree of Mental Complexity
Less Process-based	2.94	2.80	3.73	3.33	3.69	3.31	2.75	3.69	2.88	Highly Process-based
Less Context Interactive	3.06	3.00	2.00	3.71	4.25	3.00	4.25	3.00	3.63	Highly Context Interactive
Only positive in valence	3.38	3.33	2.31	2.60	3.31	3.00	2.50	2.00	2.50	Positive or negative in valence

Note: The mean (frequencies) values is based on n=16. Each variable is by comparison (three variables at a time) rated from 1-5, where 1 represent the "characteristic pole" (e.g., Less process-based) and 5 represent the "contrast pole" (e.g., Highly process-based).

Next, the paired sample *t*-tests showed some contrasting results from other concepts, which were significant. Regarding the level of mental complexity, CBE was reported to be significantly more complex than brand involvement (mean difference = 0.80, $t = 1.87$) and motivation (mean difference = 0.79, $t = 2.15$; Table 3). As argued in the theoretical section, brand involvement is considered to be restricted to emotions and cognitions related to a particular object (i.e., a product category), while engagement is a wider concept, comprising combinations of intentional, emotional, and/or cognitive investment in two-way interactions. Considering how the concept of motivation is defined (see Table 1), it seems reasonable that CBE would be a more complex concept than motivation.

Although CBE was reported to be considerably process-based, participation (mean difference = −7.33, $t = −1.91$) and customer delight (mean difference = −7.50,

$t = -1.82$) were characterized as significantly more process-based than CBE (Table 3). For example, when customers participate they show willingness to involve in long-lasting processes with the brand, while engagement is considered to be a fluctuating state (in these ongoing processes).

Table 3 Comparison of CBE with other Brand Relationships

Paired concepts	Mental Complexity Paired mean diff./ t-value	Process-based Paired mean diff./ t-value	Context Interactivity Paired mean diff./ t-value	Valence (positive vs. positive or negative)
CBE and Brand Inv.	0.80, $t = 1.87^*$	2.87, $t = 0.14$	0.08, $t = 0.12$	-0.07, $t = -0.14$
CBE and Participation	0.25, $t = 0.39$	-7.33, $t = -1.91^*$	1.07, $t = 2.79^{**}$	1.06, $t = 2.18^{**}$
CBE and Motivation	0.79, $t = 2.15^*$	-0.47, $t = -0.82$	-0.79, $t = -1.99^{***}$	0.67, $t = 1.35$
CBE and Flow	0.25, $t = 0.62$	-0.75, $t = -1.51$	-1.19, $t = -3.05^{***}$	0.06, $t = 0.10$
CBE and Brand Experience	0.38, $t = 0.88$	-0.38, $t = -0.67$	0.06, $t = 0.14$	0.38, $t = 0.69$
CBE and Trust	0.81, $t = 1.50$	0.19, $t = 0.44$	-1.19, $t = -3.34^{***}$	0.88, $t = 1.56$
CBE and Customer Delight	0.31, $t = 0.75$	-7.50, $t = -1.82^*$	0.06, $t = 0.16$	1.38, $t = 2.80^{**}$
CBE and Commitment	0.69, $t = 1.34$	0.06, $t = 0.19$	-0.56, $t = -1.35$	0.88, $t = 1.78^*$

Note: n=16, Sig. (2-tailed): $^*p < .1$, $^{**}p < .05$, $^{***}p < .01$

Hence, in participative processes, the engagement can be of a high level one day and of a lower level the next, depending on the particular situation and customers' interest. While the participants interpreted CBE as more important in interactive contexts than participation (mean difference = 1.07, $t = 2.79$; Table 3), the following were deemed more important than CBE in interactive contexts: motivation (mean difference = -0.79, $t = -1.99$), trust (mean difference = -1.19, $t = -3.34$), and flow (mean difference = -1.19, $t = -3.05$) (see Table 3). For customers to use interactive contexts in relation to brands, they must be particularly motivated (i.e., to provide energy for achieving goals) and they must find the brand and other customers trustworthy (e.g., in online brand communities). Flow is considered as essential to understand

consumer navigation behaviour in online environments and highly interactive contexts, such as social media (see Table 1). While interactive contexts seem to be required in order for flow to occur, they seem to be an important but not a necessary condition in order for CBE to arise. Regarding valence, CBE is considered to take on either positive or negative values, significantly contrasting with participation (mean difference=1.06, $t = 2.18$), customer delight (mean difference=1.38, $t = 2.80$) and commitment (mean difference=0.88, $t = 1.78$), which were all reported to be primarily positive in nature (see Table 3).

This preliminary repertory grid study showed that most of the student expert panel's conceptions were in alignment with the conceptual understanding of CBE in the conceptual framework section. The main findings of the repertory grid also guide our further studies. The process-based characteristic of CBE indicates the need for studies that clarify antecedents and outcomes of CBE, to capture its complex relationships with other brand variables. Although CBE emerged as a more complex concept than motivation, we consider motivation to be a fundamental basis underlying the CBE concept. Hence, we argue that CBE can be considered a motivational state (Brodie et al., 2011a, 2011b; Gambetti et al., 2012). Both CBE and motivation were reported as being important in interactive contexts, and thus we argue that CBE incorporates an underlying motivational "force" that contributes to its highly interactive nature. Because our results indicate that both CBE and flow (which is based on absorption and focused attention) (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) are highly important in interactive contexts, we consider flow to be potentially fundamental and inherent in the cognitive dimension of CBE (Patterson et al., 2006), as customers may lose their sense of time and space in the engagement processes that go on in social media (i.e., customers become absorbed)(Dessart et al., 2015). Based on the indications of study 1, we find it prudent to consider CBE as a distinct relational concept positioned centrally in the nomological network of relationship concepts. CBE is assumed to be complex, motivationally anchored, process-based, and highly important in interactive contexts. After gaining a more thorough understanding of CBE's characteristics, we continued by conducting two predictive studies in which we adapted, developed and validated a CBE scale and empirically investigated the position of CBE as a core concept linking brand relationships.

Measurement of CBE

Most engagement studies in marketing have been conceptual and qualitative (Brodie et al., 2011b; Dessant et al., 2015; Hollebeek, 2011a), but a few scale development studies have been

conducted, albeit applying very divergent approaches. Previous research in marketing and management has adapted measures of concepts from intra-organizational relationships. For example, Gundlach et al. (1995) were inspired by the three-component model of organizational commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1990) when measuring commitment in inter-firm relationships. Furthermore, Fullerton (2005) argued that Morgan and Hunt (1994) operationalized relationship commitment as affective commitment, borrowing substantially from the Allen and Meyer (1990) affective commitment scale. Table 4 summarizes some of the main engagement scales developed in the fields of organizational behaviour and marketing.

In table 4 we find several scales that do not consider CBE as a multidimensional motivational psychological state, comprising the following three dimensions: behavioural intention, emotions, and cognitions. For example, The Gallup CE[11] (2001) scale, developed by practitioners for practitioners, measures engagement as a broad concept comprising satisfaction, repurchase intent, and word of mouth. We consider it insufficient for capturing CBE. Algesheimer et al. (2005) measured community engagement as a four-item unidimensional construct reflecting intrinsic motivation to participate in community activities; this scale is not applicable to the consideration of CBE as a multidimensional psychological concept.

Vivek (2009) and Calder et al. (2009) undertook initial research on the development of comprehensive second-order engagement scales. Vivek's (2009) 44-item scale captures enthusiasm, participation, and interaction, but lacks the cognitive dimension that we consider necessary for CBE measurement (Brodie et al., 2011b; Higgins and Scholer, 2009; Hollebeek et al., 2014). Calder et al.'s (2009) 24-item second-order online engagement scale, based on first-order experiences, represents eight dimensions. We believe that the numerous dimensions of this scale complicates practical measurement. Furthermore, these authors define online engagement as an experience, whereas we view experience and engagement as theoretically distinct constructs, in line with Lemke et al. (2011) and Hollebeek et al. (2014). We also argue that the interactive context should be foundational to all engagement dimensions, in contrast to Calder et al. (2009), that restricts the importance of interactivity to only a few dimensions.

Academic Discipline	Author(s)	Concept	Definition	Dimensionality
Organizational Behavior	Salanova & Peiró (2005)	Work Engagement	Positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.	17 items Vigor Dedication Absorption
Organizational Behavior	Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova (2006)	Work Engagement	Positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.	UWES (9 items) Vigor Dedication Absorption
Organizational Behavior	Rich, Lepine & Crawford (2010)	Job Engagement	Engagement is observed through the behavioral investments of personal physical, cognitive, and emotional energy into work roles.	18 items Physical Emotional Cognitive
Marketing	Gallup's CE[11] (2010)	Customer Engagement	Customer engagement incorporates overall satisfaction, intent to repurchase, intent to recommend and emotional attachment.	11 items Fully engaged Engaged Disengaged Actively disengaged
Marketing	Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann (2005)	Community Engagement	Customer's intrinsic motivation to interact and cooperate with community members.	4 items Unidimensional
Marketing	Vivek (2009)	Consumer Engagement	Intensity of the consumer's participation and connection with the organization's offerings and/or its organized activities.	44 items Enthusiasm Conscious participation Social interaction

Table 4 A selection of Engagement Conceptualizations in Academic Disciplines

Academic Discipline	Author(s)	Concept	Definition	Dimensionality
Marketing	Calder, Malthouse & Schaedel (2009)	Online Engagement	A second-order construct manifested in various types of first-order experience constructs, with experience being defined as a consumer's beliefs about how a (web)site fits into his/her life.	37 items Stimulation and Inspiration Social Facilitation Temporal Self-Esteem and Civic Mindedness Intrinsic Enjoyment Utilitarian Participation and Socializing Community
Marketing	Sprott, Czellar & Spangenberg (2009)	Brand Engagement in self-concept (BESC)	An individual difference representing consumer's propensity to include important brands as part of how they view themselves.	8 items Unidimensional (Cognitive)
Marketing	Cheung, Lee & Jin (2011)	Customer Engagement	The level of a customer's physical, cognitive, and emotional presence in connections with a particular online social platform.	Vigor Absorption Dedication
Marketing	Reitz (2012)	Online Consumer Engagement	A multidimensional construct that encompasses cognitions, affection, and behavior.	Cognitive Affective Participative
Marketing	Jahn and Kunz (2012)	Fan-Page Engagement	An interactive and integrative participation in the fan-page community and would differentiate this from the solely usage intensity of a member.	5 items Unidimensional (Behavioral)
Marketing	Verleye, Gemmel, & Rangarajan (2013)	Customer Engagement Behaviors	Behavioral manifestations of customer engagement toward a firm, after and beyond purchase.	Compliance Cooperation Feedback Helping other customers Positive Word-of-Mouth
Marketing	Hollebeek (2014)	Consumer Engagement Behavior	A consumer's positively valenced cognitive, emotional and behavioral brand-related activity during, or related to, specific consumer/brand interactions.	Cognitive Processing Affection Activation

Table 4 A selection of Engagement Conceptualizations in Academic Disciplines (continues)

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As described, we consider CBE as a multidimensional concept with fluctuating states, rather than a stable and consistent trait (i.e., enduring, general, and consistent across situations) like that measured using Sprott et al.'s (2009) brand engagement in self-concept (BESC) scale. Hence, we argue that their scale do not sufficiently capture the fluctuating nature of CBE, particularly in social media.

Jahn and Kunz (2012) and Verleye et al. (2013) developed their measurement scales inspired by the customer engagement behaviour perspective (Van Doorn et al., 2010), which is an inappropriate approach when considering CBE as a psychological state that comprises intentional, emotional and cognitive components.

Reitz (2012) developed her scale of online consumer engagement seeking to align the state and behavioural perspectives. This scale inspired our work, which has been adapted to a social media context. In line with our approach, Reitz (2012) and Hollebeek et al. (2014) considered CBE to be a positively valenced concept comprising three dimensions. However, unlike Hollebeek et al. (2014), we stress the importance of how a particular context facilitates engagement with brands. Contrasting with Hollebeek et al.'s (2014) scale, which considers Facebook and Twitter as interactive brands by nature, we consider Facebook, Twitter and most other social media as interactive contexts or platforms for CBE with almost all brands. Thus, it is fundamental for consumers to exercise their engagement through an interactive context (e.g., an interactive social media channel) in collaboration with the service brand, but it is not a requirement that they are current users (customers) of that brand as posited by Hollebeek et al. (2014). Based on these arguments, we claim that Hollebeek et al.'s (2014) measurement scale in its present form is insufficient when measuring CBE in social media as an interactive context.

Similarly to the work of several other researchers (Patterson et al., 2006; Cheung et al., 2011; Chandler and Lusch, 2014), our research draws on the more mature field of organizational behaviour, in which work engagement has been measured and empirically tested for decades (Kahn, 1990; Salanova and Peiró, 2005; Schaufeli et al., 2006). Rich et al.'s (2010) JES is drawn from Kahn's (1990) conceptualization of engagement as positively valenced, motivationally founded, and comprising dimensions of physical, emotional, and cognitive state. We believe that this scale provides a suitable basis for developing a measurement scale of CBE. Thus, the measurement of CBE in the two studies reported in this article are based on our adaptations of the JES developed by Rich et al. (2010).

Study 2: scale adaptation and item validation

Scale items reflecting the proposed intentional, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of CBE were adapted from those of the JES (Rich et al., 2010). The original scale consisted of 18 items (six per dimension) representing engagement as positively valenced, and motivationally and psychometrically founded (see Table 5).

Table 5 The original items from the Job Engagement Scale

	Job Engagement	**Loading**
	Physical/behavioral	
1	I work with intensity on my job	.60
2	I exert my full effort to my job	.81
3	I devote a lot of energy to my job	.88
4	I try my hardest to perform well on my job	.89
5	I strive as hard as I can to complete my job	.87
6	I exert a lot of energy on my job	.78
	Affective/emotional	
7	I am enthusiastic in my job	.85
8	I feel energetic at my job	.89
9	I am interested in my job	.81
10	I am proud of my job	.78
11	I feel positive about my job	.81
12	I am excited about my job	.80
	Intellectual/cognitive	
13	At work, my mind is focused on my job	.88
14	At work, I pay a lot of attention to my job	.84
15	At work, I focus a great deal of attention on my job	.92
16	At work, I am absorbed by my job	.88
17	At work, I concentrate on my job	.78
18	At work, I devote a lot of attention to my job	.78

Note: The measurement scale of Job Engagement (JES) from Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2010) is adapted.

In the aforementioned original scale, the behavioural dimension captured the energy, time, and effort spent by the engagement "subject" in a relationship with the engagement "object", the emotional dimension reflected the subject's enthusiasm, excitement, and positive feelings in relation to the object, and the cognitive dimension captured the levels of attention, concentration, and absorption that the subject invested in their interaction with the object. As absorption characterizes flow (Table 1), we incorporated flow in the cognitive dimension. The subject and object in Rich et al. (2010) were the employee and job, respectively, but we discussed this thoroughly and found the scale to be sufficiently generic that we could adapt it for the customer and brand as subject and object. We initially adapted all original items to reflect CBE as a psychological state, with "brand" serving as the object. A team of consumer behaviour research experts evaluated the content and face validity of each item to ensure accuracy of meaning with respect to what the dimensions were intended to capture. The team was asked to determine how well each item represented CBE, defined as in the Introduction section of this paper. Four items considered inapplicable in a customer context were removed. The remaining 14 items were then translated into Norwegian, with slight adjustments to create consistency in linguistic style throughout the scale. One bilingual expert fluent in both English and Norwegian helped to translate the questionnaire into Norwegian and helped with back-translation, to provide compatible meaning in the new scale. The 14-item scale with a seven-point Likert-type response structure (1, totally disagree; 7, totally agree) was used for initial data collection among 95 first-year college students (47 men, 48 women; aged 19–45 years). Participants were asked to respond while thinking about a brand that they found to be highly engaging.

Data were examined using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in IBM SPSS statistics 21, with principal axis factoring and oblique rotation (Netemeyer *et al*., 2003). The scree-plot elbow test (i.e., a graphical strategy to determine the number of factors to retain (Cattell, 1966) was used, with eigenvalues > 1 considered to be significant for a three-factor solution. Items with factor loadings > 0.5 were included in the assessment of convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010), performed according to Voss et al. (2003). Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy were performed to assess the degree of correlation among dimensions. The average variance extracted (AVE), which estimates the amount of variance captured by a construct's measure relative to random measurement error, was assessed (Fornell and Larcker, 1981a, 1981b). AVE > 0.5 with Cronbach's α > AVE was considered to indicate acceptable convergent validity. Discriminant validity was tested (Fornell and Larcker,

1981a, 1981b) using the criteria of maximum shared variance (MSV) and average shared variance (ASV) < AVE.

Results

The analysis yielded a three-factor solution that explained 65.7% of the variance, indicating that the CBE construct was three-dimensional. After consecutive removal of five poorly fitting items (not achieving the recommended critical factor loading of 0.5), nine items (three per dimension; Table 6) were retained for further analysis.

The three dimensions were significantly correlated [χ^2 (153) = 1171,077, p = 0.000; KMO statistic = 0.91]. Mean statistics (frequencies) ranged from 3.14–5.11 and factor loadings exceeded 0.5 (range, 0.64–0.92; Table 6). All dimensions showed acceptable reliability (Cronbach's α > 0.7; Table 6). Also, all AVEs exceeded 0.5 and all Cronbach's α values exceeded the AVEs (Table 6). Following the Fornell-Larcker procedure, we found that AVE > MSV and ASV (behavioural = 0.59 > 0.51, 0.41; emotional = 0.73 > 0.58, 0.45; cognitive = 0.60 > 0.58, 0.53). The scale showed acceptable convergent and discriminant validity (Table 6). Hence, we used the nine-item three-dimensional scale for re-evaluation in study 3.

CBE with services in social media: scale validation and hypotheses testing

In study 3, we refined the nine-item CBE scale developed in study 2 to fit a specific social media context (i.e., Facebook), founded on the assumptions discussed in the conceptual framework section, and empirical indications (from study 1) that CBE is a core concept in interactive (social media) contexts. Again, we tested the external validity and stability of the CBE scale (Stone, 1978, in Hinkin, 1995). Then, we assessed the discriminant validity of CBE using key brand constructs (Table 1) and tested hypotheses about its antecedents and outcomes using an insurance customer sample.

