Brand Communities on LinkedIn

Master Thesis

Mads Thrysøe Christensen

Supervisor: Anne Grethe Julius Pedersen

AALBORG UNIVERSITY

Abstract

How to navigate and fully exploit social media has become an increasing subject of interest for brands since the implementation of web 2.0. This thesis concerns the possibilities and limitations of utilizing such a social media as LinkedIn for international brand community building. The thesis draws on Muniz and O'Guinn's framework for components that constitute a brand community. Additionally, in relation to brand communities on social media, this thesis draws on Habibi, Laroche, and Richard's framework for how brand communities manifest on social media and how social media enables those communities. The thesis focuses on Harley-Davidson, which has an existing brand community, and Shaping New Tomorrow, which does not have a brand community. The data collected for the thesis consists of ten posts shared by Harley-Davidson on LinkedIn and ten posts shared by Shaping New Tomorrow on LinkedIn, including comment sections from two of each brand's posts. To analyze the collected data, this thesis utilizes Tafesse and Wien's social media post categorization framework, Schau, Arnould, and Muniz's common practices framework, and Fournier and Lee's common community role and script frameworks.

The first part of the analysis showed that Harley-Davidson and Shaping New Tomorrow utilize different social media brand posts when posting content. This implicitly showed that there is not a clear distinction between content that appeals to the private side of the users and professional content, which LinkedIn arguably focuses on, as the primary affordance of LinkedIn is professional networking. This suggests that brands should understand what content the platform enables, what content enables users, and what kind of participation is being enabled by the content.

The second part of the analysis demonstrated that there were differences in participation and assumed roles while scripts were only present in one of the analyzed comment sections. In Harley-Davidson's comment sections, the comments were of a more dynamic nature consisting of positive, neutral, and negative comments based on various practices and roles. The comments involved primarily different varieties of social networking and impression management both between users but also between users and employees. Contrary to Harley-Davidson, Shaping New Tomorrow's comment sections showed more static comment sections with solely positive comments. However, apart from social networking between users and an employee, there were not any other variations of practices in Shaping New Tomorrow's comment sections. Furthermore, there were only a few identifiable assumed roles through participation.

The possibilities of international brand community building on LinkedIn relates to the participation that is being enabled. Brand communities facilitate a space where users can communicate with one another, employees, and the brand. Furthermore, brand communities can provide a space where users can express support or discontent. This is beneficial for brands in connection with receiving feedback and mapping out different consumer opinions. The limitations on LinkedIn as a platform for international brand community building, as suggested by the analysis of this thesis, concern that the social media is still perceived to be a social media for professional networking. However, this thesis also found that LinkedIn can be utilized for different content purposes. This suggests that LinkedIn can be used to sustain an already existing brand community as Harley-Davidson's. However, to establish and facilitate a new brand community, Shaping New Tomorrow may have to rely on the different possibilities of utilizing a multitude of social media.

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1. Introduction

The world has become increasingly digitalized, where the web 2.0, through its mixed technological and media core, has allowed for "instantaneous, real-time communication with relatively low cost and utilizes various formats (e.g., text, video, audio or photos), global reach and different delivery platforms" (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 125). Today people have an online presence like never before, where people spend more than one-third of their waking day consuming content on social media (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 123). People join social media to fill their needs such as self-presentation, self-expression, and increasing self-esteem (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 125). The changing nature of social media does not only affect people but also brands. For brands, social media is a cheap and easy alternative to traditional marketing and branding forms (Fournier & Avery, 2011, p. 193). However, contrary to traditional marketing and branding forms, brands do not control the messages they post nor the reach of them (Fournier & Avery, 2011, p. 194).

In the digital world, where social media constantly keeps changing, evolving, and growing in user bases, so do brands have to keep evolving with them to be able to utilize and exploit their benefits in connection with marketing and branding. Currently, there exists a wide variety of social media with different functionalities and purposes, e.g. LinkedIn. What characterizes LinkedIn is that it is the world's largest professional network with over 756 million members from over 200 countries and territories where the social media's vision is to create economic possibilities for all members of the global labor market (LinkedIn, "About"). Additionally, LinkedIn has a business site that contains marketing solutions, which includes how to utilize LinkedIn, here can LinkedIn employees as well as networking professionals post content (LinkedIn, "Marketing Solutions"). Although LinkedIn may not be as popular as other social media platforms, such as Facebook or Twitter, one cannot underestimate the significance of a more professionally-oriented platform such as LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a large social media which distinguishes itself by providing a platform for professional networking. This suggests that both users and groups on the platform post professional-oriented content. This raises the question of how do brands utilize LinkedIn for marketing and branding purposes?

One of the fundamental features of social media is "groups", where users can form communities and sub-communities (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 125). These groups and the everyday interactions they represent must be considered by brands as they offer a valuable opportunity, not only for brand awareness but also for profit. One option brands should consider are a brand community strategy, which provides opportunities such as sharing information and

communicating with consumers, integrating consumers into brand identity and enhancing their loyalty, obtain valuable market research from consumers leading to new product development, and co-creating value with consumers (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124). Since brand communities are a source of various benefits, this leads to a consideration of whether brands can utilize a brand community strategy on a social media such as LinkedIn?

This thesis seeks to understand what a brand without an active brand community can learn from a brand with an active brand community on LinkedIn. The selected examples for this thesis consists of Harley-Davidson and Shaping New Tomorrow. Harley-Davidson is one of the world's largest motorcycle brands that has implemented a brand community as a part of its organizational strategy (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 106). The other example regards Shaping New Tomorrow, a danish brand, which recently expanded into the international market which does not have a brand community strategy (Mortensen, 2021). The two examples are comparable since both brands, to some extent, regards experience economy. Harley-Davidson regards experience economy in the traditional sense through the experience that their products can provide consumers by riding a motorcycle. While Shaping New Tomorrow displays through their men's clothes that it provides the consumer with freedom and flexibility contrary to general office clothes. Their marketing material often shows people being active, e.g. running or doing parkour while being dressed in the brand's products (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021). Both brands are additionally active on LinkedIn, which means that both brands utilize the social media platform for marketing and branding purposes leading to this thesis problem formulation:

What are the possibilities and limitations of utilizing LinkedIn compared to other social media for international brand community building? This will be examined focusing on what Shaping New Tomorrow could learn from Harley Davidson MC's brand community communication strategy

Through the thesis, there will be the following sub-research questions that will guide the problem formulation:

1. *Which affordances does LinkedIn as a platform provide? Compared to other social media?*
2. *What features categorize brand communities?*
3. *What kind of content does Harley-Davidson share on LinkedIn? Compared to Shaping New Tomorrow?*

2. Literature Review

This literature review provides an overview of relevant academic literature on online brand communities, more specifically on social media platforms. Community building and brand communities and how to build and sustain them have been a field of interest for various interdisciplinary research areas such as psychology, organizational communication, and marketing and branding (Carlson et al., 2008; Raj Devasagayam et al., 2010; Habibi et al., 2014). Within psychology, the main emphasis has been on the individual's relationships with other brand users to understand the sense of community and social interactions (Carlson et al., 2008, p. 285-286). In organizational communication, the focus has been on external and internal stakeholders' branding efforts to improve how to convey branding messages (Raj Devasagayam et al., 2010, p. 210-211). Within marketing and branding, the main emphasis has been on brand and marketers communicating with consumers, integrate consumers into the brand community while enhancing loyalty, obtain valuable market research through the relationship with consumers, and co-create with them (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124). The research areas are interdisciplinary due to their common utilization of Muniz and O'Guinn's brand community definition, which will be defined in this thesis theory section.

Considering the research questions presented in the introduction, the following section seeks to answer the first sub-research question:

> *Which affordances does LinkedIn as a platform provide? Compared to other social media?*

Within branding and marketing, there also exist a large number of 'how-to' books on building brand communities which can be found online, for example "Fostering brand through social media" which focuses on how to build and maintain brand communities (Humprey et al., 2015, p. vi). Different social media platforms have different characteristics regarding brand utilization. Humprey, Laverie, and Rinaldo argue; that Facebook can be described as a page and newsfeed-based social media site with dedicated brand pages, Twitter is a 140-character social constant stream of updates with the ability to reply, send private messages, share links, and reshare content from others (2015, p. 6). Instagram is primarily a mobile network with photos shared that can utilize filters and editing tools, and LinkedIn is an online resume site where users can connect through professional contacts primarily used for job postings

(Humprey et al., 2015, p. 6). Some of the functions are general and can be shared by all platforms, but some are unique and characterizes specific social media. Compared to the other social media, LinkedIn has the affordance that it is defined by being oriented towards professional networks, while e.g. Facebook focuses on general networking. Furthermore, other affordances for the other social media include that Twitter is a fast-paced media with a low character limit while Instagram is a photo and video-oriented social media and not a discussion-based social media. They will therefore be treated separately in the following section, which will present brand community research made on different social media.

2.1. Brand communities on social media

Social media are a large part of our everyday life, and they are far-reaching in terms of user basis (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124). On the subject of marketing, social media enables various practices and heavily influences consumer behavior based on the endless flow of information (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124). The possibilities of social media open up for opportunities where like-minded can connect with one another over a specific common interest (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124). Often users will connect through groups or sub-groups, specifically, groups concerning brands can be initiated by brand managers and consumers alike (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124). Over the past decade, the amount of research and literature on the topic of brand communities on social media has increased. To understand brand communities on LinkedIn, the following literature review on brand communities will consist of studies made on various social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

2.1.1. Facebook

In her study on Facebook, Melanie E. Zaglia investigated fan pages and groups of the top 100 leading brands, with the purpose of investigating the existence, functionality, and different types of brand communities (2011, pp. 216, 219). Through the scope of descriptive analysis, significant variations in member numbers on fan pages and groups were observed (Zaglia, 2011, p. 221). Additionally, the number of applications from companies variated, by applications, Zaglia refers to activities and information provided by companies (2011, p. 221). The study showed that applicants are more common in fan pages than groups however, specifically, discussion applications were twice as common in groups (Zaglia, 2011, p. 221).

In her findings, she found that most groups and fan pages consisted of Muniz and O'Guinn's three community markers: consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility (Zaglia, 2011, p. 220).

Secondly, she identified the drivers behind what makes individuals participate (Zaglia, 2011, p. 220). The drivers behind participation can derive from various aspects (Zaglia, 2011, p. 220). Either by receiving advice from an experienced member, which leads to influence conscious buying decisions, or that the individual wants to learn and improve skills by asking questions, posting comments, sharing, or criticizing (Zaglia, 2011, p. 220). These groups reflect that members who actively participate in discussion seek out opportunities whereby they can enhance sociability, be entertained, enjoy forming and retaining relationships, or give voice to their concerns (Zaglia, 2011, p. 221). Individual behaviors mainly differed depending on the frequency of posts, subject matter, intensity of social interaction, and discussion threads on both fan pages and group sites (Zaglia, 2011, p. 221). Furthermore, social media such as Facebook opens for new learning opportunities through photos and videos (Zaglia, 2011, p. 220). In groups where the company was also present, Zaglia found that they have the ability to enhance the learning experience through, for example, daily photo challenges (Zaglia, 2011, p. 221).

In another brand community study on Facebook, Sanz-Blas, Bigné, and Buzova studied the relationship between value creation behavior and community bonding as a result of users' interactions with other community members (2019, p. 1). Extensively, the study also examined the moderation role of value co-creation on community members' predispositions to develop emotionally based relationships with brands (Sanz-Blas et al., 2019, p. 1). The study examined 370 followers of brand Facebook pages (Sanz-Blas et al., 2019, p. 1). The study showed that the consumption of content establishes a parasocial interaction which they found was as important as the participation itself since the role of value enabled passive users to become active (Sanz-Blas et al., 2019, p. 5-6). Value creation behavior was therefore characterized as an antecedent and moderation for emotionally-based relationships, which improved the quality of interaction within a brand community and developed a harmonious relationship between the user, other members, and the brand (Sanz-Blas et al., 2019, p. 6). The strengthened relationship between members additionally increased involvement and had a positive impact on members' cognition, e.g. attention, interests, and opinions, which contributes to brand community attachment and advocacy (Sanz-Blas et al., 2019, p. 6). This means that members are more likely to share brand communities on their own Facebook or recommend the brand to friends (Sanz-Blas et al., 2019, p. 6).

The relevance of the two studies derives from what results scholars have found on social media such as Facebook. By identifying brand community markers, Zaglia was able to determine that fan pages and groups on Facebook can be considered forms of online brand communities. This establishes the grounds that brand communities exist on social media. Additionally, Zaglia proved that member participation and company participation is intertwined with one another. Sanz-Blas, Bigné, and Buzova's results found that users influence one another's level of participation and that this influence enhances relationships between members. The findings from the two studies are relevant since participation and relationships in brand communities on Facebook may transcend one social media and may share commonalities between one or more social media.

2.1.2. Twitter

In regards to Twitter, López, Sicilia, and Moyeda-Carabaza examined how individuals managed their competing needs of both being affiliated and distinctive as members of brand communities (2017, p. 21). The term affiliation concerns members' personal and communal brand connections, while distinctiveness relates to the individual's need for uniqueness (López et al., 2017, p. 21). The study analyzed 318 responses collected from three camera brand communities (López et al., 2017, p. 21). In the analysis of the data, it was suggested that brand communities on Twitter satisfy consumers' need for affiliation however, the study was unable to prove what practices within the brand communities satisfy these needs (López et al., 2017, pp. 21, 39). This study showed that the balance between affiliation and distinctiveness could only be balanced around niche brands (López et al., 2017, pp. 21, 39). Consumers identify more with these brand communities due to member size rather than large brand communities (López et al., 2017, pp. 21, 39). The study showed that affiliation and distinctiveness enhance identification and that identification is as important as brand loyalty (López et al., 2017, pp. 21, 39).

Ibrahim, Wang, and Bourne's study investigated the impact of online retailers' engagement with the online brand communities on users' perception of brand image and services on Twitter (2017, p. 321). Data collected for the analysis consisted of Twitter posts from five brands ranked in the top 10 on the UK retailer websites (Ibrahim et al., 2017, p. 324). The analysis consisted of analyzing trends of different brands and engagement patterns between companies and customers in Twitter posts, which extensively included examining how

different engagement types affect customer sentiments (Ibrahim et al., 2017, p. 321). The research showed that engagement significantly influenced sentiment towards the brand image and the perception on customer service (Ibrahim et al., 2017, p. 321). The engagement patterns were investigated by looking at word frequency, timing, and different types of engagement (Ibrahim et al., 2017, p. 334). Additionally, the impact of different levels of engagement (number of replies), attitude (sentiment of replies), length of words, and media type influenced the customer sentiment, which showed that emotional transitions in posts were critical to sentiment in customer replies (Ibrahim et al., 2017, pp. 334, 336). This research on brand communities on Twitter indicates that members are searching for a form of identification within these brand communities and that this identification affects participation and brand loyalty. Compared to the Facebook studies and the first Twitter study, the last of the two Twitter studies illustrates another more discursive approach. The interrelated relationships between members affect sentiments towards the brand.

2.1.3 Instagram

Gaber, Elsamadicy, and Wright's research on Instagram concerns if following brands on fan pages enhance the relationship between the consumer and the brand from the consumer perspective (2021, p. 1). The data was collected with an online questionnaire and regarded four fan pages about telecommunication companies in Egypt (Gaber et al., 2021, p. 1). The online questionnaires were posted on the telecommunication companies' official pages to understand how many of their followers also follow the fan pages of interest and what effect they may have (Gaber et al., 2021, pp. 8-9). Results from the questionnaire indicated that following a fan page influenced consumers positively both in terms of brand love, sense of community, purchase intention, and word of mouth (Gaber et al., 2021, p. 1). This study contributes to knowledge regarding brand communities on Instagram, where it found that consumer participation on fan pages had a positive effect on brand satisfaction and brand loyalty (Gaber et al., 2021, p. 12).

In a study made by Phua, Jin, and Kim, they examined consumers' utilization of one of four social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat) regarding brands and their influence on brand communities (2017, p. 412). The data consisted of a questionnaire sent to a demographic of 305 college students from a major university in the U.S (Phua et al., 2017, p. 416). Findings related to Instagram showed that the social media was the highest rated in

relation to following specific brands, e.g. fashion brands (Phua et al., 2017, p. 421). Followers of specific brands were ranked as those demonstrating the most sociability (making friends, meeting new acquaintances, and least inhibited chatting to strangers) (Phua et al., 2017, p. 421). This was based on the media being image-based (Phua et al., 2017, p. 421). Instagram users' inhibited nature may explain their sociability and extensively explain why users on this particular social media demonstrate greater affection for other users (Phua et al., 2017, p. 416). Other significant findings from this study include that Twitter had the highest brand community identification and membership intention rate (Phua et al., 2017, p. 416). The rating was based on users' ability to follow brands' real-time postings, which occurred multiple times a day, and that they were able to repost them (Phua et al., 2017, pp. 421-422).

Gaber, Elsamadicy, and Wright's study show that on social media such as Instagram, there is a clear connection and value in brand communities regarding brand satisfaction, brand loyalty, and brand agency. The second study proves that social media functionality can affect user behavior both in regards to Instagram and Twitter. This indicates that different social media may be suitable for different things and serve various purposes in terms of brand communities.

