Consumers' relationships with brands and brand communities – The multifaceted roles of identification and satisfaction

Authors:

Bastian Popp[a*] and Herbert Woratschek[b]

[a]Leeds Beckett University, Carnegie School of Sport,

Cavendish Hall 211, Headingley, Leeds, LS6 3QU, UK,

Tel. +44-113-81-23173, b.popp@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

[b]University of Bayreuth, Department of Services Management,

Universitaetsstrasse 30, 95447 Bayreuth, Germany,

Tel. +49-921-55-3497, Fax +49-921-55-3496, dlm@uni-bayreuth.de

* Corresponding author

Consumers' relationships with brands and brand communities – The multifaceted roles of identification and satisfaction

Abstract

This study integrates consumer-brand identification and customer satisfaction as core relationship drivers to study their interrelationships as well as the effects on customer loyalty and word-of-mouth communication. Considering multiple interacting targets of identification in brand communities, the empirical study unfolds the multifaceted, context-specific relevance of identification and satisfaction: While the effect of identification on brand loyalty is mediated by customer satisfaction, satisfaction has no significant effect on community loyalty. Moreover, brand communities are particularly useful for gaining new customers, whereas no increase in brand loyalty could be found. Managers are generally advised to specify constructs of interest related to different relevant targets of identification.

1. Introduction

In the last decades, a clear shift in marketing from transactions to relations could be observed and it is highlighted by the success of relationship marketing (Grönroos, 1994; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995), which refers to „all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges" (Morgan and Hunt, 1994, p. 22). While for a long time publications particularly focussed on the important role of customer satisfaction as a core relationship driver (e.g., Palmatier et al., 2006; Hennig-Thurau and Klee, 1997), more recently consumers' identification with a company has been introduced as a construct and a driver of relationships (Ahearne et al., 2005; Haumann et al., 2014). Scholars argue that identification gains in importance in times of high customer satisfaction levels which make it increasingly difficult to outperform customer expectations and to differentiate from competitors on the basis of customer satisfaction (Homburg et al., 2009). Moreover, Haumann et al. (2014) demonstrate that both customer satisfaction and customer-company identification positively influence customer's loyalty and willingness to pay, whereby the effects of customer-company identification were significantly more persistent and particularly helpful to compensate lower levels of customer satisfaction. Not surprisingly, researchers and practitioners increasingly emphasize the value of identity-motivated marketing strategies (Lam, 2012).

Extensive research on the concept of identification has particularly been carried out on brand communities, commonly defined as a 'specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand' (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001, p. 412). Consumer identification both with the brand and the community constitutes a fundamental characteristic of brand communities (Marzocchi et al., 2013). Thus, identification is considered to be a crucial driver of both the success of brand communities and their positive effects on a variety of brand objectives, including customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, feedback and product innovation (e.g., Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006). Surprisingly, in spite of this significant influence on consumer's relationships with companies, an integration of brand community research and relationship marketing is still missing, although this could help to address a number of important questions on both concepts and their key relationship drivers (customer satisfaction, identification).

In particular, we identified three key research gaps. First, brand communities demonstrate that consumers may simultaneously identify both with the brand and its users (Marzocchi et al., 2013). However, existing relationship marketing studies on identification

are limited to one single target of identification (e.g., brand, company) (e.g., Haumann et al., 2014; Homburg et al., 2009). Therefore, they do not account for the complexity of consumer-brand relationships which regularly implicates the relevance of multiple targets of identification including the company, the brand, and other consumers (Ambler et al., 2002). Consequently, the dyadic perspective of relationship marketing, which focuses on the relational exchange between a focal firm and a customer (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), should be broadened to enable companies and brand owners to consider the interrelationships among different relevant actors, groups or organisations in their marketing efforts.

Second, the relationship between identification and satisfaction has been neglected in previous publications which either do not discuss the relationship between both constructs (Homburg et al., 2009), leave behind an ambiguous picture (Arnett et al., 2003; McAlexander et al., 2003), or particularly focus on the positive effects of identification as an alternative to customer satisfaction (e.g., Boenigk and Helmig, 2013; Kuenzel and Halliday, 2008; Homburg et al., 2009). A stronger integration of relationship marketing and brand management research, where not only customer satisfaction, but also consumer-brand identification are well-established drivers of relationships (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012; He et al., 2012), could help in a joint analysis of identification and satisfaction and provide managers with a more comprehensive picture of the interdependencies among the two core relationship drivers.

Third, existing research does not, as of yet, offer satisfactory insights into when and why either identification or satisfaction are especially important for key relationship outcomes. In particular, there is a lack of knowledge on the relative importance of each of both constructs for marketing outcomes such as customer loyalty (i.e. retaining customers) and positive Word-of-Mouth (WOM) behaviour (i.e. gaining new customers). Again, studies that simultaneously analyse more than one target of identification could provide a better picture of the specific relevance of both satisfaction and identification as drivers of relationships. These insights would help companies to create effective marketing strategies which are appropriate for a particular company, brand or organisation and their respective relationship marketing goals.

The goal of the current study is to fill these research gaps by studying identification and customer satisfaction within brand communities, i.e. a research context in which the relevance of multiple targets of identification is readily apparent. In so doing, we aim for important managerial insights into the effectiveness of identification, satisfaction and brand communities, which could help business practice to effectively shape their marketing strategy

and employ brand communities. Therefore, this study particularly addresses the following research questions:

1. How is consumer identification with the brand (and the brand community) related to customer satisfaction with the brand (and the brand community) and what are the effects of these constructs on loyalty as well as on positive WOM towards brands and brand communities?

2. Does the relative importance of identification and of customer satisfaction as relationship drivers differ with regard to the target of identification (brand vs. brand community)?

3. Does a brand community (equally) contribute to brand loyalty and brand-related WOM?

2. Conceptual framework

In our research framework, we include customer-satisfaction and consumer-brand identification as core relationship drivers as well as customer loyalty and positive WOM behaviour as the core relationship outcomes. In doing so, we account for the increasing relevance of both the concept of identification and of brands in relationship marketing. Consequently, we integrate the fields of relationship marketing and brand management. This combination of research streams seems to be particularly worthwhile as both relationship marketing and branding activities have the similar objective of building intangible customer assets (Palmatier, 2008). Brands are thereby considered to be successful relationship facilitators (Veloutsou, 2009). They have become a central key to successful relationship marketing, as they facilitate long-term, affect-laden relationships with consumers (Fournier, 1998). Brands provide the consumers with symbolic meanings which enable them to develop their sense of self, to construct their (personal and social) identities, and to achieve self-representation goals (Schau and Gilly, 2003). Such identification processes are clearly apparent and especially significant in brand communities, i.e. communities which are built around a specific brand (e.g., Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Algesheimer et al., 2005; Jung et al., 2014). High levels of identification are an essential part and a fundamental characteristic of brand communities, whereby it was shown that individuals particularly identify with the brand or the community as a target (Algesheimer et al., 2005). Both identification with the brand and identification with the community have been proven to determine the psychological sense of the community (Carlson et al., 2008). Marzocchi, Morandin, and Bergami (2013) further demonstrate that both targets of identification are statistically distinct.

Due to this multiplicity of identification, this study proposes a conceptual framework for the

analysis of customer retention and new customer acquisition in and through brand communities that clearly differentiates between two different targets of identification. First, the brand community, i.e. the other community members, represents a separate target of identification. Second, the brand itself can serve as the focal point of an individual's identification. Following this proposition, we relate all constructs of interest in our research including identification, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and positive WOM to each of these targets of identification (brand community, brand). Moreover, it is assumed that assumptions on the relationships between constructs of interest are not limited to dependent variables related to the same target of identification (Thoits, 1983). Rather a construct may also influence subsequent constructs related to other targets of identification, whereby it can be assumed that the strength of these effects between different targets of identification depends on the strength of perceived overlap between both targets of identification. In this research context, the brand and the corresponding brand community are considered as closely related and therefore interrelationships between both targets of identification can be assumed. As a result, the derived hypotheses also apply to relationships between constructs of the different targets of identification. For instance, consumers highly identified with the community are more loyal to both the community and the brand or the company.

