



OULUN YLIOPISTO  
UNIVERSITY of OULU

# **Key Customer Engagement drivers in social media.**

University of Oulu  
Department of Information Processing Science  
Master's Thesis  
Roman Stepankov  
Oulu 2015

## Abstract

The rapid development of Internet technologies and pervasive spread of social media in the last decade have led to a tremendous growth of interest in customer engagement (CE). Nowadays, social media significantly enrich and facilitate marketing communications and enable brands to get closer to their customers, serve them and engage as never before. At the same time, social media allow customers to be active and often to play a leading role in their relationships with brands. CE in social media is a complex and challenging task, which requires companies to have a clear vision of motivational drivers that lead customers toward engagement with brands. Moreover, the development and implementation of effective customer engagement strategies in practice is difficult without an understanding of how social media influence customers' attitudes and behaviors.

This research identified and analyzed fourteen key customer engagement drivers (KCEDs) in social media. Additionally, a new conceptual framework for KCEDs was developed. The framework presents gratification and positive emotions; utilitarian; and social groups of drivers that take place in the brand-to-customer and customer-to-customer contexts. The proposed framework is aimed at enhancing the understanding of online CE and its motivational origins as well as providing the foundation that facilitates designing effective CE strategies in social media.

In addition to a review of marketing and persuasive technology academic literature, twelve interviews with marketing and communication professionals were conducted in order to provide an empirical insight into the phenomenon of CE in social media. The findings of the empirical part indicate that a thorough analysis of the persuasion context helps companies in selecting the proper social media channels for CE activities; designing an appropriate persuasion message; and determining a suitable route of persuasion depends on the industry of a brand, the type of marketing relationship, and the target audience. The findings prove that customers consider social media as trustworthy sources of brand-related information and highly value their openness. Also, the empirical results verify the reliability of the theoretical finding and demonstrate that effectiveness of KCEDs in social media may vary in different countries.

**Keywords:** customer engagement, social media, persuasion technology, engagement drivers.

# Contents

Abstract .....	2
Contents .....	3
1. INTRODUCTION .....	4
1.1 Purpose of the study .....	5
1.2 Motivation .....	6
1.3 Research contibution .....	6
1.4 Structure of the study .....	7
2. MOTIVATIONAL ORIGINS OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA.....	8
2.1 Practitioners' views on customer engagement .....	8
2.2 Academic views on customer engagement .....	9
2.3 A working definition of customer engagement .....	10
2.4 Existing views on the antecedents of customer engagement .....	12
2.5 The key drivers of customer engagement in social media.....	13
2.5.1 Gratification and positive emotions drivers of customer engagement .....	13
2.5.2 Utilitarian drivers of cusotmer engagement .....	16
2.5.3 Social drivers drivers of customer engagement .....	18
2.6 Conceptual framework for key customer engagement drivers in social media.....	22
3. CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT IN THE PERSUASION CONTEXT OF SOCIAL MEDIA .....	26
3.1 Persuasive technology.....	26
3.2 Social media: characterisctics and role in marketing communications .....	28
3.3 Persuasion in the context of social media .....	30
3.4 Social media as behavior change support platforms for customer engagement .....	31
3.5 Analysis of the persuasion context for customer engagement .....	33
3.6 Persuasive system design principles as essential elements of customer engagement strategy .....	37
4. KEY CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT DRIVERS AND PERSUASION PATTERNS IN THE CONTEXT OF BRAND-TO-CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS IN SOCIAL MEDIA: PRACTITIONERS' PERSPECTIVE.....	40
4.1 Research goals and settings .....	40
4.2 Key findings .....	43
5. DISCUSSION .....	53
6. CONCLUSIONS.....	58
REFERENCES.....	60

# 1. INTRODUCTION

In the last decade the phenomenon of customer engagement (henceforth CE) has been receiving increasingly great attention in the business environment among numerous practitioners from different industries (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric & Ilic, 2011; Sashi, 2012). Nowadays, an increasing number of companies including the giant multinationals such as Master Card, GM and Sony understands the benefits of CE and places it at the foundation of their strategies for succeeding in the market place (Econsultancy, 2011; Gallup Consulting, 2009; Patterson, Yu & de Ruyter, 2006). CE is a form of psychological state which occurs through an interactive customer experience with a target object such as an organization or brand (Brodie, et al., 2011). CE behaviors extend beyond transactions, and may be defined as *“a customer’s behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers”* (Van Doorn et al., 2010).

The notion of CE is not new. For several decades the key elements of CE have been employed in offline business relationships as an essential part of a general marketing strategy. Various aspects of CE have been widely discussed in research literature. Thus, customer commitment is considered as one of the key elements of successful long-term relationships and as a central construct in relationship marketing (Garbarion & Johnson, 1999). Customer commitment has been identified to mediate the effects of such variables as communication, shared views, relationship benefits and trust on various aspects of customer behavior such as acquiescence, retention and advocacy (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In the context of comfortable and enduring relationships with a company, customers often act as advocates for a brand, its products and services (Fullerton, 2003).

A new epoch of online CE started around a decade ago due to the continuing evolution of the Internet and emergence of Web 2.0 technologies that brought totally new opportunities in communication and collaboration. Today, customers perform a lot of brand-related behaviours that did not exist a decade ago and that may have both positive and negative outcomes for the company (Gummerus, Liljander, Weman & Pihlström, 2012). Nowadays, online CE is a qualitatively new social phenomenon empowered manifold by the technologies developed in the era of Web 2.0. The term “Web 2.0” was popularized by Tim O’Reilly and characterizes the aggregate changes in the structure and use of the Web. In contrast with the previous state of Web, the essence of the Internet is getting more comprehensive, from playing a role of an application to being a universal platform for myriads of applications (Oinas-Kukkonen & Oinas-Kukkonen, 2013). Whereas the early Web was mostly one-directional and users were just passive receivers of the information, the Web 2.0 is a two-way collaboration in which users are able to consume information as well as be active participants in the generation, exchanging and disseminating of information (Goodchild, 2007; O’Reilly, 2007).

Social media built on the ideological and technological base of Web 2.0 provide highly interactive platforms with wide opportunities for users to share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). The interactive essence of social media, their potency in establishing conversations between customers and brands, and involving customers in content generation and value creation processes make numerous practitioners consider social media as powerful tools for serving and satisfying customers (Sashi, 2012). Currently, social media have a great

influence on different aspects of customer behavior such as awareness, attitudes, information acquisition, purchase behavior and post-purchase satisfaction and activities (Manglold & Faulds, 2009). Millions of users and great influence on customer behavior make social media exceptionally attractive to the business world. Nowadays, numerous companies around the world have created brand communities in various social media with the aim of establishing deeper connections with their customers as well as providing them with a robust environment which stimulates customers' participation, collaboration and purchase decisions (Gummerus et al., 2012; Social Media Today, 2012).

Although CE promises a large variety of benefits for business, many organizations are reluctant or incapable of developing productive strategies for CE in social media (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Often, the main reason behind this incompetence is that companies do not have a clear understanding of social media and how they can be utilized in the CE process. To shed light on this problem, the present study discusses social media, their influence on customer behavior, and the variety of CE drivers and strategies in social media.

## 1.1 Purpose of the study

The establishment of trust and commitment is an essential prerequisite of CE. The customers can be expected to be advocates of a brand only if they trust a company. Commitment, at the same time, leads to enduring relationships between a brand and its customers. Nowadays, numerous social media are the highly interactive platforms that bring to companies totally new opportunities for establishing long-term relationships with trust and commitment between the customers and brand (Sashi, 2012). The purpose of the present study is to investigate the nature of CE, identify and analyze the key drivers of CE (henceforth KCEDs), and develop a classification of KCEDs which can facilitate designing effective CE strategies in practice.

Social media allow organizations to reach with little effort a great number of customers, to get closer to them and, as a result, to increase profitability by serving and satisfying customers' needs and wants better (Gummerus et al, 2012). At the same time, due to the interactive essence of social media, companies are no longer in full control of relationship (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). Kietzmann, et al. (2011) state that social media allow customers to be active in their interactions with a company, in the creation and exchange of information related to a brand and its offerings. In social media, brand-related communications may occur with or without the permission of the organizations (Kietzmann, et al., 2011). Nowadays, companies attempt to establish and foster their own brand communities in social media in order to reap the fruits of CE and decrease negative customer behaviors that may be potentially dangerous for a brand. CE in social media is a complex and challenging task which requires an understanding of how social media influence customers' attitudes and behaviors. The purpose of the present study is to examine the persuasion process in social media as well as to provide empirical insight into designing effective CE strategies in practice.

## 1.2 Motivation

In the last decade we can observe an increasing interest in CE in both business and consumer markets. Evolution of the Internet and the pervasive spread of social media enable companies to establish highly interactive brand communities with the aim of meeting customers' growing expectations and satisfying their needs better (Brodie et al., 2011; Sachi, 2012). However, currently there are a limited number of studies that take into consideration the persuasion peculiarities and opportunities of social media with regard to the CE process. The present research examines the phenomenon of CE from two angles: marketing, because CE is always part of a general marketing strategy; and persuasive technologies, because the CE process occurs in the persuasion context of social media.

Due to a wide range of potential benefits such as intimate and enduring relationships with target customers, increasing profitability, gaining and sustaining a competitive advantage, the phenomenon of CE attracts a keen attention from many practitioners around the world (Brodie et al., 2011; Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2013). Numerous business seminars, conferences, and roundtables during the last several years are good evidence of an intense interest in CE within the business field (Sachi, 2012). Apart from that, CE has become a research topic for a number of companies including the Gallup group, Nielsen Media Research, Forrest Consulting, IAG research, Advertisement Research Foundation and the Association of National Advertisers (Brodie et al. 2011).

Despite an increasingly growing interest of companies in customer participation and engagement with their brands, the concept of CE has only relatively recently begun to receive attention in academic literature (Hollebeek, 2011). As a result, the theoretical foundation of CE has yet to be thoroughly investigated, so that companies have been hindered from a better understanding of the phenomenon and have been prevented from applying effective CE strategies in practice (Patterson et al., 2006; Sachi, 2012). Moreover, according to Gambetti et al. (2012), there is a certain gap between practitioners' and scholars' areas of interest towards CE. On the one hand, academic works often have a focus on creating general, abstract theories and neglect the contextual and pragmatic aspects of CE that are especially interesting for the practitioners. On the other hand, companies are interested mostly in tactical methods and tools aimed at getting short-term financial results and often miss attaining a broader understanding of the CE phenomenon, and as a result, fail to design long-term engagement initiatives which could have yielded a great variety of CE benefits (Gambetti et al., 2012). The motivation of the current study is to shorten the gap between academic research on CE and the business world by providing a comprehensive view of the KCEDs in social media as well as by examining practitioners' experiences and opinions regarding the phenomenon of CE.

## 1.3 Research contribution

The present research has a number of theoretical and managerial contributions. First, the study identifies fourteen KCEDs in social media and presents a new conceptual framework for KCEDs. The proposed framework extends understanding of online CE and its origins as well as provides a roadmap for practitioners to design effective CE strategies for social media. The study discovers that social media have a high persuasive potential for CE and enable companies to utilize a number of persuasive techniques in their CE activities.

Additionally, the present research examines practitioners' views and experiences with CE and links them with up-to-date marketing and persuasive technology academic literature. Thus, the empirical research defines the common persuasive patterns that companies use to engage their customers in social media and identifies a number of factors that have a strong influence on CE strategies. Also, the study demonstrates that social media are trustworthy channels of brand-related information and discusses practitioners' experiences in dealing with negative customers' behaviors towards a brand. These findings contribute to previous studies on CE in social media as well as give directions for further research.

## 1.4 Structure of the study

The rest of the study is structured as follows. Chapter 2 introduces up-to-date academic views on CE and its motivational origins. Also, the chapter provides analysis of KCEDs and presents a new framework of KCEDs in social media. Chapter 3 examines social media as persuasive systems for CE and discusses the analysis of the persuasion context for CE. Chapter 4 presents the key findings of the empirical research on KCEDs and persuasion strategies in social media. Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the empirical research based on prior academic marketing and persuasive technology literature. Chapter 6 provides concluding thoughts, limitations and avenues for further research.

## 2. MOTIVATIONAL ORIGINS OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA

The popularity of CE in the business field as well as in the research community has been increasing continuously during the last decade (Hollebeek, 2011). The phenomenon of CE attracts the attention of practitioners and scholars with focus on the different aspects of CE (Gambetti et al., 2012). Respectively, there is not a single definition of CE. Various practical and academic approaches complement each other by illuminating the different perspectives of the phenomenon. In this chapter practitioners' and scholars' views of CE will be examined and the KCEDs in the context of social media will be formulated.

### 2.1 Practitioners' views on customer engagement

Practitioners have been pioneers in their endeavours to define, comprehend and build CE (Sashi, 2012). In March 2006, the Advertisement Research Foundation (ARF) made one of the first attempts to define the phenomenon of CE as "turning on a prospect to a brand idea enhanced by the surrounding context" (Advertisement Research Foundation, 2012). ARF's definition has assigned CE as embracing a wide variety of situations, from customer awareness and interest, to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Sashi, 2012). Later, some practitioners criticized this definition for being too broad (ClickZ, 2006). According to ARF, a broad definition of CE was chosen deliberately in order to offer a framework which encourages sharing knowledge and perspectives, rather than a single approach to implementing and measuring CE (Advertisement Research Foundation, 2012).

In 2007, the Economist Intelligence Unit did a set of empirical studies worldwide and defined CE as the establishment of an intimate and enduring connection with customers or external stakeholders. According to the report of the Economist Intelligence Unit, CE often refers to customer marketing, satisfaction, and loyalty. The authors emphasize the role of CE as a strategic way of establishing a deep, intimate and long-term relationship with customers and stakeholders. The research also indicates that CE is a way to create customer interaction and participation (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007).

In 2008, Forester Consulting conducted an empirical study with a focus on measuring CE. The study defined the phenomenon as a process of deep relationships with customers that drive interaction, participation, and purchase decisions over time. The authors mention the Internet as an essential prerequisite for CE and consider involvement, interaction, intimacy and influence as the key elements for measuring CE. Also, the report highlights the importance of empowering customers which often catalyzes the process of building CE (Forester Consulting, 2008).

Gallup Consulting (2009) developed a CE metric based on the principles of behavioral economics to measure both rational and emotional aspects of CE. Following Gallup's approach, all customers are categorized into four distinct groups ranging from actively disengaged customers: the ones who are emotionally disconnected and actively opposed



to a brand; to fully engaged customers: the ones who are emotionally attached and rationally loyal to a brand (Gallup Consulting, 2009).

The recent empirical studies of CE such as Econsultancy (2011) and Social Media Today (2012) identify an essential role of mobile technologies as an important channel for acquiring information and problem resolution; and social media as an environment for deeper collaboration, content generation and intimate engagement. The studies suggest that companies should integrate mobile into their service strategies to provide an instant service channel which would facilitate building deeper relationships with customers and meet their increasing demands. Similarly, the studies emphasize the consolidation and collaboration effects of social media and highlight the importance of fostering an active and robust brand community as a prerequisite for establishing a deeper, enduring and more intimate level of CE (Econsultancy, 2011; Social Media Today, 2012)

## 2.2 Academic views on customer engagement

Within academic marketing literature the term “customer engagement” began to be used widely only after 2005 (Brodie et al. 2011, 2013). In one of the first articles addressing the social influence of brand communities on customers, Algesheimer et al. (2005) examine the factors affecting customers’ identification and consequently engagement with brand community as well as how different aspects of customers’ relationships with the brands influence customers’ intentions and behaviors. Also, the research highlights the positive outcomes of CE in the sense of increasing company profitability (Algesheimer, Dholakia, Herrmann, 2005).

According to Brodie et al. (2011), the theory addressing value co-creation and interactive experience in the context of marketing relationships may be used in explaining the conceptual origins of CE. Three decades ago this research perspective was first examined by the Nordic school. Later the theory was articulated more formally as a “service-dominant logic” of marketing which was different from the more traditional “goods dominant” approach (Brodie et al., 2013). The service-dominant logic perspective brings into focus the customers’ motivation to do interactive and co-creative activities with other customers as well as with service personnel that can be considered as act of engagement and serve as a driving force for mutual wellbeing (Brodie et al. 2011; Vargo, 2009).

In the last two decades, the term “engagement” has become very common in many areas of social science. Scholars from different fields including political science, sociology, and psychology have developed a variety of conceptual approaches focused on the different CE aspects (Brodie et al. 2011). As mentioned above, in marketing literature the term “customer engagement” has only begun to be used in the last decade. As opposed to the variety of definitions for different engagement forms provided by the business practices and social science literature, in the marketing field the number of endeavors to define so far is quite limited (Patterson et al. 2006; Sashi, 2012; Van Doorn et al., 2010). Similarly, there are few research works that examine the phenomenon of CE as a separate construct and explore CE differences from the relational terms such as “involvement” and “participation” (Brodie et al. 2013) Often, the researchers in elaborating their definitions of CE rely on the literature from related fields of social science (Brodie et al. 2011).

As can be seen from the most comprehensive CE definitions, many of them have a multidimensional perspective. In defining the phenomenon of CE, they consider various combinations of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects. For instance, in one of the first attempts to establish a conceptual understanding of CE, Patterson et al. (2006) refer to the all three CE dimensions and define CE as a level of customers' presence in their relationships with a service company. According to the authors, CE is a higher-level construct which consists of the following four elements dedication: a customer sense of belonging to a brand community; absorption: the degree of customer concentration on the object of engagement; vigor: the level of customer willingness to invest time and effort in interacting with the object of engagement; and interaction: various interactions with a brand as well as with other customers (Patterson et al. 2006). Similarly, Hollebeek (2011) advocates a three-dimensional view, describing customer brand engagement as a level of motivational context-dependent customer's state of mind which is addressed to a focal brand and defined by emotional, cognitive and behavioral activity in direct interactions with brand. In contrast, Mollen and Wilson (2010) propose emotional and cognitive dimensions of CE, characterizing CE as an emotional and cognitive commitment to an active relationship with a brand embodied by a website or other computer system designed to promote brand value.

A number of authors in their research refer to the motivational nature of CE. For example, in the defining concept of CE Pham & Avnet (2009) address to the specific types and patterns of engagement activities and highlight a driving force of value as well as the motivational influence of context-related factors. Similarly, a set of studies in advertisement has focused on the behavioral/motivational perspective of CE. Wang, in his research, stresses that engagement built on behavioral engagement and contextual relevance may have a positive effect on the effectiveness of advertising and branding (Wang, 2006). Rohm et al. (2013) investigate the impact of social media on customers' relationships with brand and identify the high importance of customer motivations in social media interactions (Rohm, Kaltcheva & Milne, 2013). Calder and Malthouse (2008) see media engagement as an overall level of individual motivational experiences that consumers have with a media product. The study done by Van Doorn et al. (2010) has a one-dimensional perspective with a focus on the behavioral and motivational aspects of CE. In the next chapter this study will be discussed in more detail.

### 2.3 A working definition of customer engagement

As indicated above, CE is a relatively young academic field which is still in a formative phase and further development of a theoretical foundation is required (Javornik & Mandelli, 2012; Mollen & Wilson, 2010; Vivek, Beatty & Morgan, 2012). In the process of a literature review the definition of CE articulated by Van Doorn et al. (2010) was chosen as a working definition for this research. In their article the authors described CE as *“a customer's behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers”*. The article is composed of three sections. The first section provides a theoretical foundation of CE on the basis of examination marketing, management, and social science literature. In the second section the authors develop five dimensions for CE, including valence of CE, form and modality of CE, customer's purpose in engagement, scope of CE, and impact of CE. Then, the authors examine the phenomenon of CE through a prism of developed CE dimensions, define and systemize the antecedents and consequences of CE, and propose the conceptual model of CE behavior. The third section provides a set of CE managing implications as well as suggestions for the further research (Van Doorn et al., 2010).

The choice of the CE definition proposed by Van Doorn et al. (2010) as a working definition for the current research will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, in their study Van Doorn et al. (2010) focus on the behavioral and motivational aspects of CE. Thus, their definition of CE is consonant with the purpose of the current research to identify the key motivational drivers of CE and examine how companies may utilize a persuasion potential of social media to influence customers' attitudes and behaviors.

