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CONSUMER BRAND ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA: WHAT KIND OF SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION INFLUENCES CONSUMER BRAND ENGAGEMENT AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS?

Examiners: Professor Anssi Tarkiainen
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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this master's thesis is to find out what kind of communication influence consumer brand engagement and purchase intentions in the social media environment. This specific research area was chosen because it is a very current and important topic. Social media is changing continuously, and new social media platforms appear all the time. Previous research shows, that consumer brand engagement in the social media environment is still not a well-examined research field. This study focuses on the social media communication that happens between a brand and a consumer, and how communication style might affect consumers' engagement and purchase intentions.

The empirical part of this research was conducted as a quantitative method and more specific experimental design. The data was collected with Qualtrics online survey and was after exported to SPSS which is used for statistical data analysis. With factor analysis and independent samples T-test, the consumer brand engagement and purchase intentions were examined with one-way and two-way communication. The findings demonstrate that a brand's communication style on social media (two-way communication) does not influence on consumer brand engagement or purchase intentions.

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tämän Pro Gradu tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, millainen sosiaalisen median viestintä vaikuttaa kuluttajan brändisitoutumiseen ja ostoaikeisiin. Kyseinen tutkimusaihe valittiin, koska se on erittäin ajankohtainen ja tärkeä aihe tällä hetkellä. Sosiaalinen media muuttuu jatkuvasti ja uusia sosiaalisen median alustoja ilmestyy jatkuvasti. Aiemmat tutkimukset osoittavat, että kuluttajan brändisitoutuminen sosiaalisen median ympäristössä ei ole vielä kovin laajalti tutkittu tutkimusala. Tämä tutkimus keskittyy viestintään sosiaalisessa mediassa, joka tapahtuu brändin ja kuluttajan välillä, sekä siihen, miten viestintätyyli voi vaikuttaa kuluttajan brändisitoutumiseen ja ostoaikeisiin.

Tutkimuksen empiirinen osa toteutettiin kvantitatiivisena tutkimusmenetelmänä, kokeellisena tutkimuksena. Data tutkimusta varten kerättiin Qualtrics- verkkokyselyllä, ja sieltä saadut vastaukset analysoitiin sen jälkeen SPSS-ohjelmalla, jota käytetään tilastotietojen analysointiin. Kuluttajan sitoutumista brändiin ja ostoaikeita tutkittiin sekä yksi-, että kaksisuuntaisella viestintätyylillä faktorianalyysin ja riippumattoman otoksen T-testin avulla. Tulokset osoittavat, että brändin viestintätyyli sosiaalisessa mediassa (kaksisuuntainen viestintä) ei vaikuta kuluttajan brändisitoutumiseen eikä ostoaikeisiin.

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This journey has been long and stressful. I started writing my master's thesis in the summer of 2020, and my goal was to graduate in the Autumn of 2021. But sometimes life has other plans. The global pandemic, three moves, two renovations, a new full-time job, and other things made this journey a bit longer than I actually planned. However, I finally made it, and I could not be happier! I would not have succeeded in this without the support of my family and friends. Especially I want to thank my partner, who has managed to encourage me even in the most difficult moments. I also want to give special thanks to my Professor Jenni Sipilä, who has helped me through this journey, always giving the best advice, and being very positive and encouraging. Thank you, once again!

In Helsinki, 6.12.2022

Elina Sihvola

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CB Consumer Behavior
CEBs Consumer Engagement Behaviors
CBE Consumer Brand Engagement
COBRA Consuming, Contributing, Creating
PI Purchase Intentions
RM Relationship Marketing
SDL Service-Dominant Logic
SET Social Exchange Theory
WOM Word-of-mouth

1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the background of the research will be introduced, which will be followed by determining the research objectives and research questions. After that, the previous literature will be discussed, and the theoretical framework of the study. Lastly, the definitions and delimitations are explained, also the research methodology and the structure of the study.

1.1 Background of the research

Social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have become increasingly popular in consumers' everyday lives. In 2020 there were over 3.6 billion social media users around the world, and the amount is estimated to grow rapidly in the future, too (Statista, 2020). In contrast to the beginning of internet usage, the interactive nature of social media has made changes in how consumers engage with brands. When consumers are using social media, they come into contact with many products and brands by watching, reading, typing, liking, commenting, and sharing content (Schivinski et al, 2016). Therefore, companies are changing their strategies to acquire more networked consumers and are putting more importance on competing for consumers' social media attention to carry consumer engagement (Hudson et al, 2016). The broad adoption of this strategy in business explains that more than 99% of Fortune 500 companies use social media to interact with their consumers in order to build strong and favorable brand awareness among consumers (Barnes et al, 2020).

Although access to social media is now widespread and brands in many industries are combining social media into their business strategies, little research has been conducted on the field of engagement in social media. ‘Engagement’ has obtained notable attention across several academic disciplines, including organizational behavior and social psychology, but has transpired in the marketing literature at a recent time (Brodie et al. 2011). In this research, I will be examining consumer brand engagement on social media, and more specifically, what kind of social media communication influence consumer brand engagement and purchase intentions.

1.2 Research objective and research questions

The purpose of this study is to examine what kind of communication affects consumer brand engagement and purchase intentions in the social media environment. I chose this specific research area since it is little examined, and also because it is a very current and important topic at the moment. Social media is changing and spreading all the time, and new social media platforms appear constantly. Since the theoretical part of the study is based on consumer brand engagement and consumer behavior, the study will be made from the consumers' perspective. However, the perspective of companies and brands will be also discussed because they can benefit from the findings of the study.

The main research question is:

- *What kind of social media communication influences consumer brand engagement and purchase intentions?*

Sub-research questions support and complement the main research question. The first sub-question concerns Grunig & Hunt's (1984) Public Relations theory where the ideal communication would be two-way communication. To my best knowledge, this theory has never been examined together with Consumer Brand Engagement, nor in the social media environment. Because of this, I wanted to include this in my thesis and research area. The second sub-question concerns also two-way communication and Public Relations theory, however here together with Purchase Intentions. To my best knowledge, these two theories have never been studied together before either and it will be interesting to see what kind of findings they will eventually have.

Sub-research questions established to support the main research question are:

1. How does two-way communication influence Consumer Brand Engagement?
2. How does two-way communication influence Purchase Intentions?

1.3 Previous research

The term "engagement" has been used in many academic areas in the past, involving sociology, political science, psychology, and organizational behavior (Hollebeek et al. 2011, 13). In the marketing literature, the terms “Engagement”, “Customer Engagement” and “Consumer Engagement” emerged in 2005. The Marketing Science Institute (MSI) in their research priorities required a better understanding of the concept of engagement in 2006-2008. Again in 2010, Marketing Science Institute listed Consumer Engagement as a focal research priority for the period of 2010-2012 (Marketing Science Institute [MSI] 2010). Consequently, consumer engagement has been quite a dominant topic in recent years, even though it is quite a new research topic.

Plenty of the initial researchers of consumer engagement started building the theory on relationship marketing, a theory that was already invented (Brodie et al. 2011; Hollebeek 2011). Brodie et al. (2011) examined the theoretical basis of consumer engagement by using the named relationship marketing and service-dominant logic. Some of the earlier literature has concentrated specifically on engagement with brands, of which Hollebeek (2011) was the first to introduce the term CBE, consumer brand engagement. Hollebeek et al. (2014) were also the first ones to develop a conceptual framework of CBE that functions in the social media environment. The concept of CBE has been examined in different environments and contexts, like employee environment, tourism marketing, and some social media channels like Facebook and Twitter (Harrigan et al. 2018; Pitt et al. 2018; Halaszovich et al. 2017; Hollebeek et al. 2014). I will outline more in detail the theoretical part of consumer brand engagement (especially in social media) in the literature review, in chapter two.

Consumer brand engagement has been studied quite extensively which has been useful for this study. However, consumer brand engagement in the social media environment is still not a well-examined research field. In this study, I decided to focus on the social media communication that happens between a consumer and a brand, also the effect it has on consumer engagement and purchase intentions. To examine the communication between a consumer and a brand, I wanted to utilize public relation theory. This theory has been usually used together with corporate social responsibility

(CSR) research as a CSR communication strategy. However, to my best knowledge, it has never been used in consumer brand engagement, CBE. That is why it would be interesting to use this theory in a different context and see, how it works and what kind of findings it will result. By combining these themes, a clear research gap for this thesis can be formed.

1.4 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework illustrates the structure and theoretical central concepts of this research (Figure 1). The framework expresses the chosen context of consumer brand engagement and purchase intentions. These are related to the first and second sub-research questions, that concern communication style's influence on the CBE, and communication style's influence on purchase intentions. This thesis focuses on answering the question of what kind of social media communication influences consumer brand engagement and purchase intentions.

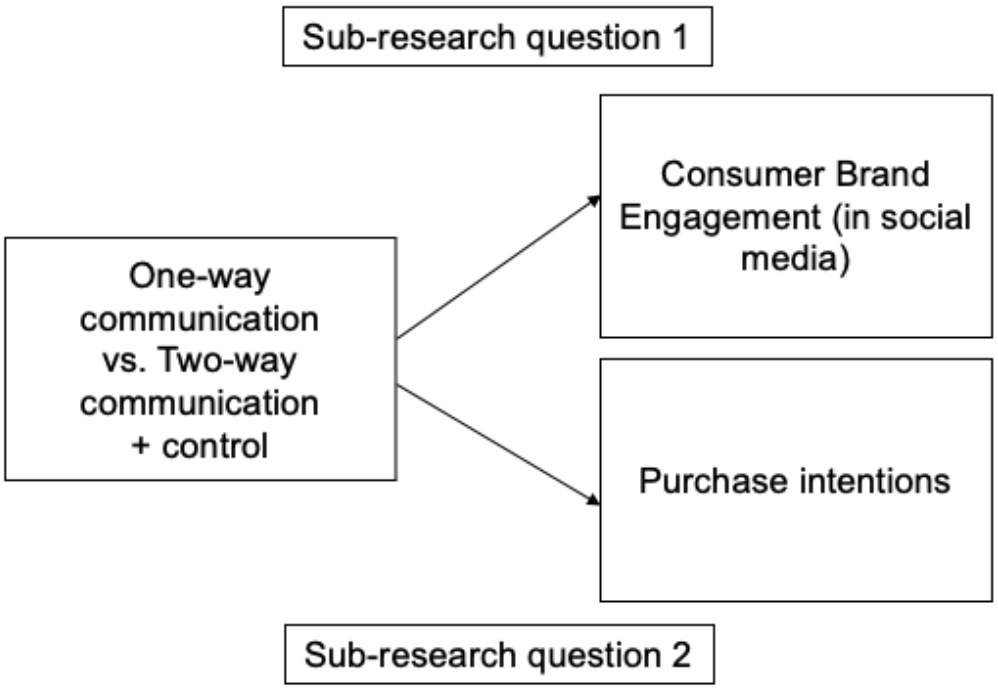


Figure 1. The framework of the thesis.

1.5 Definitions

Consuming, Contributing, Creating, COBRAs, are the three usage examples of brand-related social media use created by researcher Muntinga in 2011. Consuming refers to consumers' different social media consumption, like reading comments and product reviews of a brand. Contributing again means consumers' participation in social media, for example liking and commenting on a brand post. Creating refers to consumers' urge to generate something related to a brand, for example writing a product review (Muntiga, 2011).

Consumer Brand Engagement, CBE, a consumer's positively valenced brand-related behavioral, emotional, and cognitive activity with or related to key consumer or brand interactions (Hollebeek et al. 2014).

Consumer Engagement Behaviors, CEBs, consumers' behavioral expression on a brand or a company, resulting from motivational drivers, beyond purchase (Van Doorn et al. 2010, 253).

One-way Communication, information flows from sender to receiver only, not providing any feedback (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

Two-way Communication, information trading between two people or parties, where information is both received and given (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

Purchase Intention, an individual's consciousness to make an attempt to buy a brand's products or services (Peña-García et al. 2020).

Social Media, refers to new internet services and applications that combine communication between users and their content production (Kumar et al. 2017).

1.6 Delimitations

This part of the study represents the delimitations of this thesis. As the study is quantitative experimental research made from the perspective of consumers, it is quite

focused. The study covers only consumer brand engagement with B2C customers, and delimits B2B customers from this study, because of the chosen context of consumers in social media. The theoretical part of the study focuses on consumer brand engagement in the social media environment. The theories that the CBE is based on, relationship marketing, service-dominant logic, and social exchange theory are shortly mentioned but otherwise delimited out of this study. In the empirical part, this research focuses on examining precisely delimited antecedent, specific communication types on social media, one-way and two-way communication, it does not include other activation types. The research is conducted on one specific social media platform Instagram. The created framework can be utilized in other social media platforms, however it might change the results.

1.7 Research methodology

This research is quantitative, and more specifically experimental research. With quantitative research, I will be collecting and analyzing numerical data and examining causal relationships of the two different communication types (one-way and two-way) on social media. The goal is to deliver valuable knowledge on the topic of consumer brand engagement by making a questionnaire to consumers on social media. Experimental design is selected as a method of this thesis because it helps determine causal relationships and discover causal conclusions. Experimental design is also a widely used and popular research approach. The research methodology will be discussed more in detail in chapter three.

1.8 Structure of the study

This research is structured as followed. The first chapter is the introduction, which presents the research subject, objectives, and aims of the study. Additionally, it provides a short description of the theory, together with definitions and delimitations of the study. Second Consumer Brand Engagement, CBE, is approached through a theoretical background. Previous research is done on CBE and related marketing themes are presented and exploited in the context of social media including one-way and two-way communication. Also, the hypothesis development will be outlined in chapter two. After developing the theoretical background for the study, research

design, data collection, and data analysis will be presented. Also, the reliability and validity of the study will be reviewed. The fourth chapter will focus on the findings of the study. Finally, the fifth chapter concludes the research with a discussion and conclusion. The final theoretical contributions and managerial implications are outlined together with the limitations and future research.