In line with both the theory-based discrimination between consumer-community identification and consumer-brand identification outlined in the previous chapter and empirical publications which consider both constructs as independent constructs (Marzocchi et al., 2013; Popp et al., 2016), we do not assume a relationship between identification with the community and identification with the brand. Moreover, we stick to the view that satisfaction is always the result of a comparison of consumers' expectations and the actual performance of a particular actor (Oliver, 1980). Customer satisfaction with a brand or with a community therefore may only occur from activities and transactions of a particular target of identification, but not from other targets of identification or an interrelationship among the customer satisfaction with the community and customer satisfaction with the brand. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework resulting from this approach.

Relationship Drivers   **Relationship Outcomes**
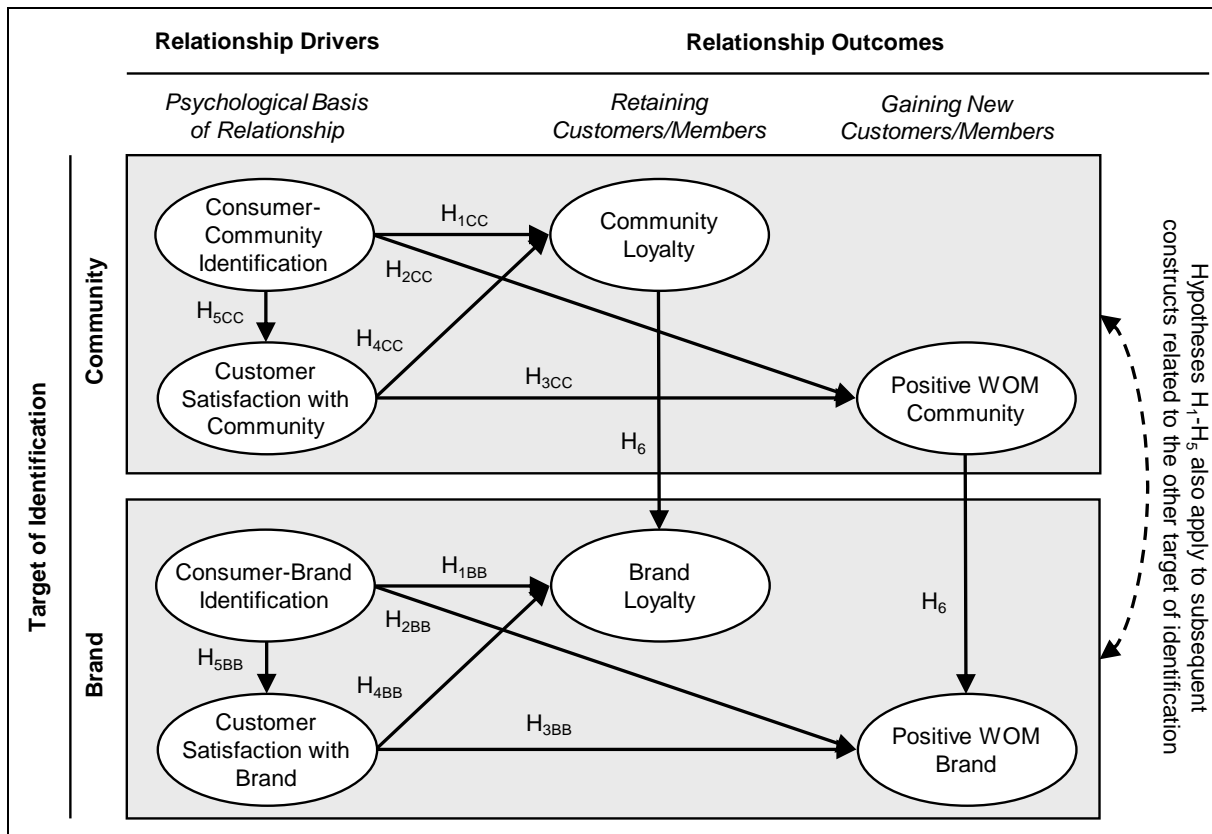
2.1. Core relationship outcomes

Customer loyalty. Loyalty signals the customer's motivation to enhance an ongoing relationship (Palmatier et al., 2006). In particular, we adapt Oliver's (1980, p. 34) widely-accepted definition and define loyalty towards a target of identification as a deeply held intent to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred target of identification in the future. Unlike many previous studies, this study includes two loyalty constructs where each of them captures the individual's loyalty towards one of both relevant targets of identification (brand community, brand). Hence, it represents a relationship outcome which focusses on retaining customers (or community members), and thus a strategy which is considered to be less expensive than acquiring new customers (Zeithaml et al., 1996).

Positive WOM. Besides an individual's loyalty towards a brand or community, existing literature particularly attaches great importance to positive WOM as an effective means of gaining new customers (von Wangenheim and Bayón, 2007). As a result of its important role in shaping other consumer's attitudes and behaviours and because of the fact that recommending a product or service is not necessarily accompanied by staying customer and vice versa, we follow the notion of positive WOM as a separate construct (e.g., Blodgett et al., 1993; Dick and Basu, 1994) instead of considering it as an integral part of customer

loyalty (e.g., Jones and Taylor, 2007).

2.2. Core relationship drivers

Consumer-brand identification. The concept of identification was originally developed in the fields of social psychology and organizational behaviour and has its roots in social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). It covers the sense of connection between an individual and an organization and represents the extent to which individuals perceive oneness with the organizational identity (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Identification therefore has consensually been defined as a consumer's psychological state of perceiving, feeling, and valuing his or her belongingness with an organization (Lam et al., 2013). It is considered to be an active, selective, and volitional act motivated by the satisfaction of one or more self-definitional needs which depends on the central, distinctive, and enduring characteristics of a specific target of identification (e.g., brand community, brand) (Bhattacharya et al., 1995).

In recent years, consumer-brand identification has been identified as a crucial determinant of brand loyalty (e.g., Homburg et al., 2009; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012; Haumann et al., 2014) as well as customer extra-role behaviours including positive word-of-mouth (WOM) and other supportive behaviours for the benefit of the brand (e.g., Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012; Boenigk and Helmig, 2013; Zhu et al., 2016). In the past, several researchers in the field of marketing limit their studies to only one single target of identification, e.g. a company (e.g., Ahearne et al., 2005; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Haumann et al., 2014), a brand (e.g., Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012; Kuenzel and Halliday, 2008; He et al., 2012), or a brand community (e.g., Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006; Algesheimer et al., 2005; Stokburger-Sauer, 2010). However, from a marketer's point of view, it is important to recognize that consumers may not only identify with one specific target of identification. According to self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) they rather simultaneously belong to different brand-related groups and hold multiple socially constructed dimensions of identity, which are attributed to these different targets of identification and which influence one another (Thoits, 1983). Given that customers generally have ties with a number of brand-related targets of identification including the brand, the company, and other customers (Ambler et al., 2002), an exclusive focus on either of them thus falls short of capturing a thorough picture. Instead, more than one target of identification should be included in the analysis of consumer behaviour as a joint analysis of multiple targets of identification perceived by the customers. In so doing, it is possible to identify which exerts the most influence on core relationship outcomes and other target variables.