Table 6 The adapted items for measuring CBE

The wording of the original scale-items	The adapted items of this study	Mean	SD	Loadings	α	AVE	MSV	ASV
Behavioral	**Intentional**				.81	.59	.51	.49
I exert my full effort to my job	I exert my full effort in supporting [brand]	4.29	1.4	.64				
I devote a lot of energy to my job	I am very active in relation to [brand]	4.39	1.5	.90				
I try my hardest to perform well on my job	I try my hardest to perform well on behalf of [brand]	4.09	1.6	.75				
Emotional	**Emotional**				.89	.73	.58	.55
I am enthusiastic in my job	I am enthusiastic in relation to [brand]	5.00	1.4	.83				
I feel energetic at my job	I feel energetic in contact with [brand]	4.16	1.4	.92				
I feel positive about my job	I feel positive about [brand]	3.75	1.6	.80				
Cognitive	**Cognitive**				.82	.60	.58	.53
At work, my mind is focused on my job	In relationship with [brand], my mind is very focused on [brand]	4.27	1.6	.75				
At work, I focus a great deal of attention on my job	In relationship with [brand], I focus a great deal of attention to [brand]	5.11	1.4	.81				
At work, I am absorbed by my job	In relationship with [brand], I am absorbed by [brand]	3.14	1.6	.75				

Note: AVE=Average Variance Extracted, MSV=Maximum Shared Variance, ASV=Average Shared Variance.

Sample and measurement

Norstat (the largest online panel data provider in Norway) conducted nationwide panel surveys in April 2012 and February 2013 with 203 insurance customers aged ≥ 15 years. To make the samples representative, Norstat controlled recruitment according to age, gender, education, income, and non-disclosed consumer-related variables. When combining the two samples, we controlled for potential differences in the mean values of the disclosed variables, which showed equal distributions. The demographic profile of the sample was as follows: 59% male; 14% aged 15–24, 19% 25–34, 23% 35–44, 20% 45–54, 14% 55–64, 10% ≥ 65 years.

Each participant responded to the questions with reference to the insurance firm/brand with which s/he had a customer relationship. Insurance brands could be considered convenience and preventive brands offering low-involvement products, limiting the appropriateness of their use in this study. However, based on the S-D logic perspective (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), we assume that customers participate and engage with insurance brands in social media (e.g., on Facebook) based on experiential value characteristics *beyond* the exchange and use of insurance products, exemplified by engagement in specialized activities and services, campaigns and contests. As stated in the introduction section, social media is considered useful in almost every industry as a profitable customer channel. The insurance companies under investigation had recently invested resources in the establishment of Facebook brand pages, and thus were interested in investigating the role of CBE and their possibilities for encouraging CBE as well. To ensure recruitment of a sufficient number of Facebook users, survey links were placed on the firms' Facebook brand pages. Respondents were rewarded through the Norstat system.

Scale item wording was amended slightly for the social media (i.e., Facebook) context (reflecting brand–customer interactivity), following Reitz (2012) and Casalo et al. (2010), by adding the following wording: at [Facebook] (Figure 1). To assess the discriminant validity of CBE, the questionnaire also assessed the following related constructs: *brand experience* [15 items (Brakus et al., 2009; Nysveen et al., 2012), five dimensions (sensory, emotional, intellectual, behavioural, and relational), seven-point scale ("not at all" to "fully")], *participation* [four items (Chan et al., 2010; Pralahad and Ramaswamy, 2004)], *brand involvement* [three items (Candel, 2001), seven-point scale ("totally disagree" to "totally agree")], *brand satisfaction* [five items reflecting general satisfaction, meeting of expectations (Fornell, 1992), and acceptability of brand choice (Gottlieb et al., 1994; Oliver, 1980), seven-point scale ("totally disagree" to "totally agree")], and *brand loyalty* [four items reflecting future loyalty and continued patronage (Brakus et al., 2009; Selnes, 1993; Wagner et al., 2009),

recommendation to others (Brakus et al., 2009), and repeat selection (Selnes, 1993), seven-point scale].

We analysed the data using CFA with maximum likelihood estimation (Bollen, 1989), and IBM SPSS AMOS 21. To assess nomological validity, we examined CBE's position in the network of other constructs, using composite (aggregated average) scores for multidimensional constructs (CBE and brand experience), in line with Brakus et al. (2009). Convergent and divergent validity were assessed following Fornell and Larcker (1981a, 1981b).

Scale evaluation results

Ten "outlier" respondents showing no variance in either CBE *or* brand experience were excluded. The three-dimensional model showed a reasonably good fit (χ^2/df = 1.91, CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.067; Figure 1).

Figure 1 A social media adapted CBE measurement scale
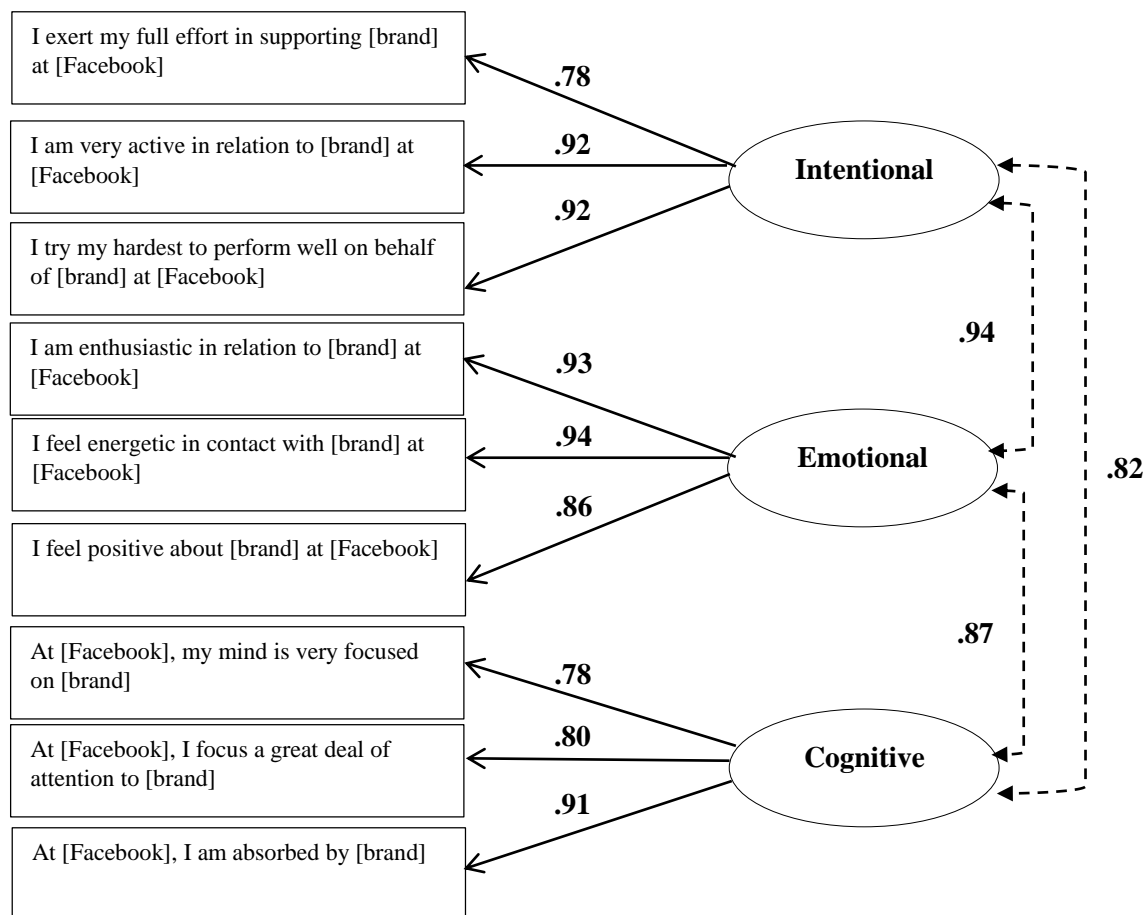
Note: All coefficient values are standardized.
The three factors were allowed to correlate.
Facebook is the empirical interactive social media context in this study.

N=193
χ^2/df =1.91
CFI= .99
RMSEA= .067

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Factor loadings ranged from 0.78 to 0.94, and were thus above the recommended critical factor loading > 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). All dimensions showed acceptable reliability (Cronbach's α, 0.87–0.93) (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Nunnally, 1978) and convergent validity (AVE, 0.70–0.82), indicating that items correlated well within each dimension. The Fornell and Larcker test showed a possible lack of discriminant validity [intentional, MSV (0.88) and ASV (0.78) > AVE (0.77); emotional, MSV (0.88) > AVE (0.82); cognitive, MSV (0.76) and ASV (0.72) > AVE (0.70)]. We thus tested two alternative models: a two-factor model in which the intentional and cognitive dimensions were merged, and a unidimensional model. Both showed a significantly poorer fit than the three-dimensional model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 12.8$, df = 1, $p < 0.005$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 13.1$, df = 1, $p < 0.005$, respectively), confirming that the three-dimensional model should be retained in the subsequent analysis.

Nomological validity results

As a part of study 3 we examined the CBE scale within a nomological net of brand relationships, to assess the discriminant validity of CBE. The estimated measurement model showed a reasonably good fit (χ^2/df = 1.75, CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.063). All constructs showed acceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.7$), convergent validity (Cronbach's $\alpha >$ AVE > 0.5), and discriminant validity (MSV and ASV < AVE; Table 7).

Although the model showed acceptable nomological validity supporting the distinctiveness of CBE, Table 7 reveals that the different constructs correlate highly significantly with each other (i.e., CBE and brand experience = 0.56 and CBE and participation = 0.51). This could be due to common method variance, which is often a concern within cross-sectional survey research. We chose to use the marker variable technique to partial out the marker's variance (Lindell and Whitney, 2001; Malhotra et al., 2006).

Table 7 Reliability, Construct Validity and the Correlation Matrix

Constructs	α	AVE	MSV	ASV	CBE	Brand Involvement	Brand Experience	Brand Satisfaction	Participation	Brand Loyalty
CBE	0.92	0.79	0.31	0.19	**0.90**					
Brand Inv.	0.89	0.73	0.19	0.10	0.44***	**0.85**				
Brand Experience	0.90	0.65	0.44	0.30	0.56***	0.35***	**0.81**			
Brand Satisfaction	0.96	0.82	0.80	0.30	0.30***	0.31***	0.58***	**0.90**		
Participation	0.80	0.50	0.44	0.21	0.51***	0.19*	0.66***	0.42***	**0.71**	
Brand Loyalty	0.95	0.82	0.80	0.29	0.35***	0.21**	0.56***	0.90***	0.39**	**0.91**

Note: α = Cronbach's alpha, AVE=Average Variance Extracted, MSV=Maximum Shared Squared Variance, ASV=Average Shared Squared Variance,

Significant Covariances:* $p < .1$, **$p < .05$, ***$p < .01$, N=193. Bold values=The square root values for each AVE.

A theoretically unrelated three-item variable ([I know that "brand" uses Facebook to give advice about insurance], [I know that "brand" uses Facebook for arranging contests with price premiums], [I know that "brand" uses Facebook to invite customers to seminars, internet meetings, and other activities]) on a seven-point Likert scale anchored by "not known at all" to "well known" served as a marker. The two lowest variable correlations with the marker variable ($r = -0.02$ and $r = 0.03$) were below the suggested 0.20 threshold for problematic method variance (Lindell and Whitney, 2001; Malhotra et al., 2006). All correlations in the model remained significant with signs unchanged. In sum, it seemed that method bias was not a significant risk in the data. Thus, further testing of the conceptual model and hypotheses was carried out.

Hypotheses testing of antecedents and outcomes of CBE

Founded in the ideas from Table 1 in the conceptual framework section, we address several hypotheses, introducing antecedents and outcomes of CBE as a psychological state, which is tested in study 3. As our **H1**, we argue that brand involvement affects CBE in social media positively. This argument is in line with suggestions from previous research (Brodie *et al.*, 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Vivek, 2009), and we argue that the more involved a customer is with the service brand, the more they are likely to engage intentionally, emotionally and cognitively in the brand activities in social media. Next, we suggest as our **H2** that participation affects CBE in social media positively (Dessant et al., 2015; Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014; Ramaswamy and Gouillart, 2010). Our argument is that when service brands seek to activate customers' emotions, cognitions and intentions during participative activities, customer engagement with the brand evolves (e.g. gradually). Inspired by Gummerus et al. (2012) and Chandler and Lusch (2014), and by extending the model of Brakus et al. (2009), we propose (**H3**) that CBE in social media positively affects brand experience. In line with regulatory engagement theory (RET), we argue that engagement strength affects motivational force in an engagement process that results in great experiences (Higgins, 2006). Further, we argue (**H4**) that brand experience affects brand satisfaction positively (Grace and O'Cass, 2004; Ha and Perks, 2005). Because brand experience affects brand value positively, customer satisfaction is expected to increase with a service brand's evocation of experiential dimensions (Chang and Chieng, 2006; Hong-Youl and Perks, 2005). Customers who positively experience the service brand and its activities become more satisfied and convinced that the brand lives up to their expectations. The satisfaction-loyalty hypothesis has been tested in numerous studies, which holds that brand satisfaction is a key driver of brand loyalty (e.g., intention to stay loyal,

willingness to recommend brand to others) (e.g., Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Bloemer and Kasper, 1995; Mittal and Kamakura, 2001). Thus, we argue (**H₅,**) that brand satisfaction affects brand loyalty positively. When customers realize that their patronage has been a good choice and that the service brand offers good solutions, they likely intend to stay loyal to this brand in the future. They are also more willing to recommend the brand to other people. At last, following previous findings (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006; Bowden, 2009; Gummerus et al., 2012; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Vivek, 2009), but with recognition of the complexity of the effect chain, brand loyalty can be understood as a positive outcome of CBE in social media (**H₆**). When customers intend to perform well on behalf of the brand, feel enthusiastic about the brand, and pay a great deal of attention to brand in social media, a positive brand loyalty effect is likely (Dessart et al., 2015).

Using a structural equation model and IBM SPSS AMOS 21 software (Bollen and Long, 1993), we tested hypotheses **H₁-H₆**. The estimated model showed a moderate fit (χ^2/df = 1.87, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.067; Figure 2).

Figure 2 Hypotheses testing
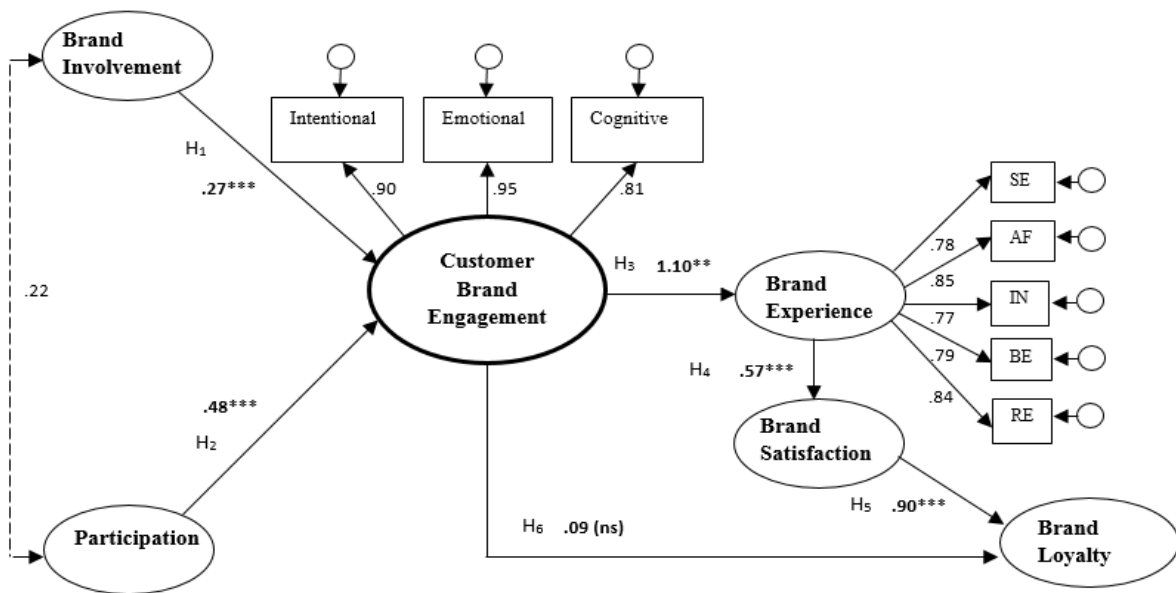
Notes: All coefficient values are standardized. The concept of Customer Brand Engagement and Brand Experience are presented by dimensions. SE=Sensory, AF=Affective, IN=Intellectual, BE=Behavioural, RE=Relational. Brand Involvement and Co-Creation were allowed to correlate. Significance level: ***p<.001, **p<.01, * p<.05.

N=193
χ^2/df =1.87
CFI= .95
RMSEA= .067

All standardized path coefficients were significant ($p < 0.01$), except for the effect of CBE in social media on brand loyalty. Brand involvement (β=0.27) and participation (β=0.48) affected CBE in social media positively, supporting **H₁** and **H₂**. In addition, CBE in social media affected brand experience positively (β=1.10), experience affected brand satisfaction positively (β=0.57), and satisfaction affected brand loyalty positively (β=0.90), supporting **H₃–H₅**. Nonetheless, we could not confirm a positive direct effect of CBE in social media on brand loyalty, and were thus unable to accept **H₆**.

We examined a competing nomological model in which brand experience served as a predictor of CBE, in line with brand involvement and participation. This model showed a poorer fit than the original model (χ^2/df = 2.01, CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.073). Although all path coefficients were significant, some paths showed weaker effects than in the original model. We thus considered the original model (Figure 2) to best fit the data.

Discussion, implications, and limitations

CBE arises in contexts wherein consumers/customers actively interact and communicate with brands. The emergence of the CBE concept acknowledges the opportunities afforded by interactive social media to transform customer–brand relationships. Unlike traditional marketing, in which firms/brands largely control marketing decisions, social media shifts control of some of these decisions to customers. This paper contributes to a more thorough understanding of customers' engagement with brands that utilizes social media. A comprehensive way to measure CBE in brand and social media contexts was needed and, in this paper, we offer a suitable scale for that purpose, founded in the multidimensional conceptualization of CBE as a psychological state.

Our conceptual framework section provides an overview of CBE perspectives in the literature, regarding both its characteristics and how to understand the concept, fundamental for measurement. The strength of this study lies in our use of method triangulation, combining a preliminary study and predictive studies that provided us with opportunities to get a deeper knowledge of CBE, and how to measure CBE as a psychological state in interactive brand- and social media contexts. Our initial exploration of the conceptualization of CBE in study 1 showed that CBE can be characterized as having a high degree of mental complexity, indicating support for a multidimensional understanding of the concept. Further, study 1 argued that CBE should be considered as process-based and predominantly prominent in interactive contexts. Regarding the four characteristics introduced in study 1, CBE was reported to be significantly distinct from brand involvement, participation, motivation, flow, trust, customer delight and

commitment, in terms of one or several of the characteristics. Based on findings from study 1 and from theory, we chose to incorporate the flow concept/element in the cognitive dimension of CBE and the concept of motivation as an underlying foundation of the CBE concept.