2 CONSUMER BRAND ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA

There were over 3.5 billion social media users in 2020, and the amount seems to be growing in the next few years (Statista, 2020). This has made brands very interested in social media and therefore it has become a channel where the commercial activity takes place. Companies and brands try to be impressive on these different social media platforms and make their relationships stronger with customers by creating a high level of engagement (Harrigan et al. 2018). The rising usage of social media has also changed how consumers engage with brands these days. Yet, the different social media channels and new features there have made it more versatile, too.

In this study, I will examine consumer brand engagement and its concepts in the social media environment. Since the academic literature on the field of CBE in social media is rather small, the first part will focus on the theoretical background of CBE, which includes the definitions of consumer brand engagement (CBE) and the most important concepts and frameworks of it. After that, consumer brand engagement in the social media environment will be handled, how CBE has changed in the entry of social media, and which ways brands and consumers are engaging there. Next, I will go through the factors that influence CBE and the consequences CBE has on consumer behavior. Lastly, one-way and two-way communication will be discussed, and also the hypothesis development will be presented.

2.1 The background of Consumer Brand Engagement

While ‘engagement’ has had a lot of attention across several academic literatures, the concept has emerged in marketing literature relatively recently. Engagement has been seen as a promising concept expected to increase the explanatory and predictive power of key consumer behavior outcomes (Hollebeek et al. 2014). The concepts of brand engagement and consumer brand engagement have gained attention in the newest literature. In the wide development of the engagement concept, consumer brand engagement (CBE) has advanced to be a vital concept in marketing literature, since its strongly connected to the value of the brand (Pitt et al. 2018). Different authors have defined consumer brand engagement in various ways. The first one to define the term consumer engagement in the marketing research context was Patterson et al.

(2006, 3). They define it as the level of consumers' several presences in their relationship with an organization. The presences involve physical, emotional, and cognitive presence. According to Patterson et al. (2006), consumer engagement comprises four parts, dedication, vigor, interaction, and absorption. These can be attached to engagement that happens between a consumer and a brand, or consumer and a product, or consumers and other individuals (Patterson et al, 2006).

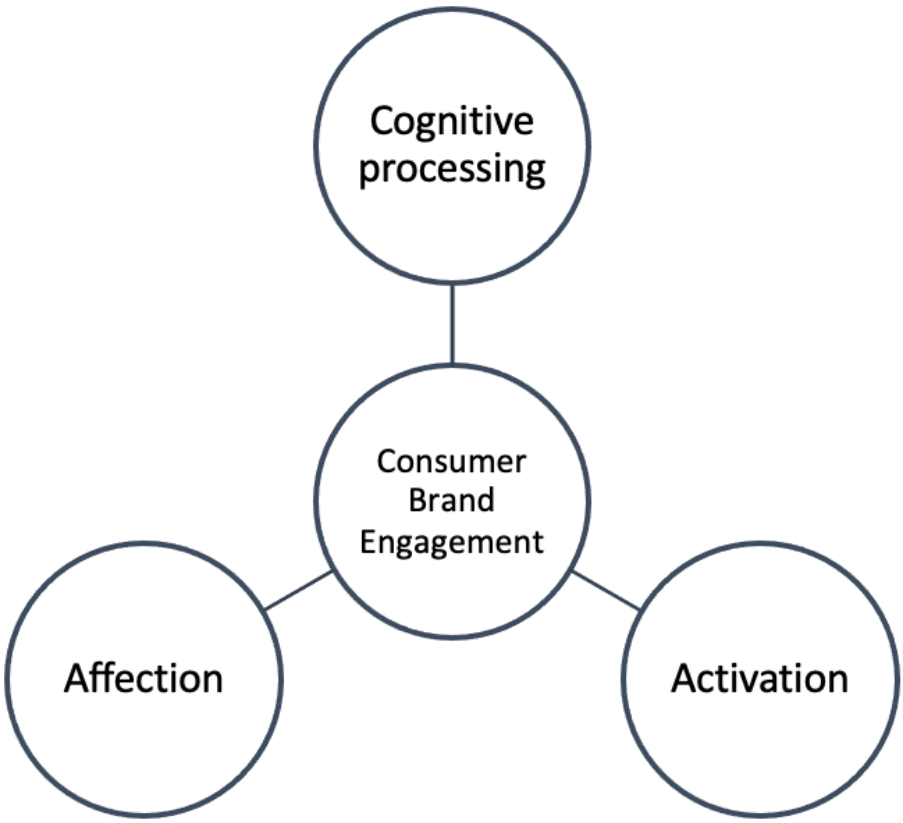
Other authors, Mollen and Wilson (2010) explained consumer engagement as an efficient and cognitive commitment to an active relationship with the brand, as personalized with computer-mediated entities designed to communicate brand value (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Dwivedi (2015), on the other hand, has defined CBE as consumers' positive, satisfying and brand-related mood characterized by dedication, vigor, and adoption (Dwivedi, 2015). Another definition of CBE is Hollebeek's definition as a consumer's positively brand-related emotional, cognitive, and behavioral activity within or related to key consumer or brand interactions (Hollebeek et al. 2014).

One of the first authors to properly conceptualize consumer engagement was Brodie et al. (2011). Their conceptualization was based on service management and relationship marketing. Relationship marketing is meant the maintenance of relations between a firm and the actors in its micro-environment, e.g., customers, suppliers, market intermediaries, and the public (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996). In the research of Brodie et al., they examined especially service-dominant logic, which basic idea is to shift from traditional markets that are based on the exchange of goods to the exchange of services. The service-dominant logic is represented using ten different premises that handle interactions and relationships between consumers and companies, stakeholders, and other customers. Four of these ten premises are essential when the concept of consumer engagement is defined (Brodie et al. 2011, 253). According to Brodie et al. 2011, these premises are:

- *"The customer is always a co-creator of value"*
- *"A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational".*
- *"All social and economic actors are resource integrators".*
- *"Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary".*

Another study by Vivek et al. (2012) has also conceptualized consumer engagement. According to their study, consumer engagement comprises not only physical, emotional, and cognitive elements, but also social and behavioral elements (Vivek et al. 2012, 127). The social and behavioral stages can involve interactions that happen during purchasing goods or services however, it can happen also without purchasing or even plans of doing that. This indicates consumer engagement since there are interactions between a firm and a consumer without the purpose of purchasing. In the theoretical model of Vivek et al. (2012, 135) they have identified many facets that will positively combine with consumer engagement. These are trust, customer participation, value, word-of-mouth, affective commitment, brand community involvement, loyalty, and involvement. Therefore, if a firm wants to raise its consumer engagement, it should try to increase the facets indicated by Vivek et al. (2012).

Hollebeek (2011) is one of the first research scientists who has deeply delved into the concept of consumer brand engagement, CBE. Like the previous authors mentioned, Hollebeek also familiarizes the theories of relationship marketing and service-dominant logic. In addition, she also represents social exchange theory, SET, which precedes these two others. According to social exchange theory, consumers are predicted to change positive feelings, thoughts, and behaviors toward an object when getting a certain advantage from the brand relationship (Pervan et al. 2009). According to Hollebeek (2011), there are three key themes of CBE which are activation, passion, and immersion. These themes present the degree to which a consumer is willing to use relevant emotional, cognitive, and behavioral resources in certain interactions with a specific brand (Hollebeek 2011, 565).



Picture 1. The dimensions of CBE (Hollebeek et al. 2014).

As noticed, various studies endorse that CBE has three different dimensions: cognition, affection or emotion, and activation or behavioral stage. Next, I will discuss more in detail, what is meant by these. To represent the CBE dimension model, I will use Hollebeek et al's model from 2014. The first, cognitive processing indicates the cognitive aspect of CBE, and it can be explained as a brand-related thought processing and assessment (Halaszovich et al. 2017). The second dimension concentrate on the emotional facet of CBE, which can be seen as a brand's possibility to receive a positive emotional reaction from the average consumer as a result of its use (Leckie et al. 2016). The third dimension represents the behavioral activities associated with CBE, which is defined as an expression through a customer's level of energy utilized in interacting with a relevant brand (Dessart et al. 2015). All three dimensions play a significant role in explaining the dimensions of consumer brand engagement and also reflect the core theoretical understanding of interactive experience (Hollebeek et al. 2014, 154).

Compared with Hollebeek et al's (2014) three dimensions model, Dwivedi has also conceptualized an example that illustrates the drivers of CBE. Dwivedi's (2015, 100) model consists of three different dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. According to Dwivedi, vigor comprises the consumer's "*high levels of energy and mental resilience when interacting with the brand*" and *"consumer's willingness and ability to invest effort in such consumer-brand interactions*" (Dwivedi 2015, 100). As in Hollebeek et al's activation dimension, vigor refers to the behavioral aspect of the CBE. Dedication again is defined as *"a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge"* (Dwivedi 2015, 101), which refers to the emotional aspect of consumer brand engagement, like affection in Hollebeek et al's model. The third dimension, absorption, is determined as "*a sense of being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in brand-related interactions*" (Dwivedi 2015, 101). Absorption can be associated with Hollebeek et al's cognitive aspect of CBE.

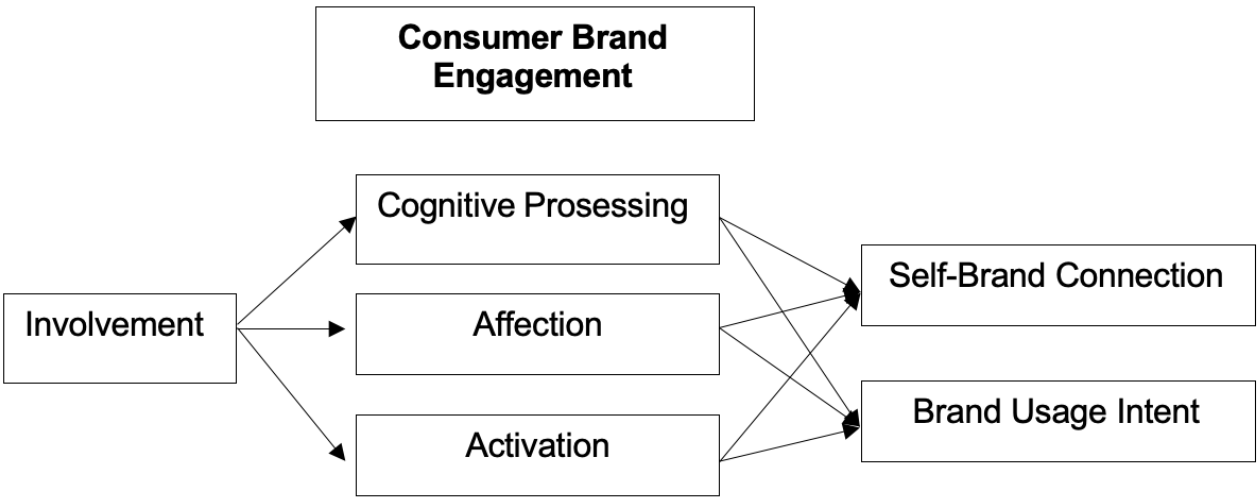
As noted, Dwivedi's (2015) dimensions are quite similar to Hollebeek et al's (2014) dimension model. In Dwivedi's model, dimensions put more significance on the feeling and sense of consumer's brand-related interactions, unlike in the other model.

2.2 Consumer Brand Engagement in the social media environment

Next, I will move forward to examine the concept of CBE in the social media environment. But first, it's important to define what social media exactly mean. Haenlein and Kaplan (2010) explain social media as, "*a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and permit the creation and exchange of user-generated content"* (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Hall-Phillips et al. (2016) accompany, that social media platforms are web-based social services that enable a person to build a profile, interact with other social media users, and view and connect with others through videos, photos, and texts (Hall-Phillips, 2016). What is suggested, is that consumer and brand relationships are defined as complicated and very interactive exchange processes between these two. Normally, such levels of interaction can be attained only in face-to-face communication. However, the entry of social media has provided an environment that enables highly interactive relations between a consumer and a brand, the consumer being the initiator of the communication (Halaszovich et al. 2017).

In 2014 Hollebeek et al. made a breakthrough study on consumer brand engagement in the social media environment. They were one of the first ones to bring the concept of CBE into the new and continuously developing social media environment where engagement is different between a brand and a consumer. Later, this research has been supported by many other scientific researchers and has been cited hundreds of times in other studies. In Hollebeek et al's research (2014), *Consumer Brand Engagement in social media: Conceptualization, Scale Development and Validation* they developed a model that conceptualizes CBE in the social media environment. There are three central suggestions in the model that are:

1. Consumer "involvement" is an antecedent to consumer brand engagement,
2. "Self-brand connection" is an outcome of consumer brand engagement, and
3. "Brand usage intent" is an outcome of consumer brand engagement (Hollebeek et al. 2014). This means, that the dimensions of CBE; cognitive processing, affection, and activation are all connected to the model. A picture of this model is illustrated below (Picture 2).



Picture 2. Consumer Brand Engagement conceptualization model (Hollebeek et al. 2014).

To be more specific, I will clarify what is meant by these. Consumer involvement refers to an individual's level of personal relevance and interest in relation to a central decision or object in terms of one's basic values, self-concept, and goals. In turn, the self-brand connection is meant the extent to which persons have absorbed brand(s) into their self-concept. Whereas brand usage intent is described as a consumer's

differential response between an unbranded product and a central brand when both have the same level of product features and marketing stimuli (Hollebeek et al. 2014).

In the same study (Hollebeek et al. 2014), the researchers discover consumer brand 'involvement' to indicate an important relationship with each of the three CBE dimensions of cognitive processing, activation, and affection. More specifically, it seems that consumer brand 'involvement' has the largest influence on CBE 'affection'. Further, it was found that also 'self-brand connection' had a positive association between the CBE dimensions, cognitive processing, affection, and activation. 'Affection' had the greatest impact on 'self-brand connection'. Similarly, 'brand usage intent' was strongly connected to consumers' brand-related 'activation' and 'affection'. However, 'cognitive processing' did not succeed to produce an important effect (Hollebeek et al. 2014).