The second reason has its roots in the online nature of CE. Despite the fact that social media play an essential role in the process of CE, this aspect is missing in a range of research focusing on building a theoretical foundation for CE. Thus, Hollebeek (2011) in her CE definition uses the concept of "direct brand interaction" and limits the CE context by the direct, physical contact with a focal brand and leaves aside indirect interactions with the brand that, for example, may occur through social media. On the contrary, Van Doorn et al. (2010) emphasize the vital role of social media in the process of engaging customers. The article suggests that organizations establish and offer customers the platforms that: first, support specific brand-to-customer actions, e.g. allow customers to express their compliments, concerns, suggestions, and ideas straight to a company and its staff; second, facilitate customer-to-customer engagement, e.g. communications and interactions among brand community, contests, rewards and training programs, etc. (Van Doorn et al., 2010).

Finally, the definition given by Van Doorn et al. (2010) was chosen as a working definition for the current research because it provides a conceptualization which is not limited to a particular situation and can be applied across a wide range of cases. The authors emphasize that CE encompasses not only positive but also negative behavioral manifestations toward a brand, its products and services. Also, in the proposed definition of CE Van Doorn et al. (2010) emphasize that CE behaviors extend beyond purchase transactions. The authors highlight a variety of CE behavioral manifestations, including word-of-mouth activity, recommendations, helping other customers, writing reviews, and blogging. This perspective contrasts with some other views on the phenomenon of CE. For instance, Bowden (2009) defines CE as a psychological process that shapes the underlying mechanisms by which customer loyalty may be maintained for old customers and established for new customers. The article proposes a conceptual framework for the process of CE that evolves in the context of transactions (Bowden, 2009).

## 2.4 Existing views on the antecedents of customer engagement

As was discussed in the previous chapter, CE may have a strong impact on a wide range of company-related activities, including idea generation, value co-creation, advocating of a company, product and services promoting, etc. and consequently on increasing a brand value, sales volume and companies profitability (Flies, Nadzeika & Nesper, 2012). Despite the fact that CE behavior manifestations take place both online and offline, there is no doubt that building and managing online CE requires a different marketing strategy compared to developing CE in the offline context. Since CE in the online context is more direct and familiar, the customers' role and content generated by them are empowered manifold. Organizations have to leverage customers' brand-related behavior manifestations with caution, because they may have both positive as well as negative effects on company products and services and brand reputation. In

order to comprehend the increasing role of CE and exploit the new opportunities brought up by the CE phenomenon, companies have to understand the nature of CE, its antecedents and how that actually works (Flies et al., 2012). To shed light on these problems, different types of factors influencing the establishment and development of CE will be discussed in this chapter.

As indicated above, in the field of academic marketing literature there are a number of studies referring to the motivational aspects of CE. However there are few studies that attempt to build a comprehensive view of the numerous motivational stimuli of CE and the organization of them depends on the research perspective. Flies et al. (2012) single out identification with social groups and the perceived emotional value as an important group of motivational drivers for CE. The authors also stress that motivational stimuli are not only defined by individual preferences, but they are also an outcome of role playing and network contention (Flies et al., 2012). Vivek et al. (2012) in their research examine the phenomenon from the customers' perspective. The study proposes a two-dimensional matrix of CE foci according to which, CE may derive from the four types of interactions, including: engagement initiated by offerings of organizations (e.g. brands, products, services); engagement initiated by activities, events and programs of organizations (e.g. interaction on Web site of the company); engagement initiated by offerings of customers (e.g. donations, customer auction Web sites); and engagement initiated by activities for customers (e.g. blogging, hobbies). Also the authors consider participation and involvement of old as well as potential customers as the antecedents of CE, while value, trust, loyalty, affective commitment, and word-of-mouth as potential CE outcomes (Vivek et al., 2012). Rohm et al. (2013) investigate the role that social media are playing in the interactions of digital natives with brands. The study reveals five key drivers of CE in social media, including: entertainment, connection and identification with a focal brand, benefits and promotions, product information, and prompt customer service (Rohm et al., 2013). Wirtz et al. (2013) in their research consider CE in the context of online brand community. They identify three groups of CE drivers: brand-related drivers such as brand identification and brand symbolic function; social drivers such as social benefits and social identity; and functional drivers such as functional benefits, information quality, monetary benefits, and uncertainty avoidance. Also, according to the study, product factors, situational online brand community factors, and customer factors act as moderators of the relationship between CE drivers and engagement in the online brand communities (Wirtz et al. 2013). Van Doorn et al. (2010) propose the model of antecedents and consequences of CE behavior which classifies the factors affecting CE on three broad groups, including customer-based factors, firm-based factors and context-based factors.

Even though there are a few studies with focus on categorization of CE drivers, a new classification is needed. Yet, the current studies have only provided a very general view of the variety of CE drivers with the purpose to build some theoretical background for further research rather than to offer a model which could be used in practice. The next chapter provides a review of existing marketing literature with the purpose of revealing and examining the KCEDs in the context of social media, analyzing them, and developing a conceptual framework with which to get a comprehensive view of the motivational origins of CE and establish effective CE strategies in social media.

## 2.5 The key drivers of customer engagement in social media

According to Van Doorn et al. (2010), the customer incentive for engagement is a result of various internal motivational factors. Providing an effective platform for information exchange and interaction is an essential prerequisite of online CE (Sashi, 2012). The platform offers customers a favorable environment where they can easily connect and communicate with brand representatives and other customers (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Wirtz et al. (2013) state that in social media, a customer is able to preserve his/her privacy and has little entry and exit difficulties. However, making customers join online brand communities in social media requires an understanding of the ways that customers get engaged with brands and other members of community (Wirtz et al., 2013). In the process of the marketing literature review the drivers that have a significant effect on the process of CE were identified. The identified drivers can be divided into three groups that include gratification and positive emotions CE drivers, utilitarian CE drivers, and social CE drivers.

### 2.5.1 Gratification and positive emotions drivers of customer engagement

In the academic literature related to the motivational aspects of CE, a large number of studies refer to the CE drivers that have their roots in various types of customer gratification. These studies will be analyzed further in this chapter.

According to Calder et al. (2009), uses and gratifications (U&G) theory can be useful in the comprehension of the role of enjoyment in the process of CE. In understanding the phenomenon of mass communications U&G theory is focused on the human aspect rather than on characteristics of media. Investigation of the reasons why people use media is a focal aim of U&G theory, which has been a popular field of research in communications since the 1940s (Calder, Malthouse & Schaedel, 2009). U&G theory has been used in numerous studies of mass media and media content. Dunne et al. (2010) mention that the primary focus of U&G theory has been changing depending on the dominant media of the day. For instance, in the forties the theory was applied in the context of radio. Later scholars used U&G theory in their research of television and various forms of print media. The recent tremendous development of Internet technologies and rapid expansion of new types of media have rejuvenated the concept of U&G theory which is applied now in the online context, giving to customers totally new opportunities in communication, interaction, content customization and control (Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley, 2010).

U&G theory focuses on the individual's use of media and emphasizes that both utilitarian purposes as well as the hedonic stimuli of enjoyment and entertainment seeking are the main drivers that attract people to media in general, and make them join and participate in social media particularly (Rohm et al., 2013). According to the U&G theory, in many cases entertainment aspects play a key role in the use of media when people want to relax, pass the time, escape or distract themselves from problems, release emotions, or receive aesthetic or cultural enjoyment (Calder et al., 2009). The gratification and positive emotions drivers' perspective has been widely used in interactive marketing literature. For instance, Childers et al. (2001) considers hedonic experiences as essential attributes of online shopping behavior and emphasizes the importance of creating an immersive, enjoyable environment in shopping media. Similarly, Calder et al. (2009) state that the content of a website can be engaging

because of utilitarian reasons (e.g. useful information), or due to providing intrinsic enjoyment for users (e.g. escaping from problems). Through U&G theory Nambisan and Baron (2007) categorize online customer environments as these four experiences: hedonic, cognitive, personal integrative, and social integrative. Huang (2008) emphasizes that hedonic incentives and experiences have a large impact on a greater acceptance of e-commerce websites. Dunne et al. (2010) reveal seven hedonic motives for participation in social networks, including entertainment, communication, identity creation, social interaction, friending, information search, and escaping from boredom. Rohm et al. (2013) identify that stimuli for brand-consumer interactions can range from utilitarian to hedonic such as entertainment, enjoyment, and social status.

Among CE academic literature a large part of research studies propose that a lot of CE drivers are directly related to the customer's gratification seeking. In this chapter the relevant up-to-date marketing literature is reviewed and analyzed, the gratification and positive emotions drivers of CE in social media are categorized. Since the purpose of the current research is a deeper understanding of the motivational side of CE to provide a basis that could be used in the development of online CE strategies, among a variety of hedonic drivers that may lead to CE, the focus was done on those that can be exploited by practitioners in practice in the online context of social media.

*KCED 1: games and entertainment content.* People like to play by nature. Often we divide our activities into “work” and “play”. Numerous social media attempt to close the gap between “which we have to do” and “which we want to do” (Zichermann & Linder, 2010). Nowadays, social media provide versatile platforms for numerous games both for playing solo or together with other users. Online games offer a natural and explicit way for entertaining and engaging (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Well-designed game applications can reinforce the positive behaviors of customers and keep them engaged and excited from the very beginning. Due to the development of computer and Internet technologies, playing online games occupies a larger and larger share of people's everyday lives. According to Zichermann and Linder (2010), the significantly increased role of online games brings new opportunities to companies for utilizing game mechanisms to develop a deeper and more enduring loyalty and engagement than ever before. Numerous innovative companies already realize the potential of games and implement gaming elements into their marketing strategies in order to build a lasting engagement and positive relationship with customers (Zichermann & Linder, 2010). For instance, Mangold and Faulds (2009) in their research provide the cases of Mattel and Warner Brothers as successful examples of exploiting online games in CE strategies. Zichermann and Linder (2011) emphasize the importance of continuity in the CE process, suggesting that marketers continue to polish existing games and add new interesting challenges (e.g. adding new levels, extra points and budgets) that ensure the increasing loyalty of consumers as well as frontline employees interacting with each other on a daily basis.

Calder et al. (2013) reveal that fun-based interactions are one of the most common reasons for customers' communications with a brand in social media. The research suggests that entertainment brand-related content may be an effective incentive for CE (Calder et al., 2013). According to Gummerus et al. (2012), utilizing economic benefits in social media (e.g. Facebook) may not be effective in the long run. For long term CE the authors suggest strategies that employ various entertainment content including videos, photos, and comic strips which might please customers to feel good and encourage them to keep interacting with a focal brand. Providing entertainment content on a regular basis increases the number of customer interactions with the company as

well as the probability of customer learning about products and services, and CE with a focal brand (Gummerus et al., 2012).

*KCED 2: sense of exclusivity.* In general, people like to feel special (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Similarly, customers seek hedonic satisfaction based on relationship exclusivity (Gambetti, Graffigna & Biraghi, 2012). Companies can develop a sense of exclusivity in the minds of their customers by offering information, products or special deals that are available only for a particular customer segment (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Likewise, according to Noor Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012), many companies engage customers by creating a feeling of exclusivity for those who participate in online brand communities. That approach is supported by Vorvoreanu (2009) who reveals in her research that coupons and discounts available exclusively for Facebook users stimulate customers to join companies' brand groups thereby turning them into fans of corporate Facebook pages. This sense of exclusivity and its positive impact on the customer's attitude towards a brand has been widely used in numerous loyalty programs. The results of research done by Rosenbaum et al. (2005) indicate that due to this sense of exclusivity, members of communal loyalty programs have, in general, higher loyalty toward a company compared to members of non-communal loyalty programs. The research suggests companies offer the loyalty programs that make participating customers feel exclusive (Rosenbaum, Ostrom & Kuntze, 2005).

*KCED 3: brand-related events.* According to Rohm et al. (2013), a customer feeling of connection and identification with a focal brand are important drivers for CE in social media. Vivek et al. (2012) consider activities initiated by a company as a one of four types of interactions that may lead to CE. Special events organized by a company allow marketers to communicate with customers and provide opportunities to engage customers them with a company, its brand, and community. These events create a social environment for customers and increase the level of their involvement. Close et al. (2006) state that nowadays, numerous companies organize events for their customers to achieve a large number of business goals via interactions with them. Marketers embed desirable messages into the medium while the CE process continues during and after the event. As a result, customers may consider a marketing message as part of an event instead of viewing it as a marketing oriented communication (Close, Finney, Lacey & Sneath, 2006). According to Van Doorn et al. (2010), customers can obtain various emotional benefits by participating in brand-related events. Vivek et al. (2012) mention that skill development and creative activities may be the good stimuli for customers to participate in events organized by the company. Close et al. (2006) single out two main activities of the CE process. First, community involvement, which can be defined as an amount of non-transactional interaction that a company has with its customers and other companies. Community involvement includes investments of a company in the organizing of events for the members of a brand community. Secondly, branding which means that nowadays, companies increasingly use brand-related events to develop and maintain strong brands.

*KCED 4: supporting the causes important to a customer.* People tend to share with others things to which they are emotionally connected. To leverage emotional connections companies should support causes that are important to their customers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Similarly, Van Doorn et al. (2010) note that natural events (e.g. natural disaster) can affect CE. For example, organizations may promise to donate some part of their sales to people in need (e.g. victims of disaster) or organizations can facilitate customers' donations by organizing special charity campaigns or events. Both above mentioned actions may influence customers to engage with a target brand (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Cause-related marketing activities may significantly increase

customers' loyalty to a focal brand (Van den Brink, Odekerken-Schröder & Pauwels, 2006). The importance of socially responsible marketing activities within and beyond purchase transactions has been widely discussed and verified in academic marketing literature (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006). Also, that has been corroborated by numerous practical studies such as the Cone Corporate Citizenship Study (2004). The study indicates that according to 80 percent of surveyed consumers, cause-supporting brands create a higher trust. 86 percent said that in the case of the similar prices and quality, they would switch from an old brand to a new cause-supporting brand. 74 percent take into account a brand's responsibility to a social issue when they decide which products and services to recommend to others. Gupta and Pirsch (2006) in their research suggest that cause-related activities are most effective when a cause to a high degree corresponds to a brand. Also the authors mention that a cause must be relevant to a target customer audience (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006).

### 2.5.2 Utilitarian drivers of customer engagement

As discussed above, U&G theory emphasizes both gratification and utilitarian drivers as the main stimuli for people to use various types of media including social media. According to U&G theory, apart from entertainment, people seek media because of numerous practical reasons such as finding the relevant information, obtaining a sense of security through knowledge, satisfying curiosity, education, etc (Calder et al., 2009). Numerous studies in the field of interactive marketing are based on the U&G theory and refer to the various utilitarian factors influencing human behavior. Among the main reasons for customers' interactions with a brand in social media Rohm et al. (2013) identify a number of practical incentives such as access to a fresh content, information related to brand offerings, and promotions. Bronner & Neijens (2006) single out several factors influencing media experience including functional drivers such as information acquiring and practical use. Childers et al. (2001) note an important role of utilitarian experiences in online shopping behaviors. Calder et al. (2009) mention that various utilitarian aspects of websites may act as engagement drivers.

Numerous studies devoted to the motivational nature of CE demonstrate the importance of various utilitarian drivers in the process of CE. In this chapter the relevant academic literature is analyzed, utilitarian incentives that stimulate development of CE in social media are revealed and classified.

*KCED 5: Brand-related information.* In contrast with traditional media like newspapers and television that push content to viewers, the Internet is considered a "pull" media where companies seek to pull viewers via content. However, companies must provide some content, especially at the beginning phase of their online presence (Parent, Plangger & Bal, 2011). Calder et al. (2013) emphasize that a website may be engaging when customers can acquire useful information that can help them to make important decisions or achieve something desirable in their lives. Similarly, Gummerus et al. (2012) suggest that companies create content that keeps customers participating in Facebook brand communities and stimulates them to engage in transactional activities. Van Doorn et al. (2010) state that companies can engage their customers by providing activities for customer learning such as online training. Flies et al. (2012) reveal that developing a group identity can stimulate CE behaviors.

According to Van Doorn et al. (2010), a customer informational environment may have a significant effect on the process of CE. Agile companies can shape the informational



environment of their customers to influence on CE behaviors. For instance, companies like Apple and Google invest a huge amount of resources to spread information about test products and to engage customers through relevant conferences and events. Moreover, customer-oriented companies are very sensitive to media reports about their brands, products and services (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Rohm et al. (2013) offer evidence that information content provided by a company has a strong impact on customers' interactions with a brand in social media. According to the research, acquiring brand-related information and access to fresh content are the essential drivers of CE in social media. The importance of relevant and topical brand-related information was also proven by empirical studies. Thus, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit (2007), customers are likely to engage with companies that are sensitive to their needs and provide them information they require.

*KCED 6: sense of ownership.* Jaakkola and Alexander (2014) define that a sense of ownership is one of the key drivers for CE. In their research, the authors identify that the need for improvements of a brand offering on an individual as well as collective basis is an underlying motive for customers' sense of ownership. The research emphasizes that the ceding of a certain amount of control by a company is another important prerequisite of CE. Empowering customers by giving them some freedom to make company-related decisions increases their sense of attachment to a focal brand and community and consequently, positively influences their engagement (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014). Despite the fact that in their research Jaakkola and Aleksander consider the phenomenon of CE in an offline context, their findings align with the results of CE studies that were done in online brand communities.

Mangold and Faulds (2009) state that the customers' sense of ownership may positively influence their engagement. In order to develop a sense of ownership among members of online brand community, the authors recommend introducing various activities such as online voting regarding company initiatives, products and services. The study also mentions that the ability to submit feedback makes customers feel more engaged with a company and its products. The feedback, which may be in the form of compliments, criticism, or suggestions, contributes to a sense of brand community where open and honest communications are encouraged, consequently having a positive effect on CE. Further, the research provides examples of successful online campaigns that leverage customers' sense of ownership by providing various opportunities for expressing their opinions on brand offerings (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Similarly, Parent et al. (2011) consider feedback as an effective engagement tool. Uncontrolled and uncensored feedback makes customers trust a focal company, increases their commitment and consequently, enhances their engagement with a brand (Parent, Plangger & Bal, 2011). Van Doorn et al. (2010) emphasize that in order to increase CE, companies should develop and provide platforms that enable customers to voice their suggestions, ideas, concerns, and compliments directly to a company and its employers. Similarly, Rohm et al. (2013) state that numerous companies have utilized various social media to foster customer co-creation and receive new ideas regarding brand products and services. Cambra-Fierro et al. (2013) provide successful examples of developing CE and reinforcing relationships between a company and its customers by involving a significant number of customers in product development and various communications.

*KCED 7: customer service.* Numerous empirical studies emphasize the role of customer service in the process of CE. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (2007), a majority of executives and customer care analysts believe that one of key CE drivers is providing customers the information and service they want in a timely manner. Offering such a level of customer service, may mean that a company must maintain a 24/7 call

center or respond without delay to customers' e-mails. Econsultancy (2011) says that forward-looking companies increasingly also consider social media as channels for customer service. According to the study, around half of companies were using social media for customer support (Econsultancy, 2011). Social Media Today (2012) provides a similar percentage with regard to the companies that have fully integrated their traditional customer support activities with social media. These empirical studies are corroborated by academic research works that consider providing customer service as an incentive for CE. For example, Rohm et al. (2013) reveal that seeking timely customer service and fresh content is one the main motives for customers' interactions and engagement with a focal brand. Similarly, Jaakkola and Alexander (2014) mention that frequent communication between customers and company representatives and positive dialogue enable a quick resolution of issues that lead to CE. Fuller (2010) suggests that companies build an environment that enables customers to have direct interactions with the development team and supports customers in case there are any problems. Customers appreciate a direct communication with company representatives in charge (Fuller, 2010).

*KCED 8: rewards and benefits.* Customers will interact in social media and engage in co-creation activities if they expect certain rewards from a focal company (Van Doorn et al., 2010). These rewards may include: referrals, loyalty programs, special offers, lotteries, giveaways, financial rewards that depend on effort made, etc. (Fuller, 2010). Rohm et al. (2013) state that providing incentives and promotions is one of the key drivers for CE in virtual brand communities. Parent et al. (2011) report on successful cases of the application of the rewards and promotions strategy for building CE in social media. Jaakkola and Alexander (2014) reveal that support of other stakeholders may be also a key driver for CE. According to Wirtz et al. (2013), various financial stimuli may increase customers' participation in online brand communities and encourage their engagement. In general, monetary incentives have a stronger influence passive customers than active customers, especially in a short-term perspective (Wirtz et al., 2013). Fuller (2010) notes that financial rewards may be essential, for example, in helping to avoid the bad impression that a flourishing company is exploiting their customers' creativity and co-creation for free. However, an extensive use of monetary incentives may also backfire in the long term for the CE plans of a company. Thus, Wirtz et al. (2013) notice that in the long run, financial rewards may discourage the participation of active customers in brand-related activities. Similarly, Gummerus et al. (2012) say that offering economic incentives for attracting and engaging customers in Facebook brand communities may be not effective in the long run. Fuller (2010) mentions that monetary stimuli may overshadow customers' initial intrinsic motivations for engagement behaviors.

### 2.5.3 Social drivers of customer engagement

As discussed above, U&G theory is the study of the gratification and utilitarian motives that stimulate people to use various media (Dunne et al., 2011). However, CE motivational drivers in the online environment are not only determined by the customer's individual preferences and considerations, but they also greatly depend on role playing and network (Flies et al., 2012). Prior to the epoch of social media, social benefits were not considered important in an online context (Gummerus et al. 2012). Thus, special treatment benefits and confident experience benefits were considered by customers of air travel and bookstores to be more valuable than social benefits (Yen & Gwinner, 2003). Social media are much more participatory and interactive compared to

traditional media. They offer more opportunities for information sharing and communication, and consequently, foster social engagement. Therefore, the interactivity factor needs to be included into the U&G framework (Calder et al., 2009). The online environment increases the speed and persistence of CE. Communications processed in social media require much less physical and cognitive efforts from a company and its customers, so interactions can occur in real-time and be more frequent and persistent. In contrast with the one-directional communication common in traditional media, social media provide a two-way interactive dialogue that allows companies to learn about and from their customers as well as enabling customers to participate in the value creation process. Moreover, social media help companies to reach and engage a much larger customer audience without any serious loss of the richness of interaction (Sawhney, Verona & Prandelli, 2005). In summary, social media facilitate and stimulate customer interaction and collaboration and can serve as powerful tools for CE activities.

This chapter provides a CE literature review with the purpose of identifying and discussing various social factors that can encourage the process of CE in social media. In the academic literature is a set of theories that investigate the nature of virtual interaction and co-creation. For instance, social exchange theory is considered helpful in examining innovative user behavior in online communities. One of the goals of social exchange theory is the analysis of the motives of social human behavior. Social exchange theory states that the expectation of reward is the main reason for customers' interaction with brands and CE in value co-creation process. According to the theory, rewards may be tangible (e.g. various practical benefits that were discussed above) and intangible, such as recognition or a sense of belonging to a community. Moreover, apart from expecting rewards, the interaction experience may be a stimulus for CE behaviors per se (Fuller, 2010). Further, the chapter analyzes the social drivers for CE in social media.

*KCED 9: opinion leaders.* In the decision making process, many customers tend to seek information and advice from others. They consider recommendations left by their friends, co-workers or other customers in social media trustworthy and credible. Customers may rely on social media as sources for important information for their purchases. According to Chu and Kim (2011), customers who frequently post opinions online may have a strong influence the attitudes and behaviors of customers searching for brand-related information. As was discussed above, the current Internet technologies and social media brought totally new opportunities of multidirectional communications, creating and sharing information that enables opinion leaders with several clicks of a mouse, to reach a great number of other customers and share brand-related thoughts and opinions (Chu & Kim, 2011). Kumar et al. (2011) suggest that companies identify and motivate customers who are likely to be opinion leaders to continue to spread desirable knowledge and attitudes regarding brand products and services. In CE campaigns celebrities can act as influential opinion leaders. Javornik and Mandelli (2012) report on successful cases involving celebrities in various CE activities, including the initiation of conversations with customers in social media and engaging them in co-creating and sharing company-related content and information.

Flies et al. (2012) emphasize that the stimulation of interactions in a brand community is important but not a sufficient prerequisite for creating long-term CE. According to the authors, a conscious emotional process with active customers or opinion leaders is an essential element of building enduring CE. Active customers or opinion leaders support security about the rules and engagement on online brand community. Adjustment to opinion leaders' activities may help to bridge uncertainty and emotional gaps (Flies et al., 2012).

*KCED 10: belonging to a brand community.* People like to be connected with other people who have similar wishes and interests (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). According to Fliess et al. (2012), identification with a social group is an essential prerequisite for CE. For customers it is necessary to feel like they belong to a related social community during the process of engagement. A customer's knowledge and awareness of his/her belonging to a certain social group and the emotional value lead to customer's social identity. A customer's identification with a particular social group leads to a positive self-evaluation that is a result of a positive differentiation between the customer's membership in the group and other people who are not in the group (Fliess et al., 2012). Similarly, Wirtz et al. (2013) state that a customer's identification with a brand community leads to positive self-esteem and may play an important role in the CE process. Fuller (2010) emphasizes that communication and interaction with other members of an online brand community may act as an engagement driver. Thus, customers engage not only due to their interest in brand offerings, but also because they are interested in meeting other community members. Similarly, customers' desire to interact with like-minded people may be an engagement stimulus for co-creation behaviors (Fuller, 2010). According to Gummerus et al. (2012), customers may be engaged by discussion with other customers. Van Doorn et al. (2010) recommend that companies engage customers by organizing customer get-togethers, forums, contests, and platforms where they can share and exchange their ideas with each other. For the same reason Fuller (2010) suggests that companies provide customers with opportunities for blogging and joint collaboration spaces.

*KCED 11: social benefits.* Various intangible social benefits are important drivers that stimulate customers to join and participate in virtual brand communities and engage in online co-creation activities. Social motivational drivers of users' interaction and value co-creation in the online environment have been researched widely in the context of open source software. Academic literature devoted to the process of open source software development outlines a range of social stimuli including kinship, altruism, peer recognition, reputation building, and career prospects. Fuller (2010) states that, in online brand communities altruism may also be a reason that customers engage in value co-creation and support a brand in the innovation of new products. The customer's desire to become noticeable and get recognition from the other customers as well as from a company may be a key stimulus for engagement with a brand and the brand community (Fuller, 2010). Thus, Parent et al. (2011) provide empirical examples of customers' need to establish credibility and recognition by the community and the company that leads toward CE with a focal brand. Van Doorn et al. (2010) say that self-enhancement and seeking positive recognition from others may be a strong engagement stimulus. Similarly, according to Gummerus et al. (2012), customers may become engaged by helping other customers making them feel useful, recognized and important in the brand community and eventually builds their social credibility.

*KCED 12: brand-related information as a source for conversations and brand community interactions.* People are more willing to talk about brands and their offerings if they feel that they know a lot about them (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). As indicated above, despite the fact that the Internet remains a "pull" medium, company-generated content plays an important role in the customers' interactions with a brand. The content "pushed" by a company into social media may stimulate a customers' participation, interactions and consequently catalyze CE (Parent et al., 2011). Flies et al. (2012) emphasize that stimulating interaction in a brand community is an important element of building CE. The authors suggest that companies develop long-term CE-activities by providing stimuli for customers' interactions. For example, offering products and

service information may be effective in attracting customers' attention to a product- and service-related trends and problems (Flies et al., 2012).

Providing utilitarian information about a brand and its offerings is not the only type of content that may be used for generating interaction. For instance, Mangold and Faulds (2009) advise companies to leverage the power of stories. In general, stories are memorable. The more interesting stories are, the more likely that people will repeat them to others. Interesting brand-related stories leave vivid memories in the customers' minds and likely will be repeated via traditional word-of-mouth or electronic word-of-mouth in social media (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Similarly, Muniz and Schau (2011) emphasize that members of a brand community enjoy detailing their brand experience in the form of stories. These narratives are collaborative in the sense that they are developed and passed on to other customers and eventually stimulate wider and deeper CE among the brand community (Muniz & Schau, 2011). Also, Mangold and Faulds suggest that another way of stimulating interaction is to provide content that is somewhat outrageous thereby increasing the likelihood that it will be talked about.

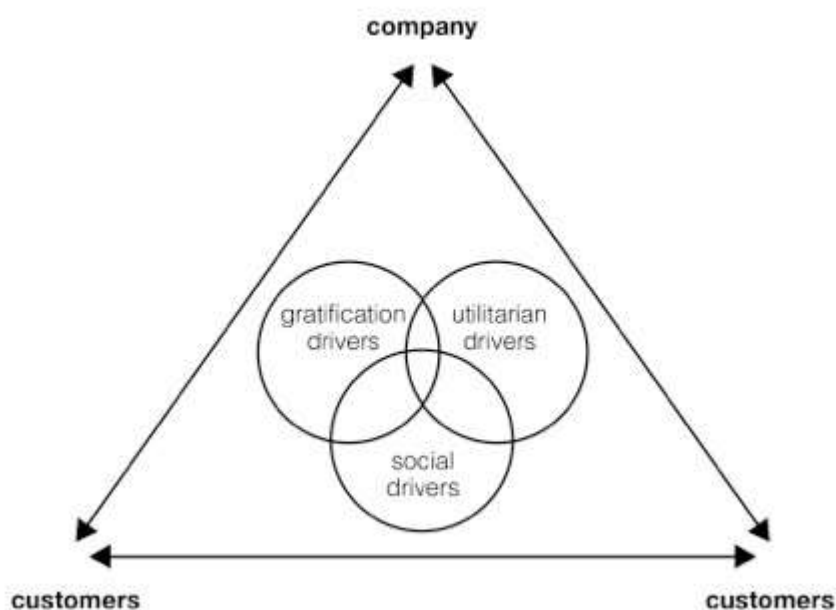
*KCED 13: observing other customers using brand-related products and services.* Customers can be entertained and engaged by observing others using brand-related products and services (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Similarly, Vivek et al. (2012) single out a group of engaging drivers that include observing customer-initiated activities (e.g. various hobbies) in which other customers use products and services provided by a company. These engagement activities can be implemented in the context of social media, for instance, by encouraging customers to submit their photos or videos of brand offerings in use (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Muniz and Schau (2011) suggest that companies encourage (e.g. by providing easy-to-use templates) customers to document and share their product-related experiences. According to the authors, these authentic brand use stories made and shared by customers may be a highly persuasive and powerful tool in the CE strategy of a company. Rohm, et al. (2013) emphasizes that experiences shared by other customers are often considered as more trustworthy sources of information compared to traditional marketing channels.

*Key driver 14: receiving help from other customers.* Customers often participate in online brand communities to ask questions about the problems they have and to get prompt and enthusiastic help from other customers (Dholakia, Blazevic, Wiertz & Algesheimer, 2009). For instance, Fuller (2010) identifies four types of customers engaging in value co-creation including need-driven customers whose main interest is getting help from the community for solving their problems. Wiertz and Ruyter (2007) state that according to the norm of reciprocity, people who get help from others should help in return by reciprocating equivalent benefits. Similarly, the customers receiving help from others feel a sense of indebtedness that stimulates them to help in return (Wiertz & de Ruyter, 2007). According to Wirtz et al (2013), this interaction facilitates bonding among community members and makes them identify strongly with the brand community. In addition to that, this interaction increases the amount of social benefits perceived by customers that consequently lead to deeper engagement with the brand community (Wirtz et al, 2013). Similarly, Gummerus et al. (2012) say that receiving help from other customers may be a driver for engagement with a focal brand and its community.

## 2.6 Conceptual framework for key customer engagement drivers in social media

During the last decade social media have become an essential aspect of everyday life for millions of people. Nowadays, social media is a major factor that affects various elements of customer behavior such as awareness, information obtaining, attitudes, opinions, purchase behaviors and post-purchase evaluation (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Moreover, social media with their broad and flexible opportunities for multidirectional communication and quick collaboration provide a fruitful environment for establishing and building CE which leads to a customer sense of satisfaction with products and services, increased trust in and commitment to a focal brand, and participation in the value creation process (Wirtz et al., 2013). Currently, an increasing number of companies is trying to implement social media in their marketing strategies in order to reach and understand existing and potential customers, serve them better and, eventually, engage them deeply with brands. However, for many companies, the establishment of an engaging environment remains an unachievable goal that is often caused by the absence of a general vision of how activities should be performed in social media to make a brand really engaging for the customers (Schultz & Peltier, 2013). The understanding of the key motivational drivers is an essential requirement for comprehending the process of building CE and implementing effective engagement strategies in practice (Flies et al., 2012).

Despite the fact that recently online CE has become a focal point of interest among practitioners in various fields of business and has also gained the keen attention of the academic world, there is still a quite limited understanding of the motivational origins of CE and the ways that social media may be utilized in engaging the target audience (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Yet, in marketing academic literature there are very few studies attempting to offer a comprehensive framework for numerous motivational drivers of CE (Flies et al., 2012). Moreover, a large part of these studies focus mostly on the conceptual side of the phenomenon and does not consider which motivational drivers actually make up the frameworks elaborated by their authors (Vivek et al., 2012). One of the main purposes of the current work is to offer a model which adds to understanding of the motivational origins of CE and could be used in developing effective CE strategies in practice. Based on a review of the up-to-date academic marketing literature this paper proposes a new conceptual framework for the KCEDs in the context of social media.



**Figure 1** Framework for key customer engagement drivers in social media

As discussed above, the literature review revealed three main groups of drivers that motivate customers to engage with a focal brand. They include: gratification and positive emotions, utilitarian, and social drivers. Thus, gratification drivers are essential elements of the CE process. In many cases customers join online brand communities, voluntarily participate in value creation process and finally engage with a brand because of various hedonic stimuli. For instance, the current research identifies the following four types of drivers related to customer's enjoyment seeking: games and entertainment content (KCED 1); sense of exclusivity (KCED 2); brand-related events (KCED 3); and supporting the causes important to a customer (KCED 4). These factors affect the customers' perception of brand, give a positive experience in the process of interaction with a brand and the online brand community and attach customers emotionally to a company.

Another integral group of CE drivers are utilitarian stimuli that engage those customers who are interested in various practical aspects. Thus, customers may be engaged by acquiring useful brand-related information that reduces any feelings of uncertainty about the brand and helps them in making important decisions (KCED 5); stimulating their sense of ownership and opportunity to submit feedback that empower customers and involves them in the process of value co-creation as well as increases their trust of a focal brand (KCED 6); timely customer service that leads to problem resolution and establishes positive relationships with a brand (KCED 7); and gaining various practical and financial rewards and benefits that stimulates customers' participation and interest in a focal brand (KCED 8).

Finally, in the era of social media with its highly participatory, interactive and collaborative environment, the role of social factors in the process of CE has been increased more than ever before (Calder et al., 2009). The current study defines the following social motivational drivers of CE: opinion leaders who shape customers' attitudes towards a brand and share brand-related information (KCED 9); the sense of belonging to brand community that leads to customer's social identity (KCED 10);

various social benefits, including peer recognition, reputation and credibility building, self-enhancement, etc. that stimulate customers to join and be active participants in a brand community (KCED 11); company-related information which may trigger customers' communication and interaction (KCED 12); demonstrative experiences of other customers using brand-related products and services which may be a strong persuasive factor increasing CE (KCED 13); and receiving help from other customers that strengthens the bonds between members of brand community and, eventually, leads to a stronger social identity and deeper engagement (KCED 14).

The framework proposed in this research consists of a triad: gratification and positive emotions drivers, utilitarian drivers, and social motivational drivers of CE in social media. It is important to mention that the revealed KCEDs cannot be always defined strictly just one particular group but often may refer to a certain degree to other groups. For instance, receiving help from other customers (KCED 14) may be engaging not only from the social perspective (closer bonding with other customers and deeper identification with the brand), but may be also a utilitarian motive for engagement (problem resolution or reducing a feeling of uncertainty). Similarly, in addition to tightening the customer's connection and identification with a focal brand (gratification and positive emotion perspective), participation in brand-related events (KCED 3) may increase the customer's attachment and engagement with the brand community (social perspective). A certain overlap between three defined groups of KCEDs illustrates that engagement drivers have a complex cumulative effect on a customer and interrelate with each other. This aspect reflects on the proposed framework and demonstrates a holistic view of the motivational origins of CE in social media.

Apart from the three main groups of KCEDs in social media, the proposed framework indicates that the process of CE occurs in a brand-to-customer as well as in a customer-to-customer context. In the brand-to-customer context CE can be defined as the level of intensity of a customer's participation as well as a customer's connection with activities initiated by a company and its brand offerings (Vivek et al., 2012). For successful CE, it is crucially important to have a clear vision about customers' needs and motivations, which is difficult without close communication with target customers. For that reason, frequent and close interaction between customers and brand representatives is essential. Moreover, establishing and developing CE requires companies to control and manage online brand communities by providing relevant information, support, rewards, emotional and practical benefits, etc. (Wirtz et al., 2013). Table 1 presents a set of KCEDs revealed in the process of the literature review that takes place in the brand-to-customer context.

**Table 1.** Key drivers of CE in social media: brand-to-customer context

KCED 1	Games and entertainment content
KCED 2	Sense of exclusivity
KCED 3	Brand-related events
KCED 4	Supporting the causes important to a customer
KCED 5	Brand-related information
KCED 6	Sense of ownership
KCED 7	Customer service
KCED 8	Rewards and benefits



According to Flies et al. (2012), CE is not only result of personal emotional or rational concerns toward a focal brand. In many cases, a customer's identification with the brand community and social interactions also lead to CE (Flies et al., 2012). For example, social context may be engaging when it offers a customer emotional value obtained from a sense of belonging to a certain social group or from various intangible social rewards and benefits such as interaction with other customers, helping and receiving help from them, etc. Effective CE strategy requires companies to provide and manage an environment which enables fast communication, easy interaction and flexible collaboration between members of an online brand community (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Moreover, in order to increase customers' commitment and stimulate their participation in a process of value co-creation, companies have to cede some amount of control of the community and provide opportunities for customers to voice openly their suggestions, ideas, concerns, and complains about a brand and its offerings (Witrz et al., 2013). KCEDs that take place in the brand-to-customer context are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Key drivers of CE in social media: brand-to-customer context

KCED 9	Opinion leaders.
KCED 10	Belonging to a brand community
KCED 11	Social benefits
KCED 12	Brand-related information as a source for conversations and brand community interactions
KCED 13	Observing other customers using brand-related products and services
KCED 14	Receiving help from other customers

Effective long term CE strategies are impossible without understanding the nature of CE and its key motivational drivers (Flies et al., 2012). The current work contributes to the existing CE literature by revealing the main CE stimuli and categorizing them into three different groups depending on their motivational mechanisms, which is reflected in the proposed framework. The study investigates online CE not only from utilitarian and gratification perspectives, but also emphasizes the interactive and collaborative roots of CE and considers CE as a social phenomenon. The present research also provides important managerial insights into the main CE motives in social media for designing and implementing effective CE strategies in practice. Moreover, in order to utilize the full potential of CE, it is necessary for companies to conduct engagement activities both in the brand-to-customer and customer-to-customer contexts.

### 3. CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT IN THE PERSUASION CONTEXT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

As was discussed above, the recent tremendous development of Internet technologies and social media particularly have created a previously impossible interactive social medium which is a fertile environment for building large and enduring online brand communities bringing totally new opportunities for companies to engage their customers (Sachi, 2012; Brodie et al., 2011). Thus, the understanding of the existing online and offline business practices employing numerous marketing techniques in CE is an essential but not sufficient prerequisite for successfully establishing and cultivating CE in online brand communities. A holistic view of the development of CE in online environment requires the comprehension of how social media affect customers, their attitudes and behaviors. Understanding the persuasion process in social media which occurs in the contexts of human-computer, computer-mediated interpersonal and computer-mediated mass interpersonal interactions, allows companies to effectively use the great persuasion potential of social media and helps them to build effective CE strategies. To shed light on these issues, this chapter examines the phenomenon of CE in social media from the persuasive technology angle: first, a persuasive technology research domain will be briefly introduced; second, the essence and important characteristics of social media as well as their influence on present business relationships will be discussed; third, different types of persuasion existing in social media will be presented; fourth, social media will be analyzed as a behavior change support platform for CE; fifth, an analysis of the persuasion context of CE will be discussed; sixth, the PSD principles and their role in CE persuasion will be examined.

#### 3.1 Persuasive technology

For a hundred years persuasion has been a research topic for numerous philosophers and scholars, however, there is not a single generally accepted definition of this phenomenon. There are plenty of different approaches from various research areas that contribute to the understanding of persuasion, but each also has its own particular limitations (Fogg, 2003). Thus, the Oxford English Dictionary describes persuasion as a process or act of persuading an individual to do or believe something (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). Persuasive technology is used in numerous different spheres of human activity and, in general, can be defined as any technology which is designed to change people's attitude or/and behavior through persuasion and social influence without using coercion (Fogg, 2003).

The subject of users' attitudes and behaviors has been also widely elaborated in information system research (Oinas-Kukkonen & Hurjumaa, 2008). The theories related to attitudes and behaviors in information systems context have their origins in the various fields such as social psychology and cognitive psychology (Oinas-Kukkonen, 2010). Among the most fundamental of the related theories from these areas are: the Theory of Reasoned Actions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) which considers a person's voluntary behavior as a result of behavioral intentions; the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) which states that an individual's behavioral intentions are formed by

three determinants: and individual's attitudes toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control; the Social Learning and Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1969 & 1989) which say that a person shapes his/her own behavior by studying and observing other people's behaviors; the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) which describes two different methods of persuasion depend on persuadee's motivation and capability in cognition of the persuasive message; and Cognitive Dissonance Theory formulated by Festinger in 1957 (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2007) which states that inconsistency in an individual's attitudes and behaviors leads to cognitive dissonance that needs to be reduced.

Persuasive design and technology in a digital context is quite a new academic field which became a focus of research less than two decades ago (Oinas-Kukkonen, 2010). One of the pioneers of this field B.J. Fogg (2003) defines persuasion as an action which attempts to change attitudes or/and behaviors without using deception and coercion. He describes persuasive technology as any interactive computing system built with purpose of changing attitudes or behaviors of a target audience. In his book, B.J. Fogg coined the term "captology" which refers to persuasion processes in the context of human-computer interactions. Further he identifies three main functional roles of persuasive technology and presents the functional triad according to which, interactive computing systems may be used as tools that increase a user's capability; as a medium which provides an interactive experience; and as social actors that establish relationships (Fogg, 2003).

Persuasion as a key element of attitude and behavior change is the most effective in an interactive context (Fogg, 2003). The modern pervasive information technologies make the persuasion messages interactive rather than one-way. As a result, interaction model is not fixed and may be adjusted based on persuadee's characteristics or behavior (Dominic, Hounkponou, Doh, Ansong & Brighter, 2013). According to Oinas-Kukkonen (2010), recent studies on persuasive technology focus their attention on how present-day interactive technologies may influence people and form, reinforce or change their beliefs and behaviors. A vast majority of persuasive technology studies that have been done are experimental (Oinas-Kukkonen, 2010). Also, a few studies building on Fogg's (2003) offer more elaborate conceptual frameworks for design of persuasive systems. For example, Parmar, Keyson, and de Bont (2009) suggest a conceptual and design framework for the persuasive health informational system built on the Theory of Planned Behavior and Fogg's (2003) persuasive computing theory. Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa (2009) introduce Persuasive System Design (PSD) model which represents an elaborative conceptual and design framework for developing and evaluating persuasive systems. The authors divide the process of the designing persuasive system into three stages. In the first step, fundamental issues behind persuasive systems should be considered. In the second step, the study suggests to analyzing the context of persuasion system with a focus on the intent, event and strategy for persuasion. In the third step, qualities and features of the persuasive system should be designed and evaluated. The authors propose 28 key design principles classified into the following four categories: primary task support, dialogue support, systems credibility support, and social support (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2009). Oinas-Kukkonen (2010) introduces the concept of a behavior change support system (BCSS) and discusses its design and development. An elaborative BCSS concept and PSD model have become a basis for a set of research works evaluating the persuasiveness of social media (Stibe, Oinas-Kukkonen, Berzina, & Pahlila, 2011) and information systems (Lehto & Oinas-Kukkonen, 2010; Räsänen, Lehto, & Oinas-Kukkonen, 2010) in various domains.

### 3.2 Social media: characteristics and role in marketing communications

The extensive development of digital technologies, mobile platforms and other technological innovations during the last couple decades has changed the essence of the web and the way that it is being used. Nowadays, the role of the web has expanded into a universal platform composed of numerous applications, which implies that the key focus should be data, specifically that is generated by users, user activity and reach user experience. In their book, Oinas-Kukkonen & Oinas-Kukkonen (2013) use the term “social web” referring to the phenomenon of the web and describing its current state. The term social web does not focus on a present level of information technology but rather characterizes the way that the web is perceived and being used. According to the authors, in the social web ordinary users generate a great part of content, while companies try to provide a suitable environment, which stimulates and engages users in content creating and sharing (Oinas-Kukkonen & Oinas-Kukkonen, 2013).

The development of the Internet infrastructure and technologies in the 1990s has led to the pervasive growth of various social media, including social networking sites, collaborative projects, blogs, image and video sharing sites, etc. The modern digital environment which includes the social web and mobile platforms bridges distance between people and allows them, whether at home, work or on the go, easily create and distribute their informational content, and present themselves and interact with other people from any part of the world (Erickson, 2010). According to McNab (2009), social media is a great informational mediator which has entirely changed communication pattern on worldwide scale. They not only make communication and interaction between people borderless but also provide an instant stream of information that advances online communication nearly to face-to-face. Social media have changed the decades long predominant “one-to-many” monologue model of communication to the “many-to-many” dialogue model, implying that anybody can be a creator, communicator or consumer of information (McNab, 2009). Similarly, in the business domain there is a shift from traditional one-directional marketing with main focus on delivering a message to two-way relationships intended for engaging customers with a brand (Drury, 2008). Numerous social media platforms with their rich and instant communication capacity enable companies to create a 24/7 collaborative channels for a target audience. At present, customers play an active role in marketing relationships that have essentially changed the way that marketers influence and engage customers (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011). According to Sashi (2012), social media significantly enrich and facilitate marketing relationships to enable companies to get closer to their customers, to better satisfy them, and develop CE. CE in social media extends beyond purchase transactions, satisfaction, retention and loyalty. Also, the author considers CE as a manifestation of the evolution of business relationships, starting with the epoch of the marketing concept, to market orientation, and culminating with relationship marketing (Sashi, 2012).

By offering many opportunities for users to share information and interact with each other, social media have facilitated and democratized the access to information more than ever before (Drury, 2008). Oinas-Kukkonen & Oinas-Kukkonen (2013) point to the abundance of informational content, the lion’s share of which is often generated by ordinary users, as an important aspect of the social web. As a result, the social web provides access to a vast diversity of information and viewpoints that users throughout the world can synthesize and share (Oinas-Kukkonen & Oinas-Kukkonen, 2013). Social media have also changed the model of how information flows in the business context.

According to Mangold & Faulds (2009), customers are being increasingly alienated from traditional marketing informational channels such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. Instead, in their search for information to aid in making purchase decision, they are turning more and more often to numerous social media (Mangold & Faulds 2009). Customers increasingly require more control over their acquisition of information from media and expect on-demand and instant access to desired content (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008).

In addition to democratizing access to information, social media stimulate building of users' informal social networks that facilitate the movement of ideas and knowledge by supporting efficient creating, sharing, editing and synthesizing of informational content (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). Moreover, the social web enables ordinary people to easily reach thousands or millions of other people around the world that was impossible before. The social web not only facilitates the flow of ideas and opinions between individuals but also provides a platform for collaboration and the joint conceptualization of information by numerous users - possibly the most democratic manifestation of user generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Oinas-Kukkonen & Oinas-Kukkonen, 2013) The great capacity of social media to communicate knowledge and ideas has two important impacts on the business domain. On the one hand, via social media companies are able to reach easily and be closely connected with a large number of customers (Gummerus et al., 2012). On the other hand, social media provide customers with numerous platforms for immediate, real-time communication with thousands of other customers on a global scale. As opposed to previous traditional marketing communication methods, with the advent of the epoch of social media, companies have relinquished full control of the information related to their brand or products, while customers have become active participants in the process of generation and communication of brand-related ideas and knowledge (Kietzmann, et al., 2011; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Nowadays, collective intelligence and peer opinions have an increasing influence on customer behaviors (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). Customers now consider social media as a more reliable source for brand-related information than traditional marketing channels (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Social media have become an omnipresent element in numerous spheres of human life (Kent, 2015). Today, social media is a cultural and business phenomenon providing to citizens, companies, media, and governments exceptional opportunities for interaction enabling them to have unprecedented access to information (Rodriguez, Peterson & Krishnan, 2012). However, despite the ubiquity of social media and the shared general understanding of the phenomenon, there is a lack of formal definitions for the term (Carr & Hayes, 2015; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). First, the rapid development of digital and communication technology lead to continuous radical technical and social advances in the domain of social media making this phenomenon broader and more complex over time. Second, during the past decade social media have been a focal point of keen interest among the research community that has resulted in myriads of definitions differentiated depending on discipline and context of research (Carr & Hayes, 2015). Thus, a large part of the research on social media is focused particularly on social networking sites, their structure and various socio-psychological aspects of use (Correa, Hinsley & Zuniga, 2010). Also, social media are often examined from the perspective of the user experience; and their influence on organizations as well as on people's behavior in the various fields of human activity.

In light of the research topic for the current study, in the process of selecting a working definition for social media, the majority of the attention was given to a range of definitions considering social media as a tool for stimulating CE and the co-creation of

value for a company. A great part of these definitions naturally refer to present digital technologies and consider interaction and user-generated content as essential elements of social media (Drury, 2008; Constantinides & Fountain, 2008; Carr & Hayes, 2015; Kaplan & Haenlein; Marketo, 2010; Nair, 2011; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). In addition, some authors in their definitions also mention the capability of social media to facilitate the flow of knowledge, ideas and thoughts (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008; Rodriguez, et al., 2012). Also, Constantinides & Fountain (2008) point to the uncontrolled essence of social media which extends users' experience and market power and makes them influential participants of the business process. Hanna et al., (2011) refer to the large capacity of social media to influence customers. Finally, some definitions emphasize the role of social media as being a platform for CE and eventually involving customers in the process of value co-creation (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Andzulis, Panagopoulos & Rapp, 2012). With a nod toward each of these definitions, and some others that are not specified here, in this work social media are articulated as *“Interactive and uncontrolled Internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological basis of Web 2.0 that facilitate the creation and exchange of user-generated content, the flow of ideas, experiences, and knowledge; influence customers; and expand customers' market power as active participants in the business relationships involving them in the value co-creation process.”*

### 3.3 Persuasion in the context of social media

Persuasion is a major determinant of attitude and behavior change (Oinas-Kukkonen, 2010). Persuasion is most effective in an interactive context and can be described as a communication process in which one side sends a persuasive message in order to influence attitudes or behaviors, while the recipient always has the power of decision (Fogg, 2003). There are three different types of persuasion that can be singled out depending on the context of the communication: interpersonal persuasion, human-computer persuasion and computer-mediated persuasion. Interpersonal persuasion happens within the interaction process between two or more people - this includes verbal and non-verbal communication. Human-computer persuasion refers to the situation when people are persuaded while interacting with computer technology (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjuma, 2008). Generally speaking, computer technology is never neutral and influences people's attitudes and behaviors in one way or another (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjuma, 2009). Moreover, in the case of BCSSs, there are always other stakeholders who create and distribute BCSSs in order to influence attitudes and behaviors of a target audience (Oinas-Kukkonen, 2010). Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjuma (2008) state that even though computer communication is not equivalent to human communication, some interactional patterns that are very similar to social communication can be used in human-computer persuasion. Computer-mediated persuasion occurs when people persuade others by interacting via computer technology, e.g. email, instant messages, discussion forums, social networks, etc. (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjuma, 2008).

BCSSs are inherently persuasive (Oinas-Kukkonen, 2010). Social media have a set of characteristics congener to the essential principles of BCSSs that will be discussed in the next chapter in more detail. Similarly to BCSSs, social media enable human-computer and computer-mediated persuasion. Moreover, social media are exceptionally suitable for persuasive communication, because they bring together the power of interpersonal and mass communication (Oinas-Kukkonen & Hurjama, 2008). According to Fogg (2008), the rapid development of social media has created a

particular environment that has made possible the emergence of a new form of persuasion – mass interpersonal persuasion. Mass interpersonal persuasion combines the potential of interpersonal persuasion with the global pervasion of social media. Fogg (2008) states that social media provide a unique medium which brings together six integral characteristics of mass interpersonal persuasion: persuasive experience – an experience which is designed to influence attitudes and behaviors; automated structure – computer technology delivers a persuasive experience with constancy and enables easy sharing of this experience with others; social distribution – social networks make sharing persuasive experience easier with more credibility; rapid cycle – a persuasive experience can be quickly dispersed by one person to others; huge social graph – a persuasive experience can potentially be delivered to an enormous number of people; and measured impact – the influence of a persuasive experience can be measured (Fogg, 2008).

The integral components of mass interpersonal persuasion identified by Fogg (2008) closely correlate with the new state of marketing relationships that have dramatically changed in the era of social media. As was discussed above, currently social media have a great influence on a wide range of customer behaviors by enabling companies as well as customers to quickly reach a large number of people around the world; empowering customers to actively create and distribute brand-related content; and providing for customers a trustworthy channel for information flow.

As can be seen from the KCEDs identified in chapter 2, companies may employ human-computer, computer-mediated interpersonal, and computer-mediated mass interpersonal types of persuasion in their CE activities. That reflects the multipersuasive essence of social media. For example, human-computer persuasion is widely represented in games and entertainment applications (KCED 1) and in various elements that reward customers (KCED 8). Brand-related events (KCED 3) and customer service (KCED 7) are good examples of computer-mediated interpersonal persuasion. Finally, computer-mediated mass persuasion is an essential component of various social CE drivers, including: the opinion leader's influence (KCED 9), the observation of others customer experience (KCED 13), brand-related conversations with other customers (KCED 12), receiving help and assistance from other customers (KCED 14), etc.

### 3.4 Social media as behavior change support platforms for customer engagement

Since persuasion is a key component in attitude and behavior change, persuasive system design and technology should serve as the primary building blocks of BCSS (Fogg, 2003). Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjuma (2009) define three principles addressing essential characteristics of BCSS. According to the authors, BCSS should be useful and easy to use; open and transparent; and unobtrusive (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjuma, 2009). These postulates closely correspond to the essential requirements that a platform fertile for CE must have.

First, the usefulness inherent in BCSSs is also an integral component of a vast majority of the KCEDs defined earlier, especially, utilitarian drivers which represent various practical stimuli that may engage customers. Sashi (2012) emphasizes that a positive customer experience and customer loyalty are important prerequisites for CE which also corresponds with the essential features of BCSSs. According to Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjuma (2009), BCSS should be easy to use. Likewise, CE studies emphasize the

importance of the usability aspect and suggest that companies provide easy-to-use interactional platforms for the effective engagement of their customers (Van Doorn et al. 2010; Wagner & Majchrzal, 2007). Also, a high level of usability is a significant factor contributing to the pervasive popularity of social media which is in the considered context means that social media may serve as effective BCSSs for CE.

Second, the principle of open and transparent BCSSs has a lot in common with building open and trusting relationships between a company and its customers - an essential requirement for the development of CE. Just as the persuasive power of BCSS may be reduced when the designer's bias is unclear to the users, a lack of trust between customers and a brand is unlikely to result in an intimate, lasting and engaging relationship (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2009; Sashi, 2012). In this context, social media are seen very suitable BCSSs for CE. According to the academic literature, social media are considered by customers to be more trustworthy sources of information than traditional marketing channels (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Moreover, studies on CE suggest that companies ceding of a certain amount of control and empowering customers to more deeply engage their target audience (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Wirtz et al., 2013). These two postulates were also verified by the results of the empirical research presented in chapter 4 of this study.

Third, effective BCSSs should be unobtrusive, meaning that there should be careful consideration of suitable and unsuitable moments for persuasion (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2009). Whereas previously the control over the distribution of information was fully in the hands of companies and the message was delivered at the moment when customers may or may not have been willing to participate in communication, nowadays, social media make delivery of information to customers much timely by providing on-demand and instant access to desired content (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

To summarize the brief examination of the essential characteristics of BCSS in the context of building online CE, two important findings can be articulated. First, the fundamental characteristics of BCSSs closely correspond to the key principles of CE. This indicates that, apart from such areas as healthcare, education, commerce, safety, occupation effectiveness, environmental conservation, and some others that have been defined by the previous research works (Fogg, 2003; Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2008) as very suitable for utilizing the power of persuasive systems, persuasion technology may be also especially useful in the domain of establishing and building close and enduring relationships with customers and their engagement. Second, the examination of the essential principles for designing BCSSs and building CE indicates that social media have a high potential and the necessary characteristics for effective platforms that can influence the customers' attitudes and behaviors towards a focal brand.

In his work Oinas-Kukkonen (2010) introduces the concept of a BCSS, which he defines as: "*An information system designed to form, alter, or reinforce attitudes or behaviors or both without using coercion or deception.*" Numerous social media have been designed for a variety of purposes, including a social interaction, collaboration, knowledge and ideas exchange and dissemination, entertainment, building social and professional networks, etc. Even though popular social media have a number of particular characteristics enabling companies to engage a target audience, none of them has been designed specifically for this purpose. Thus, in the context of business communications with customers, social media can be considered to be *behavior change support platforms* that clever companies use for engaging activities with the aim of establishing and developing lasting and productive relationships with target customers.



### 3.5 Analysis of the persuasion context for customer engagement

As was mentioned earlier, social media enable companies to utilize the potential of human-computer and computer-mediated interpersonal as well as mass interpersonal types of persuasion. The multipersuasive essence of social media allows companies to influence a target audience in different ways to achieve intended CE goals. This chapter discusses the important elements of persuasive strategy for CE in social media based on the PSD model proposed by Oinas-Kukkonen & Hurjumaa (2009) which is regarded to be the most thorough framework for designing and evaluating persuasive systems (Wiafe, Nakata, Moran & Gulliver, 2011). While the original purpose of the PSD model is defining persuasive design and software requirements for BCSSs, it also provides an elaborative conceptualization of human-computer and computer-mediated persuasion that make it especially relevant for the persuasive context of social media examined in the current research (Torning & Oinas-Kukkonen, 2009).

Oinas-Kukkonen & Hurjumaa (2009) state that the understanding and careful analysis of the persuasive context is an essential prerequisite of effective persuasion. According to the PSD model, context analysis includes three stages: identifying the intent of persuasion, understanding the persuasion event; and choosing a suitable persuasion strategy (Oinas-Kukkonen & Hurjumaa, 2009). In the following paragraphs these three stages will be discussed in the CE context.

#### **The intent**

As was discussed above, CE can be defined as “*a customer’s behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond a purchase, resulting from motivational drivers*” (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Therefore, companies try to persuade customers to form, change or reinforce their attitudes and behaviors towards a focal brand or brand-related products and services and, as a result, establish productive and lasting relationship with customers as well as engage them. CE is a complex phenomenon, which consolidates a large variety of customers’ beliefs and behavioral manifestations including idea generation, value co-creation, advocating of a company, promoting products and services, etc. (Flies et al, 2012). Similarly, the persuasive strategies should differ depending on seeking behavioral outcome and the type of change (Fogg, 2009; Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2009).

In his work, Fogg (2009) proposes the 35 Behavior Grid which describes the following five main types of behavior: performing a new behavior; performing an existing behavior; increasing behavior; decreasing behavior; and stopping behavior. Moreover, the grid illustrates seven behavior schedule types, including one time behavior; one time behavior leading to continuous obligation; temporary behavior; behavior on a predictable schedule; behavior on cue; behavior at will; and permanent behavior. Two types of behavioral characteristics form a 35 Behavioral Grid, which provides segmentation for behavior change intents requiring the different persuasive techniques and strategies (Fogg, 2009).

Wiafe, et al. (2011) identify eight types of persuadees depending on their current behavior and relationship to the target behavior and offer the 3D-RAB model which suggests different persuasive approaches for each type of user. The work is based on the cognitive dissonance theory, which in the considered context, describes behaviors of persuadees and their attitudes towards the target behavior. The model categorizes

persuadees based on their level of cognitive dissonance state, characterizing their attitudes towards the target behavior and changing or maintaining the current behavior. The authors analyze possible transitions between cognitive states and emphasize that each transition may require different persuasive approaches (Wiafe, et al., 2011).

According to Oinas-Kukkonen & Hurjamaa (2009), in analyzing the intent of persuasion it is crucially important to consider the type of change. Depending on the persuader's intent, the focus may be on the persuadee's behavior or/and on attitude. Similarly to Fogg (2009), the authors emphasize that permanent behavior change is more challenging task than one-time behavior change. The most difficult persuasion goal is attitude change (Oinas-Kukkonen & Hurjamaa, 2009). Attitude is considered as one of the primary concepts of persuasion and can be defined as people's opinions about themselves and the surrounding world (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). According to considerable research in social psychology (e.g. Theory of Reasoned Action) attitude may often predict behavior; and only in the case of attitude change, full behavior change can be expected. The most challenging task is changing an already well-formed attitude, while forming or reinforcing an attitude or changing recently learned attitude are relatively easier objectives (Oinas-Kukkonen, 2010). Along with this type of change, potential outcomes of persuasion such as formation, alteration or reinforcement should be considered. Similar to Fogg's (2009) findings, Oinas-Kukkonen (2012) emphasizes that different types of change and seeking outcomes require different approaches and strategies. In his article, the author proposes an O/C matrix, which is useful in analyzing the intent of persuasion. The O/C matrix is a two-dimensional grid that characterizes the intent as the basis of seeking types of change (act of complying, behavior, and attitude) and desirable outcomes (forming, altering, and reinforcing) (Oinas-Kukkonen, 2012).

Just as the intent of BCSSs varies in the seeking outcomes and types of change, the intent of CE persuasion in social media may be different. CE involves a wide range of customer behavioral manifestations that in a persuasion context may require companies to focus on the different types of change. However, since CE implies establishing an intimate and enduring connection between a customer and brand, the simple act of complying cannot be the ultimate intended outcome of CE persuasion. It also means that using coercion or deception as a part of a strategy is not effective in the case of CE. The phenomenon of CE spreads beyond purchase transactions (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Deception or coercion may help to gain a one-time compliance like clicking on a pop-up window or even a purchase, but will fail in building trusting and lasting relationships with target customers (Fogg, 2009). On the contrary, the goal of CE persuasion includes the most challenging behavior and attitude types of change aiming to gain enduring behavioral objectives from customers, including providing feedback, creating and disseminating brand-related content, evangelizing about a brand to other people, etc.

Additionally, the seeking persuasive outcomes may be different depending on various factors of the business context such as relationships between target customers and brand or a stage of customer engagement cycle (CEC). Thus, while forming or altering behaviors or/and attitudes may be most proper for noncustomers or potential customers, the reinforcing strategy is suitable for existing loyal customers. Similarly, the seeking persuasive outcomes may vary for customers on different stages of CEC. The concept of CEC described by Sashi (2012), distinguishes the following stages of the CE process: connection, interaction, satisfaction, retention, commitment, advocacy, and engagement. Thus, the strategy aimed at forming an attitude or/and behavior may be used for customers who are in the awareness or interaction stages of CEC, while the reinforcement approach works better for those customers who have reached the commitment and advocacy stages. As can be seen, careful consideration of the intent is

essential for the understanding of the persuasion process in social media and designing effective CE strategies.

### **The event**

According to Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa (2009), the second step of analyzing the persuasion context is an examination of the event, which means careful consideration of the user context as well as the use context of persuasive system.

Analyzing of the use context focuses on the information that is relevant for a customer in a specified situation and closely connected with the particularities of the CE domain. A well-thought-out CE persuasive plan is impossible without a comprehension of the phenomenon of CE. For instance, in the process of CE, a target audience often may not have a formed an attitude towards a brand which means extra attention to the first customer's interaction with a brand. Only if a customer's interactions with a brand or other customers result in satisfaction, the customer will continue to participate in CE persuasion process (Sashi, 2012). Moreover, the industry of a company-persuader and the type of marketing relationships (business-to-business or business-to-consumer) should be also considered. The possible influence of these business factors on the CE process is discussed more in detail in chapter 4 of the current research.

In addition to analyzing the use context, the user context should also be examined. Analysis of the user context means an examination of a wide range of user's characteristics, including needs, goals, motivations, life styles, interests, personality traits, attitudes, consistency, etc. (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2009). In this context, it is important to mention that CE persuasion in social media is a significantly different compared to persuasion in traditional persuasive systems. There is a larger scale of persuasion. Nowadays, social media enable companies to reach and influence tens or hundreds of thousands of customers around the world. In terms of analyzing the user context, two important remarks should be made. On the one hand, such a large sized target audience means a great diversity of potential persuadees. The process of analyzing and categorizing participants of online brand communities may be very complex in practice and require considerable efforts from a company. On the other hand, hectic and rapid business life, global market, and competition demand from companies as precise a portrait of their target customer as it possible. Modern technologies provide for companies numerous tools and ways to gain deep insights into their customers. This information collected in the process of various marketing activities, including market segmentation, product differentiation, etc. can also be used by companies for analyzing user context.

Also, the technology context should be taken into consideration (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2009). Currently, companies can use for their CE activities a wide range of social media platforms, including social networking sites, collaborative projects, blogs, image and video sharing sites, etc. The potential persuasive capabilities and limitations of specific technological platforms should be carefully analyzed depending on context of CE persuasion. For example, analysis of the user context may often determine the choice of the proper social media for CE. This issue is discussed more in detail in chapter 4 of this work.

### **The strategy**

Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa (2009) consider the analysis of a persuasive message as a key aspect of defining the persuasion strategy. The authors note that persuasion occurs

when a persuadee makes a compromised decision among conflicting forces. Also, they emphasize the difficulty in unequivocally differentiating between persuasion affecting mainly emotions and conviction, which relies mostly on logical proof (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjuma, 2009). A similar observation can be done from the KCEDs defined in chapter 2: the first group of motives, gratification and positive emotions drivers, is aimed at having an affective influence on a persuadee; the second group of stimuli, utilitarian drivers, rely mostly on the rational aspects; whereas the third group of stimuli, social drivers, usually combines both emotional and logical paths. Analysis of the persuasive message in practice and further selection the proper CE drivers are discussed in chapter 4 of the present research.

According to Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjuma (2009), choosing a suitable route for delivering a persuasive message is another key issue in defining persuasion strategy. Two major routes to persuasion were described in the ELM proposed by Petty & Cacioppo (1986). The central route relies on a rational processing of information and requires a persuadee to examine carefully and thoughtfully the content of the persuasive message. As opposed to the central route, persuasion via a peripheral route is generally unrelated to the logical quality of the persuasive message and appeals mostly to persuadee's associations with positive or negative cues in the persuasive message. ELM suggests that the choice of a proper route mostly depends on two factors: a persuadee's motivation to process carefully the persuasive message and ability to do it. The central route is used when a person is able and involved enough to thoroughly evaluate the persuasive message. In other cases, the peripheral route is preferable (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Generally, successful persuasion via the central route usually leads to a more enduring and predictive attitude or/and behavior changes compared to persuasion which is done via the peripheral way (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). However, in the Internet age of abundance of information and the multitasking way of information gathering and processing, a peripheral route often is more effective, especially in a situation of low involvement of persuadee (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjuma, 2008). On the contrary, highly involved customers are willing to spend energy and time with their brand relationship (Goodman, Fichman, Javier, Lerch & Snyder, 1995). The level of customer involvement depends on various factors. For instance, a high level of customer involvement is typical for complex and dissonance-reducing buying behaviors, whereas habitual and variety-seeking buying behaviors are characterized by a low level of customer involvement (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011). Also, the phenomenon of CE expands beyond purchase transactions (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Nowadays, modern interactive technologies and social media enable companies to create an environment that stimulates customer participation in product development, creating and sharing brand-related content, and even strategic decision making that all eventually increases the level of customer involvement (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011; Sashi, 2012).

As was discussed above, a prominent attribute of CE persuasion in social media is the potentially very large scale of persuasion. Given the existence of such a heterogeneous target audience of persuasion, companies should be flexible in choosing a suitable route of persuasion, combining the routes and even using both central and peripheral routes simultaneously. Selection of the proper route of persuasion for CE in social media was discussed in the empirical research conducted in the scope of the present study. The key findings of the empirical research are presented in chapter 4 of this work.

### 3.6 Persuasive system design principles as essential elements of customer engagement strategy

After analyzing the persuasion context, a company has to determine the appropriate CE activities and select suitable KCEDs. The KCEDs presented in chapter 2 closely correspond to numerous persuasive techniques. For instance, Cialdini (1988) singles out six key persuasion techniques: reciprocation – humans feel obliged to pay back equivalent benefits which other have given to them (KCED 14); commitment – humans strive to be consistent with respect to the things they have done before (KCED 10); social proof – human actions are often influenced by the actions or opinions of others (KCED 11 and 13); liking - humans are more likely to be influenced by humans they like (KCED 10); authority – humans often follow the behavior suggested by an person perceived to be an authority (KCED 9); and scarcity – the things that are less available are considered by humans as more desirable (KCED 2).

Also, the KCEDs in social media are in line with the 28 PSD principles proposed by Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa (2009). The PSD model presented by Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa (2009) is considered to be the most elaborate conceptual and design framework for developing and evaluating persuasive systems (Wiafe et al., 2011). The PSD model can be relatively easily applied by practitioners without a strong theoretical background in persuasive design (Räisänen et al., 2010). That makes the examination of the PSD model interesting in the context of the current work intended to provide managerial insights into KCEDs in social media in order to help companies in establishing effective CE strategies in practice. The PSD model defines a set of design guidelines that are, to a great extent, based on the Fogg's (2003) functional triad characterizing interactive computing systems as the tools for increasing capability, media for providing experience, and social actors for creating relationships. However, Fogg's functional triad does not have a place for computer-mediated persuasion and restricts persuasive technology to human-computer interactions (Kelders, Kok, Ossebaard & Van Gemert-Pejnen, 2012). Alongside human-computer persuasion, computer-mediated interpersonal and mass interpersonal types of persuasion are essential elements of CE persuasion in social media. In this chapter the design guidelines proposed in the PSD model will be discussed in the context of the KCEDs in social media defined in chapter 2. In the PSD model Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa (2009) suggest 28 design principles for BCSSs that are divided into four categories: primary task support, computer-human dialog support, perceived system credibility, and social influence.

#### **Primary task support**

The principles with a focus on supporting the accomplishing user's primary task are compiled into primary task support group which includes the following design principles: reduction, tunneling, tailoring, personalization, self-monitoring, simulation, and rehearsal (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2009). The primary task support elements of persuasive systems seem to be the most common methods of persuasion (Kelders et al., 2012; Torning & Oinas-Kukkonen, 2009). However, since CE occurs in a medium which initially is not designed for the specific persuasion activities, in social media company representatives mostly do the primary task support functions during their interactions with a target audience. For instance, reduction, tunneling and simulation techniques may be widely used in various online engagement campaigns (KCED 8); tailoring is a part of brand cause-related activities (KCED 4); games and entertainment content (KCED 1) have behind the idea of rehearsing to increase customer interactions

with a brand. The principle of self-monitoring probably is less common in social media because a customer's activity is broadly observed by company representatives as well as other customers. However, self-monitoring elements still may be used in various brand-related applications, e.g. in counting referrals.

To sum up, in the process of CE persuasion in social media, the primary task support is done mostly in the context of interpersonal interaction. Still, primary task support principles for BCSSs suggested by the PSD model may be effectively incorporated in various CE activities.

### **Dialogue Support**

The second group of PSD principles consists of dialogue support features that are intended to implement human-computer interaction support to help users in achieving an intended goal or behavior. This group of principles includes praise, rewards, reminders suggestion, similarity, liking, and social role (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2009). Similar to the primary task support principles, dialogue support in social media is done to a great extent through computer-mediated interactions between company representatives and customers. For example, customers may receive praise after particular actions, including participation or inviting somebody to participate in brand-related campaigns and events, submitting feedback, creating brand-related content, etc. Praise may be offered by a system (e.g. thank you message or like sign), by the staff of a company as well as by other customers. The principle of rewarding is also a common aspect of CE strategies (KCED 8). In this context, it is important to mention that whereas BCSSs often use virtual rewards, companies may engage customers by offering them real rewards and benefits, including referrals, loyalty programs, special offers, lotteries, giveaways, financial rewards, etc. (Fuller, 2010; Van Doorn et al., 2010). The dialogue support principle of suggestion is widely presented in KCEDs, for example customers may receive suggestions from customer service (KCED 7), opinion leaders (KCED 9) or other customers (KCED 14). Since the general attractiveness of the CE medium is limited by the appearance of the social media in use, companies may make it more appealing to customers (principle of liking) by adding a suitable media content like photos or videos (KCED 1). The implementation of such dialogue support principles as similarity and social role into online CE activities is probably unnecessary because social media inherently have these features. For instance, social media enable customers to easily reach brand representatives or to observe without effort the activities of other customers.

As can be seen, PSD dialogue support principles are important features of the CE process. However, CE in social media includes not only typical for BCSSs human-computer persuasion but also the computer-mediated interpersonal and computer-mediated mass interpersonal persuasion that make persuasive dialogue many-sided by involving customers, the system as well as company personnel and other customers.

### **System Credibility Support**

As was discussed earlier, credibility is an important feature of BCSS's as well as an essential aspect of the CE process. According to Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa (2009), the third group of PSD principles is intended to make the persuasive system more credible for users. The authors single out the following credibility support principles: trustworthiness, surface credibility, expertise, authority, verifiability, real-world feel, and third-party endorsements (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2009). The KCEDs in social media identified in chapter 2 incorporate these PSD principles in many ways. For

instance, providing expertise and trustworthiness and verifiable information (KCED 5) is crucially important for cultivating trust and commitment in relationships with customers (Sashi, 2012). The principle of authority is widely reflected in KCED 9: competent opinion leaders help customers to bridge uncertainty and emotional gaps (Flies et al., 2012). Social media as platforms for CE combine an inherent real-world essence together with exceptional openness and transparency. Social media provide to customers on-demand access to a great variety of information and viewpoints as well as enable them to have real-time communication with thousands of other customers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Oinas-Kukkonen & Oinas-Kukkonen, 2013).

In a nutshell, CE in social media has a lot of room for the utilization PSD credibility support principles empowered by the persuasive power of collective intelligence and peer opinions.

### **Social support**

The last group of PSD principles considers social influence as a tool to make BCSS more persuasive. These principles include social learning, social comparison, social facilitation, normative influence, cooperation, recognition, and competition (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2009). As was discussed, social media facilitate and stimulate customer interaction and collaboration. The triad of the KCEDs in social media presented in chapter 2 indicates that various social motives are essential elements of the CE process. Social support PSD principles are widely reflected in the social KCEDs. For example, social learning, social comparison, and social facilitation are motive drivers for customers' participating in brand-related events (KCED 3) and observing other customers in brand-related activities (KCED 13). The principles of normative influence and cooperation play an important role in a customer's involvement in a brand community (KCED 10) and participating in brand-related events (KCED 3). Finally, feelings of peer recognition and competing with other customers are influential social engaging motives (KCED 11, KCED 13) as well as may be broadly used in entertainment activities (KCED 1).

To sum up, the 28 PSD principles proposed by Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa (2009) are reflected to a great extent in the key CE drivers. CE happens in the context of social media that enable not only human-computer but also computer-mediated interpersonal and computer-mediated mass interpersonal types of persuasion. As a result, some primary task support and dialogue support PSD principles are not very prominent in KCEDs and may be exercised by company personnel or other customers instead of computer system. Credibility is an essential prerequisite of the CE process (Sashi, 2012). The open and uncontrolled nature, as well as the real-world essence of social media, enable companies to create a credible persuasive medium for engaging their customers. In other words, some credibility support PSD principles like verifiability or real-world feel are incorporated to a great extent into social media, while the other credibility support principles are widely reflected in the KCEDs. Social influence is a highly important factor in the persuasion process. According to Hendler et al (2008), social aspects often determine the success of web information systems. As was discussed earlier, social support PSD principles closely correlate with social KCEDs. Moreover, some social persuasive techniques, such as principle of reciprocity, were excluded by Oinas-Kukkonen and Hurjama (2009) from their framework because they are not common in human-computer communication. Nevertheless, these principles play an important role in the process of CE in social media, especially in the context of computer-mediated interpersonal persuasion.

## 4. KEY CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT DRIVERS AND PERSUASION PATTERNS IN THE CONTEXT OF BRAND-TO-CUSTOMERS RELATIONSHIPS IN SOCIAL MEDIA: PRACTITIONERS' PERSPECTIVE

Manglold & Faulds (2009) consider social media as a hybrid element of the promotional mix because they combine traditional integrated marketing communications as well as provide for customers great opportunities to communicate with each other. Similarly, in chapter 2 of this work it was identified that the process of CE may take place in the context of brand-to-customer and customer-to-customer communication. Thus, the KCEDs 9-14 take place in customer-customer communication. Social media provide versatile platforms for customers' interactions and content creating. A company is not in full control anymore for generating and disseminating brand related information. In order to engage effectively the customers in their interactions with other customers a company should conduct a variety of engaging activities that encourage customers' participation and loyalty towards a brand. These issues open up more room for research and may be an interesting topic for further studies. However, more elaborated research on the customer-to-customer KCEDs is outside the scope of this work. The rest of the present study focuses on the KCEDs 1-8 that engage customers in their interactions with a brand. In the context of brand-to-customer interactions, a company usually plays a leading role in marketing communications and utilizes the power of social media to get closer to target customers, in order to understand and serve them better (Manglold & Faulds, 2009; Sashi, 2012). At the same time, social media may serve as handy tools for enabling customers to reach easily the company stuff or get the needed information (Rohm et al., 2013).

In order to examine practitioners' viewpoints and experiences about CE, reveal persuasion strategies applicable for CE in social media, and verify the findings of chapter 2 in practice, empirical research was conducted. Research goals and settings as well as the key findings of the research are presented further in this chapter.

### 4.1 Research goals and settings

As was discussed earlier, there is no well-established shared theory on motivational drivers of CE yet. Moreover, the deeper understanding of CE and its prerequisites requires applying flexible and in-depth approaches that are able to explore such a complex psycho-social phenomenon as CE (Gambetti et al., 2012). In this context, a qualitative approach appears very suitable for the current research, due to its capacity to examine the multifaceted social construct of CE, explore numerous engagement motives, and define the appropriate persuasion strategies depending on customer context. The present study is exploratory with the aim of understanding how various CE drivers are employed by companies in real world settings. In the research, deductive and inductive approaches are employed together for a more complete understanding of mechanisms and strategies of CE in the process of interactions between brand and



customers in social media. The key brand-to-customer CE drivers as well as possible central and peripheral persuasion routes for CE were generated deductively from the literature review. Since the up-to-date academic literature does not provide much insight into analysis of the persuasion context for CE in practice, the factors affecting on the selection of social media, designing the persuasive message, and choice of a suitable route of persuasion were obtained inductively through the interviews with practitioners.

According to Oinas-Kukkonen (2012), all possible PSD design principles are not mandatory for BCSS. Usually, BCSSs incorporates a suitable combination of them (Oinas-Kukkonen, 2012). Similarly, the present research does not claim that all identified KCEDs must be used in online CE activities. Depending on the intent, event and strategy of persuasion, the companies should select and combine suitable KCEDs. *The first research goal is to verify the importance of the identified KCEDs that companies use in their dialogue with customers.*

Building trusted relationships with customers and their engagement is a very difficult task without an understanding of the persuasion context and the KCEDs. Persuasion is an influential factor of attitude and behavior change and especially effective in social media. Social media have an enormous potential for persuasion, which may occur in the context of human-computer, computer-mediated interpersonal and computer-mediated mass interpersonal communication (Fogg, 2003, 2008). Currently, companies can use for their CE activities a wide range of social media platforms with different persuasive capabilities and limitations. *The second research goal is to identify which social media practitioners use in their CE activities and the factors influencing their choices.*

Depending on a customers' motivation and ability to process a persuasive message, a company may use different persuasion strategies. *The third research goal is to investigate the implementation of different persuasion strategies in practice.*

According to Mangold & Faulds (2009), social media are essential channels of brand-to-customers communications and often considered as more reliable sources of brand-related information than traditional marketing channels. Nowadays, companies are not anymore in full control of the brand-related information that is being generated and communicated by customers via social media. Instead of talking to customers, companies must learn how to talk with them in order to shape brand-related discussions in a way that is consistent with companies' objectives (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). *The fourth research goal is to verify practitioners' opinions on the perceived trustworthiness of social media and to examine how they deal with possible negative brand-related discussions.*

Within the scope of the present study, data was collected through twelve semi-structured interviews with practitioners working in medium and large-sized companies. Since this exploratory research is aimed at discovering the practitioners' standpoints on CE drivers and strategies applied in social media, the sample is represented by marketers as well as PR professionals because they are both in charge of key brand-related decisions and involved into generating and spreading brand-related information to the public. Thus, marketers are responsible for the strategic brand management process, while communication professionals manage creative and media activities. The roles of marketing and PR professionals are complementary in creating and achieving corporate goals, thereby both; their viewpoints and experiences related to engaging motives and strategies in social media, are equally significant for a comprehensive understanding of the CE process. Also, the interviewees were asked about their work

experience in the field. The interviewees' work positions and work experiences are presented in Table 3.

The research had its focus on medium and large-sized companies including multinationals such as Nestle and ECCO as well as communication agencies with large brand portfolios. This sample provided a variety of experiences that are both meaningful and prototypical of their fields of business. In order to consider the different perspectives on the KCEDs and persuasion strategies, the research analyzed the practices of a diversified range of brands. Multiplicity of distinctive experiences from various industries is very important to develop a comprehensive understanding of effective CE activities and strategies. Apart from the different industries, the sample was represented by both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing and communication professionals in order to gain deeper insight into factors influencing the persuasion strategy for CE. Moreover, the current research analyzed the CE experiences of the practitioners in three different countries which also contributes in a wider coverage of the phenomenon and allows comparing the engagement practices on a global scale. The industries, types of marketing relationships, and countries of the sampled companies are presented in the Table 3.

**Table 3.** Interviewees' profiles

<b>№</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Type of marketing</b>	<b>Work position</b>	<b>Years of work</b>
1	Russia	Personal care	B2C	Head of marketing	> 10
2	Russia	IT	B2C	Head of PR	> 10
3	Russia	Hotels	B2C/B2B	Marketing manager	> 10
4	Russia	Construction	B2B	Marketing Manager	1-3
5	Germany	Computer software	B2B	Marketing Manager	1-3
6	Finland	Computer software	B2B	Marketing Manager	3-5
7	Russia	Beverage	B2C	PR manager	1-3
8	Russia	Communication agency	B2C/B2B	CEO	> 10
9	Russia	Banking	B2C	PR director	> 10
10	Finland	Computer software	B2B	Head of marketing	3-5
11	Russia	Footwear	B2C	Head of PR	3-5
12	Russia	Food and beverage	B2C	PR manager	5-10

Within the scope of the present research, data sampling was carried out in August – September, 2015. Prior to the interviews with marketing and communication specialists, a pilot interview was conducted. A person at the position of sales manager was chosen as an interviewee because of her close collaboration with the marketing department of a company and her everyday experience in communicating with customers. On the basis of pilot interview some questions were rephrased and a description of the KCEDs in the printed material for interviewees was shortened. Also, the order of some questions was changed to make the interviews more logically structured.

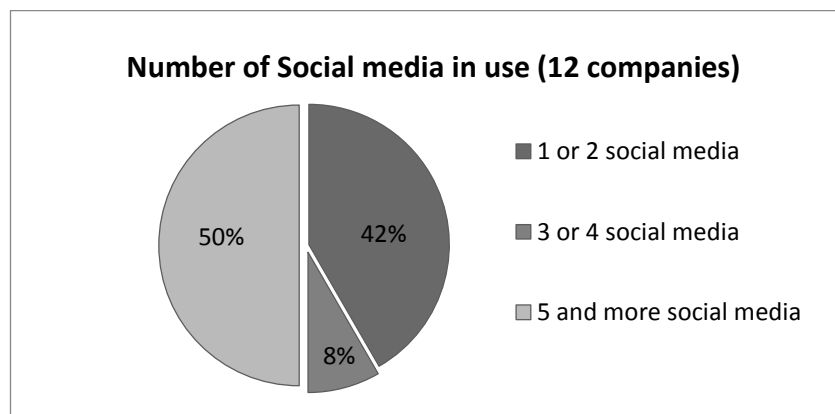
The interviews with practitioners lasted on average half an hour each and were held face-to-face or via Skype. The interviews were semi-structured and consisted of four main blocks: in the first block interviewees introduced their work profiles and experiences in CE; in the second block interviewees were asked about CE practices in their companies and their perceptions on the brand-to-customer KCEDs revealed in chapter 2 of this study; the third block was related to practitioners' choice of a persuasion strategy for CE; factors affecting that choice; and the KCEDs are used in the scope of a chosen strategy; finally, in the fourth block interviewees expressed their viewpoints regarding a perceived trustworthiness to social media and shared their experiences in dealing with negative feedback from customers. In order to get practitioners' expert opinion on all brand-to-customer KCEDs revealed earlier, interviewees also received a printed material with a short description of all CE drivers. All interviews were recorded. The interviews with practitioners on Finnish and German markets were done in English, while the interviews with Russian companies were conducted in Russian and later translated to English because of the lower interviewees' proficiency in English language. In the end, all interviews were transcribed and analyzed.

## 4.2 Key findings

The most important findings of the empirical research are presented in the following paragraphs.

### **Social media in use as the channels for CE**

During the interviews all twelve marketing and communication professionals emphasized that social media play an essential role in the CE process. In their opinion, nowadays, all companies interested in engaging a target audience, must have social media channels for communication with their customers. However, the number of social media channels that interviewees used for CE varied a lot. Whereas five out of twelve practitioners used five and more social media in their engagement activities, five companies used only one or two social media to communicate with their customers (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Number of social media for customer engagement in use

The practitioners who were using three and more social media emphasized that CE should be done via several different social media. As one of the interviewees commented:

I5: “Once you have engagement content in the one channel you should extend it to the other channels. It’s good to use different social media because everyone is interested in different things. And you can find different people everywhere.”

Also interviews stated that effectiveness of each particular social media as a CE channel depends on a target audience and persuasive message.

I5: “Of course your engagement channel depends on what your customer is like. For example, if you want to reach female customers in B2C, it makes a lot of sense to go to Pinterest because around 80% of Pinterest users are female and they are very young ... For example, infographics work on Pinterest amazingly ... And you speak with totally different audience than, for example, on Facebook or Twitter which are considered mainly used by men ... and most of the users are over 30”.

Some practitioners who were using only one or two social media explained their choice due to a lack of budget. They mentioned that their top management often does not realize the significantly increased role of social media in the process of communication with customers and their engagement.

I3: “Our top management relies on the old patterns and channels like exhibitions or booklets. They are not ready to change and do not want to grasp the great opportunities of social media even though, brand promotion and customer engagement via social media may cost for a company several times less than the same activities via traditional marketing channels.”

The interviews with practitioners indicated that nowadays, companies use a variety of different social media for CE. Interviewees mentioned eleven different social media (see Figure 3) that they use to communicate with a target audience. Facebook reaffirmed its title of the most popular social network in the world (EBizMBA, 2015): eleven out of twelve practitioners use Facebook to engage their customers. Apart from its popularity, practitioners mentioned that Facebook enables them to observe very well activities of people who are interesting for them. Hence, that helps in building brand community as well as facilitates the instant spreading of the topical news widely beyond community.

I2: “Facebook is a really good working tool for thinking people. You can easily follow somebody’s comments so it is clear what kind of person he is, what he is interested in and so on. Rephrasing the old proverb, nowadays, it is possible to say: “A friend in a news feed is a friend indeed”.

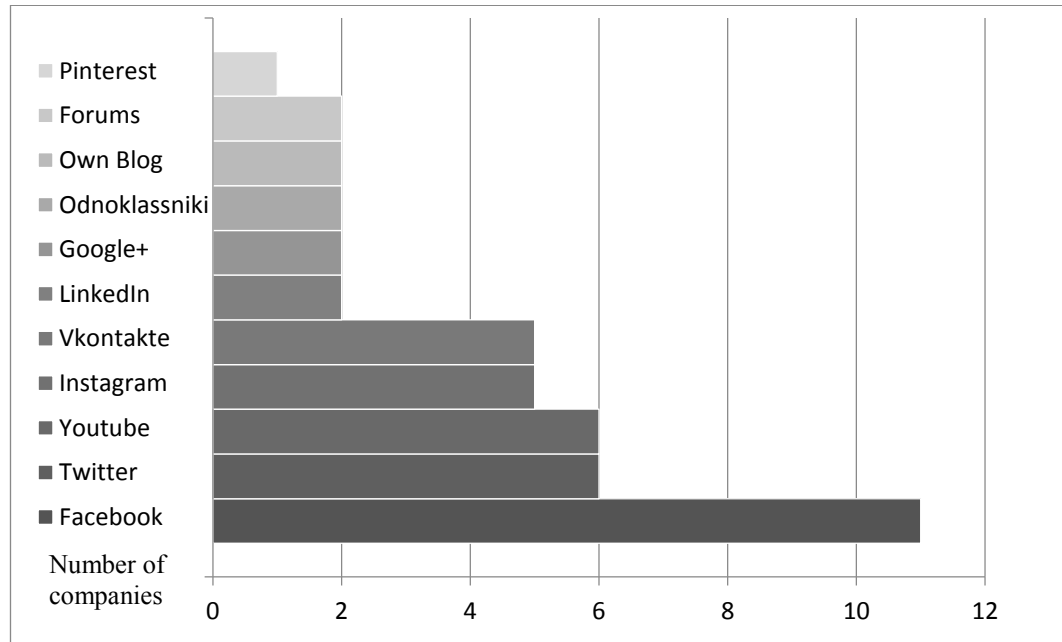
Twitter, Youtube, Instagram and V Kontakte (the most popular social network in Russian-speaking countries and the eighth largest social networking site in the world) were another popular CE channels and were mentioned in a half of the interviews each. It was emphasized that each of these media requires different CE persuasion strategy. For example, Twitter was considered as a channel suitable for delivering factual brand-related information to customers with the aim of convincing them and engagement.

I5: “Every social media has a different value, in my opinion, for a customer engagement. For example, we use Twitter mostly to be seen as an expert on the market. We are posting a lot and also reposting a lot the content related to our business. It’s not just about our content but we have a customer persona in our mind and we want to post every content that our customer is interested in.”

Opposed to Twitter, practitioners see Instagram, Youtube, and Vkontakte as the most suitable social media for appealing to customers' emotions.

I6: "We have different goals for different channels. For example, on Instagram we put more relaxing content: a lot of photos about the company, what people are doing. We want to introduce people behind the company. It's more for young people, more relaxing, more casual. And then there is Twitter, and that is more for professionals."

I12: "In different social media we have different audience so we should also talk with them in a different way. For example, on Facebook we pose ourselves as experts, while in Vkontakte we talk in more friendly and entertaining way."



**Figure 3.** Social media for customer engagement in use by companies

In addition to the above mentioned social media, some interviewees named also LinkedIn, Google+, Odnoklassniki, Pinterest, writing their own blog and participation on various online forums related to products and services of a company as communication channels that they use for CE. However, the number of the companies that were using these social media was not very large (see Figure 2).

### **Key brand-to-customer engagement drivers: practitioners' viewpoint.**

In the second part of the interview, marketing and communication professionals described engagement activities in their companies. Also, they discussed the KCEDs in a brand-to-customer context revealed in chapter 2 of this work. According to the interviewed practitioners, all identified KCEDs are important for the CE process.

I6: "I think they are all [KCEDs] somehow really important."

I12: "I've read through all eight drivers and, generally, they are all really important. It's good to use several of them simultaneously, not to restrict your CE process by using the only one particular motive"

From the interviewee's perspective, the KCEDs may have different value depending on the target audience, industry of a company, and even country of the market. The

perceived importance of the KCEDs is presented in the Table 4. The table shows the number of interviewees who consider each particular driver as the most important, important, moderately important or not important in the CE process. Also, practitioners' opinions and experiences about each KCED are presented further in the chapter.

**Table 4.** Perceived importance of CE drivers in brand-to-customer context.

No	Name of driver	The most important	Important	Moderately important	Not important
1	Games and entertainment content	10	1	0	1
2	Sense of exclusivity	0	11	1	0
3	Brand-related events	2	9	1	0
4	Supporting the causes important to a customer	0	4	6	2
5	Brand-related information	9	2	1	0
6	Sense of ownership	4	8	0	0
7	Customer service	9	3	0	0
8	Rewards and benefits	2	6	3	0

According to marketing and communication professionals, entertainment content (KCED 1) is a very influential engagement driver: ten out of twelve interviewees named it among the most important KCEDs.

I4: "Entertainment content of course is highly important. We need an interaction with our customers so it is a very important aspect. I would give that a ten out of ten for its importance."

Many interviewees emphasized that entertainment content works the best together with KCED 5, brand-related content.

I3: "The entertainment content is the most important because, generally, people seek entertainment in social media... Information about a brand and its products should be inbuilt to entertainment content. Entertainment content helps to interact with customers and deliver brand-related information to their minds."

However, CE through entertainment content may be restricted by the industry or type of products and services of a company. For example, the only negative opinion on this KCED was received from a PR director of a large bank.

I9: "[Entertainment content] is not very suitable for us. People don't come to the bank for jokes."

The second KCED, the sense of exclusivity, was perceived by all practitioners as an important engagement motive. Also, many of the interviewees emphasized that the development of a sense of exclusivity may require from a company a lot of resources to make its offers tailored and personalized depending on the customers' profile.

I3: "During the last several years sense of exclusivity has been playing more and more important role in CE. It reflects the current people needs in personalization because communication on the Internet is usually less personal compared to

communication in real life. And when you provide content, you have to reach out to different people and, of course, customers accept the offering much better if it reflects their needs and wants.”

However, companies must apply sense of exclusivity wisely to avoid overestimation of a brand.

I1: “It seems, nowadays, everybody in Russia plays on that [sense of exclusivity] ... But it is very important not to overestimate a brand. If your customers realize that a brand is overestimated, you immediately lose their interest which is very difficult to get back.”

According to the interviewees, brand-related events (KCED 3) are important elements of the CE process. Practitioners mentioned that participation in brand-related events makes customers more interested and loyal to a company as well as facilitates receiving feedback from them.

I4: “Brand-related events are very important because they have positive influence on recognition of the brand among customers. Also, they help to enlarge a target audience.”

In the cases of organizing brand-related events in real life, practitioners may combine online and offline CE.

I9: “Yes, they [brand-related events] may be effective. We often combine offline and online engagement activities: first we invite people and then share online photos from the event so our customers can find and tag themselves”

Supporting the causes important to a customer (KCED 4) was perceived by the interviewees as the least significant driver compared to the other CE activities. Two practitioners did not believe that caused-related activities may engage customers; six replied that this driver may work only for some companies; and only four considered it as an important aspect of the CE process. Also, the interviews revealed an interesting fact which is that a vast majority of practitioners in Russia think that caused-related activities may help to engage customers in Europe or USA but, at the same time, they do not believe that this driver may work on the Russian market. This point of view was opposite to the opinions of practitioners on European markets. Two out of three interviewees from Europe considered caused-related activities important for CE, while only two out of nine Russian interviewees thought the same.

I4: “Of course that [supporting the causes important to a customer] may work. However, in Russia there is often a prejudice that this is only a way to win fame. It is a particularity of the Russian market. Here it is very difficult to apply this driver because people often consider any activity except for the main business of a company as a way of putting extra money in a pocket. In Western companies social-related activities are much more common.”

Despite of some doubts about effectiveness of social-related activities, the majority of interviewees believe that this driver may engage customers.

I12: “In my opinion, social-related activities are effective. Many customers say that they like to know that by buying a certain product some of their money goes to a charity-related activity. This is something important for them because customers feel their participation in that.”

According to the practitioners, providing topical brand-related information (KCED 5) to customers is one of the most significant engagement factors. Thus, three-quarters of the interviewees named it among the most important CE drivers.

I6: “What I really like is the №2 [providing brand-related information]. Nowadays, people appreciate interesting and useful information a lot. People ask these things.”

The sixth KCED, sense of ownership, was perceived as an important engagement motive by the all the practitioners. Also, one-third of the interviewees mentioned that as one the most important engagement driver. Apart from positive influence on customers' interest and attachment to a brand, the practitioners believed that providing sense of ownership to customers is an effective way to test products and services as well as get information about what customers think about a brand.

I5: “Sense of ownership - is very important. We are constantly asking our customers for feedback, we are asking them for questions and that influence our content... I also feel that customers really value this feeling that the company is interested in their opinion on certain things”

Also, some of the interviewees mentioned an interesting issue which is that a sense of ownership is a more effective engaging motive for the old customers than for the new ones.

I8: “Of course that [sense of ownership] is a good thing. However, it will work only for the existing customers, for those who are already interested in brand and its products and willing to spend time and efforts on their improvement.”

According to a vast majority of the interviewees, customer service (KCED 7) is one of the most important engagement drivers in social media. The practitioners believed that nowadays, customer service in social media is an essential element of communications with customers for every company.

I4: “In our digital era every company must have customer service in social media. At least in one or two social media because the first thing that people do is checking the presence of a company in social media. If, for example, a company is not active on its Facebook page, the reputation of a brand, of course, decreases. If a company is not presented in social media at all, it also affects in a negative way the reputation of its brand.”

Also, the interviewees mentioned that many customers in their communications with a brand prefer social media to other communication channels.

I5: “Customer support in social media is very very important. Basically, there is somebody 24/7 to read if there are some comments or questions that need to be answered. And people value it definitely. And they use social media way more freely than official channels that we had before because social media is faster ... Also, German people are a bit awkward so it is always a problem for them to call ... so if they can do it through social media it is more anonymous and people are freer to ask their questions. You get definitely more questions through social media than through other channels”

From the standpoint of marketing and communicating professionals, the eighth key CE driver, rewards and benefits, is an important element of the CE process.



I12: “Various rewards, contests with prizes and lotteries work very well ... They allow engaging the participants, make customers to communicate more actively with a brand.”

A number of the interviewees believed that CE via rewards and benefits is more effective for B2C than for B2B customers.

I6: “Rewards and benefits do not sound very interesting for me. For some companies I think they may be essential but, for example, for B2B (interviewee’s case) they may be not so important.”

Despite the fact that all questions in the interviews had focus on brand-to-customer KCEDs, the practitioners also mentioned a number of customer-to-customer CE drivers identified in chapter 2, that they used in their CE activities. Thus, the interviewees told about their CE experiences that involved opinion leaders (KCED 9); providing information content for stimulating discussions between customers (KCED 12); and providing for customers opportunities to observe other customers’ brand-related activities (KCED 13).

As can be seen, all brand-to-customer KCEDs identified in chapter 2 were considered by the interviewees as the influential engagement factors. A vast majority of the interviewees believed that entertainment content (KCED 1), brand-related information (KCED 5), and customer service (KCED 7) are the most important CE motives.

### **Persuasion strategy for customer engagement**

The third part of interviews was devoted to a choice of persuasion strategy for CE. Thus, the practitioners singled out the following question as especially interesting for them:

“In your engagement activities do you usually try to appeal to customer’s logic and expect careful and rational evaluation of your message or you mostly attempt to evoke particular emotions by your message?”

Also the interviewees discussed about the factors influencing their choice of persuasion strategy.

According to the opinion of all practitioners, companies in their engagement activities should convince customers by factual information as well as persuade them via content and actions that triggers customers’ emotions. However, the proportions of these two approaches may vary for different companies. Thus, four interviewees in their work relied mostly on appealing to customers’ logic; seven primarily tried to evoke certain customers’ emotions; and one used both ways in approximately the same proportions. Generally, a majority of practitioners believed that in the process of CE in social media customer’s emotions play a more important role than customer’ logic. This statement was done by nine out of twelve interviewees.

I12: “Generally, consistency is good for everything. On the one hand, any company wants that customers know about its products, are loyal to a brand... so the logical aspect is important. On the other hand, emotions are essential. Pure informational content written on formal language will never work in social media... In social media, probably emotions are a little bit more important than logic.”

The interviewed marketing and communication professionals also mentioned a number of factors that may affect the choice of the CE persuasion strategy. For instance, a majority of interviewees stated that the industry of a company defines a target audience and that has a strong influence on a content of persuasive message.

15: “It [persuasive message] always depends, also on the branch you are in. For example, in information technology it is not so emotional [compared to engaging customers for car brands]”.

In the scope of the present research, the interviewees who preferred persuasion through emotions were working in the following fields: personal care, IT, hotels, beverage, footwear, and food and beverage. The interviewees who relied mostly on persuasion through logics were from the computer software, construction and banking fields. Apart from industry of a company, interviewees also mentioned some other important customers’ characteristics that should be taken into consideration in the CE process. Thus, B2B and B2C marketing relationships may require persuasion strategies.

16: “We are trying to attract professionals... they don’t appreciate so much fun. It needs to be a real content like research, tips how to use a tool, etc. I think when people are at work they are looking for more professional information and when they are on their free time they like to have more emotional content ... And we try to attract those people who are at work and they are looking at the content with a professional mind ... In B2C everything is about emotions, how you feel about a brand. In B2B there is, of course, a bit of emotions, because you cannot avoid it... but in B2B people are more rational, and the content needs to be that kind of.”

The need in different persuasion strategies for B2B and B2C customers was corroborated by the general results of the interviews. All practitioners who worked with B2B customers were engaging them mostly in a rational way, while all professional on B2C market had focus on influencing customers’ emotions. The only exception was the representative of a large bank who said that in their engagement activities targeted on private customers they appeal mostly to customer’s logic. However, it seems that in that case banking industry had a great influence on the choice of the persuasion strategy:

19: “Of course, I wish to say that we mostly react on customers’ emotions but according to the third-party research done in 2014, we use a pragmatic approach and appeal to our customers’ logic... We are trying to engage our customers by emphasizing that we provide good products and services. Bank is an organization, something that can help you to solve some problems in your life. It is not a person with whom you can be a friend or have fun together.”

Also, a number of the interviews stated that persuasion through customer’s emotions is especially effective for potential or new customers while convincing through customer’s logic works better for the existing customers.

18: “Usually, a new audience is not very interested in spending their time and efforts on learning information about the products so it is much more effective to engage them by influencing their emotions. Opposed to them, old customers are mostly interested in what a brand really offers.”

Finally, one interviewee said that customers from different countries may have different mentalities and that issue should be taken into consideration in the process of their engagement.

I5: “I know that in some countries emotional approach works much better than in other countries. In Germany it’s very factual and rational but for some people in some way you also should influence emotions.”

Also, the practitioners discussed which KCEDs are more suitable for CE in a rational or emotional way. Interviewees believed that, generally, all KCEDs may be used to influence both customer’s logic and emotions. However, they emphasized that entertainment content (KCED 1) and sense of exclusivity (KCED 2) are especially effective for persuading customers’ through their emotions, while brand-related content (KCED 5) and customer service (KCED 7) usually help to convince rationally customers.

A vast majority of practitioners stated that a peripheral way of persuasion is more effective in social media. Interviewees mentioned that they try to make factual content as short as possible. Also they try to visualize information and use certain cues as a short-cut to CE.

I2: “The most important thing is to explain what you want in the shortest possible way because people do not like long reads in any social media from LinkedIn to Facebook ... Everything should be short, preferably visualized, so a customer could glance at the picture and understand without reading what everything is about. People in social media are not interested in reading, careful consideration and so on.”

A few of those interviewees who engage customers mostly in a rational way mentioned that they may use both central and peripheral ways of persuasion depending on a target audience (e.g. new versus old customers).

### **Communication between brand and customers in social media.**

In the last part of the interview the practitioners were asked about what they think about customers’ attitude to credibility of the brand-related information received from social media. Also, the first interviewee touched upon an interesting issue concerning possible moderation of negative comments from customers in social media. After that, it was decided to discuss with the other practitioners about their experiences related to how they deal with negative customers’ behavior manifestations in social media.

According to the opinion of five out of twelve interviewees, customers consider brand-related information in social media more trustworthy compared to the same information received from other marketing channels.

I4: “In think that, in general, customers trust more social media than other marketing channels, at least in the Russian market. In social media people have more opportunities for communication. For example, if a company publishes something and someone disputed the published information in the comments under the post, a company has to give a reply on that in real time. In other words, in social media people are able to get the information at first hand as fast as it possible”

I9: “Firstly, for some customers interaction with brand representatives in social media seems more confidential: using a more simple language and so on. Secondly, customers think that all official brand-related information in traditional media was published because of money, while in social media they can get the true information. Thirdly, people think that the content on the company web page or in

traditional media is standard, while a reply that they get from the brand-representatives is personalized and can be applied only to them.”

Half of the interviewed practitioners supposed that in the cases when the information was originated from the brand-related source, there is no difference for the customers whether they received that information from social media or traditional marketing channels. However, the customers rely much more on the brand-related information written in social media by the other customers. Also, one practitioner said that the customers with different personal characteristics and from different industries or countries may rely on different channels of information.

I3: “The customers who are under 35 years old are eager to consume and spread information in social media. The older customers are usually still quite conservative and prefer traditional media to social media. Also in our industry [hotels] the information about hotels is traditionally published in special booklets. My German colleagues have a strong opinion that these booklets are the only effective way to reach and influence a target customer. It is funny that in this aspect Russian market is more progressive. Here most of the information is offered online.”

In the very end of interview, the practitioners shared their experiences of how they deal with customers’ negative behavior towards a brand in social media. Eleven out twelve interviewees believed that brand representatives should use the negative customers’ comments as an opportunity to show other customers that a company learns from mistakes, cares about its customers and always tries to help them.

I12: “According to the policy of our company we don’t delete any comments. In social media it is necessary to interact with customers ... It is necessary to monitor the issues that require reply or comment from you. Social media is not such a channel where you can reply after couple of days. If the situation needs to be answered, you have to do it immediately. Otherwise, a customer will get a negative experience or, in the worst case scenario, it will raise a negative uncontrolled discussion among the customers.”

I7: “If you delete the negative comments of one customer it will be sooner or later revealed by other customers and damage the image of the company. Replying on the negative comment you do it not only for the author of that comment but also for the third-party readers so they could see that the company is open for a dialogue with customers and cares about them.”

However, the interviewees emphasized that corporate social media must be moderated to eliminate useless or malicious content such as; constructive complains, abusive comments, harmful or advertising content from the competitors and so on.

I4: “Moderation [in corporate social media] is possible only in case that the customers’ comments violate ethical norms or have been written with the only goal to discredit a brand.”

Also, one interviewee believed that any negative comments decrease image of a company and should be deleted from the corporate social media.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Nowadays, social media are some of the most powerful tools that enable companies to reach, understand, and serve their customers as never before (Harvard Business Review, 2010). Today, numerous companies are trying to leverage the potential of social media for their own benefit. Unfortunately, because of the fear of being left out the social media race, many companies enter into the social media field with a little or no strategy. Hence, for a majority of companies, the main challenge is not in developing and initiating their social media activities, but in making them really important and engaging to customers (Schultz & Peltier, 2013).

I1: “For effective CE it is essential to develop a well-thought-out engagement strategy for at least one year. A strategy should include not only informing the customers about a brand and its products but also include the introduction of various activities that need to be on-going and effective exactly for the selected target audience.”

Often, the main obstacle for managing CE behaviors is the lack of understanding of which social media channels should be used for reaching a target audience, which activities are engaging for the target customers, and how they should be employed. For solving these problems, it is essential to comprehend and analyze the motivational drivers of CE in social media (Flies et al., 2012). Up till now, there have been few studies that try to identify and classify the variety of CE drivers. Additionally, these studies (Flies et al., 2012; Rohm et al., 2013; Vivek et al., 2012) have quite a limited application within a business context. First, these works are theory building with the aim of providing a theoretical background for the further research. They exclude the contextual and practical aspects that are highly important for the practitioners. Second, these studies do not consider the persuasion peculiarities and opportunities of social media that are nowadays the driving platforms for the online CE process.

The current study proposes a new conceptual framework for the KCEDs in social media. This framework consists of fourteen KCEDs which have been identified in the process of literature review. The KCEDs are divided into three groups depending on the customers' needs they are related to: gratification and positive emotion drivers; utilitarian drivers; and social drivers. The main goals of a new classification is to provide a more clear understanding of the nature of online CE to facilitate a process of designing CE strategies for practitioners. The suggested classification supports the view (Rohm et al., 2013) that customers may be engaged in social media by utilitarian as well as hedonic stimuli and expands on the findings of the previous research by adding third group of KCEDs, social drivers. Similar to the present research, numerous studies (Flies et al., 2012; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Wirtz et al., 2013) emphasize that various social motives play an essential role in customers' participation in brand-related social media and CE. Additionally, the proposed framework highlights that in the context of social media CE drivers are derived not only from the customer's individual interactions with a brand, but are also a result of the interactions with other customers. Thus, the KCEDs identified in the present research are divided into engagement stimuli and are located in a brand-to-customer context (brand initiated); and engagement stimuli that occurs in a customer-to-customer context (customer initiated). This division is in line with a

number of previous studies on the motivational roots of CE (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012).

In the scope of the present research, a set of interviews with twelve companies was conducted. The first research purpose was to validate in practice the eight KCEDs identified from the marketing literature. According to a vast majority of the interviewed marketing and communication professionals, entertainment content (KCED 1), brand-related information (KCED 5), and customer service (KCED 7) are the most important engagement stimuli in social media. The current research corroborates a set of previous studies with theoretical findings related to the essential role of entertainment content (Calder et al., 2013; Mangold & Faulds, 2009), brand-related information (Calder et al., 2013; Rohm et al., 2013), and customer service (Fuller, 2010; Rohm et al., 2013) in the CE process. Also, the current work is in line with the results of the empirical research works (Gummerus et al., 2012; Rohm et al., 2013), which consider all three stimuli as the integral elements of CE in social media. The empirical part of the present research supports the previous studies that emphasize the significance of brand-related events (Rohm et al., 2013; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012); and a sense of ownership (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Van Doorn et al., 2010) in CE process. In the current work these stimuli are KCED 3 and KCED 6, respectively.

Sense of exclusivity (KCED 2) was also proven as an important engagement motive that contradicts practical research (Rohm et al., 2012), which does not see the sense of exclusivity as a significant element of CE in social media. However, these results are in line with a number of studies (Gambetti, et al., 2012; Noor Al-Deen & Hendricks, 2012; Vorvoreanu, 2009) stating that exclusivity in relationships with brand gives a customer hedonic satisfaction that consequently leads to CE.

The present research also verifies the importance of rewards and benefits (KCED 8) in CE activities which was declared in a set of previous academic works (Parent et al., 2011; Rohm et al., 2013; Van Doorn et al., 2010). The statement (Gummerus et al., 2012; Wirtz et al., 2013) that economic benefits may be useful in attracting new customers but not effective in the long run was not proven in this work. Surprisingly, a majority of marketing and communication professionals emphasized that various rewards and benefits increase customers' loyalty and may also be engaging in the long run.

Finally, the present research does not corroborate completely that supporting causes important to a customer (KCED 4) leads to CE. One possible explanation for this disagreement with the previous research may be the differences in customers' mentality in different markets. For example, a majority of Russian interviewees believed that cause-related activities may engage customers but only in the case of a company operating in USA or Western Europe, while practitioners from Europe had more confidence in that engagement motive. Similarly, studies that emphasize the engagement potential of caused-related marketing are usually based on the results of empirical research done in USA (Cone Corporate Citizenship Study, 2004; Gupta & Pirsch, 2006; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Van Doorn et al., 2010) or in Western Europe (Van den Brink et al., 2006). This difference in customers' perceptions of caused-related marketing in different countries revealed in this research may be an interesting topic for further studies.

Persuasion as a major element of attitude and behavior change is especially effective in the interactive context of social media (Oinas-Kukkonen & Hurjamaa, 2008). Social

media have a great potential for influencing the attitudes and behaviors of customers towards a focal brand because they enable companies to utilize the potential of human-computer, computer-mediated interpersonal and computer-mediated mass interpersonal persuasion. The present research discusses the correspondence between fundamental characteristics of BCSS and the key principles of CE. The work indicates that persuasion techniques and principles may be very suitable not only in such areas as healthcare, education, safety, and some others indicated in previous studies (Fogg, 2003; Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjuma, 2008), but also in the domain of CE.

Influencing customers to create and exchange brand-related content as well as to promote and advocate a brand to others are challenging behavioral objectives (Fogg & Eckles, 2007). For an effective attitude or/and behavioral change, it is essential to understand and carefully analyze three important aspects of the persuasion context: the intent, the event, and the strategy (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjuma, 2009). Analyzing the intent means that a company should explore a target audience for engagement and define the desirable types of change. For example, behavior change may be a suitable strategy for engaging potential customers, while the old loyal customers may need attitude reinforcement. Generally speaking, the goal of CE is establishing an intimate and enduring connection between a customer and brand that usually requires the most difficult behavior and attitude types of change.

Analyzing the persuasion event requires a company to consider the peculiarities of the problem domain as well as to explore a customer's profile. Thus, the present research reveals that it is highly important to select the right social media channels for successful engagement with the target audience. Ideally, a company should use a variety of social media channels for engagement with different groups of customers. For example, Pinterest may be very helpful in persuading young female customers, while Facebook may be more suitable to reach male customers over thirty. Similarly, Instagram is mostly used by people at leisure, while Twitter is very effective for engaging professionals at work. In regard to the second research goal, these findings indicate that a choice of social media for CE depends to a great extent on a customer's profile and business domain and requires from a company through analysis of the persuasion event.

Apart from analyzing the persuasion intent and event, a company must define the persuasion strategy (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjuma, 2009). The third goal of the empirical research was recognizing the persuasion strategies that are being used by practitioners in the CE process and revealing the factors that influence the choice of the persuasion strategy. First of all, defining the persuasion strategy means that a company should decide whether to engage the target customers by influencing their emotions or by appealing to their logic. The results of empirical research indicate that companies should combine both rational and emotional approaches in their CE activities. However, a majority of the interviewed professionals believed that the persuasive messages that trigger intended customer's emotions generally are more effective in social media compared to the persuasive messages that require a customer to rationally process the arguments.

Also, the present research reveals that there are a number of factors that a company should take into consideration in the process of designing the persuasive message. First, the industry of a company may significantly affect the type of persuasive message. Secondly, the engagement in the context of B2C relationships should be done mostly by influencing customers' emotions, while for the business customers convincing by arguments often is more effective. Thirdly, various groups of customers may require different persuasive approach. Thus, old customers are more willing to process

rationally a persuasive message, while potential or new customers more often use an emotional evaluation. Finally, in some cases customers' mentality might vary by country, which may also influence the content of a persuasive message. The framework for KCEDs in social media proposed in the present work, suggests the engagement motives that influence mostly customers' emotions as well as the engagement motives that may be more effective in appealing to customers' logic. The accuracy of the proposed categorization for KCEDs was verified by the results of the empirical research. Additionally, the results of the empirical research indicate that the content of the persuasive message may affect the selection of social media for CE. For instance, Twitter may be very effective when a company wants to appeal to a customers' logic while Instagram may better influence customers' emotions.

The selection of the proper route for persuasion is another important issue defining the persuasion strategy (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2009). The findings of the empirical research indicate that the peripheral route of persuasion is more effective for online CE than the central route because in social media people, usually do not have much of a motivation to evaluate a persuasive message. These results corroborate the view (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2009) that nowadays, the over-abundance of information forces people to rely on simple cues in the processing of a persuasive message. However, a central route of persuasion may be effective in engaging business customers at work, especially those who are already loyal to a brand.

After recognizing the intent of the persuasion, comprehending the persuasion event, and defining the persuasion strategy, a company should select the proper KCEDs. The present research provides a comparative analysis of KCEDs and the 28 PSD design principles proposed by (Oinas-Kukkonen & Harjumaa, 2009). The analysis indicates that there are a lot of similarities between KCEDs and PSD principles. Compared to BCSSs, social media enable companies to rely on not only human-computer interaction but also to utilize opportunities of computer-mediated interpersonal and computer-mediated mass interpersonal interaction that significantly enlarges the potential of persuasion. Thus, in social media many primary task support and dialogue support principles may be performed by computer systems as well as by the personnel of the company or other customers.

Credibility is essentially important both for persuasion via BCSSs and CE in social media. According to the academic literature (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), social media are inherently open and considered by the customers more trustworthy than other channels of brand-related information. Also, the active role of customers in their relationships with a brand increases customers' trust of the brand-related information that they receive in social media. The findings of the present research confirm both of the above-mentioned statements. Half of the interviewed professionals believed that brand-related information published in social media is more trusted by customers regardless of the source of the information. The other half of the interviewees supposed that the customers' trusting of the information from corporate sources does not depend on the channel. However, customers rely much more on the brand-related information received in social media from other customers. The last finding supports the hypothesis that customer-generated content has higher credibility among customers compared to brand-generated information (Rohm et al., 2013).

Also, the current research demonstrates that companies realize that in the age of social media, CE is impossible without enabling customers to openly voice their suggestions, concerns or complains. In addition, negative feedback may be very important for the improvement of brand products and services as well as being a valuable opportunity to



show that a company is open to dialogue with its customers, cares about them and always tries to be helpful them. These results corroborate a number of previous studies that emphasize customers' active role in communications with a brand (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Parent et al., 2011; Van Doorn et al., 2010).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The present research mainly focuses on an understanding of the motivational roots of online CE and defining important aspects for designing CE strategy in social media. In this work the phenomenon of CE was examined from two perspectives: marketing, because CE is always part of a general marketing strategy; and persuasive technologies, because the CE process occurs in the context of social media which in this situation play the role of persuasive systems influencing customers' attitudes and behaviors.

The research began with the observation of the current views on CE and its origins. A review of CE-related academic literature revealed that there are a few studies existing that have begun to categorize CE stimuli. These studies place their emphasis on providing a general classification of CE motives, but do not examine thoroughly a variety of CE drivers, which may impede the application of these research works in practice. To address this issue, the present work has identified and examined fourteen KCEDs that companies may use for their engagement activities. Additionally, a new conceptual framework for KCEDs in social media was presented. In the proposed framework all KCEDs are divided into three groups depending on the customers' needs: gratification and positive emotion drivers; utilitarian drivers; and social drivers. Additionally, the framework demonstrates that the CE process takes place both in the context of a customer's interactions with a brand as well as in the context of a customer's interactions with other customers. A new conceptual framework for KCEDs in social media presented in this research can provide a roadmap for practitioners attempting to frame and align their engagement activities with customers' specific motives in order to better engage the customer with a focal brand in the context of social media.

The tremendous development of social media has significantly enriched and facilitated marketing communications and enabled brands to reach out to their customers, serve them and engage them as never before. A holistic view of CE is impossible without an understanding of how social media affect customers, their attitudes and behaviors. The present research contributes to the theory of CE by exploring the phenomenon from the persuasion technology perspective. First, three types of persuasion that brands may use to engage customers in social media were investigated. Second, this work discovered that social media have a high persuasion potential and essential characteristics to influence customers' attitudes and behaviors towards a focal brand. Third, understanding and analysis of persuasive context were considered as an essential requirement for development of effective CE strategies. Four, KCEDs identified earlier were discussed in light of essential PSD principles and persuasion techniques.

Empirical research conducted in the scope of the current work has a number of theoretical as well as managerial contributions. The importance of all eight KCEDs that occur in a brand-to-customer context was successfully verified in practice. Moreover, the results indicate that the effectiveness of KCEDs in the CE process may vary in different countries. Thus, customers in the Russian market are often skeptical about caused-related marketing so companies should be especially careful in incorporating this engagement stimulus in their CE strategy. Additionally, empirical research gave insight into the analyzing of the persuasion context for CE in practice and revealed a number of aspects that must be taken into consideration during this process. First, the

stage of analyzing the user context is vitally important to select the proper social media channels for CE. Numerous social media with their own persuasion capabilities and limitations enable companies to reach different groups of customers and determine a range of KCEDs that may be applied in the CE process. Second, companies should both trigger the customers' emotions and appeal to the customers' logic for effective CE. However, a number of factors, including the industry of a company, the type of marketing relationships, and the customer type may significantly influence the content of persuasive message. Thus, rational arguments may be very effective for older customers as well as in B2B communications, while emotions are essential for potential or new customers as well as in B2C marketing. The conceptual framework for KCEDs proposed in the present work may positively influence for practitioners the process of selecting the proper CE drivers depending on the persuasion context. Third, companies should rely mostly on the peripheral route of persuasion in the process of CE in social media. However, the central route may also be useful for some industries, especially in the context of B2B marketing communications. Also, the empirical research proved that customers trust more brand-related information received from social media than information from the other marketing channels. For deeper CE, negative customers' feedback in social media must be handled in a prompt and responsive way.

The present study has some limitations, which introduce future research options. The first limitation was the number of the interviewees. Even though the sample provides a variety of experiences, the comprehensiveness of the findings is restricted by the limited number of industries and markets presented in the research. Therefore, the study revealed some interesting characteristics of Russian customers regarding some CE motives that are not directly applicable to other countries. Further research should examine a wider range of industries in other countries with different customer settings to provide deeper insights into the process of CE in social media as well as ensure a more complete representative sampling.

Another limitation of this study is its focus only on the KCEDs that occur in the context of communications between a brand and its customers. Consequently, further research should examine customer-to-customer KCEDs identified in this work to verify the reliability of the current findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

## REFERENCES

- Advertising Research Foundation (2012). Defining Engagement Initiative. Retrieved June 06, 2014, from <http://thearf.org/research-arf-initiatives-defining-engagement>
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), pp. 179-211.
- Algesheimer, R., Dholakia, U. M. & Herrmann A. (2005). The Social Influence of Brand Community: Evidence from European Car Clubs. *Journal of Marketing*, 69 (July), 19-34.
- Andzulis, J., Panagopoulos, N.G. & Rapp, A. (2012). A Review of Social Media and Implications for the Sales Process. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, vol. 32, №3, pp. 305-316.
- Bandura, A. (1969). Social-learning Theory of Identificatory Processes. In D. A. Goslin (Ed.), *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research* (pp. 213-262). Chicago: Rand McNally& Company.
- Bandura, A. (1989). Social Cognitive theory. In R. Vasta (Ed.), *Annals of Child Development. Vol. (6). Six Theories of Child Development* (pp. 1-60). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press
- Baird, C. H. & Parasnis, G. (2011). From Social Media to Social Customer Relationship Management. *Strategy & Leadership*, Vol. 39, Issue: 5, 30 – 37.
- Bronner, F. & Neijens, P. (2006). Audience Experiences of Media Context and Embedded Advertising: A Comparison of Eight Media. *International Journal of Market Research* Vol. 48, Issue 1, pp. 81-100.
- Bowden, J.L.H. (2009). The Process of Customer Engagement: A Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 17(1), 63–74.
- Brodie, R.J., Hollebeek, L. D., Juric, B. & Ilic, A. (2011). Customer Engagement: Conceptual Domain, Fundamental Propositions, and Implications for Research. *Journal of Service Research*, 14(3), 252-271.
- Brodie, R. J., Ilic, A., Juric, B. & Hollebeek, L. (2013). Consumer Engagement in a Virtual Brand Community: An Exploratory Analysis. *Journal of Business Research* 66, 105-114.
- Calder, B. J. & Malthouse, E. C. (2008). *Media Engagement and Advertising Effectiveness*. Kellogg on Advertising and Media, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 1-36.
- Calder, B. J., Malthouse, E. C. & Schaedel, U. (2009). Experimental Study of the Relationship between Online Engagement and Advertisement Effectiveness. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 23 (2009), pp. 321-331

- Cambra-Fierro, J. J., Melero-Polo, I. & Vazquez-Carrasco, R. (2013). Customer Engagement: Innovation in Non-Technical Marketing Processes. *Innovation: Management, Police & Practice*, Vol. 15, Issue 3, pp. 326-336.
- Carr, C.T. & Hayes, R.A. (2015). Social Media: Defining, Developing, Diving. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 23:1, pp. 46-65.
- Close, A. G., Finney, R. Z., Lacey, R. Z. & Sneath, J. Z. (2006). Engaging the Consumer through Event Marketing: Linking Attendees with the Sponsor, Community, and Brand. *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol. 46, Issue 4, pp. 420-433.
- Childers, T., Carr, C., Peck, J., & Carson, S. (2001). Hedonic and Utilitarian Motivations for Online Retailing Shopping Behavior. *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 77, pp. 511-535.
- Chu, S.-C. & Kim, Y. (2011). Determinants of Consumer Engagement in Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) in Social Networking Sites. *International Journal of Advertising*, 30(1), pp. 47-75.
- ClickZ (2006). Marketers Mulling ARF's "Engagement" Definition. Retrieved June 06, 2014, from <http://www.clickz.com/clickz/news/1707642/marketers-mulling-arfs-engagement-definition>
- Cone Corporate Citizenship Study: Building Brand Trust (2004). Retrieved July 28, 2014, from [http://twopercentclub.org/repository/documents/2004\\_cone\\_corporate\\_citizenship\\_exec\\_summary.pdf](http://twopercentclub.org/repository/documents/2004_cone_corporate_citizenship_exec_summary.pdf)
- Constantinides, E. & Fountain, S. (2008). Web 2.0: Conceptual Foundations and Marketing Issues. *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice* 9, № 3, pp. 231-244.
- Correa, T., Hinsley, A.W. & de Zuniga H.G. (2010). Who Interacts on the Web?: The Intersection of Users' Personality and Social Media Use. *Computers in Human Behavior*. Vol 26, Issue 2, pp. 247-253.
- Dholakia, U. M., Blazevic, V., Wiertz, C. & Algesheimer, R. (2009). Communal Service Delivery: How Customers Benefit from Participation in Firm-Hosted Virtual P3 Communities. *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 12, № 2, pp. 208-226.
- Dominic, D., Hounkponou, F., Doh, R., Ansong, E. & Brighter, A. (2013). Promoting Physical Activity through Persuasive Technology. *International Journal of Inventive Engineering and Sciences*. Vol. 2, Issue 1, pp. 16-22.
- Drury, G. (2008). Opinion Piece: Social Media: Should Marketers Engage and How Can It Be Done Effectively? *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, 9, № 3, pp. 274-277.
- Dunne, A., Lawlor, A.-M. & Rowley, J. (2010). Young People's Use of Online Social Networking Sites – a Uses and Gratifications Perspective. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing* Vol. 4 № 1, 2010, pp. 46-58.

- EBizMBA (2015). Top 15 Most Popular Social Networking Sites | October 2015. Retrieved October 23, 2015, from <http://www.ebizmba.com/articles/social-networking-websites>
- Economist Intelligence Unit (2007). Beyond Loyalty: meeting the Challenge of Customer Engagement. Retrieved June 07, 2014, from <http://www.adobe.com/engagement/pdfs/partI.pdf>
- Econsultancy (2011). Customer Engagement Report 2011. Retrieved June 08, 2014, from <https://econsultancy.com/reports/customer-engagement-report>
- Erickson, I. (2010). Geography and Community: New Forms of Interaction Among People and Places. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 53(8), pp. 1194-1207.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research*. Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.
- Flies, S., Nadzeika, A. & Nesper, J. (2012) Understanding Patterns of Customer Engagement – How Companies Can Gain a Surplus from a Social Phenomenon. *Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness*, Vol. 6(2) 2012, pp. 81-92.
- Fogg, B. J. (2003). *Persuasive Technology: Using Computers to Change what we Think and Do*. San Francisco, CA, USA: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers.
- Fogg, B.J. & Eckles, D. (2007). The Behavior Chain for Online Participation: How Successful Web Services Structure Persuasion. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science Volume 4744*, pp. 199-209.
- Fogg, B.J. (2009). The Behavior Grid: 35 Ways Behavior Can Change. *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Persuasive Technology*. Article No. 42
- Forester Consulting (2008). How Engaged are your Customers? Retrieved June 07, 2014 from [https://www.adobe.com/engagement/pdfs/Forrester\\_TLP\\_How\\_Engaged\\_Are\\_Your\\_Customers.pdf](https://www.adobe.com/engagement/pdfs/Forrester_TLP_How_Engaged_Are_Your_Customers.pdf)
- Fuller, G. (2010). Refining Virtual Co-Creation from a Consumer Perspective. *California Management Review Vol. 52, NO. 2, Winter 2010*, pp. 98-122.
- Fullerton, G. (2003). When Does Commitment Lead to Loyalty? *Journal of Service Research May 2003 vol. 5 no. 4*, 333-344.
- Gallup Consulting (2009). Customer Engagement: What's Your Engagement Ratio? Retrieved May 15, 2014, from <http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/157187/customer-engagement-core-strategy.aspx>
- Gambetti R. C., Graffigna, G. & Biraghi, S. (2012). The Grounded Theory Approach to Consumer-Brand Engagement. The Practitioner's Standpoint. *International Journal of Market Research Vol. 54, Issue 5*, pp. 659-687
- Garbarion, E., & Johnson, M. (1999). The Different Roles of Satisfaction, Trust and Commitment in Customer Relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 63 (2), 70-87.

- Goodchild, M. F. (2007). Citizens as Voluntary Sensors: Spatial Data Infrastructure in the World of Web 2.0. *International Journal of Spatial Data Infrastructures Research*, vol. 2, 24-32.
- Goodman, P.S., Fichman, M., Javier Lerch, F. & Snyder P.R. (1995). Customer-Firm Relationships, Involvement, and Customer Satisfaction. *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 38, №5, pp. 1310-1324.
- Gummerus, J., Liljander V., Weman, E. & Pihlström M. (2012). Customer Engagement in a Facebook Brand Community. *Manager Research Review* Vol. 35 No. 9, 857-877.
- Gupta, S. & Pirsch, J. (2006). The Company-Cause-Customer Fit Decision in Cause-Related Marketing. *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 23/6, pp. 314-326.
- Hanna, R., Rohm, A. & Crittenden, V.L. (2011). We're All Connected: The Power of the Social Media Ecosystem. *Business Horizons* 54, pp. 265-273.
- Harmon-Jones, E. & Harmon-Jones, C. (2007). Cognitive Dissonance Theory After 50 Years of Development. *Zeitschrift fur Sozialpsychologie*, 38 (1), pp. 7-16.
- Harvard Business Review (2010). The New Conversation: taking Social Media from talk to action. Harvard Business Review Report, Harvard Business Publishing, Boston, MA. Retrieved July 04, 2014, from [http://www.sas.com/resources/whitepaper/wp\\_23348.pdf](http://www.sas.com/resources/whitepaper/wp_23348.pdf)
- Hendler, J., Shadbolt, N., Hall, W., Berners-Lee, T. & Weitzner, D. (2008). Web Science: an Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding the Web. *Communication of the ACM*, 51 (7), 60-69.
- Hollebeek, L. D. (2011). Exploring Customer Brand Engagement: Definition and Themes. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 19, No. 7, December 2011, 555–573
- Hollebeek, L. D. (2011). Demystifying Customer Engagement: Exploring the Loyalty Nexus. *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 27, Nos. 7–8, July 2011, 785–807
- Huang, E. (2008). Uses and Gratification in E-consumers. *Internet Research*, Vol. 18 № 4, pp. 405-426.
- Javornik, J. & Mandeli, A. (2012). Behavioral Perspectives of Customer Engagement: An Exploratory Study of Customer Engagement with Three Swiss FMCG Brands. *Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management*, Vol. 19, 4, pp. 300-310.
- Jaakkola, E., & Alexander, M. (2014). The Role of Customer Engagement Behavior in Value Co-Creation: A Service System Perspective. *Journal of Service Research*, Vol 17(3), pp. 1-15.
- Kaplan, A.M. & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons* 53, pp. 59-68.
- Kelders, S.M., Kok, R.N., Ossebaard, H.C & Van Gemert-Pejnen, J.EWC. (2012). Persuasive System Design Does Matter: A Systematic Review of Adherence to Web-Based Interventions. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, Vol. 14, №6.

- Kent, M.L. (2015). Social Media Circa 2035: Directions in Social Media Theory. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 23:1, pp. 1-4
- Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P. & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the Functional Building Blocks of Social Media. *Business Horizons* 54, 241-251.
- Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. (2011). *Principles of Marketing 14<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc./Prentice Hall.
- Kumar, V., Aksoy, L., Donkers, B., Venkatesan, R., Wiesel, T. & Tillmanns, S. (2010). Undervalued or Overvalued Customers: Capturing Total Customer Engagement Value. *Journal of Service Research* 13(3), pp. 297-310.
- Lehto, T. & Oinas-Kukkonen, H. (2010). Persuasive Features in Six Weight Loss Websites: A Qualitative Evaluation. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, vol. 6137, pp. 162-173.
- Mangold, W. G. & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social Media: The New Hybrid Element of the Promotional Mix. *Business Horizons* 52, 357-365
- Marketo (2010). The Definitive Guide to B2B Social Media: A Marketo Workbook, San Mateo, CA. Retrieved February 15, 2015, from <http://www.webguild.org/events/socialmedia/socialmediastategy.pdf>.
- McNab, C. (2009). What Social Media Offers to Health Professionals and Citizens. *Bull World Health Organ[online]*, vol.87, n.8, pp. 566-566.
- Mollen, A., & Wilson H. (2010). Engagement, Telepresence, and Interactivity in Online Consumer Experience: Reconciling Scholastic and Managerial Perspectives, *Journal of Business Research*, 63 (9/10), 919-925.
- Morgan, R., & Shelby, H. (1994). The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 58 (2), 20-38.
- Muniz Jr., A. M. & Schau, H. J. (2011). How to Inspire Value-Laden Collaborative Consumer-Generated Content. *Business Horizons* 54, pp. 209-217.
- Nair, M. (2011). Understanding and Measuring the Value of Social Media. *The Journal of Corporate Accounting & Finance*, March/April 2011, pp. 45-51.
- Nambisan, R., & Baron. R. (2007). Interactions in Virtual Customer Environments: Implications for Product Support and Customer Relationship Management. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 21(2), pp. 42-62.
- Noor Al-Deen, H. S. & Hendricks, J. A. (2012). *Social Meida: Usage and Impact*. Lexington Books, Plymouth, United Kingdom.
- Oinas-Kukkonen, H. (2010). Behavior Change Support Systems: The Next Frontier for Web Science. In: *Proceedings of the WebSci10: Extending the Frontiers of Society On-Line, April 26-27th, 2010, Raleigh, NC: US*.



- Oinas-Kukkonen, H. (2013). A Foundation for the Study of Behavior Change Support Systems. *Journal Personal and Ubiquitous Computing, Vol. 17, issue 6*, pp. 1223-1235.
- Oinas-Kukkonen, H. & Harjumaa, M. (2008). Towards Deeper Understanding of Persuasion Software and Information Systems. *In Proceedings of The First International Conference on Advances in Computer-Human Interaction*, pp. 200-205.
- Oinas-Kukkonen, H. & Harjumaa, M. (2009). Persuasive System Design: Key Issues, Process Model, and System Features. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems, Vol. 24, 28*, pp. 458-500
- Oinas-Kukkonen, H. & Oinas Kukkonen, H. (2013). *Humanizing The Web. Change and Social Innovation*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK.
- O'Reilly, T. (2007). What Is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software. Retrieved May 19, 2014, from [http://mpira.uni-muenchen.de/4578/1/MPRA\\_paper\\_4578.pdf](http://mpira.uni-muenchen.de/4578/1/MPRA_paper_4578.pdf)
- Oxford Dictionaries (2014). Persuasion (definition). Retrieved June 15, 2014, from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>
- Parent, M., Plangger, K. & Bal, Al (2011). The New WTP: Willingness to Participate. *Business Horizons 54*, pp. 219-229
- Parmar, V., Keyson, D. & de Bont, C. (2009). Persuasive Technology to Shape Social Beliefs: a Case of Persuasive Health Information Systems for Rural Women in India. *Communication of the Association Information Systems 24, Article 25*.
- Patterson, P., Yu, T. & de Ruyter, K. (2006). Understanding Customer Engagement in Services. *Proceedings of ANZMAC 2006 Conference, Brisbane, 4-6 December*.
- Petty, R. E. & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, Vol 19, (pp. 123-205). New York: Academic Press.
- Pham, M. T., & Avnet, T. (2009). Rethinking Regulatory Engagement Theory. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 19 (2)*, 115-123.
- Räisänen, T., Lehto, T., & Oinas-Kukkonen, H. (2010). Practical findings from applying the PSD Model for evaluating software design specifications. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol. 6137*, pp. 192.
- Rodriguez, M., Peterson, R.M. & Krishnan, V. (2012). Social Media's Influence on Business-to-Business Sales Performance. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, Vol. 32, №3*, pp. 365-378.
- Rohm, A., Kaltcheva, V. D. & Milne, G. R. (2013). A Mixed-Method Approach to Examining Brand-Consumer Interactions Driven by Social Media. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, Vol. 7, № 4*, pp. 295-311
- Rosenbaum, M. S., Ostrom, A. L. & Kuntze, R. (2005). Loyalty Programs and a Sense of Community. *Journal of Services Marketing 19/4 (2005)*, pp. 222-233.

- Sashi, S. M. (2012). Customer Engagement, Buyer-Seller Relationships, and Social Media. *Management Decision Vol. 50 No. 2*, 253-272
- Sawhney, M., Verona, G. & Prandelli, E. (2005). Collaborating to Create: The Internet as a Platform for Customer Engagement in Product Innovation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, Vol. 19, № 4, Autumn 2005*, pp. 4-17.
- Schultz, D. E. & Peltier, J. (2013). Social Media's Slippery Slope: Challenges, Opportunities and Future Research Directions. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, Vol. 7, № 2, 2013*, pp. 86-99.
- Social Media Today (2012). The Social Customer Engagement Index 2012: Results, Analysis and Perspectives. Retrieved June 08, 2014, from [http://podcasts.socialmediatoday.com/media/sap\\_wp\\_assets/TheSocialCustomerEngagementIndex\\_2012.pdf](http://podcasts.socialmediatoday.com/media/sap_wp_assets/TheSocialCustomerEngagementIndex_2012.pdf)
- Solomon, M. R. (2009). *Consumer behavior: Buying, Having, and Being*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education. Inc./Prentice Hall.
- Stibe, A., Oinas-Kukkonen H., Berzina, I., & Pahnla, S. (2011). Incremental persuasion through microblogging: a survey of Twitter users in Latvia. *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Persuasive Technology: Persuasive Technology and Design: Enhancing Sustainability and Health*
- Torning, C. & Oinas-Kukkonen H. (2009). Persuasive System Design: State of the Art and Future Directions. *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Persuasive Technology*. Article No. 30
- Van den Brink, D., Odekerken-Schröder, G. & Pauwels, P. (2006). The Effect of Strategic and Tactical Cause-related Marketing on Consumers' Brand Loyalty. *Journal of Consumer Marketing 23/1*, pp. 15-25
- Van Doorn, J., Lemon, K. N., Mittal, V., Nass, S., Pick, D., Pirner, P. & Verhoef, P. C. (2010). Customer Engagement Behavior: Theoretical Foundations and Research Directions. *Journal of Service Research, 13(3)*, 253-266.
- Vargo, S. L. (2009). Toward a Transcending Conceptualization of Relationship: a Service-Dominant Logic Perspective. Retrieved June 23, 2014 from [http://www.sdlogic.net/Vargo\\_2009\\_JBIM.pdf](http://www.sdlogic.net/Vargo_2009_JBIM.pdf)
- Vivek, S. D., Beatty, S. E. & Morgan, R. M. (2012). Customer Engagement: Exploring Customer Relationships beyond Purchase. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, vol. 20, no. 2 (spring 2012)*, pp. 127-145.
- Vorvoreanu, M. (2009). Perceptions of Corporations on Facebook: An Analysis of Facebook Social Norms. *Journal of New Communications Research. Vol IV, Issue 1*, pp. 67-86
- Wagner, C. & Majchrzak, A. (2007). Enabling Customer-Centricity Using Wikis and the Wiki Way. *Journal of Management Information Systems. Vol. 23, №3*, pp. 17-43.
- Wang, A. (2006). Advertising Engagement: A Driver of Message Involvement on Message Effects. *Journal of Advertising Research, 46 (4)*, 355-368.

- Wiafe, I., Nakata, K., Moran, S. & Gulliver, S. (2011). Considering User Attitude and Behavior in Persuasive Systems Design: the 3D-RAB Model. *Proceedings of the 19th European Conference on Information Systems*. Paper 186.
- Wiertz, C. & de Ruyter, K. (2007). Beyond the Call of Duty: Why Customers Contribute to Firm-Hosted Commercial Online Communities. *Organization Studies* 28(03), pp. 347-376.
- Wirtz, J., den Ambtman, A., Bloemer, J., Horvath, C., Ramaseshan, B., van de Klundert, J., ... Kandampully, J. (2013). Managing Brands and Customer Engagement in Online Brand Communities. *Journal of Service Management, Vol 24, №3, 2013*, pp. 223-244.
- Xiang, Z. & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of Social Media in Online Travel Information Search. *Tourism Management* 31, pp. 179-188.
- Yen, H. J. R. & Gwinner, K. P. (2003). Internet Retail Customer Loyalty: The Mediating Role of Relational Benefits. *International Journal of Service Industry Management, Vol. 14 No. 5*, pp. 483-500
- Zichermann, C. & Liner, J. (2012). *Game-based Marketing. Inspire Customer Loyalty Through Rewards, Challenges, and Contests*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, NJ.