Based on results from study 1 we found it appropriate to consider CBE as a unique distinct concept, and decided to continue the process of creating a CBE scale suitable for measurement in interactive brand and social media contexts. We developed a CBE scale for capturing CBE as a psychological state by adapting an existing scale from the acknowledged research field of organizational behaviour. The scale was based on the three-dimensional (physical, emotional, and cognitive) JES (Rich et al., 2010). Thus, the main contribution of this research is the adequate adaptation and empirical evaluation of a tripartite, motivationally founded, psychological and positively valenced measurement scale.

In study 2, we suggested a generic version of the CBE scale, and in study 3, we further refined it to fit the interactive context of social media by using Facebook as the empirical context of validation. In study 3, we also verified the internal consistency, reliability, and construct and nomological validity of the CBE scale and documented the antecedents and outcomes of CBE using insurance customers as the subjects of investigation.

Although other researchers have developed scales measuring customer (brand) engagement, we argue that a social-media-adapted CBE scale is needed. Hollebeek et al. (2014) recently suggested a three-dimensional psychometric scale similar to the one we present in this paper. However, we consider their scale to be limited to brands in use, and less suitable for measuring customer engagement related to brands acting in social media as an interactive context. Our three-dimensional, nine-item scale is not restricted to brands in use, but applies to customers' engagement *with* brands in most interactive contexts, such as social media. Although our scale was tested in an empirical study of customers following service brands on Facebook (i.e., Facebook brand pages), the scale is applicable for measuring CBE in other social media channels as well, such as Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. The scale is also applicable for measuring CBE in offline contexts as well (as documented in study 2) as long as these are interactive.

We gained support for CBE as a motivationally founded, psychological and multidimensional concept, comprising behavioural intention, emotions and cognitions, viewed as *distinct* from CBE behaviour. Franzak et al. (2014), who are suggesting that brand engagement reflected as cognitive responses and behavioural intention differ from consequent engagement behavioural activity, support this view. Cheung et al. (2015) argue that a multidimensional view of engagement best captures the complexity of the concept, thus,

consider it to consist of psychological engagement and behavioural engagement. When measuring CBE in social media, we find it necessary, but too liming to focus solely on the behavioural part of engagement (e.g., Gummerus et al., 2012; Kumar et al., 2010; Libai et al., 2009; Sashi, 2012; Verhoef et al., 2010; Verleye et al., 2013; Wirtz et al., 2013). Therefore, this paper provide a measurement scale for capturing CBE as a psychological state that may supplement the registration of CBE behaviour (e.g., likes, comments, shares). By considering CBE as a psychological state, the intentional behaviour is captured by measuring the energy, time, and effort spent, the emotions are captured by measuring the customers' enthusiasm, excitement, and positive feelings, and the cognitions are captured by the levels of attention, concentration, and absorption. These findings are largely consistent with Dessart et al.'s (2015) findings of dimensions and sub-dimensions explaining customer engagement.

Empirical testing of CBE as a psychological state in a nomological network model (study 3) provided support for five of our six hypotheses. We found that participation was an important driver of CBE in social media, and that increased brand involvement (e.g. with insurance-related topics) positively affected customers' engagement, supporting previous research arguments (Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014; Ramaswamy and Gouillart, 2010; Vivek, 2009). Brand loyalty was found to be a positive outcome of CBE in social media, supporting similar findings in marketing research (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006; Bowden, 2009; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Vivek, 2009). However, this relationship was not direct but occurred through the concepts of brand experience (Dessart et al., 2015) and brand satisfaction.

Theoretical implications

This current research contributes to theory construction about CBE as a distinct concept, by identifying its conceptual foundations and characteristics. Based on our research we conclude that CBE has relevance in central theoretical perspectives focusing on two-way interactive customer–brand relationships. This support the social exchange theory (SET) (Homans, 1958), which highlights the importance of obligations generated through interdependent parties. This research is also supporting the service-dominant (S-D) logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008) and the expanded domain of relationship marketing theory (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Vivek et al., 2011), which highlights the importance of interactive and powerful customers in value creation. In line with S-D logic we posit that CBE in social media is centred on interactive experiences within complex, co-creative contexts, and thus, that social media is an appropriate platform for the encouragement of CBE on other premises than exchange. Our research results,

proving that CBE is an important concept in social media, support consumer culture theory (CCT), which are focusing the importance of experiential, social, and cultural aspects of particular interactive contexts (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Kozinets, 2002). Social media remains as an important and distinct research domain for CBE, in line with suggestions from previous research (Brodie et al., 2011a; Dessart et al., 2015; Fournier and Avery, 2011; Hsu et al., 2011; Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Wirtz et al., 2013). Our nomological model provides theory testing and thus contributes to a better understanding of theoretical relationships involving CBE in social media. Through theory testing, the results show that both participation and brand involvement explain CBE positively. Further, CBE produces strong brand experiences and thereby increases brand satisfaction and brand loyalty. This paper develops scholarly understanding of the theoretical relationships involving CBE as a motivational, psychological, and multidimensional construct.

Practical implications

Our research yields key insights for service marketing practitioners seeking social media strategies. Our analysis clearly shows that CBE should be encouraged and sustained in online social platforms. The vast reach, low cost, and popularity of social media encourage practitioners to take advantage of this context. Our findings can enhance service firms' understanding of CBE and provide a new way of thinking about how they can encourage it, especially by inviting customers to involve and participate in brand activities in social media.

We have shown that customer engagement is not limited to popular or luxury brands, as our study involved insurance brands. Practitioners must recognize that customers can be intentionally, emotionally, and cognitively engaged not only with hedonic brands (e.g., clothes and jewellery), but also with convenience and utilitarian brands (e.g., insurance). We suggest that engaging customers on service firms' Facebook brand pages is excellent for creating positive brand experiences. Since service companies offer particularly intangible "products" that are difficult for customers to comprehend beforehand, we recommend using social media to engage customers in activities beyond product purchase, encouraging more complete and positive brand experiences. Study 3 confirmed that customers' brand engagement is important and should be encouraged by service brands in general and by insurance brands in particular.

An open platform, such as social media, provides opportunities for two-way interaction on the customer's premises, with characteristics and themes *beyond* the particular product/service (e.g., insurance) serving as central elements. Hence, our findings suggest that *all brand* and firm types have possibilities for focusing their efforts on engaging customers

intentionally, emotionally, and cognitively through increased participation and activity in social media. In addition to interactions with customers, a firm's or brand's moderation of ongoing interaction among customers is critical. Managers who are able to introduce and invite customers to contribute in online activities (e.g., innovative ideas, storytelling, campaigns, and contests) that enable participation and encourage brand involvement will stimulate customers' behavioural intention, emotional, and cognitive engagement - a prerequisite for engagement behaviour. The involvement of customers in the value-adding process and marketing decisions increases the likelihood of brand engagement, experience, satisfaction, and loyalty. Service firms' Facebook brand pages allow customers (i.e., followers) to connect and interact with other customers, increasing the amount of mutually positive brand experiences. Our findings explicitly show how social media practices that increase engagement can affect brand loyalty (through enhanced brand experience and satisfaction), serving as a powerful tool for obtaining competitive advantage. Thus, service firms should invest in resources to increase customers' use of social media. Service brands should develop strategies, systems, and Facebook brand pages that recognize customers' concerns and that build and maintain platforms for customer participation and engagement. The empirical results of this research are particularly promising for insurance companies, and other service companies offering intangible "products".

Service marketing practitioners who prioritize social media as marketing and service channels can apply the scale developed in this research to assess the current level of psychological CBE states among customers. This multidimensional scale developed here, comprising behavioural intention as a dimension, is critical for the understanding of CBE as a psychological state, in addition to registration of engagement behaviour (e.g., likes, comments, shares). Service marketing practitioners need to realize that a large number of "followers" is not enough. Customers' level of psychologically anchored engagement is of the highest importance. Service marketing practitioners may use the scale in customer profiling to gain information useful for maximizing the overall engagement and individual engagement states and levels, thereby transforming customers into satisfied and loyal followers. Hence, for service marketing practitioners, understanding psychological CBE is helpful for assessing which customer segments to focus on when designing future strategies and content for social media.

Limitations and future research

The research described in this paper is subject to several limitations. Student subjects were used in study 1, which have been suggested by some researchers to threaten the external validity and generalizability of findings due to the non-representativeness of the population (Wells, 1993,

in Yoo and Donthu, 2001). However, in line with the arguments of other scale development researchers (Yoo and Donthu, 2001; Brakus et al., 2009; Hollebeek et al., 2014), students are also customers, and given that we provided them with clear guidelines, we assume that the results gained from this study are credible and trustworthy.

Because descriptive and confirmatory research on CBE is at an early stage, conclusions from study 2 and 3 should be drawn with caution. Based on statistical limitations regarding the discriminant validity of the CBE scale in study 3, future work should consider the scale's applicability in larger customer samples and with different brands, services contexts and countries, for further validation and improved generalizability.

Although the conceptual framework section suggested that CBE could be positive or negative in valence, the measurement scale adapted and evaluated in this research considers mainly the positive valence of CBE. As is easily observed, customers are frequently negatively engaged in social media (e.g., showing negative emotions) (Laroche et al., 2012; Ward and Ostrom, 2006). In future research, the ability of the scale to measure both positive and negative valence should be considered, e.g., through an evaluation of positively and negatively worded versions of the scale (Brakus et al., 2009). We recommend an investigation of how positive versus negative engagement affects consumer behaviour (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014). The effects of CBE were examined using an aggregate CBE construct in this research. To gain more detailed knowledge of the engagement effects, the individual dimensions of CBE could be examined separately (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Self-reported questionnaire responses potentially reflect customers' memories of engagement states, and thus, may not adequately capture them. In the future, "in situ" data could be collected using netnography (Kozinets, 2002) to extend and support self-reported questionnaire data. Further, data collected on psychological CBE should be supplemented by data of behavioural engagement (e.g., Facebook statistics, Graph API data), to get a full picture of the total engagement processes that consumers/customers follows.

The models presented in this paper were investigated empirically using cross-sectional data, which yields limited results reflecting "snapshots" of customers' engagement with specific insurance brands (Rindfleisch et al., 2008). From the conceptual framework section, we consider CBE to emerge from interactive processes (i.e., to be process-based). Founded on the consideration of CBE as process-based, future studies should use other empirical approaches, such as longitudinal/time-series studies (Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a; Rindfleisch et al., 2008), which would enable the examination of CBE changes and the comparison of results obtained at different time points (Laroche et al., 2012). Such research

would provide insight into specific CBE phases and fluctuating lifecycles, and thereby more truly predict CBE effects (Menard, 2002; Rindfleisch et al., 2008). Future research should also test CBE using different comprehensive models that integrate more theoretically related service constructs, such as trust, commitment, and customer delight.

Service marketing practitioners seem to lack knowledge of the types of marketing tactics and co-creative activities that stimulate CBE dimensions in specific interactive brand contexts. One can join firms Facebook brand pages by simply pressing the "Like" button (Habibi et al., 2014), but what does that really mean for a consumer/customer in terms of his/her level of engagement? Future experimental studies could investigate how service firms' activities, combined with customer strategies, can achieve and affect CBE states, and how this can positively influence customers' value experience of the service firm/brand. Promising theories for such studies are self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2002) and regulatory fit theory (Higgins, 2000).

The empirical context of study 3 was insurance companies' Facebook brand pages. Because we based the findings in study 3 on data from one industry, they may not be directly applicable to other industries. Thus, we suggest research into brands in other industries. Future research could also examine the effectiveness of CBE-stimulating activities and campaigns in different social media channels (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram) (Bolton, 2011) and investigate whether brand type (e.g., utilitarian *vs*. hedonic) and self-brand connection moderate engagement-level effects in social media (Nelson-Field and Taylor, 2012). In line with Brodie and colleagues (2011a), we assume that CBE lies on a continuum ranging from non-engaging to highly engaging. Today, very few people become highly engaged with many brands in social media. We recommend that future studies compare the levels of customer engagement in social media achieved by different brand types to better explain why some brands seem to be more engaging than others.

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Article 3

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Influences of customer participation and customer brand engagement on brand loyalty

Abstract

Purpose – Value co-creation assumes that customers take an active role and create value together with the firm. This research investigates the consequent effects of customer participation on brand loyalty, through brand satisfaction, from both a short-term and a long-term perspective. The research also examines customer participation effects among social media using customers, by introducing customer brand engagement as an additional explanatory factor.

Design/methodology/approach – Service brands were the objects of two studies conducted among insurance customers: (1) a cross-sectional study using a nationwide sample ($N = 954$) to look at short-term effects, including an analysis of a subsample of social-media-using customers ($N = 145$); and (2) a longitudinal study utilizing three assessment time points ($N = 376$), to provide a stronger empirical long-term test.

Findings – The cross-sectional study showed positive short-term effects of customer participation on brand loyalty, mediated by satisfaction. Among customers using social media, positive customer participation effects gained from customer brand engagement resulted in positively strengthened brand satisfaction. Interestingly, the longitudinal study could not report the same positive long-term effects from customer participation.

Practical implications – This study helps deepen service marketers understanding of the possible short-term effects of customer participation and customer brand engagement, as well as warning them to be careful about expecting long-term positive satisfaction and loyalty effects from customer participation.

Originality/value – This research provides interesting short-term versus long-term findings, due to the combination of cross-sectional and longitudinal research design.

Keywords – customer participation; customer brand engagement; brand satisfaction; brand loyalty

INTRODUCTION

Service firms continually strive to maintain long-term relationships with customers and to understand the factors that build and sustain brand loyalty. From a value co-creation perspective, which recognizes the customer as playing an active and participatory part in value creation (Ranjan and Read, 2014; Pralahad and Ramaswamy, 2004a; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014), customers' participation (Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014) and customers' engagement (Brodie *et al.*, 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a) can be prioritized in order to ensure customers' loyalty. Considering them as value co-creators, firms view customers as partners or co-producers instead of "external elements" (Fuat Firat *et al.*, 1995), as they are engaging and participating in specific interactions and activities. Thus, interaction manifests itself through participation (Grönroos and Ravald, 2011) and engagement (Zhu, 2006).

Modern technology plays a crucial role in supporting the manner in which firms and customers interact (Flores and Vasquez-Parraga, 2015). One major arena in which customers participate in co-production, and which supports the development of collaborative customer relationships, is that of social media (Maklan and Klaus, 2011). Engagement is also considered a particularly important phenomenon in social media (e.g., chats, blogs, videos, and brand communities) (Brodie *et al.*, 2011a; Fournier and Avery, 2011; Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Dessart *et al.*, 2014). The interactive nature of social media gives service firms the opportunity to become more customer-centric, thereby encouraging customer participation (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Hoffman and Novak, 2011) and engagement in certain brand activities (Schamari and Schaefers, 2015). Thus, social media complement brands' physical-world counterparts and serve as platforms for customers' sharing of feelings, thoughts and content (Schau *et al.*, 2009). An increasing number of service brands invest time and marketing resources in the organization of social-media-based brand communities and Facebook brand pages (McAlexander *et al.*, 2002; Shankar and Batra, 2009; Laroche *et al.*, 2012; Vries *et al.*, 2012), and positively encourage engagement (Algesheimer *et al.*, 2005; Brodie *et al.*, 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b), hoping that customers will participate. Previous studies have investigated customer preferences for online versus offline interaction (Frambach *et al.*, 2007), as well as customer satisfaction and loyalty in online versus offline contexts (Shankar *et al.*, 2003), customer participation in virtual brand communities (Casaló *et al.*, 2008) and customer participation in service recovery using online platforms (Dong *et al.*, 2008). Nonetheless, there remains a lack of empirical research investigating brand loyalty effects of customer participation among customers using social media compared to customers not doing so, and

also incorporating the effects of customer brand engagement (CBE) in social media. This research explores customer participation effects on brand loyalty, as well as effects of CBE in social media, particularly in relation to insurance firms' Facebook brand pages. Accordingly, this research seeks to contribute to these areas by investigating the short- and long-term effects of customer participation on brand loyalty through brand satisfaction as a bridging element. Further, this research explores in particular whether CBE among customers using social media explains customer participation, further enhancing brand satisfaction and brand loyalty. Thus, brand loyalty is the ultimate dependent variable in this research.

The high costs service firms face in their attempts to attract new customers make it increasingly necessary for them to reinforce established ties with customers (Casaló *et al.*, 2007). The insurance sector is known for having low switching barriers. Statistics show that 17% of the customer base switch insurance providers annually (Lavik and Schjøll, 2012), which makes it imperative for insurance firms to gain knowledge about factors that build and sustain brand loyalty. Brand loyalty denotes an intended behavior in relation to the brand and/or the brand's services. If real alternatives exist or switching barriers are low, a service brand will discover its inability to satisfy its customers via two feedback mechanisms: exit and voice (Hirschman, 1970). This paper considers brand loyalty as expressions of individual preferences, thus, as an attitudinal concept (e.g., intention to stay loyal, intention to recommend the brand and intention to choose the brand again) (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978; Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998).

Previous studies of the loyalty effects of customer participation have utilized cross-sectional data (Casaló *et al.*, 2007; Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014). Although marketing scholars frequently conduct cross-sectional studies, several researchers argue that longitudinal studies are more trustworthy, as they give a more precise picture of long-term effects (Brodie *et al.*, 2011b; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2011a, 2011b). Longitudinal studies enable consideration of auto-correlational (i.e., historical) effects, which would be expected to weaken the between-variable effects in comparison with cross-sectional studies (Rindfleisch *et al.*, 2008). To strengthen the empirical research, this paper combined cross-sectional and longitudinal studies to investigate observed effect patterns over a short-term *and* a long-term period. The paper proposes that customers' willingness to participate over time will affect their brand satisfaction positively, thereby affecting their subsequent loyalty, from a short-term as well as a long-term perspective.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, it presents a theoretical framework, describing the concepts of customer participation and CBE and addressing the hypotheses. Next, it presents the methodological approaches and the results of the cross-sectional and longitudinal studies,

separately. In the discussion section, the paper compares and discusses the findings from the two studies, considering their implications, limitations and suggestions for future research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Customer participation

Customer participation specifies the degree to which a customer puts their effort and resources into the process of production (Dabholkar, 1990), thus taking an *active part* in consuming and producing value (Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014). Customer participation includes the physical and mental inputs required of customers (Flores and Vasquez-Parraga, 2015), when involved in co-production. Co-production consists of direct and indirect co-working between a firm and its customers or the customers' participation in the product/service design process (Lemke *et al*., 2011). Customer participation might be evidenced in a facilitation role at the periphery of a firm's processes (Auh *et al*., 2007), or in an active role through the application of knowledge and the sharing of information with the firm (Ranjan and Read, 2014). Following Ranjan and Read (2014), customer participation should be considered a component of co-production. Predominantly, in co-production, the locus of control of the process resides with the firm (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008). Etgar (2008) defines co-production as customers' participation in one or more of the activities of the network chain of the firm (design, production, delivery, executing use). Further, Etgar (2008) refers to the co-production phase of value co-creation as the activation stage. The activation stage, which is the focus of this research, is where customer participation via co-production occurs and results in the production of the core offering. In the same way, Auh *et al*. (2007) define co-production as customer participation in the service creation and delivery in a cooperative manner, and Chen *et al*. (2011) define co-production as constructive participation in the service process.