Based on this, companies seeking to evolve consumers 'brand usage intent' which includes a loyalty part, can centralize tactics and activities favoring consumer 'affection' and 'activation', in order to attain their social media goals. Among the three CBE dimensions, 'affection' has the greatest influence on 'self-brand connection' and 'brand usage intention'. (Hollebeek et al. 2014).

As we may guess, consumer brand engagement has changed massively in recent decades due to social media. There, users can interact not only with other users but also with brands with which they choose to engage. Consumers' active participation and engagement in network communities contribute a strong bond between a consumer and a brand (Hall-Phillips et al. 2016).

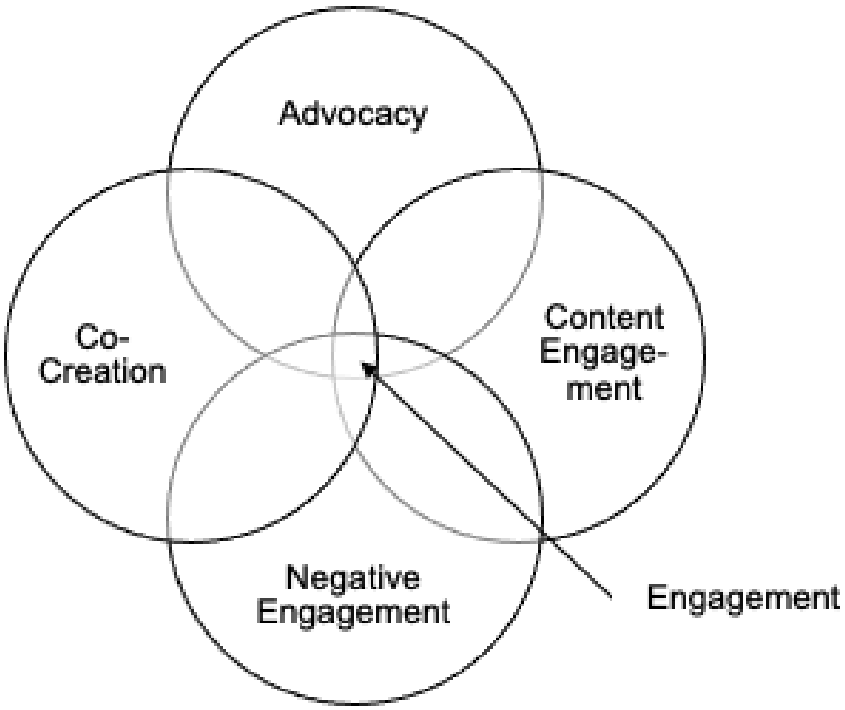
According to the study by Pitt et al. (2018), the entry of social media has encouraged customer engagement with brands in one way and another. Some of these have been intentional, with companies implementing their strategies in the form of online communities on social media platforms, and in some cases, customers, not companies, have led the engagement with brands. These customers post videos and photos, share content, and give both negative and positive feedback online to the brands they both like and dislike. Discussions about brands are happening continuously, online and offline, without brands noticing (Pitt et al. 2018). According to

Van Laer et al. (2013) and de Valck et al. (2009), the interactive ability of social media gives a conceptual parallel to the interactively created nature underlying the "engagement" concept. As an example, by accessing online content and making it easier to communicate, social media can link consumers and brands, and thereby encourage consumer "engagement" (Van Laer et al. 2013; de Valck et al. 2009). To an extent, Osei-Frimpong et al. (2018) interpret social media communications are considered interactive, but also collaborative, private, participatory, and at the same time communal. This gives an avenue for brands and companies to engage with their customers and build significant relationships. Therefore, social media offers a powerful tool to communicate the company-consumer brand engagement procedures (Osei-Frimpong et al. 2018).

Most of the studies that I have reviewed, encourage engaging and interacting between a consumer and a brand on social media. In Osei-Frimpong (et al. 2018) study, the results represent insights into the potential role of brand engagement and social presence in advancing a deeper understanding of brand engagement, brand relationship management, and social media research. The results propose a need for companies and businesses to engage in social media with their consumers. In this case, firms are encouraged to engage with fascinating and informative messages that will raise consumers' interest and attention (Osei-Frimpong et al. 2018). However, when considering the three dimensions of CBE, engagement depends also on the consumer's self-brand connection and brand usage intent. If the consumer doesn't identify these, it is quite unlikely the engagement to occur even if the brand is performing on social media (Hollebeek et al. 2014).

Even though Hollebeek et al's measure for consumer brand engagement in social media has become one of the most popular and used measures of engagement, there are also more recent studies that reinvestigate the CBE scale. In the paper of Obilo et al. (2021) the authors are re-examining the validity of Hollebeek et al's (2014) CBE scale within the context of social media. The researchers for example extend the CBE scale by presenting a new social media context (Instagram). They merge views from marketing research and present a new conceptualization of engagement. The findings indicate that Hollebeek's CBE scale does not truly capture the concept of engagement. According to the study of Obilo et al. engagement is made up only of behaviors, not

other affective and cognitive components. The authors introduce a new tool to capture the true engagement concept, which includes a four-dimensional model that examines behaviors including 1) consumer co-creation, 2) content engagement, 3) consumer advocacy, and 4) negative engagement (Obilo et al. 2021). The first, co-creation means consumers' suggestions, opinions, and improvements they communicate to a brand, in order to enhance their products or services. Content engagement refers to different brand generated content that consumer sees, shares, comment on, likes, posts, and reads in social media. Whereas advocacy means the support consumer is giving to a brand, for example by recommending the brand services or products to others. Negative engagement again refers to the negative behavior, a consumer does when they are not satisfied with the performance of a specific firm or a brand. (Obilo et al 2021). The picture above represents the four-dimensional model to capture the engagement concept by Obilo et al 2021.



Picture 3. Model to capture the Engagement concept (Obilo et al. 2021).

2.3 Antecedents of CBE

Notable research is done on the consumer engagement process that includes its antecedents and consequences. Besides Hollebeek et al's CBE conceptualization

model (2014), Van Doorn et al. (2010) created a conceptual model for consumer engagement behaviors that comprises both antecedents and consequences of engagement. Consumer engagement behaviors, also called as CEBs are defined as "consumers' behavioral manifestation toward a company or a brand, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers" (Van Doorn et al. 2010, 253). The behaviors comprise both non-transactions and transactions in the online environment (Vivek et al. 2014, 416). Consumer engagement behaviors include several behaviors, for example, recommendations, word-of-mouth, blogging, writing product reviews, and giving other consumers help (Van Doorn et al. 2010, 253). According to Van Doorn et al. (2010), there are three antecedent factors and three consequence factors. The three antecedent factors are customer-, firm-, and context-based, and these factors influence which type of engagement will perform. Customer-based factors compose of attitudinal factors, including for example brand commitment, customer satisfaction, trust, brand performance perceptions, and brand attachment (Van Doorn et al. 2010). Additionally, consumers' resources such as effort, money, and time, and consumers' goals can also affect consumer engagement behaviors (Van Doorn et al. 2010, 257). Firm-based factors compound characteristics of the brand, for example, reputation and size of the company and industry, also brand equity. Context-based factors concern the political, social, economic, environmental, technological, and legal aspects of the society where companies and consumers exist (Van Doorn et al. 2010, 258). I will discuss the consequences in the next section.

There are many ways in which brands can interact with consumers on social media. In the study of Velitchka et al. (2013) the authors underline the importance of continuous proactivity and communication between a brand and consumers on social media. Good examples of these are communicating product information, engaging consumers with content relevant to the brand, addressing customer service issues, giving timely information related to promotions and new product launches, and managing comments created by consumers (Velitchka et al, 2013). Also, the study of Ruiz-Mafe et al. (2014) endorses that social media brand page content should offer valuable information to consumers. However, Ruiz-Mafe et al's study also underlines that social media brand page content should be fun and foster user interactions, too (Ruiz-Mafe et al, 2014).

When looking from the consumers' point of view, according to Ashley (et al. 2015) research, engaged consumers participate and share content on social media. Participation may be passive or active. Consumers' response to social media is usually measured by discovering whether the user clicks, links, connects, blogs, refers, subscribes, submits, or buys the brand. The most desirable are the ones that result in brand mention shared with the individual's network. This is called earned media. Proper content may also trigger the consumer to engage (Ashley et al. 2015). However, the Voorvedlt et al. (2018) study highlights, that since many types and variations of social media exist, engaging in social media is also different. The study's results showed, that depending on the channel, various engagement dimensions occur. For example, while Facebook was considered as a perfect social interaction platform, YouTube was seen more as an entertainment channel (Voorverld et al. 2018). Therefore, the CBE should focus on one social media channel at a time.

As Ashley et al's (2015) study highlighted, sometimes even the content creator can be of great importance to the consumer on social media. Especially user-generated content (USG), which means any form of content created by individual people - not a brand, has a stronger impact on consumers' online behavior, for example, purchase decisions, than marketer-generated content (MGC) (Goh et al. 2013). However, this could also be the opposite way. According to the research of Kumar et al. (2016) company-generated content has a positive and important influence on customer behavior, especially on cross-buying behavior and customer purchase spending. The study shows that brand managers can use company-generated content not only for promoting their goods on social media channels but also for engaging and cherishing lucrative relationships with their customers (Kumar et al. 2016).

What are the motivations behind the consumer-brand interactions then? According to the study of Velitchka et al. (2013), consumer-brand interactions driven by social media can be described by five different motivations: brand engagement (especially identification or connection to the brand), entertainment, timeliness of information and service responses, inducements and promotions, and product information. The researchers also recognize relationships among these themes related to respondents' gender, age, and social media usage. (Velitchka et al. 2013) In another research by Muntinga (2011), he is also examining people's motivation to engage with brand-

related social media content and the consequences of consumer's brand-related activities. The author represents motivations for different types of COBRAs, which are consuming, contributing, and creating. Muntinga (2011) gives various examples of each COBRA type, for example consuming includes reading comments and product reviews, and watching brand-related videos or photos, contributing involves e.g., engaging in branded conversation on social media, and joining a brand profile on social media, while creating consists of e.g., writing product reviews and brand-related articles (Muntinga 2011). Table 1 below presents all the examples of the three usage types of brand-related social media use. However, the list of examples is not comprehensive, COBRAs come in various forms.

Table 1: COBRA typology as a continuum of three usage types (Muntinga 2011).

COBRA type	Examples of brand-related social media use
Consuming	• Watching brand-related video or picture • Listening brand-related sound • Following message threads on online forums • Reading comments and reviews on products • Playing branded videogames online • Downloading branded applications • Giving branded virtual gifts or gift cards
Contributing	• Giving ratings on goods or brands • Take part in a brand profile on social media • Engaging in branded conversations on social media

	• Liking and commenting on brand-related videos, photos, blogs, etc.
Creating	• Writing product reviews • Writing brand-related articles • Uploading brand-related music, images, or videos • Publishing brand-related weblog

Thus, these different activities between a consumer and a company or brand create engagement. A more recent study on the quite same topic was published in 2016. In the research of Saboo et al. (2016) the authors are examining how consumers engage with brands on social media platforms and how it affects their purchase process. In the study, it is proposed that consumers engage in three different social media activities to improve the attractiveness of their brands: 1) sampling the brand's product from the social media websites, 2) subscribing and following the brand on social media, and 3) commenting and creating online WOM on the posts of the focal brand. According to brand attachment theory, the authors argue that these actions influence consumer purchase behavior and brand sales. The findings show that the influence of sampling the brand's product from social media websites decreases at a decreasing rate, subscribing and following the brand on social media increases at a decreasing rate, and commenting and creating online WOM on the posts of the focal brand increases at an increasing rate (Saboo et al. 2016).

With this knowledge, we can conclude that there are many different approaches and divisions when examining consumer-brand interactions on social media and the motivations behind them. Now that we know these, we can continue to research how certain brand posts and response behavior are related to certain consumer engagement behaviors. The research of Dhaoui et al. (2021) it is examined consumer brand engagement on social media, specifically focusing on the dynamic interaction between consumers and brands, and, also among consumers themselves as well. The authors review what things affect consumers to give feedback to brands. Examples of this kind of feedback are, commenting on brand's social media posts, agreeing with

other consumers by liking their replies or comments and connecting with other social media users by replying to their comments. The findings indicate that the number of brand posts indirectly influences consumer comments through increased sharing and liking, however with diminishing returns. Liking is considered as key since it increases positive and weakens negative feedback, while sharing is considered with both negative and positive consumer-brand comments. Posting videos and photos again encourage liking (Dhaoui et al. 2021). These findings illustrate how marketers can stimulate positive communication on social media between consumers and brands.

Now that we have delved deep into the social media activities influencing the CBE, we can move forward on discussing what kind of consequences CBE has on consumer behavior.

2.4 Consequences of CBE

According to Van Doorn et al. (2010), the three consequences of consumer engagement are customer, firm, and other. In other words, most consumer engagement will appear to have some kind of consequence for customers, the company itself, or other outside organizations. (Van Doorn et al. 2010) Customer factors are attitudinal, cognitive, emotional, identity, and physical. Plenty of these can however occur from the same kind of engagement behavior, for example, if a consumer engages with a brand and has a positive experience, often the attitudinal, emotional, and cognitive consequence is that the person will want to continue to engage with the specific company or brand (Van Doorn et al. 2010). Firm factors are competitive, employee, financial, reputational, regulatory, and product. According to Van Doorn et al, (2010) the financial consequences are the ones that a company should take into account when trying to manage engagement behavior. Lastly, are the other consequences, which are cross-brand and cross-customer, consumer welfare, economic surplus, social surplus, and regulation. (Van Doorn et al. 2010) As we may conclude from Van Doorn et al's study (2010), customer engagement behavior can be extremely influential on many aspects of an industry. There are many factors that play an important role in the formation of CEBs and also many consequences that appear after it. That is why firms should try to manage CEBs as much as possible.