Customer satisfaction. Prior to the emerging focus on consumer-brand identification

particularly customer satisfaction has been discussed as a central aspect of customer-company relationships and a key determinant of customer loyalty (e.g., Fornell et al., 1996). It describes "a customer's post-consumption evaluation of a product or service" (Mittal and Frennea, 2010, p. 4). According to the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1980), customer satisfaction occurs when the performance of a product or service meets or exceeds the customer's expectations. Given the superiority in terms of predicting customer loyalty, this research follows a cumulative perspective of customer satisfaction, which is based on repeat purchases rather than a single transaction (Olsen and Johnson, 2003). Nevertheless, customer satisfaction and customer-company identification constitute two clearly distinct constructs, which is also emphasized in Haumann et al.'s (2014) comprehensive comparison. The authors highlight the different theoretical foundations of both concepts (confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm vs. social identity theory) and argue that they differ with regard to three bases of development. Thereafter, in comparison to identification, customer satisfaction (1) is much more tied to real performances of a company, (2) has a more backward-oriented focus, and (3) is assumed to have a low level of self-referentiality.

2.3. Hypotheses Development

Effects of identification on relationship outcomes. Research has established loyalty and identification as two separate constructs describing a consumer's relationship with a brand or other targets of identification (e.g., Homburg et al., 2009; Haumann et al., 2014). However, theoretical and empirical research provides ample support for assuming that both constructs are not independent from each other, but rather suggests a positive influence of identification on loyalty. According to social identity theory, the consumers' loyalty helps them to reinforce their sense of belonging and thus fulfils a self-definitional need (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Furthermore, consumers derive emotional benefits from their identification which they will no longer receive if they switch to another firm (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Ahearne et al., 2005). Moreover, highly identified individuals reveal supportive behaviours for the benefit of the group they belong to in order to raise the status of this group. Loyal behaviour can be seen as such a way to help the organization (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). Recent empirical studies also has demonstrated a positive relationship between identification and loyalty for brands (Homburg et al., 2009; Kuenzel and Halliday, 2008; Haumann et al., 2014; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012) as well as for brand communities (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Stokburger-Sauer, 2010) as targets of identification. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H_1:   A higher level of identification with a target of identification positively

influences loyalty towards this (or closely related) target(s) of identification.

The theoretical considerations which corroborate the hypothesis that identification has a positive effect on loyalty equally apply to the relationship between identification and positive WOM. Positive WOM constitutes a supportive behaviour for the benefit of the brand (or the brand community) which highly identified individuals reveal in order to strengthen the in-group. Moreover, saying positive things about the brand (or community) is a means to express and improve the own self-identity (Arnett et al., 2003). Indeed, empirical studies have found evidence for this assumption both in the context of brands (Ahearne et al., 2005; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012) and brand communities (Algesheimer et al., 2005). Consquently, a second hypothesis for this study is:

H2:   A higher level of identification with a target of identification positively influences positive WOM regarding this (or closely related) target(s) of identification.

Effects of customer satisfaction on relationship outcomes. Behavioral theories including the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), risk theory (Cox, 1967), and learning theories (Nord and Peter, 1980) provide rationale for a causal effect of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty. Ample empirical studies from various contexts and different research areas have proven that customer satisfaction has positive effects on brand loyalty (Fornell et al., 1996; He et al., 2012) or loyalty towards a brand community (Casalo et al., 2010). The third hypothesis therefore assumes:

H3:   A higher level of customer satisfaction with a target of identification positively influences loyalty towards this (or closely related) target(s) of identification.

Besides the effects of customer satisfaction on loyalty, scholars emphasize the value of high customer satisfaction levels as a way to increase positive WOM. Empirical studies corroborate these considerations both in the context of brand communities (Stokburger-Sauer, 2010; Zhu et al., 2016) and in general (de Matos and Rossi, 2008). In line with these findings, it is proposed:

H4:   A higher level of customer satisfaction with a target of identification positively influences positive WOM in favour of this (or closely related) target(s) of identification.

Interrelationship between core relationship drivers. A key relationship in our conceptual framework is represented in the link between identification and satisfaction. In order to properly assess the impact of both constructs on the key indicators of economic success, we explicitly consider their relationship to each other. This extends previous research

on the relevance of both identification and customer satisfaction for customer loyalty and for WOM, since existing knowledge on the relationship of both variables and their relative importance in a specific context is still scarce. For instance, Homburg, Wieseke, and Hoyer (2009) did not take into account a relationship between both constructs and modelled them as independent determinants of loyalty. In contrast, several other scholars take on theoretical considerations which suggest a link between both constructs, however they disagree on the direction of their relationship: Whereas some scholars argue that higher levels of customer satisfaction lead to a more positive perception of the target of identification which results in a stronger identification with this target (Bhattacharya et al., 1995; Arnett et al., 2003; Boenigk and Helmig, 2013), the majority of publications considers identification as a determinant of customer satisfaction (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012; McAlexander et al., 2003; Casalo et al., 2010; He et al., 2012). The latter authors substantiate this perspective by a number of theoretical considerations: In particular, individuals highly-identified with a target of identification fulfil a basic self-definitional need and thus they derive additional benefits which lead to a more positive evaluation of company's performance (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2008; Fournier, 1998). Moreover, the affective attachment which is entailed in high levels of identification positively influences satisfaction by a more favourable overall judgment (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Finally, scholars argue that identification is preceding satisfaction as it commonly evolves even before someone becomes customer of a brand or member of a group (He et al., 2012; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003).

The authors follow the latter arguments and assume that identification is antecedent to customer satisfaction. Moreover, given the previously outlined fact that satisfaction is generally seen as the result of the comparison of expectations and perceived quality of a concrete product or service, it is assumed that this relationship is limited to each target of identification:

H_5:   A higher level of identification with a target of identification positively influences customer satisfaction with this target of identification.

Interrelationships among brand community and brand. Literature on brand communities further suggests adding hypotheses which cover the effects of brand communities on the corresponding brand. For brand communities which are initiated by the consumers, the consumers deliberately unite around the brand, so that an influence on their brand-related intentions and behaviours can be assumed. Official brand communities initiated by the brand owner also follow this assumption and have the objective to gain from the positive spill-over effects between the community and the brand. Members who are loyal

towards the brand community would cause cognitive dissonances if they switched to another brand (Algesheimer et al., 2006). Moreover, switching the brand would regularly lead to an exclusion from the brand community which results in a loss of social relationships (McAlexander et al., 2002). The additional benefits of an individual's relationships with and within the brand community consequently strengthen his loyalty towards the brand. Empirical studies also found support of a positive effect of brand community loyalty on brand loyalty (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Algesheimer et al., 2006; Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H_6:   Community loyalty exerts a positive effect on brand loyalty.

A similar line of argumentation also supports the assumption of a positive effect of positive WOM regarding the community and positive WOM regarding the brand. Whereas recommending a competitor would lead to cognitive dissonances, favourable communication about the brand on which the community is focused on fits the balance between community and brand. In line with previous empirical research confirming this hypothesis (Algesheimer et al., 2006), it is hypothesized:

H_7:   Positive WOM regarding the brand community exerts a positive effect on positive WOM regarding the brand.

3. Empirical study

3.1. Sample and procedure

The structural model posited in Figure 1 was empirically tested using a large-scale data set of an official online brand community whose members are interested in an alcoholic beverage. The brand community is operated by the brand owner and offers a variety of features which are more or less brand-related. In particular, members of the brand community share videos or pictures and they make use of chats, forums, and clubs. The contents include both topics directly related to the brand (e.g. mixing drinks, parties and festivals with involvement of the brand) and topics with an indirect link to the brand (e.g. parties and events in general). Moreover, the brand shares information about its activities and products and it provides the users with mixed drinks recipes and brand-related entertainment (e.g. games, music).

The brand community is well-suited to test our hypotheses for several reasons. First, we consider the community to be prototypical for other brand communities revealing active interaction between the brand and community members as well as among the community members. Second, as a result of this, the brand community offers two main targets of interaction (brand, community) with which individuals can identify and have relationships

with. Third, the brand community is used to intensify interaction on a product that is sold on a highly competitive market on which companies have to look for new ways to build meaningful long-term relationships (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). Fourth, the brand community is a large-scale brand community (over 50.000 registered members) thereby allowing quantitative research.