Customer brand engagement

While the concept of engagement has received considerable attention across a number of academic disciplines (e.g., educational psychology and organizational behavior), it has transpired in the marketing literature only relatively recently (Gambetti and Graffigna, 2010; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). In the current marketing and service literature, the CBE concept has been found to be a core explanatory element in online brand communities (Brodie *et al.,* 2011a), in the emergence of social media networking sites (Jahn and Kunz, 2012), and particularly in social-media-based brand communities (Laroche *et al*., 2012; Habibi *et al*., 2014), such as

Facebook brand communities (Gummerus *et al*., 2012). As the use of social media has been added to firms' marketing and brand-building activities (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010), attracted by the large number of users, firms have begun creating Facebook brand pages (Gummerus *et al*., 2012) to encourage CBE. In line with Brodie *et al.* (2011b) and Hollebeek *et al.* (2014), this study considers CBE to be a context-dependent, psychological construct, reflected by emotional, cognitive and intentional states that occur by virtue of interactive experiences *underlying* behavioral interactions (e.g., in social media). Inspired by Hollebeek *et al.* (2014), this study considers emotional CBE to be a customer's degree of positive brand-activity-related affect, and cognitive CBE to be their level of brand-activity-related thought processing and elaboration. Intentional CBE refers to a customer's interest in spending energy, effort and time on a brand activity. Brodie *et al.* (2011a) highlight the fluctuating nature of the state dimensions of CBE. Intensity levels of cognitive, emotional and intentional states can change rapidly, from one moment or situation to another, in engagement processes (Hollebeek, 2011a).

Hypotheses

The disconfirmation-of-expectation paradigm (Oliver, 1980) argues that customer loyalty (e.g., intention to stay loyal, willingness to recommend a brand to others) is a function of customer satisfaction. Thus, when customers realize that their patronage has been a good choice and that the brand offers good solutions, they likely intend to stay loyal to the brand in the future. They are also more willing to recommend the brand to other people. By taking a value co-creation perspective (Ranjan and Read, 2014), this paper argues that customers' participation in co-production can help to build brand loyalty. To encourage customer participation, the firm creates platforms for value creation that will suit customers' unique interests, and thus enhances brand satisfaction in a way that is personal and subjective, and that will affect brand loyalty positively. Co-production has previously been found to be a positive predictor of attitudinal loyalty (Auh *et al*., 2007; Hosseini, 2013) and of satisfaction (Ranjan and Read, 2014; Flores and Vasquez-Parraga (2015). When customers participate in co-production activities, they tend to share their new ideas, suggestions and problems with the service firm (Chen *et al*., 2011), and thus are expected to become more satisfied, due to their personal investment. Ranjan and Read (2014) argue that, as customers outlay resources in the co-production process, it is considered a cooperative act of satisfaction. This paper argues that, when customers obtain more customized services through participation in brand activities, they will be more satisfied, and the more difficult it will be for a competitor to attract those customers. The following mediating hypothesis is thus proposed:

H₁: In the presence of brand satisfaction, customer participation will have a positive effect on brand loyalty.

Chan *et al.*'s (2010) findings provide empirical support for the argument that customers' involvement beyond the consumption of a product or service can add value for them. In the same manner, Van Doorn *et al.* (2010) argue that customer engagement goes beyond transactions and purchase, having positive brand or firm consequences as well as positive customer consequences. The relationship between CBE and other concepts has not been undertaken much research to date, however, suggesting that the positive effects of CBE are brand satisfaction (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Hollebeek, 2011a) and brand loyalty (Brodie *et al.*, 2011a; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). Regarding customer participation, this variable is mostly suggested as an antecedent of CBE (Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014; Ramaswamy and Gouillart, 2010; Vivek, 2009) but the relationship remains empirically untested.

As this paper is leaning towards the view of Brodie *et al.* (2011a) by considering CBE as reflecting inherent states in which the intensity of CBE may develop and fluctuate, it argues that CBE can give rise to customer participation. For example, when a customer feels greater emotional attachment to a brand, they will have higher motivation to participate in brand activities (Auh *et al.*, 2007). However, the paper assumes that customers' engagement with an object (e.g., a brand) is frequently fluctuating, and thus evokes short-term positive effects. Further, it argues that, from a short-term perspective, customers who engage in participative activities (e.g., in social media) will be both satisfied (Chan *et al.*, 2010; Flores and Vasquez-Parraga, 2015) and loyal (Hollebeek, 2011b). In interactive social media, customers who enter positively valenced engagement states are assumed to participate willingly in joint activities, leading to brand satisfaction and brand loyalty. This paper theorizes that, when customers become emotionally, cognitively and/or intentionally engaged in social-media-based brand activities, they will willingly participate in those activities. Through participation, this paper argues that they will be both satisfied with their own performance (individual value) and with the engagement object, such as a brand or a brand activity (relational value). A positive outcome is strengthened loyalty to the brand. Thus, brand satisfaction and brand loyalty are considered positive outcomes of customers' engagement and of the subsequent participation process with the brand in social media, in an extensive affect chain. The paper addresses the following hypothesis:

H₂: In social media, customer brand engagement will have a positive effect on customer participation, giving rise to positive brand satisfaction and brand loyalty effects.

H₁ was tested regarding both its short-term effects (i.e., using a cross-sectional study) and its long-term effects (i.e., through a longitudinal study). H₂ was tested regarding short-term fluctuating CBE effects in the cross-sectional study.

STUDY 1: CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

Design, sample and measurement

The cross-sectional study was conducted in April 2012 in partnership with Norstat (the largest online panel data provider in Norway) using a nationwide online panel survey of insurance customers aged at least 15 years. Respondents were rewarded through the Norstat system. To make the sample representative, Norstat controlled recruitment according to age, gender, education, income and non-disclosed customer-related variables. Seven insurance brands were included in the data. Each participant answered a questionnaire related to the insurance brand with which s/he had a customer relationship and responded to questions with reference to that brand, and to their relationship with the brand in social media (Facebook) if they reported using social media as a customer channel.

The insurance brands included in this study had used social media (i.e., Facebook brand pages) as a customer channel since 2011. Customers had, since 2011, been invited to express their preference for a brand by "liking" it; content on the firms' Facebook brand pages was then automatically posted to these customers' Facebook news feeds, where they were expected to engage emotionally, cognitively and through behavioral intentions. The total sample comprised 954 respondents, 145 of whom reported using social media in relation to the insurance brand (and 809 respondents whom did not).

Self-reported questionnaire items measured latent constructs using modifications of previously used scales (Appendix 1). Customers rated their willingness to *participate* with the brand [four items reflecting customer participation in creating value together with a service brand (Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014; Chan *et al*., 2010)]. *CBE in social media* was measured using a nine-item scale reflecting states of emotional, cognitive and intentional CBE [Solem and Pedersen (forthcoming), based on the work engagement scale of Rich *et al*. (2010)]. Item wording was amended slightly for the Facebook brand page (reflecting brand–customer interactivity), following Reitz (2012) and Casaló *et al*. (2010). Customer participation and CBE

were measured using a seven-point scale ranging from "totally disagree" to "totally agree." The questionnaire also assessed the following related constructs: *brand satisfaction* [five items reflecting overall satisfaction, meeting of expectations (Fornell, 1992) and acceptability of brand choice (Oliver, 1980; Gottlieb *et al.*, 1994); on a seven-point scale ("totally disagree" to "totally agree")] and *brand loyalty* [four items reflecting future loyalty and continued patronage (Selnes, 1993; Brakus *et al.*, 2009; Wagner *et al.*, 2009), recommendation to others (Brakus *et al.*, 2009) and repeat selection (Selnes, 1993); on a seven-point scale ("totally disagree" to "totally agree")].

A total of 964 invited panel members completed the questionnaire. After the exclusion of 10 "outliers" showing no variance in brand engagement, the final sample comprised 954 respondents. Gender was evenly distributed in the sample, 59% of respondents were aged more than 45 years, 66% were well educated and 47% had household incomes of more than 600,000 NOK (Table 1). CBE in social media was examined among the subsample of 145 (15%) respondents who reported using social media (i.e., Facebook).

Table 1 Sample Demographics from the cross-sectional study

Sample demographics (*N*=954)	Percent
Gender	
Male	54,4
Female	45,6
Age	
15-24	9,7
25-34	14,0
35-44	17,2
45-54	17,9
55-64	19,2
64-	21,9
Education	
Primary	5,2
Secondary	28,6
University/College $\leq$ 3 years	30,8
University/College $\geq$ 3 years	35,3
Household income (in NOK)	
< 200.000	4,9
200.000-399.000	15,7
400.000-599.000	23,4
600.000-799.000	18,1
>800.000	28,9
No response	8,9
Using Social Media	
Using Facebook in relation to brand	15,2

Reliability and validity testing

The data were examined through confirmatory factor analysis with maximum likelihood estimation (Bollen, 1989) using IBM SPSS AMOS 21. To assess nomological validity, concept positions were tested using a measurement model for the total sample of respondents. Convergent and divergent validity were assessed following Fornell and Larker (1981a, 1981b).

The estimated measurement model for the total sample ($N = 954$) showed a reasonably good fit [χ^2/df = 4.90, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.98, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.064]. All constructs showed acceptable reliability (Cronbach's α > 0.7). Brand satisfaction and brand loyalty showed acceptable convergent validity, while customer participation did not show adequate results [Cronbach's α < average variance extracted (AVE) > 0.5], indicating that the items did not optimally reflect the concept. No discriminant validity issue was observed, except for the brand loyalty variable [maximum shared variance (MSV) > AVE; Table 2]. The square root of AVE for brand loyalty was lower than its correlation with brand satisfaction.

Table 2 Reliability, validity and the correlation matrix for the total sample (N=954)

Constructs	α	AVE	MSV	ASV	Customer Participation	Brand Satisfaction	Brand Loyalty
Customer Participation	1.01	1.04	0.06	0.06	**1.02**		
Brand Satisfaction	0.95	0.78	0.77	0.41	0.24***	**0.88**	
Brand Loyalty	0.90	0.69	0.77	0.41	0.23***	0.88***	**0.83**

Note: α = Cronbach's alpha, AVE=Average Variance Extracted, MSV=Maximum Shared Squared Variance, ASV=Average Shared Squared Variance. The bold values on the diagonal of the matrix represent the square root values for each AVE. Significant Covariances:* p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01, N=954.

As the strong correlation between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty may have been due to common method bias, the marker variable technique (Lindell and Whitney, 2001; Malhotra *et al*., 2006) was applied. A theoretically unrelated two-item variable ("Facebook can be used to read what other people are writing," "Facebook can be used to achieve personal gains"), structured by a seven-point Likert scale anchored by "totally disagree" and "totally agree," served as a marker. The two lowest correlations with the marker ($r = 0.15$ and $r = 0.12$) fell below the suggested 0.20 threshold for problematic method variance (Malhotra *et al*., 2006).

All correlations in the model remained significant, with signs unchanged. These results indicated that method bias was not a significant risk in this dataset.

Hypothesis testing

In the cross-sectional study, the hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM), applied via IBM SPSS AMOS 21, following the procedure of Bollen and Long (1993). First, H_1 was tested using data from the subsample of 809 that did not use social media. This model showed acceptable fit (χ^2/df = 4.70, CFI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.068; Figure 1). Customer participation affected brand satisfaction positively ($\beta = 0.27$), and brand satisfaction affected brand loyalty positively ($\beta = 0.85$). Meanwhile, customer participation had a non-significant direct effect on brand loyalty. These results indicated support for H_1, that customer participation affects brand loyalty positively through brand satisfaction as a bridging factor.

Figure 1 Hypothesis (H_1) test results from the cross-sectional study

Note: All coefficient values are standardized.
Significance level: ***p<.001, **p<.01, * p<.05.

N=809
χ^2/df =4.70
CFI= 0.98
RMSEA= 0.068

The paper controlled for possible different effects of customer participation for the seven brands by introducing brand as a control variable (covariate) in the analysis, testing the direct effects on brand satisfaction and brand loyalty. All the models showed insignificant results, except for the model of one particular brand (χ^2/df = 4.37, CFI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.065), which showed a negative effect of brand on brand satisfaction ($\beta = -0.11$). Comparing this model's results with the results gained from the original model (see Figure 1), the effect of customer participation on brand satisfaction was still positive, although marginally lower ($\beta = 0.26$),

while the effects of customer participation and brand satisfaction on brand loyalty remained unchanged.

Testing for a mediating effect

The assumed mediating effect of brand satisfaction on the relationship between customer participation and brand loyalty was further examined using a bootstrap resampling method. Bootstrapping is not bound by the assumptions of normal theoretical approaches (e.g., the Sobel test), and thus more accurately characterizes indirect effects (Hayes and Preacher, 2013). An indirect effect is considered to be significant when the bootstrap confidence interval (CI) excludes zero. In the present study, a 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect was obtained using 5000 bootstrap resamples. The results confirmed that brand satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between customer participation and brand loyalty (β = 0.20, 95% CI = 0.15–0.25).

Incorporation of CBE in social media

To test H_2 regarding effects among social-media-using customers, CBE was incorporated as a predictor variable in the analysis. Composite (aggregated average) scores were used for the multidimensional CBE concept, following the ideas of Brakus *et al*. (2009). Total, rather than individual dimensional, effects of these variables were thus examined. The SEM model showed an acceptable fit (χ^2/df = 1.63, CFI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.066; Figure 2).

For customers using social media, CBE positively affected customer participation (β = 0.60), thus giving rise to positive effects of customer participation on brand satisfaction (β = 0.49), substantially higher than the effects among non-social-media-using customers. The effect of brand satisfaction on brand loyalty (β = 0.85) was the same as for the non-social-media-using customers. This model offers support for H_2.

Figure 2 Hypothesis (H₂) test results from the cross-sectional study
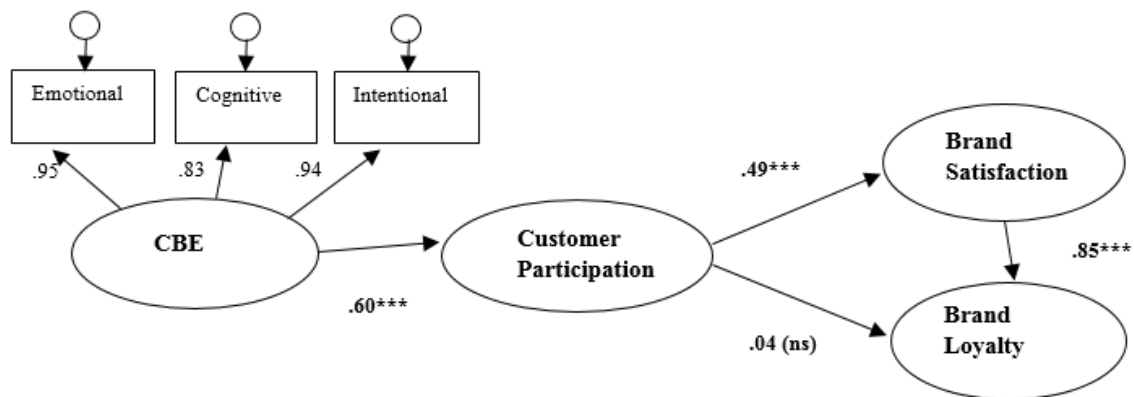
Note: All coefficient values are standardized. The concept of CBE is presented by dimensions.
Significance level: ***p<.001, **p<.01, * p<.05.

N=145
$\chi^2/df = 1.63$
CFI= 0.98
RMSEA= 0.066

STUDY 2: LONGITUDINAL STUDY

The paper also explored H_1 in a longitudinal study (study 2). Here, the paper was interested in whether long-term results supported H_1 as well. Longitudinal analysis makes it possible for one to account for potential common-method variance by studying changes over time (Bijleveld *et al*., 1998; Griffith *et al*., 2006; Rindfleisch *et al.*, 2008; Ployhart and Vandenberg, 2011). In addition, longitudinal analysis displays auto-correlation effects, thereby reducing between-variable effects but strengthening the validity of effect patterns by showing them in a more honest way (Menard, 1991). Based on this, the paper anticipated that the results for H_1 should exhibit the same positive effects as in the cross-sectional study, but that the effects should be weaker with the use of a longitudinal design. The longitudinal study assessed the effect of customer participation subsequent to brand satisfaction, with brand loyalty serving as the outcome (Jap and Anderson, 2004). It also incorporated the historical effects of variables on themselves over time (i.e., auto-correlational effects).

Design and sample

The longitudinal study focused on within-unit change across three waves of data collection from the same insurance customers over an 18-month period [T_0, autumn 2011; T_1, spring 2012 (dataset used in the cross-sectional study); and T_2, spring 2013] (Menard, 1991; Bijleveld *et al.*, 1998). Norstat conducted nationwide online panel surveys among a representative sample of insurance customers aged at least 15 years. As in study 1, respondents completed questionnaires soliciting information about customer participation, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty with reference to the insurance brands with which they had a relationship. The measures used in the longitudinal study were identical to the ones used in the cross-sectional study (Appendix 1).

The optimal frequency of data collection can be difficult to determine (Cole and Maxell, 2003). The intervals between the surveys were consciously planned, together with marketing managers in the insurance companies, to ensure that the intervals were neither too long nor too short to allow for changes to occur (Gollob and Reichardt, 1991). Consideration was made of the time required for customer participation and brand satisfaction to act as predictors of brand loyalty. The intervals between T_0 and T_1 and between T_1 and T_2 were thus not equal, according to Cole and Maxwell's (2003) description of the use of mediational models.

Respondents participating in the first wave of the study were asked by email to complete additional surveys at T_1 and T_2. To account for a dropout rate of up to 75% between T_0 and T_2, a much larger sample than was required for the study was recruited at T_0 (Ployhart and Vandenberg, 2011). The numbers of participants at T_0, T_1 and T_2 were 1389, 964 and 1172, respectively. The study sample comprised 376 respondents who completed surveys at all three time points.

The longitudinal study was based on the procedure described by Cole and Maxwell (2003). The effects of the independent variable (customer participation) at T_0 were considered to predict the mediating variable (brand satisfaction) at T_1. In turn, the mediating variable was thought to predict the dependent variable (brand loyalty) at T_2 (Figure 3). The potentially confounding auto-correlational effects of all variables were controlled for to avoid spuriously inflated estimates of the causal path of interest (Cole and Maxwell, 2003; Orth *et al.*, 2009). For example, Chandler and Lusch (2014) argue that temporal connections refer to current connections stemming from customer participation in the past and giving rise to participation in the future. Figure 3 illustrates how the auto-correlational effects were taken into account through the inclusion of data for the same variable from all time points (e.g., X_0customer participation $\rightarrow$ X_1customer participation $\rightarrow$ X_2customer participation).

