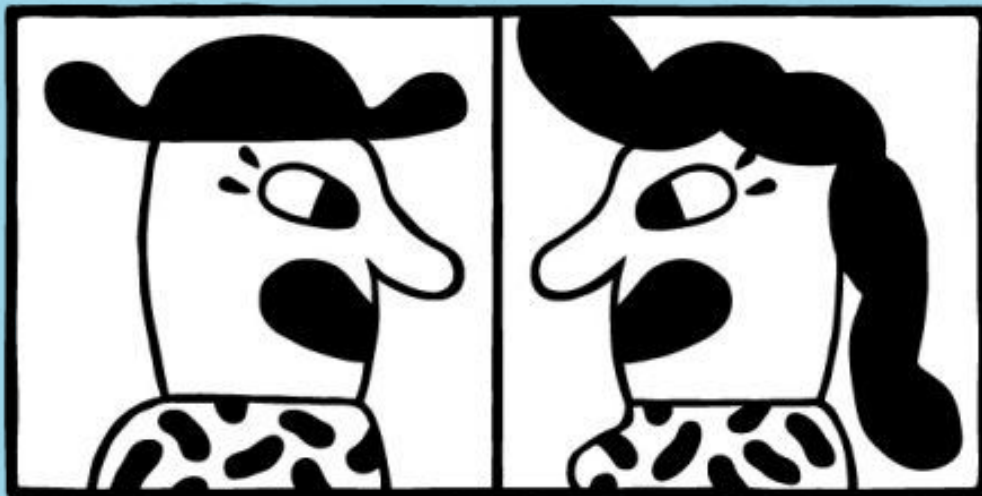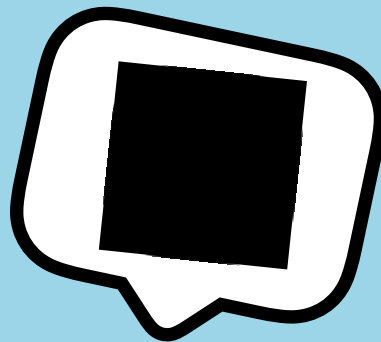# A Study of How Social Media Contributes to Consumer Engagement

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Abstract

With the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies, the social media landscape has greatly changed. Social media platforms have made it possible for people to express their feelings, voice their opinions, and connect with each other anywhere and anytime. In the age of social media the consumers use the social web in order to share among themselves their own experience with a brand or a product, which means that the decision making process has changed. This means that consumers are leveraging the experiences of others, before making a purchase themselves, creating word-of-mouth promotion. Thus, brands and companies have increasingly entered the social media in order to promote their products, services and brands. With social media marketing, marketers seek to engage consumers in online social locations and social media has made it possible to establish an intimate relationship with consumers. This study provides an insight into how the Danish beer company Mikkeller could use social media in order to build consumer engagement beyond national borders. It further analyses the benefits of using social media marketing. Based on results from netnography and ideological discourse analysis of three Instagram accounts connected to Mikkeller (and MRC) as well as Mikkeller's official Facebook account, this study argues that idelogies organize social group attitudes, meaning that collective identities have been formed online as a polarizing structure between *us* and *them*. People that share their particular qualities and values are part of the in-group, whereas those who do not share the same values will be defined as the out-group. Through posting Mikkeller's logo, Mikkeller's team flag, using handgestures and drinking beer, Mikkeller can create an online community, where the members commit to the brand and show their identification and affection to the brand. This study further analyses that Mikkeller breaks with norms and traditions, which creates an attitude and edge to the club. To some extent, Mikkeller sends an image of MRC being "cult-like", hipster and different, which results in a quite heterogeneous group of people. It can be concluded that Mikkeller's consumers were not only connected by Mikkeller's products or brand, but in a deeper sense they were connected to the healthy, hipster, running lifestyle associated with the brand. Thus, social media can greatly contribute to establish consumer engagement beyond national borders, since social media is used for social interaction and has become a vital part of human experience. Social media facilitates the formation of online communities all around the world, because people gather around a shared interest, cause or lifestyle in pursuit of a collective experience. Consequently, social media

marketing benefits a brand like Mikkeller, because it helps strengthen the brand experience and helps reinforce their brand name and increase brand recognition. Social media marketing is a very powerful tool when it comes to building online communities and communicating the brand.

List of abbrevations

- CRM – Consumer Relationship Management
- MRC – Mikkeller Running Club
- WOM – Word-of-mouth

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1.0 Introduction

The Internet and especially social media have changed how consumers and marketers communicate today. With the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies and user-generated platforms, social media has made it possible for people to express their thoughts, voice their opinions, and connect with each other anywhere and anytime (Evans 2010). Therefore, social media has become part of our culture and consumers have taken to the social web in order to share amongst themselves their own experience with a brand, a product or a service, in order to provide a more "real" view of their experience. This means that the decision making process has changed, which also means that in the age of social media consumers are leveraging the experiences of others, before making a purchase themselves – creating word-of-mouth (henceforth refered to as WOM) promotion (Evans 2010: 4-5). Ultimately, this has led to the formation of online communities that share the same values, interests, and standards. Companies and brands have therefore taken to social media in effort to promote their products, brands and services. Social media marketing seeks to engage consumers in online social locations and social media greatly facilitates the process of establishing an intimate relationship with the consumer. Consumer engagement is thus concerned with building emotional bonds with the consumer in relational exchanges (Sashi 212: 260). By using social media, brands and companies can forge relationships with their consumers as well as new consumers, and form communities that can interactively collaborate with each other and the brand (Sashi 2012: 255). What these members have in common may therefore be something deeper than the brand or a product.

For millions of years, human beings have been part of one tribe or another (Godin 2008). Now the Internet has eliminated the barriers of geography, cost, and time, which means that these tribes are often found online. People gather around a shared interest, cause, or lifestyle in pursuit of a sense of collective experience (Evans 2010: 64). Hence, people are often motivated by an apparent desire to talk about a brand, product or experience with each other, in relation to what they have in common (Evans 2010: 64). But people also gather, because we have a profound need to belong. Belongingness is the human need to be an accepted member of a group. Social media platforms greatly facilitate social connections, because these platforms allow users to fulfil belonging needs through communication and learning about others, and through self-representation i.e through photographs, profile information etc. (Chernev, Hamilton, & Gal 2011). Consequently, belonging to a group will verify a sense of belongingness and will raise one's self-worth (Hogg & Reid 2006).

The social media platforms have a growing importance in our lives, since they are the places where we can "showcase" our living experiene. This means that one of the significant marketing changes in the past decade has been in the variety of ways in which consumers can express their identities. Thus, social media enables identity expression, exploration, and experimentation, something that is natural for human beings (Rettberg 2017). Consequently, I have found it interesting how consumers form groups online on the social media platforms: Instagram and Facebook, in order to create a collective identity with connection to a brand. More precisely, I would like to examine the Danish beer company Mikkeller and their running club: Mikkeller Running Club (MRC), and how they have employed social media marketing in order to build consumer engagement around the world. I have chosen to examine Mikkeller, because of their marketing strategies employed on social media combining running and drinking beer together. This means that people around the world are meeting up every weekend to join each other and MRC for a run and afterwards catch a beer together. In the case of Mikkeller, the consumers might not only be connected by Mikkeller's products or the brand, but in a deeper sense they are connected to the healthy, hipster, running lifestyle associated with the brand. This creates a natural cause for wonder, which I would like to explore throughout my study.

1.1 Problem statement

With the abovementioned introduction and focus of this thesis, I would like to answer the following problem statement:

How can social media contribute to consumer engagement beyond national borders for Mikkeller and what are the benefits of social media marketing?

In order to answer my problem statement, I will seek to understand the role of the social media channels i.e Facebook and Instagram. This study of Mikkeller will focus on the company as a whole, but it will also identify running-communities as the key for creating consumer engagement. Hence, the intercultural aspect of this study will focus on how collective identities are created around the world in connection with MRC.

1.2 Structure of the study

This study is presented in several chapters. Below, figure 1 covers the thesis structure and highlights what can be found in each chapter for easier navigation.

Figure 1: Thesis structure

| **Introduction** |
| Presents the problem statement and the motivation behind choosing Mikkeller as a case. Further, the definitions of important concepts are covered here |

| **The story of Mikkeller** |
| Presents the Danish company Mikkeller and the story behind it. This chapter will further cover a presentation of social media, and the platforms: Instagram and Facebook |

| **Methodology** |
| Covers the research philosophy and methodological approach to the study, the process and the actual data collection |

| **Literature review** |
| Introduces previous theories and research on my topic to determine how other researchers have put my subject into perspective |

| **Theory** |
| Presents the selected theories related to the the problem formulation and sets the stage for the analysis |

| **Analysis** |
| Outlines what I have discovered in relation to my problem formulation, my data and my theories |

| **Discussion** |
| Brings the analysis and theory together in a discussion of consumer engagement beyond national borders and social media marketing for Mikkeler |

| **Conclusion** |
| Concludes on the study in relation to the problem statement |

Source: own creation

1.3 Definitions of important concepts

For the purpose of this study, it is necessary to concretise certain concepts in order to create a common basis in the understanding of my project's content.

Since this project is based on Mikkeller's choice of marketing, it is important to define the concept *social media*. This will help the reader in understanding why and how the internet plays a key role in today's marketing for many organisations. The understanding of this concept is relevant for this project's analytical part, due to the fact that it is the overall theme of this project. According to the Oxford Dictionaries and Merriam Webster social media can be characterised as forms of electronic communication, such as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking (Oxford Dictionaries N/D). Users can also create communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content, such as videos (Merriam Webster 2018). Social media is therefore related to a self-generated, authentic conversation between people, who share a mutual interest or built on the thoughts and experiences of the participants (Evans 2008). This allows the consumer to share content on social media, since Social Networks or Social Media Sites, which are the main actors in the Social Media medium, can be defined as online communities of people who typically share a common interest or activity. Thus, social media provides the consumer with a variety of ways to interact and having the ability to facilitate communication. In section 2.1, I will dig deeper into the understanding of social media today and my two chosen social media platforms: Instagram and Facebook.

In relation to *social media*, I do find it relevant to define the term *social network*. Where social media sites originally have focused on providing the users with an outlet for broadcasting, social networks is defined as a way of communication and connecting with others (Edosomwan et al. 2011). Moreover, a social network is defined as a set of people connected by a set of social relationships, such as friendship (Acar 2014: 10). Both social media sites and social networks allow users to communicate and share information, as well as images and videos with each other to their followers or "friends". The two social media platforms that I have selected for this study, focus on a two-way communication as a way of creating and maintaining connections and networks by providing the users with features such as direct messaging, the ability to tag specific people in posts or comments etc.

I have also found it relevant to explain the emergence of *Web 2.0*. Theoretically, this is an important notion in relation to my topic, since it helps define the Internet today. Web 2.0 (also called the Social Web) revolves around conversations, social interactions, and the formation of groups that in a way act or advance on collective knowledge (Evans & Mckee 2010: 14). Thus, the concept of Web 2.0 was coined around 2004, when Tim O'Reilly organised the Web 2.0 conference (O'Reilly 2007). The conference did not concern whether Web 2.0 was an update to any tecnhological specifications, but rather Web 2.0's effect on usage and design of web pages.This means that the web was perceived as a platform (O'Reilly 2007). The Internet have become the most common platform that consumers use to find information on products and services, interact with each other, and purchase online. The Web has therefore made it possible to have a direct contact between producers and consumers, making the physical retailer of information-based products redundant. In contrast to the Web 1.0 era, where people were limited to the passive viewing of content (i.e one way communication), Web 2.0 websites allow users to interact and collaborate. Over the last years, a new generation of online tools, applications and approaches such as blogs, online communities, wikis, and virtual worlds have emerged. This means that the fundamental element of Web 2.0 is what is widely known as consumer-generated content. In a way, this direct consumer involvement result in powerful network effects and communities (O'Reilly 2007). Hence, the Web 2.0 can be perceived as a social phenomenon that drives content and builds personal relationships with the consumer. This means that the key interest of marketers is how to effectively leverage Web 2.0 and derive value from social media based tools and build communities among consumers around their products, services or brand, and to have the consumer collaborate in the developing of future product strategies (Constantinides, Romero, & Boria 2008).

Word-of-mouth (*WOM*) is another important aspect to cover in this study, since it is a quite important notion within social media marketing as well as consumer engagement. To put it simply, WOM is one person talking about something to another person through oral or written communication, hence from person-to-person. People have always talked about their experiences, emotions, needs, brands and products with others (Mosley 2017), because it enhances something about us (Hollowell 2014). Consequently, social acceptance and recognition is important to human beings as we like to feel as though we belong to a social group and that we contribute positively to the social circle (Hollowell 2014). Even more importantly, the reason why other people listen to these experience is that we often tend to trust the person talking, rather than the business (Hollowell

2014). This means that in the age of social media the role and the impact of WOM has evolved, which means that we like to trust the person talking about a brand rather than the brand itself. Consequently, social communities have been formed due to the increased interactivity of social media and WOM. These new communities have highly shaped the way that businesses can leverage the power of WOM for marketing purposes and how WOM impacts businesses (I-scoop N/D).

Throughout this project, I will use the term consumer instead of costumer. The word consumer is made from the word "consume", which also means "to use". This means that a consumer will buy or purchase a product/service for his own use or consumption (French 2015). Thus, a consumer is a user of the goods or a service, whereas a costumer may just purchase a product (French 2015). As an example, children are the actual users of a product, which means they are the consumers, whereas their parents are the costumer, because they have bought the product for the children (French 2015). For the purpose of this study, I have therefore found it more appropriate to mention consumers, rather than costumers, due to the fact that I am analysing the effect of Mikkeller's social media marketing on the consumer - since they use the brand to express their identities and lifestyle, which is my focus.

2.0 The story of Mikkeller

In 2006, the Danish math and physics teacher, Mikkel Borg Bjergsø, started experimenting with making home-made beer in his kitchen in Copenhagen. Today, in 2018, Mikkel exports his beer to more than 40 different countries worldwide (Mikkeller N/D). He has become one of the most innovative and cutting edge brewers in the world. For Mikkeller, running is a fundamental element of the brewery's global expansion, since Mikkel Bjergsø used to be a young running talent who performed well on the tracks, which earned him some Danish records (Petersen 2017). This means that running is perceived as an important element of the brewery's global expansion (Bernot 2017). *"So many people take running too seriously – we wanted to do something much more inclusive and fun",* described Søren Runge, the president of the worldwide MRC (Doherty 2017). Over 12,000 runners across the world are now a member of Mikkeller Running Club (MRC) (Bernot 2017), which means that since 2015 where MRC started, MRC has expanded from its hometown in Copenhagen, to now more than 180 clubs around the world (Mikkeller Running Club 2017) (Bernot 2017). The brewery has always done more than making beer, which means that it is one of the world's first "gypsy breweries". Instead of having a centralized brewery, Mikkeller collaborated with other existing breweries. This means that Mikkeller developed a cult following, which allowed

the company to open more than 30 taprooms, bottle shops, and bars across the world. So what is the connection between beer and running? Although there are plenty of other beer and running clubs around the world (i.e Hash House Harriers, RunTOBeer etc.), Mikkeller has made running a key element of the brewery's overall global plan (Bernot 2017). Søren Runge has expressed that they started the running club, because he and Mikkel were out of shape and wished to loose some weight (Bernot 2017). Since they had always enjoyed running and did not want to run alone, they made a post on Facebook, inviting anyone who was interested to come and join their run in Copenhagen one Saturday (Bernot 2017). Both Søren and Mikkel bought beer for everyone who joined and showed up. Quite amazingly the word spread, and on the next run they created, 30 people joined, and only two months later 100 people showed up (Bernot 2017). "We thought, *We may have something here,"* Søren stated (Bernot 2017). Soon, they organized runs every first Saturday of the month, with a free beer following the workout. As the word spead about MRC in Copenhagen, Mikkeller expanded their running club's around the world (Bernot 2017). As Mikkeller has described, their philosophy is that they do not want to be too serious about their sports, but at the same time, they do not want to forget to exercise either (Doherty 2017) (Bernot 2017). This means that MRC would not like to be a serious athletics club, they would rather like to have a balance in exercising and enjoying more of the good life (i.e beer etc.) (Petersen 2017) (Bernot 2017). In this way, Mikkeller breaks with norm and tradition, thereby giving the club attitude and edge. To some extent, MRC is autonomous and different because they are doing-it-themselves and do not care what other people think. This makes the community within MRC hetereogenous and exciting, which probably also explains their global expansion and success, because they have an inclusive attitude combined with technical excellence. First of all, this can be seen in their online activity and presence on social media platforms. Second of all, it can be viewed in many of the images posted on Instagram and Facebook, where the members are using handgestures (i.e giving the middle finger/"fuck finger"), wearing a Mikkeller logo on their shirts, and waving a Mikkeller team flag. This creates global awareness for Mikkeller and creates a sense of community around the world, because they speak about themselves as inclusive and different (Doherty 2017). It further gives the club some edge and attitude by following these values. They literally do not "give a fuck" about standards and norms, and this is highly evident in their use of handgestures. Thus, Mikkeller promotes a lifestyle of enjoying the good life while being healthy, and an identity of being different, hetereogenous and not caring about what other people think. Further, the attitude they practice or

pursue breaks with the norm or the standards, which probably also explains their somehow outrageous content on social media.

This presentation sought to clarify my choice of selecting Mikkeller as my case study, in order to examine consumer engagement and social media marketing. As the many running clubs attached to MRC gather online to communicate, I have found it interesting how Mikkeller employs social media in order to create engagement beyond national borders. Therefore, the next chapter will examine social media today, which will help me set the stage for my theories in chapter 5.0.

2.1 Social media

With more than 3.0 billion Internet users worldwide (Statista 2018), the web is causing significant changes in how people communicate. Easier access to computers, the modernization of countries around the world, and an increased utilization of smartphones have given people around the world the opportunity to use the Internet more frequently (Statista 2018). Social media is a communication mechanism that allows users to communicate with thousands of individuals all over the world, as well as with companies or brands (Whiting & Williams 2013: 363). With the advancement of the Internet, the emergence of complex interactions of groups of people with shared interests or goals has spread across the globe (Ohiagu & Okorie 2014). Ultimately, this has led to the formation of online communities, because social media is used for social interaction and has become a vital part of human experience (Whiting & Williams 2013: 364). Members of virtual communities tend to share similar interest or topics, and connect to each other anytime and anywhere as friends or followers (Tang, Liu, & Huan 2010). Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Youtube etc. greatly facilitate these online communities and groups. Due to the popularity of online communities and social technologies, companies increasingly entered the online world in order to get their consumers engaged with their brand. If the consumer is interested, they might spread the words and share their experiences and opinions with the company or with other consumers. With this behaviour, consumers have a direct impact on marketing content, since the consumer influences whether the information or content is interesting or not to be engaged in. Consequently, the consumers have become an essential part of companies' marketing strategies.

In recent years, platforms such as Instagram and Facebook have become avenues for retailers and brands to market their consumer goods in a way that will influence consumer spending. Facebook

was launched in 2004, as a social networking service, and in 2006 the network was extended beyond educational institutions to anyone with a registered email address (Shah 2016). Users on Facebook can post comments, share photographs and links to news or other interesting content on the Web, chat live and stream live videos. Additionally, Facebook users may join common interest user groups organized by workplaces, schools, or other institutions (Edosomwan et al. 2011). Instagram is somewhat different from Facebook, because Instagram is more about capturing moments. Instagram is thus a free online photo-sharing application and social network platform, which allows the user to edit and upload short videos or images via a mobile app to be viewed by their fellow friends and followers (Techtarget Network 2017). Furthermore, the users can add a caption on each post and use hashtags (#) and location based geotags to index these posts and make them searchable for other users. As with many other social media platforms (e.g Facebook), users on Instagram can comment, like, as well as send private messages to their friends via this platform. Instagram was founded in 2010 by the two co-founders Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger (Instagram 2018), and is now a community of more than 800 million people who capture and share the world's moments on the service (Instagram 2018). As a result, Instagram has become the home for visual storytelling for everyone from celebrities to brands as well as anyone who has a creative passion (Instagram 2018). However, where Instagram and Facebook differ the most is in the privacy settings. The audience on your Facebook account can be smaller than Instagram, because Facebook provides more options regarding privacy. This means that you have to allow people to watch your content by adding them as friends, while you can change the privacy for each post on Facebook and maintain a friend list (Shah 2016). An account on Instagram is either open for everyone to see or your account is private, where Facebook allows several options for people to watch/"lurk". Essentially, Instagram users have scored highest for showing affection and demonstrating the highest brand engagement (Phua, Jin, & Kim 2017). Since self-representaiton has always been part of our culture (Thumin 2012), images play an increasingly important role in our visual communication and in our construction of identites (Rose 2000). Through digital cameras, smart phones and social media it has become easier to create and share our self-representations by allowing individuals/users to document and visually narrate their everyday lives. Therefore it has become much easier to present oneself, and to some extent present an idealized version of the "self" (Senft & Baym 2015) (Ziegler 2016).

With the abovementioned presentation of Mikkeller and Social Media, I will use the next chapter to cover the research philosophy and the methodological approach to this study, and I will also cover the actual data collection.

3.0 Methodology

The overall purpose for this project was to demonstrate how social media affected the way that Mikkeller communicated with the consumer, but also how consumer engagement was created in the age of social media. On the one hand, this included an investigation on Mikkeller's marketing strategies on their social media platforms. On the other hand, it involved research on how social media shaped social networks and communities on the popular platforms, Facebook and Instagram. And how these networks shaped consumer engagement as well as group-belongingness. In the following sections, I will account for the methodology applied, including my choice of analytical tool, my choice of social media platforms to investigate, and my general approach to the problem statement.