2.1.4 LinkedIn

Clark, Black, and Judson's study focus on two brand community aspects (2017, p. 39). Firstly, why consumers integrate into brand communities and how that impacts satisfaction (Clark et al., 2017, p. 39). Secondly, which social media site (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest, etc.) is more/less suitable for cultivating brand communities (Clark et al., 2017, p. 39). Data analyzed for the study was collected through online surveys at two universities since Clark et al. argues that students fit the demographic of people who utilize social media the most (Clark et al., 2017, pp. 39, 45). The analysis found that visit frequency was determined by personal interests (Clark et al., 2017, p. 39). Additionally, the analysis showed that Twitter was the platform that consumers frequented the most and were the most satisfied with (Clark et al., 2017, p. 47). Interesting about this study is that it also this study argues that the users' interests determine participation and integration into brand communities. Furthermore, it gives an insight into what social media a specific demographic prefers, and it reflects which social media arguably may be best to cultivate brand communities. Notably about the study is that there were

no findings regarding LinkedIn. This suggests that the study did not find that participants utilized LinkedIn for brand community purposes.

Based on the research and literature search done in connection with this thesis, there exists a lack of literature on brand communities on LinkedIn. However, there exists one study by Mäläskä and Nadeem that investigates the nature of an online brand community as a B2B brand communication platform (Måläskä & Nadeem, 2012, p. 30). The data was selected through a netnography of the CISCO LinkedIn Group discussions (Måläskä & Nadeem, 2012, p. 30). There are multiple CISCO groups on LinkedIn, but the one Mäläskä & Nadeem selected for the study was the largest, which at the time had 80.000 members (2012, p. 34). In this study, there exist four distinct themes characterizing B2B brand communication within online communities: company employees' persuasive communication, company employees' communal communication, community members' persuasive communication, and community members' communal communication (Mäläskä & Nadeem, 2012, p. 30). Mäläskä and Nadeem found that marketing personnel and employees from various departments had different functions when interacting with the brand community, e.g. inviting feedback from the members or informing the members about products or services. Community members' communication included recommendations, criticism, brand positioning, inviting third-party, sharing personal experiences, exchanging knowledge, and offering support (Mäläskä & Nadeem, 2012, p. 38). Brand community participation served the members' professional, social and self-expressive interests, e.g. knowledge sharing and acquisition, while B2B stakeholders did it for the economic self-interest (Mäläskä & Nadeem, 2012, p. 39).

This case illustrates the value creation of a company's employees engaging with members in brand communities. As mentioned previously, based on my research, there is a lack of literature on brand communities on LinkedIn. Many of the studies presented through this literature review share results, e.g. what influences engagement and participation. There are no similar studies on LinkedIn to the extent of my research, which makes LinkedIn an interesting case. This lack of literature on how brand communities on LinkedIn function is the foundation for this thesis. This project will consider if businesses should pursue brand communities on LinkedIn rather than focusing on brand communities on other social media.

2.2 Harley-Davidson's brand community

The following section of the literature review will focus on brand community studies made on Harley-Davidson. Academics have previously examined Harley-Davidson's brand community, and since this particular brand community is the source of inspiration for this project, the following section will include some of the literature on the subject.

In Susan Fournier and Lara Lee's study on Harley-Davidson, they identified seven myths about creating value for firms in connection with brand communities (2009, p. 105). Fournier and Lee use the Harley-Davidson study to illustrate what is needed to build and sustain a brand community.

The first myth concerns that a brand community strategy is not only a marketing strategy but should be perceived as a business strategy (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 106). Understanding individuals and the social needs of members by supporting and engaging them on their terms is only achievable through combined company effort (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 106). The benefits of having a solid brand community involve customer loyalty, increased marketing efficiency, and enhanced brand (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 106). In the case of Harley-Davidson, the company experienced organizational changes in the mid-'80s, which led to reformulating their competitive strategy and business model around a brand community philosophy (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 106). Harley Davidson's brand community philosophy was created on the ethos of the brotherhood of riders where the purpose of community-outreach events was to establish a relationship with employees (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 106). Thereby, could the company's decision-making be grounded in the community's perspective (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 106). Structurally, to nurture the community, Harley-Davidson established a stand-alone organization that communicated with management and the Harley Owners Group (H.O.G) membership club (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 106).

The second myth focuses on control which involves that brand communities exist to serve the people within the community rather than serving the business. Marketers and managers often assume that consumers need help gaining status or establishing a new identity through brand affiliation however, consumers have different needs, interests, and responsibilities (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 106). Consumers often seek emotional support and encouragement to explore and cultivate interests and skills (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 106). Even though members may seek help from marketers or other company affiliations, what interests members the most is socializing with other members (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 106).

For a community to be strong, the company needs to understand its members rather than attempting to increase its brand reputation (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 106).

The third myth, contrary to building the brand and thereby having the community follow, companies have to engineer the community whereby the brand will naturally be strong as following (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 107). Fournier and Lee argue there exist three basic forms of community affiliation: pools, webs, and hubs, needed for an effective community strategy (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 107). Pools focus on having strong associations with a shared activity, goal, or values and are only beneficial if the members create a connection to one another (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 107). Webs consist of strong relations between people with similar or complementary needs (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 107). Commonalities such as shared interests spark communication between people and thereby establishes the foundation for community affiliation (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 107). Hubs are centered around people having a strong connection to a central figure however people have a weak association with each other (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 107). The benefit and weakness of a central figure are that they acquire new members with similar values however, if they leave, the community easily dissolves (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 107). Each of the three communications has benefits and weaknesses, but together, they complement one another (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 107).

The fourth myth is that instead of companies attempting to avoid conflicts, they should embrace conflicts that make communities thrive (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 108). Conflicts define groups and clarify both communities' differences and members within the communities (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 108). Internally in communities, it can define passion and loyalty levels that separate hardcore fans from poseurs (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 108). By knowing the qualities of members, companies can identify various groups and utilize them in various ways, e.g. campaigns (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 108).

The fifth myth about brand communities is that opinion leaders are essential for reinforcing the community however, in reality, it is vital that all members take part (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 109). Even though opinion leaders are able to spread information, influence decisions, and help new ideas gain traction, a stronger foundation for a community is when the cultural foundation enables all members (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 109). Fournier and Lee argue there exist 28 social and cultural roles, which are crucial for community function, preservation, and evolution (cf. figure 3, section 3.3) (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 109).

The sixth myth that Fournier and Lee argue is that online social networks are not the key to community strategies but rather a tool (2009, p. 109). What often makes an online community strategy fail is companies failed efforts to establish a company-sponsored online

community where people bond with one another by themselves (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 109). Fournier and Lee argue that even though people may confine themselves or find support in a community, people still demonstrate anti-social behavior in the case of little interaction (2009, p. 110).

The seventh myth involves that it is not the company that should manage and control the brand community but the community's members (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 110). Brand communities are not corporate assets, and control is not possible, this does not mean that responsibility should be abdicated (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 110). Companies need effective brand stewards who, by participating, are correcting, nurturing, and facilitating so that conditions exist for communities to thrive (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 110). When companies construct an effective community where a balance of structure and flexibility is at the center, there exist nine archetypal community scripts which can be implemented (cf. figure 4, section 3.3) (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 110).

Fournier and Lee provide a theoretical framework of community roles and community scripts which will be included in the theory section due to their utilization in this thesis analysis. Fournier and Lee's study of Harley-Davidson provides an insight into how Harley-Davidson's proactive approach has created the proper conditions for the company and people while attempting to understand the nature of the community. Fournier and Lee's study considers both offline and online aspects of a brand community which is relevant when understanding the development of Harley-Davidson's brand community from pre-social media to the present.

In Habibi, Laroche, and Richard's study, they examined the existence of brand communities on social media, arguing that social media's social and networked nature makes it the ideal environment for brand communities (2014, p. 123). The data selected for the study, through a netnography, consisted of the official fan pages of Jeep and Harley-Davidson on Facebook (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 126). From the analysis, Habibi et al. found that all characteristics of brand community: shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility, were manifested in brand communities based on social media (2013, p. 129). What differentiates this research from previous research is that Habibi et al. identified five new dimensions of brand communities on social media: social context, structure, scale, content and storytelling, and myriads of affiliated brand communities (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 129). By utilizing these five dimensions, they found, e.g. that social context is different on social media than chat rooms and forums since people often disguise their identities with pseudonyms on those websites (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 129). This transparency regarding identity influences brand evaluation and purchase intentions (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 129). An

additional example from the five dimensions is that when considering scale, they found that there can be negative consequences to large communities since sub-communities can start to form on the basis that members interact with other members, they potentially share commonalities with (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 130). The structure of brand communities was defined by having hardcore members and outsiders, this structure is more blurred for brand communities on social media (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 130). In large social media brand communities, uncovering how to climb the community ladder can be difficult due to community size and member relations (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 130).

The two studies reflect previous brand community studies on Harley-Davidson, Fournier and Lee's study functions as the foundation for understanding how Harley-Davidson's brand community functions on a member and company level. While Habibi, Laroche, and Richard's study demonstrates how a brand community, such as Harley-Davidsons, manifests on social media.

3. Theory

This theory section will provide definitions and descriptions of relevant theories and theoretical frameworks, including branding, social media post categorization, brand community theory, brand communities based on social media, and decision-making theory. Section 3.1 will introduce the concept of branding and extensively define brand management, including how the concept has developed. The relevancy of brand management relates to the utilization of social media (cf. section 3.1). Section 3.2 will therefore involve the framework for categorizing social media posts, which can be utilized to appeal to users. Section 3.3 and 3.3.1 regards the theoretical framework of brand community and what constitutes a brand community both in general and online. Lastly, will section 3.4 concerns decision-making, specifically how consumers through their decision process are being influenced.

3.1 Branding & Brand Management

In connection with defining brand community, will the following section define branding and brand management to establish a prior understanding of what a brand is and how brand management functions.

The term branding was in the 1950s originally used when cattle farmers branded their cattle so that each farmer would be able to identify their cattle in the herd of cattle (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 77). In the 1960's the American Marketing Association started defined "a brand is distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or servicer of either one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate those goods or servicer from those of competitors" (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 77). This particular definition has a classic marketing connection to a product's branding, which identifies a single product and how it differentiates from other products on the market (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 78). For brand managers, there exist four classic brand tools: product, price, placing, and promotion (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 78). These four components formulate the specific brand's unique selling proposition (USP) (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 78). One of the rationales behind classic brand management is that the product is created from inside the marketing department and that consumers are perceived as "prey", which needs to be caught by the brand (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 78). The classic perception rests on the transactional relationship between brand and consumer, whereby brand management is about optimizing each transaction (Eiberg et al.,

2013, p. 78). The brand's meaning is only understood by what the consumer decodes the brand's meaning to be through the transaction (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 78).

During the '70s and '80s, the definition of brand management changed where the brand should be understood as a living organism defined by the brand's personality and identity (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 78). A brand identity was defined as "a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization's members" (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 79). In connection with identity, brand management concerns building a coherent, solid, and stable identity that consumers can overtake (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 79). The identity represents a promise to the consumer about specific functional, emotional, and self-expressive values that forms the baseline for the relation between brand and consumer (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 79).

Within this understanding of branding, there are different perspectives, Salzer-Mörling and Stannegaard argue that identity does not present itself until the brand connects with the consumer (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 79). Furthermore, Fournier argues that brand identity is more dynamic and relational, where consumers establish a relation to the brand in the same manner as they establish relations to other humans (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 79). This suggests that the consumer plays an active role in the construction of the brand, which Fournier argues by "what matters in the construction of brand relationships is not simply what managers intend for them, or what brand images "contain" in culture (...) but what consumers do with brands to add meaning in their lives" (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 79-80). Instead of the consumer assuming the brand identity based on the brand's intentions, the consumption of the brand instead becomes based on what the individual projects onto the brand (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 80). Prioritizing the brand-consumer relation is extensively driven by the economic stimulus that underlines the importance of loyal consumers that has the potential to continuously invest in the brand as Aaker argues "it is simply much less costly to retain customers than to attract new ones" (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 80). The classic brand identity theory focuses on market segments and how these segments fit with brand values, while the new brand identity theory focuses on the relationship between consumer and brand (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 80). Fournier and Avery argue three central principles for relation-driven brand management (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 80). Firstly, the importance of understanding the person behind the consumer, secondly the importance of understanding different types of relations that consumers have with brands, to understand which relations should be prioritized (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 80-81). Thirdly, the responsibility of the relation between brand and consumer (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 81). However, Prahalad and

Ramaswamy argue that the traditional transactional understanding of the market is in disarray, becoming more co-created where brand values occur during the co-creating process with consumers (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 81).

This new market understanding is not only driven by new digital media and social technology (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 82). Fournier and Avery argue that four central themes in the digital age have changed the terms of brand management: Social collectivism, critical consumers, transparency, and parodying and politicization (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 82-83). In connection to social collectivism, Michel Maffesoli argues that the western individualistic society is being replaced by new social communities defined as casual, superficial, and emotional (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 82). It is becoming more likely that people join communities where individuals are driven by a longing to belong and be recognized by others (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 82). This is supported by social media and new technologies where brands can connect people through communities which further establishes a connection between users and the brand (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 82). New digital media and social technologies have enabled a place where consumers can interact with one another (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 82). Handleman identifies an increasing amount of skepticism and cynicism from consumers about brands and market culture where consumers for example boycotts brands or express themselves through consumer activism (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 82). This means that social media both enables brands but additionally also anti-consumer culture communities or, in general, critical consumers (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 83). Due to the internet's constant flow of information, it has become less possible for brands to hide anything (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 83). This means that brands should be aware of establishing transparency due to the negative effects that exposure may have on the brand (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 83). Brands should additionally always be aware of the social and cultural aspects of the product or services they sell (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 83). Therefore, the role of the consumer has changed to a more co-creating one in connection with brand meaning, relations, and cultural ideas (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 85). Additionally, this means that consumption is not driven by the individual consumer but the social community between consumers (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 85). These four central themes become drivers behind another set of ideas about brand management, including that brands correlate in a form of ecosystem where the brand is created in confined relations and interactions between the business and their consumers (Eiberg et al., 2013 p. 85). The ecosystem involves other brands, actors, and institutions that constantly negotiate the brand's meaning (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 85-86). Brands are a social and cultural construction but should also be understood by the meanings of other brands (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 87). The ecosystem management is also

described as open source brand management since brand management unfolds in connection with new social media and platforms where consumers share content, knowledge, and experiences (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 87). In connection with open source brand management, brand management focuses increasingly on preventing and managing risks (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 87).

Traditionally the focus of brand management was to build by the brand creating rewarding experiences and initiatives that filled the brand with meaning, this focus has, however, been challenged by Web 2.0, where the idea is that brand management equally as much regards crisis management (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 87). Instead of constructing meaning, it is more about protecting and continuously developing the brand in a world of total transparency, dense networks, increased consumer influence, and increased brand politicizing (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 88). This means that it is difficult to be proactive today since new ideas have potential risks (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 88). Open source brand management is also about increasing focus on execution rather than strategic planning (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 88). Therefore, should brand management be constantly aware of the current events that may potentially "hit" or freeze the brand (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 88). Fournier and Avery, therefore, argue that brand management has to move away from the idea of structured, disciplined, and strategic activity where thorough analysis and quantitative objectives control the work (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 88). Instead, should brand managers adjust to building brands based on exploring the brand's meaning as it occurs and continuously is being negotiated between the actors in the ecosystem (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 88). Open source brand management is about resonating with the consumer rather than differentiating from competitors (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 88). To resonate with consumers, brands should aim at being able to intertwine themselves into the everyday life of consumers, this is done through knowing how to behave and interact on social media (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 88-89). Brands must act accordingly based on the desire to obtain cultural resonance rather than creating a differentiating position in the consumers' consciousness (Eiberg et al., 2013, p. 88-89).

3.2 Social media post categorization

As established in the previous section (cf. section 3.1), brands can convey a wide variety of messages on social media. The following section will present the theoretical framework for social media post categorization presented by Tafesse and Wien.

Social media such as Facebook, Youtube, and LinkedIn have experienced exponential growth in the user base due to their mass appeal in terms of potential to support user-generated content and real-time interactions (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 2). This growth has led brands to increasingly implement social media marketing involving exploiting their interactive and networking capabilities (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 2). An example is establishing brand pages where brands have the ability to connect with customers and fans, which extensively allows brands to create online communities (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 2). To communicate with users, brand pages have the option to post brand posts which are frequent, concise, and unpaid updates that provide brands with the ability to communicate meaning and experiences (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 2). Brand posts allow brands to convey messages in various ways through multiple media types such as text, photo, video, and website links (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 2). Tafesse and Wien argue that there exist 12 categories of brand posts that define common message themes and are mutually exclusive (cf. figure 1)(Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 9).