Figure 3 An illustrative path diagram of a longitudinal model of mediation
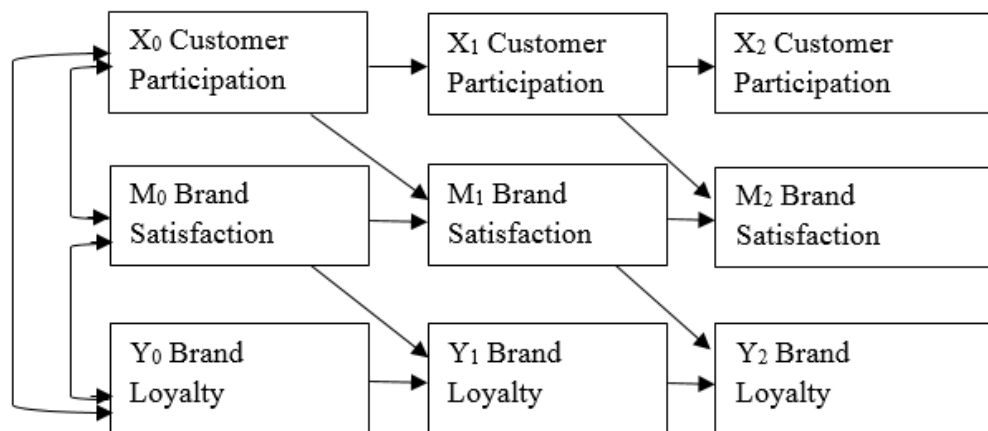
In contrast to cross-sectional research, in which the residuals of constructs are assumed to be uncorrelated and normally distributed, the residuals were allowed to be correlated in this longitudinal analysis (Ployhart and Vandenberg, 2011). Furthermore, the causal structure (the degree to which one set of variables produces change in another set) was assumed to remain unchanged over time (Bijleveld *et al.*, 1998). The use of three waves of identical measurement was selected, according to the recommended minimum number of repeated measures (Chan, 1998 in Ployhart and Vandenberg, 2011), and to ensure validity and avoid variance (Vandenberg, 2002). The observed invariance (equality of standardized factor loadings of like items across time points; Appendix 1) indicated that the items retained the same meaning for participants throughout the study period (Ployhart and Vandenberg, 2011).

Analysis and results

Mplus 7.11 software was used to perform the SEM analysis of between-variable, auto-correlational effects (Muthén and Muthén, 2007) in the longitudinal study. Mplus is a code-based software and is considered appropriate for studying larger models of effects at different time-points (i.e., lagged and cross-lagged) (Ployhart and Vandenberg, 2011). Maximum likelihood estimation was performed.

The model showed a good fit [CFI = 0.94, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.065, Bayesian information criterion (BIC) = 39,295.219]. Customer participation at T_0 had a weakly negative, but non-significant, effect on brand satisfaction at T_1 and T_2 (β = -0.009; Table 3). Further, customer participation had a weakly positive, but non-significant, effect on brand

loyalty at T_2 ($\beta = 0.03$; Table 3). On the other hand, the effect of brand satisfaction at T_0 and T_1 on brand loyalty at T_1 and T_2 was significantly positive ($\beta = 0.17$; Table 3). Further, all the auto-correlational relationships were reported to be significantly positive ($\beta = 0.56$ for customer participation, $\beta = 0.70$ for brand satisfaction and $\beta = 0.50$ for brand loyalty; Table 3).

Table 3 Hypothesis (H_1) test results from the longitudinal study ($N=376$)

Results from SEM analysis in Mplus:		Acceptance level
Model results:		Acceptable fit
CFI	0.94	>0.95
TLI	0.93	>0.95
RMSEA	0.065	<0.080
BIC	39,295.219	As low as possible
Test results:		
Customer Participation on Brand Satisfaction	-0.009 (ns)	
Customer Participation on Brand Loyalty	0.032 (ns)	
Brand Satisfaction on Brand Loyalty	0.17***	
Autocorrelation effects:		
Customer Participation on Customer Participation	0.56***	
Brand satisfaction on Brand Satisfaction	0.70***	
Brand Loyalty on Brand Loyalty	0.50***	

Note: CFI = Comparative Fit Index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index, RMSEA = root-mean-square-error of approximation; BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion. *$p < .10$ (two-sided), **$p < .05$ (two-sided) and ***$p < .01$ (two-sided).

In summary, the results from the longitudinal study show a lack of support for H_1, that customer participation will have a positive effect on brand loyalty in the presence of brand satisfaction. Thus, the longitudinal study of long-term effects of customer participation on brand satisfaction and brand loyalty did not support the short-term results gained from the cross-sectional study.

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Taking a value co-creation perspective, which recognizes the customer as playing an active and participatory part in value creation, this paper contributes to the marketing literature by shedding light on the customer participation effects on brand loyalty (through brand satisfaction) in the short and the long term. The paper also documents the short-term effects of

CBE on customer participation, brand satisfaction and brand loyalty in the context of social media.

The cross-sectional study was conducted so as to report on short-term effects, and documented substantially positive effects of customer participation on brand loyalty, flowing through brand satisfaction as a bridging factor (see Figure 1). Despite being based on only a limited subsample of customers who were using social media, the results further indicated that CBE was an important positive driver of customer participation, and resulted in enhanced positive effects of customer participation on brand satisfaction (see Figure 2). When customers engage emotionally, cognitively and/or intentionally in certain brand activities and content on a brand's Facebook page, they show more interest in participating with the brand. The customer participation effect on brand satisfaction is more substantial among customers that are using social media than among those that are not, which is a promising result for service firms that are strategically using social media as a marketing and service channel.

Although the paper expected the longitudinal study to show weaker effects than the cross-sectional (due to the incorporation of auto-correlational effects), it was not expecting the non-significant customer participation effects that were found. Thus, the findings shed light on the nature of customer participation, in terms of substantial differences between long-term and short-term effects. Given that the longitudinal data were collected over a period of one and a half years, the results of the second study provide a more honest picture of the long-lasting brand satisfaction and brand loyalty effects of customer participation, impossible to achieve with a cross-sectional study. A plausible explanation for the non-significant findings could be that customer participation with brands and brand activities is of a fluctuating nature (such as is the case with CBE), and thus soon forgotten by the co-producing customers once completed. Another explanation could be that the service firms do not plan the foundation for customer participation well enough, consequently providing random and unsystemized handling of feedback over time. If customers find that services do not change for the better based on their input, then their satisfaction and loyalty will probably remain unchanged. Thus, our research results reveal that, even if customer participation produces positive outcomes in the short run, it seems difficult to conclude that long-term brand satisfaction and brand loyalty are positive outcomes. These results contradict previous research findings, produced by cross-sectional studies (Auh *et al.*, 2007; Hosseini, 2013; Flores and Vasquez-Parraga, 2015). Thus, the longitudinal study provides a useful contribution to the existing marketing literature, by shedding light on the missing long-term satisfaction and loyalty effects of customer participation. However, a positive from the longitudinal research came from the auto-

correlational effects, reporting that, when customers participate, they are likely to participate later on, which is a promising result for service firms.

Theoretical implications

Taking a value co-creation perspective, which recognizes the customer as an active and participating partner in value creation, this paper confirms that customer participation is an important driver of brand satisfaction (Ranjan and Read, 2014; Flores and Vasquez-Parraga, 2015) and brand loyalty (Auh *et al*., 2007; Hosseini, 2013) in the short term. Further, the paper shows the important role of CBE as an explanatory factor for customer participation in interactive contexts, such as social media, supporting Brodie *et al.* (2011a), Jahn and Kunz (2012) and Gummerus *et al*. (2012). Moreover, the findings support the disconfirmation-of-expectation theory, which predicts that satisfaction is the primary route to loyalty (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Bloemer and Kasper, 1995; Oliver, 1999), both in the short and the long term. Of most interest is the result indicating the lack of explanatory power of customer participation for brand satisfaction and brand loyalty in the long term, which contradicts previous marketing literature.

Practical implications

For service marketers, the findings of these two studies have important implications with regard to brand-building strategies. Key to brand loyalty is still brand satisfaction, both in the short and the long term. As service firms invite customers into co-creative actions and activities, such as innovation initiatives, service improvements, etc., service marketers can gain positive short-term brand satisfaction and brand loyalty effects from this customer participation. Further, by utilizing social media platforms, such as Facebook brand pages, service firms have the ability to encourage CBE, which in turn will positively affect customer participation, with subsequent positive short-term effects for brand satisfaction as well. Thus, for short-term purposes, our advice is that customer participation should be encouraged through social media, together with CBE, in relation to activities beyond exchange.

Regarding the long-lasting effects of customer participation, service marketers should not have over-high expectations. Rather, they have to realize that, even if customers show a willingness to participate in brand relationships (e.g., expressing their needs, suggesting service improvements, etc.), they will not necessarily become more satisfied and/or loyal over the long term. Certainly, other explanatory factors than customer participation can have more to say in explaining brand satisfaction and brand loyalty from a long-term perspective. Service quality

and/or advertising campaigns can have greater long-term loyalty effects. However, due to the "new" value co-creation perspective, marketers need to take seriously the consequences of letting the customers participate. That is, they need to strategically develop systems, and network platforms (online and offline), that recognize customers' concerns and interests, and that facilitate customers' engagement and participation. Further, based on customer input, they need to systemize changes, so that customers can personally benefit from them. Then, the positive consequences may very well be enhanced brand satisfaction and brand loyalty in the long as well as the short term.

The results of analyzing the data from the insurance service industry are particularly promising for insurance firms wishing to utilize social media for CBE and customer participation purposes. However, on the negative side, for insurance firms already struggling with high annual turnover rates and failing loyalty, these results are not promising regarding any long-term positive loyalty effects of letting customers participate in brand activities. However, as is the case for service firms in general, insurance firms too need to form strategies for the development of platforms and networks that will facilitate customer participation, in the hope that brand loyalty will become a positive long-term effect.

Limitations and future research

As with all research projects, the two studies described here have several limitations. The small subsample of social-media-using customers in study 1 prevents consideration of the findings as definitive evidence of CBE effects. Future studies should examine the effects of CBE using larger customer samples. Future studies would also benefit from studying loyalty effects of customer participation and CBE among different customer segments, such as heavy, medium and light buyers (Nelson Field *et al*., 2012).

Due to certain challenges revealed regarding the convergent validity of the customer participation concept in study 1, future studies should improve the items reflecting customer participation, to ensure optimal construct validity.

Following Brakus *et al*. (2009), the effects of CBE were examined holistically in this research. To gain more detailed and sophisticated knowledge of CBE effects, the dimension effects should be examined and reported separately. Following the existing research tradition, CBE was measured here using positively valenced scales (Brakus *et al*., 2009; Hollebeek *et al*., 2014). In practice, however, customers can become negatively engaged (e.g., in social media) (Ward and Ostrom, 2006; Laroche *et al*., 2012; Hollebeek and Chen, 2014). Thus, future

research should seek to more accurately assess valence (e.g., through the evaluation of positively and negatively worded versions of scales), as recommended by Brakus *et al.* (2009).

This paper chose to operationalize brand loyalty as customers' intended behavior related to the brand and/or the brand's services (i.e., an attitudinal concept). In this paper, brand loyalty was not defined based on customers' repeat purchase patterns. By considering brand loyalty as a behavioral construct, panel data on registered repeat-purchase behavior could have been used to assess repeat-purchase loyalty (e.g., penetration, purchase frequency, market share and repeat buying), and analyzed using Dirichlet models/The negative binominal distribution (NBD) (Ehrenberg, 1988; Sharp and Sharp, 1997; Sharp *et al.*, 2012). Future studies could benefit from a combined conceptualization of brand loyalty, viewing it as a hybrid attitudinal/behavioral construct, thus supporting the analysis of attitudinal loyalty, by also reporting repeat-purchase loyalty.

In assessments of relationship variables, including the present longitudinal study, optimal time points for data collection are difficult to determine. For example, it could be argued that an 18-month period is too short in insurance if you have an interest in loyalty analysis. However, with 17% of customers switching insurance providers annually, much can happen in one or two years' time in this industry. Regardless, longitudinal data collection is probably more valuable in situations involving daily observation and data recording, rather than the administration of self-reported questionnaires at one-year intervals. These limitations make it difficult to favor the longitudinal study results over the results of the cross-sectional study. Thus, this paper views the longitudinal study results on long-term effects as a sufficient supplement to the cross-sectional study results reporting short-term effects.

Appendix 1 Concepts and Measures

Concepts	Dimensions and Measures	Item Loading T_0	Item Loading T_1	Item Loading T_2
Customer Participation	I often express my personal needs to [brand]	.84	.85	.85
	I often suggest how [brand] can improve their services	.90	.92	.92
	I participate in decisions about how [brand] offer its services	.90	.91	.90
	I often find solutions of my problems together with [brand]	.83	.81	.85
CBE	*Emotional engagement*			
	I am enthusiastic in relation to [brand] at [brand]'s Facebook page		.93	
	I feel energetic in contact with [brand] at its Facebook page		.94	
	I feel positive about [brand] at its Facebook page		.86	
	Cognitive engagement			
	At [brand]'s Facebook page, my mind is very focused on [brand]		.78	
	At [brand]'s Facebook page, I focus a great deal of attention to [brand]		.80	
	At [brand]'s Facebook page, I become absorbed by [brand]		.91	
	Intentional engagement			
	I exert my full effort in supporting [brand] at its Facebook page		.78	
	I am very active in relation to [brand] at its Facebook page		.92	
	I try my hardest to perform well on behalf of [brand] at its Facebook page		.92	
Brand Satisfaction	Overall, I am satisfied with [brand]	.91	.90	.92
	Being a customer of [brand] has been a good choice for me	.92	.91	.91
	[brand] has lived up to my expectations	.91	.92	.94
	[brand] is concerned with what solutions that is the best for me	.87	.80	.79
	[brand] offers me good solutions	.93	.91	.92
Brand Loyalty	I intend to stay loyal to [brand] in the future	.90	.89	.89
	I intend to stay on as a customer of [brand] for the next three years	.87	.84	.88
	I intend to recommend [brand] to other people	.87	.84	.82
	If I had to choose again I would still choose [brand]	.92	.89	.89

Note: Item wording and standardized coefficients from the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Loadings are based on the customer sample in the longitudinal study (N=376) for customer participation, brand satisfaction and brand loyalty.
For CBE, the factor loadings are based on the cross-sectional study conducted at T_1 (N=145).

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Article 4

Solem, B. A. A. & Pedersen, P. E.

The effects of regulatory fit on customer brand engagement:

An experimental study of service brand activities in social media

ABSTRACT

When service brands use activities in social media to establish strong customer-brand relationships, they need to understand what kinds of social media activities that stimulate different types of customer brand engagement (CBE) and brand preference. This experimental study of a Nordic insurance firm's brand activities on Facebook (N=429) suggests that regulatory fit is one of the main drivers of CBE and brand preference. Regulatory fit theory assumes that promotion orientation (i.e., a promotion-focused brand activity) fits with eager customer strategies, while prevention orientation (i.e., a prevention-focused brand activity) fits with vigilant customer strategies. The study identifies both regulatory fit and regulatory non-fit effects on psychologically anchored CBE and CBE behaviour, and thus challenges regulatory engagement theory and regulatory fit theory. The findings imply that service firms can benefit from the use of both promotion- and prevention-oriented activities in social media, having positive emotional, cognitive, intentional, and behavioural engagement effects on eager and/or vigilant customers.

Keywords – Customer brand engagement; brand value experience; regulatory focus theory; regulatory fit theory; regulatory engagement theory; field experiment

Paper type – Research paper

Introduction

As research on branding extended to considerations of services, attention shifted to the evaluation processes customers use in appraising services versus products (Zeithaml, 1981). Strategically building service brands is considered more difficult than building product brands because of the co-production and performance variability inherent in the service delivery process (Berry & Parasuraman, 2004; Cummins & Weiss, 1998). Product brands, which as a rule are tangible, rely on their physical attributes to aid the customer in engaging with the brand. In contrast, for brands that are mostly intangible, as in services such as telecom, banking, and insurance (Crosby & Stephens, 1987), the firm itself and all it stands for is the link to building the brand and customer engagement (Kaltcheva, Patino, Laric, & Imparato, 2014). Further, a challenge for many service brands is that they offer services that, because of the service complexity, uncertainty and perceived risk related to the service outcomes, require high involvement from customers (Eisingerich & Bell, 2007; Percy & Elliot, 2012). However, the same services can also be coupled with customers' negative motives, where the goal is to solve or avoid a problem (e.g., insurance services) (Percy & Elliot, 2012). Given these characteristics of certain services, those brands providing them need to know which communication strategies to choose when planning brand activities. According to Camarero (2007), specific guidelines for brand communication needs to be developed for specific *types* of services (e.g., particularly challenging services).

Given these challenges for many service firms (i.e., intangible, high involvement, negatively motivated), successful attempts at building brands are based on customers' interactions with the service firm beyond exchange (Bowden, 2009). Arguably, knowing the underlying engagement processes involved in cultivating relationships with customers can aid service marketers in their attempts to build trustworthy and strong service brands (Kaltcheva et al., 2014).

We recognize that social media channels are especially relevant for those purposes, because they are interactive two-way communication platforms appropriate for the encouragement of CBE on other premises than exchange. Social media provide the opportunity to become more customer-centric, and to encourage engagement in certain brand activities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Hoffman & Novak, 2011; Schamari & Schaefers, 2015). Social media provide the possibility of visualizing customer situations that might happen, in both content and pictures. Thus, the service brand can succeed in materializing the offerings mentally, before the services are to be used or 'realized' (Laroche, Habibi, Richard, &

Sankaranarayanan, 2012), providing it with the possibility of reducing customer-perceived uncertainty and risk.

As marketing theory evolved to embrace service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008), the importance of customer-to-service-firm interaction became more recognized, and the customer was highlighted as a co-creator of value (Kaltcheva et al., 2014). Recently, considerable attention has been directed towards customer engagement (CE) and customer brand engagement (CBE) (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2011a; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). Several researchers have found that CBE, stimulated by firms using social media as a brand communication channel, is timely and important (Brodie et al., 2011a; Fournier & Avery, 2011; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, Pihlström, 2012; Dessart, Morgan-Thomas, & Veloutsou, 2014). However, we argue that there has been limited focus dedicated to explaining *drivers* of CBE in social media. In this study, we address service brand activities (promotion-oriented versus prevention-oriented) targeted towards diverse customer groups (applying eager versus vigilant strategies) as drivers of CBE and brand preferences in a social media context.