To collect data from a broad range of users of the brand community, we invited users to participate in the online survey both by email and on the main page of the community. Using an online survey with closed-response questions was deemed appropriate, as the sample comprised users of a brand community who mainly interact electronically thus being accustomed to online communication (Carlson et al., 2008). As a result of this approach, we received questionnaires from 1.797 brand community members.

3.2. Measures

All measures were taken from previous research and utilized seven-point Likert scales ranging from '1 = strongly disagree' to '7 = strongly agree'. In particular, identification with the community as well as consumer-brand identification was measured by five items from Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann (2005) and Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, and Sen (2012) which cover cognitive, affective, evaluative aspects. Loyalty intentions towards the brand and towards the community as well as positive WOM regarding the brand and regarding the community were all represented by three-item scales established by Algesheimer et al. (2005). Members' satisfaction with the brand community and customer satisfaction with the brand each were measured by three items covering overall satisfaction with each of both targets of identification (Homburg et al., 2009). A complete list of constructs and items used is given in Table 1 also providing the CFA results.

Construct and Item	Stand. Loading
Consumer-Community Identification *(adapted from Algesheimer et al, 2005; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2008)*	
cid_1 I am very attached to the community.	0.86
cid_2 Other brand community members and I share the same objectives.	0.81
cid_3 The friendships I have with other brand community members mean a lot to me.	0.84
cid_4 If brand community members planned something, I'd think of it as something 'we' would do rather than something 'they' would do.	0.84
cid_5 I see myself as a part of the brand community.	0.82
Customer-Community Satisfaction *(Homburg et al., 2009)*	
csat_1 All in all I am very satisfied with this community.	0.86
csat_2 The experiences with this community meet my expectations of an ideal community.	0.90
csat_3 The performance of this community has fulfilled my expectations.	0.90
Community Loyalty *(Algesheimer et al, 2005)*	
cloy_1 It would be difficult for me to leave the community.	0.78
cloy_2 I would be willing to pay more for the membership in this community than for a similar community.[*]	(0.60)
cloy_3 I intend to stay a member of the community.	0.68
Positive WOM Community *(Algesheimer et al., 2005)*	
cwom_1 I will hardly miss an opportunity to tell others positive things about the community.	0.84
cwom_2 If friends or relatives were to search for a brand community, I would definitely recommend this one.	0.93
cwom_3 I will comment positively on the community.	0.88
Consumer-Brand Identification *(adapted from Algesheimer et al., 2005; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2008)*	
bid_1 This brand says a lot about the kind of person I am.	0.80
bid_2 This brand's image and my self-image are similar in many respects.	0.84
bid_3 This brand plays an important role in my life.	0.88
bid_4 I am very attached to the brand.	0.88
bid_5 The brand raises a strong sense of belonging.	0.89
Customer Satisfaction with Brand *(Homburg et al., 2009)*	
bsat_1 All in all I am very satisfied with this brand.	0.88
bsat_2 The experiences with this brand meet my expectations of an ideal brand.	0.91
bsat_3 The performance of this brand has fulfilled my expectations.	0.91
Brand Loyalty *(Algesheimer et al., 2005)*	
bloy_1 I intend to buy this brand in the near future.	0.87
bloy_2 I would actively search for this brand in order to buy it.	0.83
bloy_3 I intend to buy other products of this brand.	0.75
Positive WOM Brand *(Algesheimer et al., 2005)*	
bwom_1 I will hardly miss an opportunity to tell others positive things about the brand.	0.87
bwom_2 I will actively encourage friends and relatives to buy this brand.	0.84
bwom_3 If friends or relatives were to search for a liqueur, I would recommend them to buy this brand.	0.82

Notes. [*]Item removed after initial CFA, because of too low factor loading.
All items used a 7-point scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7); χ^2 = 2959.244, χ^2/df = 9.997, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.98, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.98, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.08, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.05.

3.3. Results

3.3.1. Common method variance

Given that the constructs in our research cover consumers' perceptions, intentions and psychological states, self-reports are clearly appropriate (Conway and Lance, 2010). However, it was necessary to test whether common method variance (CMV) was problematic (Podsakoff et al., 2003). CMV refers to shared statistical variance caused by the measurement method rather than the constructs the items represent (MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012).

Although reasonable precautions in the design of the survey were taken, such as using different scale formats and separating exogenous and endogenous variables in the questionnaire, Harman's (1976) single-factor test was applied as a post-test assessment. None of the factors accounted for the majority of covariance among items indicating that questionnaire design strategies for reducing CMV were successful (Podsakoff et al., 2003; MacKenzie and Podsakoff, 2012). Therefore, we consider common method bias not as a serious threat to our study.

3.3.2. Analysis of measurement models

Both the measurement model and the structural model were estimated using the maximum likelihood method and applying the Satorra-Bentler (1994) scaled statistic for model fit evaluation. The measurement model performed satisfactory. Unidimensionality of all constructs was checked by exploratory factor analyses. The subsequent confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) revealed that the factor loading of the item '*I would be willing to pay more for the membership in this community than for a similar community.*' on the associated construct community loyalty is 0.595 and thus below the suggested threshold of 0.7 (Bagozzi and Yi, 2012). Given this result and considering the fact that the item might not be appropriate for online brand communities offered on a free basis, we decided to eliminate this item from the further analysis. In doing so, the final measurement model demonstrated a good fit to the data ($\chi 2$ = 2959.244, CFI = 0.98, NNFI = 0.98, SRMR = 0.05, RMSEA = 0.08) and meets the common standards suggested in the literature (Bagozzi and Yi, 2012). Table 1 shows the construct items and their standardized loadings.

Moreover, Table 2 provides relevant psychometric properties and the correlation matrix of the latent variables. In particular, all Cronbach's alpha values exceed 0.70, all average variances extracted (AVE) exceed 0.50, and all construct reliabilities (CR) are greater than 0.70 thereby indicating good reliability and convergent validity of our construct operationalization (Bagozzi and Yi, 2012). Further, discriminant validity was checked using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion which postulates that the square root of the AVE exceeds the factor correlations. The constructs identification, loyalty and positive WOM fail this most demanding test for discriminant validity. This is not very surprising, since all of these three constructs represent conceptually different kinds of a positive attitude towards the brand (or towards the community), which in certain situations may be strongly correlated. However, as shown in our conceptual framework, they trace back to different theoretical foundations and they are conceptually distinct. Using chi-square difference tests as a second test for discriminant validity we prove this assumption and show that all constructs are

statistically distinct, both from each other and from the same construct related to another target of identification. All of the chi-square differences were significant (see Appendix 1), demonstrating that all the latent constructs were mutually distincti constructs; discriminant validity was thus achieved. These results demonstrate the need to differentiate between different targets of identification and support the structure of our conceptual model which allows for a more detailed analysis of antecedents and consequences of all latent variables than models which use a more condensed perspective.

Table 2: Constructs and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results

Construct	α	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Consumer identification with brand community	0.92	0.92	0.70	*0.83*							
2. Customer satisfaction with community	0.92	0.92	0.79	0.77	*0.89*						
3. Community loyalty	0.69	0.70	0.54	0.90	0.78	*0.73*					
4. Positive WOM community	0.91	0.91	0.78	0.73	0.72	0.96	*0.88*				
5. Consumer-brand identification	0.94	0.94	0.72	0.53	0.45	0.59	0.47	*0.85*			
6. Customer satisfaction with brand	0.93	0.93	0.91	0.36	0.50	0.50	0.51	0.62	*0.95*		
7. Brand loyalty	0.85	0.86	0.67	0.34	0.45	0.49	0.49	0.61	0.86	*0.82*	
8. Positive WOM brand	0.87	0.88	0.71	0.45	0.48	0.57	0.61	0.73	0.81	0.91	*0.84*

Notes: α = Cronbach's Alpha; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; the diagonal (in italics) shows the square root of the AVE for each construct; the off-diagonal numbers represent the correlations among constructs.