3.1 Qualitative method

Throughout this study, I will apply a qualitative research method. One of the main considerations in choosing this method has been that I am examining the world through different "users" and look at how these make sense of the world (Bryman 2012: 30). I started out with a general question and on the basis of this question, I searched for relevant data and theories. I wanted to find information about social media marketing, consumer engangement beyond national borders for Mikkeller, and what the benefits of using social media in their marketing strategies were for this company. Qualitative data is generally difficult to measure and quantify, however it can help reveal valuable attitudes and perspectives that hardly ca be accessed through a traditional quantitative approach.

In contrast to a quantitative research, where hypotheses are formed and then applied to various specific cases (deduction), qualitative research employs inductive reasoning, proceeding from particular to more general statements. To do this, qualitative research borrows methods from humanistic researchers e.g. from the social sciences, who believe in multiple realities and focus on interpreting the interaction between researcher and phenomenon (Sayre 2001). This study is therefore qualitative due to two reasons: (1) the problem statement is largely exploratory in nature, and (2) the purpose of the problem statement is to gain insights into a topic on which literature

already exists. The aim of this study has not been to measure or to quantify something, but to improve understanding of the phenomenon by obtaining information from experts.

3.2 Interpretivism

Epistemology is *"a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know"* (Crotty 2003: 3), and epistemology is further *"concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate"* (Crotty 2003: 8).

I have found interpretivism most suitable for my study. Interpretivism is used here, due to the fact that it is a strategy that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences (Bryman 2012: 28). This means that interpretivism requires the researcher to grasp the subjective meaning of social actions (Bryman 2012: 28-30). The reseacher believes that access to reality, whether it is given or socially constructed, is accessed through social constructions, such as shared meanings, language or instruments. Through interpretivism, the researcher can therefore study the social world, because the researcher integrates human interest into a study and reflects the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order (Bryman 2012: 28). Interpretivism is a philosophy based on the critique of positivism (Bryman 2012: 30). Where positivsm is more concerned with objective explanations, interpretivism is concerned with multiple understandings, since they are socially constructed (Bryman 2012: 28-30). The fundamental difference between positivism and interpretivism, is that social reality has a meaning for humans and therefore human action is meaningful (Bryman 2012: 30). The interpretivist researcher is concerned with gaining access to people's common-sense-thinking and to interpret their actions and their social world from their point of view (Bryman 2012: 30). Interpretivism will therefore be applied in this study to focus on meaning and the different understandings of people (Bryman 2012: 28-30).

Some disadvantages connected with applying interpretivism into my study, can be related to the subjective approach that the researcher applies (Bryman 2012: 28-30). This means that the results generated from my data can not as easily be generalized, since the results might be impacted by the values or viewpoints of the researcher and of the persons connected to the data (Bryman 2012: 30-31). Thus, realiability and representativeness of the data might be affected to a certain extent. However, interpretivism is applied into this study to allow cross-cultural differences in the different

countries and social media platforms to be studied in a great level of depth. As a researcher, the results that are generated from my data will allow a high level of validity and trustworthiness. This is because, interpretivism allow multiple understandings since they are socially constructed (Bryman 2012: 30). As a researcher, I will therefore aim to place the interpretations that have been elicited into a social scientific frame. Not only am I providing an interpretation of other's interpretations, but my interpretations will also have to be further interpreted in terms of the concepts, theories, and literature provided into this study (Bryman 2012: 30-32).

3.3 Deductive and inductive

My research is essentially deductive, due to the fact that I as the researcher will start out with what is already known about a particular area as well as the theoretical considerations about that area. From here, a hypothesis is deduced and subjected to a test. The data for testing the hypothesis is also collected on the concepts specified in the hypothesis (Bryman 2012: 24). This means that with a deductive approach, theory and hypothesis informs the data collection, and the data is collected only to test the hypothesis. In my research, I started out with theory, but no hypotheses were derived from the theory and neither will I try to test the theories. My choice of a qualitative research will likely focus on the generation of theory rather then to test the theory (Bryman 2012: 35-36). The theories applied for this study, will only enable me to understand the problem in depth and to interpret my findings in the light of them.

Although I have applied a deductive approach, Bryman (2012) has specified that even a traditional deductive approach to research will contain bits of induction through its last part. This is due to the fact that the researcher has to make inferences of the implications of the findings for the theory that has informed the research in the first place. The induction in my work will appear in the data analysis section. The data is analysed through a discourse analysis, then from these findings my conclusion will enable me to understand the theories and the problem better.

3.4 Ontology - Social Constructivism

According to Fuglsang & Olsen (2012) the term ontology covers: *"what, within a specific scientific approach, is considered as the subject, and furthermore how this subject is then seen"*. To describe it in other words, the ontology is what part of the reality that we choose to "look at" in order to acquire the knowledge that we are trying to create or to discover (Gray 2013).

Throughout this project, I will take the ontological position of social constructivism. Social constructivism asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors (Bryman 2012: 33). Social constructivism also corresponds very well with my analytical tool of ideological discourse analysis and netnography. This is due to the fact, that discourse is a way of showing that the social world is build up and constituted through interaction. It is constituted in a way as people talk it, write it and argue it. Thus, it implies that a social phenomenon is not only produced through social interaction but it is in a constant state of revision (Bryman 2012: 33). This means that the social order of social media is in a constant state of change, because social media is a place where agreements are constantly being reviewed, established and revised (Bryman 2012: 33-34). Furthermore, it perceives identity as a socially emerging phenomenon rather than a pre-defined or pre-determined fact, an intersubjective construction rather than a personal one.

In a social constructivist understanding, one framing of the world is not more correct than any other, because they are all culturally constructed. Having a social constructivist ontological understanding of the subject of matter, will give me the best answer to my problem statement, because it can give multiple explanations, as I discover multiple ideologies from my analysis. Language is thus employed to present categories in particular ways (Bryman 2012: 34). This means that the social world and its categories are not external to us, rather it is build up and constituted in and through interaction (Bryman 2012: 34) The chosen theories will hopefully bring light to the understanding of consumer engagement beyond nationals borders and social media marketing.

3.5 Netnography

In this project, I have found the method of Netnography most suitable to apply, due to my knowledge and decision of choosing Mikkeller as an online case (cf. section 2.0). Kozinets (2002) has originated this method with focus on consumers using the Internet more and more, which enables consumers to form or manifest communities. Netnography is thus a method specifically designed to study cultures and communities online (Kozinets 2002: 61). Kozinets developed netnography as an online marketing research technique for providing consumer insight. Furthermore, netnography is an excellent method to achieve information on the symbolism, meanings and consumption patterns of online consumer groups (Kozinets 2002: 61).

Netnography provides new opportunities for understanding new forms of interaction, how people create and maintain personal relationships online, and the development of online communities and cultures (Beneito-Montagut 2011). This means that the researcher can participate in online research, labelled as "lurkers" within online community. The important concept to mention here is that attention must be given to the ethnographic style of netnography. In this way, the researcher should inspect, index, interpret and expand the data, linking to specific research positions and theoretical constructs to develop a representation of understanding (Kozinets 2015). Netnography will thus be used in this study to identify meanings of trends in group behaviour as revealed online on Mikkeller's Facebook and Instagram accounts. I will be investigating key characteristics of these communities and gain a deeper understanding of member purposes for participation. Therefore, netnography will offer an unobtrusive exploration of the communities found online in this study, yet it will render a thick description of the unique culture created online. More than ever, the consumer is making product and brand choices online. This means that computer-mediated communication is used among consumers in order to base their decisions (Kozinets 2002: 61). Hence, consumers are making use of newsgroups, chat rooms, e-mail list servers, personal World Wide Web-pages and other online formats to share ideals, create communities, and to contact fellow consumers/friends who are seen as an objective information source (Kozinets 2002: 61). These communities are popularly called "virtual communities" (Rheingold 1993), but they are not less "real" than physical communities (Kozinets 2002: 61).

With the advances in web-based technologies and online social networking environments, engaging in online communities and communicating through Web 2.0 environments and social media has become a common practice for individuals in the twenty-first century. When Kozinets developed netnography it was primarily used to understand consumers' perception of a brand, that is, what they liked and disliked, and any other interesting information that could be gathered (Kozinets 2002). Thus, an important aspect of Web 1.0 is that is was based solely on one-way communication. However, in the Web 2.0 era, the consumer's active involvement in the informational flow in creating his or her content make it essential for marketers and businesses to reconsider not only the instruments employed, but also the type of communication chosen. Hence, the Web 2.0 has changed from a one-way communication form to a "multi-way conversation," in which users participate as both creators and consumers of web content. This means that the nature of contemporary netnography is a specific set of related data collection, analysis, ethical and representational

research practices (Kozinets 2015). With netnography, brands and marketers can discover new audiences by reaching far more people far more authentically. However, this does not mean that Kozinets considers netnography as a technique only suitable for marketers to analyse their consumers. Kozinets' method is also used for general explorative research (Kozinets 2015). Although, applying netnography for competitive intelligence is not something new, today's competitive intelligence can more accurately assess consumer passion. This means, that people who like your brand may just "like" your posts and then move on. But the people who love a brand, are the ones who will not only retweet or share the brand, they will also tell others about the brand and bring them into the "fold".

Preece (2000) states that an online community consists of: (1) people, engaging in some forms of social interaction 'to satisfy their own needs or perform special roles, such as leading or moderating' (2000: 10); (2) a shared purpose, which can be 'an interest, need, information exchange, or service' (2000: 10); (3) policies that govern or organize people's interaction, and may or may not be explicitly stated; and (4) computer systems, in order to mediate the communication and interactions among the participants. I have found it necessary to employ Preece's (2000) method for identifying online communities. Although, the Internet has developed rapidly since 2000, I still find Preece's method very useful for this study.

What netnography as a marketing research technique does differently than etnography is that it uses the information publicly available in online forums to identify and understand the needs and the decision influences of relevant consumer groups (Kozinets 2002: 63). Hence, netnography is faster, simpler and less expensive than traditional ethnography, due to the fact that ethnography has a stronger focus on focus groups and interviews. Thus, netnography is a qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to the study of cultures and communities emerging through computer-mediated communication (Kozinets 2002: 62). In other words, netnography provides marketing researchers with a window into naturally occuring behaviors, such as WOM between consumers or searches for information by consumers (Kozinets 2002: 63). This access into informants in online social situations, can provide important opportunities for consumer-researcher and consumer-marketer relationships. However, the limitations of netnography might be the drawing from its quite narrow focus on online communities (Kozinets 2002: 63). In other words, the researcher might need interpretive skills, because it can be difficult for the researcher to

extrapolate the results to the general population. This would probably lead to difficulty in generalizing results to groups outside the online community (Kozinets 2002: 63). Thus, a need for multiple methods triangulation and careful evaluations of similarity should be employed when using netnography. Netnography will help me in this study, to reveal interesting consumer insight, impressions, motivations, conventions and consumption symbols. Thus, the method will hopefully provide insight into the online communities of Mikkeller.

3.6 Discourse analysis

Friends, subscribers and followers are notions particularly used when it comes to social media, such as Facebook, Instagram etc. Consumers create networks that they display more or less openly on social media (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017: 10). This means that the identity of a person on a social media platform is defined in part by the people they allow into their network as "friends" (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017: 10). Thus, the phsysical space for using social networks can become a central aspect in interaction and in the construction of an identity, especially in those spaces where the consumers' lives almost becomes a topic, e.g. runners, coffee-drinkers, etc. (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017: 11). In the psychological construction of an individual, the "I" is created in comparison to "you" (Landowski 2004). In other words, "we" position ourselves in opposition to the people sharing the same values and norms to those with different values than "us" (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017: 11-12). Traditionally, individuals belong from birth to a certain community, as a member of a familiy, citizen of a city, etc. These groups are also called "post-traditional communities" and these groups are characterised by more flexibility and a common topical focus, and by a discursive organisation of belonging (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017: 11-12). In social media, communities can only be created by communication, belonging and negotiation of shared norms and values. In this way, social media communities are "communication communities" rather than "discourse communities". The social network's software will also qualify the type of relationship with openly showing one's "friends", "connections", "followers" (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017: 12). Moreover, the software will allow users to "like", "share", "comment" or "dislike" on other user's posts or images. Users can therefore not only choose who can see and read each message or post, they can also explicitly and publicly address one or more people in a more or less face-to-face interaction both offline and online. As a member of a social network, users will simply position themselves first with regards to a social network (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-

Beldame 2017). Hence, the users will express themselves, comment, support values and opinions based on the standards, values and habits of this network. These values are constantly negotiated in exchanges between the members. What else is interesting about social media networks, is that the users will position themselves with regard to people who do not belong to their network; friends/connectons/followers etc (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017: 12). They will create a "we" as opposed to "you". Otherness is therefore at the heart of the dynamics of ones identity (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017: 13). Through social media, identity construction relies on otherness, which makes judgements based on what individuals do and say (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017). In this way, the positive self-representation of the "we" will be practiced in opposition to the negative other-representation of the "others" (van Dijk 1995: 143) (van Dijk 2006). Van Dijk writes: "…language users are defined as members of communities, groups or organizations, and are supposed to speak, write or understand from a specific social position" (van Dijk 1995: 136). Therefore, discourse analysis in general is an analysis of the language use as well as the analysis of a text's purpose within a communicative situation. The point of ideological discourse analysis is to systematically link structures of discourse with structures of ideologies (van Dijk 1995: 143). For this project, I have found it necessary to employ an ideological discourse analysis. Contrary to most traditional approaches, ideologies are defined within a multidisciplinary framework that combines a social, cognitive and discursive component. Hence, within this project ideologies are defined as shared representations of social groups and as the basis of a social group's self-image (van Dijk 2006). Ideologies are thus the basis of the discourses and other social practices of the members of social groups *as group members* (van Dijk 2006: 117), which for this project is quite interesting to emloy.

Van Dijk has described an overall strategy to examine positive self-representations and negative other-representations. Since people acquire, express and reproduce their ideologies largely by text or talk, an ideological discourse analysis is relevant to employ in my study (van Dijk 2006: 117). Van Dijk indicates that ideologies are the basis of our social judgement and are often opinion statements or expression, such as those concerning the "Others" (van Dijk 1995: 143). Thus, the ideological semantics underlying such lexical selection will follow a rather clear strategic pattern, which favours the in-group and their members. Linking these strategic patterns into my study will identify the group members as friends, supporters, and followers, on the social media platforms. The in-group tends to be described in positive terms, whereas the outgroup, the opponents, are

described in more negative terms (van Dijk 1995: 143). These findings are very similiar to theories of stereotyping and social cognition research, which assume that the mental representations of these in-groups and out-groups will feature overall evaluative concepts that influence the lexical selection. These lexical selections may not only be nouns or adjectives, but also more complex structures that relate these groups with specific actions, objects, places, or events (van Dijk 1995: 143-144).

3.6.1 Elements of analysis

In this project, I have chosen to focus my ideological discourse analysis on some linguistic and semantic elements in order to answer my problem statement: *How can social media contribute to consumer engagement beyond national borders for Mikkeller and what are the benefits of social media marketing?* Below, I present an overview for describing/attributing in-groups and out-groups. This overview is based on Van Dijk's principles (van Dijk 2006: 125-126).

Table 1: Overview of expressions of ideology in discourse

1. **Context:** speaker speaks *as* a member of a social group; and/or addresses recipient *as* group members, ideologically biased context models: subj. Representations of communicative event and its participants of categories or groups.

2. **Text, discourse, conversation:**
   - Overall strategy: positive representation/action of Us
   - Negative representation/action of Them
   - Emphasize *our* good things, and *their* bad things
   - De-emphasize *our* bad things, and *their* good things

3. **Meaning:**
   - Topics (semantic macrostructures): Select/change positive/negative topics about Us/Them.
   Positive/Negative meanings for Us/Them are:
   - Manifestation: explicit versus implicit
   - Modality: We/They Must/Should
   - Lexicon: Select positive/negative terms for Us/Them

4. **Form:**
   - Syntax: (De)emphasize positive/negative agency of Us/Them
   - Active vs. passives sentences

5. **Rhetorical structures:**
   Emphasizing or de-emphasizing Our/Their good/bad things by:
   - Forms: Repetition
   - Meanings: Comparison, methaphors, metonymies, irony; euphemism, hyperboles etc.

6. **Action: Speech acts, communicative acts, and interaction:**
   - Speech acts that presuppose Our/Their good/bad things: promises, accusations etc.
   - Interaction strategies that imply Our/Their good/bad things: Cooperation, agreement

Source: van Dijk 2006: 125-126

This overview summarizes some of the expressions of ideology in discourse. Van Dijk assumes that ideological discourse structures are organized by well-known ingroup-outgroup polarization and therefore we may expect such a polarization to also be coded in talk and text (van Dijk 2006: 125-126). So this may happen by pronouns such as *Us* and *Them*, but also by possessives and demonstratives, such a *our people* and *those people*. Therefore, it can be assumed that ideological

discourse is generally organized by a general strategy of *positive self-representation* and *negative other-representation* (van Dijk 2006: 126). In this study, the "Others" will not be portrayed as enemies, but more as imperfect friends on social media platforms. For some of my data, it might not be relevant to include all elements in the analysis, which is why this overview should be understood as a guideline for the elements I want to include in the analysis. The table that van Dijk developed was originally longer and more text-heavy, however, for my analysis I have selected the most important elements and attached the original table in appendix 1. Including both elements of semantics and linguistics into my analysis will give me a broader toolbox to discover how language is used to portray in-groups and out-groups in social media.

3.7 Data selection and purpose sampling

As mentioned earlier, I have chosen to examine the two social media platforms; Facebook and Instagram, as my main "actors". More specifically, I will examine the official accounts of Mikkeller from these platforms. I have used background information in my study, by examining social media anno 2018 and the story of Mikkeller (cf. section 4.0). The process of finding and identifying relevant material has been done in the following way. First, I accessed the official Facebook web page of Mikkeller and the official Instagram account of Mikkeller. Then, I searched for data relevant to my study and towards my topic, by searching on Mikkeller Running Club, and relevant images and comments from the running communities addressing Mikkeller. Afterwards, I choose the material, which addressed my topic of consumer engagement and identified in-groups vs. out-groups. These sources will thus be defined as direct information about Mikkeller, from their own Facebook and Instagram webpage/account. This constitutes my main data used throughout my study.

When using qualitative material, in terms of social media content, such as posts, images, stories etc., it is necessary to secure a high level of validity. The data that will be used throughout this project has been found via literature searches and Internet searches, on Mikkeller's own webpage and through their social media platforms. All of my data has been through a critical selection to secure relevancy in relation to my project. The specific material has been carefully selected according to the criteria of purpose sampling. Purpose sampling is common within qualitative research, as it is conducted to ensure that the problem statement can be answered (Bryman 2016: 410). Moreover, purpose sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling with the main objective to

produce a sample that can be logically assumed to be representative (Saumure & Given 2008). To put it differently, a purpose sampling is a sample with a *purpose* in mind (Trochim 2006). This means that the selection of the sample is based on the judgement or the knowledge of the researcher, as to which of the subjects best fit the criteria of the study (Saumure & Given 2008). In contrast to probability sampling, nonprobability sampling does not involve the known nonzero probabilities of selection, which are relevant in relation to the usage of a random selection procedure. Rather, subjective methods are used to decide which elements should be included in the sample (Trochim 2006), and these have been predetermined by the researcher as relevant in addressing the research question (e.g., people of a particular age or other demographic categories) (Saumure & Given 2008). This means that within my study, I will apply my judgement and knowledge to decide which characteristics are most important to be represented in the sample. I have selected this method, due to the fact that I wanted to reach a targeted sample quickly and also due to the rather large potential size of my data set.

In my sampling strategy, I choose to look after *engagement* in terms of how much debate and how many 'likes' the specific posts' created. This would also help me in identifying group identity and group feeling, because of the debate and the likes that the post generated. I have also found it necessary to limit my sampling by only focusing on content from three specific Instagram accounts and the official Facebook account of Mikkeller. In my selection of the Instagram accounts, I selected the Instagram accounts of Moscow and Los Angeles, as well as the official Mikkeller Running Club account based in Copenhagen, which fosters all the many Mikkeller accounts worldwide. I choose these three accounts, because I would like to analyse two specific accounts outside Europe and one in Europe (Copenhagen) in terms of identifying group identity. The Facebook content was selected in terms of finding group-identity and engagement. Therefore, I looked after particularly rich engagement, in terms of how much debate the specific content created and how much engagement this generated. A really interesting finding is that there are so many different groups/accounts attached to Mikkeller on Instagram, that already form a sort of group-identification, since there is almost an account for every country. To select my sample, I have not only used a qualitative method but also a quantitative method. Although, researchers prefer probabilistic or random sampling methods over nonprobabilistic ones, in applied social research there might be some circumstances where it is not feasible, practical or theoretically sensible to do a random sampling, as with this study (Trochim 2006). Contrary to these concerns, purpose sampling

provides the opportunity for the researcher to study specific groups, and conduct exploratory research (Saumure & Given 2008).

This will ensure authencity of the data, because the sampling approach enabled me to address the research question and reduced the potential of having a biased sample. Furthermore, it allowed me to ensure data triangulation as well, since I have used multiple data sources to produce a more comprehensive view of my research question. The applied material has not so much been analysed on the level of word and sentence structure/construction, but more on a general level in terms of identifying group-identities and consumer engagement throughout my data. Hence, I can make sure that from the beginning to the end, there is a connection between method, theory and empirical data. For that reason, I have a high reliability of data in the sense that it originates directly from Mikkeller and has not gone through another form of medium (media, another webpage, account etc.). Hence, it has not been changed, manipulated or in any other way influenced by anyone else. It should be noted that Facebook might have edited the content before I sampled it, but even if this is the case, it would also be the edited content alone that would be available for the consumers.