The study builds on regulatory fit theory (Higgins, 2005; Higgins, Cesario, Hagiwara, Spiegel, & Pittman, 2010) and regulatory engagement theory (Higgins, 2006, Higgins & Scholer, 2009), and proposes that regulatory fit explains *different relational processes* for emotional, cognitive, intentional and behavioural CBE. In a situation with regulatory fit, promotion orientation fits with customers applying an eager strategy, while prevention orientation fits with customers applying a vigilant strategy. Regulatory engagement theory assumes that, in regulatory fit situations, customers engage more strongly than in non-fit situations (Higgins, 2006; Higgins & Scholer, 2009). In line with this theory, we consider CBE as incorporating a psychological part. However, extending regulatory engagement theory, we consider CBE to be multidimensional (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014), thus comprising emotional and intentional engagement in accordance with the solely cognitive strength component suggested by regulatory engagement theory, *and* a behavioural part comprising what Van Doorn et al. (2010) calls engagement behaviour.

When marketing practitioners measure CBE in social media, they seem to emphasize brand-related behaviour by focusing mainly on customer (or follower) acts of 'liking', commenting, and sharing as a manifestation of engagement (Wong, 2009; Swedowsky, 2009). However, arguing for multiple CBE dimensions, the purpose of this study is to provide more thorough insights into diverse engagement process results and brand preference for service brands offering highly intangible, high-involvement and negatively motivated services, offering

suggestions regarding whether to use promotion- versus prevention-oriented activities for customers applying eager and vigilant strategies, respectively.

The next section defines the main concepts and hypotheses. Subsequently, we present an online field experiment on CBE with brand activities from a real-life Nordic insurance brand that offers particularly intangible, high-involvement and negatively motivated services. By relating the study to a service brand offering services with these characteristics, we use the principles of Popper (1963) to test regulatory fit and regulatory engagement theories under the most critical conditions possible.

Theoretical framework

Customer brand engagement

While the concept of engagement has received considerable attention across a number of academic disciplines (e.g., educational psychology and organizational behaviour), it has appeared in the marketing literature only relatively recently (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). The marketing literature argues that engagement can entail specific engagement subjects as well as engagement objects (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2010). Key engagement subjects cited in the marketing literature include users, customers and consumers (Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). In line with Hollebeek et al. (2014), we argue that the concepts of consumer engagement, CE, and CBE may reflect a highly similar conceptual scope, despite employing differing concept names or designations. Specific engagement objects cited in the marketing literature have included products, firms, firm activities, media channels, etc. (Patterson, Ting, & De Ruyter, 2006; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Hollebeek et al., 2014). In this study, we consider *customers* as the engagement subjects of investigation and *brand activities* as the engagement objects of investigation, and thus so-called customer brand engagement (CBE).

At the outset, CE/CBE were studied through a focus on different underlying (and often single) components (Kaltcheva et al., 2014). Some papers focused on the cognitive aspects, as represented by Higgins (2006) and Higgins and Scholer (2009) who considered engagement as 'strength of engagement'. These authors claim that the state of being engaged is to be involved, occupied, and interested in something. Heath (2009) focused on the emotional aspects, in his study of engagement related to advertisements. Others focused attention on the physical aspects of engagement (e.g. Van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef, Reinartz, & Krafft, 2010; Kumar et al., 2010; Gummerus et al., 2012; Wallace, Buil, & de Chernatony, 2014). For example, Van Doorn et al. (2010, p. 254), posited that customer engagement behaviours went beyond transactions,

and might be specifically defined as 'a customer's behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers'. Challenging the existing research perspectives, and inspired by the organizational behaviour research field (Schaufeli, & Bakker, 2003; Kahn, 1990), another research tradition has considered CE/CBE as a multidimensional psychological state (Patterson et al., 2006; Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Mollen, & Wilson, 2010; Vivek, Sharon, & Morgan, 2011; Brodie et al., 2011a, 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). For example, Hollebeek (2011a, p. 555) defines CBE as 'the levels of a customer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural investment in specific brand interactions'. Brodie et al. (2011b) developed a comprehensive view on the engagement concept in service relationships, thus providing an important foundation for engagement research. They claim CE to be a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g. a brand) in service relationships. Further, they highlight that CE occurs under a specific set of context-dependent conditions, generating differing CE levels, and that it exists as a dynamic, iterative process within service relationships that-co-create value. They also argue that CE is a multidimensional concept subject to a context-specific expression of relevant emotional, cognitive and/or behavioural dimensions. In this study, we lean towards the view of Brodie et al. (2011b) by considering CBE as context-dependent (e.g., represented by social media), reflecting a process in which the intensity of engagement may develop and fluctuate over time, giving rise to two-way co-creating interactions between relevant engagement subjects (i.e., customers) and objects (i.e., brand activities), giving rise to the emergence of specific engagement levels at a particular point in time. Following Brodie et al. (2011a, 2011b) and Hollebeek (2011a, 2011b), we agree that CBE is a psychological state comprising multiple dimensions (i.e., emotional, cognitive and intentional). However, supporting the view of Van Doorn et al. (2010) and Gummerus et al. (2012), we argue that CBE should also comprise engagement behaviour beyond exchange (e.g., 'likes', comments). As an overall concept, CBE should encompass both a state and a behavioural part, each consisting of separate engagement processes, inspired by Reitz (2012), that developed her scale of online consumer engagement seeking to align the state and behavioural perspectives. Thus, in this paper, we define CBE as '*a customer's psychological state of emotional, cognitive and intentional investments, and the invested engagement behaviour in brand activities*'.

Inspired by Hollebeek et al. (2014), this study considers emotional CBE as the customer's degree of positive brand-activity-related affect, and cognitive CBE as the customer's level of brand-activity-related thought processing and elaboration. Intentional CBE refers to a

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customer's interest in spending energy, effort and time on a brand activity. Finally, and inspired by Van Doorn et al. (2010) and Wallace et al. (2014), behavioural CBE refers to a customer's behavioural and physical activity (i.e., likes, comments) dedicated to a certain brand activity.

While researchers often study engagement with positive valence, a disappointed customer's negative word-of-mouth behaviour can represent negative valence (e.g., in social media) (Van Doorn, 2011). Still, few authors have discussed the valence of engagement explicitly (Hollebeek, 2011a; Vivek, 2009; Calder, Malthouse, & Schaedel, 2009). In this paper, we consider valence, and thus clarify the direction of engagement, that is, whether it emerges as positively or negatively loaded.

Brand value experience

In regulatory engagement theory, Higgins and Scholer (2009) argue that the value experience is the strength of attraction to or repulsion from a goal object (e.g., a brand). Experiencing something as having positive value corresponds to experiencing a force of attraction to it, and experiencing something as having negative value corresponds to experiencing a force of repulsion from it. Thus, value experience is considered an attitudinal concept, explained by basic distinctions such as good or bad and between liking or disliking something (Eagly, & Chaiken, 1993). Extending the concept of value experience to 'brand value experience', we argue that the latter comprises customers' attraction to or repulsion from a brand, in comparison to other competing brands (in the same brand category). According to Woodruff (1997) and Srivastava, Shervani, and Fahey (1999), the customer's value experience is the key source of competitive advantage. Inspired by Lassar, Mittal, and Sharma (1995) and Srivastava and Shocker (1991), we argue that the term 'brand value experience' can be perceived as an element of customer-perceived brand equity. Challenging the traditional view of brand equity, Jones (2005) argues that a growing awareness of the need to consider customers' overall experience with the brand was a key element. According to Keller (1993), a useful way to consider brand value experience is from the perspective of the customer, based on the customer's knowledge, familiarity, and associations with respect to the particular brand. In this study, we conceptualize brand value experience as a brand equity component or element, reflecting the customer's consideration of a brand as *preferable* to other competing brands. Higgins and Scholer (2009) argue that value experience is a consequence of the strength of engagement. Considering brand activities as the object of investigation, we claim that brand value experience can be a positive, direct effect of brand activities combined with customer strategies. Thus, we anticipate direct positive effects from regulatory fit on brand value experience.

Regulatory fit

Most of the research to date has used regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) as a vehicle for testing regulatory fit predictions (Motyka et al., 2014). This theory of motivation and self-regulation has rapidly gained prominence in consumer research as a means to explain consumer decision making (Pham & Higgins, 2005). Its major tenet is that it proposes a fundamental distinction between two motivational orientations, called *promotion* and *prevention* (Florack, Keller, & Palcu, 2013). Additionally, the theory considers a promotion-oriented person to be approach-focused, while a prevention-oriented person is avoidance-focused (Higgins, 1997)[1]. While promotion orientation is related to the pursuit of advancement and accomplishment, prevention orientation is more likely related to the pursuit of security and protection (Idson, Liberman, and Higgins, 2004; Pham & Higgins, 2005). A promotion or prevention orientation can be a chronic predisposition of an individual, or it can be momentarily induced by a situation (Camacho, Higgins & Luger, 2003). Thus, although people may show chronic habituation towards one orientation or the other, their orientation can shift between situations, tasks and contexts (Luo, Reinaker, Phang, & Fang, 2014).

Regulatory fit is described by Higgins (2005) as the match between an individual's motivational orientation (promotion versus prevention) and the *strategy* used to sustain it (Motyka et al., 2014). Regulatory fit theory proposes that a person's current orientation is sustained under conditions of regulatory fit and is disrupted under conditions of non-fit. It also postulates that promotion orientation is characterized by greater eagerness, while prevention orientation is characterized by greater vigilance. The difference between these two strategies lies in their focus on how to attain a desired end-state or how to avoid undesired end-states, respectively. For example, regulatory fit theory suggests that a match between orientation towards a goal and the means used to approach that goal (eager versus vigilant strategies) produces a state of regulatory fit that increases task motivation (Higgins, 2000, 2005). Regulatory fit, which Aaker and Lee (2006) refer to as the persuasive benefit derived from a message when it logically fits with the goal orientation of the customer, is argued to determine advertisement message effectiveness. In this study, we expect that diverse CBE processes related to a service brand activity in social media would be greater under conditions of fit than under conditions of non-fit.

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[1] Note that the person's orientation may be determined by the task or situation, as motivational orientation is not to be considered a traditional trait, even though some individuals are more likely to be motivated by a particular motivational orientation.

Hypotheses

To develop our hypotheses, we draw from regulatory engagement theory (Higgins, 2006; Higgins & Scholer, 2009). This theory posits that regulatory fit (among other factors) drives cognitive engagement *strength* in a psychological engagement process. As a basis for our study, we assume that, when people experience regulatory fit, they will engage emotionally, cognitively, intentionally, and behaviourally. This argument is in line with Hollebeek et al.'s (2014) and Dessart et al.'s (2014) multidimensional view on CBE, and also with Motyka et al.'s (2014) meta-analysis that argues for differential effects of regulatory fit on evaluation, behavioural intention, and behaviour. For the achievement of regulatory fit effects, promotion orientation has to fit with eager strategy *and* prevention orientation has to fit with vigilant strategy.

In line with the ideas of Pham and Avnet (2009), we argue that the strength of engagement proposed by regulatory engagement theory may not operate through a solely cognitive process. Following Shah and Higgins (2001), one argument is that regulatory fit strength influences emotional engagement, reflected as customers' positive feelings related to a certain brand activity. First, we assume that, when customers apply an eager strategy in social media, they will become emotionally engaged in a service brand activity that applies a promotion orientation (i.e., leading them into a promotion-oriented mode). Conversely, our argument is that, when customers apply a vigilant goal strategy in social media, acting in a more passive and reticent way, they will become emotionally engaged by a brand activity that applies a prevention orientation (i.e., leading them into a prevention-oriented mode). Based on these arguments, we address the following hypothesis of a positive regulatory fit effect on the emotional CBE dimension:

H1: For customers applying an eager strategy, a promotion orientation has a positive influence on the strength of emotional CBE (H_{1a}). For customers applying a vigilant strategy, a prevention orientation has a positive influence on the strength of emotional CBE (H_{1b}).

Second, and in line with the main arguments of regulatory engagement theory (Higgins, 2006; Higgins & Scholer, 2009), we argue that, when customers apply eager strategies in social media, they will become cognitively engaged by a service brand activity that applies a promotion-oriented message (content). The cognitive CBE state is reflected in the customer's interest in

the service brand activity. Furthermore, we argue that, when customers apply vigilant strategies in social media, they will be more cognitively engaged by a service brand activity that applies a prevention-oriented message (content), following the main thoughts of regulatory engagement theory (Higgins, 2006; Higgins & Scholer, 2009). We argue for the following hypothesis of positive regulatory fit effects on the cognitive CBE dimension:

H2:   For customers applying an <u>eager</u> strategy, a <u>promotion</u> orientation has a positive influence on the strength of cognitive CBE (H_{2a}). For customers applying a <u>vigilant</u> strategy, a <u>prevention</u> orientation has a positive influence on the strength of cognitive CBE (H_{2b}).

Third, as we consider intentional behaviour as an important dimension of CBE (Solem & Pedersen, forthcoming), and a prerequisite for engagement behaviour to occur, we argue that, when customers apply eager strategies in social media, they will be more intentionally engaged by a service brand activity that applies a promotion-oriented message. We also argue that, when customers apply vigilant strategies in social media, they will become intentionally engaged by a service brand activity that applies a prevention orientation. We propose the following hypothesis of positive regulatory fit effects on the intentional CBE dimension:

H3:   For customers applying an <u>eager</u> strategy, a <u>promotion</u> orientation has a positive influence on the strength of intentional CBE (H_{3a}). For customers applying a vigilant strategy, a prevention orientation has a positive influence on the strength of intentional CBE (H_{3b}).

Fourth, we argue that CBE also comprises a behavioural part, supporting the view of Van Doorn et al. (2010) that CE reflects engagement behaviour beyond exchange. Van Doorn et al. (2010) exemplifies this by word of mouth and customer blogs. In this study, and in line with the study of Wallace et al. (2014), 'likes' and comments on Facebook reflect customers' behavioural CBE. We propose the following hypothesis of positive regulatory fit effects on the behavioural CBE dimension:

H4:   For customers applying an <u>eager</u> strategy, a <u>promotion</u> orientation has a positive influence on behavioural CBE (H$_{4a}$). For customers applying a <u>vigilant</u> strategy, a <u>prevention</u> orientation has a positive influence on behavioural CBE (H$_{4b}$).

Our argument is that regulatory fit also increases the intensity of a customer's brand value experience of an object, whether that value experience is attraction or repulsion (Higgins, 2006; Higgins & Scholer, 2009). We argue that certain ways of attaining a decision influence the value of that decision and of the object (i.e., the brand). Hence, we assume that regulatory fit intensifies the reaction to the brand activity and the brand, and accordingly the brand value experience. This reasoning is in line with the assumptions in two experiments conducted by Florack and Scarabis (2006) on the impact of regulatory focus on brand choice and category-brand associations. In the situation of regulatory fit, our argument is that customers will not consider changing to a new provider, even if they are offering the same product/services. We propose the following hypothesis of positive regulatory fit effects on brand value experience:

H5:   For customers applying an <u>eager</u> strategy, a <u>promotion</u> orientation has a positive influence on brand value experience (H$_{5a}$). For customers applying a <u>vigilant</u> strategy, a <u>prevention</u> orientation has a positive influence on brand value experience (H$_{5b}$).

Method

We used an experimental online field study to examine the effect of regulatory fit on CBE dimensions and on brand value experience, and how service brand activities should be designed for maximum impact.

Design and participants

Our field experiment was a two motivational orientations (promotion versus prevention) x two customer strategies (eager versus vigilant) between-subject design, with CBE (i.e., emotions, cognitions, intentions and behaviour) and brand value experience as the dependent variables. There were four groups, thus, with four treatment conditions (promotion-eager, promotion-vigilant, prevention-eager, and prevention-vigilant).

We tested the hypotheses (H$_{1a,b}$-H$_{5a,b}$) by introducing them in an interactive social media context (i.e., Facebook), which is a highly relevant frame for CBE to occur within. In line with Motyka et al., (2014), we argue that, since online research opportunities are becoming more

accessible, regulatory fit studies can be performed successfully online just as well as in classrooms or labs. We conducted the randomized field experiment in close cooperation with a Nordic insurance company (as a representative of a service firm offering tangible, high-involvement and negatively motivated services). The sample consisted of customers/followers of the insurance company on Facebook. The experiment took place in a concentrated period – 10-13 February 2015.

Procedure

Inspired by experiments conducted by Lee and Aaker (2004) and Cesario, Grant, and Higgins (2004), motivational orientation was the manipulated variable. The manipulation of motivational orientation consisted of two sponsored Facebook activities/posts with content reflecting either promotion or prevention orientation/foci (assumed to lead the responders into a promotion or a prevention mode). The promotion-focused post was *approach-oriented*, highlighting the possibility of a customer receiving a cinema ticket as a reward for responding on the topic of the ongoing extreme weather, supported by a picture of cinema chairs so as to put the strategic focus on the reward (see Appendix 1). The prevention-focused post was *avoidance-oriented*, giving advice about injury prevention related to fires caused by electrical household equipment, supported by a picture of a burning house (see Appendix 2). Appendices 1 and 2 show the manipulation posts including pictures and text (Facebook screenshots), followed by translations of the original Norwegian text into English. Prior to the study, we pretested the brand activity posts (manipulations) among 16 third-year college students (8 men, 8 women; aged 19-35 years). The students were asked to consider whether they perceived the posts as promotion-oriented or prevention-oriented. Then, they filled out a questionnaire comprising questions about the remaining variables (i.e., CBE, brand value experience, and other demographic data). We applied the students' constructive feedback to improve the content and messages of the manipulation posts, and to refine the final questionnaire.

Both activity posts were published simultaneously on 10 February, and provoked a huge number of behavioural responses (i.e., reflecting behavioural engagement). Promotion-oriented activity post reached 21,968 people, and received a total of 288 'likes', comments and/or shares. Prevention-oriented activity post reached 30,032 people, and received a total of 551 'likes', comments and/or shares (see Table 1).

Table 1 Overall behavioural CBE related to the two activity posts

	Promotion oriented activity post	Behavioural response in % of post clicks	Prevention oriented activity post	Behavioural response in % of post clicks
Post clicks	497		946	
Likes	188	37.8	377	39.9
Comments	90	18.1	88	9.3
Shares	10	2.0	86	9.1

Note: Results stemming from the Nordic Insurance Company statistics. The results give a picture of the responses related to the two different activity posts. The results are not broken down to an individual level of data.

As we can see from the table, the prevention-oriented activity post generated far more post clicks than the promotion-oriented activity post. The 'liking' response as a percentage of post clicks was almost the same. The comments as a percentage of post clicks was higher for the promotion-oriented than for the prevention-oriented post. Lastly, the willingness to share was higher for the prevention-oriented post than for the promotion-oriented post. Even though it was not possible to break these overall results down to an individual subject level or to group them into eager versus vigilant customer strategies, these results were promising, considering our interest in gaining enough responses to perform a significant analysis at the individual level, later on.