Many studies support the fact that successful consumer brand engagement on social media leads to a positive increase in purchase spending among consumers (Goh et al, 2013; Xie et al, 2015; Kumar et al, 2016; Saboo et al, 2016). According to Rishika et al's research (2013), it is underlined that the more activity there is on the brand's social media site, the more participation effect there is. This customer partition not only leads to a growth in purchase spending, but also customer profitability, because customers who show strong loyalty to the brand, purchase premium products, and have a lower level of buying focus (Rishika et al, 2013). In another study by Zhang et al. (2017), they were examining if there's a relationship between online shopping activity and social media usage. The results show that greater cumulative usage of the social networking site of a brand is positively related to customers' shopping activity (Zhang et al. 2017).

According to the study of Rapp et al. (2013), many consumers tend to follow brands on social media for advertising and promotional information, and therefore their usage of social media influences directly their loyalty towards the company. Also, social media tends to affect both company and brand performance. More loyal consumers are likely to purchase more across the brand and the total company's offering (Rapp et al. 2013). In Xie et al's study (2015) it was found that exposures to earned and owned social media activities for brands have an important and positive impact on consumers' probability to purchase from the brands. Owned social media refers to social media activity that is created by the owner of the brand (or his/her agents) on social media sites, such as Facebook, which they can control. Whereas earned social media refers to non-paid and non-controllable social media activities, for example, consumers' shares, reposts, mentions, and reviews. Although both, earned and owned social media activities are said to have a positive effect on brand purchases, their effects are suppressive on each other (Xie et al, 2015).

Even though it is said that successful social media activities increase consumer brand engagement, and it has a positive effect on customer behavior and purchase spending, it is vital to take into consideration that the consumer should first be familiar with the brand before it can lead to loyalty and bigger purchases. In the research of John et al (2017), it is examined whether liking a brand on social media is a symptom

of being fond of a brand, or does it cause a person to view the brand more favorably. The study supports the fact that brand purchasing and attitudes are predicted by consumers' prior love of brands, and these are the same regardless of whether and when consumers like brands on social media. This indicates that “liking” a brand on social media, does not causally change consumer behavior and purchase intentions. Rather, it appears that being fond of a brand gets consumers to buy that brand’s offerings (John et al, 2017).

The CBE in social media can also improve the customer relations between a brand and a consumer. In the study of Hudson et al. (2016) the authors are examining how social media usage is related to consumer-brand relationships. The findings present that social media use is positively associated with the brand relationship. In other words, engaging customers via social media is related to greater consumer-brand relationships and positive WOM. Consumers who are engaging with brands through social media, tend to have a stronger relationship with those brands when compared to consumers who do not interact with brands through social media sites. (Hudson et al. 2016). How about the consumers’ behavior offline, when they are not online on social media? In the research of Mochon et al. (2017) the authors handle the impact of Facebook page likes on offline customer behavior. The findings show that Facebook page likes have a positive impact on offline customer behavior, and these page likes are discovered to be most efficient when the Facebook page is used as a platform for company-initiated promotional communications and firm-relevant information. Also, an important influence is found when the company or brand pays to promote its page posts and is using its Facebook page as a platform for paid advertising (Mochon et al. 2017).

2.5 One-way and two-way communication

Two-way communication is a part of Grunig & Hunt’s public relation theory (1984). Two-way communication involves trading information between two people or parties, where information is both received and given. There are two kinds of two-way communication, asymmetric and symmetric (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). In both, the communication flows in and out from the public. The difference between these two is, that the two-way asymmetric presumes an imbalance from the effects of public

relations on behalf of the firm, as the firm doesn't change because of the public relations. Rather, the firm tries to change the public's behavior and attitude (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). However, this study uses only two-way communication in general, not specifying it as asymmetric or symmetric. The opposite of two-way communication is one-way communication where the information flows from sender to receiver only, not providing any feedback (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

In 1984, the public relation theory claimed that 50% of firms used one-way communication with their stakeholders regarding public information, and only 35% used two-way communication processes (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). It is suggested that there is a growing need to improve sophisticated two-way communication processes when firms communicate information to their stakeholders. While one-way information is necessary, it is not enough. Chen & Zhang (2009) demonstrates the difference between one-way and two-way communication very well; one-way communication is only informing the stakeholders, whereas two-way communication is not only informing but also listening, to what the stakeholders have to say about it (Chen & Zhang, 2009).

2.6 Hypotheses development

In this section, the hypotheses of this thesis will be conducted. The aim of this study is to find out, what kind of social media communication influence consumer brand engagement and purchase intentions. The two sub-research questions are helping answer it. As a recap, the first one of them is: how does two-way communication influence Consumer Brand Engagement?

In the previous section, the literature review, the public relation theory (1984) on one-way and two-way communication was handled. Two-way communication can be considered a better communication style compared to one-way communication because the information is both received and given. Two-way communication style is also open to feedback and it encourages audience partition. Based on the public relation theory (1984), this study assumes that two-way communication will result in higher consumer brand engagement in social media than one-way communication. Consequently, hypothesis one is formed as follows:

H1: *If a brand uses two-way communication in social media, it will result in higher CBE, than using one-way communication.*

The second sub-research question of this study is: how does two-way communication influence Purchase Intentions? In chapter 2.4, which handled the consequences of CBE, there were several evidence that consumer brand engagement in social media leads to a positive increase in purchase spending among consumers (Goh et al, 2013; Xie et al, 2015; Kumar et al, 2016; Saboo et al, 2016). This information combined with public relation theory (1984) on one-way and two-way communication, this study assumes that two-way communication will result in higher consumer purchase intentions. Thereby, hypothesis two is formed as follows:

H2: *If a brand uses two-way communication in social media, it will result in higher consumer purchase intentions, than using one-way communication.*

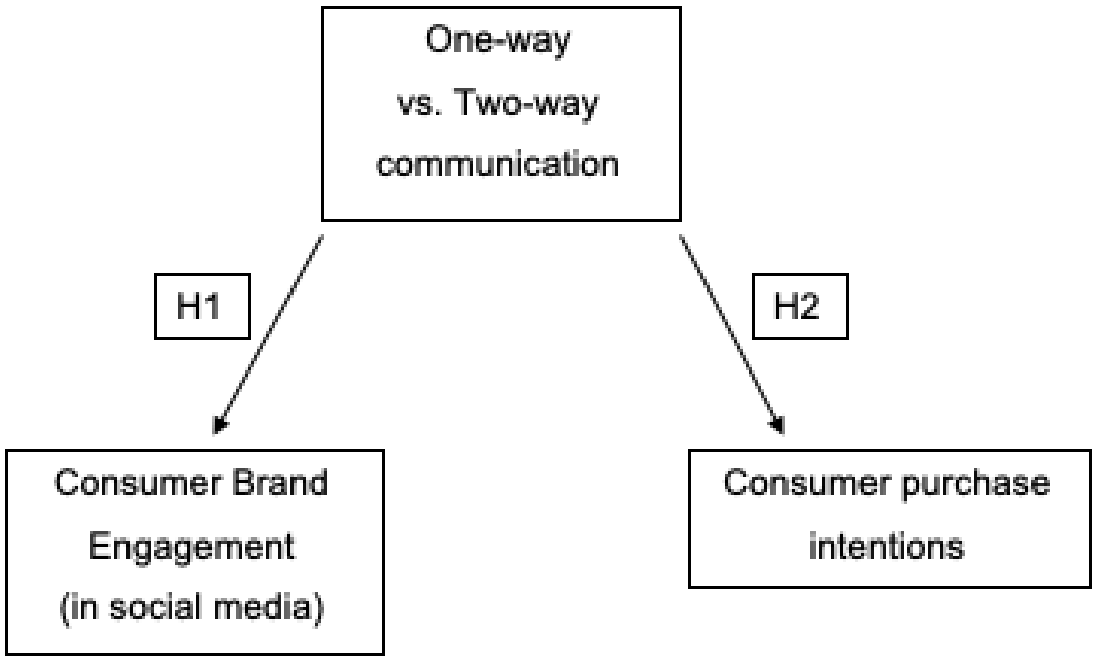


Figure 2. Conceptual map with hypotheses.

The summary of the hypotheses and a conceptual map, which locates the hypotheses to the theoretical framework can be found above. The same kind of conceptual map can be found in the introduction, theoretical framework part 1.4.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This chapter presents the methodological approach of this thesis. First, I will introduce the research design of this study. After that, the quantitative and experimental nature of this research is outlined and the means of data collection. Data analysis and reliability and validity will be handled last.

3.1 Research design

The empirical part of this thesis is executed as an experimental design which is a form of quantitative research. Experiments are used to examine causal relationships and it means creating a set of practices to systematically test a hypothesis. Experimental research aims at finding the effect of one, or more manipulated variables by controlling for all the other variables. The manipulated variable is called the independent variable, and the other variables possibly influenced by the changes in the independent variable are called dependent variables (Ryan & Morgan, 2007). The variables of this experimental study can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Variables used in the research

Type	**Variable**
Independent variable	Two-way communication, One-way communication
Dependent variable	Consumer brand engagement, Consumer purchase intentions
Background variable	Gender, nationality, age, educational level, monthly income, social media usage

This experiment is a between-subject design, which means that the participants receive only one of the possible levels of experimental treatment (Saunders et al. 2016). In other words, the individuals belong to either the experimental group or to control group but not to both. Respondents of the questionnaire are randomly set into experimental and control groups. The experimental group sees the Instagram post

with two-way communication and the control group with one-way communication. Both Instagram posts have the same picture, a photo of Adidas sneakers. The experimental group sees the post with a caption that encourages social media users to interact with the post: "*Simplicity is the key. Adidas Grand Court sneakers now available in stores and online. Let us know what you think of these new sneakers, comment below!"* Whereas the control group sees the post with one-way communication, a caption that does not encourage social media users to comment on the post: "*Simplicity is the key. Adidas Grand Court sneakers now available in stores and online*." The whole questionnaire including both Instagram posts can be seen in Appendix 1. This thesis has not been made in collaboration with Adidas, but the brand is only used as an example.

This difference in the communication style is assumed to make changes in consumer brand engagement and consumer purchase intentions. The rest of the questionnaire is similar in the experimental and control group, to minimize any other factors affecting the results.

3.2 Data collection

The data for this thesis was gathered as an online survey via Qualtrics Survey Software. According to Saunders et al. (2016), surveys are a very good data collection method for experimental research because it tries to find cause-and-effect relationships, and it is an easy and cost-effective way to collect a large number of responses. The questionnaire was pre-tested, and questions were adjusted after to ensure the survey was easy to read and understand.

The questionnaire was live for 15 days, from the 27th of April to the 12th of May 2022. The Survey link was shared on my personal social media channels on Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook. The survey did not have a particular target group, it was meant for consumers who are familiar with social media or are social media users. This made it natural to share the survey link on social media channels. During these two weeks, a total of 113 respondents were received. The questionnaire was made in English in order to get more responses and not to delimit the respondents to only Finnish-speaking participants.

In the survey, most of the claims were following the 7-point Likert scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 strongly agree. Likert scale is much used when measuring options and the 7-point Likert scale is considered to be more accurate than fewer-point scales (Saunders et al, 2016). In the survey, two items used a 5-point Likert scale, one as a matrix table and one as a normal multiple-choice question.

The survey questions are based on a set of measurement items that are adapted from previous academic studies. Questions related to consumer brand engagement and its dimensions were modified from research by Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014). Questions related to purchase intentions were adapted from research by Jalilvand, and Samiei (2012). The whole questionnaire can be found at the end of this paper in Appendix 1. After collecting the data with Qualtrics survey software, the data was exported to SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), which is used for statistical data analysis.

3.3 Data analysis

Before starting the actual analysis, the collected dataset was cleaned up. Test answers, the answers that were collected before the actual start of the survey, were delimited from the dataset. Also, the manipulated variable (communication style) was separated into two different groups, having (0) if the respondents belonged to the control group (one-way communication) and having (1) if the respondents belonged to the experimental group (two-way communication).

3.3.1 Defining measures

After the dataset was cleaned up and changed to the right format, the analysis of the dataset was run with factor analysis and reliability tests. The factor analysis was done using principal axis factoring with varimax rotation for factor extraction. The reliability test was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. All the variables were run by these both, factor analysis and reliability tests in the SPSS system.

Exploratory **factor analysis** is a statistical method that is used to find the most correlated variables and form factors from them. Exploratory factor analysis method aims to find out as much variation between variables as possible. A basic hypothesis of exploratory factor analysis is that there are x common latent factors to be found in the dataset, and the aim is to find the smallest number of common factors that will consider for the correlations (Yong & Pearce, 2013, 80)

Generally, the minimum factor loading value is noted to be at least 0.4. Variables that don't exceed that, are not considered strong enough (Yong & Pearce, 2013, 91).

Communalities are the proportion of each variable's variance that can be explained by the factors. In this measure, all the values over 0.6 can be considered good, and over 0.4 satisfactory. (Yong & Pearce, 2013, 90)

Reliability analysis of the whole scale was measured with **Cronbach's Alpha**. This is a measure of internal consistency, which is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. For Cronbach's Alpha, values over 0.7 are considered satisfactory and values around 0.8 are considered as good. (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011)

3.3.2 Factor Analysis

CBE, Cognitive

Consumer Brand Engagement, Cognitive dimension was measured with three different claims, and the scale was a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The factor analysis had factor loading values ranging from 0.406-0.948, which are considered good. The communalities, initial and extraction, are varying from 0.153-0.899, which are not all acceptable. In items 1 and 3, the communalities were very low, and considered not strong enough, whereas in item 2 the communalities are considered better, especially in extraction very strong (0.899). Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.607 which can be interpreted that the reliability is not acceptable. The findings of the factor analysis are presented below in Table 3.