3.3.3. Analysis of structural relations and hypothesis testing

The structural equation model acceptably fits the empirical data (χ^2 = 2235.547, CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.09, SRMR = 0.05). In total, the model is able to substantially explain the relationship outcomes as key indicators of economic success of brands and brand communities. In particular, the squared multiple coefficient of correlation (R^2) for community loyalty is 0.86 and for positive WOM regarding the community R^2 is 0.65. Looking at the corresponding constructs with the brand as target, we explain 79 % of the variance of brand loyalty and 80 % of the variance of brand-related WOM. These high values of R^2 indicate substantial statistical power of our empirical model (Chin, 1998) and highlight the crucial role of the relationship drivers studied in our model. The estimated path coefficients of the hypotheses are given in Table 3.

As Table 3 shows we found strong support for most of the proposed hypotheses. This is not very surprising given the fact that many of our hypotheses have been established in previous research. However, our structural model substantially contributes to existing knowledge by providing a much more detailed picture of the underlying relationships and their strength.

Table 3: Hypotheses and Standardized Coefficients of Structural Model Estimation

Hypotheses	Standardized Coefficient	t-Value
H$_1$: Identification → Loyalty		
Effects on community loyalty		
H$_{1CC}$ Customer-community identification → Community loyalty	0.81**	(18.67)
H$_{1BC}$ Customer-brand identification → Community loyalty	0.06*	(1.93)
Effects on brand loyalty		
H$_{1CB}$ Customer-community identification → Brand loyalty	-0.18**	(2.46)
H$_{1BB}$ Customer-brand identification → Brand loyalty	0.12**	(3.94)
H$_2$: Identification → Positive WOM		
Effects on positive WOM community		
H$_{2CC}$ Customer-community identification → Positive WOM community	0.55**	(13.09)
H$_{2BC}$ Customer-brand identification → Positive WOM community	-0.08**	(2.61)
Effects on positive WOM brand		
H$_{2CB}$ Customer-community identification → Positive WOM brand	-0.08**	(2.42)
H$_{2BB}$ Customer-brand identification → Positive WOM brand	0.35**	(11.81)
H$_3$: Satisfaction → Loyalty		
Effects on community loyalty		
H$_{3CC}$ Customer satisfaction with community → Community loyalty	0.06*	(1.67)
H$_{3BC}$ Customer satisfaction with brand → Community loyalty	0.09**	(3.83)
Effects on brand loyalty		
H$_{3CB}$ Customer satisfaction with community → Brand loyalty	0.07*	(2.04)
H$_{3BB}$ Customer satisfaction with brand → Brand loyalty	0.80**	(23.91)
H$_4$: Satisfaction → Positive WOM		
Effects on positive WOM community		
H$_{4CC}$ Customer satisfaction with community → Positive WOM community	0.21**	(5.60)
H$_{4BC}$ Customer satisfaction with brand → Positive WOM community	0.27**	(11.02)
Effects on positive WOM brand		
H$_{4CB}$ Customer satisfaction with community → Positive WOM brand	-0.05	(1.49)
H$_{4BB}$ Customer satisfaction with brand → Positive WOM brand	0.54**	(18.96)
H$_5$: Identification → Satisfaction		
Effects on customer satisfaction with community		
H$_{5CC}$ Customer-community identification → Customer satisfaction with community	0.79**	(35.33)
Effects on customer satisfaction with brand		
H$_{5BB}$ Customer-brand identification → Customer satisfaction with brand	0.62**	(18.19)
H$_6$: Community loyalty → Brand loyalty		
H$_{6CB}$ Community loyalty → Brand loyalty	0.12	(1.55)
H$_7$: Positive WOM community → Positive WOM brand		
H$_{7CB}$ Positive WOM community → Positive WOM brand	0.26**	(8.23)

Notes. * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; letters in indices of hypotheses indicate the target of identification the antecedent construct (first letter) and the dependent construct (second letter) are related to (C = community; B = brand).

In line with our previous assumptions, the effects in general were stronger if the relationship drivers (independent) and the relationship outcomes (dependent) constructs were related to the same target of identification, however we also found significant interrelationships between the brand and the brand community. For pointing out and for discussing the contribution of our research, we illustrate the key results of the conceptual model in Figure 2. It shows the significant path coefficients exceeding 0.2, whereby arrows of paths with a standardized coefficient greater than 0.5 are highlighted in bold.

Figure 2: Key results of empirical study
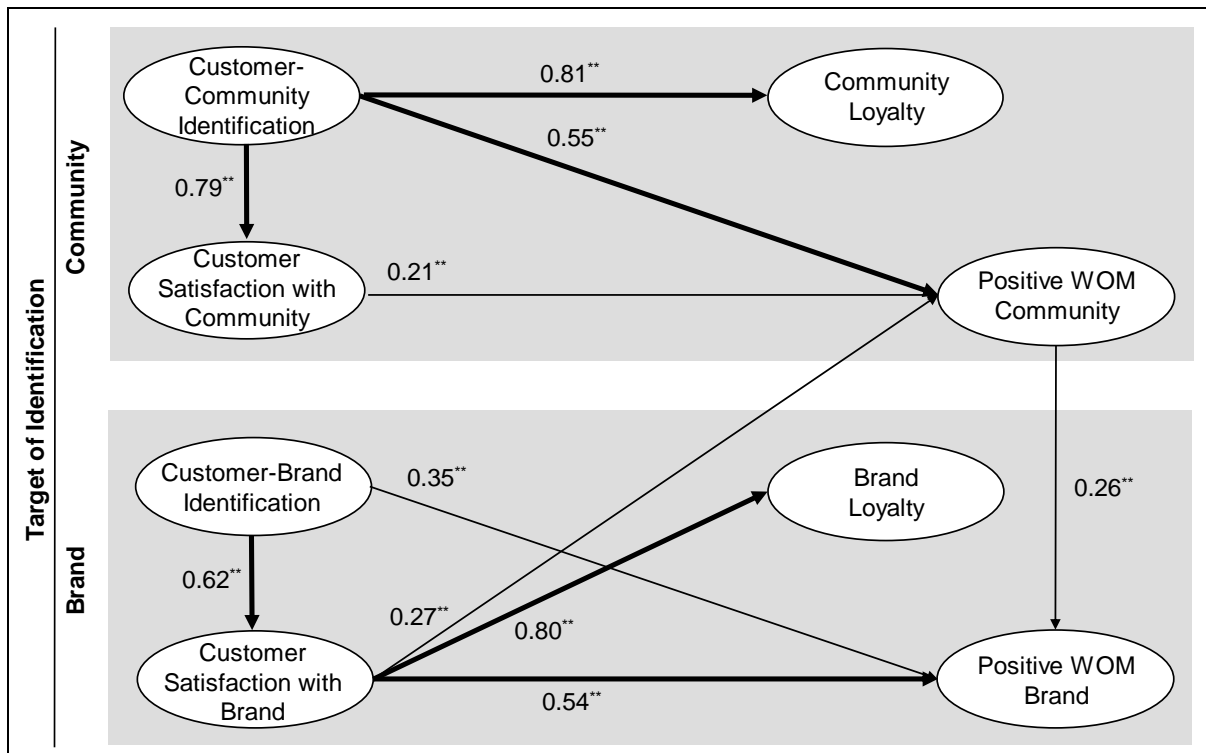
Both in the community-context and in the brand-context we find strong effects of identification with the corresponding target of identification on satisfaction with this target (H5CC: $\beta = 0.79$; $p < 0.01$; H5BB: $\beta = 0.62$; $p < 0.01$). Further, for the community, identification with the community outperforms other determinants of community loyalty (H1CC: $\beta = 0.81$; $p < 0.01$) and positive WOM (H2CC: $\beta = 0.55$; $p < 0.01$). In contrast, for the brand as target of identification, customer satisfaction with the brand has the strongest effects on brand loyalty (H3BB: $\beta = 0.80$; $p < 0.01$) and brand-related WOM (H4BB: $\beta = 0.54$; $p < 0.01$). We observe minor, but also significant effects for satisfaction with the community on positive WOM in favour of the community (H4CC: $\beta = 0.21$; $p < 0.01$) and consumer-brand identification on brand-related WOM (H2BB: $\beta = 0.35$; $p < 0.01$).