In the morning of the following day, 11 February, we published two more posts asking whether the customers/followers had seen the posts the day before, and whether they would click on a link to fill out a questionnaire (facilitated by Norstat, the largest panel data provider in Norway). To compensate respondents for their contribution, the insurance company made one hundred cinema vouchers available to randomly drawn participants.

A sample of 516 customers/followers completed the questionnaire. After the exclusion of 87 unserious 'outliers' (i.e., non-variance in response, elapsed time <2 minutes, did not recognize the post), the final sample comprised 429 respondents, of which 206 responded to the promotion-oriented activity post and 223 on the prevention-oriented activity post. Gender was not evenly distributed in the sample (65.5% of respondents were female). Regarding age, 74.2% of the respondents were in the age group ranging from 25-54 years old. Most of the responders (81%) viewed the post on their newsfeed, and 17% viewed it when visiting the insurance company's Facebook brand page. Regarding valence of engagement, both posts were reported to engage the participants in a positive direction, reported on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (in a negative direction) to 5 (in a positive direction).

Measures

We asked the respondents to answer the following two questions to check the manipulation related to each of the two posts: 'To what extent do you perceive that this Facebook activity post is about "something to approach"/"something to avoid",' on a five-point Likert scale. We measured customer strategy using a five-point Likert scale with three items representing an eager customer strategy ('I was eager to respond to the brand post', 'I was eager to comment on the brand post immediately', 'I was eager to share the brand post with my friends/followers'; $\alpha = .77$), and two items representing a vigilant strategy ('I read the brand post and gave it some thought', 'I read the brand post and registered, in detail, how others commented on it'; $\alpha = .78$), all of which were inspired by Higgins (2000) and Freitas and Higgins (2002). Psychological CBE was measured by items reflecting the three dimensions: emotions ('This brand post evoked my feelings'), cognitions ('This brand post evoked my interest'), and behavioural intention ('I really would like to comment on this post', 'I really would like to share this post with others', 'This post was so special that I would share it with others'), on a seven-point Likert scale (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Solem, & Pedersen, forthcoming). Behavioural CBE was measured by registration of 'likes' (yes/no) and comments (yes/no). Inspired by Higgins (2006), we measured brand value experience using a seven-point Likert scale regarding the customer's comparison of the brand to another competing brand delivering the same products/services ('Even if another insurance company offers the same, I will not consider changing to a new provider') (Yoo & Donthu, 1997).

Manipulation check

The manipulation check of motivational orientation was successful, showing significant differences between the manipulation of promotion and prevention orientation ($F(1,429)=72.02, p < .001$). Participants who responded to the promotion-oriented post (N=206) reported that they understood the post as 'something to approach' ($M_{approach}= 1.587$). Participants who responded to the prevention-oriented post (N=223) understood the post as 'something to avoid' ($M_{avoid}= -.188$). This confirms that the participants perceived the manipulation variable in the way we intended.

Exploratory factor analysis and hypothesis test results

Construct clarifications were examined using the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in IBM SPSS Statistics 21, with principal component analysis and varimax rotation (Netemeyer, Bearden, & Sharma, 2003). The analyses resulted in 146 participants reporting a high level of eager strategy (use), and 283 participants reporting a high level of vigilant strategy (use), with items loading on two distinct factors. The EFA also reported psychological CBE to be a tripartite concept (i.e., items loading on three factors), thus supporting the idea of psychological engagement as a three-dimensional construct reflecting emotional (mean=4.13), cognitive (mean=4.76) and intentional CBE (mean=3.01). The behavioural CBE was captured by registrations of 'likes' and comments at the insurance firm's Facebook brand page (in compliance with confidentiality). The mean value for brand value experience was 5.82.

We tested the hypotheses by applying univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) in IBM SPSS Statistics 21. We investigated regulatory fit using interaction effects between motivational orientation (promotion/prevention) and customer strategy (eager/vigilant, based on median split differences). Table 2 provides an overview of the mean-difference values and standard deviations (SD) for all six models tested (see Table 2).

Table 2 Mean difference effects of motivational orientation in the two groups of customers applying different strategies

	Promotion orientation				Prevention orientation			
	Eager		Vigilant		Eager		Vigilant	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Emotional CBE	.46	1.01	.21	.87	.14	.86	-.47	.98
Cognitive CBE	.00	.95	-.11	.97	-.13	.89	.16	1.08
Intentional CBE	-.04	1.08	-.20	.95	.50	1.11	-.05	.91
Behavioural CBE likes	.08	.27	.03	.17	.10	.30	.05	.21
Behavioural CBE comments	.15	.36	.02	.15	.11	.32	.05	.21
Brand value experience	4.92	2.02	5.37	2.00	5.67	1.88	5.32	1.90

First, we tested the effect of regulatory fit on emotional CBE. The interaction effect of motivational orientation and customer strategy on emotional CBE was not significant ($F(1,429) = 3.53$, ns). While we found a positive effect of promotion orientation on emotional CBE among customers applying an eager strategy ($M_{promotion/eager} = .46$), supporting H_{1a}, we could not find a corresponding positive effect of prevention orientation on emotional CBE among customers applying a vigilant strategy ($M_{prevention/vigilance} = -.47$). Thus, H_{1b} was not supported. For

regulatory fit theory to hold, both effects should have been significantly positive. Therefore, these emotional CBE model findings do not support regulatory fit theory (Higgins, 2005) or regulatory engagement theory (Higgins 2006; Higgins & Scholer, 2009). Despite this, it should be noted that a promotion-oriented activity post affects emotional CBE positively, among customers applying eager and among those applying vigilant strategies (Figure 1). This suggests that, for emotional CBE, one of the main effects of a promotion orientation has not been discussed in previous regulatory fit literature.

FIGURE 1

Effect of Regulatory Fit on Emotional Customer Brand Engagement
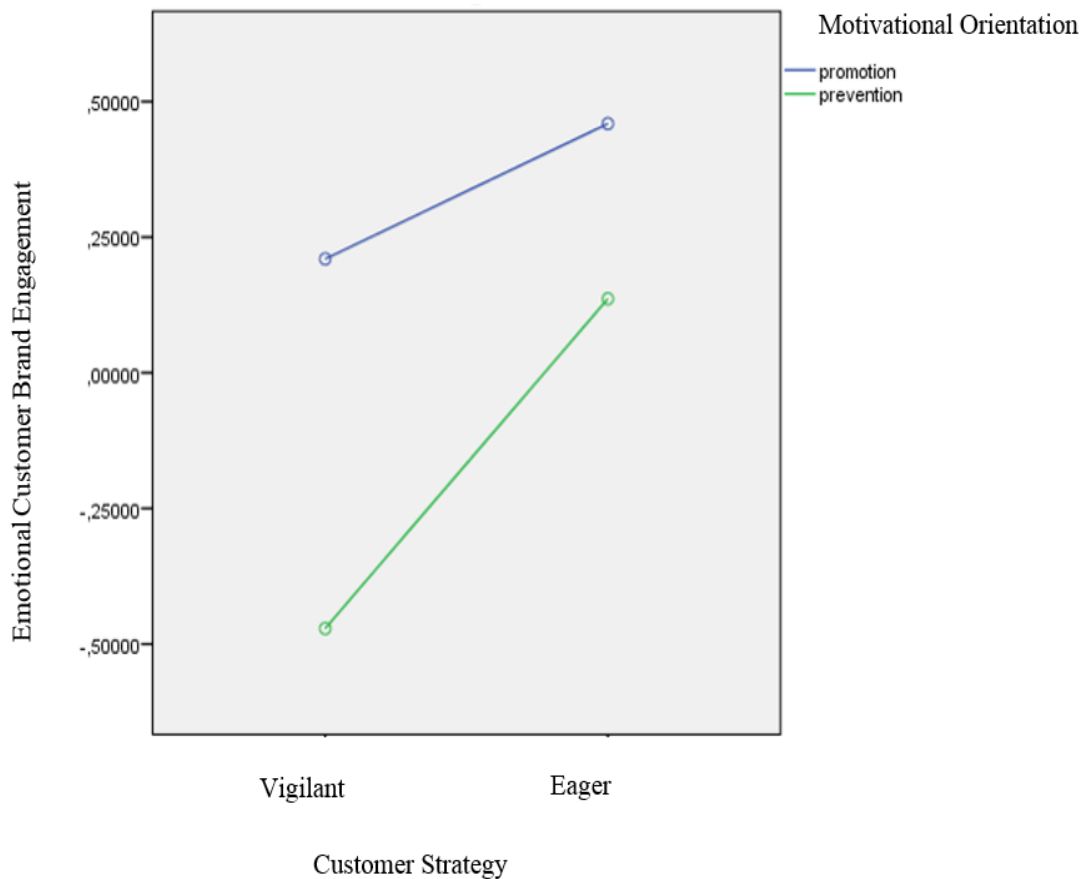
Second, we tested the effect of regulatory fit on cognitive CBE. The interaction effect of motivational orientation and customer strategy on cognitive CBE was significant ($F(1, 429) = 3.84$, $p < .05$). We could not find a corresponding positive effect of promotion orientation on cognitive CBE among customers applying an eager strategy ($M_{promotion/eager} = .00$); thus H$_{2a}$ was not supported. However, we found a positive effect of prevention orientation on cognitive CBE in the customer group applying a vigilant strategy ($M_{prevention/vigilance} = .16$), supporting H$_{2b}$. This model shows results that support both the regulatory fit theory (Higgins, 2005) and the regulatory engagement theory (Higgins 2006; Higgins & Scholer, 2009), because promotion orientation fits with an eager strategy and prevention orientation with a vigilant one, affecting the strength of cognitive engagement, as illustrated in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

Effect of Regulatory Fit on Cognitive Customer Brand Engagement
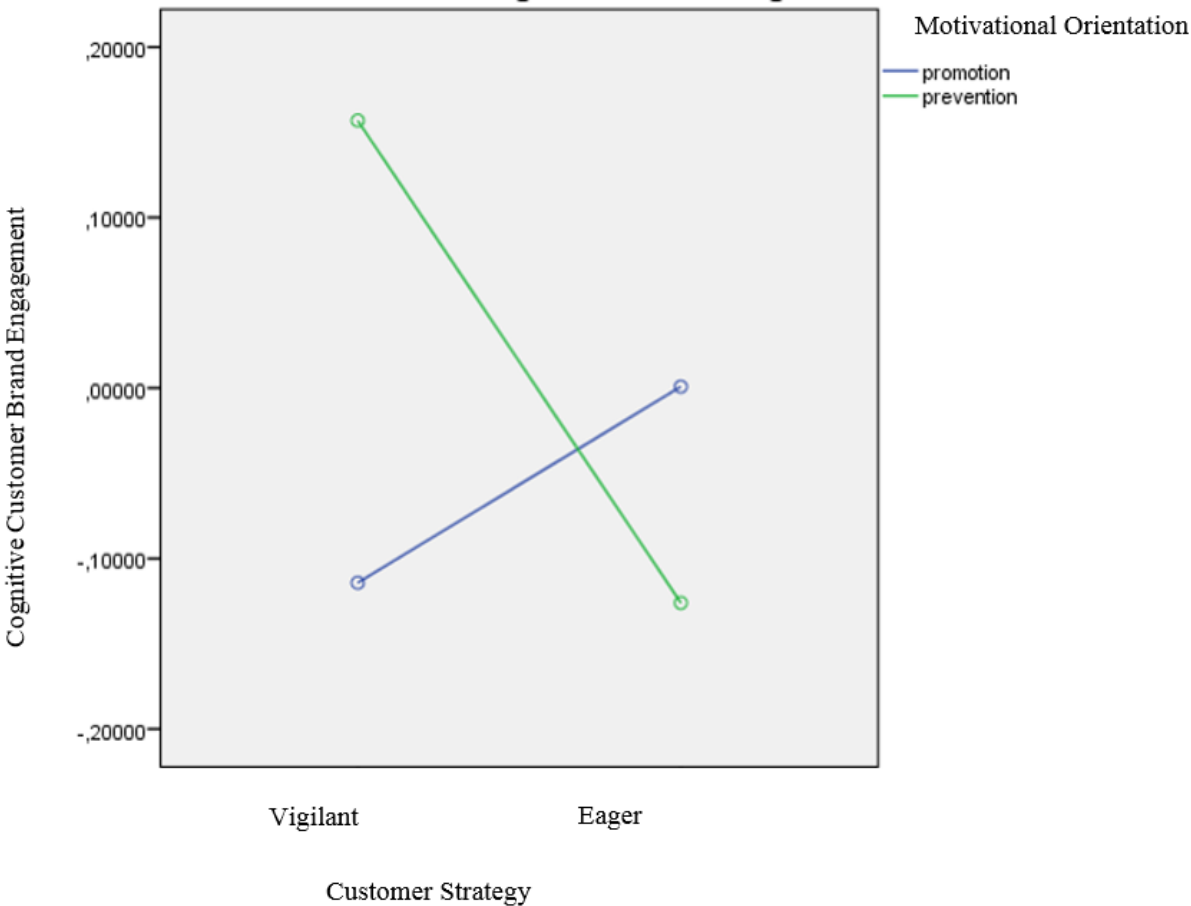
Third, we tested the effect of regulatory fit on intentional CBE. Although the interaction effect of motivational orientation and customer strategy on intentional CBE was significant ($F_{(1, 429)}$ = 3.84, $p < .05$), we could not find a corresponding positive effect of promotion orientation on intentional CBE among customers applying an eager strategy ($M_{promotion/eager}$ = -.40). Thus, H_{3a} was not supported. Furthermore, we could not find a corresponding positive effect of prevention orientation on intentional CBE among customers applying a vigilant strategy either ($M_{prevention/vigilance}$ = -.05). Thus, H_{3b} was not supported. Despite these results, it should be noted that a prevention-oriented activity post affects intentional CBE positively, in the group of customers that apply eager strategies, challenging regulatory fit theory (Higgins, 2005) (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3

Effect of Regulatory Fit on Intentional Customer Brand Engagement
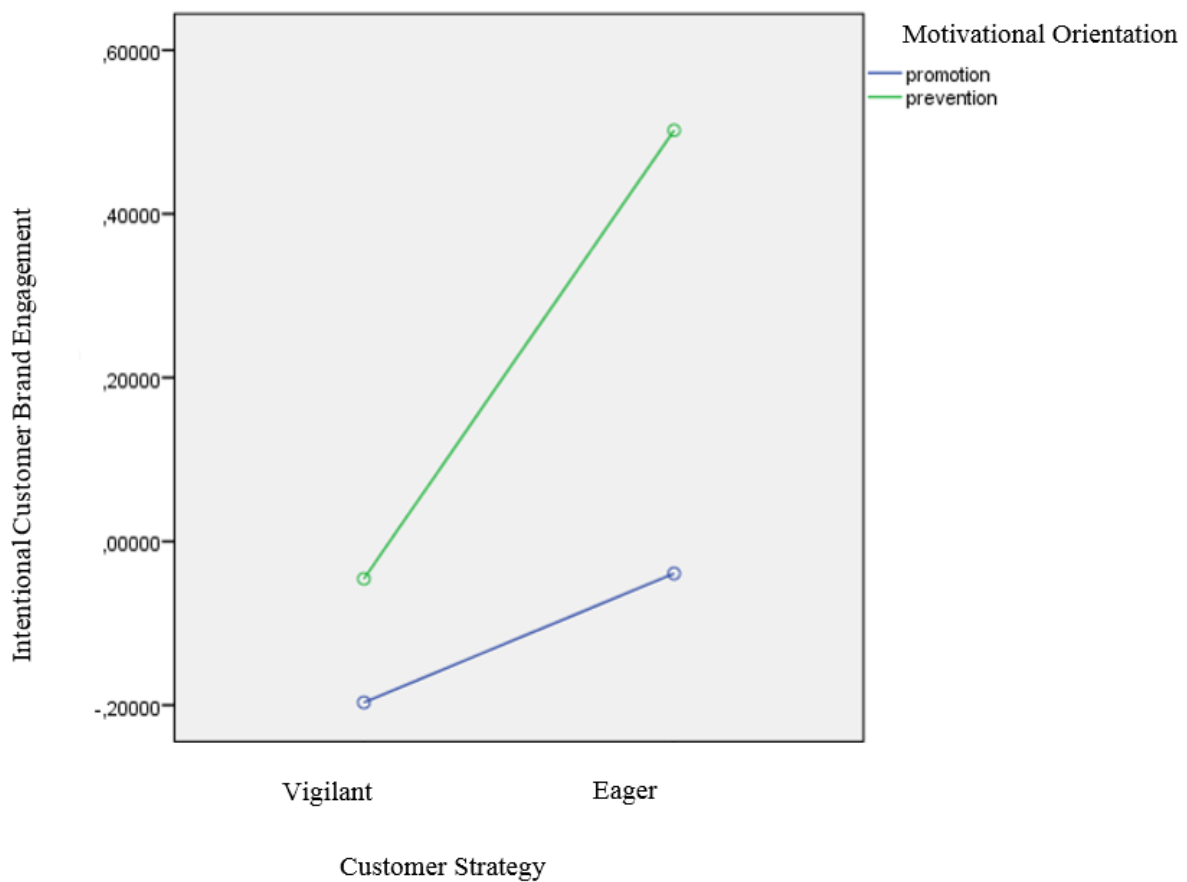
Fourth, we tested H_4 regarding the effect of regulatory fit on behavioural CBE (i.e., operationalized as 'likes' and comments, separately). We analysed interaction effects on both behavioural 'likes' and behavioural comments (i.e., as two distinct dependent behavioural CBE variables). The interaction effect of motivational orientation and customer strategy on behavioural CBE 'likes' was not significant ($F(1, 429) = 0.004$, ns). We could not find a corresponding positive effect of promotion orientation on behavioural CBE 'likes' among customers applying an eager strategy ($M_{promotion/eager} = .08$). Furthermore, we could not find a corresponding positive effect of prevention orientation on behavoural CBE 'likes' among customers applying a vigilant strategy either ($M_{prevention/vigilance} = .05$). Despite these results, it should be noted that this model reported a direct positive effect of customer strategy on behavioural CBE 'likes' ($F(1, 429) = 4.75$, $p < .05$). This result indicates that, for a customer applying an eager strategy, it is 'easy' to click on the 'like' button without being engaged in a specific service brand activity.

The interaction effect of motivational orientation and customer strategy on behavioural CBE comments was not significant ($F(1, 429) = 1.27$, ns). However, we found a corresponding positive effect of promotion orientation on behavoural CBE comments among customers applying an eager strategy ($M_{promotion/eager} = .15$), which is in line with the result in Table 1. In contrast, we could not find a corresponding positive effect of prevention orientation on behavoural CBE comments among customers applying a vigilant strategy ($M_{prevention/vigilance} = .05$). As for behavioural CBE 'likes', this model documents a positive direct effect of customer strategy on behavioural CBE comments ($F(1, 429) = 14.18$, $p < .001$). These results indicate that a customer applying an eager strategy engages by making comments related to a promotion-oriented brand activity. Customers applying an eager strategy will also comment on posts without necessary being engaged in a specific service brand activity. The analysis of behavioural CBE gave partially support to H_{4a} (i.e., positive effect from ($M_{promotion/eager}$) on CBE comments), and non-support to H_{4b} (i.e., non-significant effect from ($M_{prevention/vigilance}$) on CBE 'likes' and CBE comments.