3.8 Limitations

The focal point of this study has been to analyse the user interface that has been publicly available on the social media platforms: Instagram and Facebook. For this study, it could have been interesting to have conducted interviews with Mikkeller, and interviews with some of their users/consumers. However, this has not been possible due to the page limitations and due to the time limit. More importantly, I do not believe that I would achieve the answers and understandings that I was looking for through interviews. This is because Mikkeller might not know what they believe is their most important way to brand themselves, and the interviews with the users might not reveal group identity or consumer engagement. With netnography and ideological discourse analysis, I believe I will attain a better understanding of consumer engagement and social media marketing. It will therefore be possible for me to examine group identity and whether these identities are equal on a cross-national level, using these two methods. To achieve this understanding through personal interviews, I would need to create a lot of interviews with the individual users, which is why I have chosen not to apply the method of interviewing into my study.

4.0 Literature review

The following literature review aims to identify, select and discuss literature which deals with the problem statement and builds upon the topics covered in the introduction (cf. section 1.0), concerning consumer engagement, social media marketing and identity constructions/networks. Section 4.1 explores the culture of social media, looking at scholars such as Jose van Dijk, Ohiagu & Okorie, and Acar. Section 4.2 looks at self-representations on Instagram and Facebook, exploring how images play a visual role in how collective identities are constructed online. Lastly, section 4.3 will focus on literature regarding how companies promote a lifestyle for the consumers on social media. Consequently, this literature review will serve to introduce the literature on the research problem as to set the stage for the analysis and to place the research within the current literature. The development on social media is very fast, which is why I have chosen to only focus on studies published within the last 10 years.

4.1 The culture of social media

The communication capabilities of the Internet have revolutionized how both individuals and organizations communicate today. Information from around the world has become available on demand when that information is needed, but the Internet has also provided the ability to reach out and connect with others worldwide in real time, which previous media outlets have not been able to do (Waters & Lo 2012). Communication is the foundation of any culture (Ohiagu & Okorie 2014), and in the initial iteration of the World Wide Web (i.e Web 1.0), communication was predominantly one sided (Waters & Lo 2012) (Matade & Rajeev 2017). This means that the web was made up of web pages connected by hyperlinks and visitors could only visit these sites – they could not impact or contribute (Matade & Rajeev 2017). However, in the Web 2.0 era, communication has become much more interactive (van Dijk 2013). This involves people communicating their texts, images, and videos to a larger audience with much more feedback in more real-time. Furthermore, it allows people to collaborate and communicate with people around the world. In contemporary societies, much of the media communication finds its expression in various social media platforms (Ohiagu & Okorie 2014: 93). In this sense, social networks allow consumers to share their emotions, interests and thoughts that generate desirable membership and differentiation feelings amongst themselves (Gonzalez, Llopis, & Gasco 2015). This is mainly because social networks allow people to create and build a social relation with other people who share the same personal interests, activities, backgrounds etc. Thus, consumers can be members of a

community connected by interpersonal relationships, which means that this membership may act as a measure of adhesion to a certain lifestyle that allows these members to be different from other consumers (i.e differentiation) (Gonzalez, Llopis, & Gasco 2015: 824).

It can therefore be assumed that social media have become embedded in our everyday lives and because of this, social media fashion our perceptions, understandings, construction of meanings and our general view of reality (Ohiagu & Okorie 2014: 93). Mass media and social networks are two important components of modern societies. Acar (2014) examined that the way that social networks are formed today is quite different than from the beginning of the Internet. Today, we use social media for emotional support and to maintain the sense of community (Acar 2014: 3). Dutton & Reisdorf's (2017) study identified that in defining cultures online, one needs to consider attitudes toward the Internet as an expression of meanings ascribed to it (Dutton & Reisdorf 2017: 2). This means that people socially construct common patterns of beliefs and attitudes which group individuals into distinct cultures of the Internet that shape their behavior online (Castells 2010) (Dutton & Reisdorf 2017). According to Jan van Dijk (2012), social media enables each person to discover social information, and eliminates the need for face-to-face communication (van Dijk 2012). This means that face-to-face interaction is increasingly replaced by digital communication of email, websites, social networks and virtual communities (Giaccardi 2012). In other words, people are now more interconnected than ever (Pookulangara & Koesler 2011: 349), because of the increased popularity of social networking sites. When we do not depend of face-to-face communication - because we use the Internet more and more – Jan van Dijk (2012) examined that time and space limitations of human comminication becomes largely irrelevant (van Dijk 2012). Thus, Acar (2014) defines that modern social networks that are driven by people who can use the Internet and advanced communication technologies, are more effective and have more influence on societies in the twenty-first century (Acar 2014: 10).

The Internet and virtual communities have transformed consumers, societies, and corporations with access to information, better social networking and enhanced communication abilities (Kucuk & Krishnamurthy 2007). Additionally, Jose van Dijk (2013) has argued that within less than a decade, a new infrastructure for online sociality and creativity has emerged and has penetrated our culture today (van Dijk 2013). In connection to this argument, Ohiagu & Okorie (2014) examined that the formation of the online community or the virtual world exhibits a wide range of cultural

characteristics (Ohiagu & Okorie 2014: 93). Online communities are thus a cultural aggregation that emerges when people interact, and they have formed a new online layer through which people can organize and show their lives (van Dijk 2013). The need for connectedness has driven many users to social media platforms and when Web 2.0 first emerged culture was the buzzword that connoted the web's potential to nurture connections and build communities (van Dijk 2013: 4). Online content has undergone a transformation from being a source of data to becoming an interactive tool, enabling people to collaborate. As a result, consumers with common interst organise online groups and societies where every participant can contribute by using social tools such as networks, videos, blogs, photos etc. to establish a common ground. In other words, social networking has given rise to the "culture of sharing" with other individuals, since much of the information is usually user generated (Pookulangara & Koesler 2011).

We naturally join groups because of our needs for survival, social belonging, and social reference. Studies have shown that groups in general make better decisions that individuals (Adams 2011). Acar (2014) therefore argues that because of this, we are usually more influenced by people with whom we share a group with (Acar 2014: 14). He further describes that we usually will achieve cohesion, a sense of belonging, and social identity be being a member of a group (Acar 2014: 14). By reflecting on the arguments above, culture is a necessary component for understanding how groups and networks are formed online and how these may be linked to different discourses of in-group behaviour.

4.2 Self-representation on Instagram and Facebook

For decades, humans have used media to represent themselves. Goffman's theory of 'impression management' (Goffman 1956: 132), described that the "masks" we are wearing reveal our truer self, the self we would like to be (Goffman 1956: 12). This theory is to a large extent outdated, however Goffman's dramaturgical approach still remains pertinent when understanding how processes of identity constructions and self-representations differ across different online platforms and environments. Goffman's study examined that the presentation of the self in everyday life is understood as a constant work of creation and negotiation, because people carefully select and use setting, appearances and manners in their performance (Goffman 1956). With this in mind, the representation of self is a dynamic process that involves production – where the author (i.e the

individual) invests effort, time and care (Rueda-Ortiz & Giraldo 2016: 41-43). With the increasing tendency to use social media, ordinary people share their self-representations with a larger audience than ever before. Rettburg (2014) has argued that this is because we post selfies and images on Instagram or Snapchat, and write updates on Facebook (Rettburg 2014). While Goffman (1956) focused on situations, social media frequently employs exhibitions, such as lists of status updates, sets of photos, and situational activities, such as chatting (Hogan 2010: 377). This means that images are playing an increasing role in our visual communication and in our construction of identities (Rose 2000). Social media is therefore facilitating visual self-representation in terms of posting selfies and images in order to express ourselves, but also written self-representations in terms of blogs, online diaries and status updates (Rettberg 2017). With the ability to edit and filter images on Instagram and Facebook, Senft & Baym (2015) has aruged that it has become much easier for the individual to present an idealized version of the "Self" on social media. Rueda-Ortiz & Giraldo (2016) describe that nowadays, taking pictures is not an exclusive practice, but an extended activity due to the advent of new platforms for exhibition (Rueda-Ortiz & Giraldo 2016: 44). Hence, with smart phones available at our hands, social media has made it more attractive to create and share our self-representations, because we are able to document and visually narrate our everyday lives (Rettberg 2014). Rettberg (2014) has thus argued that posting images and selfies online, is a form of self-reflection and self-creation (Rettberg 2014). The creation of a self-image and the presentation of self to others is therefore a combination of: symbols, interactions and context (Rueda-Ortiz & Giraldo 2016: 44). In connection with this, Roberts (2011) has defined that photographs and photographing can stimulate a "rememoration" of people, events and objects (Roberts 2011).This means that in interpreting a portrait or an image, we may not only be responding to others' comments or an anticipated audience, but we may also attempt to fit the image in into our current self-conceptions (Rueda-Ortiz & Giraldo 2016: 44) (Roberts 2011).

Consequently, social media technologies create a new space for identity formation and self-expression. With the growing tendency to use e.g. Facebook and Instagram in our social and professional lives, it has become difficult to distinguish between our "real" and online identities (Cook & Leberecht 2017). Cook & Leberecht (2017) have therefore argued that we can shape not only how others perceive us but also our self-perception, which creates pressure to be more like the often idealized digital versions of ourselves and our peers (Cook & Leberecht 2017). Social media identities are complicated by the diverse uses for these platforms. With the rise of social media platforms, the connection between offline and online selves has become more pronounced (Davis &

Weinstein 2017: 5). Especially Facebook facilitates the creation of online profiles grounded in an individual's offline identity and connections (Davis & Weinstein 2017: 5). Valkenburg & Peter (2011) have recognized that one benefit of using social networking sites to connect with friends is that the digital disclosure and communication can enhance closeness and strengthen peer relationships offline (Valkenburg & Peter 2011). Seargent & Tagg (2014) identified that social networking sites has become an integral part of modern life (Seargeant & Tagg 2014: 2). They further argued that from the shift from the web 1.0 to web 2.0, the new web is no longer a place where you predominatly consume content and information – it is a place where you participate (Seargeant & Tagg 2014: 2). It is a dynamic space shaped by one's own actions and contributions (Seargeant & Tagg 2014: 2). With this in mind, I have found it interesting to dig deeper into how identities can be formed online in the era of the Web 2.0 and how we present ourselves. Today, we can be both offline and online while participating and connecting with others, which is interesting in relation to this project. Since the running communities of Mikkeller are formed all over the world, communicating with other peers will naturally have to be both offline and online. Also it is interesting to analyze how we engage on social media platforms and how we perceive ourselves in relation to others. If identities are formed under the pressure of idealized digital versions of ourselves and our peers, our self-perception and how others think of us might be different than our real selves.

4.3 Promoting a lifestyle for the consumer

As consumers have become increasingly selective in the way they choose brands to better reflect their identity and demanding lives, lifestyle branding has become quite important for many brands and businesses today (Maxwell 2017). Maxwell (2017) defines that the strategy of lifestyle branding is to move beyond product and services to own a larger slice of the consumer's identity (Maxwell 2017). This means that brands can promote a certain lifestyle and identity that the consumer would like to buy themselves into, which means that consumers are allocating more of their income to lifestyle services and experiences (Maxwell 2017).The self-expressive function of brands can be related to the notion of conspicuous consumption, that is the acquisition of products mainly for the purpose of attaining or maintaining social status (Chernev, Hamilton, & Gal 2011: 67). Chernev, Hamilton & Gal (2011) further adds that brands can be used to communicate membership in particular social groups, through the use of brands that signals membership in desirable groups. In addition, brands have been discovered to convey hidden aspects of consumer's

self-image because consumers frequently choose brands that they consider appropriate for the image they have themselves (Chernev, Hamilton, & Gal 2011: 67). In connection with Maxwell (2017), this means that brands can establish and confirm a consumer's self-concept and identity without explicitly aiming to attain social status, recognition, or acceptance (Chernev, Hamilton, & Gal 2011: 67). Steve Olenski (2016) has described that the ultimate goal for a brand is to truly connect with the consumer (Olenski 2016). This requires a level of intimacy with the consumer, and brands would have to get to know the consumer; that is their likes, dislikes, dreams, hobbies etc. Additionally, Alex Frias (2016) has examined this intimacy as: "*Even if it's the perfect ad — being served up to the perfectly targeted person — marketers need to do more: they need to create the perfect experience for their consumers*" (Frias 2016). According to Frias (2016), lifestyle brands are the ones that do the best job. This is because lifestyle brands have a deep understanding of their target consumer's way of life (Frias 2016). Furthermore, they understand the type of experience that the consumers crave, as well as the places and people that motivate and inspire them. Frias (2016) argues that brands need to understand their consumers fully, as an anthropologist would understand culture (Frias 2016). This means that social media has become increasingly important for brands to promote their services and products (Maxwell 2017). Kittaneh (2015) further adds that what people purchase and who they purchase it from, is an integral part of their identity (Kittaneh 2015). And connecting with that personal identity, Kittaneh argues, is the best way to brand success (Kittaneh 2015). Gonzalez, Llopis, & Gasco (2015) have described that social networks gather people around a shared interest or purpose, which ultimately creates a desirable membership and differentiation from others. This allows the company to build a community and a relationship with the consumers. Thus, when a company or a brand has created a community, this community membership may act as a measure of adhesion to a certain lifestyle, which permits these members to be different from other consumers (Gonzalez, Llopis, & Gasco 2015: 824).

As Brafton (2014) points out, selling a certain lifestyle gives a brand the flexibility to appeal to different consumers in new ways (Brafton 2014). Olenski (2016) describes that the promotion of lifestyles versus products is nothing new. But it is what sells that counts (Olenski 2016). He further argues that in order to be a lifestyle brand, brands should speak to the target audience, engage with them, and connect with them on a deeper level through their lives (Olenski 2016). For Maxwell (2017) this further implicates that brands should embrace the importance of building a community of like-minded individuals and partners, because a brand should nurture their ethos and attitude

(Maxwell 2017). Thus, a brand should evolve premium experiences and interactive, personalized service to the consumer in order to create a relationship (Maxwell 2017). This means that in selling a lifestyle, rather than a mere product, companies can become not just vendors, but also style-markers or even trendsetters (Brafton 2014). Harvey (2018) further adds that a lifestyle brand can help us to connect more with our ideal version of ourselves (Harvey 2018).

The power-shift of consumers having the power today, reflects the way people now make purchasing decisions (Bughin, Doogan, & Vetvik 2010). The Internet is about networks between people, ideas, products, actions, etc. (Andjelic 2017). In these networks, social, individual and cultural identities are formed and confirmed. Andjelic (2017) further argues that a network does for the 21st-century brand communication what the TV did for the 20th century (Andjelic 2017). Thus, it conveys brand identity in a tangible form (Andjelic 2017). Internet networks or identity networks are more about people talking about themselves rather than brands talking about themselves. This means that organisations need to capture consumer imagination in order to create authentic gatherings of people who share a common identity, interest or passion (Andjelic 2017). In this way, the brand can build an identity network as Esber & Gregg (2016) have argued, while creating brand loyalty and a relationship with the consumer (Esber & Gregg 2016) (Andjelic 2017). A succesful lifestyle brand can earn the loyalty of their consumer, because they can convince them that they can become the person thay thet would like to be (Harvey 2018). In a specific example, Andjelic (2017) explores how the fashion brand Annie Bing sells a specific identity on Instagram, while managing an ongoing relationship with a specific set of consumers that enables their specific lifestyle. In this way, the consumer will almost become "cult-like" followers, because they identify with the brand's attitude and point of view, and more importantly, identify with the community of like-minded others who "gets it" (Andjelic 2017). In other words, personalizing online content and promoting content that the consumer can relate to works for businesses today (Kittaneh 2015). And it also works to sell a certain lifestyle and to promote a certain identity (Harvey 2018). By doing so, businesses can create a culture, instead of just selling products (Kittaneh 2015).

In order to stay relevant in the age of networks and social media, brands need to focus on the identity of those they want to connect with. Thus, brands need to convincingly embody the taste, aesthetic and cultural sensibility and lifestyle of their audience (Kittaneh 2015). Then, brands need to augment through content, intimate communities, feedback loops, collaborations and convincing

cultural narratives. Traditional brands need to understand the role that networks play in their business beyond advertising. For the purpose of this study, I find it quite interesting to take a closer look at these new "identity networks". For Mikkeller, the identity network they provide the consumers with should foster their social connections, while maintaining an understanding of what the consumers are really interested in.

This literature review aimed to identify the current state of research on my topic by including theoretical and empirical evidence from previous work. Therefore, this literature review concludes that in the era of Web 2.0 technology and with social media platforms, communication have become much more interactive. It further identified that individuals have a need to belong, and this need is found with the emergence of virtual communities that connects people with same interest, norms and values. By the same token, businesses have started to look at these technologies as an effective mechanism to interact more with their consumer in order to create engagement and relationships. The tools and approaches for communicating with consumers have greatly changed with the emergence of social media, and therefore businesses must learn how to use social media in order to gain competitive advantage. Social media has opened a whole new world for retailers by providing endless solutions of potential interactions with consumers, which is the main reason why there is a need for examining the impacts of social media marketing.
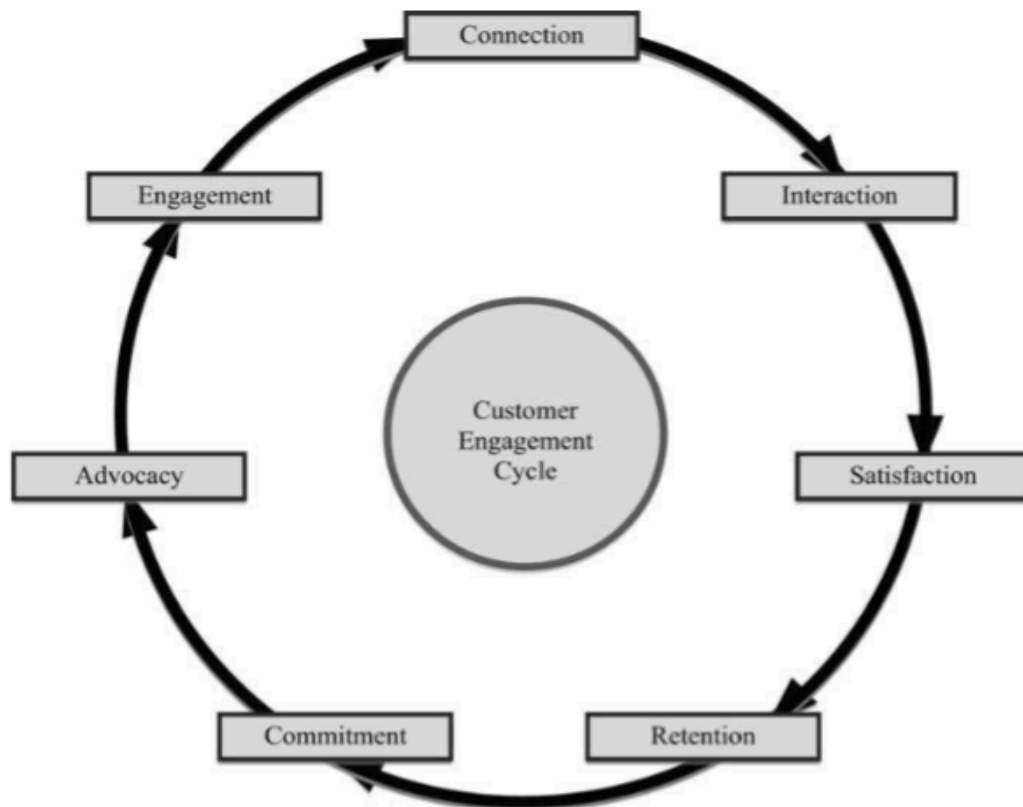
5.0 Introduction to theory

In this section, I will introduce a number of theories to shed light on the data in a scientific manner. These theories are also important in relation to my chosen subject. The main purpose of using these theories is to analyse and interpret my data in section 6.0. In my literature review (cf. section 4.0), I defined and evaluated a number of concepts and theories to determine how other researchers have put my subject into perspective. The literature review also helped me to provide an overview of sources that I have explored. Moreover, chapter 2.0 helped me define Mikkeller and Social Media, which I will incorporate into this chapter. Therefore, I will start by examining the theory of consumer engagement. This theory has been found very relevant to my study, since it is the foundation for my interest and my problem statement. This theory will help me understand how and why consumers engage with a company/brand. The next part will dig into the theory of social identity theory, which will help me identify how people communicate with each other on social media platforms, and how they form groups online with focus on creating collective identities.

Lastly, I will examine the theory of social media marketing, since it has become a powerful and useful tool for many brands and businesses today. Social media marketing has been selected in order to understand and examine Mikkeller's communication and relation with their consumers.

5.1 Consumer engagement

While the notion of "engagement" is not something new in a business context, interest in the concept has developed over the last decade (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Llic 2011). In today's highly dynamic and interactive business environment, the role of "customer engagement" in co-creating consumer experience and value is receiving increased attention from business practitioners (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Llic 2011). Consumer engagement is perhaps the strongest indicator of consumers' feelings towards an organisation's brand (Millwood 2017). If the consumer *like*'s the brand, they might come back again. However, if the consumer *loves* the brand, they will not only be dedicated to the brand, but they will likely share their experience of the brand with other consumers or friends (Albert & Merunka 2013). Therefore, engagement is a way of measuring consumer sentiment in order to predict future brand loyalty (Millwood 2017) (Fetscherin & Heillmann 2015). In the revolution of the Internet and the emergence of social media, managers seek to better understand and serve their buyers by using social media channels and platforms (Sashi 2012: 255). This is because, the Internet and especially the social media has an enhanced the ability to facilitate interaction between buyer and seller (Sashi 2012: 255).