Finally, we found substantial interrelationships between both targets of identification. In particular, customer satisfaction with the brand positively affects community-related WOM (H4BC: $\beta = 0.27$; $p < 0.01$). Moreover, we found support of the assumption that interaction in brand communities leads to brand-related WOM (H7CB: $\beta = 0.26$; $p < 0.01$). However, we did surprisingly not observe a significant effect for loyalty.

The total effects on customer retention and acquisition of new customers of both brands and brand communities (see Table 4) confirm the findings above. In the case of the brand community, identification is by far most important and has strong effects on both

loyalty and WOM. In contrast, with the brand as target of identification, the relevance of customer satisfaction increases and both identification and satisfaction contribute equally strong to the brand's success.

Table 4:   Total effects on dependent variables (and t-values)

Construct	Community		Brand	
	Loyalty	Positive WOM	Loyalty	Positive WOM
1. Consumer-community identification	0.85** (32.91)	0.72** (27.19)	-0.02 (1.16)	0.06 ** (3.39)
2. Customer satisfaction with community	0.06* (1.67)	0.21** (5.60)	0.08* (2.31)	0.01 (0.17)
3. Community loyalty	NH	NH	0.12 (1.56)	NH
4. Positive WOM community	NH	NH	NH	0.26** (8.24)
5. Consumer-brand identification	0.12** (4.80)	0.09** (3.58)	0.63** (16.98)	0.71** (24.61)
6. Customer satisfaction with brand	0.09** (3.83)	0.27** (11.02)	0.81** (24.33)	0.61** (21.88)

Note: WOM = WOM; NH = not hypothesized; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

4. Discussion

Integrating the fields of relationship marketing and brand management, our findings make several important contributions to the understanding of consumer-brand relationships. In particular, we identify four contributions which address the proposed research questions.

First, our results highlight that consumer behaviour is regularly related to more than one target of identification. The empirical study shows that consumers differentiate between several brand-related targets of identification including other consumers (i.e. the brand community) and the brand itself. It is further shown that this differentiation not only applies to the construct of identification as consumers also relate relationship drivers (i.e., customer satisfaction) and relationship outcomes (e.g., loyalty, WOM) to a specific target of identification (i.e. community, brand). Consequently, a comprehensive analysis of consumer-brand relationships should specify the latent variables of interest related to these targets of identification. This approach more appropriately considers the complexity of consumers' relationships, since the precise distinction of latent variables according to their targets allows for the analysis of both the relationships within a target and the interaction effects between the different targets.

Second, the conceptual model contributes to previous research by including customer satisfaction as a mediator between identification and loyalty. These results help to overcome the insufficient consideration of both variables (Homburg et al., 2009) and extend previous findings on their relationship (Boenigk and Helmig, 2013; He et al., 2012). As shown in our study, identification not only directly influences customer loyalty and WOM, but moreover has additional indirect effects via customer satisfaction on both relationship outcomes as key indicators of economic success. However, the mediating effect of the rather cognitive variable

customer satisfaction changes regarding the target of identification. In particular, consumer-brand identification seems to activate a cognitively mediated process, reinforcing previous experiences and trust in the brand, whereas consumer-community identification acts on the emotional and affective dimensions of the brand schema (Marzocchi et al., 2013).

Third, this study extends knowledge on the specific relevance of identification and satisfaction for consumer-brand relationships in different contexts. In this research, these contexts relate to different targets of identification (community, brand) and different psychological and physical touchpoints which determine the product or service experience. As highlighted by the bold arrows in Figure 2, our findings disclose that the brand and the community follow different patterns regarding the formation of loyalty (or positive WOM). Whereas in the case of the brand community identification mainly has a direct effect on customer loyalty (or positive WOM), this relationship is strongly mediated by customer satisfaction if the brand is the target of identification. These findings illustrate the divergent context-specific importance of the relationship drivers identification and satisfaction thereby contributing to previous research on the effectiveness of both constructs to produce favourable relationship outcomes (Haumann et al., 2014). Moreover, the varying results for the community and the brand substantiate the need for the complex model with a clear assignment of the measured constructs to a specific target. In particular, the analysis of the paths within our structural model illustrates that both constructs are rather complementary than alternative ways to increase the economic success of a company. However, their relative importance and the question whether identification is strongly mediated by satisfaction obviously differ from context to context. Previous research provides several possible answers to the question which of both constructs dominates customer behaviour in which contexts: For example, Garbarino and Johnson (1999) found that satisfaction is only a good indicator for the future intentions of low relational customers whereas high relational customers are driven by the constructs trust and commitment which are rather close to the identification construct. Furthermore, McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig (2002) reveal that the importance of satisfaction declines with the degree of experience with a community. A third explanation for the dominance of identification- or satisfaction-based loyalty strategies can be given by the individual's involvement with the product assuming that identification becomes more important as the consumer's involvement increases (Suh and Yi, 2006).

Fourth, besides proving the relationships between relationship drivers and outcomes, the comprehensive structural model also contributes to previous research on brand communities. By splitting up loyalty into retention and positive WOM, we demonstrate that

brand community members are particularly valuable for the acquisition of new customers via positive WOM effects. Interestingly, in contrast to previous studies (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006), brand community membership did not significantly increase loyalty towards the brand.

5. Implications

Our research should encourage scholars to further integrate brand management and relationship marketing to draw on the strengths of both domains. In doing so, the findings of the present research shed light into both the field of brand communities and the effectiveness of core relationship drivers by illuminating the interrelationships between identification and satisfaction as well as their effects on loyalty and positive WOM. Our results thereby help practitioners to find a better mix between these marketing strategies and to better understand complex consumer-brand relationships.

In particular, the results advise managers to take a more accurate view of relationships and identify all targets of identification which are relevant from a customer's point of view (e.g., brand, company, retailer, and other customers). This allows precisely specifying the constructs of interest related to each target of identification, identifying possible interrelationships between the targets, and deriving corresponding marketing decisions. Although this may result in more complex management models, this is worthwhile as insights into the interrelationships reveal options to influence targets which are actually outside the managers' control. Moreover, the relevance of multiple targets of identification highlighted in our research as well as the interdependencies among identification and satisfaction may lead to new perspectives of traditional relationship marketing models like the service-profit chain (Heskett et al., 1994) which focus on one target of identification and satisfaction as a key driver of loyal behaviour.

Given the strong effects of identification both on key relationship outcomes (loyalty, WOM) and on customer satisfaction, marketers are advised to include consumer-brand identification as a key objective and 'go beyond satisfying customers' basic utilitarian needs' (Haumann et al., 2014, p. 20). Therefore, companies should try to strengthen their identity, invest in image campaigns, and offer positive values thus creating a sustainable competitive advantage due to its value, rareness, inimitability, and non-substitutability (Balmer, 2008). In so doing, consumer may fulfil higher-order self-definitional needs by identifying with a brand (or a related target of identification). Consequently, companies may benefit from the concept of identification because of its positive long-term impact on the customer-brand relationship, whereas customer satisfaction is rather transaction-oriented.

However, as shown in this research, the relative importance of identification and satisfaction differs from context to context. Therefore, marketers should try to identify the context-specific key drivers of consumer-brand relationships for their brand. Given that satisfaction considerably mediates the influence of identification on brand success, companies are advised not solely to focus on identity-based marketing strategies. Rather a balanced mix of marketing activities aiming both at identification and at customer satisfaction seems promising.