Proposed categories	Definition and common message themes
Emotional brand posts	These brand posts evoke consumers' emotions. To this end, the posts typically employ emotion-laden language, inspiring stories or humor and jokes to arouse affective responses, such as fun, excitement and wonder
	Common themes: emotionally worded posts, emotional storytelling, jokes and trivia
Functional brand posts	These brand posts highlight the functional attributes of company products and services. Typically, these posts promote the benefits of company products and services according to performance, quality, affordability, design and style criteria
	Common themes: product functional claims, product reviews, awards, green credentials, and so forth
Educational brand posts	These brand posts educate and inform consumers. These posts help consumers acquire new skills on proper ways of applying products, or discover new information about broader industry trends and developments
	Common themes: do it yourself tips, instructions, blog posts, external articles, technical interviews with employees, and so forth
Brand resonance	These brand posts direct attention to the brand promise and identity of the focal brand. These posts highlight some of the main tropes of brand identity, such as brand image, brand personality, brand association and branded products with the goal of differentiating the brand and favorably influencing consumers' brand attitude and association
	Common themes: brand image (i.e. brand logo, brand slogan, brand character, etc.), photos of branded products, celebrity association, and brand history
Experiential brand posts	These brand posts evoke consumers' sensory and behavioral responses. Experiential brand posts highlight the sensory and embodied qualities of the brand and often associate the brand with pleasurable consumer experiences
	Common themes: sensory stimulation (i.e. visual, auditory, taste, odor, etc.), physical stimulation (i.e. physical actions, performances, activities, etc.), brand events (product launches, festivals, fan events, sponsored events, etc.)
Current event	These brand posts comment on themes that capture active talking points in the target audience, such as cultural events, holidays, anniversaries, and the weather/season. These brand posts initiate conversations with consumers using timely and widely talked about events
	Common themes: weather, cultural events (i.e. sport, film, TV shows), holiday, special day and anniversaries
Personal brand posts	These brand posts center around consumers' personal relationships, preferences and/ or experiences. These brand posts typically invoke personally meaningful themes, such as family, friendship, personal anecdotes or future plans to initiate deeply personal conversations with consumers
	Common themes: friends, family, personal preferences, anecdotes and future plans
Employee brand posts	These are brand posts about employees. Employee brand posts present employees' perspective on a range of issues, such as employees' technical expertise, their managerial philosophies, or their personal interests, hobbies and worldviews
Brand community	These brand posts promote and reinforce the brand's online community. These brand posts foster a sense of community identification and engagement with the community, by recruiting new community members, as well as encouraging participation from existing members
	Common themes: encouraging fans to become members of the brand's online community, acknowledging fans (e.g. mentioning their name, tagging them), using/ soliciting user-generated content
Customer relationship	These brand posts solicit information and feedback about customers' needs, expectations and experiences. These brand posts seek to deepen the impact of customer relationships in social media channels by encouraging customer feedback, reviews and testimonies
	Common themes: customer feedback, customer testimony and customer reviews and customer services
Cause-related brand posts	These brand posts highlight socially responsive programs supported by the focal brand. These brand posts promote worthy social causes and initiatives and encourage customers and fans to support them
Sales promotion	These are brand posts that entice consumers to take actions toward a buying decision. These brand posts often contain transactional details such as price and availability points, as well as concrete promotional offers, such as price discounts, coupons and competitions
	Common themes: price discounts, coupons, free samples, customer contests and product competitions

Figure 1 (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 9-10).

Emotional brand posts are intended to evoke consumers' emotion through emotion-laden language, inspiring stories, or humor and trivia to derive effective responses from consumers (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 10). The primary purpose is to depict the focal brand through emotional terms to establish an emotional connection with consumers (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 10). The first variant of emotional brand posts employs emotion-laden language through emotionally expressive words and symbols (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 10). The second variant regards the utilization of emotional storytelling that employs longer content forms such as videos or blog posts to express inspiring or moving stories (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 11). These stories highlight customers, fans, employees, other personalities, or external entities to the company who have succeeded under unlikely circumstances (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 11). The third variant, which employs humor and trivia, portrays the soft or informal side of the brand by utilizing everyday jokes and trivia (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 11). Emotional brand posts are able to cause stronger feelings and emotions, which enables the brand to connect with consumers (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 11). Emotional brand posts have the unique trait that they can be combined with other post forms such as functional, educational, and brand image posts (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 11).

Functional brand posts highlight the functional attributes of products and services, promote company products' benefits, and services based on performance, quality, affordability, efficiency, and style criteria (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 11). The posts can additionally include product specifications and technical features (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 11). The purpose of functional brand posts is to convey in-depth product information that helps consumers make informed purchase decisions (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 11). The first variant captures product attributes and benefits according to the brand itself, including targeting new products and services at consumers who have had limited exposure to them (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p 11). The second variant concerns the promotion of product attributes and benefits by external reviewers who offer comprehensive coverage (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 12). Functional brand posts emphasize new products and solutions where the risk is that they can be perceived as sales pitching (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 12).

Educational brand posts are intended to educate and inform consumers (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 12). The main purpose is to help consumers acquire new skills about product and service applications or learn about substantive issues involving broader industry developments (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 12). Educational brand posts have the ability to cover a broad spectrum of topics, including covering issues that have little relation with the company products and services (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 12). The first variant focuses on hands-on,

everyday product applications, including providing professional tips and instructions to educate consumers on proper methods (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 12). The second variant concerns generic topics that are not directly linked with company products and services, this includes posting articles, opinion pieces, and commentaries published by new sites and specialist blogs (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 12). The educational brand post empowers consumers to solve any product-related problems or find ways of applying the products in their everyday lives (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 12). The stimulation that educational brand posts provide can additionally include articles on various topics (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 13).

Brand resonance posts regard the focal brand's brand promise and identity (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 13). These posts focus on brand identity constructions such as brand image, brand personality, brand association, and branded products to differentiate the brand and obtain a favorable position with the consumers (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 13). The first variant focuses on brand image featuring the brand's visual identity in the form of the brand logo, brand slogan, and brand character to reinforce the brand image (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 13). The second variant regards visually displaying photos of branded products to captivate fans (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 13). These posts often avoid additional text or website links (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 13). The third variant involves including celebrities and influencers in the brand post to reinforce brand personality and establish positive brand associations (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 13). The fourth variant concerns celebrating brand heritage through brand posts to insist on the historical contribution and accomplishments of the focal brand (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 13). Brand resonance posts project and reaffirm brand promise and identity, which seeks to imprint positive brand images and associations at consumers (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 14).

Experiential brand posts involve consumers' sensory and behavioral responses connected with brand cues (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 14). The sensory responses concern appealing to the senses, including visual, auditory, and gustatory, while the behavioral response concerns physical actions and embodied performances (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 14). The first variant involves sensory brand cues, while the second variant focuses on attention to embodied actions that portray the brand as an enabler and essential part of adventurous consumer experience (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 14). The third variant includes brand events, e.g. sponsored events, product launches, live events that provide the consumer with experiential access to the brand (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 14). The experiential brand post utilizes sensory, behavioral, and event-based brand cues to directly link to the specific consumer experience that represents an authentic brand experience on social media (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 15).

Current event brand posts are centralized in timely themes about topics of conversation among a certain group, e.g. cultural events, holidays, anniversaries, and the weather/season (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 15). The main purpose of current event brand posts is to enable conversations with consumers, which facilitates the brand to get involved (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 15). The first variant concerns brand posts regarding cultural events, e.g. film releases, sports competitions, TV shows, etc., to establish conversations with consumers on ongoing phenomena (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 15). The second variant regards popular holidays, anniversaries, and special days where brands take advantage of a collectively celebrated occasion to enable conversation with consumers (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 15). The third variant is about the weather/season, which also functions as a conversation enabler with consumers (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 15). Current event brand posts help brands enable conversations with consumers to be invited into the consumers' lives and private conversations (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 15).

Personal brand posts focus on consumers' personal relationships, preferences, and experiences regarding personal themes, e.g. family, friendships, personal anecdotes, and further plans that initiate personal conversations with consumers (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 15). The first variant appeals to consumers' personal relationships where the post concerns family and friendship themes for the purpose of starting a conversation with consumers (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 16). The second variant covers consumers' anecdotes and preferences where the consumers are encouraged to share and convey their feelings, opinions, plans, everyday anecdotes, etc. (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 16). The purpose of personal brand posts is to develop the brand's involvement with the consumer's life through personal themes (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 16). The acknowledgment that derives from personal brand posts and the following conversation establishes opportunities for brands and other consumers within the community, enabling the consumers to get to know each other and reinforce their social relationship (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 16).

Employee brand regards employees and can contain various topics, e.g. employees' technical expertise, managerial philosophies, or personal perspectives (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 16). This post type establishes the possibility for employees to express themselves and empowers them to communicate with the consumers (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 16). The first variant relates to employees' opinions on company technology and processes where employees evoke their technical expertise and experiences to explain complex issues (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 16). The second variant concerns the employee perspective in connection with broader corporate issues, including senior managers addressing organizational issues, e.g. strategy,

corporate culture, partnerships, and employee relations (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 16). The third variant comprises of the employees' personal interests, hobbies, opinions, achievements, etc., to establish employees' personal stories (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 16). The employee post type establishes a personal connection between the customers and employees (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 17).

Brand community posts promote and strengthen the brand's online community (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 17). The post type attempts to recruit new members to expand the brand community and promote participation among members (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 17). The purpose of the brand community post is to promote participation and identification with the brand community (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 17). The first variant focuses on recruiting new members by exposing customers to the online communities and encourages them to join (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 17). The second variant enhances community participation and engagement by acknowledging members or utilizing their content (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 17).

The customer relationship post concerns customer issues with the brand e.g. customer services, customer testimony, customer feedback, etc. (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 17). These types of posts create opportunities for brands to ask and learn about customers' current and future needs and priorities (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 17). The first variant involves customer services e.g. common service announcements and reminders (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 17). The second variant focuses on customer testimonials e.g. customer success stories or asserting how customers have benefited (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 18). The third variant regards customer feedback e.g. obtaining feedback and opinions from customers about their experiences with company products or services (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 18).

Cause-related brand posts highlight socially responsive programs and initiatives that support the focal brand (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 18). The cause-related brand post promotes social causes and encourages customers to support them (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 18). The purpose of these posts is to illustrate the brand in a positive light, whereby the brand is seen as a responsible entity that contributes to society through impactful community programs (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 18). These posts can also concern socially responsible corporate programs and initiatives (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 18).

Sales promotion brand posts attract consumers towards a purchasing decision (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 19). These posts comprise of transactional details, including price and availability points and additionally concrete promotional offers, e.g. price discounts, coupons, and competitions (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 19). Sales promotion brand posts are equipped

with website links, where consumers are directed towards the purchase site or the sign-up to promotional offers and competitions site (Tafesse & Wien, 2017, p. 19). These social media post categorizations will be utilized in the first part of the analysis to establish different types of content types Harley-Davidson and Shaping New Tomorrow utilize. This is both to establish which kinds of posts the two brands utilize and to understand which types appeal to LinkedIn users.

3.3 Brand community

In section 3.1, about branding and brand management, it was argued that the brand-consumer relation is extensively driven by economic stimulus that underlines the importance of loyal consumers that have the potential to invest continuously. This suggests that it is important for brands to establish a connection with consumers. The following section will provide a definition of brand community and the theories' theoretical framework. Considering the research questions presented in the introduction, the following section seeks to answer the second sub-research question:

What features categorize brand communities?

The basic definition of a community is a group where members share a relationship based on commonalities, e.g. neighborhood, occupation, leisure pursuit, or devotion to a brand (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002, p. 38). People in communities share essential resources related to cognitive, emotional, or material in nature (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002, p. 38). No matter what the common denominator is, the purpose of a community is to share the creation and negotiation of meaning (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002, p. 38). Boorstin observed that following the industrial revolution, the emerging consumer culture and sense of community moved from interpersonal bonds of geographically bounded collectives to tenuous bonds of brand use and affiliation (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002, p. 38). Additionally, he described these communities as consumption communities which he defined as "invisible new communities… created and preserved by how and what men consumed" (1974, as cited in McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002, p. 38). For example, attending and participating in the local farmers' market, skydiving or brandfests can all be considered consumption communities (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414).

However, in McAlexander and Schouten's study of Harley-Davidson, they observed that the riders shared a connection to the brand, which established a collective understanding

but also created subcultures of consumption where subcultures were perceived as outsiders with both similar and different perceptions (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414). Muniz and O'Guinn argue that rather than describing a brand with a socially fixed meaning, brand communities should be perceived as having an active interpretive function where the meaning is socially negotiated from context to context and consumer to consumer (2001, p. 414). Additionally, the focus should be on the collective and the individual identity since brand communities embrace surrounding culture's ideology contrary to subcultures that create opposition or indifferences to accepted meanings by the majority (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414). In their research, Muniz and O'Guinn recognized that brand communities shared similarities with communities of limited liability (2001, p. 414). In Jannowitz's studies on the concept, he observed that shared interests commonly bound together urban neighborhoods, e.g. securing more resources like police, transit, and educational support (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414). Except for shared interests, members had few ties to one another, which meant that communities of limited liability were intentional, voluntary, and partial in the level of involvement (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414). The similarities between communities of limited liability and brand communities are that their members are primarily united because of shared interest, e.g. a brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414). Furthermore, as for urban neighborhoods, their identity is often defined by their diversity and differentiation from other urban neighborhoods (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414). As for brand communities, they are also defined by their differentiation to other brand communities (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414). As a part of their deliberations regarding brand communities, Muniz and O'Guinn, argue that brand communities draw from neo-tribalism (2001, p. 414). Scholars in the field argue that there is a decline in individualism and that hyperindividualism increases (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414). Neo-tribes can be "characterized by fluidity, occasional gatherings, and dispersal" (Maffesoli, 1996, as cited in Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414). Members of neo-tribes are unbound to physical co-presence, meaning that they form, disperse, re-form as something else, reflecting the constantly shifting identities of postmodern consumers (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414).

Muniz and O'Guinn, define a brand community as "a specialized, non-geographically bound community based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand" (2001, p. 412). A brand community is specified and centered around a specific branded good or service (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001, p. 412). Brand communities are liberated from geography and informed by a mass-mediated sensibility where the local and the mass converge (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 415). Brand communities are commercial, self-aware, self-

reflective, and committed with relatively stable groupings (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 415). The sharing of information and experiences within the community strengthens the brand's cultural norms and values and is essential when conveying the creation and negotiation of meaning (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124).

There exist three core components or markers of community: consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414). The consciousness of kind regards the sharing of more than shared attitudes and commonalities it is a feeling of connectedness with group members which manifests itself through processes such as in-groups/out-groups differentiation and oppositional brand loyalty (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001 p. 414; Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124). Shared rituals and traditions are the community's shared history, culture, and consciousness which preserves the community identity and manifests in celebration of brand history, sharing brand stories, and a certain form of communication (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414; Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124). The purpose of rituals is to contain meaning socially agreed upon and display visible public definitions and social solidarity (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414). While traditions are various social practices that instill certain behavioral norms and values (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414). The last component, sense of moral responsibility, concerns the obligation that the community and its members have to one another about collective action for the community's survival (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 414; Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124).

Muniz and O'Guinn suggest that a brand community is a customer-customer-brand triad (cf. figure 2) (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002, p. 39). However, McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig further develop on the previously mentioned triad by considering that "construing brand community as a social aggregation of brand users and their relationships to the brand itself as a repository of meaning overlooks other relationships that supply brand community members with their commonality and cultural capital" (2002, p. 39). Brand community members' relationship includes other customers, marketers, the product, and the brand itself, creating value for the members (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002, p. 39). This perspective argues that the meaningfulness of the community derives from the customer experience instead of in the brand, which the experience revolves around (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002, p. 39).

Key Relationships of Brand Community

Traditional Model of Customer–Brand Relationship

Muniz and O'Guinn's (2001) Brand Community Triad
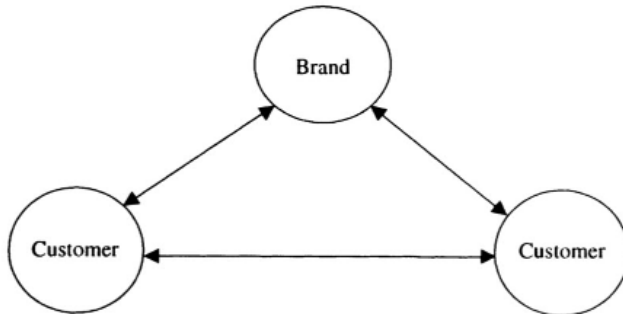
Customer-Centric Model of Brand Community
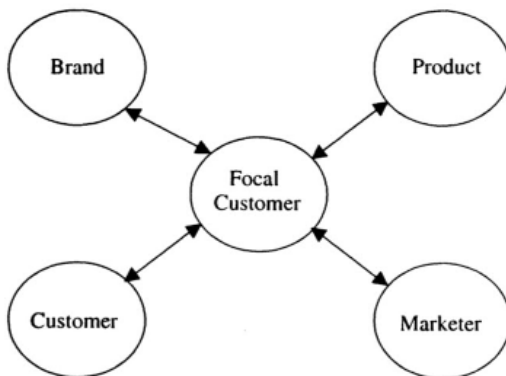
Figure 2 (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002, p. 39).

Schau, Arnould, and Muniz have categorized the activities between consumers and marketers in brand communities and then identified into 12 common practices that can be separated into four thematic groups: social networking, impressions management, brand use, and community engagement (2009, p. 32, 34; Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124). Social networking focuses on creating, enhancing, and sustaining relationships among brand community members, which includes (1) welcoming new members, (2) empathizing, and (3) governing (Schau et al., 2009, p. 34). This is done through socializing, articulating norms and values of the community, and lending emotional and physical support (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124).