Lastly, we postulated that regulatory fit would have an effect on brand value experience. The interaction effect of motivational orientation and customer strategy on brand value experience was not significant ($F(1, 429) = 3.22$, ns). In this model, we found a positive effect of promotion orientation on brand value experience among customers applying an eager strategy ($M_{promotion/eager} = 4.92$), supporting H_{5a}. We also found a positive effect of prevention orientation on brand value experience among customers applying a vigilant strategy ($M_{prevention/vigilant} = 5.32$), supporting H_{5b}. Because the effect of promotion orientation on brand

value experience among customers applying a vigilant strategy ($M_{promotion/vigilant} = 5.37$) and that of prevention orientation on brand value experience among customers applying an eager strategy ($M_{prevention/eager} = 5.67$) were found to be stronger than the hypothesized effects, this model does not fully support regulatory fit theory (Higgins, 2005), Thus, we report on non-fit situations that give a higher level of effects than does the postulated fit situation (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4

Effect of Regulatory Fit on Brand Value Experience
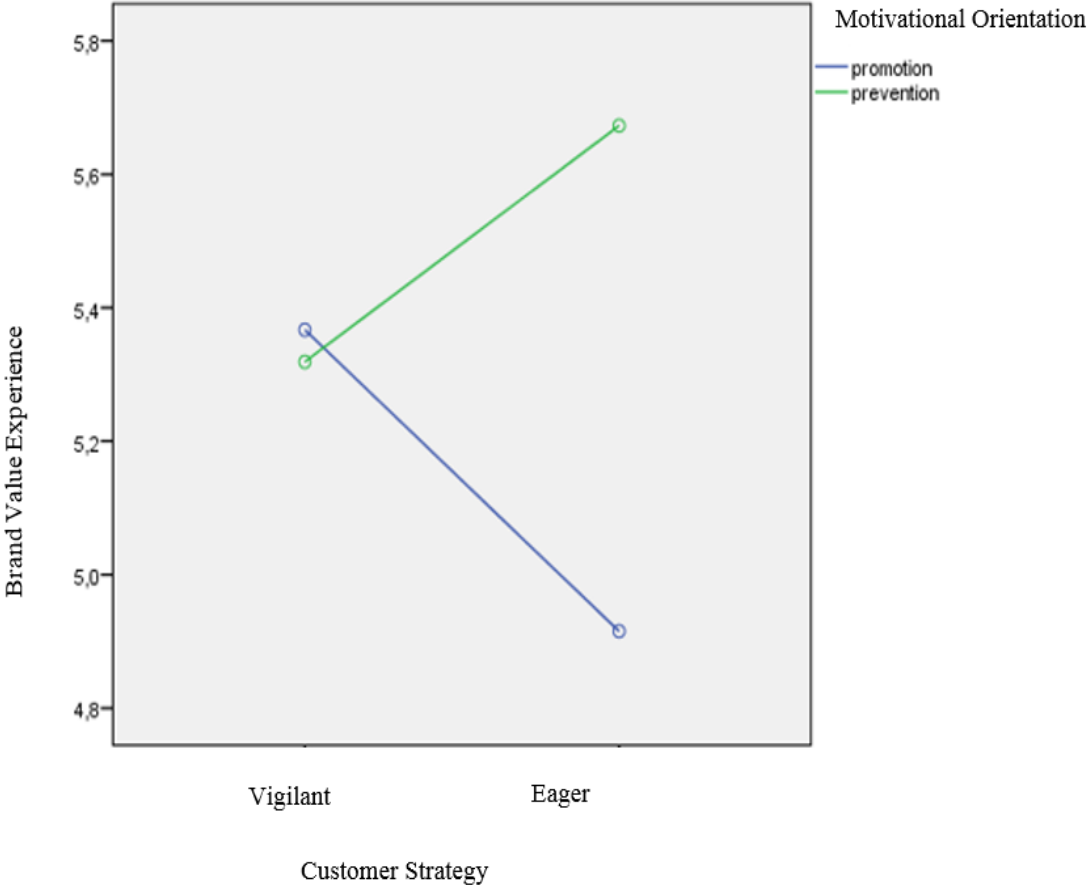
To summarize, this study tested six models, reporting on regulatory fit effects (i.e., interaction effects), as well as simple effects. The following table provides an overview of all the effects derived from the analysis (see Table 3).

Table 3 Overview of simple and interaction effects of the six tested models

Models tested	Effect type	df	F	Sig.
Emotional CBE				
Motivational orientation	Simple effect	1	27.73	< .001
Customer strategy	Simple effect	1	20.20	< .001
Mot. Orient. x Customer strategy	Interaction effect	1	3.53	ns
Cognitive CBE				
Motivational orientation	Simple effect	1	.50	ns
Customer strategy	Simple effect	1	.68	ns
Mot. Orient. x Customer strategy	Interaction effect	1	3.84	< .05
Intentional CBE				
Motivational orientation	Simple effect	1	12.09	< .01
Customer strategy	Simple effect	1	12.55	< .001
Mot. Orient. x Customer strategy	Interaction effect	1	3.84	< .05
Behavioural CBE likes				
Motivational orientation	Simple effect	1	.53	ns
Customer strategy	Simple effect	1	4.74	< .05
Mot. Orient. x Customer strategy	Interaction effect	1	.00	ns
Behavioural CBE comments				
Motivational orientation	Simple effect	1	.05	ns
Customer strategy	Simple effect	1	14.18	< .001
Mot. Orient. x Customer strategy	Interaction effect	1	1.28	ns
Brand value experience				
Motivational orientation	Simple effect	1	9.51	ns
Customer strategy	Simple effect	1	.18	ns
Mot. Orient. x Customer strategy	Interaction effect	1	3.81	ns

Note: Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) reporting between-subject effects was used to test the models and hypotheses. Regulatory fit effects were tested by interaction effects.

We controlled for two different factors (covariates) in the analysis of the six different models: gender and age group. The participants did not differ in their responses based on gender, except from a significant effect on behavioural CBE 'likes' ($F(1,429) = 6.94$, $p < .01$). Regarding age groups, only the behavioural intention was affected ($F(1,429) = 9.76$, $p < .01$).

Discussion and implications

When utilizing social media to establish customer-brand relationships beyond exchange, service brands need to understand what kind of social media activities to use for the stimulation of different types of CBE and brand value experience. Our findings from the experimental field study show that, even for service firms offering services whose outcomes remain intangible and

unclear, brand activities on social media gain positive results for CBE and brand value experience. This study of a Nordic insurance company shows that customers willingly engage behaviourally in activities (posts), as reported by the high number of 'likes', comments and shares (as a percentage of post clicks) made in response to our experimental stimuli. Further, results from the study regarding behavioural CBE indicate that, for customers applying eager strategies, it is easy to click on the 'like' button or even to comment on posts without the need for engagement related to the specific service brand activity.

However, the engagement process seems to be more complex than comprising only behavioural engagement. Our study identifies different explanatory effects of service brand activities on three separate, psychological CBE dimensions (i.e., emotional, cognitive, and intentional) among customers applying eager or vigilant strategies. Customers seem to engage differently in diverse engagement processes, depending on their motivational orientation (mode) and customer strategies. Inspired by regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997), regulatory fit theory (Higgins, 2005), and regulatory engagement theory (Higgins, 2006; Higgins & Scholer, 2009), we proposed different hypothesized relationships ($H_{1a,b}$-$H_{5a,b}$). Based on regulatory fit, we argued for interaction effects of motivational orientation and customer strategy on the CBE dimensions separately, and similarly on brand value experience. Summarizing the results, we found that H2 (H_{2a} and H_{2b}) was the one hypothesis that satisfied the requirement of regulatory fit, reporting positive effects on cognitive CBE. Here, cognitive CBE was found related to the promotion-oriented activity of customers applying eager strategies *and* related to the prevention-oriented activity of customers applying vigilant strategies. H2 is in line with the reasoning in regulatory engagement theory (Higgins, 2006; Higgins & Scholer, 2009). However, our study gained support for several of the sub-hypotheses (H_{1a}, H_{2b}, H_{4a} (partially), H_{5a}, H_{5b}).

The findings show that the promotion-oriented post had a positive effect on emotional CBE, on the willingness to comment behaviourally, and on brand value experience, among customers applying eager strategies. The prevention-oriented post had a positive effect on cognitive CBE, and on brand value experience, among customers applying vigilant strategies. It is interesting to see that both types of service brand activities positively affected brand value experience, but among customers applying different strategies.

This study reports interesting findings from non-fit situations, which are worth commenting on. It should be noted that the promotion-oriented activity affected emotional CBE positively, among *both* customers applying eager and those applying vigilant strategies. Rather surprisingly, the prevention-oriented activity intentionally engaged customers applying eager

strategies. However, this effect on intentional CBE was in line with the overall effects on behavioural engagement (see Table 1), showing generally higher engagement effects from the prevention-oriented activity (551 'likes', comments and/or shares) than from the promotion-oriented activity (288 'likes', comments and/or shares). If we assume that customers applying eager strategies are more active in their overt behaviour than customers applying vigilant strategies, this effect on behavioural intention and on engagement behaviour follows an expected pattern of social media use, even if the finding itself is not in line with what is proposed by regulatory fit theory. A reason for this result could be that the customers (in both groups) found the content of the prevention-oriented post 'right' for a service brand offering high involvement and negatively motivated services, and thus found the post more cognitively, intentionally, and behaviourally engaging than the promotion-oriented post.

Summarizing and relating the findings to the research purpose addressed in the Introduction of the paper, we found that customers engage in social media, not only behaviourally, but also psychologically, with service brands offering intangible, high-involvement and negatively motivated services. Thus, depending upon the customer-applied strategies, the engagement processes differ. It is thus difficult to give a general answer to the question of what type of activities and messages engage customers the most in customer-brand interactions with intangible services. The relative effects of promotion-oriented versus prevention-oriented activities on different engagement dimensions clearly differ depending on the strategies applied by eager and vigilant customers.

Theoretical implications

This study makes several theoretical contributions. First, it contributes to the conceptualization of CBE and to the identification of drivers of CBE. This study identifies different engagement effects for diverse engagement state dimensions, which gives us reason to believe that CBE is a multidimensional construct, supporting previous literature both in the organizational psychology field (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; Kahn, 1990) and in the field of marketing (Patterson et al., 2006; Algesheimer et al., 2005; Mollen & Wilson, 2010; Vivek et al., 2011; Brodie et al., 2011a, 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). Based on the reported results, this study also indicates that an overall CBE engagement should comprise both CBE behaviour (e.g., Van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010; Kumar et al., 2010) and psychological CBE (Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). The engagement process remains complex, and as a result cannot be captured by recording behavioural engagement measures alone.

Regulatory engagement theory argues that engagement strength is all about a cognitive component, mainly explained by regulatory fit (among several explanatory factors) (Higgins, 2006). Our model, postulating that positive cognitive CBE results from regulatory fit, is in line with the effect pattern suggested by Higgins (2006) and Higgins and Scholer (2009), who postulated that regulatory fit would have positive effects on cognitive engagement strength. Regulatory fit occurs when individuals pursue goals in a strategic manner that sustains their regulatory orientation (Higgins, 2000). As regulatory fit theory implies, promotion orientation has to fit with eager customer strategy *and* prevention orientation has to fit with vigilant strategy. However, the effect we identified on cognitive CBE is the only one that fully supports regulatory fit theory (as illustrated in Figure 2). From our study, we propose that regulatory fit does not fully explain CBE.

We argue that the results of our study support the extension of regulatory engagement theory through the inclusion of an engagement concept that captures *more than* cognitive engagement strength (Brodie et al., 2011b; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b). The results are in line with the ideas suggested by Pham and Avnet (2009) in their paper offering a constructive critique of regulatory engagement theory. Although only cognitive CBE was affected by regulatory fit, our study shows positive interaction effects of regulatory orientation and customer strategies on both emotional and intentional CBE. However, the size and direction of the effects differ from those of cognitive CBE.

Additionally, we cannot draw the conclusion from our findings that regulatory fit (the way Higgins, 2005, proposes it) fully explains brand value experience. The relationships revealed in this study (i.e., combinations of motivational orientation and customer strategy) remain more complex than regulatory fit theory suggests. Our study also finds positive engagement effects in non-fit situations, in line with suggestions from Lee (2009) that argue for the importance of extending hypotheses to cover regulatory non-fit effects. According to Lee (2009), regulatory non-fit may lead to intensified engagement and greater value experience. However, Lee (2009) argues that this is the case in situations related to high-involvement offerings (but not those with low involvement). As this particular study comprises a service brand offering high-involvement services, our findings support Lee's (2009) reasoning about opposing forces.

According to the traditional communication- and message-framing literature (e.g., Percy and Elliot, 2012), products and services can be categorized as low versus high involvement and positively versus negatively motivated, which could be used to determine an appropriate communication strategy for a brand. In line with Percy and Elliot's (2012) ideas, a service brand

offering high-involvement and negatively motivated services should develop a high-involvement informational (i.e., preventive) communication strategy, suitable for all customers. This study extends this traditional view on communication by showing that diverse service activity posts create different effects among customers applying different strategies. Even for a service brand offering high-involvement and negatively motivated services, emotional CBE is reported to be a positive effect of a promotion-oriented activity. This finding is supported by Rothman and Salovey (1997), who claim that promotion orientation can have more positive effects than prevention orientation under conditions of high involvement.

Our findings suggest that the interaction of regulatory orientation and customer strategy explains CBE, but that these interaction effects differ for different engagement dimensions and do not result from one singular form of regulatory fit. As such, our findings support the ideas of Lee (2009) and thus contribute significantly to ongoing work extending regulatory fit theory into regulatory engagement theory (Higgins, 2006).

This study relates in particular to service brands offering intangible, high-involvement and negatively motivated services. By relating the study to certain service brand types, the experiment represents a critical test of regulatory focus, fit and engagement theories in the Popperian (1963) sense. By applying the broader ideas of CBE as a multidimensional concept in interactive environments (e.g., social media), we argue that a regulatory engagement theory can be developed on a more complex set of positive interaction effects resulting from regulatory fit as well as from non-fit. Another approach in further theory development of a regulatory engagement theory could be to extend this theory with moderating effects of social context (e.g., social media), thus, inspired by self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Our findings indicate that a product or service may have an inherent regulatory orientation limiting the possibilities of regulatory orientation induction. In addtion, they suggest that the mechanism of motivational 'rightness' in regulatory fit theory may be complex (Cesario et al., 2004). For example, orientation/goal strategy fit may be less important for the customer than complying with the inherent regulatory orientation of a product or service. In our case, the rightness of approaching insurance services with a preventive orientation overrides the rightness of regulatory fit.

Managerial implications

Our findings offer multiple potential opportunities to marketers of service brands, and in particular to marketers of service brands offering intangible, high-involvement and negatively motivated services, to utilize social media in a more efficient way. First, our results show that

a promotion-oriented brand activity is the best method by which to evoke positive emotional CBE among customers applying eager and vigilant strategies, as well as behavioural CBE comments among customers applying eager strategies. Second, our study shows that a prevention-oriented brand activity is the best method by which to evoke positive cognitive CBE among customers applying vigilant strategies. Third, prevention-oriented brand activities seem to be useful in evoking intentional CBE among customers applying eager strategies, supported by the high numbers of 'likes', comments and shares (i.e., overall behavioural CBE) related to this activity post. Finally, we suggest that both promotion- and prevention-oriented activities may be applied by marketers to evoke a positive value experience of the brand, but that a prevention-oriented activity is the one to choose to target eager customers.

Many service providers struggle with the fact that they offer intangible, high-involvement and/or negatively motivated services. The reported results are especially promising for such service brands, showing that they can 'stick' to their brand values (even if they are about injury prevention, risk reduction, etc.) on social media, by strategically focusing on prevention-oriented activities and content. The prevention-oriented activity offered by the insurance company in this experiment had positive effects on both cognitive and intentional CBE. Furthermore, the prevention-oriented activity also enhanced the brand value experience among the customers, meaning that they would not change to another service provider if it were possible.

It is commonly believed that customers normally follow eager strategies on social media, which implies that a promotion-oriented strategy is the one to choose. Consequently, the use of regulatory fit theory provides limited possibilities for brands focusing on prevention-oriented services, values, and content to engage customers. Our study results show that the theoretical assumptions from regulatory fit do not hold. We conclude that service firms offering intangible, high-involvement and negatively motivated services can actually benefit from the use of prevention-oriented activities and messages on social media, if such activities are in accordance with their brand values. For example, an insurance company can gain positive CBE (i.e., cognitive, intentional and behavioural) from customers and add great value experience to their brand by focusing on injury prevention and other risk-reducing content on social media.

Limitations and future research possibilities
The limitations associated with the current research are worth noting, particularly because they offer additional research opportunities. For example, the experimental online field study focused on CBE related to one particular service brand offering intangible, high-involvement

and negatively motivated services. Therefore, future studies of different brands/brand categories are required to ensure that our findings are generalizable across brands. It would also be interesting to compare the effects of regulatory fit on CBE between service and product brands.

When conducting a field experiment in a natural customer context (i.e., not in a lab), a possible limitation relates to the uncertainty from not knowing whether the customers who responded to the questionnaire were the same as those who responded to the posts the day before, even though they reported that they were. The possibility of not gaining full control is a well-known common threat to field experiments (i.e., quasi-experimental designs).

This field experiment consisted of one single study. We encourage future studies on the effects of regulatory fit on psychological and behavioural CBE to be conducted across different types of online and offline interactive settings/contexts. By repeating tests of regulatory fit on CBE dimensions founded in regulatory focus, fit and engagement theories for different brands in different contextual settings, there will be future opportunities for constructing a theory of regulatory fit as a fundamental CBE driver.

APPENDIX 1 The promotion-oriented manipulation

The promotion-oriented Facebook post

The text in the post translated from Norwegian to English

'There has been much focus on the weather in the last couple of days. We want to give some cinema tickets to five of you who experienced the extreme storm 'Ole' or other bad weather. The only thing you need to do is tell us why you think you should win. We will randomly choose the winners on Friday.'

APPENDIX 2 The prevention-oriented manipulation

The prevention-oriented Facebook post

The text in the post translated from Norwegian to English

'High-power electronic equipment is more likely to trigger a fire. Washing machines, dryers and dishwashers are among the worst offenders. Our recommendation: Never leave these machines on when you are not at home or during the night. What time of day do you use your washing machine/dryer/dishwasher?'

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