With regard to the value of the brand community for the brand, the results particularly corroborate the notion that the use of a brand community may be a means to profit from favourable WOM communication within and outside the community. Hence, the interactions between customers may be a promising way to gain new customers. Therefore, building and maintaining brand communities in online environments can be a valuable aim in marketing. However, we advise brand managers to be careful about the widely assumed positive effects on customer loyalty, as this effect could not be affirmed on a statistically significant basis.

6. Limitations and further research

The aim of this research has been to study central ways to increase favourable outcomes of consumer's relationship with brands and brand communities. The focus was on studying consumer identification and satisfaction with brands and brand communities as drivers of the relationship outcomes 'loyalty' and 'positive WOM'. To that effect, our research has pondered the causal relationships of these constructs for both the brand and the community as a target of identification. However, further research is needed to clarify our findings on less substantial effects in our model. For example, in contrast to our hypothesis, we observed a small, but significant negative influence of consumer-community identification on brand loyalty. This finding could indicate a possible drift of the community apart from the brand which could be investigated by qualitative research on the community.

Another limitation of our empirical research is that it is based on one particular online brand community. In order to check the reliability of the findings it is encouraged that future research studies other brand communities and other platforms (e.g. social networks). Moreover, the present sample is limited to cross-sectional data, which does not allow for a deep understanding of possible dynamic effects within the causal structure of the proposed model. Further studies could help to solve this issue by using longitudinal data or an experimental setting. Longitudinal data further might be helpful to take a closer look into the synergistic effects of the different targets of identification.

Although the research provides new insights into the relative importance of

satisfaction and identification for economic success, these have to be considered as a first step towards a better understanding of the observed differences in pattern and magnitude of the relationships. Further studies in other contexts and sectors may help to fully explain in what situation identity-based or satisfaction-based strategies are particularly promising. In any case, our results call for a rethinking of many traditional concepts in relationship marketing which focus on customer satisfaction. Moreover, even if it may not be possible to generalize our empirical results, we strongly encourage researchers and practitioners to follow the approach to include more relevant actors as targets of identification into their analyses.

7. References

Ahearne, M., Bhattacharya, C. B. and Gruen, T. (2005), "Antecedents and Consequences of Customer-Company Identification: Expanding the Role of Relationship Marketing", *Journal of Applied Psychology,* Vol. 90 No. 3, pp. 574-585.

Algesheimer, R., Dholakia, U. M. and Herrmann, A. (2005), "The Social Influence of Brand Community: Evidence from European Car Clubs", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 69 No. 3, pp. 19-34.

Algesheimer, R., Herrmann, A. and Dimpfel, M. (2006), "Die Wirkung von Brand Communities auf die Markenloyalität – eine dynamische Analyse im Automobilmarkt", *Zeitschrift für Betriebswirtschaft,* Vol. 76 No. 9, pp. 933-958.

Ambler, T., Bhattacharya, C. B., Edell, J., Keller, K. L., Lemon, K. N. and Mittal, V. (2002), "Relating Brand and Customer Perspectives on Marketing Management", *Journal of Service Research,* Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 13-25.

Arnett, D. B., German, S. D. and Hunt, S. D. (2003), "The Identity Salience Model of Relationship Marketing Success: The Case of Nonprofit Marketing", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 67 No. 2, pp. 89-105.

Ashforth, B. E. and Mael, F. A. (1989), "Social Identity Theory and the Organization", *Academy of Management Review,* Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 20-39.

Bagozzi, R. P. and Dholakia, U. M. (2006), "Antecedents and purchase consequences of customer participation in small group brand communities", *International Journal of Research in Marketing,* Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 45-61.

Bagozzi, R. P. and Yi, Y. (2012), "Specification, evaluation, and interpretation of structural equation models", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* Vol. 40 No. 1, pp. 8-34.

Balmer, J. M. T. (2008), "Identity based views of the corporation", *European Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 42 No. 9/10, pp. 879-906.

Bhattacharya, C. B., Rao, H. and Glynn, M. A. (1995), "Understanding the Bond Identification: An Investigation of its Correlates among Art Museum Members", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 59 No. 4, pp. 46-57.

Bhattacharya, C. B. and Sen, S. (2003), "Consumer-Company Identification: A Framework for Understanding Consumers' Relationships with Companies", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 67 No. 2, pp. 76-88.

Blodgett, J. G., Granbois, D. H. and Walters, R. G. (1993), "The effects of perceived justice on complainants' negative word-of mouth behavior and repatronage intentions", *Journal of Retailing,* Vol. 69 No. 4, pp. 399-428.

Boenigk, S. and Helmig, B. (2013), "Why Do Donors Donate? Examining the Effects of Organizational Identification and Identity Salience on the Relationships among Satisfaction, Loyalty, and Donation Behavior", *Journal of Service Research,* Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 533-548.

Carlson, B. D., Suter, T. A. and Brown, T. J. (2008), "Social versus psychological brand community: The role of psychological sense of brand community", *Journal of Business Research,* Vol. 61 No. 4, pp. 284-291.

Casalo, L. V., Flavian, C. and Guinaliu, M. (2010), "Relationship quality, community promotion and brand loyalty in virtual communities: Evidence from free software communities", *International Journal of Information Management,* Vol. 30 No. 4, pp. 357-367

Chaudhuri, A. and Holbrook, M. B. (2001), "The Chain of Effects from Brand Trust and Brand Affect to Brand Performance: The Role of Brand Loyalty", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 65 No. 2, pp. 81-93.

Chin, W. W. (1998), "The partial least squares approach for structural equation modeling", Marcoulides, G.A. (ed.) *Modern methods for business research Quantitative methodology series* Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, pp. 295-336.

Conway, J. M. and Lance, C. E. (2010), "What reviewers should expect from authors regarding common method bias in organizational research", *Journal of Business and Psychology,* Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 325-334.

Cox, D. F. (1967), "Risk handling in consumer behavior – an intensive study of two cases", Cox, D.F. (ed.) *Risk taking and information handling in consumer behavior* Harvard University Press, Boston, pp. 34-81.

de Matos, C. and Rossi, C. (2008), "Word-of-mouth communications in marketing: a meta-analytic review of the antecedents and moderators", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* Vol. 36 No. 4, pp. 578-596.

Dick, A. S. and Basu, K. (1994), "Customer Loyalty: Toward an integrated conceptual framework", *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science,* Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 99-113.

Festinger, L. (1957), *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance,* Stanford University Press, Stanford.

Fornell, C., Johnson, M. D., Anderson, E. W., Cha, J. and Bryant, B. E. (1996), "The American Customer Satisfaction Index: Nature, Purpose, and Findings", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 60 No. 4, pp. 7-19.

Fornell, C. and Larcker, D. F. (1981), "Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error", *Journal of Marketing Research,* Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 39-50.

Fournier, S. (1998), "Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research", *Journal of Consumer Research,* Vol. 24 No. 4, pp. 343-373.

Garbarino, E. and Johnson, M. S. (1999), "The Different Roles of Satisfaction, Trust, and Commitment in Customer Relationships", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 63 No. 2, pp. 70-87.

Grönroos, C. (1994), "From Marketing Mix to Relationship Marketing", *Management Decision,* Vol. 32 No. 2, pp. 4-20.

Harman, H. H. (1976), *Modern factor analysis,* 3 edn, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Haumann, T., Quaiser, B., Wieseke, J. and Rese, M. (2014), "Footprints in the Sands of Time: A Comparative Analysis of the Effectiveness of Customer Satisfaction and Customer–Company Identification over Time", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 78 No. 6, pp. 78-102.

He, H., Li, Y. and Harris, L. (2012), "Social identity perspective on brand loyalty", *Journal of Business Research,* Vol. 65 No. 5, pp. 648-657.