Impressions management is intended to create and maintain favorable impressions of the brand and the community externally through (1) evangelizing and (2) justifying (Habibi et

al., 2014, p. 124; Schau et al., 2009, p. 124). These practices include sharing good news and information, encouraging others to use the brand or preach it, and rationalize effort and time devoted to the brand activities (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124).

Community engagement encompasses (1) staking, (2) milestoning, (3) badging, and (4) documenting that enhances the member engagement and provides them with social capital (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124; Schau et al., 2009, p. 34). These practices are competitive compared to the others and focus on communal engagement rather than brand use (Schau et al., 2009, p. 34). Staking can concern members staking their engagement domain within the brand community (Schau et al., 2009, p. 34). Milestoning is stand-out brand experiences, and badging is the practice of establishing an association to semiotics, e.g. brand logo (Schau et al., 2009, pp. 34-35). Documenting as a practice includes all the other practices since members construct a narrative of their brand experience (Schau et al., 2009, p. 35).

Lastly, brand use relates to the optimal utilization of the brand, including (1) grooming, (2) customizing, and (3) commoditizing (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124; Schau et al., 2009, p. 35). The grooming practice is sharing knowledge on maintaining the products while customizing involves members sharing how to customize or modify the product (Schau et al., 2009, p. 35). Commoditizing entails how community members perceive the brand's uniqueness compared to other similar brands (Schau et al., 2009, p. 35). By utilizing these practices, consumers and marketers interact to enhance better use of the brand (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124). How people participate in brand communities can vary. There will frequently be members who act as opinion leaders or evangelists who spread information, influence decisions, and help new ideas gain traction (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 109).

As previously mentioned in the literature review, Fournier and Lee have, from their research on brand communities, been able to identify 18 social and cultural roles which are critical to community functionality (cf. figure 3) (2009, p. 109). Either in the case of the company's established brand communities or companies interested in strengthening an existing community, they have the opportunity to insert or support structure in the brand community by implementing these 18 roles (Fournier, 2009, p. 109).

Common Community Roles

Members of strong brand communities stay involved and add value by playing a wide variety of roles. In designing a new community or strengthening an existing one, companies should incorporate an assortment of roles into the community structure and help members take on new roles as their needs change. Below are 18 roles critical to a community's function, preservation, and evolution.

Mentor: Teaches others and shares expertise

Learner: Enjoys learning and seeks self-improvement

Back-Up: Acts as a safety net for others when they try new things

Partner: Encourages, shares, and motivates

Storyteller: Spreads the community's story throughout the group

Historian: Preserves community memory; codifies rituals and rites

Hero: Acts as a role model within the community

Celebrity: Serves as a figurehead or icon of what the community represents

Decision Maker: Makes choices affecting the community's structure and function

Provider: Hosts and takes care of other members

Greeter: Welcomes new members into the community

Guide: Helps new members navigate the culture

Catalyst: Introduces members to new people and ideas

Performer: Takes the spotlight

Supporter: Participates passively as an audience for others

Ambassador: Promotes the community to outsiders

Accountant: Keeps track of people's participation

Talent Scout: Recruits new members

Figure 3 (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 109).

Roles and behaviors within communities are dynamic, where members can identify improvements (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 109). The roles are not constituted by themselves but have to be ensured by those who design the community and are able to create structures to support the system within the community (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 109).

Behaviors within brand communities can be based upon a set of behaviors for specific social situations, called scripts (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 110). When companies establish brand communities, they can implement scripts to balance structure and flexibility instead of attempting to control the brand community (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 111). Figure 4 illustrates nine archetypal community scripts that Jump associations identified as frameworks (Fournier & Lee, 2009, pp. 110-111).

A Sampling of Community Scripts

A script suggests a set of behaviors that are appropriate for a particular situation. Companies can design brand communities by establishing and reinforcing a base script and then layering on new scripts over time. Vans, a maker of skateboarding shoes, initially sold its products to tight-knit surfer and skateboarding communities. Building direct relationships with these groups and cultivating lead users within them reinforced an implicit Tribe script. By sponsoring competitions and skate parks, Vans introduced the Performance Space script. And through skateboarding clinics and demonstrations, the company added features of the Sewing Circle.

The Tribe
A group with deep interpersonal connections built through shared experiences, rituals, and traditions.

The Fort
An exclusive place for insiders to be safe and feel protected.

The Sewing Circle
A gathering at which people with common interests share experiences, provide support, and socialize.

The Patio
A semiprivate place that facilitates in-depth, meaningful connections.

The Bar
A public space that grants reliable although shallow connections.

The Tour Group
A way to participate in new experiences while staying inside a comfort zone.

The Performance Space
A place where members can be sure of finding an audience for their talents.

The Barn Raising
An effective way to accomplish tasks while socializing.

The Summer Camp
A periodic experience that reaffirms connections.

Figure 4 (Fournier & Lee, 2009, p. 110).

This theory section presented various concepts which will be utilized in the analysis (cf. section 5). By Schau, Arnould, and Muniz, the common community practice framework, and the common community roles and scripts, by Fournier and Lee will be utilized in the second part of the analysis. The purpose of this is to identify different practices utilized by LinkedIn users and brand employees, which extensively can categorize their roles. The analysis will also identify any common community scripts that the brands may have implemented.

3.3.1 Brand communities based in social media

Kaplan and Haenlein define social media as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (2010, as cited in Habibi et al., 2014, p. 124). Social media can enable like-minded users to gather in groups, discuss, share information, photos, videos, flirt, or fall in love (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 125). People often join social networks to participate for various reasons such as self-presentation, self-expression, and increasing self-esteem (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 125). Social media and brand communities share essential commonalities, e.g. creating and sharing content is an essential aspect that extensively means both are ideal environments (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 125). Brand communities on social media have unique characteristics, e.g. cost of initiation is low since social media platforms are mainly free (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 125). Social media based brand communities or online brand communities should not be exchanged with virtual brand communities (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 125). In virtual brand communities, people often hide their real identities behind pseudonyms, contrary to social media based brand communities where they join with their real identities (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 125). On social media, brand communities and events are essential platforms for members to share meaningful consumption experiences, brand stories, symbolic interpretations, and other valuable resources (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 125). The benefits of brand communities on social media are strengthening ties between members, co-creating value, providing higher participation and engagement, and enhancing brand loyalty (Habibi et al., 2014, p. 125). In their study Habibi, Laroche, and Richard found that communities on social media provide the platform for marketers and brand members to co-build and improve their relationship (2014, p. 127).

Habibi, Laroche, and Richard's study focus on studying fan pages on Facebook, where the fan pages of the brand communities are both run by devoted fans and marketers from the companies (2014, p. 123, 126). Additionally, Habibi, Laroche, and Richard refer to brand communities as both groups and fan pages (2014, p. 123). This suggests that brand communities are diffuse in the sense of what technically defines them on social media. Zaglia argues that social media such as Facebook establish the distinction between groups and fan pages (2011, p. 222). In the case of Facebook, the social media has changed the name of fan pages to Facebook pages which are defined as "a public profile that enables you to share your business and products with Facebook users. Create one in a few minutes with our simple interface" (Zaglia, 2011, p. 222). While groups offer a space where there can both be posted

private and public content (Zaglia, 2011, p. 222). This means that fan pages and extensively brand communities on Facebook are perceived as public social media pages related to brands. In the case of LinkedIn, the distinction between a group and a page is that a page is consequently focused on a company, brand, institution, or organization while a group is for users who share the same interests (LinkedIn, "Create a LinkedIn page"; LinkedIn, "Create a LinkedIn group"). This additionally indicates that public pages are brand-related, suggesting that online brand communities are not distinguished by being fan pages but instead public pages that are brand-related.

This suggests that online brand communities can both manifest as fan pages and groups produced by users and as brand pages made by marketers. Furthermore, does this suggest that online brand communities are not only constituted by user-initiated fan pages but instead can be any social media page where consumers, marketers, or the brand are present and can participate.

3.4 Decision-Making

The following section on decision-making will present the decision process that consumers experience and what influences the consumer during this process. Darnley, Blankson, and Luethge adapt Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell's (1978) and Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard's (1986) decision-making model to establish a comprehensive review of studies on online consumer behavior and decision-making processes (2010, p. 94). The study focuses on the decision-making process and the decision process stages to modify the previously utilized decision process models.

The five core stages of the decision-making process include problem recognition, search, alternative evaluation purchase, choice, and outcomes (Darnley et al., 2010, p. 95). While the focus of the decision process stages includes the cognitive (e.g. beliefs), affective (e.g. attitudes), and conative (e.g. intentions) factors underlying alternative evaluation, and the external or environmental influences on the decision process stages (Darnley et al., 2010, p. 95). The external or environmental factors consist of four key elements: (1) individual differences or characteristics such as motives, values, lifestyle, and personality, (2) socio-cultural factors such as culture, social class, reference groups, and family, (3) situational and economic factors, and (4) online atmospherics or environmental aspects such as Web site

quality, Web site interface, Web site satisfaction, and Web site experience (Darnley et al., 2010, p. 95). Darnley, Blankson, and Luethge argue that their modified model:

> "... (1) recognizes the central role of the five stages of decision-making process as well as recognizes the moderators, interactions, and consequences of the decision-making process; (2) is consistent with the call for a return to a focus on satisfaction of human needs rather than an emphasis on technology; and (3) recognizes the fact that online consumer behavior is a complex phenomenon" (Darnley et al., 2010, p. 96).

The model recognized that external moderators and interactions, e.g. brand community members, may influence the five stages of decision-making and that the decision-making process may have consequences (cf. figure 5). Highlighting that the consumer experience emphasizes the human needs and the importance of fulfilling them to improve the decision-making process.

Decision Process

External Factors

Problem Recognition

Individual Characteristics
- Motives
- Value
- Life Style
- Personality

Internal

External

Search

Social Influences
- Culture
- Reference Group
- Family

Beliefs

Alternative Evaluation

Attitudes

Intentions

Situational and Economic Factors

Purchase

Online Environment
- Web Site Quality
- Web Site Interface
- Web Site Satisfaction
- Web Site Experience

Outcomes

Cognitive Dissonance

Consumption

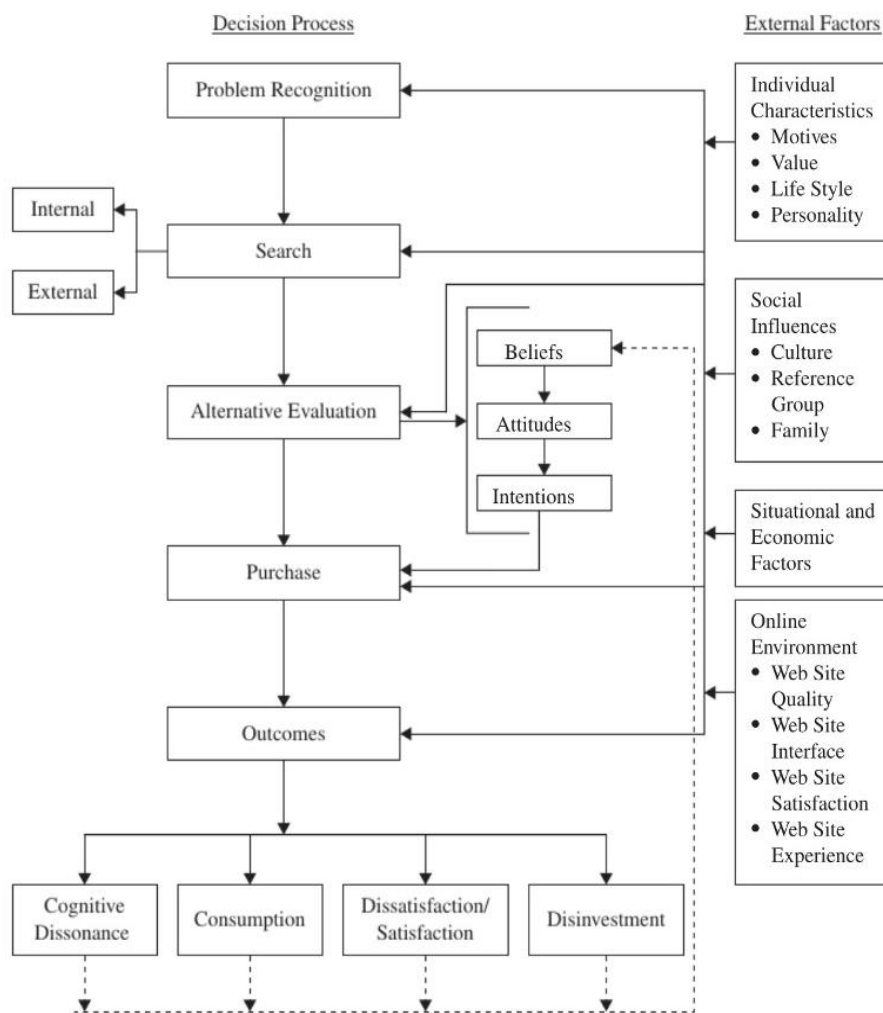Dissatisfaction/ Satisfaction

Disinvestment

Figure 5 (Darnley et al., 2010, p. 96)

The components within the model correlate with brand communities' effect on consumer behavior and decision-making. Brand communities can influence individual characteristics, social influence, and the online environment. However, it may depend on the recognized problem relates to, e.g. the need for a specific product, the need to learn, or the need to communicate with somebody. The consumers' decision process can both be influenced before and after the problem recognition step. Brand communities could potentially influence consumers both before or during the decision process

In this thesis, the decision-making process will be drawn into the analysis in correlation with the common practice framework when it has been established which practices are being utilized. The purpose of this is to establish how users are being influenced and how that influence can affect users' decision-making.

4. Methodology

This thesis aims to examine two official company pages on LinkedIn to understand what a company with little brand community activity may learn from a company with a strong brand community. The following methodological chapter will explain this thesis's methodological considerations and choices, including social constructivism's suitability and netnography as a data collection method.

Before arguing the ontological and epistemological position in this thesis, the following section will first define ontology and epistemology. Guba and Lincoln argue that ontology questions reality's form and nature and what can be known about (1994, p. 108). They argue that if the world is to be assumed as real, then what can be known about what things really are and how they function (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). Meaning that only questions related to matters about real existence and real actions are valid (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). Vivien Burr simply defines ontology as "the study of being and existence in the world. It is the attempt to discover the fundamental categories of what exists in the world" (2015, p. 104). Guba and Lincoln argue that epistemology regards the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known (1994, p. 108). To discover how things are and how things work in an assumed reality, the knower must be one of objective detachment or value freedom (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). In short, "epistemology is the study of nature of knowledge and how we come to know the world of things" (Burr, 2015, p. 104).

4.1 Social constructivism

Social constructivism is defined as "the idea that "reality" is something we create collectively through our interactions and ways of speaking about the world" (Holm, 2018, p. 137). Reality is created within our own discursive construction (Holm, 2018, p. 137). Money is an example of a social construction, when evaluated by its physical features, money is either only a worthless piece of metal or paper (Holm, 2018, p. 121). Collectively, we decide that money has value which extensively gives it value through our collective behavior (Holm, 2018, p. 121). The assumption within social constructivism is that people create reality or realities through individual and collective actions (Charmaz, 2006, p. 189). Kathy Charmaz argues that social constructivists "study people at a specific time and place take as real, how they construct their views and actions, when different constructions arise, whose constructions become taken as definitive, and how that process ensues (2006, p. 189).

There exist four basic assumptions in social constructivism (Holm, 2018, p. 123). Firstly, there is no necessary correlation between the world and our concepts (Holm, 2018, p. 123). The reason for this perspective concerns that language is not only a reflection of the world but rather a social convention (Holm, 2018, p. 123). Language can impossibly mirror the world since it is metaphorical, meaning is therefore found in cultural background knowledge (Holm, 2018, pp. 124-125). Secondly, our descriptions of reality derive from our social relations (Holm, 2018, p. 124). How we perceive the world is created by our collective worldview (Holm, 2018, p. 124). What we think, feel, etc., differs from the physical world however, social constructivism argues that thoughts and the physical world are constructed from language (Holm, 2018, p. 127). Our inner self is not confined to us privately because thoughts and emotions are expressed and understood through collective concepts (Holm, 2018, p. 127). Our identity is neither public nor private since our identity is shaped based on recognized social conventions, which can be compared to a narrative, e.g. when defining ourselves, we go into detail about where we come from, went to school, etc. (Holm, 2018, p. 128). Thirdly, we shape our future through our understanding of the world (Holm, 2018, p. 124). Our collective understanding determines what we are able to do and not (Holm, 2018, p. 124). Within social constructivism, there are two stances in this relation: (1) Our identity is constructed unconsciously according to conventional patterns, and (2) by reflecting critically on our language, can we change and extensively change the world (Holm, 2018, p. 128). Fourthly, reflecting on our understanding of the world is vital for our future well-being (Holm, 2018, p. 124). By problematizing oppressive ideas, are we capable of improving society for oppressed groups (Holm, 2018, pp. 124,129).