Consumer engagement has emerged in the last few years in correlation with the continued evolution of the internet (Sashi 2012: 254). The interactive nature of social media with its abilities to establish conversations among individuals and firms has excited many businesses because of its potentional to better serve consumer and satisfy their needs (Sashi 2012: 260). On the basis of the preceding discussion, consumer engagement thus focuses on satisfying consumers by providing supervior values than their competitors in order to build trust and commitments into a long-term relationship (Sashi 2012: 260). The interactivity on social media greatly facilitates the process of establishing an intimate relationship. The process of consumer engagement can be viewed in the figure below. Sashi (2012) suggests that there are seven stages in the cycle – connection, interaction, satisfaction, retention, commitment, advocacy and engagement (Sashi 2012: 260).

Figure 2: The consumer engagement cycle

Source: C. M Sashi, 2012

As it can been seen in this engagement cycle, the prerequisite for establishing relation exchange with emotional bonds is for the sellers and the consumers to connect with each other. Social media greatly facilitate the establishment of connections with a wide variety of individuals and firms. The many stages in this cycle will thus end in engagement. This last stage means that the consumer is delighted or loyal, and the consumer is willing to share their loyalty in interactions with others in their social media networks, e.g through WOM promotion (Sashi 2012: 264). Both consumer delight and consumer loyalty is necessary for establishing engagement. It thus requires affective commitement as well as trust. Only when consumers have a strong emotional bond in relational exchanges with sellers, consumer engagement can occur (Sashi 2012: 264). The consumers in the different stages of the consumer engamgent cycle will vary in terms of the degree of relational exchange and emotional bonds that charcterize their relationships with sellers (Sashi 2012: 264). This means that in the first to stages, connection and interaction, the buyer and seller has yet to establish exchange relationships and within these stages there is little or no relational exchange or emotional bond between them.

With the rise of mobile and social technologies, the consumer is now more powerful than ever (Maquire 2015). Consumer engagement is about encouraging the consumer to interact and share their experiences created by the company. Today, the consumer is online at all times and can always find information on the internet in just a few seconds (Maquire 2015). This has forced marketers to rethink how they engage and connect with their consumer. When executed well, a strong consumer engagement will foster brand growth and loyalty (Maquire 2015). In order to survive today's ever-changing social media landscape, organisations and companies need to provide real-time, personalized experiences to the consumer just as they need them (Maquire 2015). Van Doorn et al. (2010) suggests that "engagement" is behavioral in nature and that consumer engagement goes beyond transactions. By promoting relevant and consistent communication to the consumer, businesses have an opportunity to engage and connect with their consumer like never before (Maquire 2015). Organisations and companies that focus on consumer engagement are more focused on value relation rather than revenue extraction. Thus, the consumer is provided with something more than a sales pitch, such as consumer experience, great content, or interactive, real-time consumer support. Kumar et al. (2010) suggests that consumers contribute to firms in many ways beyond direct transaction, that is WOM, new product ideas etc. (Kumar et al. 2010: 297). Companies have become more and more aware of the imminent need to focus on building personal two-way relationships with consumers that foster interactions.

Social media provides the oppurtunity to connect with consumers using rich media with greater reach. Web 2.0 alter the roles of buyer and seller and the relationship between them (Sashi 2012). Thus, unlike traditional market exchanges where the seller largely controlled the marketing mix decisions related to product, price, promotion, and place and developed strategies to meet the needs for consumer, social media has shifted the control of some of the decisions to the consumer (Sashi 2012: 258, 267). By changing the roles of how sellers and consumers connect and interact, social media has enabled the consumer to participate in making strategies choices with sellers, value adding, and marketing mix decisions by connecting and interacting with sellers, but also with other consumers as well as non-consumers (Sashi 2012: 267). The online environment thus provides numerous venues for consumers to share their views, preferenes, or experiences with one another, as well as opportunities for firms to take advantage of WOM marketing (Kumar et al. 2010: 298). Additionally, with the growth of social networking sites this has allowed the user to broaden the scope of their connections with others by allowing them to build and maintain a network of friends

for social or professional interaction while also share ideas with others as well (Kumar et al. 2010: 298). This means that human interactions, e.g. referrals, observations of product/service etc., play an important role in the diffusion of products and services (Kumar et al. 2010: 298).

Below, figure 3 provides a summary of the relationships among the key constructs of engagement. 'Consumer brand engagment' is defined as the level of an individual's consumer motiovational, brand-related and context dependent state of mind characterised by specific levels of cognition, emotional and behavioural activity in brand interaction (Hollebeek 2011: 792). It will however depend on the level of involvement before turning towards consumer engagement. This figure show that the relationship quality represents a higher-order construct comprising the dimensions of trust, commitment, and consumer satisfaction (Hollebeek 2011). This means that consumer brand engagement is expected to be positively related to trust. Hence, the relationship quality is highly related to the consumer's engagement, which consequently will lead to brand loyalty. In the following chapter, I will address the perception of relationship marketing which I find very useful to employ into my study.

Figure 3: Conceptual model of the relationship between consumer brand engagement
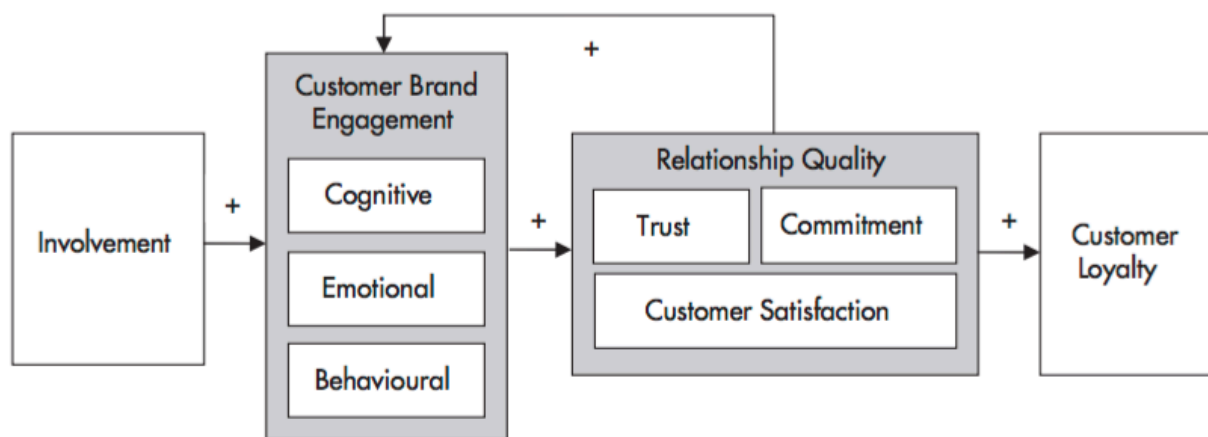
Source: Hollebeek 2011

5.1.1 Relationship marketing

Sashi (2012) highlights how companies are striving to create a high level of consumer engagement, which is defined as an intimate long-term relationship with the consumer (Sashi 2012: 254). So managers seem to view consumer engagement as well as relationship dimensions on the scale from

short- to long-term and from cusory to intimate (Sashi 2012: 254). Today, managers would like to have an intimate long-term relationship with the consumer and in order to achieve this, managers seek to personalise their marketing. Relationship marketing is defined as the focusing on consumer loyalty and long-term consumer engagement (Olenski 2013). Moreover, the goal of relationship marketing is to attract consumers by creating a strong, emotional consumer connection to a brand or a firm that eventually can lead to on-going business, WOM promotion and information from the consumer that can generate leads (Rouse 2014). The role of consumer communicating in social media is becomming a relevant topic, since it provides the consumer with power to become influential (Zailskaitė-Jakštė & Kuvykaitė 2016: 70). This means that social media has become a very useful channel for creating relationships with consumers. By building a relationship with the consumer, practioners will meet consumer needs by providing superior value relative to the competitors. Moreover, consumers' influence depends on consumers engagement level in interaction with a brand (Zailskaitė-Jakštė & Kuvykaitė 2016: 70). Especially, trust and commitment is important within relationship marketing due to the fact that *"trust exists when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity"* (Morgan & Hunt 1994: 23). This means that trust is defined as willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence in (Morgan & Hunt 1994: 23). When consumers trust the seller, they can be expected to advocate for the seller, because trust is the basis for loyalty (Morgan & Hunt 1994: 24). A consumer may be convinced to purchase a product or select a brand for one time, but without a strong relationship marketing strategy, the consumer may not return to the brand or the product in the future (Rouse 2014).

Consquently, consumer engagement focuses on satisfying the consumer by providing superior value than competitors in order to build trust and commitment in long-term relationships (Sashi 2012: 260). Hence, engaged consumers will almost become partners who will ultimately collaborate with the seller in the value adding process to better satisfy the needs of the consumer as well as other consumer (Sashi 2012: 260). Social media is therefore a great platform to facilitate the process of establishing an intimate relationship with trust and commitment between sellers and buyers. The seller will build emotional bonds in relational exchanges with the consumer (Sashi 2012: 260).

5.2 Social identity theory

In social psychology, the study of the interplay between personal and social identites is the main focus. Social identity theory aims to specify and predict the circumstances under which individuals think of themselves as individuals or as a group member (McKinley, Mastro, & Warber 2014). Social identity theory builds on identity theory. However, social identity theory focuses on the creation of collective identities, which I would like to focus on in my study, rather than on the creation of individual identities. Human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain significant personal relationship (Baumeister & Leary 1995: 497). The need for human contact and the need to belong, is therefore not new in theory. Thus, the belonging to a group should satisfy the need to belong and hence obviate or reduce the need to belong to another group (Baumeister & Leary 1995: 498). The need to belong should be found to some degree in all humans in all cultures (Baumeister & Leary 1995: 499), and perhaps the most important motivator of online social networks is the desire to socialize and connect with others (Hoffman & Novak 2012). This means that the need to belong is a profound need for humans and social relationships are critical for our well-being.

Social identity theory was developed from a series of studies, called minimal-group studies, conducted by the British social pshycologist Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s. This minimal-group study were interpreted to show that the mere act of categorizing individuals into groups (in-group members and out-group members), can be sufficient to make them think of themselves and others in terms of group membership instead of as separate individuals. The study showed that the mere act of individuals categorizing themeselves as group members was sufficient to lead them to display in-group favoritism. Furthermore, in social identity theory a person has not one "personal self", rather a person has several selves that correspond to widening circles of group membership (Tajfel & Turner 1979). Later studies has shown that cognitive factors relevant to social identification could specify how people interpret their own position in different contexts and how that affects their perceptions of others, such as stereotyping, as well as their own behaviour in groups, e.g. social influence (Hogg & Reid 2006).

After being categorized as having group membership, individuals seek to achieve positive self-esteem by positively differentiating their in-group from a comparison out-group on some valued dimension (Hogg & Reid 2006). This differentiating shows that people's sense of who they are is

defined in terms of a collective identity of "we/us", rather than an individual identity of "I" (Tajfel & Turner 1979). Therefore, social identity theory originated from the thought that group memberships can help people to instill meaning in social situations. Group membership helps people define who they are and helps to determine how they relate to others. This process assists in the maintenance of self-concept and self-esteem along increasing confidence in existing cognitions (McKinley, Mastro, & Warber 2014). In other words, the desire to maintain positive in-group status thus enhances by the personal relevance of the particular in-group to one's identity. This means that norms that define an in-group that we identify with may have significant potential in actually influencing our behaviour (Hogg & Reid 2006: 13). The greater the degree of identification one has with an in-group, the more motivated one will be in protecting the status and interest of that group (McKinley, Mastro, & Warber 2014). Belonging to an in-group means that we adopt the identity of that group we belong to, and we act in ways that perceived members of that group act (Burke & Stets 2009). We construct and modify our normative beliefs through information from people we interact with or who influence us more indirectly through mass media (Hogg & Reid 2006), or more corretly for this study through social media. However, out-group norms and values can affect in-group behaviour in a sense that in-group norms is confirmed via self-categorization thus producing group polarization (Hogg & Reid 2006: 13). This social identification means that one will develop emotional significance to that identification, and one's self-esteem will be dependent on it.

Consequently, while one's personal identity refers to self-knowledge associated with unique individual attributes, people's social identity indicates who they are in terms of the group to which they belong (Burke & Stets 2009). A key motivator for online social network is the fact that it allows for self-expression and identity representations. Online social networks thus allow the user to share content such as biographical information, interest, activities, etc. with other users. In this way, it provides the avenue to portray an online version of themselves, and often it portrays the best side of us or something that we want to be (Ziegler 2016). Categorizing self and others in particular ways and expecting particular thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to follow from these categorizations will enable individuals to have control (Burke & Stets 2009: 121). Consequently, belonging to a group will verify a sense of belongingness and will raise one's self-worth (Hogg & Reid 2006). It will further enhance one's recognition, approval, and acceptance from other group members, thus verifying their social identity as a group member (Burke & Stets 2009: 121). Communication plays a key role in social influence and grounding of norms (Hogg & Reid 2006: 14). People tend to use

more abstract language to describe behaviors that are consistent with normative expectations, and they tend to use more concrete language to describe behaviors that are inconsistent with normative expectations (i.e out-group behaviour) (Hogg & Reid 2006: 14). Within the groups, information about the prototype of a group-member and who is most prototypical can be gleaned by simply observing how people behave, what they do, what they say and how they dress (Hogg & Reid 2006: 14). As a result of social identity processes, people are inclined to seek positive valued traits, attitudes, and behaviours that can be seen as characteristics of their in-groups (Burke & Stets 2009: 118-120). That inclination might also cause them to focus on less favourable characteristics of out-groups or to downplay the importance of positive out-group characteristics (Burke & Stets 2009) (Hogg & Reid 2006). Especially assessments of in-group versus out-group performances and achievements, and communication about the behaviour of in-group versus out-group members can be related to this "grouping" (Hogg & Reid 2006). Below, I have schematized the difference between belonging to an in-group versus belonging to an out-group based on Tajfel & Turner's (1979) theory.

Figure 4: Overview of group-belonging based on the theory of social identity theory

Group-belonging / Behaviour	In-group	Out-group
Favouring	Favouring the in-group by self-enhancement, social comparison and categorization.	Persons who differ from the self and are not similar to the self are categorized with the "others"
Differentiating	Maximise the differences between the in-group and the out-group	Necessary to maintain that the groups are distinct if a person is favoring their group over the out-group
Positive attributes	Remember more positive information about the in-group and identifying with this group	Remember more negative information about the out-group – "them"
Differences	Minimize the perception of differences between in-group members (this will increase in-group cohesion)	Maximise the differences of the out-group members

Source: Own creation

I find this theory of social identity very relevant for my study, due to the fact that we shape our identities upon a clear delineation of the "we" as the in-group who are the aggrieved versus the "them" as the out-group who are responsible for the state of affairs. Thus, individuals self-categorize themselves in terms of the social groups they belong to. Thus, for this study people will categorize themselves into a social group of running. Such psychological affiliations are essential for maintaining a positive self-esteem. It will therefore provide the motivations to subjectively evaluate the in-group more positively vis-á-vis the out-group (behaviour (Hogg & Reid 2006) (Tajfel & Turner 1979). In terms of social media, social identity theory corresponds well, because with the rise of social media networking platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, it has become easier to form identities. Moreover, these social media platforms also provide individuals with a greater opportunity to identify themselves in a larger group or communities, such as sports communities. Social media has made it possible to connect all over the world both offline and online, and the need to belong to the in-group is therefore interesting to address via social media throughout this study.

5.3 Social Media Marketing

Social media is perhaps the fastest growing media in history (Richardson, Choong, & Parker 2016: 24). Social media is an influential tool that can form consumers' attitudes and behavioural intensions. Further, it can give more reliability and have greater impact on consumer's perception of products and brands (Zailskaitė-Jakštė & Kuvykaitė 2016: 69). Consequently, it can expand brand awareness, provide consumers with more positive associations and increase consumer loyalty to a brand (Zailskaitė-Jakštė & Kuvykaitė 2016: 69). Social media marketing is therefore the use of social media platforms, websites and networks to promote a brand, a product or a service. Social media is empowered to create content 24 hours a day and consumers can choose by themselves the communication channels (Zailskaitė-Jakštė & Kuvykaitė 2016: 69). Thus, the trust in consumer generated content compared to company marketing actions is higher (Zailskaitė-Jakštė & Kuvykaitė 2016: 69).

In order to engage effectively with social media, managers needs to understand their consumers but they also need to make sense of social media. Kietzman et al. (2011) have provided a framework

called "The honeycomb of social media". This framework helps managers in understanding their audience and their engagements needs. Kietzman et al. (2011) consider seven building blocks to capture the essence of social media. The seven building blocks are *identity*, *conversations*, *sharing*, *presence*, *relationships*, *reputation* and *groups*. For the purpose of this study, I find this framework extremely important to incorparte in order to understand the choices of Mikkeller's marketing and in order to understand how social media works. The overview is presented below in figure 5.

Figure 5: The honeycomb of social media
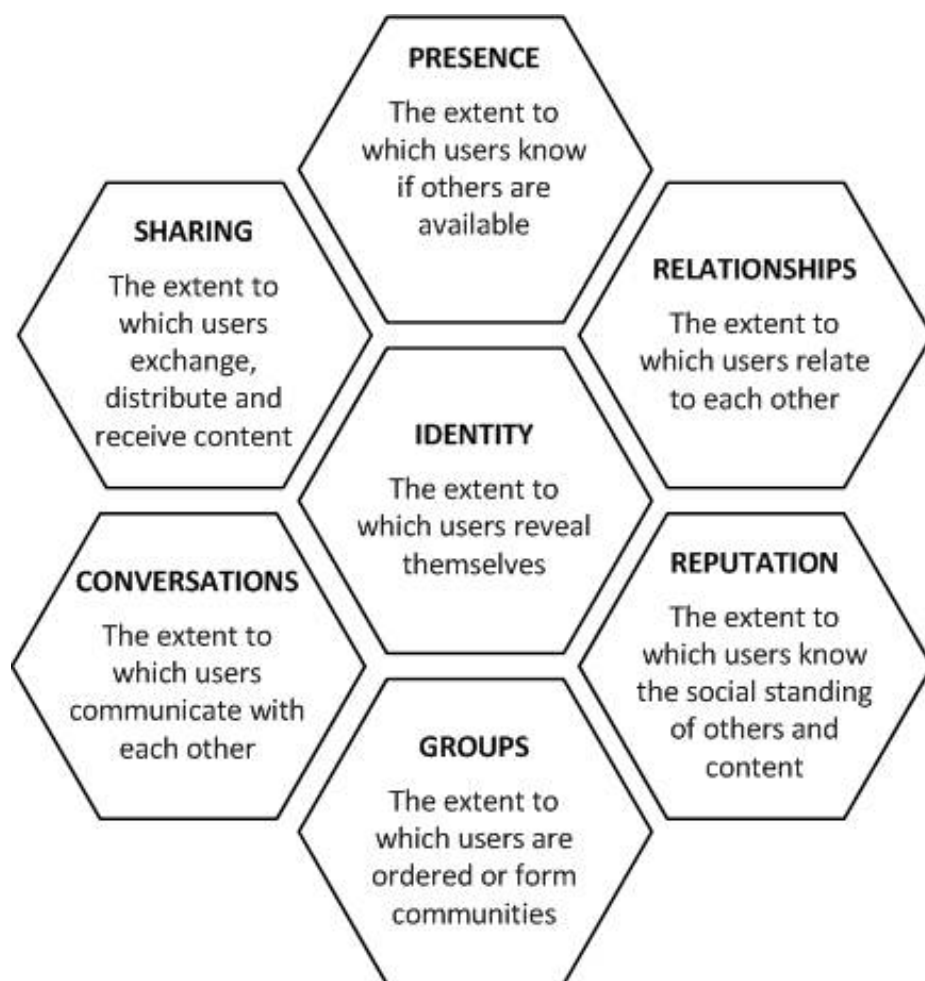
Source: Kietzmann, Silvestre, McCarthy & Pitt 2011: 243

Each block makes it possible for a brand or a company to unpack and examine, first a specific facet of social media user experience, and second its implications for firms (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre 2011: 243). These building blocks should not be understood as a hierarchy,

but more as each building block is equally important in the understanding of social media. Thus, these building blocks are constructs that allow the user to make sense of how different levels of social media should be configured. This means that the blocks are not muturally exclusive, and they do not all have to be present in social media activity (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre 2011: 243). A company should recognize and understand its social media landscape, which will help unveil the social media functionality and engagement implications for understanding consumers. When analysing different social media sites, it becomes quite clear that these sites are build upon different blocks of the honeycomb. In other words, some sites focus more on identity, some more on sharing etc. For my two specific social media platforms or sites, it can therefore be assumed that they focus more on relationship building, identity building, conversations and presence. Therefore, companies should develop different strategies for monitoring, understanding, and responding to different social media activities. For that reason, Mikkeller should focus more on building identities, relationships, conversations etc. on Instagram and Facebook, compared to the social media site Youtube that focus more on sharing, reputation, groups and conversations (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre 2011: 248).

The traditional view on marketing has been for organisations to accomplish the goal of attracting consumer through the Marketing Mix (Kareh 2018). The mix is also well knowned for its four P's: Product, Price, promotion and Place (or distribution) (Kareh 2018). As social media marketing techniques has continued to expand around us, Tuten & Solomon (2017) have argued that a fifth P: Participation, is needed (Tuten & Solomon 2017). Traditional marketing focused on push messaging, that is one-way communication delivered to the target audience, by using a large dose of broadcast and print media to reach their audience. In contrast, social media enables the consumer to be empowered (Tuten & Solomon 2017). With social media, it is not enough to interrupt the consumer experience and steal a few moments of attention, as it has been with traditional media. Social media marketing enhance the ability for consumers to interact and engage with a brand. The channels within social media provides the consumer with unparalleled access, in which consumer discuss, contribute, collaborate, and share, not only with brands but also each other. I will return to this perception and discuss this further in section 4.2.1. The culture of marketing has shifted to an informal culture, that focuses on the belief that the consumer is in control today (Tuten & Solomon 2017). This means that Participation, as the fifth P, has a whole new meaning, because the purpose

of a business today is to create a consumer, who likely creates other consumers (Tuten & Solomon 2017).

Below, I have schematised the difference between tradtional marketing and social media marketing. This figure is based on Tuten & Solomon's (2017) own creation of the evolution from traditional marketing to social media marketing. However, I have tried to simplify this model based on the abovementioned discussion, which has resulted in the figure below.

Figure 6: The difference between marketing communications
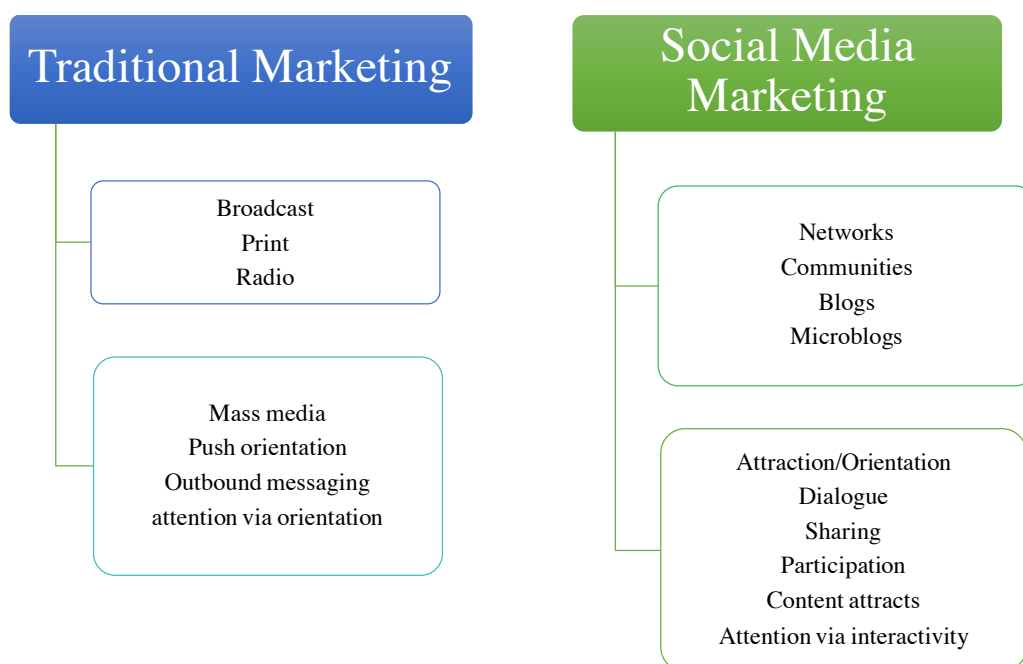
Source: Own creation

Social media is only working when people or the consumer participates, creates, and shares content. This means, that people are not just joining social communities, they are contributing too (Tuten & Solomon 2017). Since social media has expanded over the last years, the objectives that organisations can accomplish has expanded as well. To name a few, promotion, branding, customer service and relationship management are some of the objectives that managers are faced with today. Brands reach consumers of social media in order to build awareness, promote themselves, and encourage the users to try them (Tuten & Solomon 2017). Social media cross the boundaries of mass media and personal media, which means that social media enable individuals to communicate

with one or a few people, as well as to thousands of others. Communication travels on social media using a medium (or a channel) such as WOM, television, magasines, Internet, direct mail etc.

5.3.1 The Social Feedback Cycle – how it affects the consumer

Before the rise of social media, the exchange of opinions relied highly between one's families, relatives, friends etc. (Pan & Crotts 2012: 75). However with the rise of social media, the decision-making and exchange of opinions have changed (Pan & Crotts 2012: 75). Social media has provided possibilities to change traditional marketing and from World Wide Web to Web 2.0 in terms of communications. Web 2.0 has transformed the web from a "one to many" channel to a "many to many" communication channel, while also having a "one to one" channel of interaction. This allows the consumer to not only communicate, but also interact and engage with each other (Zailskaitė-Jakštė & Kuvykaitė 2016: 69). Traditionally, the information communicated by friends and relatives was construed to be more credible, honest and trustworthy than that generated from marketers, because the communicators are not compensated for the referral (Pan & Crotts 2012: 77). In traditional marketing, the purchase funnel was more simple than it is today. In the figure below, I have outlined the three stages of the classic purchase funnel. The goal with traditional media was for marketers to make the consumers aware of the product or service, and what it could offer. The more aware the consumer were of the product, the more likely they would be to purchase the product or service.

Figure 7: The classic purchase funnel (used for traditional media)
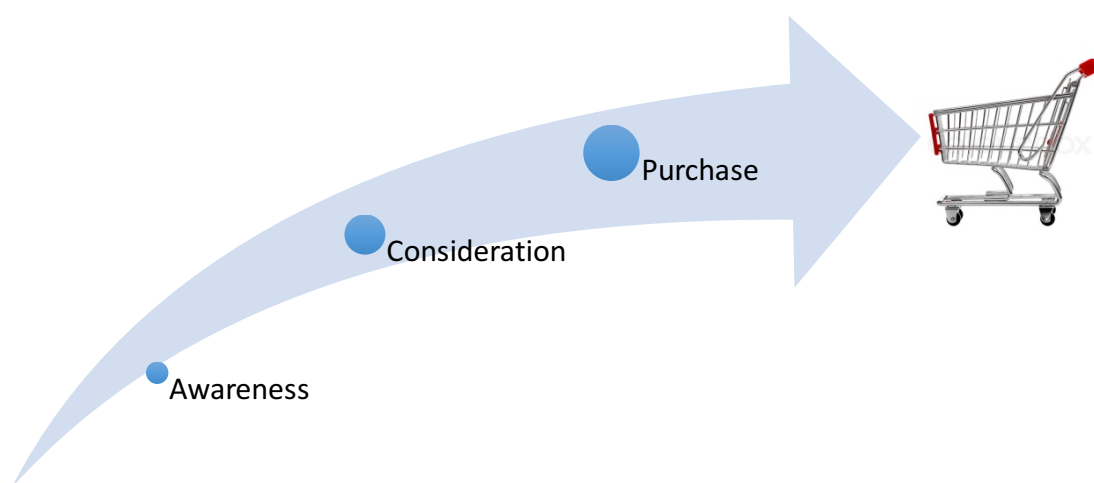
Source: Own creation

The contemporary purchase funnel has changed. Social media now allows the consumer to access personally meaningful critiques not only from friends and relatives but also from "strangers", e.g. through blogs, forums etc. (Pan & Crotts 2012: 77). This represents the post-purchase dimension, which can have an impact on the basic stages of consideration. For a lot of organisations, the usage of social media often begins in marketing (Evans & Mckee 2010). In order to achieve "engagement", many organisations view social media as the way to achieve it. No longer satisfied with advertising and promotional information as the traditional source for learning about new products and services, consumers have taken the social web in an effort to share among themselves their own direct experiences with brands, products, and services to provide a more "real" view of their overall experience (Evans & Mckee 2010: 4). More and more, consumer are leveraging the experiences of others before they actually make a purchase themselves. Social media thus represents a digital version of WOM. Figure 8 shows the classic purchase funnel, connected to the Social Web through WOM. Thus, as it can be seen in this figure, the loop represents the journey from expectation to trial, to rating, to sharing the actual experience. This means that the loop is a part of most purchase or conversion processes today. Today, people are turning to people like themselves for the information they need in order to make a choice (i.e WOM) (Evans & Mckee 2010: 5).

Figure 8: The Social Feedback Cycle
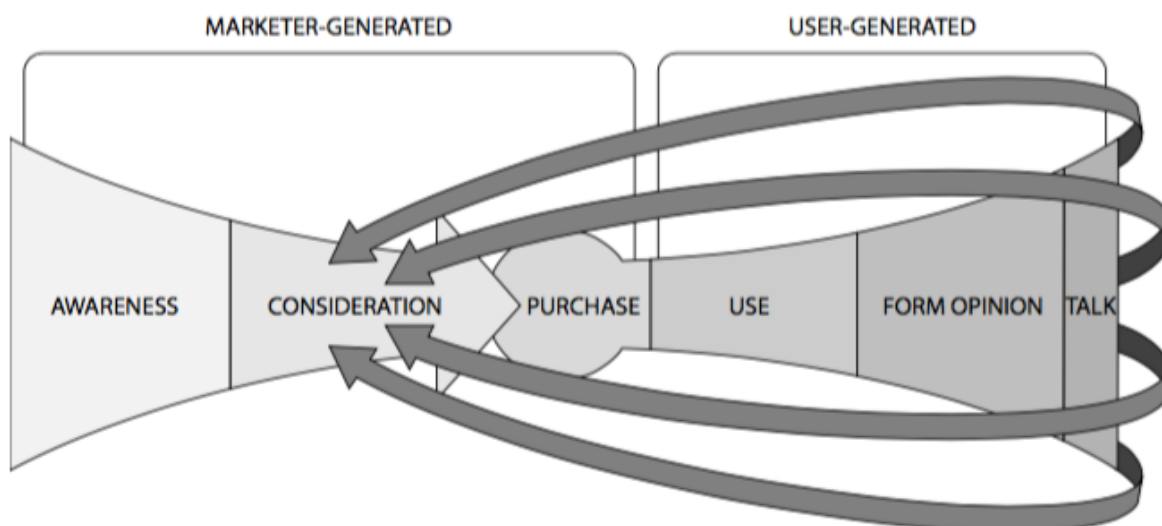
Source: Evans & Mckee 2010: 5

The Social Feedback Cycle forms the basis of social businesses today. The social feedback loop represents the way in which Internet-based publishing and social technology has connected people around businesses. This new social connectivity applies to businesses and their consumers (B2C), other businesses (B2B), and consumers themselves (Evans & Mckee 2010: 5). Consequently, this more widespread sharing has exposed information more broadly today. Information has previously been available to only a selected or a priviledged class of individuals, yet information is now open to everyone (Evans & Mckee 2010: 5). Thus, the social feedback cycle represents a new way of adding WOM into one's decision before making a purchase.

6.0 Introduction to analysis

Throughout the succeeding sections, I will analyse my data in the following way. In the first chapter, I will start by analysing the three Instagram accounts of: Mikkeller Running Club Moscow, Mikkeller Running Club Los Angeles, and the official Mikkeller Running Club account (Copenhagen). My second chapter will include an analysis of the official Facebook account of Mikkeller Running Club. Both of these two chapters will be analysed according to the method of ideological discourse analysis (cf. section 3.6 & 3.6.1), and after drawing on the results from this analysis, I will continue with the theoretical discussion, linking all of my data to particular theoretical perspectives. I will conclude these two chapters with answering the question: "How can social media contribute to consumer engagement beyond national borders for Mikkeller?", which is the main focus on my research question. The analysis of both chapters will end with a discussion of my analysis (cf. section 7.0). In general, all of my data has been attached as appendices (cf. section 9.0). Thus, when referring to my data, I will refer to the attached appendices. As mentioned in section 3.7, I will only focus on specific selected content between 2016-2018.

6.1 Instagram

This chapter analyses the three abovementioned Instagram accounts, with focus on my methodological perspectives. When group members explain, motivate or legitimate their (group-based) actions, they do so in terms of ideological discourse (van Dijk 2006: 121), which I would like to address in my analysis. With regard to the method of netnography and the way that Preece (2002) identifies online communities, all of the three Instagram accounts and the Facebook account meet Preece's four methods (cf. section 3.5). (1) All of the accounts are concerning people that

engage in a social interaction on Instagram. (2) All of the accounts have a shared purpose/an interest in running, socializing with others, and drinking beer. (3) All of the accounts have "policies" that organise the people's interaction. This is not stated explicitly, however, in order to be a member, you either have to be accepted into the group or have shared values as of those within the group. (4) All of the accounts mediate their communication and interactions through social media platforms.

Instagram is an attractive platform for self-representation, because users can take their time to strategically construct online personas that emphasize their most desirable traits. People predominantly show, rather than tell on social networking sites. This means that face-to-face interaction does not allow the same degree of contemplation that an online platform like Instagram does. Furthermore, the images provide the users' preference of showing their lifestyle, their group members and their values, thus reinforcing norms and habits that are only known to insiders or the in-group. The instagram users communicate by presenting themselves in a particular way to appeal to a specific community, which means that the group identities are stressed over personal narrated ones. Therefore, I find it interesting how groups form their identites on Instagram in comparison to "Others", and how they - through social media - can convey their personal characteristics via images or posts. It should be noted that in many of the images posted by all of the MRC accounts, a lot of hand gestures emerge, as I have mentioned in section 2.0. Especially, the usage of the "fuck finger"/middle finger is quite apparent throughout the content, which I would like to incorporate into my analysis as something rather important for the understanding of Mikkeller's marketing and the understanding of group identity. There is something "cult-like", "hipster" and breaking with the rules about Mikkeller and their outwardly attitude and identity, which perhaps explains the usage of the middle finger.

6.1.1 Mikkeller Running Club Moscow

I will start by analysing Mikkeller Running Club Moscow (henceforth referred to as mrcmoscow). This account was attractive for me to analyse, since there was a lot of positive self-representation throughout the content. The people of this account communicated their identities as an inspiration to adjust to a certain lifestyle of running and being healthy. Their outward appearances were built on materialistic elements, their physical appearance and experiences. Perhaps this account was the account that went "all the way", in terms of using hand gestures, waving flags and wearing masks.

Their attitude and identity was t the most outrageous, extreme, and somehow autonomously of the accounts that I have found.

In the picture above (see also appendix 2), it is quite apparent that the group-mentality is weighted high and that the group communicates a certain identity. The group of runners are wearing masks, giving the middle finger, looking quite serious and an orange smoke signal emerges in the background. In terms of the overall strategy, which van Dijk's highlights in his overview (cf. section 3.6.1), mrcmoscow uses a positive representation and an explicit manifestation of *us*, by stating they are celebrating their captain's birthday. Thus, the club is emphasizing *our* good things, and further the image employs modality: "*We* celebrate" (appendix 2). This is done because of the semantic macrostructure that is used in the text. The positive topic emphasized in the image, is that the group is proud of their captain's birthday and of the group as a whole. The captain is almost portrayed as the group leader, because of the way the image is taken and the way they are "celebrating", and acclaiming him through the text. What is interesting about the image is that almost no one is smiling or in any other way looking like they are "celebrating". Rather, the group is looking quite serious, and are using hand gestures (i.e the middle finger) to set the tone - almost upholding some sort of facade. This somewhat outrageous attitude immediately seperates

mrcmoscow from the *Others*. With the usage of the pronouns *we* and *our* in the post, an in-group polarization can be assumed (cf. section 3.6.1). Likewise, by looking at the image, it is quite clear that the club manifest themselves as a rather closed group. Consequently, by wearing masks and by firing the smoke signal, the picture becomes somewhat aggressive in the way they positioning themselves. Because the group shows they are closed, the image (see image above, or appendix 2) can almost be mistaken with a picture of hooligans. Hooliganism is best understood as a group of football fans that employs violence or unlawful behavior such as rioting, bullying etc., in connection with a sporting event. Hooligans further construct their collective identity in terms of the perceived differences between self and the other (Armstrong 2003). Although this may seem extreme, the image does represent some sort of rage or closedness, because of the masks they are wearing, the handgestures and their quite serious mood. This shared value or normative belief forms the ideology that the group has. Concurrent with group identity, as Armstrong (2003) describes, the image represents a group of runners from Moscow sharing the same values and norms in terms of creating a "we"-identity (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017: 11-12). Since this image is not indicating direct opinions or statements about the "Others", I still believe it represents a strong in-group sentiment. In this way, the image is shown as a positive self-representation of the in-group, sharing the same values and habits (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017: 11-12). To a great extent, the image serves to manifest the group and to show "others" how they are, and how proud they are of their group (appendix 2).

Another example of in-group mentality, is found in appendix 3. From van Dijk's perspective, the context of the image is that the speaker speaks *as* a member of mrcmoscow, by using the term: "Our hot team" (appendix 3). In this way, the speaker position himself to the people sharing the same norms and values *as* the speaker. The adjective *hot* also adds sentiment to the group feeling. This further creates a sense of belonging, due to the way the relationship of the group is described. In addition, the sentence: "love you all guys!" (appendix 3), also creates this special relationship/bond of the group. I have further identified this sentence as a form of hyperbole (cf. section 3.6.1), since it is slightly exaggerated that they "love" everyone/each other. This form of overstatement just expresses the ideology in the rhetorical structure, because it manifests the group. Likely, it creates a positive self-representation of *we/us* in opposition to the "Others" (van Dijk 1995: 143). Additionally, these examples creates the overall strategy of the image, and once again the image is to create a positive action and representation of *Us*/mrcmoscow. Furthermore, these examples also

states some sort of closedness and group-mentality, because of the usage of the pronouns *Our* and *you*. This is further evident as they are employing handgestures (i.e the middle finger), which creates an outrageous or this rather autonomos attitude/identity. The rhetorical structure of the image is to emphasize *Our* good things, and this is also expressed in the usage of the methaphors and the binary oppositions of hot/cold. Although, the term cold is used here to describe the weather, I still find it interesting how the speaker refers to the group/team as hot. In this sense, it can be assumed that "hot" is used here to indicate a strong sense of feeling towards the in-group. "Cold" on the other hand, represents some sort of social exclusion and it also represents the "Others". To put it differently, hot is used in this context to describe the in-group, whereas cold can somehow be employed to implictly describe the out-group. Thus, the out-group are those who are not members of the team and those who are different from *us*. Moreover, the rhetorical structure of repetition in the image (appendix 3), i.e exclamation marks represents a shout out or an exclamation to the group, and it also represents a sense of pride.

As mentioned earlier, the construction of identity depends on the perception and representations of "Others". The construction of their identity and their shared values, norms, and beliefs forms the ideology of this group. As mentioned earlier, I found this account to depict the most extreme and outrageous group, because they were so serious and distancing in their content and in their images. In section 2.0, I described that MRC is a club that does not "give a fuck" about standards and norms, which has been greatly evident in my analysis of mrcmoscow. In order to understand the identity of the group, one needs to understand its history (Christiansen 2016). Christiansen (2016) describes that the Russian national memory, regarding enemies and previous invasions, promotes the ability for Russians to look at threats everywhere (Christiansen 2016). Although, this may not be the intension for the mrcmoscow running group, the way they portray and promote themselves still does have some elements of the abovementioned thinking. Especially, I found this quite hooligan-attitude interesting to analyse, because in this way they already seperates themselves from the *Others*, by indicating that the *Others* does not belong. And to return to van Dijk's overview of expressing ideologies in discourse (table 1), the rhetorical structure is to emphasize the good things about the mrcmoscow group.

6.1.2 Mikkeller Running Club LA

In this part, I will analyse Mikkeller Running Club LA (henceforth referred to as mrclosangeles). In comparison to mrcmoscow, mrclosangeles posts a lot of pictures where the mrclosangeles logo is in front (appendix 6). Many of the images posted on the mrclosangeles account either portray the entire group or one or two people. The images often consist of happy runners having fun or enjoying themselves, compared to many of the images of mrcmoscow that often pictures a serious group of runners. In this way, I found it easier to uncover the theme of *engagement* throughout these posts, because this group seemed more open and engaged with each other and Mikkeller. In other words, the mrcmoscow account seems more distant, while the mrclosangeles account seems more embracing.

In terms of exploring in-group identity in the images from mrslosangeles, I found it interesting that it was not as easy to discover, as it was analysing the mrcmoscow account. Many of the images gladly welcome other runners, and the group is indicating that everyone is welcome to join (appendix 6). However, through the overall topic (or the semantic macrostructure) (cf. section 3.6.1), they selected positive topics about themselves/*Us* (appendix 4 and appendix 5). In this way, mrclosangeles formed some form of in-group mentality that I still would like to explore. As it can be seen in appendix 4, the happiness of the group is weighted high. The text: "big ups to all of our @mikkellerrunningclub", suggests that the speaker speaks *as* a member of the entire mrc-group/a social group, and the speaker further addresses the members *as* group members (cf. section 3.6.1). It further implies that the speaker emphasizes *our* good things, i.e. that they have finished a half marathon together, which also points to the modality and the lexicon chosen for this text. "Keeping us motivated" highlights the modality, since the meaning of the text conveys some form of positive notion that expresses the group's actions (appendix 4) (cf. section 3.6.1). While the lexicon is the way the speaker intentionally has selected words, in order to describe the positive actions about mrslosangeles, i. e. "big ups", "big thanks", "our cheering squad", "all our runners" (appendix 4). This points to the positive self-representation that the in-group tends to employ in order to demonstrate *Us* (appendix 4), which also forms their ideology because of their shared values. Additionally in this image, and appendix 5, the group is also using hand gestures as mrcmoscow did. However, this may be perceived differently than in appendix 2 & 3, because the mrclosangeles still looks happy and welcoming in their images. The hand gestures are used here to somehow blend

in with the norms and habits of MRC. Mrclosangeles thus appears as if they do not care about standards and norms, which is greatly mediated in MRC.

Mrslosangeles did not so much manifest themselves explicitly as mrcmoscow did, but mrclosangeles has chosen to use rhetorical structures and communicative acts in order to emphasize *our* good things (appendix 5). Hence, the images provided the users' preferences of showing their lifestyle, their group members and their values, thus reinforcing norms and habits that are only known to the in-group (appendix 4, 5 & 6). In this way, the communicative acts separates the in-group from the out-group, because the speakers has employed irony into the text to presuppose *our* good things, and *their* bad things i.e. "Some of us braved the rain, some of us didn't" (appendix 5). This highlights that the in-group/*us* is more "brave" and that these people are part of the in-group. This means that the in-group will tend to identify with these actions and values of getting together, whereas they will not as much identify with the out-group that derogates from the in-group (cf. section 3.6). As Baldauf, Develotte & Ollagnier-Beldame (2017) described, the users will express themselves based on the standards, values, and habits of this network. This means that within a social network, the users will position themselves with regard to people who do not belong in their network (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017: 12). The positive self-representation of *us* that I have analysed throughout the content on mrclosangeles account will thus be practiced in opposition to the "Others".

In general, I found that mrclosangeles uses more text-heavy descriptions when uploading images to Instagram, in comparison with mrcmoscow (e.g appendix 6). Furthermore, mrclosangeles employs more emojis (appendix 4 and 5), which indicates their emotions and expresses their feelings. Emojis can be used in a lot of different ways, but they are usually applied with the motive of adding sentiment and expressing emotions by using visual representations (i.e emojis) rather than words (Sims 2017) (Long 2017). The emojis found most commonly when analysing the content of mrclosangeles, were emojis such as of a running man or beers. In this way, the mrclosangeles adds engagement and humour into their posts, which expresses their emotions and their group feeling. I have also found it interesting that with each content/image posted by mrclosangeles, they employ plenty of hashtags.

In comparison, mrcmoscow did not use as many hashtags and often it was hashtags about mikkellerrunningclub (e.g. #Mikkellerrunningclub, #MikkellerRunningClubMoscow (appendix 2 & 3)). However, it is interesting how mrclosangeles employs their hashtags through their content. The hashtags found most relevant for this study has been identified to be the following: #FitFam, #WeRunLA, #RunningGroup, among many others (appendix 4 & 5). In this way, mrclosangeles indirectly indicates that they position themselves with regard to the in-group. These hashtags are in a way relational identifications, because it defines their identity in terms of their relations (family, friends etc) e.g. #FitFam (fitfamily). It shows a rather intimate relationship and engagement with Mikkeller and the group, as they refer to each other as a family (appendix 4 and 5). Emotional contagion is a big part of how we build connectedness and online we recreate face expressions as a crucial element of empathy by using emojis (Ghanchi 2017). Their relationship with Mikkeller is further evident in their choice of handgestures, waving the team flag and wearing MRC t-shirts, which greatly affirms that they are part of MRC.

6.1.3 Mikkeller Running Club

This part seeks to analyse the official account of Mikkeller Running Club (henceforth referred to as MRC), which is the main account that fosters all the many ”chapters”/accounts of MRC all over the world. Already, this forms group-identification, since there is a group/account for every country attached to Mikkeller. I have found it interesting how MRC promotes themselves through this account, because they show a certain lifestyle and preferences that their group members know and want to be engaged in. This means that they appeal to a specific community that reinforces norms and habits of this social network.

As it can be seen in appendix 6, MRC has managed to create a humorous image of the evolution ”from Monkey to Man”.
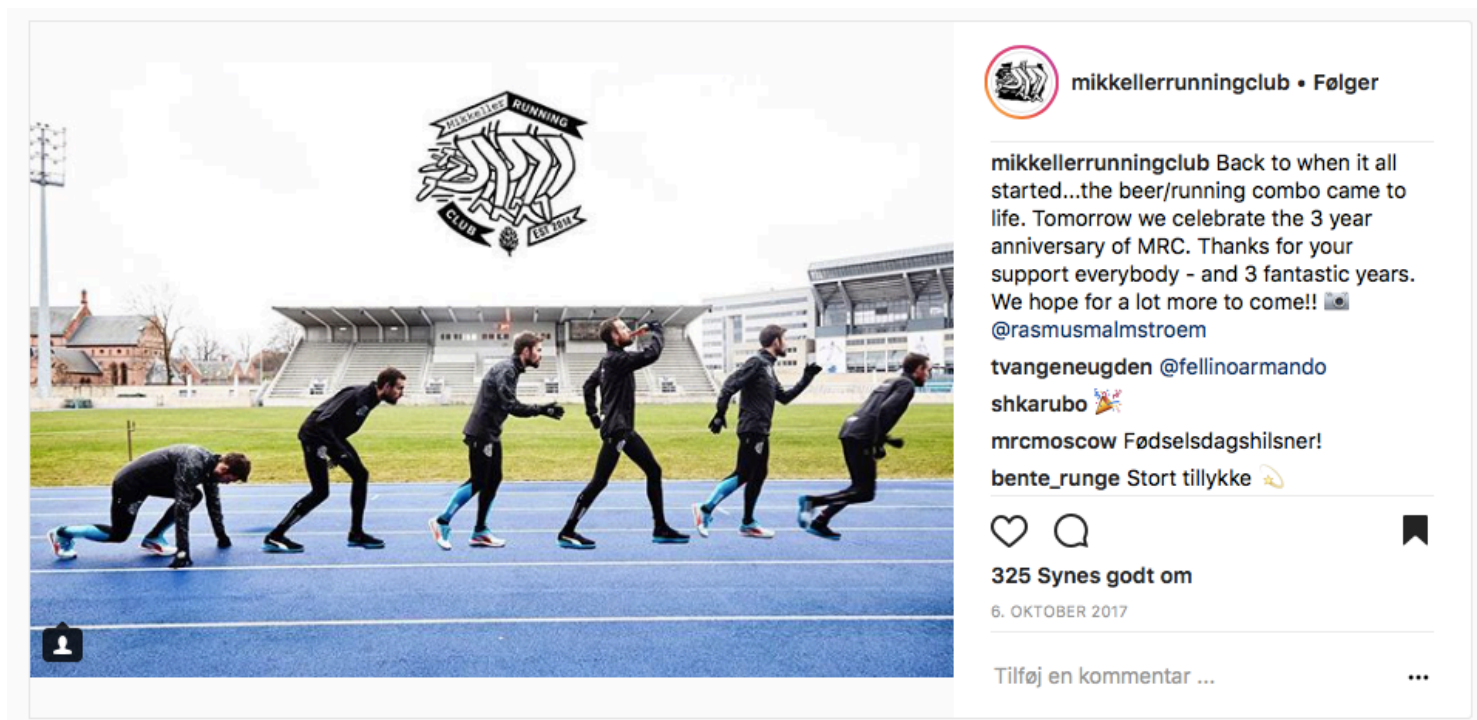
In the image above (see also appendix 6), MRC celebrates their ”journey” from the beginning of MRC until now through self-branding and self-representation. This ”evolution” for MRC highlights their 3-year anniversary and through social media, they somehow develop emotional connections to their consumers/their members. In this way, they show affection to their members and they celebrate not only their anniversary, but also the great support that their members have shown them (appendix 7). Another great example of developing emotional connections to the consumers/the members can be seen in appendix 8, where two of the MRC members are getting married. This shows that the MRC members greatly engage with the group and MRC. Furthermore, it reveals the group’s belongingness to MRC and they show a certain identity only the in-group is part of. ”The MRC wedding team ♥♥” (appendix 8), supports the notion of van Dijk that the positive self-representation of the ”we” is practiced in opposition to the ”others” (van Dijk 1995: 143) (van Dijk 2006). By using the love heart as an emoji in this text, it expresses the admiration and emotions for the belonging to the group. This greatly manifests the in-group, because it portrays a desirable community to be a member of. The members will therefore position themselves with regard to this network, because they support the values and opinions of this network, which is shown through appendix 7 and 8. Additionally, through the text in appendix 7, the speaker speaks *as* a member of MRC: ”back to when it all started”, ”tomorrow we celebrate...” (appendix 7). In this sense, the

speaker addresses the members *as* group members (cf. section 3.6.1), by stating *"we* celebrate", *"your* support", *"we* hope". For the purpose of the text, the overall strategy has thus been analysed to be a positive representation and action of *us,* since they emphasize *our* good things ("3 year anniversary", "beer/running combo", "a lot more to come") (appendix 7). On social media, communities can only be created by communication, belonging and negotiation of shared norms and values (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017: 11-12). The members of MRC will therefore feel that they are part of the in-group, because they feel a special bond and belongingness to the group. Through the likes and comments to the image, it greatly shows how many supports and identifies with the group (appendix 7 & 8). This also states the explicit manifestation of "us", because MRC proudly shows "others" how happy they are about their own success and the success of their members.

In appendix 9, MRC has posted an image of a gold card. The text to the image states that a gold-membership will soon be launched. This image further signifies the user's preference of showing a lifestyle that only the insiders will know. By posting this image, MRC is creating some sort of scarcity appeal[1] among the consumers, and MRC further enhances the group belongingness and engagement. Products that have a limited availability can induce consumers to evaluate those products more favourably – creating a scarcity effect (Eisend 2008). Consequently, scarcity appeals in marketing or advertising enhance values perception, which in return impacts purchase intensions (Eisend 2008). A scarcity message thus evokes consumers' sense of urgency to purchase a product, while increasing the product's value perceptions and attractiveness (Eisend 2008). Therefore, this gold card and the text posted with it, creates an image of this product as something people "must have". In terms of creating group belongingness, a (limited) gold card represents a strong in-group mentality, due to the fact that the "Others" do not have what the members of MRC has. An ideology is also constructed here, since MRC is creating a group-defining category of membership. It further implies that only a defined number of members can achieve and purchase this card, which creates a special relationship with the members that actually are able to get this card. Furthermore, consumers may perceive this product as higher quality and more valuable, since they believe that a brand makes credible commitments to a predefined number of limited products (Balachander &

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[1] Scarcity appeal should be understood in this connection as a marketing strategy to persuade people to buy a product, or otherwise be persuaded. This will make people feel like they need to hurry, either because the product is valuable or because the product is limited (Eisend 2008).

Stock 2009). This card may also signal uniqueness and exclusivity to important others by possessing a scarce product. Through this card, the members can show their status to the "Others", creating a positive self-representation of the group. Also by looking at the comments and at the likes to this image, it can easily be seen that the consumers are interested and excited about the gold card, and they wants to know more about it (appendix 9). Thus, the product produces a sense of thrill among the consumers, and it intensifies the desirability for owning the product, which is probably the intention for Mikkeller. The self-image and shared representations/the ideology of the group will therefore be enhanced and highly valued through this product (van Dijk 2006: 117). Van Dijk indicates that ideologies are the basis of our social judgement (van Dijk 2006), which means that in regard to appendix 9, the in-group/the members of MRC can improve positive self-esteem of the group via the product.

To summarize the three instagram accounts, I found a clear connection between self-promotion/self-representation and belonging to the in-group. The more content the individual accounts shared with each other and to others, the more they could create a collective identity that formed group ideologies. These ideologies were therefore used to create a division between *us* and *them*, which was formed upon shared values, norms, membership etc. This was evident in the way they manifested themselves, with the usage of hand gestures, and the creation of a rather positive image of *us*. In the next section, I would like to analyse the Facebook account of Mikkeller, which hopefully will give me a different insight into collective identities, how Mikkeller promotes themselves and how consumer engagement comes into play. Facebook is a different platform, which means that the content here is more intended for networking and connecting with friends that you know, whereas, Instagram is more a visual platform where you allow strangers into your network.

6.2 Mikkeller Running Club – Facebook

This chapter will address and analyse the official Facebook account/page of Mikkeller Running Club. What is interesting about the Facebook account is that although there are a lot of images posted on the wall, there is a lot of text-based posts or reviews that addresses the group feeling and *engagement* that I would like to analyse.

In terms of identifying a positive self-representation and a negative other-representation that van Dijk highlights (van Dijk 2006: 117), I find it interesting through MRC's Facebook account how they express and reproduce their ideologies by text. Taking a closer look at appendix 12, "Our story", the context of the "story" is that the speaker speaks *as* a member of the social group, by indicating *us, our, we, you,* etc. (appendix 12). This is a rather subjective communication that addresses the recipient *as* group members. Thus, the overall strategy for this particular statement is to represent a positive image of *Us*. This is evident in the following examples: "that makes us capable of enjoying even more of the good life", "having fun and great social relations is our top priority", "Every first Saturday we meet up for a training session" etc. (appendix 12). In these examples, it is rather clear that the ideological discourse is to emphasize *our* good things and through the usage of personal pronouns and adjectives, the semantic macrostructures is to select positive topics about *Us*. Through appendix 12, there is not so much a negative "other" representation, which means that this is more emphasized through the mentioning of *Us* as a "proud" club. In other words, the positive speech act will in some way reflect negatively on the "Others" who are not part of the club and who will not "enjoy even more of the good life" (appendix 12). Likewise, as it can be examined in appendix 13, this post has created attention and likes by highlighting why Mikkeller members run. Though it is done in a humorous way, it is still interesting how Mikkeller mentions *us* and *we* throughout the text, which indicates that the members of the in-group will identify more with these values or habits of the group (cf. section 3.6). Posting "Our story" and the image in appendix 13 on MRC's facebook wall, makes it more easy to identify the social network and hence the in-group of MRC. This means that MRC members will position themselves with regard to the people who share the same values and norms as themselves (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017: 11-12), i.e running, staying healthy, drinking beer and socializing (appendix 12 & 13).

Correspondingly, when analysing appendix 10 and 11, it is interesting how the recipients or the group members address and talk about MRC. These reviews/debates that the members have posted on MRC's facebook accout, can be identified to be more or less WOM recommendations to other consumers/members (which I will address in section 6.4). But herein, I have also discovered that the reviews work as in-group manifestations and *engagement* as well. In appendix 10, words and sentences such as: "bedste løbeklub", "absolut den bedste løbeklub!!!", "Love Mikkeller!", represent a quite positive representations of *Us*. Using adjectives such as "bedste løbeklub" and

"love" highlights the manifestation of *Us* and it further shows a high level of engagement with the brand. As with the example of "Love" in section 6.1.1, I also find that "love" is used here as a rather exaggerated word. However, this form of statement just expresses the ideology in the rhetorical structure, since it helps to manifest the in-group perception. It creates a special relationship with Mikkeller, and the members will feel loyalty and trust to the brand. In appendix 11, the belonging to an in-group was emphasized through shared values and norms: "It was amazing to find people who love both beer and running, because I think I'm alone in this love" (appendix 11). This show that the member feels belonging to the in-group, because he has finally found a group that expresses themselves, support values and opinions based on the standards, habits and values that he also possesses (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame 2017). Furthermore, he expresses himself *as a group member*, which also indicates that he is indicating the social group's self-image (van Dijk 2006: 117). I found in the example that he addresses himself with regard to people who do not belong to his network or share the same values as him. However, in the other two reviews posted in appendix 11, it appears as some of the members welcome everyone to join MRC: "man føler sig altid velkommen", "Hyggeligt løb for alle" (appendix 11). In another way, this points to the fact that the club is rather "open" for everyone to join, which does not manifest *Us* as an in-group or a closed group. These examples reveal that group manifestation is not something that always lies at our hearts, which means that the ideology here is not to address a social group (with specific interest in relation to other groups), but more a cultural community that addresses a more general audience with shared knowledge (van Dijk 2006: 119-120).

6.3 Sub conclusion

Ideologies organize social group attitudes consisting of schematically organized general opinions about social issues (van Dijk 1995: 138). Each group will select from the general cultural repertoire of social norms and values, and they will use these values as building blocks for their group ideologies. Social representations are defined for groups vis-á-vis being shared by social group members (van Dijk 1995). Ideologies have throughout my analysis helped me identify a polarizing structure between *us* and *them*. Ideologies served as the representation a group had of itself and of the relations with relevant other groups, e.g. opponents. Thus, an ideology can be constructed from group-defining categories as identity, membership, norms, values etc. (van Dijk 1995), which was quite evident in my analysis. The popularity of the online accounts attached to MRC may be explained through the identities of the group, which are formed through carefully selected details of

behaviours and identifiable features. These are not only physically but also culturally accessible for other users worldwide.

It is a well-known fact within social psychology that people define themselves in terms of social groupings, and are quick to denigrate others who do not fit into those groups (cf. section 3.6). People who share our particular qualities and values are the in-group, and those who do not, will be defined as the out-group. Through social media, we position ourselves the way we want to be seen. From Mikkeller's perspective, it is quite interesting how groups are formed and define themselves, because one of the most prominent ways we tend to work on our self-representation is through things, buying things and acquiring things that signify who we are. This will also intensify the emotion people can feel for their favourite brand. Through posting Mikkeller's logo, Mikkeller's team-flag, drinking Mikkeller beer and using hand gestures that I have examined in the analysis, the brand can create a long-lasting aspirational way for their communities/groups. Entering a particular community creates symbolism for the individual member, and when being a member of an online community, they commit to the brand and show their identification and affection with the brand. Thus, Mikkeller breaks with the norm and tradition, which gives the club some attitude and edge. The analysis of the accounts thus showed that the community within MRC is quite hetereogenous, which perhaps makes this brand so exciting and interesting to be a part of. To some extent, MRC is autonomous and sends and image of MRC being "cult-like", different and hipster, because they are doing-it-themselves and do not care what other people think. As I mentioned in my introduction (cf. section 1.0), the consumer might not only be connected by Mikkeller products or brand, but in a deeper sense they are connected to the healthy, hipster, running lifestyle associated with the brand. My analysis proved this, because Mikkeller's consumers were more than willing to engage with the brand, advocate for the brand, and more importantly, live the brand.

When looking at self-representations, the analysis also revealed that the three instagram accounts constructed a consumer identity that was rather closed for "members only". The overall strategy has been analysed to be a positive representation of *our* good things, which was more or less explicitly addressed. In this sense, I suggest that identities are socially built through the culture and the human connections in discourses in order to talk about oneself and about others. In the era of Web 2.0, the individual has now become both the sender and the receiver of a message, which means that it has become possible to take on different identities – in order to feel unique and different from the

"others". A social network is therefore based on interactions and contact between people as a fundamental element for the use and success of the network. We establish networks with those we want to establish contact to, based on values, habits, norms etc. (cf. section 2.6). Through this social network, there is a need to impress "others", because the accept of oneself and the identity of the group is linked to the success of their posts, measured by number of likes, share, comments etc. This was greatly evident throughout the analysis, because the groups were busy demonstrating and manifesting their positive acts, impressing "others" and manifesting themselves. As described by van Doorn et al. (2010), a brand itself is often a source for consumer engagement. The better the reputation of a brand, the more likely it is that consumers will commit and attach to the brand. In terms of Mikkeller, many people buy their products and have seen their promotions, which means that people have built their own opinions about them.

6.4 Theoretical discussion

In this chapter, I will gather both the analysis of Instagram and Facebook together. In this way, I can make a more comprehensive and thorough theoretical discussion in relation to consumer engagement, social identity theory and social media marketing.

6.4.1 How Mikkeller engages with the consumer

The theory of consumer engagement is very relevant to this study, because it is one of the strongest factors in indicating consumers' feelings towards a brand (Millwood 2017). Througout the previous sections, consumer engagement was very evident. If the consumer *loves* the brand, they will not only be dedicated to the brand, they will likely share their experience with other consumers as well. The content posted by all of the MRC runnning accounts and on the Facebook account emphasize that the consumers developed emotional connections to Mikkeller. Through many of the above mentioned examples, I showed that the consumers have an emotional and intimate connection with Mikkeller. These groups/consumers do not just *like* the product or the brand, they *love* them, and they describe their experiences with words like "love", "we celebrate" "our hot team", "…braved the rain", "bedste løbeklub" etc. (appendix 2, 3, 4, 5, 9). This creates a sense of WOM promotion, which means that they share their experiences with other consumers. In connection to relationship marketing, the goal for any company is to create a strong, emotional consumer connection to the brand/firm, which eventually can lead to on-going business, WOM promotion etc. (Rouse 2014). In the case of Mikkeller, this means that the consumer has become more and more influential on the

brand/firm and that they have created a relationship with the consumer. Building a relationship with the consumer on social media enhances trust and commitment to the brand (Sashi 2012), which I throughout my analysis have seeked to examine.

Not only does the texts posted to the images reveal brand-love and trust, many of the comments posted to the images (in the appendices), also reveal this connection and engagement with the brand: "amazing" (appendix 7), "awesome", "superb cool" (appendix 8), "wow" (appendix 8), "nice" (appendix 4 and 8). The consumers share their opinions and experiences on Mikkeller's facebook wall and on Instagram, which creates awareness for the brand and WOM marketing: "Bedste løbeklub", "Love Mikkeller" (appendix 9). These examples also show great affection, since they label the brand and the club as *their favourite*. It further shows a connection and commitment to Mikkeller as well. Since consumer engagement is about showing and encouraging the consumer to interact and share their experiences that the company creates, I find it interesting how Mikkeller's consumers are engaging with each other and with the brand through their own experiences, images, comments and texts (appendix 1-12). These show that the brand loyalty is evident in the case of Mikkeller, and because of the way that Mikkeller brands and promotes themselves, they have the opportunity to connect with the consumers (Macquire 2015). Mikkeller interacts and creates content to the consumer that they can relate to and participate in (Sashi 2012). This is because social media has shifted the control of the decision to now be greatly dependent on the consumer, which means that Mikkeller's consumers can connect and interact with Mikkeller. Moreover, it allows the consumers to create an intimate long-term relationship with Mikkeller. To a high extent, Mikkeller has personalised their marketing which creates brand-loyalty and awareness for Mikkeller. Loyalty to the brand and awareness have been prominent throughout my analysis, and I do believe that these elements are most important in the case of Mikkeller, in order to create a high level of consumer engagement beyond nationals borders.

6.4.2 How social identities are created in relation to Mikkeller

In section 5.2, I described that perhaps the most important motivator of online social networks was the desire to socialize and connect with others (Hoffman & Novak 2012). The need to belong is thus a profound need for people, and social relationships are critical for our well-being. This means that in connection with my analysis, the online social networks formed on Instagram and Facebook allowed the users to connect and socialize with one another in a network. The analysis further

showed that the need to belong to a group was evident, since there are so many different accounts/groups found on Instagram, which in a way shows that identifying as part of a group gives individuals a stronger sense of purpose and security. Individuals tend to identify with groups that share the same values, interests and priorities as thermselves, which is to a great extent also the case with the groups and accounts connected to Mikkeller. Mikkeller breaks with the norm and tradition, which gives the club some attitude and edge because of the way they promote themselves and does not "give a fuck" about standards and normals. Thus, the groups have the same interests and values of running, socializing and drinking beer together, while having the purpose of staying in shape with others. These psychological affiliations are essential in order to maintain positive self-esteem and to evaluate the in-group more positively vis-á-vis the out-group (cf. section 5.2).

Aditionally with social media, the users can connect and keep in touch with a broad set of friends, no matter geography, which greates in-group favoritism in comparison to out-group sentiment. This was apparent in the case of mrcmoscow and mrclosangeles, since they formed a clear in-group distinction, concurrently with the fact that they could connect and relate to MRC in Copenhagen both online and offline. In social identity theory, an individual has multiple "social identities" (Hogg & Vaughan 2002), which means that in connection with my analysis, the groups formed on Instagram were highly defined by people's social identities that indicated who they were in terms of the group to which they belong. As an example, mrcmoscow showed through their images and posts (appendix 2 & 3) that the group was rather closed and proud, which created an arguably outrageous and closed feeling (appendix 2 & 3) (cf. section 6.1.1). Through my analysis, every account on both Instagram and Facebook prefered to maintain a positive image and attitude of the group. The tendency to favour one's in-group over out-groups came into play especially analysing the three Instagram accounts. Each account favoured the in-group in terms of mentioning and highlighting performances and achievements about the group, i.e mrcmoscow celebrated their captain and the love of their team (appendix 2 & 3), whereas mrslosangeles mentioned their finishing of a halfmarathon together and their bravery (appendix 4 & 5), and MRC highlighted their journey from where it all began, a team wedding, and a scarce product of a gold-membership to the club (appendix 6, 7 & 8). All of these examples show that the in-group was favoured to a great extent and that each account positioned themselves with regard to the others/the out-group (cf. section 6.1.1, 6.1.2, 6.1.3 and 6.2). This further indicates that individuals self-categorize in terms of the

social group they belong to, which I tried to clarify through an ideological discourse analysis inspired by van Dijk (cf. section 3.6.1).

6.4.3 How Mikkeller employs social media marketing

Social media is a very influential tool that helps consumers form attitudes and behavioural intensions. Social media can further give more reliability and can have a greater impact on consumers' perception of a brand, which expands brand awareness and increase consumer loyalty (cf. section 5.3). As I argued in section 5.3, social media marketing has expanded to now including a fifth P in the marketing mix, that is Participation. Social media enables the ability for consumer to interact and engage with a brand, which have created participation between brand and consumer. Through my analysis, I found that Mikkeller interacts and engages with the consumer through images, hashtags and texts etc.. This creates a unique opportunity for Mikkeller to participate with the consumers, while creating brand-loyalty and a long-term relationship. In other words, the hashtags, images and texts used to describe MRC creates intimacy, and the consumers will become more loyal towards the brand.

Traditional marketing enhanced a more one-way communication, where exchange of opinions relied upon one's families, relatives, friends (Pan & Crotts 201: 75). However, social media represents a more two-way communication and today consumers can through social media access personal and meaningful critiques from everyone (Pan & Crotts). Social media has created the feedback loop (as mentioned in section 5.3), which has led to a more transparent marketing landscape. This is highly evident throughout my analysis, since the content posted on Facebook and Instagram is open for everyone to read, and because of the openness people know more, because they have the access. In other words, the experiences and comments that the consumers post on MRC's facebook wall (appendix 9), and on their Instagram accounts, create this two-way communication between the brand and the consumer, and it further reveals that WOM promotion is quite important for Mikkeller's marketing strategies. This means that consumers have taken the social web in an effort to share among themselves their own direct experiences with a brand in order to provide a more "real" view (Evans & Mckee 2010). The experience of the consumer is very important for any brand today, and in my analysis I found that Mikkeller engages with their consumers in order to create trust and commitment. WOM is therefore really important for a Danish brand like Mikkeller, because the brand will need some awareness and engagement with their
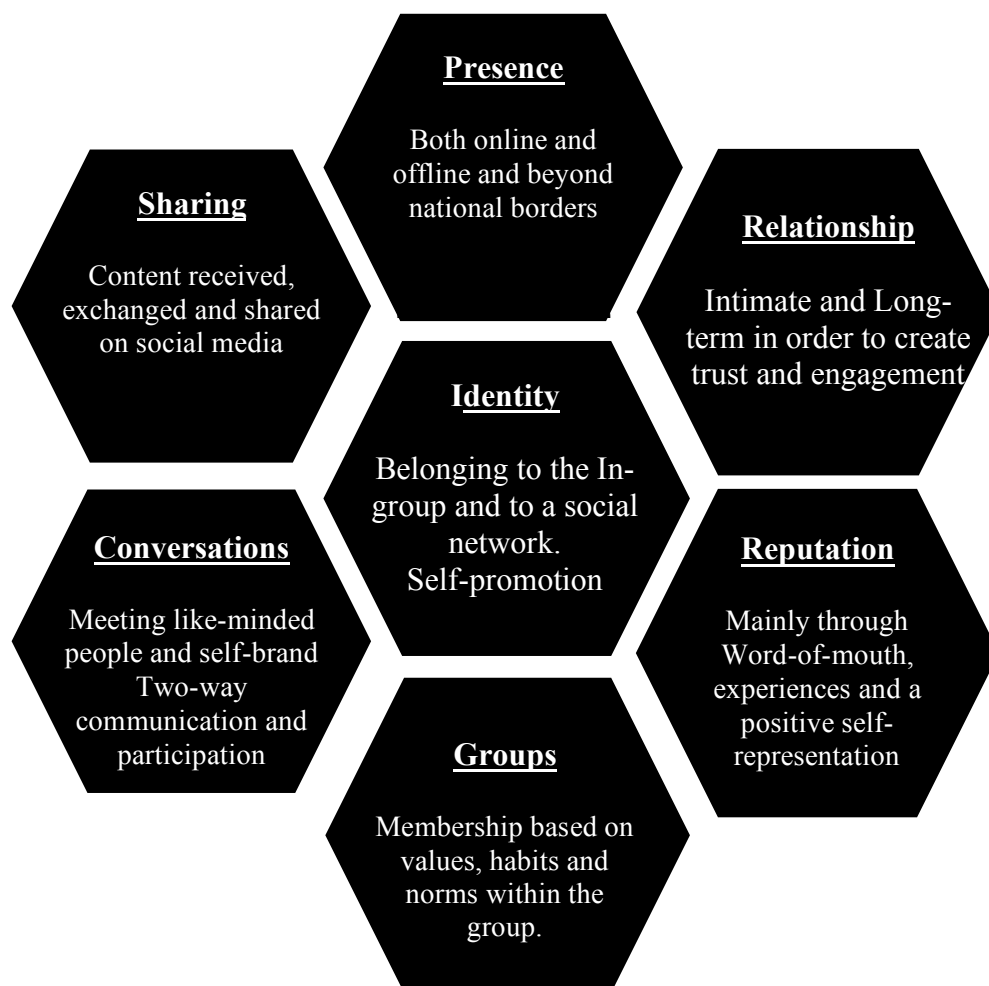
consumers in order to grow and build relationships beyond national borders. The connection between beer and running is therefore to Mikkeller's advantage, due to the fact that they somewhat promote a lifestyle of not carring too much, while being different from others. As mentioned in section 4.0, the brand is about having fun and staying fit through running. This means that the consumer will feel attached to this rather "hipster"-lifestyle that Mikkeller encourages. The many accounts attached to MRC on Instagram just shows that the company has managed to facilitate an intimate long-term relationship with their consumers, since the consumers support and trust Mikkeller. And in the And in an age where WOM marketing is so valuable, the relationship brands build with the consumer is often more valuable than a sale itself.

So how can social media contribute to consumer engagement beyond national borders for Mikkeller? I discovered through my analysis that consumer engagement finds its roots in relationship marketing which both include *attraction* and *establishing*. This naturally leads to building and maintaining a relationship with the consumer. Building a strong long-term relationship with consumers is all about trust and following-up consumers (Evans 2010). The social web gathers individuals that share the same values, interests and habits, and it constructs communities that are interacting between themselves. In this way, Mikkeller can use the social web to interact with their potential consumers and Mikkeller can more easily take part in the community's debates, contents, stories etc. By knowing their consumers, Mikkeller is able to know the environment they are evolving in, and they can more easily satisfy their consumers' needs. Consequently, consumers tend to get more engaged with a brand when they are part of a brand community. This means that the more engaged the consumers get, the more committed they are, and this influences on consumers' loyalty towards the brand. The engagement with Mikkeller shows the attachment of the consumers, and this will decrease the potential of consumers leaving the brand. Loyalty is therefore a strong key for Mikkeller, because this will create a relationship with them. Social media can make it possible for a brand like Mikkeller to create consumer engagement beyond nationals borders.

In the figure below, I hereby present my findings of my analysis based on Kietzman et al.'s (2011) framework. Mikkeller, indeed, promotes a consumer relationship, and their consumers *love* their brand. In this way, it can be assumed that their consumers trust and believe in the brand, which not only creates brand loyalty but also WOM marketing, because their consumers are more than willing to share their experiences and talk about them (appendix 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12).

Consequently, the social media platforms enable Mikkeller to establish consumer engagement beyond national borders.

Figure 9: The honeycomb of Mikkeller

Presence

Both online and offline and beyond national borders

Sharing

Content received, exchanged and shared on social media

Relationship

Intimate and Long-term in order to create trust and engagement

Identity

Belonging to the In-group and to a social network. Self-promotion

Conversations

Meeting like-minded people and self-brand Two-way communication and participation

Reputation

Mainly through Word-of-mouth, experiences and a positive self-representation

Groups

Membership based on values, habits and norms within the group.

Source: own creation

In this figure, I attempt to illustrate the social media marketing that Mikkeller employs based on my analysis above. As I have mentioned earlier, the rise in social media has created a shift in power, which means that the individuals and communities has now more than ever the ability to create, share, consume etc. (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre 2011). This means, that this figure should be understood in the way that *identity* is perhaps the strongest building block for Mikkeller. Today, brand's can build an online presence that is anchored in values, philosophy etc., which means than *identity* is integral to a brand's consumer experience. I have found identity so

important for Mikkeller and MRC, because they promote such a different and "cult-like" lifestyle/identity that the consumer's *love*. As mentioned in my analysis and in section 2.0, MRC break with traditions and norms, which gives the club some attitude and edge. Thus, the identity that MRC promotes is quite important in order to establish and reinforce the communities around the world, and to create consumer experience and engagement. The consumer's live the brand, which means that they buy themselves into the healthy, hipster, running lifestyle and identity associated with the Mikkeller. In other words, this lifestyle and identity that Mikkeller promotes is accessible, understandable and relatable for many consumer's. Hence, when the consumer's are reaffirming their own identity as healthy and active, they will subconsciously connect and interact with Mikkeller's, which creates brand experience and brand engagement. Through social media content, Mikkeller can target their audience and connect with them both offline and online, which creates an opportunity for Mikkeller to establish engagement beyond national borders. And because their audience is so specific with reference to the lifestyle and identity that I have mentioned above, the consumers/audience is more than willing to create positive WOM for Mikkeller, which ultimately shapes a long-lasting relationship and trust.

7.0 Discussion

This chapter gathers the different aspects and parts of the analysis to provide a holistic discussion of consumer engagement beyond nationals borders for Mikkeller. This is done to highlight and discuss the relationship between the consumers and the company that have been analysed above, and to discuss the benefits of social media marketing. Additionally, the findings will be discussed in relation to the delimations of the study (cf. section 3.8), as well as with attention to the methodological considerations (section 3), under which the analysis was carried out. This discussion provides the basis for drawing a well argued conclusion (section 8.0) to the problem statement in section 1.1.

The focal point of this study has been to analyse the user interface that has been publicly available on the social media platforms: Instagram and Facebook. Consequently, the purpose was to investigate how social media contributed to establish consumer engagement beyond national borders for Mikkeller. It further sought to identify how groups were formed on social media in comparison to "others", and how these groups/communities created affiliation towards a brand (i.e

Mikkeller). As I mentioned in section 5.3, social media is only working when the consumer participates, creates, and shares content. This means that people are not just joining social communities, they are contributing, too. One thing that comes to mind when taking at look at the different accounts on Instagram and the Facebook page, is how they are all somewhat different from each other and how they all created some sort of engagement. This means that the consumers were largely participating and contributing on the social media platforms. To a large extent, many of the images constructed an in-group identity that emphasized their most desirable traits. The images showed a certain lifestyle and certain values that reinforced norms and habits of the in-group. This means that some of the posts have been successfull in creating engagement, while others were not as succesfull. Mrcmoscow was the account that I analysed that had the strongest in-group sentiment and seemed the most extreme and outrageous. Thus, the mrcmoscow account seemed more distancing than the other accounts. Due to their attitude of not "giving a fuck" and quite serious and closed mood, they created a strong in-group vs. out-group portrait. This was found in the images that framed a positive self-representation of *us,* with a tendency to almost look like hooligans or at least framing a strong national feeling. It revealed the ideology within this group, because of their shared values and norms. But this was also found through their texts that strongly favoured the in-group and the many positive things about *us*. Mrclosangeles did also frame a group-feeling, but this was not as strong as mrsmoscow. However, somehow they created a strong relationship with not only the group, but also with Mikkeller, because the account seemed more embracing than mrcmoscow. This was done through cheering on and encouraging fellow members, through their hashtags and comments. These examples showed that the speaker emphasized *our* good things and the in-group tended to identify with the actions and values of this in-group (creating ideology in discourse). The last MRC account, was also interesting to analyse, because it supported and highligthed positive things about Mikkeller, i.e *us*. The account created ideology of shared values and norms and revealed the in-group feeling, because MRC managed to create a scarce product that somehow were only ment for the inner-circle. It further highlighted how happy they were for the group's support, which contributed to this in-group vs. out-group sentiment. This was done through images and text that strongly favoured those who had supported and contributed to the group. The Facebook account that I analysed in the last section, was also interesting in terms of identifying consumer engagement and group-sentiment. This was especially highlighted through *"Our story",* which strongly favoured those who support MRC, and the members will more easy position themselves with regard to people who would share the same values and norms as

themselves. Through the reviews I also analysed, it was interesting to analyse the in-group sentiment, because this was easy to find. These reviews represented a positive representation of *us*, which further created consumer engagement for Mikkeller.

Of course it would have been more fruitful for the analysis to investigate even more content and different accounts connected to Mikkeller. However, this has not been possible due to the page limitations of the project. Consequently, it can be established through my theoretical framework and my analysis, that social media do contribute to consumer engagement beyond national borders for Mikkeller. Mikkeller has created a strong relationship with many of their consumers, not only in Denmark, but in many other countries as well. What they have done to create consumer engagement can be emphasised through the many different accounts that are connected to MRC. Mikkeller can in that way be accessible and obtainable for the consumers, because they will fell that the company is nearby. I have also found that the consumers really enjoy that Mikkeller is different from many other brands and companies, which gives the brand some atittude and edge. To some extent, MRC is autonomous and different because they are doing-it-themselves and do not care what other people think. This makes the community within MRC hetereogenous and exciting, because they are embracing difference and inclusivity. I found that members of virtual communities/social networks tend to share similar interest (i.e running and staying fit, while enjoying beers and socializing), and connect to each other in a community more frequently than with those outside the community, those who do not share the same interest, values and habits. This contributes to consumer engagement, because Mikkeller engages with their audience in a personal and achievable manner.

What I have found most interesting analysing and investigating the marketing strategies that Mikkeller has employed, is that they are present and active in their content, whether it is offline, online or face-to-face/real-time. To be present in the age of social media means a lot for the consumer. As I have mentioned and examined ealier (cf. section 5.1 & 5.3), in order to create brand loyalty and brand growth, a brand needs a strong relationship with the consumer. In order to create a relationship with the consumer, the brand or the company needs to, not only be available at all time on social media, but they also need to be present in real-time with the consumer. The consumer will feel intimacy with the brand and they will feel supported and committed to the brand. Additionally, they will trust the company or the brand more, which in return will create a connection with the consumers. Another important aspect I have discovered and examined, is that

consumer's would connect more with each other if they shared the same values (i.e. ideologies). Consequently, I find that if the consumers shared the same values as a brand or a company, they would connect more with them and create a long-term relationship. In my analysis of Mikkeller, I examined that the company created a long-term relationship with the consumer, which means that the consumers *love* their brand and are more than willing to talk about their experiences with others. This was evident througout my analysis, because Mikkeller's consumers are more than willing to talk positively about them and create WOM promotion that talked to Mikkeller's advantage (cf. section 5.3). In this way, Mikkeller's consumers can engage and connect with the brand, which creates loyalty. This means that consumer are more likely to trust someone like themselves, and therefore they are more influenced by personal recommendations or reviews as compared with mass marketing/traditional marketing. For a brand like Mikkeller, it is thus very important to create a relationship with the consumer, but also WOM promotion. This means that Mikkeller engages with the consumer at all times through Instagram stories, through videos, facebook posts and reviews. Consequently, the more Mikkeller's consumers rely on them, the more likely they are to "stay" with the brand, and make WOM promotion. In this connection, communication today is about co-creation, dialogue and sensemaking, rather than distrubution of carefully crafted messages, which is greatly the case with Mikkeller's strategies of communicating. Consequently, the consumers might not only be connected by Mikkeller products or the brand, but in a deeper sense they are connected to the healthy, hipster, running lifestyle associated with the brand. Social media is therefore a useful tool for Mikkeller in order to promote and create running communities all over the world, because Instagram and Facebook are virtual areas for interpersonal interaction and will therefore serve as platforms for the development of the self within groups.

Today's consumers have a wealth of ressources available at their fingertips. No matter where they are in the world, they can access reviews, blog posts, websites etc. because of the digital connectivity of smart phones and Internet. This means that the consumer behaviour has changed and as a result the consumers are more impatient, demanding and informed (Evans 2017). Consumers expect that the brand creates tailored experiences to their individual stories and they expect companies to communicate in a way that works best for them. With almost half of the global population using the Internet as of 2017 (Evans 2017), brands have to rethink their long-standing strategies in order to appeal to this new consumer type. To be on the same level as the consumer means a lot for brand growth. The consumer would like to get to know the brand today, and they

would - more importantly - like to have access to everything about the brand, in order to make a buying-decision. Social media has created greater transparency into what friends, families and celebrities are buying and thinking. This constantly reminds the consumer that there are multiple choices available for their purchase. A relevant problem is that many consumers have more trust in what they read from strangers than what companies tell them. In other words, companies and brands needs to win back the trust of the consumer by getting into consumer's consideration early in the decision making process (cf. figure 8). Another relevant problem is that groups formed on social media are to some extent superficial, because the number of online social networks and the amount of time spend on these sites demonstrate how immensely popular these sites are today. Our desire to socialize and connect with others is perhaps the strongest and most important motivator of online social networks (cf. section 2.6 & 5.2). Through my analysis, I propose that the social media platforms Instagram and Facebook are virtual areas for interpersonal interaction, which means that these platform serves as a location for the development of the self. Instagram allows for people to guide others and create certain images and desired impressions of self for others to attain knowledge about them. This means that we tend to post images that we find the most desirable and acceptable to post for others in order to perform a certain role. In essence, our online selves represent our ideals, and to some extent eliminate many of our other real components. I find this relevant, since I have analysed group-formation on social media platforms. In a way, these accounts posted and formed the self-image that they wanted to reveal to others, because they posted images that they each found most desirable for others to look at.

The benefits of social media is therefore analysed to be very helpfull in regards to strenghting the brand experience, which will support brand growth. This means that through social media content, the company can repeatedly reinforce the brand name and increase brand recognition, because social media helps the brand connect with people all around the world. Through social media content, it can thus be more cost effective than traditional advertising, since the costs of maintaining a social media presence is quite minimal. Social media revolves around the idea of building online communities, which means that a brand can gather people with common interests, ideas and values in order to engage with these communities/consumers and ultimately greate brand loyalty and a long-term relationship. Social media platforms have therefore been analysed to be very powerful ways of communicating the brand and facilitating open forums for communication.