Table 3. Factor analysis of CBE cognitive

	Item	Factor 1	Communalities, Initial	Communalities, Extraction
CBECOG1	Wearing Adidas gets me to think about the brand	.406	.153	.165
CBECOG2	I think about Adidas a lot when I'm wearing it	.948	.305	.899
CBECOG3	Wearing Adidas stimulates my interest to learn more about sports	.475	.207	.225
	Cronbach's Alpha	.607		

CBE, Affection

Consumer Brand Engagement's Affection dimension was measured with four different claims and the scale was also a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The factor analysis received factor loading values ranging from 0.707-0.895, which are very good. The communalities, initial and extraction, are ranging from 0.464-0.801, which is within an acceptable range. Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.904 which means the reliability is acceptable. The findings of the factor analysis are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Factor analysis of CBE affection

	Item	Factor 1	Communalities, Initial	Communalities, Extraction
CBEAF1	I feel very positive when I'm wearing Adidas	.882	.689	.778
CBEAF2	Wearing Adidas makes me happy	.889	.720	.790

CBEAF3	I feel good when I'm wearing Adidas	.895	.711	.801
CBEAF4	I'm proud to wear Adidas	.707	.464	.499
	Cronbach's Alpha	.904		

CBE, Activation

CBE Activation dimension scale was a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) and was measured with three different claims. The factor analysis received factor loading values varying from 0.811-0.942, which are considered good. The communalities, both initial and extraction, are ranging from 0.606-0.887, which are also considered good. Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.909 which means the reliability of CBE Activation is acceptable. The results of the factor analysis can be found in Table 5.

Table 5. Factor analysis of CBE activation

	Item	**Factor 1**	**Communalities, Initial**	**Communalities, Extraction**
CBEACT1	I wear Adidas a lot compared to other sports brands	.855	.711	.783
CBEACT2	Whenever I'm wearing sports clothing or shoes, I usually wear Adidas	.942	.753	.887
CBEACT3	Adidas is one of the brands I usually wear when I'm wearing sports shoes or other sports clothing	.811	.606	.658
	Cronbach's Alpha	.909		

Purchase Intentions

Purchase intentions had also a 7-point Likert scale and were measured with three different claims. The factor analysis had factor loading values ranging from 0.594-0.874, which are in an acceptable range. The communalities, initial and extraction, are ranging from 0.294-0.764, which are not all acceptable. In item 1 the communalities were low and considered not strong enough, whereas in items 2 and 3 the communalities are at an acceptable level when the values are over 0.4. Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.789 which means the reliability is satisfactory. The results of the factor analysis of purchase intentions are presented below in Table 6.

Table 6. Factor analysis of purchase intentions

	Item	**Factor 1**	**Communalities, Initial**	**Communalities, Extraction**
PI1	I would buy Adidas rather than any other brands available	.594	.294	.352
PI2	I am willing to recommend others to buy Adidas' products	.802	.508	.644
PI3	I intend to purchase Adidas' products in the future	.874	.537	.764
	Cronbach's Alpha	.789		

Other results from the Factor Analysis

The questionnaire also included other variables than the ones in the hypotheses (Consumer Brand Engagement and Purchase Intentions). These other variables are Consumer Involvement, Self-Brand Connect, and Brand Usage Intent, which help to understand the background of the participants better. Factor analysis was also conducted on these variables, and the results from these are handled next.

Consumer Involvement

Consumer involvement was measured with nine different claims and the scale was a 5-point Likert scale. The respondents were asked how they felt about the Instagram post, they saw at the beginning of the survey. The items are adjectives, positive and negative ones. All nine items can be found in Table 7.

The factor analysis received factor loading values varying from 0.552-0.842, which are considered acceptable. The communalities, initial and extraction, are ranging from 0.304-0.708, which are not all within an acceptable range. In items 2, 7, and 8 communalities values are below 0.4 which is not strong enough. In other items, the communalities value is over 0.4 which is considered satisfactory. Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.876 which means the reliability in consumer involvement is acceptable.

Table 7. Factor analysis of consumer involvement

	Item	**Factor 1**	**Communalities, Initial**	**Communalities, Extraction**
CON INV1	This Instagram post is… Interesting - Boring	.729	.565	.531
CON INV2	Irrelevant - Relevant	.552	.321	.304
CON INV3	Unexciting - Exciting	.724	.631	.524
CON INV4	Means nothing - Means a lot to me	.630	.483	.397
CON INV5	Unappealing - Appealing	.669	.451	.447
CON INV6	Mundane - Fascinating	.842	.638	.708
CON INV7	Worthless - Valuable	.611	.433	.374
CON INV8	Uninvolving - Involving	.598	.338	.357

CON INV9	Not needed - Needed	.640	.420	.409
	Cronbach's Alpha	.876		

Self-Brand Connect

Self-brand connect was measured with seven different claims and the scale was a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The factor analysis had factor loading values ranging from 0.488-0.873, which are considered satisfactory. The communalities, initial and extraction, are ranging from 0.238-0.762, which are not all acceptable. In item 7 the communalities are very low, with values ranging under 0.3 and considered not strong enough. Whereas in all of the other items (1-6) the communalities are considered much better, with values being over 0.6. Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.918 which means the reliability is acceptable. The results of the whole factor analysis are presented below in Table 8.

Table 8. Factor analysis of self-brand connect

	Item	**Factor 1**	**Communalities, Initial**	**Communalities, Extraction**
SBC1	Adidas reflects who I am	.800	.632	.640
SBC2	I can identify with Adidas	.829	.657	.687
SBC3	I feel a personal connection to Adidas	.818	.642	.670
SBC4	I wear Adidas to communicate who I am to other people	.830	.655	.688
SBC5	I think Adidas (could) help me become the type of person I want to be	.840	.700	.706

SBC6	I consider Adidas to be 'me' (It reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to other(s))	.873	.755	.762
SBC7	Adidas suits me well	.488	.284	.238
	Cronbach's Alpha	.918		

Brand Usage Intent

Brand usage intent was measured with four different claims and the scale was also a 7-point Likert scale. The factor analysis received factor loading values varying from 0.776-0.967, which are considered very good. The communalities are varying from 0.560-0.936, which is within an acceptable range. Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.911 which means the reliability is acceptable in brand usage intent. The results of the factor analysis are presented below in Table 9.

Table 9. Factor analysis of brand usage intent

	Item	**Factor 1**	**Communalities, Initial**	**Communalities, Extraction**
BUI1	It makes sense to wear Adidas instead of any other brand, even if they are the same	.820	.680	.672
BUI2	Even if another brand has the same features as Adidas, I would prefer to wear Adidas	.967	.811	.936

BUI3	If there is another brand as good as Adidas, I prefer to wear Adidas	.833	.659	.694
BUI4	If another brand is not different from Adidas in any way, it seems smarter to wear Adidas	.776	.560	.602
	Cronbach's Alpha	.911		

3.4 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are an important part of the research design since in this part the credibility of the study is evaluated. Reliability means consistency and replication, would similar results be achieved if the research design would be repeated (Saunders, 2016, 223). Significant features of reliability are transparency of data analysis and running a pilot test on the questionnaire. The replication of this research has been made possible by describing every step carefully and transparently in each part. However, it is good to consider that the social media platform Instagram is rapidly changing all the time, and therefore the context of this study might be different over time. The questionnaire of this study was pre-tested to ensure the questions were easy to understand, which also indicates good reliability. In the previous chapter where the factor analysis is discussed, the reliability analysis was measured with Cronbach's Alpha. All the alpha values were above the acceptable limit (> 0.7) except for one variable, CBE Cognitive. Otherwise, the variables in this study can be called reliable.

The validity on the other hand means whether the research actually studies the phenomenon it is supposed to (Saunders, 2016, 224). Validity can be divided into external and internal validity. External validity means that the findings can be generalized (Saunders, 2016, 224). The findings of this study can be applied best to young and highly educated Finnish women, as these were the most among the respondents. Internal validity on the other hand consists of an assessment of the concepts and whether they are in line with actual verified theory (Saunders, 2016,

224). The validity of this research is assured by using variables from the previous confirmed academic studies. Consumer brand engagement and one-way and two-way communication concepts were carefully chosen, and they are both based on confirmed theories. However, based on the factor analysis of this study, not all measures were completely valid.

4 RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the data analysis. First, descriptive statistics of the variables will be reviewed, and after that correlations table's findings are presented. Finally, the results of the hypotheses testing and manipulation check are presented, and lastly a short summary of the results.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

As mentioned earlier, a total of 113 responses were received from the survey and 95 people answered the question regarding nationality. The majority of the respondents were Finnish (94,7%). However, there were also a few other nationalities such as American, Estonian, French, Guatemalan, and Portuguese. Figure 3 below illustrates the distribution of nationalities in this survey.

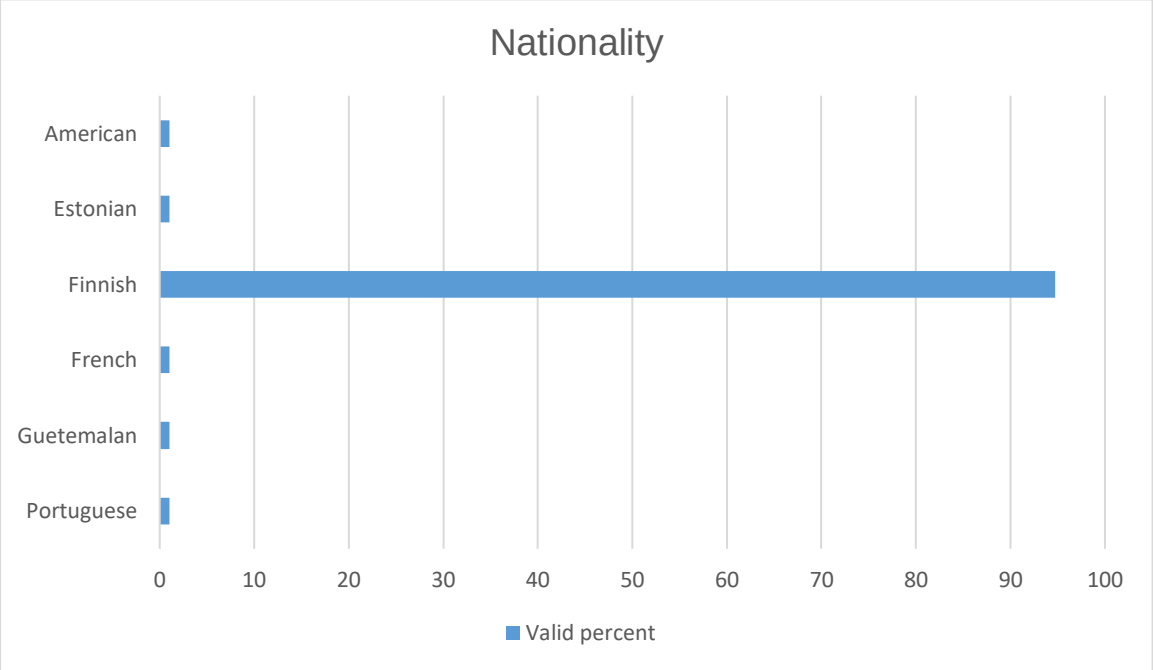


Figure 3. Nationality distribution

A total of 92 people answered a question regarding gender, and from those 79,3% were women and 18,3% were men. Few respondents preferred not to answer the question, a total of 2,2%. Figure 4 below visualizes the gender distribution of this study.

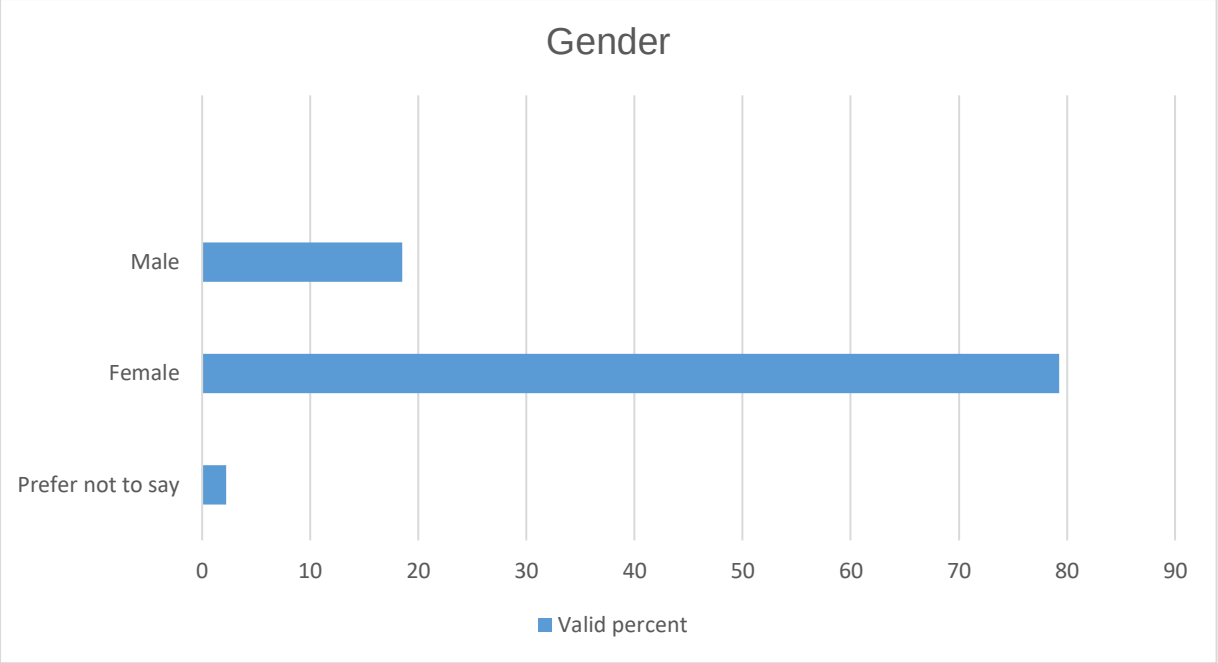


Figure 4. Gender distribution

The age distribution of the study was a bit more versatile. The majority (56,5%) of the respondents were 25-29 years old or 30-34 years old (29,3%). The third largest age group was 35-39 years old (5,4%) and the rest of the age groups, 18-24 years old, 40-49 years old, 50-59 years old, and over 60 years old had the same percentage of responses (2,2%). Figure 5 below presents the age distribution of this survey.