The ontological position on social constructivism regards that realities are understood through "multiple, intangible mental constructions which are socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature (although elements are often shared among many individuals and even across cultures), and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 110-111). These intangible mental constructions are based within the brand's official page and constructed by those who follow the brands. The epistemological position on social constructivism argues that the investigator and object of investigation are "assumed to be interactively linked so that the "findings" are *literally created* as the investigation proceeds" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). In this thesis, this means that findings are created or found in the analysis when analyzing posts and comments.

According to Van Den Belt, there exist two distinctions within social constructivism: moderate constructivism and radical constructivism (Van Den Belt, 2003, p. 203). Moderate constructivism seeks to explain variations and alterations in knowledge by relating them to differences and changes in social structures (Van Den Belt, 2003, p. 203). Society and social reality are presumed and not challenged (Van Den Belt, 2003, p. 203). Radical constructivism differs by arguing that it is not legitimate to assume the existence of pre-given social structures where both nature and society are being co-produced by science (Van Den Belt, 2003, p. 204). This means that radical constructivists "reject a priori distinctions between 'social' and 'cognitive', 'subject' and 'object', 'nature' and 'society' or 'nature' and 'culture'" (Van Den Belt, 2003, p. 204). Those distinctions should rather be seen and treated as outcomes of the constructive processes (Van Den Belt, 2003, p. 204).

In the same case as money is a social construction, so are brands. Similar to money, brands can be regarded as socially constructed phenomena constructed and altered by the people who interact in connection to it. In reference to this thesis, the social construction occurs on Harley-Davidson's and Shaping New Tomorrow's official LinkedIn pages, where users or consumers interact with one another and the brand. The brand's meaning is constantly being negotiated between the different actors who are communicating with each other in the posts' comment sections. This thesis leans towards a moderate social constructivism approach as, e.g. Muniz and O'Guinn's study about brand communities and their mechanisms that acknowledge existing social constructions outside (2001, p. 428).

4.2 Netnography

Netnography is a qualitative research method that provides consumer insight by collecting data from online communities (Kozinets, 2002, p. 61-62). The method derives from traditional ethnography but is faster, simpler, less expensive, and modified to study online communities (Kozinets, 2002, p. 61). An ethnography is more naturalistic and unnoticeable than focus groups and interviews (Kozinets, 2002, p. 61). The purpose of the method is to provide information on symbolism, meanings, and consumption patterns of online consumer groups (Kozinets, 2002, p. 61). The format of the internet whereby users can share ideas, build communities, and communicate with other users enables users to affect one another's consumer behavior (Kozinets, 2002, p. 61). Businesses and marketers know there is a potential for brand advocacy in online communities since consumers inform and influence fellow consumers about

brands and products (Kozinets, 2002, p. 61). Even though netnography is primarily a qualitative method, it can also be utilized quantitatively in regards to amount of text collected or the number of participants (Kozinets, 2015, p. 11).

Kozinets argues there exist five key elements to netnography: entrée, data collection and analysis, providing trustworthy interpretation, research ethics, and member checks (2002, p. 63).

4.2.1 Entrée

Entrée regards preparations before investigating an online community (Kozinets, 2002, p. 63). There are two preparation steps; firstly, the researcher needs to specify their research question to identify a specific online forum or platform (Kozinets, 2002, p. 63). Secondly, the researcher must learn as much as possible about the online community and its members' participation (Kozinets, 2002, p. 63).

When suitable online communities relevant to the research question have been identified, Kozinets argues that the online communities' suitability can be judged by certain criteria (2002, p. 63). Online communities should be selected based on "(1) a more focused and research question-relevant segment, topic, or group; (2) higher "traffic" of posting; (3) larger numbers of discrete message posters; (4) more detailed or descriptively rich data; and (5) more between-members interactions of the type required by the research question" (Kozinets, 2002, p. 63). Harley-Davidson's official LinkedIn page was not only selected as data but as a case of interest due to its relevance in connection with brand communities. As previously established, there have been various studies regarding the Harley-Davidson brand community, making it a source of interest because there has been no previous brand community research on the company's activity on LinkedIn. Shaping New Tomorrow represents a brand with no existing brand community on LinkedIn and a brand with no prior research on the brand community.

4.2.2 Data collection and analysis

For data collection and analysis, there are two aspects to consider "(1) the data the researchers directly copy from the computer-mediated communications of online community members and (2) the data the researchers inscribe regarding their observations of the community and its members, interactions, and meanings" (Kozinets, 2002, p. 63). The benefits of doing a

netnography contrary to a traditional ethnography when collecting data are the vast amount of posts and comments rather than interviews (Kozinets, 2002, p. 63-64). The two aspects will manifest in this project as content posts posted by Harley-Davidson and Shaping New Tomorrow and the comments to specifically selected posts in the brand community and the official pages. Additionally, what meanings can be inscribed to the comments by utilizing previously presented brand community frameworks (cf. section 3.3).

Besides interpreting comments, Kozinets argues that it is essential to differentiate between online community types based on their level of involvement and consumption activity (2002, p. 64). Kozinets outlines that there exist four types: tourists, mingles, devotees, and insiders (2002, p. 64). Tourists can be described as having weak social ties to other members but have a deep interest in the activity shown by posting casual questions (Kozinets, 2002, p. 64). Contrary to tourists, the mingles with strong social ties but minimal interest in consumption activity (Kozinets, 2002, p. 64). Devotees have a strong consumption interest but few or no social relations (Kozinets, 2002, p. 64). What can characterize Insiders are that they are long-standing members who have both strong social ties to the online community and consumption activity (Kozinets, 2002, p. 64). Different types within the comment sections will not be the focus of this thesis but instead will the analysis consist of identifying Fournier & Lee's common community roles.

4.2.3 Trustworthy interpretation

Trustworthy interpretation tracks marketing-related behaviors of online communities by understanding the discourse and interactions of people engaging in computer-mediated communication about market-oriented topics (Kozinets, 2002, p. 64). Researchers should be aware of the difference between ethnography and netnography even though observational data, in itself, is capable of being trustworthy (Kozinets, 2002, p. 64). Ethnography balances between discourse and observed behavior by observing people, while netnography primarily observes the textual discourse and specifically the recontextualized conversational acts (Kozinets, 2002, p. 64). For netnography to be trustworthy, the conclusion needs to reflect the limitations of the online medium and the technique (Kozinets, 2002, p. 64).

4.2.4 Research ethics

When gathering data, there are issues regarding research ethics that should be considered (Kozinets, 2002, p. 65). The ethics issues about netnography concern "(1) Are online forums to be considered a private or a public site? And (2) What constitutes "informed consent" in cyberspace?" (Kozinets, 2002, p. 65).

In this thesis, the data will be extracted from two official pages. The two official pages are public since users do not need to be allowed into them, but Kozinets argues that consumers who generate the data do not necessarily intend for their comments to be utilized academically (2002, p. 65). When using netnography, Kozinets proposes four ethical research procedures:

"(1) The researcher should fully disclose his or her presence, affiliation and intention to online community members during any research; (2) the researchers should ensure confidentiality and anonymity to informants; and (3) the researcher should seek and incorporate feedback from members of the online community being researched. The fourth procedure is specific to the online medium: (4) The researcher should take a cautious position on the private-versus-public medium issue" (Kozinets, 2002, p. 65).

Additionally, Kozinets argues that interacting with community members can risk poisoning the research well (2002, p. 65). Instead of interacting and disclosing my presence on the official pages, will any collected data that includes names or profiles be made anonymously.

4.2.5 Member checks

The member checks procedure comprises of presenting the researcher's findings to those that have been studied, whereby the researcher can receive feedback (Kozinets, 2002, p. 66). There are three valuable reasons for member checks (Kozinets, 2002, p. 66). Firstly, it provides additional insight into consumer meanings, secondly, it improves ethical concerns, and thirdly it can establish an ongoing information check (Kozinets, 2002, p. 66). Since users are unaware of my presence on the two official pages and have been made anonymous in the collected data, member checks have therefore been excluded from this thesis.

4.3 Data presentation

The following section will consist of a presentation of this thesis's selected data. In the problem formulation for this thesis, it was stated that the case of interest is what Shaping New Tomorrow

can learn from Harley-Davidson. In section 3.3.1, it was suggested that online brand communities can manifest in different forms. This thesis data have been collected from Harley-Davidson's and Shaping New Tomorrow's official LinkedIn pages, which is a form of brand community manifested by the brands' marketers. Harley-Davidson's and Shaping New Tomorrow's official LinkedIn pages establish a space where users, marketers, and brand employees can participate. Being aware that the official pages do not fit traditional brand communities, the analysis will consist of why these pages consist of recognizable brand community elements. As previously established in section 4.2.1, Harley-Davidson has been chosen due to previous studies and research on the company's brand community but none in connection with LinkedIn. While Shaping New Tomorrow has been selected based on there being no prior brand community studies in correlation with this specific brand.

The first set of data was selected to establish an overview of Harley Davidson and Shaping New tomorrow posts. The data collected consisted of twenty LinkedIn posts, ten posts from Harley-Davidson and ten posts from Shaping New Tomorrow. These posts were collected on the 5th of May 2021 from Harley-Davidson's and Shaping New Tomorrow's official LinkedIn pages. Due to LinkedIn's algorithm, the first ten posts which were presented were not the ten most recent posts, and since LinkedIn does not present exact timestamps, the posts were not selected based on a specific period of time. Besides the post content, the posts also consist of quantitative data such as reactions, comments, and views, which will also be analyzed.

The purpose of the twenty posts is to analyze them with the previously present social media post categorization framework (cf. section 3.2) to map the different content types posted by Harley-Davidson and Shaping New Tomorrow. The second set of data was selected for an analysis of common community practices, common community roles, and community scripts. The comments were collected on the 5th of May 2021 from two Harley-Davidson posts and two Shaping New Tomorrow posts. The four posts were randomly selected from each brand's ten posts in the first set of data. This was done using a number generator[1] to select four posts unbiasedly, as the content of the posts had already been seen during the collection of the first set of data. Out of the twenty posts, four posts were selected as a sample for the in-depth analysis.

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[1] For this purpose, Google's number generator was used.

5. Analysis

The following analysis will be divided into two different analyses. The first part will concern creating a mapping of posts posted by Harley-Davidson and Shaping New Tomorrow on LinkedIn to establish different social media posts posted by the brands. This will include analyzing the content of the posts and the number of reactions, comments, and views. The second part will consist of an in-depth analysis of comments on Harley-Davidson and Shaping New Tomorrow posts. The comments will be analyzed with Schau, Arnould, and Muniz's community practices framework and Fournier and Lee's common community roles and common community scripts.

5.1 Mapping of posts on Harley-Davidson's and Shaping New Tomorrow's LinkedIn pages

The mapping of each company's content on LinkedIn will be done in connection with the previously presented theoretical framework of categorizing social media posts by Tafesse and Wien (cf. section 3.2). The mapping will not only consist of the categorization of content type but additionally also the number of links and comments. The purpose of this is to analyze a sample of posts by each company to understand content types and additionally which types appeal to the users. In figures 6 and 7, the posts have been numbered as they were presented when the data was collected on the 5th of May 2021, however, the following analysis will use the post numbers but categorize them by content type.

The following analysis section will consider the research questions presented in the introduction, the following section seeks to answer the third sub-research question:

What kind of content does Harley-Davidson share on LinkedIn? Compared to Shaping New Tomorrow?

Post number:	Post name:	Content:	Reactions/views:	Comments:
1.	"As companies around the globe have been experiencing shipping and supply chain challenges."	Text & video	699 reactions and 18.866 views	22 comments
2.	"We are proud to be recognized by The RepTrak Company as #5 most Reputable company in the world."	Text & article (reptrak.com)	1.648 reactions	67 comments
3.	"We're proud to play our part in supporting Hunger Task Force's mobile market to fight hunger in Milwaukee."	Text & article (Wisn.com)	655 reactions	19 comments
4.	"We're committed to supporting STEAM education to help prepare future generations for the workforce"	Text & article (Madison.com)	573 reactions	11 comments
5.	"Today we're thrilled to debut the 2021 Pan America 1250 motorcycle, the first adventure touring motorcycle designed, developed and manufactured from the ground up in America"	Text & article (Harley-Davidson.com)	2.234 reactions	163 comments
6.	Jochen Zeitz: "Last week I visited our York, PA factory to see the first Pan American motorcycle roll off the production line."	Shared post from Jochen Zeitz	2.279 reactions	171 comments
7.	"We welcome Edel O'Sullivan who will join us Chief Commercial Officer when Larry Hund, our current CCO, retires following 18 years of service."	Text, link to article & picture	2.161 reactions	159 comments
8.	"As we announce the Hardwire, our five-year strategic plan, our CEO Jochen Zeitz shares one of the first commitments to inclusive stakeholder management – our first-ever equality grant!"	Text & shared post from Jochen Zeitz	611 reactions	39 comments
9.	"Today we announced our new 2021-2025 strategic plan, The Hardwire!"	Text & video	1.023 reactions and 35.436 views	97 comments
10.	"Are you up to speed on our 2021 lineup?"	Text & video (live.harley-davidson.com)	588 reactions	43 comments

Figure 6

Post number:	Post name:	Content:	Reactions/views:	Comments:
1.	"Hamburg HQ coming together"	Text & Video	444 reactions and 11.545 views	14 comments
2.	"Meet Peter Fjeldgaard"	Text & picture	376 reactions	16 comments
3.	"De fortalte om deres bukser, og jeg nænnede ikke at fortælle dem, at det var en lorte-idé," skriver Martin Thorborg om Shaping New Tomorrow på Facebook	Text & article (Bt.dk)	105 reactions	0 comments
4.	"Seeking new "Shaper" Do you know our new SoMe-Specialist"	Text, link & picture	48 reactions	0 comments
5.	"Do women care about menswear?"	Text & picture	67 reactions	0 comments
6.	"Green screen at its finest"	Text & video	146 reactions and 3.710 views	0 comments
7.	"Seeking our new "Shaper". Do you know our new Marketing Manager for the DACH region?"	Text & link (Stepstone.de)	45 reactions	0 comments
8.	"Seeking our new "Shapers". Are you (one of) our new Customer Care Agents?"	Text & link (Jobindex.dk)	59 reactions	0 comments
9.	"Dressed for spring"	Text, link & video	81 reactions and 1.291 views	0 comments
10.	"Today (and all the other days) we celebrate all the wonderful women at SHAPING NEW TOMORROW"	Text & picture	209 reactions	3 comments

Figure 7

5.1.1 Harley-Davidson

The first post consists of a description text and a video regarding how Harley-Davidson handled the supply and product shortage initiated by the containership crisis in the Suez Canal (Harley-Davidson, 2021, April/May). The primary content type can be categorized as an **educational brand post** since the blocking of the Suez Canal by a containership was a general problem that affected one of the world's central supply routes. The post establishes transparency regarding what Harley-Davidson did as a counter-reaction to neither receiving supplies nor delivering products. Harley-Davidson utilizes a global event to stay relevant and capture the users' attention by showing how proactive the brand's crisis management has been and how they have been able to keep up with demand. The brand turns the crisis into a success story. The secondary content type within the post is the experiential post type since the post consists of a short description and a video. The video draws attention to the brand as an enabler, which showcases the brand's physical actions towards the problem. The post received 699 reactions, 18.866 video views, and 22 comments (Appendix 1.1).

The second post concerns Harley-Davidson being the number 5 most reputable company globally (Harley-Davidson, 2021, March/April). The post contains an external article that provides insight into the company's reputation status (Harley-Davidson, 2021, March/April). Having an external article attached to the post arguably points the post towards the **educational brand post** category. The post draws the users' attention towards the brand's general performance and showcases its achievement whereby the brand seems more favorable and appealing since an external company makes the evaluation. The post received 1.648 reactions and 67 comments (Appendix 1.2).

Post number 8 is a shared video from Jochen Zeitz's personal profile that addresses the new inclusive stakeholders initiative for employees (Harley-Davidson, 2021, January/February). The post can be categorized as an **educational brand post** since it concerns a generic topic about employee influence within the company, which has an immediate connection with the brand's products. However, as stated in the post's video, it is believed, by the company, that employees should share the success of the brand. This means that when users support the brand, it additionally benefits the employees on another level. The post received 611 reactions and 39 comments (Appendix 1.8).

Post number 9 comprises a video of where Jochen Zeitz presents the new 2021-2025 strategic plan, called The Hardwire (Harley-Davidson, 2021, January/February). The video provides information about six significant changes and initiatives that will be the focus of the next four years (Harley-Davidson, 2021, January/February). The video provides insight into the six key elements and initiatives, including profit focus, selective expansion and redefinition, leading in electric, growing beyond bikes, customer experience, and inclusive stakeholder management (Harley-Davidson, 2021, January/February). The post represents an **educational brand post** that informs the users on various topics, which in this case concerns the organizational strategy for innovation, products and services, customer experience, and inclusivity within the organization. The post involves users in the brand's strategy and, by posting it on LinkedIn, establishes a space where the changes can be discussed. The post received 1.023 reactions, 35.436 views, and 97 comments (Appendix 1.9).