8.0 Conclusion

This final chapter provides the key findings in the thesis. The goal for this study was to learn more about social media as a business strategy for Mikkeller, with the intension to investigate consumer engagement. Additionally, this study sought to clarify how consumers would form groups online on the two social media platforms: Instagram and Facebook, in order to create a collective identity with connection to a brand. I was therefore interested in how Mikkeller employed social media marketing to build consumer engagement around the world. Throughout my study, I wondered whether consumers would only be connected by Mikkeller's products, or if the consumers in a deeper sense was connected to the identity and lifestyle that was associated with Mikkeller. Therefore, this study has attempted to answer the following problem statement:

How can social media contribute to consumer engagement beyond national borders for Mikkeller and what are the benefits of social media marketing?

In order to answer my problem statement, I used the method of netnography as well as ideological discourse analysis to identify meanings of trends in-group behaviour as revealed online on Mikkeller's Facebook and Instagram accounts. I therefore used these two methods in order to identify and investigate key characteristics of online communities and gain a deeper understanding of member purposes for participation. Through the methods, I could comprehend new forms of interaction, how people create and maintain personal relationships online, and the development of online communities and cultures. Through the usage of social media, the members would construct a collective identity based on communication, belonging and negotiation of shared norms and values. What was especially interesting by employing these methods was that users would position themselves in regards to people who did not belong to their network: creating an in-group as opposed to the out-group or the Others. To introduce literature on my research problem and to set the stage for the analysis, I created a literature review to establish the theoretical roots of my study. I introduced literature and studies concerning consumer culture, self-representation and social media marketing – the backdrop to which this study is based. My theory section was therefore concerned with the theories of consumer engagement, social identity theory, and social media marketing. These three selected theories helped me understand how and why consumer's engage with a brand, how people commincate with each other on social media and how collective identities

are created online, and lastly how useful and powerful social media marketing has become for businesses and especially Mikkeller today.

Throughout my analysis, I examined three Instagram accounts connected to Mikkeller and MRC, and MRC's official Facebook account. These accounts helped me in identifying group behaviour and how collective identites were formed online, and it further helped me examine how social media can contribute to consumer engagement beyond national borders. Through my analysis, I discovered that each account was quite different in the way they presented themselves, but they all created some sort of engagement. Thus, the analysis revealed that ideologies served as the representation of a group and of the relations with relevant other groups, i.e creating a polarizing structure between *us* and *them*. The overall strategy for each account was to represent *our* good things, which was greatly evident through the many images that constructed an in-group identity that emphasized their most desirable traits. And in this sense, I suggested that identites was socially build through the culture and the human connections in discourses, in order to talk about oneself and about others. Additionally, I discovered that through social media, we position ourselves the way thay we would like to be seen. In the case of Mikkeller, this was especially evident through the usage of hand-gestures, waving team-flags, posting Mikkeller's logo and drinking Mikkeller beer, which helped me clarify that being part of an online community creates symbolism for each member and that each member was quite committed to the brand i.e. through affection and identification. I revealed that the community within MRC was quite hetereogenous, because the brand breaks with norms and traditions, which created something "cult-like" and hipster about the brand.

With my theoretical discussion, I discovered that consumer engagement is perhaps the strongest factor in indicating consumer's feelings towards a brand. The consumer's connected to MRC *loved* the brand, and I revealed that the consumers had an emotional and quite intimate connection with Mikkeller. Mikkeller was therefore able to create a strong relationship with many of their consumers, not only in Denmark, but in many other countries as well. I found that Mikkeller is quite accessible and obtainable for the consumers, because the consumer will always feel that the company is nearby. Furthermore, I discovered that the consumer enjoyed that Mikkeller was so different from many other brands, which gave Mikkeller/MRC attitude and edge. Importantly, I uncovered that identity is vital for Mikkeller, because the identity that they promote was so

different, which means they could reinforce and establish communities around the world and create consumer engagement. I clarified that people tend to share similar interest and connect to each other in a community more frequently than those outside the community, which greatly contributed to create consumer engagement, because Mikkeller engages with the consumer on a very personal level. Through positive WOM promotion's that talked to Mikkeller's advantage, I found that the consumers were more than willing to talk about their experiences with others, which ultimately created loyalty. Social media is therefore representing a digital version In other words, consumers trust people like themselves, and are more influenced by personal recommendations, which is very important for a brand like Mikkeller. Social identity theory further helped me clarify that people have a desire to socialize and connect with others, because people have a profound need to belong to a group. The analysis revealed that the groups formed on Instagram and Facebook were highly defined by people's social identities that was showed through images, videos and posts. They created a positive self-representation of *us* and this was especially evident by analysing the three Instagram accounts. Each account favoured the in-group in terms of mentioning and highlighting performances and achievements about the group. The individuals in these groups shared the same values, interests, and priorities. Through my theory of social media marketing, I found that social media enables the ability for consumer's to interact and engage with a brand, which created an opportunity for Mikkeller to participate with their consumers, while creating brand-loyalty and an intimate long-term relationship. With the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies and user-generated platforms, consumers have taken the social web in effort to share among themselves their own direct experience with a brand, product or a service to provide a more "real" view of their experience. In my analysis, I therefore sought to clarify how important WOM promotion is for Mikkeller, because the experience of the consumer is so important for any brand today. I found that Mikkeller highly engage with their consumers in order to build trust and commitment, which ultimately created positive WOM promotion.

This naturally leads me to answer the problem statement. Social media can greatly be used to establish consumer engagement beyond national borders, because social media is to a great extent used for social interactions, and has become a vital part of human experience. Thus, social media greatly facilitates the formation of online communities all around the world, because people gather around a shared interest, cause or lifestyle in pursuit of a collective experience. I discovered that social media platforms greatly facilitates social connections, because these platforms allow the

users to fulfill belonging needs through communication and self-representation, which has given individuals all over the world the opportunity to connect and interact with each other. As a consequence, social media enable the users to "showcase" their lives and experience. Therefore, companies have more and more entered this online world in order to get their consumers engaged with their brand, since social media has become a vital part of our culture. By using social media brands can forge relationships with their consumers as well as new consumers and form communities that interactively collaborates with each other and with the brand. This benefits Mikeller, because their strategy of creating running communities all around the world on online social media platforms has greatly contributed to establish consumer engagement. Through social media content, Mikkeller can therefore target their audience and connect with them both online and offline. In the case of Mikkeller, I therefore conclude that the consumers connected to this company have something much more deep in common than just the brand or the product. Mikkeller has actively integrated their consumers into their business concept, which in return has created trust, engagement and loyalty. The consumers are therefore in a deeper sense connected to the healthy, hipster, running lifestyle and identity associated with Mikkeller and MRC. When the consumers are reaffirming their identity, they will subconsciously connect and interact with Mikkeller, which creates brand experience and engagement. My analysis proved this, because Mikkeller's consumers were more than willing to engage with the brand, advocate for the brand, and more importantly, live the brand. Consequently, social media marketing seeks to engage consumers in online social locations and social media greatly facilitates the process of establishing an intimate relationship with the consumer. The benefits of using social media marketing for a brand like Mikkeller, is that social media is very helpful in strengthening the brand experience, which means that through social media content the company can reinforce the brand name and increase brand recognition. Social media marketing is as a consequence, a very powerful tool to build online communities around the world and communicate the brand.

9.0 Appendix

Appendix 1

Table 1. Some expressions of ideology in discourse.

- **Context:** Speaker speaks *as* a member of a social group; and/or addresses recipient *as* group member; ideologically biased context models: subj. representations of communicative event and its participants as members of categories or groups.
- **Text, discourse, conversation:**

Overall strategy: positive presentation/action of Us,
   negative presentation/action of Them

- Emphasize *Our* good things, and *Their* bad things, and

De-emphasize *Our* bad things, and *Their* good things

MEANING

O **Topics** (semantic macrostructures)

- ▪ Select/Change positive/negative topics about Us/Them.

O **Local meanings** and coherence

- ▪ Positive/Negative Meanings for Us/Them are
  - Manifestation: Explicit versus Implicit
  - Precision: Precise versus Vague
  - Granularity: Detailed/fine versus Broad, rough
  - Level: General versus Specific, detailed
  - Modality: We/They Must/Should...
  - Evidentiality: We have the truth versus
They are misguided
  - Local coherence: based on biased models
  - Disclaimers (denying Our bad things): `We are not racists, but...'

O **Lexicon:** Select Positive/Negative terms for Us/Them
   (e.g. `terrorist' versus `freedom fighter')

FORM

O **Syntax:** (De)emphasize Positive/Negative Agency of Us/Them

- ▪ Cleft versus non-cleft sentences (`It is X who...')
- ▪ Active versus Passives (`USA invades Iraq' versus 'Iraq invaded by USA')
- ▪ Full clauses/propositions versus nominalizations (The *invasion* of Iraq').

O **Sound structures:** Intonation, etc., (de)emphasizing Our/Their Good/Bad things

O **Format (schema, superstructure: overall form)**

Positive/Negative meanings for Us/Them in

- First, dominant categories (e.g. Headlines, Titles, Summaries, Conclusions) versus last, non-dominant categories.
- Argumentation structures, topoi (stereotypical arguments, e.g. 'For their own good')
  - O Fallacies that falsely conclude Our/Their Good/Bad things, e.g. overgeneralizations, authority, etc.

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TEUN A. VAN DIJK

O Rhetorical structures

Emphasizing or de-emphasizing Our/Their Good/Bad things
  by

- Forms: Repetition
- Meanings: Comparisons, metaphors, metonymies, irony; euphemisms, hyperboles, number games, etc.

ACTION

O Speech acts, communicative acts, and interaction

- Speech acts that presuppose Our/Their Good/Bad things: promises, accusations, etc.
- Interaction strategies that imply Our/Their Good/Bad things: Cooperation, agreement

Signe Flarup Øllgaard
20161472

Master Thesis
CCG

31 May 2018
Aalborg University

Appendix 2

Appendix 3

mrcmoscow • Følg
Все твои друзья / Бар

mrcmoscow Our hot team gathered again on this cold November day! Love you all guys! See you next month !

#MikkellerRunningClubMoscow
#папаягорю
#MikkellerRunningClub
#mikkeller #всетвоидрузья
#вышенепогоды

kolbasss Блин проспал (
ingalunar Эхх, и я не дошлаааа(

197 Synes godt om

4. NOVEMBER 2017

Tilføj en kommentar ...

Appendix 4

mrc_losangeles • Følg
Pasadena Half Marathon

mrc_losangeles Big ups to all our @mikkellerrunningclub runners who ran the #pasadenahalfmarathon today! And a big thanks to our cheering squad out there keeping us motivated 🏃‍♀️🍺🏃‍♂️ #mikkellerrunningclub #MRCLA #RunForBeer #run4beer #LosAngeles #WeRunLA #RunAngeles #runpasadena #Runner #Run #Running #RunnersOfInstagram #unitedLA #DoItForTheRun #RunningGroup #Workout #Fit #FitFam #dtlarunning #dtla #happeningdtla #lalive #Fitness #🏃‍♀️ # 🏃‍♀️ #🍺 #🍻
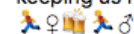
runcrosstrail 💪👊
firecracker10k Cheers! 🍻
fleetfeetsac Nice!

166 Synes godt om

22. JANUAR

Appendix 5

mrc_losangeles • Følg

mrc_losangeles Some of us braved the "rain", some of us didn't. We have here part of our marathon crew and our 1st Saturday brave souls. Big ups to those that came out. Remember to come out this Monday night for Monday Mikkeller Running Night. 🍻 #mikkellerrunningclub #MRCLA #Mikkeller #mikkellerdtla #RunForBeer #run4beer #LosAngeles #WeRunLA #RunAngeles #Runner #Run #Running #RunnersOfInstagram #unitedLA #DoItForTheRun #RunningGroup #Workout #Fit #FitFam #dtlarunning #dtla

142 Synes godt om

4. MARTS

Tilføj en kommentar …

Appendix 6

mrc_losangeles • Følg
Mikkeller DTLA

mrc_losangeles Come join us tonight for #MRCMonday and get your week started off right!

Tonight we celebrate all of our runners who ran the @lamarathon. Even if you're not feeling up to running, you're welcome to come out and join us for a round.
🏃🏃‍♀️
8:00pm meet up at @mikkellerdtla
8:10pm start
8:45pm Bar
🔹🔹🔹
🔴Run: 3mi around #DTLA
🔹🔹🔹

After the run feel free to buy food or drinks at the bar and enjoy some post-run comradery!
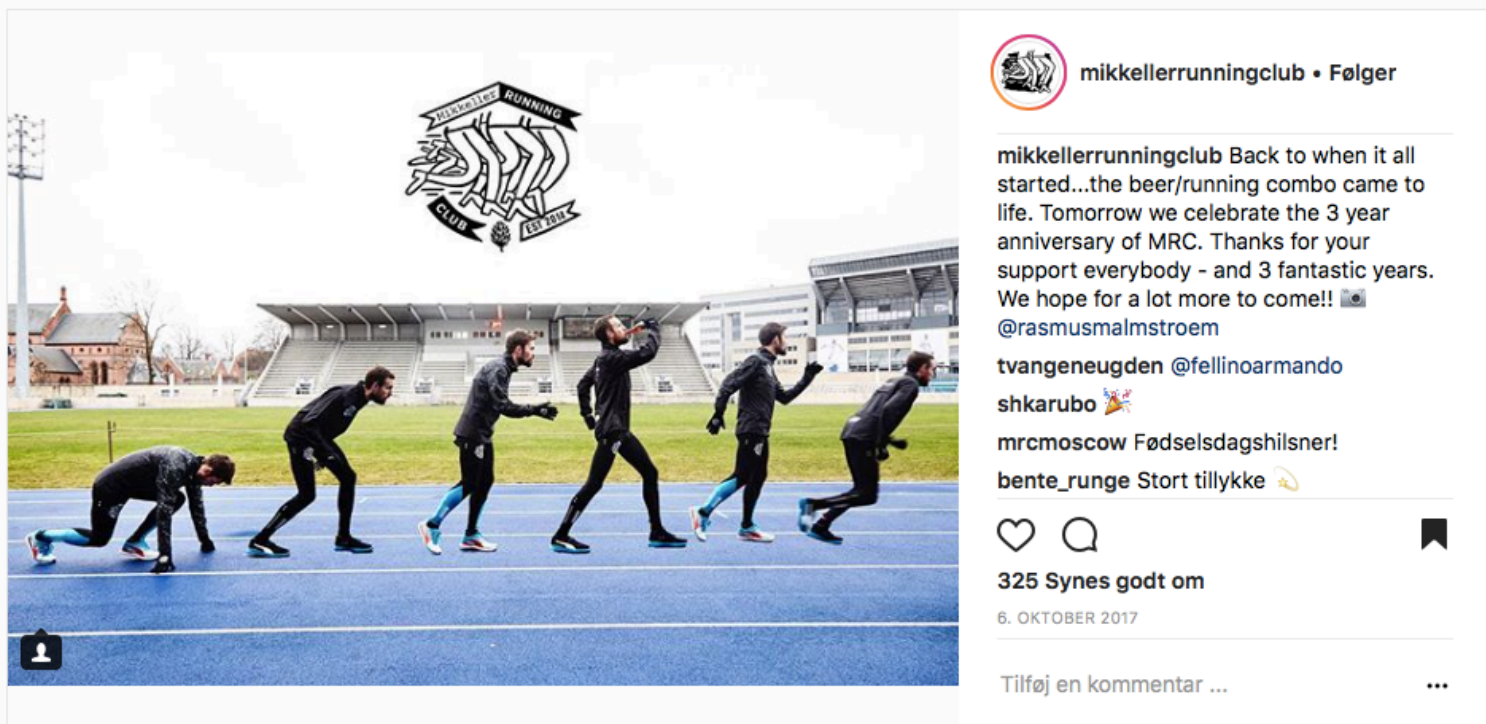🍻
#mikkellerrunningclub #MRCLA

126 Synes godt om

19. MARTS

Tilføj en kommentar …

Appendix 7

Appendix 8

Appendix 9

Appendix 10

Per Seestedt har anmeldt Mikkeller Running Club – 5★
6. august 2017 · 🌐

Bedste løbeklub �

👍 Synes godt om   💬 Kommenter   ↪ Del

👍 1

Din kommentar …   ☺ 📷 GIF 🎭

Lene N. Fruensgaard har anmeldt Mikkeller Running Club – 5★
1. marts 2017 · 🌐

Absolut den bedste løbeklub!!!!
Fyldt med gode mennesker, gode oplevelser og god øl 😍😍😉

👍 3

👍 Synes godt om   💬 Kommenter   ↪ Del

Joana Yabut har anmeldt Mikkeller Running Club – 5★
6. august 2016 · 🌐

Love Mikkeller! Great beers, drinks and people at all their locations!

👍 Synes godt om   💬 Kommenter   ↪ Del

Appendix 11

Lene Olsson har anmeldt Mikkeller Running Club – 5★
8. oktober 2017 · 🌐

Så hyggelig stemning, søde mennesker og ikke mindst god øl. Man føler sig altid velkommen ◆◆◆◆

👍 Synes godt om   💬 Kommenter   ↪ Del

👍 1

Din kommentar ...   ☺ 📷 GIF 😼

Kirill Jakimovič har anmeldt Mikkeller Running Club – 5★
6. april 2016 · 🌐

It was amazing to find people who love both beer and running, because I think I'm alone in this love^)

👍 Synes godt om   💬 Kommenter   ↪ Del

👍 5

Din kommentar ...   ☺ 📷 GIF 😼

Brian Feldborg har anmeldt Mikkeller Running Club – 4★
27. august 2017 · 🌐

Hyggeligt løb for alle ◆◆

👍 Synes godt om   💬 Kommenter   ↪ Del

👍 1

Appendix 12

Our Story

MIKKELLER RUNNING CLUB · 17. DECEMBER 2017

The idea of Mikkeller Running Club is to stay fit through running. That makes us capable of enjoying even more of the good life – which includes state of the art food and drinks.

Obviously our main passion is beer – especially drinking beers – and sometimes (preferably) in large scales.

The club is founded by Mikkel Borg Bjergsø, who is also the creator and owner of Mikkeller.

It is not a coincidence that Mikkel chooses to focus on running. He used to be quite the talent, and as a youngster he performed very well on the tracks, which earned him scholarships in the US, and some Danish records.

However, speed is not the main target in Mikkeller Running Club. Having fun and great social relations is our top priority and we´re just proud to see MRC members take part in races and events around the world.

Every first Saturday of the month we meet up for a training session. Meeting point may vary due to the nature of the activity – but we always finish up at the clubhouse - a bar that serves Mikkeller-beer, where we share a couple of beers – sometimes our own Mikkeller Running Club beer.

You do not have to be an experienced runner or athlete to join MRC...all we ask, is for you to come join us and have fun staying healthy – and sometimes a bit tipsy!!!

We hope to see you wearing the shirt around the world....

Appendix 13
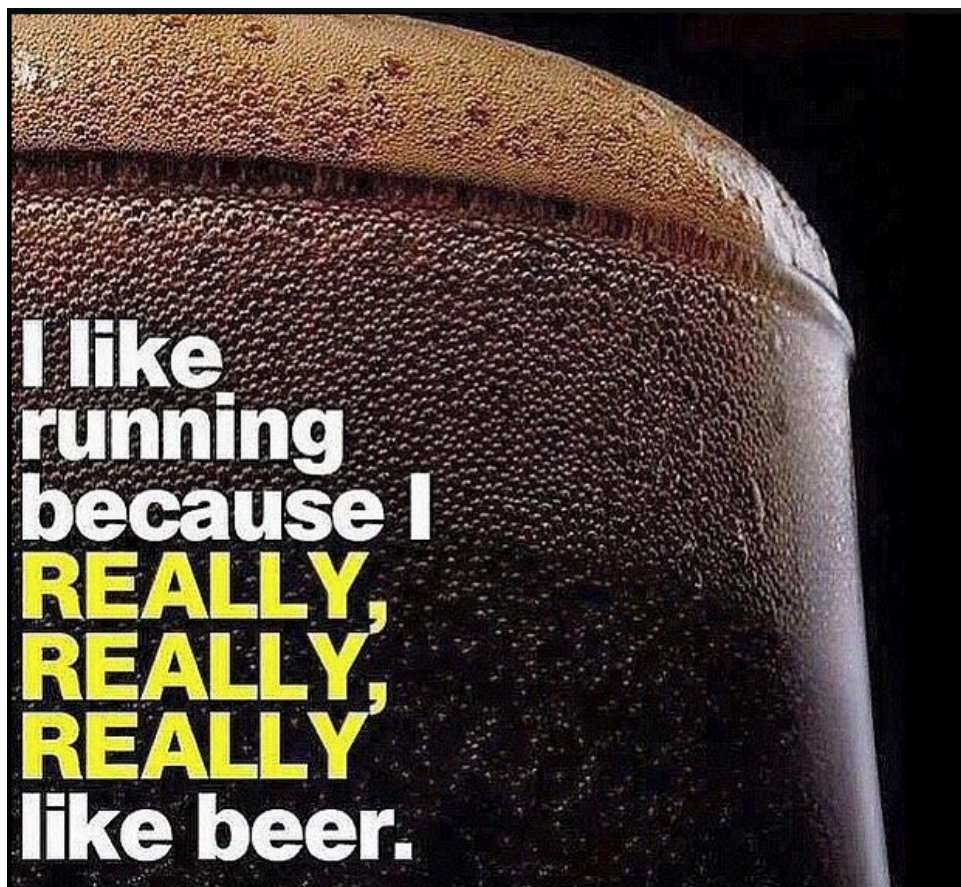
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