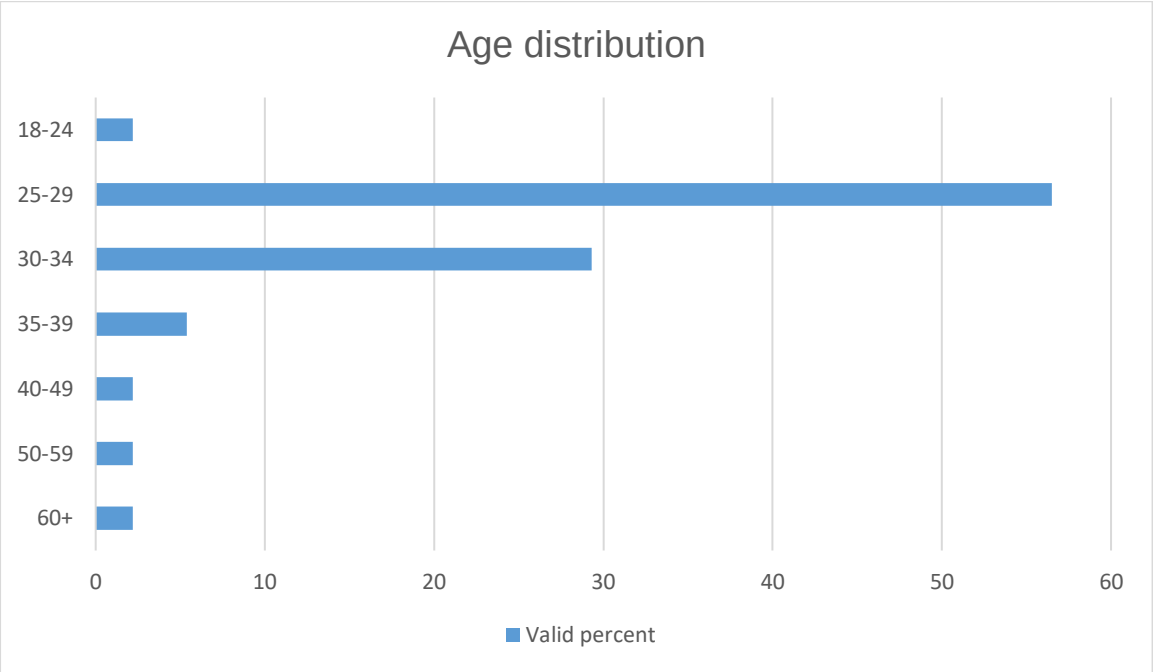


Figure 5. Age distribution

Most of the respondents' highest educational levels were either upper university degrees (54,3%) or lower university degrees (37%). The third largest educational level group was high school / vocational school (7,6%) and the fourth was Ph.D. level (1,1%). None of the respondent's educational levels was primary school or no education at all. Figure 6 below illustrates the results of educational level distribution.

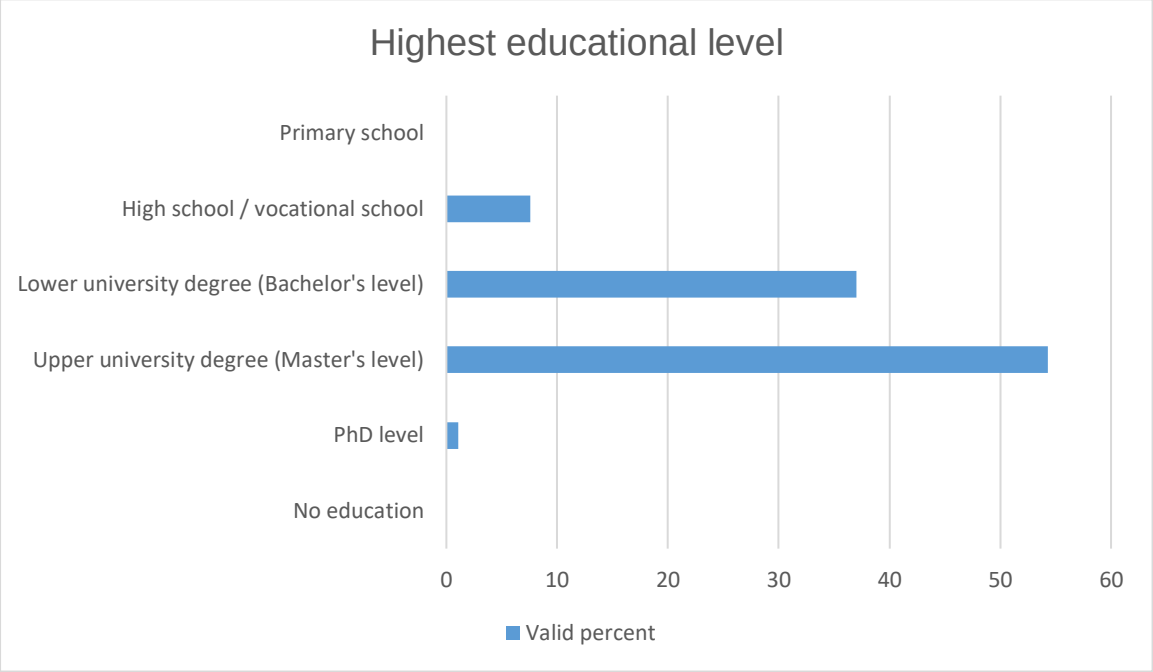


Figure 6. Educational level distribution

There was a bit more dispersion in gross monthly income level distribution among the respondents. The majority (41,3%) of the respondents earn 3000-3999€ per month. The second largest income level among the respondents was 2000-2999€ (19,6%) and the third largest was 4000-4999€ and 5000-5999€ (12%). Respondents who earn over 6000€ per month had the second least answers (10,9%). The least responses were received to 1000-1999€ and less than 1000€ (2,2%) monthly income levels. Figure 7 below presents the gross monthly income level distribution.

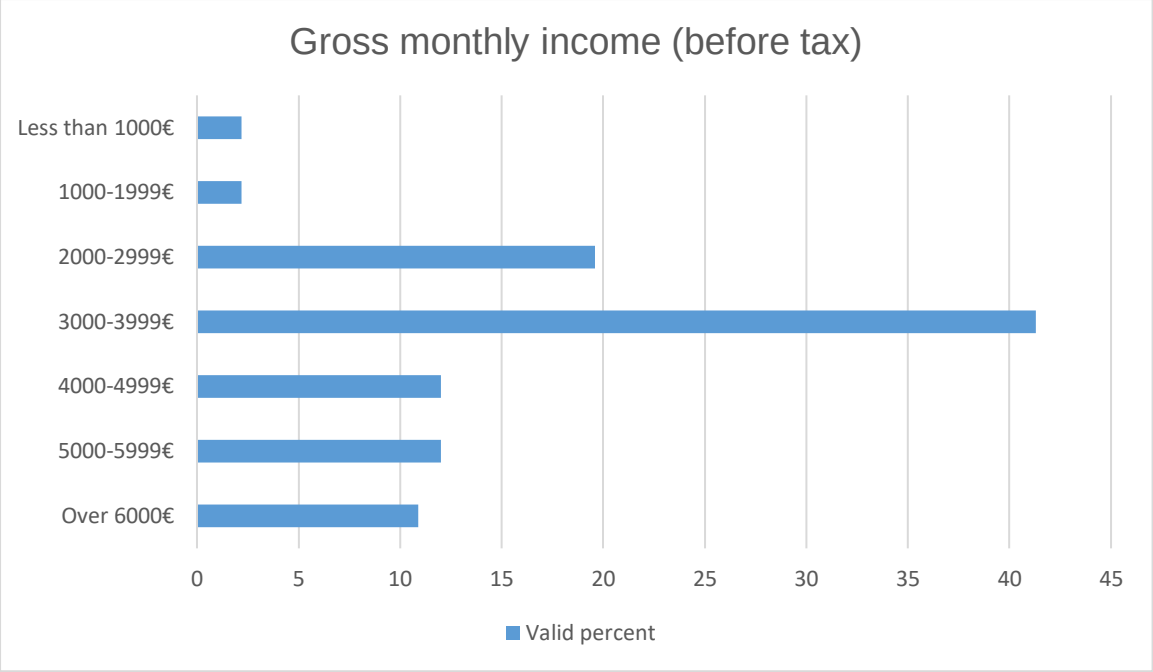


Figure 7. Gross monthly income level distribution

The second last question of the survey's descriptive statistic part was about people's Instagram usage, and more specifically how often they use it. Over half of the respondents use Instagram a few times a day (54,3%). The second largest group used Instagram once an hour (15,2%) and the third largest many times an hour (9,8%). Here we can see that majority of the respondents use Instagram a lot and many times a day. 7,6% of the respondents use Instagram once a day, 6,5% use Instagram once a week or less, and 4,3% use Instagram a few times a week. Few respondents answered that they don't use Instagram at all, or they don't have an Instagram account (2,2%). Figure 8 illustrates the respondents' Instagram usage distribution.

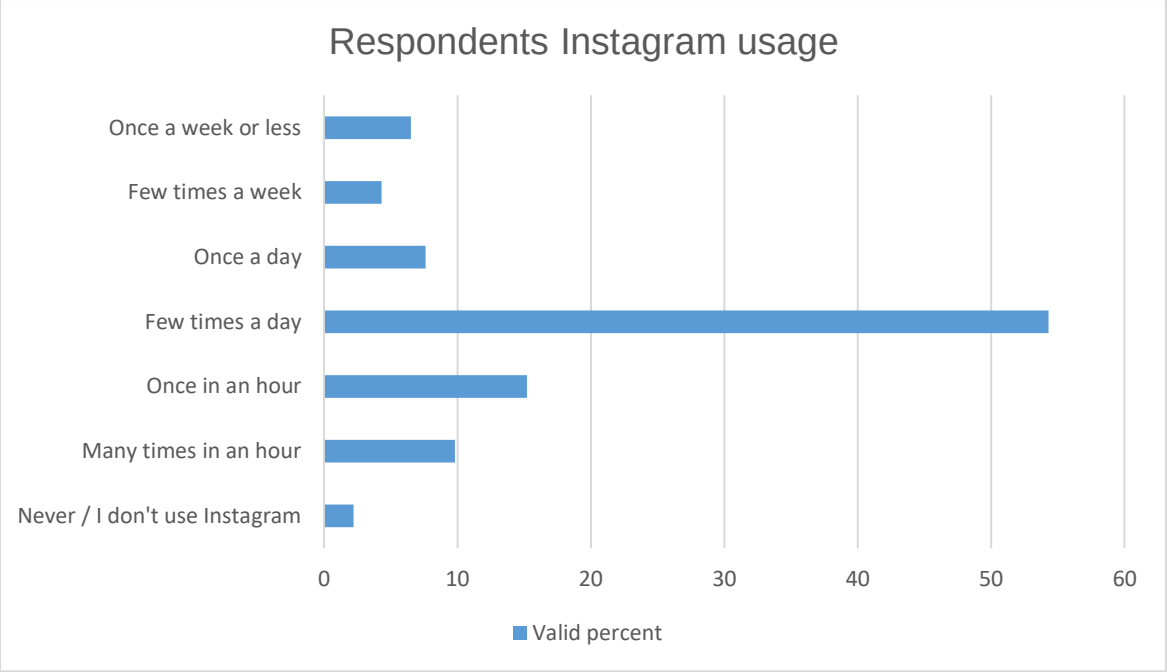


Figure 8. Respondents' Instagram usage distribution

Before moving to the actual survey, respondents were asked about familiarity with the Adidas brand. The majority of this survey's respondents were very familiar with the brand and 94% of them answered so. About 5% of the respondents probably were familiar with the brand and 1% were not sure if they were or were not familiar with the brand. Figure 9 illustrates respondents' familiarity with Adidas.

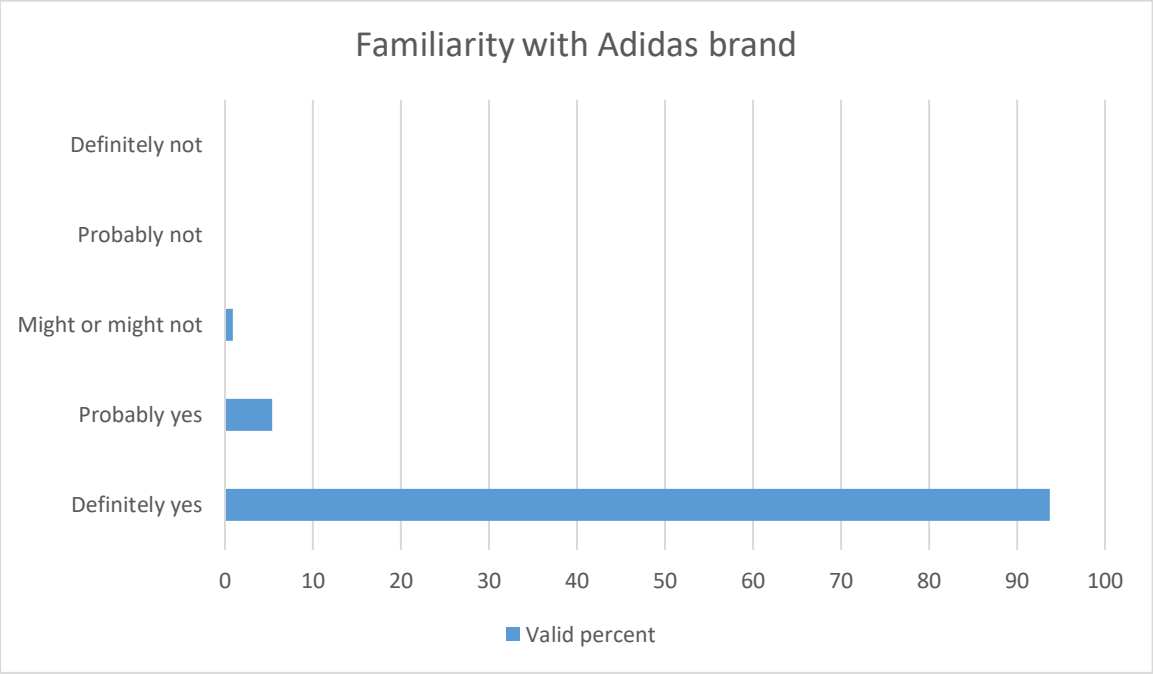


Figure 9. Respondents' familiarity with the Adidas brand

4.2 Correlation table

In table 10 the mean, standard deviation, and the number of respondents on each descriptive statistic can be found. From the table, we can see that some of the respondents have left unfinished, since purchase intentions was the first part of the questionnaire, and it has the highest number of respondents' amount (104). Mean values are at a normal level since they vary between the neutral answers from 3 to 5 (somewhat disagree – neither agree nor disagree - somewhat agree). Consumer involvement is the only part that had a mean value below normal (2), which indicates disagreement with the claims. Standard deviation denotes how scattered the data is in relation to the mean. A low standard deviation value means that the data is clustered around the mean, and a high standard deviation on the other hand indicates that the data is more scattered. From Table 10, we can conclude that the standard deviation is rather low.

Table 10. Mean and Std. Deviation of measures

Descriptive Statistics	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**N**
CBE Cognitive	3.389	.9728	102
CBE Affection	4.200	1.019	100
CBE Activation	3.306	1.396	99
Consumer Involvement	2.614	.588	97
Self-Brand Connect	3.104	1.181	95
Brand Usage Intent	3.470	1.321	93
Purchase Intentions	4.471	.989	104

When looking at the correlations table in Table 11 below, consumer brand engagement (activation and affection dimensions) seems to have a high positive correlation with purchase intentions, as the Sig. (2-tailed) value is < 0,05. This is not

that surprising because many studies support the fact that consumer brand engagement leads to a positive increase in purchase spending (Goh et al, 2013; Xie et al, 2015; Kumar et al, 2016; Saboo et al, 2016).

Another interesting finding is that self-brand connect and consumer brand engagement (affection dimension) seems to have a high positive correlation. This means the more connected consumer feels with the brand, the more engagement there is with the brand and consumer. Also, brand usage intent and consumer brand engagement (activation dimension) seem to have a strong positive correlation.

Table 11. Correlations

		PI	**CBE COG**	**CBE AFF**	**CBE ACT**	**CON INV**	**SBC**	**BUI**
PI	**Pearson Corre-lation**	1	0,193	.602**	**.571****	.215*	.577**	.599**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,051	0,000	**0,000**	0,034	0,000	0,000
	N	104	102	100	**99**	97	95	93
CBE COG	**Pearson Corre-lation**	0,193	1	.355**	.198*	.313**	.526**	.369**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,051		0,000	0,050	0,002	0,000	0,000
	N	102	102	100	99	97	95	93
CBE AFF	**Pearson Corre-lation**	**.602****	.355**	1	.443**	.315**	.622**	.594**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**0,000**	0,000		0,000	0,002	0,000	0,000
	N	**100**	100	100	99	97	95	93

CBE ACT	**Pearson Corre-lation**	.571**	.198*	.443**	1	.272**	.604**	.745**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,050	0,000		0,007	0,000	0,000
	N	99	99	99	99	97	95	93
CON INV	**Pearson Corre-lation**	.215*	.313**	.315**	.272**	1	.513**	.321**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,034	0,002	0,002	0,007		0,000	0,002
	N	97	97	97	97	97	95	93
SBC	**Pearson Corre-lation**	.577**	.526**	**.622****	.604**	.513**	1	.687**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	**0,000**	0,000	0,000		0,000
	N	95	95	**95**	95	95	95	93
BUI	**Pearson Corre-lation**	.599**	.369**	.594**	**.745****	.321**	.687**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,000	**0,000**	0,002	0,000	
	N	93	93	93	**93**	93	93	93

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Notes: PI = Purchase Intentions

CBE COG = Consumer Brand Engagement Cognitive dimension

CBE AFF = Consumer Brand Engagement Affection dimension

CBE ACT =Consumer Brand Engagement Activation dimension

CON INV = Consumer Involvement

SBC = Self-Brand Connect

BUI = Brand Usage Intent

4.3 Manipulation check and hypothesis testing

In this part, the manipulation check and hypothesis testing will be conducted. Hypotheses are evaluated by using **independent samples T-test** in the SPSS system. The hypotheses will be either approved or rejected, depending on the final findings of the analysis. In independent samples T-test, the means of two different groups are compared to define whether there is statistical evidence that the related population means are substantially different (Kent State University, 2021). The T-test consists of two parts, the first one is Levene's test for equality of variances, and the second one is the T-test for equality of means.

Levene's test for equality of variances is used to test the null hypothesis that the samples to be compared, come from a population with the same variance. If the p-value is bigger than 0.05, then the variances are not substantially different from each other, and the null hypothesis can be maintained. If the p-value is smaller than 0.05, then there is a substantial difference between the variances, and the null hypothesis can be rejected. (Data tab, 2022)

- **H0:** Groups have equal variances
- **H1:** Groups have different variances

In Levene's test, F is the test statistic and Sig. is the p-value equivalent to the test statistic. (Kent State University, 2021)

The outcome in the independent samples T-test table has two rows. The first one is Equal variances assumed, and the second one is Equal variances not assumed. If Levene's test proves that the difference across the two groups is equal, the first row's outcome, Equal variances assumed should be relied on. If Levene's test indicates that the difference across the two groups is not equal, then the second row's output, Equal variances not assumed should be relied on. (Kent State University, 2021)

The second part, the **T-test for equality of means** gives the outcomes for the actual independent samples T-test. The most important value here is the Sig. (2-tailed), which is the p-value equivalent to the given test statistic and degrees of freedom. If the p-value is less or equal to 0.05, it means that there is a statistically significant

difference between the two groups. If the p-value is smaller than 0.10, it means that there is a marginally notable difference between the two groups. Again, if the p-value is bigger than 0.05, it means there is no statistically notable difference between the two groups. (Data tab, 2022)

Another value that comes in the T-test for equality of means is, t which is the calculated test statistic using the formula for the Equal variances assumed -test statistic or the formula for the Equal variances not assumed test statistic. Df refers to degrees of freedom, which are the greatest numbers of values that have freedom of ranging in a sample dataset. Mean difference again is the difference between the sample means and Standard error of the mean difference (Std. Error Difference) is the approximation that refers to how different the sample mean is likely to be when compared to the population mean. (Kent State University, 2021)

A manipulation check was made to determine the effectiveness of manipulation in experimental research. A great part of this thesis relies on the assumption that the experimental group finds the Instagram post as two-way communication and the control group as one-way communication. In the survey, 52 respondents were seeing an Instagram post where two-way communication is used and 41 respondents were seeing an Instagram post where one-way communication was used.

The manipulation check was performed using a two-tailed independent sample T-Test. Two questions at the end of the survey worked as manipulation checks:

1. Do you think social media user was able to interact with the brand?
2. Do you think social media user was encouraged to interact with the brand?

The results of the manipulation check are shown in Table 12 and Table 13. As can be seen from Table 12, in both manipulation checks there is a statistical difference between the experimental (two-way communication) and control group (one-way communication). For example, if we compare the mean values in one-way and two-way groups, in one-way communication the mean value is about three while in two-way communication mean value is above four. The scale was in the survey from 1 to 7 (strongly disagree - strongly agree) and four indicated neither agree nor disagree, and three indicated somewhat disagree. Therefore, it can be concluded that the

experimental group perceived two-way communication through the Instagram post as slightly more engaging than the control group in one-way communication. However, it is good to note that the sample groups were different sizes. The reason for this is that there were few unfinished surveys which affected the equal placing of experimental and control groups.

Table 12. Group statistics of manipulation check 1 and 2

Manipulation check 1.				
	N	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
One-way	41	3.68	1.386	.217
Two-way	52	4.23	1.395	.193

Manipulation check 2.				
	N	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
One-way	41	3.10	1.393	.218
Two-way	52	4.38	1.374	.191

The results from the independent samples T-test can be found in Table 13. The most important values in this table are the p-values Sig., and Sig. (2-tailed). As can be seen from the Table 13, Sig. value is bigger than 0.05 and Sig. (2-tailed) value is between 0.05-0.10. It can be concluded that the manipulation checks worked well since the p-values had satisfactory results in both.

Table 13. Independent Samples T-test, results of manipulation check 1 and 2

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means				
Manipulation Check 1.	**F**	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**
Equal variances assumed	.018	.894	-1.886	91	.063	-.548	.291
Equal variances not assumed			-1.887	86.244	.063	-.548	.290

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means				
Manipulation Check 2.	**F**	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**
Equal variances assumed	.066	.798	-4.458	91	.000	-1.287	.289
Equal variances not assumed			-4.450	85.470	.000	-1.287	.289

Next, the factor analysis of this study will be presented.

CBE, Cognitive

According to independent samples T-test, Consumer Brand Engagement, Cognitive dimension Sig. value is 0.360 which is higher than 0.05. This indicates that the variability in the two groups (one-way and two-way) is not significantly different. Thus, the results table can be read from the first row, with Equal variances assumed. Sig. (2-Tailed) value is 0.709 which is also higher than 0.05. As a conclusion, there is no statistically substantial difference between the two groups. When reviewing mean values from one-way and two-way communication, two-way communication has a slightly higher mean value than one-way communication. In a conclusion, hypothesis 1a (H1a), the cognitive dimension of CBE, is rejected. The results from the whole T-test are shown in Table 14.

Table 14. Independent Samples T-test, CBE Cognitive

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means				
CBE Cognitive	**F**	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**
Equal variances assumed	.846	.360	-.374	100	.709	-.073	.195
Equal variances not assumed			-.378	97.566	.706	-.073	.193

Group Statistics		**Mean**
CBE Cognitive	One-way communication	3.348
	Two-way communication	3.421

CBE, Affection

In the affection dimension of CBE, Sig. value is 0.338. Since the value is higher than 0.05, it means that the variability in the two groups (one-way and two-way) is not significantly different here either. Thus, the results table should be read from the first row, Equal variances assumed. Sig. (2-Tailed) value is 0.359 which is also higher than 0.05. Here we can conclude that there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups. When viewing mean values from one-way and two-way communication, one-way communication has a slightly higher mean value than two-way communication. In conclusion, hypothesis 1b (H1b) is rejected, from the CBE affection part. Results from the independent samples T-test on CBE affection are presented in Table 15.

Table 15. Independent Samples T-test, CBE Affection

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means				
CBE Affection	**F**	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**
Equal variances assumed	.927	.338	.921	98	.359	.189	.206

Equal variances not assumed			.942	96.958	.347	.189	.201

Group Statistics		**Mean**
CBE Affection	One-way communication	4.308
	Two-way communication	4.118

CBE, Activation

In the CBE, activation part Sig. value is 0.084 which is slightly bigger than 0.05. This means that the variability in the two groups is not remarkably different. That is, the results table should be interpreted from the first row. The Sig. (2-Tailed) value here is 0.152. The p-value is also bigger than 0.05, and it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups, one-way and two-way communication. When reviewing mean values from one-way and two-way communication, two-way communication has a slightly higher mean value than one-way communication. Hypothesis 1c (H1c) from the CBE activation part is rejected. Results from this can be found in Table 16.

Table 16. Independent Samples T-test, CBE Activation

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means				
CBE Activation	**F**	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**
Equal variances assumed	3.044	.084	-1.445	97	.152	-.408	.282
Equal variances not assumed			-1.477	94.396	.143	-.408	.276

Group Statistics		**Mean**
CBE Activation	One-way communication	3.071
	Two-way communication	3.479

Purchase Intentions

According to independent samples T-test purchase intentions Sig. value is 0.930 which is higher than 0.05. This indicates that the variability in the two groups (one-way and two-way) is not significantly different. Consequently, the results table should be read from the first row. Sig. (2-Tailed) value is 0.791 which is also greater than 0.05. When looking at mean values from one-way and two-way communication, two-way communication has a slightly higher mean value than one-way communication. As a conclusion, there is no statistically substantial difference between the two groups. This means that hypothesis 2 (H2) is also rejected. The results are presented in Table 17.

Table 17. Independent Samples T-test, Purchase Intentions

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means				
Purchase Intentions	**F**	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**
Equal variances assumed	.008	.930	-.266	102	.791	-.052	.196
Equal variances not assumed			-.265	94.848	.792	-.052	.197

Group Statistics		**Mean**
Purchase Intentions	One-way communication	4.442
	Two-way communication	4.494

4.4 Additional analyses

In this part, additional analyses will be presented. With these analyses, more detailed information is obtained about the factors that may influence the actual research results.

Consumer Involvement

Consumer involvement's results on independent samples T-test are the following. Sig. value is 0.170, which is higher than 0.05. This means that the variability in the two groups is not significantly different here. Therefore, the results table (Table 18.) should be read from the first row. Sig. (2-Tailed) value is 0.790 which is also higher than 0.05. In a conclusion, there is no statistically substantial difference between the two groups. When reviewing mean values from one-way and two-way communication, one-way communication has a slightly higher mean value than two-way communication.

Table 18. Independent Samples T-test, Consumer Involvement

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means				
Consumer Involvement	**F**	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**
Equal variances assumed	1.913	.170	.267	95	.790	.032	.121
Equal variances not assumed			.272	93.514	.786	.032	.119

Group Statistics		**Mean**
Consumer Involvement	One-way communication	2.632
	Two-way communication	2.600

Self-Brand Connect

According to independent samples T-test Self-Brand Connect Sig. value is 0.241. Since the value is bigger than 0.05, it means that the variability in the two groups is not different here either. Therefore, the results table (Table 19) should be read from the first row, with Equal variances assumed. Self-Brand Connect Sig. (2-Tailed) value is 0.742 which is also bigger than 0.05. It can be concluded that there is no statistically substantial difference between the two groups. When viewing mean values from one-way and two-way communication, it seems that one-way communication has a slightly higher mean value than two-way communication.

Table 19. Independent Samples T-test, Self-Brand Connect

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means				
Self-Brand Connect	**F**	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**
Equal variances assumed	1.394	.241	.330	93	.742	.810	.246
Equal variances not assumed			.334	90.207	.739	.810	.242

Group Statistics		**Mean**
Self-Brand Connect	One-way communication	3.149
	Two-way communication	3.068

Brand Usage Intent

In the Brand Usage Intent part, Sig. value is 0.108 which is higher than 0.05. This indicates that the variability in the two groups, one-way and two-way, is not remarkably different. Thus, the results table should be interpreted from the first row. The Sig. (2-Tailed) value here is 0.074. Since the p-value is less than 0.10, it can be concluded that there is a marginally significant difference between the two groups. When reviewing mean values, it seems that two-way communication has a slightly higher mean value than one-way communication. Results are presented below, in Table 20.

Table 20. Independent Samples T-test, Brand Usage Intent

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means				
Brand Usage Intent	**F**	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**
Equal variances assumed	2.633	.108	-1.807	91	.074	-.492	.273
Equal variances not assumed			-1.855	90.972	.067	-.492	.266

Group Statistics		Mean
Brand Usage Intent	One-way communication	3.195
	Two-way communication	3.687

4.5 Summary of the results

Table 21 summarizes the results of the hypotheses testing. This study failed to support both hypotheses 1 and 2. None of the hypotheses were fully supported and therefore it can be concluded that the excising theories do not explain this phenomenon in this context plenty enough.

Table 21. Summary of the hypotheses results

Hypothesis	Result
H1: If a brand uses two-way communication in social media, it will result in higher CBE, than using one-way communication.	*rejected*
H2: If a brand uses two-way communication in social media, it will result in higher consumer purchase intentions, than using one-way communication.	*rejected*

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to find out, what kind of social media communication influences consumer brand engagement and purchase intentions. This was conducted by examining these theories with one-way and two-way communication in the social media environment. To my best knowledge, these theories have never been examined together before, which made this research interesting as a whole. In the theoretical part of this thesis, relevant and essential previous academic literature was handled and discussed from this study's point of view. In the empirical part, the hypotheses of this research were tested.

This final chapter will answer the research questions and assess how the empirical findings align with previous research. The managerial implications evaluate who could benefit from this study's results and how these could be utilized. Lastly, the limitations of this study will be handled and future research recommendations, on how the study could be further examined in the future.

5.1 Theoretical contributions

This sub-chapter assesses if the theories presented in chapter two support the empirical findings that were handled in the previous chapter four. The findings are presented by answering the sub-research questions and after that the main research question.

The first sub-research question was:

1. **How does two-way communication influence Consumer Brand Engagement?**

This sub-research question was approached with hypothesis one:

H1: If a brand uses two-way communication in social media, it will result in higher CBE, than using one-way communication.

The previous literature on Public relation theory (1984) has shown that two-way communication can be considered as a better communication style compared to one-way communication since information is there both given and received. The two-way communication style is also open to feedback and it encourages people to participate. There was also previous literature on CBE, how important it is for brands and companies to engage with their customers through their social media sites (Velitchka et al, 2013; Ruiz Mafe et al, 2014; Kumar et al, 2016; Osei-Frimpong et al, 2018.) Fascinating and informative communication on social media will raise consumers' attention and interest, and result in higher engagement (Osei-Frimpong et al, 2018).

Based on these, this research assumed that two-way communication would result in higher consumer brand engagement in social media than one-way communication. However, this study failed to support this assumption. There was no statistically remarkable difference in consumer brand engagement when using one-way communication or two-way communication on a social media post.

Consumer brand engagement was analyzed in three different parts (H1a-c) including all three dimensions of CBE; cognition, affection, and activation. When comparing the mean values on independent samples T-test, it seems that two-way communication had a slightly higher mean value when compared to one-way communication in cognition and activation dimensions. This means that even though the hypothesis on two-way communication leading to higher CBE did not have support in this research, survey respondents' thoughts on two-way communication were slightly more agreeable when compared to one-way communication.

In addition to the three dimensions of CBE, other factors affect consumer brand engagement, like self-brand connection, brand usage intent, and involvement. These were also examined in this research but these did not get any support either, except for brand usage intent. This indicates that previous research cannot fully explain this phenomenon, not at least when combining consumer brand engagement and public relation theory.

The second sub-research question was:

2. **How does two-way communication influence Purchase Intentions?**

This sub-research question was approached with hypothesis two:

H2: If a brand uses two-way communication in social media, it will result in higher consumer purchase intentions, than using one-way communication.

Previous research on purchase intentions in social media environment was also studied before. Several studies support the fact that brands engaging in social media with their customers lead to a positive increase in purchase spending (Goh et al, 2013; Xie et al, 2015; Kumar et al, 2016; Saboo et al, 2016). This information combined with public relation theory (1984) on one-way and two-way communication, this study assumed that the two-way communication style will result in higher consumer purchase intentions in social media.

However, this study failed to support this assumption, too. There was no statistically remarkable difference in purchase intentions among consumers when using one-way communication or two-way communication on a social media post.

When comparing the mean values on independent samples T-test, it looks that two-way communication had a slightly higher mean value than one-way communication also in purchase intentions. Even though the hypothesis on two-way communication leading to higher purchase intentions did not have support in this research, survey respondents' thoughts were more agreeable and neutral on two-way communication style than on one-way communication.

Finally, the main research question was:

What kind of social media communication influence consumer brand engagement and purchase intentions?

This study has shown that the communication style, one-way or two-way communication does not have a significant difference in consumer brand engagement or purchase intentions in social media.

What explains the fact that neither of the hypotheses did get any support in this study? One reason for this could be, that both social media posts were too similar and therefore the results were also quite the same and did not differ from each other. In one-way communication, the message receiver does not have the opportunity to give feedback to the message sender in any way, whether in two-way communication receiver has. Therefore, social media platform is not maybe the best environment to examine one-way communication because social media users can almost always comment on other brands' or users' posts whether they are encouraged to do so or not. The only exception is, if a user or brand has decided to shut down their comment section, then no one can participate in social media posts. Perhaps this influenced the study's results and next time these should be noted.

Before this study, to my best knowledge, there was no academic research done on these theories together including public relations theory with consumer brand engagement and purchase intentions. Even though this study failed to prove these assumptions, interesting findings were still made. The manipulation check that was included in the survey, had two questions that referred to the social media post shown in the beginning. The first question asked whether the social media user was able to interact with the brand on the post, and the second was whether they were encouraged to interact with the brand. Both questions had a higher mean value in two-way communication than in one-way communication. This indicates that survey respondents thought that the two-way communication post was easier and more encouraging to interact with than the one-way communication post.

Another interesting finding that was also made, was the results regarding brand usage intent. Brand usage intent had a marginally significant difference between the two groups, the p-value being less than 0.10. This indicates that, as a result of two-way communication, people want to use the brand, but not so much to purchase it.

5.2 Managerial implications

Even though the hypotheses were not supported, this study provides important insight into consumer brand engagement and purchase intentions on social media. Based on the findings of this study and previous research on these theories, managerial implications can be represented.

What brands should focus on social media, is to keep on communicating with their customers with interesting and informative messages (Osei-Frimpong et al. 2018). Continuous proactivity and communication between a customer and a brand are vital in social media (Velitchka et al, 2013).

Even though the communication style on a brand's social media posts doesn't seem to matter to consumers, at least according to this study, brands are encouraged to generate content for their consumers (Ruiz-Mafe et al, 2014). Communicating on social media can be for example informing brand info, engaging consumers with relevant content to the brand, giving timely information related to promotions and new product launches, addressing customer service issues, and managing consumer-generated comments (Velitchka et al, 2013).

It is also important for companies to stay active and post regularly, because the number of brand posts indirectly influences consumer engagement and behavior, like commenting, sharing, and liking (Dhaoui et al, 2021). The more activity there is on the brand's social media page, the more participation effect there is. At best, consumer brand engagement on social media can lead to a positive increase in customers' purchase spending (Rishika et al, 2013). However, it is important to remember that customers should first be familiar with the brand before it can lead to loyalty or a bigger purchase.

Social media is a powerful place for companies and brands to engage with their customers, and therefore they should be part of it, at least in some of the social media platforms.

5.3 Limitations and future research

This research has also limitations. The survey's sample size could have been a bit larger to increase the reliability of this study. Now, it had altogether 113 respondents which is acceptable but still quite small. Also, the demographics of the sample size were not very diverse in gender, nationality, and education level. This was because the survey was shared on my own social media channels (e.g. Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook) and most of the survey respondents were family or friends, not random social media users. To increase the sample size and get more diverse demographics, the survey could have been made together with the brand and utilize their customer base.

In this study, not all measures were completely valid. This should be taken into account when going through and applying the results.

In the future, it would be interesting to use some other brand than Adidas here and see if it would affect results. In this study, 94% of the respondents were familiar with the brand Adidas (Figure 9). People might have subconscious presumptions regarding the brand and its products that might have influenced their answers in the survey. This study has focused on the Instagram environment which means, that results can certainly vary if another social media platform would have been used. Therefore, a future recommendation for further examination would be that research could be conducted on another social media platform, for example, Facebook, Twitter, or TikTok. Other activation types, than commenting and liking a post could be examined more in the future, too.

This study was made from the consumer's perspective, which also limits the results. In the future, the research could be made from the companies' and brands' perspectives only. This would definitely give different kinds of results. Most importantly, in future research, it would be vital to note that experimental and control group social media posts are more different from each other. In this study, they were very similar, and therefore the results were also very alike and did not differ from each other.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. The survey questionnaire

Dear participants,

This study is done for the purpose of a Master's Thesis within the Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology. This thesis is studying consumer brand engagement and communication on social media.

The questionnaire will take about five minutes to respond and is completely anonymous and private. Your personal information will not be saved, and the data received from this questionnaire will only be used for the purposes of this thesis. You can withdraw your consent to participate in this study any time by exiting the questionnaire. Furthermore, if you wish your data to be deleted, please contact Elina Sihvola (Elina.Sihvola@student.lut.fi)

The Instagram post (picture and text) used in this survey is fictional and Adidas is not part of it.

Please note that this survey is only for 18 years and older. If you are under 18 years, please ignore this survey. By proceeding, you consent to the saving of your responses and their usage for the master thesis.

Thank you for your interest towards my research!

Look at the social media post on Instagram closely and answer the following questions next page.

Experimental Group

Control Group

Are you familiar with Adidas?

- ◯ Definitely not
- ◯ Probably not
- ◯ Might or might not
- ◯ Probably yes
- ◯ Definitely yes

Please answer the following questions below.

I would buy Adidas rather than any other brands available

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

I am willing to recommend others to buy Adidas' products

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

I intend to purchase Adidas' products in the future

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

Wearing Adidas gets me to think about the brand

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

I think about Adidas a lot when I'm wearing it

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Wearing Adidas stimulates my interest to learn more about sports

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

I feel very positive when I'm wearing Adidas

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Wearing Adidas makes me happy

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

I feel good when I'm wearing Adidas

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

I'm proud to wear Adidas

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

I wear Adidas a lot compared to other sport brands

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Whenever I'm wearing sports clothing or shoes, I usually wear Adidas

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Adidas is one of the brands I usually wear when I'm wearing sport shoes or other sports clothing

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Think about the Instagram post you saw in the beginning of this survey and answer the following questions.

The instagram post is...

Boring	○	○	○	○	○ Interesting
Irrelevant	○	○	○	○	○ Relevant
Unexciting	○	○	○	○	○ Exciting
Means nothing	○	○	○	○	○ Means a lot to me
Unappealing	○	○	○	○	○ Appealing
Mundane	○	○	○	○	○ Fascinating
Worthless	○	○	○	○	○ Valuable
Uninvolving	○	○	○	○	○ Involving
Not needed	○	○	○	○	○ Needed

Adidas reflects who I am

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

I can identify with Adidas

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

I feel a personal connection to Adidas

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

I wear Adidas to communicate who I am to other people

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

I think Adidas (could) help me become the type of person I want to be

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

I consider Adidas to be 'me' (It reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to other(s))

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Adidas suits me well

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

It makes sense to wear Adidas instead of any other brand, even if they are the same

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Even if another brand has the same features as Adidas, I would prefer to wear Adidas

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

If there is another brand as good as Adidas, I prefer to wear Adidas

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

If another brand is not different from Adidas in any way, it seems smarter to wear Adidas

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Think about the Instagram post you saw in the beginning of this survey and answer the following questions.

In this Instagram post, do you think social media user was able to interact with the brand?

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

In this Instagram post, do you think social media user was encouraged to interact with the brand?

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

Nationality

Gender

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Non-binary / third gender
- ○ Prefer not to say

Age

- ○ 18-24 years
- ○ 25-29 years
- ○ 30-34 years
- ○ 35-39 years
- ○ 40-49 years
- ○ 50-59 years
- ○ +60 years

Highest educational level

- ○ Primary school
- ○ High school / vocational school
- ○ Lower university degree (Bachelor's level)
- ○ Upper university degree (Master's level)
- ○ PhD level
- ○ No education

Your gross monthly income (before tax)

- ○ Less than 1000€
- ○ 1000-1999€
- ○ 2000-2999€
- ○ 3000-3999€
- ○ 4000-4999€
- ○ 5000-5999€
- ○ Over 6000€

How often do you use Instagram?

- ○ Once a week or less
- ○ Few times a week
- ○ Once a day
- ○ Few times a day
- ○ Once in an hour
- ○ Many times in an hour
- ○ Never / I don't use Instagram

Thank you for your participation!

Feedback and additional comments regarding this questionnaire, please contact:
Elina.Sihvola@student.lut.fi