THE IMPACT OF BRAND EXPERIENCE ON ATTITUDES AND BRAND IMAGE
-a quantitative study

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE The impact of brand experience on attitudes and brand image - a quantitative study

RESEARCH QUESTIONS How to create an engaging brand experience in marketing context?
How does an engaging brand experience affect consumer attitudes and brand image?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY The authors propose that the relationship between brand experience and formation of brand loyalty can be mediated by brand affect: positive attitude and brand image. The study discovers the components of an engaging brand experience and indicates their effect on consumer attitudes and brand image.

METHODOLOGY The study consists of primary data and literature. A survey based quantitative approach with 346 respondents is used in answering the research questions.

CONCLUSION An engaging brand experience can be delivered by enabling seamless interaction between the consumer and the brand, involving the consumer with the brand at the consumer’s own will, and by ensuring that all the communication efforts as well as the content of each of the brand’s touch points is consistent. By delivering such brand experiences, positive attitudes and brand image; brand affect, can be generated and brand loyalty affected.

KEYWORDS Brand loyalty, brand experience, brand image, attitude
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

"The mind is like a universe, it is constantly expanding."
– ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY

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## GLOSSARY

The glossary gives an overview of the most frequent used terms, keywords and concepts throughout this thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BRAND LOYALTY</strong></td>
<td>An individual’s act to buy the same brand repeatedly, due to a reason. Forms out of four stages: affective, cognitive, conative and action loyalty (Oliver, 1999). Brand loyalty consists of two dimensions, attitudinal and behavioral dimensions (Aaker, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ATTITUDINAL LOYALTY</strong></td>
<td>A dimension of brand loyalty, examining attitudes and motives behind purchasing a brand (Aaker, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ATTITUDE</strong></td>
<td>A person’s individual outcome of a learning process, including everything we know, feel, value, and disposition to act (Evans et al., 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BRAND EXPERIENCE</strong></td>
<td>A set of feelings, sensations, cognitions and behavioral responses evoked by different stimuli when interacting with a brand (Brakus et al., 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BRAND IMAGE</strong></td>
<td>An overall evaluation of the brand. Through brand image, consumers relate attributes and benefits to the brand and position it against competitors (Webster &amp; Keller, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BRAND AFFECT</strong></td>
<td>Emotional ties with the brand (Chaudhuri &amp; Holbrook, 2001) In this study, measured through attitude and brand image.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOUCH POINT</strong></td>
<td>Different channels for companies to interact with consumers: websites, physical stores, kiosks, direct mail, catalogues, social media, mass media, mobile devices etc. (Rigby, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOLISTIC APPROACH</strong></td>
<td>Includes both, rational and emotional components of a brand in marketing. Also describes a seamless experience of a consumer when migrating between touch points. (Iglesias et al., 2011)</td>
</tr>
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1. INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of this thesis about an engaging brand experience begins with introducing the background and the problem discussion outlining the whole thesis. Followed by the arisen research questions and purpose of the study, the chapter ends with an intended target audience.

The task of attracting consumers’ attention is challenging. The noise of advertising messages that consumers face is making it more and more difficult to make consumers remember specific messages. Still, at the center of every profit seeking company, are the efforts of making the company to be perceived in a positive light and thus, improving consumers' loyalty to brands, the key variable for customer retention in long-term perspective (Amine, 1998). For a company, the value of a brand is of great importance because through a brand, a company can differentiate from its competitors and create value (Aaker, 1991, p.7). By understanding consumers, companies can manage their brand communication strategies in a way that engages consumers the best. Therefore from the marketing perspective, “understanding consumer behavior is good business” (Solomon et al., 2010. p. 6).

As many scholars (Amine, 1998; Dick & Basu, 1994; Aaker, 1991) state, a positive attitude towards a brand is a necessity in creating brand loyalty. Attitude and emotions towards the brand are important, because emotions have been recently recognized as having the most effect in predicting consumer behavior (Johnson & Greyson, 2005). These attitudes and the overall perceived brand image are affected by the consumer’s brand experience: how the product makes the consumer feel or the fun experiences the brand provides (Solomon et al., 2010. p. 277-280). The resulting brand experience is a combination of the consumer’s feelings, sensations, cognitions and behavioral responses that evoke when interacting with the brand (Brakus et al., 2009).

Having an individual, positive experience of the brand leads to emotional bonds and attitudinal commitment (Iglesias et al., 2011; Thompson et al., 2006; Johnson & Grayson, 2005; de Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003). Therefore, an emerging stream of marketing is now focusing on adding value to consumers by creating consumer experiences (Iglesias et al., 2011; de Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003). How to create engaging brand experiences for consumers through marketing communication is, however, not yet standardized (Brakus et al., 2009).

What this study aims to prove, is that delivering engaging brand experiences to consumers through marketing communications is an effective way to generate feelings towards a brand, which later evolve into attitudes and brand image. In addition, this study strives to highlight the importance of emotional responses towards a brand and suggests ways to enable those through marketing communications. The reason for this is that the traditional way of marketing has had its core focus only on the rational reasons to buy the brand, without considering the emotional responses (Iglesias et al., 2011). The driving force behind emotional branding, however, is that the passion needed for bonding with a brand is very seldom cultivated through rational arguments (Thompson et al., 2006).
1.1. Research question

Brand experience is an outcome of the consumer’s feelings, sensations and cognitions when interacting with a brand (Brakus et al., 2009). This study aims to discover how to create brand experiences that are engaging and thus, affect brand loyalty positively. The variables used to indicate brand loyalty in the study are consumer attitudes and brand image and they are measured through a three component attitude model (Solomon et al., 2010) and Aaker’s (1991) dimensions of brand personality. The questions that guide this research are:

R1: How to create an engaging brand experience in marketing context?

R2: How does an engaging brand experience affect consumer attitudes and brand image?

1.2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine how to create an engaging brand experience in marketing context and how it affects consumer attitudes and brand image (brand affect). Brand affect represents the consumers’ emotional ties with the brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2010) and is important in affecting brand loyalty, the key goal for marketers. Based on the prior introduction, the study tries to indicate whether the designed brand experience affects consumer behavior and brand loyalty.

In order to find the factors behind an engaging brand experience, recent marketing fields seeking for new ways to draw attention of consumers and engage them to the brand are examined. Many efforts to commit consumers to brands have been made and different schools have defined the best practices from different aspects. In this study, the authors try to identify the building blocks with relevance in creating engaging brand experiences to consumers, by retrieving insights from what forms brand loyalty and how those factors are pursued in current marketing. Finally, the influence of the derived components is tested in practice in order to see whether the outcomes are in line with current research.

1.3. Target audience

The results of this thesis can be utilized in marketing purposes by a variety of target audiences. Especially for managerial purposes, the study can give valuable insights on how to design marketing communications that provide the consumers with engaging brand experiences and thus, lead to brand commitment and purchasing of the brand. The study as a whole can provide marketing practitioners with a better understanding of how to utilize the research of consumer behavior as a tool for successful marketing. In addition, practical ideas on how to design effective marketing actions can be adapted from the analysis provided. As another target audience, academic scholars can benefit from the study in their research processes and provide them with different views of the study topic, or even exploit the verified hypotheses in future research.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter gives an overview of the information landscape needed for answering the research question.

In order to create a model of an engaging brand experience aiming at creating brand loyalty, factors that affect the formation of brand loyalty must be examined first. Added by researching how current marketing schools have pursued to exploit engaging marketing, the components of how to create an engaging brand experience are sought. With this theoretical framework, a model of an engaging brand experience can be presented. In order to combine an encompassing theoretical framework for the topic, the research area involves the fields of social science of consumer behavior, branding and marketing communications. A conceptual development connecting the main concepts of this study is presented in the final paragraph of this chapter.

2.1. Consumer behavior and brand loyalty

Consumer behavior is the study of processes behind a consumer’s selection, purchasing, using and disposing of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires (Solomon et al., 2010, p. 6). Behind the behavior is the consumer’s perception of the world, an individual process how different stimuli is organized and interpreted into a coherent entity. Thus for marketers, consumers’ perceptions, such as brand image in this study, are much more important than the consumers’ actual knowledge (Schiffman et al., 2012). Understanding consumer behavior is essential from marketing aspects, since consumption plays such an important role in our daily lives and in the formation of our consumer culture, that is, the spread of consuming habits. Therefore from the marketing perspective, “understanding consumer behavior is good business” (Solomon et al., 2010. p. 6) and measuring consumer attitudes is widely used for evaluating and predicting consumer behavior. Consumer attitudes are in the center of this study due to their relevance in gaining important insights about consumers’ intentions and how they perceive a brand, because that is the key factor behind purchasing and becoming loyal to a brand. By understanding consumer attitudes, brands can manage their communication strategies in a way that best engages consumers and ultimately leads to brand loyalty.

Aaker (1991, p.7) and further Webster and Keller (2004) define a brand as a distinguishing name and symbol which identifies and differentiates the goods or services of the seller from goods and services of competitors. The value of a brand is of great importance to a company and through a brand, a company can drive market positions, resist competition, support price premiums, create customer preference, leverage stock value and continue to exist over long periods of time (Aaker, 1991, p.7).

This is why branding is important for companies and in order to manage it successfully, understanding consumers is essential. As an outcome of successful branding, consumers recognize the brand among competitors and form positive attitudes and brand image by associating it with attributes based on their own experiences. Another notable benefit of a strong brand is that selling to existing, loyal customers is considerably easier than attracting new customers. Loyalty to a brand is thus a substantial
benefit that leads to creating value in at least four different ways: reducing marketing costs, leveraging trade value, attracting new customers and giving time to respond to competitive threads. (Aaker, 1991, p. 46-47) To highlight the importance of brand loyalty, Amine (1998) adds that consumers with a high level of confidence in a brand, develop positive word-of-mouth communication and support the brand publicly. By openly supporting the brand, advocates influence others with their positive word-of-mouth and generate more brand loyalists, which is why brand support appears to be in key role in building and maintaining the popularity of a brand (Amine, 1998). Loyalty to a brand also reinforces the consumers’ repeat purchase behavior and resists brand switching, even if the brand occasionally fails to deliver its promises. A loyal customer base is therefore one of the most important assets a company may possess and the main goal for any marketer (Aaker, 1991; Webster & Keller, 2004). Concluded by Amine (1998), loyalty to a brand is a key variable for customer retention in long-term perspective.

Based on the above arguments, the importance of brand loyalty guides this study to find the key factors that are needed in the process of forming brand loyalty and integrating these into effective ways to exploit marketing communications. Marketing efforts can be made more effective in terms of creating brand loyalty, when these key factors are known. The formation of brand loyalty is examined with more detail below.

It has been theorized that cognitive (knowledge-driven) loyalty is the first phase of brand loyalty development. During this phase, the consumer buys the product based on information available and by comparing it with competitors. This phase can lead to actual liking of the product, but, if the transaction is routine and does not arouse feelings and satisfaction, the depth of loyalty remains shallow. If it manages to arouse feelings, it becomes part of the consumer’s experience and begins to take affective overtones. Thus, affective loyalty (attitude) is theorized to be the second stage of brand loyalty. Affection towards a brand is based on the satisfaction from the transaction, the individual’s own experience of the brand. The third stage is the conative phase, an intention of the consumer to purchase and repurchase. This phase is much affected by the affection phase, the consumer liking the product. The combination of the three phases lead to the final stage, action loyalty, which is the consumer repeatedly buying the same brand all over again. Additionally, the consumers who feel congruent with the brand are more likely to become loyal to the brand. (Oliver, 1999).

Oliver (1999) recognizes these stages, but his view of the process differs from the order of the stages by saying that “consumers can become loyal at each attitudinal phase relating to different elements of the attitude development structure (affective, cognitive, and behavioral)” (p. 35). He further adds that a little work has appeared to corroborate this extended perspective, which is a weakness, since these loyalty phases require more specification if marketers are to protect their loyal customer base. Further research has emphasized the same aspect more. Iglesias et al. (2011), Johnson & Greyson (2005) and already Amine (1998) also state that brand loyalty is complex and consists of cognitive and affective dimensions. What especially favors Oliver’s (1999) assertion, is that during the recent years, the importance of emotional response has become the central aspect of an attitude and predicts future behavior more (Johnson & Greyson, 2005). The scholars further add that consumers are more willing to try brands that engender strong positive emotions and tend to act by their emotional reactions.
In this study, the formation of brand loyalty follows Oliver’s (1999) view of the process: brand loyalty can form at any attitudinal phase. Based on the arguments within the recent study positing that consumers tend to act by their emotional reactions, the authors propose that the loyalty process can also begin with the affective loyalty. The process continues as theorized: the affective phase affects the conative loyalty phase positively. When confined with the cognitive evaluation after the first time of purchasing, the combination of the three lead to permanent action loyalty. However, the stages are not linear and each phase can affect the other ones. This study further posits that the process can be started through marketing communications, through an engaging brand experience to be specific (See figure 1).

![Loyalty phases. Own illustration based on Oliver’s Loyalty phases (1999, p. 35)](image)

Given the importance of the affective stage of brand loyalty, variety of scholars further continue to highlight the emotion-driven factor by dividing brand loyalty in two dimensions. Aaker (1991) calls the dimensions the “attitudinal” and “behavioral” aspects of brand loyalty and Amine (1998) defines them as the “downstream approach” and the “upstream approach” of brand loyalty. Both of the scholars define the dimensions to examine brand loyalty through repetition in purchases (behavioral aspect, which can be influenced by situational variables, like discounts) and attitudinal aspect, which examines attitudes and motives behind purchasing a brand. Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001) agree and further posit that these together define the performance of the brand. To further confirm the importance of the attitudinal aspect, Amine (1998) adds that the behavioral approach of loyalty fails to explain the consistent purchasing behavior because it does not offer a possibility to differentiate the various buying situations (discount, design, store layout) and the effect of personal motives behind the purchase. Therefore the first, attitudinal commitment, is seen as having more relevance in predicting and affecting long-term consumer because it aims to discover the true motives for consumers to stay loyal. (Amine, 1998)

Based on the above stated, attitudes are chosen as the focus of this study, due to their significance in predicting and enlightening consumer motives behind purchasing decisions. Given the importance of attitudes, it is needed to investigate what kind of attitude affects brand loyalty so that the brand experience can be designed accordingly.

### 2.1.1. Positive attitude as main factor behind brand loyalty

“An attitude is a lasting, general evaluation of people, objects, advertisements or issues” (Solomon 2010. p. 275-277). This study follows Solomon’s (2010) definition of an attitude, because it receives further support from other scholars. Evans’ et al. (2009) definition of an attitude is that it is a person’s individual outcome of a learning process, including everything we know, feel, value, and disposition to act. Ajzen (2001) states that the general agreement of what attitude consists of represents a summary
evaluation of a psychological object captured in such attribute dimensions as good-bad, harmful-beneficial, pleasant-unpleasant and likable-dislikable. All the previous scholars agree that an attitude is an individual, general evaluation of the object and therefore in this study, Ajzen’s (2001) attitude dimensions are used as a part of measuring attitudes.

Ajzen’s (2001) dimensions in this study are further categorized under the three component attitude model, which according to most researchers is an attitude model that explains an attitude to consist of three components: affect, cognition and conation. These are as well the three stages of brand loyalty according to Oliver (1999), as previously introduced. The affect component defines how a consumer feels about the object (Ajzen’s pleasant-unpleasant, likable-dislikable). The cognition (Ajzen’s harmful-beneficial, good-bad) involves the consumers’ beliefs about the object and conation lightens the consumer’s intention to do something with regard to the object. However, an intention to do something does not always result in behavior (Solomon et al., 2010. p. 275-277). Therefore to predict future behavior from the measured attitudes, Romaniuk & Sharp’s (2003) statement that the strength of the attitude is the factor related to future behavior has influenced the structure of the survey and will be used in making assumptions of future behavior in this study. The three component model of attitude also enables an interpretation of consumer behavior and brand loyalty with the “stages of brand loyalty” by Oliver (1999).

Attitudes need affecting stimuli to be formed and from Chaudhuri & Holbrook’s (2001) perspective, a brand’s power can be defined through its potential to arouse positive emotional responses. Following the same footsteps, Aaker (1991) and Amine (1998) state that brand loyalty will not develop without a positive experience and forming attitudinal bonds with the brand and enabling positive emotions are in substantial role. Without the attitudinal bond to the brand, purchasing remains habitual buying behavior and the process never reaches the stage of true brand loyalty (Dick & Basu, 1994). In order to enable true brand loyalty, the repeat purchase of a brand must be constantly strengthened with a positive attitude towards it (Dick & Basu, 1994). This receives further support from Johnson & Grayson’s (2005) study, indicating that when the emotional connections due to positive attitude towards a brand deepen, trust towards the brand can exceed the limit justified by knowledge.

To conclude, enabling positive emotions to form attitudes should be in focus of any company and in order to successfully create brand loyalty, all communication efforts with consumers should be seen as cognitive and affective sources of brand commitment (Aaker, 1991). Since affection is considered to influence brand loyalty more, this study focuses on the matter of how to create engaging brand experiences for consumer that generate positive attitudes and brand image and thus, become the affective source of commitment to the brand. This should be the starting point of creating the communication strategy (Aaker 1991, p. 43-46), since the overall evaluation of the brand evolves from an attitude: “brand image is an attitude about a given brand” (Cited by Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990. p. 110-119 from Bird et al., 1970).
2.1.2. Brand image as a result of attitudes

As stated before, attitudes have the core role in shaping an overall evaluation of a brand, the brand image, and they can be strongly influenced by intangible product attributes, such as creating feelings through advertising. Through brand image, customers relate attributes and benefits to the brand and position it against competitors (Webster & Keller, 2004; Mudambi, et al., 1997). In this study, brand image is defined as an individual’s overall evaluation of a brand (Webster & Keller, 2004).

The techniques for measuring brand image have not been standardized, although there is a trend towards different quantitative techniques in conducting researches. Also from Barwise & Meehan’s (2010) point of view, in order to accomplish the quality of a great brand, all information about the customers and their perceptions of the brand is beneficial to be gathered for managing the image. In order to be able to measure brand image in this study, it must be examined what a brand image consists of. Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) discovered a brand image to be a set of feelings, ideas and attitudes consumers have about brands. In their opinion, a brand image is everything people associate with the brand: symbolism, meanings or messages, personification or cognitive and psychological elements. The scholars further concluded that a brand image is a subjective and a perceptual phenomenon the consumer forms through his/her own interpretation and it can be affected by marketing, context and characteristics of the consumer. In addition, the perception of reality that the consumer possesses is more important than the reality itself (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). According to Aaker’s (1996) model of brand personality scale, brand can also have a “personality” that can be described with terms used to describe a person. The model categorizes personalities to five categories that break down to 15 facets: Sincerity (down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, and cheerful), excitement (daring, spirited, imaginative, and up-to-date), competence (reliable, intelligent, and successful), sophistication (upper class, charming) and ruggedness (outdoorsy, tough). In a study of his, these attributes explained 93 percent of perceived differences in brands. The questionnaire of this study examines brand image by adapting Aaker’s model, because it enables measuring the brand image holistically.

Throughout time, marketing has focused on enhancing the brand’s marketing mix thinking that consumers make buying decisions always based on cognition and rationality (Iglesias et al., 2011). As it was introduced above, in recent studies, however, it has been indicated that consumers often tend to act by their emotional reactions (Johnson & Grayson , 2005). In this study, consumer attitudes and brand image are in focus due to their ability to explain consumer motives and thereby predict the consumers’ behavior in long term. As the next chapter continues, positive attitudes and brand image are consequences of a brand experience, which can be delivered through marketing communications.

2.2. Brand experience and marketing communications

Attitudes and brand image can be positively affected through a brand experience that provides consumers with pleasure by how the product makes them feel or the fun experiences the brand can provide (Solomon, 2010. p. 277-280). This receives further verification from the scholars Chaudhuri &
Holbrook’s (2001) empirical research where they conclude: “hedonic value in the product category was significantly and positively related to brand affect” (p. 90). The prevailing mood of the consumer, when exposing to a marketing message, has influence on how the consumer feels and forms attitudes towards the brand and remembers it in the long run (Solomon, 2010. P. 277-280). How to define brand experience and to succeed in delivering such an experience through marketing communications, though, has not yet been conceptualized, and a scale for measuring brand experiences has not yet been developed (Brakus et al., 2009). The scholars, however, have tried to define it as a set of feelings, sensations, cognitions and behavioral responses evoked by different stimuli when interacting with a brand (Brakus et al., 2009), which is held as the definition of a brand experience in this study.

The positive attitude is needed in creating affective commitment that can lead to purchasing, and finally brand loyalty. Therefore, creating positive brand experiences and changing consumer attitudes are one of the main challenges of marketers (Solomon, 2010. p. 277-280). An area of marketing that especially focuses on creating holistic experiences for consumers is called experiential marketing. In the next chapter, marketing schools with the focus of providing consumers with experiences are introduced in order to further indicate how the efforts of committing consumers through marketing communications can be done in practice. It is yet to be discovered how the practice of designing engaging brand experiences has evolved during the years and what has been researched to be the components behind an engaging brand experience.

2.2.1. Discovering the components of an engaging brand experience

In the old-fashioned way of structuring marketing channel architectures, the channels and channel members have been operating more or less independently without real integration between them. This would mean personal, electric, traditional broadcast, catalogue/direct mail and tele service channels all operating separately (Hauser & Lewison, 2007). The development of technology during the last two decades, however, introduced a new multichannel customer, who would choose how and when to interact with a brand. Interactions could take place in several touch points during the purchase decision cycle. The strategies created to reach these customers are called multichannel marketing strategies (Hauser & Lewison, 2007). The goal of multichannel thinking was to build lasting customer relationships by offering customers products, services and support through different touch points (Rangaswamy & Bruggen, 2005). As Dholakia et al. (2005) further state, providing customers with shopping options they prefer, will ultimately create long-term loyalty.

Berman & Thelen (2004) mention an advantage of the multichannel strategy for the supplier to be the ability to select from multiple channels what to use, based on their own strengths. The experience for the customer however, should be consistent through the touch points and felt as one entity. The migration between touch points should be easy and the central focus being that the customer chooses to interact with the company. As a generalization of multichannel thinking, the feeling of consistency can and should be enhanced with familiar characteristics across touch points. A well-developed multichannel strategy includes characteristics such as well-integrated promotions, product consistency and a free flow of data across touch points (Berman & Thelen, 2004).

When multichannel thinking arose, the idea was that information would move seamlessly between touch points (Berman & Telen, 2004). In practice, more channels as touch points emerged, but no real integration was ever established. However, the evolution of digital retailing channels and the
advances in technology are now removing the boundaries between different retailing channels (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013; Rigby, 2011). This has brought up a new term to describe the phenomenon: omnichannel marketing. Rigby (2011) explains this to be the result of the countless touch points that companies now have to interact with consumers: websites, physical stores, kiosks, direct mail, catalogues, call centers, social media, mass media, mobile devices etc. Old operating models will not work anymore in the future; different touch points need to be integrated together to form a seamless experience – the omnichannel experience. According to Rigby (2011), the key of the new thinking is shifting the focus to the consumer experience instead of company-driven measures. This can be done for example by applying new technologies to all of the interactions with customers, whether it is in the physical store or other touch point the customer chooses to use when interacting with the company.

Rigby’s (2011) idea of focusing on consumer experiences instead of company-driven measures, however, was not a totally new innovation. Already over a decade ago, Schmitt (1999) drew a concept of experiential marketing, which according to the scholar was needed, since the traditional marketing strategies that were useful before were developed in response to the needs of the industrial age. The new era of information, branding and communications revolution has shifted companies from traditional way of marketing features and benefits towards creating holistic experiences to consumers. According to the scholars, communications are no longer just a one-way, but a two-way interaction (Schmitt, 1999; Smilansky 2009). The idea receives recent confirmation from Iglesias et al., (2011) saying that instead of focusing on the rational and physical aspects of products, in the current environment, marketing should change its focus to managing consumer experiences. Also Thompson et al. (2006, p. 50) already highlighted the importance of emotions and customer centrism in branding, saying that “emotional branding is widely heralded as a key to marketing success”. Emotional branding is consumer-centric, relational, and a story-driven approach for creating deep and enduring affective bonds between consumers and brands. The driving force behind emotional branding is that consumer passion needed for bonding with a brand is very seldom cultivated through rational arguments (Thompson et al., 2006). In more depth, the traditional view of branding fails to recognize the brand as an essential source of sensory, affective and cognitive associations that result in the brand experience – hence the experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999).

According to Smilansky (2009), the experiential era of marketing should focus on giving consumers brand-relevant experiences that involve and add value for them. The unforgettable experiences where the consumers are personally involved, will eventually make consumers remember the brand’s marketing. Smilansky (2009) continues that the brand experience should be communicated live, either face-to-face or remotely, across all touch points. The other “non-live” communication channels used, should then be integrated around the live experience to amplify the impact. Also, engaging the consumers should happen at their own will.

What can be concluded, is that the schools of multi-, omni-, and experiential marketing seem to match well with what can be stated from the consumer behavioral point of view mentioned before: attitudes and affectional bonding have a strong impact on consumer behavior and these ways of marketing are especially trying to generate emotional responses through delivering consumer experiences.
2.2.2. Components of an engaging brand experience

Firstly, what constantly arise in the literature as important factors related to brand loyalty, are attitudinal commitment to brands and positive emotions behind the process. What experiential marketing aims to accomplish, is well in line with these aspects. Secondly, the components how these brand experiences have been tried to deliver in different touch points are interaction, involvement of consumers and consistency of communications and the experience. These components are further discussed below.

A brand takes on a meaning with customers through personal experiences, commercial messages and interpersonal communications. The power of a brand lays in brand interactions: thoughts, feelings, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and behavior. This is why a brand is a valuable intangible asset and has to be managed consistently and carefully in order to form strong bonds with customers. (Webster and Keller, 2004.) Consumers can connect with brands in multiple touch points and understanding the brand relationship is in key role for marketers to adapt their strategies accordingly. What has especially changed is when and in what touch points the consumers are most open for influence and how the interaction can be created. Based on their study, Evans et al. (2001) say that virtual communities as touch points are commercially beneficial for companies. Virtual communities are a good way to provide interactive communication between a company, consumer and between consumers, as long as the community adds value to the interactions. In the study, the consumers that used Internet content provided by a company had a more positive opinion towards the company. In addition, both Andrews et al. (1990) and Zaichkowsky (1986) confirm involvement to be a consumer’s internal state of arousal, with intensity, direction and persistence. It is the consumer that is involved in a product, advertising content, media or situations, not the other way around. They state that involvement is affected by personal character but also situational and decision factors (risk, size, etc). The consequences of involvement are numerous: increase in perceived product attribute differences and time spent examining alternatives, increased recall and comprehension, and enduring change in attitude that is more resistant to counter persuasion. Consumers’ commitment to attitudes vary depending on their level of involvement with the attitude object. When the involvement is deep, the attitude becomes a part of the person’s value system and these attitudes are very difficult to change due to their importance to the consumer (Solomon, 2010. p. 282-283). Based on the above stated, hypothesis 1 posits:

**H1: The more involving and interactive the brand experience, the more positive the attitude will be**

The scholars Brodie et al. (2009) introduce that a brand experience is also about providing consistent action. The strength of the brand reflects the quality of the firm’s marketing and therefore the brand must be consistent with the firm’s strategy and strategic marketing management (Webster & Keller, 2004). From consumer behavioral point of view, when the consumer evaluates how the attitude object fits with his/her other, related attitudes of the object, the cognitive experience behind an attitude must be consistent with the new one in order to be reinforced (Solomon et al., 2010, p. 282-283). Therefore, consistency in communicating the brand is important and hypothesis 2 states the perceived consistency in communication to have a positive effect on consumer attitudes.

**H2: The more consistent the experience, the more positive the attitude will be**
According to Amine (1998), behavior is an indirect source affecting brand loyalty through mediating variables such as involvement and satisfaction, which are continuation of using the brand. These alone are not enough to measure true brand loyalty, even though many earlier researches, such as Traylor’s (1981) survey, have indicated that high involvement in a product category may enhance brand loyalty. On the other hand, according to Amine’s (1998) empirical findings, low involvement in a product category indicated low brand loyalty, since the consumer has no strong beliefs or feelings about the product. Therefore with direct sources, such as perceived differences and risks among alternatives, brand sensitivity, brand attachment and liking, brand loyalty can be affected thoroughly. To conclude, direct and indirect sources are both needed in the birth of true brand loyalty. (Amine, 1998)

Based on the above arguments, through interaction and involvement, consumers form individual perceptions of the brand and the overall evaluation of the brand can deepen out of the consumer’s own will. Therefore, hypothesis 3 presents that:

**H3: The more involving and interactive the brand experience, the more positive the brand image will be**

Additionally, Barwise & Meehan (2010) remind that successful companies always keep an eye on their core brand values, regardless of the consumer touch point. The values must guide all other actions across communication and the communication must be consistent in order to create a consistent brand image. A pilot test introduced by Edelman (2010), showed that discontinuous and fragmented experience when navigating and searching information of a brand online, dissuaded potential customers. When the customer experience was enhanced by making the decision journey consistent across all platforms, the examined product became the bestselling item of the company and its sales exceeded all expectations. In line with that, Iglesias et al. (2011) also propose that brands that are capable of delivering unique and distinctive experiences to consumers by ensuring consistency in all touch points, will be able to build brand loyalty, which can only form when the perceived brand image is positive. Based on the above arguments, hypothesis 4 posits that:

**H4: The more consistent the experience, the more positive the brand image will be**

As the overall conclusion, the authors propose that the combination of consistency in communication, interaction with the brand from the consumer’s own will and involvement of the consumer with the brand, together can deliver an engaging brand experience for the consumer that generates positive attitudes and brand image. Therefore in this study, a marketing campaign consisting of these constructs was chosen as the base for the research, in order to measure how the brand experience affects consumers’ attitudes and brand image. The ideology behind the chosen campaign is in line with Schmitt’s (1999) summary about experiential marketing being distinctive from the traditional thinking through focusing on consumer experiences, treating consumption as a holistic experience, recognizing the rational as well as the emotional drivers of consumption, and using customized, situation-bound methodologies instead of one methodological ideology. In practice, these components can be enabled through different communication touch points such as face to face promotions, social media marketing and traditional advertising. Combining the benefits from all these channels into a pre-designed path that a consumer follows, will assumingly enhance positive attitude and brand image towards the communicating brand. The new aspect with this study is the power of the combination: when
multichannel marketing targets all consumers with the same message regardless of the touchpoint, the integration aims to create a seamless story, continuing from one touchpoint to another. The difference in the mechanism is that while the power of multichannel thinking lays in repetition, an integrated and pre-designed path extends and deepens the story for the consumer and thereby involves the consumer more with the story. High involvement and interaction enable a deeper experience and when the perception of consistency supports the evaluation, positive attitudes form. In order to cause positive attitude, the three substantial components must integrate and form a holistically confined picture of the brand. These three components; interaction, involvement and consistency seem to have relevance in forming an engaging brand experience for a consumer and their relation is further illustrated in the next chapter.

2.3. Conceptual development

The conceptual development in Figure 2 (p.13) describes the theoretical framework with specific concepts derived from the previously reviewed literature and places the hypotheses of the study to the framework. The purpose of the model is to connect the most relevant concepts and create a theoretical base for answering the research questions.

This study examines how consumer attitudes and brand image can be affected by marketing communications that focus on delivering engaging brand experiences to consumers (H1-H4). The literature did not provide one model combining the factors of an engaging brand experience, which is why the factors with relevance were chosen by the authors. Derived from the literature, the key factors in creating an engaging brand experience through marketing communications are interaction, involvement and consistency in communication.

An engaging brand experience is vital in order to arouse positive emotions for the consumers, which are then the core in forming a positive attitude towards the brand. Attitudinal commitment to brands has recently been highlighted in predicting future behavior well. Therefore, measuring consumer attitudes serves a good base for understanding and affecting consumer behavior. Attitudes result in brand image, which is the overall evaluation of a brand. By knowing how consumers perceive the brand, marketers can design communication activities accordingly and deliver brand experiences that affect brand loyalty. Therefore, a final hypothesis of the study presents that:

*H5: A consumer’s positive attitude leads to a positive brand image*
Figure 2: Conceptual development connecting the central concepts presented in the literature review. (Own illustration)
3. METHODS

The following chapter gives a detailed overview of how the data for the later analysis was gathered and utilised in the study. The chapter will be concluded by an evaluation of the quality of the research.

3.1. Selection of topic and the research process

The interest towards the topic arose from following public writing and discussing with marketing practitioners. The advertising noise that consumers are surrounded by nowadays, is making it more and more difficult for brands to gain consumers’ attention through marketing communications. Practitioners are looking for cues on how to design successful marketing communication activities, which led the authors to examine the characters which effectively commit consumers to brands.

As many scholars (Aaker, 1991; Dick & Basu, 1994; Amine, 1998) state, attitudinal commitment has a strong influence on brand loyalty and purchasing behavior. Therefore the “mental commitment”, attitudes, turned out to be the goal to reach through marketing communications. Attitudes and brand image can be affected by providing brand experiences (Solomon et al., 2010. P. 277-280). In our study, we wanted to examine how an engaging brand experience in marketing communications is created and whether it leads to positive attitude and thus, brand image.

In order to understand the mechanisms of an engaging brand experience, related literature and the reasons behind the demand for a more effective way to communicate had to be examined and interpreted. Comparing practitioners’ discussions with complementary literature has been parallel throughout the research process, in order to successfully orientate the focus of the study and to connect it with current marketing practice. In order to explore what affects the formation of brand loyalty and how this is approached in current marketing, the data collection was, however, made without prior presumptions.

As a result, what the practitioners seemed to do and what they wish to do, did not perfectly match with existing literature. The problem was that the literature did not yet cover the idea of combining the components, what we call the components of an engaging brand experience, as one model. Therefore, no existing model was to be found to be verified in practice, but the combination of factors was to be built by the authors. The scholars Dubois and Gadde (2002) justify that principle by stating that data should not be forced to fit existing categories, but existing categories are to be developed from data.

The insights for accomplishing the combination were gathered from two different aspects. As the starting point, creating brand loyalty is the ultimate goal for brands. By first examining what causes brand loyalty, we then continued to study how these elements can be created in marketing communications. Exploring different ways of designing marketing communications then revealed methods that seemed to have the most relevance in committing consumers, which we further combined as components of an engaging brand experience.
In order to connect the study with reality, the findings this far were introduced to two different marketing agencies, them not knowing of each other’s participation. Table 1 summarizes the conducted interviews. The found ideology of experiential marketing was further also proven to be relevant from these practitioners’ point of view and to be the path that innovative practitioners are now trying to follow. While the direction of the study thereby received support, it encouraged the authors to continue with the research design and to further verify it in practice. As Bryman & Bell (2011) state, the line between qualitative and quantitative research can occasionally blur. In this study, qualitative studies with the two companies being inductive and interpretative in nature mixed with a later quantitative method, which is more deductive and analytical in nature. The focus of this study was, however, to analyze data and answer a research problem, so the quantitative strategy became the primary design of the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Timeframe/date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>2 hrs / 31.3.2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Business Manager</td>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>2 hrs / 31.3.2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategist</td>
<td>Tietotalo</td>
<td>45 min / 16.4.2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>Tietotalo</td>
<td>45 min / 16.4.2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Conducted interviews*

### 3.2. Data collection

The study is a combination of primary data and literature review and follows mainly a quantitative method. The study was conducted in three levels: First, the literature review focused on consumer behavior in relation to branding and marketing communications. Second, a brief qualitative study was conducted to verify the conceptual development in practice. Finally, the quantitative data gathering was implemented in order to test the hypotheses. The primary data has an important role in the study while the research questions could not have been fully answered with secondary data. This was kept in mind due to Ghauri and Grønhaug’s (2005) statement that peoples’ attitudes, intentions or buying behavior of a certain product cannot be measured without collecting primary data.

As mentioned before, the factors enabling an engaging brand experience were derived from literature and further verified to have importance in reality by interviewing two different marketing agencies. These interviews were conducted to verify the chosen direction of the study to match reality, and for being able to test the model in real life. As Brewerton and Millward, (2001) also state, interviews are flexible to be used at any phase of the research process and they can fit to be combined with other data collection methods. The first agency was contacted due to previous discussions with them about trends in marketing in general. The way in which the agency is designing marketing strategies for their clients was in line with the interests of the authors regarding marketing. In order to gain a wider opinion, the ideology was further compared with another marketing consultancy agency. This agency was contacted out of interest towards their public webinar on the topic omnichannel retailing. Omnichannel retailing very much focuses on the same principles what the authors held as the key
elements of an engaging brand experience, but in retailing environment. As a comment during the webinar, the agency briefly mentioned that the idea of omnichannel retailing could be also exploited in brand marketing, the area of interest in this study. In order to get original comments in the interview, the outcomes of the study this far were not revealed to the agency. Despite that, the consultant agency almost completely supported the problem statement and possible methods to research it. This further confirmed the authors to continue with the research design. Once the theoretical framework for the following part, the quantitative research, was formed, the first marketing agency was contacted again. Due to their way of designing marketing communications, cooperation was suggested for organizing a research to study the impacts of the ‘new’ method. After receiving a green light from the original client, a survey to measure a particular marketing concept was conducted.

3.2.1. Literature review

Existing literature and research have guided this research from the start. The role of literature to this study has been important, since it provided the authors with a better understanding of the research area and the advantage of building the new research on top of already existing ones. The literature to support this thesis was mainly sourced from Google Scholar, Discovery and the databases at Mälardalen University. By defining the key words for the study in the beginning, the amount of unrelated data was minimized and the search process made more efficient.

All chosen literature was further critically reviewed in order to use only trustworthy and quality sources, such as scientific peer-reviewed articles from known journals. Journals related to marketing were especially the primary source of articles. The carrying ideology for the structure of this thesis was adopted from one certain article that affected the study much, “Whence consumer loyalty?” by Richard Oliver (1999), retrieved from the Journal of Marketing. This ideology was used in building the theoretical framework and designing the study.

As further qualifications, the literature used had to be rather new and collected from well-rated journals (journal ranking list from Harzing.com was used), and books as original sources of articles. Some older sources, such as Aaker (1991) and (1996), were used in case the scholar plays an important role within the field of the study and is still constantly cited in academic articles. Referring to older sources also served the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of how the concepts have developed during the years. Some of the concepts were from the field of psychology and therefore the literature dated longer back in time, when the first concepts of consumer behavior were defined.

3.2.2. Quantitative research

The quantitative research was conducted among two different target groups, participants and non-participants of a campaign. The first target group was the participants of a marketing campaign that was designed using “omni experience” thinking, meaning that as the purpose of the campaign, the consumer is directed through a pre-designed experience path of different touch points of the brand, all conveying different messages which together build a story. The idea of the campaign was to find the funniest smile of Finland and the most smiling city of Finland, and it was tightly bound to the
organizing brand, a dentist chain. The aim of the campaign was to involve consumers in spending time with the brand in a positive, fun way, by making them come and take smiling pictures of themselves in promotion stands at shopping malls around Finland. The photos were then sent to a Facebook gallery with an identifying hashtag of the city that the participant lives in and the participants then competed against each other of the funniest smile in Finland. The cities also competed of the title of the most smiling city of Finland. The “red thread” of the campaign was to provide the consumer with a holistic experience of the brand regardless of the touch point and as the basic feature, the consumer were to become involved at his/her own will. These were well in line with the definition of experiential marketing by Schmitt, (1999); Smilansky (2009), Thompson et al. (2009) and Iglesias et al. (2011). The participants for this study were afterwards identified with the help of the marketing agency and their Facebook data, and approached via an e-mail survey.

The survey was built to measure consumer attitudes towards the brand, thus the brand image, as a result of participating in the “omni experience campaign”. The respondents were asked which channels of the campaign they had been exposed to, and from this information, the respondents were separated and analyzed separately and comparatively. Out of the three components that were defined as the components of an engaging brand experience, interaction and involvement were surely to be present in the campaign design (in order to take part in the campaign, one had to get involved either by taking the picture at the promotion stand and downloading it to Facebook). Because consistency of the campaign was more of a perception of a participant, the level of perceived consistency was investigated separately in the survey. For comparison, the same survey was conducted among people who had not participated in the campaign. With this data, differences between attitude and brand image between participants and non-participants of the campaign could be measured.

The purpose of the gathered data was to learn the effects of the brand experience (and for comparison, non-participants’ perception) by volume, not by individual respondents, which is why a quantitative method was chosen. As Schiffman et al. (2012) conclude, a quantitative method is a descriptive method that can be used to understand the effects of promotional inputs on consumers and to predict future consumer behavior. In this study, consumer attitudes and brand image were measured in detail. The goal was to draw conclusions that can be generalized to concern marketing efforts at large.

What comes to measuring attitudes, Brace (2004) states that measuring attitudes can be problematic because of the difficulty for the respondents to accurately describe their attitudes towards something. The respondents need to be helped in expressing their attitudes. To do this, a Likert attitude scale with three component attitude model was used in the study. The Likert scale consisted of three attitude dimensions, which according to general agreement of researchers are affect, cognition and conation (Solomon et al., 2010, . 275-277). According to Evans et al. (2009, p. 107), this three component model especially serves a useful approach for researching attitudes, because it provides a framework for the questions in a way that all components are covered and attitudes can be measured holistically. The model also served the purpose of analyzing the formation of brand loyalty with Oliver’s (1999) phases of brand loyalty. The more detailed questions were inspired by Ajzen’s (2001) summary of attitude attribute dimensions and the way to predict behavior was adapted from Romaniuk & Sharp (2003), stating that there is a relationship with the strength of the attitude and behavior. The statements
concerning brand image were adopted from Aaker’s (1996) model of brand personality, investigating the brand image through perceived brand personality.

3.3. Operationalization

This section provides a more detailed explanation of how the data gathering was made in practice.

The contact with the two marketing agencies to verify the study was conducted through a personal interview, phone calls, skype conference call and by e-mail. An open personal interview with the CEO and International sales manager of the first company was conducted on May 31, 2015 in Helsinki. The interview, or rather a discussion, did not have any prior expectations or assumptions, but the purpose was to gain insights on the current challenges in marketing in order to combine the forthcoming study with practical relevance. The data was further deepened by phone calls and e-mail. The communication with the agency was continuous throughout the study, since the quantitative research was as well exploited with the agency’s assistance. The representatives from the second marketing consultancy agency were interviewed through a skype conference call on April 17, 2015. The purpose for this contact was to furthermore verify the findings from the first agency and to widen the perspective to be more valid in general.

3.3.1. Questionnaire

The quantitative data gathering was conducted through an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on the conceptual development and conducted in Finnish in order to avoid loss in respondents due to language difficulties. In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked how much they agree or disagree with the presented statements and how strong the attitude is, by using a seven-point scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The Likert Scale was chosen, because apart from receiving findings on different aspects of an attitude through certain attitude statements, its scale also enables summing the scores for an overall attitudinal score per individual respondent. Due to time restraints, the results had to be collected quickly, which is why the design of the research carried was an electronic, self-completing e-mail survey. This is a fast and low-cost way of conducting a survey (Schiffman et al., 2012). The tool for conducting the survey had to reliable, acknowledged and proficient and it should also enable easy transfer of data further to an analysis software, Microsoft Excel. As for tool for creating the survey, Surveymonkey.com survey was used. The participants’ e-mail addresses were retrieved with the help of the marketing agency. The questionnaire was first sent via e-mail to 1174 participants of the campaign. As a result, the questionnaire received 449 responses. The number of acceptable, completed surveys was 310 so the overall response rate was 26 %. After this, the questionnaire was shared in Facebook to retrieve answers from consumers that had not participated in the campaign, for comparison. 56 responses were received, of which 36 were acceptably completed. The risk with questionnaires often is the low response rate, so the greater the response rate, the more accurately it will estimate parameters in the population sampled (Kanuk &
Berenson, 1975). The received answer rate can be considered as a good sample of the studied population.

3.3.1.1. Questionnaire design

The questionnaire consisted of 24 statements divided to four sections. Table 2 further describes the reasoning for asking these questions and how the statements are connected with the collected literature. For the full questionnaire, see Appendix 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Explanation of topic</th>
<th>Question types</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Question numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Attitudes towards the brand</td>
<td></td>
<td>Solomon et al. (2010); Evans et al. (2009); Ajzen (2001); Romaniuk &amp; Sharp (2003), Oliver (1999)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Beliefs about the brand</td>
<td>Statements: &quot;I think that Oral is very versatile...&quot;</td>
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<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>Feelings related to the brand</td>
<td>Statements: &quot;I feel that Oral has high quality...&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>6-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conative</td>
<td>Intentions regarding future actions</td>
<td>Statements: &quot;Next time I need dental service, I will&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>12-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand image</td>
<td>Perceptions of the brand</td>
<td>Brand personality statements: &quot;The company is up-to-date...&quot;</td>
<td>Aaker (1996)</td>
<td>14-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Perceptions of consistency in the campaign</td>
<td>Statements of perceived consistency: &quot;The campaign was suitable/fluent/good entity...&quot;</td>
<td>Aaker (1991 &amp; 1996); Brodie et al, 2009; Barwise &amp; Meehan, 2010</td>
<td>21-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch point</td>
<td>Where the respondent has encountered the campaign</td>
<td>&quot;Where have you encountered the campaign?&quot;</td>
<td>Andrews et al. 1990; Zaichkowsky 1986, Webster &amp; Keller, 2004</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: The survey design and structure.

Section 1 (statements 1-13) is explorative in nature and examines attitudes through cognitive, affective and conative components following the three component attitude model (Solomon et al., 2010). The model was chosen due to its ability to measure attitudes holistically when the three components are combined and interpreted as whole (Evans et al., 2009). The questions under the components “affective” and “cognitive”, were further retrieved from Ajzen’s (2010) attitude attribute dimensions.
good-bad, harmful-beneficial, pleasant-unpleasant and likable-dislikable. The scholar states that an attitude is an overall evaluation consisting of these dimensions. By connecting the questions with the literature review, and further combining the three component model with Ajzen’s (2010) attribute dimensions, the variables should have a high validity.

Ajzen’s (2010) attributes were further categorized under the three component attitude model as following: Cognitive (harmful-beneficial, good-bad) and affective (pleasant-unpleasant, likable-dislikable). The content of the statements was, however, adjusted to fit the researched brand. As an intention to do something does not always result in behavior (Solomon et al., 2010, p. 275-277), Romaniuk & Sharp’s (2003) statement, that the strength of the attitude to the brand is the factor related to future behavior, is used in predicting the future behavior. The structure of the statements was therefore assigned so that strong opinions were possible to be expressed: e.g. “In my opinion, the brand is very suitable for me”.

Section 2 (statements 14-20) is examining the brand image. In order to the statements to be valid, the same method of carefully combining the questions with literature of great importance was used. The model to examine brand image was partly adopted from Aaker’s (1996) concept of brand personality scale, because it is widely used in examining brand image by practitioners and according to a study in the scholar’s book, these attributes explained 93 percent of perceived differences in brands. Brand image is an important indicator of consumers’ future behavior and therefore in the focus in this study. The model categorizes personalities to five categories that break down to 15 facets: Sincerity (down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, and cheerful), excitement (daring, spirited, imaginative, and up-to-date), competence (reliable, intelligent, and successful), sophistication (upper class, charming) and ruggedness (outdoorsy, tough). These categories were the base for the statements, but adjusted according to the researched brand, e.g. “Ruggedness” was left out due to its inability to fit the brand, a dentist chain. As the result, only four of the five categories of Aaker’s model were used.

Section 3 (questions 21-23) examines the perceived level of consistency of the experience provided by the campaign. The perceived consistency was asked due to its relevance in affecting attitudes (Solomon et al., 2010, Brodie et al., 2009, Barwise & Meehan, 2010). Section 4 (question 24) asks about the touch points where the respondent had encountered the campaign. The reason for asking this question was in its great importance in evaluating the involvement of the consumer in the campaign. Involvement is one of the chosen criteria of an engaging brand experience and its importance is highlighted especially by Zaichkowsky, 1986; Andrews et al. 1990, and Webster & Keller, 2004. In general, the questions in the sections 3 and 4 represent the category of brand experience (interaction, involvement, consistency). They were asked as filter questions in order to analyze the answers based on how consistent the respondent perceives the campaign and how involved (how many touch points) the respondent had passed through.

In addition, the survey was also conducted among people who had not taken part in the campaign. For this purpose, one additional question about participating the campaign was added and section 3-4 about brand experience was removed. The comparable variables between the two questionnaires were only the overall attitude and brand image between participants and non-participants. The second questionnaire was distributed via Facebook, on the authors’ individual pages as well as in different Finnish groups.
3.3.1.2. **Analysis of the data**

In the analysis of the answers, the respondents were categorized to different respondent groups based on their level of interaction and involvement in the studied campaign and by perception of consistency in their answers. Participation to the campaign required interaction and involvement in the first place, that being a given factor, but there could be differences in the level of interaction and involvement, depending on how thoroughly the consumer had proceeded with the designed experience path in different touch points. The differences in the answers were then compared between respondent categories. The goal was to measure whether there is indication that higher levels in involvement, interaction and consistency led to more positive attitudes and image towards the brand.

The categorization by level of involvement and interaction was defined by the number of touch points in which the respondent had encountered the campaign. The more touch points they had been in touch with, the higher the level of interaction and involvement. The comparison was made between the respondents exposed to all of the touch points, that is the whole designed experience path, and respondents exposed to only some touch points.

The level of consistency was asked in the survey as a perception of the respondents. The answers were compared to the attitudinal answers and brand image related answers and presented as a chart, in which correlation between a feeling of consistency and positive attitudes and brand image were sought. Finally the analysis checked for whether there exists a correlation between positive attitude and brand image. The correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to +1, and the value represents the strength or the weakness of the dependence between two figures in sets of data (Newbold et al. 1995). If the correlation coefficient is from .10 to .29, the correlation is weak, from .30 to .49, the correlation is medium and from .50 to 1.0, the correlation is strong (Cohen, 1977, p.115). Microsoft Excel uses the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient formula to calculate the correlations, and it will be used in the analysis.

In the results, attitude was given an overall numerical value from the Likert scale answering options depending from 1-7, where 1 is the lowest possible and 7 is the highest of all. The value is the average of all the answers of each respondent in the respondent group to the questions related to the three component attitude model of cognitive, affective and conative dimensions. The numerical value for brand image is the average of all the questions of each respondent in the respondent group related to brand image. Perception of consistency was examined through three related questions, and the numerical value for consistency is the average of all the answer to these questions. For comparison, the results from the questionnaire among non-participants’ were further compared to the results of the participants’ of the campaign. Standard deviations were used to see the fluctuation of the values to estimate the certainty of the results. According to Kohler (1994), standard deviation is the most important average deviation measure of dispersion among data sets, and therefore good for estimating the certainty of the results.
3.4. Research quality

This section presents the considerations that may affect the reliability and validity of the thesis.

3.4.1. Reliability and validity

The empirical data collection was designed in a way that eliminates all factors limiting the data gathering. For instance, as the source of primary data and in addition to phone calls and an online survey, also face-to-face communication was conducted so that non-verbal cues could be interpreted. The questionnaire was translated in Finnish and the interviews were in Finnish as well, so that language barriers would not intimidate respondents. During the interviews, an open discussion without prior assumptions was exploited in order to receive authentic answers. An agreement whether the data from these agencies should stay anonymous was made at an early stage in order to remove barriers to discuss openly.

When quantitative data gathering is used, it is important to validate the research by examining how well it has been connected to literature. If it has been conducted well, other researchers should be able to use the exact method and receive the same results and conclusions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The questionnaire was connected with well-known literature in order to be interpreted, following an already valid method. The study was conducted as an online survey, where misinterpretation and misunderstanding should be minimal. In order to be as accurate as possible, the questionnaire was tested several times before launching. As result, some questions were further specified and their placing was changed. To receive data from only valid respondents, the questionnaire was only sent to people who had taken part in the campaign. This was ensured with the help of the marketing agency and their data of respondents. In order to avoid legal issues and whether the participants’ data was legally accepted to be used for this purpose, was furthermore confirmed from a legal advisor.

The quantitative data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel and its formula of correlation, which indicates that the results are accurate, since the same formula was used in each calculation and done the same way. When writing a questionnaire using a Likert scale, Brace (2004) mentions few issues that the researchers must be aware of. Acquiescence refers to the tendency for respondents to agree more than disagree with statements. Central tendency means that respondents rather use the more central scores, rather than the extremes, in their answers. Pattern answering might also occur due to the respondents’ boredom and lead to routinely ticking boxes in a pattern. In this study, obvious pattern answers were deleted from the results, totally 11 in amount. The other aspects of the scholar are, however, difficult to be spotted from the answers (such as tendency to answer with central scores) and therefore remain as possible factors limiting the overall reliability of the answers.

3.4.2. Limitations

During the process, there were some issues limiting the study. First, a loss of one touch point in the campaign in a late stage narrowed down the results to some extent. With more touch points the results would have been more demonstrative on the subject. Second, the number of respondents was not
divided equally between different respondent groups, which could limit the generalization of the results. Third, it might have also been that some participants of the survey might have already had a certain attitude and brand image towards the brand before exposing to the campaign, and the already existing attitude and brand image could have had an effect (positive or negative) on the individuals’ responses when responding to the survey, regardless of the campaign. In order to indicate how the attitude and brand image were perceived without this experience, the second survey for non-participants was conducted. This could, however, only indicate the difference between the two focus groups. In order to truly verify the outcome of the brand experience (the campaign) on a respondent, the same respondent should have been questioned before and after participation. Finally, as discussed earlier, the study tried to indicate whether this formula of an engaging brand experience enables brand loyalty to begin to develop. This however can only be indicated, not validated, since the data does not tell whether the participants pursued to use the brand’s services or not. As indicated, positive attitude is required for brand loyalty to form, but ultimately it is not the sole source of it, with other factors also affecting the issue.
4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter will present the findings and analysis of the quantitative survey. The structure follows the structure of the conceptual development: brand experience affecting attitudes and brand image, followed by attitude affecting brand image. As a concluding chapter, an interpretation of consumer behavior and brand loyalty is provided.

The survey was conducted over two weeks during April, 2015. The survey received 346 valid responses. Out of the respondents, 287 had encountered one of the touch points of the campaign. 23 respondents had encountered all the touch points, and 36 respondents had not participated in the campaign.

4.1. An engaging brand experience

This section provides an analysis on whether the brand experience was engaging and generated positive attitude and brand image.

In the survey, attitude (section 1) and brand image (section 2) were measured through a Likert Scale with numerical values from 1-7, 1 meaning the lowest possible and 7 meaning the highest possible value. Number 4 in the middle represented “neutral” and all values above 4 are considered as positive and all values below 4 are considered as negative. The overall numerical value of attitude and brand image consists of the average value of individual respondents’ answers to the related questions.

The survey was conducted in two target groups, participants of the campaign (A) and non-participants of the campaign (B, no touch points). Table 3 shows the average values of attitude and brand image of both of the target groups, as well as the level of perceived consistency of the campaign among the participants. From the values, it can be seen that the numerical average values of attitude and brand image are higher in the group that had participated in the campaign (A) than from the respondents with no contact with the campaign (B).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Touch points</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Brand image</th>
<th>Consistency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: All touch points</td>
<td>5.67 (1.10)</td>
<td>5.89 (1.04)</td>
<td>6.47 (0.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: No touch points</td>
<td>4.28 (1.37)</td>
<td>4.54 (1.13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Numerical values and standard deviations for attitude and brand experience based on touch point exposure

From the participants (A), it was asked in which touch point of the campaign they had been exposed to and the answers about attitude and brand image were divided based on the touch point exposure. An engaging brand experience in this study was defined to consist of interaction, involvement and consistency and to result in positive attitude and brand image towards the brand. In order to indicate whether the brand experience had been engaging, the brand experience must be considered as whole. This means that only the participants who had gone through the whole designed experience path of
the campaign (exposed to all touch points) are considered in evaluating the success of the brand experience.

The participants’ (A) answers resulted in numerical attitude value of 5.67 and brand image value of 5.89. In the scale 4 being neutral and 7 representing the highest possible value, 5.67 and 5.89 exceed the median between 4 and 7 (5.5) and can be considered to be closer to the highest possible value than “neutral”. This indicates that the overall attitude and brand image of the participants of the campaign are positive. The average value of perceived consistency of the campaign was 6.47, indicating that the campaign was perceived nearly as consistent as possible. In comparison, the values within the non-participants’ group (B) were attitude 4.28 and brand image 4.54. These values as well exceeded the value “neutral” 4, but narrowly. This indicates that this respondent group’s attitude and brand image towards the brand was nearly “neutral”, but with a positive nuance. The standard deviations of the results fluctuate between 0.81 and 1.37. These are relatively small deviations, which gives reliability and validity for the results; fluctuation amongst the answers have been quite small.

The definition of an engaging brand experience in this study is that it affects brand loyalty positively. In detail, brand loyalty can be affected when the perception of the brand is positive and the consumer forms emotional ties with the brand, thus, brand affect (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2010). As a result of the campaign, positive attitude and brand image were generated and it can be concluded that the brand experience as a whole was engaging.

The way to create an engaging brand experience was tried to enable through integrating the three components of interaction, involvement and consistency in the experience. The components interaction and involvement were already given at the campaign (one must have interacted and involved with the brand when participating) and based on the results, the campaign was perceived consistent. Therefore, the findings seem to prove that a combination of consistency in communication, interaction with the brand from the consumer’s own will and involvement of the consumer with the brand, together can build an engaging brand experience for the consumer. This in turn has an effect on the consumer’s overall evaluation of the brand. This cannot, however, be regarded as the sole definition of an engaging brand experience, but an indication that at least the given factors have an impact on the outcome. The following chapter will continue to analyze how the three components; interaction, involvement and consistency, further correlated with attitude and brand image. Based on these insights, differences in the correlations can provide insights on what particularly has affected the overall attitude and brand image.
4.2. Components of an engaging brand experience

This section provides an analysis of the effects of different components in the brand experience on attitudes and brand image.

In order to examine whether deeper involvement and interaction correlated with a more positive attitude, the touch points and attitude are placed on the X Y axis. Then, the same is done with brand image. Finally, the effect of perceived consistency in the experience is compared with attitude and brand image. The number of touch points represents the level of involvement and interaction in the experience, because the more touch points the consumers have passed, the more they have had to be in interaction and involved with the brand. The number of touch points is defined based on the respondents’ answers on where they had encountered the marketing campaign (Section 4). The numerical value of attitude consists of the average value of individual respondents’ answers to the attitudinal questions of the survey (Section 1). The numerical value of brand image consists of the average value of individual respondents’ answers to the questions related to brand image (Section 2). The numerical value of consistency consists of the average value of individual respondents’ answers to questions related to perceived consistency (Section 3).

4.2.1. Brand experience and attitude

Figure 3 illustrates the correlation between the consumers’ exposure to touch points and attitude. In the chart, the trend line shows a positive correlation. The correlation coefficient between the number of touch points and the numerical attitude value of the respondents’ answers is 0.26, which, according to Cohen (1977) means there is a weak correlation.

![Figure 3: Correlation between touch point exposure and attitude](image)

The finding indicates that the more touch points the consumer had passed during the experience path, the more positive was the attitude. When exposing to all of the touch points, the resulting attitude was the highest. This furthermore means that the presence of interaction in a virtual community added value for the consumer and had a positive influence on the attitude, as Evans et al. (2001) posited. This means there is weak support for Hypothesis 1, positing that the more involving and interactive the brand experience, the more positive the attitude will be, since the more touch points the consumer
has been exposed to, the higher the level of interaction and involvement, thus the more engaging the brand experience. In addition, the more involved the consumer is with the brand, the more positive effect it has on how resistant the consumer is to counter persuasion (Andrews et al., 1990; Zaichkowsky, 1986). However, involvement with the brand in marketing environment does not provide a first-hand experience of the service or product of the brand itself. Therefore, involvement in this context is probably not enough to make the participant resistant to counter persuasion, until first-hand experience has occurred. Yet, the brand experience in marketing context can serve as an effective allurement to try the brand.

In Figure 4, placing the values of attitudinal answers and the answers related to the perceived consistency in the whole respondent group to the X Y axis, the trend line shows a correlation between consistency and attitude. The correlation coefficient is 0.50, indicating a strong correlation (Cohen, 1977).

![Consistency and attitude](image)

*Figure 4: Correlation between perceived consistency and attitude*

This supports Hypothesis 2 stating that the more consistent the brand experience, the more positive the attitude will be.

As the authors Brodie et al. (2009), Solomon et al. (2010) and Edelman (2010) proposed, consistency of the brand experience seems to be a major factor in affecting consumer attitudes. Consistency had the strongest correlation with positive attitude, meaning the more consistent the experience was perceived, the more positive was the attitude towards the brand. The effect of interaction and involvement should not be underestimated though, for there was also a weak correlation to positive attitude with the increase in interaction and involvement. This supports Webster and Keller (2004) emphasizing the importance of interaction with consumers and brands. Also, as an observation, in Table 4 the numerical value of perceived level of consistency is higher amongst the respondents who had passed through all touch points of the designed experience path (6.47), compared to those who passed through only some touch points (5.88). The finding supports the literature stating that consistency is a key construct of an engaging brand experience, but it also indicates that when interaction and involvement are higher, perception of consistency is higher. That way interaction and involvement do affect attitude and brand image through being the mediators of consistency of the experience. Together, involvement, interaction and consistency of the experience then seem to lead
to more positive attitudes. Here as well, the standard deviations are rather small, indicating only little fluctuation in the answers. This again gives reliability and validity for the results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Touch points</th>
<th>Consistency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All touch points</td>
<td>6.47 (0.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some touch points</td>
<td>5.88 (1.29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4: Numerical consistency values and standard deviations of respondents exposed to all touch points versus some touch points.*

### 4.2.2. Brand experience and brand image

Figure 5 illustrates the correlation between the consumers’ exposure to touch points and brand image. The trend line shows a positive correlation. The correlation coefficient between the number of touch points and the numerical brand image value of the respondents’ answers is 0.23, which means there is a weak correlation.

![Figure 5: Correlation between touch point exposure and brand image](image)

The finding indicates that the more touch points the consumer had passed during the experience path, the more positive the brand image. Therefore, Hypothesis 3, stating that the more interactive and involving the brand experience, the more positive the brand image will be, is supported.

In figure 6, comparing the brand image related answers to the answers related to the perceived consistency in the whole respondent group, the chart shows a correlation between consistency and brand image. The correlation coefficient is 0.52, indicating a strong correlation.
Figure 6: Correlation between perceived consistency and brand image

The finding supports Hypothesis 4 saying that the more consistent the brand experience, the more positive the brand image will be.

To analyze the findings, they seem to support Dobni & Zinkhan’s (1990) assertion that brand image can be affected through marketing. Furthermore, although there was a weak correlation between deeper involvement and interaction and brand image, it seems that out of the three components, the level of perceived consistency had the strongest impact on brand image, as well as to attitude. This supports Edelman (2010) and Iglesias et al. (2011), who state that delivering the experience in a consistent way, instead of a fragmented experience, forms a positive brand image. Also Barwise and Meehan (2010) are supported saying that consistent communication creates positive brand image. Again, though, all the factors are related because perception of consistency grows together with interaction and involvement.

Overall the results show that increase in involvement and interaction (touch points) correlated with more positive attitude and brand image, although the correlation was rather weak. Even more important was the perceived consistency in the experience, which resulted in strongly affecting attitude and image when it grew. This supports the presented hypotheses, especially H2 and H4, meaning that out of the studied components, consistency has the strongest influence to the success of the experience.

4.3. Consumer behavior and brand loyalty

This section provides an analysis whether the brand experience has been successful in terms of predicting consumer behavior and the formation of brand loyalty.

The success of the brand experience can be evaluated based not only on its ability to create affection, but also on its ability to act as a trigger to start the process towards brand loyalty. The authors scrutinize the phenomena from different perspectives, but the phenomena can only be considered based on the respondents’ perceptions and not true action. Data on the actions of the consumers has not been able to be collected in this study. This analysis can therefore only serve as an indication
whether the brand experience has succeeded in leading to purchasing and starting the process towards brand loyalty.

As concluded, the brand experience created brand affect through positive attitude and brand image towards the brand. Hypothesis 5 was generated to examine the relation between attitude and brand image, because brand image is the consumer’s overall evaluation of the brand and through brand image, consumers relate attributes and benefits to the brand and position it against competitors (Webster & Keller, 2004; Mudambi, et al., 1997). The presumption was that when the engaging brand experience functions as the mediator, the brand image correlates with positive attitude. In Figure 7, attitude and brand image were placed on the X Y axis by individual responses to the overall attitudinal questions and brand image related questions. The trend line shows a correlation between attitude and brand image. The calculated correlation coefficient is 0.78, meaning a strong correlation.

![Figure 7: Correlation between attitude and brand image](image)

Based on the correlation, it can be derived that if a brand experience manages to create positive attitude, it also generates positive brand image. A positive brand image is an indicator of successful branding and leads to multiple benefits for the company, such as driving market positions, resisting competition, supporting price premiums, creating customer preference, leveraging stock value and continuing to exist over long periods of time (Aaker, 1991, p.7). To draw a conclusion, the studied brand experience had a positive effect on brand image, meaning it was successful in terms of branding. Therefore delivering this kind of brand experiences can be said to lead to such benefits mentioned above.

Branding aims at creating brand loyalty and a loyal customer base, which is a key variable for customer retention in long-term perspective (Amine, 1998). Aaker (1991) and Amine (1998) both stated that brand loyalty will not develop without a positive experience and forming attitudinal bonds towards the brand. Also Iglesias et al.’s (2011) asserted that brand loyalty can be built through brand experiences, when the experience is such that it builds positive brand image. As the results show, the formation of brand loyalty can be indicated to begin, because the brand experience was successful in creating both positive attitude and brand image: brand affect. As an additional factor, Oliver (1999) as well propounded that when the individuals feel congruent with the brand, they are more likely to become loyal. When asked if “Oral Dentists is a dentist chain suitable for me”, the answers revealed that the respondents felt congruent with the brand (4.98). As an indicator of brand loyalty, also this
factor supports the vision that the brand experience has been successful in starting the process towards brand loyalty.

Analyzing from another perspective, the attitudes were measured by using a three component attitude model (Solomon et al., 2010), which also represents the stages of brand loyalty by Oliver (1999). As a part of the three component attitude model, conation as the intentions to recommend and use the brand’s services in future, was asked from the respondents in section 1. The average value of the respondents’ intentions received a value 5.

Given that the touch point exposure correlated positively with attitude and brand image, it is also meaningful to examine the attitude components in more detail. Oliver (1999) posited that an individual’s affection towards an object has an impact on the individual’s future behavior. As a finding in this study, the affective dimension of the attitude had a positive correlation with the conative dimension. The correlation factor was 0.80, indicating a strong correlation.

Figure 8: Correlation between affection and conation in the three component attitude model

When analyzed with the stages of brand loyalty, the findings are in line with what Oliver (1999) posited, the affective dimension effects the conative dimension positively. The findings also receive support from Johnson & Greyson (2005), stating that during the recent years, the importance of emotional response has become the central aspect of an attitude and predicts future behavior more; consumers are more willing to try brands that engender strong positive emotions and tend to act by their emotional reactions.

In order to interpret future actions from another perspective, Romaniuk & Sharp (2003) say that an intention to do something is a strong indication that the individual has decided to act, but does not always lead to action anyway. In order to predict future behavior from this perspective, the strength of the overall attitude can be used to indicate future action to use the brand’s services (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2003). The average value of the respondents’ attitude towards the brand being 5.2, the assumption is that the respondents are likely to use the brand’s services in the future, but does not indicate a strong likelihood. Also when asked directly whether the respondents intend to use the brand’s services in the future, the average value of the answers was 5, which as well supports the assumption that the respondents favor using the brand’s services in the future. As an outcome, a conclusion based on the similar values can be drawn. When analyzed from these two standpoints, the participants’ intention can be said to hold true and lead to action. The values, however, are both closer
to the value 4 than 7 which indicates that the group still could need further persuasion to surely use the brand’s services in the future.

Stated by Solomon (2010, p. 277-280) the prevailing mood that the consumer has when interacting with the brand effects on how the consumer remembers the brand later. Therefore, when the participant encountered the campaign for the first time, it has had to arouse enough positive feelings in order to the participant to continue the interaction with the brand. As a result, the more interactive and involved the consumer was, the more positive was the resulting attitude and brand image. This receives support from the finding related to consistency: the more consistent the participant felt the entity, the more positive attitude and brand image it generated. To conclude, the brand experience was perceived positive, which affected the participants’ attitude and brand image towards the brand to be more positive when compared with the responses of the non-participants. Ultimately this result is significant because it follows Iglesias et al.’s (2011) position that brand loyalty can be built through brand experiences, when the experience is such that it builds positive brand image. This being the case in the brand experience, development of brand loyalty can be assumed to take place.
5. CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from analyzing the primary data and relevant literature gathered throughout this thesis. The aim of this chapter is to answer the proposed research questions: How to create an engaging brand experience in marketing context and how does the engaging brand experience affect consumer attitudes and brand image?

The task of attracting consumers’ attention is challenging and companies must constantly come up with branding strategies that make the consumers remember the brand. In order to remember and prefer a brand, consumers must have an individual brand-related experience (Schmitt 1999). By understanding how consumers behave and consume, successful marketers exploit those insights in designing engaging marketing, with the aim of creating brand loyalty.

The main focus of this study has been to investigate how to create an engaging brand experience in marketing context and whether it has positive effects on consumers’ attitudes towards a brand and the brand image. As a result, the designed brand experience consisted of three components of involvement, interaction and consistency, and affected the consumers’ attitudes positively and strengthened the brand image. As an outcome, delivering engaging brand experiences to consumers through marketing communications is an effective way to affect and change consumers’ attitudes and brand image, as posited by the scholars Solomon et al. (2010) and Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001).

If the experience is perceived positive by the consumer, it results in positive attitude and brand image, which provably affect the consumers’ intentions to recommend and use the brand in the future. An intention to use and recommend the brand indicate attitudinal commitment to the brand, which was also presented to be the outcome of individual, positive brand experience by several scholars such as Iglesias et al. (2011), Thompson et al. (2006), Johnson and Grayson (2005) and De Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2003). Simultaneously, purely emotional ties between consumers and brands can lead to action by the consumer, and reduce the need for cognitive reasoning behind purchase decisions. The finding is similar to that of Oliver (1999) positing that brand loyalty can form at any attitudinal phase and cognition does not have to be the first stage of becoming loyal to a brand. Based on the above arguments, it can be concluded that an engaging brand experience in marketing context can influence brand loyalty by generating positive brand affect. The strong influence of brand affect in the process was evidenced in this study, just as it was also highlighted by variety of scholars such as Johnson and Grayson (2005), Amine (1998) and Aaker (1991).

As for answering the research questions: How to create an engaging brand experience in marketing context and how does the engaging brand experience affect consumer attitudes and brand image, this study could confirm that high levels of interaction and consumer involvement in the experience, as well as the feeling of consistency, do all influence the perception of the brand. The components together, have a positive impact on attitude and brand image. Therefore, all these can be regarded as components of an engaging brand experience, as suggested by Brodie et al. (2009), Evans et al. (2001) and Andrews et al. (1990). The more interactive, involving and consistent the experience is perceived, the more positive the resulting attitude and the brand image become. Perceived consistency correlates with attitude and brand image the most, meaning that out of the three components, consistency has
the strongest influence in communicating engaging brand experiences. It must be noted, though, that since the perceived consistency increases together with the level of interaction and involvement, all three components are related.

As an outcome, the study does not suggest these components to be the sole definition of an engaging brand experience, but it does claim these constructs to be part of it and have impact on creating an engaging brand experience in marketing context. Therefore, based on this study, an engaging brand experience can be created through seamless interaction between the consumer and the brand, involving the consumer with the brand at the consumer’s own will, and ensuring that all the communication efforts as well as the content of each of the brands touch points is consistent. By delivering such brand experiences, positive brand affect can be generated and brand loyalty affected and maintained. Ultimately, this is what companies are seeking to be able to keep up with the competition with their rivals.
6. RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter offers both, marketing practitioners and researchers, suggestions that have arisen as a result of this study.

6.1. Recommendations for marketing practitioners

How can companies improve their brand management and build brand loyalty?

Based on this study, marketing communications should aim at delivering engaging brand experiences to consumers and especially pay attention to the consistency in communications, interaction with consumers and personally involving consumers with the brand’s offering and marketing actions. The more touchpoints the brand has with consumers, the more possibilities a consumer has to interact with the brand and the more the interaction, the more positive the attitude towards the brand is generated. The migration between touchpoints, however, must be seamless and perceived constant in order to strengthen the consumer’s attitude and brand image towards the brand. To make marketing communications effective in the competition of consumers’ attention, marketers should focus on providing the consumers with holistic experiences of the brand, that its, focus on providing consumers with both, rational and emotional sources of brand commitment. Marketing communications should be designed in a way that after each time of exposing to a brand’s touch point, the connection between the consumer and the brand can deepen. Instead of repeating the same message from a touch point to another, the company should be able to integrate its touch points together as an entity and continue the story in each encounter with consumers. This way, the brand becomes a part of the consumer’s values and resistant to counter persuasion.

Especially new market entrants and service brands can advantage of involving consumers with the marketing actions which provide them with personal experiences of the brand. The actions should especially be able to generate hedonic pleasure for the consumers, which is apt to impact on how the consumer remembers that brand afterwards when the need for the service or product occurs. In addition, all marketing actions must be congruent with the brand and the target group in order to become a part of the consumer’s value system and create brand loyalty.

Finally, each marketing action should be analyzed in terms of outcomes, in order to know the effect on consumers and their perceptions of the brand. It also provides information of at which stage of the decision journey the consumer is at and enables the usage of consumer behavior insights in marketing. Depending on that, the different groups can be targeted with specified messages with the right content for further persuasion. Through the identification, the message feels personalized, which leads to a stronger impact in terms of perception of the brand. On top of rationalizing the consumer’s decision, attention should be paid to the affective side, because that has an effect on initially persuading consumers to try the brand. Delivering positive brand experiences leading to positive attitude and brand image should be in focus of every company, since those are a necessity in forming brand loyalty. As stated, attitudinal commitment to brands can exceed the limit justified by knowledge, even if the brand occasionally fails to deliver its promise. Loyal customers are the key to customer retention in the long run and therefore engaging marketing should be the prime focus of any company.
6.2. Recommendations for future research

As for future research suggestions, connecting the engaging brand experience tighter to brand loyalty and to purchasing would be a matter of great interest. As this study was only able to examine short-term influences of the experience in marketing context, a research concerning long-term consequences and how the perception of the brand changes after gaining first-hand experience, would provide valuable information whether the user experience reinforced the arisen expectations. Also as it was stated, the three components of an engaging brand experience in this study are not claimed to be the sole definition of an engaging brand experience. For future outlook, more factors could be studied in order to provide practitioners with a wider selection of insights on how to commit customers to their brands. In addition, examining how to deliver these kinds of engaging brand experiences in practice, would also serve a great helping hand for marketers when designing effective marketing campaigns and maximizing return on investment.

A limitation with this study was that the campaign chosen to examine the effects of the brand experience was established by one certain industry and country. The industry and the country could both have influenced on how the experience was perceived by the consumers and the perception could differ, if the communicating brand was different. The effect of interaction, involvement and consistency on consumer attitudes and brand image could be therefore further addressed in another context, in order to better understand their relevance in creating engaging brand experiences.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

Thank you for participating in the survey. Your answers are important. Answering to the survey will take 2-3 minutes.

Please, answer based on how much you agree or disagree with each statement on a scale from 1 to 7, 1 meaning completely disagree and 7 meaning completely agree.

Section 1 (Attitude)

Oral Dentists is a very versatile dentist chain
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

Oral Dentists has a very good reputation
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

Oral Dentists is a very professional dentist chain
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

Oral Dentists is a very helpful dentist chain
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

Oral Dentists are modern
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

I feel that Oral Dentists is a particularly high quality dentist chain
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

I feel that Oral Dentists is a very reliable dentist chain
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

I feel that Oral Dentists is a very pleasant dentist chain
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

I feel that Oral dentists is a really caring dentist chain.
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

I feel that Oral Dentists is a very easily approachable dentist chain
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

I feel that Oral dentists suit me very well
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree
Next time I need dental care services, I will use Oral Dentists
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

I will recommend Oral dentists to others
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

**Section 2 (Brand Image)**

Oral Dentists are humane
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

Oral Dentists are honest
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

Oral Dentists are cheerful
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

Oral Dentists are brave
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

Oral Dentists are up-to-date
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

Oral Dentists are successful
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

Oral Dentists are high-class
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

**Section 3: (Brand experience, consistency)**

Participation to the campaign was very smooth
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

The campaign fits Oral dentists very well
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

The campaign was a good entity
Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 completely agree

**Section 4: (Brand experience, touch points)**
Where have you encountered the campaign?

Radio

Internet

Promotional stand in a shopping center