The Corporate Expression of Identity

- and the effect on social media engagement

Master's Thesis

Thesis supervisor

Hanne Tange

Keystrokes

305,988

Nicolai Koefoed Elnef & Habill Mahendran

Aalborg University

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Abstract

The advent of social media has created an opportunity for companies to further expose their brand to current and prospective consumers, and it has allowed for a more free interaction between these two entities. It has also created an opportunity and necessity for companies to distinguish themselves from other competitors on the employed social media platform(s) in order to stand out. This is accomplished through the expression of the companies' unique corporate identities with which the consumers may associate and identify themselves. This association and identification between company and consumer may positively impact both consumer preference for, and consumption of, the brand, and this interest in the brand can manifest itself through the consumers' propensity to engage with the brand. The company's unique identity, and its expression hereof, may therefore facilitate or affect this engagement among the consumers.

In order to investigate this phenomenon, this thesis has sought to analyse two different companies in separate industries, namely AirBnB and dbrand, with the intention of understanding the relationship between the expression of companies' unique identity, and the resultant consumer engagement on social media. This should further provide an insight into how companies may best express their unique identity and thereby how this may affect consumer engagement on social media.

In order to facilitate our analysis of this phenomenon, Devereux et al.'s (2017) theory on corporate identity and social media was employed to get a better understanding of the two case-companies' use of, and behaviour on, social media. Here, the case-companies' social media content was analysed through five stages pertaining to their choice to adopt social media, their choice of platforms, their choice of content, their stakeholders' engagement, and, lastly, their interaction behaviour. Geuens et al.'s (2009) theory on brand personality traits was further employed in order to analyse the two companies' expression of personality in terms of five distinct traits. This content analysis was also based on the companies' social media content.

It was ultimately revealed that the two companies have vastly different approaches to social media, with AirBnB presenting a more neutral, cautious and unoffending approach in which it showed an interest in bettering the community, e.g. through promoting its community initiatives and showing support towards the community, and, in relation to this, AirBnB primarily showed a propensity to express the *responsibility* and *activity* personality traits.

On the other hand, dbrand presents a more risky, bold, and even offensive but humorous approach in which it showed a significant interest in promoting itself and its products, putting others down, and

bantering with its stakeholders. In relation to this, it was found that dbrand primarily expresses traits of *aggressiveness* and *activity*.

It was further analysed how these expressions of personality affected stakeholder engagement for the two case-companies. As it relates to AirBnB, it was found that its expressions of *activity* and *responsibility* received the most stakeholder engagement, though it was also determined that AirBnB experiences a low overall average engagement. In terms of dbrand, it was found that its expression of the personality traits *aggressiveness* and *activity* received the most engagement. It was also found that dbrand receives high overall engagement, both compared to the platform average but also compared to its nearest competitor.

In order to get a better understanding of the relationship between the expression of the different personality traits and the resultant engagement on social media, a survey was sent out to American social media users. Here, a pre-assessment of the respondents' preferences was performed, which showed a clear preference for the *activity* and *responsibility* traits, which matches AirBnB's experience in terms of engagement. However, a further evaluation of the respondents' behaviour showed a clear preference for the traits *aggressiveness* and *emotionality*. It is therefore indicated that social media content expressing emotion-driven traits like *aggressiveness* and *emotionality*, and content expressing dynamic, active, and innovative characteristics, like the trait *activity*, is more likely to facilitate stakeholder engagement.

1.0. Introduction

The advent of Web 2.0 has had a large impact on the use of the internet, as it has brought with it new opportunities to communicate with others by facilitating online interaction, e.g. through the creation and use of social media platforms (Wilson et al. 2011, 1; 2). The prevalence of this phenomenon has thereby also spread to the corporate world, where it has inspired companies and led to the corporate adoption of social media (ibid.). The innovation of social media has been revolutionising for companies, as it has presented new opportunities in terms of reaching, communicating, and interacting with a wider audience (Vukasovič 2013, 56-57). The existence of companies on social media platforms, and their incessant interest in presenting a proper brand to both their current and prospective audience, has thereby also led to a necessity for proper management and distinguishing of the company brand on these platforms (Gensler et al. 2013). Companies have always wanted to stand out from its competitors to better attract customers, and this can be accomplished by way of creating and presenting a distinguished corporate identity and presentation of self (Larsen and Pedersen 2016, 30; Herbst 2012, 34-35). This is believed to be expressed through corporate communication, which concerns both the formal and informal, and explicit and implicit messaging to both internal and external stakeholders (Gray and Balmer 1998, 696; van Riel 2007, 65; 68). By creating and expressing a unique identity in the market, a company can hereby make itself stand out among the competition. On social media, companies can express their corporate identity to its current and prospective stakeholders through both the content they publish and through their interaction with stakeholders and others on these platforms. This behaviour represents the companies' expression of self, and it thereby communicates their corporate identity to their audience (Devereux et al. 2017, 117-118).

For companies, facilitating consumer-brand interaction and stakeholder engagement can be pertinent as it allows for both the creation of stronger consumer-brand relationships and the spreading of electronic word of mouth (Hudson et al. 2016, 27). Further, facilitating and promoting engagement on social media also allows the companies to expose themselves to new audiences through social medias' viral capabilities (Devereux et al. 2017, 116), and social media is therefore a magnificent tool for companies seeking to market themselves. As such, there is an inherent interest in facilitating and maximising stakeholder engagement, and this can be accomplished through the expression of a unique identity that the stakeholders can identify themselves with, and which they are interested in engaging with (Balmer 2017, 1487-88; Zhang and Vos 2014, 7).

Ultimately, this relationship between the expression of a unique identity and the resultant engagement rate of its stakeholders has inspired this thesis.

To further examine this phenomenon, this thesis has chosen to examine two distinct companies, namely AirBnB and dbrand (AirBnB Newsroom A 2020; dbrand A 2020). Despite operating in different industries, with AirBnB offering accommodations and tourist experiences and dbrand offering electronic device customisation, they both use social media to communicate their corporate identity, though with varying levels of success.

These two companies are also vastly different in their approach to using social media, with one being more controlled and calm, and the other having a more risky and bold approach. The differences in these two companies' approaches to social media and their resultant successes in terms of facilitating engagement has inspired this thesis, and it has ultimately led this thesis to the following problem statement:

1.1. Problem statement

How do AirBnB and dbrand communicate their unique identities and personalities on social media? What are the differences and similarities in their approach, and what is the consequent effect on the stakeholder engagement?

2.0.   Corporate identity

In the following, the concepts of corporate and organisational identity are presented and compared, and this thesis' understanding of the concepts and their relation to the theoretical approach will be clarified. Following this, an overview of the literature concerning corporate identity will be reviewed. This will be followed by an introduction to, and clarification on, this thesis' view on the interplay between corporate identity and corporate communication. Finally, Devereux et al.'s (2017) theory on corporate identity and its relation to social media will be presented, which represents the thesis' approach to, and analysis of, corporate identity.

2.1. Literature review

Corporate identity has been a point of contention for a few decades, and as a field of research, it has received a significant amount of attention (Brown 2014; Melewar 2003, 195; Powell 2011; Suvatjis, Chernatony & Halikias 2012). No commonly shared definition of the concept has been made (e.g. cf. 2.1.1. The distinction between corporate and organisational identity), and what it comprises is not necessarily agreed upon as it can be considered a multidisciplinary concept (Devereux et al. 2020, 413-415; Melewar & Jenkins 2002, 76; Melewar et al. 2005, 60-61; Cornelissen et al. 2012, 1093-94). Certainly, there are various academic works that have contributed to the research on corporate identity. In the following, we will therefore present the concept of corporate identity, as compared to organisational identity. This will be followed by a presentation and review of the material that has inspired this thesis and the choice of theory. This thesis has further drawn inspiration from three distinct approaches to analysing corporate identity, which has ultimately informed and led us to our choice of theory.

2.1.1. The distinction between corporate and organisational identity

In the literature, the concepts of organisational and corporate identity can be seen as both one of the same, related, and completely separate. Riel and Fombrun (2007) and Melewar and Jenkins (2002) have both provided an overview of various academic-based definitions of the identity concept from literature on the matter (Melewar & Jenkins 2002, 78-79; Riel and Fombrun 2007, 66-67). Some of these definitions talk of and refer to the matter as both corporate and organisational identity, and some differ greatly. This is to say that there is no common definition or understanding of the concepts. Therefore, due to the divergence in the field, it is necessary that a distinction be made between the

two concepts, which will further serve to establish this thesis' view on and approach to the concepts. Below, we will present the concepts of organisational identity and corporate identity, as well as present this thesis' understanding hereof.

Kitchen et al. (2013) propose that organisational identity *"refers to a collective shared understanding of an organisation's distinctive values and characteristics with emphasis on how members conceive [organisational identity]"* and is *"held in organisation members' minds"* (ibid., 268). This indicates that organisational identity is formed by, and based on, the shared interpretation of the organisation's doings. This is specifically based on the "*members*", which, in this case, would refer to individuals directly related to the organisation. Organisational identity is thereby said to be focused on the internal stakeholders of the organisation and their view of the organisation. Kitchen et al. (2013) further propose that organisational identity is an "integral part" of corporate identity (ibid., 268). Devereux et al. (2020) supports this view, stating that "*We take the view [...] that organisational identity is a part of corporate identity*" (Devereux et al. 2020, 415), further explaining that organisational identity is seen as being a part of corporate identity that represents an internal focus and point of view on the organisation (ibid., 415; Devereux et al. 2017, 112). Organisational identity is therefore considered an internal perspective, or representation of, the organisation's identity that affects the overall representation of the corporate identity.

In terms of *corporate* identity, Devereux et al. (2017) see corporate identity as being a "*holistic*" and "*multidisciplinary*" concept that concerns "*all expressions of the organization*" and which is "*much more than the observable*" (ibid., 112). It is further argued that every action performed by an organisation expresses and communicates something about the organisation, whether they be visual, symbolic, organisational elements, communicative, or otherwise (ibid., 112). It can therefore be considered a multidisciplinary field as these aspects, despite being interrelated in terms of corporate identity, all concern separate topics and fields of research. For Balmer and Gray (1998), corporate identity concerns *"'what the organization is'"* (ibid., 695) and is *"the reality and uniqueness of the organization"* (ibid., 697). Likewise, according to Melewar et al. (2005), corporate identity refers to *"'what the organization is', what it stands for', what it does', how it does it' and 'where it is going'"* (ibid., 61). Based on the above, corporate identity therefore refers to the overall communicated representation of the organisation as presented through its composition, expressions, and behaviour.

It is further believed by Devereux et al. (2020) that corporate identity is not a static construct but rather that it evolves and adapts with the organisation and its actions (ibid., 414), which was originally

suggested by Balmer (2017, 1475). This is to say that changes in general, i.e. to the organisation's composition, expressions or behaviour, will impact the organisation's corporate identity. This is due to the conception that these changes represent a change to the corporate identity, which, again, is due to the idea that everything communicates.

This thesis therefore acknowledges and adopts the view that corporate identity is a holistic, multidisciplinary concept that concerns the various elements that communicate something about the organisation, i.e. *"'what the organization is', what it stands for', what it does', how it does it' and 'where it is going'"* (Melewar et al. 2005, 61). However, it must be stated, yet again, that this thesis is solely concerned with the communication and behaviour of the organisations on social media, their interaction with stakeholders, and the resultant stakeholder engagement.

2.1.2. Corporate identity as a construct – its constituents & analysis approaches

This thesis has been heavily inspired by three distinct pieces of literature that concern both the constituents that form, and thereby affect, corporate identity and approaches to measuring corporate identity. These will be presented, discussed, and compared in the following, and it will be further explained how these approaches have inspired the thesis, and why they were ultimately deselected.

2.1.2.1. Melewar and Jenkins' Corporate Identity Construct

Melewar & Jenkins (2002) have developed a Corporate Identity Construct through examining various academic works on the corporate identity concept. Through their collection and analysis, the authors have identified four subconstructs of corporate identity, which are as follows: *1) Communication/visual identity, 2) Behaviour, 3) Corporate culture,* and *4) Market conditions* (ibid., 86).

The first subconstruct, *1) Communication/visual identity,* concerns the "*conscious*" or controlled internal and external communication, which refers to both management, marketing, and organisational communication. As well, it further concerns the uncontrolled communications of the organisation, which may refer to either stakeholder communications pertaining to the organisation, or the behaviours and initiatives that unconsciously and inevitably communicate something about the organisation (ibid., 81-82). It is thereby stated that all communications performed by an organisation, whether they be controlled or uncontrolled, impact the organisation's corporate identity. This sub-

construct also concerns the corporate visual identity, which is said to consist of "*the corporate name, logotype and/or symbol, typography, and color*" (ibid., 83), which are said to "*present the central idea of the organization with impact, brevity and immediacy*" (Olins 1995, 11). It is hereby understood that the visual aspect also communicates something about the organisation's corporate identity.

2) Behaviour concerns both the corporate, managerial, and employee behaviour (Melewar and Jenkins 2002., 83-84). These three elements function as the internal communications and expressions that the organisation presents, and they can therefore be considered a direct representation of the organisation's behaviour.

Subconstruct *3) Corporate culture* concerns the corporate culture of the organisation, which is an internal perspective, that relates to e.g. the intentions, values, and beliefs of the organisation. (Melewar and Jenkins 2002., 84). These represent the organisation's deep-rooted motivations for existing and can explain the motivations behind the organisation's actions.

4) Market conditions involve examining the market conditions that may affect the corporate identity, i.e. the *nature of the industry* and the *corporate and marketing strategies* of the organisation (ibid., 81, 85).

2.1.2.2. Balmer's continuum

In more recent times, Balmer (2017) has developed the "Corporate identity, total corporate communications, stakeholders' attributed identities, identifications and behaviours continuum" framework which sheds light on the very same topics, that is: corporate identity and how it is affected by corporate communication, its stakeholders, and corporate law. In this piece of academic work, Balmer covers the corporate identity concept, which is considered the *"cornerstone element of the continuum"* (ibid., 1476) and presents an approach to determining an organisation's key corporate identity traits (ibid., 1478).

To start, Balmer's (2017) continuum, which can be found in the figure below (figure 1), shows the elements that constitute and affect corporate identity, and it forms a feedback loop that constantly informs and either confirms or disconfirms the corporate identity.
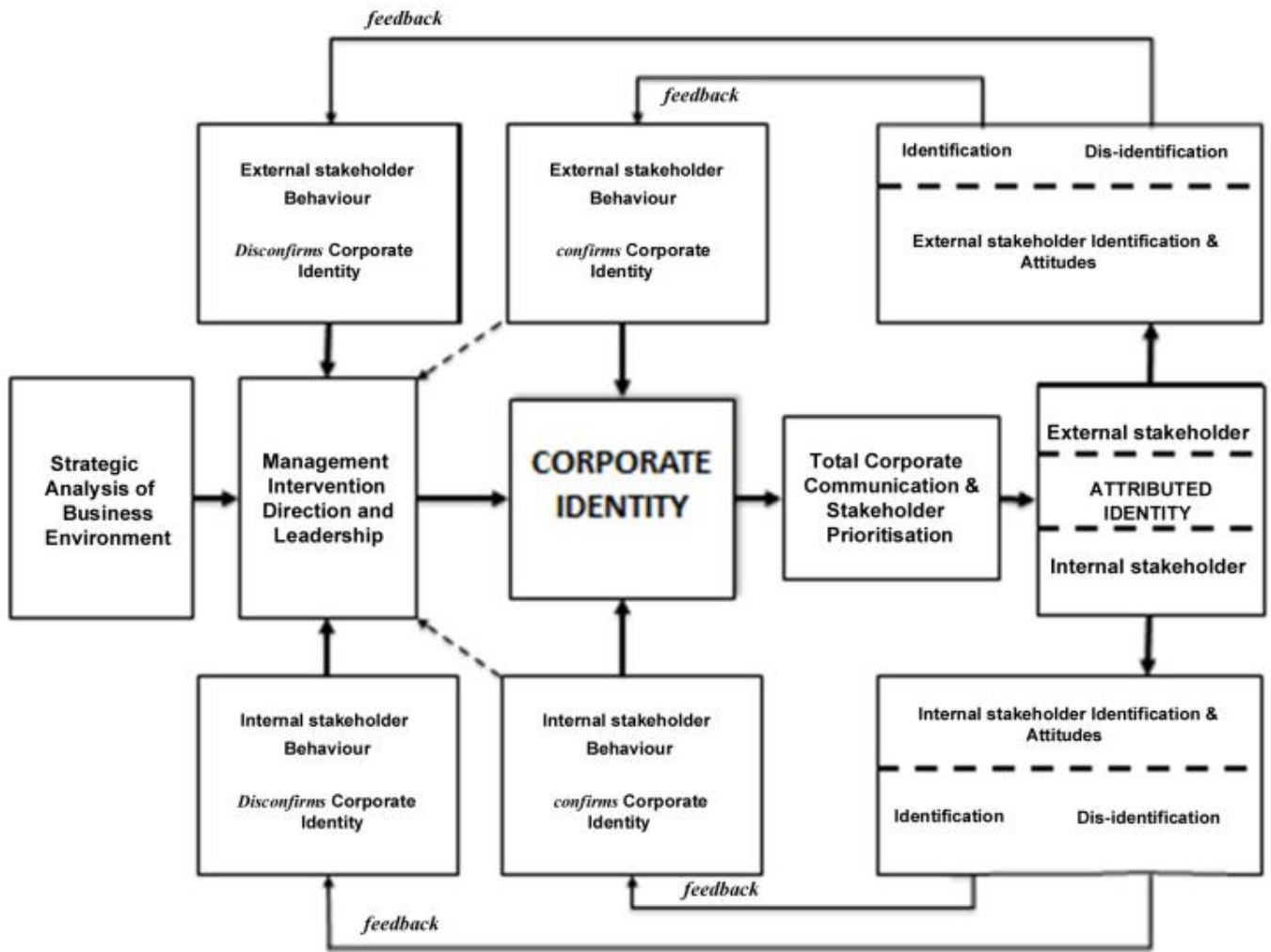
*Figure 1: Balmer's (2017, 1477) "Corporate identity, total corporate communications,
stakeholders' attributed identities, identifications and behaviours continuum."*

This continuum can be used to guide an organisation in terms of creating, strengthening or altering
its corporate identity to best fit either its real identity, its strategies and/or its target and consumer
segment. It therefore provides an insight into the factors that affect, and should be considered in
relation to, corporate identity. Based on this, it can therefore also be used to analyse a given
organisation's corporate identity.

When using the continuum to analyse a given organisation's corporate identity, it is necessary to
examine the *total corporate communications*, which includes both controlled and uncontrolled
communications, which are said to control and establish both the perceptions placed on stakeholders
involved with the organisation, i.e. internal and external stakeholders (ibid., 1480-82), the attributed
identities and traits, and the corporate images and reputations (Balmer 2017., 1483-84). Moreover, it
is described how one should examine the stakeholders and the degree to which they identify with the

organisation, as it is stated to be a key determinant that guides them in their attitudes towards the organisation (ibid., 1484-86). Lastly, it is claimed that the stakeholder behaviour can confirm or disconfirm the corporate identity. That is, the stakeholders' behaviour will provide the feedback necessary to determine whether they identify with the organisation and its traits (ibid., 1487-88). Balmer (2017) has further indicated what the specific corporate identity traits of an organisation may pertain to. Among others, these are said to concern:

- *"an institution's organisational type;*
- *its purpose(s);*
- *activities;*
- *ethos and values;*
- *market position;*
- *markets and customers served;*
- *product and service quality;*
- *management and employee behaviours; and*
- *geographical scope, etc."* (ibid., 1478).

These are some of the unique traits that may distinguish an organisation.

2.1.2.3. Riel and Fombrun's identity types

Riel and Fombrun (2007) have also provided insight into the field of research on corporate identity. The author distinguishes between four identity types that may be applicable or of interest to a given organisation, namely the *desired identity*, the *perceived identity*, the *applied identity*, and the *projected identity* (ibid., 82). These can all be measured using different methods, and should, when combined, give a complete view of the organisation's corporate identity. The identity types and methods will be presented in the following.

The first identity type is the *desired identity*, and it refers to an *"idealized picture"* of the organisation that is held in the minds of the decision makers (ibid., 70). As this is the "*idealised picture*" of the organisation, that is held and controlled by the leaders, it can be argued that it may serve to inform and direct the management and strategies of the organisation in its pursuit of meeting this desire. In terms of measuring this type of identity, Riel and Fombrun (2007) prescribe two approaches, the first of which concerns extracting information from the key leadership individuals and subsequently

establishing consensus between the individuals on what attributes are most important (ibid., 82; Bernstein 1986). The other approach concerns identifying personality, or character, traits of the organisation (Riel and Fombrun 2007, 84-85; Lux 1986).

In terms of the *perceived identity*, it is said to concern *"The collection of attributes that are seen as typical for the "continuity, centrality and uniqueness" of the organization in the eyes of its members."* (Riel and Fombrun 2007, 70). This identity type is thereby said to concern the internal stakeholders, and it is, in the text, specified that it concerns the employees of the organisation (ibid., 70). As such, the method for measuring the *perceived identity* therefore also concerns interviewing a *"representative set of employees"* in relation to the attributes that they find most pertinent for the organisation (ibid., 70).

As it relates to the *applied identity*, it is said to concern the *"behaviors and initiatives"* of the organisation and the signals that these convey either consciously or unconsciously (ibid., 70). The measuring of this identity type is prescribed to be based on interviewing both external stakeholders, e.g. consumers, and internal stakeholders, e.g. employees (ibid., 88); an approach that was first proposed by van Rekom (1992, 1997; Rekom et al. 2006).

Lastly, there is the *projected identity*. This is said to concern the organisation's communication to both its internal and external stakeholders/audiences and the "*explicit*" and "*implicit*" signals that this communication conveys (Riel and Fombrun 2007., 70). The measuring of this type of identity is prescribed to be carried out by analysing the organisation's communications, which is said to include "*its online presentations, its financial statements, its social reports, newsletters, brochures, corporate advertisements, sponsorships, press releases, and executives speeches*" (ibid., 87). As further prescribed by Fombrun (1996), this is ideally carried out by way of content analysis to ensure that both the explicit *and* implicit signals that communicate corporate identity are covered (Riel and Fombrun 2007, 90; Fombrun 1996).

2.1.2.4. Putting corporate identity and the analysis approaches into perspective

Having covered the three approaches above from Melewar & Jenkins (2002), Balmer (2017), and Riel & Fombrun (2007) (cf. 2.1.2.1. Melewar and Jenkins' Corporate Identity Construct; 2.1.2.2. Balmer's continuum; 2.1.2.3. Riel and Fombrun's identity types), it is clear that they have a few things in common.

To start, they all present and include several fields of study in their explanations for, and measurement scales of, corporate identity. In these three approaches, four distinct themes are identified, and these are found to concern: 1) behaviour, 2) communication, 3) corporate culture, and 4) markets or market conditions.

In terms of the first point, '*behaviour'*, Melewar and Jenkins' (2002, 83-84) have their 'behaviour sub-construct' which is focussed on the internal stakeholders and goings-on, while Balmer (2017, 1484-88) focusses on both the internal and external stakeholder behaviour. Riel and Fombrun (2007, 70; 88), too, show an interest in the 'behaviour' aspect in relation to his point on *applied identity*, which focuses on the behaviours and initiatives of both the internal and external stakeholders of the organisation.

As it relates to '*communication'*, Melewar and Jenkins' (2002, 81-83) *communication/visual identity* sub-construct cover this aspect with a focus on the controlled and uncontrolled, internal and external stakeholders' communications; an idea that both Balmer (2017, 1480-82) and Riel and Fombrun (2007) support, further adding that communication may carry both explicit and implicit signals (ibid., 70).

The communication aspect will be expanded upon later (cf. 2.1.3. The interplay between corporate identity and communication).

'*Corporate culture'* is found in Melewar and Jenkins' (2002, 84) *corporate culture* sub-construct which concerns the underlying intentions, ethos and values, beliefs, motivations, etc. of the organisation, which are items that Balmer (2017, 1478) consider corporate identity traits, and which Riel and Fombrun (2007, 70; 82) consider the constituents of the *desired identity* and the idealised picture of the organisation.

Lastly, in terms of '*markets or market conditions'*, Melewar and Jenkins' (2002, 81; 85) *market conditions* subconstruct cover this concept, arguing that it may ultimate affect the corporate identity,

a view that Balmer (2017, 1478) supports as he considers these as corporate identity traits that may distinguish and impact the organisation.

These four, especially the communication, behaviour, and the corporate culture, are controllable aspects, and they imply that the organisation has a certain level of control over its corporate identity and how it is expressed. Corporate identity can thus also be considered mainly a managerial construct (Kitchen et al. 2013, 265) as opposed to a consumer construct, though it certainly is formed through the interaction between the organisation and its stakeholders. Further, both *behaviour* and *communication*, as covered above, indicate a focus on the stakeholders of the organisation, whether it be internal or external stakeholders. As the term 'stakeholder' seems to refer to both internal and external stakeholders in relation to corporate identity, it can aptly be defined as:*"[The individuals who] directly or indirectly affect or are affected by the firm's activities."* (Maignan and Ferrell 2004, 4). As it relates to stakeholder theory, it is argued that organisations have a certain level of responsibility to its stakeholders (Maignan and Ferrell 2004, 4), not only in terms of corporate social responsibility, but also in terms of corporate financial performance (Lee 2007). Organisations can therefore be argued to have a vested interest in facilitating relationships with its stakeholders.

Based on the fact that these three approaches all include multiple fields of study to cover the concept of corporate identity, it is therefore argued that they all follow the idea that corporate identity is a multidisciplinary concept. They therefore align with this thesis' view of corporate identity (cf. 2.1.1. The distinction between corporate and organisational identity).

These approaches have helped us put into context what constitutes and affects corporate identity, and thereby what should be focussed on in order to determine an organisation's corporate identity, and it has led us to the choice of theory used in this thesis, which will be presented later on (cf. 2.2. Corporate identity and Social Media).

Ultimately, these three approaches were all deselected for use in this thesis. This is mostly due to the intensive approach and requirement for, or reliance on, full access to the organisation, its internal stakeholders, decision makers, consumer data, and more to determine the true values, motivations, purposes, attitudes, etc. of the organisation This information is either not easy to come by, or it is even unavailable for third parties. It is, however, fully acknowledged that all three of these approaches could lead to some interesting findings, and they could certainly provide an intricate insight into an organisation's corporate identity.

2.1.3. The interplay between corporate identity and communication

As mentioned previously, this thesis acknowledges and adopts the view that corporate identity is a holistic, multidisciplinary concept that concerns the various elements that communicate something about the organisation. To further specify, as it concerns a multidisciplinary field of research, this thesis is concerned with the external communication and behaviour from the organisation on social media (cf. 2.1.1. The distinction between corporate and organisational identity).

As it is believed that corporate identity is a multidisciplinary field of research, it is only natural that interplay exists between corporate identity and its constituents. This thesis mainly draws inspiration from the academics mentioned previously (Balmer and Gray 2000; Devereux et al. 2000; Gray and Balmer 1998; Kitchen et al. 2013; Melewar 2003; Melewar et al. 2005; Riel and Fombrun 2007) and adopts the view that corporate communications is a constituent in this multidisciplinary field.

Gray and Balmer (1998) have proposed an operational model on the workings of corporate identity. The model shows that corporate identity is expressed through corporate communication, which, in turn, creates both corporate image and corporate reputation. The model further shows that the created corporate image and reputation informs and affects both the corporate communication and identity. This, again, shows that the corporate identity concept is adaptive by nature (cf. 2.1.1. The distinction between corporate and organisational identity).

The operational model (Figure 2), as proposed by Gray and Balmer (1998), is shown below.
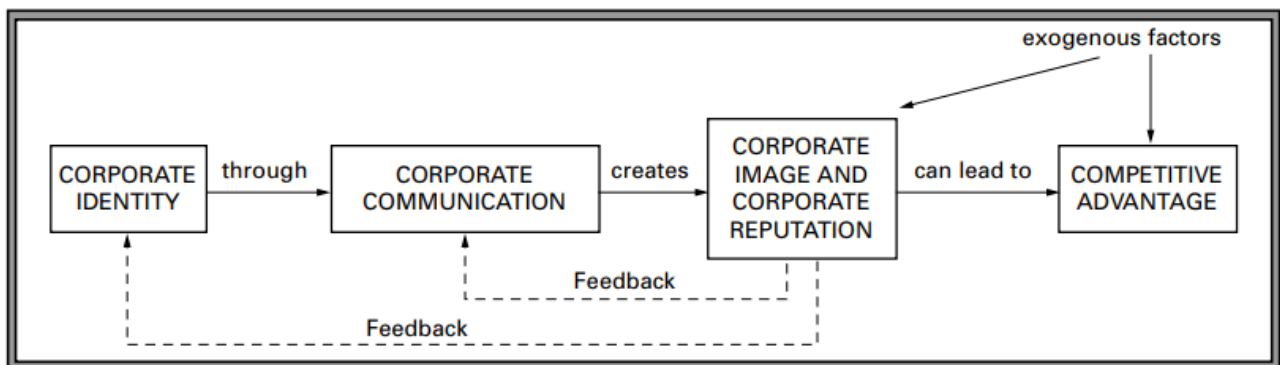
(Figure 2: *Operational model for managing corporate reputation and image (Gray & Balmer 1998, 696).*

It is thereby believed by Gray and Balmer (1998) that corporate communication is an expressor of corporate identity. This is further clarified, as it is stated that "*Corporate communications is the aggregate of messages from both official and informal sources, through a variety of media, by which the company conveys its identity to its multiple audiences or stakeholders*" (ibid., 696). Corporate communications is hereby said to encompass all the messaging that the organisation communicates to its stakeholders, who acts as the primary receiver (Simões et al. 2005). It can thus be managed, at least to a certain degree, by the organisation, and it can therefore be considered a sort of management tool, e.g. to further create or strengthen the relationship with stakeholders (Kitchen et al. 2013, 274).

This view is further supported by Riel and Fombrun (2007), who believe that identity is rooted in communication, stating that *"Companies reveal their identities through verbal messaging"* (ibid., 65, 68). Devereux et al. (2017), too, supports this and adopts the view that corporate identity is expressed by the organisation, and that everything communicates (ibid., 112). Further, Melewar et al. (2005), like Gray and Balmer (1998), have proposed a model of the components of corporate identity, which shows that corporate communication, consisting of both controlled and uncontrolled communication, informs and affects the corporate identity (Melewar et al. 2005, 62-63).

Therefore, to clarify, this thesis adopts the view that corporate communication functions as an expressor of corporate identity.

2.2. Corporate identity and social media

This section will briefly explain corporate identity and social media as a term, and thereafter how it is related to each other.

There is no perfect definition of corporate identity, since there are a lot of different variables in play. However, the majority of definitions define corporate identity as what makes the company unique compared to others, and this includes aspects such as; communication, behaviour, strategies. One thing that is agreed upon is that corporate identity is something every single company possesses. It does not matter whether it is a small or large company, since every company is unique in some kind of form (Devereux et al. 2017, 111; Melewar 2003; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu 2006). Another aspect that should be mentioned in relation to corporate identity is that it is dynamic and adaptive (cf. 2.1.1. The distinction between corporate and organisational identity). Even corporate identities change slightly over time as a company has to adapt to new changes (Devereux et al. 2017, 112).

Social media on the other hand, can be defined as:

"*a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content*" (Devereux et al. 2017, 113; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, 61).

Social media is of interest to companies and organisations, since it has created new advertising opportunities, and made ways to express themselves on these platforms, and to form connections with their stakeholders (Devereux et al. 2017, 110; Bruce and Solomon 2013, 307-8). Another reason for adopting social media is because of the widespread use of social media by the public and stakeholders, who are the target of companies. This is one of the reasons marketing departments keep exploring social media for new ways to uniquely brand the company (Devereux et al. 2017, 113).

One of the ways corporate identity and social media can be seen as interrelated is by looking at how social media has forced companies to change strategies online. Even though social media gives companies the tools to be more creative, it also changes the power dynamic. Social media gives stakeholders more power to affect companies by having a platform to complain about, and thereby impact, the company, and this may ultimately affect the identity of the company (Devereux et al. 2017, 114; Aula 2010). This is one of the obstacles that companies have to deal with. Even with the pressure from stakeholders, the company needs to maintain a strategy that forms the corporate identity they want and seek (Devereux et al. 2017, 114-115; Fournier and Avery 2011; Bruce and Solomon 2013).

As this thesis is concerned with examining the external communication of organisations on social media, Devereux et al.'s (2017) approach to analysing corporate identity is applied in the analysis of the two case-organisation's communication and engagement on social media. Devereux et al.'s (2017) approach consists of five stages, namely: 1) *Social media adoption*, 2) *Choice of platform(s)*, 3) *Choice of content*, 4) *Stakeholder engagement*, and 5) *organisation interaction* (ibid.). The five stages will be presented in the following.

2.2.1. Stage one – Social media adoption

The first point is *social media adoption*, which relates to the organisation's choice of and motivations for adopting and incorporating social media (Devereux et al. 2017, 115-118).

It is stated that "*the actual existence of an organization would communicate something about its identity.*", and social media is a platform through which an organisation can communicate its identity (ibid., 115). Further, the choice of adopting and using social media grants the organisation's stakeholders access to its history, communication, and identity on the medium, and therefore allows for a more accessible view into and understanding of the organisation (ibid., 115-116). There are several ways for an organisation to be represented on social media, whether it be through its official accounts, the personal and/or corporate accounts of its employees, through parody accounts, or word of mouth, e.g. through general discussion (ibid., 116). The organisation's adoption of social media, and its manifestation on the platform, changes depending on the use-choice, i.e. whether it be for internal and/or external use. The motivations for internal use could be e.g. to promote and improve corporate culture and therefore corporate identity, while the motivations for external use could be forming and strengthening customer relationships, reaching new potential customers, optimising Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), or creating and/or facilitating discussion (ibid., 117-118). The adoption of social media is part of an organisation's strategy, and six general motivations for adopting social media are identified, namely *"social media growth and popularity, its viral capabilities, the presence of competitors on social media, headquarters' social media strategy, and cost reduction pressures"* (Devereux et al. 2017, 116). In terms of marketing, the motivations would be "*promotion and branding, Customers Relations Management (CRM) and service recovery, marketing research, and retailing and e-commerce.*" (Devereux et al. 2017, 117; Tuten and Solomon 2014).

2.2.2. Stage two – Choice of platform(s)

The second point, *choice of platform(s),* concerns the choice of platform(s) that the organisation has adopted, the effect it has on corporate identity, and the objective of using the specific platform(s) (Devereux et al. 2017, 118-120).

Six different types of social media platforms have been found to exist, namely "*collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia), namely, blogs, content communities (e.g., YouTube), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life)*" (Devereux et al. 2017, 118; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Social media platforms are further exemplified as including "*social networking platforms, video sharing sites, microblogging, and business networking sites*" (Devereux et al. 2017, 118; Whiting and Williams 2014). Social media platforms, though often sharing similar features, have their own characteristics which dictates the form of content the organization can put out, and the type of interaction it can have with its stakeholders. The organisation's expression of identity can therefore take different forms depending on the platform (Devereux et al. 2017, 119).

2.2.3. Stage three – Choice of content

The content posted on social media is a catalyst for promoting engagement between the organisation and its stakeholders. The *choice of content* is therefore an important one to make as the success of the social media initiative largely depends on it (Devereux et al. 2017, 120). There are four distinct points worth considering when making or examining the choice of content (Devereux et al. 2017, 120).

The first is the '*Why*' of creating content, and it relates to the strategy set forth by the organisation and the purpose behind the initiative. As mentioned previously (cf. 2.2.1. Stage one - Social media adoption), there are several reasons for creating content, and examining the motive gives an insight into the organisation, its strategy, and its corporate identity (Devereux et al. 2017, 120-121).

The second point is the '*Who*' which concerns examining or deciding who should create content for the organisation (ibid., 121). There are three distinct types of content, the first of which is *created* content, which refers to content created specifically by the organisation. This type of content is a direct indicator of the organisation's personal identity (ibid., 121). The second is *curated* content, which refers to content created by and shared from other third-party sources. Curated content gives an indication of the "*information, content, and stories that the organization identifies with* […]"

(ibid., 121). Lastly, there is *co-created* content, which relates to content created in co-operation with a third party. This type of content creation is therefore a mix of both *created* and *curated* content (ibid., 121). The 'Who' of content creation gives an indication of the organisation's identity, and the groups, users, and thoughts that the organisation aligns with (ibid., 121).

The third and fourth point of creating content is the '*What'*, which refers to the form of content and what it contains (ibid., 122-123). The choice of content can express both the characteristics of the organisation, as well as signify its identity, personality, values, and the groups it aligns itself with. Content can take many forms and combinations hereof, and these characteristics are expressed through the chosen language, whether it be written or spoken, and the visual aspect of the content (ibid., 122-123). It is further stated that organisations can be anthropomorphised through social media posts showing or indicating identity (ibid., 123).

The last point is the *'When'* of content creation, which relates to the timing of social media posts and reacting to relevant events in a timely manner (Devereux et al., 2017, 123). The timing of social media posts can impact both crisis management and the popularity of posts, and it may signify the level of support for causes and events (ibid., 123).

2.2.4. Stage four – Stakeholder engagement

As it relates to *stakeholder engagement* and their interaction with the organisation, it can indicate characteristics of the organisation's corporate image and of its reputation. It further gives an indication of the organisation's corporate identity (Devereux et al. 2017, 123). The level to which external stakeholder engagement represents corporate identity depends on the level of stakeholder involvement in the organisation. The stakeholder engagement, and its effect on the organisation, and its identity can be determined on the basis of the level of engagement and the nature of said engagement (Devereux et al. 2017., 123).

There are two types of stakeholder engagement this; the first concerns a hyper-involved, tribal approach where the external stakeholders are considered a part of the organisation and therefore representative of the organisation's corporate identity. In this category, external stakeholders may act as co-creators (ibid., 123-124; Bruce and Solomon 2013; Theunissen 2014). In the second type, a differentiation is made between internal stakeholders, who exclusively represent the organisation's corporate identity, and external stakeholders, to whom the organisation strictly communicates. Here,

the interplay between these two entities serves to partly define the organisation's corporate identity (Devereux et al. 2017, 124). The organisation can further be identified by the level of engagement of its stakeholders, i.e. the amount of likes, comments, shares, and followers it has on social media (ibid., 124).

2.2.5. Stage five – Organisation interaction

As it pertains to the fifth point, *organisation interaction*, two themes are identified. The first theme is concerned with determining the organisation's reaction to stakeholder engagement, and the second is concerned with the organisation's interaction with other users. Determining the organisation's reaction to engagement and its interaction with stakeholders on social media can further indicate the characteristics of the organisation's corporate identity (ibid., 124).

As it pertains to the first theme, there are two main ways for an organisation to react to stakeholder engagement on social media, namely through responding to comments made by stakeholders, and through further publishing of content. The reaction to engagement can both form and be formed by its strategies (ibid., 124), e.g. as determined in previous points (cf. 2.2.1. Stage one - Social media adoption; 2.2.2. Stage two - Choice of platform(s); 2.2.3. Stage three - Choice of content).

In terms of the second theme, the manner in which the organisation interacts with other users can signify corporate identity, e.g. through its commenting, responding, sharing, and co-creating and the manner in which these take place (Devereux et al. 2017, 125). As mentioned previously (cf. 2.2.4. Stage four - Stakeholder engagement), the organisation's identity may be created through the interaction with other users. Moreover, it is stated that "*It is through interaction that any agreement on "what the organization is" is reached*", and this interaction can occur between both the organisation and other users on the social media platform (Devereux et al. 2017, 125; Olins 2014, 69).

3.0. Brand personality

3.1. Literature review

3.1.1. Brand personality in perspective

By some authors, brands are believed to possess personality and can be considered a *"character, a partner and a person"* who can be described by use of human characteristics (Aaker and Fournier 1995, 393; Ingenhoff and Fuhrer 2010, 86). Aaker (1997) originally created a framework that sought to explain and be a representation of a given brand's associated personality traits, and she expressly defined brand personality as *"the set of human characteristics associated with a brand."* (ibid., 347).

Aaker's (1997) framework was largely inspired by and adapted from psychology and the "Big Five" personality model, otherwise known as the "Five Factor Model", and was supplemented by both marketing-based personality scales as well as original research work (ibid., 349). The original Five Factor Model used in psychology constitutes five factors that are said to be representative of most personality traits possessed by people. The five factors in the model consist of: *Neuroticism*, *Openness to Experience*, *Extraversion*, *Agreeableness*, and *Conscientiousness* (Roccas et al. 2002, 789). Though the conceptualisation of human and brand personality traits share certain similarities, as stated by Aaker (1997), they ultimately differ in their formation due to the differences in the experience and perception of either (ibid., 348; Epstein 1977; Park 1986; Plummer 1985). Brands can be experienced not only by their own direct actions, communications, and associations, but also by their indirect expressors such as their product attributes, price, and style. Through her research and adaptation of the Five Factor Model, Aaker (1997) concluded that five distinct brand personality factors and related facets exist, which comprises the *Brand Personality Scale*. The scale is consistent of the following factors (in italics) and related facets (in brackets): *Sincerity* (down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, cheerful), *Excitement* (daring, spirited, imaginative, up-to-date), *Competence* (reliable, intelligent, successful), *Sophistication* (upper class, charming) and *Ruggedness* (tough, outdoorsy) (Aaker 1997, 352). Three of these dimensions, *Sincerity, Excitement,* and *Competence*, are based on and relate to dimensions found in the original Five Factor Model, namely *Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion* (Geuens et al. 2009, 99). Aaker's (1997) five factors and 15 facets are said to be viable personality descriptors for all brands, and the five factors and 15 facets were further tested for validity, reliability, and generalisability, with the end-conclusion being that they were both valid, reliable, and generalisable (ibid., 353).

Due to it being a recent development of a generalisable brand personality scale, Aaker's (1997) model has seen much attention by academics, and it has been the basis for both numerous testing across different settings, such as industries and cultures, as well as adaptations of the original scale to specific contexts (Kumar 2018). In turn, it has also received criticisms pertaining to both the generalisability/applicability of the scale in specific contexts, as well as criticisms pertaining to methodological issues in the development and testing of the scale (ibid. 222).

Examples of applicability issues include Smith et al. (2006), who tested Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale and concluded that the scale was not entirely applicable for membership-based organisations. Likewise, Schade et al. (2014) and Sung et al. (2015) found that the scale was not generalizable for, respectively, sports club brands and luxury brands. The scale had also received criticism for not being applicable across cultures (Azoulay and Kapferer 2003), and it was later found by Aaker, Benet-Martinez, and Garolera (2001) that Aaker's (1997) original Brand Personality Scale was not applicable in either Japan or Spain and that it needed further adaptation to fit the contexts (Aaker, Benet-Martinez, and Garolera 2001), and Chu and Sung (2011) also experienced applicability issues with the use of the scale in a Chinese context. These last examples, claiming cultural applicability issues, are likely to be explained by the fact that Aaker's (1997) original scale was developed and tested in the USA. Cultural aspects are therefore not included in the tested "generalisability" of the scale. Other authors have pointed out that Aaker's (1997) framework is not generalizable at the individual level as it relates to differences between brands and consumers, as it is stated that the framework *"does not seem to generalize to situations in which analyses are required at the individual brand level and/or situations in which consumers are an element of differentiation"* (Geuens et al. 2009, 97; Austin, Siguaw, and Mattila 2003). Based on the issues pointed out above, there seems to be incongruence, in terms of validity and generalisability, between the original test of Aaker's Brand Personality Scale and newer tests that have occurred in specific industries and cultures. To end, Aaker's (1997) definition of brand personality, which has inspired numerous later academic works, has also been questioned, as it is considered "too loose" (Geuens et al. 2009, 97). Some authors argue that this has resulted in the inclusion of brand personality dimensions that are not related to personality traits in Aaker (1997)-inspired academic works (Geuens et al. 2009, 99; Azoulay and Kapferer 2003; Bosnjak, Bochmann, and Hufschmidt 2007).

However, despite these criticisms, Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale has, undeniably, been an important piece of literature in terms of exploring the concept of brand personality (Kumar 2018; Geuens et al. 2009). It has also been a large inspiration for several other authors and their development

of personality scales. Geuens et al. (2009) have compiled a list of scales that are largely inspired by Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale, as well as the Big Five human personality dimensions which Aaker originally drew inspiration from. Here, the authors identified fifteen different brand personality scales in which the included dimensions resemble either Aaker's (1997) and/or the Five Factor Model's dimensions (Geuens et al. 2009, 99). All the above serves to show that the Five Factor Model and Aaker's (1997) adaptation hereof has been significantly influential in the development and research on brand personality. It is also clear that Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale is not the only piece of literature that has sought to cover the concept.

Ultimately, Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale was deselected for use in this thesis due to the previously mentioned criticisms of the theory, though it must be acknowledged that Aaker's (1997) work has been a significant inspiration in finding relevant material. Other scales and measures were considered. As an example, Davies et al. (2017) found that, based on 21 different studies, three personality dimensions were universally relevant, namely *Sincerity, Competence,* and *Status*, and they further proposed that 13 additional dimensions may be relevant in specific contexts (Davies et al. 2017., 123). Though Davies et al.'s (2017) analysis shows very interesting and relevant results, with dimensions that can seemingly be applied to specific contexts, it is not fitting for the analysis performed in this thesis. It never was meant as a tool for measuring brand personality, as stated by the authors themselves (ibid., 123), and due to its pliability, in terms of determining what dimensions are relevant, it would not allow for cross-cultural and/or cross-industry analysis and comparison.

Another example is George and Anandkumar (2018) who produced their *Product Brand Personality Scale* with which they sought to cover the personality dimensions pertaining to product brands specifically. The scale is consistent of seven personality dimensions, *Happy, Youthful, Reliable, Adventurous, Competent, Accountable,* and *Appeal*, and 26 related items in total. The scale was tested for reliability in an Indian context, which proved its applicability and reliability. This scale, too, was deselected as this thesis is not concerned specifically with product brands. Further, since the scale was purely tested for applicability and reliability in an Indian context, its overall generalisability is dubious.

Last to mention, Geuens et al. (2009) developed a brand personality scale that sought to address the issues found with Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale, i.e. issues with generalisability and application across different cultures, industries and brands, and the inclusion of non-personality items. The authors developed a five factor scale consisting of *Responsibility, Activity, Aggressiveness,*

Simplicity, and *Emotionality*, with 12 related items in total (Geuens et al. 2009, 103). The scale is also consisting of personality items only (ibid., 97), thereby keeping to the belief that brands possess personality and can be described using human characteristics (Aaker and Fournier 1995, 393; Geuens et al. 2009, 97; Ingenhoff and Fuhrer 2010, 86). The scale was developed based on the analysis of 12,789 respondents and 193 brands, and it ultimately proved reliable and applicable in the USA, and nine tested European countries, namely France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, and Turkey (ibid., 97, 105). This scale and Geuens et al.'s (2009) work have been the basis for a part of this thesis' theoretical framework and analysis, and it will therefore be expanded upon later on (cf. 3.2. Geuens, Wejters & Wulf - A New Measure of Brand Personality).

Evidently, a wide variety of scales have been developed, and though, seemingly, some common ground can be established, e.g. Davies et al.'s (2017) analysis of 21 different studies mentioned previously, incongruence still exists in terms of the amount and sort of applicable brand personality dimensions. This is further evidenced by George and Anandkumar (2018) who, in their examination of the field of research, further identified several different brand personality structures containing between three and up to 12 personality dimensions or factors (George and Anandkumar 2018, 378; Ambroise et al. 2004; Bosnjak et al 2007; d'Astous and Boujbel 2007; Ekinci and Hosany 2006; Kaplan et al. 2010; Murphy, Benckendorff, and Moscard 2007; Murphy, Moscardo, and Benckendorff 2007; Smith Graetz, and Westerbeek 2006; Sweeney and Brandon 2006).

Based on the previously mentioned differences in both the amount of personality dimensions, as well as the purported inapplicability of Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale in specific cultural and industrial contexts, there seems to be an apparent disagreement in terms of 'what constitutes brand personality', and 'which personality dimensions are applicable' between authors. It seems to be the case that creating a wide-ranging, generalisable and reliable scale is quite a challenge, and that certain contexts are likely to demand more refined and specific scales tested within the specific context. This would also explain the motivation for developing context-specific scales, e.g. Venable et al.'s (2005) scale for non-profit organisations, d'Astous and Levesque's (2003) retail-specific scale, Smith et al.'s (2006) adaptation of Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale for membership-based organisations, Valette-florence and Barnier's (2013) print media personality scale, or Chu and Sung's (2011) brand personality dimensions for China.

3.1.2. The effects of brand personality

Looking past the disagreements and developments that occur in the testing and researching of the brand personality phenomenon, it is evident that organisations both possess and express personality traits through their communication and expression of self (e.g. Aaker 1997; Arora & Stoner 2009; George and Anandkumar 2018; Ha 2016, 530; Venable et al. 2005). Brand personality is said to be formed through the perception of the brand, and it can be said to be *"formed and influenced by any direct or indirect contact that the consumer has with the brand"* (Aaker 1997, 348). Brand personality would therefore seem to be expressed through loads of different channels of communication, e.g. as shown by Ingenhoff and Fuhrer's (2010) who concluded that companies' brand personality often is communicated through their mission and vision statements on their web sites (ibid., 83). In this case, it can be argued that there is a resemblance between brand personality and corporate identity in the sense that they are formed through the communication and interaction with stakeholders (cf. 2.1.3. The interplay between corporate identity and communication). Due to the unique properties that the expression of personality can hold, it can further be argued that brand personality serves to distinguish an entity. It is therefore possible to draw parallels between corporate identity and brand personality as they both serve to create and express unique identifiers.

The evident existence of brand personality has led to further research on the matter, which has shown that brand personality, when applied strategically, can provide a strategic and competitive advantage for brands (Arora & Stoner 2009, 273; Ang and Lim 2006; Goldsmith and Goldsmith 2012, 11). The possession of a distinguished brand personality has several benefits.

It has been suggested that brand personality may positively impact consumers' preference for and consumption of a given brand's products or services, and that it may positively impact both loyalty and trust (Fournier 1994; Sirgy 1982). Brand trust, specifically, has shown to be "*a key mediating variable*" between brand personality and its purported effects of establishing brand loyalty (Ha 2016; 537). Establishing brand trust, i.e. through brand personality, is therefore deemed a necessity for maintaining and creating strong relationships with consumers. Further, brand personality may also positively impact the consumers' likeability of the brand, which, in itself, leads to both *"a greater amount of positive association [...,] increased interaction interest [...] and increased brand contentment"* (Nguyen et al. 2013, 777). Overall, brand personality is said to positively impact the relationship between the brand and its consumers, e.g. as evidenced by Becheur et al. (2017) who found that brand personality directly affects consumers' relationship with the brand . This is argued to be due to the existence of congruity, or matching, between a given consumer's and brand's ideals,

values, and personalities, as well as the fact that consumers can use brands that they identify with as expressors of their personality and identity (Maehle et al., 2011; Maehle and Shneor 2010, 44; Malhotra 1988; Sirgy 1982). To add, Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer (2013) found that the positive aspects of possessing a strong brand personality are more effective for more mature brands as opposed to younger brands (ibid., 205). It was also found that the brand name may affect the personality traits created and possessed by the brand (Klink and Athaide 2011, 109).

Based on the above, it is indicated that it is pertinent for brands to establish and express a strong brand personality. Brands can use their personality to distinguish themselves as a brand and to set themselves apart from competitors, as well as create a platform with which its consumers can identify themselves with. This is also an argument for, and an example of, targeting one's marketing. The more specific a brand's personality is, and the more it fits the brand's target segment, the more likely its consumers are to engage with the brand (Goldsmith and Goldsmith 2012; Maehle and Shneor 2010). Due to its similarities with corporate identity in terms of creating unique identifiers for an entity, it is further believed by this thesis that brand personality serves to distinguish a company, and therefore that it serves to create a unique corporate identity.

3.2. Geuens, Wejters & Wulf – A New Measure of Brand Personality

Geuens et al. (2009) have developed a theory on brand personality measures which consists of five distinct *brand personality traits* (BPT) and twelve associated personality items. These form the *brand personality scale* (BPS). The theory was developed in response to previous research and theories on brand personality measures that included traits not pertaining strictly to personality traits, i.e. Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale and subsequent work based hereon (Aaker 1997; Azoulay & Kapferer 2003; Bosnjak et al. 2007; Geuens et al. 2009, 97). The goal of the theory was to make a BPS resembling a human personality scale. According to Geuens et al., this would simplify the process of translating "[…] *consumer research into the most appropriate actions to create the "right" brand personality in view of their target group*" for brand managers (Geuens et al. 2009, 98).

To specify, as there are several different understandings of what brand personality is and entails, Geuens et al. use the following definition of brand personality as presented by Azoulay & Kapferer (2003, 151): "*Brand personality is the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands*" (Geuens et al. 2009, 97).

Geuens et al.'s BPS was developed based on personality items from both Aaker (1997) and relevant personality scales based on "The Big Five" (cf. 3.1.1. Brand personality in perspective) (ibid., 100; Costa & McCrae 1992; Mervielde 1992; Saucier 1994). Based on extensive testing of the personality items, Geuens et al. (2009) landed on five distinct BPT, namely 1) *Responsibility*, 2) *Activity*, 3) *Aggressiveness*, 4) *Simplicity*, 5) *Emotionality*. Each BPT includes between 2-3 associated personality items that may describe a given brand's personality trait(s). There are 12 personality items in total divided among the five BPTs. The five BPTs and their associated personality items are presented below, and a clarification of this thesis' understanding of and view on each specific trait will be presented in a later section (cf. 3.2.1. Clarifying our position on and understanding of the five BPT).

The first BPT is *Responsibility* (Geuens et al. 2009, 102), which is also known as "Conscientiousness" in human personality studies (John & Srivastava 1999). It concerns the personality traits and characteristics used to describe a responsible, reliable brand. Therefore, it further includes the personality items "*down to earth*", "*stable*", and "*responsible*" (ibid., 102).

Activity, which is the second BPT, is also known as "Extraversion" and refers to traits and characteristics that relate to the BPT and its associated personality items. *Activity* includes the personality items "*active*, "*dynamic*", and "*innovative*" that can be used to describe a brand personality (ibid., 102).

The third BPT, *Aggressiveness*, refers to characteristics that may seem and be interpreted as aggressive. This BPT therefore contains the personality items "*aggressive*" and "*bold*" as potential descriptors for brand personality (ibid., 102).

Simplicity is the fourth BPT, also known as "Openness", and concerns the personality items "*ordinary*" and "*simple*" that may act as descriptors or reference points in relation to a brand's personality (ibid., 102).

Emotionality is the last of the five BPTs, and its associated personality items are "*romantic*" and "*sentimental*" (ibid., 102).

The five brand personality traits and their associated items are further shown in Figure 3 below.
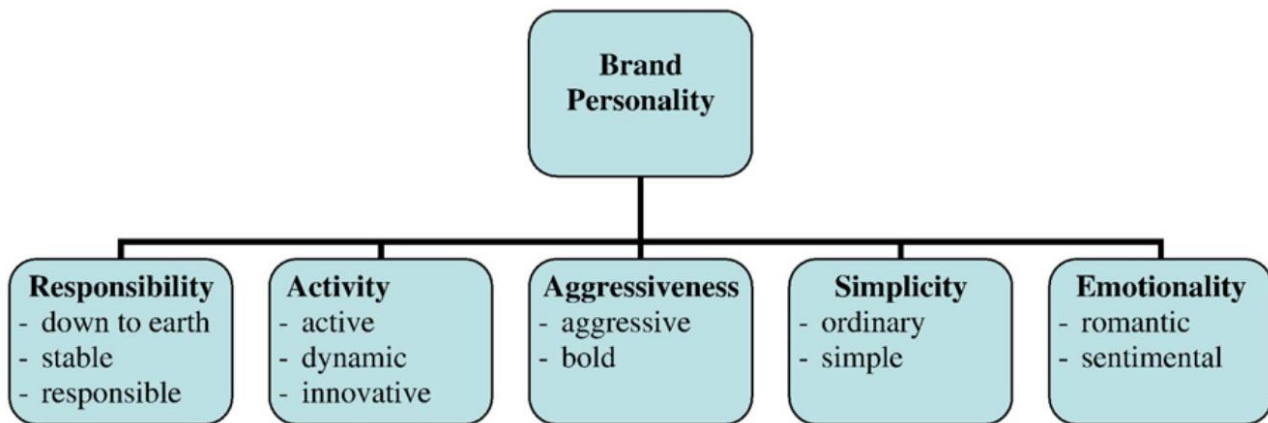
(Figure 3: The five brand personality traits and the associated items (Geuens et al. 2009, 103).

For Geuens et al., an additional objective of testing and producing the brand personality scale was to test its generalisability. The scale was tested for reliability and generalisability across both separate individuals/respondents, brands, product categories, and countries (Geuens et al. 2009, 98). The results showed that the scale is reliable and is applicable for studies across both competitor brands, brands in different product categories, and for studies across cultures (ibid., 104-106).

3.2.1. Clarifying our position on and understanding of the five BPTs

In the following, this thesis' understanding of Geuens et al.'s (2009) five personality traits will be clarified. The five BPTs will function as part of the coding manual used in the analysis performed in this thesis. In order to maintain transparency, and to establish a systematic approach, a clarification on this thesis' understanding of the five BPT must be made.

The first BPT, *Responsibility* (items: down to earth, stable, responsible), is understood as relating to all things "responsibility" and therefore concerns *"moral, legal, or mental accountability",* *"reliability",* and *"trustworthiness"* (Merriam-Webster E 2020). As the analysis performed in this thesis concerns organisations, this also includes organisational/corporate responsibility, which can be defined as: "*context-specific organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders' expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance*" (Aguinis 2011, 858). This BPT will therefore be understood as referring and relating to actions and expressions that show the company as being responsible and/or showing either moral, legal, or mental accountability. Further, as it relates to the BPT's items *down to earth* and *stable*, actions or

expressions that show the company as being unpretentious, practical, and/or steadfast also indicates the *Responsibility* trait.

The second BPT, *Activity* (items: active, dynamic, innovative), is understood as relating to actions or expressions that either show the company's activities, or shows the company as taking action, being active, productive, and/or innovative (Merriam-Webster A 2020). Due to the inclusion of the item *dynamic*, which can express positivity and energy (Lexico 2020), we also see *Activity* as being expressed through a positive and/or energetic attitude.

In this thesis' view, *Aggressiveness* (items: aggressive, bold), as a personality trait, is seen as being expressed by behaviour that exhibits "aggressive" tendencies (Merriam-Webster B 2020), i.e. actions or expressions exhibiting aggressive behaviour, self-assertiveness, and/or initiative. Further, as the BPT contains the related item *bold,* actions or expressions that show impudence, presumptuousness, and/or fearlessness (Merriam-Webster C 2020) are also considered expressors of the personality trait *Aggressiveness.*

Next, there is the BPT *Simplicity* (items: ordinary, simple). Here, actions or expressions that either show candor, directness, and/or lack subtlety, or shows the company as being simple and/or ordinary (Merriam-Webster G 2020), are considered expressors of the trait *Simplicity.*

Lastly, there is *Emotionality* (items: romantic, sentimental). This trait is seen as being expressed through actions or expressions that show emotion, feelings, sentiment, and/or romantic gestures (Merriam-Webster D 2020).

4.0 Other theoretical considerations

In this thesis we have decided to include two sections that explains and gives the reader an overview of how these two topics impact what we are researching. The first one is regarding "culture" and how it affects communication. The other topic is regarding how targeting consumer groups is connected to social media marketing. However, first we will explain culture's effect on communication.

4.1. Culture's effect on communication:

As mentioned, this section of our project is not an area we will be using as a specific theory, but more to give the reader an overview of how this topic affects what we are researching. We also wanted to include this topic to make it known that we, in our research process, were aware that culture also

impacts business' communication and conduct over i.e. social media. Even though we will not look any further into it, we still wanted to give a brief explanation for how this relates to our research.

Terpstra and David defined culture as follows:

"Culture is a learned, shared, compelling, interrelated set of symbols whose meanings provide a set of orientations for members of a society..." (Kale 1991, 19).

An individual will in the process of learning these symbols within a culture, also create a mindset of a "highly selective screen" that accepts some stimuli and rejects others. These symbols are shared by people who belong to one culture, and it enables them to communicate fluently because of the mutual understanding of these symbols. The lack of experience and understanding of these symbols within a certain culture is also why cross-cultural communication can be a difficult practice (Kale 1991, 18-19). This is because the symbols vary from country to country, and it can even be different within a single country depending on its size. Geert Hofstede identified four (later increased to six) dimensions of culture, which are the following: *individualism*, *power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, long-term orientation*, and *indulgence*. We will not get into each of these dimensions, but the idea was that these dimensions would help account for different cultures' belief systems and behavioral patterns around the world (ibid. 19-21). These differences among countries affect the people as well. One of the major impacts culture has on people is on how information is received, stored in the mind, retrieved, and used to make decisions. This aspect, for example, highly impacts how marketing departments decide to promote and sell its products or services. This means that the milieu of a society can greatly impact how communication is used. Something that works in one country might fail in another. These dimensions do not only affect the national culture, but also the business culture and corporate culture within a country. This means that there are a lot of different aspects in a society that influence how communication is being executed. To take a brief look at the process of how marketing communication is done: At first the seller selectively uses information to influence the buyer to favor the seller's product or services. This means that the seller's chosen content and communication style is vital in the process, and among other things culture-based. The same applies for how the buyer receives information, and thereafter makes their purchase decisions. These aspects are all affected by culture (ibid. 21). This is also one of the challenges when dealing with marketing communication that operates in several countries. People are generally not aware of how these cultural factors work as they are not evoked by conscious thought. As a consequence the seller has to understand and be aware of these cultural differences, before choosing communication style

and content. If these cultural differences are ignored by the seller, it can lead to misunderstandings for the receiving buyer. The seller could transmit unintended meanings to the buyer, which, in the worst cases, can lead to failure with the overall marketing communication strategy, and, in other cases, offend the buyer (Kale 1991, 22-24). This can in turn impact a company's sale numbers, or even negatively influence buyer's perception of a company's products or services. This means that companies that operate internationally, and in diverse cultures, have to be aware of these cultural factors. Companies that operate mostly nationally, or in countries with similar cultures, would come across less of these cultural challenges. These companies would, in-turn, be able to be a bit more risky with their communication content and style, since the lack of cultural differences would make them able to operate more freely, and with less restrictions. We can also look at culture's effect from another person's point of view. Edward T. Hall describes low-context to high-context communication. In low-context communication most of the information of a message is embedded in the transmitted explicit code. However in high-context communication most of the information is in the physical context, or embodied in the person. This also means that very little is in the coded, explicit, and transmitted part of the message (Hall 1976, 90-92). Therefore, in high-context communication it is required that the receiver of a message understands the context, which can include knowing about the message sender's history, behavior, body language, social status, tone of voice, etc. If the receiver is unaware of some of these areas, the message might be misunderstood or lead to confusion. Because a lot of the information is in the physical context or embodied in the person, the actual transmitted message will usually also be fast. As a consequence of this a lot of the transmitted message will be implicit. So it is required that the receiver is able to read these little cues if communication in high-context countries is to be successful (ibid. 91-93). The reason Edward T. Hall's low-context and high-context continuum is being mentioned is because it can highlight what can go wrong if international companies are unaware of these aspects in their communication over e.g. social media, and how it might lead to confusion by switching between low- and high-context cultures in communication without considering the differences at play. We included this section because we also wanted to highlight that this is an aspect that affects the large companies when they use social media to communicate with stakeholders.

4.2. Social media marketing and targeting consumers

This section about social media marketing, and its connection to targeting consumers, will also only be used to give the reader an overview of our consideration, and we will explain how it relates to our research. This topic is also not an area we will go in-depth with, but will be referred back to since this can also explain some of the decisions companies make on how social media platforms are used to targeting consumers. This is an aspect that is found in the case of both AirBnB and dbrand in their use of social media platforms, so we believe it would be useful to get a very brief explanation of how this is connected. We included this topic since it is relevant, and so it is also known that we, in our research process, were aware how this topic impacted what we were researching.

The manner in which a company communicates over social media will impact, or be impacted by, who they are targeting as its consumers. Marketers in a company usually have two ways of engaging over social media. Either they use existing social media, or they create their own. Creating its own social media is resource intensive since this includes creating their own websites from scratch. This is why using existing social media sites is easier, since a lot of consumers already have existing profiles on these sites, and gathering an audience is therefore easier and faster. These sites include sites like: Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Google+, Instagram, Reddit and etc. (Armstrong et al. 2017, 559-560). As with all other things in life, social media presents advantages and challenges. One of the advantages of using already existing large social media sites is that a company (marketers) can create and share tailored brand contents that targets and attracts the consumer groups they are interested in. Having these profiles online can also create brand communities, where consumers would be able to engage with the company. Social media is interactive, which is another advantage companies gain by using them. This gives the customers the ability or option to communicate and share information, experiences and ideas within the brand community or the company in general. Communication over social media is immediate and can be timely, depending on how fast a company reacts online. This makes it easier for companies to inform and engage with its customers, but at the same time also makes it easier for customers to get involved with a brand by proposing ideas or possible new products they would be interested in (ibid. 560-561). The challenges in using social media can vary as well. Using social media effectively is a common problem marketers come across. However the most difficult challenge, in using social media platforms to communicate and engage with its consumers, is that the company never has full control over how its posted content will be perceived. Consumers have most of the control over social media content. A company might have well-intended intentions with a social media campaign, but consumers can hijack this, and turn it

around to something negative instead. As soon as it is online, it will be difficult to contain the spread of this, especially if a post goes viral. Some consumers will take a company's idea and try to tear it apart or find what is malicious intent in it. This is why some companies are very cautious in terms of what they post online to make sure it is not offensive to anyone (Armstrong et al. 2017, 560-561). The usage of social media platforms varies from one company to another depending on need, but it can be something as simple as posting messages, or announcing ongoing promotions of products on a given platform, or even create interest and discussion among followers with simple pictures and videos (ibid.).

However, before companies can post anything on its social media profiles, they have to know which customer group they will be targeting in the market. This means a company has to select those customers it can serve well and profitably. The companies target these unique target groups by communicating content that attracts these groups. It should also be mentioned that it is a common misconception that a company should choose to serve as many customers as possible. By trying to serve everybody, the company might end up serving nobody, since they do not cater to or create interest among any specific customer segment in the market. This means in the end that the majority of people would identify themselves with the posted content, since it does not target anyone (Armstrong et al. 2017, 10). However, some companies still make use of mass marketing, where they do not target a specific segment in the market. These types of companies usually design a strategy that focuses on what is acceptable or appealing among the majority of people in society (ibid. 253-254). When the targeted customers have been chosen, a company will have to decide how they want to serve them. This also means how the company will differentiate themselves from competitors, and how they position themselves in the market. This decision is vitally important in whether a company is successful or not. A company/brand's value proposition is the set of values and benefits it ensures to deliver to fill the needs of the customers. The value proposition should therefore also differentiate the company from competitors in some way. How a company differentiates itself from others will also be noticed on how the company communicates, and what interests the company identifies with. Besides these factors, the content the companies post will eventually communicate a lot about what it is focussing on, and who its target group is in society (Ibid 259-262).

5.0. Methodology

In the following, we will present our methodology. We will first present our philosophy of science, which has led our research. We will then present our research design, which consists of a multiple-case study, after which we will present the two case-companies. This will be followed up by an introduction to the main method of analysis, which is content analysis, and, lastly, an introduction to our survey research design and method.

5.1 Philosophy of science

5.1.1. Introduction for use of philosophy of science

This introduction of philosophy of science is written so the reader will have an overview of how we approached this thesis. Usually we decide on a single approach to projects we have made in prior semesters. However, in this thesis we have decided to blend two approaches. The hermeneutic approach is the main way we have decided to take up this thesis. This is primarily because we will be doing a qualitative analysis based on interpretation of this case we have set up. In order to facilitate the production of an objective analysis, it is therefore vital that we are aware of how we, as researchers, process information, and how our individual past will affect the results. Additionally we have decided to use social constructivism as a secondary approach. We have decided to do so because the phenomena we will be examining and processing in this thesis are socially constructed. So conventions and behaviours in these fields we, as individuals, are shaped to follow should be critically viewed. This way the social constructivist approach can be seen as a useful philosophical position in the context of our thesis. How we use the two different approaches will be explained in the following sections, where we dig deeper into each one of them.

5.1.2. The Hermeneutics approach

"Hermeneutic", a word that comes from the Greek word "hermeneuein", which can be translated into "to interpret" (Collin & Køppe 2015, 227). The core in this science can also be seen as the interpretation of something that has meaning. This is also why two of the most important concepts in the Hermeneutics approach are "interpretation" and "meaning". Therefore, the Hermeneutics can be seen as part of a science that seeks an in-depth understanding of human activities and the consequences of these activities (Collin & Køppe 2015, 225). The approach has been in constant development since the 1500s. Initially, the approach was only used in relation to religious and legal

texts. However, later on, the Hermeneutics approach was expanded to interpret all kinds of texts as the Age of Enlightenment started to dominate society. It was also expanded to include the authors of the texts, and their intention, opinion and feelings pertaining to, and expressed through these texts. This is how the psychological and spiritual context of a given situation was added to the approach. This meant that the reader of a given text would in a sense be able to relive what was written by the author. By the end of the 1800s, the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey expanded the approach once again to how we know it today, where it includes all kinds of human activities and the consequences of these (ibid. 228-229).

The Hermeneutic Spiral

For as long as people have been trying to interpret texts, there seems to be an agreement that the process of understanding and interpreting a text has a spiralling motion. This means that the smaller parts of a text affect the entirety of the whole text's meaning. Therefore, depending on which parts a reader focuses on, the entirety of the text's meaning might change as the interpretation and understanding of the text develops (ibid. 231-232). According to Hans-Georg Gadamer the hermeneutic spiral consists of three phases which concern the *"pre-understanding, understanding, and post-understanding"* (Gadamer 2017, 255-256, translated from Danish), and these three phases are a constant in the interpretation and creation of one's understanding of both the text and the subject, and this interplay is thereby called the *Hermeneutic Spiral* (ibid, 255-256).

Hans-Georg Gadamer believed that when an interpreter was interpreting a text or situation, this individual, like everybody else, had a pre-understanding of the text. This includes knowledge about the context of when the text was written, the author's intention, and general knowledge about the topic the text is regarding. This pre-understanding phase is different from person to person, since everybody has their own unique understanding of everything. This phase of pre-understanding serves to explain the phenomenon or subject before the interpretation even begins (Heldbjerg 2003, 83-86). If we relate this phase to our thesis, our pre-understanding would be our existing knowledge about AirBnB and dbrand, and our knowledge on why and how consumers engage over social media. In this phase, the knowledge would be different for both researchers in this project, since we would both most likely have come across these topics in our own different way. However we have decided to focus more on the understanding & post understanding phase where it can be explained directly how, and which areas we came up against that were new, compared to what we knew in our pre-understanding.

The *understanding* phase concerns the interpretation and understanding of the text, and context, of the topics that the researcher has gathered and researched. In this phase, the researcher must be open to the texts meaning, as this will allow him/her to further understand the text that he/her is presented with, the context in which it is placed, and the meaning behind the text. It will ultimately allow the researcher to compare these understandings of the topic with his/her pre-understanding, which will allow for further reflection and interpretation on the topic (Gadamer 2017, 255-256). The *understanding* phase has therefore begun when we, as researchers, started researching the topic(s) at hand, e.g. in terms of corporate identity, brand personality, and stakeholder engagement, which is ultimately reflected in e.g. our literature reviews (cf. 2.1. Literature review; 3.1. Literature review), our collection of empirical data (cf. 5.4.1. Data collection; 5.5.1. Survey empirical data), and in our selection of case-companies to analyse. Throughout this phase, our new understandings of the topics were kept in mind and compared to our pre-understandings. This continued on throughout our examination of the empirical data as we gained new understandings of the research topic at hand. In order to keep an inventory and overview of our new understandings, we included recaps after our analyses of the companies in relation to i.e. their corporate identity and brand personality, and it should further promote transparency of our methods of analysis, which is important in content analysis as it is based in interpretation of text (cf. 5.4. Content analysis method).

The post-understanding phase is when the interpreter is finished with playing his/hers pre-understanding knowledge up against the new gained knowledge in the understanding phase. When this is done, the interpreter will stand back with a new understanding of a given text and context as a whole. It varies from person to person how much the new understanding has changed. Knowledge and understandings the interpreter had prior to researching will have changed in some way to a new post-understanding. This post-understanding will from then on be the interpreter´s new pre-understanding. This is why the hermeneutic spiral can be seen as never-ending. People and interpreters will always change their understandings over time as new information is processed (Heldbjerg 2003, 85-87). Our post-understandings are ultimately seen in the discussion of our findings, and in the conclusion and answer to our problem statement (cf. 7.0. Discussion; 8.0. Conclusion), and this further reflects our new understandings of the subjects that we have researched.

5.1.3. Social constructivist approach

All phenomena in society are granted meaning or made by human perception according to social constructivism (Holm 2013, 137). The reality that everybody lives in is created together through a common understanding of the world, and through our (manner of) interacting with each other. A phenomenon can be considered socially constructed when it is not naturally created, but instead collectively created through people. This means that these phenomena that are socially created are also determined and affected by culture. This is because, "*culture is a learned and shared set of symbols whose meanings provide a set of orientations for members of a society*" (Kale 1991, 19). Thus, these learned and shared symbols in different cultures will impact the way phenomena are socially created. A phenomenon can be viewed differently depending on the social group, or culture, that sees and experiences it. However because all phenomena are anthropogenic, it is also possible to alter or change the perception of said phenomena (Collin & Køppe 2015, 419-220). In society, no phenomena remains constant, and they are continually evolving. Everything keeps changing as we, as humans, change and adapt with time. Therefore, when a social constructivist approach is used, it can be seen as the study of humans, and how our perception of reality creates the world we all live in, and finally how interactions with one another also affect the same reality. As a consequence of this, some phenomena are varied, and even vastly different, in different cultures. This is all due to our differences in thought and (manner of) interacting with one another. If that is the case, then these different orientations around the world should also affect the perception of reality, and how people interact with one another. This is a way to understand that anthropogenic phenomena are created through the collective of society (Collin og Køppe 2015, 420-421). In social constructivism, it is not only phenomena that are anthropogenic but also behaviour. Certain conventions in society dictate how an individual is supposed to act or behave in a given situation with the rest of society. An example that illustrates this can be a business meeting. The formality of how you address one another, or behave around one another at this business meeting can vary a lot depending on which set of symbols or orientations a person is surrounded by in a society. In this sense, the behaviour can be seen as socially constructed by the people. Something is considered "natural", when most people in the world consider a phenomena or behaviour as being common. However as mentioned before this can be altered over time. Something "natural" can be deconstructed and change meaning. This means that the perception of something old can mutually or collectively be changed to a new meaning, if the people surrounding the phenomena can agree on it (ibid., 420). By using the social constructivist approach in regards to our thesis, we will be aware and get to question phenomena or behaviour that

might be considered common. This way we can critically review AirBnB's and dbrand´s behaviour, and the possible conventions that may exist and present themselves in our research of corporate identity, personality traits in content, and stakeholder engagement on social media. The social constructivist approach can thereby be viewed as a useful philosophical position to understand and maintain awareness of phenomena, and conventions that are anthropogenic in the areas we have examined. There might be certain expectations from international companies on how they should behave or act over social media, since they are communicating to the public or a large consumer group. These expectations are socially agreed upon, which means they can be seen as conventions. The readers or followers on the international companies' social media profiles will most likely have a lot of power in how these conventions are built up. They get to decide what is considered acceptable communication or behaviour. If they cross any of these collectively agreed upon conventions, the followers and readers will most likely communicate their dissatisfaction through their engagement with the company. Having researched the phenomenon concerning the corporate expression of identity and personality, and how this ultimately affects stakeholder engagement, we have found that companies express different identities and personalities, and the perception and reception of these, from its audiences, are vastly different as indicated by their manner and likelihood of engaging with the companies.

5.2 Research design

This thesis has applied the multiple-case study research design, which is a variation of a case study design. A case study can be defined as "*a methodological approach that involves the in-depth exploration of a specific bounded system, utilizing multiple forms of data collection to systematically gather information on how the system operates or functions.*" (Linda 2010, 2). The "*bounded system*" can refer to several different entities, e.g. individuals, social groups, single entities, or cultures, and a case study therefore allows for an in-depth investigation of an entity which should provide a rich understanding of a given phenomenon. On the other hand, a multiple-case study is said to refer to "*case study research in which several instrumental bounded cases are selected to develop a more in-depth understanding of the phenomena than a single case can provide.*" (ibid., 2). A multiple-case study therefore allows the researcher to better investigate a phenomenon in different contexts. The

multiple-case study is also said to share similarities with the comparative research design as it allows the researcher to reflect and compare the phenomenon and its occurrence in several different contexts (Bryman 2012, 74).

This thesis is interested in examining how the communicated corporate identity and brand personality affects stakeholder engagement on social media. In order to study this phenomenon, we have selected two cases, i.e. the companies AirBnB and dbrand, that belong to widely different contexts, i.e. the industry and culture(s) that they operate in. Examining the phenomenon in two widely different contexts should allow us to compare and reflect on the similarities and differences between the two. This, in turn, should thereby provide a better insight and understanding of the relationship between the communicated identity and personality of a company and the resultant engagement on social media.

It is also possible to differentiate between three types of case studies, as they can be either exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory (Yin 2002, 5-6; Chmiliar 2010, 3). Therefore, to specify, this thesis is an explanatory multiple-case study as it intends to explain *how* the communicated identity and personality of a corporation affects stakeholder engagement.

Last to add, the different research strategies that can be applied in a study are also not mutually exclusive, and it is therefore possible to mix several strategies (Yin 2002, 9). To this point, despite using a multiple-case study approach to research the phenomenon at hand, this thesis has also included a survey. This is done with the intention of gaining a better insight into the general engagement behaviour on social media and how it is affected by companies' communicated brand personality.

5.3 Company and case description

5.3.1. dbrand

Dbrand is a tech company that was founded in 2011 in Toronto, Canada. The company makes and sells customizable vinyl skins and cases for a large variety of electronic devices. However the company is mostly known for selling skins and cases for laptops and mobile phones. It should also be noted that dbrand is a 100 percent online tech company, without any retail stores in any countries (Smith 2018). This means the company sells the skins and cases online, and then ships the products to customers all over the world (dbrand A 2020). It is the innovative web interface that makes dbrand unique. It allows the customers to get a live preview from millions of possible custom skin combinations. This innovative experience on dbrand's website is what the company builds its business on (Pantheon 2020). dbrand is very active on social media, which includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Reddit (Facebook B 2020; Instagram D 2020; Twitter D 2020; YouTube B 2020; LinkedIn B 2020; Reddit 2020). On all platforms but Twitter, dbrand has a single profile to represent the company. Even though dbrand is an international company that sells products all over the world, it still maintains only one profile for the different social media platforms, unlike, for example, AirBnB, which we will expand upon in the following.

5.3.2. AirBnB

AirBnB is a company that offers an online marketplace for people to arrange or offer accommodation, and tourism experiences. All of this is offered on AirBnB's website. The company was founded in 2008 in San Francisco, USA (AirBnB 2020). The basic idea is that people can create an account, and use it as a host or as a traveller. Hosts rent out rooms, apartments or even houses for travellers from all over the world. Whereas travellers book the accommodation they find suitable during their travels. The website has millions of different accommodations available from all over the world, which makes AirBnB very international. The company helps hosts and travellers with any questions online, but at the same time the hosts and the travellers can communicate safely, if they have questions regarding anything (Press association 2018). AirBnB's success is built online on its website, where all the accommodations are offered. However, even though everything AirBnB offers is online, the company still has 31 office locations across 21 countries in the world (Craft 2020). AirBnB is also active on several social media platforms, which includes Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Youtube

(Twitter A 2020; Instagram A 2020; Facebook A 2020; LinkedIn A 2020; Youtube A 2020). However, AirBnB operates differently on social media platforms than i.e. dbrand. AirBnB only has one Facebook and YouTube account, but on Instagram and Twitter AirBnB has several different accounts. On Twitter it seems the company has a unique account in each country they offer accommodation within, whereas the US version is the account with most followers, and most activity. Beside these accounts, they also have two Twitter accounts called "Airbnb Citizen" and "AirBnB Help", where technical problems are communicated, and where people can ask questions to possible issues they have (Twitter B 2020; Twitter C 2020). On Instagram they have one main account, called @Airbnb, and 2 smaller accounts, which are called @airbnbexperiences and @airbnbdesignteam (Instagram A 2020; Instagram B 2020; Instagram C 2020). However these are rarely used. Unlike the other social media platforms, the Instagram accounts are usually more focussed on the visual posts, which the three Instagram accounts also indicate.

The difference in activity on the different social media platforms also indicate that Twitter is the company's most used platform. Unlike AirBnB's main Instagram account and Facebook account, there are generally posted something every day on the company's biggest Twitter account. The Twitter account was also created back in 2008, the same year as the company was founded (Twitter A 2020). Whereas the company's Facebook account was created in 2015 (Facebook A 2020). This could indicate that AirBnB placed more focus on Twitter in the beginning. All in all, it can be argued that AirBnB has a slightly different way of using its social media profiles than compared to dbrand, because, among other things, the many countries they operate in. However we will explain more about this in our analysis section (cf. 6.1.1. Social media adoption).

5.4 Content analysis method

This thesis employs content analysis as its primary method of examining its empirical data. Content analysis, in its original quantitative form, serves to examine, categorise, and quantify elements in text-based material by way of predetermined categories. These categories and elements can be consistent of e.g. words, phrases, meanings, ideas, or themes, and the significance of these ideas, or themes, are then measured through their "*frequency of appearance*" in the analysed content (Scott 2006, 40). Content analysis has been considered a quantitative research method for quite some time (ibid., 40; Bryman 2012, 289-90), but it has also been recognised for its use as a qualitative research method (Figgou and Pavlopoulos 2015, 545). As a qualitative research method, content analysis functions as

an interpretive approach that seeks to derive meaning from the text, context, and the underlying meaning of the textual data through the use of categorisation (ibid., 545). Qualitative content analysis has therefore been defined as:

"An approach to documents that emphasizes the role of the investigator in the construction of the meaning of and in texts. There is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of data and on recognizing the significance for understanding the meaning of the context in which an item being analysed (and the categories derived from it) appeared." (Bryman 2012, 714).

As it relates to this thesis, content analysis will be applied in two distinct ways. Firstly, a five-stage content analysis of AirBnB and dbrand will be performed in accordance with Devereux et al.'s (2017) five stages of social media use, which are said to all contribute to the formation and understanding of the organisation's communicated corporate identity (cf. 2.2. Corporate identity and social media). The analysis of these five stages will be carried out through content analysis of the two organisations' social media pages. Therefore, to specify, the focus in this analysis will be on deriving meaning from the content found on their social media sites, i.e. in terms of how they use social media, as well as how and what they communicate as it relates to their corporate identity. The selected content will be coded using the five aforementioned corporate identity elements (cf. 2.2. Corporate identity and social media), which function as the coding manual for this part of the analysis. A coding manual is defined as a *"statement of instructions to coders that outlines all the possible categories for each dimension being coded"* (Bryman 2012, 710), and thus this selected content will only be coded using these categories. Any findings will be expanded upon and exemplified in the analysis in order to facilitate a proper understanding of the arguments presented. The analysis of both AirBnB's and dbrand's content and social media use will be performed and presented in stages, i.e. Devereux et al.'s (2017) five stages presented previously (cf. 2.2. Corporate identity and social media). Thus, the analysis of AirBnB's *Social media adoption*, which is the first stage, will be followed by an analysis of its *Choice of platform*, which is the second stage, and so on. In the third and fourth stage of this analysis, we will analyse the stakeholder engagement and the organisation interaction (cf. 2.2.4. Stage four - Stakeholder engagement; 2.2.5. Stage five - Organisation interaction). In relation to this, we specifically focus on the external stakeholders of the companies, more specifically the so-called 'followers' that exist on their social media platform. Other users with which the companies interact with are also included. In terms of measuring their engagement, this will be based on the amount of 'likes' that the companies, and their content, receives. We will further include analysis of the

stakeholders' created content that relates to the two case-companies. We believe that this is a fair representation of stakeholder engagement, as it indicates a direct interest in the companies and the content that the companies have published.

Secondly, a content analysis of 50 selected Twitter posts, from both AirBnB and dbrand, will take place. These 50 posts will be coded on the basis of Geuens et al.'s (2009) five brand personality traits and 12 related items (cf. 3.2. Geuens, Wejters & Wulf - A New Measure of Brand Personality; 3.2.1. Clarifying our position on and understanding of the five BPTs). These are the predetermined categories that will be identified and coded for in both organisations' Twitter posts, and these will also function as the coding manual for this part of the analysis. It may also be the case that the selected content relates to several of the codes, which is not unusual in qualitative content analysis (Figgou and Pavlopoulos 2015, 545), and it will therefore be coded for all relevant traits. Furthermore, any content that does not express or relate to any of these categories will be discarded. This is due to the fact that they do not follow the coding manual set in place by this thesis, and, as such, are deemed irrelevant for this analysis. Last to mention, the frequency of appearance of these brand personality traits and corporate identity traits in both organisations' Twitter content will be summed up in order to get an insight into their general expression of traits.

In addition, the amount of engagement, i.e. the amount of likes, that each personality trait has received will also be summed up to get an impression of the relation between the expressed personality traits and their associated engagement rate.

As it relates to content analysis as a method, it is also important to mention that proper content analysis should be conducted systematically and objectively, i.e. the analysis should be performed in a consistent, transparent, and replicable manner (Bryman 2012; 289-90). This is to ensure that personal bias is suppressed as much as possible, and it should also ensure that the work is replicable by other researchers – not only in terms of making a complete replication of the research work presented in this thesis, but also to ensure the proper applicability of the method in other areas, i.e. in different contexts (ibid., 289-90), which could serve to broaden the understanding of the phenomena presented in this thesis. In order to ensure. Thus, the coding manual and systematic approach of the analysis should ideally provide a guide that would allow other researchers to replicate the analysis and reach the same conclusions as presented in this thesis.

To sum up, the purpose of using content analysis in this thesis is to derive meaning from the two organisations' social media content with the intention of identifying and gaining an understanding of

their use of social media, their expression of corporate identity and brand personality traits, and the resultant stakeholder engagement.

5.4.1 Data collection

As mentioned above, the analysis of both companies was divided into two parts. In order to facilitate the content analysis of AirBnB's and dbrand's use of social media and what it communicates in regard to their corporate identity, we gathered content from their social media profiles, specifically Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Reddit. In terms of determining the two companies' choice of content, stakeholder engagement, and organisation interaction, as it relates to our corporate identity theory, we further chose to focus on their primary profile on Twitter (cf. 2.2. Corporate identity and social media). This allowed us to go more in depth with the specific platform and their behaviour and interaction hereon. The content was gathered from these sources as they are deemed representative of the organisations' direct external communication to its stakeholders. It is therefore also a direct representative source of content from which we can derive meaning as it relates to their expression of corporate identity. The content that was gathered and analysed in relation to AirBnB and dbrand's expression of corporate identity can be found in the appendix (App. 3., p. 146 - 171; app. 4., p. 172 - 206).

In order to facilitate the content analysis of AirBnB's and dbrand's brand personality traits, as expressed through their social media communication, content was gathered from their Twitter profiles. Here, 50 Twitter posts expressing one or more of the five brand personality traits (cf. 3.2. Geuens, Wejters & Wulf - A New Measure of Brand Personality) were identified and retrieved. This was done for both organisations, and we had therefore gathered 100 posts in total. As these were gathered based on their relevance to the research question, this type of sampling can be considered "*purposive sampling*" (Bryman 2012, 418). In regard to sampling in qualitative research, there is no agreed-upon amount of samples that *should* be included. (ibid., 425). It entirely depends on the field of study, and all that matters is that the sampling is deemed large enough for the study at hand, and/or that theoretical saturation is reached (ibid., 426). As this thesis seeks to determine what brand personality traits are expressed *currently* by the two organisations, this sample size is deemed sufficient. Last to add, in order to get a true representation of both organisations, we did not include Twitter content that the organisations had retweeted or shared.

The reason we chose the social media platform Twitter was due to the amount of activity from both companies on this platform. Both AirBnB and dbrand frequently post on Twitter, whereas on their other social media profiles, like Facebook, the activity was less frequent. Dbrand only has one Twitter account, @dbrand (Twitter D 2020), which represents the organisation as a whole on this platform, and it was therefore easy to select the dbrand twitter account that we wanted to study. AirBnB was, however, a different case since it has several Twitter accounts that represent e.g. the different countries that the organisation operates in. We chose the primary account, @AirBnB (Twitter A 2020), which is also representative for the American market, because it has the most followers, and was therefore the biggest account, which meant it was also the most representative for the AirBnB brand. In addition, we were interested in the American consumers, and this account was therefore most representative. Our survey was also was directed towards the American market, though we will explain more about the survey in section (cf. 5.5. Survey research).

We also wanted to analyse both companies' current brand personality traits and corporate identity, as well as the resulting engagement rate. This would have been very difficult to conclude on if we were to gather posts that were several years old from both companies. The posts were not randomly selected, but instead planned. We selected the relevant material in chronological order from their Twitter accounts, since we had to take the organisations' current amount of followers into account.

We wanted to know more about the current engagement rate in relation to the current number of followers. This was another reason why we could not take posts from several years ago, since the amount of followers were drastically different back then, and therefore would affect our results. We wanted to know more about the engagement rate according to the current number of followers, which is why we had to take the newest posts from each company´s Twitter platforms. The 50 Twitter posts we retrieved from AirBnB´s Twitter platform were taken in the period of time from: October 30, 2019 till May 1, 2020. The 50 Twitter posts we retrieved from DBrand´s Twitter account were taken in the period of time from: November 29, 2019 till May 1, 2020. We chose 50 Twitter posts from each, since we believed this was a very accurate representation of the engagement rate from followers and the public in 2020 on each of the companies' Twitter platform. Other than that we also believed the 50 newest posts from both companies' Twitter platforms would more accurately portray/explain/show their current communicated brand personality traits and corporate identity, in contrast to posts from several years ago. As was explained previously (cf. 2.1.1. The distinction between corporate and organisational identity; 3.1.2. The effects of brand personality), brand personality and corporate identity are bound to change and adapt with time, and it would therefore be

a misrepresentation of companies' current brand personality and corporate identity if we selected Twitter posts from several years ago. It is likely that the companies' brand personality and corporate identity were different back then. To specify, we are only interested in the companies' current brand personality and corporate identity and its effect on the current engagement rate.

5.4.2 Data processing

As mentioned, the analysis of both companies' will be conducted in two parts. In the first part of the analysis, the companies' social media content will be analysed and coded in accordance with Devereux et al.'s (2017) five stages, or categories, of corporate identity (cf. 2.2. Corporate identity and social media). These five categories therefore make up the coding manual for the first part of the analysis. In this part of the analysis, the thesis has sought to derive meaning from the companies' social media content, in terms of what is expressed, as it relates to corporate identity. Our analyses of AirBnB and dbrand's corporate identity, as based on the coded content among others, are then presented in the analysis section of this thesis (cf. 6.1. AirBnB's corporate identity; 6.3. dbrand's corporate identity).

In the second part of the analysis, the two companies' social media content was analysed and coded in accordance with the five brand personality traits and their 12 related items as identified by Geuens et al. (2009) (cf. 3.2. Geuens, Wejters & Wulf – A New Measure of Brand Personality). This part of the analysis focuses on examining the expressed brand personality traits in the companies' social media content. Thus, in this second part of the analysis, these five categories will make up the coding manual for deriving meaning from the analysed content. Any Twitter posts that did not express one of the five personality traits was discarded, as they would not be relevant for the thesis. The coding of both parts of the analysed content was facilitated through the use of the qualitative data analysis software NVivo12, as it allowed us to easily code and structure our analysed content. The analyses of AirBnB and dbrand's communicated brand personalities, as based on the coded Twitter content, are further presented in the analysis section of this thesis (cf. 6.2. AirBnB's communicated brand personality traits; 6.4. dbrand's communicated brand personality traits).

We have presented the analysed and coded material in our appendix (app. 1., p. 3-67; app. 2., p. 68-145; app. 3., p. 146-171; app. 4., p. 172-206).

5.4.3 Replicability, validity, and considerations

In social research, it is a criterion that the researcher assesses their research work and the validity and replicability of the data and conclusions that they present (Bryman 2012, 46; 389). Replicability can be facilitated by writing out a salient explanation of the research procedures performed in the study. By being transparent with one's procedures, it can help other researchers understand the concept and how the research has been carried out, which ultimately aids the replicability of the study (Bryman 2012, 47). Validity also concerns, among other things, the ability to generalise one's findings across other contexts (ibid., 47; 390). We will therefore present our thoughts on the validity and replicability of this research work below.

Now, to put the following considerations into perspective, we will reiterate: this thesis seeks to examine AirBnB's and dbrand's use of social media, how it expresses its current communicated corporate identity, and it also seeks to determine what brand personality traits they express through their social media communication and what the results are in terms of stakeholder engagement rate.

First of all, this thesis has sought to perform the analysis systematically, consistently, and objectively. It must, however, be acknowledged that qualitative content analysis is inherently interpretive (Figgou and Pavlopoulos 2015, 545). It must therefore be acknowledged that the act of coding, and text analysis, is based on the interpretation of the researcher. Though this thesis attempts to suppress personal bias as much as possible through its systematic methods of analysis, it must be acknowledged that *some* bias will always remain when interpretation is involved. It is therefore possible that other researchers may come to slightly different conclusions if a complete replication of this thesis' analysis was to be attempted.

In addition, although a clarification has been made on the five brand personality traits (cf. 3.2.1. Clarifying our position on and understanding of the five BPTs) as well as on the five elements of corporate identity (cf. 2.2. Corporate identity and social media), it must also be added that the understanding and analysis of these traits is based on the interpretation of both the terms and their application in the two case companies' communication. Other researchers may understand these terms and the application differently, and, thus, this may also impact a complete replicability of this thesis.

As it relates to our collection and analysis of the data pertaining to brand personality traits, i.e. the 50 Twitter posts from both companies, it must also be acknowledged that the picture(s) attached to almost every post may also have an effect on the amount of engagement that each post has received. In regard to this, it is argued that the pictures and their effects on engagement on each specific Twitter post is equalised by the inclusion of a larger amount of data in the analysis. To further explain: in one post, the attached picture may yield a significant amount of engagement, which would give the illusion that the personality trait, that is also portrayed in the post, is responsible for the amount of engagement. Relying on this single example to explain the relationship between a communicated brand personality trait and its resultant engagement, would therefore provide a false narrative. However, by including several different examples of posts communicating personality traits, the perceived effect on engagement of each specific picture should equalise, and the effects on engagement that the personality traits carry should be more apparent. This should ideally aid with the question of *causality* (Bryman 2012, 47), i.e. the question of whether the expressed personality trait *or* the specific picture in the post is the cause for the resultant engagement rate.

It must also be added that the data collected to analyse and determine what brand personality traits the two companies express in their social media was collected specifically from Twitter. In regard to this, it is important to note that this only represents one source of communication, and it could therefore be criticised as only being representative of the companies' communicated personality traits on *this specific platform*. However, as established previously (cf. 2.1.3. The interplay between corporate identity and communication), this thesis believes that a company's communication on one platform is still a representation of the company and that it still communicates something about the company.

It is also acknowledged that the amount of content that was analysed could be larger. However, the scope of this thesis is not to examine either company's whole history of communication as it relates to their expressed brand personality traits and corporate identity. The amount of analysed content is deemed sufficient for determining what DBrand's and AirBnB's communicated corporate identity and brand personality on social media *currently* consists of, and how this relates to the amount of engagement that they are getting. Thus, the selected content represents the companies' *current* communicated corporate identity and brand personality traits on social media. It is acknowledged, though, that the conclusion of this thesis likely would have been different if other content had been included.

Similarly, it is certainly likely that a larger quantitative analysis of several different brands across different industries and cultures could provide a fuller view and understanding of the general consumer engagement behaviour with different personality traits on social media. However, this thesis is not concerned with making vast generalisations in terms of the effects of brand personality and corporate identity on consumer behaviour on social media. As such, the amount of content selected and analysed in this thesis is deemed sufficient.

A last consideration to add is that the user demographics of the social media platform Twitter is represented by a specific split of people. This split is not necessarily representative of the demographics on other platforms or in real life. To add, we do not know what the demographic split of either of the companies' Twitter followers is. These two factors are yet another reason why this thesis is not interested in making vast generalisations. This fact will also be kept in mind when we reflect on the two groups of data that we have gathered, i.e. from the companies' social media content and from the survey, which will be elaborated on later (cf. 5.5. Survey research).

Twitter user's age groups are also very different, as you can see in the following bullet points:

- 11 per cent are between 13-17 years old.

- 24 per cent are between 18-24 years old.

- 28 per cent are between 25-34 years old.

- 21.9 per cent are between 35-49 years old.

- 15.1 per cent are 50+ years old. (Statista 2020)

This means the engagement rate of both companies' Twitter posts might be represented by a younger crowd. Another aspect that should be taken into consideration is the gender demographic. 34 per cent of all Twitter users are females, and 66 per cent are males (Omnicore agency 2020). Unlike Reddit, Twitter has a much larger demographic of males. These demographic numbers with age and gender should be in consideration when we reflect on the two groups of empirical data, since they might be representative of each other. Unlike with our web-based survey, we will not know the specific demographic groups of those who engaged with dbrand's and AirBnB's Twitter content. This can be considered a limitation, since we do not have access to that information on Twitter from each company.

5.5. Survey research

Surveys are today acknowledged as a great research tool to understand large groups and their opinions and behaviours. The concept and practice of accurately representing a large number of people by sampling information derived from a small number of people through surveys has found acceptance in most of the world (Rea and Parker 2014, 3). This means the goal in survey research is to allow us researchers to be able to generalise about a large population by only gathering data from a small portion of that population. This way, it can be seen as a fast way to understand a population's opinions or behaviours (ibid, 4).

We created our survey to understand the underlying motivations that cause American consumers to engage with content posted by companies on social media. Our sample was therefore a small portion of Americans. In this sense the results and answers, we retrieved from our survey, was a representation of American consumers. In order to reach the American respondents, we chose to post our survey in subreddits (subforums) on the online platform Reddit. We posted the survey in the following subreddits: /r/twitter, /r/socialmedia, /r/marketing, /r/samplesize, /r/askreddit, and /r/takemysurvey (Reddit B 2020; Reddit C 2020; Reddit D 2020; Reddit E 2020; Reddit F 2020; Reddit G 2020).

Additionally we posted the survey on our own social media profiles on LinkedIn, and Facebook to get more American respondents. This also means that our survey can be seen as web-based, since people are asked to participate through the internet. The web-based survey is seen as an effective way to reach respondents, and have several advantages, like giving the respondent the time needed to answer the survey in the privacy of their home or office (ibid, 12).We also constructed our survey to be short, so we increased our chances of having more people participating in it. The length of a survey can greatly influence whether or not people go through with it. Complex questions can, for example, take a lot of time to answer, especially if the respondent has to elaborate himself/herself on a lot of different topics. Complex questions can therefore result in making the survey perceived longer than it actually is (Rea and Parker 2014, 46-47). This is why most of our questions are simple, with multiple choice answers. An example of this can be seen in our final part of our survey. Here we have included ten Twitter posts that represent the five personality traits mentioned in Geuens' theory (cf. 3.2. Geuens, Wejters & Wulf – A New Measure of Brand Personality). These ten Twitter posts were not only selected from dbrand and AirBnB, but also from other companies. We did this, because we wanted two very clear examples of each of the personality traits (Activity, Aggressiveness,

Emotionality, Responsibility, and Simplicity). Geuens' theory had aspects which could be generalized towards different industries and businesses (cf. 3.2. Geuens, Wejters & Wulf – A New Measure of Brand Personality). This allowed us as researchers to use the examples from other companies in our survey. The respondents would then be asked to rate these ten examples on how inclined they were to engage with the post's content. We set it up like this, so we could compare the results from our web-based survey with our second group of empirical data, the 100 Twitter posts. It should also be noted that we wanted American respondents in our survey, because the second group of empirical data, we retrieved from dbrand's and AirBnB's Twitter platform, we also focused on retrieving answers from American respondents. We did it this way so there was accordance between our two groups of empirical data.

Most Surveys typically collect three different kinds of information from the targeted respondents, which are: descriptive information, behavioral information, and attitudinal information. Descriptive information is usually information or facts about the respondent, like age, income, education, where they live etc. Most surveys have descriptive questions in the beginning of the survey. "*These socioeconomic characteristics provide important information that enables the researcher to better understand the larger population represented by the sample*" (Rea and Parker 2014, 6). The behavioral information is retrieved in surveys, where the respondent's behavior is of interest to the researcher. This can be patterns in different contexts like; transportation, entertainment, or personal behavior. The last one is attitudinal information. This is the kind of information that is usually the focus point for most researchers through surveys. Attitudinal information is collected through questions regarding "[…] *the respondent's attitudes and opinions about a variety of conditions and circumstances*" (ibid., 6). In most surveys the researcher will collect all three kinds of information. This gives the researcher a better foundation, "*to fully understand the differential complexities of the population from which a sample has been drawn.*"(Rea and Parker 2014, 6).

In our own web-based survey, we initiated the survey with some descriptive questions in regard to age, gender, and state. We found this information relevant, since we had to understand who the sample represented, and at the same time be able to explain why certain groups of people were not included in our sample of respondents. After the descriptive questions, our survey is constructed to be very attitudinal oriented. We only have one question that relates to behavior, which comes directly after the descriptive questions. The rest of our survey is filled with questions that seek the opinion of the respondents. In this survey we were more interested in knowing what the respondents' attitudes and

opinions were regarding a variety of conditions and circumstances that we had created ourselves. These conditions and circumstances were all relating to what makes a person engage with companies or organizations on social media. We can thereby compare the results we get from the primary data we collected with our second group of empirical data from AirBnB´s and dbrand´s Twitter accounts. With this approach we get another perspective on our topic of research, and we therefore do not rely on empirical data from one single place. This way, the data from our web-based survey allows us, as researchers, to have a critical mindset towards the results we come across.

It was previously mentioned that the pictures attached to most social media content is likely to affect the amount of engagement that it receives (cf. 5.4.3 Replicability, validity, and considerations). In order to combat this same issue in the survey, a question was also added, after every exemplified Twitter post in the survey, which asked the respondents whether their motivation for engaging with the post would be due to the picture, the text, or a combination of both. By doing this, it should be possible to determine the weight of the picture on the resultant engagement rate (cf. 5.5. Survey research).

5.5.1. Survey empirical data

Throughout our thesis we have used both quantitative and qualitative empirical data to answer our problem statement. As we mentioned earlier the qualitative data comes from the combined 100 Twitter posts we retrieved on both dbrand's and AirBnB's Twitter accounts that showed brand personality traits. Our second group of empirical data comes from a web-based survey we have created, which we expanded on in the previous section (cf. 5.5. Survey Research). Here it will also be explained how, where, and when the survey was carried out. This data is our quantitative data, since this data would give us another perspective into what makes people engage with companies' content on social media. The results from this survey would give us numbers, and statistics regarding the underlying causes of what makes people engage. These numbers are only a sample in our survey, but they can still be used to represent how companies' personalities affect engagement with consumers. The findings and perspectives we have gained from the survey, is finally compiled and presented at the end of our analysis, after which it will be discussed in relation to our content analysis of the 100 Twitter posts, where it is further discussed whether the results support each other in any way. We should remember that statistics can be used to summarise our data, which means describing certain patterns, relationships, and connections. Statistics can in this sense be descriptive or inferential

(Bryman 2012, 161-163). This also means that the statistic can be used to make inferences about a broader group of people, or in our case make a comparison with our second group of qualitative data (Ibid 160). We should remember that the phenomenon we are looking at in this research is how companies' personality and corporate identity can affect engagement. In the end our two groups of empirical data should help us answer our problem statement.

6.0. Analysis

In the following, we will present an overview of how our analysis is set up. The introduction and analysis of each of the two case-companies, as it relates to their corporate identity and communicated brand personality traits, will be presented one after another, i.e. AirBnB, and all its relevant material, will be presented and analysed first, after which dbrand will be presented.

Our analysis is built up in five parts. The first part is an analysis of AirBnB's corporate identity, and all the coded content in relation to this part can be found in appendix 3.

The second part is an analysis of AirBnB's brand personality traits. The 50 Twitter posts we have analysed in relation to this can be found in appendix 1.

The third part is an analysis of dbrand's corporate identity, and all the coded content in relation to this can be found in appendix 4.

The fourth part is an analysis of dbrand's brand personality traits. The 50 Twitter posts we have analysed in relation to this part of our analysis can be found in appendix 2.

The fifth and last part of our analysis pertains to the web-based survey in relation to brand personality and engagement. The empirical data we have used and analysed in this final part of our analysis can be found in appendix 5. All of our findings will finally be discussed in section 7.0. Here, we will compare the results from our analysis of both companies, and discuss relevant differences and similarities between them, and what the effects of these have resulted in. To end, our findings will be concluded on in section 8.0.

6.1. AirBnB's corporate identity

The selected and analysed content can be found in the appendix (App. 3., p. 146-171). The specific text that is relevant for each individual point in this part of the analysis will be highlighted in the appendix, so it is clear what we are referring to. In the following we will be analysing AirBnB's corporate identity based on Devereux's five stages (cf. 2.2. Corporate identity and social media).

6.1.1. Social media adoption

We established in Devereux's theory that social media adoption refers to whether or not a company chooses to be active on social media, and if they were, what motivations were there for being on these social media platforms (cf. 2.2.1. Stage one – Social media adoption). AirBnB have accounts on many different social media platforms, i.e. Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and Youtube. This, we briefly explained earlier in our description of the company (cf. 5.3.2. AirBnB). How they use these different platforms and engage with followers and users on them also varies. Among all the accounts

they have on the same platform, and different platforms, the company only engages with followers on two accounts, the Facebook account, and their Twitter account called, "@AirbnbHelp"(Facebook 2020; Twitter C. 2020). It would seem, these two accounts are designated to helping travellers and hosts with issues they might have had with AirBnB. A majority of complaints and comments written in these two channels are followed with a response from AirBnB, which is not seen in any of the other accounts or platforms they are present on. AirBnB actively responds to comments on its other Twitter account @AirbnbHelp, too. On any of the other platforms or accounts AirBnB owns, the majority of comments don't receive any response. So it can be argued that these two accounts are for external use to strengthen customer relationships. In this sense it is interesting how AirBnB uses its different social media platforms. The company does not say directly what its strategy is with the use of social media, but there seems to be a pattern to how they adopt the different platforms. AirBnB exists on social media platforms through the company's own accounts, but this is extended to other accounts as well. The company uses influencers, or "associates" as AirBnB calls it, because of its viral capabilities, and to spread the brand on to the influencers' followers. On AirBnB's website, they have an associate program, where it is stated: "*Airbnb Associates earn money by promoting stays on Airbnb. If you love to share travel content with your audience, you could be a perfect fit.*" (App. 3.1.1., p. 146). This associate program shows that AirBnB wants to use social media for marketing as well by reaching new targets. However their social media marketing strategy goes further than that. In some instances AirBnB cooperates with celebrities around the world in relation to big events, where exposure is greatly increased. The company then offers these celebrities free stays at some of AirBnB's most expensive and extravagant properties. In return, the celebrities share a sponsored post with a picture from the amazing accommodation and mentions AirBnB along with the post (Mediakix 2020). Mariah Carey is one of these celebrities. Before a concert in 2015, she posted a picture of an AirBnB accommodation with the following text on instagram: "*Taking a break from #1toinfinity #beachtime @airbnb, before my concert in Israel.*" (App. 3.1.2., p. 147). Lady Gaga did the same on her Instagram account before Superbowl in 2017, where she stated: "*Thank you @airbnb for the gift of the gorgeous home in Houston for #SB51*" (App. 3.1.3., p. 148). The last example of this is by Martin Garrix before a festival, where he posts a picture and states: "*WOOO! Thanks to @Airbnb for putting us up!*" (App. 3.1.4., p. 149). These three examples are good examples of how they also have an associate program for celebrities, where they use them for marketing purposes. The problem with this is that AirBnB does not have a list on its website of the celebrities, who has sponsored them in the past, or are currently sponsoring them. It seems like they only get sponsored for a single post at big

events, which the three examples are evidence of. All three people are famous singers with millions of followers each. This broad audience is most likely what AirBnB is targeting with their approach of sponsoring celebrities. Therefore, in addition to using its own social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) for promoting products and supporting causes, and thereby creating an identity, it further uses its associate program to gain one of the advantages of social media by spreading the brand via celebrities. We only gave examples of celebrities' Instagram accounts, but it is also done on celebrities' Facebook accounts, but unfortunately cannot show those, since these posts seem to get deleted after a time period. Based on their associate program it can be argued that their motivations for using social media is a mix between *social media popularity, viral capabilities*, *social media strategy,* and *cost reduction pressures* (cf. 2.2.1. Stage one – Social media adoption). The strategy to co-operate and sponsor celebrities is likely a clear decision from AirBnB's headquarters. Another benefit this program has is the low costs for a single post. The celebrities are only staying at the accommodation for a brief period, so it is not a long sponsored contract that could cost a lot of capital over time. The company only has to pay the hosts for their accommodation, and perhaps a small premium. So AirBnB gets to promote its brand for millions of people for a relatively low fee in comparison. In terms of marketing, the motivations seem to be related to promotion and branding of products by using celebrities' large number of followers, and *Customer Relations Management* on the two accounts, where AirBnB actually responds to negative comments or questions.

So overall, AirBnB adopts social media in an interesting way by using celebrities to promote its own brand and products. "The products" are a key word in this context, because it seems like this is an important focus point for the company. On AirBnB's main accounts on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter they promote its products on all these accounts. Promoting its products is thereby indicated to be one of the priorities for AirBnB. Beside this, it also seems to have a focus on the communities in its use of their own social media platforms. AirBnB's main account on Twitter and Instagram is followed with the same brief text on what their focus is. It is here stated: "*The well-being of our community is our top priority*" (App. 3.1.5., p. 150; 3.1.6., p. 151). On their YouTube account it is stated: "*[…] we are here to show you the people, the spaces, and the faces that make up the community*" (App. 3.1.7., p. 151). So it would seem that AirBnB wants to be seen as a company that takes care of the communities on its own social media accounts, since this pattern is shown on more than one platform. Overall AirBnB's social media strategy seems to be very complex since the company uses it for so many different things, but all the platforms seem to be for only external use.

6.1.2. Choice of platform(s)

The second point of this analysis is regarding *Choice of platform*. This concerns the platform(s) that the organisation has chosen to adopt, and the objective of using the specific platform(s), and how these choices affect the corporate identity of AirBnB (cf. 2.2.2. Stage two – Choice of platform(s)). It has already been established that AirBnB is active on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube (cf. 2.2.1. Stage one – Social media adoption). All of these platforms can be divided into a type of platform, i.e. social networking sites, content communities, collaborative projects, blogs, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds (cf. 2.2.2. Stage two – Choice of platform(s)).YouTube is, for example, a content community since the focus on this platform is to create and distribute content. YouTube stands out, compared to the rest of AirBnB's social media platforms, since this is mostly video content with less focus on text. All of the video content on their YouTube channel is created by the company itself, which can be seen by the company's implementation of its logo in every video (App. 3.2.1., p. 152). The majority of content they upload on YouTube is branding of products and the initiatives AirBnB is a part of. This is more of a visual representation of the company, but it still stands well with the other platforms that also focus on these two types of content. This is one of the benefits of using YouTube, since it is different from the rest, where text is replaced with visual images, which some audiences might prefer. We also established that AirBnB targets broad audiences, so this plays well with AirBnB's corporate identity.

Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn are all placed in a type of platform called, social networking sites. Management relationships and networks is more of a key area in this type of platform. This is where Twitter can be used as an example for AirBnB. Twitter can be considered a platform where communication is easy to express for both the company and the followers and customers. The majority of people have a mobile phone today, which means they can easily ask questions, or comment over the Twitter app with ease (Pew Research 2019). This platform is also an advantage for companies, since employees can easily respond to this anywhere they are from their mobile as well. This platform is more focussed on brief text, and quick communication. This might also be why AirBnB has divided its Twitter accounts into three different groups; i.e. @Airbnb, @AirbnbHelp, @AirbnbCitizen. Previously, we concluded that AirBnB uses celebrities to promote its brand and products, but never saw any of this co-operation on their own platforms. This can show that the company prefers to keep different platforms and accounts divided. By having three different Twitter accounts, they can arrange where they want to focus on customer relationship, i.e. @AirbnbHelp, and where they want to promote products, and initiatives for the community, i.e.

@Airbnb. This also allows the followers to choose the type of content they wish to follow, by following the associated Twitter account. This separation between the accounts also increases the chances of a more positive main Twitter channel, i.e. @Airbnb. By only answering comments in @AirbnbHelp, AirBnB is in a way trying to divert all relationship management to this channel (App. 3.2.2., p. 153). @AirbnbCitizen is the last Twitter account. This account is exclusively used to post content regarding the community or relevant retweets. So unlike @Airbnb, this channel does not promote any kind of products. This can also be seen as a form of customer relationship management, but more focussed on how the company is perceived by the followers.

The rest of this analysis will be solely focused on AirBnB's primary Twitter account, @Airbnb. This is done because we believe this platform and account is representative of AirBnB's social media and interaction communication. Furthermore, Twitter is also seen as more of a communicative platform that focuses more on text than i.e. visual images, which Instagram relies more on. We also did this to stay consistent with our analysis of AirBnB's Brand personality traits (BPT), which we will expand upon later in this analysis (cf. 6.2. AirBnB's communicated brand personality traits).

6.1.3. Choice of content

The third stage is regarding the content posted on AirBnB's Twitter account, @Airbnb. As mentioned earlier, we will only be focussing on this account in the rest of the analysis. In a lot of ways, the choice of content is the foundation for how the consequent engagement proceeds between a company and its stakeholders. On this stage, there are 3 important points worth taking a closer look at, which is regarding the "*Why, Who, What*" (cf. 2.2.3. Stage three – Choice of content).

The first is "*Why*" the content is created by a company, and which motivations are behind this. This also relates back to a company's social media strategy. This part we explained previously (cf. 2.2.1. Stage one – Social media adoption), so this point is already examined and explained, which is why we will focus more on the "*who & what*" created the content on this stage.

As we mentioned in our theory, there are three different types of content; created content, co-created content, and curated content (cf. 2.2.3. Stage three – Choice of content). Out of the latest 20 posts on @Airbnb (from May 21, 2020), we found out that 13 of those posts were *created* content, five were *curated* content, and the remaining two were identified as *co-created* content. All created content was made by AirBnB itself with no co-operation with anyone else, and the content consisted of promoting

products and innovative initiatives and actions AirBnB had started in response to COVID-19. These initiatives were also highlighted as being beneficial for the community (e.g. App. 3.3.1., p. 154; 3.3.2., p. 155; App. 3.3.3., p. 155; 3.3.4., p. 156). The second group was curated content. This type of content is basically just retweeting another company's post. The content of this post is entirely made up by someone else, and therefore the only action a company does, is sharing it on its own account. There were five instances of this on AirBnB's Twitter account, @Airbnb. Four of these retweets were positive reviews of the online experiences that AirBnB had created in response to COVID-19. The retweets were from "regular people" who enjoyed the online experiences, and The New York Times who also commented on the success of these substituted online experiences (e.g. App. 3.3.5., p 156; 3.3.6., p. 157). The final and last retweet can be considered a part of product promotion, since AirBnB retweeted a post from another company that recommended an apartment AirBnB had available on its website from a well-known (e.g. App. 3.3.7., p. 158). The last group is regarding co-created content. Here, the content is created in cooperation with another organisation or person (cf. 2.2.3. Stage three – Choice of content). @Airbnb only had two instances of co-created content. The first one was in cooperation with Bumble, a dating application, where Bumble asked its followers "*To describe your perfect first date*", and hereafter Bumble and AirBnB would, in co-operation, make it a virtual reality (App. 3.3.8., p. 158). The other *co-created* content was a bit different, since this could also be considered *curated* content. It was posted on one of AirBnB's other Twitter accounts, @AirbnbCitizen, and then shared on @Airbnb. This can be considered *co-created* since the content says something about the corporate identity, and this aspect must have been in focus, when it was agreed that this specific post on @AirbnbCitizen should be retweeted on @Airbnb. There most likely was some kind of co-operation behind this content, which is why we consider this a unique kind of *co-created* content (App. 3.3.9., p. 159).

Now that we have looked at the "who" of this stage, we can start looking at the "What", which refers to what the content contains, and how this can express identity, personality, and values that a company aligns itself with (cf. 2.2.3. Stage three – Choice of content). In the co-created content, AirBnB co-operated with a company called Bumble. This co-operation can hardly be considered random. Bumble was created by women, who were previously employed at Tinder (another dating app), but left to create an app, where only the women could start conversations with matches on the app. The app was created, because it was believed that the gender dynamic of dating was outdated, where it was always the men who wrote first (Bumble 2020). It can be argued that AirBnB cooperated with this company because Bumble shares some of the same values and identity of AirBnB. AirBnB has a lot of focus

on "Diverse community", which for them also includes areas like gender equality and race (Diverse community 2020). On AirBnB's website regarding its communities, it is stated: "*There's no belonging without diversity and inclusion. To create a world where people can Belong Anywhere we must take real steps to build a workplace where everyone feels welcome and all voices are heard*." (App. 3.3.10., p. 160). By *co-creating* content with a company like Bumble, AirBnB is communicating that it also aligns itself with what Bumble stands for. We already know a part of the *created* content AirBnB post on its own account is in support of the community, and initiatives that support this, which we will show more examples of later in our analysis (cf. 6.2. AirBnB's communicated brand personality traits). So it can be argued this type of content that concerns itself with supporting the community in some way is an important part of the identity that AirBnB wants to express to the public. This is also supported by the *curated* content. Four out of five instances were retweets of positive reviews of the positive effect AirBnB has on the community, while COVID-19 was creating havoc globally. The concern for the community also shows up in *created* content by AirBnB itself, so it is very clear that there is an overall focus on identifying AirBnB with a helping hand.

The overall analysis of AirBnB's content indicates that the majority of content is *created* by the company itself. However, there can still be seen a pattern on how the company expresses itself. Every kind of content that is posted on the account has some kind of relation to the company, whether it is relating to product promoting, initiatives taken by the company, or actions to help the community. It would appear that AirBnB is angling the majority of its posts to what AirBnB can offer as products, and what the company offers the community with its focus on different types of causes in society. Everything has some kind of relevant connection to these few key areas that AirBnB wants to focus its energy on.

6.1.4. Stakeholder engagement

The fourth stage is regarding the stakeholder's engagement with the organisation. This concerns both the level of engagement, but also the reason for engagement on the Twitter account, @Airbnb (cf. 2.2.4. Stage four – Stakeholder engagement). The stakeholder engagement alone can tell a lot about how involved the stakeholders are in the corporate identity of a company, depending on what kind of engagement it is. We can start by looking at the average 'likes' the @Airbnb account receives for its content. On Socialblade, a statistics website that allows you to track your statistics and measure growth (Social Blade A 2020), it is stated that the Twitter account, @Airbnb, receives at average 742 likes for its posts (Social Blade B 2020). This number is much higher than what we expected. This is most likely because the website, Socialblade, includes likes from a retweet's original posts in this estimation. This means that when AirBnB retweets a post from another account, this original post has at that time already received a certain number of likes. These likes are not really given to AirBnB's retweets, but they seem to be included when Socialblade calculates AirBnB's average number of likes. We can give an example of this with a retweet by @Airbnb. This original post received around 22,400 likes (App. 3.4.1., p. 161). However these likes were not generated on AirBnB's Twitter account, @Airbnb, but instead from @sweetplummama, who created the original post. This means that Socialblade's calculations should be critically viewed, since AirBnB can increase its average received Twitter likes by retweeting posts that have already gone viral and received a lot of likes, and thus seem like they have a higher average likes on their own posts than in reality. This is why we calculated @Airbnb's average amount of likes ourselves to get a more accurate estimation, where retweets were not included. We calculated the average of likes based on 50 Twitter posts @Airbnb had posted (App. 1., p. 3-67). These 50 posts will also be analysed further in our analysis regarding brand personality traits (cf. 6.2. AirBnB's communicated brand personality traits). Based on the 50 posts, @Airbnb received on average 134 likes per post, which is considerably lower than the 742 average from Socialblade. AirBnB has 723,000 followers on its Twitter account @Airbnb, which means they have an engagement rate of 0.02% based on the 134 at average, or 0.10% if you follow the 742 at average from Socialblade. The average engagement rate on Twitter is 0.13% (Ahmed 2017), which means that @Airbnb's engagement rate is considerably lower than the average on Twitter, if retweets are excluded from the estimation. However this is just one way of looking at @Airbnb's level of engagement rate. Instead of comparing it to the average rate on Twitter, we could instead calculate how AirBnB is doing compared to one of its competitors. Vrbo is one of AirBnB's competitors, and this company only received 3 likes at average per post on its Twitter account, @vrbo

(Social Blade C 2020). However, in order to get a more representative number, and because we also calculated @Airbnb's average based on 50 chosen posts, we would also do the same on Vrbo's account, @vrbo (Vrbo Twitter 2020). Based on @vrbo's 50 recent posts, excluding retweets, they got an adjusted average of 6 likes per post. Vrbo has 29,550 followers @vrbo, which means that Vrbo's engagement rate can be calculated to 0.02% based on the 50 posts we looked at ourselves, and 0.01% based on the number on Socialblade. There is a clear difference between @vrbo and @Airbnb when it comes to the amount of followers they have, and average likes per post. However based on the 50 posts we looked at @Airbnb and @vrbo, the engagement rate is pretty much the same at 0.02%. However the engagement rate is different, if the average on Socialblade is followed, where retweets are included. @Airbnb has increased it considerably from 0.02% to 0.10% by elevating its numbers through retweets. It should also be noted that different industries have different average engagement rates on Twitter, so even though both @Airbnb and @Vrbo are both below the overall average, it might be relatively normal for companies working with rental of accommodations and experiences. However to know this for sure, we would have had to analyse and compare several companies, so this can only be considered speculation. It is only indicated that, based on @Airbnb and @Vrbo's own content, these two companies have a similar engagement rate. This concludes our analysis of @Airbnb's level of engagement, and we will now instead take a closer look at the nature of the stakeholders' engagement, which relates to the reasons the followers and the public engage with @Airbnb.

In this context it is possible to look at AirBnB's "mentions" on Twitter, to understand the nature of the stakeholders' engagement with AirBnB. This means we took a closer look at posts where users have either tagged AirBnB, with "#Airbnb", or used a hash-tag, in the form of "@Airbnb". By looking at this form of content, we would get an overview of what stakeholders were saying about AirBnB, and how they chose to contact the company. It should be noted that the user posts we are looking at, with "mentions' ' of @Airbnb, are the most recent ones, which means COVID-19 currently might have a big impact on what people post. After having looked at the "mentions" with @Airbnb, it can be argued that the majority of content is feedback on user's experience with @Airbnb. Most of this is negative reviews of how AirBnB treated them. One user states: *"@airbnb I don't understand, I canceled my trip due to the corona virus! [...] Where's my money !???? !!"* (App. 3.4.2., p. 162), while another states: *"@Airbnb I had to cancel a reservation in August for a trip we had planned. Obviously with covid 19 things have changed. I find it not fair that we only receive half of our money back due to the current situation. [...]* " (App. 3.4.3., p. 162). These are just two examples among

hundreds of posts from users, who express their dissatisfaction with AirBnB's process of cancellation of products, and their overall customer service. One user even expresses his criticism in hash-tags: *"[...] #AwfulService #badcustomerservice #Embarrassing"* (App. 3.4.4., p. 163). At this point we already knew that COVID-19 is the cause of all these problems, but it would seem that almost all of the stakeholder engagement that was expressed was relating to customer service. Only rarely would a positive customer experience be expressed in "mentions", like the following statement: *"[...] @airbnb has excellent policies - they are mandating owners to refund money back without hassles! We are forced to cancel due to a #GlobalPandemic. Kudos to @Airbnb"* (App. 3.4.5., p. 163). Overall it was difficult to notice anything but negative posts from users about AirBnB's customer service. Once in a while, there were also questions relating to some of the initiatives or actions AirBnB's had started to support the community. One user asks: *"Any plans to further extend your extenuating circumstances policy?@Airbnb* [...]" (App. 3.4.6., p. 164). Questions relating to initiatives were however also very rare. The examples given here are only a small portion of the posts where users have tagged @Airbnb. It appears like there are hundreds, if not thousands of "mentions" of AirBnB every day. Unfortunately the majority of stakeholder engagement seems to be caused as a consequence of the user's negative experiences. This can also be seen as the stakeholder's expressing that they disagree with how AirBnB is expressing its corporate identity. AirBnB highlights how much the company values the community through its initiatives and posts, but it does not seem like this aligns well with how the stakeholders view the company, based on the content they have posted, and in the manner they are engaging and communicating with the company.

Based on the analysis of AirBnB's stakeholder engagement, it is clear that engagement is relatively low, when it comes to comments to AirBnB's posted content. The engagement rate is here below average on Twitter, but this picture changes completely when "mentions" are considered in engagements. Users engage a lot with AirBnB through "mentions", where they express their experiences. The majority of these experiences were considered negatives, and this can in a way be seen as a negative representation of AirBnB's brand. The stakeholders will express to their own followers that AirBnB as a company does not take responsibility, or actions to support its own communities and customers. This representation might then be the introduction for followers of the stakeholder who tagged @Airbnb. So AirBnB's stakeholder engagement does represent a part of the company's corporate identity with how they describe their experiences. However, unfortunately the connotations that get shared about AirBnB's corporate identity can be considered very negative.

6.1.5. Organisation interaction

The fifth and last stage relates to how the organisation reacts to stakeholder engagement, and how it interacts with other users. How an organisation chooses to take this on over social media can also indicate some of the characteristics of the organisation's corporate identity (cf. 2.2.5. Stage five - Organisation interaction).

We previously mentioned that AirBnB uses its account on Facebook and the Twitter account, @AirbnbHelp, for answering people's questions (cf. 6.1.1. Social media adoption). This is still the case, but AirBnB has added an interesting element in its way of interacting with stakeholders with the Twitter account, @Airbnb. We mentioned previously that AirBnB wanted to direct questions and negative reactions over to @AirbnbHelp, so @Airbnb can focus on some of the more positive aspects of the company. This seems to also be applied in the company's decision on how it engages with its stakeholders. It was already established that all the negative questions and comments would be covered by @AirbnbHelp, so instead we looked for instances where the Twitter account, @Airbnb, chooses to react to comments. Having reviewed countless reactions from @Airbnb on stakeholder engagement, it seems like there is a pattern here as well. Only positive, funny or neutral stakeholder comments about AirBnB will be answered by the primary account @Airbnb (e.g. App. 3.5.1., p. 165; 3.5.2., p. 166; 3.5.3., p. 167). We even found one instance that proved this very well. In this example of a post from @Airbnb, the stakeholders initially comment on the content in a positive and humorous manner. What is noteworthy in this example is that @Airbnb answers these comments, seemingly because none of it is negative. However, at some point in this example one of the stakeholders, named "Jacko", comments: *"[...] I'm broke cuz you won't refund me for a trip that obviously isn't happening"* (App. 3.5.4., p. 168). The response came almost immediately from the Twitter account, @AirbnbHelp. After this negative comment, several of other stakeholders came with negative comments and questions, and @Airbnb did not engage with any of them. From then on, it was only @AirbnbHelp that was answering these types of questions. It seems to be a very clear and deliberate strategy that positive and negative interactions is selectively answered by @Airbnb and @AirbnbHelp. In one of the stakeholders' comments, it is also revealed that only one person runs the entire account, @Airbnb (App. 3.5.5., p. 169). This was answered, while at the same time diverting the negative comment over to @AirbnbHelp. It can be assumed that several employees are behind the account @AirbnbHelp since it is very active in terms of answering comments and questions, which is hardly possible for one single person. So perhaps AirBnB has focussed and implemented a team on this account unlike on @Airbnb. However, this is purely speculation based on a subjective

review on the differences we have noticed on interactions between those two accounts. So there is definitely a strategy when it comes to interaction with stakeholders. The account @Airbnb even "likes" certain comments from stakeholders that have tagged @Airbnb, which can also be seen on its Twitter account (App. 3.5.6., p. 170). For obvious reasons, these comments are also only positive content. This "liked" content is usually regarding the initiatives AirBnB has started, pictures of products the stakeholders liked from AirBnB, or positive reviews of what AirBnB does for the community. So the stakeholder content that @Airbnb actually reacts to has a close resemblance to the type of content @Airbnb posts on its own feed (cf. 6.1.3. Choice of content). This is an aspect that highlights what @Airbnb would like to focus on, and what the company finds important. Not just based on the type of content it posts on its own feed, but also on the type of stakeholder comments and questions it reacts on that is also regarding the same topics. This seems to be a very clear strategy on how AirBnB wants its corporate identity to be seen by the public and its stakeholders. By focussing on this type of content on its account, @Airbnb, the idea is probably that the associations created by this type of content will be reflected on AirBnB as a brand. Another aspect that could be looked at is what actions AirBnB takes based on the content of the stakeholders comments and questions. We already established that a lot of the stakeholder engagement was negative (cf. 6.1.4. Stakeholder engagement), and even though the account @Airbnb does not answer negative content, it might still indirectly engage with this type of content by posting content in @Airbnb's own feed that offers possible solutions to these negative comments from stakeholders. A lot of the concern, comments, and questions AirBnB's stakeholders currently have are in relation to how COVID-19 has affected travellers and hosts (cf. cf. 6.1.4. Stakeholder engagement). @Airbnb might not answer these questions directly, but they do e.g. post content in its own feed with the CEO, where he answers questions from stakeholders, and @Airbnb also posts policy changes in regard to cancellation of stays that people have been complaining about a lot (app. 3.5.7., p. 171). So even though it seems like it is not one of the work tasks for @Airbnb to answer negative content, the channel still does answer some of the questions indirectly with actions instead.

Based on our analysis of the organisation's interaction, it can be concluded that AirBnB has a highly complex way of interacting with its stakeholders. It might appear like they are ignoring stakeholder engagement by diverting all negative questions and comments to another Twitter account, @AirbnbHelp. However it can still be maintained that AirBnB has a high interaction with its stakeholders' engagement. It simply operates differently in this area. @Airbnb might only answer positive "mentions" and comments, but this is still considered engagement. Furthermore this account

also indirectly answers negative questions and comments by posting content in the feed that offers a possible solution to some of the problems the stakeholders are inquiring about. Through our analysis we have found out that the reason they might be dividing positive and negative content, from stakeholders, is because they want to highlight the key areas of the business they find most relevant. This focus also reflects on the corporate identity of AirBnB, which seems to be the whole point. The company wants to highlight three areas of its business; promoting products, introducing initiatives AirBnB has created, and finally all the actions the company has done to support and sustain the communities. These decisions paint a positive corporate identity of AirBnB's actions by only posting this type of content in their own feed in @Airbnb, and focussing on these three key areas in the organisation's interaction with stakeholders. It makes the company look like it's there for the people, and that the community comes first. Diverting the negative content to another channel might seem contradicting, but it is highly effective for AirBnB in their pursuit of a corporate identity that puts the community first.

6.1.6. AirBnB's corporate identity

Through our analysis of AirBnB's use of social media, it has become clear that the company has a very unique way of using its social media profiles to highlight corporate identity. The company's target group on social media is the broad audience. This is clear by looking at how AirBnB uses famous influencers to promote its products (cf. 6.1.2. Choice of platform(s)). The company operates on different types of platforms, but some of them are more important than others, and Twitter is one of them. Not only do they have three Twitter accounts on the platform, @Airbnb, @AirbnbHelp, @AirbnbCitizen, but the company also has a unique account in every country it offers its products in (cf. 6.1.1. Social media adoption). The Twitter accounts are considered more important because of the way it is all set up. The main account, @Airbnb, which we analysed closely, focussed on and answered the positive comments and questions from the stakeholders, whereas @AirbnbHelp focussed on the negative comments and questions. From our analysis, we found out that this might have been done in alignment with how the company wants its corporate identity to be seen by the public. AirBnB wanted the stakeholders and the public to see the company as taking care of the community. There was certain content that the company was focussing on, i.e. promoting products, introducing initiatives started by the company, and promoting actions AirBnB has made to help the community. These three key areas showed up in different aspects of the company's use of social media. The content that @Airbnb posted usually contained traces from one of these three groups. The

majority of content @Airbnb posted in its own feed was also created by the company itself. Furthermore when AirBnB occasionally retweeted or co-operated with other companies, the content of this also related to one of these three groups (cf. 6.1.3. Choice of content). This was not the only thing the company did to highlight these three areas. When AirBnB interacted through @Airbnb with its stakeholders with "likes" or responses, the focus here was to promote its products, introduce initiatives started by the company, and actions AirBnB has made to help the community, and @Airbnb only answered positive comments and questions from stakeholders pertaining to these three groups. AirBnB seems to focus a lot on creating a corporate identity that puts the community first (cf. 6.1.5. Organisation interaction). Even in customer relationship management, corporate identity was a focus point. The positive stakeholder engagement got a response from the main account @Airbnb, whereas customer relationship management, pertaining to the more negative comments and questions from stakeholders, were diverted away from the main Twitter account, and over to @AirbnbHelp. In regards to stakeholder engagement with @Airbnb, we found that the account, @Airbnb, has a below average engagement by its stakeholders in the form of "likes" on @Airbnb's posted content. However we also found that the engagement from stakeholders was instead more frequent with comments, where @Airbnb was either tagged with "#Airbnb", or used along with a hash-tag, in the form of "@Airbnb". It was here the real engagement was ongoing and divided up between the two accounts; @Airbnb, and @AirbnbHelp, depending on whether it was positive or negative. Overall it can be concluded that AirBnB is interested in painting out a picture of a company that puts the community first for its stakeholders and, in general, the broad audience. This is why AirBnB constantly focuses its energy on the type of content that makes the company look good, in the form of promoting its products, the initiatives started by the company, and the actions AirBnB has made to help the community. It is clear that AirBnB uses its social media platforms to develop and spread the corporate identity it believes is in the best interest of the company.

6.2. AirBnB's communicated brand personality traits

In order to analyse and determine what AirBnB expresses in terms of brand personality traits, we analysed AirBnB's communication on the social media platform Twitter. Here, 50 of the newest posts were identified that expressed one or more of the five BPTs: *Aggressiveness, Activity, Responsibility, Emotionality,* and *Simplicity* (cf. 3.2. Geuens, Wejters & Wulf – A New Measure of Brand Personality). These 50 posts were further coded for their expressed brand personality trait(s) and item(s). The selected and coded material can be found in the appendix (App. 1., p. 3-68).

In total, out of the 50 posts, it was determined that four BPTs were expressed, namely *Responsibility, Activity*, *Emotionality*, and *Simplicity*. The last BPTs, *Aggressiveness* was not expressed at all in the 50 posts. In the following, we will present and exemplify the make-up of these four BPTs, how they are expressed and in what context, and what their average engagement rate is.

6.2.1. The expression of 'Responsibility'

The first of the four BPTs, and the one that occurred most frequently in AirBnB's Twitter posts, was *Responsibility*. Out of the 50 posts we coded, this trait was identified in 26 of them, and the representation hereof was split between two of the related items: *Down to earth,* and *Responsible.* In one instance, more than one of these items was represented in a single post.

AirBnB's *Responsible* content

The first item, *Responsible*, occurred in 19 instances, and it therefore represents a large part of AirBnB's expression of the BPT *Responsibility*. All of AirBnB's *Responsible* content can be found in the appendix (App. 1.1.1., p. 3-18). In our analysis of AirBnB's 50 posts, the *Responsible* content presented itself in a specific pattern. The majority of content was expressed by showing responsibility for the community, by showing appreciation for people, and by supporting environmental causes. All these reasons lies well with Geuens' definition of *Responsible*, where an organisation or company show concern for social and environmental causes currently ongoing in society (cf. 3.2. Geuens, Wejters & Wulf – A New Measure of Brand Personality). All the content containing the BPT item *Responsible*, was relating to one of these three groups.

The first example of one of these three groups is shown by AirBnB, when it shows concerns for mothers and their children by asking and stating in a post: "*Plans for Mother's Day? Meet online.*

Even if you can't be in the same room this year, you can still celebrate [...]" (App. 1.1.1.1., p. 3). This post is in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused families all over the world to be divided, and not be able to be together on events like for example Mother's day (BBC 2020). Even though this post shows concern, it also shows appreciation for mothers all over the world by suggesting that even though there is social distancing because of COVID-19; people can still meet online to celebrate their mothers. Another post that shows this appreciation feature towards a certain group is a post relating to employees: "*In honor of #EmployeeAppreciationDay, we'd like to highlight some of the employees that make up Airbnb*" (App. 1.1.1.10., p. 9). This can be seen as one of the duties of a company, where it shows appreciation for those who help build a company, and it thereby serves to maintain strong relations with its stakeholder group.

Showing concern or making the effort to help with environmental causes is another stand some companies decide to take. Out of the 19 *Responsible* posts, only two posts were showing concern for the environment. One of the posts stated: "*We teamed up with @OurOcean to send five fearless volunteers to Antarctica to investigate the presence of microplastics and their impact on the Earth's last great wilderness.*" (App. 1.1.1.14., p. 13). This is clearly an action and effort from AirBnB where it has shown its stance on environmental causes, and on how it, as a company, is taking *responsibility* in this area of topic.

The last group of posts that showed *Responsible* content was also the group that AirBnB was focussing most on. This was regarding showing responsibility for the community, and it was done in different contexts. One context is a post that states: "[...] *support LGBTQ homeless youth in the united states* [...]" (App. 1.1.1.4., p. 5). This post shows that AirBnB takes responsibility and shows concerns for certain groups in society that are more exposed to discrimination than others by supporting them (Amnesty 2020). However the majority of *Responsible* posts from AirBnB, which showed concern for the community, were in relation to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. One posts states: "*Reminder to all frontline responders. You can find a place to stay with thousands of Airbnb hosts who have opened their homes to those on the frontlines of COVID-19.*" (App. 1.1.1.2., p. 4). This post refers to those who are fighting the COVID-19 with risk of being infected, like doctors, nurses and people working at hospitals (Schwirtz 2020). By launching an initiative that encourages hosts to help frontline responders, AirBnB is clearly stating that it is doing what it can to help the community by taking on this responsibility. Because of the impacts COVID-19 has in the world, a lot of the posts regarding the community are relating to this cause. Another post shows how the CEO of AirBnB, Brian Chesky, is also involved in this process by taking responsibility in the statement: "[...]

He'll answer top questions and provide updates on what we're doing to support our host community."
(App. 1.1.1.3., p. 5). The inclusion of the CEO also states AirBnB position when it comes to helping
the community. Of the 50 posts we have analysed from AirBnB, the CEO only appeared when it was
in regard to taking *Responsibility*. It can therefore be argued that content expressing *responsibility*
trait is what AirBnB wants to be associated with since the majority of posts expresses this trait.

AirBnB's *Down to earth* content

The second item, *Down to earth*, occurred in 7 instances. It therefore represents a smaller part of
AirBnB's expression of the BPT *Responsibility,* compared to the item Responsible. All of AirBnB's
Down to earth content can be found in the appendix (App. 1.1.2., p. 19-25). In our analysis of
AirBnB's 50 posts, the *Down to earth* content presented itself in a similar way of showing
responsibility, but from a more practical point of view.

COVID-19 changed and affected the travel industry a lot, since airlines were suspending or severely
reducing flights (Pallini 2020). This would also affect AirBnB hosts and travellers, and therefore a
lot of cancellation would occur as a consequence. It is in this context that AirBnB took responsibility
and was practical in the understanding of these unexpected changes. In one of the posts it states:
"*Starting today, we've updated our Extenuating Circumstances policy that will allow guests to cancel
eligible reservations without charge:*" (App. 1.1.2.3., p. 21). AirBnB did not have to do any of this,
since cancellations have always had a charge. However, AirBnB still showed accountability with
their actions, and were practical in changing the policies they had in play up till this point of COVID-
19 happened. These policy changes were initially only applied in China, South Korea, Italy, and the
United States, because these specific countries were at that time very affected by COVID-19 (Airbnb
Newsroom D 2020). However a single day after this post AirBnB changed this policy to be applied
globally, so everybody could cancel in every country, if needed, without charge. This is stated in the
following post: "*In response to the global disruption to travel caused by COVID-19, our Extenuating
Circumstances policy now applies globally to all existing reservations with check-in dates between
March 14, 2020 and April 14, 2020.*" (App. 1.1.2.2., p. 20).

Besides being practical in regard to COVID-19, the rest of the *Down to earth* content was about
giving travellers and hosts advice and tips on being practical, and making certain experiences easier.
In one post, it is stated: "*Tired of being the one with excess baggage? Airbnb asked 3 different types*

of pros—a flight attendant, an expert organizer, and a pair of travel bloggers—to share their suitcase-stuffing wisdom." (App. 1.1.2.4., p. 22). This can be seen as AirBnB taking on a more practical responsibility, where they share ideas that might help travellers on their journey. The only constant that can be seen in AirBnB's practical tips, is that it is always in the context of travelling. The tip about "excess baggage" is before travelling, but it can also be after. In another post it is stated: "*Traveling as a vegan just got a whole lot easier—experiences offering vegan options is up 579%. You can try plant-based versions of...Gyoza in Tokyo, Taco Tortas in Mexico City, Croquettes in Paris*" (App. 1.1.2.5., p. 23). This post is more of a tip for travellers who get to their final destinations. All in all the *Down to earth* content from AirBnB is about being practical, and showing the company has a certain level of accountability to the community.

6.2.1.1. The engagement rate of the BPT 'Responsibility'

In order to get a better understanding of the engagement rate that the BPT *Responsibility* received, we calculated the average amount of likes that the 26 posts received. This showed that the average amount of likes, or the mean, that the BPT *Responsibility* received was 159. As compared to the average amount of likes that AirBnB receives overall on this Twitter account, as determined previously (cf. 6.1.4. Stakeholder engagement), it would seem that the expression of the BPT *Responsibility* yields a higher engagement rate, at 159 likes vs the adjusted average of 134 likes. However, the average of likes the BPT *Responsibility* posts received is still suspected to be skewed by a few posts that represent relatively high values of likes (e.g. App. 1.1.2.2. p. 20; 1.1.1.8, p. 8). We therefore calculated the skewness of the distribution in order to get a better understanding of the distribution of likes between the posts that express *Responsibility*. By using Excel, we entered our dataset in and calculated the skewness of the distribution using Pearson's Coefficient of Skewness (Statistics 2014), and the results showed that the skewness of the distribution of the dataset was 1.378. As per Bulmer's (1979) rule of thumb, skewness 1 or more => means the distribution is highly skewed (Bulmer 1979, 63), and this means the distribution of the dataset presented here is therefore argued to be highly skewed. As such, for the posts that express the BPT *Responsibility*, the skewness seems to indicate that the distribution of likes is highly skewed by a lot of posts with a relatively higher value of likes. As a final note, we would like to briefly explain Bulmer's rule of thumb regarding skewness with the following three points:

1. $0 < 0.5 =>$ fairly symmetrical
2. $0.5 < 1 =>$ moderately skewed
3. 1 or more $=>$ highly skewed (Ibid, 63-64)

6.2.2. The expression of 'Activity'

The second of the four BPTs, and the one that occurred almost as frequently as *Responsibility* in AirBnB's Twitter posts, was *Activity*. Out of the 50 posts we coded, this trait was identified in 22 of them, and the representation hereof was split among three of the related items: *Active, Innovative, and Dynamic.*

AirBnB's *Active* content

The first item, *Active*, occurred in 11 instances, and it therefore represents half of AirBnB's expression of the BPT *Activity*. All of AirBnB's *Active* content can be found in the appendix (App. 1.2.1., p. 26-35). In our analysis of AirBnB's 50 posts, the *Active* content presented itself by showing AirBnB's activities, and how it showed productivity. These can be relatively simple posts that encourage followers to do certain things to be productive, e.g. to donate to certain causes, in which case AirBnB shows further willingness to match the final raised donation amount.

The first example that comes to mind states: "*We might not be able to surround ourselves in nature this #Earthday, but we can let it come to us. Gardening experts and Superhosts Maureen + Zdravko share their tips for cultivating greenery at home so you can have more plants in your life[...]*" (App. 1.2.1.1., p. 26). This is not really a direct action from AirBnB itself, but more of a call-to-action, or encouragement, aimed at its followers. It should be mentioned that this post was posted while COVID-19 caused lockdowns and quarantines all over the world, which is why people could not "surround themselves in nature". Earth-day is celebrated every year on the 22nd of April. It is a celebration of planet earth, and marks the birth of the modern environmental movement (Earth Day 2020). Most people were stuck inside because of lockdowns and quarantines, so to compensate for outdoor activities in nature, AirBnB instead suggested activities where people try to let nature come to them. This can, in some ways, be seen as less of a direct action, but more like a post that shows AirBnB's activities of encouragement. In other instances, AirBnB is seen suggesting that its followers should contribute to certain causes, to which AirBnB shows intentions of matching the donated

amount. This is shown in the following post: "*This #GivingTuesday, we're inspired by the generosity of our host community. Hosts can now donate part of their earnings to help people affected by disasters, conflict, or critical illness. We're matching contributions until 12/31.[...]*" (App. 1.2.1.10., p. 34). #GivingTuesday is a global generosity movement that refers to a day where people do good and charitable actions in their communities (Giving Tuesday 2020). This post was posted December 3, 2019, which was before COVID-19 went global, so the content is regarding general charity and helping people worse off in life. In this post, AirBnB also encourages its followers and hosts to take action, but, in addition, it further shows intention and propensity to match the final donation amount.

There are also posts where it is clear that AirBnB is taking actions and showing its activities. One post states: "*Starting today, we've updated our Extenuating Circumstances policy that will allow guests to cancel eligible reservations without charge:*" (App. 1.2.1.5., p. 30). This post was previously analysed and coded as *Responsible*, but a post can express more than one BPT (cf. 5.4. Content analysis method). In this post it is clear that the company takes a stance on the matter and is actively doing something productive for its followers and those who have arranged travel plans. The *Activity* trait can be expressed in different and creative ways, which will be further explored in the next section.

AirBnB's *Innovative* content

The second item, *Innovative*, occurred in 8 instances, and it therefore represents a good portion of AirBnB's expression of the BPT *Activity*. All of AirBnB's *innovative* content can be found in the appendix (App. 1.2.2., p. 36-43). In our analysis of AirBnB's 50 posts, the *Innovative* content presented itself by being creative and innovative actions.

The first innovative post exemplifies this well by stating: "*get your pencil, your pen, and all your favorite books, because literary-inspired online experiences are ready to transport you to all your favorite destinations.*" (App. 1.2.2.1., p. 36). Once again this content is posted during the COVID-19 pandemic, but AirBnB still found a digital way of giving its followers a travel experience. Since the people cannot physically travel anywhere, AirBnB launched Online Experiences, where people can connect with people from all over the world, and have an experience with them (Matthews 2020). This is a clear example of what an innovative action is, where a company thinks outside the box with a creative experience to substitute something else. It is not only experiences that AirBnB substituted.

Another post states: "*Looking to change up your day-to-day scenery? Get ready to be virtually transported with downloadable window views from AirBnB homes from all over the world.[...]*" (App. 1.2.2.2., p. 37). With a large screen, this allows you to be virtually transported to homes all over the world (Airbnb Newsroom B). This innovative content can also be seen as a way for AirBnB to fulfill and maintain travellers' hunger for new places whilst in lockdown, because of COVID-19. However, AirBnB does not just post simple substitution content. Some of it takes a lot of planning and capital, like the following post: "*We teamed up with @OurOcean to send five fearless volunteers to Antarctica to investigate the presence of microplastics and their impact on the Earth's last great wilderness.*" (App. 1.2.2.5., p. 40). This content was also analysed under the item *Responsible*, but it is also a clear and innovative idea that shows the company's activities for a good cause. This project started all the way back in October 2019, where 5 adventurers were selected from over 140.000 applications (Airbnb newsroom C). This content is one of a kind, which might make it more intriguing for readers. Unfortunately, most of the process with this "mission" is not being shown on social media, which is likely due to the lack of engagement that this content receives from followers on Twitter.

AirBnB's *Dynamic* content

The third item, *Dynamic*, only occurred in 3 instances, and it therefore represents a very small portion of AirBnB's expression of the BPT *Activity*. All of AirBnB's *Dynamic* content can be found in the appendix (App. 1.2.3., p. 44-46). In our analysis of AirBnB's 50 posts, the *Dynamic* content presented itself in either a positive or humoristic context.

Out of the 50 AirBnB posts, only one of them contained clear humour that it had written itself. This post stated the following:

"1980s: In the future, we'll probably have flying cars.

2020: SPACE DUCK" (App. 1.2.3.2., p. 45).

The text was followed with a picture of a large golden "space duck" on the roof of a random house. This post is obviously a funny remark that refers to the movie "Back to the Future", which came out in 1985, and contained several predictions on how the future would be (Morona 2015). So, in a way, AirBnB is making fun of the followers' expectations as compared to reality. This post was also completely random, because it has nothing to do with the company, and has no tags or anything. It

was just a fun joke or reference, which the company otherwise rarely presents. The other two posts with *Dynamic* content were more in the context of a positive story. One of them states: "*Seven years ago, textile designer Abril decided to try hosting on Airbnb for extra income. Now she and her partner are welcoming guests to 17 homes throughout Mexico City, including this bright Condesa apartment.*" (App. 1.2.3.1., p. 44). This can be seen as a post of a woman who took the decision to try out being a host, and expanded it to a small business venture that changed her life in a positive way. The reader can almost feel the positive energy form the post alone. Another thing to note with this post is that it can also be seen as marketing for AirBnB. They do not post this kind of content without a reason. The company most likely hopes the post can motivate other people to do the same as Abril and become hosts, which then benefits AirBnB. So, even though it is a positive story, it can still be argued that AirBnB likely had ulterior motives with it.

6.2.2.1. The engagement rate of the BPT 'Activity'

We did the same here as earlier by calculating the average engagement rate that the BPT *Activity* received. Based on the 22 posts in which *Activity* was expressed, we calculated the average amount of likes to be 201. Here, it was also suspected that the average was skewed by a lot of posts that represent a higher amount of likes (e.g. App. 1.2.1.3., p. 28; 1.2.1.4, p. 29). The results showed that the skewness of the distribution was 1.618, and the distribution is thereby considered highly skewed (Bulmer 1979, 63).

6.2.3. The expression of 'Emotionality'

The third of the four BPTs we analysed in AirBnB's Twitter posts was *Emotionality*. Out of the 50 posts we coded, this trait was identified in 12 of them, and the representation hereof was split between two of the related items: *Sentimental, and Romantic.*

AirBnB's *Sentimental* content

The first item, *Sentimental*, occurred in 11 instances, and it therefore represents almost everything of AirBnB's expression of the BPT *Emotionality*. All of AirBnB's *Sentimental* content can be found in the appendix (App. 1.3.1., p. 47-56). In our analysis of AirBnB's 50 posts, the *Sentimental* content

presented itself by playing on the readers emotions. The majority of the *Sentimental* content was product related, where places, and AirBnB destinations, around the world were displayed.

In one post it is stated: "*In Greece, a country that is often thought of as a warm-weather destination, ski slopes coexist with thousands of years of history and unique local food.*" (App. 1.3.1.4., p. 49). One of the reasons we analysed product based content to be *Sentimental*, was because of the very clear descriptive build up of the post. One of AirBnB's motives here is to paint a picture of the destination mixed with emotionality, which in turn will hopefully inspire people to travel and see Greece on their own. This entire post is only focussed on appealing to the reader's emotional side, with the intention of selling more of their own products. Another example of this kind of content is stated in the following post: ""*When you're here, it feels like you're on top of the world. It's just you, the mountains, the wind, the sky, the moon, and the stars," says host Julia.*" (App. 1.3.1.8., p. 53). Once again it is a descriptive post of a place in the world. The only difference in this post is that the entire content is a quote from the host, Julia. This makes the post more personal and relatable when a person, instead of a company, says something about a location. These posts where AirBnB implements emotional content occur very often, and in most cases it is about products the company offers in various locations around the world. It can be argued that whenever AirBnB posts something that appeals to people's emotions, they are most likely trying to sell the reader something. The last example we will show and analyse regarding the item *Sentimental*, is more an explanation for why we placed this post in this category, and not in *Romantic*. The post states: "*The ultimate Valentine's gift - win a stay in the medieval home of Shakespeare's Juliet in Verona, Italy. Rose Rules apply.* [...]" (App. 1.3.1.6., p. 51). This post has all the signs for being a romantic post, which means we could have placed it in the item, *Romantic*. However even with the romantic descriptive content, it is still a display of product, which is why we consider this in the *Sentimental* trait. Also, when romance is involved, it usually refers or includes people, which this post does not contain or refer to. This makes the post more impersonal, and as a consequence we do not see any difference between this content and the other posts we have analysed with the trait *Sentimental*. In the end, it is seemingly all about selling a product through inspiration.

AirBnB's *Romantic* content

The second item, *Romantic*, occurred in 1 instance, and it therefore represents very little of AirBnB's expression of the BPT *Emotionality*. AirBnB's *Romantic* content can be found in the appendix (App. 1.3.2., p. 57). In our analysis of AirBnB's 50 posts, the single *Romantic* content presented itself in the context of romance.

This single post stated: "*In July 2013, Debbie and Michael sold their Seattle home to spend retirement as full-time travelers. Today, they've visited 80 countries and 285 cities, sharing their adventures with the world as the @seniornomads. Explore their story in Airbnb Magazine*" (App. 1.3.2.1., p. 57). Most people probably dream of dropping everything in their lives, and just take out and travel the world. Doing so with your spouse, one cannot help picturing a romantic setting for the couple. This content is very clearly appealing to the reader's romantic side, and at the same time the adventures side. However, once again the post can also be seen as a form of marketing, where AirBnB suggests what people in or close to retirement can do instead of staying at home and being bored.

6.2.3.1. The engagement rate of the BPT 'Emotionality'

Again we calculated the average engagement rate that the BPT *Emotionality* received. Based on the 12 posts in which *Emotionality* was expressed, we calculated the average amount of likes to be 46. Unlike with the BPTs *Responsibility* and *Activity*, it was suspected here that the average was fairly symmetrical, because of the few amounts of posts and the similarly few amounts of likes to each of the posts that showed the BPT *Emotionality*. The results showed that the skewness of the distribution was 0,162 and the distribution is thereby considered fairly symmetrical of the posts we selected as showing the BPT *Emotionality* (Bulmer 1979, 63).

6.2.4. The expression of 'Simplicity'

The last of the four BPTs, and the one that occurred the least in AirBnB's Twitter posts, was *Simplicity*. Out of the 50 posts we coded, this trait was identified in 10 of them, and the representation hereof was all in one related item: *Simple.*

AirBnB's *Simple* content

The first and only item, *Simple*, occurred in all 10 instances. All of AirBnB's *Simple* content can be found in the appendix (App. 1.4.1., p. 58-67). In our analysis of AirBnB's 50 posts, the *Simple* content presented itself by simple updates or simple information AirBnB just wanted to share with its followers. Some of this content serves no purpose, compared to the other three BPTs, but that is what makes it simple. The important thing to remember is that what is seen as simple in one organisation can be considered something else in another, since their communication most likely is different from each other.

One post exemplifies this well by stating: "So… we were a clue on @Jeopardy last night." (App. 1.4.1.1., p. 58). This post can at most be seen as fun trivia as well, but mostly it is just a random update on something completely unrelated to the company or its activities. In other words, there was no clear purpose with it, besides updating AirBnB's followers with some information. The majority of posts that contained the BPT Simplicity contained trivial information that was posted very randomly, and with seemingly no purpose. Another post states: "*Across the globe, winter holidays traditions are as varied as the people who celebrate them.*" (App. 1.4.1.7., p. 64). This is another example of an update that does not really serve any purpose, other than, perhaps, to stir inspiration. It is not often that AirBnB posts content that serves no clear purpose, but once in a while, these posts do appear. A third example of this is stated in the following post: "*In 1974, newlyweds Stu + Penney stopped by a local Bangor writer's book signing. Little did they know, this teacher (and soon to be bestselling horror author) would make a shining impact on their lives.*" (App. 1.4.1.10., p. 67). This post is a reference to the book and horror series of movies (Wax 2019). This post is by far the most simple and random post of them all. It has absolutely nothing to do with AirBnB, and is a prime example of a simple update with no purpose. After having analysed AirBnB it can be argued the *Simple* content they post can be considered more like trivial updates that diversify its overall content, and which, in some sense, may make AirBnB seem more personable and relatable.

6.2.4.1. The engagement rate of the BPT 'Simplicity'

The BPT *Simplicity* is the last average engagement rate of AirBnB we calculated. Based on the 10 posts in which *Simplicity* was expressed, we calculated the average amount of likes to be 28. The results showed that the skewness of the distribution was 1.290, and the distribution is thereby considered highly skewed (Bulmer 1979, 63). Just like in our analysis of the BPT *Emotionality*, *Simplicity* only contained very few posts, which means that even a single post with a high amount of likes, can increase the overall skewness a lot. This is a consideration that should be taken into account, when dealing with data where one post stands out, which can greatly impact the overall results. The single post that stands out compared to the rest, received 62 likes (e.g. App. 1.4.1.3., p. 60).

6.2.5. A recap and comparison between the traits

Based on the analysis of AirBnB's 50 Twitter posts that express one or more BPTs, it is evident that the BPT *Responsibility* occurred most frequently, with it being expressed in 26 out of the 50 posts. This BPT was represented by 19 instances of *Responsible* content, and 7 instances of *Down to earth*. *Activity*, being expressed in 22 out of the 50 posts, followed the BPT *Responsibility* as a very close second. The expression of this BPT was represented by 11 instances of *Active* content, 8 instances of *Innovative* content, and 3 instances of *Dynamic* content. The BPT *Emotionality* was a bit further behind, with it being expressed in only 12 out of the 50 posts. This was represented with 11 instances of *Sentimental* content, and a single instance of *Romantic* content. Lastly, *Simplicity* was expressed in 10 instances, and it was therefore the least expressed BPT out of the four traits that were identified in AirBnB's posts. *Simplicity* was represented solely by *Simple* content. The last trait, *Aggressiveness*, was not expressed in any of the 50 selected posts.

Based on the analysis of AirBnB's expression of personality, it can be concluded that AirBnB primarily expresses content with BPTs of *Responsibility* and *Activity*. *Responsibility* is shown in different ways, but taking concern and accountability for the community is one of the major contents that get posted very often, along with initiatives introduced, and practical advice that might help travellers. Besides this, environmental causes (initiatives) and showing appreciation for groups in society is also popular content from AirBnB. The BPT, Activity, was also very common, and it was shown by expressing what activities the company was currently doing to be productive. This was mostly about adaptation to the changes caused by COVID-19. In this context AirBnB also got very innovative, and came up with creative online experiences as a substitution for what people lost thanks

to COVID-19. After having analysed all 50 posts, it can also be argued that AirBnB's content of *Responsibility* and *Activity* is a large part of how the company operates, and most likely want to be seen this way. The company does not take a lot of chances with its content, which can be seen as very neutral, so it does not offend anyone. This is best illustrated with the lack of humoristic content, which might cause a negative response from readers, since humour can be seen as very subjective. AirBnB also operates in a lot of countries, so posting neutral content would also seem like a safe way to not offend anyone.

In terms of the engagement rate of the BPTs, *Responsibility* and *Activity* also received the highest average amount of engagement with *Activity* receiving 201 at average & *Responsibility* receiving 159 at average. Their decision to focus on these two groups of content does make sense from these results. An overview of the stakeholders' preference, in terms of engagement, for AirBnB's expressed BPTs can be found in the table below.

BPT engagement preferrence	Most engaged/preferred		Least engaged/preferred	
AirBnB's BPT engagement	Activity	Responsibility	Emotionality	Simplicity

Table 1: AirBnB's BPT engagement from its stakeholders.

However, because three of the four groups of BPTs were highly skewed, including *Responsibility* and *Activity,* it should be considered that our results in this area can be seen as rather inconsistent. Therefore, because of the high skewness that exists in the distribution of the engagement dataset in three of the four BPTs, it seems hasty to make any general conclusions in terms of 'what generates more engagement'. It is therefore argued that a larger dataset and a quantitative analysis of the data, with control for more variables, could provide a much better insight into the interplay and relationship between the expressed BPTs and their resultant engagement rate of AirBnB.

6.3. dbrand's corporate identity

Having analysed AirBnB's communicated corporate identity and personality, we will now present the second case-company of this multiple-case study. The analysis of dbrand's corporate identity and expressed brand personality traits will be presented and analysed in the exact same format as was done for the analysis of AirBnB. This section therefore concerns dbrand's corporate identity as expressed through its social media use and behaviour. To maintain transparency, the selected, coded, and analysed content can be found in the appendix (App. 4., p. 172-206). The analysis, like the previous corporate identity analysis, will be performed based on Devereux's five stages (cf. 2.2. Corporate identity and social media).

6.3.1. Social media adoption

The first stage, *social media adoption*, concerns determining the degree to which the given company has adopted social media as well as identifying the motivations behind the adoption of said social media (cf. 2.2.1. Stage one – Social media adoption). As mentioned previously, dbrand is active on several different social media platforms. This includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit, LinkedIn, and YouTube (cf. 5.3.1. dbrand). On these platforms, dbrand is primarily represented by its single company profile, with the only exception being Twitter, where dbrand has two profiles: its official main company account and a support account (Twitter D 2020; Twitter E 2020). On its company profiles, dbrand publishes content relating to both its own products, but it also features content from its sponsored parties that involves dbrand, and, in some instances, external stakeholders' content. Dbrand further serves to help its customers as it publishes "how-to" guides on its YouTube channel in addition to its use of a support account on Twitter. The representation of dbrand on the different social media platforms will be expanded upon in cf. 6.3.2. Choice of platform(s).

On social media, dbrand is not only represented by its own accounts. The company is also represented by its sponsored content creators, e.g. Dave Lee, Marques Brownlee, EXCESSORIZE ME., and Linus Tech Tips (Dave Lee 2019; Marques Brownlee 2019; Linus Tech Tips 2019; EXCESSORIZE ME. 2020). The sponsored parties are specifically content creators, who focus and are knowledgeable on technology, and, as such, the sponsorships can be integrated organically as they are relevant for both the content creator, their work, and their audience. The sponsored parties represent dbrand as they act as spokespersons for the brand, and dbrand's choice of sponsoring these parties is, essentially, an endorsement of their content and personality. Through the sponsorship of these parties, dbrand is

essentially paying these parties to promote its products in a manner suitable for and compliant with dbrand's terms. Further, the formation of a relationship between the two also associates dbrand with the sponsored parties, as the promotion of its products is considered an endorsement of the company.

The advertising of dbrand through sponsorships on social media includes both subtle promotion and direct advertisement. In terms of subtle promotion, dbrand's products are often seen used in the sponsored parties' videos, while not necessarily being acknowledged in speech (e.g. Dave Lee 2019). They are also seen featured in sponsored parties' Instagram posts, with the only acknowledgement being a "tag", or a hyperlink, of dbrand attached to the photo (e.g. Nelson 2020). The direct advertisements consist of spoken and written promotions of dbrand and its products by the sponsored parties in their videos. This is seen through either an integrated sponsorship segment where dbrand's products are presented in relation to the featured technology (e.g. App. 4.1.1., p. 172), through a short, casual mention that does not change the focus of the video (e.g. App. 4.1.3., p. 173) or a separate sponsor segment at the start or the end of the video (e.g. App. 4.1.2., p. 172). It is also seen that the sponsored parties reference dbrand and include a referral link in their descriptions, e.g. by writing "*Get yourself a dbrand skin at https://dbrand.com/LinusDropTips*" (Linus Tech Tips 2019). There are several explanations for this, the first of which is to promote dbrand and to refer the viewers directly to its website and products. It can also be used by dbrand to keep track of the number of referrals that the sponsorship deal has yielded, which can be used to further guide the sponsorship deal(s) in terms of e.g. negotiating the sponsorship pay-out or future sponsorships. It may also be done to meet FTC guidelines. According to the U.S. FTC, also known as the Federal Trade Commission, social media influencers must disclose the endorsement of brands when a "*material connection*" is involved, i.e. a "*personal, family, or employment relationship or a financial relationship*" with the brand (FTC 2019).

Dbrand has also collaborated with other creators such as JerryRigEverything to create special-edition products (dbrand E 2020), advertisements, and YouTube content for said product (dbrand 2019; JerryRigEverything 2019).

Due to dbrand's sponsoring of, and collaboration with, other creators, its adoption of social media has therefore extended to other social media influencers and their social media sites and accounts, and these sponsorships and collaborations can expose dbrand to each influencer's own separate viewership. The act of sponsoring other content to promote dbrand and its products, as well as to be

associated with their persona, is therefore an indication that dbrand is interested in marketing its brand to a broader audience. (cf. 2.2.1. Stage one - Social media adoption).

The consumers, or followers, can also be said to represent dbrand to a degree. Its consumers actively engage with dbrand on social media in the form of commenting, liking, sharing, discussing, and creating content. Though this can all be considered a form of communication, some of it is considered uncontrolled communication (cf. 2.1.3. The interplay between corporate identity and communication) as dbrand is unable to moderate how and what is shared and discussed. This will be explored further in the later analysis of dbrand's stakeholder engagement (cf. 6.3.4. Stakeholder engagement).

It is also worth mentioning that dbrand is also represented by its employees on social media, as 19 employees have been identified on LinkedIn (LinkedIn 2020), though their actual identities are not available as public information, and it is thus not possible to explore their social media activity and how they represent the company.

It is clear that dbrand has adopted social media, and it has even accrued a significant amount of followers (cf. 6.3.4. Stakeholder engagement). Overall, dbrand's use of social media is meant for external use, and there are several motivations for using this medium. The act of putting out content relating to the brand and products serves to market and promote the company to both stakeholders and prospects, which is only helped by the viral capabilities of social media, as this virality can further expose the company to new audiences. Another motivation for using social media is customer relations management, as dbrand has made a deliberate choice of creating and using both a support account on Twitter and a YouTube channel with "how-to" guides. Lastly, social media is a cheap medium to use to present and promote oneself, but also for dbrand to engage with its audience and to build and nurture its relationships.

6.3.2. Choice of platform(s)

The second stage of this part of the analysis is *choice of platform*, which concerns determining what (types of) platforms dbrand has adopted, the objective of using these specific platforms, and the effect it has on corporate identity (cf. 2.2.2. Stage two - Choice of platform(s)).

As mentioned previously (cf. 6.3.1. Social media adoption), dbrand is active on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Reddit, and these can all be classified based on their type. Again, there are several types of platforms, namely social networking sites, content communities, collaborative projects, blogs, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds (cf. 2.2.2. Stage two – Choice of platform(s)). The first four, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, are considered social networking sites. Here, the main focus of the platforms is to build and nurture networks and relationships. As determined previously (cf. 6.3.1. Social media adoption), dbrand's adoption of social media is for external use, and therefore the focus is on facilitating networks and relationships with its external stakeholders.

In terms of dbrand's choice to use Twitter, the platform allows for fast, informal communications that is easily shared between users (Economic and Social Research Council 2020). This would also explain dbrand's choice of having an extra support account on Twitter (Twitter E 2020), as the platform facilitates fast and easy communication and support with its stakeholders. The choice of using a separate support account can also be explained by dbrand having an interest in separating its marketing/promotional communication on one profile and its support communication on another, which would ensure that dbrand's followers on its primary account are not spammed with unnecessary chatter that is not relevant for them.

Due to the fast nature of communication on Twitter, the medium may not be conducive to maximizing engagement on each individual post as compared to other social media platforms such as Instagram. It has been shown that the overall engagement rate on each individual post on Twitter is about one-tenth of the engagement rate on Instagram, i.e. 0.13 vs 1.1 percent (Locowise 2017).

It is also seen that dbrand is more apt to respond to comments on Twitter as compared to its other platforms (e.g. App. 4.2.2., p. 174; 4.2.3., p. 175; 4.2.4., p. 176). It would therefore seem that dbrand uses Twitter as its main form of communication with its stakeholders while using Instagram to further increase exposure and engagement from its current and prospective stakeholders. Despite having a profile on, and being active on, all four of these different social networking sites, dbrand is significantly less active on Facebook, and it receives significantly less engagement. As per May 20,

2020, it has been 17 days since dbrand last posted, and despite having 250,000 followers on Facebook, the post only received 40 likes (App. 4.2.1., p. 173). Here, the lack of engagement may be the culprit for dbrand's lack of activity on the platform. It is likely that dbrand has chosen to be active on all four of these social networking sites, instead of focusing on a single site, in order to ensure that it is active and available on whichever platform its stakeholders use and prefer. This could maximise its exposure to both its current and prospective stakeholders. The stakeholder engagement and dbrand's interaction with its stakeholders will be further discussed later in the analysis (cf. 6.3.4. Stakeholder engagement; 6.3.5. Organisation interaction).

The last two social media sites that dbrand has adopted, namely YouTube and Reddit, are considered content communities as the main focus here is on creating and distributing content. Despite both of these being content communities, there are a few distinct differences in how these two media are employed. On dbrand's YouTube channel, dbrand is the sole creator of content, which is mostly aimed at guiding its external stakeholders in terms of applying its products (e.g. App. 4.2.5., p. 176). The use of dbrand's subreddit, however, is different. Here, dbrand is not the creator of content, but rather a moderator of the content created by its stakeholders. This can be considered a clear manifestation of dbrand's brand community, as the entire focus of the content creation and discussion is on dbrand. In addition, even though dbrand has been active on the forum, the entire content creation and discussion on this forum is facilitated by its user-base, its common interest in the brand, and its willingness to endorse and discuss dbrand's content. This forum can therefore be considered community-driven and community-focussed.

On both Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, dbrand's profiles are "verified" profiles, as indicated by the blue check-marks beside its name. This connotes trust, authenticity, and officiality as the lengthy process of getting verified requires making an application that must first be accepted and resolved (Twitter C 2020; Facebook C).

From here, the rest of the analysis will be focused on dbrand's use of the social media platform Twitter and dbrand's primary account @dbrand. This is done for two distinct reasons. With a following of 1,4 million followers, Twitter is the social media platform on which dbrand's has the most followers (Twitter D 2020). It can be argued that dbrand's communication through this single profile has the potential to reach the most stakeholders of all of its employed social media, and, in addition, that it is the most official communication channel since the profile is "verified". We further believe that all official communication is representative of the company (cf. 2.1.1. The distinction between corporate

and organisational identity), and that, despite only being a single medium, this Twitter profile is therefore sufficiently representative of dbrand's social media communication. To end, it is also done to remain consistent with our analysis of dbrand's communication on social media, as the later analysis of dbrand's brand personality traits will be focussed on this single medium as well. This should allow us to get a better insight into the specifics of dbrand's use of the media and expressions of both corporate identity and brand personality.

6.3.3. Choice of content

Thus comes the third stage, the *choice of content*, which concerns both *who* creates the content, *what* it consists of, and the motivations for creating this content (cf. 2.2.3. Stage three – Choice of content). As mentioned, the only profile and platform that will be focussed on and analysed from here on is dbrand's primary Twitter account @dbrand.

As it pertains to the creation of content, three different types of content can be identified, the first of which is *created* content, the second type is *curated* content, and the third and last type is *co-created* content (cf. 2.2.3. Stage three – Choice of content). Out of the latest 20 posts, as per May 21, 2020, it was identified that dbrand's content consisted of nine instances of *created* content, six instances of *curated* content, and five instances of *co-created* content.

In terms of *created* content, this concerns the content created solely by dbrand. This *created* content consists of posts where dbrand promotes, announces, or gives an update on its products. This is usually in the form of a photo or video that presents the product, which may include a link to the specific product, and it is usually accompanied by a remark of some sort (e.g. App. 4.3.1., p. 177; 4.3.2., p. 178; 4.3.3., p. 179; App. 4.3.4., p. 180).

It may also take the form of an official, shared response to other parties' posts that may be either relevant, e.g. aimed at dbrand, or irrelevant for dbrand specifically, and the content of this type of post is therefore context specific (e.g. App. 4.3.5., p. 180; 4.3.6., p. 181; 4.3.7., p. 181). Dbrand's content has been shown to often be accompanied by either a quip or a humorous, bold or aggressive remark, though the analysis of this and dbrand's expressed brand personality will be presented later on (cf. 6.4. dbrand's communicated brand personality traits). This type of content is a direct indicator of dbrand's personal identity (Devereux et al. 2017, 121).

In addition to its *created* content, dbrand also posts both *curated* and *co-created* content, i.e. content that is not created solely by dbrand. Here, it is necessary to differentiate between the two types of content. *Curated* content is content that is created by and shared from a third-party. *Co-created* content, on the other hand, is content that is created in co-operation with a third-party. The differentiating factor between these two types of content is that dbrand's *co-created* content implies, and includes, an association, i.e. a '*material connection*' (FTC 2019), with the third-party. Another differentiating factor is that its *curated* content is entirely made up of a third-party's content, which dbrand merely shares, or rather 'retweets', without adding any commentary or the like.

The *co-created* content that dbrand presents takes two distinct forms. Firstly, it takes the form of simply retweeting (sharing) content from its sponsored parties without commenting on it – specifically, content in which dbrand's products are brought up (e.g. app. 4.3.8., p. 182; 4.3.9., p. 183). These third-parties are seen acknowledging and stating that they are sponsored by dbrand by e.g. writing "*Thanks to dbrand for sponsoring this video!*" in their video description while having a sponsored segment in the video (iJustine 2020; Marques Brownlee 2019). The *co-created* content can also take the form of dbrand directly promoting its sponsored parties, and their content by e.g. writing "*On today's episode of "Sponsored by dbrand," @KevinKenson drills his Switch.*" and linking to the sponsored party's video (e.g. app. 4.3.10., p. 184; 4.3.11., p. 185; 4.3.12., p. 186). In both forms of *co-created* content, it is established that a material connection exists between dbrand and these third-parties. The fact that dbrand has sponsored these content creators, and the fact that it shares their material, indicates dbrand's involvement in the creation of the content, which therefore makes it co-created. As mentioned previously (cf. 6.3.1. Social media adoption), the act of sponsoring and promoting these content creators is a direct endorsement of them and their 'product' (in the form of their content). The endorsement of these parties therefore indicates that dbrand identifies with these sponsored parties (Devereux et al. 2017, 121), many of whom are considered large, professional, and well-respected content creators e.g. Marques Brownlee, Dave Lee, Linus Tech Tips, JerryRigEverything, and iJustine (Ranker 2020).

On the other hand, dbrand's *curated* content takes the form of directly sharing third-parties' content without commenting any further on it. This is seen mostly in the form of acknowledging and sharing consumers' appreciation of its products (e.g. app. 4.3.13., p. 187; 4.3.14., p. 188; 4.3.15., p. 189). Even though this type of content relates to, and is aimed at, dbrand it does not indicate that dbrand has had any direct involvement in creating this type of content. The lack of such association therefore makes the content *curated* instead of *co-created*. This type of content also gives an indication of what

dbrand identifies with (Devereux et al. 2017, 121). The choice of posting curated content that promotes dbrand and its products indicates just that: and interest in promoting itself.

The analysis of dbrand's content indicates that dbrand uses a mix of all three types of content, i.e. *created*, *curated*, and *co-created*. There could be several explanations for this, the first of which is to increase the exposure of its content to prospective stakeholders, by including third-parties whose followers may be separate to dbrand's. It may also be done to ensure the sharing of varied content, which may prevent follower engagement burnout. Referring to the idiom "*variety is the spice of life*" (Cambridge Dictionary 2020), a lack of variety could prove harmful in terms of maintaining and creating an engaging follower-base.

Based on the analysis above, dbrand indicates, through its *created* content, that it is interested in promoting its products, and it also indicates that dbrand has a distinct personality, as it is neither opposed to using colourful language, quips, or bold, aggressive, or humorous remarks, nor is it opposed to confrontation (cf. 6.4. dbrand's communicated brand personality traits).

Its choice of *co-created* content also indicates that it identifies with its sponsored parties, who are considered respected professionals in their world of tech. The sponsored parties' choice to endorse dbrand also connotes that dbrand's products are highly valued and that using its products is the choice of the professionals in the industry, who, again, are highly respected.

It has also been found that dbrand only posts, retweets, and shares replies to content that either involves dbrand in any form, or it chooses to angle the content to be relevant for the brand. This indicates an interest in limiting its choice of content to something that relates to and promotes dbrand. Further, it was previously determined that dbrand indicates an interest in employing social media, and sponsoring third-parties to promote its products and to expose the brand to both current and prospective stakeholders (cf. 6.3.1. Social media adoption; 6.3.2. Choice of platform). The choice to centre its content around itself thereby supports this interest in promoting and exposing itself to current stakeholders and prospects.

6.3.4. Stakeholder engagement

The fourth stage is *Stakeholder engagement* and it concerns determining the stakeholder engagement with the organisation, both in terms of the level of engagement and the nature of the stakeholders' engagement and involvement in the organisation (cf. 2.2.4. Stage four – Stakeholder engagement).

In order to determine the stakeholders' involvement with dbrand, it is possible to refer to dbrand's 'mentions' on Twitter, i.e. the posts in which users have either tagged dbrand or used "dbrand" as a hashtag, by, respectively, using "@dbrand" and "#dbrand". This would show both what its stakeholders are saying about dbrand, as well as how they are trying to get in contact with the brand.

On Twitter, dbrand's stakeholders are seen posting about dbrand's products and announcing that they have received their package from dbrand (see e.g. app. 4.4.1., p. 190. to 4.4.4., p. 193). The stakeholders posting about dbrand's products is seen by them e.g. writing *"@dbrand skin is on point!"* (app. 4.4.3., p. 192) and *"[…] they're beautiful! I highly recommend their products, I am impressed! Very easy to install and looks great!"* (app. 4.4.4., p. 193) in reference to the product that they have bought from dbrand. It is also seen that dbrand's stakeholders are apt to comment on and promote its (customer) services and copywriting publicly to their followers (e.g. app 4.4.5., p. 193 to 4.4.8., p. 195). This is seen by them e.g. writing "*Now THIS is customer service @dbrand*" in response to a customer's encounter with dbrand customer service (app. 4.4.7., p. 194), and "*Only @dbrand robots would come up with this. What an awesome little prank.*" in response to a note that the customer received in their order (app. 4.4.8., p. 195). Further, dbrand's stakeholders are seen using Twitter to publicly contact dbrand about e.g. plans for future products and questions pertaining to warranty (e.g. app. 4.4.9. p. 196; 4.4.10., p. 196). Lastly, the stakeholders are seen providing feedback on problems that occur with its products (e.g. app. 4.4.11., p. 197; 4.4.12., p. 198; 4.4.13., p. 198), for example by writing "*Hey @dbrand, my grip case is breaking apart, is this a known issue?*" (app. 4.4.13., p. 198). The stakeholders therefore engage with dbrand in various ways on Twitter, and their engagement can be considered a form of co-creation as dbrand's stakeholders actively use dbrand's products to create content which evidently also promotes the brand to the stakeholders' own followers.

In addition to these external stakeholders, it was previously mentioned that dbrand also employs sponsorships to expose the brand to new audiences (cf. 6.3.1. Social media adoption; 6.3.2. Choice of content). It was determined that these sponsored parties, who can also be considered dbrand's stakeholders, act as co-creators and as representatives of dbrand's corporate identity. However, due

to them being on dbrand's payroll, at least in terms of the sponsored content that they produce, they may be considered internal stakeholders as opposed to external stakeholders.

Continuing on, as it pertains to the level of engagement of dbrand's stakeholders, we can take a look at dbrand's average amount of 'likes' on Twitter. According to the website Socialblade, dbrand averages 4147 likes per post on Twitter (Socialblade D 2020). However, we also gathered data in terms of 50 of dbrand's Twitter posts for use in the later analysis of dbrand's expressed brand personality traits (cf. 6.4. dbrand's communicated brand personality traits). This data is considered a pure representation of dbrand's expressions of personality as it does not involve retweets, and therefore does not rely purely on third-parties content to create engagement. This data can be found in appendix 2 (App. 2., p. 68-145). Using this data to calculate the average of dbrand's engagement rate shows that, on average, it receives 4704 likes per post. Considering dbrand's 1.4 million followers on Twitter, this amounts to an engagement rate of either 0.3 or 0.34 depending on which of the two numbers is used, i.e. 4147 vs 4704. It was previously mentioned that the average engagement rate on Twitter is around 0.13 percent (Locowise 2017), and it would therefore seem that dbrand's engagement rate is more than two times the overall average.

This can be compared to dbrand's biggest competitor, @Slickwraps on Twitter, whose average engagement rate is 853 likes per post according to Socialblade (Socialblade E 2020). However, further examining its Twitter profile and content, it comes to light that Slickwraps is apt to hold giveaways with the qualifier being "liking" the post (e.g. Slickwraps 2020); a strategy, or choice of content, that is not seen on dbrand's profile. Slickwraps' engagement rate found on Socialblade would therefore present a false narrative, as compared to dbrand, as the engagement is 'bought' to an extent. In order to get a more representative number, we therefore found the average engagement of Slickwraps' 20 latest posts, disregarding both retweets and tweets that promise the chance to win something in exchange for likes. The adjusted average shows that Slickwraps' average engagement rate is 285 in terms of likes on Twitter. Keeping Slickwraps' 261,000 followers in mind, this represents an engagement rate of 0.1 percent, which is both less than the overall Twitter engagement, i.e. 0.13, and which is less than one-third of dbrand's overall engagement, i.e. 0.3 to 0.34 vs 0.1 percent. This is an indication that dbrand's followers are more apt to engage with its content as compared to its nearest competitor, who does not receive nearly as much engagement.

Based on the above analysis of dbrand's stakeholder engagement, it is clear that dbrand's stakeholders are engaging with the brand, and they go so far as to promote the brand publicly on their own Twitter profiles to their followers. By them doing so, they can be considered co-creators as they are, to a certain extent, promoting the brand. Further, they are, at least partly, representative of dbrand's corporate identity. This is due to the fact that their co-creation, and sharing of dbrand is likely to be an introduction to, and representation of, the brand to their followers. Other stakeholders may also be exposed to this content of theirs, and the material may denote their experience with, and the enthusiasm for, the brand, in which case the content may further represent (and promote) the brand.

It is shown that dbrand's stakeholders are likely to be endorsers of the brand, and they may present dbrand as a high-quality, professional and reliable brand, and this high engagement shows that the stakeholders are committed to the brand. This high level of engagement is likely due to its unique identity and its expression of personality, which will be expanded upon in section 6.4.

Though dbrand's stakeholders are quite involved, and though they may represent dbrand and its corporate identity to a certain extent, a more legitimate representation hereof is found in dbrand's interaction with these stakeholders. This leads us to the final stage, *organisation interaction*.

6.3.5. Organisation interaction

The fifth and last stage concerns determining both how the organisation reacts to stakeholder engagement and how the organisation interacts with other users on social media (cf. 2.2.5. Stage five – Organisation interaction).

In terms of dbrand's reaction to stakeholder engagement, it is found that dbrand does so in two distinct ways. First of all, it is found that dbrand is apt to 'like' its stakeholders comments and mentions of dbrand as evidenced by its activity on the "Likes" section of its Twitter profile (Twitter D 2020), and dbrand is also apt to reply to stakeholders' comments and posts (e.g. app. 4.5.1., p. 199; 4.5.2., p. 200; 4.5.3., p. 201). In response to comments and posts in which stakeholders claim that they are experiencing problems with e.g. their order or product application, dbrand is seen responding using its Twitter support account @robot (Twitter E 2020). Through its interaction with its stakeholders, dbrand also shows that it is not opposed to using otherwise 'controversial' language, i.e. a sassy tone and even snarky, bold and/or aggressive remarks – language that is rarely seen in correspondence with, and in response to, stakeholders (e.g. app. 4.5.4., p. 201; 4.5.5., p. 202; 4.5.6., p. 203).

The fact that dbrand sticks to its behaviour, consisting of publishing and responding to content with a (sometimes) sassy or snarky tone and bold remarks, can also be considered a response to the stakeholder engagement and feedback. As it stands, dbrand's unique identity and personality has evoked a certain level of interest in the world of marketing and social media (Lavigne 2018; Younggun India 2019; Focus Forward Media 2018; Sahakyan 2020). Added to the fact that dbrand experiences a higher-than-average amount of engagement on social media (cf. 6.3.4. Stakeholder engagement), this seemingly positive reaction to dbrand's unique behaviour serves to further validate dbrand and its behaviour. It is thereby found that, in response to this positive reaction, dbrand continues to post its bold, provocative, snarky content. This is perhaps because it seemingly yields both attention and higher overall stakeholder engagement, which will be explored and expanded upon in the later analysis of dbrand's personality (cf. 6.4. dbrand's communicated brand personality traits).

As it pertains to interacting with other users on social media, it was also previously found that dbrand makes use of both *curated* content, in terms of retweeting stakeholders' content featuring dbrand and its products, and *co-created* content in collaboration with its sponsored parties (cf. 6.3.3. Choice of content). Dbrand not only co-creates content with its sponsored parties, it is also apt to comment on their social media, e.g. by writing "*This is coming out of your next paycheck.*" in response to a sponsored party announcing a give-away (app. 4.5.7., p. 204; 4.5.8., p. 205; 4.5.9., p. 206). However, this type of interaction from dbrand is, again, only seen in response to content that concerns dbrand. The choice of retweeting and commenting on sponsors' and customers' posts promoting dbrand and its products, seems to be a deliberate choice as this use of third-parties' endorsements of dbrand's products serves to further promote the brand to both current and prospective stakeholders. These actions are in congruence with dbrand's apparent motivation to employ social media to (freely) present and promote the brand through its viral capabilities. Further, the choice to interact with and respond to its customers on social media, especially as it relates to reported problems, also indicates dbrand's motivation to manage its customer relations.

Through this interaction with its stakeholders and other users on the platform, dbrand indicates that it has a strong and unique personality that does not follow the norm in terms of what would otherwise be considered 'professional' interaction on public media. It also strongly indicates that it is interested in promoting its brand, content, and products. However, its inclination to respond to comments, banter with other individuals on Twitter, and help stakeholders in need further indicates that, despite all of this, it is still interested in building and maintaining its relationship with its stakeholders.

6.3.6. dbrand's corporate identity

Having analysed dbrand's social media use and behaviour through the five stages above, it is found that dbrand is active on several social media platforms. This allows dbrand to reach its stakeholders on whichever platform they prefer, and it may therefore serve to maximise its exposure to current and prospective stakeholders (cf. 6.3.1. Social media adoption; 6.3.2. Choice of platform(s)). On Twitter, it is found that dbrand makes use of both created, curated, and co-created content. In regards to this, dbrand employs stakeholders, in terms of sponsored parties and consumers, and their content in its content creation. Overall, all of dbrand's content consists of and relates to dbrand itself, whether it be created, curated or co-created, and dbrand's employment of stakeholders who endorse dbrand further, serves to validate and promote the brand to both current and prospective stakeholders. This includes the sponsoring of esteemed content creators, which also serves to associate dbrand with professionals in the world of tech, which further connotes that dbrand's products are 'the choice of the professional' (cf. 6.3.3. Choice of content).

Dbrand shows a propensity to engage and interact with its stakeholders. This is both in terms of including its stakeholders in its content creation, but also in terms of commenting and bantering, as well as acknowledging and supporting the stakeholders who engage with dbrand (cf. 6.3.5. Organisation interaction). Through both its content creation and its interaction with stakeholders, dbrand shows a propensity to banter, and use 'unprofessional' and offensive language (cf. 6.3.5. Organisation interaction). In turn, dbrand's behaviour has led its stakeholders to be highly engaged, both in terms of promoting dbrand through content creation, but also in terms of 'liking' its content. This is evidenced by the fact that dbrand receives more than two times the average engagement of the Twitter platform and three times its largest competitor's average engagement (cf. 6.3.4. Stakeholder engagement).

6.4. dbrand's communicated brand personality traits

In order to analyse and determine what dbrand expresses in terms of brand personality traits, we analysed dbrand's communication on the social media platform Twitter. Here, 50 of the newest posts were identified that expressed one or more of the five brand personality traits: *Aggressiveness, Activity, Responsibility, Emotionality,* and *Simplicity* (cf. 3.2. Geuens, Wejters & Wulf - A New Measure of Brand Personality). These 50 posts were further coded for their expressed brand personality trait(s) and item(s). The selected and coded material can be found in the appendix (App. 2., p. 68-145). In total, out of the 50 posts, it was determined that three brand personality traits were expressed, namely *Activity*, *Aggressiveness*, and *Simplicity*. The last two BPTs, *Responsibility* and *Emotionality*, were not expressed at all in the 50 posts. In the following, we will present and exemplify the make-up of these three brand personality traits, how they are expressed and in what context, and what their average engagement rate is.

6.4.1. The expression of 'Activity

The first of the three BPT, and the one that occurred most frequently in dbrand's Twitter posts, was *Activity*. Out of the 50 posts, this trait was identified in 28 of them, and the representation hereof was split among all three of its related items: *Dynamic, Active,* and *Innovative*. In some instances, more than one of these were represented in a given post.

dbrand's *Dynamic* content

The first item, *Dynamic*, occurred in 24 instances, and it therefore represents a large part of dbrand's expression of the BPT *Activity*. All of dbrand's *Dynamic* content can be found in the appendix (App. 2.1.2., p. 78-101). In our analysis of dbrand's 50 posts, the *Dynamic* content presented a positive attitude and mostly related to light-hearted quips and jokes aimed at spreading positivity while still promoting the company and its products.

The first example of this is dbrand promoting the release of its Doomsday Kit. In this post, dbrand states that *"Doomsday is here."*, which is followed by a reference to the kit's store-page and a picture of said kit (App. 2.1.2.10., p. 87). On the website, the Doomsday Kit is found to contain hand sanitiser, toilet paper, a facemask, and a promise that dbrand will donate 20 facemasks for every kit bought (dbrand B 2020). These are all unusual products as they do not relate to dbrand's usual product-offering. However, the kit is seen released and promoted April 1, 2020, otherwise known as April

Fools' Day. Further, considering the current COVID-19 pandemic, these products all refer to products in shortage during this crisis, i.e. facemasks, toilet paper, and hand sanitizer (Khazan 2020; U.S. FDA 2020; Suthivarakom 2020; Fisher 2020). A shortage of these products could constitute "doomsday", hence the statement "*Doomsday is here*" which is a reference to the whole ongoing situation. Therefore, due to the contents of the kit and the release date of the product, this kit and product can be considered a practical joke release that serves to both make light of the COVID-19 pandemic, spread awareness, and to help doctors in need. This post could certainly be considered insensitive by some. However, April Fools' Day is considered a day of fun, and neither the post nor the kit being sold represents malicious intent, quite the contrary. This post is therefore considered *Dynamic* content as it serves to spread positivity in a time of need.

Another example is dbrand promoting its new, limited edition product "(not) Animal Crossing" skins (App. 2.1.2.3., p. 80). Here, dbrand presents the product as follows on its Twitter: "*Day two of (not) Animal Crossing skins. Nintendo has (not) sued us yet*" along with a picture of the product applied to the Nintendo Switch game console. The characters and landscape pictured on dbrand's product also resemble the content found in Nintendo's game "Animal Crossing". On their website, the product also has the tagline "*It's like Animal Crossing, but (not)*" (dbrand C 2020). It is thereby made clear that the product relates and refers to Nintendo's product "Animal Crossing", though dbrand seems to deny it. This product launch and dbrand's Twitter content is in clear reference to Nintendo's previous issuances of copyright claims, the last of which was issued earlier this year in relation to Nintendo's "Animal Crossing" (Craddock 2020). Nintendo is notorious for being incredibly protective of both its trademarks and products, and even so for online content featuring its products, which other games companies usually allow. This has earned Nintendo its notoriety for either issuing DMCA Takedowns[1] or claiming the revenue on e.g. YouTube content featuring its games, in-game music, and others (Cowan 2013; Geigner 2020; Kohler 2015). Dbrand's launch of this product can be seen as an attempt to make fun of this situation, and dbrand even states that it is "*counting on*" a grey area in copyright infringement law to get "*loads of free lawsuit-related press*" (dbrand C 2020). Having put dbrand's post into context, it seemingly expresses a positive and energetic attitude as it jokingly challenges and comments on the situation at hand, which, by some, is considered ridiculous – dbrand

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[1] "A DMCA Takedown is: When content is removed from a website at the request of the owner of the content or the owner of the copyright of the content." (DMCA 2020).

included, hence the launch of the product. The post is therefore considered an example of dbrand's *Dynamic* content.

dbrand's *Active* content

The second item, *Active*, occurred in 10 instances, and it occurred by dbrand either producing content or promoting products, giveaways, sales or sponsored parties – i.e. actions that show business activity. All of dbrand's *active* content can be found in the appendix (App. 2.1.1., p. 68-77).

As it pertains to dbrand's promotion of products, there are several examples. In one example, dbrand is seen teasing the release of one of their new products, thereby promoting the product and creating a form of suspense before its release (App. 2.1.1.6., p. 73) by writing "Friday." with a photo attached that spells "CAMO". This is hinting at the release of its "Robot Camo" product that was released the following Friday (@dbrand, February 7, 2020). Dbrand also holds giveaways meant to promote the purchasing of its products by writing "*Every $20 you spend on dbrand.com is a slim chance to win one of these AirPods* […]" with the added humour of "[…] *and a 100% chance to give us $20.*" (App. 2.1.1.10, p. 77). Another such example is seen when dbrand puts out an update on the inventory of a new limited-edition product while, in the same instance, promising that a new free smartphone will be included in one lucky recipient's order (App. 2.1.1.7, p. 74). It was also found that dbrand likes to promote new products and discounts (App. 2.1.1.8, p. 75; 2.1.1.9., p. 76). These can all aid with creating interest and incentive among the followers to buy dbrand's products at the time of promotion. It is a sort of 'call-to-action' that promotes both dbrand and its products, and these posts are therefore considered *Active* content.

There are also two examples showing dbrand promoting some of their sponsored parties and their video content on YouTube (App. 2.1.1.2., p. 69; 2.1.1.5. p. 72). The sponsored parties in question are, respectively, "EXCESSORIZE ME." and "ShortCircuit", who is otherwise known as "Linus Tech Tips", on YouTube. The sponsored parties are both tech-based YouTubers who, respectively, unbox, review, and discuss technology accessories and technology on their channels (Linus Tech Tips 2020; ShortCircuit A 2020; EXCESSORIZE ME. #1 2020). In these examples, dbrand is seen acknowledging that the sponsored parties have put out a new video, e.g. by writing "*Glad to see @excessorizeme has accepted our briefcase of sponsorship cash*" (App. 2.1.1.2., p. 69), followed by referencing a link to the video in question. In the videos referenced in dbrand's tweets, dbrand's smartphone skins are seen featured as they are applied to the phones that the videos revolve around. The sponsored parties are further seen acknowledging the sponsorship and referencing dbrand and

their products, e.g. by writing "*Thanks to dbrand for sending us the phone and check them out at https://dbrand.com/ShortLinus*" in the description of the video (ShortCircuit B 2020). These two examples are considered *Active* content as they promote dbrand's products, as well as the sponsored parties and their content, and they thereby represent and promote active business dealings.

dbrand's *Innovative* content

In the 50 posts, only two instances were identified to be *Innovative* content. Both of these related to the release of its Boxing Day Cube (App. 2.1.3.1., p. 102; App. 2.1.3.2., p. 103), which is a Rubik's Cube wrapped in dbrand's signature vinyl wrap (dbrand D 2020). This limited-edition product is released in connection with Boxing Day, a holiday usually celebrated in (former) British colonies Trammell 2019) such as Canada, which is dbrand's country of origin (dbrand A 2020). The product itself can certainly be considered really out-of-the-norm for dbrand's usual line of products, though it can be argued that the inclusion of the wrap normalises it a bit. The launch and promotion of such an odd, out-of-the-norm product for a company can be considered both an innovation in terms of dbrand's usual product line-up, and it can also be considered an innovative approach of marketing the company, as it has previously been found that innovative products generate more electronic word-of-mouth and boost virality (Nguyen and Chaudhuri 2018). Due to this, these are considered *Innovative* content.

6.4.1.1. The engagement rate of the BPT 'Activity'

In order to get a better understanding of the engagement rate that the BPT *Activity* received, we calculated the average amount of likes that the 28 posts received. This showed that the average amount of likes, or the mean, that the BPT *Activity* received was 4681. As compared to the average amount of likes that dbrand receives overall on Twitter, as determined previously (cf. 6.3.4. Stakeholder engagement), it would seem that the expression of the BPT *Activity* yields a higher engagement rate, i.e. 4147 vs 4681 average. However, this average was suspected to be skewed by a few posts that represent relatively high values of likes (e.g. App. 2.1.2.8. p. 85; 2.1.2.18, p. 95; 2.1.2.22, p. 99). We therefore calculated the skewness of the distribution in order to get a better understanding of the distribution of likes between the posts that express *Activity*. Using Excel, we plotted our dataset in and calculated the skewness of the distribution using Pearson's Coefficient of Skewness (Statistics How To A 2020; Statistics How To B 2020), and the results showed that the skewness of the distribution of the dataset was 0.974.

As per Bulmer's (1979) rule of thumb, a skewness of 0.5 < 1 means the distribution is moderately skewed (ibid., 63), and the distribution of the dataset presented here is therefore argued to be moderately skewed. As such, for the posts that express the BPT *Activity*, the skewness seems to indicate that the distribution of likes is moderately skewed by a few posts with relatively higher values of likes.

6.4.2. The expression of 'Aggressiveness'

The second-most occurring BPT was *Aggressiveness*, which was identified in 21 of the 50 posts. The expression of the BPT *Aggressiveness* was represented by both *bold* and *aggressive* content, and, in some instances, both of the related items occurred in the same post.

dbrand's *Bold* content

The first item, *Bold*, occurred in 18 instances, and it is therefore the second-most occurring item in dbrand's content, the most occurring item being *Dynamic*, which is related to the BPT *Activity*. *Bold* content represents a significant portion of dbrand's expression of the BPT *Aggressiveness* since it occurred in 18 out of the 21 posts, and all of this content can be found in the appendix (App. 2.2.2., p. 115-132). In the analysis of the selected content, dbrand's *Bold* content was consistent of bold or presumptuous statements, or statements that lacked modesty or may seem offensive, aimed at either its followers or other third parties.

A first example of dbrand making a bold, presumptuous statement is shown by them stating the following: "*You're already in debt, what's another $29.95?*" with an attached picture of one of their cases on a smart that has a vinyl skin applied to it as well (App. 2.2.2.7., p. 121). The message is clearly aimed at the reader, based on the use of "*You're*", and it makes a presumptuous assumption of the reader's financial situation while boldly asking them to buy the case displayed in the photo, which costs $29.95.

There are other examples of this, like dbrand writing: "*Don't let illiteracy keep you from owning a leather-bound book.*" with an attached picture of an Apple MacBook computer with a leather skin applied (App. 2.2.2.15., p. 129). This, too, is aimed at the reader, again by the use of "*you*", and it implies that the reader is illiterate, while also implying that they should buy a skin for their Mac"Book" regardless. The "illiterate" comment could be considered an unnecessary comment, though, to some, it could be considered a harmless quip. Other such examples include dbrand's tweet

of: "*your phone sucks -> buy dbrand -> your phone looks cool but still sucks*" (App. 2.2.2.14., p. 128) and "*Imagine your favorite shirt, but it's for your phone and it actually fits. That's dbrand.*" (App. 2.2.2.16., p. 130). These could all be considered either a humorous jab, or an affront to the reader as they are mocking and making fun of them. This content is therefore considered *Bold* as some may find it offensive while others may not.

Dbrand is also not opposed to including politics or making political commentary in its content. This is seen by dbrand tweeting at U.S. President Donald Trump on December 20, 2019 (App. 2.2.2.17., p. 131). This is notable, as Donald Trump was impeached December 18, 2019 (Wolf 2020), and dbrand's tweet being posted only two days after the impeachment indicates that it is a direct response to this situation. The contents of the post only bolsters this argument. In the tweet, dbrand writes: "*.@realDonaldTrump looking for work?*" which would be a reference to the fact that Trump's impeachment could lead to him being removed from office (BBC B 2020). In the photo attached to the tweet, an orange vinyl smartphone skin, three peaches, Mentos mints, a U.S. flag, and an article referring to rigged elections is found. The orange phone skin would be a reference to Donald Trump's purportedly orange skin (Cockburn 2020), while the inclusion and combination of peaches and mints would be a reference to "peach-mint", or rather, "impeachment". The article referencing rigged elections is also a reference to one of Trump's charges of impeachment which specifically concerned him "*seeking help from Ukraine's government to help himself get re-elected this November*" (BBC B 2020). This piece of content can be considered *Bold,* as it is a deliberate choice by dbrand to include politics and commentary hereon. Despite controversies, Donald Trump's approval rating is relatively high and he may even win the re-election (Gallup 2020; Levitz 2020), which would be an indication that he has a cult following. Dbrand making political commentary could potentially cause political divide between dbrand and some of its stakeholders, and it could potentially cause some stakeholders to distance themselves from the company because of it.

dbrand's *Aggressive* content

The second item relating to the BPT *Aggressiveness* is *Aggressive,* which occurred in 11 out of the 50 posts. All of dbrand's *Aggressive* content can be found in the appendix (App. 2.2.1., p. 104-114). Dbrand's *Aggressive* content was seen consisting of aggressive expressions aimed mostly at the reader, or its stakeholders, and even competitors and third-parties.

An example of dbrand exhibiting aggressive behaviour, dbrand is not opposed to referring to vulgar and offensive language in its content (App. 2.2.1.6., p. 109). It is seen that dbrand, at least to a certain extent, promotes vulgarity as it writes "*when the feed lines up perfectly*" while referencing a vulgar response to a harmless question aimed at dbrand. This can be considered uncustomary as it is not usually seen by companies, who, to a certain degree, are expected to appear professional. To this, it can be argued that vulgarity is not considered professional business conduct. Further, it may also be offensive to some stakeholders which could otherwise alienate them. Due to the offensive nature of vulgarity, and dbrand's support of it, this is considered *Aggressive* content.

Another example is this: in reference to a follower asking dbrand for a refresh of a limited-edition product, dbrand is seen responding as follows: "*you people are insufferable*" (App. 2.2.1.3., p. 106). This original question is also considered harmless, which would warrant a simple or courteous rejection. Dbrand's response can therefore be considered extreme and aggressive, as it does not seem warranted. Dbrand is also seen tweeting out: "*AirPower skins: protect yourself from Coronavirus and everyone else from hearing you speak.*" with a picture of a skull with a vinyl skin covering its mouth (App. 2.2.1.5., p. 108). This would seem to imply that the reader has nothing worthwhile to say, and therefore should buy this skin to cover their mouth and to save others from hearing them speak, which would be considered an aggressive statement.

Dbrand is also not afraid of confronting, accusing or stirring up drama with its competitors. A good example of this is dbrand tweeting at its competitor Slickwraps, where it stated the following: "*.@slickwraps At what point are you dimwits going to stop hiding behind bot accounts? Did the massive data leak teach you nothing about taking responsibility?*" (App. 2.2.1.7., p. 110). Dbrand is, first of all, name-calling its competitor by calling them "*dimwits*", and further accusing them of using fake accounts to artificially manipulate conversations, which is considered violation of Twitter's Terms of Service (Twitter F 2020). The "*data leak*" is in reference to Slickwraps' recent data breach, which it has been ridiculed for as it was previously warned of certain significant vulnerabilities that it did not attempt to fix (Peters 2020; Clover 2020). Dbrand accusing Slickwraps of using bot accounts may not be unfounded either, as Slickwraps has also been suspected of faking reviews on Trustpilot, which Trustpilot has warned its users about (Trustpilot 2020). Dbrand has further been suspicious of this behaviour for a significant amount of time, as indicated by its following tweet: "*Oh … one more thing. We've been archiving every single one of your bot profiles for years now. Tread lightly.*" (@dbrand, February 22, 2020) while referring to an archive of said profiles. Though competition and

jabs between competitors is not unheard, this example can be considered out of the ordinary as this is a direct, public attack on a competitor which consists of both name-calling and serious accusations.

6.4.2.1. The engagement rate of the BPT 'Aggressiveness'

Here, we also calculated the average engagement rate that the BPT *Aggressiveness* received. Based on the 21 posts in which *Aggressiveness* was expressed, we calculated the average amount of likes to be 5419. The engagement rate of the BPT *Aggressiveness*, too, seems to be higher than dbrand's overall average, i.e. 4147 vs 5419. Here, it was also suspected that the average was skewed by a few posts that represent a high amount of likes (e.g. App. 2.2.1.1., p. 104; 2.2.1.10, p. 113; 2.2.2.11, p. 125). The dataset for the amount of likes that the BPT *Aggressiveness* had received was used to calculate the skewness. The results showed that the skewness of the distribution was 1.326, which means the distribution of likes is considered highly skewed, as the skewness is greater than 1 (Bulmer 1979, 63). This higher-than-average amount of likes may therefore not be completely representative of the engagement rate that the expression of the BPT *Aggressiveness* receives.

6.4.3. The expression of 'Simplicity'

The last, and least, occurring BPT out of the three is *Simplicity*. This BPT was identified in 13 of dbrand's posts, and was only found in the form of *Simple* content. The content that was identified to be expressors of *Simplicity* can be found in the appendix (App. 2.3.1., p. 133-145).

dbrand's *Simple* content

As *Simple* was the only identified item in dbrand's posts that expressed *Simplicity*, it occurred in all 13 instances. This *Simple* content mostly consisted of simple updates on, and references to, dbrand's products and product inventory that seemingly serve no other purpose than to update its followers and to promote its products.

Dbrand's updates on its products or product inventory are rather simple. An example of this is dbrand announcing the launch of its Doomsday Kit. The first update on the product is an announcement saying "*only 24 hours left*" while linking to its product page (App. 2.3.1.6., p. 138). 24 hours later, dbrand follows this up, and announces the launch by writing "*Doomsday is here.*" while, again, referring to a link leading to its product page (App. 2.3.1.5., p. 137). Dbrand ends its updates on the product by simply writing: "*Sold out.*" in reference to the same Doomsday Kit (App. 2.3.1.4., p. 136). Another such example is dbrand announcing that its Boxing Day Cube is sold out by tweeting "*Sold*

out. Back to selling non-Cubes." (App. 2.3.1.10., p. 142) or announcing that its products are live, e.g. by writing "*Galaxy S20 Ultra skins are live*" (App. 2.3.1.8., p. 140). These are all rather simple updates on its products and the product inventory, in which dbrand only writes what is necessary in terms of updating its followers on the status of these items. As such, they need no further interpretation as they can be taken at face-value.

Dbrand is also seen simply posting photos of its products while linking to its specific product page (App. 2.3.1.7., p. 139), or perhaps with an added quip like "*The iPhone is reasonably priced. The electronic tape isn't.*" (App. 2.3.1.2., p. 134). The same goes for dbrand announcing that one of its products will include further content, where it simply tweets out "*All Teardown orders will include a limited edition Robot microfiber cloth*" (e.g. App. 2.3.1.7., p. 139; App. 2.3.1.13., p. 145). These are all rather direct as they are simple updates on dbrand's products, that contain no additional information, and which need no further interpretation. Because of this, they are considered *Simple* content.

6.4.3.1. The engagement rate of the BPT 'Simplicity'

As mentioned, the BPT *Simplicity* occurred in 13 instances. As such, it gave us 13 points of data in terms of "likes" that the BPT, in the form of these 13 posts, received on Twitter. In order to get a better understanding of the engagement rate of this BPT, and in order to compare the results with the other occurring BPTs *Activity* and *Aggressiveness*, we used this dataset to calculate the average engagement rate of the BPT *Simplicity*. The results showed that the average amount of likes this BPT received was 3600. When compared to dbrand's overall average amount of likes on Twitter, i.e. 4147 vs 3600 likes, it would seem that the BPT *Simplicity* receives less overall engagement.

As was done for both *Activity* and *Aggressiveness*, the skewness of the distribution in this dataset was also calculated, and the results showed that the skewness of *Simplicity's* dataset was 0.513. Again, as per Bulmer's (1979) rule of thumb, a skewness of 0.5 < 1 means the distribution is moderately skewed, and the distribution of 'likes' that the BPT *Simplicity* has received is therefore considered moderately skewed.

6.4.4. A recap and comparison between the traits

Based on the analysis of dbrand's 50 most current Twitter posts that express one or more BPTs, it is evident that the BPT *Activity* occurred most frequently, with it being expressed in 28 out of the 50 posts. This BPT was represented by 24 instances of *Dynamic* content, 10 instances of *Active* content, and two instances of *Innovative* content. *Aggressiveness*, being expressed in 21 out of the 50 posts, was the second-most expressed BPT. The expression of this BPT was represented by 18 instances of *Bold* content and 11 instances of *Aggressive* content. Lastly, *Simplicity* was expressed in 13 instances, and it was therefore the least expressed BPT out of the three traits that were identified in dbrand's posts. *Simplicity* was represented solely by *Simple* content. The last two traits, *Responsibility* and *Emotionality*, were not expressed a single time in either of the 50 selected posts.

Based on the analysis of dbrand's expression of personality, it can be concluded that dbrand primarily expresses *Activity*, mostly in the form of humour and light-hearted quips while promoting the company and its products. However, a significant amount of dbrand's content also indicates the expression of *Aggressiveness*. It can be argued, though, that *Bold* and *Aggressive* expressions are a part of dbrand's humour – perhaps best described as "mordant" (Collins Dictionary 2020) or crass humour as mocking, sassiness, and harshness seems to be the focus of some of dbrand's content. Though it seems offensive, hence the attribution of the *Aggressiveness* to this content, it may not necessarily be the case, as some may consider it humorous. This argument is also bolstered by the fact that dbrand's *Aggressive* and *Bold* content, on average, receives the highest amount of engagement.

In terms of the engagement rate of the BPTs, *Aggressiveness* received the highest average amount of engagement, though it also experienced the most variance of the three, and the distribution of likes for *Aggressiveness* was the only one that was considered *highly skewed*. *Activity* received the second-highest amount of engagement, though the distribution of engagement that the content received was also considered moderately skewed. Both *Aggressiveness* and *Activity* received higher engagement than the overall average, i.e. 5419 and 4681 likes, respectively, vs 4147. The BPT *Simplicity* received the least engagement, lower than the overall average, but it also experienced the least variance in its distribution of 'likes'. Based on the above, it would seem that, on average, the expression of dbrand's *Aggressive* BPT receives the most engagement, though it is rather inconsistent based on the skewness, and it may therefore not be a given that expressions of *Aggressiveness* would yield more engagement than e.g. expressions of *Activity*.

An overview of the stakeholders' preference, in terms of engagement, for dbrand's expressed BPTs can be found in the table below.

BPT engagement preferrence	Most engaged/preferred		Least engaged/preferred
dbrand's BPT engagement	Aggressiveness	Activity	Simplicity

Table 2: dbrand's BPT engagement from its stakeholders.

Due to the skewness that exists in the distribution of engagement between all three BPTs, ranging from moderate to high skewness, it seems unwise to make any general conclusions in terms of 'what yields more engagement'. It is therefore argued that a larger dataset and a quantitative analysis of the data, with control for variables, could provide a significantly better insight into the interplay and relationship between the expressed BPTs, and their resultant engagement rate in the case of dbrand.

6.5. Survey on brand personality preferences

The following part of our analysis will be regarding the web-based survey we created to understand the underlying motivations that cause American consumers engage with content posted by companies on social media. The data and results of what we retrieved from the survey will then be compared to our overall analysis of AirBnB's and dbrand's corporate identity, and the brand personality traits we analysed based on the 50 posts from each company. This new perspective should give us an understanding of the consumers' engagement behaviour, and how the personality and identity of companies factor into this equation. This should ultimately help us answer our problem statement.

We received 46 respondents from the survey. We can start by briefly explaining who this sample represents. 65 percent of the 46 respondents were male, and 85 percent of the 46 respondents were in the age group between 18-34 (App. 5.1., p. 207; 5.2., p. 207). Previously we mentioned that the gender demographic on Reddit was more evenly split, with 49% males, and 51% females. we also mentioned that the users on Reddit were mainly from a very specific age demographic, with 91% of all users aging between 18-39 (cf. 5.5. Survey research). This information can be compared to the respondents in our web-based survey, to understand whether or not there is alignment between Reddit's users, and our respondents. Our survey had a different gender distribution compared to Reddit, with our survey having a higher percentage of males (65%), compared to reddit (49%). The age groups in our survey were however more closely related to Reddit. Reddit had a very large age group of users between 18-

39 (91%), whereas the majority of our respondents were in the age group of 18-34 (85%). No survey will have a 100% representation, but the difference in gender might be explained by some of the few people who participated from our own social media profiles (cf. 5.5. Survey research). Overall it can be argued that our respondents are a good representation of the primary platform we posted the survey on, namely Reddit. There is one difference in gender distribution, but the age demographic is very close, and the otherwise differences can, as said before, be explained and be affected by the secondary platforms we posted the survey on, with our own private social media profiles. It is therefore acknowledged that our survey is not a complete representation of Reddit's users, but we still believe our overall survey is a good representation of Reddit's users. However, we cannot make any real generalisations on behalf of this group of respondents, but we can still use our survey findings to determine what motivates this group of people to engage with corporate social media content in terms of their expressed brand personalities. 80 percent of the 46 respondents also state that they actually engage with companies on social media (App. 5.4., p. 208), so we can now take a closer look at whether or not the manner in which companies communicate on social media affects the engagement of the respondents. According to the survey, 80 percent of the respondents indicate that the manner, in which companies communicate its content, will impact their willingness to engage (App. 5.5., p. 209). This indicates that a majority of our respondents are affected by the manner in which companies communicate. We will now take a closer look at what type of content the respondents are most drawn towards. Before we gave any examples for the respondents to rate, we asked them which personality characteristics they would be more inclined to engage with. The respondents could choose one of more traits among *Responsibility*, *Activity*, *Emotionality*, *Aggressiveness*, and *Simplicity*. These BPTs were also the same traits we based our analysis of the two case-companies on. 70 percent of the 46 respondents believed that content expressing the trait *Responsibility* would motivate them to engage on with said content. Closely followed is content that expressed the BPT *Activity*, with 67 percent of the 46 respondents finding this type of content worth engaging with (App. 5.6., p. 209). Another 48 percent of the respondents believe content with the BPT *aggressiveness* would entice them to engage, which is almost half of the respondents (App. 5.6., p. 209). 37 percent of the 46 respondents believe content with *Emotionality* would entice them, and finally only 24 percent of the 46 respondents believe content with *Simplicity* would encourage them to engage with companies (App. 5.6., p. 209). Based on the above, it is indicated that the respondents are most drawn towards engaging with content expressing the BPTs *Responsibility* and *Activity*. However, it should be kept in mind that this is only what they believe they would be drawn towards, based on preconceived notions, and it does not

necessarily mean that it is the type of content they would actually be more inclined to engage with. This is also why we gave ten examples of the five BPTs (two of each), to see how the respondents would actually rate the different type of content when presented with real examples. This should give us some insights into how the respondents behave in reality, as compared to their preconceived perception of their own engagement behaviour.

Now that we have an overview of what type of content they believe they would engage with, we can start reviewing and analysing the respondents evaluations of our ten selected posts.

6.5.1. Activity

In order to get a better understanding of the respondents' engagement behaviour with the five BPTs, we tasked them with evaluating 10 distinct posts that express the five BPTs on an "engagement likelihood" scale of 1-10. These 10 posts consisted of two of each BPT which were spread out to avoid grouping of the BPTs.

The BPT *Activity* was, like the four other BPTs, represented by two posts in this evaluation of posts. The first post which expressed *Activity* was a post by Nike in which it announced the launch of a new collection of swimwear (app. 5.9., p. 211). This post indicates both *innovative* and *active* characteristics due to it being a promotion of new, innovative products, which thereby shows business activity. Thus, it is considered an expression of *Activity*. The respondents' evaluation of this post showed that their likelihood of engaging with this, and similar, posts was 2.5 out of 10.

In addition, a majority of respondents indicate that their motivation for engaging with the post would be due to either the attached picture (56.5%) or a combination of the picture and text (34.8%) (app. 5.10., p. 212). This shows that the actual text, which may be considered relatively neutral in this case, is not the main motivator for the respondents' willingness to engage.

The second post that expressed *Activity* was an engineering update by Tesla on the "Tesla Ventilator". This post, too, indicates both *innovative* and *active* characteristics, as it shows business development and activity, and it is thus an expressor of *Activity*. Here, the respondents' evaluation showed that their average likelihood of engaging with this type of post was 3.15 out of 10 (app. 5.19., p. 221).

In this case, there was an even split in terms of the motivation for engaging with this post among the respondents, i.e. 43.5% were motivated to engage due to both the picture and the text, and 13% were motivated by a combination of both (app. 5.20., p. 222).

In total, between the two posts that express the BPT *Activity,* the overall average likelihood of engagement was 2.83 out of 10.

In the previous analysis of AirBnB's and dbrand's brand personality and the resultant engagement, we chose to calculate the skewness in order to get a better understanding of the distribution of the data (cf. 6.2. AirBnB's communicated brand personality traits; 6.4. dbrand's communicated brand personality traits). We therefore also made the decision to calculate the skewness of our respondents' engagement likelihood for all five BPTs as represented by their two respective posts. As it pertains to the BPT *Activity*, the skewness of the dataset, averaged out between the two posts, was calculated to be 1.15. Referring to Bulmer's (1979) rule of thumb, a skewness of $0 < 0.5$ is indicative of a fairly symmetrical dataset, a skewness of $0.5 < 1$ is indicative of a moderately skewed dataset, and a skewness of 1 or more is indicative of a highly skewed dataset. Based on this, it is therefore evident that a few responses highly skew the average engagement likelihood of the respondents.

6.5.2. Aggressiveness

Aggressiveness was also represented by two posts in the survey, both of which were from dbrand's Twitter account.

The first post relates to one of dbrand's products, a skin for the new and cheap iPhone SE (app. 5.11., p. 213). The post shows both *aggressive* and *bold* characteristics due to the language used in the post, i.e. "*iPhone SE skins: because poor people have money, too.*", which can be considered a bold and aggressive remark towards iPhone SE owners. In response to this post, the respondents evaluated their likelihood of engaging with this type of post to be 4.26 out of 10 on average.

A majority further responded that their motivation for doing so would either be due to the text/language used (52.2%), or a combination of both the text/language and the attached picture (13%) (app. 5.12., p. 214). This indicates that a significant portion of the people engaging are motivated by, or fond of, the more aggressive/bold language used.

The second post indicating *Aggressiveness* was, as mentioned, also published by dbrand, and this post also relates to dbrand's products. This post, too, showed *aggressive* and *bold* characteristics as it includes a presumptuous, bold, and aggressive remark: "*your phone sucks → buy dbrand → your phone looks cool but still sucks.*" (app. 5.21., p. 223). Here, the respondents showed that, on average, their likelihood of engaging with this type of content is 4.46 out of 10. The respondents further indicated that their main motivation for engaging with this post was due to the text/language used (50%), while a significant portion of respondents were motivated by a combination of both the text/language and the picture (26.1%) (app. 5.22., p. 224).

The average likelihood of the respondents engaging with these two posts, which both indicate the *Aggressiveness* trait, is calculated to be 4.36 out of 10. The skewness of this dataset was calculated to be -0.14, and the distribution is therefore considered fairly symmetrical (Bulmer 1979, 63).

6.5.3. Emotionality

The BPT *Emotionality* was represented by two posts in this survey. Both contents were posted on Twitter. The first one is from Coca-Cola (app. 5.13., p. 215), whereas the second is from The Salvation Army USA (app. 5.23., p. 225).

The first post from Coca Cola is a supporting message that is stated with the intention of motivating people to help the ones fighting on the frontline with reference to COVID-19. This post indicates *Sentimental* characteristics, due to the fact that Coca-Cola is appealing to followers' emotions to do as suggested. The likelihood that the respondents would engage with this type of content was evaluated to be 3.52 out of 10 on average. The majority stated that their motivations for engaging with this post would be because of a combination of the text/language, and the picture (61%), or because of the text/language alone (30%) (app 5.14., p. 216). This indicates that a large portion of the respondents were motivated by the text/language, when it comes to *Emotionality* content, but that the attached picture also had an effect on the overall impression of the post.

The second post that showed *Emotionality* content was from The Salvation Army, which was a post that showed gratitude towards those who had helped in a fundraising to help those affected by COVID-19 (app. 5.23., p. 225). This post also showed signs of Sentimental characteristics by playing on the emotion of the readers, and by framing it in a context of 'fighting for the good' by stating: "*Thank you for supporting the fight for good*" (app. 5.23., p. 225). The respondents indicated their likelihood of engaging with this post was, on average, 3,85 out of 10. The respondents further expressed that their motivations for engaging with this post would be based on a combination of both text/language and the attached picture (52%) or based on the text/language alone (39%) (app. 5.24., p. 226). Just like the first *Emotionality* content, this indicates that the text/language in this example is the primary motivator in terms of stirring the respondents' engagement, but also that the attached picture has an overall effect. This is perhaps due to the fact that the picture included further textual content, in which The Salvation Army expressed their gratitude.

The average likelihood that the respondents would engage with these two posts expressing *Emotionality* is calculated to be 3.68 out of 10. In addition, we further calculated the skewness of the distribution in order to get a better understanding of the data and how it is spread out. This showed

that the skewness of *Emotionality*, averaged out between the two posts, was 0.98 which is considered moderately skewed, and it shows that there are a smaller number of respondents who positively skew the distribution.

6.5.4. Responsibility

Responsibility was represented by two posts, the first of which was a post by AirBnB on Twitter. In this post, AirBnB is seen announcing that it is launching an initiative to provide housing for 100,000 COVID-19 responders. This post showed AirBnB taking responsibility in a time of need, and it therefore shows *responsible* characteristics. Here, the respondents of the survey indicate that the likelihood of them engaging with this type of content, on average, is 3.8 out of 10 (app 5.15., p. 217). A majority of respondents also indicate that their motivation for doing so is based on the text, as represented by 63% of respondents, while another 28.3% are motivated to engage with this post due to a combination of both the text/language and the picture (app. 5.16., p. 218).

As it pertains to the second post that indicates *responsibility*, it is a post from Walmart in which it promotes its initiative to donate to people in need in response to COVID-19, which, in this example, are the patients at Javits Center field hospital in New York. Here, Walmart is shown taking responsibility for these patients, and people in need, and it therefore indicates *responsible* characteristics. In response to this, the respondents have shown that the likelihood of them engaging with this post is 2.78 out of 10 (app. 5.25., p. 227). A majority of the respondents show that their motivation for engaging with this piece of content is due to the text and language used, accounting for 54.3%, while another 41.3% are motivated to engage by a combination of the photo and the text/language in the post (app. 5.26., p. 228). Between these two posts, the average likelihood of engaging with this content is calculated to be 3.29 out of 10. The skewness was also calculated, and it showed that the dataset has a skewness of 0.45 which indicates that the distribution is fairly symmetrical.

6.5.5. Simplicity

Simplicity was represented by two posts, where the first was from McDonald's Twitter account. This post simply conveys a message on how swimming works up an appetite (app. 5.17., p. 219). The respondents rate, on average, the likelihood that they would engage with this type of content at 2.1 out of 10. The motivation behind engaging with this post is almost evenly split between the

text/language alone (41 %), and a combination of text/language along with the picture(37%) (app. 5.18., p. 220).

The second post was from AirBnB, which is a simple description of one of the countries the company offers its accommodations in (app. 5.27., p. 229). The likelihood the respondents would engage with this post was calculated to be 3.61 out of 10. It is indicated that the motivations behind this was a combination between text/language and the picture (65%), while a group believed the picture alone was motivation enough (28%) (app. 5.28., p. 230). Unlike the previous nine posts, the respondents seemed to be more motivated by the picture here. This is most likely because of the beautiful landscape that might have caught the eye of the respondents, and inspired their choice to engage.

Both of these posts indicate *simple* characteristics, since the posts relate to content that says very little about the company, which can be taken at face value, and which contains very neutral content, which is the case of these two posts. Between these two posts, the average likelihood respondents would engage with this type of content was calculated to be 2.85 out of 10. The skewness of the BPT *Simplicity*, averaged out between the two posts, was calculated to be -0.23 which thereby indicates that the distribution is fairly symmetrical.

6.5.6. Comparison of the results & recap

Having analysed the survey results in terms of the respondents' engagement behaviour and their evaluation of the five BPTs, in terms of the 10 posts presented in the survey, we can now compare the findings. A quick overview of the findings can be found in the table below.

BPT engagement preferrence	Most engaged/preferred				Least engaged/preferred
Survey pre-assessment of BPTs	Responsibility	Activity	Aggressiveness	Emotionality	Simplicity
Survey evaluation of BPT examples	Aggressiveness	Emotionality	Responsibility	Simplicity	Activity

Table 3: An overview of the respondents' pre-assessment and evaluation of BPTs as expressed through content.

Prior to being tasked with evaluating the 10 select posts expressing the five BPTs, the respondents were asked about their preferences for engaging with content expressing personality on social media. This showed that the respondents were most drawn towards the BPTs *Responsibility* and *Activity*. About half of the respondents indicated that they were drawn towards engaging with content showing *Aggressiveness*. A bit more than a third of the respondents were drawn towards *Emotionality,* and

approximately a fourth were drawn towards *Simplicity*. This can be compared to the respondents' evaluation of the 10 posts representing the five BPTs.

The analysis of the respondents' evaluation of the 10 posts, and their expression of BPTs, has shown that, overall, the respondents show a propensity to engage with the content expressing *Aggressiveness*. In terms of this BPT, the respondents indicate an engagement likelihood of 4.36 out of 10, and the distribution of the dataset was shown to be fairly symmetrical. The results therefore indicate that content expressing *Aggressiveness* experiences a higher engagement likelihood on average. Second to this is *Emotionality* in which the respondents showed a likelihood to engage of 3.69 out of 10, and the distribution of the dataset was considered moderately skewed.

Responsibility showed an engagement likelihood of 3.29 on average, and the distribution of this dataset was considered fairly symmetrical.

In regards to the last two BPTs, *Simplicity* and *Activity*, the respondents indicate an engagement likelihood of 2.85 and 2.83 out of 10, respectively. The distribution of the dataset for *Simplicity* was considered fairly symmetrical while the distribution of the dataset for *Activity* was, as the only one, considered highly skewed. Due to the skewness that exists in the distribution of these datasets, with one dataset being moderately skewed and another being highly skewed, the overall average engagement likelihood for these two BPTs may not necessarily be reflective of reality.

The respondents' evaluation of these 10 posts is in stark contrast to the preliminary question pertaining to the respondents' preferences in terms of the expression of BPTs on social media. Though the respondents were most drawn towards the BPTs *Responsibility* and *Activity*, this was not necessarily reflected by their engagement likelihood as indicated by their evaluation of the 10 posts representing the five BPTs. The discrepancy between these results can either be explained by 1) that the examples shown to the respondents were not agreeable with their definition of the BPTs, or 2) that the hypothetical is not reflective of the respondents' actual engagement behaviour.

As a final note, it should also be mentioned that the representation of our respondents is not exactly equal to the representation seen on Reddit, where the survey was posted. However, because of the close numbers when it comes to age and gender demographic, we still believe this survey's respondents is a good and representable sample for users from Reddit.

7.0. Discussion

The following discussion will be focussing on all aspects of what we have examined and analysed in this thesis. This means we will initially compare the results we got from our corporate analysis of AirBnB and dbrand, which will be followed by a discussion and comparison of our results pertaining to AirBnB's and dbrands's communicated brand personality. This will include a discussion and comparison of the results of our web-based survey as it pertains to brand personality and engagement behaviour.

AirBnB and dbrand each present their unique corporate identity through their use of social media. Based on the analysis of AirBnB social media use, it is found that it is focussed on three key areas, i.e. promoting its products, introducing initiatives, and community-oriented actions. It is found that these three key areas are recurring themes in AirBnB's content on the account '@airbnb' on Twitter. As it pertains to the content that AirBnB interacts with on Twitter, these three key areas reoccur. This indicates that AirBnB is interested in portraying itself as a community-oriented company. This is accomplished by highlighting the positive engagement and promotion of AirBnB, its service, and 'products' on its main account @airbnb. Any negative engagement is redirected towards its other support account @airbnbHelp. Overall, AirBnB indicates that it's primary account targets a broader audience, as evidenced by its use of influencers. This is further indicated both by its choice to post neutral, widely relevant, and broad content that does not target specific audiences, as well as its choice to use different accounts for separate user segments, i.e. accounts for specific countries.

AirBnB's approach can be compared to dbrand's use of social media. On Twitter, dbrand's approach indicates a significant interest in promoting both its material, its brand, and its products. This is indicated by its choices of content production, presentation, and its interaction with stakeholders: in all three areas, the main focus is on promoting dbrand. In addition to its self-promotion, dbrand employs stakeholders, in terms of consumers and sponsored parties, and their content to promote the brand. In its content production and interaction with stakeholders, it is apt to present itself by use of 'unprofessional', offensive language and banter, which may be offensive to some but appeal to others. This is highly different from AirBnB who, unlike dbrand, is focussed on more than just promoting its products. AirBnB's focus on the community aspect is in stark contrast with dbrand's consistent self-promotion. This is an indication of where the companies' interests are, i.e. the community vs self-promotion. Though dbrand indicates a large interest in promoting itself, it is also indicated that it has an interest in managing its customer relations. This is evidenced by its activity on its support account, @robot, but also by its propensity to engage and banter with its stakeholders. The nature of its (large)

stakeholder engagement shows a significant interest in and endorsement of the company, seemingly due to its bold, aggressive, and bantering personality that speaks to its specific consumer segment. Dbrand's specific interest in being associated with large and respectable tech-heads, as well as its offensive nature and high stakeholder engagement, suggests that it has a more specific and more invested target group, as compared to AirBnB. AirBnB's focus on a broader audience seems to be reflected in its content creation and stakeholder engagement, and its lack of specificity may be partly to blame for its lower-than-average engagement on Twitter. On the contrary, dbrand's specificity, in terms of both language use, presented personality, content, and sponsor-association indicates a more specific audience. Overall, this may be an explanation for its higher-than-average engagement on Twitter.

This leads us to the analysis of AirBnB's and dbrand's communicated personality traits. Based on our analysis of AirBnB's 50 Twitter posts, it is evident that content expressing *Responsibility* and *Activity* occurred most often. *Activity* was expressed through AirBnB's posting of content that shows its initiatives in response to COVID-19, whereas *Responsibility* was shown through its showing of concern and accountability towards its community in terms of announcing policy changes and providing general advice, as it relates to adjusting to the unforeseen changes due to COVID-19, to both its hosts and travelers. AirBnB also showed community support, in terms of LGBTQ and environmental causes, which, too, indicated *Responsibility*. Both *Activity* and *Responsibility* further led to the highest amount of engagement among its stakeholders. This may also explain AirBnB's choice to primarily present and express these traits in its posting of content. AirBnB's content and language can be considered neutral, as it seemingly does not present humoristic or risky content at all, as evidenced by the lack of expression of *Aggressiveness*. By doing so, AirBnB indicates that it avoids confrontation in terms of offending anyone. This may be explained by AirBnB's focus on a broader audience, due to the fact that it operates in several different countries and cultures, and that (relatively) safe and neutral content is less likely to offend anyone.

This is in stark contrast to dbrand's approach, whose content largely expresses *Activity* and *Aggressiveness*. In the case of dbrand, it shows a propensity to use humour in its content creation and self-promotion. More specifically, dbrand is seen tip-toeing the line between dynamic, light-hearted humour and downright aggressive, offensive remarks, as evidenced by its significant expression of both *Activity* and *Aggressiveness*. This further indicates that dbrand, unlike AirBnB, is not interested in targeting a broader audience, as doing so, while maintaining an offensive personality, would be counterproductive. The risk of offending a section of a broader audience is likely higher, when

offensive or risky content is a large part of its expressed content-repertoire. Further, its choice to present a bold, and sometimes aggressive, personality is also an indication that it seeks a specific target group; a group that appreciates this specific type of content. The fact that dbrand receives a higher-than-average engagement rate from its stakeholders indicates that it has done just that. In addition, the fact that dbrand's expression of *Activity* and especially *Aggressiveness* seemingly receive higher overall engagement, as compared to its average, may also reinforce and validate dbrand's choice to focus on this type of content and its expression of personality.

In terms of engagement, AirBnB's engagement rate on Twitter, disregarding retweets, is found to be 0.02 percent, whereas dbrand's was found to be 0.34 percent. It is therefore evident that dbrand experiences a significantly higher overall engagement rate on Twitter, which may be explained by its unique identity, personality, and behaviour on social media.

However, though our data and analysis showed an overall higher engagement on AirBnB's expression of *Responsibility* and *Activity*, and an overall higher engagement on dbrand's expression of *Activity* and *Aggressiveness*, it must acknowledged that the distribution of our dataset turned out to be highly skewed. As it pertains to dbrand, the distribution of the dataset for *Aggressiveness* was shown to be highly skewed, while the dataset for *Activity* was moderately skewed. Meanwhile, the dataset for AirBnB's *Responsibility* and *Activity* were both considered highly skewed. As a consequence of this, the results may not be a complete representation of the stakeholders' engagement behaviour as it pertains to expressed BPTs. In order to get a better understanding of the relationship between the stakeholder engagement rate and the expressed BPTs, it is evident that a quantitative analysis of a larger dataset, with control for variables, would have been beneficial. This was an issue that became apparent during our analysis of the selected empirical data.

Based on our analysis of the web-based survey pertaining to consumer preferences for engagement with BPTs, it was found that prior to evaluating the 10 examples of BPTs, they preferred content expressing *responsibility* and *activity*, with a close third being *aggressiveness*, and finally, *emotionality* and *simplicity* were the two least preferred BPTs as expressed through content on social media. However, the respondents' evaluation of the 10 examples showed that they had a significant preference for content expressing *aggressiveness* followed by *emotionality* and *responsibility*, with *simplicity* and *activity* being the lowest rated BPTs. This shows that there is a discrepancy between the pre-assessment, and the results from the evaluation of the ten examples. Here, the largest discrepancy is found in relation to *activity* and *aggressiveness*.

This discrepancy may be caused by a disparity between our assessment, as researchers, of the 10 examples and the respondents' perspective of these.

An overview of both the respondents' pre-assessment and evaluation of BPTs, as well as the engagement rate of AirBnB's and dbrand's BPTs can be found in the table below.

BPT engagement preferrence	Most engaged/preferred				Least engaged/preferred
AirBnB's BPT engagement	Activity	Responsibility	Emotionality	Simplicity	
dbrand's BPT engagement	Aggressiveness	Activity	Simplicity		
Survey pre-assessment of BPTs	Responsibility	Activity	Aggressiveness	Emotionality	Simplicity
Survey evaluation of BPT examples	Aggressiveness	Emotionality	Responsibility	Simplicity	Activity

Table 4: An overview of the engagement preference for expressed BPTs.

In comparison to our analysis of AirBnB's and dbrand's expressed BPTs, and the resultant engagement, it was found that the results from our survey pre-assessments of BPTs matches well with AirBnB's BPT engagement. Here, it is apparent that *Responsibility* and *Activity* is the most preferred, and they were rated the highest in both instances. However, we should keep in mind that the results from our web-based survey is only what they preferred, and not actually what they rated. Our results from the survey evaluation of BPT examples instead showed that the respondents rated *Aggressiveness* as the most preferred BPT, whereas *Responsibility* and *Activity* fell down the order of preference. *Activity* was even rated as the lowest of all the BPTs. Besides the disparity between our assessment, as researchers, and the respondents' assessment, this does tell us that content that stands out, *Aggressiveness*, with humour and risky remarks get more attention from our respondents. It would appear that even though the respondents would prefer to like BPT content like *Responsibility* and *Activity* from companies in the pre-assessment, reality contradicts this preference. In the figure, we can also see that the BPT *Emotionality* is the second highest rated BPT in the evaluations of the 10 examples. *Emotionality* and *Aggressiveness* both have in common that these two BPTs invoke emotions among the respondents, and it seems like this type of content is much more effective in causing the respondents to engage. This is supported by the high ratings of *Aggressiveness* compared to the other BPTs, and the level of engagement to dbrand's *Aggressiveness* posts.

8.0. Conclusion

With time, the use of social media has only increased, and, in response to this, brands have found an opportunity to employ these platforms to present and market themselves. A large influx of brand presentation on social media, and thereby an oversaturation hereof, has also caused a necessity for brands to distinguish themselves on these employed platforms. This distinction is represented by the companies' unique identities and personalities, and the employment and presentation hereof, and the differences among these, are found to lead to varying levels of success in terms of stakeholder engagement.

Based on an analysis and comparison of two different companies, namely AirBnB and dbrand, this thesis has sought to examine how brands communicate their unique identities and personalities on social media, and, as a consequence of the unique presentation hereof, how these affect stakeholder engagement. This examination is facilitated by the use of a combination of theory on corporate identity on social media and brand personality traits.

AirBnB communicates its corporate identity in various ways on social media. Through the company's own content and its interaction with stakeholders, it is found that AirBnB wants its corporate identity to be closely related with how the company supports the community. The company highlights three different types of content on its social media, namely 1) *actions taken to support the community*, 2) *introducing initiatives that benefit the communities*, and 3) *promoting products*. These three key areas are what AirBnB wants its corporate identity to be associated with by its stakeholders. To express this kind of corporate identity, AirBnB highlights, or even prefers, to express certain types of personality traits in its content. Based on an analysis of AirBnB's Twitter content, and a web-based survey, it is apparent that AirBnB posts and focuses on content that expresses the personality traits *Responsibility* and *Activity*, since the majority of its content is related to these two traits. These two traits, out of the four identified traits, also received the highest amount of engagement as based on the analysis of its Twitter content. The company's approach to highlight these two personality traits is not only expressed through AirBnB's own content, but it is also shown through the specific stakeholder content that AirBnB decides to engage with. This interaction is seen in relation to both AirBnB's retweets and liking of certain stakeholder content that aligns with its focus.

Dbrand, on the other hand, communicates its corporate identity by focussing on the language that frames both the content it posts on its social media, and the language in relation to interaction with its stakeholders. Here, dbrand distinguishes itself by using humour and more bold and risky language in its content and interaction with stakeholders. Unlike AirBnB, dbrand is not opposed to taking chances, as it relates to its content and interaction, which could otherwise be considered offensive by some people. The majority of dbrand's content on Twitter consists of product and brand promotion, and this often includes humorous and/or bold, aggressive, and perhaps even offensive remarks. It is therefore indicated that dbrand is interested in defining its corporate identity as a bold, risky, and self-centred brand. To express this kind of corporate identity, dbrand expresses two distinct personality traits in its content. Based on an analysis of dbrand's Twitter content, it was concluded that dbrand's most-expressed personality traits were *Activity* and *Aggressiveness*. The majority of the analysed content contained these two traits, and the consequent stakeholder engagement, in response to the expression of these traits, was also the highest of the identified personality traits in dbrand's content. Its presented corporate identity indicates that dbrand is especially interested in having its stakeholders perceive dbrand as a risky, bold, and self-centred, but humorous, company. This unique expression of identity is facilitated by dbrand's use of, and expression of self on, Twitter. It is not only accomplished through its own content, but also in its interaction with stakeholders. Though it might be perceived as offensive from the outside, it is still supported by dbrand's own stakeholders as evidenced by its high stakeholder engagement. It is therefore also an indication that dbrand has built a strong and engaging brand community through its expression of identity and promotion of self.

The analysis of our web-based survey also revealed some interesting aspects in terms of stakeholder engagement in relation to content expressing certain personality traits. This provided another perspective on what motivates stakeholders to engage with corporate social media content. It was revealed that content expressing the personality traits *Aggressiveness* and *Emotionality* were rated the highest on whether or not the respondents in the survey would engage with the content. In this analysis we concluded that emotional content was more effective in motivating the respondents to engage, whereas content including the personality traits *Responsibility* and *Activity* were considered less attractive in terms of engagement likelihood, and it was, as a consequence, rated lower by our respondents. Based on these results, it is concluded that dbrand's expression of identity and personality, being largely consistent of *Aggressiveness*, would lead to more engagement. As it relates to AirBnB, its approach falters as it simply does not attract a comparable level of engagement.

As a final note it should be mentioned that AirBnB and dbrand are ultimately two different companies who operate in different industries, and these differences are also highlighted in each company's approach to expressing corporate identity and brand personality through its behaviour on social media in terms of content production and interaction with stakeholders.

It is therefore also indicated that different companies are likely to express their unique identities differently. Though there is seemingly no 'wrong' approach, per se, it is evident that certain identities and personalities, and the expression hereof, are more successful in terms of facilitating engagement on social media. This is evidenced by our research on, and analysis of, AirBnB and dbrand's unique identities and personalities, in which it was found that dbrand experiences significantly higher engagement on its social media content.

9.0.   Literature

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