Hennig-Thurau, T. and Klee, A. (1997), "The impact of customer satisfaction and relationship quality on customer retention: A critical reassessment and model development", *Psychology & Marketing,* Vol. 14 No. 8, pp. 737-764.

Heskett, J. L., Jones, T. O., Loveman, G. W., Sasser, W. E. and Schlesinger, L. A. (1994), "Putting the Service-Profit Chain to Work", *Harvard Business Review,* Vol. 72 No. March-April, pp. 164-174.

Homburg, C., Wieseke, J. and Hoyer, W. D. (2009), "Social Identity and the Service-Profit Chain", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 73 No. 2, pp. 38-54.

Jones, T. and Taylor, S. F. (2007), "The conceptual domain of service loyalty: how many dimensions?", *Journal of Services Marketing,* Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 36-51.

Jung, N. Y., Kim, S. and Kim, S. (2014), "Influence of consumer attitude toward online brand community on revisit intention and brand trust", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* Vol. 21 No. 4, pp. 581-589.

Kuenzel, S. and Halliday, S. V. (2008), "Investigating antecedents and consequences of brand identification", *Journal of Product and Brand Management,* Vol. 17 No. 5, pp. 293-304.

Lam, S. K. (2012), "Identity-motivated marketing relationships: research synthesis, controversies, and research agenda", *AMS Review,* Vol. 2 No. 2-4, pp. 72-87.

Lam, S. K., Ahearne, M., Mullins, R., Hayati, B. and Schillewaert, N. (2013), "Exploring the dynamics of antecedents to consumer–brand identification with a new brand", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* Vol. 41 No. 2, pp. 234-252.

MacKenzie, S. B. and Podsakoff, P. M. (2012), "Common Method Bias in Marketing: Causes, Mechanisms, and Procedural Remedies", *Journal of Retailing,* Vol. 88 No. 4, pp. 542-555.

Marzocchi, G., Morandin, G. and Bergami, M. (2013), "Brand communities: loyal to the community or to the brand?", *European Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 47 No. 1/2, pp. 93-114.

McAlexander, J. H., Kim, S. K. and Roberts, S. D. (2003), "Loyalty: The Influences of Satisfaction and Brand Community Integration", *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice,* Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 1-11.

McAlexander, J. H., Schouten, J. W. and Koenig, H. F. (2002), "Building Brand Community", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 66 No. 1, pp. 38-54.

Mittal, V. and Frennea, C. (2010), "Customer satisfaction: a strategic review and guidelines for managers", *MSI Fast Forward Series, Marketing Science Institute, Cambridge, MA*.

Morgan, R. M. and Hunt, S. D. (1994), "The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 58 No. 3, pp. 20-38.

Muniz, A. M. and O'Guinn, T. C. (2001), "Brand Community", *Journal of Consumer Research,* Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 412-432.

Nord, W. R. and Peter, J. P. (1980), "A Behavior Modification Perspective on Marketing", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 44 No. 2, pp. 36-47.

Oliver, R. L. (1980), "A Cognitive Model of the Antecedents and Consequences of Satisfaction Decisions", *Journal of Marketing Research,* Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 460-469.

Olsen, L. L. and Johnson, M. D. (2003), "Service Equity, Satisfaction, and Loyalty: From Transaction-Specific to Cumulative Evaluations", *Journal of Service Research,* Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 184-195.

Palmatier, R. W. (2008), *Relationship marketing,* Marketing Science Institute, Cambridge, MA.

Palmatier, R. W., Dant, R. P., Grewal, D. and Evans, K. R. (2006), "Factors influencing the effectiveness of relationship marketing: a meta-analysis", *Journal of marketing,* Vol. 70 No. 4, pp. 136-153.

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y. and Podsakoff, N. P. (2003), "Common Method Biases in Behavioral Research: A Critical Review of the Literature and Recommended Remedies", *Journal of Applied Psychology,* Vol. 88 No. 5, pp. 879-903.

Popp, B., Wilson, B., Horbel, C. and Woratschek, H. (2016), "Relationship building through Facebook brand pages: The multifaceted roles of identification, satisfaction and

perceived relationship investment", *Journal of Strategic Marketing,* Vol. 24 No. 3-4, pp. 278-294.

Satorra, A. and Bentler, P. M. (1994), "Corrections to test statistics and standard errors in covariance structure analysis", von Eye, A. & Clogg, C.C. (eds.) *Latent variables analysis: Applications for developmental research* Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 399-419.

Schau, H. J. and Gilly, M. C. (2003), "We Are What We Post? Self-Presentation in Personal Web Space", *Journal of Consumer Research,* Vol. 30 No. 3, pp. 385-404.

Sheth, J. and Parvatiyar, A. (1995), "Relationship marketing in consumer markets: antecedents and consequences", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 255-271.

Stokburger-Sauer, N. (2010), "Brand community: Drivers and outcomes", *Psychology and Marketing,* Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 347-368.

Stokburger-Sauer, N., Bauer, H. H. and Mäder, R. (2008), "Kundenidentifikation als Basis von Kundenloyalität – Theoretische und empirische Grundlagen für eine Umsetzung in der Unternehmenspraxis", *Zeitschrift für Betriebswirtschaft,* Vol. 78 No. 9, pp. 923-950.

Stokburger-Sauer, N., Ratneshwar, S. and Sen, S. (2012), "Drivers of consumer–brand identification", *International Journal of Research in Marketing,* Vol. 29 No. 4, pp. 406-418.

Suh, J.-C. and Yi, Y. (2006), "When brand attitudes affect the customer satisfaction-loyalty relation: The moderating role of product involvement", *Journal of Consumer Psychology,* Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 145-155.

Tajfel, H. and Turner, J. C. (1979), "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict", Austin, W.G. & Worchel, S. (eds.) *The social psychology of intergroup relations* Brooks/Cole Pub. Co., Monterey, CA, pp. 33-47.

Thoits, P. A. (1983), "Multiple identities and psychological well-being: A reformulation and test of the social isolation hypothesis", *American Sociological Review,* Vol. 48 No. 2, pp. 174-187.

Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D. and Wetherell, M. S. (1987), *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory,* Basil Blackwell, New York, NY.

Veloutsou, C. (2009), "Brands as relationship facilitators in consumer markets", *Marketing Theory,* Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 127-130.

von Wangenheim, F. and Bayón, T. (2007), "The chain from customer satisfaction via word-of-mouth referrals to new customer acquisition", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* Vol. 35 No. 2, pp. 233-249.

Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L. and Parasuraman, A. (1996), "The behavioral consequences of service quality", *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 60 No. 2, pp. 31-46.

Zhu, D. H., Sun, H. and Chang, Y. P. (2016), "Effect of social support on customer satisfaction and citizenship behavior in online brand communities: The moderating role of support source", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* Vol. 31, pp. 287-293.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Chi square difference test for assessing discriminant validity among constructs

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Consumer-community identification								
2. Customer satisfaction with community	$\Delta\chi2$ = ; p < 0.00							
3. Community loyalty	$\Delta\chi2$ = 360.17; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 251,38; p < 0.00						
4. Positive WOM community	$\Delta\chi2$ = 253,34; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 245,47; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 318,90; p < 0.00					
5. Consumer-brand identification	$\Delta\chi2$ = 622,36; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 340.92; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 644,65; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 277,05; p < 0.00				
6. Customer satisfaction with brand	$\Delta\chi2$ = 890.02; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 778,73; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ =954,43; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 842,56; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 264,63; p < 0.00			
7. Brand loyalty	$\Delta\chi2$ = 1039,91; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 856,75; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 1148,57; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 839,35; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 192,08; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 52,46; p < 0.00		
8. Positive WOM brand	$\Delta\chi2$ = 967,83; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 644,43; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 758,66; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 904,34; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 257,90; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 162,62; p < 0.00	$\Delta\chi2$ = 211,74; p < 0.00	

Notes: WOM = WOM; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted;