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THE CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIP PARADOX

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Abstract

This study attempts to investigate and understand the unexplored paradoxical intersection between a relationship-oriented marketing philosophy and consumers who are seemingly uninterested in relational behaviour with brands. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods have been applied with the aim to illuminate this paradox through extensive revision of relevant literature, and implementation of empirical research.

The research provided evidence that commitment, engagement and involvement are instrumental variables in relation to consumers' interest in relational behaviour. They were found to statistically predict the level of brand loyalty. Respondents depicted low levels of involvement, commitment, engagement and brand loyalty. Likewise had significant negative responses towards relationship offerings (ROs) from brands. This was though significantly determined by the level of ROs. A number of three to four ROs in a month were found to have remarkably negative impact on consumers behavioural brand loyalty (BBL), attitudinal brand loyalty (ABL) and intentions to recommend (ITR) a brand.

Likewise, consumers' motivation for engaging with brands were steered by simpler motives as making a purchase, getting discounts and receiving customer service. Thus, provide additional evidence to the claim that consumers have little interest in deep relationships with brands. The main conclusion is that a consumer-brand relationship (CBR) paradox exist. Consequently, marketers must realise that not all consumers are receptive to ROs or interested in brand relationships. Thus, cannot be managed as relationships and without consequences be forced into one. Subsequently, marketing thinking and efforts should be diversified and account for this.

Keywords: Relationship marketing, consumer-brand relationships, relationship offerings, consumer-brand relationship paradox.

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1. Introduction

The scope of this dissertation is to generate knowledge and gain an understanding of a paradoxical intersection. A paradox that seems to exist between the relationship marketing (RM) oriented philosophy and consumers disinterests in forming relationships with brands. The marketing literature is filled with research within RM. Including research on strong and committed relationships, benefits of CBRs, strong emotional bonds, relationship building and many elements related to acquiring loyal customers through RM. Yet, recent data suggests that consumers' are generally uninterested in relationships with brands. However, this has seemingly not be problematized. This might be a result of a general captivation for the technological opportunities and the extensive research on the potential benefits of strong, committed and long-term relationships.

1.1 Theme

Brands nowadays attempt to build long-lasting, deep and interactive relationships with consumers. Thus, realise that in today's competitive environment, acquiring new customers is challenging and expensive. Keeping customers to boost brand loyalty is regarded as pivotal to success. According to a large scale study conducted by Accenture (2011), consumers nowadays change between brands more frequently and look for deals increasingly more. Interestingly, Accenture points out that this is in spite of increased satisfaction with firms' customer services. In total, only one in four consumers perceive themselves as brand loyal, whereas a similar percentage see themselves as having no loyalty at all (Accenture, 2011).

Academics have been broadcasting the important message of retaining current customers for decades. In this context, stating that firms should nowadays aim to be defined by customer's through continuous relationships, trust and commitment (Krasnikov, Jayachandran, & Kumar, 2009). As such, marketing has evolved from the original transactional-based marketing to RM (Grönross, 2006). A strategy that, as implied by its name, focuses on building close relationships with consumers to get loyal customers.

Within this new marketing paradigm, customer relationship management (CRM) has its roots. A term commonly used interchangeably with RM (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2001). It is therefore important to highlight the distinction and understand the difference between CRM and RM. Accordingly, get a complete understanding of the focus point in this dissertation.

CRM is defined as the "values and strategies of relationship marketing – with particular emphasis on customer relationships – turned into practical application" (Gummesson, 2002, p. 3). In other words, it focuses on "engaging customers in long-term relationships so that the firm can learn about customers' individual needs" (Nguyen, 2012, p. 58). In this line of thought, RM can be regarded as a supporting element to CRM. On the other hand, CRM is what makes RM valid and reliable (Shukla, 2010), by operationalizing the RM theories. This means that RM is not a clear or complete concept with unwavering objectives and strategies (Egan, 2008). Gummesson (2008) explains this perfectly by stressing that RM is "an attitude and CRM a tool" (p. 339).

In this study, the focus will primarily be on RM rather than CRM. Consequently, on the attitude, the philosophy, of RM rather than on the actual tools that companies apply. A significant reason being that that companies often have widely different perspectives on CRM. Payne & Frow (2013) identified no less than three ways in which CRM is often viewed, meaning that CRM is applied and viewed in diverse ways depending on the market and industry. As a result, it would be difficult to make a general discussion regarding the certain CRM activities that companies practice. Consequently, the approach of this study will be theoretical and generic of nature. Thus, not concerned with the actual marketing activities practiced by individual companies.

In the discussion of RM, engagement is a key word. Marketing were once a one-way street of communication, but that is completely changed today. Therefore, firms' are recommended to create dialogues and engage with consumers through the vast amount of means technology offers today. Encouraging engagement, trust and commitment through different media is therefore a common way of managing customer relationships and giving customers unique value. This mind-set of creating value for customers has, to a certain extent, been necessary to satisfy nowadays extremely powerful consumers. In a world where 89% of consumers switch to a competitor following one negative experience, and where 26% publicly broadcast their negative experience on social media (Harris Interactive, 2011), companies simply cannot afford dissatisfied customers.

Companies nowadays therefore commonly attempt to build strong CBRs by interacting with consumers and encouraging engagement with their RM mind-set and CRM strategies. Ultimately, hoping to gain and maintain a loyal customer base. However, sceptic and uninterested consumers are reluctant to engage in deep brand relationships. Nevertheless, marketing academics have encouraged extensive focus on precisely relationship building for decades (Section 2.1). This paradoxical intersection is referred to as the **CBR paradox** in this study, and is the major theme of this dissertation.

A survey by Havas media (2013) suggests that 73% of consumers in the world, and 92% of consumers in Europe and the US, would not care if brands disappeared. Furthermore, only 20 % of brands are perceived to have a notable positive impact on consumers' sense of well-being and quality of life. These data suggest that companies, in general, are unable to understand and satisfy consumers' needs. Paradoxical, considering that customer centricity is the focal area of attention in marketing today. Furthermore, clearly suggesting that consumers are not highly loyal or interested in relationships with brands. Thus, raising a need to understand consumers, particularly their level of loyalty and interest in relational behaviour with brands.

Consumers are constantly evolving and the latest trend is consumers' increasingly wide-ranging level of cynicism, scepticism and indifference towards brands. A tendency that has resulted in a general decline in trust, respect and loyalty from consumers to brands (Havas media, 2013). The cynicism, scepticism and indifference towards brands may be the reason why only 20% of consumers are actually willing to engage in relationships with brands (Corporate Executive Board (CEB), 2012). A surprising and thought-provoking fact that disconnects with the philosophy of treating customers as relationships.

Overall, these facts showcase how consumers are constantly changing, and begs the question; if 80 % of consumers are uninterested in brand relationships, how come the current marketing philosophy is centred around precisely relationships? This is a central theme in this study and the starting point for the research problem, which will be clarified next.

1.2 Research Problem

This master dissertation will explore the paradoxical intersection between the relationship-oriented marketing philosophy and consumers' lack of interest in relationships. Many have illuminated the development within CBRs and the transition from transactional to RM (Section 2.3). Thus, explained how marketing and brand management have developed throughout the years owing to significant changes in the marketplace. Here, pointing out that engaging prospects and forging relationships with customers is the avenue to success. Furthermore, stressing that marketing encompass more than return on investments by suggesting the concept of Return on Relationships (ROR). ROR is defined as "the value that is accrued by a person or brand due to nurturing a relationship", compared to ROI which is "simple dollars and cents" (Rubin and Rose, 2013, p. 24-25).

Recent statistics though suggest that consumers' are uninterested in relationships with brands (Section 1.1). This point to a curious paradox between the current RM approach and customers' interests in relationships. Yet, a paradox which seems to have been slightly overlooked in the literature. The marketing literature is filled with extensive research on strong, committed brand relationships that may have led to this paradox not being problematized. Deriving, the main purpose of this dissertation is to understand if there is a mismatch between the focus on relationships and consumer's interest in relational behaviour with brands. Thus, this study will be highly customer-oriented.

It is certainly not the intention of this dissertation to question the philosophy or theory of RM, nor to dismiss RM as a strategic marketing approach. RM is undoubtedly necessary for companies to attain and retain the current troublesome and powerful 20 % of consumers interested in CBRs (CEB, 2012). This is particularly the case as this includes firms' most important customers e.g. brand advocates, brand lovers or heavy users. The intention is nevertheless to investigate the appropriateness and effectiveness of basing current marketing strategies blindly on a RM philosophy i.e. on forging long-term relationships with all customers. Does a blind focus on building relationships, in fact annoy current consumers, scare off potential customers or even destroy relationships? What about the 80% of consumers that view brands as redundant and are unwilling to engage in relationships with brands? (Section 1.1). What might the adverse effects of having an overall relationship oriented marketing approach be? What are consumers' response to this? And what does this mean in relation to brand loyalty?

80% is a significant percentage that must be treated with high importance. Accordingly, it is imperative to understand these customers, while still considering the critical remaining 20 % of consumers. Here, acquire an understanding of their interest, or lack hereof, in relational behaviour with brands and responses to ROs. Finally, investigate what this means for marketers. Thus, realise whether there is a need to diversify the current RM thinking.

1.3 Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to illuminate the paradox between a marketing theory revolved around relationships and consumers who are uninterested in relationships. In this context, advance an understanding of the potential implications of focusing on building relationships, when research suggest that a significant percentage of consumers are uninterested in relationships and view brands as redundant (Section 1.2).

Deriving, with consideration to the problem background, the overall aim of this research is:

- **To explore consumers' interest in relational behaviour with brands and elucidate how this (dis)connects with a relationship oriented marketing philosophy.**

To achieve this research objective, the follow sub-research objectives must be met:

- **RO1: Explore consumers' interest in relational behaviour with brands, and uncover their responses to relationship offerings from brands.**
- **RO2: Identify what motivates consumers to engage/interact with brands, and examine if their motivation depends on their level of engagement, commitment or involvement.**
- **RO3: Understand brand loyalty and how it relates to involvement, commitment and engagement.**

RO1 directly relates to the heart of the main research objective. Consequently, will directly aid to explore consumer's interest in relational behaviour with brands. Nonetheless, RO2 and RO3 play a significant role in the process of validating the research findings of the first research objective. The two sub-research objectives are likewise related to the aim of exploring consumers' interest in relational behaviour with brands. Consequently, meeting RO2 and RO3 will add additional support and strength to the most instrumental conclusions of this study, by exploring consumers' interest in relational behaviour with brands from different angles.

In order to fulfil the sub-research objectives, the development of statistically testable hypotheses is necessary. The creation of hypotheses enables the development of further explanations, of the relevant variables under investigation, and the relationship between or among these variables (Goldhor, 1972). These hypotheses will be presented during the literature review and in the quantitative analyses (Section 4.4).

The target market for the study will be limited to the Danish population, owing to obvious research limitations.

1.4 Structure of the Dissertation

The structure of this dissertation consists of five overall chapters. Chapter one introduces the theme and research problem of the dissertation. The aim is here to provide the reader with a clear insight into the relevance, perspective and context of the research problem.

In the second chapter, an extensive literature review lays the groundwork for the reminding part of the dissertation. Booth & Beile (2005) explains it perfectly "a researcher cannot perform significant research without first understanding the literature in the field" (p. 3). The review starts by looking into general elements as definition of concept. Subsequently, moves into specific details while identifying influential researchers within the field. By the end, the reader should be able to understand the rationalization of the significance of the research problem and understand the subject structure.

In the third chapter, the methodological paradigms will be outlined. Here, all methods utilized during the research process will be clarified. Each research method will be critically approached and the inclusion or exclusion of any relevant method will be justified.

Next, the fourth chapter includes the analysis and discussion of the primary data. This includes qualitative analyses of the semi-structured interviews and quantitative SPSS analyses of data collected by questionnaire. The last chapter will undertake a reflective approach wherein discussions and results will be the source for evaluations and conclusions. Moreover, limitations of the research, implications and suggestions for further research will finalise this section.

2. Literature Review

In order to answer the research problem, a solid theoretical foundation is needed. This foundation will hence become the starting-point for the empirical investigations.

Typically, a literature review would encompass all relevant previous research concerning the research problem. However, while statistics suggest that the research problem is relevant to investigate, no academics' seems to have conducted research concerning the specific research problem, to the best of knowledge.

Some have criticized the entire brand-relationship concept, pointed out issues with RM and a few have mentioned that not all consumers want relationships with brands. Nevertheless, far from illuminated the paradox between the marketing philosophy of building long-lasting relationships and the vast majority of consumers' being uninterested in relationships with brands. These will obviously be presented here, but the majority of the literature review will be related to RM. Consequently, include definitions, the emergence of RM, CBRs, marketing to a new generation of consumers, and key variables within the subject as customer value, brand loyalty, commitment, involvement and engagement. Without a complete understanding of these elements, the development of empirical research would be based on a vague foundation.

The review starts from a general perspectives and continues by diving into specific aspects related to the issue at hand.

2.1 From Marketing to Relationship Marketing

The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines marketing as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners and society at large" (American Marketing Association, 2013). This citation from the AMA defines marketing as a process where the key is to create value for all stakeholders, albeit provides no explanation of what value encompasses. This is probably not by accident as sources of value is a complex matter (Section 2.5). It is though certain that stakeholders, particularly customers, perception of value have changed significantly over the last decades. Therefore, marketing strategies had to become customer-centric, wherein the needs of the individual are regarded more important than the needs of the mass market. Thus, marketing shifted away from the product-centric and market-centric approach of transactional based marketing and instead considered the customer as the starting point for the planning process (Grönross, 2006).

The process of managing relationships is at the core of marketing today. Researchers already noticed this trend in the ‘70s and ‘80s where many argued that socio-economic changes required a paradigm shift from transactions to relationships. However, it was first in 1983 that one of the pioneers of RM came up with the philosophy: “attracting, maintaining and - in multi-service organizations - enhancing customer relationships” (Berry, 1983, p. 25).

Another significant author within RM is Grönross (1994). His definition of RM is one of the most frequently cited and most complete definitions of RM covering all the seven elements of RM: birth, develop, maintain, temporal, interaction, output and emotional content. He defines RM as the “process of identifying and establishing, maintaining, enhancing, and when necessary terminating relationships with customers and others stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties involved are met, where this is done by a mutual giving and fulfilment of promises” (Grönroos, 1997, p. 407). Thus, RM as a concept relates to developing and maintaining long-term relationships with stakeholders that benefit both parties and where value can be created together.

2.2 Defining a Customer Relationship

At first glance, it might seem obvious what a relationship between a brand and a customer is. However, fact is that marketing academics cannot seem to agree on a common definition. Lindberg-Repo and Grönross (2004) argued that a relationship exists when a behavioural and emotional connection has been established between a customer and a brand. Storbacka and Lehtinen (2001) partly agrees, though adds that an attitudinal components is required, arguing that part of customers heart and mind must be committed for a relationship to exists. Contradictory, others simply refer to any customer that makes a repeat purchase as one having a relationship with a brand, as Grönross (2006) pointed out. No research however seem to consider how consumers define or view a CBR. As such, this will be investigated in the empirical part with the aim of understanding consumers’ level of loyalty. Subsequently, clarify their interests in relationships with brands (Section 4.2.4).

Grönross (2006) further concludes that unless a customer repurchasing once or twice is considered to have a brand relationship, the idea that all customers can be managed as relationships is misguided. The same author (2006) though firmly explains that considering every repurchasing customer to have a brand relationship is naive. Repurchasing can often be the simple result of complex supplier changing processes or a lack of alternatives (Diller, 2000). Grönross (2006) thus states that forcing all customers into relationships will result in inappropriate, ineffective and inefficient marketing activities and behaviour. Subsequently, stressing that some consumers are in relationship modes whereas others are not. Therefore, managing customers in a relational manner should never be a generic approach.

Fournier, Dobscha, and Mick (2008) also noted that consumers might be annoyed by the numerous ROs: "Companies may delight in learning more about their customers than ever before and in providing features and services to please every possible palate. But customers delight in neither. Customers cope. They tolerate sales clerks who hound them with questions every time they buy a battery… They juggle the flood of invitations to participate in frequent buyer rewards programs" (p. 43). Thus, underlining the importance of having a more versatile approach to relationships that considers consumers' viewpoint. Similarly, Jackson (1985) and Barnes (2000) explain that consumers all have different needs for relationships with a given supplier. Other researchers noted that some customers are just unwilling and disinterested in forming relationships with suppliers (Fournier, 1998; Diller, 2000), and in being brand loyal (Fournier, 1998; J. Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004). Furthermore, consumers will always seek variety and value will always be subjective to the individual (Drolet, 2002).

These findings clearly support Grönross' (2006) notion that a generic approach to dealing with customers is inappropriate. To satisfy customers' diverse needs for relationships, a company should therefore consider different relational segments (Aaker, 1996). This relates significantly to the research problem and the belief that there might be a clear disconnect between the notion of building relationships with consumers, when the majority of consumers are uninterested in relationships. Thus, suggesting that all customers cannot be treated and managed on the basis of a RM philosophy (Section 3; Aaker, 1996). The attempt to build relationships can instead be the exact thing that manages to destroy it (Fournier *et al.*, 1998).

Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, the purpose is not to dismiss the theory of RM (Section 1.2). The objective is to explore the paradox between a marketing philosophy of managing customers as relationships and consumers who are uninterested in relationships. In this context, investigate how consumers respond to relationship oriented marketing activities. In this study, relationship oriented marketing activities are defined as "relationship offerings" (ROs) which is here determined to encompass any marketing activity that aims to build relationships with customers as emails, newsletters, sales clerks, loyalty programs, membership programs and any other activity that directly attempts to build relationships with customers i.e. make customers loyal.

This leads to the formulation of the following hypotheses:

- ***H1: The number of relationship offerings negatively affects the impact of relationship offerings on the respondents behavioural brand loyalty***
- ***H2: The number of relationship offerings negatively affects the impact of relationship offerings on the respondents attitudinal brand loyalty***
- ***H3: The number of relationship offerings negatively affects the impact of relationship offerings on the respondents intentions to recommend a brand***

2.3 The Emergence of Relationship Marketing and a New Market

Since the consumer goods-oriented marketing approach, where the transaction was regarded as the essence of marketing (Bagozzi, 1975; Hunt, 1976), several marketing paradigms have emerged. These include service marketing, network-based business-to-business marketing (IMP-approach) and RM (Grönross, 2006).

The concept of RM is founded on the idea of using effective marketing activities to increase customer retention to gain economic advantages (Bhattacharya & Bolton, 2000). Consequently, build long-term customer relationships, rather than acquiring new customers. This adoption of RM strategies caused a clear paradigm shift afar from the classical 4'ps of marketing approach, as noted by Grönross (1994) 20 years ago. Initially, RM was merely considered a mass-marketing approach and was restricted to database marketing, affinity marketing and regional marketing (Sheth & Parvatier, 1995). Many academics though noted that customer involvement was critical for the creation of brand experience. Consequently, establishing a need for a strategic approach that focused on the relational aspects and individualization (Keller, 1998; Grönross, 2001; Gummesson, 2003).

Several other factors led to the necessity for adopting RM and evolve from the original mass-marketing approach. Firstly, increased globalisation, intensification of competition and saturation of the market forced companies to acquire success through long-term customer relationships (Kuusik, 2007). This is partially a consequence of the technological progression contributing to a vast amount of sales channels, higher production volumes and lower prices. As competition intensified and products became easier to distribute, product availability significantly increased. This meant that consumers started to face a greater quantity of product choices. Hence, "products and services are facing commoditization as never before" (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 7), where products are increasingly seen as being similar. This is a clear result of globalization, deregulation and merging industries and technologies (Prahalad &

Ramaswamy, 2004). Therefore, companies are challenged with adapting to the changing dynamic and increasingly globalised environment to remain competitive.

Today, the progressions within information technology have caused a digital revolution that has changed relationships between companies and customers forever. As consumers' have become increasingly aware, digital and active, power has shifted from the hands of firms' to the hands of consumers'. Consequently, the days with uni-directional flows of communication, and all out organizational and mass media power are extinct. Today communication is multi-dimensional, occurring in-between a vast amount of parties within which consumers can exert their power (Fill, 2009). Particularly this empowerment of consumers have significantly affected the way in which companies are expected to act, and the consequences of not acting accordingly. As a result, the marketing philosophy needed a relational approach that focuses on providing customers' with value. Thus, marketing has undergone a total reconceptualization in its orientation from the traditional transactional based, product and market centric approach, to a customer-centric RM approach (Lindberg-Repo & Grönross, 2004).

In the traditional concept, the transaction was the focal area of attention (Cosic & Djuric, 2010). Companies primarily focused on attracting consumers with little emphasis on maintaining them. For decades, this strategy worked, however, at a certain point companies could no longer gain competitive advantages solely through optimization of product characteristics and price (Kuusik, 2007). As the market place became more competitive, companies realised that to maintain long-term profits, satisfaction among current customers had to be established. A strategy also found to be more cost-effective than attracting new ones (Kanagal, 2009). To solve this issue, Companies realised the need for attention on relational aspects of marketing. Hence, adopted a strategy that focused more on customer retention than customer acquisition, thus on building brand loyalty (Nakleh, 2012). This is also reflected in the marketing literature where studies shifted from the transactional, marketing mix management (price, place, product and promotion) approach, to the relationship-marketing practice (Sweidan, G. Al-Dmour, Zubi, & R. Al-Dmour, 2012). Consequently, marketing must, according to the literature, be considered in the context of RM. Deriving, it is clear that RM is at the forefront of marketing practice and research and an epitome of marketing.

To retain customers, interaction has become a common tool to provide value to customers. Through easily accessible online platforms and social media, the opportunities for engaging with consumers are almost endless. With interactive co-production platforms, it is also possible to co-create unique value together with consumers. This is an increasingly popular research stream that encourages stronger customer relationships through co-creation of value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2004a, b).

The entire theory of RM is built on the concept of engendering brand loyalty, thus solidifying CBRs. In other words, encourage stronger commitment, and relationships between consumers and brands, and move beyond the traditional notion of simply generating one-time transactions. RM is though not solely concerned with customer retention, but is more important than customer acquisition (MAXIM, 2009). Cosic and Djuric (2010) noted that customer loyalty now surpasses market share as a company performance indicator.

2.4 Consumer-Brand Relationships

The acknowledgement of relationship building as a brand success driver, contributed to an increased attention among marketing scholars on CBRs. The CBR principle arose as a natural consequence to the emerging concept of RM. Thus, it came to substitute the short-term oriented approach concerning one-time transactions in the 1990's (Fournier, 1998). In the same period, the academic interest in consumption for symbolic and psychological reasons increased. This includes consumption of goods that helped consumers create, reinforce and express their self-concept (Belk, 1988; Kleine, Iii, & Allen, 1995). Academics thus realised that brands were a source of symbolic properties that could encourage self-brand connections between consumers and brands, in situations where consumers could identify themselves with the brand (Escalas & Bettman, 2005.) Consequently, consumers were considered to be identity seekers and makers (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

Previous work verifies that CBRs improves brand loyalty (Park, Macinnis, & Priester, 2006), durability of brands (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, & Unnava, 2000) and consumers inclination to pay premium prices (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). Besides, strong CBRs have proved beneficial concerning the financial value of a company (Park *et al*., 2006; Peelen, 2005). Therefore, it is also difficult to question the importance of having strong CBRs with consumers. Deriving, it is clear why marketing scholars and managers are interested in building and maintaining strong CBRs. However, there is reasonable doubt to question the appropriateness of focusing extensively on building CBRs with all customers. To investigate this, it is necessary to improve the understanding of consumers' interest in CBRs. Likewise, understand consumers' reaction and response to brands attempts of encouraging consumers to form relationships.

Particularly the emotional aspects related to brand relationships has been a central focus area, in the attempt to identify the focal aspects of a strong brand relationship. In this context, feelings of self-concept connection (Fournier, 1998), perceptions of closeness of the self to a brand (emotional attachment) (Fournier, 1998), and feelings of love for a brand (brand love) (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Fournier, 1998) have been central research areas. Emotional aspects have been found to improve relationship quality as emotional attachment often is reflected in increased brand commitment (Thomson *et al*., 2005).

Susan Fournier's (1998) seminal framework for understanding consumers' motivation of engagement and the nature of this engagement exists as a central research piece in literature worthy of attention. Her brand relationship quality model (BRQ) considers multiple dimensions of "relationship quality" within CBRs. Specifically, the model claims that relationship strength is determined by seven different brand relationship qualities. These include intimacy (physical closeness), passionate attachment, love (brand feelings), self-concept-connection (brand perception of the part of the self), personal commitment (brand loyalty), nostalgic connection (connection to the consumer's history and certain memories), and partner quality and customer care. Thus, the model extensively explains how relationships between brands and consumers occur.

A later review of the model (Smit, Bronner, & Tolboom, 2007) suggested that passionate attachment, love, self-connection and nostalgic attachment are emotional aspects of brand relationships, whereas the remaining three are behavioural dimensions. Overall, the model is widely accepted and acknowledged within the literature. Nonetheless, limitations have been detected. Dowling (2002) argued that the BRQ model cannot be perceived as generic framework suitable for all brands as brands ability to connect with consumers vary. Thus, advises companies to adopt the model with caution.

Moreover, Fournier did, as several other authors within the field, consider psychological self-brand connections as the primary driver of relationship quality (Fournier 1998; Park, Macinnis, & Priester, 2009; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). O'Guinn & Muñiz (2009) criticized this major focus on psychological elements and the object-person dyads for being too narrow. Bengtsson (2003) also identified problems with Fournier's Brand relationship quality facets. Particularly commitment, interdependence, love and passion, and intimacy as he argued that brands do not have any real kind of reciprocity.

2.5 Defining Customer Value

In the context of CBRs, RM, brand loyalty and satisfaction, it is inevitable to avoid the concept of customer value. Grönross (1996) explains the centrality of customer value in the context of customer oriented marketing perfectly, when stating that “the ability to provide superior value to customers is a prerequisite when trying to establish and maintain long-term customer relationships” (p. 19). Deriving, the paradigm shift from transactional to relationship-based marketing has brought along the concept of customer value owing to the increasing customer orientation. Thus, it has long been known that understanding, creating and managing customer value is at the upmost essence for firms (Drucker, 1985; Porter, 1985, 1998; Slater & Narver, 1998). It is regarded as one of the most determining factors of success for companies’ (Woodruff, 1997; Zeithaml, 1988; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996) and identified as a primary source for competitive advantage (Mizik & Jacobson, 2003; Woodruff, 1997). Rendering the data presented (section 1.2; 1.3), one could question if customer value is created and managed by encouraging brand relationships with uninterested consumers.

Overall, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) argues that two types of values exists, “exchange value” and “value-in-use”. Exchange value refers to the value embedded in the product, whereas value-in-use is the consumer’s perception and determination of value through experience. Thus, value is co-created in the customer sphere, making it superior in marketing today compared to the previous principle of value-in-exchange (Grönross, 2006). Clearly, the value-in-use principle opposes the traditional marketing dominant logic and the traditional value-in-exchange view. The principle of letting the customer take part in the value creation is unfamiliar to the previous notion of marketing. A term currently referred to as co-creation of value. Academically and professionally this has been studied as a topic of interest in the latest years and is emerging as an essential business, innovation and marketing paradigm (Dijk, Antonides, & Schillewaert, 2014; Grönroos, 2011; Matthing & Johansson, 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2004a,b; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000, 2004).

A reason for the emerging concept of co-creation of value probably is that the impact of co-creation is not solely restricted to new ideas, concepts, designs, applications and market ready solutions (Tanev, Knudsen, & Gerstlberger, 2009). Different academic studies have revealed that co-creation leads to an increase in loyalty towards the company (Sawhney, Verona, & Prandelli, 2005), stronger customer relationships, higher levels of trust and support towards brand image (Füller, 2010), improved brand experience, added value for customers, and improved brand personality perceptions (Dijk *et al*., 2014). Thus, clearly emphasizing the impact and importance of creating unique value for customers.

2.6 Marketing to a New Generation

The business environment has changed in connection with the digitalization, the need for engagement and the power change, causing a paradigm shift from transactional to collaborative exchange (Fill, 2009). Consumers have shifted from passive spectators to active problem solvers with the rise of the Millennials (Froom & Garton, 2013; Berelowith, 2013). A generation positioned as the forerunners for the participation economy with their eagerness to participate, co-create and engage with the brand, thus sharing the interest of its success.

Another general trend incorporated in all lifestyles involve their position as anywhere consumers. The Millennials are constantly online, engaging in social networks, lifestreaming and lifeblogging (Yankee Group Research, 2009). Hence, referred to as the connected consumers, concerned with personal broadcasting and a high fear of missing out (FOMO) i.e. a fear of missing an opportunity for interacting socially (Grehan, 2013; Cammorate, 2013).

Millennials are digital natives born into an era where digitally provided services are everyday life. To capture their attention, the answer to one primary question must be apprehended within the communication: “what is in it for me” (Kolvaleski, 2008). Bair (2008) empathizes a similar notion by perceiving this generation as one with low patience and a desire for personalization. Millennials have solid convictions and beliefs and are not opposed to walking away if these are not met (Jones, 2007; Schmitt, 2008). Still, also willing to position themselves as brand advocates if seeing the possibilities for improved social status. This new consumer generation is thus exceedingly troublesome to cope with as a by-product of the high fragmentation and enhanced expectation level. A group expecting consideration for their claims, full information access and constant updates. They believe shopping should be an experience, but simultaneously simple and convenient (Breuer, 2010).

Consequently, a radically different world has resulted in profoundly different consumers. As a result, marketing philosophies and strategies have changed. Changes imperative to keep up with the prevailing Millenials. Consequently, two-way interaction has been vital for companies to approach to build stronger CBRs and generate brand loyalty. Deriving, todays marketing strategies are adapted to satisfy the needs of the Millennial generation, who loves engagement and are willing to engage in brand relationships.

To a certain degree, it has been a necessity to adopt marketing strategies according to this generation's needs, in the sense that they are undoubtedly the most powerful segment of consumers'. Their power originates in their constant online connectivity and participation in social networks, resulting in a significant larger outreach than other consumers'. Thus, making them potentially powerful brand advocates or brand adversaries. Besides, owing to the increasing nature of the competitive environment, where switching ease has never been higher, the current relational oriented marketing strategy has been needed to retain current customers, who are increasingly disloyal (Section 1.1).

2.7 Customer Engagement, Commitment and Involvement

While Millennials typically characterises people between 18-30 (Burstein, 2013), everyone far from shares this generations interest in brands and their willingness to engage and form relationships with brands. Results from a study conducted by CEB (2012), support this proposition revealing that only 20 % of consumers are actually willing to engage in relationships with brands (Spenner & Freeman, 2012). Subsequently, seeing consumers' willingness to engage in CBRs as a myth. Engagement in brand relationships is thus merely perceived as a means of getting discounts, whereas relationships are reserved for friends, family and colleagues. Consequently, Spenner & Freeman (2012) recommends companies to identify those customers who want relationships and those who do not. Subsequently, make a clear distinction between these two segments in order to market to their needs and expectations differently. Thus, avoid bombarding the average 80% of consumers who do not want relationships and relationship offers.

Customer engagement is regarded as a critical construct within literature. Consequently, it has been treated in many closely related forms as "consumer engagement behaviours", "customer engagement", "consumer engagement" and as simply "engagement" (Hollebeek 2011a). Particularly "customer brand engagement" has been applied as a well-used sub-form of engagement, and is defined as "the level of an individual's customer's motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity in direct brand interactions" (Hollebeek 2011b).Thus, directly relates to the interaction between a consumer and a brand. For the purpose of this study, it is relevant to acquire a clearer picture of the connection between consumers' level of brand engagement and their motivation for engaging/interacting with brands. In this context, investigate the degree to which consumers engage/interact with brands.

Brand engagement operates close to traditional marketing constructs as involvement, commitment and loyalty. Bowden (2009) points out that engagement should be differentiated from these relational concepts, leading to the following discussion of involvement and commitment.

Consumers' low level of interest in forming brand relationships (Section 1.2), naturally questions whether consumers correspondingly shows significantly lower levels of commitment and involvement. Commitment and involvement are two variables that many researches identify as sources of brand loyalty (2.8). Thus, relevant variables that provides an insight into the level of intimacy consumers have with brands. Considering the purpose of understanding consumers' general interest in brands and brand relationships (Section 1.2), these will be key variables to consider and investigate.

Involvement is usually considered as a characteristic of a product. Therefore, most research have been conducted in this context. Involvement is believed to reflect "a consumer's level of ongoing commitment in relation to thoughts, feelings and behavioural response to a product category" (Gordon, Mckeage & Fox, 1998, p. 29). In other words, it is the perceived personal relevance that determines the level of involvement. In this case, involvement will be investigated in relation to brands, not products. As highlighted by Aaker (1997), brands are likely to be involving just as products. Consequently, measuring involvement with brands is relevant, as supported by previous studies (Kirmani, Sood, & Bridges, 1999). Measuring involvement in relation to brands, compared to products, is most appropriate for the purpose of this research study. It enables the possibility to gain an insight into the extent to which consumers are uninterested in brands and relational brand behaviour. Accordingly, this may illuminate the CBR paradox and the potential implications of focussing on relationship building with uninterested consumers.

Commitment is an attitudinal construct that epitomises customers' feelings towards relationships with brands (Gordon, 2003). This means that committed customers wish to maintain a relationship with a brand i.e. be a loyal customer. Relationship commitment is popularly defined as an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Thus, commitment is considered to be a key variable in the connection between brands and consumers (Bansal, Irving, & Taylor, 2004). Similarly, a cornerstone behind a successful relationship and an indicator of long-term relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Thus, it is hypothesized:

- ***H4: There is a significant relationship between the respondents low levels of involvement, commitment and engagement***

And the three following research questions are raised:

- ***RQ1: Are consumers' motivations for engaging with brands dependent on their level of engagement?***
- ***RQ2: Are consumers' motivations for engaging with brands dependent on their level of involvement?***
- ***RQ3: Are consumers' motivations for engaging with brands dependent on their level of commitment?***

2.8 Interaction and Cognitive Overload

Corporate Executive Board identifies two additional marketing myths, including interactions build relationships and more interaction is better *(*Spenner & Freeman, 2012*).* A research clearly suggesting shared value as the greatest source of relationship building (64 %). Shared values is a belief that is held by both parties regarding the brands greater purpose or philosophy. On the contrary, only 13 % considers frequent interactions as an incentive to brand relationship (Spenner & Freeman, 2012). High levels of engagement, from the side of the company, is a poor source of relationship building, according to consumers. Deriving, it will be interesting to realise whether those consumer who does engage with brands tend to be brand loyal. Knowing this could provide a better understanding of consumers' behaviour and see the connection between engaged consumers and loyal consumers.

Regarding the third myth, *more interaction is better*, indications suggests that constant interaction only adds to the already overwhelming amount of information bombarding consumers every day. Ultimately, resulting in cognitive overload causing an adverse effect on consumers' intentions to purchase, repurchase and recommend a product or service (Spenner & Freeman, 2012). The nature of the business sphere, with constant exposure to communication material, has been a clear source for trends as brand immunization and brand allergies (Abber, n.d.).

In summary, the key findings from CEB's study suggests that the bombardment of messages is not empowering, but overwhelming. As a result, consumers consider "decision simplicity" as the key variable for deciding whether to purchase, repurchase and/or recommend a brand. Decision simplicity refers to the accessibility of trustworthy information regarding the product. Information, which can be gathered and applied to evaluate the purchase opportunities.

In other words, the ease of which consumers can go through the decision making process. The impact of this is clear “What consumers want from marketers is, simply, simplicity” (Spenner & Freeman, 2012).

Based on this, Spenner & Freeman (2012) concludes that “given the rapid expansion of social and mobile technologies, marketers will have ever-increasing opportunities to bombard consumers. And if history is any guide, that’s exactly what they’ll do. But in their aggressive efforts to engage with their customers, they’ll only make the decision journey more complex and confusing. Marketers who focus on simplifying consumers’ decision making will rise above the din, and their customers will stick by them as a result (8)”. In this way, emphasising the problem of overwhelming uninterested consumers with information.

2.9 Understanding Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a complex subject, imperative for companies to obtain. Particularly now, in an era where focus is shifted from customer acquisition to customer retention (Section 2.3). Findings show that in average the cost of gaining new customers are somewhere between five to ten times more expensive than retaining already existing ones (Slater & Narver, 2000). Thus, it is obvious why brand loyalty has gained increased interest.

Jacoby & Chestnut’s (1978) definition of brand loyalty as “a biased behavioural response expressed over time by some decision making unit with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands” (p. 80) is according to Fournier and Yao (1996) one of the most well accepted definitions. Fournier (1998) though criticizes it for considering brand loyalty as a utilitarian decision making process.

Overall, the studies of brand loyalty have been divided between two distinct types of loyalty, attitudinal and behavioural loyalty, perceived as equally important (Kumar & Shah, 2006; Fullerton, 2005). Originally, loyalty was simply defined as the behaviour of the customer i.e. in terms of repeat purchase (Pong & Yee, 2001). However, marketers started to realise that loyalty encompasses more than simple behavioural aspects, thus cannot simply be considered as mere repurchase behaviour (Dick & Basu, 1994). It has long been known that consumer behaviour is sometimes determined by a lack of available alternatives, high switching cost or inertia (Cooper & Withey, 1989). This means that attitude and emotions plays a significant part in consumers decision making process. Accordingly, indicating that loyalty should be measured in relation to consumers’ attitudes as well (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998). As a result, loyalty is usually measured by incorporating behavioural and attitudinal measures simultaneously (Hallowell, 1996).

BBL simply refers to people's willingness to repurchase the same brand (Farr & Hollis, 1997; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Quester & Lim, 2003). Therefore, BBL is unable to explain the various buying situations wherein people's personal motives and buying behaviour is affected by their positive or negative attitudes (Aaker, 1991). Consequently, the need for considering attitudinal loyalty exist. Attitudinal loyalty encompasses more than simple repurchasing behaviour, including the degree to which a person commits to a brand (Zins, 2001; Back & Parks, 2003; Quester & Lim, 2003). In other words, it comprises the cognitive elements that drive consumers to re-purchase certain brands. The definition of brand loyalty is therefore popularly defined as an outcome of the interplay between consumers' attitude and repeat purchase behaviour (Ogba & Tan, 2009).

Brand loyalty is a multi-dimensional construct found to have many sources. Most notably, literature points to customer satisfaction and trust as key predictors for brand loyalty (Oliver, 1999; Delgado-Ballester & Manuera-Aleman, 2001). Satisfaction is related to consumers' continuous satisfaction with the functions and performance of the brand (Reast, 2005) and is an attribute of both behavioural and attitudinal loyalty (Taylor, Celuch, & Goodwin, 2004). A study conducted by Lee and Lee (2013) additionally established a strong correlation between customer satisfaction and loyalty. Besides, many studies have identified a clear connection between customer satisfaction and purchase behaviour (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Bolton, 1998; Mittal & Kamakura, 2001). Consequently, making it clear that satisfaction is a pivotal source of brand loyalty, thus essential for a strong CBR.

Busacca and Castaldo (2003) suggests that a consumer goes through two relationship stages. In the first stage, loyalty originates in brand satisfaction. Hence, as the duration of the relationship is extended, trust replaces satisfaction (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). Trust is presumed to enable consumers to understand the offering and the perceived risks of the entire purchase (Berry, 2000). A trustworthy brand will likewise acquire more loyal customers willing to pay premium price. Furthermore, the brand will be more likely to sell other products in different categories under the same brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Buscca & Castaldo, 2003). As a result, trust is at the core of a brand's value provision and clearly one of the main drivers of loyalty (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Berry, 2000; Harris & Goode, 2004; Ballester & Aleman, 2005; Chiou, 2006; Mohammad, 2012).

However, fact is that literature has related BBL and ABL to a vast amount of influential factors. Aside satisfaction and trust, the most prominent sources of brand loyalty remain brand affect (Taylor *et al*., 2004; Matzler, Celuch, & Goodwin, 2008), brand love (Fournier, 1998; Chaudhuri & Holdbrook, 2001; Park *et al*., 2006), product involvement (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978; Park, 1996), perceived value (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000; Reichheld, 1996) and commitment (Fournier, 1998; Bansal *et al*., 2004). Besides, brand loyalty has often been considered as a part of larger constructs. Fournier (1998) considered brand loyalty (personal commitment) as one of seven brand relationship qualities that affects the relationship strength. A facet used as an indicator of relationship quality (Section 4.5). Similarly, Aaker (1996) considered brand loyalty within the wider concept of brand equity identifying it as a main source of brand equity.

This evidently displays that brand loyalty is treated as an extremely important subject in literature. Yet, reality is that there is no recipe for loyalty. The positive outcome of a strong CBR is difficult to argue against, as such, most academics agrees on the proposition that customer retention is based on relationship formation. However, as the data suggest (Section 1.3), satisfying consumers and becoming trustworthy to the uninterested and sceptic consumers nowadays are clearly problematic as few are open towards relationships.

The proper method to build brand loyalty is thus an aspect worth further elaboration. Establishing trust and ensuring satisfaction is a step in the right direction for any company. Though no indications are made regarding relationship building as the best approach for customer retention. In fact, it suggests that such an approach might instead encourage cognitive overload and simply annoy consumers (Section 2.8). Considering the high correlation between satisfaction and brand loyalty, mentioned earlier, a consumer experiencing cognitive overload and annoyance definitely is an obstacle to the objective of gaining brand loyalty.

Suggesting how to create loyalty is beyond this paper. However, focus will be to investigate whether consumers indeed are interested in close relationships with brands. Deriving, commitment, engagement and involvement has been pinpointed as central elements strongly related to a consumer’s interest in brands and brand relationships. A committed, involved and engaged customer is presumed more prone to be loyal. The connection between engagement, involvement, commitment and loyalty will be investigated while consumers general level of brand loyalty will be assessed. Most importantly, an understanding of consumers overall level of engagement, commitment and involvement must be acquired. Elements providing great indications for peoples interest in relational behaviour with brands.

Overall, this leads to the following hypothesis:

- ***H5:Involvement, engagement and commitment are joint predictors of the level of brand loyalty***

2.10 Critique of Relationship Marketing and Consumer-Brand Relationships

For more than half a century, marketers have accepted that brands carry meaning beyond the physical functional characteristics. Gardener and Levy (1955) indicated this in their seminal article. Research have similarly demonstrated that brands have an identity (Aaker, 1996; De Chernatony, 1999), personality (Aaker, 1997; Durgee, 1988) and charisma (Smothers, 1993). Thus giving marketers the opportunity to exploit that brands hold symbolic meanings through which the consumer can express themselves (Slater, 1997). By this logic, consumers can use brands as a tool of differentiation to distinguish themselves from other consumers.

As brands have come to possess this meaning, the definition of a connection between a consumer and a brand were metaphorically described as similar to an interpersonal relation. Thus, CBRs has often been perceived as akin to interpersonal relationships e.g. the relationship between a husband and wife. The metaphor has been useful for illuminating the positive characteristics of having relationships with consumers and the new long-term exchange principle (Houston & Gassenheimer, 1987).

Nevertheless, it is problematic that people seem to have forgotten that it in fact merely is a metaphor. Consequently, researchers have treated relationships as if they were indeed interpersonal relationships (Bengtsson, 2003). Bengtsson further stresses that brands lack essential attributes that are characteristic for human relationships as a brand is unable to act and react as consumers. Aggarval (2004) also pointed out that because there exists "obvious differences between social relationships and CBRs" (p. 89), it is important for researchers not to overextend the relationship metaphor when studying consumer behaviour. Thus, there are scepticism regarding the perception of CBRs as relationships with high emotional attachment and commitment.

In 1998, Fournier *et al.* pointed to several issues with RM. In essence, it was highlighted that if RM continued to be practiced as it currently were, it would face a premature death. At the time, the authors had realised that "relationships between companies and consumers are troubled at best. When we talk to people about their lives as consumers, we do not hear praise for their so-called corporate partners. Instead, we hear about the confusing, stressful, insensitive, and manipulative marketplace in which they feel trapped and victimized" (Fournier *et al.*, 1998, p. 42). Here, stressing that marketers might have forgotten that a relationship requires two parties to exist and taken it for granted that consumers willingly wants to engage in relationships. Seeing it from a customer's point of view, they explain that information can easily seem trivial and useless. Likewise, people have literally hundreds of interpersonal relationships, but arguably only a few strong. Deriving, when every company ask for strong relationships, it is unrealistic to believe that consumers are naturally interested (Fournier *et al.*, 1998)

Reflecting, it suggests that the metaphor of CBRs being similar to interpersonal relationships may have been stretched too far. Thus, suggesting that the current marketing philosophy may have been too narrowly focused on building strong CBRs. Moreover, RM may indeed contribute to a manipulative marketplace with a vast amount of relationship requests. A marketplace that certainly only has become more crowded with marketing messages and ROs since Fournier *et al.,* (1998) noted this. Ultimately, it is though the consumers' opinion that matters. Consumers determine the degree to which brands have meaning for them. Grönross (2006) alleged that a "customer often do not want to be engaged in something *they would define* as a relationship with the firm" (p. 408). Thus, implicitly telling that there might be a need to understand how consumers define a CBR. Thus, this will be explored. In this context, the purpose is to investigate what consumers understand by a CBR as this might reveal important information regarding their interest in relational behaviour with brands.

3. Research Methodology

After the thorough literature review, where extensive knowledge regarding the subject matter where acquired, a methodological chapter will follow. A methodological section of a dissertation is an instrumental part of a study, aiming to provide a clear portrayal of the research choices.

3.1 Methodological Paradigms

To provide an overview of the research format, the choice of methodological paradigms will be outlined. This entails the research purpose, sampling method, reasoning method, data collection methods and collection of primary and secondary data. Afterwards, specific considerations and preparations, made prior to the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data respectively, will be outlined.

3.1.1 Purpose of Research

To clarify the research approach, the objective of the study must be considered. The aim of this study is **"to explore consumers' interest in relational behaviour with brands and elucidate how this (dis)connects with a relationship oriented marketing philosophy"** (Section 1.3). Richey and Klein (2007) explain that three diverse approaches to research can be undertaken: exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. However, a study is not necessarily limited to one purpose. Multiple research purposes can exist within one study (Sue & Ritter, 2007). In fact, this study encompasses all three research purposes to varying degrees.

Considering the research objective, a mixture of descriptive, exploratory and explanatory approaches were applied. Firstly, the interviews explores the curious paradox between the current RM approach and customers' interest in relationships, by investigating and understanding how consumers view and relate to brands. Furthermore, attempts to explore how interested consumers are in relational behaviour with brands and their reactions to relationship offers. This is as mentioned earlier a rather unexplored theme in the marketing literature. Consequently, a further exploration is a necessity to understand the study under investigation.

Nonetheless, while the interviews are explorative of nature, they fulfil two roles. Firstly, they act as an exploration into the subject providing knowledge to the area of investigation. Thus, offer vital information to the development of the questionnaire together with aspects relevant to perform additional research. Secondly, they are applied to support the quantitative findings to strengthen the research results (Appendix 1).

The descriptive approach of this study is reflected in the extensive literature review. The descriptive nature of the literature review act as a precursor to explanations. Deriving, the descriptive part of the study is implemented as a means to an end, as recommended by Saunders (Saunders, 2009). The descriptive part is thus the backbone of this study, providing a clear portrayal of the relating subjects to the problem. Finally, the study aims to move beyond simple description with an explanatory approach that intends to explain the paradox between the focus on relationships within RM and consumers' lack of interest in relationships with brands.

3.1.2 Data Collection Method

Qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques are both highly appropriate. Thus, the choice of research technique depends on the goal of the research project (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013). In this case, the primary objective includes acquiring a deep understanding of consumers' interest in relationships with brands. To attain this knowledge, qualitative studies must firstly be conducted in form of interviews. These interviews provides great value to the research design by exploring the study's theme and contributing to the development of the questionnaire. However, qualitative data provides no basis for generalizations. Accordingly, quantitative research has been conducted to improve the trustworthiness and reliability of the study. Quantitative research is known to increase the efficiency of qualitative research (McDaniel & Gates, 2002). This multi-method data-collection technique provides analytical texture to the research design, weigh up the well argued deficiencies of quantitative and qualitative approaches respectively and exists as an opportunity to strengthen the analytical findings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

3.1.3 Reasoning Method

The reasoning method applied for the research will be deductive of nature. This shows itself, as the starting-point for this study is a research problem and theoretical structure, followed by data collection and ultimately analysis. Thus, it moves "toward the development of a logical explanation or theory and next gathers evidence to test the theory" (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011, p. 17). On the contrary, an inductive approach starts with observations and analyses before finally developing a theory or explanation (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013).

3.1.4 Sampling Method

The selection of research participants is referred to as the sampling method. Generally, the key focus in sampling is representativeness i.e. that the selected respondents is representative of the population under investigation (Terre, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). This is particularly important in quantitative research as these are the foundation for generalizations.

A sample can be selected through either a non-probabilistic or a probabilistic method. In probabilistic sampling, the respondents have a known, often equal, chance of selection. Thus, a perfect way to collect a representative sample, wherefrom valid inferences can be made. However, while this is a great strength, a probabilistic sample is only possible in cases where an accurate sampling frame is available (Gerrish & Lacey, 2010). Therefore, this was not an option as all Danes aged between 15-69 are the target population, for which a sampling frame could not be found or made. This age-group make up the working population and the “young” senior citizens. It is naturally relevant to focus on the working population. They are most likely to have money and those who will be important consumers in the future. However, since the old generation today is a large percentage of all people within the population, it was deemed relevant to include the young part of the old generation i.e. the 63-69 year old people.

Due to the impossibility of obtaining a sample frame, a non-probabilistic sampling technique have been selected, even though this technique may result in bias. However, as Gerrish & Lacey (2010) states “the alternative of not undertaking the research because a sampling frame is not available may impoverish our knowledge about important groups of people… where a register does not exist” (p. 144). Furthermore, non-probability samples are less expensive, less time consuming, convenient to apply and often more appropriate in cases where no sampling frame or list exists (Lowe, Ward, Winzar, & Zikmund, 2007).

For the quantitative questionnaire, a quota sampling technique was undertaken. This type of non-probability sampling ensures that various subgroups of people within the population are represented in the sample. This improves the likelihood that the sample is representative for the target population of 15-69 year-old Danes. Therefore, the population was divided into quotas, defined by age, gender, education and income. These are common variables to consider and variables that are likely to have a significant impact on consumer behaviour (Black, 2014), thus relevant variables to consider for the purpose of this study. Particularly differences in gender are known to create bias as men and women relate differently to brands (Fournier, 1998).

For the interviews, a purposeful/judgmental sampling was used. This technique was use to select a variety of relevant respondents. A selection based on the quotas identified for the questionnaire. This resulted in a variety of respondents in terms of income, age, education and salary, thus similar to the variety of the sample gathered for the questionnaire (Appendix 2). This method is unarguably prone to bias, nevertheless regarded as a necessity (Section 5.5).

3.1.5 Primary and Secondary Data

Secondary data have been the starting point for this project. Churchill explains that secondary data is cheaper and less time consuming than primary data. Subsequently, states that "a good marketing research study should *always* start with secondary data" (p. 142). In addition, a literature review is pivotal for the quality of a good research project (Pender, 1999; Bell, 2010). In this study, only external secondary data have been collected in form of the literature review. A literature review is helpful in forming a solid theoretical foundation, but further empirical analyses have to be made. Primary data have therefore also been collected through a questionnaire and interview. Contrary to secondary data, primary data are fresh data collected for a specific research problem (Kothari, 2004).

3.1.6 Sample Size

Another concern in quantitative studies is the sample size. The sample must be of a certain size for any inferences to be valid for the population. Therefore, a general goal for quantitative studies is to "include as many sources as possible that add to the richness, depth, and variety of the data" (Macnee & McCabe, 2008, p. 133). However, as Mooi and Sarstedt (2011) points out, the size of a sample is not necessarily strongly connected to the population size. The authors state that a relatively small sample of e.g. 100 people can provide a similar level of accuracy independent of whether the population size is 300 or 100.000. For that reason, the goal is not simply to gather a large sample but more importantly to select the sample accurately (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). As such, great care has been given to accurately follow the quotas determined by the non-probability quota sampling method (Section 3.2.1). Consequently, the aim is to include a net sample size of 270 participants for the questionnaire. This number is realistic with the resources available, and large enough to yield reliable results, considering the high focus on sample accuracy. Consequently, regarded as an appropriate number for the purpose of this study.

Contradictory to a questionnaire, an interview has different objectives in terms of generalizability. Nonetheless, the size of the sample is not irrelevant. According to Pitney & Parker (2009), the sample size should be guided by data saturation, "the point at which you no longer encounter new information, or continually encounter the same information" (p. 44). To identify data saturation a researcher must conduct interviews until discovering redundancy of data. To reduce the number of interviews, thus limit the extensive resources needed for conducting and transcribing interviews, the focal attention of each interview will be quality. The higher the quality of data obtained from each interview, the earlier data saturation will occur, thus reducing the number of interviews necessary (Pitney & Parker, 2009). Redundancy of data was encountered after nine interviews, thus is the total number of conducted interviews.

3.2 Methodological Choices for Analysis of Quantitative Data

3.2.1 Planning Quota Sampling

To accurately identify the number of respondents needed within each quota, statistics about the population were firstly collected (Appendix 3; 4; 5). Then, calculations were made to identify the number of respondents needed within each quota in the sample (Appendix 2). To acquire these numbers, the number of people within the population in each category e.g. male, were divided with the total population within the overall category. Subsequently, multiplied with 100. This results in the percentage of people, in each category, within the total population. This is then used to identify the same percentage within the selected sample size of 270. By following these quotas, it ensures that an equal proportion to that of the general population is present in the sample within the selected categories.

3.2.2 Measurements of variables

Proper measurement is vital for any research project and a critical component in quantitative settings. According to Turk (2011), “measurement refers to grouping objects according to their score on a measurement scale” (p. 57) However, the degree of difficulty associated with measurement varies significantly. In cases where people’s feelings, attitudes and perceptions are measured, the complexity increases as these variables are intangible. This questionnaire contains few tangible variables e.g. demographic questions that are straightforwardly measured with simple questions. On the contrary, several intangible variables are part of the questionnaire, hence must be conceptualized and operationalized to ensure appropriate measurement of the constructs.

3.2.3 Conceptualization and Operationalization

To properly implement the theory under investigation, pre-tested and validated scales have been adapted to build the questionnaire. Deriving, a selected number of items from prior studies have been carefully selected and adapted. Thus, make up a reliable measurement scale for the purpose of this study. A number of indications i.e. items are typically necessary for the measurement of concepts. Turk (2011) argue that a minimum of three items must be applied for the measurement of one variable to uphold reliability.

In total, the questionnaire instrument includes 34 items that measure seven constructs: commitment, involvement, engagement, brand loyalty, BBL, ABL and ITR a brand. Three to seven items measure the constructs, a difference explained by the varying complexity of the variables. The collection of these items operationalizes each paradigm, as these must be conceptualised before being measured (Turk, 2011). Accordingly, a review of past studies has led to appropriate definitions i.e. conceptualisation of each construct under measurement.

3.2.4 Questionnaire Instrument

Table 1 gives an overview of the conceptual definition, operationalizing items i.e. specific questions and the source wherefrom the items have been adapted. Moreover, it displays the reliability of each construct, according to Cronbach's Alpha. This reliability and validity test "asses the goodness of scale" (Turk, 2011, p. 65). Different researchers argue for different minimum requirements. A level of 0.60 is the minimum requirement, but may be considered poor, near 0.70 is acceptable whereas more than 0.80 is good (Nunnally, 1994; Sekaran, 1996; Melewar & Saunders, 1999). Obtained values for the current study are presented in section 4.3.1.2., but visible in the instrument. Thus, the questionnaire instrument provides a complete framework for the measurement scales, while simultaneously displaying their validity.

Table 1 - questionnaire instrument with conceptual definition, operationalizing and alpha coefficients.

Concept:	**Conceptual Definition:**	**Operationalizing Items and Source:**	**Alpha values**
Behavioural brand loyalty	People's willingness to repurchase the same brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).	1. I would intend to do more business with the brand 2. I would intend to do less business with the brand 3. I would not switch to a competitor, even if I have a problem with the services I received (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Foster & Cadogan, 2000).	,536 - ,690
Attitudinal brand loyalty	More than simple repurchasing behaviour, including the cognitive elements that drive consumers to re-buy and commit to certain	4. I would be more likely to consider their products my first choice when evaluating related products 5. I would stay loyal to the brand, as long as they stick to their promises 6. In the future, I would be willing to pay a higher price for products from the brand over competitive offerings.	,686 - ,843

	brands (Zins, 2001; Back & Parks, 2003; Quester & Lim, 2003)	7. I would commit myself stronger to this brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Taylor *et al*., 2004; Halim, 2006).	
Intentions to recommend a brand	A consumer's intention to spread positive word-of-mouth about a brand to others (Zeithaml *et al*., 1996).	8. I would be likely to say positive things about the brand to other people. 9. I would be likely to recommend the brand to someone who seeks my advice. 10. I would be likely to encourage others to do business with the brand. 11. I would be likely to post positive messages about the brand on some internet board. (Zeithaml *et al*., 1996; Foster & Cadogan, 2000).	,866 - ,923
Involvement	A consumer's level of ongoing commitment in relation to thoughts, feelings and behavioural response (Gordon *et al*., 1998).	12. In general, I have a strong interest in brands 13. Brands are very important to me 14. Brands matters a lot to me 15. I get bored when other people talk to me about brands 16. Brands are relevant to me 17. For me, brands does NOT matter in general (Beatty & Talpade, 1994; Mittal & Lee, 1989)	,901
Commitment	An enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).	18. I am very loyal to brands I like 19. I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep using the product of a brand I like 20. I would be willing to postpone my purchase if a product I like was temporarily unavailable *21.* I would stick with a brand I like, even if it would let me down once or twice (Aaker, J., Fournier, S., & Brasel, S. A, 2004).	,815
Engagement	The level of an individual customer's motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of	22. I really like to talk about brands I like with others 23. I am always interested in learning more about brands I like. 24. I would be interested in merchandise with a brand's name I like on it.	,894

	mind, characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity in direct brand interactions (Hollebeek, 2011b).	25. I am proud to have others know I use a brand I like. 26. I like to visit the website for a brand I like. 27. Compared to other people, I closely follow news about brands I like. (Keller, 2001).	
Brand loyalty	"A deep held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour" (Oliver, 1999, p. 34).	28. I always consider the brand before I buy a product 29. If I feel that a brand is good, I could see myself buy other products from the same company 30. It is important that I feel a strong relationship to a brand 31. If I were satisfied with a brand, I would buy from the same company in the near future again 32. I will stay loyal to a brand, as long as they stick to their promises 33. If I were satisfied with a brand, I would say positive things about the brand to others 34. Commercials regarding competing brands are NOT able to reduce my interest in buying a brand I like. (Oliver, 1999; Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Sahin, Zehir, & Kitapci, 2011).	,746

Source: self-constructed

3.2.5 Type of Questionnaire and Administration Methods

A pilot study must be conducted prior to the intended study (Blessing & Chakrabarti, 2009). Firstly, a colleague was asked to review the questionnaire before a pilot study including 20 respondents were launched. Following the recommendations of Blessing & Chakrabarti (2009), each participant was asked to provide feedback on their experiences and approach the questionnaire with a critical attitude. Subsequently, several changes were made including using easier and more commonly known language, re-framing of three statements and clarification of two main questions.

Respondents were firstly collected via the web. However, web surveys, while fast and low cost, are prone to be biased by factors as income, race, gender and age (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). During the data-collection process, this depicted itself as certain quotas were filled faster than others. The first quota to be complete, were the age-group of 15-29. Previous calculations had determined that this quota should consist of 72 respondents (Appendix 2). When 230 responses were collected, 72 of those respondents were within the age-group of 15-29. However, to fulfil the objective of a sample size of 270, additional 40 respondents had to be found. Moreover, these respondents had to fit into one of the remaining quotas that yet were to be full.

Consequently, these 40 respondents were collected through quantitative face-to-face standardised interviews. The participants were approached in geographically different populated areas, malls and streets. When approached, each participant were asked initial screening questions regarding age, income and education level. This ensured that the approached participants could be put within one of the remaining quotas. This type of face-to-face interviews, where respondents fill out the questionnaire next to the researchers, are quite time-costly. However, considering that only 40 respondents had to be approached, this drawback was limited significantly.

Owing to the translation from English to Danish, following a completely similar framing, structure and wording was impossible. Nevertheless, by following the original sentence structure and format closely, negations were avoided. Furthermore, by avoiding slang and jargon, double negative sentences, vague quantifiers, suggesting answers and double-barrelled questions, the risk of validity and reliability issues were minimised. To improve people's willingness and ability to complete the questionnaire, it was kept relatively short and only closed-ended questions were included. The advantage of flexibility and explanation associated with open-ended questions will be acquired through the interviews (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011).

The scale type consists of a five-point Likert scale with anchors (1) completely agree; (2) agree; (3) neutral; (4) disagree; and (5) completely disagree. 7-point Likert scales can be confusing to respondents, considering the minor difference between the answer options. Admittedly, it though does provide greater opportunities for response variation, however similarly increases the length and difficulty of the questionnaire (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). Most importantly, five-point Likert scales have been used in studies including similar behavioural variables as the ones measured in this study (Mittal & Lee, 1989; Beatty & Talpade, 1994). In addition, one rank-order scale has been adopted to acquire more balanced responses. "Neutral" is provided as an option to circumvent bias and reliability issues (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix 6.

3.4 Methodological Choices for Analysis of Qualitative Data

3.4.1 Interview Approach

An interview aims at collecting ample information and thoroughly explore an issue (Cousin, 2009). Thus, perfect for illuminating the complex matter of consumers' attitudes towards brands and ROs. An interview should last between 30 min and two hours (Wiid & Diggins, 92). The average time for the nine interviews were 36.24 minutes.

There are three basic interview approaches. Each approach differs in relation to the degree of detail the interview questions are prepared, prior to the actual interview (Cousin, 2009). A semi-structured approach was selected in preference to an unstructured or structured interview method. This approach avoids standardized answer, nonetheless ensures comparability. To conduct the interviews, an interview guide with pre-determined questions was developed prior to the interview (Appendix 8). Thus, ensuring that each respondent gets similar questions, nonetheless leaving room for the pursuit of any relevant subject areas that may arise during an interview. Hereby, a mutually comfortable and positive conversation should be established to embrace validity.

3.4.2 Presentation of Interview Participants

Table 2 provides a short description of the interview participants. Thus, demonstrating the selection of a variety of respondents, within variables used for the quota-sample in the questionnaire (Section 3.1.4)

Table 2 - Presentation of interview participants

	Gender	Age	Occupation	Income	Education
Morten	Male	26	Multimedia designer	Medium	Long
Kristina	Female	22	Hairdresser	Low	Short
Peter	Male	29	Insurance sales representative	High	Short
Mette	Female	18	Student	Low	Short
Anja	Female	31	Teacher	Low	Medium
Maiken	Female	49	Self-employed	Medium	Long
Knud	Male	63	Carpenter	Medium	Medium
Maria	Female	54	Fashion designer	High	Medium
Brian	Male	38	Lawyer	High	Long

Source: self-constructed

3.4.3 Transcription

All interviews were recorded with a dictaphone to ensure that full attention were given to the research participants during the interview. They were conducted in the respondent's native language before being transcribed and translated directly into written text. All questions and statements made by the interviewer and interviewee were transcribed to provide the exact context of the interaction to improve the level of sense-making. However, paralanguage have been omitted from the interview transcripts, as assessing its meaning would only add confusion, subjectivity and bias to the qualitative data analysis (Murchison, 2010). The interpretation of paralanguage is highly subjective, particularly for an unexperienced researcher. Moreover, when transcribing an oral conversation in one language to written text in another language, it is impossible to make a completely accurate transcript. Linguistic nuances and slang often cannot be translated directly to another language.

The researcher is though fully aware that "adequacy and accuracy of translation in cross-cultural communication is paramount for conducting research with human subjects in any methodological tradition, across all disciplines and paradigms" (Shklarov, 2007, p. 529). Consequently, all doubts and unclear aspects in the interview were revised with the individual respondents who were given the original part of the transcript, in need of clarification. Hence, asked to clarify the specific section.

4. Empirical Research

4.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Research

By now, the theoretical foundation for this dissertation has extensively been reviewed and discussed. To progress from this foundation, the research objectives will be met and hypotheses tested. The in-depth interviews will be presented qualitatively on the basis of simple content analyses. Conversely, data collected through the questionnaire will be analysed statistically with SPSS. Firstly, descriptive exploratory analyses will be used to provide an initial insight before inferential statistics will be applied to statistically test the research hypotheses.

4.2 Qualitative Study

4.2.1Qualitative Analysis of Interviews

The following chapter will evaluate the research findings according to Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of learning. The data will thus be described, discussed/analysed, synthesised with reference to the literature review and evaluated. The evaluation itself will though appear in the concluding chapter, wherein the qualitative findings will be correlated with the quantitative findings. Each research objective form a section of analysis, thus constitute as the structure for the analyses. The transcript for each interview can be found in appendix 9.

4.2.2 RO1: Explore consumers' interest in relational behaviour with brands, and uncover their responses to relationship offerings from brands.

A thorough exploration into the respondents opinion and reaction to ROs, will likewise elucidate the respondents interest in relational behaviour with brands. A further exploration of their interest in relational behaviour with brands will be acquired in section 4.2.3 and 4.2.4. There are many commonalities in the respondent's interest in relational behaviour, and reaction to ROs. Respondents display a noteworthy lack of interest in ROs and negative opinions towards them. Common explanations includes a preference to seek out the information themselves, a bombardment of marketing messages and the reception of unrequested information. An excerpt of quotes display these feelings well:

- ✓ *"Oh, I really hate these things (ROs). I just want to be able to make my own choices and not be told what to do. If I am interested in information from a brand, and for instance is looking for a membership card, I will seek that information out on my own… I am just not interested in receiving all this information"*. – *Kristina*

- ✓ *"Often it just gets too much because you are bombarded with it…. Therefore, I also think that I get quite easy annoyed by these marketing bombardments". – Maria*
- ✓ *"Newsletters, to take that, I believe is something invented by the devil. I always want to seek out the information that I need directly at the source e.g. on their own website. I try to avoid any information from brands actually. If I like a brand, I go check for myself if there is something new and interesting for me to know about. The mentality of throwing information in the heads of consumers I really do not like".- Morten*
- ✓ *"Companies today try too hard to get your attention. But what they do not realise is that half of the information they sent out is irrelevant for the receiver and result in annoyance instead of gratitude". – Maiken*
- ✓ *"I definitely notices it and it definitely annoys me. You know, we live in a world where it is so easy to send information to people, whether they want that information or not. The problem is that when it is easy for everyone to send, it means that I as a consumer receive tons and tons of information". – Knud*
- ✓ *"I would like to add that it really depends on the situation and the way brands handle it. I know I often give my permission to receive things from brands, but in many cases I just receive so much more than I was expecting… They always tell you that they will only send "relevant" news or special offers, but I actually often feel that I receive things so often that it feels kind of inconvenient and annoying". – Peter*

Brian, the respondent who actually displayed the greatest level of interest in brands, even said *"I do not want to receive tons of offers from brands that I am not really interested in and have not asked to receive anything from".* He though explains his interest in offers from brands that he like *"Often I like to receive stuff from brands I like and am loyal to and I guess I am also one of those that often "fall" for the offers because I often see it as an opportunity to save money".* Nonetheless, he follows it with a particularly interesting and telling analogy *"how can I put it? You know how you sometimes have a good friend or a girlfriend. You might like or love the person, but it does not necessarily mean that you want to talk to the person every day, and other times you might feel that the person is simply just talking too much. We all need space, even from the things we like and are interested in".*

Brian's analogy is strongly connected to elements pointed out by other respondents who mentions the quantity of ROs as an essential aspect. An excess amount of information is perceived as a source of irritation. Respondents though acknowledge that if the amount of information and ROs correspond with their expectations, or if the information is well-targeted and relevant for them, the effects can be positive. Even so, when asked directly if it positively affects their intentions to purchase, their brand loyalty and/or their ITR, it is evident that it is primarily consumers BBL that is effected i.e. not their attitude towards the brand or ITR the brand.

Only Brian and Peter sticks out. Both believe that ROs can affect their BBL and ABL. Brian explains "*Surely it can drive me closer to the brand because I am regularly reminded about a brand and their products"* and "*my intentions to purchase can increase when I receive things from brands that I like or when I am a member of some loyalty program*". Consequently suggesting a positive impact on his ABL as well as BBL. Nevertheless, Brian would not have higher ITR a brand*" I will not recommend brands just because I have received information from brands. I recommend brands on the basis of my own experience with their products, I don't just recommend brand because some brands sends me information about how great they are"*. Peter states *"my intentions to purchase or repurchase could both be affected negatively and positive. I do not know if I could say that I am more inclined to be affected positively or negatively, but both things could easily happen, dependent on the situation".* Further, gives the example that *"if they only send one per months, and that is what I expect, I would surely also be affected positively". – Peter*

While other respondents likewise mention a potential positive effect, this affect does not seem to impact BBL, ABL or ITR a brand. Primarily, the positive elements just encompass the opportunity to exploit a great offer and save money.

- ✓ *"I think that overall, I would only have intentions to purchase or repurchase a brand if e.g. a newsletter or similar offered me a great discounts. But these relationship offerings would not make me want to have, or give me the feeling that I have, a relationship to the brand and therefore like that brand more". - Maria*
- ✓ *"I think that it has a subconscious influence, but it is not that often that these things can result in a purchase or repurchase. However, a few select times it may have a positive effect". - Mette*
- ✓ *"The implications can also be positive, e.g. if I say yes to receive something from a brand that interest me e.g. Änglemark, then I can be happy about receiving information from them.* Later in the conversation adding "*The only positive outcome may be that I buy a great offer once a while". – Anja*

- ✓ *"My intention to purchase or repurchase a product is based on previous experience with the product or the price. I do not believe that relationships offering affects that. A loyalty program may cause me to try a new product because I can get it cheaper, but I will not purchase it again or be loyal to the brand if I do not like the product or do not find the brand interesting".– Maiken*

While the above suggests that the implications of ROs can be positive in certain cases, the implications can certainly be negative. Annoying, overwhelming and irritating are commonly used words to describe the respondent's negative reactions. In this regard, several respondents mentions that online information as e-mails/newsletters would lead them to block future information. However, define this as the ultimate implication, thus saying that it would not affect their attitudes towards the brands. While there are plenty of examples describing the respondent's annoyance towards ROs, focus will instead be on the implications of these negative feelings. Particularly, understand whether the negative perception of ROs may extend to impact their BBL, ABL and ITR a brand. Five of the nine respondents explain that ROs are capable of affecting their BBL and ABL at some point.

- ✓ "*I will be irritated and annoyed which can mean that I will be likely to have a negative attitude towards the brands that bombard me with information and offers". –* Kristina. Kristina further states that "*I will not be likely to buy from or rebuy from a brand that overwhelms me with offers and information*" and that it would likewise affect her level of brand loyalty and make it highly unlikely for her to recommend the brand.
- ✓ *"My first action would simply be to block the information that I receive. I could still buy that product at another time, but of course, my attitude towards that brand would definitely not be as good as it was before. So I would most likely need more incentive to buy the brand in the future". – Anja*
- ✓ *"Companies that try too hard and send out too much information and tries to "catch" their customers seems untrustworthy. Particularly if they exaggerate it"… "I would definitely say that because of these relationship offerings I today clearly have come to have a negative view of Bilka's (Supermarket chain) brand". – Morten*
- ✓ *"It would slowly drive me away and at some point, it would simply annoy me so much that I would start looking for other brands, even though I in every way actually like this brand and their product". – Peter*

A great example is provided by Knud, who explains his search for new running shoes. Knud had, by choice, accepted to receive Nike's newsletter a while back owing to several good experiences. Knud searched the internet and ended up with two pair of shoes, one from Adidas and one from Nike. He clarifies his decision making process *"I couldn't really make a decision but then I opened to check my e-mail which I hadn't had time to check the entire weekend and then had 3, yes 3 e-mails in there from Nike. I was like, seriously, come on! I was already annoyed because they had been sending me 3 times a week or so, but that was "the drop that made the difference". I deleted the e-mails, found a way to unsubscribe from Nike and put the Adidas shoes on my wishlist". - Knud* (Full example, Appendix 9).

A few respondents are somewhere in-between the above examples, seeing neither a potential positive or negative impact on their purchase intentions, brand loyalty or ITR. Yet, the implications of ROs are generally believed to have a negative influence on BBL, ABL and/or ITR a brand.

Synthesising this to the literature review, it is clear that these findings are not surprising. No researchers have directly investigated consumers' response to ROs, in which a direct comparison cannot be made. Still, several researchers have previously noted that all consumers simply cannot be forced into relationships. Grönross (2006) accurately pointed out that forcing all consumers into relationships will result in inappropriate, ineffective and inefficient marketing activities and behaviour.

A common word used in almost every single interview was "annoying". Rendering Fournier *et.al* (1998) quote, this problem was accurately portrayed: *"Customers delight in neither. Customers cope. They tolerate sales clerks who hound them with questions every time they buy a battery… They juggle the flood of invitations to participate in frequent buyer rewards programs" (p. 43).* The respondents surely seems to "delight in neither". Furthermore, it was suggested that the attempt to build relationships might be the exact thing that destroys one (Fournier *et al.* 1998). Conferring the responses, this is likewise indicated here.

Similarly, surveys from CEB pointed out that constant interaction can add to the already overwhelming amount of information bombarding consumers every day. Consequently, proposing a potentially adverse effect on consumers' intentions to purchase, repurchase and recommend a product or service. Thus, identifying cognitive overload as the cause of this adverse effect (Section 2.8). The findings here notably support this proposition. Many respondents identified the quantity of ROs as essential. In the context of receiving information and marketing messages, phrases and words as “an excess amount of”, “too much”, “bombardment” and “overwhelming” were common. Indeed, it points to the notion that extensive information is far from empowering, but overwhelming. Thus, explains the negative attitudes towards ROs.

4.2.3 RO2: Identify what motivates consumers to engage/interact with brands, and examine if their motivation depends on their level of engagement, commitment or involvement.

4.2.3.1 Level of engagement with brands and motivation for engaging with brands

Before portraying the respondent’s motivations for engaging with brands, it is foremost necessary to understand their attitudes towards engagement. In this context, understand their desire to engage/interact with brands and be approached by them. Hence, obtain an understanding of their underlying motives for engaging with brands.

In relation to engagement, many of the responses are somewhat similar to the ones concerning ROs. Since ROs is a type of engagement, this was to be expected. Again, several people highlight the preference to seek out information on their own terms while mentioning a limited interest in engaging with brands. In fact, several respondents have a rather negative attitude towards engagement, primarily due to the excessive amount of information.

- ✓ *“I just want to be able to access the information I find relevant. I do not have a need to actively communicate with brands. As long as they keep their promises, remain interesting and open about their business I see no need to communicate more with them”. – Maiken*
- ✓ *“I definitely have a negative attitude towards interacting with brands today, it is not because I don’t think that it can be interesting sometimes, but if it is too much, then you are overwhelmed by it”. – Kristina*
- ✓ *“Sometimes you just receive information in what feels like inconvenient or inappropriate times. Sometimes it becomes inconvenient and annoying because you receive it all the time and everywhere you go… It is often something that takes up a lot of time, time that I think most people feel they have less of. And also it can just become too much and you just want to get rid of the brand. You know, if you give them your hand then they try to take your whole arm (Danish saying that relates to being greedy)”. - Brian*

- ✓ *"if I receive communication material too often I will be very likely to see it as negative"*. *– Anja*
- ✓ *"Often it is just too easy to see right through all the advertising bullshit (sorry for my choice of word). You know, it can just seem so fake when companies interact with you because it is evident that they only do it to make me buy something. But in general I think what annoys me the most is just when I feel that I didn't ask for this information, when I feel that it is thrown in my head". – Knud.*
- ✓ *"I think that if there is an excessive amount of communication, which I often think there is, then I see it very negatively. No matter where you go today, communication is everywhere. If you are anywhere online on Facebook, a website or alike, commercials and pop ups are everywhere, and if you want membership cards or be part of loyalty programs you always receive way to much information regarding all sorts of things you have no interest in. I quickly start to see it as spam, which of course has the opposite effect of what brands intended". – Maria*

As in the case with ROs, the participants do mention potential positive outcomes and advantages of interacting with brands. The critical determining factor seems to be the amount and relevance of communication. Those examples will though not be presented here as the positive outcomes are highly similar to those described in the potential positive outcomes of ROs (Section 4.2.2).

In summary, findings shows that in general the respondents are not overly engaged with brands. This is the result of limited time and experience telling them that when engaging, the amount of information brands provide will quickly become overwhelming. Therefore, it is a general belief that there are few incentives for engaging with brands.

In regards to the type of motivation for brand engagement, there is a strong level of agreement in relation to the reasons for communicating with brands. Most point out rather simple motivations for interacting with brands:

- ✓ *"My primary motivation is probably just to get customer service, if I need a problem to be fixed or if I need to make a purchase". – Kristina*
- ✓ *"My motivation is usually to get more information, about either a product or a certain offer. I probably often also just communicate with them to get discounts". – Anja*

- ✓ *"The only times I communicate with brands are when I buy products and when I have trouble or questions regarding the given product. I do not have any kind of motivation to communicate with brand at all, besides maybe get discounts to save money.*
- ✓ *"Just to get guidance, a reclamation or advices". – Morten*
- ✓ *"I think that sometimes I communicate with brands because I want other people to see that I like these brands, to show friends that I have good taste and like quality brands. So you could say I do it to show my image. Else, I don't really know, I guess I often also communicate with brands just to get some help with a problem I have with a product. Maybe a defect or other issues. And then I of course communicate with brands when I receive their offers and discounts that I often exploit". - Brian*
- ✓ *"Typically, I would say it is because I have trouble with e.g. their products, or it might be because they have made some changes and I am probably more inclined to call and complain than call and praise them". – Peter*

Reflecting on this, strong commonalities can certainly be detected in people's motivation for engaging with brands. Discounts and customer service are the two most important types of motivation. In relation to engagement, the responses vary more, but are albeit mostly negative and depict rather low levels of engagement. Researchers have explained that today Millenials are active problem solvers. Thus, a generation filled with eagerness to engage with brands and be interested in them (Section 2.6). It is though evident that this is not an interest and/or eagerness shared by everyone. This support research findings from the literature regarding consumer's lacking interest in relational behaviour and ROs. Particularly, CEB claims that consumer's willingness to engage in brand relationships is a myth and that engagement in brand relationships is merely a means of getting discounts (Section 2.7). Several respondents' mentions exactly "discounts" as a great motivation for engagement. These findings therefore definitely does not contradict CEB's claim.

In addition, CEB identified "*more interaction is better"* as a myth (Section 2.8). Here, claiming that consumers are already exposed to an overwhelming amount of information every day, in which more interaction results in cognitive overload (Section 2.8). It is clear from the qualitative findings that more interaction is not better. Little information may have a positive effect. However, a lot of interaction is oppositely pinpointed as the exact reason for their negative attitudes. Consequently, it provides strong support to the claim that "*more interaction is better*" indeed is a myth.

Overall, the motivations for interacting with brands seems to be quite independent of the level of engagement as respondents put forth the same types of motivations despite of their interest for engaging with brands. This was though difficult to measure in the interviews, thus will be investigated thoroughly in the quantitative section.

4.2.3.2 Commitment and involvement with brands

Commitment and involvement are both behavioural constructs providing vital insight into consumers' attachments to brands. (Section 2.7). Though, while literature distinguishes between the two separate, albeit closely related, concepts this distinction was not presented for the interviewees. Accordingly, respondents were only involved in a general discussion of their involvement and attachment to brands.

Brian, who previously indicated a positive attitude towards ROs, shows a high level of involvement and attachment to brands. *"I feel attached to many brands, so I would say that I have a strong attachment to brands"*. When asked to explain how this shows itself he expresses *"I often recommend and advocate for the brands that I am a proud user of".* Brian argues that because he "*feel loyal and act as a loyal customer"* his level of attachment shows itself pretty well. Once again, Brian distinguishes a bit from the remaining respondents.

Conferring the remaining respondents, a limited degree of attachment and involvement can be detected. Arguably, some respondents mention a certain level of attachment, but likewise clarifies obvious limitations. Examples include Maiken who is constrained to a few select brands and Anja, Kristina and Mette who are constrained to certain product categories.

- ✓ *"I am involved with brands to the degree that I actively search information about companies that I have an interest in and which have performed well over time". – Maiken*
- ✓ *"Even though I feel that brands are important, as they are good indicators of what products stand for, I am not really closely attached to many brands. However, two brands that I feel a very close attachment to is Änglemark which I just mentioned and my telephone company Call Me". – Anja*
- ✓ *"I have a select few brands that I feel close to, but in general, I am not particularly close to any brands… I would say Zara, H&M and Apple… But I think that I am not really involved with brands that much in general to be honest. I am involved with a few brands, particularly the ones that I have already mentioned, but my attachment is not closer than if I find something better, then I shift to that brand". – Kristina.*

- ✓ *"I am definitely not very involved with brands. I also hope that I am independent of brands"… For a lot of brands I just buy what is cheapest, for instance with food related products or clothes. So those brands I do not really think about, but for instance with telephones, computers and so on I definitely feel closer to them because within this category I think that quality is more important". – Mette*

The remaining respondents displays little to no attachment to brands, as exemplified next:

- ✓ *"No attachment really. I don't feel close to brands in that way"…. I do not feel like I am involved with brands. I do not feel close to any brands that springs to mind. Also, since I do not consider brands that important and are not that interested in brands, it is only logical that I do not have an interest to be involved with brands in any way".- Knud*
- ✓ *"I am not involved with brands at all. So well, there is not that much to explain… it is just not something that is interesting for me. As I said earlier, I am not really a loyal kind of person. I don't care that much about brands and I don't see it as my responsibility to support any brands, therefore I also don't have an interest in being involved with brands." - Maria*
- ✓ *"I may have some preferences towards some brands. But I'm not sure I would say that I have a close attachment to any specific brands… "I am not really that involved with any brands. But still, to some degree, I guess I am since I feel closer to some brands than I do to others. But in general I would say that I'm not overly involved with brands." – Peter*

When analysing the responses and reflecting upon the results, consumers are arguably quite uninvolved with brands and show few signs of emotional attachment. A notions supported by the indications made in relation to consumer's lack of interest in brand relationships, in communicating with brands and their negative view on engagement (Section 4.2.2; 4.2.3). As mentioned earlier, a connection worth considering is the link between consumers' low level of interest in brand relationships and their expected low levels of involvement and commitment to brands. A link that these findings seems to support, considering the above reflections.

In relation to consumers' relatedness and feelings towards brands, commitment and involvement are vital aspects to consider, thus essential for a CBR (Section 2.7). Both variables may be regarded as conditions for a relationship. If someone is not involved and committed to a brand, one is neither likely to be interested in a relationship with that brand (Section 2.7).

Therefore, respondent's minor level of attachment and involvement with brands indicates that everyone far from shares the Millennials interest in brands and their willingness to engage and form relationships with brands (Section 2.6). By this reasoning, supporting the finding from CEB suggesting that only 20 % are actually willing to engage in relationships with brands. Thus, strengthens the argument provided by CEB that consumers' willingness to engage in CBRs is a myth.

4.2.4 RO3: Understand Brand Loyalty and How It Relates to Involvement, Commitment and Engagement.

As part of investigating the connection between loyalty, involvement, commitment and engagement, a deeper exploration of brand loyalty was performed during the interviews. Emphasis was put on the participant's level of brand loyalty. Thus, on obtaining insights into the perceived connection between loyalty and brand relationships, in order to provide a better understanding of how consumers view relationships with brands. Consumers view on, and interest in, CBR is the central theme in this study, therefore highly relevant to investigate from several angles.

Maiken express having "*certain brands that I am highly loyal to and which I would buy no matter what. I for example like Apples products a lot*". Hence, explains that her loyalty originates from several good experiences with their products, and states that what makes her loyal is "*if a brand performs on a continuous basis that is what makes me a loyal customer. If they keep on coming up with interesting new products, I keep on being invested in them"*. Other respondents likewise show a certain level of loyalty towards brands:

- ✓ *I do want to be loyal to the brands that I am very happy with. If they make great quality products at good prices, obviously I want to be loyal to them. I want to continue using their products and support their business so that I can keep buying their products in the future". – Kristina.*
- ✓ *"I am very interested in being loyal to the brands that have great products. If their products work excellently, then I definitely will want to be loyal to that brand". – Brian*
- ✓ *"I guess I am a little bit loyal towards some of the more expensive brands". – Mette*
- ✓ *"I would say that I am loyal to a number of brands".- Peter*

Nevertheless, the same respondents who just showed an interest in being loyal to brands, later explains their loyalty and how little is needed for them to change. This suddenly provides an entirely different view on the respondent's level of brand loyalty.

- ✓ "*For instance my loyalty to H&M and ZARA are mostly based on the fact that it is quite good quality to very good prices. I am satisfied with their quality and design, but mostly the driving factor is that it is so cheap.*" *– Kristina.*
- ✓ *But at the moment that they don't work as good as expected, I will try to find another brands that has better products". – Brian*
- ✓ *"I am loyal to some brands, but not because of interest, I would say. And I am not 100% loyal to any brand, I will always be likely to change a brand if I find something better, cheaper or something". - Mette*
- ✓ *"I would not say it is any kind of strong loyalty. I think I just buy many of these brands because I'm used to them and are happy with the quality of the product and not really because I have any particular interest in the brands or interest in supporting and helping this brand. I just buy them because I know it works or tastes great, I do not really care whether I support the brands or show my loyalty to the brand. If I find another product that tastes better or works better, I would probably switch to that product without thinking for a second". – Peter*

As epitomised by these examples, the participants who see themselves as loyal, are essentially not truly loyal. Based on their statements, it is obvious that the type of loyalty the respondents have to brands are weak and fragile or driven by price. An example from Peter exemplifies perfectly the fragility of consumers brand loyalty.

Peter's story is related to the travel Agency Falck Lauritsen. Previously the favourite travel agency, Peter had been travelling with them for several occasions, despite their high prices. Nevertheless, owing to good experiences he was willing to pay the extra to be *"certain that everything was good".* Peter explains his experience: "*In one vacation, I had ordered an island roundabout in a jeep where they had promised Danish-speaking guides, but in reality, no one spoke Danish, English or any other language that we could understand. Therefore, I requested my money back (for the trip), which they were unwilling to give".* In conclusion, Peter firmly establishes the consequences "*Ever since, I have never travelled with Falck Lauritsen. Before, I would consider myself a very loyal customer, but still, after just one negative experience, I immediately dropped the company, and I am sure that I will never book a vacation with them again".*

Peter had been a loyal customer to Falck Lauritsen for years, but after just one negative experience, brand loyalty was substituted by hatred. In a bigger picture, it adds to the notion that little is needed for the respondents to shift to another brand. One negative experience, a cheaper product, better value for money or a better functioning product are no doubt capable of causing brand switching.

In addition to what is already presented, two respondents see themselves as having no loyalty or interest in being loyal to brands.

- ✓ *"I'm not really a loyal kind of person… I rebuy a lot of brands, but not out of loyalty. I buy those brands because I like them, either their taste or quality or because they are cheap... I am not attached to any of these brands, so as soon as I experience a better product or maybe just something cheaper or easier accessible I would change to that product".* – Maria
- ✓ *"I am not really interested in being loyal. This does not mean that I do not like any brands and that I am not buying the same brands repeatedly. What I mean is that I do not buy certain brands repeatedly because I want to support their brand or because I think that what they stand for is great or something like that. I am much more focused on the individual product that the actual brand. To me it is all about quality versus price. Therefore, I also often change and shift between different brands and products, so that is why I don't think that I am really loyal to brands but also why I am not really interest in being loyal". - Knud*

In relation to the connection between loyalty and relationships, and how consumers view relationships, the responses are quite interesting. The participants largely agree on the viewpoint that being loyal and having a relationship is somewhat similar. Several though argue that having a relationship is a stage beyond loyalty i.e. something that requires a stronger emotional bond. Considering the high level of price loyalty, the respondents depicted earlier, it suggests that few are engaged in emotionally deep relationships with brands.

- ✓ *"I think that if I am loyal there is also a great likelihood that I have a relationship with a brand, which I would just define as "stronger loyalty". - Brian*
- ✓ *"Having a relationship with a brand, for me, is associated with a closer and deeper emotional bond than being loyal to a brand". – Peter*
- ✓ *"if you are truly loyal to a brand and really want to support a brand, for any personal reason, then you also have a relationship, but you need to have this connection and not just rebuy the product for no apparent reason other than it just tastes good or looks good or something like that". Maria*

- ✓ *"To have a relationship with a brand you would need some kind of stronger emotional connection than you would have just to be loyal to a brand".* – Knud
- ✓ *"Loyalty can have different degrees I would say, and if you are highly loyal and really passionate about a brand I think it will naturally evolve into a relationship".* - Mette

While this improves the understanding of how they view relationships with and loyalty towards brands, this was further illuminated by asking the respondents to characterise a CBR, while having in mind their perception of an interpersonal relationship.

- ✓ *"A relationship with a brand is more superficial. You may have an interest or attachment to a brand but it is a one way relationship. There is no mutual interest as such besides the company wanting to keep you as a customer".* - Maiken
- ✓ *"A relationship to a brand will be much much weaker than any kind of relationship that you can have with a friend, boyfriend, mom or dad". Kristina*
- ✓ *"I actually think it is rude to compare a personal relationship with a relationship to a brand, but well, maybe someone truly has these deep feelings for brands, I just do not understand it".* – Mette
- ✓ *"It is like a relationship that has most of what a normal relationship has but less of everything. Less love, less interest, less support. It is much more about personal self-interest, from both sides".* – Brian
- ✓ *"A relationship to a brand is something that you have one day, but may drop the other day if something better comes along or if you have a negative experience with a brand".* – Knud
- ✓ *"Brands don't help to solve your real problems, product solve them, not brands and similarly consumers rarely want to honestly help brands, they just want to have their own way and make them fix their problems. There is no relationship in that".* – Maria
- ✓ *"It is a very different kind of relationship and level of loyalty in the sense that so little needs to happen before I simply choose to buy another brand. You could say that it is human to fail, and therefore people forgive. But if brands fail, you don't forgive as easily because there are almost always other great options to try".* – Peter.

The respondents view a relationship as something quite similar to brand loyalty, although a stronger level of brand loyalty. Yet, when asked to characterise relationships with brands, it becomes obvious that they see little connection between a CBR and interpersonal relationship. CBRs are characterised as something fragile, weak, easy replaceable and with no emotional attachment. Interestingly, this contradicts their own words when first defining relationships as something emotionally stronger than loyalty, but hence characterises a relationship as weak and fragile.

The work from particularly Fournier (1998), established that the emotional aspects related to brand relationships are essential for relationship quality (Section 2.4). The respondents though appear to define CBRs as something founded on few strong emotional aspects. At least, the respondents seem unwilling to put strong feelings into a CBR. Likewise, few appear to have strong relationships with brands, albeit some price-oriented loyalty towards brands. Nonetheless, according to their definition of loyalty, the strength of loyalty towards certain brands is weak and mostly price oriented. Similar indications were discovered in the literature where Accenture (2011) suggested that consumers nowadays change between brands more frequently and look for deals increasingly more, in spite of increased satisfaction with customer services (Section 1.1).

In the literature, Grönross (2006) stated that "a customer often do not want to be engaged in something *they would define* as a relationship with the firm" (p. 408): a statement respondents seem to agree with. The respondents do not seem to be interested in close relationships with brands. Primarily, a relationship with a brand is not something regarded as strong and emotionally deep.

4.3 Quantitative Analysis of Questionnaire

4.3.1 Exploratory Data Analysis

Description is an exploratory type of data analysis critical to detect data problems as outliers, non-normal distributions, coding issues and data input errors. In addition, it is useful to check whether the assumptions are met regarding the statistics planned for later use, and to display the demographic distribution of respondents (Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, & Barrett, 2013).

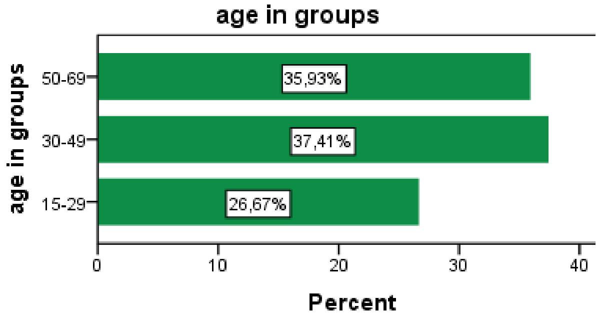
4.3.1.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics

There are 270 valid responses, corresponding to the sample size objective set previously (Section 3.1.6). From inspection of a frequency table, no missing data were found within the sociodemographic variables, thus suggesting no data entry errors (Appendix 10).

As reported previously, a quota sampling method was adhered to with focus on gender, age, educational level and salary. This was chosen to ensure that the distribution of respondents within the sample are similar to the distribution of consumers within the population, according to these variables. Males and females are almost equally represented in the sample: 136 males

(50.4%) and 134 females (49.6% of the respondents). From Figure 1 it is possible to conclude that 37.41% of the respondents are aged between 30-49, whereas only 26.67 % are between 15-29.

Figure 1 - Distribution of age in groups



With almost half of the respondents having a medium long education (Figure 2), this is the most common level of education. Next follows a short education with 43.33 % whereas only 8.15 % of the respondents have a long education.

Figure 2 - Distribution of education levels

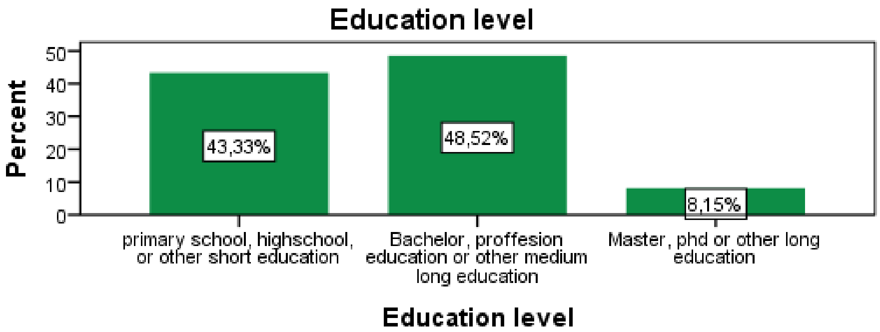
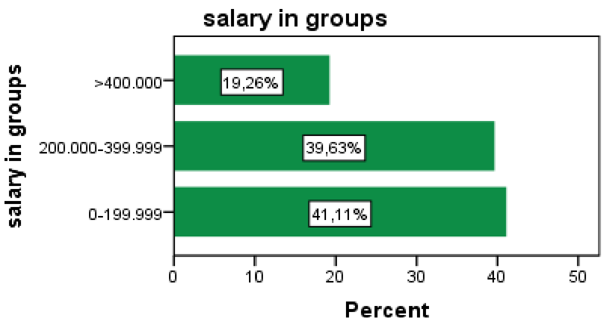


Figure 3 shows that 19.26 % of the respondents earn more than 400.000 DKK a month, 39.63 % between 200.000-399.999 DKK and 41.11 % somewhere between 0-199.999 DKK.

Figure 3 . Distribution of salary in a year in groups (in DKK)



4.3.1.2 Summated Scales

Besides the socio demographic questions, and the rank-ordered question concerning motivation for engaging with brands, all questions in the questionnaire measures underlying constructs (Section 3.2). As a result, the individual variables have been used to compute summated scales in SPSS. Nonetheless, it can still be useful to make descriptive analyses of the individual variables, in relation to the scale they measure. Thus, get a feeling of the respondents answer to each question. Hence, provide a great insight into the different constructs. Subsequently, inferential statistics, on the summated scales, can be applied to provide statistical support.

Prior to looking at the individual items in relation to the scale they measure, a brief analysis of the means, shape of distribution and range of data for each summated scale were conducted (Appendix 11). In this way, an initial insight into important aspects as central tendency, variability, range of scores and shape of distribution of the data was acquired (Morgan *et al*., 2013). Likewise, an analysis of the Cronbach's alpha coefficients, obtained for each of the seven scales, tested their reliability (Section 3.2.4). The coefficients for the BBL scale displayed values below the minimum requirement of 0.60. However, the three questions measuring BBL are represented twice in the questionnaire. It measures the affect after both 1-2 ROs and 3-4 ROs. For 3-4 ROs the coefficient is .690 in contrast to .53 for 1-2 ROs. Deriving, it was regarded as a decent reason for accepting the scales validity. The remaining scales are all acceptable, most scales even forms a good reliable composite with levels above .80 (Appendix 7).

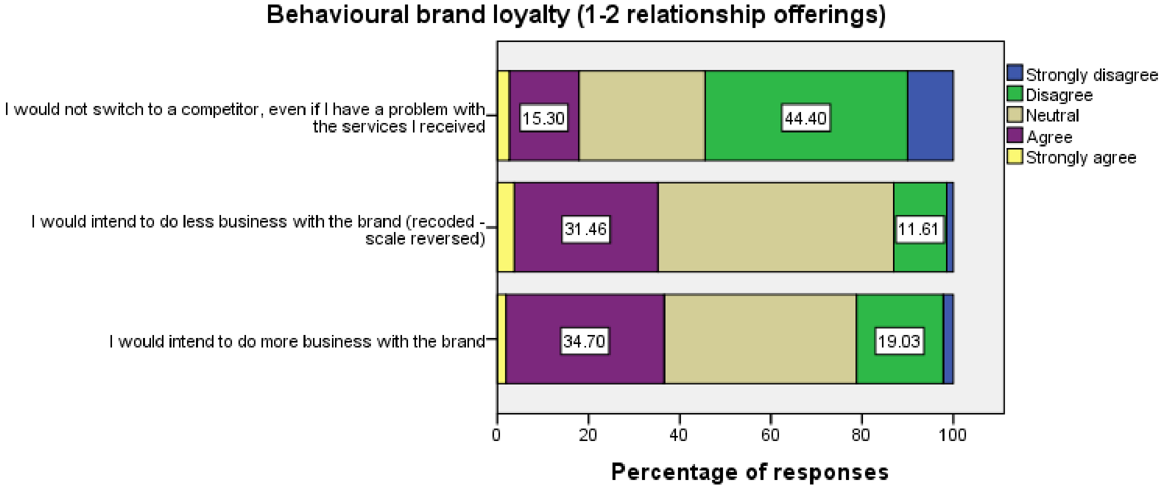
4.3.2 Descriptive Analysis of Individual Variables

A deeper look into each question, relating to its respective scale, will be provided in the following sections through descriptive analyses. Subsequently, a better understanding of the rank-ordered question in relation to motivation will be provided.

4.3.2.1 Individual variables measuring behavioural brand loyalty (BBL)

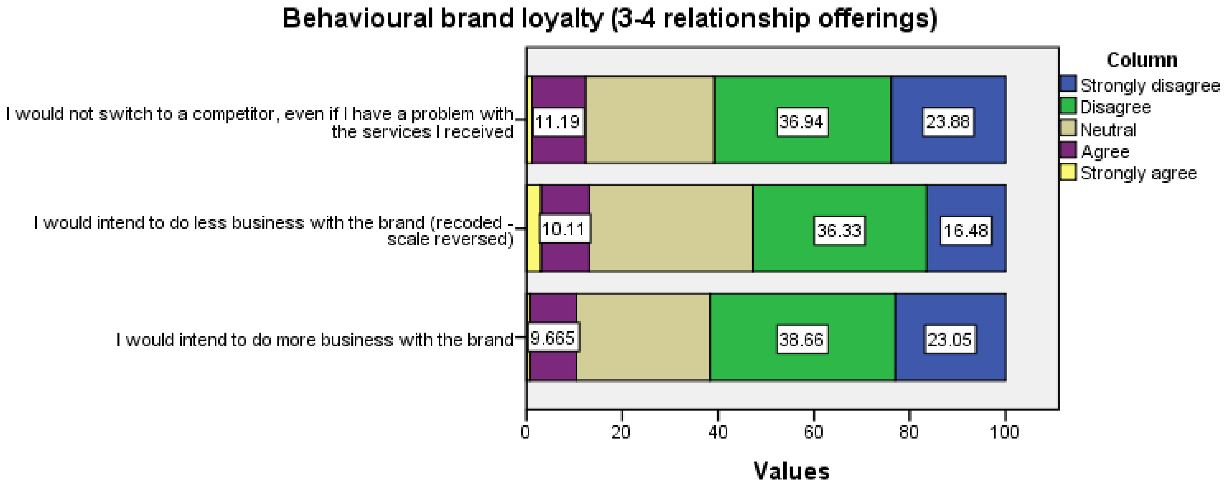
The following three questions measures consumers BBL, when receiving 1-2 ROs a month from a brand. To the first question "I would not switch to a competitor, even if I have a problem with the services I received", the respondents show a high level of disagreement with 44.4 % disagreeing with the statement. Likewise, 10.1 % strongly disagrees as compared to the 2.6 % who strongly agrees and 15.3 % who agrees. The other two questions "I would intend to do less business with the brand" (scale reversed) and "I would intend to do more business with the brand" though shows high levels of agreement, suggesting that 1-2 monthly ROs from a brand is likely to affect the respondents level of BBL positively. This would also be the general conclusion, albeit the first question suggests a limited positive impact (Figure 4).

Figure 4 - Behavioural brand loyalty 1-2 relationship offerings



When asked the same question later, however with the difference of receiving 3-4 ROs, the results are remarkably different. As evident from Figure 5, the responses are predominantly negative i.e. respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the statements. This indicates that while 1-2 ROs might have a slightly positive impact on consumer's level of BBL, the effects are highly negative in the case of 3-4 ROs.

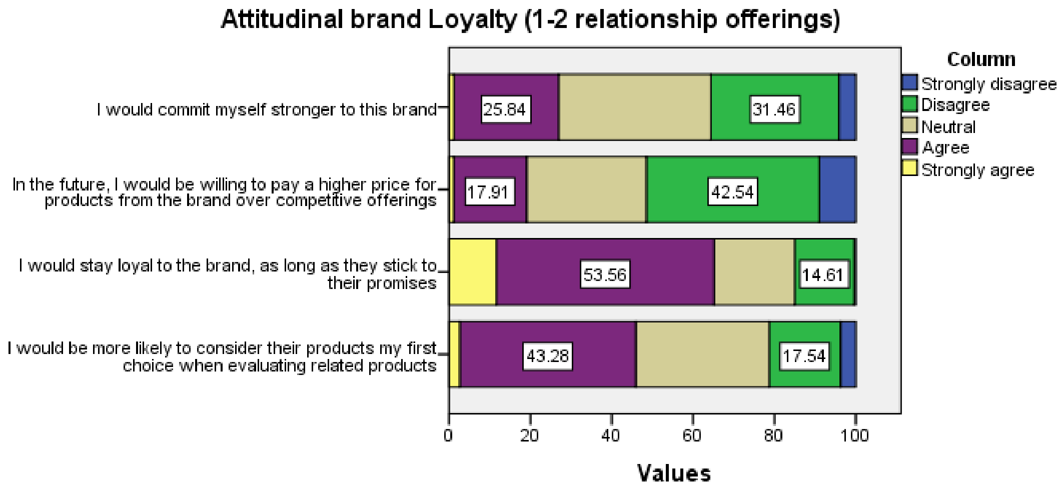
Figure 5 - Behavioural brand loyalty 3-4 relationship offerings



4.3.2.2 Individual variables measuring attitudinal brand loyalty (ABL)

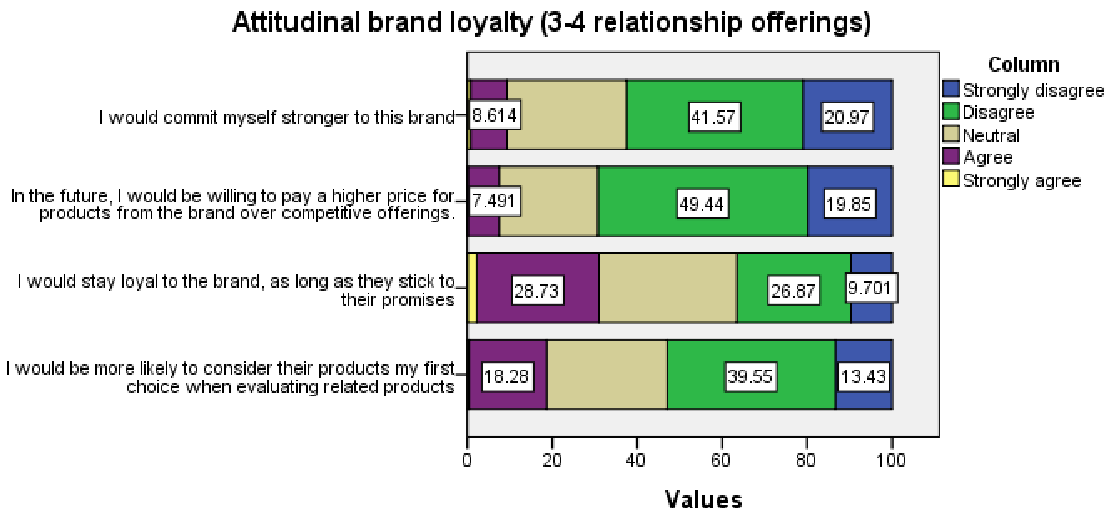
A comparison of the respondents ABL, dependent on the reception of 1-2 or 3-4 ROs, reveal strong contrasts. Responses to the question, the first time, reveals that people would not be willing to pay a higher price and only around 25 % would commit stronger to the brand. Yet, they would be willing to stay loyal to the brand for keeping its promises, and be likely to consider their product their first choice when evaluating related products. It suggest at close to neutral or slightly positive effect on consumers ABL when receiving 1-2 ROs (Figure 6).

Figure 6 - Attitudinal brand loyalty 1-2 relationship offerings



On the contrary, when receiving 3-4 ROs a strong negative impact on their ABL can be detected. For all questions, the respondents disagree and strongly disagree significantly more than agreeing and strongly agreeing to the statements. In fact, a relevant percentage of people strongly disagree with all statements, whereas almost no one strongly agrees.

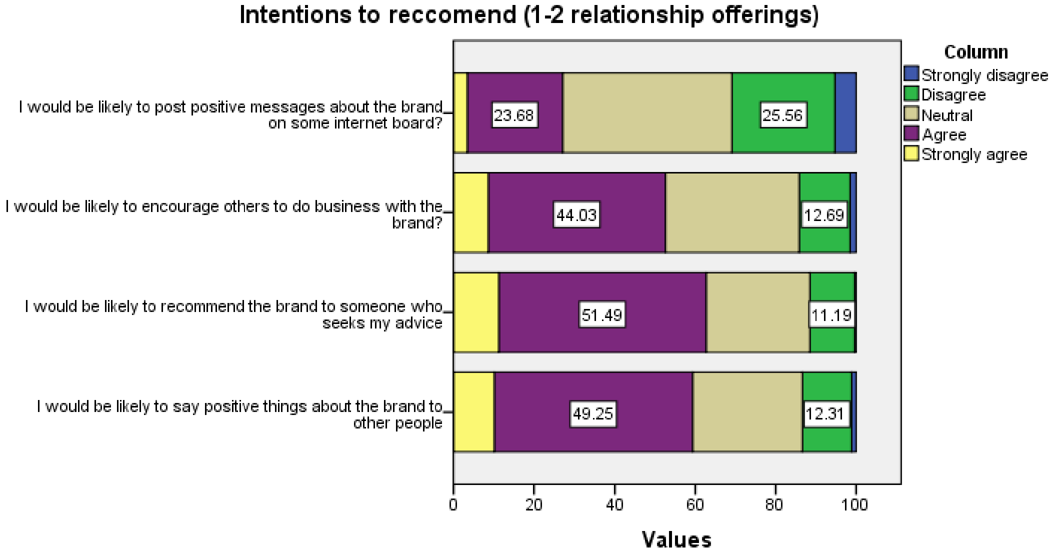
Figure 7 - Attitudinal brand loyalty 3-4 relationship offers



4.3.2.3 Individual variables measuring intentions to recommend (ITR)

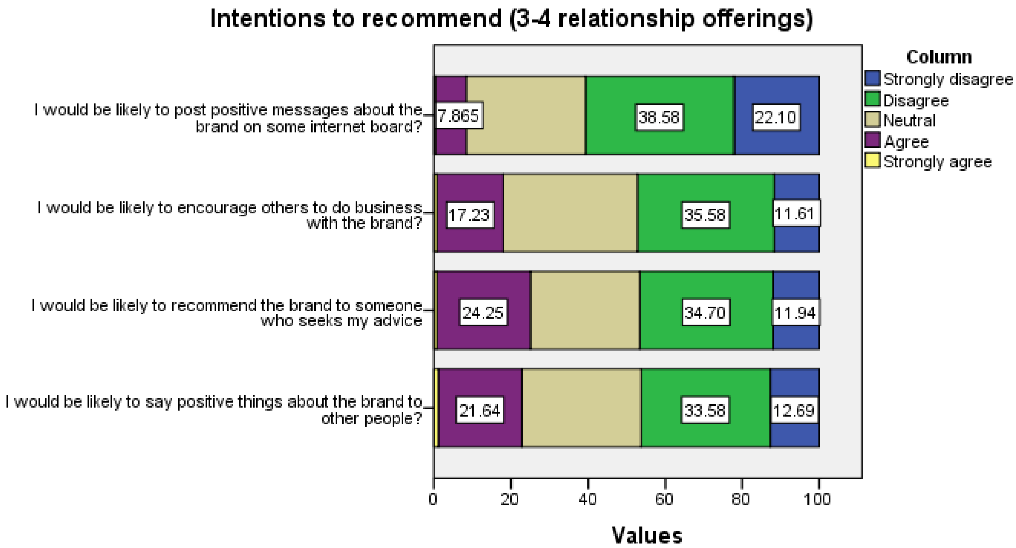
Figure 8 displays a strong positive impact of 1-2 ROs on peoples ITR a brand. Only to the first question the respondents disagrees slightly more than agreeing, in terms of being likely to post positive messages about the brand on the internet. For the remaining three questions, between 44 % and 51.5 % agrees to be likely to recommend the brand in some way. In addition, significantly more strongly agrees than strongly disagrees.

Figure 8 - Intentions to recommend a brand 1-2 relationship offers



In Figure 9, a similar pattern as the previous two cases reveals itself. Respondents mostly disagree and strongly disagree with all questions. The agree responses are more than halved from the previous responses concerning 1-2 ROs. Likewise, extremely few strongly agree in any of the statements related to ITR a brand following 3-4 ROs.

Figure 9 - Intentions to recommend a brand 3-4 relationship offers

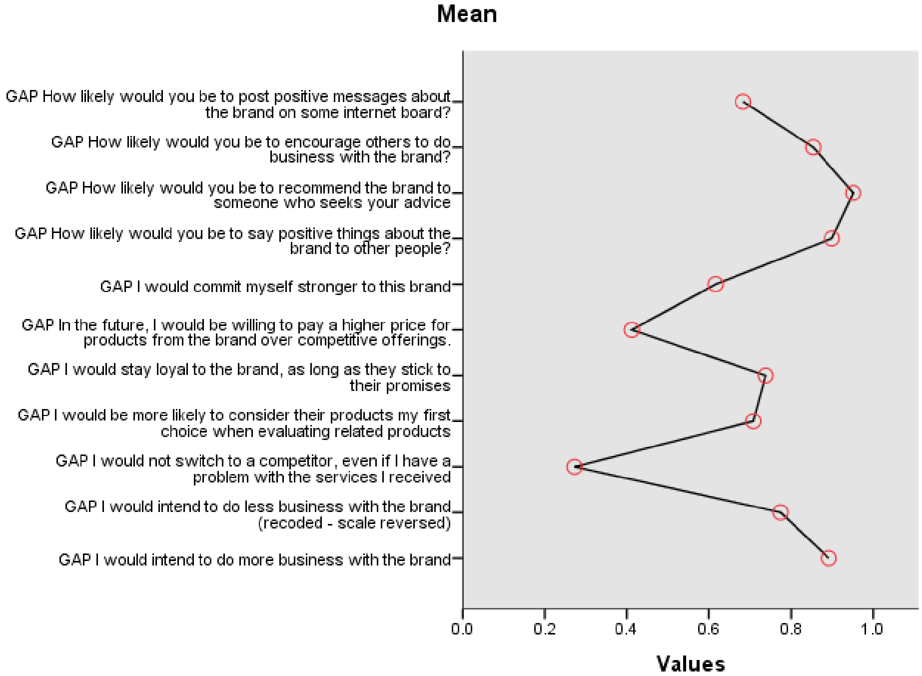


4.3.2.4 Summing up BBL, ABL and ITR

The descriptive analyses of ROs impact on the respondents BBL, ABL and ITR, displays a considerable change in pattern of responses when going from 1-2 ROs to 3-4 ROs. Accordingly, highlighting that the quantity of ROs is a critical factor. Few offerings can though have a slightly positive impact on BBL and ABL and a stronger positive affect on consumers ITR a brand. In contrast, 3-4 ROs impacts every singly variable strikingly negatively.

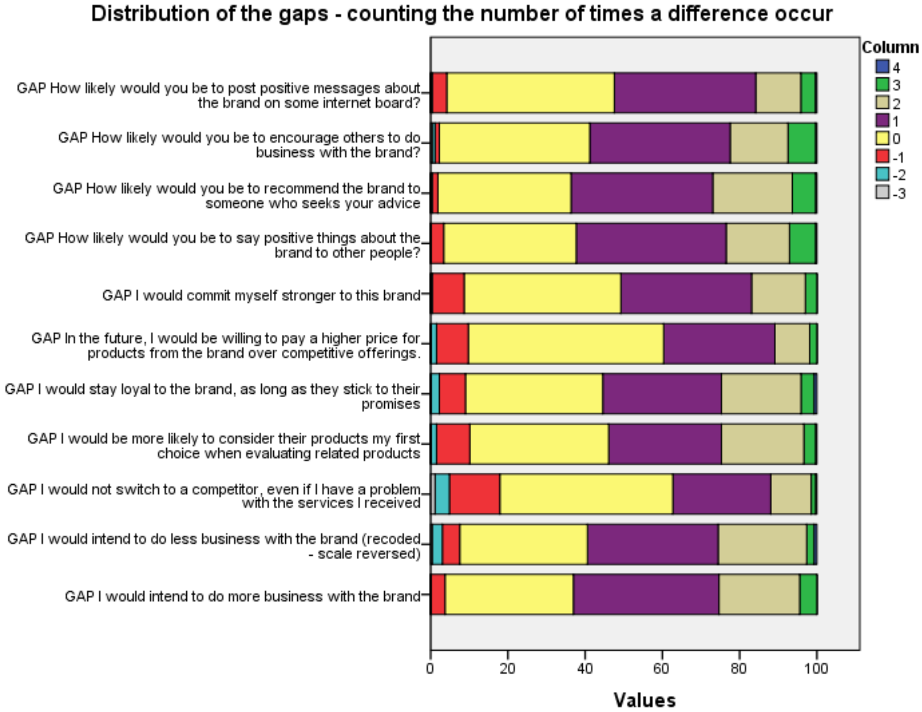
To further investigate the diversity in responses, dependent on the number of ROs, a computation of the gaps in responses was conducted. The mean values of the gaps, between the responses to the questions related to 1-2 ROs and 3-4 respectively, are significantly different from zero. Thus, indicating a significant difference between these responses. The mean value gaps are displayed in Figure 10.

Figure 10 - Mean values of responses to individual questions related to BBL, ABL and ITR a brand



Equally, the differences in distribution of responses is one or higher, a great number of times, while only rarely below zero. The distribution of the gaps is shown in Figure 11.

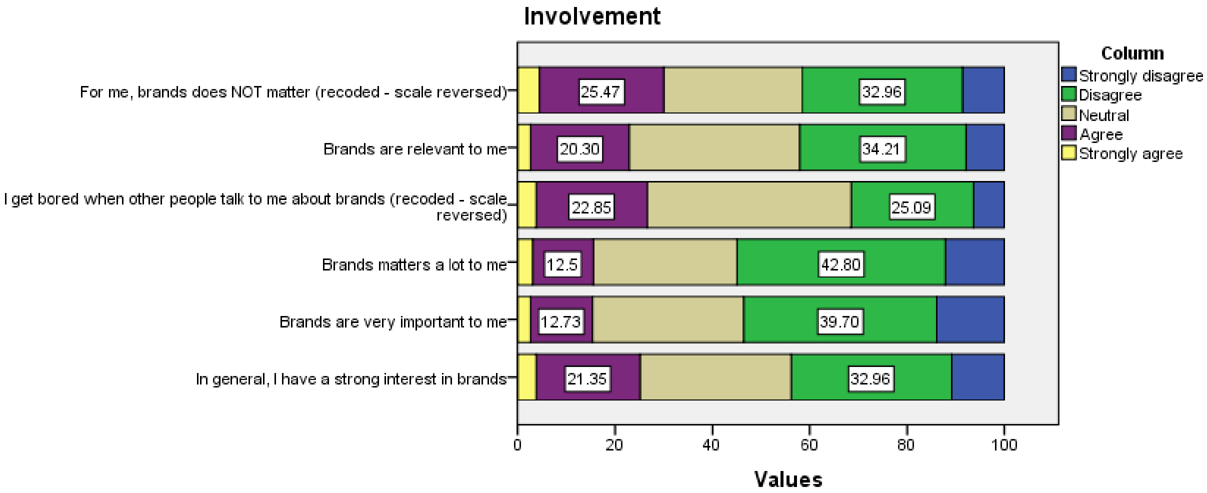
Figure 11 - Distribution of the gaps, depending on the number of ROs (1-2 vs 3.4)



4.3.2.5 Involvement with brands

In relation to respondent's general level of involvement with brands, a clear pattern is visible (Figure 12). A comparison of the level of disagreement and agreement shows significantly higher levels of the former. Likewise, respondents strongly disagree significantly more than strongly agree with any of the statements. There is a considerable block of neutral answers. Nevertheless, the conclusion is that the respondents have significantly low levels of involvement with brands. A finding supported by the mean value of 3.29, acquired from the frequency tabulation of the summated scales (Appendix 11).

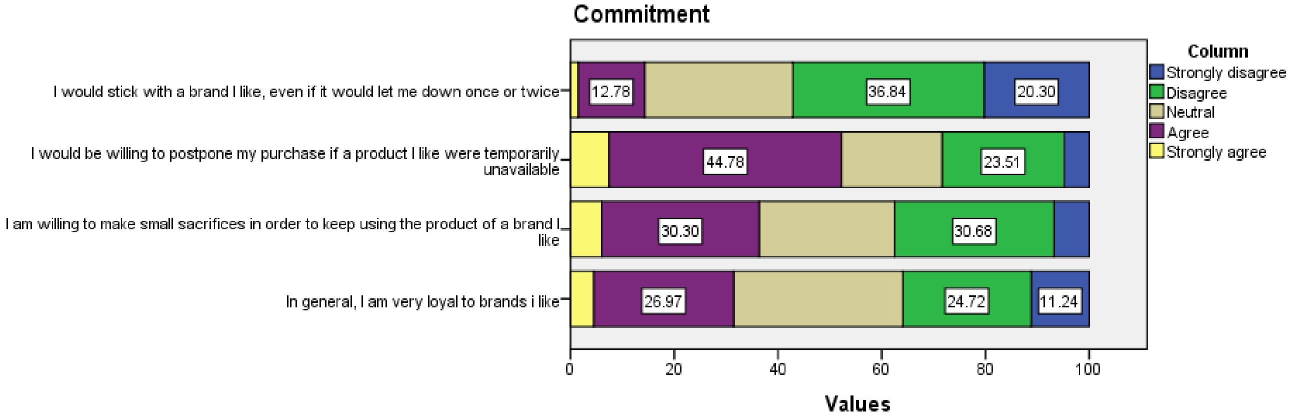
Figure 12 - Individual question measuring involvement



4.3.2.6 Commitment with brands

Usually, commitment is measured in relation to a certain brand, however without a case-study approach the questions are instead directly concerned with "brands I like". This is highly interesting from a research perspective and the purpose of this study as respondents would be expected to have a certain degree of commitment to brands of their liking. Overall, the responses are quite divided. People are clearly not willing to forgive brands, as evident from question one where 36.84 % disagrees and 20.30 % strongly disagrees. In contrast, a large portion of 44.78 % agrees to postpone a purchase temporarily in case of unavailability. The willingness to make sacrifices to keep using a product and their general level of loyalty is almost evenly split in terms of positive and negative responses (Figure 13). Thus, it is difficult to grasp if the overall level of commitment is primarily negative or positive. However, by looking at the mean value of 3.12 (Appendix 11), it can be concluded that in average the levels of commitment are low, despite of the fact that this was measured in relation to brands the respondents like.

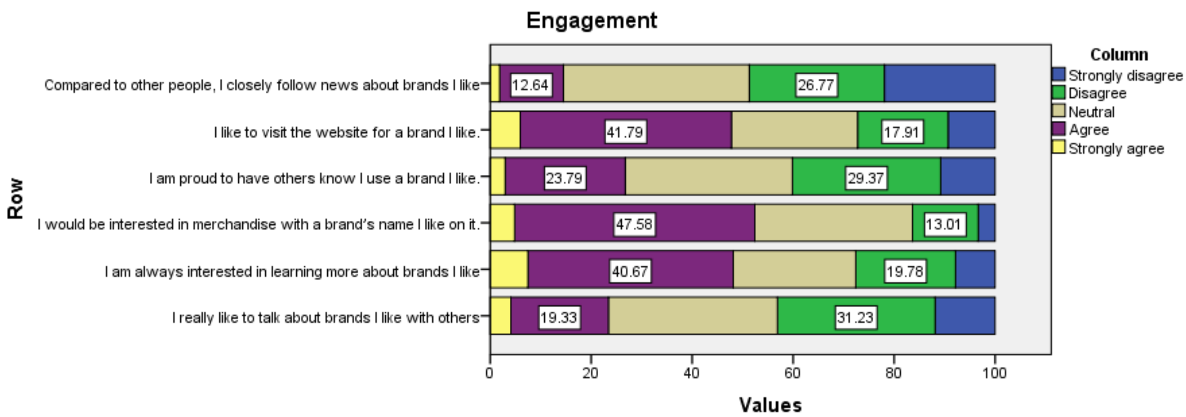
Figure 13 - Individual questions measuring commitment



4.3.2.7 Engagement with brands

Engagement is likewise measured in relation to brands that the respondents like. The variation in responses to the questions that measures engagement are quite large. “I like to visit the website of a brand I like”, “I would be interested in merchandise with a brands name I like” and “I am always interested in learning more about brands I like” have high levels of agreement. The respondents though seem to think less about others opinions, derived from the higher levels of disagreement with “I am proud to have others know I use a brand I like” and “I really like to talk about brands I like with others”. Overall, the agreement levels are significantly higher than the level of the exact counterpart. However, the strongly disagree levels are generally significantly higher than the strongly agree levels (Figure 14). Accordingly, the average mean value of 3.04 is meaningful (Appendix 11). Being so close to the average mean of three in this type of Likert scale, suggest that the respondent’s engagement levels are close to neutral, albeit relatively low. However, rendering that engagement is measured in relation to brands the respondents like; it indicate that consumers are not considerably engaged with brands.

Figure 14 - Individual questions measuring engagement

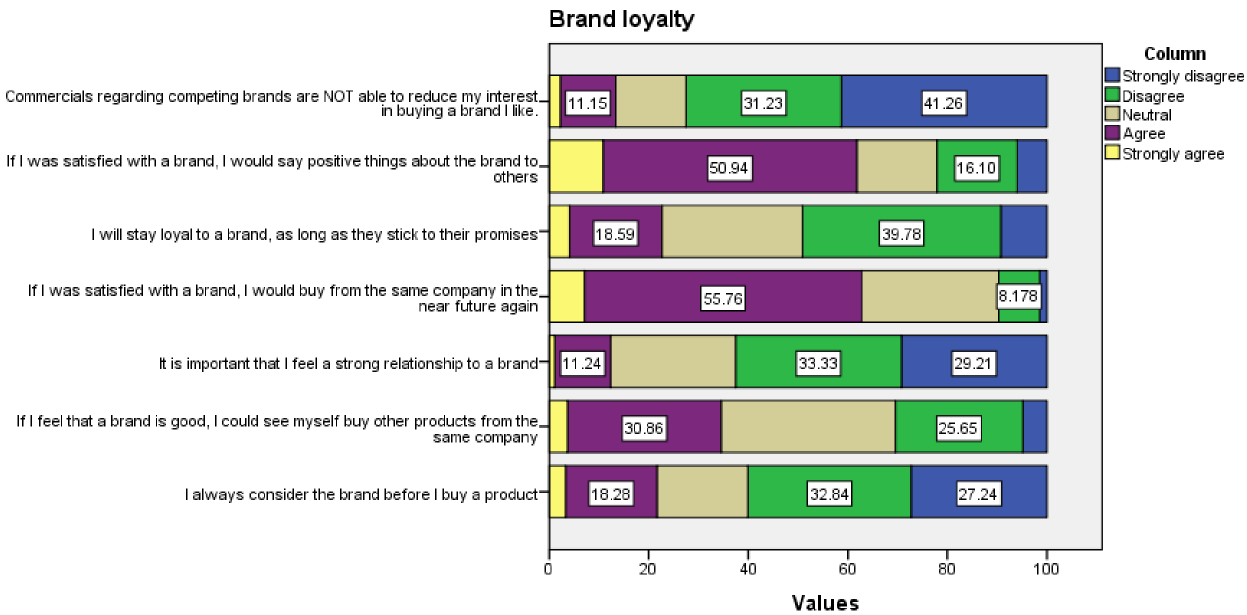


4.3.2.8 Brand loyalty

The impact of ROs on BBL, ABL and ITR was previously investigated. Nevertheless, the respondents overall level of brand loyalty in relation to brands they like was measured separately. More than 50 % of the respondents agree with the statements that ”if I was satisfied with a brand, I would say positive things about the brand to others” and “if I was satisfied with a brand, I would buy from the same company in the near future again”. This shows the high importance of satisfaction in relation to brand loyalty, as suggested in the literature (Section 2.9). However, these results deviate from the remaining questions as these largely contain disagree or strongly disagree responses. The respondents certainly do not believe that it is important to feel a strong relationship to the brand or always consider the brand before buying a product.

Similarly, results shows a strong receptiveness for competitive commercials, as highlighted by the strong belief that competitive commercials can reduce the interest for buying a brand of their liking. In general, it becomes visible that the high number of disagree and strongly disagree responses leads to a general low level of brand loyalty among the respondents (Figure 15). Particularly owing to the large number of respondents who strongly disagree with some statements. This is supported by the mean value of 3.23 for the scale (Appendix 11).

Figure 15 - Individual questions measuring brand loyalty



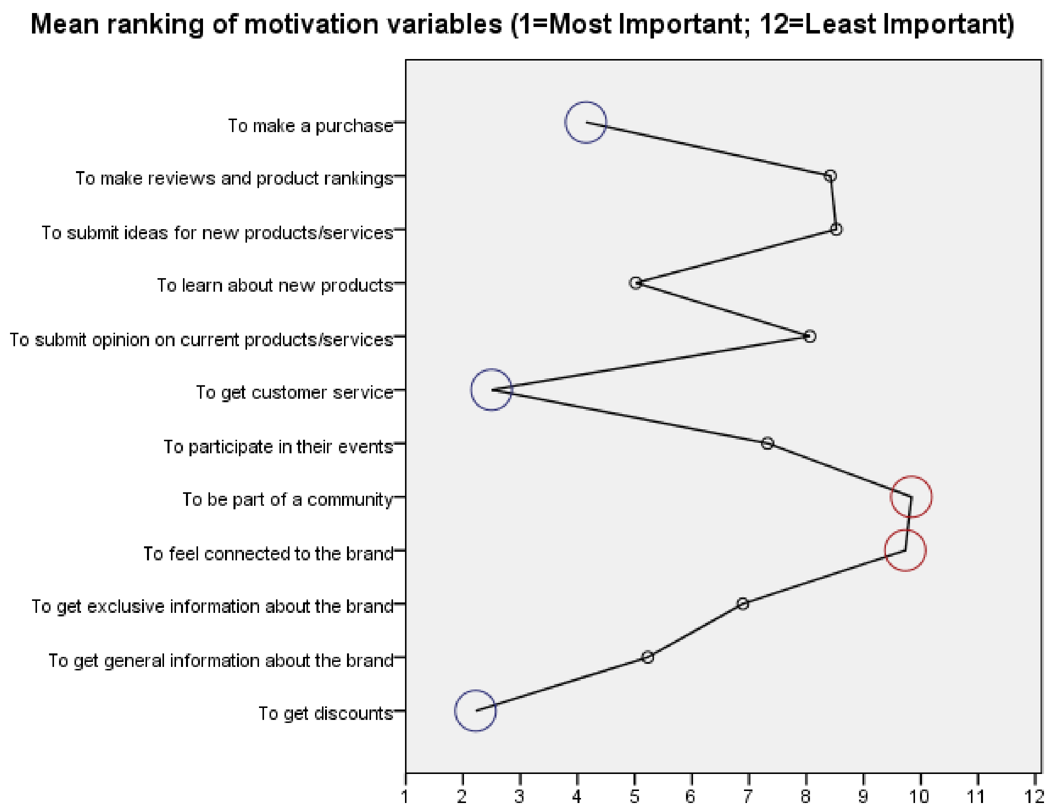
4.3.2.9 Motivation for interacting/engaging with brands

An exploration of the most important types of motivation for engaging/interacting with brands shows that particularly three elements are selected as highly important. Oppositely, two reasons are given little importance (Figure 16). The mean ranking of the motivational variables below display that “to get discounts”, “to get customer service” and “to make a purchase” are the three most important types of motivation for engaging with brands. On the other hand, “to be part of a community” and “to feel connected to the brand” is revealed to be of least importance to the respondents.

Derived from a table displaying the distribution of responses in relation to motivation for engaging/interacting with brands, a further illumination is provided (Appendix 12). 8.7 % of the respondents selected “to get discounts” as most important. Second choice was “to get customer service” with 40.4 % and third choice was “to make a purchase” with 28.9 %. In contrast, 38.9 % selected “to feel connected to the brand” as the 11th choice. The least important was “to be part of a community” with 42.6 % selecting this as the 12th choice.

Interestingly, this strongly suggests that people engage for extremely simple and self-beneficial reasons. It characterises a consumer as someone who buys to save money, and if problems should arise, requires assistance. Saving money is clearly key. Thus, further characterises consumers as rational and egoistic, and not as someone concerned with forming relationships and being loyal to brands. It seems of little importance to establish a relationship with a brand and to feel as part of a community.

Figure 16 - Mean ranking of the motivation variables 1=most important; 12=least important



4.4 Hypothesis Testing

To fulfil the research objectives, research hypotheses stating specific predictions, concerning the content of each objective, were formulated. The statistical testing of these hypotheses will utilise the objective of reaching the main goal of this study (Section 1.2).

4.4.1 RO1: Explore consumers' interest in relational behaviour with brands, and uncover their responses to relationship offerings from brands.

The four hypotheses related to the first research objective are:

- *H1: The number of relationship offerings negatively affect the impact of relationship offerings on the respondents behavioural brand loyalty*
- *H2: The number of relationship offerings negatively affect the impact of relationship offerings on the respondents attitudinal brand loyalty*
- *H3: The number of relationship offerings negatively affect the impact of relationship offerings on the respondents intentions to recommend a brand*
- *H4:There is a significant relationship between consumer's low levels of involvement, commitment and engagement*

In order to test H1, H2 and H3, a paired-sample t-test was used as the type of statistical analysis. Three separate paired sample t-test were conducted (Appendix 13; 14; 15). Each test compares the means of one of the following variables: BBL, ABL and ITR a brand, when receiving 3-4 ROs versus 1-2 ROs. In other words, the test determines whether there is a statistically significant mean difference between ROs impact on BBL, ABL and ITM, depending on the number of ROs.

The conclusion for each test is identical (Appendix 13; 14; 15). They suggest a statistically significant difference between the means ($p < .05$). This means that the gaps previously computed (Section 4.3.2.4) are statistically significantly positive. In other words, H1, H2 and H3 are all accepted.

To test H4, i.e. investigate whether there is a statistically significant association between commitment, engagement, and involvement, Pearson correlations were computed. Prior to computing the correlations, the assumptions that underlie Pearson's correlation were checked: no violations of linearity were found and no outliers were identified (Appendix 16).

Strong/large positive correlations were obtained between commitment, engagement, and involvement. The Pearson correlation (r) is .714 for involvement-commitment, .696 for involvement-engagement and .684 for commitment-engagement (Appendix 17). These values are according to Cohen (1988) a sign of very large effect size. Accordingly, respondents with low levels of involvement are likely to have low levels of engagement and commitment while people with low levels of commitment likewise will be likely to have low levels of engagement. In addition, the scales significance (sig) values are < 0.01 (Appendix 17). This shows that the probability that there is no relationship between these variables is very low, even close to zero. Thus, H4 is accepted.

In brief, and regarding the first research objective, since H1, H2 and H3 were accepted, it can confidently be established that the respondent’s responses to ROs depends highly on the number of ROs. 3-4 ROs have a strong negative impact on consumers’ level of BBL, ABL and ITM. Accepting H4 suggests that consumers have little interest in relational behaviour with brands. This is an obvious conclusion derived from the significant correlation between low levels of commitment, engagement and involvement among the respondents.

4.4.2 RO2: Identify what motivates consumers to engage/interact with brands, and examine if their motivation depends on their level of engagement, commitment or involvement.

This research objective is firstly concerned with identifying consumers’ motivation for engaging/interacting with brands. In terms of this, the descriptive analyses made clear indications. Cleary, to get discounts, to get customer service and to make a purchase were the three most important types of motivation. Oppositely, feeling connected to the brand and being part of a community were of least importance (Section 4.3.2.9). These five types of motivations are thus defined as the most and the least important elements respectively.

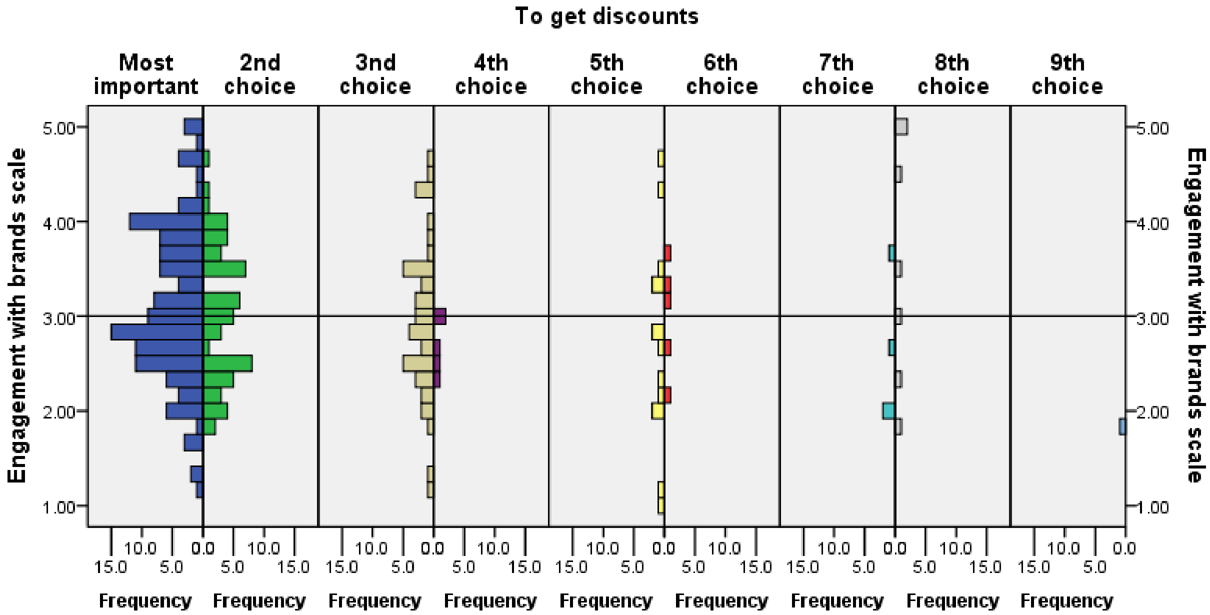
The second part of the research objective is concerned with the degree to which the motivation for engaging with brands is dependent on the level of engagement, commitment or involvement. This leads to the investigation of the following three research questions. These questions were raised previously (Section 2.7), as no statistical tests are used to answer these.

- ***RQ1: Are consumers’ motivations for engaging with brands dependent on their level of engagement?***
- ***RQ2: Are consumers’ motivations for engaging with brands dependent on their level of involvement?***
- ***RQ3: Are consumers’ motivations for engaging with brands dependent on their level of commitment?***

It is interesting to investigate whether those who have high levels of engagement, commitment and involvement with brands are differently motivated from the remaining respondents. This investigation will reveal the degree to which all respondents engage with brands for the same reasons. RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 will be investigated with the aid of graphs.

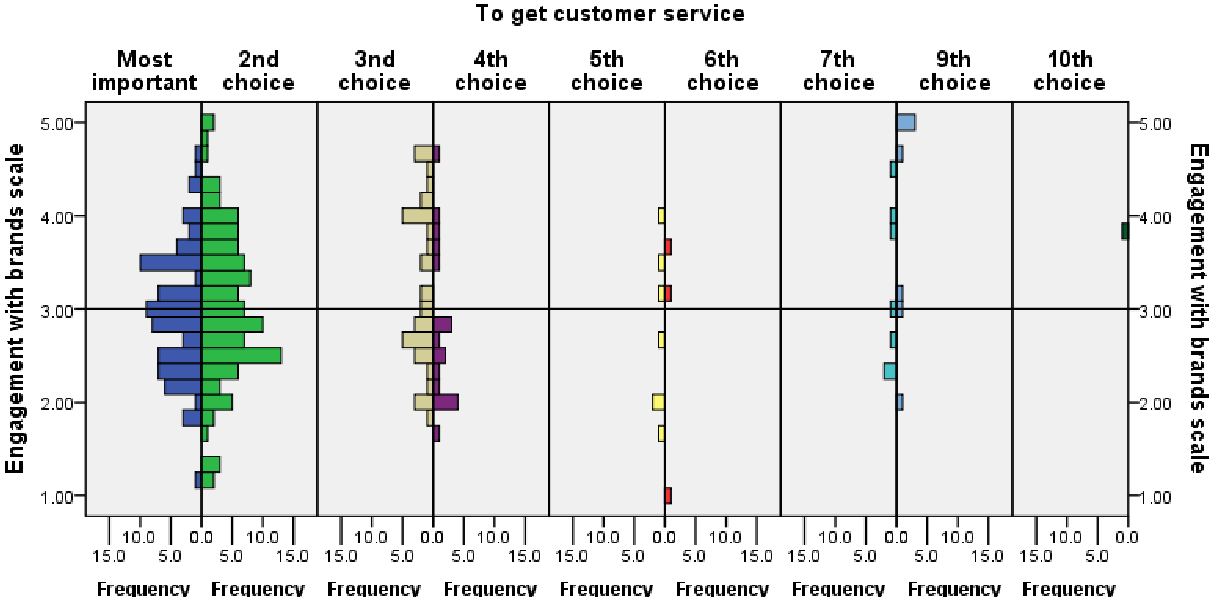
Figure 17 shows the level of importance assigned by the respondents to the motivation “get discounts. This representation shows how the response is determined by the level of engagement, by having the mean values of engagement on the y-axis. A mean value of three is the average. The higher the value is above three, the less engaged the respondent is. Contrastingly, the lower the value is below three, the more unengaged the respondents is. By inspection, it is visible that the variety in responses is extremely limited by the level of engagement. Those who show high levels of engagement (mean values below 3), clearly still rank “to get discounts” as the most or second most important motivation for engaging with brands. Overall, the response patterns are highly similar above and below the horizontal reference line.

Figure 17 - Motivation "to get discounts", varying with the level of engagement



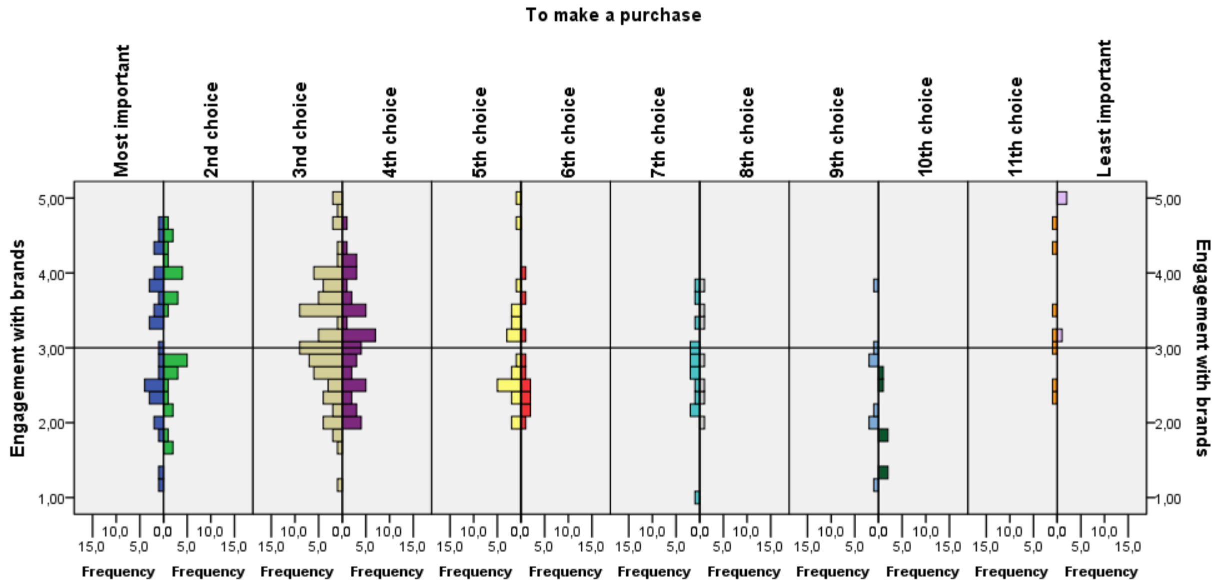
A highly similar pattern, to the one just described, is shown in Figure 18. Again, people with high engagement values definitely still sees customer service as one of the most important types of motivation. Likewise, the responses below and above the horizontal reference line are highly similar.

Figure 18 - Motivation "to get customer service", varying with the level of engagement



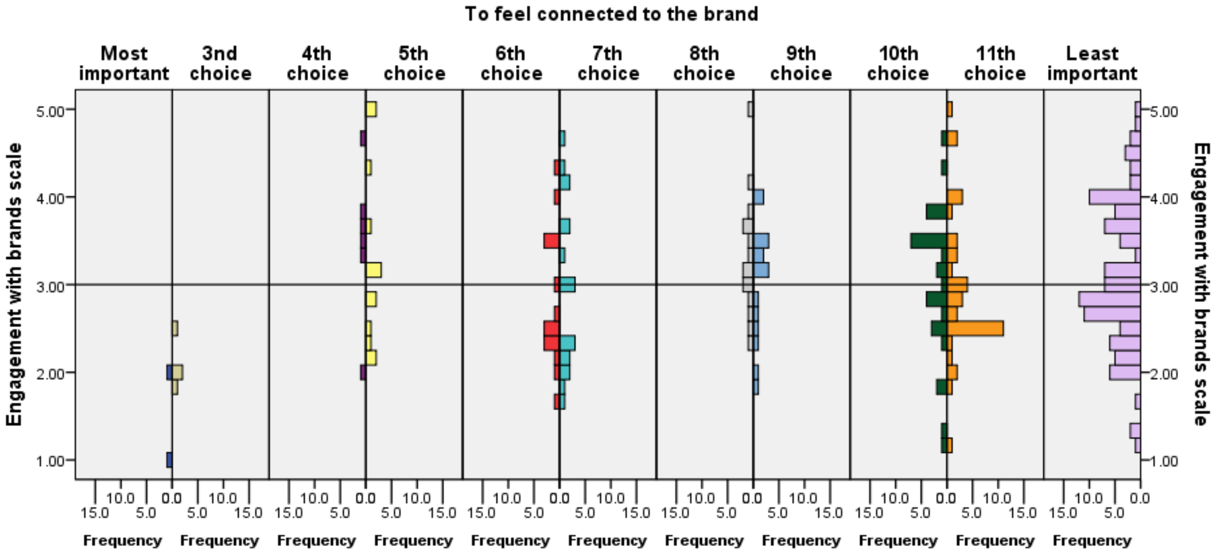
The pattern in responses “to make a purchase” is widely spread (Figure 19). Most people have selected it as the third to fourth most important type of motivation. In general, the responses below and above the horizontal reference line are quite similar. Respondents with low levels of engagement even depict a higher inclination to consider “to get customer service” as less important, with a few more selecting it as the 11th and least important type of motivation.

Figure 19 - Motivation "to make a purchase", varying with the level of engagement



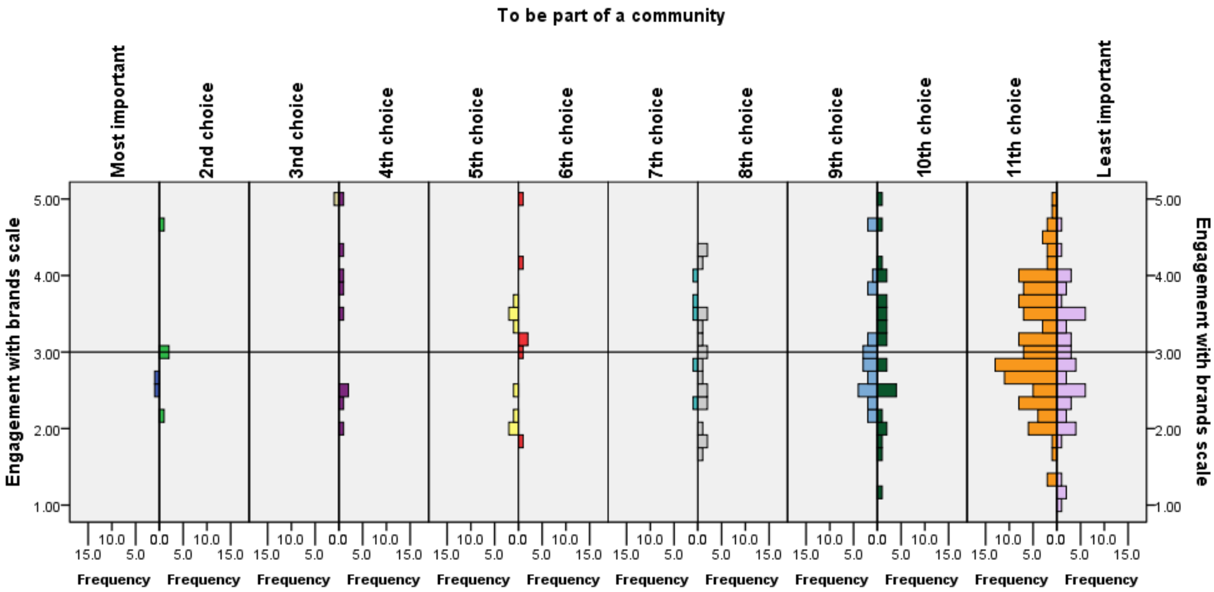
Turning the attention to the least important type of motivations, Figure 20 prevails a high level of consistency in the answers from respondents with high and low levels of engagement. There is even a slight overrepresentation of frequencies in the 11th choice and least important choice below the mean value of 3. Thus, indicating that those who engage a lot still tend to view “to feel connected to the brand” as one of the least important types of motivation.

Figure 20 - Motivation "to feel connected to the brand", varying with the level of engagement



Lastly, the responses "be part of a community" depicts similar tendencies (Figure 21). The variety in responses is limited and most people, independent of the level of engagement, does not consider it as an important type of motivation. Few exceptions do appear. Nevertheless, these exceptions are evenly spread below and above the horizontal reference line.

Figure 21 - Motivation "to be part of a community", varying with the level of engagement



Similar graphs as the ones above, were created with commitment and involvement as the variable of interest. However, to avoid repetition, these analyses will be less slavish and without a step-by-step inspection of each graph. All graphs can instead be found in appendix 18 and 19, whereas the analysis follows next.

Generally, the graphs with the variables commitment and involvement show highly similar tendencies. The levels of involvement and commitment are rather low, meaning that most responses are naturally above the horizontal reference line. In relation to the three most important types of motivation, similar patterns to the ones depicted with engagement can be identified for both involvement and commitment. The level of importance assigned to each type of motivation is quite independent of the level of involvement and commitment. This means that people with high levels of involvement and people with high levels of commitment, assign a similar level of importance to the most important types of motivation as those with low levels of the respective construct. Similarly, the response patterns to the two least important types of motivation are visibly independent of the level of commitment and involvement. This is displayed by the evenly spread responses across both sides of the horizontal reference line. Likewise, it is clear that those with high levels of commitment and involvement still find “to feel connected to the brand” and “to be part of the community” as the two least important types of motivation (Appendix 18; 19).

In brief, consumers’ motivations for engaging with brands do not seem to depend on their level of engagement, involvement or commitment, thus answering RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3. In other words, the data suggest that in general, consumers with high levels of involvement, commitment and engagement consider “to get discounts”, “to make a purchase” and “to get customer service” as the most important reasons for interacting/engaging with brands. Likewise, consumers regard “to be part of a community” and “to feel connected to the brand” as the least important reasons for interacting/engaging with brands. The answer to the second research objective is therefore that these are clearly the most and least important types of motivations, and not dependent on the consumers’ level of engagement, commitment or involvement.

4.4.3 RO3: Understand Brand Loyalty and How It Relates to Involvement, Commitment and Engagement

An understanding of brand loyalty was acquired through the literature review, interviews and descriptive analyses. To validate the joint impact of involvement, commitment and engagement on brand loyalty, the following hypothesis will be tested:

- *H5:Involvement, engagement and commitment are joint predictors of the level of brand loyalty*

A multiple linear regression model was estimated to investigate the extent to which commitment, involvement and engagement simultaneously predict the levels of brand loyalty. Predicting one variable from another variable is what distinguishes regression from correlation.

In correlations, the purpose is simply to investigate the relationship between the variables (Morgan *et al., 2013*). The assumptions underlying multiple linear regression were all upheld (Appendix 21).

Commitment, engagement and involvement significantly predicts the level of brand loyalty, F (3, 252) = 154.526, p < .0005, adj. R2 = .648 indicates that 64,8 % of the variance in brand loyalty is explained by the explanatory variables in the model. Cohen (1988) defines this as a large effect. All three variables added statistically significantly to the prediction, p < .05. The adjusted R2 value is only 0,04 points lower (.672 - .668 = .004 or 0,4 %). Thus, if the model were derived from the population as opposed to a sample, it would only account for approximately 0.4 % less variance in the outcome, suggesting great cross-validity (Field 2013 p. 336). All three variables ads significantly to the prediction of brand loyalty, p < .05.

In conclusion, this means that H5 is accepted as involvement, commitment and engagement all are statistically significant predictors of the level of brand loyalty. These results are important, as they underline the prominence of the variables engagement, involvement and commitment. Moreover, they suggest that the respondents are not highly brand loyal i.e. not likely to be interested in forming strong relational bonds with brands. Thus, significantly supporting the belief that consumers are uninterested in relational behaviour with brands i.e. that a CBR paradox exists.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings and Conclusions

The overall aim of this research was to acquire an insight into consumers' interest in relational behaviour with brands. In this context, understand the paradox of having a marketing philosophy centred on relationship building, when consumers display a considerable lack of interest in relational behaviour with brands. Subsequently, understand the potential implications of giving ROs to uninterested consumers. The specific research objectives were:

- **RO1: Explore consumers' interest in relational behaviour with brands, and uncover their responses to relationship offerings from brands.**
- **RO2: Identify what motivates consumers to engage/interact with brands, and examine if their motivation depends on their level of engagement, commitment or involvement.**
- **RO3: Understand brand loyalty and how it relates to involvement, commitment and engagement.**

This concluding chapter will revisit each of the sub-research objectives above by summarising the findings of the quantitative and qualitative research simultaneously. Subsequently, offer conclusions based on the findings. Finally, sum up and provide an answer to the main research objective. The chapter of analysis were comprehensive and requires to be summarised, thus the summary in this chapter. Implications of this study will be clarified before the limitations of the research methods will be outlined. Importantly, recommendations for future research will be discussed to provide guidance for potential progressions of this study, thus finalise this section.

5.1.1 RO1: Explore consumers' interest in relational behaviour with brands, and uncover their responses to relationship offerings from brands.

The literature have indicated that consumers should not be forced into relationships (Grönross, 2006; Fournier et. al., 1998). Furthermore, suggested that consumers experience annoyance when approached constantly and everywhere. Constant interaction were found to be a source of information bombardment. Consequently, an overwhelming and negative facet affecting consumers intention to purchase, repurchase and recommend a product or service (Spenner & Freeman, 2012). Yet, no researchers have directly investigated how consumers respond to ROs from brands and illuminated the CBR paradox. Instead, the literature seems to have been blinded by the immense amount of relevant research concerning RM that enlightens the potential benefits of strong emotional relationships, CBRs and loyal committed consumers.

Data from the interviews indicated that consumers have negative attitude towards ROs. Likewise, a lack of interest in relational behaviour with brands (Section 4.2). Many respondents mentioned the feeling of being bombarded with marketing messages and a receiver of much unrequested information. The interviews though importantly revealed that the number of ROs have a clear and strong influence in terms of how the respondents react towards ROs. Well targeted ROs may have a limited positive effect, primarily including the opportunity to exploit a great offer. Nonetheless, the effects are identified as mostly negative. They are generally regarded as capable of affecting BBL, ABL and ITR negatively.

The quantitative findings support these propositions and provide much stronger empirical evidence to support the claims. Statistical tests confirmed that the number of ROs negatively affect the impact of ROs on the respondents BBL, ABL and ITR respectively. Here, clearly showcasing ROs potentially negative impact on consumers BBL, ABL and ITR.

Investigations related to the level of commitment and involvement were quite broad in the interviews, owing to their explorative nature. Primarily, respondents did though not depict high level of attachment to brands. As such, it showed a potential connection between the respondents lack of interest in forming brand relationships and their correspondingly low levels of attachment. Importantly, the quantitative analyses identified a statistically significant association between the respondent’s low levels of commitment, engagement and involvement. Thus indicating a limited interest in relational behaviour with brands among the respondents. Hereby establishing that far from everyone shares the Millennials interest in brands and their willingness to engage and form relationships with brands. Consequently, adds support to the claim that a large amount of people is not interested in having relationships with brands. This strongly supports findings presented by CEB suggesting that only 20 % are willing to engage in relationships with brands (Section 1.1).

5.1.2 RO2: Identify what motivates consumers to engage/interact with brands, and examine if their motivation depends on their level of engagement, commitment or involvement.

The qualitative and quantitative findings were highly similar in terms of identifying the most significant types of motivation for engaging with brands. The qualitative interviews broadly found that respondents primarily engage with brands to get discounts or customer service. Similarly, descriptive analyses from the quantitative findings identified customer service, making a purchase and getting discounts as the three most important types of motivation. Oppositely, feeling connected to the brand and being part of a community were identified as the two least important types of motivation.

These findings were largely consistent with the findings obtained through the literature review (Spenner & Freeman, 2012). CEB suggested that consumer's willingness to engage in brand relationships is a myth and that engagement in brand relationships is merely a means of getting discounts. Importantly, the findings ads support to the previous finding that consumers are not interested in relational behaviour with brands, albeit no statistical support were given for this claim. For the respondents, brand engagement is arguably not motivated by the possibility of having a relationship with a brand.

It was learned during the interviews that most respondents have rather low levels of engagement. Many respondents had a rather negative attitude towards being engaged by brands, therefore also displayed a lacking interest themselves in engaging with brands. When interacting/engaging with brands, the motivations for doing so were largely self-beneficial reasons as getting customer service or discounts. Even those who depicted certain levels of engagement or attachment to brands identified similar types of motivations for interacting/engaging with brands.

When RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 were answered, descriptive analyses revealed that the prime motives for engaging with brands were not dependent on the consumer's level of engagement, commitment or involvement. Respondents with high levels of involvement, commitment or engagement perceived the same type of motivations as important and unimportant as those with low levels did. Thus, indicating that generally consumers do not engage/interact with brands to get closer or to build a relationship with them. Their reasons are simple and self-oriented rather than concerned with relationship building, even those who are committed, involved or engaged with a brand.

5.1.3 RO3: Understand brand loyalty and how it relates to involvement, commitment and engagement.

It was discovered during the literature review that the emotional aspects related to brand relationships are instrumental for relationship quality (Section 2.4). Consequently, these aspects were explored in the interviews.

The qualitative interviews revealed that the respondents who did perceive themselves as loyal, essentially were not truly loyal. Their loyalty were primarily driven by price, and several examples showed that their loyalty were fragile and weak. Therefore, their level of brand loyalty were arguably not high. Moreover, respondents largely agreed that a brand relationship is a stage beyond brand loyalty i.e. something that truly requires a strong emotional bond. An emotional bond which the respondents did not have. Thus, suggesting limited interest in forming relationships with brands and being loyal to them.

Considering this, it was quite unsurprising that involvement, commitment and engagement were found to be statistically significant predictors of the level of brand loyalty. Particularly considering that involvement and commitment in the literature had been identified as sources of brand loyalty. Likewise, it underlines the prominence and relevance of the three variables in this context. Consequently, identifies a strong connection between brand loyalty and the three variables. Considering the low levels of commitment, engagement and involvement, it suggests that consumers are not highly loyal. Thus, additionally supports the notion that consumers are not interested deep emotional relationships with brands. Moreover, relates to findings from Accenture (2011)suggesting limited loyalty and increased brand switching among consumers and CEB's (2012) indications that considerable few are interested in relationships with brands (Section 1.1). Particularly when considering that commitment and engagement were measured in relation to brands the respondents like.

5.2 Implications

Certainly, the results indicate that many consumers are unwilling and uninterested in forming relationships with brands. The respondents depicted low levels of engagement, involvement and commitment. These were confirmed as important sources of brand loyalty, thus highly important and critical variables. According to data, the responses to ROs are negative and consumers seem to interact with brands for simple and self-beneficial reasons. Overall, every analysis leads to the conclusion that consumers are largely uninterested in having relationships with brands. Knowing the central concept of RM and the immense focus on exactly relationship building in the literature, everything suggest that the current marketing philosophy and literature fails to consider the lacking interest consumers have in exactly relationships. It is paradoxical to have a marketing theory that is based on relationship building, when a significant portion of consumers does not want to engage in relationships.

Consequently, marketers may need to adapt their belief of how consumers think of brands. If marketers believe that their brand have a special place in the heart of their consumers, it is arguably a mistake. Many consumers are not strongly committed, engaged or involved with brands. These results suggests not even committed or engaged with brands of their liking. Therefore, the central concept in RM building and maintaining long-term relationships, does not apply to all consumers. Simply, marketers must realise that not all customers are willing or receptive to brand relationships. In this context, consider the potential implications that ROs can have on consumers BBL, ABL and ITR. Thus, understand that the attempt to build relationships may provide counterproductive outcomes.

None of this data questions the instrumental importance of a strong CBR. A strong relationship is unarguably beneficial in many ways. Nevertheless, marketers have to ask themselves if relationships instead could be built by not excessively trying to force people into one? It is important to understand that the level of intimacy marketing academics seem to associate with CBRs is not a level of intimacy consumers have or associate with brands. Marketers are therefore recommended to get accustomed to the idea that customers may not like brands as much as they think, thus not be receptive to marketing methods based on relationship building.

Consequently, marketers should diversify their marketing and efforts based on the realisation that not all customers can be managed as relationships and without consequences be forced into one. This requires an acknowledgement of the belief that ever-increasing marketing bombardments cause cognitive overload. Marketing bombardments have slowly changed consumers' perception towards interacting and having relationships with brands. Ultimately meaning that the attempt to build relationships may instead drive brands further away from customers and potential beneficial relationships. Nonetheless, it is critical to remember the essential consumers that will require opportunities to have a strong relationship. Thus, underlines the need for diversifying marketing thinking and strategies.

5.3 Limitations of Research

Although this study has reached its aims, it has, as any study, some obvious limitations. Firstly, and as a consequence of resource and financial constraints, this study had to be limited geographically to only include Danish consumers.

In addition, the lack of a probabilistic sampling technique for the questionnaire means that any generalisations and results must be taken with circumspection. Nevertheless, it is critical to point out that since an accurate and new sampling frame were unavailable, selecting the preferable option of a probabilistic sample were impossible. It is likewise critical to note that the size of the sample determines the extent of which one can appropriately generalise. While 270 is an acceptable size, it not remarkably large. Both limitations means that the generalizability of these results must be read with circumspection. Still, this study has gathered both qualitative and quantitative data that provide supportive findings. Deriving, the study is still evaluated to provide value to the literature by illuminating a potentially big and rather unexplored issue within the marketing literature that may lay the groundwork for further investigations.

The judgemental/purposive sample for the interviews are known to create bias, nevertheless is by far the easiest and least time-consuming way of selecting a sample. Considering the huge task of undertaking both qualitative and quantitative investigations, these was seen as a necessity. Considering the different goals and objectives of an explorative interview in terms of generalizability, this can be accepted. Nonetheless, the interviews are also used as an additional source of evidence as it was selected to compare the quantitative and qualitative findings in order to way up the deficiencies of both research methods and particularly provide supporting evidence to the quantitative findings.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

A highly interesting opportunity for further research could be to expand the study to include several European countries. Hence, investigate the extent to which consumers are affected by ROs and interested in relational behaviour with brands across cultures. In this way, make a cross-cultural comparative study. Culture is known to have a major impact on consumer behaviour, thus gives encouragement to such a study.

Similarly, a study, as the above-mentioned, within a specific section/sector could be of high relevance to the current literature. While the purpose of this study were to identify an overall potential issue of focusing on relationships, researchers could for good reasons choose to look at the impact within a certain sector such as fast-moving-consumer-goods, electronics, clothing or banking. The results are likely to vary across sectors and people’s interest in relational behaviour with brands and in ROs may depend significantly on the type of product and brands. Consequently, a thorough investigation between low- and high involvement products could be another potential avenue to seek out.

A central decision in this project was to treat the subject generically and adopt a complete customer-focus. Consequently, the study is theoretical of nature and based on what the literature states about forging customer relationships. This is the foundation for comparisons with the empirical research gathered in this study, concerning consumers and their interest in relational behaviour with brands. A great opportunity for further research is therefore to compare the individual marketing practices i.e. CRM activities, in certain companies or in a certain industry, with consumers' response to these activities and interest in relational behaviour. In this way, get a deeper insight into exactly how the different type of marketing activities, attempting to build CBRs, are received by consumers'. This would be more challenging as it would require in-depth insight into different companies marketing practices, thus require interviews with numerous marketing managers.

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Appendix 1 - Mixed method research design

Qualitative exploration (interviews)

-Exploration

- Knowledge acquired through exploration was used to design the quantitative questionnaire.

- Focus on content

Quantitative (questionnaire)

- Provides more reliable and generalizable results

- Increase the efficiency of the qualitative research

- Focus on numbers

- Tests hypotheses

Qualitative (support findings)

- Validates, interprets, clarifies and illustrate the quantitative findings

- Provides analytical texture

- Potentially strengthens the findings

- Way up the deficiencies of quantitative and qualitative data respectively

Appendix 2 - Quota sample calculations

The data have been gathered from the Danish statistical bank: statestikbanken.dk via their online and freely available statistics on November 10th 2014 (Appendix 3; 4; 5)

It is important to highlight that the total population within income and education does not fit with the total population of males and females between 15 and 69. This owes to the fact that the level of income or education is unknown for a certain percentage of the population.

1					
2	**Planning of quota sample:**				
3	Variable:	Category of variable	Population	% of people in each category	Quotas for sample:
4	Sex	Men between 15-69	2.006.878	50,3%	136
5		Women between 15-69	1.982.789	49,7%	134
6	Total	Total	3.989.667	100,0%	270
7	Age	Young 15-29	1.064.133	26,7%	72
8		Medium age 30-49	1.489.783	37,3%	101
9		Old 50-69	1.435.751	36,0%	97
10	Total	Total	3.989.667	100,0%	270
11	Education	Short education 15-69 (primary+gymnasium, short)	1.648.917	43,32%	117
12		Medium education 15-69 (profession, medium, bachelor)	1.846.731	48,51%	131
13		Long education 15-69 (Master,phd)	310.955	8,17%	22
14	Total	Total	3.806.603	100,0%	270
15	Income	Low income 15-69 <25000-199.999	1.613.685	41,1%	111
16		Medium income 15-69 200.000-400.000	1.562.497	39,7%	107
17		High income 15-69 >400.000	754.691	19,2%	52
18	Total	Total	3.930.873	100%	270
19	Determined sample size				
20	270				

Source: self constructed

Appendix 3 - Statistics for quota sample

Screenshot from http://www.statistikbanken.dk/ regarding the number of **males and females** between 15-69, and the number of young people (15-29), medium aged people (30-49) and old people (50-69). The data are from the third quarter of 2014. It was impossible to provide a direct link to the source.

Translation of keywords:

- Mænd = Men
- Kvinder=Women
- År = Year/age

Folketal den 1. i kvartalet efter område, tid, alder og køn

	Mænd	Kvinder
Hele landet		
2014K3		
15-19 år	181 683	172 578
20-24 år	188 887	181 521
25-29 år	172 467	166 997
Subtotal 15-29	543 037	521 096
30-34 år	161 245	158 869
35-39 år	181 723	181 064
40-44 år	194 996	193 220
45-49 år	211 720	206 946
Subtotal 30-49	749 684	740 099
50-54 år	195 861	193 149
55-59 år	177 189	177 482
60-64 år	166 716	170 357
65-69 år	174 391	180 606
Subtotal 50-69	714 157	721 594
Subtotal 15-69	2 006 878	1 982 789

Beregnet værdi: Subtotal 15-69
Sum (værdi nr. 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 11) for variablen alder.

Appendix 4 - Statistics for quota sample

Screenshot from http://www.statistikbanken.dk/ concerning danes **highest completed education** between the age of 15-69. Translation of keywords is provided below the tables, for the ease of understanding.

Befolkningens højeste fuldførte uddannelse (15-69 år) efter køn, herkomst, område, tid, alder og uddannelse

	10 GRUNDSKOLE	20 ALMENGYMNASIAL UDDANNELSER	25 ERHVERVSGYMNASIAL UDDANNELSER	35 ERHVERVSUDDANNELSER	40 KORTE VIDEREGÅENDE UDDANNELSER
I alt					
I alt					
Hele landet					
2014					
15-19 år	330 572	16 477	4 588	865	1
20-24 år	102 364	118 485	39 137	53 339	6 870
25-29 år	59 197	30 358	10 060	84 517	14 657
30-34 år	47 889	14 199	5 681	96 553	17 956
35-39 år	53 480	14 305	6 965	124 913	23 984
40-44 år	65 430	14 529	7 872	142 480	25 989
45-49 år	78 372	16 950	8 055	173 005	24 047
50-54 år	86 218	13 292	6 448	153 352	19 651
55-59 år	94 652	11 573	2 778	129 868	16 557
60-64 år	85 960	8 656	1 639	140 419	13 413
65-69 år	109 184	6 238	1 565	146 281	12 624
Subtotal 15-69	1 113 318	265 062	94 788	1 245 592	175 749

Befolkningen mellem 15 og 69 år er opgjort pr. 1. januar det pågældende år. Den højst fuldførte uddannelse er opgjort pr. 1. oktober året før. F

Subtotal short education	50 MELLEMLANGE VIDEREGÅENDE UDDANNELSER	60 BACHELOR	Subtotal medium education	65 LANGE VIDEREGÅENDE UDDANNELSER	70 FORSKERUDDANNELSER	Subtotal long education	Subtotal all educations
351 638	0	1	866	0	0	0	352 504
266 856	4 348	13 356	71 043	399	0	399	338 298
114 272	38 004	29 236	151 757	27 248	150	27 398	293 427
85 725	50 525	9 960	157 038	45 723	2 030	47 753	290 516
98 734	62 179	8 435	195 527	48 128	3 728	51 856	346 117
113 820	65 046	6 388	213 914	41 518	4 056	45 574	373 308
127 424	66 950	4 752	244 707	35 377	3 549	38 926	411 057
125 609	61 599	3 329	218 280	26 617	2 720	29 337	373 226
125 560	60 258	2 188	192 314	24 447	1 698	26 145	344 019
109 668	58 801	1 844	201 064	22 066	995	23 061	333 793
129 611	52 583	1 357	200 221	19 799	707	20 506	350 338
1 648 917	520 293	80 846	1 846 731	291 322	19 633	310 955	3 806 603

'or dokumentation af tabellerne se: http://www.dst.dk/ext/uddannelse/Uddannelsestabeller

Keywords:

- Grundskole = Primary School
- Almengymnasiel uddannelse= High school
- Erhvervsgymnasiel = High school within specific professions
- Korte videregående uddannelser = Short educations

Short education

- Erhvervsuddannelser: Profession education
- Mellemlange vidergående uddannelser= Medium length educations
- Bachelor = University bachelor degree

Medium education

- Lange vidergående uddannelser = Long educations as Master degrees
- Forskeruddannelse = Phd's

Long education

Appendix 5 - Statistics for quota sample

Screenshot from http://www.statistikbanken.dk/ displaying number of Danes between 15-69 within each level of income.

Subtotal 15-69	416 508
Under 25.000 kr.	113 838
25.000 - 49.999 kr.	120 486
50.000 - 74.999 kr.	111 884
75.000 - 99.999 kr.	170 832
100.000 - 124.999 kr.	202 037
125.000 - 149.999 kr.	233 996
150.000 - 174.999 kr.	244 104
175.000 - 199.999 kr.	1 613 685
low income <25000 - 199.999	213 791
200.000 - 224.999 kr.	166 337
225.000 - 249.999 kr.	398 984
250.000-299.999 kr.	431 935
300.000-349.999 kr.	351 450
350.000-399.999 kr.	1 562 497
medium income 200.000-399.999	239 040
400.000-449.999 kr.	155 240
450.000-499.999 kr.	360 411
500.000 kr. og derover	754 691
high income >400.000	

Appendix 6 -Questionnaire

Part I:

1 What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

2 How old are you?

3 What is your highest level of education?

- Primary school, high school, or other short education
- Bachelor, profession education or other medium long education
- Master, Phd or other long education

4 How much do you earn in a year?

- 0 - 99.999 DKK
- 100.000 - 199.999 DKK
- 200.000 - 274.999 DKK
- 275.000 - 349.999 DKK
- 350.000-499.999. DKK
- More than 500.000 DKK

Part II:

5 **Imagine that you receive 1-2 relationship offers in a month from a brand (a company), aiming to make you loyal or increase your loyalty, what is likely to happen:**

	Strongly agrees	Agrees	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I would intend to do more business with the brand	○	○	○	○	○
I would intend to do less business with the brand	○	○	○	○	○
I would not switch to a competitor, even if I have a problem with the services I received	○	○	○	○	○
I would be more likely to consider their products my first choice when evaluating related products	○	○	○	○	○
I would stay loyal to the brand, as long as they stick to their promises	○	○	○	○	○
In the future, I would be willing to pay a higher price for products from the brand over competitive offerings.	○	○	○	○	○
I would commit myself stronger to this brand	○	○	○	○	○
I would be likely to say positive things about the brand to other people?	○	○	○	○	○
I would be likely to recommend the brand to someone who seeks your advice	○	○	○	○	○
I would be likely to encourage others to do business with the brand?	○	○	○	○	○
I would be likely to post positive messages about the brand on some internet board?	○	○	○	○	○

6 **Imagine that you receive 3-4 relationship offers in a month from a brand (a company), aiming to make you loyal or increase your loyalty, what is likely to happen:**

	Strongly agrees	Agrees	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I would intend to do more business with the brand	○	○	○	○	○
I would intend to do less business with the brand	○	○	○	○	○
I would not switch to a competitor, even if I have a problem with the services I received	○	○	○	○	○
I would be more likely to consider their products my first choice when evaluating related products	○	○	○	○	○
I would stay loyal to the brand, as long as they stick to their promises	○	○	○	○	○
In the future, I would be willing to pay a higher price for products from the brand over competitive offerings.	○	○	○	○	○
I would commit myself stronger to this brand	○	○	○	○	○
I would be likely to say positive things about the brand to other people?	○	○	○	○	○
I would be likely to recommend the brand to someone who seeks your advice	○	○	○	○	○
I would be likely to encourage others to do business with the brand?	○	○	○	○	○
I would be likely to post positive messages about the brand on some internet board?	○	○	○	○	○

7 **Please select the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
In general, I have a strong interest in brands	○	○	○	○	○
Brands are very important to me	○	○	○	○	○
Brands matters a lot to me	○	○	○	○	○
I get bored when other people talk to me about brands	○	○	○	○	○
Brands are relevant to me	○	○	○	○	○
For me, brands does NOT matter	○	○	○	○	○
In general, I am very loyal to brands i like	○	○	○	○	○
I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep using the product of a brand I like	○	○	○	○	○
I would be willing to postpone my purchase if a product I like were temporarily unavailable	○	○	○	○	○
I would stick with a brand I like, even if it would let me down once or twice	○	○	○	○	○

8* What is your most important motivation for interacting/engaging with brands? (Please rank all, start with 1 to the most important and the highest number (12) to the least important).

- To get discounts
- To make a purchase
- To get general information about the brand
- To get exclusive information about the brand
- To make reviews and product rankings
- To feel connected to the brand
- To be part of a community
- To get customer service
- To participate in their events
- To submit opinion on current products/services
- To learn about new products
- To submit ideas for new products/services

9 **Please select the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I really like to talk about brands I like with others	○	○	○	○	○
I am always interested in learning more about brands I like	○	○	○	○	○
I would be interested in merchandise with a brand's name I like on it	○	○	○	○	○
I am proud to have others know I use a brand I like.	○	○	○	○	○
I like to visit the website for a brand I like.	○	○	○	○	○
Compared to other people, I closely follow news about brands I like	○	○	○	○	○
I always consider the brand before I buy a product	○	○	○	○	○
If I feel that a brand is good, I could see myself buy other products from the same company	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that I feel a strong relationship to a brand	○	○	○	○	○
If I were satisfied with a brand, I would buy from the same company in the near future again	○	○	○	○	○
I will stay loyal to a brand, as long as they stick to their promises	○	○	○	○	○
If I were satisfied with a brand, I would say positive things about the brand to others	○	○	○	○	○
Commercials regarding competing brands are NOT able to reduce my interest in buying a brand I like.	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix 7 - Cronbach's Alpha reliability values for summated scales

BBL following 1-2 ROs scale:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.536	.558	3

BBL following 3-4 ROs scale:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.690	.692	3

ABL 1-2 ROs scale:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.685	.686	4

ABL 3-4 ROs scale:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.843	.845	4

Intentions to recommend 1-2 ROs scale:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.866	.869	4

Intentions to recommend 3-4 ROs scale:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.923	.922	4

Involvement scale:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.901	.900	6

Commitment scale:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.815	.814	4

Engagement scale:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.894	.893	6

Brand loyalty scale:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.746	.750	7

Appendix 8 - Interview guide

This guide has been developed to ensure that enough information is collected about the given research problems. Hence, ensuring that each research objective can be met, while also leaving room for the pursuit of any relevant information.

1. Can you try to explain the degree to which you like brands and whether they are important for you?
    a. If you (don't) like brands and they are (not) important for you, what kind of attachment do you feel you have with brands?
    b. How do you feel that this is connected to your level of interest in brands?
    c. Considering that you are (not) interested in brands, do you recommends brands or advice against brands?
2. Can you try to explain how you feel about the attempts brands make to get you as a loyal customer?
    a. Is it something you notices, ignores, like or maybe something that annoys you? Ask for examples.
    b. What can the implications of this be? Positive as well as negative implications.
    c. Can you try to explain why you are interested or uninterested in a relationship with a brand?
3. Do you believe that these relationship offerings, for instance emails, newsletters, sales clerks, loyalty programs, membership programs or any other activity that directly attempts to build relationships with you affect you positively or negatively?
    a. Explain in what way?
    b. Ask for examples
    c. What does this mean in relation to your intentions to purchase or repurchase a product?
    d. What does this mean in relation to your level of brand loyalty?
    e. What does this mean in relation to your intentions to recommend a brand?
4. Can you try to explain ways in which you are involved with brands?
    a. What is you interest or disinterest in being involved with brands?
    b. Can you explain if you have any close relationship or attachment to certain brands? How does this attachment shows itself?
    c. To what degree are you actively engaging/interacting with brands for instance online, on social media or other platforms?

   d. What is your motivation for communicating with brands? What do you want to achieve with it?
   e. What is the connection, if any, between you communicating with a brand a the likelihood that you are loyal to that brand?
5. Can you try to explain some of the positives and negatives of interacting with brands?
   a. If brands tries to communicate with you, what determines whether you perceive that communication as positive or negative?
6. How do you see a connection between a brand interacting with you and you being loyal to a brand?
   a. What about in terms of having a relationship with a brand?
7. Can you try to explain what a relationship is to you – A normal interpersonal relationship, what defines it?
   a. Can you try to compare this to your definition of a relationship with a brand? Ask for examples.
8. What is you interest in being loyal to brands?
   a. Are you loyal to some brands? Examples.
   b. Explain your interest or disinterest for having a relationship with a brand?
   c. How do you see the connection between being loyal to a brand and also having a relationship to that same brand?
   d. Elaborate on the differences or similarities between being loyal to a brand and having a relationship with a brand if needed.

Appendix 9 -Interview transcripts

Transcript Anja:

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you like brands and whether they are important for you?

Anja: I think that brands are important, because without them I would not be able to know what products stand for. I don't think about brands in my every day, I think I more shop without really thinking about what brands stand for, but if I didn't have just a little idea of what they stand, the brand I'm considering, I am sure I would not buy their product.

Interviewer: When you talk about what brands stand for, what are you thinking of?

Anja: For instance the brand Änglemark (Ecological and environmental friendly producer of groceries) I know what they stand for. They have many products without alcohol and perfume and therefore I buy them. Because I know that if I buy this brand my children will get something good, it makes me feel safe.

Interviewer: If brands are important for you, what kind of attachment do you feel you have with brands?

Anja: Even though I feel that brands are important, as they are good indicators of what products stand for, I am not really closely attached to many brands. However, two brands that I feel a very close attachment to is Änglemark which I just mentioned and then my telephone company Call Me.

Interviewer: How do you feel that this is connected to your level of interest in brands?

Anja: I am not really sure. But I do have a general interest in brands, of course more interest in some than others. For me, I am most interested in the brands that makes products that I buy for my children. That is really important for me. For myself, I do not really care that much or are interested in the brands I am buying. So I think my interest in brands is largely because of my natural instinct as a protective mother.

Interviewer: Considering this, what are the chances that you recommend brands or advice against brands?

Anja: The brands that I trust for my own children, those products I also recommend to my friends or family members who have kids. But else, I don't really recommend brands.

Interviewer: If you recommend or advice against brands is that only to your family or friends or do you use the internet e.g. social media?

Anja: It is only for friends and family members. I have never written a review or posted something about a brand online. Maybe I am a bit old fashioned in that way. I just do not want to use my time on it because I think there so many other things I can use my time on.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain how you feel about the attempts brands make to get you as a loyal customer? I would like to know if it is something, you notices, ignores, like or maybe something that annoys you?

Anja: If I think about my telephone company for instance, I hate when they call me. It is really annoying and it feels like they always call me at an inconvenient moment where I don't have time, or want to use time on it. In general, I just hate telephone sales representatives. I would definitely rather receive an e-mail.

Interviewer: So you like to receive newsletters?

Anja: Actually not really, I never read them but I also try to avoid getting them, so I guess that I do not receive that many because I really try to avoid them and if I receive something random I just block the sender. I definitely only want to receive newsletters for a select few brands e.g. Änglemark as I mentioned earlier. I receive a newsletter from them but I am fine with that because I am interested in the brand.

Interviewer: And what can the implications of receiving these relationship offers be?

Anja: If I receive something that I did not ask for, the implications will no doubt be negative. My first action would simply be to block the information that I receive. I could still buy that product at another time, but of course, my attitude towards that brand would definitely not be as good as it was before. So I would most likely need more incentive to buy the brand in the future.

But the implications can also be positive, e.g. If I say yes to receive something from a brand that interest me e.g. Änglemark, then I can be happy about receive information from them. But I also believe that it often happens that you say yes to receive something, but then receives more information than you expected, but also information about all kinds of stuff that did not interest you.

Interviewer: Can you give an example?

Anja: For instance, Kvickly (Supermarket chain) once gave me the opportunity to select brands from their store that they could then send me information about. That was fine and I received information about these brands for some time, but then as time passed I suddenly started to receive information about a lot of the other brands that they also sell in their store. That was seriously annoying because that was simply not what I had asked for. If I wanted to hear from all those things, I would have asked for that.

Interviewer: Do you believe that these relationship offerings, for instance emails, newsletters, sales clerks, loyalty programs, membership programs or any other activity that directly attempts to build relationships with you affect you positively or negatively?

Anja: I am not entirely sure. I think that it can be both positive and negative. It can be positive in the sense that I can learn more about stuff that I might have an interest in. But it can also quickly be negative if I receive more than I want or receive things that I don't want at all.

Interviewer: What does this mean in relation to your intentions to purchase or repurchase a product?

Anja: I am certain that it can affect my intentions both negatively and positively. If I'm happy about it I might buy it more because I fall for their offers or alike or I just start to trust the brand more after getting information about them, oppositely if a brand annoys me I might try to avoid them or remember that when I am in the store next time.

Interviewer: And what about in relation to your level of brand loyalty?

Anja: In the same way as with my intentions to purchase.

Interviewer: And the last one, what about in relation to your intentions to recommend a brand?

Anja: The same again I would say. It can go both ways.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you are involved with brands, if you are?

Anja: Can you clarify what you mean by that?

Interviewer: I mean, whether you feel close to some brands and therefore follow those brands closely?

Anja: I guess I am involved with a few brands then. I have to bring up Änglemark as an example again. I think I am very close to this brand and follow them quite closely e.g. by receiving their newsletter and reading about their products in the news, visiting their website once a while and like that. However, it is probably only Änglemark and one or two additional brands I am involved with.

To what degree are you actively engaging/interacting with brands for instance online, on social media or other platforms?

Anja: I basically only communicate with brands over e-mail, telephone or via. Their online chat functions. But even that is quite rare. And I never engage with brands on social media or read blogs. If I have questions or problems, I usually just write an e-mail. I think that the reason I do not communicate with brands that often is that I do not really feel that I have the time to. I have a busy every day with a job and two kids to take care of. So I only communicate with brands if I really have to.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain your motivations for communicating with brands, what do you want to achieve with it?

Anja: My motivation is usually to get more information about either a product or a certain offer. I probably often also just communicate with them to get discounts.

Interviewer: Do you see a connection between communicating with a brand, even though you do not do that much, and the likelihood that you are loyal to a brand?

Anja: A strong connection yes. There is definitely a strong connection for me personally as I almost only communicates with those brands that I am already a user of. So clearly, these are also the brands that I am most loyal to. Of course sometimes I might have seen something interesting from a brand and might want to know more and therefore communicates with them, but it does not happen often.

Interviewer: If brands tries to communicate with you, what determines whether you perceive that communication as positive or negative?

Anja: If there is too much irrelevant information, and by irrelevant I mean information that I did not expect to receive information about, then I will see it as negative. E.g. if I sign up to get newsletters about new product launches but instead starts to get discount offers. Also, if I receive communication material too often I will be very likely to see it as negative.

Interviewer: Could you give an example?

Anja: For instance Call Me, my phone operator, I have been a loyal customer to them in at least

10 years by now I think. Nonetheless, if they started to send me e-mail all the time, called me on my phone to get me to do that and that, then I could easily see myself changing to another operator. It would annoy me so much that I would try to look for another operator that would not bomb me with information all the time.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain some of the positives and negatives of interacting with brands?

Anja: On the positive side, I think that having the opportunity to communicate is great, because there will always be situations where you would like to know something or know more about e.g. a product. It could for instance be that you would like to know more about what kind of natural ingredients or non-toxic chemicals that are used in certain products. For me, this is something I am often interested in knowing because I care about my kids.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain what a relationship is to you – A normal interpersonal relationship, what defines it?

Anja: Overall, no matter whether it is a relationship with my friends, boyfriend or kids I think it is about love and loyalty.

Interviewer: Can you try to elaborate this?

Anja: You have to be loyal to each other in a relationship, or else you will no longer be friends or together in the end as you might end up getting tired of each other. You bring love into every relationship, no matter whether it is with your friends or whatever. Also honesty, you need to be honest to each other.

Interviewer: Now, can you try to compare this to your definition of a relationship with a brand?

Anja: I would not use the word love in connection to this kind of relationship. But I think that regarding honesty and loyalty it is similar. I am thinking that if I am to be loyal to a brand they also need to be honest with me. For instance my phone operator, I do not really know anything about how much internet I am using a month. I am not really aware of how many GB I need, what I need for download and upload etc. but if the phone operator tell me that I need exactly this type of subscription to 300 a month, because they can see from my bills that this is the type of subscription that would fit my needs. In that case, I would trust that what they are telling me is true, because they of course know much much more about this than I do. However, if I were to find out that I actually use much less than what is part of the package that they recommended me, then I would of course never be loyal to them again. So in that way it is about trust and honesty as well.

Interviewer: So if you were to sum up, do you believe that these two types of relationships are similar or different?

Anja: I do not know, I think that I would say that they are mostly different but they do have similar points. I think it is difficult to make a connection between these two things.

Interviewer: What is so different?

Anja: It is some very different feelings that you have towards your friends and family members, the feelings are much deeper than the feelings you have in relation to having a relationship to a brand.

Interviewer: What is your interest in being loyal to brands?

Anja: I am interested in being loyal to brands that are able to make my life easier, but in reality I really only think I am loyal to Änglemark and Call Me. But that is probably also because I need to be certain about exactly what they are and what they stand for before being loyal to them. Sometimes it is also just easy and convenient that you have one brand or two that you completely trust within a category e.g. food to my children, everything is from Änglemark. And it means that I don't have to look for other brands or even consider them as long as I trust Änglemark and they keep delivering their promises.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain why you are interested or uninterested in a relationship with a brand?

Anja: As such, I am not interested in relationships with a brand. I just do not think that it is worth my time to build a relationship with a brand.

Interviewer: How do you see a connection between being loyal to a brand and having a relationship to that same brand?

Anja: I guess it depends on how you define it. If being loyal to a brand is having a relationship, then it is connected. But I am not sure that this is the case.

Interviewer: Do you have anything to add?

Anja: I think all this about loyalty is somewhat difficult. It is not really stuff that I think about that much. But when I think about it now I realise that I have a lot of brands that I buy often, but brands that I do not think about. Typically small stuff as milk, butter and other food products. For instance, I typically buy Kærgården (Danish Butter) but if I see Lurpak (Butter) on offer, I will chose them that one time to save money.

Also I just thought of my fitness shoes. I have had Nike Air the last three years and these are the best fitness shoes I have ever had. But I don’t feel loyal to Nike at all. The brand itself I really do not care about – The shoes are just crazy good and I love the comfort, and that is why I buy them. So I really do not think that I think about who has created the products, unless it is for my children. For instance if Adidas makes an exact copy of Nike’s shoes and sells it 200 DKK cheaper, then I would just buy the shoes from Adidas, no doubt. So I am not really that loyal you see?

If Nike for instance made a bad model of the Nike AIR shoe, I think they make a new model every year. But if they made one bad model, then I would not buy that shoe again, I would try to find another brand. And that is even despite that I have been happy with them for three years now.

Interviewer: Interesting, I think that was it, thank you for your participation

Anja: You welcome, good luck with your project.

Transcript Knud:

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you like brands and whether they are important for you?

Knud: Well, for me personally, I do not think that brands are that important. I mean, they are not important for me in the sense that I am not a follower or fan of any brands and I do not support any brands. Therefore, I guess you could say that I do not like brands that much. Of course, within different product categories I have some brands that I prefer compared to other brands, I think that everybody has that, but I think that the brands I prefer is not because I want to support those brands. I think I just prefer them because of e.g. their good price or product quality. It is not like I buy a brand because I really love the values of that given brand.

Interviewer: ‘Since brands are not important for you, what kind of attachment do you feel you have with brands?

Knud: No attachment really. I do not feel close to brands in that way.

Interviewer: How do you feel that this is connected to your level of interest in brands?

Knud: Well, it is connected because my interest in brands are also only on a very limited level. I do not follow any brands on social media or something like that, but still I often read about brands in newspapers. Articles about companies can be quite interesting sometimes. However, I do not read much; I think it is just the big news and the "headliners" about some of the big brands that interest me.

Interviewer: Considering this, what are the chances that you recommend brands or advice against brands?

Low I would say. Since I do not have a great interest in brands, they are not really a common or natural topic of discussion for me. Therefore, I also very rarely recommend brands or advice against them for that sake. Though, I probably advise against brands more than I recommend brands, I think that when I have a bad experience with a brand I will be more likely to spread that because I would want to try to punish that brand for causing that bad experience. Particularly if they are unwilling to fix any given bad experience.

Interviewer: If you recommend or advice against brands is that to your family or friends or do you use the internet e.g. social media?

I only do it to my friends or family. If I have great experience with a product I sometimes, tell it to people I care about because I of course wish that they have a good experience as well. And the same the other way around, I would also want to warn people about an bad experience. But using the internet or social media has almost never happened. But it has a few times in rare occasions. For instance if the product/Brand experience have been either extraordinarily bad or great they I would maybe share it online. But in that case I would also do it in the hope that I could either punish or support the brand if I feel that they deserved it. But it definitely would have to be a special case.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain how you feel about the attempts brands make to get you as a loyal customer? I would like to know if it is something, you notices, ignores, like or maybe something that annoys you?

Knud: I definitely notices it and it definitely annoys me. You know, we live in a world where it is so easy to send information to people, whether they want that information or not. The problem is that when it is easy for everyone to send, it means that I as a consumer receive tons and tons of information. Therefore, I am also extremely "careful" when I buy stuff on the internet.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on that?

Knud: I mean, I am careful in the sense that I try to avoid getting information from brands e.g. newsletters. You know, today, on almost all major clothing sites for instance, you need to create an account to be able to buy from them. And whenever you do that, they automatically assumes that you would like to hear from that brand. So I ALWAYS remember to uncheck the "I want news" from brands, just the fact that it is automatically selected annoys me crazy much.

Interviewer: And what can the implications of this be?

Knud: First of all, I would probably just try to make sure that I don't receive information from them. But if they had annoyed me too much the it could also mean that I would not be likely to select that brand in the future. Actually, I have an excellent example that just came to my mind. Maybe a couple of months ago or so I bought different kinds of running equipment from Nike. And then I actually choose to receive news from them because I think Nike has a kind of cool brand and because I have quite a bit of clothes from them, so I thought, sure that would be nice to hear from them once a while. Now, just last week I was searching the internet to find some things that I wished for Christmas and I realised that it would be nice with some new running shoes. I searches the internet and looked at many different shoes and I ended up finding two pair of shoes at almost the same price. One pair from Adidas and the other pair from Nike. Which one should I choose? I was a bit in doubt, the looks and price were very similar, both had good reviews and the quality seemed quite similar as well. I couldn't really make a decision but then I opened to check my e-mail which I hadn't had time to check the entire weekend and then I had 3, yes 3 e-mails in there from Nike. I was like, seriously, come on! I was already annoyed because they had been sending me 3 times a week or so, but that was "the drop that made the difference". I deleted the e-mails, found a way to unsubscribe from Nike and put the Adidas shoes on my wishlist.

Interviewer: Good example. So you were annoyed even though you had said yes to receive the newsletter?

Knud: Yes I were, even though I actually wanted some news from them, when I signed up, I never expected it to be that much. I do not know exactly what I expected, but definitely not three times a week. So I might have said yes I am interested, but it does not mean yes I would like you to spam me every week.

Interviewer: Do you believe that these relationship offerings, for instance emails, newsletters, sales clerks, loyalty programs, membership programs or any other activity that directly attempts to build relationships with you affect you positively or negatively?

Knud: No doubt negatively. I try to avoid these offerings whenever I can, but when I receive them, they do not do much good for me. Sometimes I may exploit a great offer of or something on sale, but I don’t get connected to these brands, so the only positive outcome may be that I buy a great offer once a while.

Interviewer: What does this mean in relation to your intentions to purchase or repurchase a product?

Knud: That my intentions can be affected negatively. For instance as I explain in the example I just gave with Nike. Sometimes, as I said, it might make me inclined to buy something on sale, but that is also it.

Interviewer: And what about in relation to your level of brand loyalty?

Knud: I guess the same. I am definitely also a less loyal customer to Nike today for instance. It does not mean I will never buy any Nike product, because most of their products are great quality, but there is a greater chance that I will chose a competing brand. I do not see how these things could have a positive effect on my level of brand loyalty.

Interviewer: And the last one, what about in relation to your intentions to recommend a brand?

Knud: I do not think that I would be more or less inclined to recommend a brand. I rarely recommend brands or warn people about brands. I do not really share my experiences with brands, good or bad, publicly. Sometimes I surely talk to friends and family members about it, but only in rare cases if I have had some awesome or horrible experience with a brand.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you are involved with brands, if you are?

Knud: I do not feel like I am involved with brands. I do not feel close to any brands that springs to mind. Also, since I do not consider brands that important and are not that interested in brands, it is only logical that I do not have an interest to be involved with brands in any way.

To what degree are you actively engaging/interacting with brands for instance online, on social media or other platforms?

Knud: I communicate with brands extremely rarely. Almost never actually. The only times I communicate with brands are when I buy products and when I have troubles or questions regarding the given product. In that case, I always e-mail the brand or use their chat-function if they have one like that. But I never do I via social media and I don't follow brands on social media or read and comment on company blogs or anything like that. I guess the reason is that I do not have that much of an interest in brands

Interviewer: Can you try to explain your motivations for communicating with brands, what do you want to achieve with it?

Knud: As I just said, when I communicate with brands it is just to buy something or to get something fixed. Else, if I receive news from brands it is just to exploit great offers.

Interviewer: Do you see a connection between communicating with a brand, even though you do not do that much, and the likelihood that you are loyal to a brand?

Knud: I believe that it can be connected, but not that it necessarily always is like that. You can be loyal to many brands that you do not communicate with at all, but I think that those brands that you use are also the once that you are most likely to communicate with. At least I more or less only communicate with those brands that I am already a user of as most of the reason why I communicate with brands is to fix some issues or maybe if I have some questions about the product I am using. Therefore, you could say that those brands that I communicate with are typically also those brands that I am a user of, which is also loyalty I assume.

Interviewer: If brands tries to communicate with you, what determines whether you perceive that communication as positive or negative?

Knud: Well, in general, I prefer to receive a minimum of communication from companies, but the most important aspect is how they communicate with me. For instance if I've accepted to receive the information and they only send me relevant information, not too often, then I could be quite satisfied with that, and it would have the result that I would probably buy their products once a while. So in that way I could see it as something positive. But if I feel like I am over flooded with marketing messages it would have a very negative effect instead. And if I didn't ask for it I would almost always hate it, no matter the content.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain some of the positives and negatives of interacting with brands?

Knud: I think it can be positive in the sense that you can get a good insight into companies and in that way better understand their brand identity. Which I think is key if I am to relate to a brand. So if brands are capable of creating great and compelling content, interaction can be positive. And next time I have to buy a brand I might remember that I was happy about their the information I received from them or remember that I read about this great thing form them. However, oppositely, it can easily be negative if the interaction is fake, which I often feel it is.

Interviewer: What do you mean by fake?

Knud: I mean that often it is just too easy to see right through all the advertising bullshit (sorry for my choice of word). You know, it can just seem so fake when companies interact with you because it is evident that they only do it to make me buy something. But in general I think what annoys me the most is just when I feel that I didn't ask for this information, when I feel that it is thrown in my head. In those cases, it can never have a positive effect, rather the opposite.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain what a relationship is to you – A normal interpersonal relationship, what defines it?

Knud: A relationship is about mutual respect and trust I would say, and also equality. What I mean is that both parties of the relationship needs to feel that they are "equal" to the other person in the relationship. At least for it to be a good and strong relationship. I think that strength is a key word as well and what should define interpersonal relationships and I think that this strength is something that comes from the respect and trust that must be in a relationship to be good.

Interviewer: Now, can you try to compare this to your definition of a relationship with a brand?

Knud: Well, I think that these two type of relationships are very different on some key parameters, even though they do share some similarities. To me, the major differences is that relationships to brands are much much weaker than interpersonal relationships. What I mean is that a relationship to a brand is something that you have one day, but may drop the other day if someone better comes along or if you have a negative experience with a brand. I think that we as consumers have so many opportunities today to compare products, their prices and quality that it has become extremely difficult to be loyal. Because if it is always possible to find a somewhat similar product or cheaper and equally good product from another brand, why in the world would you ever continue your loyalty or relationship to a brand?

Interviewer: Can you try to elaborate this?

Knud: Okay. Well, it is a bit complicated to explain. But I will try. What I am trying to say is that I do not really feel like that there are many great incentives to be in relationships with brands today. I do not feel that brands give me something or do something that makes me want to have a relationship with them. Unlike in an interpersonal relationship where so many great things can come from being in a strong relationship. So I really think that a consumer-brand relationship is very different in the sense that they are not compelling, but even if a relationship should exist you can barely call it a relationship if the one part is so quick to drop that relationship.

Interviewer: You might have talked about this a bit earlier, but what is your interest in being loyal to brands?

Knud: I am not really interested in being loyal. This does not mean that I do not like any brands and that I am not buying the same brands repeatedly. What I mean is that I do not buy certain brands repeatedly because I want to support their brand or because I think that what they stand for is great or something like that. I much more focused on the individual product that the actual brand. To me it is all about quality versus price. Therefore, I also often change and shift between different brands and products, so that is why I don't think that I am real loyal to brands but also why I am not really interest in being loyal. I am only loyal to a brand if I get something out of it e.g. if I get a great product for a great price, then I will of course keep buying that brand. But does that makes me interested in being loyal? I do not see it that way.

How do you see a connection between being loyal to a brand and having a relationship to that same brand?

Knud: I think that it often is connected, but I think there is a difference in the emotional connection. I mean, that to have a relationship with a brand you would need some kind of stronger emotional connection than you would have just to be loyal to a brand. So you could say that loyalty may be a first step whereas you later may develop a relationship and then become a stronger loyal customer.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain why you are interested or uninterested in a relationship with a brand?

Knud: I am not interested in a relationship with a brand because I do not feel like I have to support brands and help them. For me, brands are just something that exists to make my life easier. And as I've already said, I'm not really a "brand animal", I don't care about the brand name or reputation as long as the experience that I have with the product is excellent. It do not have to be well known brands, not at all. And clearly, when I feel that way it also means that I don't really see a reason to have a relationship with a brand. What would it give me?

Interviewer: Do you have anything to add in the end?

Knud: No, I think I have said what I wanted to.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you for your participation. It was really helpful!

Knud: Happy to hear that, good luck with everything.

Transcript Kristian:

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you like brands and whether they are important for you?

Kristian: I think that brands are very important, both from a business perspective but also for me personally. Brands are important indicators of what you are buying, particularly if you are buying something from categories that you may not know a lot about. Therefore, I also believe that brands are important and I like them in the sense that they are often a key variable that I consider when buying a product.

Interviewer: Considering that brands are important for you, what kind of attachment do you feel you have with brands?

Kristian: I feel attached to many brands, so I would say that I have a strong attachment to brands.

Interviewer: How does this attachment show itself?

Kristian: I think it shows itself in the way that I often recommend and advocate for the brands that I am a proud user of. I also feel loyal and act as a loyal customer to many of these brands so I guess that this shows my attachment pretty well.

Interviewer: How do you feel that this is connected to your level of interest in brands?

Kristian: It is clearly connected in my opinion. I have a great interest in brands, I like to know about new product launches, cool insight information and all kinds of stuff about brands and because I like this I am also pretty close with many brands.

Interviewer: Considering this, what are the chances that you recommend brands or advice against brands?

Kristian: I already mentioned that I recommend brands quite a lot but I surely also advice against brands. I actually think that I advice against brands more often than I recommend brands. If I have a bad experience with brands I really just feel that people should know that they are likely to experience problems with this brand.

Interviewer: If you recommend or advice against brands is that only to your family or friends or do you use the internet e.g. social media?

Kristian: Mostly, it is to my friends and that but I also exploit social media to get my will. Often you can put pressure on brands and make sure that they fix a given problem faster if you e.g. write on their Facebook wall, because as soon as it becomes “a public” problem, brands will of course try to solve it to avoid negative publicity. So I often use this, and then if they fix the problem I praise them for that but if they do not they will probably pay for that with negative publicity, dependent on how unreasonable the problem is of course.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain how you feel about the attempts brands make to get you as a loyal customer? I would like to know if it is something, you notices, ignores, like or maybe something that annoys you?

Kristian: Well, that depends. Often I like to receive stuff from brands I like and am loyal to and I guess I am also one of those that often “fall” for the offers because I often see it as an opportunity to save money. E.g. by getting a membership card to the shop where I buy most of my clothes or by receiving offers from brands I like on newsletters so that I know when they have good discounts and also am aware of their latest products.

However, I do not want to receive tons of offers from brands that I am not really interested in and have not asked to receive anything from. I can still fall for their offers sometimes, but mostly, I do not like to receive things I have not asked for, I guess because you automatically receive so much that you did not ask for.

Interviewer: And what can the implications of receiving these relationship offers be, positive as well as negative?

Kristian: Surely it can drive be closer to the brand because I am regularly reminded about a brand and their products. Of course this is good for a brand when I have to find a product within a category that I may not know much about, then I will surely be likely to choose the brand that I recognise and maybe know from another category.

Interviewer: And on the negative side?

Kristian: Well, I think that it can become negative if I feel like I receive things that I have not asked for, or if I receive too much information. Like if I had to hear about the latest offers from Elgiganten (Electronic and white goods retailer) every single week it would probably ignore me in the end. I like Elgiganten and have bought many of my electronics and white goods at them, therefore I also want to receive information from them, but you know, how can I put it, you know how you sometimes have a good friend or a girlfriend? You might like or love the person, but it does not necessarily mean that you want to talk to the person every day and other times you might feel that the person is simply just talking too much. We all need space, even from the things we like and are interested in.

Interviewer: Do you believe that these relationship offerings, for instance emails, newsletters, sales clerks, loyalty programs, membership programs or any other activity that directly attempts to build relationships with you affect you positively or negatively?

Kristian: I think that they mostly affect me positively, but that they sometimes also affect me negatively. It is a fine balance sometimes. In general, I am a pretty loyal customer to the brands that I like and therefore I am also mostly affected positively whenever I receive any offers to strengthen my relationship with these brands because I often want to have a strong or stronger relationship with the brands I really like. But when I am not interested in this, which I of course am not interested in with all brands then I my attitude towards the given brands is also negatively affected.

Interviewer: What does this mean in relation to your intentions to purchase or repurchase a product?

Kristian: That my intentions to purchase can increase when I receive things from brands that I like or when I am a member of some loyalty program. If I do not like the brand that I receive information from it can go the other way as well, meaning that I won’t be likely to buy that brand.

Interviewer: And what about in relation to your level of brand loyalty?

Kristian: I would say that it is exactly the same.

Interviewer: And the last one, what about in relation to your intentions to recommend a brand?

Kristian: Surely I will be likely to recommend the brands that I am closely attached to, but I won’t recommend brands just because I have received information from brands. I recommend brands on the basis of my own experience with their products and that, I don’t just recommend brand because some brands sends me information about how great they are.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you are involved with brands, if you are?

Kristian: I am involved with brands in the sense that I have membership cards to numerous shops and I also follow the brands that I like closely both online, in the news and by receiving mails from some of them.

To what degree are you actively engaging/interacting with brands for instance online, on social media or other platforms?

Kristian: I engage with brands online pretty regularly. I think I mostly use Facebook as my channel. – I comment on their status updates, give likes if I like what they have written and sometimes makes reviews.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain your motivations for communicating with brands, what do you want to achieve with it?

Kristian: Well, I think that sometimes I communicate with brands because I want other people to see that I like these brands, to show friends that I have good taste and like quality brands. So you could say I do it to show my image. Else, I don't really know, I guess I often also communicate with brands just to get some help with a problem I have with a product, maybe a defect or other issue and then I of course communicate with brands when I receive their offers and discounts that I often exploit.

Interviewer: Do you see a connection between communicating with a brand and the likelihood that you are loyal to a brand?

Kristian: Definitely, those brands that I communicate with are also those brands that I am most loyal to. I do not waste my time on communicating with brands I am not interested in.

Interviewer: If brands tries to communicate with you, what determines whether you perceive that communication as positive or negative?

Kristian: The time, place and amount of communication I would say. Sometimes you just receive information in what feels like inconvenient or inappropriate times and sometimes it becomes inconvenient and annoying because you receive it all the time and everywhere you go. But if I receive relationship offers from brands that I like, but not too often then I'm sure that I will see it positively.

Could you give an example of an inconvenient or inappropriate time?

Kristian: For instance if I am in a hurry and then while buying a product then sales clerk starts telling about their new loyalty program or tries to sell additional products, or when you receive a tons of mails that you did not expect or all the “personal” Facebook ads that you don’t want to see.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain some of the positives and negatives of interacting with brands?

Kristian: I think the positive things about communicating with brands is that if can make you feel influential or important, you can also get great insight about products that you are using and are interested in, which of course is great.. On the negative side, you could say that it is often something that takes up a lot of time, time that I think most people feel they have less of, and also it can just become too much and you just want to get rid of the brand. You know, if you give them you hand then they try to take your whole arm (Danish saying that relates to being greedy).

Interviewer: Can you try to explain what a relationship is to you – A normal interpersonal relationship, what defines it?

Kristian: A relationship is about love, support, and interest in each other. I think what is most important is that it goes both ways, I mean that both persons love, support and are interested equally in each other. If not, I do not think it will be a good relationship.

Interviewer: Now, can you try to compare this to your definition of a relationship with a brand?

Kristian: Well, I think that a relationship with a brand seems similar to an interpersonal relationship on the surface. However, it is like a relationship that has most of what a normal relationship has but less of everything. Less love, less interest, less support. It is much more about personal self-interest, from both sides. I want products that are great and works and that fit my image, and brands want me to be loyal to earn money.

Interviewer: What is your interest in being loyal to brands?

Kristian: I am very interested in being loyal to the brands that have great products. If their products work excellently, then I definitely will want to be loyal to that brand. But at the moment that they don’t work as good as expected, I will try to find another brands that has better products.

Interviewer: How do you see a connection between being loyal to a brand and having a relationship to that same brand?

Kristian: Well, I think it is connected. I think that if I am loyal there is also a great likely that I have a relationship with a brand, which I would just define as “stronger loyalty”. I think that if you feel like you have a relationship with a brand it just means that you are more loyal to that brand that you are to brands that you might just feel a little bit loyalty to. So I also think that you are loyal to many more brands than you have a relationship with.

Interviewer: Do you have anything to add?

Kristian: No, I think that was all I had to say. It was interesting to talk about though.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you for taking your time to be interviewed.

Kristian: No problem, as I said, it was interesting.

Transcript Kristina

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you like brands and whether they are important for you?

Kristina: That depends. I do like some brands and in general, I also believe that brands are important. However, it of course depends on what the type of product we are talking.

Interviewer: Considering that brands are important for you, what kind of attachment do you feel you have with brands?

Kristina: I have a select few brands that I feel close to, but in general, I am not particularly close to any brands.

Interviewer: What are those brands and how do this attachment show itself towards these brands?

Kristina: I would say Zara, H&M and Apple. And I show my attachment to these brands by buying more or less all my clothes from ZARA and H&M and my computer and phone are also from Apple. Besides, I would also say that I talk a lot about these brands when I am with other people, I am not hiding that I am loyal to these brands and therefore logically also tries to convince others to uses these brands.

Interviewer: How do you feel that this is connected to your level of interest in brands?

Kristina: If we look aside the three brands I just mentioned, I do not feel like I am highly interested in brands or that I consider the brands behind when I buy products. Of course I have a certain level of interest in brands, but for instance my loyalty to H&M and ZARA and mostly based on the fact that it is quite good quality to very good prices. I am satisfied with their quality and design, but mostly the driving factor is that it is so cheap. So when I compare price and quality these are just the two brands within clothing that I find best. With Apple it is a little bit different because Apple is obviously pretty expensive, here it is more the design, high quality, functionality and image of the brand that is important. Therefore, I would say that my interest in their brand is higher than my interest in ZARA's and H&M's brand – H&M and ZARA is all about value for money.

Interviewer: Considering this, what are the chances that you recommend brands or advice against brands?

Kristina: I do recommend and advice against brands. The three brands I already mentioned I would say that I recommend a lot. Asides that, I only recommend really good or bad brand experiences.

Interviewer: If you recommend or advice against brands is that only to your family or friends or do you use the internet e.g. social media?

Kristina: Family and friends. I have never written an online review or tagged a company on Facebook or something like that. I like to keep these things private. If I have a problem with a brand I will contact the brand directly and then dependent on the outcome I may recommend or advice against a brand when I talk with friends or family members.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain how you feel about the attempts brands make to get you as a loyal customer? I would like to know if it is something, you notices, ignores, like or maybe something that annoys you?

Kristina: Oh, I really hate these things. I just want to be able to make my own choices and not being told what to do. If I am interested in information from a brand, and for instance is looking for a membership card, I will seek that information out on my own. So I really don't like it and find it very annoying when I sometimes receive an e-mail from a brand because I forgot to choose that I do not want to receive information from them. I also hate that on some online shops you need to create an account, with your e-mail of course, before you can actually make a purchase. For instance, sometimes I have had to buy a gift to my boyfriend from a brand that

I have no interest in, but because I had to create an account, I suddenly receive information from them. I think that is such a stupid concept.

Interviewer: What about Zara, H&M and Apple, do you receive any newsletters or other offers from them?

Kristina: Maybe a bit surprisingly, no I do not. Whatever information I need from them I will just go to their website or go look in their store. If I stumble upon great offers from H&M or ZARA I of course might jump right in and buy something, but I do not receive a newsletter from them or something. I am just not interested in receiving all this information; my mail inbox is plenty full without this.

Interviewer: And what can the implications of receiving these relationship offers be, positive as well as negative?

Kristina: For me, the implications cannot be positive. It can easily be negative though. I will be irritated and annoyed which can mean that will be likely to have a negative attitude towards the brands that bombard med with information and offers.

Interviewer: What does this mean in relation to your intentions to purchase or repurchase a product?

Kristina: I will not be likely to buy from or rebuy from a brand that overwhelms me with offers and information.

Interviewer: And what about in relation to your level of brand loyalty?

Kristina: Pretty much the same, my level of brand loyalty will be affected negatively.

Interviewer: And the last one, what about in relation to your intentions to recommend a brand?

Kristina: I would be very unlikely to recommend the brand.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you are involved with brands, if you are?

Kristina: Well, that is difficult to say. But I think that I am not really involved with brands that much in general to be honest. I am involved with a few brands, particularly the ones that I have already mentioned, but my attachment is not closer than if I find something better, then I shift to that brand.

To what degree are you actively engaging/interacting with brands for instance online, on social media or other platforms?

Kristina: I communicate with brands some times. I for instance follow some brands on social media and if I need to get customer service or have questions, I often ask a question on the company's Facebook page or in a private message to them on Facebook.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain your motivations for communicating with brands, what do you want to achieve with it?

Kristina: I would say that my primary motivation is probably just to get customer service, if I need a problem to be fixed or if I need to make a purchase.

Interviewer: Do you see a connection between communicating with a brand and the likelihood that you are loyal to a brand?

Kristina: I guess there is a connection. Because those brands that I communicate with I typically does because I am already a customer that needs something to be fixed.

Interviewer: If brands tries to communicate with you, what determines whether you perceive that communication as positive or negative?

Kristina: The single most important thing for me is that I have asked to be communicated with. If not, I just consider it spam and gets annoyed about it. However, I rarely accepts to receive any information from brands actually, it is just on Facebook I think. I do not like to have these things filling up my mail inbox, because I am just never able to chew through the tons of emails that I sometimes receive, so if I also have to check emails from brands all the time, it is just too much and makes everything else seems even more unmanageable.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain some of the positives and negatives of interacting with brands?

Kristina: For me, when I am on Facebook, I believe that it is sometimes interesting to see what different brands are doing. But that is because when I am on Facebook I am relaxed and fully aware that today my Newsfeed consists of 80% information for anyone else than my actual friends. But in general, it is all about the amount of information. I did receive news on emails from brands I liked previously, but felt like I received more than I could handle and then suddenly I had 10 emails from the same brand lying that I had never opened or deleted. And that is why I definitely have a negative attitude towards interacting with brands today, it is not because I don't think that it can be interesting sometimes, but even if it is interesting if it is too much then you are overwhelmed by it.

Interviewer: Can you clarify what you mean when you say that you are overwhelmed by the information?

Kristina: I mean that since you more or less receive information anywhere you go and anywhere you read, then you do not know how to process all that information and it instead becomes a thing that you don't even want to spend time considering. I also have a pretty busy life, so I rarely have time to consider these things, of course I theoretically have time, but it is just not a time I want to spend on it and therefore not time that I give myself to that.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain what a relationship is to you – A normal interpersonal relationship, what defines it?

Kristina: A relationship is something personal, something that you can have with a lot of people with various degree of commitment I would say. What I mean is that the strength of a relationship often varies significantly. I for instance have a lot stronger relationship to my wife than to some of my friends. However, they are still all centred on the same things.

Interviewer: What are those things?

Kristina: Commitment, interest, trust. That is the words that I first think of.

Interviewer: Now, can you try to compare this to your definition of a relationship with a brand?

Kristina: Well, as I said previously. I think that relationships have various degrees of strength and while a relationship to a brand in many ways are similar to a normal relationship, I would say that the main difference is the strength of the relationship. Clearly, for me, a relationship to a brand will be much much weaker than any kind of relationship that you can have with a friend, boyfriend, mom or dad.

Interviewer: Why do you think that relationships with brands are less strong?

Kristina: Because of the forgiveness and trust that are part of many relationships. In a very strong relationship you would always trust the other person and you would also be likely to forgive that person for any wrongdoings. The weaker the relationship, the less you will be likely to trust and person and likewise be likely to forgive. I think this is often seen with brands, sometimes you can have been happy with a brand for years, but if they make a horrible product one year of maybe treat you badly or something you will be likely to drop them immediately and find another product. Not forgive them or trust that they would do better the next time.

Interviewer: What is your interest in being loyal to brands?

Kristina: I do want to be loyal to the brands that I am very happy with. If they make great quality products at good prices, obviously I want to be loyal to them. I want to continue using their products and support their business so that I can keep buying their products in the future.

Interviewer: How do you see a connection between being loyal to a brand and having a relationship to that same brand?

Kristina: I guess that it is pretty similar.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate?

Kristina: Well, I think that it is similar in the sense that loyalty is something that comes from a good relationship.

Interviewer: Do you have anything to add?

Kristina: No, I think that we have covered it all.

Interviewer: Then thank you for your participation.

Kristina: You welcome.

Transcript Maiken

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you like brands and whether they are important for you?

Maiken: I think it depends a lot on the brand. I cannot really say that I like brands a lot or do not like them. I have certain brands that I am highly loyal to and which I would buy no matter what. I for example like Apples products a lot. I have had several good experiences with their products and because of this, I buy their products every time I need a new computer or a new phone. But again it depends on the brand and the situation. I also have some brands, which I would prefer as for example Pepsi cola. But if I go to the store and Coca Cola is at a discount I would buy that instead. I still like Pepsi better but the brand is in this case just not as important as the price.

So I would say that a brand like Apple is more important to me. You can always count on their products to perform and the service level is very high. Also having the newest Apple products has kind of become a part of my identity.

Interviewer: Considering that brands can be important for you, what kind of attachment do you feel you have with brands?

Maiken: Again, it depends on the brand. For some it is just a superficial relationship. Maybe I like their brand expression, their commercials or their products, but I would change to another brand if something better came along. For other brands, like Apple, the connection goes a little deeper. I follow the latest news about the companies, am interested in their wellbeing and am highly invested in their products.

Interviewer: How does this attachment show itself?

Maiken: It shows itself in the fact that I myself search for information about the company, follow their company page and keep on buying their products. It is mostly a one-way relationship, but as long as their products keep on performing, I prefer it that way.

Interviewer: How do you feel that this is connected to your level of interest in brands?

Maiken: My attachment is highly related to my interest in the brand. Actually I would say that my attachment is solely based on my interest. I have a large interest in Apple which has caused me to search for information about the brand and their product which in term has resulted in me being invested in the brand, in that way resulting in some kind of attachment. Oppositely I tend to be less attached to brands which I do not have that big of an interest in. I may prefer the taste of Pepsi, but my interest in the brand is solely due to the taste, and I would switch anytime if something better came along.

Interviewer: Considering this, what are the chances that you recommend brands or advice against brands?

Maiken: I would definitely recommend brands which I am invested in or attached to. I think that the more interested I am in a company and the more attached I am to the brand, the more likely I am to recommend it. I might also advise people against a product or brand due to a poor experience with the company.

Interviewer: If you recommend or advice against brands is that only to your family or friends or do you use the internet e.g. social media?

Maiken: Yes it would primarily be friends and family. I may review a product on the page I bought it, but only if feeling highly satisfied with it. I would never recommend products on social media. I might write that I have just purchased this new cool IPhone, but that is it. Then if people are interested in the review of the product, they can ask me themselves.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain how you feel about the attempts brands make to get you as a loyal customer? I would like to know if it is something, you notices, ignores, like or maybe something that annoys you?

Maiken: I think that brands try way too hard to make you a loyal customer. I believe that if a brand performs on a continuous basis that is what makes me a loyal customers. If they keep on coming up with interesting new products, I keep on being invested in them. I prefer to decide myself how much information I am interested in from the company, I do not want to get spammed with all sorts of irrelevant information. Oppositely, I want them to communicate openly about the company, but in places where I myself can decide the relevance. I often block company newsletters or email because they send information almost every day which are neither relevant, nor of interest to me.

Interviewer: And what can the implications of receiving these relationship offers be, positive as well as negative?

Maiken: I must say that they are mostly negative. Companies today try too hard to get your attention. But what they do not realise is that half of the information they sent out is irrelevant for the receiver and result in annoyance instead of gratitude. Some companies though manage to segment their communication, in this way distributing content that has actual relevance for the receiver. In these cases, I really think the relationship offers has a positive effect, as it creates higher service and more interest in the brand/products.

Interviewer: Do you believe that these relationship offerings, for instance emails, newsletters, sales clerks, loyalty programs, membership programs or any other activity that directly attempts to build relationships with you affect you positively or negatively?

Maiken: Again, it depends on how the company approaches it. If they send me information that is relevant, information that is not only sales related but can maybe improve the lifespan of my current product and if they do not do it constantly, I think that these relationship offerings do have a positive effect. But then again, they will not work if I do not have any interest in the brand, or if their products do not perform. I mostly think they work for brands that I am already invested in.

Interviewer: But in general, do you believe that loyalty programs work?

Well, I mostly think loyalty programs work because you save money. If you find the products cheaper somewhere else most people would probably switch. So loyalty programs does not really do anything for me personally. Of course if I like a brand it is nice to be a part of a loyalty program to get discounts but the program is not what made me loyal to the brand in the first place.

Interviewer: What about relationship offerings then?

Overall I also think that most of these relationship offerings have a negative affect if you are not already interested or invested in a brand. For me personally a brand has to show me something in terms of product quality and performance in order to earn my trust and attachment, relationships offerings can not do that on their own. So most of the time relationships offerings are just annoying.

Interviewer: What does this mean in relation to your intentions to purchase or repurchase a product?

Maiken: My intention to purchase or repurchase a product is based on previous experience with the product or the price. I do not believe that relationships offering affects that. A loyalty program may cause me to try a new product because I can get it cheaper, but I will not purchase it again or be loyal to the brand if I do not like the product or do not find the brand interesting.

Interviewer: And what about in relation to your level of brand loyalty?

Maiken: To me, this works in the same way as with my intentions to purchase or repurchase a product.

Interviewer: And the last one, what about in relation to your intentions to recommend a brand?

Maiken: It would not affect that at all. I would never recommend a product or brand solely based on relationships offerings. I would only recommend products that I truly think are the best.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you are involved with brands, if you are?

Maiken: I am involved with brands to the degree that I actively search information about companies that I have an interest in and which have performed well over time. I do not actively engage with brands. I would like the information to be available for me to find, but I do not personally have a need to communicate directly with the brand as long as they live up to my expectations.

To what degree are you actively engaging/interacting with brands for instance online, on social media or other platforms?

Maiken: I do not feel the need to communicate directly with the brand as long as they perform. I follow brands on social media and read their posts, but I do not comment or post anything on their wall. I often search for information about companies I find interesting, how they are performing, what their plans and goals are, and as long as this is available to me that is enough.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain your motivations for communicating with brands, what do you want to achieve with it?

Maiken: I just want to be able to access the information I find relevant. I do not have a need to actively communicate with brands. As long as they keep their promises, remain interesting, and open about their business I see no need to communicate more with them.

Interviewer: Do you see a connection between communicating with a brand and the likelihood that you are loyal to a brand?

Maiken: No, as I said previously, I personally prefer to find the information I need myself. My loyalty is solely based on my interest in the company and the performance of their products.

Interviewer: If brands try to communicate with you, what determines whether you perceive that communication as positive or negative?

Maiken: Overall, I find it annoying if a company tries to communicate with me without me initiating it. If I have not signed up for information about the company, I do not want to receive it. When I for example sign up for a newsletter or loyalty program, I find it very annoying if they spam me with irrelevant information on a daily basis. Oppositely, the communication can have a positive effect if it is targeted to my interests and needs.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain what a relationship is to you – A normal interpersonal relationship, what defines it?

Maiken: Well that was difficult, but I will try. I think it is about having a mutual interest in each other. That you care for one another and are interested in each other's wellbeing.

Interviewer: Now, can you try to compare this to your definition of a relationship with a brand?

Maiken: A relationship with a brand is more superficial. You may have an interest or attachment to a brand but it is a one way relationship. There is no mutual interest as such besides the company wanting to keep you as a customer.

Interviewer: What is your interest in being loyal to brands?

Maiken: I do not know if I have any interest in being loyal to a brand. Loyalty is something you build over time. If a company keeps performing on every level, I will become loyal to that brand, even though that may not be my initial intention when I started buying the product

Interviewer: How do you see a connection between being loyal to a brand and having a relationship to that same brand?

Maiken: If you are loyal to a brand, you share the interest in its wellbeing. You do not want the company to suffer because you want to keep buying their product. I though still do not know if I would call it a relationship as such, as a relationship is a two-way street. Even though I like Apples products and have a large interest in their company I also know that they do not have any special interest in me besides keeping me as a loyal customer.

Interviewer: Do you have anything to add?

Maiken: No, I think I have said what I wanted.

Interviewer: Thank you, I appreciate you taking your time to be interviewed.

Maiken: You welcome, time went fast, so no problem.

Transcript Maria

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you like brands and whether they are important for you?

Maria: In principle, brands does not mean much for me and are really not important at all. So I don’t really like brands in the way that I find them important. For me, it matters more e.g. if it is food that it tastes great and if it is clothing how it looks and how it suits me rather than the type of brand.

Interviewer: If you do not like brands and they are not important for you, what kind of attachment do you feel you have with brands?

Maria: Most surely not a close attachment. I do not think that I am able to mention one brand that I feel close to or a single brand that I always buy from for that matter.

Interviewer: How do you feel that this is connected to your level of interest in brands?

Maria: I think it is logically connected in the sense that I do not really have any interest in brands. At least I do not have a specific interest in any certain brands that comes to mind.

Interviewer: Considering this, what are the chances that you recommend brands or advice against brands?

Maria: Quite small, I would say. It is quite uncommon for me to recommend or advice against a brand. If I have done it, it has only been to my close family or friends. I never do it on Facebook. I do not like to "point out" good guys or bad buys like that. Therefore, I guess I am quite untraditional in that way.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain how you feel about the attempts brands make to get you as a loyal customer? I would like to know if it is something, you notices, ignores, like or maybe something that annoys you?

Maria: Newsletters and similar things are good, until a certain degree, as long as it is something that directly addresses me and are relevant for me, then I think it is fine. However, often it just get too much because you are bombarded with it, and in general, I just use newsletters and similar marketing promotions to see whether someone offer special discounts that I can exploit. It is not because I have any kind of interest in the brand or want to support them. It is 100% for my own winnings sake. Therefore, I also think that I am quite easy annoyed by these marketing bombardments.

Interviewer: And what can the implications of this be?

Maria: It can certainly annoy me. There is nothing worse than spam.

Interviewer: What is spam to you?

Maria: Usually, I would say anything I receive that I did not ask to receive. However, often even if have said yes to receive something, I sometimes start to consider it spam if they keep sending messages, particularly messages that are solely sales related and has no specific relevance for me, then it feel like they "push" the product down on me. This clearly creates some kind of irritation for me, which is likely to end with the result that I simply try to block any news from the brand.

Interviewer: Could it affect your general view of the brand?

Maria: I am not sure it would affect my general view on the brand, I think if I saw a good offer I could still end up buying the brand. However, I would probably try to avoid any commercials or alike from the brand.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain why you are interested or uninterested in a relationship with a brand?

Maria: I have no interest in having a relationship with a brand whatsoever. I do not have any kind of motivation for having a relationship with a brand. I do not have any relationships with brands, or a need for it. Brands do not really mean anything to me. It is more about whether the product is of great quality and fits my style and tastes. I guess I am also so price oriented that I am willing to shift to any just-as-good but cheaper brand, anytime, across all product categories, I believe.

Interviewer: Do you believe that these relationship offerings, for instance emails, newsletters, sales clerks, loyalty programs, membership programs or any other activity that directly attempts to build relationships with you affect you positively or negatively?

Maria: They most definitely affect me much more negatively than positively. The only reason I want to receive these offers is to get great offers anything else is just irritating.

I honestly also believe that these things have been part of making me the type of consumer that I am today. A consumer that more or less only think about the products price and quality, and is highly disloyal and ready to change at the first sight of something better or leave a brand after just one negative experience. And I believe many people share my belief in this and are the same type of disloyal consumer. I actually think that previously I were a much more loyal consumer than I am today. However, because I have been bombarded with marketing messages and because I have so many opportunities for comparing prices and products, I have changed as a consumer. All these marketing messages is definitely why they have lost me as a loyal consumer because there are so much communicating that is just annoying and tiresome.

Also, because today there is just no longer that great a difference between products on key parameters as quality, taste and functionality. And you know, today we often know the previously hidden stories. For instance in Bilka (Supermarket chain) they sell budget products and high quality product, which they have created specific brands for, but in reality both product come out of the same fabric. So you kind of know that there is nothing behind it and it is just a façade. Therefore, it also believe that many people are highly price oriented.

Interviewer: What does this mean in relation to your intentions to purchase or repurchase a product?

Maria: I think that overall, I would only have intentions to purchase or repurchase a brand if e.g. a newsletter or similar offered me a great discount. But these relationship offerings would not make me want to have or give me the feeling that I have a relationship to the brand and therefore like that brand more. So I do not think the implications would be that positive as I would probably only have intentions to buy if it was a great offers.

Interviewer: And what about in relation to your level of brand loyalty?

That I would not be likely to be more loyal because of it. I am not really affected positively about these things because I am not really a loyal person.

Interviewer: And the last one, what about in relation to your intentions to recommend a brand?

Maria: I would maybe recommend the offer, and maybe if they provide great advice or tips that are relevant, I might. However, if I saw it cheaper anywhere else, I would most likely just buy that. So as you see, I would not really recommend the brand but more just the offer.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you are involved with brands, if you are?

Maria: I am not involved with brands at all. So well, there is not that much to explain.

Interviewer: Can you explain why you are not interested in being involved with brands then?

Maria: It is just not something that is interesting for me. As a said earlier, I am not really a loyal kind of person. I do not care that much about brands and I do not see it as my responsibility to support any brands, therefore I also do not have an interest in being involved with brands.

Interviewer: To what degree are you actively engaging/interacting with brands for instance online, on social media or other platforms?

Maria: To no degree, if I can put it that way. For me, a brand is just a brand; it is only out of necessity that I buy individual brands. I do not have any relationship with any brands so I cannot see why I should be involved with brands, as they do not have any meaning for me. I do not have any kind of motivation for communicating with brands at all, besides maybe get discounts to save money.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain some of the positives and negatives of interacting with brands, even though you do not do it yourself?

Maria: you can get more guidance and more out of your products, and maybe you can help to improve future products.

Interviewer: If brands tries to communicate with you, what determines whether you perceive that communication as positive or negative?

Maria: I think that if there is an excessive amount of communication, which I often think there is, then I see it very negatively. No matter where you go today, communication is everywhere, if you are anywhere online on Facebook, a website or alike commercials pop up everywhere and if you want membership cards or be part of loyalty programs you always receive way to much information regarding all sorts of things you have no interest in. I quickly start to see it as spam, which of course has the opposite effect of what brands intended. So the level of communication definitely needs to balanced with the level of communication I expect, for it to be positive.

Interviewer: How do you see a connection between a brand interacting with you and you being loyal to a brand?

Maria: I think that if people communicate with brands, those people are probably more loyal to those brands because they might have a sincere interest in those brands if they e.g. comment on Facebook or alike. I would at least assume that. However, I also think that if it is the opposite way around, where the brand tries to communicate with their customers, it can easily feel too much and have the opposite effect where it just become irritating as you might not have started the interaction or the interest in having a conversation at all.

Interviewer: What about in terms of having a relationship with a brand? Does interaction encourage this?

Maria: I think it is the same as I just said.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain what a relationship is to you – A normal interpersonal relationship, what defines it?

Maria: For me, it is about being there for each other, care about how each other are, and it is about love and doing things to ensure that one's partner is happy and about communicating together.

Interviewer: Now, can you try to compare this to your definition of a relationship with a brand?

It is not comparable I think because, to me, a brand is a thing, something that just needs to be there. When I buy a brand, I do not feel that I get anything back or that they give me anything. There is no reciprocal interest. Their only interest is to sell me their brand and that is where it stops.

So I don't think that you can compare a interpersonal relationship with a relationship with a brand because a brand doesn't know anything about you. You might feel that you know a lot about the brand, like it and communicate, but in reality a brand do not know enough about you to have a relationship with you, and be able to provide you exactly what you want. Brands don't help to solve your real problems, product solve them, not brands and similarly consumers rarely want to honestly help brands, they just want to have their own way and make them fix their problems. There is no relationship in that.

Interviewer: What is your interest in being loyal to brands?

Maria: I am not interested at all. Again, there are probably some products that I buy every single time I select a product, from a given category. However, it is definitely not because of the brand, because I think the brand is amazing or that I have a relationship to the brand. For instance Kim's Popcorn, I really love those and I don't have count on how many times I have bought them. However, I do not buy them because I have a relationship with them or that I find the brand amazing. I just believe that their popcorn are the best on the market. It is not as if I buy any other products from them, which they sell plenty of. So I that way, I think you could say that I am not interested in being loyal to brands, I rebuy brands yes, but not because of loyalty.

Interviewer: So are you not loyal to some brands?

No, as I said I rebuy a lot of brands, but not out of loyalty. I buy those brands because I like them, either their taste or quality or because they are cheap.

Interviewer: How do you see a connection between being loyal to a brand and have a relationship to that same brand?

I believe that it is connected. If you are loyal, I guess you also have a relationship. Of course, if it is a real kind of loyalty where you really have a deeper emotional connection to the brand, and not just that you rebuy brands. Similar, if you have a relationship I also believe that you are loyal. So I guess you could say that if you have a relationship with a brand, you will always be loyal to a brand. Likewise, if you are truly loyal to a brand and really want to support a brand, for any personal reason, then you also have a relationship, but you need to have this connection and not just rebuy the product for no apparent reason other than it just tastes good or looks good or something like that.

Interviewer: Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Maria: Yes, I have thought about some of the stuff we just talked about and I would like to add that I do not think that anything could make me want to have a relationship with a brand. However, if it should be, the brand should be able to figure out what my exact interests were and give me something that were not at all sales related, but something that I could use to improve the stuff that I receive from them. They had to provide something additional to what I get from buying their product, it could be advice or guidance that I could use in my every day in order for me to feel that I receive many things back from them. There would also need to be mutual respect and interest and maybe a common cause to support e.g. if I really care about the environment, brands that fight for these causes and try to avoid harming the environment might be able to get a closer relationship to me. So in that way it is plausible that I could be inclined to have a relationship with a brand.

Interviewer: Thank you for your additional input. I just have one last question for you that came to mind. You said, you do not feel you are loyal to brands, but you have many products that you buy often, if so, when would you stop to rebuy these products?

Maria: Well, I would keep buying the products even though I continue to have no communication with the brand. I would probably even prefer that, because I would keep buying their product in the same quantities as long as I do not find anything better. Nevertheless, it is also clear that I am not attached to any of these brands, so as soon as I experience a better product or maybe just something cheaper or easier accessible I would change to that product. So those products I often buy, I would keep buying, but not be interested in other products under that brand on in buying more, but I would be just as interested in another product that is better or cheaper.

I think you could say that I am always just interested in certain products, while I really do not care about the brands.

Interviewer: Okay, that was it. Thank you for your responses, they were very helpful.

Maria: You welcome, I hope you will do well with your dissertation project.

Transcript Morten

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you like brands and whether they are important for you?

Morten: I believe that brands are critical, particularly because I have worked with brands, I have done a lot of visual work and alike for brands and therefore I also believe that a good brand is Alfa Omega for a company to work great. I think it should be a top priority for any brands to build a strong brand. So surely, I like brands in that way.

Interviewer: This seams to be based on your "professional" expertise, but what about in relation to your personal opinion?

Morten: From my own point of view, brands are definitely also important. For instance if we look at google, their brands is incredible important for me, they have created a brand where you are as customer is basically 100% sure that everything will work perfectly. The "old" Apple (I call them that because I now believe that they are heading in the wrong direction) is the same, you know that you will have to pay something extra but you know that if you paid that extra, you would also buy something damn good. Therefore, it is also important for me that I trust the brands that I buy from.

If you like brands and they are important for you, what kind of attachment do you feel you have with brands?

Morten: I think that my level of attachment varies a lot dependent on the brand. But also that I have some brands which I am quite closely connect to because I really like these brands and they maybe be important things that I use in my everyday.

Interviewer: How do you feel that this is connected to your level of interest in brands?

Morten: I guess it is connected because I have quite a big interest in brands. I use a lot of time investigating the different brands, the values and reputation whenever I have to make any larger purchase. I am actually interested in a lot of brands, most of which are for professional reasons. I follow many brands simply to learn something within my professional field. I do not really follow brands in my personal life but as I said, I often make intensive research about brands when I have to make important purchases. And when I do that I actually search more about the brands that the actual product specifications.

Interviewer: could you give an example?

For instance if we take HP, they are known to make computers that do not last. They might produce one good computer once a while but as long as they are known to have poor cooling systems after half a year, then I do not care if the machine is great because I wouldn't dare to use money on that product. Therefore, I also focus on what people say about the brand rather than one single product. It might give the result that I could get a better product that I end up choosing, but I know that the product I have chosen is going to work.

Interviewer: Considering this, what are the chances that you recommend brands or advice against brands?

Maria: I think that because of my professional career, I am often in a situation where I need to recommend brands. So I actually do that quite often. Personally, it happens as well, but I would not say that it is something that I often do. But you know, logically when you are interested in brands you sometimes start to talk about brands with friends and then it is of course only natural that you give your opinion, negative or positive, about certain brands. So it might not always be directly that you do it.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain how you feel about the attempts brands make to get you as a loyal customer? I would like to know if it is something you notices, ignores, like or maybe something that annoys you?

Morten: Newsletters, to take that, I believe is something invented by the devil. I always want to seek out the information that I need, directly at the source e.g. on their own website. I try to avoid any information from brands actually. If I like a brand, I go check for myself if there is something new and interesting for me to know about. The mentality of throwing information in the heads of consumers I really really do not like it, therefore I really do not want to have anything to do with commercials of different kinds, offers or memberships and do an effort to avoid it.

I use the media much more to check for information. I like to get my information from independent third parties.

Interviewer: Why, do you have an example?

Because the other stuff is annoying, I get too much of it, this way I can decide on my own. And the information is much more trustworthy. I once had an e-mail account where I got 100 e-mails every single day, and only two were relevant. Therefore, I use trustworthy media sources and if companies want to tell me that they have got something new or alike, I would prefer to find out about it from their own website or from another party. I do not like to receive it in a newsletter, even though I like the brand we are talking about. I really think that people are tired of commercials and of receiving stuff all the time.

Interviewer: And what can the implications of this be?

Morten: To me, companies that try too hard and send out too much information and tries to "catch" their customers seems untrustworthy too me. Particularly if they exaggerate it. For instance Bilka, I never shop electronics in Bilka, even though they sell exactly the same stuff as Elgiganten does, but I always buy it in Elgiganten. Simply because Bilka constantly and ever constantly tries to catch their customers, they almost literally throws information and offers down your throat, and therefore I just have this idea that what they are selling is crap, even though it might be exactly the same product as I can find in another store. They just do not seem serious and trustworthy. In reality, I do not really have any kind of evidence for saying this, but I just have an this idea that their service cannot be that great if they are in such a need to try to catch me, I would come automatically if their service were great. So I would definitely say that because of these relationship offerings I today clearly have come to have a negative view of Bilka's brand.

Interviewer: Do you believe that these relationship offerings, for instance emails, newsletters, sales clerks, loyalty programs, membership programs or any other activity that directly attempts to build relationships with you affect you positively or negatively?

Morten: I have already talked about the negative sides, all the things they send out and that. But sometimes it can be okay in the cases where I have made an active choice to hear from a brand that I really what to hear from. If they done exaggerate the number of news they send me I can be happy about that. A problem though is that often you end up being signed up to all kinds of stuff without you ever realise it because "I want to receive news from" is always automatically checked of.

So I would actually say that things as mails, text-messages and anything like that actually makes me devaluate a brand.

Interviewer: What does this mean in relation to your intentions to purchase or repurchase a product?

Morten: It means that particularly excessive use change my intentions and make me less likely to purchase or repurchase a brand. Let us for instance say that I were a member of a monthly subscription service. If they sent me 5 mails a month, I think I would be inclined to drop the subscription simply. But I also think I would be appropriately annoyed about it that I would not want to spend my money at that company. It is not as if I would develop a "total-hate" relationship to the brand or something like that, but they could annoy me enough for me to decide that I do not want their services anymore.

Interviewer: And what about in relation to your level of brand loyalty?

Morten: In terms of my loyalty, I think it is somewhat the same as I just talked about. Now I am an incarnated Apple fan, I buy more or less everything from apple besides mobiles, and is in general a very loyal fan. But I have also been forced to say no to annoying news from apple. When you buy an apple computer, you per standard receive their newsletter on your mail client without having signed up for it; it is an automatic RSS service. The very first thing I did when I got a new computer was to remove this. I do not want to receive any news from Apple. But I'm not entirely sure whether this is because it annoys me or because that I seek out information about apple so often on my own that I just do not want to receive these news twice. However, I think I can safely say that I under any circumstance would prefer to seek out the information on my own. I think that giving customers the need or want to seek out information about the brand is much better than forcing the information down on their customers. I definitely think that is a stronger sign of quality.

Interviewer: And the last one, what about in relation to your intentions to recommend a brand?

Morten: It could make me likely to recommend a brand I guess. I have made many recommendations on different software programs that I have never used, but which I have learned about through different media and newsletters. But now that I think about it, this information didn't really come directly from the company but e.g. from bloggers or something like that. So instead, I would say that I make recommendations of brands based on other expert's opinions, whereas information I have received directly from the company I would rarely use as the basis for a recommendation. And I would not be more inclined to recommend a brand that sends me a lot of information.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you are involved with brands?

Morten: I can yes, for instance Apple's brand as I mentioned, but as I also said now I have the impression that they are moving in a negative direction. I also really like google and their brand, I really think it is the world's greatest brand because of the amazing stamp of quality it is. If google puts their name on something, everyone knows that it works, and it is going to work greatly. Have you ever head anyone complain about a google product? It is a little bit the same about Apple, Android or HTC, most people knows that the stuff just works.

These are all brands I am involved with, to various degree, but I probably most close to google. I follow them closely and uses so many of their services.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain how this close attachment shows itself?

Morten: For instance with apple, it shows itself in the way that whenever someone has a problem with a computer I tell them: “what did you expect, you didn’t buy an apple” and whenever someone tries to make me use competing products to the brands I’m attached to I will always be extremely sceptical towards these brands,.

Interviewer: Do you have any close connection to maybe some smaller brands and not just these global giants?

Morten. Yes surely, for instance Ecco. I have always bought Ecco shoes as my work-shoes (I have been bi-jobbing as a waiter for many years and still am sometimes). I do not even try to look for other brands than Ecco, I do not even consider it for a second. I know that I need a great shoe when I walk many kilometres and for that, I just know that Ecco will do a great job and ensure that I do not get sore feet, knees, back or whatever. And well it shows itself in the fact that I the last 7 years have had been buying exactly the same shoe from Ecco year after year. It is the exact same model, same size and everything. It is not like I have any special reason to buy the shoes from Ecco. I do not receive any kind of information from them or anything, it is just something I have grown up with, probably because they were the first pair of shoes I bought the first time I started as a waiter, and now it is simply the only thing that I want.

I actually also have a decent connection to some supermarkets. But in general I probably have a tendency to associate size with quality. The bigger the company, the more positive mention there is likely to be about this company and therefore I believe that the quality must be better because so many people know this brand, but still they have a great reputation. For instance Lidl, I think that is a quite good place to shop, whereas Fakta, a quite similar shop but small supermarket chain I do not like that much. And I think it’s just because I know that Lidl are such a huge concern. They are like the 2’nd biggest supermarket concern in Germany.

To what degree are you actively engaging/interacting with brands for instance online, on social media or other platforms?

Morten: Actually not that much. But I for instance communicate with Komplett (Online webshop for electronics) where I chat with them to find out what to buy, but actually I really just exploit them to find out what to buy because they are more expensive than a lot of their competitors. Therefore, I actually just use their service, because I know that they deliver great service, but then just buys the stuff from a cheaper competitor, a bit mean now that I think about it. However, it is important that I do support the one I buy from. I do not just always buy what is cheapest, I need to trust the company, otherwise I would rather pay more to be sure of the quality.

But I'm not really an heavy user of social media or that, I do e-mail with some companies wherein I'm a customer, but that is usually in connection with the use of their products or because of a reclamation of their product.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on your motivations for communicating with brands?

Morten: It is just to get guidance, a reclamation or advices.

Interviewer: What is the connection, if any, between you communicating with a brand and the likelihood that you are loyal to that brand?

Morten: I think there is a significant connection. I do not communicate that often, but the brands that I do communicate with is definitely also the brands that I am most loyal to and usually brands that I am already users of. If I have been communicating with a brand back and forth I also think that I would be more likely to trust that brand. In that way there is a connection.

Interviewer: what if brands tries to communicate with you, what determines whether you perceive that communication as positive or negative?

That is different then. I definitely do not become loyal because brands try to interact or communicate with me, as I said earlier I really hate this bombardment of messages that it so often feels like and that is more likely to put me further away from a brand. So in general I will always find it negative if it is too much but I may find it okay if it is limited. But I do, as said earlier, prefer to find the information I need on my own.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain some of the positives and negatives of interacting with brands?

Morten: On the negative side, it can often become too much as I talked about, it particularly annoys me to receive stuff I have not accepted to receive. But even when I've accepted to receive stuff, it can still get too much and also be a negative experience to communicate with the brands. Also, sometimes companies can seem very professional in their communication but then when you talk to their staff via. Mail or maybe telephone it just does not fit with the professional communication that they seem to practice. Often I just have the impression when

I contact a firm that it will be great and easy but in reality they do not really communicate that well. To me it creates some kinds of mistrust because it seems as if the company is pretending to be something they are not, for instance highly professional and experienced communicators, when that is not at all the case.

Therefore, I think it is important for companies that open up communication with their customers that they have a fit between the people who actually talks to customers and what the brand preaches. There can easily be a mismatch between what the brand stands for and how the actually communicate which surely do not does anything positive for me.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain what a relationship is to you – A normal interpersonal relationship, what defines it?

Morten: A regular relationship? That is tuff, but let me try. For me, it is about interest for the other part in the relationship. To have a relationship you need to have an interest in what the other person is doing, not in relation to what they are working with, but what they are doing in their everyday life and in relation to how they are doing personally. And you need to have an idea or see something in that person, to know that this person is something good or can become something even better or something like that. It can be career, or on a personal level where the person can evolve. So you definitely need to have an interest in their life, how they are progressing. You should also want to achieve their accept, when you have a relationship to a person, you tell those persons that you have a good relationship to about new and interesting stuff. And you want to tell them so that you can get their accept and because you have confidence that they will give you that accept.

Interviewer: Now, can you try to compare this to your definition of a relationship with a brand?

Morten: A relationship to a brand is in my eyes something that has a bit of the same, but in another way, it is much more about "submission", if you can say that. I mean that you as a user choose to say that you seem stabile and quality oriented (if that is what is important to you), and then you trust that what they are saying regarding this is correct. You trust that they know more about it than yourself, nevertheless not meaning that you stupidly follow them and believe every word they are saying. For instance, Apple just changed from Nvidia to AMD, personally, I think it is a catastrophe, but 90% of all Apple fans trust that Apple know what they are doing and that there is a sound reason for Apple to change such an important part with a competitor. So when you have a relationship to a brand, it is a kind of submission where you need to trust them blindly. You do not have the opportunity to share yours with theirs.

Therefore, I see a brand relationship as one-way communication where you trust a brand blindly until a brand shows that they are no longer trustworthy, even though there are many ways to communicate with a brand. I also think that the transition from where you as a user have a good relationship to a brand to where you think it is the worst thing that has ever existed. The balance is extremely fine, so little needs to happen before that relationship is destroyed. It is a very fragile relationship.

Interviewer: You talk about submission from the consumers, so it is the brands that have the power?

Morten: Well, no, consumers can choose not to buy the product. But again it depends on the brand I think. For instance Samsung, as a brand, have been totally dominated by consumers on the Danish market. They have never really accepted Samsung well, Samsung is simply not capable of making money in Denmark, and have juts retracted all their computers back in Denmark, so in that way yes definitely. However, if we look at Apple for instance, consumers have absolutely no power. Look at their phones, the IPhone 5 was criticized like hell, everyone hated the phone, and still I was the most bought phone in the history of mobile phones, by a mile. The IPhone 6 was hated by everyone, even IPhone user do not think it is as good as the IPhone 5, but still so many buy version 6 even though they do not believe that the phone is better in any way. Simply because Apple has been capable of creating a brand where the user have nothing to say because it is so exclusive that consumers feel that they are either "with the brand" or a looser. It is a bit the same with Coca Cola once. Either you drank Coca Cola or you were a looser, right? But today that has changed quite a lot because Pepsi have been fighting the ranks for a long time

But now, Apple is in a position where they have all the power. Of course, consumers can criticize and complain, Apple of course listens to a certain degree, but essentially they can do whatever they want and still they are going to sell millions of IPhone.

Interviewer: Can you sum this up briefly:

To sum it up, there are few similarities between the two kinds of relationships. For instance regarding the part where you trust brands blindly, e.g. like if you girlfriend told you that red t-shirts suit you really well, then you do not question it, you are going to wear a red t-shirt way more than before. Likewise, expert advices from brands are taken to you and used in a similar way to the advice from you girlfriend.

However, in terms of being able to tell the other part of the relationship that something great is happened only exists in interpersonal relationships and this is definitely a critical aspect. So I guess the trust part and being dependent on someone can be compared, but that is just one aspect of it, but in many other aspect it is not at all the same.

Interviewer: Can you explain what your interest is in being loyal to brands?

Morten: Well, for instance Football Manager, I buy that pre-release every single year, simply because I sincerely want to support the brand behind it, I could easily download it if I wanted, but I really want to support the brand. I of course also like the game, but I am definitely a support of the brand behind the game. In reality, I could play the game in two years before I needed a new version, but because I like what the brand is doing is so good, I want to support them. The same is the case with FIFA for instance.

I feel that if a company makes a great product, you also owe that company to buy that product and support the brand. If we think of another product category where it is possible to buy copy products, I absolutely never does that, simply because I feel that I own the original company to support their product because of the hard work they have made to create this product. But contradictory, if we look at Arla and their Milk products and where they own a lot of subsidiaries where there is exactly the same milk in two different cartons with different labels and brands on it, I will always choose what is cheapest because I know that there is the same in both products. But it is still Arla Milk, so I still support and follow their brand and I only buy milk that Arla has produced. So in this case my loyalty is probably more price oriented, and that’s the case with many everyday products. But in relation to electronics it’s often not the case because I associate cheap with crap within that category.

Interviewer: How do you see a connection between being loyal to a brand and have a relationship to that same brand?

Morten: I think it is the same. If you are loyal to a brand, you also have a relationship with it. And it is difficult for you to see if competitors create a product that is equally good or maybe even better, you can’t really accept it if you are really loyal to a brand. For instance the classical discussion between Mac versus windows. Today, it is basically totally the same in terms of quality and opportunities, but as mac-user you have a very hard time accepting that a windows machine can be as good as a mac machine or the opposite. And then people start to discuss tiny details as e.g. in a mac system you are in a locked system and do not have any freedom, but if you asked a windows user how often they use their freedom they would not be able to answer it, invalidating the claim. Oppositely, a mac user would claim that there are so many issues with the use of windows, but in reality, many things are not compatible with mac, so again it is not really true.

What I am trying to say is that, if you are loyal to a brand you try to find these small excuses not to use competing brands even if we might know that the product they developed is just as good or better. The reason we do this is probably because it hurts a bit if a competitor to a brand you are loyal to, develops something great, and that is probably because you also feel like you have a relationship to that brand. Therefore, we have the need to justify to ourselves that we are still loyal to the brand by making up these excuses for continuing to use a brand or not to switch to a competitor.

Interviewer: I think that was it, thank you for all of your extensive responses.

Morten: You welcome, good luck with your dissertation.

Transcript Peter

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you like brands and whether they are important for you?

Peter: I would like to be able to say that I don't like brands and that they are not important, but I guess they do matter and they are what I am looking for when I buy things.

Interviewer: If they are important for you, what kind of attachment do you feel you have with brands?

Peter: That is difficult to say. I think that within some of the bigger categories as television, other electronics and maybe clothing I may have some preferences towards some brands. But I'm not sure I would say that I have a close attachment to any specific brands. I think I always try to look for brands that I know and I try to avoid brands I do not know and discount brands.

Interviewer: How do you feel that this is connected to your level of interest in brands?

Peter: I don't feel overly attached to brands, and I don't feel like I'm really interested in brands. So in that way it is connected. But even though I'm not so interested in brands, I think that in some way, I still subconsciously select brands that I might have a greater interest in than I have in other brands. I guess that I often select brands just because I know them and maybe because I have tried the products before and know that it works or are good.

Interviewer: Considering this, what are the chances that you recommend brands or advice against brands?

Peter: It is quite rare that I recommend brands or you know make reviews online or something. I do not remember the last time I did it at least, but of course, it has happened, but I would not say that it is something I do just because I like a brand. I definitely "warn" people from brands if I have had a bad experience, but I am not the type of person to put it on social media or something. It is just when I talk with family and friends.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain how you feel about the attempts brands make to get you as a loyal customer? I would like to know if it is something you notices, ignores, like or maybe something that annoys you?

Peter: I like the concept that you reward people that are loyal. I still feel that I can make my own choice of where to buy a product or what product to pick. In that way, I like the concept of giving something both ways. They earn some money on me and I may save some money, which is kind of a win-win situation. However, I would like to add that it really depends on the situation and the way brands handle it. I know I often give my permission to receive things from brands, but in many cases I just receive so much more than I was expecting, hell I think some of then send me means almost every day. In those cases, it simply just annoy me. They always tell you that they will only send "relevant" news or special offers, but I actually often feel that I receive things so often that it feels kind of inconvenient and annoying.

Interviewer: And what are the implications of this?

Peter: I think you could say the opposite of what brands intend, or what the purpose is, as I get annoyed and irritated on the company that constantly contact me. Therefore, I think it instead pushes the customer away that drawing them closer.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on this?

Peter: Sure, I think that to put it simply, I like the concept, but the problem occurs when there is little connection between the expectations that I have, when I e.g. accept to receive these offers, then I feel that I say yes to less than they actually give/send me.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain why you are interested or uninterested in a relationship with a brand?

Peter: In some ways, I guess that I am interested, but in some other ways, I am not. It depends on the context, I would say. In certain situations, I can give me a sense of feeling that my opinions matter and that I matter, but in other cases a brand is simply not interesting enough for me to want a relationship with the brand, even though I might find that the brand has good products and might buy it now and then.

Interviewer: Do you believe that these relationship offerings, for instance emails, newsletters, sales clerks, loyalty programs, membership programs or any other activity that directly attempts to build relationships with you affect you positively or negatively?

Peter: As I mentioned a bit earlier, I think that it depends on the situation. I can see situations where it affect me positively but definitely also situations where it affects me negatively. Again, I would say I depends on whether I receive a number of offers that fit with my expectations of what I would like to receive. Or you know, maybe I've accepted that from a given brand I would like to receive their newsletter, but if I by saying yes expect that to be one newsletter a months and reality it is 3 per week, I will definitely be annoyed and irritated. Oppositely, if they only send one per months, and that is what I expect, I would surely also be affected positively.

Interviewer: What does this mean in relation to your intentions to purchase or repurchase a product?

Peter: That my intentions to purchase or repurchase could both be affected negatively and positive. I do not know if I could say that I am more inclined to be affected positively or negatively, but both things could easily happen, dependent on the situation as I just explained.

Interviewer: And what about in relation to your level of brand loyalty?

Peter: I think that is the same as my intention to purchase or repurchase. It can be affected positively as well as negatively.

Interviewer: And the last one, what about in relation to your intentions to recommend a brand?

Peter: I think that is the same again.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you are involved with brands, if you are?

Peter: I am not really that involved with any brands. But still, to some degree, I guess I am since I feel closer to some brands than I do to others. But in general I would say that I'm not overly involved with brands.

To what degree are you actively engaging/interacting with brands for instance online, on social media or other platforms?

Peter: That is very very limited. I don't use that much time on social media and if I ever need to get a hold in companies, maybe to complain or to request a refund or some money back following a bad experience I always contact them personally e.g. via. Mail or phone. However, I also guess that this is because I work in the kind of business that I does (insurance salesman).

Interviewer: Can you try to explain your motivations for communicating with brands, what do you want to achieve with it?

Peter: Typically, I would say it is because I have trouble with e.g. their products, or it might be because they have made some changes and I am probably more inclined to call and complain than call and praise them. But for instance the other day I contacted my bank regarding some troubles where they provided excellent service and then I of course said thanks for their service and help. So in that way it can go both ways if they are able to solve the problems properly.

Can you try to explain some of the positives and negatives of interacting with brands, even though you do not do it that much yourself?

Peter: Yehr. As you said, I do not interact that much with brands, but I would say that on the positive side, you could say that those brands that try to interact with me probably have an advantage when I go to the store and have to pick a product. I think because I at some level subconsciously remember the product name or recognize the brand. But again, I would say that what really matters is still whether I can accept or like the way in which they try to approach me. If they approach me constantly and constantly reminds me of their latest products or discounts or whatever, I would probably make sure not to pick this product in the store, simply because what I remember when standing in the store is their damn annoying ways of contacting me always.

Interviewer: If brands tries to communicate with you, what determines whether you perceive that communication as positive or negative?

Peter: Definitely the volume of communication I would say. For instance, when you sign up to newsletters, you are more or less spammed with "good offers". An even though you said yes to these things in the first place and actually asked for them, because you like the brand and actually like to hear from them, sending too much doesn't do any good for me. Enough is enough.

Interviewer: Can you give an example:

Peter: Takeoffer. I actually signed up for their newsletter a while back, but then they more or less spammed me with five e-mails a day. That may be an exaggeration, but you know what I mean.

Interviewer: How do you see a connection between a brand interacting with you and you being loyal to a brand?

Peter: In moderate quantities, interaction can make me more inclined to be loyal to a brand. However, if it passes a certain limit, or well I guess my own limit, then I will have the opposite effect. But to be honest, I actually prefer if the only times I communicate with a brand is when I myself choose to initiate the contact.

Interviewer: What about in terms of having a relationship with a brand? Does interaction encourage this?

Peter: No matter how much I love a brand, let us say, the greatest brand in the world, according to me, I would still never be interested in daily interaction with them and news from them, absolutely not. It would slowly drive me away and at some point, it would simply annoy me so much that I would start looking for other brands, even though I in every way actually like this brand and their products.

Even if I really like a brand and buy it quite often or might feel like I have a relationship with a brand, I will not necessarily like to hear from the anyway. I could easily live with the silence; it would not change my loyalty at all. There can be situations where I might be interested in a few news and good offers from brands, but always in small quantities. Therefore, I would say that interaction might be able to make me more loyal, if my expectations are fulfilled, but I do not know if they could actually give me the desire to have a relationship with a brand. I think it is something more deeply held that might come more naturally than as a result of brands attempt to create this relationship. At least that is my personal opinion.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain what a relationship is to you – A normal interpersonal relationship, what defines it?

Peter: It is about reciprocal respect on an overall level, where you respect each other and do things for each other. It is important that there is not too little or too much, it needs to be a balance. In a way, you can say that the relationship needs to be equal, we need to treat each other equally and both give and receive something.

Interviewer: Now, can you try to compare this to your definition of a relationship with a brand?

Peter: In certain ways, it reminds of the same. There needs to be some reciprocal respect, I do not want them to waste my time unnecessarily e.g. with mails and offers without any grounds for this, as this would only annoy me. Likewise, I try not to waste their time and be an "unreasonable" customer that just exploit my power.

Hmm, but still, now that I think about it. There are also some major differences. Because, while you might call it a relationship it is a kind of relationship that I am willing to dump for just one bad experience. That is very different from a relationship where mistakes happens all the time, but because you have a deeper connection, you forgive each other and often everything ends well. Therefore, this is a very different kind of relationship and level of loyalty in the sense that so little needs to happen before I simply choose to buy another brand. You could say that it is human to fail, and therefore people forgive. But if brands fail, you don't forgive as easily because there are almost always other great options to try. It might not even be because the brand I currently use makes a mistake, maybe I just try another brands that provides an even greater service or products, which I then decide to switch to.

Interviewer: Can you give an example?

Actually, I have a good one yes. Until a few year ago, I almost always travelled with Falck Lauritsen (travel agency), when I had to book my vacation, I think I've been on at least 4 vacations with them. I always looked at their website first, and they are actually not that cheap, so often I even chose to order a trip from their website even though I very well knew that I could save 100 euro or more on the exact same trip by ordering from another company. Nevertheless, I did order it at Falck Lauritsen because I knew that if I booked the trip here, I was certain that everything was good and would work according to plan. I felt safe you could say. However, in one vacation, I had ordered an island roundabout in a jeep where they had promised Danish-speaking guides, but in reality, no one spoke Danish, English or any other language that we could understand. Therefore, I requested my money back, which they were unwilling to give. Ever since, I have never travelled with Falck Lauritsen. Before, I would consider myself a very loyal customer, but still, after just one negative experience, I immediately dropped the company, and I am sure that I will never book a vacation with them again. I think that shows quite well the difference between an interpersonal relationship and relationship with a brand. In a relationship with a brand, I am the only one who have power, therefore it is so easy to find something else as soon as you are unhappy with something and they are unable or unwilling to fix it.

Interviewer: What is your interest in being loyal to brands?

Peter: Well, I would say that I am loyal to a number of brands. However, I would not say it is any kind of strong loyalty. I think I just buy many of these brands because I'm used to them and are happy with the quality of the product and not really because I have any particular interest in the brands or interest in supporting and helping this brand. I just buy them because I know it works or tastes great, I do not really care whether I support the brands or show my loyalty to the brand. If I find another product that tastes better or works better, I would probably switch to that product without thinking for a second.

However, I am probably more loyal to different kinds of shops than actual product brands because I am happy with the service and treatment that is provided in that store. Then I just search for those brands that I know within that store. So in my opinion you are more loyal to a store than an individual brand or product. Products I often just select based on their functionality and quality and of course price.

Interviewer: Are you loyal to some brands?

Peter: I am loyal to some brands, probably also more than I think I am, but again it is not strong loyalty. I do not think I can mention one brand that I have a deep emotional connection with, and would stick with almost no matter what. Therefore, I think you could say that I have quite many brands that I buy frequently but very few brands that I am actually really loyal to. I guess there is a difference between just re-buying a brand and being loyal to a brand. At least I do not see myself as loyal to many of the brands that I buy repeatedly.

Interviewer: How do you see a connection between being loyal to a brand and having a relationship to that same brand?

I guess it depends on whether it is random loyalty or conscious loyalty. I mean, if I specifically choose to re-buy a brand because I want to support that brand, then I also want or have a relationship with that brand. However, as I mentioned before, if it is more like out of habit that I just buy a product repeatedly because I have used it before, and it has worked, then I am not really interested in a relationship with that brand at all. I might not care or have any interest in that brand, I just choose the product from the shelves because I'm happy with the quality of the product.

Interviewer: Can you give an example?

Peter: For instance Faxe Kondi. I really like that soft drink and if I go to buy something to drink, I probably choose that 9 out of ten times. However, to be honest, I have no interest in the brand Faxe Kondi and I certainly do not buy the product because I want to support them or something like that. I would not even be interested in any kind of news or anything form them, I just buy them because they are of excellent quality, I just really like the taste, it is that simple. I like the product, I often buy it, but I do not want to interact or be involved with them.

Interviewer: Can you sum this up by clarifying the difference between being loyal and having a relationship with a brand?

Peter: I think there is a difference between being loyal and having a relationship with a brand as well. You can be loyal to a brand, but not wanting to have a relationship with that same brand, if the loyalty is not conscious as I mentioned earlier. However, the other way around, I do not believe that it is possible to have the one without the others; at least I cannot think of any examples. So I would say that if you have a relationship to a brand you will automatically also be loyal to the brand. Having a relationship with a brand, for me, is associated with a closer and deeper emotional bond than being loyal to a brand.

Interviewer: Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Peter: Yehr. Actually yes. I just thought about that sometimes I feel like I have a relationship with brands, but I am not loyal to those brands. For instance B&O and Audi. I really like these brands; I think they have excellent quality and design, but I am not loyal to any of these brands because there are many other things that just matter more. I might have a great relationship to these brands, but my common sense and their high price level just means that I never buy these products. And you know, no type of excellent communication or newsletters or alike would be able to change this. I would not be able to make any difference, because my common sense naturally makes me consider whether any product gives good value for money, and for me, paying so much extra for a beautiful design is just not something I am willing to pay, even though I think the design is excellent and I like everything about the product.

Oh, I just realised one funny thing. As you can see, right now I am wearing a Nike t-shirt and Adidas pants. Two great competitors, but I wear them both. And this is actually quite random it's not like I consciously chose this Nike t-shirt instead of an Adidas shirt or the opposite. I do not really have any kind of relationship with any of these brands. I would say I consider them equal.

Interviewer: If we imaging that one of these two brands started sending you newsletters and tried to form a relationship with you, would they be likely to get the upper hand compared to the other brand?

Peter: It really depends on the quantity of mails because if they send me something every day a week it would simply annoy me, and at some point I'm quite sure that it would result in me preferring e.g. Adidas if it was Nike who "spammed" me. Maybe to try to punish them, you know, I am thinking that if they annoy me then I am just going to buy my stuff from their worst competitor. But if they send me something a couple of times a year or send me offers on specific things that are relevant for specific season e.g. football boots I might be quite happy about it and exploit that they send me great offers.

Transcript Mette

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you like brands and whether they are important for you?

Mette: Brands are important because they make it much easier for you as a consumer when you know what your preferences are, because it is much easier to buy things as you can make each purchase faster, with less decision to make.

Interviewer: Considering that brands are important for you, what kind of attachment do you feel you have with brands?

Mette: That depends a lot on what type of brand it is. For a lot of brands I just buy what is cheapest, for instance with food related products or clothes so those brands I do not really think about, but for instance with telephones, computers and so on I definitely feel closer to them because within this category I think that quality is more important. That is probably why I have an iPhone.

Interviewer: How do you feel that this is connected to your level of interest in brands?

Mette: I am not really that interested in brands, it is not really something that I think about; it is just something that occurs. I do not really read the news about brands or that.

Interviewer: Considering this, what are the chances that you recommend brands or advice against brands?

Mette: I recommend brands sometimes even though I am not that highly interested in brands, nevertheless you can still have bad or good experiences that you feel like sharing. Nevertheless, it is not something that I do often, and mostly I would say that I advise against brands more than I recommend.

Interviewer: If you recommend or advice against brands is that only to your family or friends, or do you use the internet e.g. social media?

Mette: Only to my family and friends - I never really make any good or bad reviews publically on social media, Trustpilot or somewhere like that. I do not really want to waste my time on that. But if I'm with friends or family I don't really waste any time if I talk about a good or bad experience about a brand, then it is instead just a topic of discussion.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain how you feel about the attempts brands make to get you as a loyal customer? I would like to know if it is something, you notices, ignores, like or maybe something that annoys you?

Mette: For instance, I receive a lot of membership offers, discounts and that in emails from clothing stores. However, I never really check any of these mails. I usually just delete them without ever checking the content. But then, a few times if I feel like having new clothes then I might open an e-mail once a while and see what they are offering to see if I can save some money. Else, I am not really signed up for anything. I do not think I have any membership cards or that. However, I do receive many emails during a week that I just delete week after week, and basically all of those are some that I receive by mistake because I forgot to say that I did not want to receive an e-mail when I might have bought something.

Interviewer: And what can the implications of receiving these relationship offers be, positive as well as negative?

Mette: For instance with the emails. I just delete them but does not really think about it anymore than that. If it really annoys me, I will just block it and mark it as spam. But in general I actually think it is positive, not because what they are sending me makes me like the brand, but I believe that subconsciously I will remember those brands because I automatically see their name and are reminded about them. So in that way I think it can be positive.

Interviewer: And on the negative side?

Mette: I do not really think it is that negative. Even though I delete it, the consequences are not negative. If it annoys me I mark it as spam, but I do not think that it is so violent that it annoys me directly. So it don't bothers me that much, but of course it can sometimes feel as if they try to approach me inappropriately.

Interviewer: Do you believe that these relationship offerings, for instance emails, newsletters, sales clerks, loyalty programs, membership programs or any other activity that directly attempts to build relationships with you affect you positively or negatively?

Mette: I do not consider it to impact be negatively, so I would have to say positively. And it does so by reminding me of the brand. Which subconsciously affects me, which I believe benefits the brand.

Interviewer: What does this mean in relation to your intentions to purchase or repurchase a product?

Mette: I think that it has a subconscious influence, but it is not that often that these things can result in a purchase or repurchase. However, a few select times it may have a positive effect.

Interviewer: And what about in relation to your level of brand loyalty?

Mette: I am not sure. I think that being reminded about a brand is positive for brands, even though I'm only reminded when I e.g. have to delete their email I think I will forget this when I have to buy a product, but subconsciously I will remember the product in a buying situation, which I think is good for brands. But this is probably also just because I am the type of person that are not that easily offended and annoyed by receiving these stuff. And because my feelings about it are not that strong, I think that it is positive.

Interviewer: And the last one, what about in relation to your intentions to recommend a brand?

Mette: I think that it could make me recommend it if the offers were good enough. If there was enough to save by being a member or exploiting this offer or alike I might tell my friends if I am able to share this experience with my friends.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain the degree to which you are involved with brands, if you are?

Mette: I am definitely not very involved with brands. I also hope that I am independent of brands.

Interviewer: Why do you hope that?

Mette: I would like to believe that I am able to select the best brand to the best price, to be able to get value for money. I do not hope that I am "deceived" by a brand because I for instance like their image. I do not hope that brands are able to blind me if you understand. Therefore, I am also highly price oriented.

But I can definitely understand why people are involved with brands. I think that it is something evolutionary; I actually think I read about this at some point. It was about that to save time and energy we create relations to brands, as there is no reason always having to use time finding the best and cheapest products. Most people just do not have the time for it, even though comparing products and prices are much easier today.

To what degree are you actively engaging/interacting with brands for instance online, on social media or other platforms?

Mette: To a very limited degree. I read a few blogs, but I never comment on social media or give my opinion or that. Therefore, it is actually not that common for me to engage with brands, and I do not really think that people on my age do it that much. I think it is mostly people at 25, or maybe even older, I would actually say 30 that shares their opinions about the products that you have and interact with brands more.

Interviewer: Do you communicate with brands if we look aside of social media, via phone or email for instance?

Mette: Actually, no. Almost never at least, of course I sometimes may have a defect product that I might need returned or I might need a bit of guidance which I have been completely incapable of finding anywhere else, in those cases I might communicate with brands very briefly to solve the problem.

Interviewer: What could make you want to communicate with a brand?

Mette: Only if I really need customer service.

Interviewer: If brands tries to communicate with you, what determines whether you perceive that communication as positive or negative?

Mette: I am not really affected negatively by the communication I receive because it is not something that can make me angry or something, I am good at ignoring that.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain some of the positives and negatives of interacting with brands?

Mette: I think the reason why I try to avoid interacting with brands is that I am not interested in it, and therefore I avoid it because I feel like there is no point in brands wasting their time on communicating with me.

For instance, Apple, I like Apple and I am very satisfied with my IPhone. Nevertheless, I really do not want to receive any news, offers or emails from Apple. And I think that this applies for all the brands that I like, and it doesn't matter whether the information they send is related to offers or products or just relevant content. So in that way I tried to avoid interaction and try to avoid that either of us wasted our time, so I cannot really say much about the positive and negatives of interaction.

Interviewer: Can you try to explain what a relationship is to you – A normal interpersonal relationship, what defines it?

Mette: I would say that it involves trust, communication and, well, I do not really know.

Interviewer: Try to elaborate

Mette: It involves many things, but I would also say different things dependent on who the relationship is with, but the essences is good communication, being able to talk together and trusting each other.

Interviewer: Now, can you try to compare this to your definition of a relationship with a brand?

Mette: I think that the words I just used is probably very good to describe this as well. It is about good communication from consumer to brand and the other way, and some loyalty.

So you believe that these two types of relationships are similar or different?

Mette: I really hope that they are different. I think they are different. For me it does not at all connect regarding the level of loyalty. The level of loyalty, trust and communication may all be elements involved in both type of relationships, but the level of each thing in an interpersonal relationship is just so much higher. I not at all able to understand the deep deep feelings for brands, because it is so far away from how I feel.

I actually think it is rude to compare a personal relationship with a relationship to a brand, but well, maybe someone truly has these deep feelings from brands, I just do not understand it. I truly hope that an interpersonal relationship is involved around much much stronger feelings that a relationship to a brand, brands are just so easily replaceable. If you like a brand and they disappoint you, you find a new one. If you like a brand, but find another brand that is similar but cheaper, you select that brand. If this were how you acted with your interpersonal relationships, the world would be a messed up place.

Interviewer: What is your interest in being loyal to brands?

Mette: I am loyal to some brands, but not because of interest, I would say. And I am not 100% loyal to any brand, I will always be likely to change a brand if I find something better, cheaper or something. I am not that strongly attached to any brand. However, I often shop in the same stores e.g. Selected and Garderobe, and of course, I buy a lot of brands again without feeling loyal to that brand or without having an interest in supporting this brands. Sometimes you also just buy a brand or from a place, because that is where your friends buy from.

But when I think about it, I guess I am a little bit loyal towards some of the more expensive brands, but since I am a student I am also forced to be reasonable and of course, therefore I am also really price oriented. But if money were not a problem, I think that it might be different. Then I guess I would pay extra for well-known brands just to be sure that it would work, taste good and sustain. However, it is mostly about the security or trust that if I pay more, then the product will work exactly as I want it to. I do not really care about the brand image and I do not want to pay extra just because the design is well known. For instance, I now have a beige hoodie to 80 DKK from H&M, and my friend just bought almost an identical hoodie for 500 DKK, the only difference is basically the brand. Even if I had money, I would not buy the one to 500 DK because I am certain that the cheap one will last just as long, here I would just pay for the brand name, which I do not do. Not now and not in the future, I think at least.

Interviewer: How do you see a connection between being loyal to a brand and having a relationship to that same brand?

Mette: I think that you can also have a negative relationship to a brand, in which you of course not are loyal to a brand. Else, I just think that relationships are more emotionally deep. Loyalty can have different degrees I would say, and if you are highly loyal and really passionate about a brand I think it will naturally evolve into a relationship.

Interviewer: Do you have anything to add?

Mette: Well, I think it was an interesting topic to discuss. Actually, I also think that some of these things differs simply dependent on whether you are a man or women. I think that men are more likely to just pick what it nearest; I think that women think more about it. At least that is what my experience tells me. Usually men just want most shopping to be over quickly, meaning that they just take what they know whereas women might investigate the different things a bit more. It might be the opposite when you are dealing with more expensive and important purchases though.

But you know, in general I'm just not the type of person that uses time thinking about brands. I understand that they are there and doing what they are doing, and yes, of course it makes lives easier for all of us, but I rarely think about who created a product. I do not really think about the brand on their image or if I bye buying from them supports a brand that supports great causes. I would like to say that I do this, and that I e.g. only buy from brands that are environmentally friendly and have great work conditions for all their employees, but in reality, it just matters whether I fit in. What and where the product comes from really do not matter that much and I do not think about that I support this brand buy buying a product from them. Therefore, I is definitely the product that is most important for me, not the brand. I hope that you could use this interview anyway though.

Interviewer: I definitely can. Thank you for your participation.

Mette: You Welcome.

Appendix 10 - Frequency of socio-demographic variables

The following frequency table of the socio-demographic questions and groups created for salary and age shows that there are no missing data within these variables. It suggests that there have been no data entry errors. Another supporting fact to this statement is found when comparing the minimum and maximum values of the output with the allowable range of values for each variable. They are all within their allowable ranges, thus suggesting no errors.

Statistics

		Gender	salary in groups	age in groups	Education level
N	Valid	270	270	270	270
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Range		1,00	2,00	2,00	2,00
Minimum		1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00
Maximum		2,00	3,00	3,00	3,00

Appendix 11 - Descriptive statistics of summated scales

By using the "Descriptives" command, a compact and space-efficient output for all scales was created.

As apparent from the following table, all scale variables have minimum and maximum values within the expected range (1-5) and all means seem reasonable i.e. they are within the expected range. Each variable is approximately normally distributed, a judgement based on the skewness values within the allowed range of -1 to 1. Deriving, each scale can be used for inferential statistics that require the assumption of normality (Morgan *et al*., 2013).

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Behavioural brand loyalty(1-2 ROs)	267	1,00	5,00	3,0187	,61319	,376	,103	,149
attitudinal brand loyalty(1-2 ROs)	266	1,25	4,50	2,9229	,64221	,412	,020	,149
intentions to recommend a brand (1-2 ROs)	266	1,00	5,00	2,6109	,74220	,551	,373	,149
behavioural brand loyalty (3-4 ROs)	266	2,00	5,00	3,5852	,78271	,613	-,043	,149
Attitidinal brand loyalty (3-4 ROs)	265	1,75	5,00	3,5396	,76335	,583	,005	,150
Intentions to recommend a brand (3-4 RO's)	265	1,00	5,00	3,4623	,86273	,744	-,059	,150
Engagement with brands	267	1,00	5,00	3,0487	,83153	,691	,197	,149
Level of brand loyalty	264	1,71	5,00	3,2386	,64374	,414	,099	,150
Involvement with brand	263	1,00	5,00	3,2909	,80577	,649	-,410	,150
Commitment to brands	263	1,00	5,00	3,1274	,83713	,701	,149	,150
Valid N (listwise)	248							

Appendix 12 - Distribution of responses related to motivation

The three most important motivations for engaging/interacting with brands has been highlighted with yellow, whereas the three least important motivations are marked with blue.

	Most important	2nd choice	3nd choice	10th choice	11th choice	Least important
	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %
To get discounts	48.7%	22.1%	15.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
To get general information about the brand	3.4%	9.4%	14.3%	3.4%	1.1%	0.0%
To get exclusive information about the brand	1.9%	3.8%	3.8%	7.3%	3.4%	2.3%
To feel connected to the brand	0.8%	0.0%	1.5%	11.5%	14.9%	38.9%
To be part of a community	0.8%	1.5%	0.4%	9.5%	42.6%	18.6%
To participate in their events	0.4%	3.0%	2.3%	6.8%	8.0%	6.1%
To get customer service	28.5%	40.4%	13.9%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%
To submit opinion on current products/services	0.4%	1.1%	1.5%	8.7%	5.7%	7.2%
To learn about new products	1.5%	4.6%	15.2%	3.8%	1.9%	0.4%
To submit ideas for new products/services	1.5%	3.0%	2.7%	35.4%	13.3%	4.6%
To make reviews and product rankings	0.8%	0.8%	0.4%	9.5%	6.1%	21.0%
To make a purchase	11.8%	11.0%	28.9%	2.3%	2.7%	1.1%

Appendix 13 - Paired samples t-test

T-Test comparing the means of the BBL variables when receiving 3-4 ROs versus 1-2. For all pairs it is possible to conclude that means are significantly different - all gaps previously computed are significantly positive.

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	I would intend to do more business with the brand (3-4 RO)	3.74	268	.943	.058
	I would intend to do more business with the brand (1-2 RO)	2.85	268	.826	.050
Pair 2	I would intend to do less business with the brand (recoded - scale reversed) - 3-4 RO	3.53	266	.983	.060
	I would intend to do less business with the brand (recoded - scale reversed) - 1-2 RO	2.76	266	.765	.047
Pair 3	I would not switch to a competitor, even if I have a problem with the services I received (3-4 RO)	3.71	268	.988	.060
	I would not switch to a competitor, even if I have a problem with the services I received (1-2 RO)	3.44	268	.956	.058

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	I would intend to do more business with the brand (3-4 RO) & I would intend to do more business with the brand (1-2 RO)	268	.456	.000
Pair 2	I would intend to do less business with the brand (recoded - scale reversed) - 3-4 ROs & I would intend to do less business with the brand (recoded - scale reversed) - 1-2 RO	266	.278	.000
Pair 3	I would not switch to a competitor, even if I have a problem with the services I received (3-4 RO) & I would not switch to a competitor, even if I have a problem with the services I received (1-2 RO)	268	.396	.000

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	I would intend to do more business with the brand (3-4 RO) - I would intend to do more business with the brand (1-2 RO)	.892	.928	.057	.780	1.003	15.734	267	.000

Pair 2	I would intend to do less business with the brand (recoded - scale reversed) - 3-4 ROs - I would intend to do less business with the brand (recoded - scale reversed) - 1-2 RO	.774	1.065	.065	.646	.903	11.862	265	.000
Pair 3	I would not switch to a competitor, even if I have a problem with the services I received (3-4 RO) - I would not switch to a competitor, even if I have a problem with the services I received (1-2 RO)	.272	1.069	.065	.144	.401	4.171	267	.000

Appendix 14 - Paired samples t-test

T-Test comparing the means of the ABL variables when receiving 3-4 ROs versus 1-2. For all pairs it is possible to conclude that means are significantly different - all gaps previously computed are significantly positive

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	I would be more likely to consider their products my first choice when evaluating related products (3-4 RO)	3.48	267	.951	.058
	I would be more likely to consider their products my first choice when evaluating related products (1-2 RO)	2.77	267	.895	.055
Pair 2	I would stay loyal to the brand, as long as they stick to their promises (3-4 RO)	3.12	267	1.005	.062
	I would stay loyal to the brand, as long as they stick to their promises (1-2 RO)	2.39	267	.887	.054
Pair 3	In the future, I would be willing to pay a higher price for products from the brand over competitive offerings (3-4 RO)	3.82	267	.836	.051
	In the future, I would be willing to pay a higher price for products from the brand over competitive offerings (1-2 RO)	3.40	267	.922	.056
Pair 4	I would commit myself stronger to this brand (3-4 RO)	3.74	266	.914	.056
	I would commit myself stronger to this brand (1-2 RO)	3.12	266	.878	.054

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	I would be more likely to consider their products my first choice when evaluating related products (3-4 RO) & I would be more likely to consider their products my first choice when evaluating related products (1-2 RO)	267	.341	.000
Pair 2	I would stay loyal to the brand, as long as they stick to their promises (3-4 RO) & I would stay loyal to the brand, as long as they stick to their promises (1-2 RO)	267	.351	.000
Pair 3	In the future, I would be willing to pay a higher price for products from the brand over competitive offerings (3-4 RO) & In the future, I would be willing to pay a higher price for products from the brand over competitive offerings (1-2 RO)	267	.491	.000
Pair 4	I would commit myself stronger to this brand (3-4 RO) & I would commit myself stronger to this brand (1-2 RO)	266	.449	.000

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	I would be more likely to consider their products my first choice when evaluating related products (3-4 RO) - I would be more likely to consider their products my first choice when evaluating related products (1-2 RO)	.708	1.061	.065	.580	.836	10.906	266	.000
Pair 2	I would stay loyal to the brand, as long as they stick to their promises (3-4 RO) - I would stay loyal to the brand, as long as they stick to their promises (1-2 RO)	.738	1.082	.066	.607	.868	11.138	266	.000
Pair 3	In the future, I would be willing to pay a higher price for products from the brand over competitive offerings (3-4 RO) - In the future, I would be willing to pay a higher price for products from the brand over competitive offerings (1-2 RO)	.412	.890	.054	.305	.519	7.564	266	.000
Pair 4	I would commit myself stronger to this brand (3-4 RO) - I would commit myself stronger to this brand (1-2 RO)	.617	.941	.058	.503	.730	10.681	265	.000

Appendix 15 - Paired samples t-test

T-Test comparing the means of the ITR variables when receiving 3-4 ROs versus 1-2. For all pairs it is possible to conclude that means are significantly different - all gaps previously computed are significantly positive.

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	How likely would you be to say positive things about the brand to other people? (3-4 RO)	3.35	268	.993	.061
	How likely would you be to say positive things about the brand to other people (1-2 RO)	2.45	268	.875	.053
Pair 2	How likely would you be to recommend the brand to someone who seeks your advice (3-4 RO)	3.33	267	.995	.061
	How likely would you be to recommend the brand to someone who seeks your advice (1-2 RO)	2.38	267	.843	.052
Pair 3	How likely would you be to encourage others to do business with the brand? (3-4 RO)	3.40	267	.930	.057
	How likely would you be to encourage others to do business with the brand? (1-2 RO)	2.55	267	.876	.054
Pair 4	How likely would you be to post positive messages about the brand on some internet board? (3-4 RO)	3.74	265	.897	.055
	How likely would you be to post positive messages about the brand on some internet board? (1-2 RO)	3.06	265	.915	.056

Paired Samples Correlations

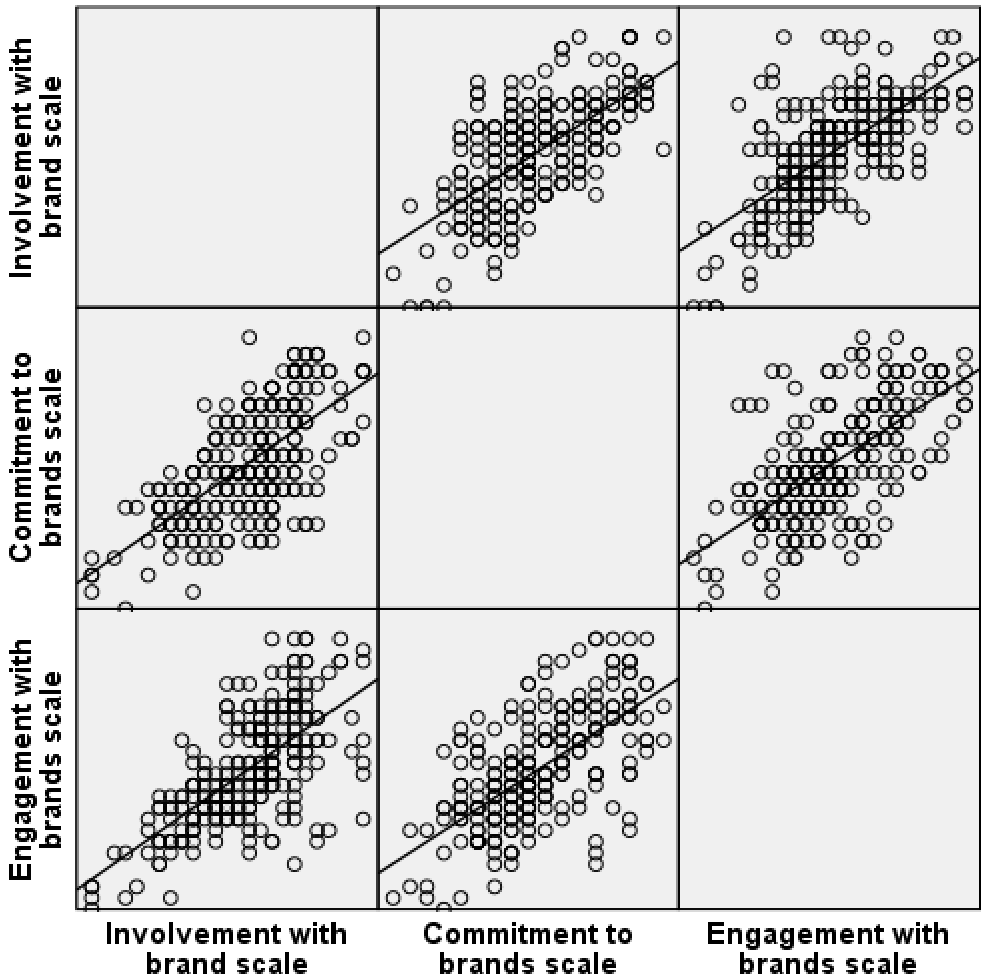
		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	How likely would you be to say positive things about the brand to other people? (3-4 RO) & How likely would you be to say positive things about the brand to other people (1-2 RO)	268	.468	.000
Pair 2	How likely would you be to recommend the brand to someone who seeks your advice (3-4 RO) & How likely would you be to recommend the brand to someone who seeks your advice (1-2 RO)	267	.466	.000
Pair 3	How likely would you be to encourage others to do business with the brand? (3-4 RO) & How likely would you be to encourage others to do business with the brand? (1-2 RO)	267	.381	.000
Pair 4	How likely would you be to post positive messages about the brand on some internet board? (3-4 RO) & How likely would you be to post positive messages about the brand on some internet board? (1-2 RO)	265	.499	.000

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	How likely would you be to say positive things about the brand to other people? (3-4 RO) - How likely would you be to say positive things about the brand to other people (1-2 RO)	.899	.968	.059	.783	1.016	15.205	267	.000
Pair 2	How likely would you be to recommend the brand to someone who seeks your advice (3-4 RO) - How likely would you be to recommend the brand to someone who seeks your advice (1-2 RO)	.951	.958	.059	.836	1.067	16.218	266	.000
Pair 3	How likely would you be to encourage others to do business with the brand? (3-4 RO) - How likely would you be to encourage others to do business with the brand? (1-2 RO)	.854	1.006	.062	.733	.975	13.868	266	.000
Pair 4	How likely would you be to post positive messages about the brand on some internet board? (3-4 RO) - How likely would you be to post positive messages about the brand on some internet board? (1-2 RO)	.683	.907	.056	.573	.793	12.253	264	.000

Appendix 16 - Scatterplot-matrix to check linearity assumption

Through inspection of the scatterplot-matrix it is visible that the scatterplots between involvement-commitment, involvement-engagement and engagement-commitment are quite similar. Each scales have a positive direction of correlation and all points fit the line pretty well. Thus, the relationships can be classified as linear.



Appendix 17 - Correlations between commitment, involvement and engagement

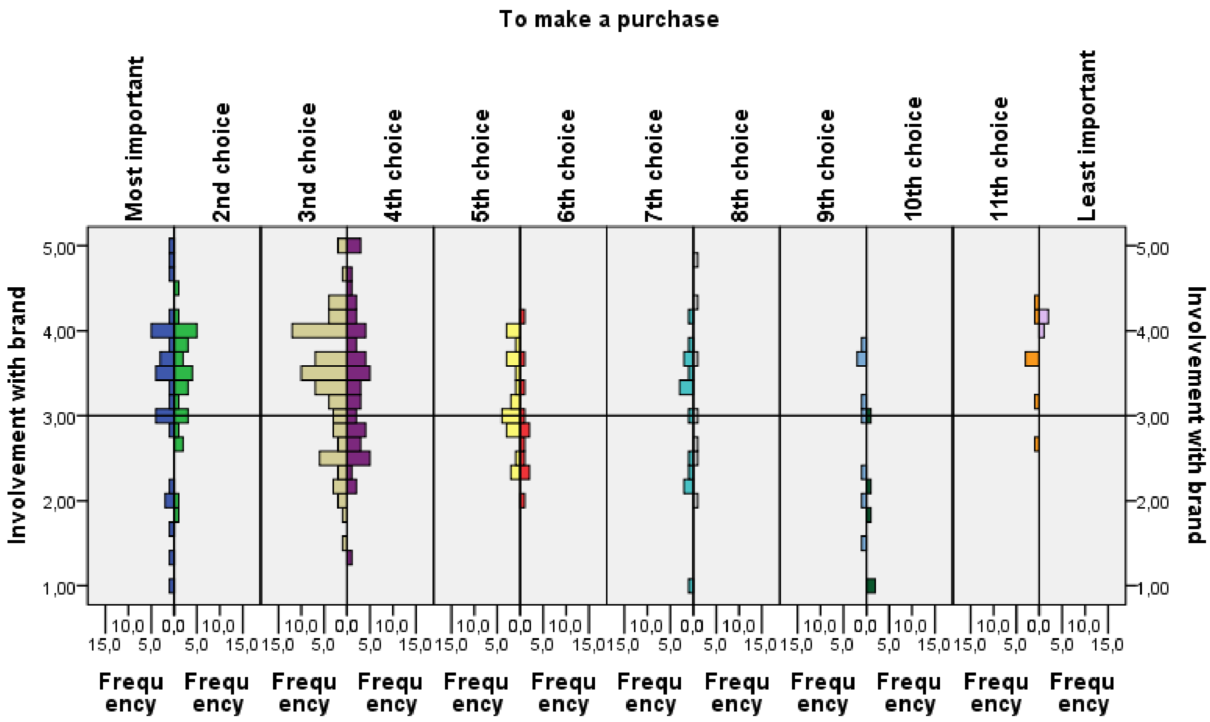
Correlations

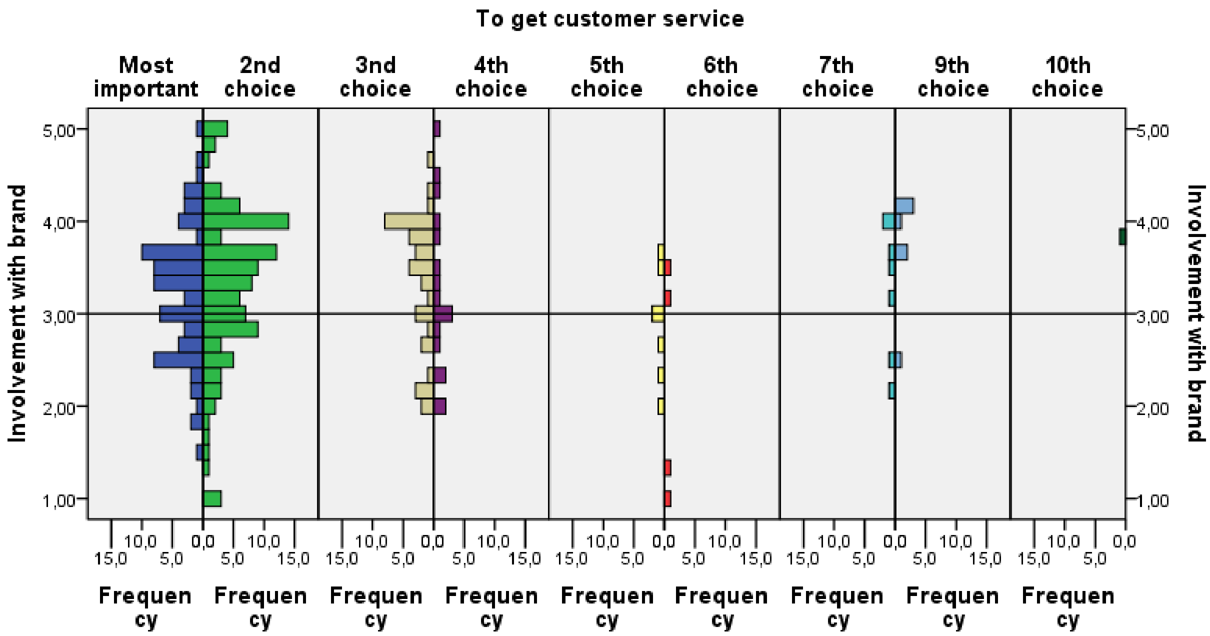
		Commitment to brands scale	Involvement with brand scale	Engagement with brands scale
Commitment to brands scale	Pearson Correlation	1	.673**	.648**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	263	261	262
Involvement with brand scale	Pearson Correlation	.673**	1	.670**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	261	263	262
Engagement with brands scale	Pearson Correlation	.648**	.670**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	262	262	267

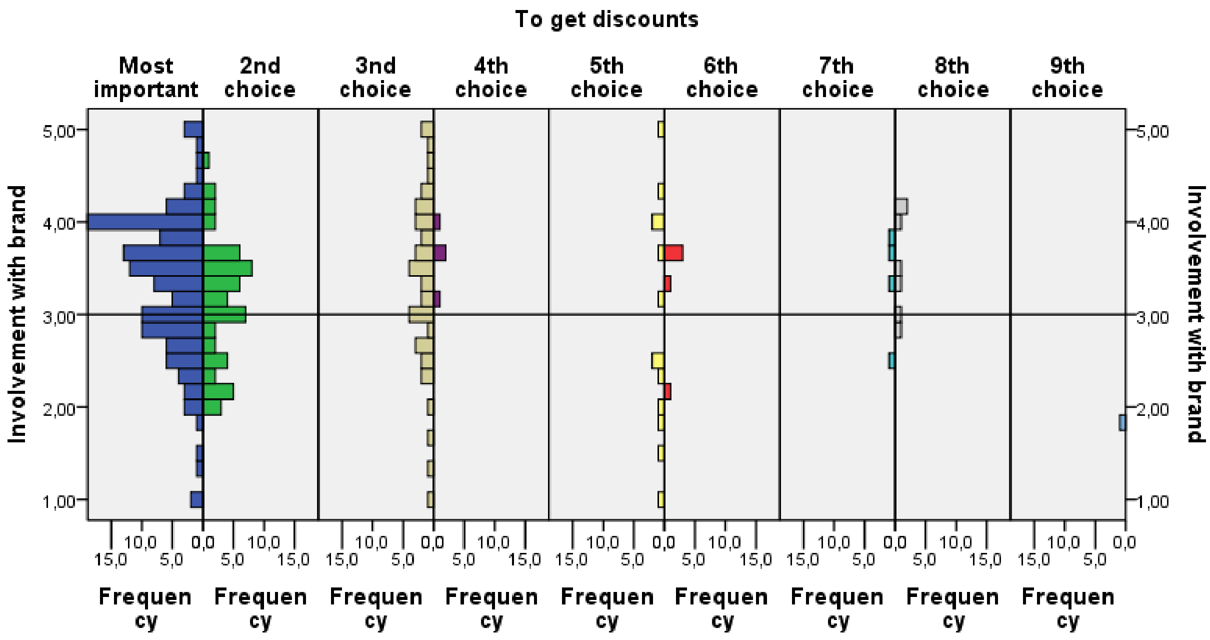
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

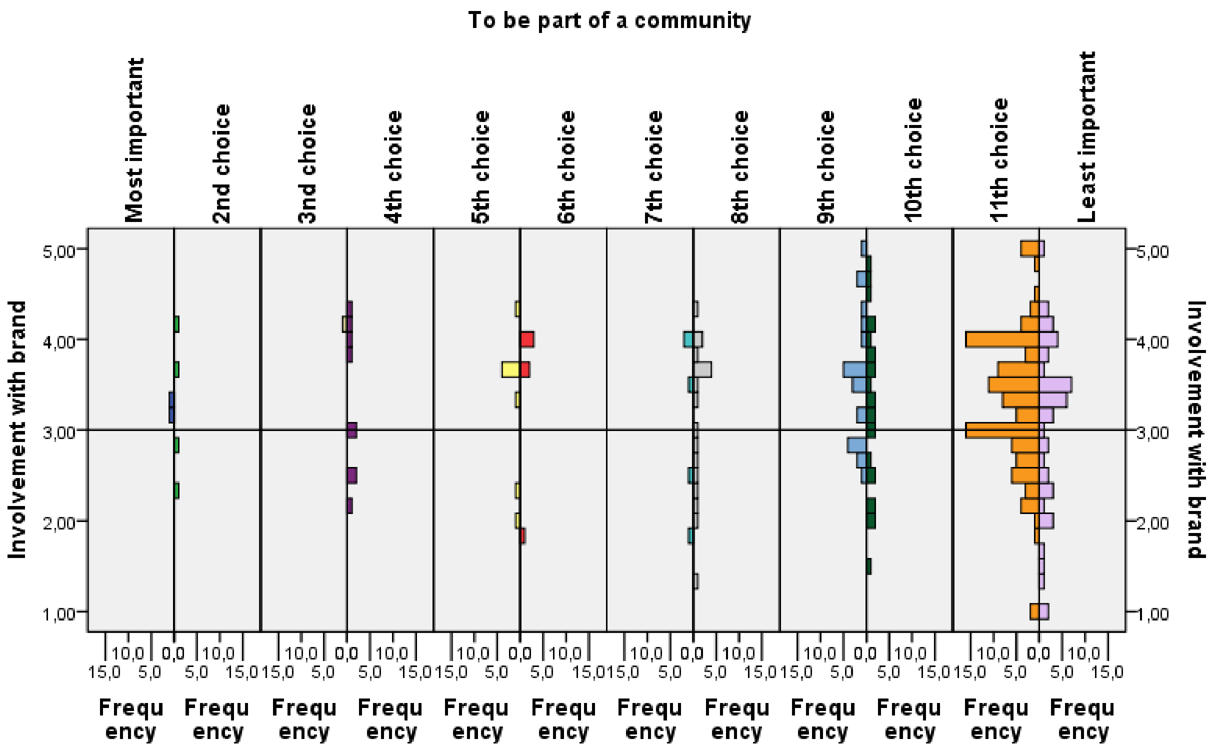
Appendix 18 - Graphs concerning the most and the least important types of motivation, depending on involvement

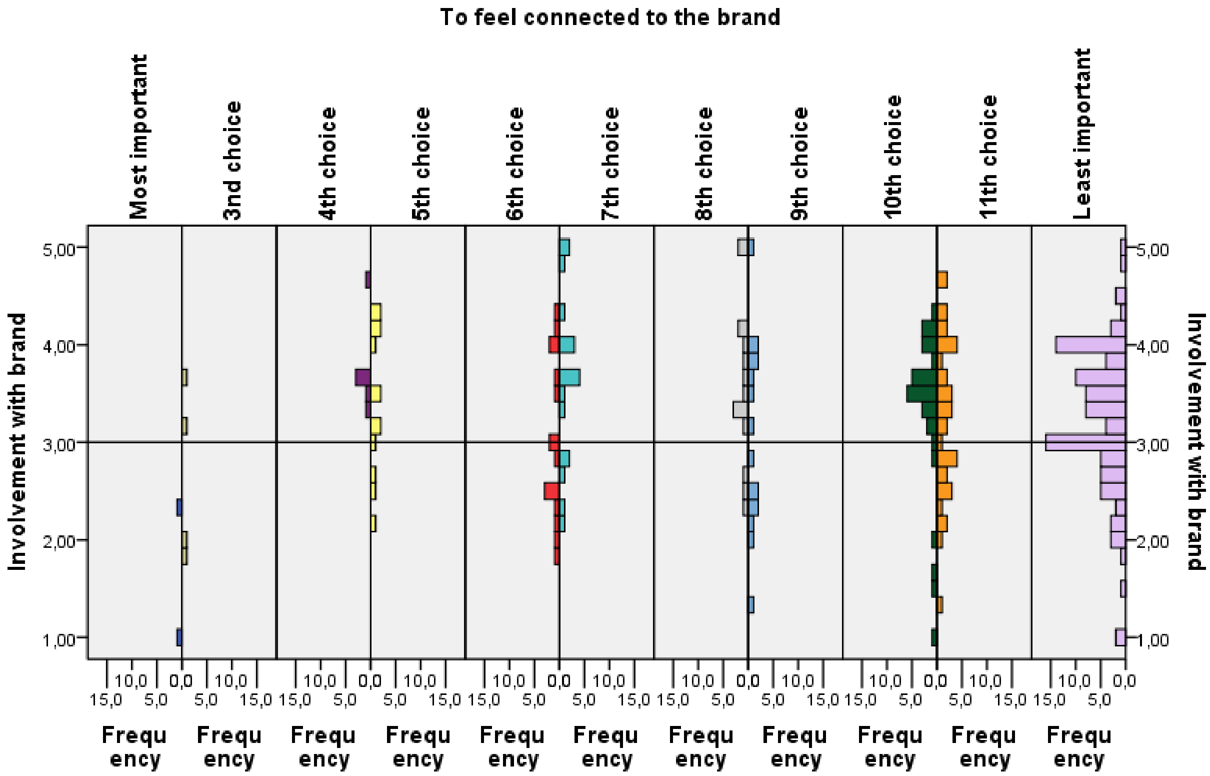
The graphs display the response patterns in relation to the most and least important types of motivation, depending on the level of involvement with the brand.





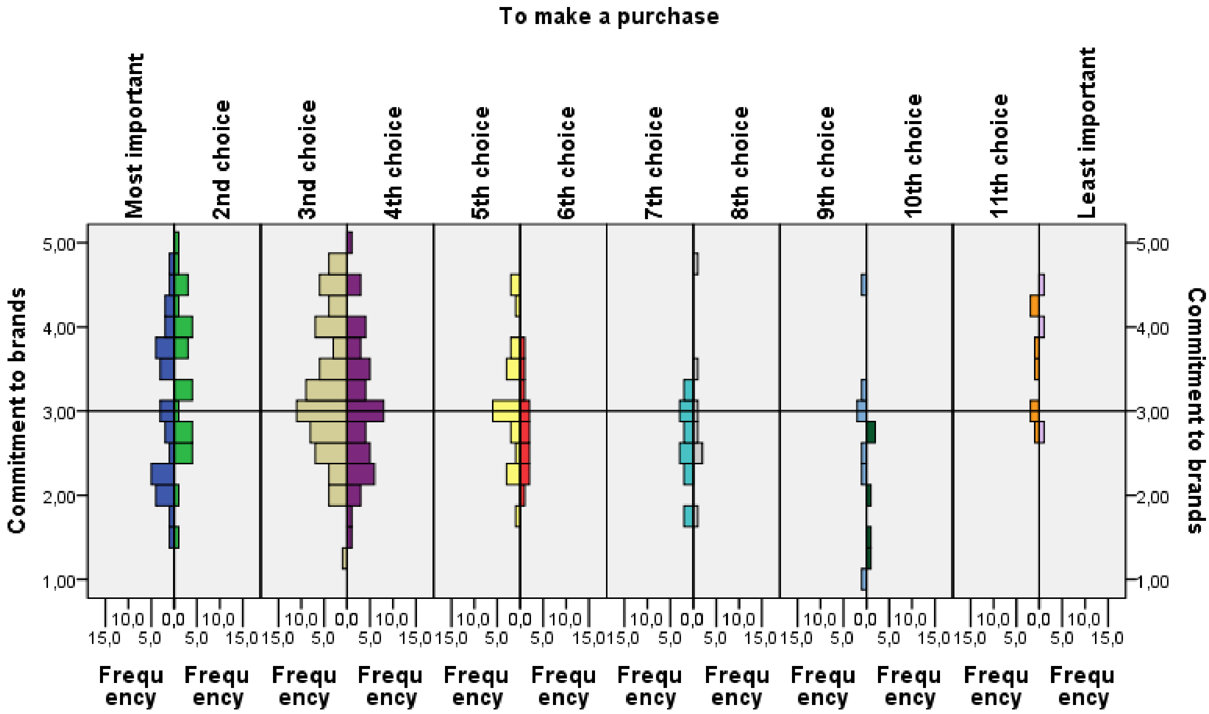

To get discounts
Most important
2nd choice
3nd choice
4th choice
5th choice
6th choice
7th choice
8th choice
9th choice
Involvement with brand
5,00
4,00
3,00
2,00
1,00
15,0 10,0 5,0 0,0
Frequency

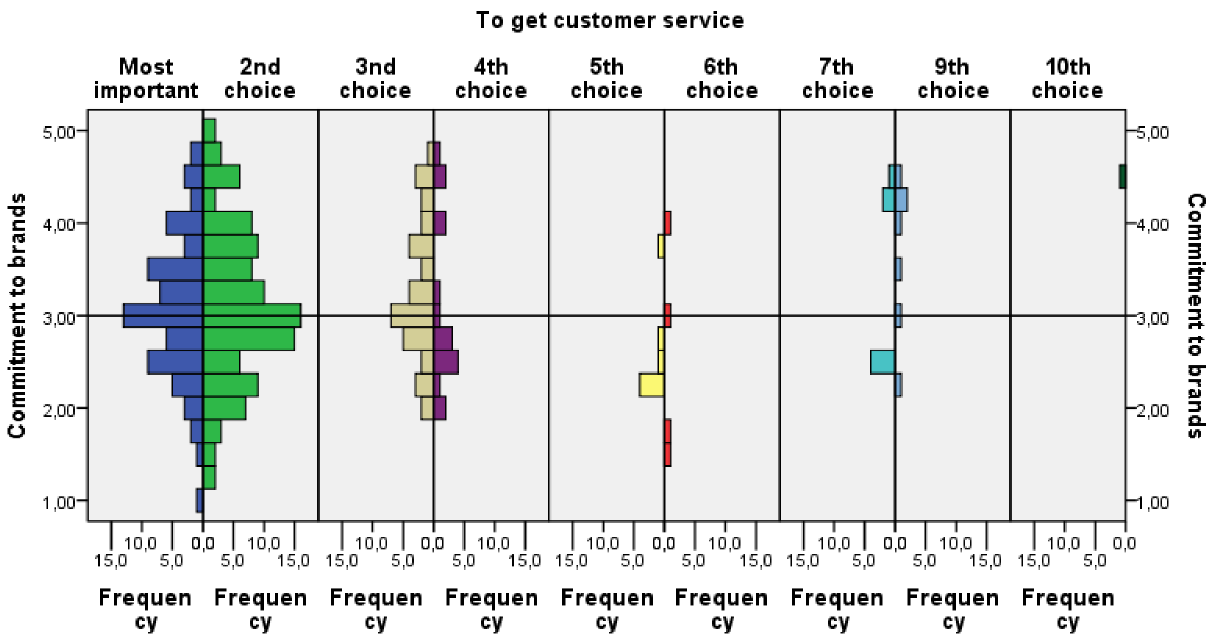

To be part of a community
Most important
2nd choice
3nd choice
4th choice
5th choice
6th choice
7th choice
8th choice
9th choice
10th choice
11th choice
Least important
Involvement with brand
5,00
4,00
3,00
2,00
1,00
15,0 10,0 5,0 0,0
Frequency

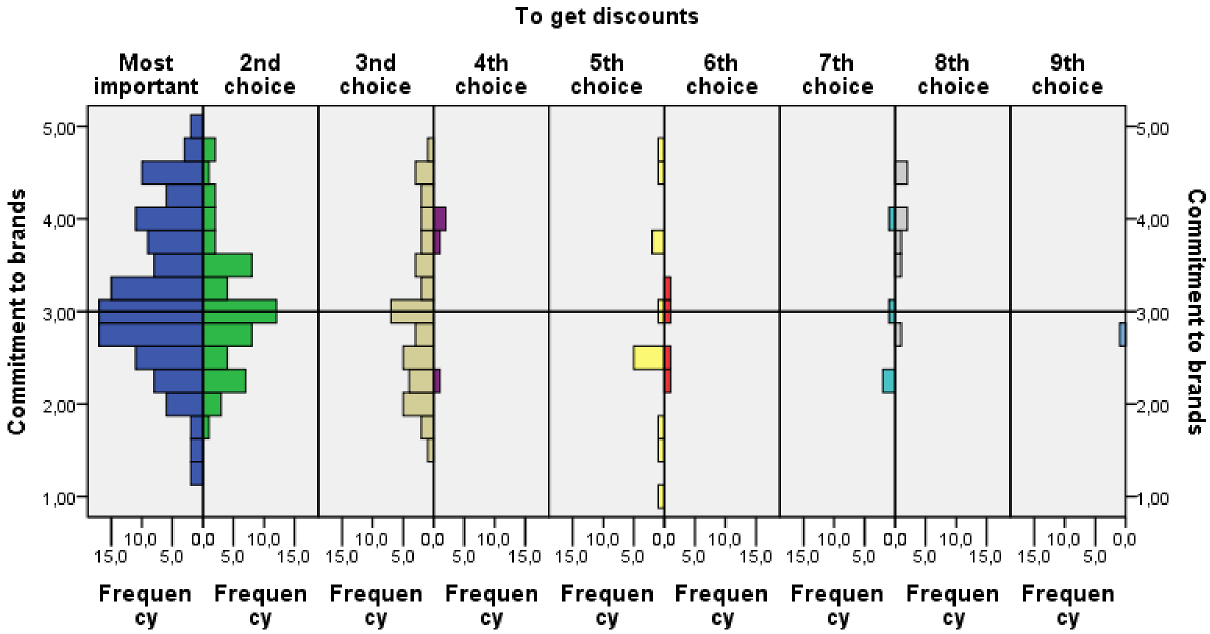

To feel connected to the brand
Most important
3nd choice
4th choice
5th choice
6th choice
7th choice
8th choice
9th choice
10th choice
11th choice
Least important
Involvement with brand
5,00
4,00
3,00
2,00
1,00
15,0
10,0
5,0
0,0
Frequency

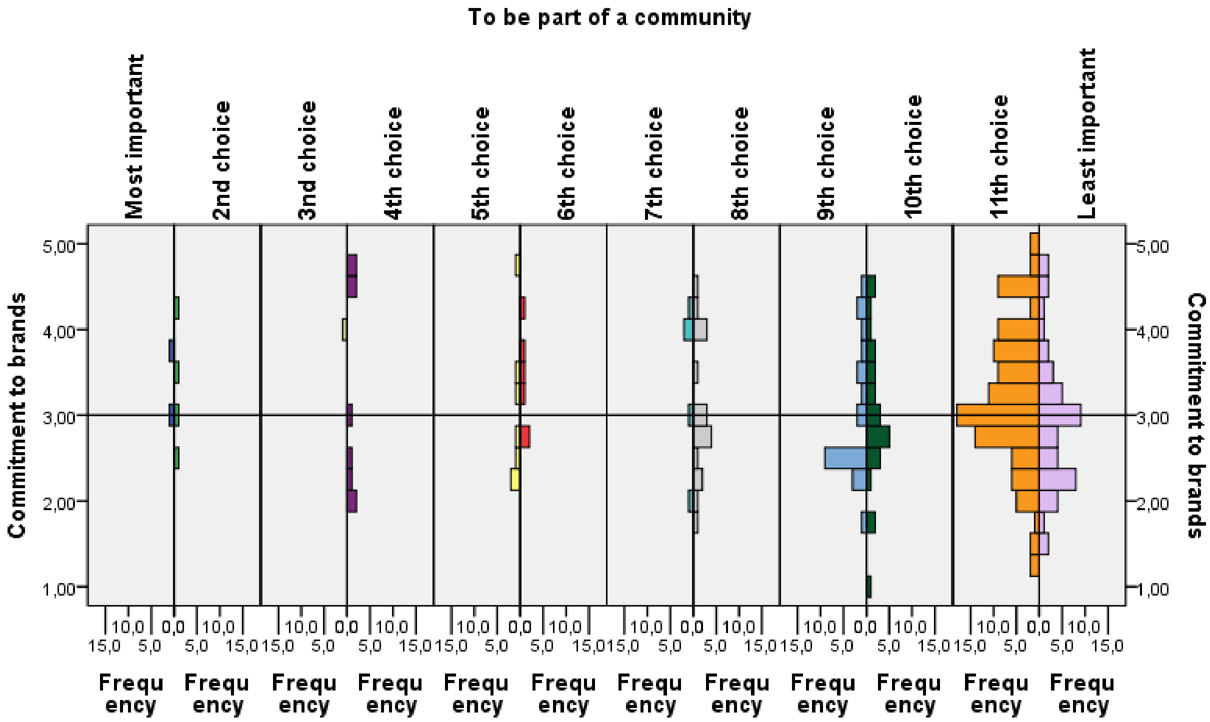
Appendix 19 - Graphs concerning the most and the least important types of motivation, depending on commitment

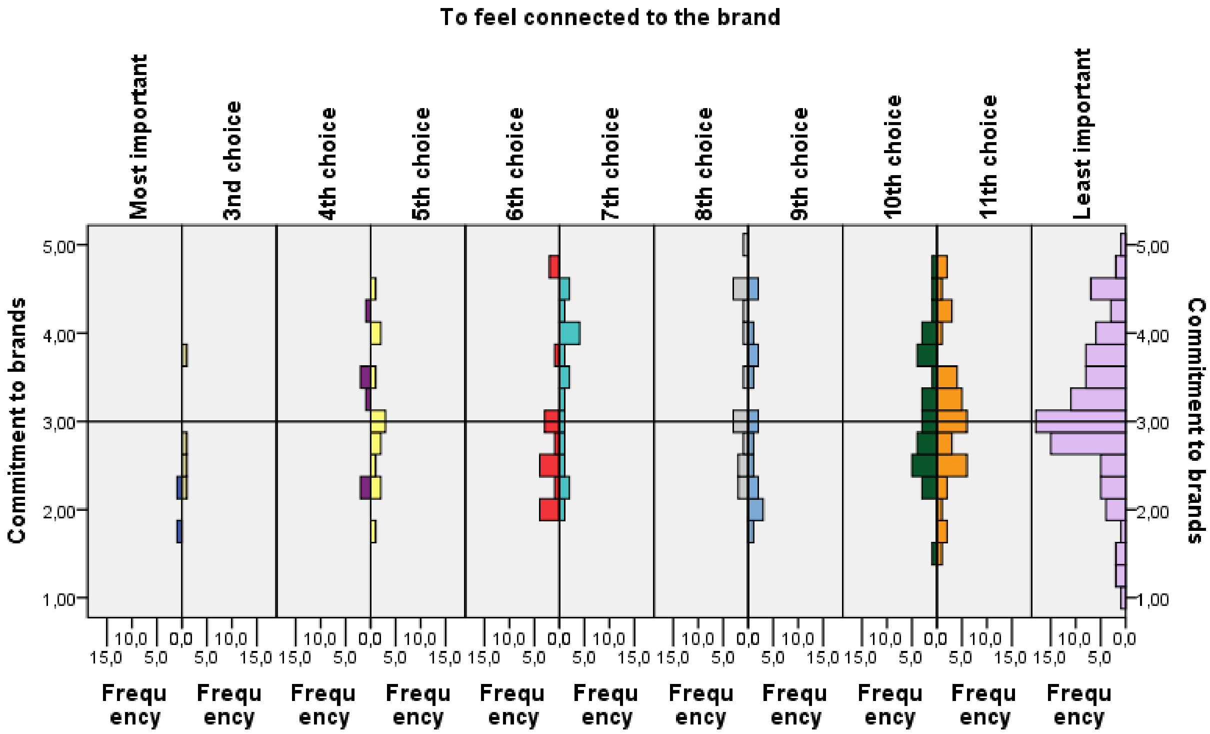
The graphs display the response patterns in relation to the most and least important types of motivation, depending on the level of commitment to brands.






To get discounts
Most important
2nd choice
3nd choice
4th choice
5th choice
6th choice
7th choice
8th choice
9th choice
Commitment to brands
Frequency

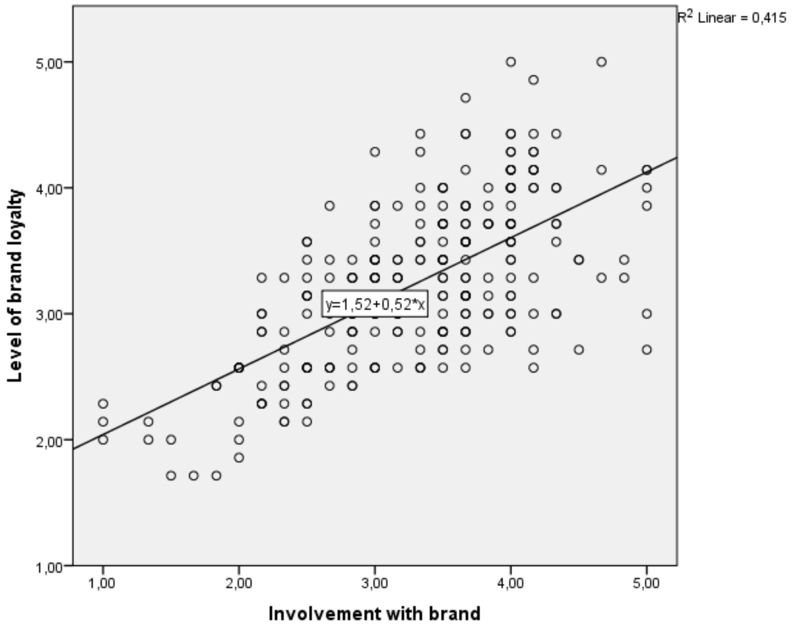

To be part of a community
Most important
2nd choice
3nd choice
4th choice
5th choice
6th choice
7th choice
8th choice
9th choice
10th choice
11th choice
Least important
Commitment to brands
Frequency

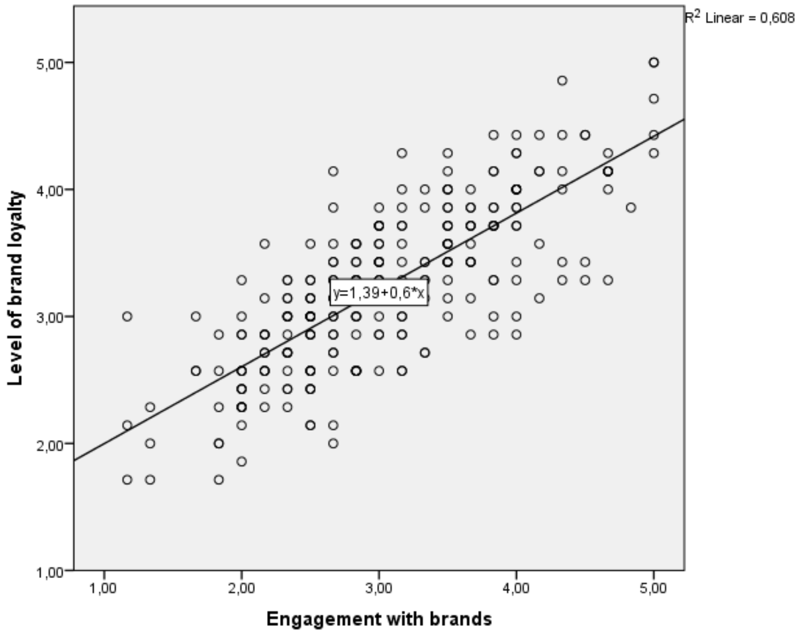

To feel connected to the brand
Most important
3nd choice
4th choice
5th choice
6th choice
7th choice
8th choice
9th choice
10th choice
11th choice
Least important
Commitment to brands
5,00
4,00
3,00
2,00
1,00
15,0
10,0
5,0
0,0
Frequency

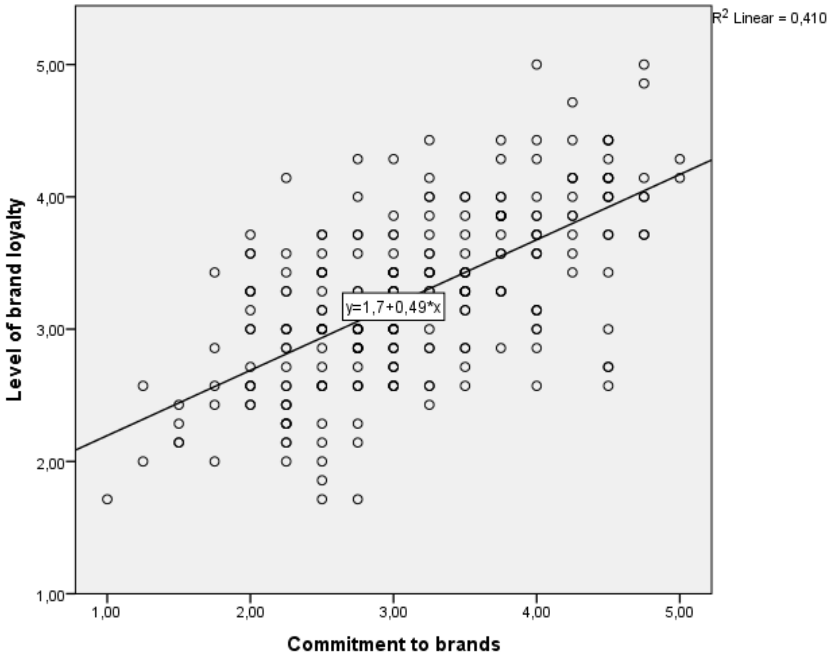
Appendix 20 - Scatterplots for linear regression

Scatterplots for brand loyalty with each of the three independent variables. Dependent variable: Brand loyalty; independent variables: commitment, engagement, involvement.

An inspection of the scatterplots reveals a positive linear relationship between brand loyalty and each of the three independent variables. No significant outliers were found.






R² Linear = 0,410
y=1,7+0,49*x
Level of brand loyalty
5,00
4,00
3,00
2,00
1,00
1,00
2,00
3,00
4,00
5,00
Commitment to brands

Appendix 21 - Multiple linear regression outputs

In between the outputs, an analysis of the different assumptions has been made to highlight that all assumptions of the multiple linear regression model are upheld.

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Level of brand loyalty	3.2472	.64302	256
Involvement with brand scale	3.3105	.78938	256
Commitment to brands scale	3.1367	.83540	256
Engagement with brands scale	3.0664	.83021	256

Correlations

		Level of brand loyalty	Involvement with brand scale	Commitment to brands scale	Engagement with brands scale
Pearson Correlation	Level of brand loyalty	1.000	.640	.637	.779
	Involvement with brand scale	.640	1.000	.666	.665
	Commitment to brands scale	.637	.666	1.000	.642
	Engagement with brands scale	.779	.665	.642	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Level of brand loyalty	.	.000	.000	.000
	Involvement with brand scale	.000	.	.000	.000
	Commitment to brands scale	.000	.000	.	.000
	Engagement with brands scale	.000	.000	.000	.
N	Level of brand loyalty	256	256	256	256
	Involvement with brand scale	256	256	256	256
	Commitment to brands scale	256	256	256	256
	Engagement with brands scale	256	256	256	256

Variables Entered/removed[a]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Engagement with brands scale, Commitment to brands scale, Involvement with brand scale[b]	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Level of brand loyalty

b. All requested variables entered.

The Durbin-Watson value of 1.930 suggests that there is independence of residuals.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.805[a]	.648	.644	.38370	1.930

a. Predictors: (Constant), Engagement with brands scale, Commitment to brands scale, Involvement with brand scale

b. Dependent Variable: Level of brand loyalty

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	68.335	3	22.778	154.716	.000[b]
	Residual	37.101	252	.147		
	Total	105.437	255			

a. Dependent Variable: Level of brand loyalty

b. Predictors: (Constant), Engagement with brands scale, Commitment to brands scale, Involvement with brand scale

All the Tolerance values are greater than 0.1 and VIF values smaller than 10 (the lowest is 0.461). Therefore, there is no problem with collinearity.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.080	.110		9.835	.000		
	Involvement with brand scale	.119	.045	.146	2.647	.009	.461	2.169
	Commitment to brands scale	.134	.041	.174	3.239	.001	.486	2.059
	Engagement with brands scale	.442	.041	.570	10.648	.000	.487	2.055

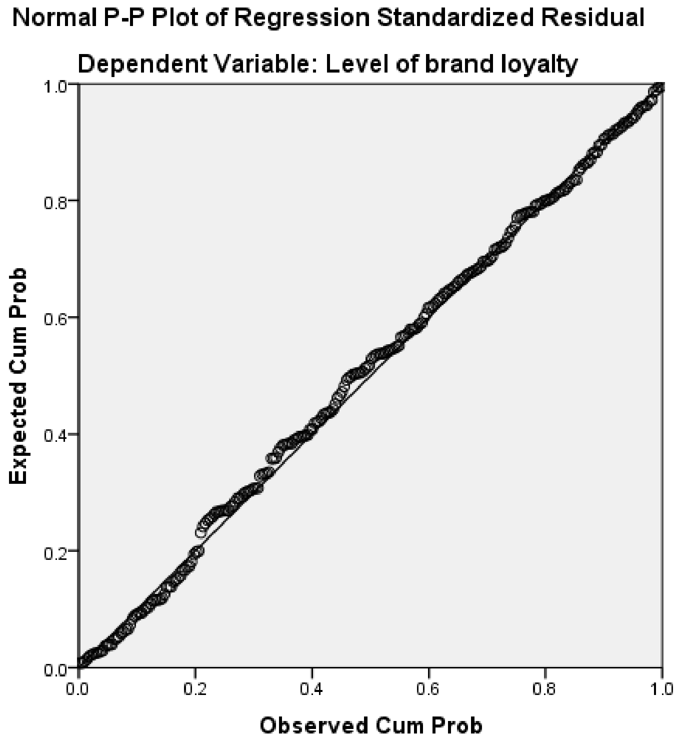
a. Dependent Variable: Level of brand loyalty

Collinearity Diagnostics[a]

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions (Constant)	Involvement with brand scale	Commitment to brands scale	Engagement with brands scale
1	1	3.920	1.000	.00	.00	.00	.00
	2	.038	10.189	.90	.01	.10	.14
	3	.024	12.787	.00	.00	.68	.67
	4	.018	14.601	.09	.99	.22	.18

a. Dependent Variable: Level of brand loyalty

The P-P plot shows that the points are aligned along the diagonal line, thus suggesting that the residuals are normally distributed.

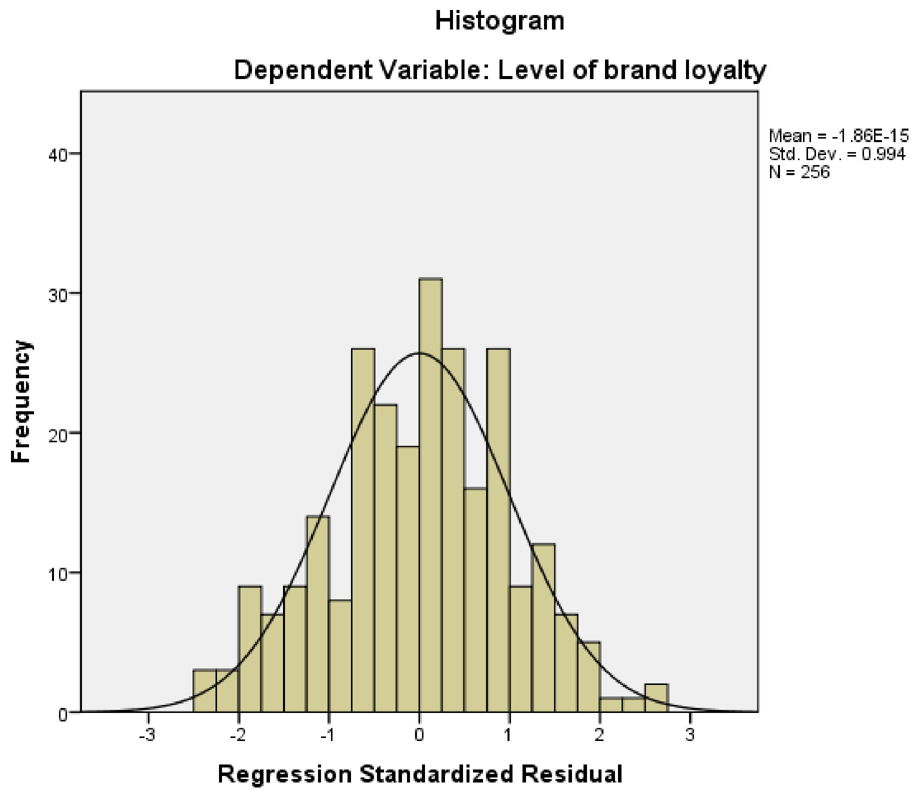


Residuals Statistics[a]

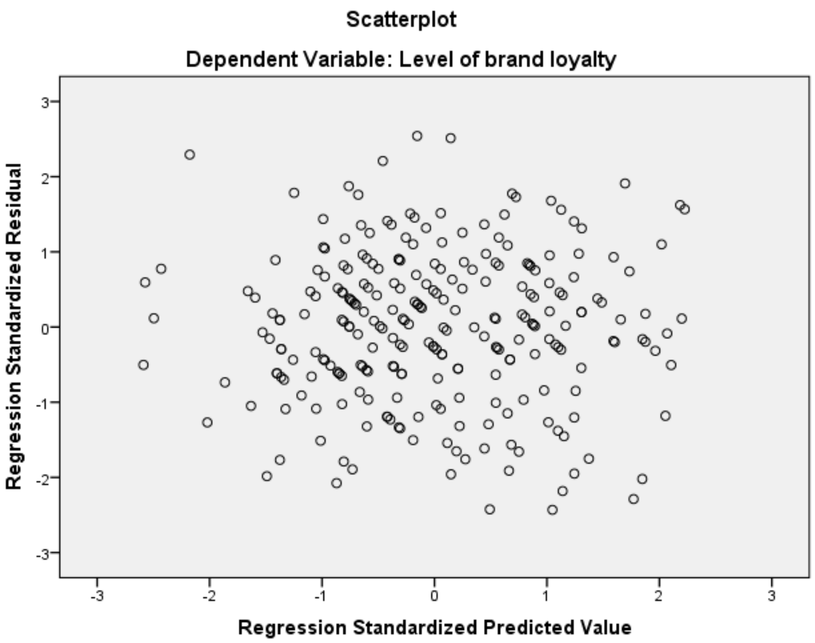
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	1.9074	4.3990	3.2472	.51767	256
Residual	-.93290	.97528	.00000	.38144	256
Std. Predicted Value	-2.588	2.225	.000	1.000	256
Std. Residual	-2.431	2.542	.000	.994	256

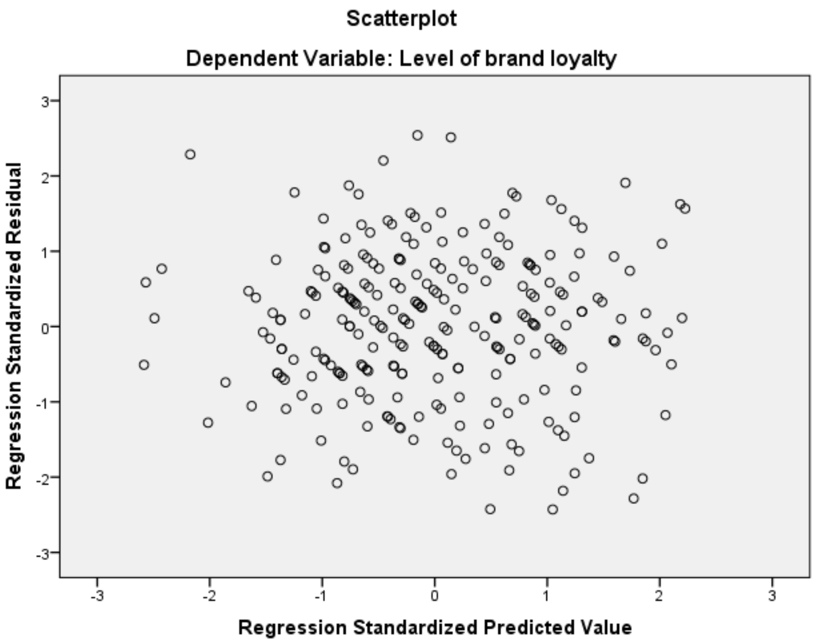
a. Dependent Variable: Level of brand loyalty

You can see from the histogram below that the standardized residuals appear to be approximately normally distributed. This supports the findings from the above P-P Plot.



An inspection of the scatterplots below shows that the residuals are equally spread over the predicted values of the dependent variables, thus suggesting homoscedasticity. In other words, the assumption of homogeneity of variance is not violated.


Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: Level of brand loyalty
Regression Standardized Residual
Regression Standardized Predicted Value
3
2
1
0
-1
-2
-3


Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: Level of brand loyalty
Regression Standardized Residual
Regression Standardized Predicted Value
3
2
1
0
-1
-2
-3