The third post is about how Harley-Davidson supports a local initiative fighting the hunger problem in Milwaukee (Harley-Davidson, 2021, March/April). The content type is a **cause-related brand post** since it promotes a local social cause that the brand supports, thereby depicting Harley-Davidson positively. The post collected 655 reactions and 19 comments (Appendix 1.3). Similar to the previous post, post number 4 regards the support of STEAM education for younger generations through their Youth Apprenticeship program (Harley-Davidson, 2021, February/March). As in the same case as post number 3, this post is also a **cause-related brand post** that stays relevant on LinkedIn through its support to a national education program. The post additionally provides insight to users about the possibility of being educated within the STEAM field (Harley-Davidson, 2021, January/February). The post obtained 573 reactions and 11 comments (Appendix 1.4).

Post number 5 regards the debut of Harley-Davidson's newest product, the Pan America motorcycle (Harley-Davidson, 2021, January/February). The post is linked to Harley-Davidson's website, where users can find additional information about the product (Harley-Davidson, 2021, January/February). The content category for this post is **sales promotion** since the purpose of the post is to entice users towards buying the product since the post includes a link to Harley-Davidson's website. The post obtained 2.234 reactions and 163 comments (Appendix 1.5).

Post number 6 regards the CEO of Harley-Davidson, Jochen Zeitz, visiting the York factory where the first Pan America motorcycle is being produced (Harley-Davidson,

2021, February/March). The post can primarily be categorized as an **employee brand post** where the employees in the York production factory provide their perspective of the production and the engagement with the company's CEO, Jochen Zeitz, during the production. This post aims to establish a relationship between the users who watch the video, the employee's who are behind producing the product, and Jochen Zeitz, who is relatively new as CEO in the company. The post, therefore, empowers the communication from the employees directly to the users and addresses the employee relations within the company. The post obtained 2.234 reactions and 163 comments (Appendix 1.6).

Post number 7 concerns welcoming the company's new Chief Commercial Officer, Edel O'Sullivan (Harley-Davidson, 2021, January/February). The post is an **employee brand post**, where the description and article describe her career, experience, managerial philosophy, and new position (Harley-Davidson, 2021, January/February). The post presents Edel O'Sullivan to the users to establish familiarity with her previous experiences and a new senior management member. The post acquired 2.161 reactions and 159 comments (Appendix 1.7).

Post number 10 introduces Harley-Davidson's 2021 lineup, which was presented at a virtual global product launch (Harley-Davidson, 2020-2021, December/January). The post links onto Harley-Davidson's website, which contains a presentation video of the 2021 lineup (Harley-Davidson, "Welcome to H-D 21"). Since the post contains a sensory stimulation in the form of video and audio and regards a product launch, this post can be categorized as an **experiential brand post**. By showcasing the products perform in various environments, the video contains behavioral brand cues. When seeing the motorcycles' drive around, it supposedly invokes the feeling of freedom and adventure associated with the brand. Through the video, the post represents a sense of familiarity regarding what the brand represents. It, therefore, establishes the grounds for invoking excitement about the new lineup since it can be associated with a familiar feeling. Post number 10 received 588 reactions and 43 comments (Appendix 1.10).

From the analysis of the selected posts, the educational brand post is the dominant post type, where post numbers 1, 2, 8, and 9 all were categorized as such. In figure 6, it can be noted that these posts both vary in the number of reactions and comments. Post number 2 has the most reaction, 1.648, and the most comments, 67, while post number 8 has the least amount of reactions, 611, but the second least amount of comments, 39. Post number 2 regards the

brand's reputation ranking, which can be considered a positive post about brand performance that potentially invokes support compared to other topics. Post number 8 concerned the new business initiative, inclusive stakeholders management, which is an organizational business topic that potentially from the number of reactions and comments received is not as supported or found as interesting by users. Additionally, notable about this content type is how post number 1 and 9 differentiate in video views, where post number 1 has 18.866 views, post number 9 has 35.436 views. The difference in the number of views can be due to two factors Firstly, post number 9 is from January/February while post number is from April/May. This means that people have been exposed to the video in post 9 for an extended period of time. Secondly, the post topic can appeal to the users differently. Post number 1 concerned the Suez Canal crisis, while post number 9 concerned the new four-year business strategy. Both topics affect the brand globally, but the unveiling of a new business strategy is often something users or users anticipate and that sparks curiosity. The two secondary post categories which were the most frequent were the cause-related and employee brand posts. In comparison, the cause-related posts number 3 and 4 received fewer reactions and comments than the employee brand posts 6 and 7 (cf. figure 6). This suggests that users are more interested in creating a relationship with the brand's employees than socially responsive programs. Lastly, post number 5 was categorized as a sales promotion, and post number 10 was an experiential post type. Post number 5 of all the posts was the one that received the most reactions and comments. The post concerned the debut of the Pan America model, indicating that users are especially interested in posts that regard products/product launches. Post number 10, however, argues the contrary, the post presented the 2021 lineup, but the post only received 588 reactions and 43 comments which is less than what post number 5 received. From this analysis, it can be argued which content types Harley-Davidson utilizes and which category is the most dominant one in this sample. However, the analysis cannot conclude which post type is the most successful in terms of engaging with users when looking at reactions and comments due to inconsistencies in the amount of represented content types. However, the analysis does indicate that certain content categories are more successful than others, but the content type also depends on the post topic. Harley-Davidson's official LinkedIn page has 217.176 followers as of the 5th of May 2021 (Appendix 1). The number of reactions and comments on the ten selected posts from Harley-Davidson variates from 588 to 2.234 reactions and 11 comments to 171 (cf. figure 6). Additionally, the views on videos vary between 18.866 and 35.436 (cf. figure 6). This indicates that it is only partial how many out of the total number of followers interact and comment on the posts.

5.1.2 Shaping New Tomorrow

Post number 1 is a video that presents the physical environment of Shaping New Tomorrow's new Hamburg office (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021, April/May). The brand logo appears multiple times in the video, which means that this post can be categorized as **brand resonance.** The brand becomes associated with the modern and stylish office environment, reflecting the company as "young" and fast-paced. Especially for employees, collaborators, and potential job seekers, it gives a functional insight into the office of operations in Germany. The post has 444 reactions, 11.545 views, and 14 comments (Appendix 2.1).

Post number 2 introduces one of the company's employees, specifically the Head of Finance, Peter Fjeldgaard (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021, March/April). The post consists of three elements; a statement, a fun fact, and a picture of him (Appendix 2.2). The primary content category is the **employee brand post**, presented through Peter Fjeldgaard's career experience going from his former job to his current one at Shaping New Tomorrow. Traits from emotional brand post content type are also present within this post. Peter Fjeldgaard's statement and the fun fact both consist of humor whereby the brand establishes an emotional connection to the users (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021, March/April). The post establishes a connection between the users based on the employee's softer side, creating a more informal relation. The post has received 376 reactions and 16 comments (Appendix 2.2).

Post number 3 regards an article about danish entrepreneur Martin Thorborg who mentions that when he first acquainted the brand and its founders, he thought it was a bad idea (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021, March/April). However, after acquiring a pair of pants and trying them, he changed his mind (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021, March/April). The post is defined by an external article that does not seem to have an immediate connection with the brand's product which argues that the post is an **educational brand post.** The purpose of the post is to challenge potential oppositional opinions about their products and provoke users to try them. The post has obtained 105 reactions and 0 comments (Appendix 2.3).

Post number 4 is a job posting about the company searching for a new SoMe-specialist (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021, March/April). Tafesse and Wien's framework cannot directly categorize the post since it is oriented towards specific job seekers rather than general users on LinkedIn. The post provides insight into a specific employee function within the specific company. This argues that there is a gap in Tafesse and Wien's framework since

none of the 12 categories cover job postings as a form of social media content. This will be discussed in this thesis discussion section. This post has, however, received 48 reactions and 0 comments (Appendix 2.4). Posts number 7 and 8 are also both job postings, where the company searches for either a marketing manager or customer care agents (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021, February/March). Neither of these posts falls under Tafesse and Wien's categories, similar to post number 4. The two posts are also aimed at potential job seekers rather than the general user. Post number 7 has 45 reactions and no comments, while post number 8 has 59 reactions and no comments (Appendix 2.7 & 2.8).

Post number 5 regards that 57% of those who purchased a Shaping New Tomorrow product online in 2020 were women (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021, March/April). The women did not only purchase the products for men in their lives but also for themselves, thereby indicating that not only men are supporters of the brand (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021, March/April). Women purchase the products both for men and themselves, which means that the post can be categorized as a **personal brand post** category. The post is centered around women, who purchase the products, however, women are not the primary target group. Therefore, does the post utilize the relation that men have with women and implicitly that women approve of men wearing the brand's products. The post has 67 reactions and 0 comments (Appendix 2.5).

Post number 6 was posted in connection with April fools, presenting the brand's new product, transparent pants (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021, March/April). The post is made based on a joke about making new innovative pants that function as a green screen, meaning that this post can be categorized as an **emotional brand post.** The post enables the brand to connect with the users on an informal emotional level based on humor. The post received 146 reactions and 3.710 views (Appendix 2.6).

Post number 9 presents the brand's 2021 spring collection (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021, February/March). The video showcases people jumping and running around in the spring collection (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021, February/March). Furthermore, the post provides a link that redirects to the brand's website (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021, February/March). The post promotes the new product line and is equipped with a link to the brand's website, indicating that it is a **sales promotion.** The post has 81 reactions, 1.291 views, and 0 comments (Appendix 2).

The last post, number 10, is a post that both celebrates International Women's day and the female employees within the company (Shaping New Tomorrow, 2021, February/March). Since the post was posted on International Women's day, it can be categorized as a **current event post.** Shaping New Tomorrow takes the opportunity to celebrate the women working for the company to start a conversation with users, e.g. about how other users value women at their workplaces. The post has 209 reactions and three comments (Appendix 2.10).

From the analysis of the selected Shaping New Tomorrow posts, the dominant post type is the job postings, post number 4, 7, and 8, which exists outside of Tafesse and Wien's content type framework. These posts, however, were not the posts that performed the best out of the sample. Post number 4 received 48 reactions, post number 7 received 45 reactions, and post number 8 received 59 reactions where all of them received 0 comments (cf. figure 7). The analysis showed that all the other posts could be categorized as different content types where post number 1, the brand resonance post, received 444 reactions, 11.545 views, and 14 comments which was the post that received the most reactions and views (cf. figure 7). A finding from analyzing post number 1 was that the office was primarily directed at employees, collaborators, and job seekers, which arguably indicates an interest in the brand environment by LinkedIn users. Post number 2, the employee brand post, received the most comments, 16 in total with 376 reactions making it the second most popular post out of the sample (cf. figure 7). Post number 6, the emotional brand post, was the only other post with an attached video. This post performed poorly with only 1291 views compared to post number 1's 11.545 views (cf. figure 7). Post numbers 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 all received 0 comments, indicating that the content type and the post topic did not encourage users to participate with the brand (cf. figure 7). In Shaping New Tomorrow's case, it can be determined that the brand-resonance post and employee brand post performed the best in terms of reactions, views, and comments. Shaping New Tomorrow's official LinkedIn page had 7.514 followers as of the 5th of May 2021 (Appendix 2). The number of reactions and comments on the ten selected posts from Shaping New Tomorrow variates from 48 to 444 reactions and 0 comments to 16 (cf. figure 7). Similar to Harley-Davidson, this indicates that only a partial portion of the brand followers interact by commenting or reacting.

To sum up, in the first analysis, when comparing the two brands, Harley-Davidson utilizes different content types multiple times in the sample. While Shaping New

Tomorrow only repeats, the same content type is in the job postings. Harley-Davidson has more followers, which also explains the differentiating reactions and comments that Harley-Davidson has compared to Shaping New Tomorrow. The analysis of Harley-Davidson showed that the most frequently utilized post type was the educational post type however, the post type that received the most reactions and comments were sales promotion and employee brand posts. In the analysis of Shaping New Tomorrow, the job postings were the most frequent content type, however, the brand resonance post was the one that received the most reactions, views, and second most comments after the employee brand post with the most comments. What can be concluded in this part of the analysis is that there are certain content types which are more appealing to users than others. However, this analysis is not able to conclude which content type and topic performs the best. Even though, as presented in the introduction, LinkedIn argues that the social media platform is primarily for professional relations, this mapping argues otherwise, indicating that the brands are utilizing the platform for multiple purposes.

5.2 In-depth analysis of comments on Harley-Davidson and Shaping New Tomorrow posts

As presented in the first part of the analysis, the following analysis will be an in-depth analysis focused on analyzing the comment sections of two posts from Harley-Davidson and two posts from Shaping New Tomorrow. The purpose of this analysis is to contribute to answering this thesis problem formulation by analyzing the four posts' comment sections with the proposed theoretical frameworks provided by Schau and Arnould's common practices and by Fournier and Lee's common community roles and community scripts.

1. Schau & Arnould's Twelve Common Practices	2. Fournier & Lee's Eighteen Common Community Roles	3. Fournier & Lee's Sample of Nine Community Scripts

•Social Networking
  •Welcoming new members
  •Empathizing
  •Governing
 	
•Impressions management
  •Evangelizing
  •Justifying
 	
•Community engagement
  •Staking
  •Milestoning
  •Badging
  •Documenting
 	
•Brand use
  •Grooming
  •Customizing
  •Commoditizing
	•Mentor
	•Learner
	•Back-Up
	•Partner
	•Storyteller
	•Historian
	•Hero
	•Celebrity
	•Decision Maker
	•Provider
	•Greeter
	•Guide
	•Catalyst
	•Performer
	•Supporter
	•Ambassador
	•Accountant
	•Talent Scout
		•The Tribe
		•The Fort
		•The Sewing Circle
		•The Patio
		•The Bar
		•The Tour Group
		•The Performance Space
		•The Barn Raising
		•The Summer Camp

Figure 8

As seen in figure 8, the analysis will first identify practices within the comments, secondly identify community roles, and thirdly analyze for any potentially implemented scripts.

5.2.1 Harley-Davidson

Harley-Davidson post number 6

The first Harley-Davidson post that will be analyzed is post number 6, which concerns Jochen Zeitz's visit to the York factory to see the new Pan Am model (Appendix 3). The first comment and the sub-comments attached regard Pan Am's pricing being matched to its Asian competitions (Appendix 3.1.).

> "Will this bike be priced to compete against its Asian Competition?" (Comment 1, Appendix 3.1)

In Schau and Arnould's participation framework, this comment shares similarities with the social networking thematic group, however this particular practice shares no similarities with the three concepts in this category which includes welcoming new members, empathizing, or governing. However, the comment does reflect a form of socialization that defines the social networking category. The comment is neither pro-brand nor oppositional but more neutral.

Even though this comment cannot be defined by the community engagement concepts of staking, milestoning, or badging, it is still a form of engagement. The user's comment reflects the learner role where the person seeks information, in this case, about market pricing. Comment 1.1, the first follow-up comment, is posted by a Harley-Davidson manager who answers that the product is priced against the BMW model that is the leading model within the segment (Appendix 3.1.1).

> "This bike is benchmarked against the BMW which is one of the leaders in this segment and priced competitively." (Comment 1.1, Appendix 3.1).

The employee socializes by governing and impression managing Harley-Davidson's competitive ability while extensively also arguing the brand's uniqueness. The employee takes upon himself a mentor role where he teaches the user about the pricing market. The comment received five likes, which arguably means that other users either agree or appreciate the employee's insight. Comment 1.2 repeats the previous comment but in a manner where the user positively emphasizes how glad the users, in general, should be that "their" brand can compete (Appendix 3.1).

> "If it's priced right then harley are opening up a new market Why shouldn't us harley riders be happy with that 👍 good luck with making our brand stronger" (Comment 1.2, Appendix 3.1).

The user assumes a partner role where the person sparks excitement or encouragement about the brand. This comment received five likes whereby other users agreed with the statement. The following comment, 1.3, reflects a user who prefers another brand regarding its better pricing (Appendix 3.1).

> "If you want price the Royal Enfield made in India is a good choice. In terms of all other brands they are all in the same price bracket by power, weight, electronics, and purpose." (Comment 1.3, Appendix 3.1)

The person socializes with the other users, but not positively towards the brand, which also is a sort of socializing outside Schau and Arnould's scope of social networking. Extensively, this

is also a sort of impression management where the user expresses a negative impression of the brand. Fournier and Lee cannot categorize the user's role within the comment section since their proposed framework involves dynamic roles that attempt to preserve the community, meaning that the roles are intended to impact the brand positively. The user does not take an antagonistic role towards the brand, but a more neutral one where the user argues a subjective perspective and thereby engages with the community.

Comment 1.4 reacts to the other comments by arguing that the Pan Am is priced competitively in the middle of its segment and that this particular product offers more horsepower and is lighter in weight than other products (Appendix 3.1). The user governs, and impression manages Harley-Davidson by arguing that the product is better than the competitions' models. Additionally, the person also justifies the model's price by arguing the uniqueness of Harley-Davidson compared to what the competitors offer. This user also takes a mentor role where the person wants to share knowledge about the product. The last sub-comment, 1.5, is a user who governs the brand by reaffirming and sharing excitement about the product even though it is not a product for them (Appendix 3.1). The user takes a partner role since the person wants to motivate others about the product.

From analyzing the first comment and its sub-comments, it can be argued that Schau and Arnould's and Fournier and Lee's concepts meant for brand communities do not fit precisely in terms of community practices and roles. As seen in comment 1, the practice cannot be categorized by the practice framework, and in comment 1.3 where the community role framework cannot categorize what role the user assumes. The frameworks for both practices and roles will be further discussed in the discussion section. However, what can be drawn for the first segment of the analysis is that the post cultivates or constructs a space for users who have "outsider" opinions, including having a neutral or opposing opinion towards the brand.

Comment 2 concerns a user who ridicules the model's design and argues that it will not be sold (Appendix 3.1).

"Looks like it was designed by committee. It looks like they tried to make a bike for everyone and will get no one. Could it be the HD Aztec? (Comment 2, Appendix 3.1).

The user socializes and engages with the community, however, in a negative manner that attacks the brand. The comment received three likes indicating that others share the same

opinion (Comment 2, Appendix 3.1). The user does not take a preserving role towards the brand but more as a provocateur, aggressor, or outsider that seeks support or approval from other users. As a reaction to this comment, in the following comment, 2.1, a Harley-Davidson employee starts by condemning the comment and then goes on to take an objective perspective by arguing and justifying that only time will tell how it will perform (Appendix 3.1.1).

> "A pretty harsh statement ……. Actually it is a bike designed to go up against the leader in its segment and outperform it. Time will tell." (Comment 2.1, Appendix 3.1).

The employee functions as a gatekeeper and neutralizer for Harley-Davidson, who governs the brand and attempts to diffuse the comment. This comment received 7 likes indicating support from users who, by liking, demonstrate supportive governing without engaging directly in the discussion. Comment 2.2 continues the discussion by arguing that Harley-Davidson has made many bad decisions, including closing a factory that could decrease the product's price and intentionally ignores an untapped market for women (Appendix 3.1). The user takes an opposing role towards the brand and how the brand conveys business since the user comments about the untapped market for motorcycles for women (Comment 2.2, Appendix 3.1). The user constructs a negative form of impression management whereby other users receive a negative impression of the brand concerning multiple topics. Comment 2.3 is from a user who seeks to be specific about the differences between the BMW 1250 Adventure model and the Pan Am while arguing that the Pan Am is the better choice (Appendix 3.1). The specific details about pricing are an attempt from the user to counter the impression management in this sub-comment section. The comment received 7 likes which again indicates support and agreement from other users. In relation to comment 2.2, comment 2.3 supposedly receives more support from other users since comment 2.2 obtained zero reactions (Comment 2.2 & 2.3, Appendix 3.1). The comment and the number of received reactions indicate that the user takes a mentor role that provides knowledge. Comment 2.4 responds to the previous comment about the BMW model pricing costing more than Harley-Davidsons's model (Appendix 3.1.1). The user attempts to counter the argument by impression managing and distorting the argument made in comment 2.3 (Comment 2.4, Appendix 3.1). In comment 2.5, the discussion escalates whereby the user personally attacks the other user (Appendix 3.1).

> ".... while you are certainly entitled to your own opinion of which i won't challenge, I'd like to take an opportunity to offer some career advice to someone who's profile

indicates they are seeking employment. Self-awareness is a key attribute hiring managers seek in talent. Post that leave ones character and EIQ questionable are best left unwritten. Blessing." (Comment 2.5, Appendix 3.1)

Comment 2.5 argues that having a negative attitude towards the brand can be seen by other users on LinkedIn, which will hurt his employment chances (Appendix 3.1). The comment received 11 reactions indicating that users believe that a negative attitude is unacceptable and unwelcome. The user's role can be argued as a sort of enforcer for the brand who takes it upon themselves to handle opposing opinions. Comment 2.6 is a counterattack to comment 2.5, which is arguably posted by the same user as comment 2.4 (Appendix 3.1). The users behind comments 2.7 and 2.8 do not participate in the personal attacks (Appendix 3.1). Comment 2.7 focuses on the constructive discussion about various models comparable to the Pan Am (Appendix 3.1). The user grooms the other user with his experience and knowledge about the various models. While comment 2.8, instead of engaging in the discussion, focuses on the product itself by commenting on its appearance (Appendix 3.1). Both comments 2.7 and 2.8 govern the brand in their own ways. Comment 2.7 reflects a user who takes a mentor role and shares knowledge about different products, while comment 2.8 reflects a bystander who does not directly engage with the other users but does engage with the community collectively. Comment 2.9 returns to the original discussion of whether the model will be sold or not (Appendix 3.1).

"... will you actually buy one?" (Comment 2.9, Appendix 3.1)

This user socializes by enabling or reigniting the conversation about the original topic. The role that the user assumes cannot be defined by the community role framework however the user arguably assumes an enabler role. In comment 2.10, the discussion has returned to subjective opinions about the brand and the competitors' models (Appendix 3.1). This user assumes a partner role where the user motivates others by stating that they usually do not purchase new bikes, but the user will potentially do it (Comment 2.10, Appendix 3.1). Comment 2.11 posted by a Harley-Davidson employee who, through supposed insider knowledge, argues that many users have already put down payment for the model (Appendix 3.1).

"... Will people buy them? I'm not sure Nationally. We pre-sold our allotment already using the sold bike request. 8 are under deposit. All 1250 specials. All have accessories

ordered. And 6 of them have already ordered the gear to wear. I would say that's successful from a dealer perspective." (Comment 2.11, Appendix 3.1)

The employee socializes and governs the brand by providing information on how the model has performed at his dealership. The comment received five likes indicating that users like to hear from employees who can provide them with some insight. The employee adopts a role that neutralizes opposition to the product. The employee assumes a mentor role where the person shares expertise about how the model performs at his local dealership. Comment 2.12 is aimed at one of the previous comments about the cost of the BMW 1250 models, contrary to the Pan Am, and that people should do some research before bluntly commenting about model prices (Appendix 3.1).

"..... You obviously don't know what a BMW 1250 retails for versus the Pan America. Please do some research before you embarrass yourself with comments like this." (Comment 2.12, Appendix 3.1)

Similar to comment 2.11 from another employee, this employee's comment receives three likes indicating that certain users appreciate the employees interacting in the discussion. This employee's social networking includes governing the brand, where the employee undertakes a defender role. The two employees in comments 2.11 and 2.12 both attempt to influence the impression of the brand either by providing information or accusing the user of not doing proper research on the topic (Appendix 3.1). The final comment in the sub-comment section, 2.13, comes from a user who is in opposition to Harley-Davidson and continues to persist (Appendix 3.1.1). The user reflects a person who cannot be affected by either other users or brand employees but instead wants to affect others.

This comment section establishes a clear representation that users oppose the brand and attempts to control or influence other users' impressions of Harley-Davidson. Additionally, it demonstrates a comment section where employees are actively engaged with users, in this case by neutralizing the opposition or defending the brand. The comments reflect both different practices and extensively different roles that both users and employees utilize or assume. The practices utilized reveal that there are oppositional forms of socializations connected to brands which are not covered by Schau and Arnould's framework. The roles manifested through the practices can neither be categorized by Fournier and Lee's framework. The analysis also

reveals that assumed roles can be categorized as either neutral as seen in comment 2.8 or roles that are oppositional towards the brand as can be perceived in, e.g. comments 2, 2.4, and 2.13.

Comment 3 is posted by an experienced rider who shares his/her experience with the community's positive reaction towards the Pan Am model across multiple online forums (Appendix 3.1).

> "As a rider, owner of Harleys for over 30 years and a member of numerous motorcycle forums, the reaction to this bike is unlike I've ever seen for H-D. I can't even say how many posts I've read in the Harley owners forum from owners saying they can't wait to try this bike, with many, many people saying they will be first in line to buy one. Even on the Ducati forums where H-D is always trashed in the comments, the reaction to this bike has been surprisingly positive... Harley is running on all cylinders. My 2017 Road Glide is the best Harley I've ever owned and I've bought a new H-D every 5 years since 1994." (Comment 3, Appendix 3.1).

The user shares a milestone with other users about how he has been a rider for over thirty years (Comment 3, Appendix 3.1). Furthermore, the user empathizes and commoditizes his pride and excitement for the product by sharing how many years the person has been driving and how people have reacted on various forums. Even though the comment cannot be categorized as brand use by the concepts of grooming, customizing, and commoditizing, it arguably can be a form of brand use where the user introduces others to what motorcycle the person drives. The comment received 21 likes from other users expressing their support both in terms of the user's observation from other forums and its long-term dedication to the brand. By sharing their story and the story from the online forums, the user assumes a combined storyteller, ambassador, and partner role since the user promotes and tells a narrative about how other users have reacted while expressing their excitement. The two following comments, 3.1 and 3.2, represent other users who agree with comment three and share the excitement for the new product (Appendix 3.1). Both users assume the role of partner since they encourage others through their comments.

This comment section with fewer sub-comments than the previous two shows that users on Harley-Davidson's page share their excitement, joy, and pride over the brand in a collective manner, either by commenting or reaction. This comment section arguably re-enforces the brand and reflects a positive community to other users.

Comment 4 demonstrates a user who addresses Jochen Zeitz directly and invites him to one of the local Harley-Davidson stores or communities in Pennsylvania (Appendix 3.1).

> "Come visit us at Lancaster Harley-Davidson the next time you are in the area of PA, Jochen Zeitz." (Comment 4, Appendix 3.1).

The comment represents an example whereby a user attempts to network and socialize with a senior management member. Additionally, it is also a form of community engagement where the user engages with Jochen Zeitz by inviting him to Lancaster. Comment 4.1 illustrates Jochen responding to the inquiry:

> "Thanks for the invite! I will try 😃" (Comment 4.1, Appendix 3.1).

Jochen Zeitz socializes with the user and assumes a celebrity role since he is the "front figure" of the brand. The comment is not directly a form of impression management but since the CEO of the brand responded, it provides a good impression of the brand and cares about its consumers. In comment 4.2, the initial user conveys details about where he can reside and dine while visiting. The user socializes and undertakes a provider role that Fournier and Lee define as hosts who take care of other members.

To sum up this small section of the analysis, the analysis demonstrates that the brand on various organizational levels interacts with users, affecting other users' impressions of the brand.

The following comment in the comment section, comment 5, is a user who addresses that the Pan Am model is not a Harley in their subjective opinion (Appendix 3.1).

> "Not a Harley." (Comment 5, Appendix 3.1).

The user presents either an opposing or outsider opinion which receives four curious and like reactions from users who share the same opinion (Appendix 3.1). The user socializes with the community by presenting their subjective opinion. Comment 5.1 from a Harley-Davidson employee states that the user probably would not accept a new model from a competitor when comparing it with an older project (Appendix 3.1).

"I bet you say the new Corvette is not a Corvette." (Comment 5.1, Appendix 3.1).

This comment questions the user's loyalty to Harley-Davidson and general knowledge about motorcycles. The employee governs the brand and undertakes a defender role. That questions the impression that the user in comment 5 attempts to convey. In response to comment 5.1, comment 5.2, presumably the same user from comment 5, distances themself from Corvette and provides an explanation for the previous statement (Appendix 3.1). Thereby attempting to control and influence the conversation and through impression management based on the user's own subjective opinion about the models. Comment 5.3 is the employee who continues to question the user's knowledge and loyalty, whereby the employee continues to defend the brand's identity (Appendix 3.1).

".... You need to read some of the articles on the Revolution Max engine and then decide if it's 60's technology. And not just the engine, all of the rest of the technology built into the Pan America. As a side note, the V-ROD was one hell of a bike. It had a loyal following and a long production run. I will put a V-Rod Muscle in my garage in the future." (Comment 5.3, Appendix 3.1).

The employee consistently focuses on influencing the user's opinion or control the user's impression of the brand. The employee embraces a defender where the person attempts to sway the user's opinion. Lastly, the user attempts to argue their point about what they meant by the comments, thereby again attempting to influence the impression of the brand (appendix 3.1).

This set of interactions between a user and an employee highlights that some users' subjective opinions are deviant or outsider perspectives, to what the employee believes the brand's identity is. Additionally, this comment section illustrates that the meaning of the brand is a negotiation between various actors within the group. In this case, both parties attempt to control the negotiation of the brand's meaning and what is associated with the brand's models.

The following comments will be presented as a form of mapping representing various types of comments within the post's comment section. None of the comments are necessarily written in connection with each other. The comments can be divided into two main groups; positive and negative comments. The positive comments can be divided into other smaller

categories. Comment 7 and 21 presents two users who lost their passion for the brand, but this new product has reignited their relationship to the brand (Appendix 3.1).

> "I, for one, am glad HD is finally putting out a product that would bring me back into the fold...." (Comment 7, Appendix 3.1).

> "I haven't ridden in two decades, but this bike made me think I should start up again…" (Comment 21, Appendix 3.1).

The two comments demonstrate a positive impression towards the Pan Am model and reflect a supportive brand impression within the comment section. Comments 8 and 13 represent users who share milestone experiences with other users by telling about a personal experience with the brand or through badging by posting a picture of their motorcycle (Appendix 3.1).

> "... I toured that plant when i was in 7th grade, My father was consulting on a project with HD. I had loved motorcycles since i was old enough to walk. That day at the plant, hanging out with all the mechanics/technicians is one of my best memories of my departed father…" (Comment 8, Appendix 8).

> "... "What was oid is new again," is what my pop pop used to say…." (Comment 13, Appendix 3.1).

Both users assume a storyteller role where they share something related to them on a personal level. The rest of the positive comments includes users sharing excitement, having positive considerations about investing in the product, applauding either the product or the brand's new direction, or congratulating the brand (Comments 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 23, Appendix 3.1.1).

> "I'm very excited to ride one of these.... I am curious to see how it performs in comparison to my old Triumph Tiger 1050….." (Comment 9, Appendix 3.1).

> ".... I think this is the right step into the future…." (Comment 16, Appendix 3.1).

"It is great to see a brand move forwards despite the deep heritage it has…." (Comment 18, Appendix 3.1).

These comments are just some examples that reflect user participation in the comment section and how it collectively demonstrates support towards the brand. The last of the positive comments are reactions, a setting on LinkedIn is that users can also comment with reactions to posts, which in this case are users' reacting with "congratulation", "love this", or "inspiring" reactions (Comments 11, 15, 22, 24, Appendix 3.1).

"Congratulations" (Comment 11, Appendix 3.1).

"Love this" (Comment 15, Appendix 3.1)

"Inspiring" (Comment 22 & 24, Appendix 3.1)

Compared to the examples in comments 9, 16, and 18, these comments are a passive form of participation, where the users only provide support with no in-depth argumentation or reasoning. Comment 15 is written by a Harley-Davidson employee who supposedly argues that employees are also consumers.

The negative comments are comments 6 and 17 (Appendix 3.1). Comment 6 is a user who has had a bad experience with the brand and has turned towards the official page where the person utilizes the comment section to complain even though the problem and the content are unrelated (Appendix 3.1).

"Received a call from Vince today from Harley Corporate. Telling me to live with my 2019 Street Glide problem that has a been back to the dealership 4 times and still is not fixed….. Think hard when you buy and this is the facts not made up!!!" (Comment 6, Appendix 3.1)

Comment 6 demonstrates that the official page can also be a space where users can express their general dissatisfaction with the brand, reflecting that the brand should be aware of co-creating with users where negative comments can flourish. This form of community engagement is influenced by an oppositional opinion about the brand. The comment received zero reactions indicating that no other users have either experienced this problem or agree with

the user. Comment 17 concerns a user who is unhappy about the new product and wants the brand to take another direction (Appendix 3.1). As argued in the previous comment, the space establishes grounds for users to express their subjective perspectives.

The majority of the presented comments can only be categorized as forms of social networking or impression management by Schau and Arnould's framework, and their roles cannot be directly determined by Fournier and Lee's community role framework. However, the comments are some of the comments documented in the comment section and are collectively a part of the socialization between users posting in the comment section. Additionally, it provides an overview of other forms of participation that the brand posts and what the comment section enables. In section 3.3.1, it was established that these official LinkedIn pages consist of brand community elements which can be seen by the three defining core components of the community, the consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility (cf. section 3.3) being present. The consciousness of kind manifests in the connectedness that users show in the comment section by commenting.
The consciousness of kind can be seen through the majority of the comment section with the pro-brand, neutral, and oppositional comments, reflecting a connectedness between the users. Shared rituals and traditions are demonstrated in, e.g. comment 3, where the user shares how many years the person has been committed to the brand. The sense of moral responsibility can be analyzed from the employee comment, e.g. 2.11, where the employee as a part of the community defends the brand, which is supported by users who react to the comment.

Harley-Davidson post number 9

The second Harley-Davidson post that will be analyzed is post number 9, which involves Jochen Zeitz presenting the new 2021-2025 strategic plan, the Hardwire (Appendix 4). The first comment does not relate to the post's content but is from a user who expresses frustration about the brand and complains to them through the post (Appendix 4.1). The user contacts the brand personally through the post because they believe they have exhausted other communication options (Comment 1, Appendix 4.1). The user attempts to "publicly" present the problem to the brand and other users. The user assumes an aggressor role where the user posts the problem on the brand's official page and thereby wants to influence other users' opinions about the brand. The response, comment 1.1, is posted by Harley-Davidson Motor Company profile which refers the user to their Customer Care team (Appendix 4.1).

"Hi … thank you for reaching out and bringing this to our attention. Please reach out to our Customer Care Team. You can see how to contact them, here: ….." (Comment 1.1, Appendix 4.1)

The brand page attempts to diffuse the situation and help the user by assuming the role of a solution-oriented company. The brand comment received one curious reaction indicating one user expressing curiosity towards the comment or the service link. The user, however, is fed up with the company and continues to express frustration (Comment 1.2, Appendix 4.1). The user does not accept the help and therefore continues to take the stance as an aggressor towards the brand.

This is the first case presented in this thesis, where the brand itself interacts with a user. From this, it can supposedly be argued that the brand potentially finds reason to participate with users when there are brand-harming comments that may affect the perception of the brand.

Comment 2 is posted by a user who disapproves of the new business strategy and points towards other alternatives (Appendix 4.1).

"Until HD comes to grips with why people buy a Harley to begin with, they will never have a solid. The bikes are way too expensive... Go back to the drawing board and release a simple, stripped down version of the Dyna, Softtail and Touring bike… Do A LOT more for your HOG chapters… have some regional events.... stop charging me 4$ for a bolt that costs 0.32….." (Comment 2, Appendix 4.1)

Compared to other negative comments presented in this thesis, this comment covers various problems and presents subjective constructive alternatives to focus on. The user adopts an outsider role by presenting their subjective perspective of what the brand should focus on instead of their current business strategy. The user engages the brand through the user's subjective opinion, which also illustrates a form of brand use by arguing what the user believes the brand should focus on instead. The comment received 30 likes indicating massive support for the user's suggestions (Appendix 4.1). The number of reactions reflects that the user additionally assumes a front figure role that enables users who oppose the new business strategy. Comments 2.1 to 2.6 represent a line of users who are not defending the brand but actively participating in discussing alternative business strategies whereby Harley-Davidson can improve the brand (Appendix 4.1). Comment 2 arguably presents an opportunity for other

users to discuss alternative business options where the sub-comment section becomes a construction not based on pro nor opposing brand perspectives. In comment 2.7, the user presents themself as an all-American that believes that Harley-Davidson is losing touch with their core customers (Appendix 4.1).

> "I'm a veteran and a hard working American… Harley Davidson you have lost your connection… You're so focused on making money yet your loosing touch with your core customers… I hope that someone of importance actually sees and reads this then takes it to the heart." (Comment 27, Appendix 4.1).

The user influences other users' impressions about what the core user is by constructing one's personality and creating the image of the core user. Both the three likes and comment 2.8 concurs with the assessment (Appendix 4.1). In comment 2.9, Jochen Zeitz responds and provides the user with a link about Harley-Davidson's initiatives (Appendix 4.1).

> "..... I hear you and you might want to take a look at our recent announcement:....."
> (Comment 2.9, Appendix 4.1)

This is another example where the brand inserts itself into the discussion to help the users understand their decision-making. The user from comment 2.7 represents a deviating opinion about the identity to which Jochen Zeits interacts and governs the brand's current identity and goal. In comment 2.9, Jochen Zeitz takes a defender role where he defends the brand's new initiatives. Jochen Zeitz's comment received two likes demonstrating that his comment receives almost equally as much support as comment 2.7, indicating that some users support the brand explaining their decision-making.

From this analysis of the comment and sub-comments, it can be argued that Schau and Arnould's and Fournier and Lee's frameworks struggle to categorize practices and roles within the comment section. This section provides insight into that some practices are neither pro nor oppositional brand comments but neutral where users freely can discuss their subjective opinions without hardcore fans or employees intervening. This suggests that official pages can function as a free space where anybody can post what they want compared to what previous research has found in brand communities where certain values and norms are determined by the majority opinion. Jochen Zeitz argues that the brand attempts to influence user opinion by providing an informational link rather than discussing it with the users.

The majority of the rest of the collected comments and sub-comments samples regard impression management. Comments 3 to 3.6 contain a discussion about the brand's electric motorcycle (Appendix 4.1). Comment 3 concerns a user's excitement about new initiatives, especially the new electric motorcycle initiative (Appendix 3.2.1).

> "Everything I heard sounds great.... Harley has to continue with Electric, it will be a requirement for all auto companies in the future. Personally I really like the look of the electric motorcycle removed from their website" (Comment 3, Appendix 4.1).

The user emphasizes and socializes by supporting the new initiative where the person establishes a favorable impression. The post received three likes and support reactions meaning that other users support and share the same excitement (Appendix 4.1). Comments 3.1 to 3.6 concern users discussing how the electric segment will be a part of the brand and impression managing what other users think about the initiative (Appendix 4.1).

> "... the Electric segment will be a new brand under Harley's wing…. that's the reason the concept you're talking about was removed from the site" (Comment 3.1, Appendix 4.1)

The user provides information on why the electric motorcycle initiative has been removed from the website (Comment 3.1, Appendix 4.1). This user attempts to be supportive by providing the previous user with information. Comment 3.2 shows a user who is oppositional towards the initiative and argues that it will have consequences on drawing in new Harley-Davidson riders (Appendix 4.1).

> "... The electric concept is another disappointing door getting shut toward design addressing accessible, entry-level motorcycles along, and another vanishing opportunity to engage with the Motor Company's history in flat track" (Comment 3.2, Appendix 4.1)

Rather than expressing excitement as in comment 3, this user demonstrates discontent with the initiative. Based on the user's subjective perspective, the comment attempts to express opposition and influence other users. Comments 3.3 to 3.6 continue the discussion but

disregards comment 3.2 opposition (Appendix 4.1). These users socialize neutrally because none of them expresses neither positive nor negative attitudes towards the brand or product. They neutrally engage with the community.

Comments 4 to 4.10 share similarities with the discussion in comments 2 to 2.9. The discussion starts with comment 4 stating the user's excitement for the new electric motorcycle initiative but that the brand should focus on the pricing (Appendix 4.1).

"I'm a softtail guy, so I love they are focusing on cruisers, but what about the Sportsters? They are a popular entry level model for many new riders. I also agree that they need to keep some focus on electric models, but they MUST bring the price down considerably." (Comment 4, Appendix 4.1)

The user socializes by expressing excitement for the new model based on the user's bike preferences. Additionally, The user engages with the community by addressing what kind of consumer the user is. The user assumes a supportive role as a partner that shares the excitement and provides constructive feedback about what the user subjectively believes the brand should change. Comment 4 received 13 likes and supportive reactions, indicating that other users agree with the comment (Appendix 4.1). From comment 4.1 to 4.10, the discussion changes, focusing instead on the competitor's models. In comment 4.1, the user leans towards another type of motorcycle as an alternative (Appendix 4.1)

"... Look at the Indian Scout. It is killer... " (Comment 4.1, Appendix 4.1)

This discussion on various model performances progresses through the entire sub-comment section, where users attempt to influence each other's impression of the competition's models.

"i would stay on my Buell X1. That was a good concept…" (Comment 4.2, Appendix 4.1).

"... I take great interest in reliability issues and I have heard little to no issues with the Buell offerings…" (Comment 4.5, Appendix 4.1)

"... When Buell replace the old tube-frames for the newer versions, it was acceptable…
But changing from a HD-V-Engine to the Rotax engine was terrible mistake… VRod
is a pity as well…" (Comment 4.6, Appendix 4.1)

The three examples presented above all include a form of socialization through discussion while also influencing the impression of Harley-Davidson's electric motorcycle and the competitors' alternatives. By projecting a negative light on the electric motorcycle, and that there are other alternatives. Comments 4.8 and 4.9 are users who show signs of governing by asking for sources about product and dealer issues discussed in the previous comments (Appendix 4.1).

"product issues or dealer issues. Be specific. I am sorry to say but I don't believe you
at all about product issues" (Comment 4.8, Appendix 4.1)

"... can you cite any of the actual issues?" (Comment 4.9, Appendix 4.1)

This particular form of governing is not related to Harley-Davidson but in regards to another brand which indicates that some users relate to subjective comments critically. The discussion of dealership issues transfers directly over to comment 5 about a user who wants to be a part of the brand but experienced problems with the dealership where the user experienced problems purchasing a particular bike (Appendix 4.1).

"... I took a learn to ride course taught on Street 500s. I looked around the dealership
and learned they told me they dont carry the Street models. They would reluctantly sell
me a Sportster with the assurance that I could trade up to a real bike in a year. I don't
want to buy a lifestyle, just an entry level motorcycle. HD wants me to buy another
brand. Good luck with the old time dealers who want to turn the business into a
museum" (Comment 5, Appendix 4.1)

The comment represents another subjective problem whereby a newcomer expresses his concern with how the dealerships want to sell the Harley-Davidson lifestyle. The user engages with the other users by addressing that they are a new driver and that there is a problem with how dealerships attempt to sell motorcycles. Comment 5.1 agrees that they have had the same experience at their local dealership (Appendix 4.1). These comments raise a problem with the

brand's approach of selling the motorcycle experience through expensive motorcycles. Comment 6 reflects a user who abandoned the brand due to the high pricing on bikes (Appendix 4.1). There are multiple instances in this analysis where users reflect their frustration or opposition to the pricing of the motorcycles, which reflects an oppositional practice and role. However, these comments leave an imprint on the comment section and become a part of the social construction of the brand.

Comments 7, 11, 13, 12, 14, and 15 reflect users who shortly either celebrate, show enthusiasm, or discontent towards the brand's new initiatives (Appendix 4.1).

> "Your customers are dying of old age. Spoken like a true American" (Comment 13, Appendix 4.1)

> "So happy to see Harley-Davidson Motor Company focusing on the core business and the voice of the customer…" (Comment 14, Appendix 4.1)

> "Congratulations H-D" (Comment 15, Appendix 4.1)

These comments reflect both positive and negative comments, which leave imprints expressed through governing or oppositional comments. Comment 8 to 8.4 regards Harley-Davidson's market performance, while comment 9 and 9.1 is a small discussion about modernization (Appendix 4.1). Comments 8 to 8.4 reflect dedicated users who, while discussing, also stake their domain of engagement on the page, which concerns Harley-Davidson's performance (Appendix 4.1). Comment 9 regards a user who utilizes the comment section to gain insight into certain aspects of the brand (Appendix 4.1).

> "What is Harley-Davidson doing to embrace the digital era? How are they embedding technological innovation across business?..." (Comment 9, Appendix 4.1)

The user utilizes the comment section and engages the community to obtain information about a certain topic whereby the person also socializes with the other users. The following comment, 9.1, attempts to provide that insight (Appendix 4.1). This example illustrates a user who turns to the community for information and receives it from a helpful user, indicating that users within the community are willing to support others.

As in the previous selected post from Harley-Davidson, there were instances where either the brand, employees, or Jochen Zeitz interacted with the users. Comments 10, 14, and 17 show instances where users engage Jochen Zeitz or Harley-Davidson by tagging them (Appendix 4.1). Jochen Zeitz and Harley-Davidson react to the tags to show support which can be seen in correlation with 10.1, 14.1, and 17.1 (Appendix 4.1).

> "Jochen Zeitz, I listened to your vision for Harley-Davidson Motor Company and agree that the way to future success is through recognizing customer wants and needs..." (Comment 10, Appendix 4.1)

> "Wow - Joche. Really impressed with your 5 Year Hardwire Vision… Looks like you are on your way to making HD great agian!..." (Comment 17, Appendix 4.1)

Comments 10, 14, and 17 are posted by users who express their support towards the brand to which the brand reacts. Lastly, comments 16, 18, and 19 demonstrate users who show moderate support (Appendix 4.1).

> "I believe the newer CEO has the best interest in keeping HD a competitive brand… But the focus needs to change with the time, it will not be an easy change. But I would rather have them scale down and still make bikes then loose them forever." (Comment 16, Appendix 4.1)

The moderate support includes expressing their hopes about the initiatives and what they may include. This is another example where a user expresses their subjective opinion to engage with the community. As argued through this section, the primary practice from comments 3 to 19 is impression management.

In connection with Schau and Arnould's and Fournier and Lee's framework, there seems to be a lack of understanding of users who practice discussion-based impression management and users who demonstrate oppositional perspectives or moderate support. This set of comments do reflect one common brand community practice, impression management. Since this community is not solely consisting of fans and extensively not explicitly constructed on preservation ideals, the comment section consists of a broader spectrum of opinions, which

for the brand can both be beneficial and detrimental. The benefits relate to the brand's ability to oversee a broader representation of user opinions within the comment section for a brand such as Harley-Davidson. This can be instrumental in understanding user feedback and demands. The main detrimental factor is the representation of negative comments on the page, which can influence other users or construct a space that enables a negative attitude towards the brand. In both Harley-Davidson posts, Fournier and Lee's script framework cannot be applied to the comment sections, since the scripts are general and not as dynamic as comment sections on official brand posts. Additionally, any applied scripts by Harley-Davidson cannot be traced due to the dynamic effect that users have on the post comment sections.

Similar to the previous Harley-Davidson post, most comments reflect consciousness of kind where the connectedness is reflected both in the discussions and in the single comments since all comments are a part of a collected whole. Shared rituals and traditions can be seen in, e.g. comments 3 to 3.6, where the users discuss the electric motorcycle initiative as part of the community's new identity, which draws from the brand's identity. Sense of moral responsibility can be analyzed from comments 4.8 and 4.9, where the users position themselves critically against a comment about production problems posted by another user.

5.2.2 Shaping New Tomorrow

Shaping New Tomorrow post number 1

The first Shaping New Tomorrow post that will be analyzed is post number 1 from Appendix 2, which concerns the video of the brand's new Hamburg office. For this analysis, eleven comments have been selected from the fourteen comments due to three comments being tags that have no relevance for this thesis since users are anonymous (Appendix 5).

As presented in section 5.1.2, the content of this post is not product-oriented but rather oriented towards employees, collaborators, and potential job seekers. Comments 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 are a form of appreciative reactions or congratulations.

"Cool, very cool 👏 😎" (Comment 1, Appendix 5.1)

"Looks like a cool place Where everything can and will happen 👍 😊 A great place to work and train Shapers!" (Comment 4, Appendix 5.1)

"Looking good 🙌" (Comment 8, Appendix 5.1)

The comments indicate that the post does not initiate discussion or any elaborate form of communication between the users and the brand. This form of practice is general for the comments, which arguably is a form of social networking or socialization between the users and the brand. Extensively it is also a form of impression management by demonstrating support. The users demonstrate support towards the brand and therefore can be categorized as supporters. In the majority of the comments, Shaping New Tomorrow reacts to the comments, which is a form of community engagement by the brand and the users (Comments 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1, 9.1, 10.1, 11.1, Appendix 5.1). Based on the number of comments from users and the number of reactions from the brand, there is clear but straightforward communication between the two parts.

Shaping New Tomorrow post 2

The second Shaping New Tomorrow post that will be analyzed is post number 2, introducing the brand's head of finance, Peter Fjeldgaard (Appendix 6). The comments within the comment section can be divided into three sections: humor, capabilities, and congratulating comments. The humor comments either relate to Peter Fjeldgaard's profession as an accountant who in the picture stands with a calculator or, as presented in the fun fact, that he strained a muscle when he challenged a colleague (Comments 1, 2, 3, 6, Appendix 6.1).

"Peter Fjeldgaard Kunne du ikke finde bordregner med strimmel?🙈" (Comment 1, Appendix 6.1)

"Peter Fjeldgaard Jeg tror videoen af din "sprint" stadig findes på YouTube...😆" (Comment 3, Appendix 6.1).

From the comments, it can be argued that the users have a personal relationship with Peter Fjeldgaard, which also provides the foundation for socialization. The capability comments are also based on a personal relationship (Comments 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, Appendix 6.1)

"Min tidligere "wing-man" har aldrig stået skarpere… en klar styrke for SNT" (Comment 4, Appendix 6.1)

"Stærk profil 💪" (Comment 7, Appendix 6.1)

The users vouch for Peter Fjeldgaard's capabilities as an accountant, reflecting users who know him personally. The congratulating comments relate to comments that applaud him (Comments 8, 11, 12, Appendix 6.1).

"👏👏" (Comment 8, Appendix 6.1)

"Sådan Peter 👍" (Comment 12, Appendix 6.1)

In this post, Peter Fjeldgaard responds to the comments himself whereby he interacts with the users (Comments 1.2, 2.2, 3.2, 5.2, Appendix 6.1). Additionally, it can be noted that Peter, the brand and one of the founders of Shaping New Tomorrow, react to the posts as seen in comments 1.1, 3.1, 4.1, 2.1, 5.1, 8.1, 10.1, 11.1, 12.1. Noteworthy about the comment section is that the users do not engage with one another, only Peter Fjeldgaard based on personal relations (Appendix 6.1). In the comment section, there is a strong interaction between users, employees, and the brand where the three parts socialize. Within this comment section, there are indications of a community script. The comment section's community script resembles that of the tribe script since Peter Fjeldgaard has an interpersonal relationship with most users.

In both comment sections for both Shaping New Tomorrow posts, Schau and Arnould's and Fournier and Lee's concepts struggle to capture or categorize the practices being utilized by both the users and the employee. The three brand community components are barely present in Shaping New Tomorrow's posts. The only component there are elements of is consciousness of kind. There is no established connectedness between the users. However, there is a connectedness between the users and the brand, where the brand either reacts to the comments or an employee, e.g. Peter Fjeldgaard, comments on the user comments.

From both the analysis of Harley-Davidson and Shaping New Tomorrow posts in connection with decision-making (cf. section 3.4), it can be argued that there are social influences from the comment sections which can affect the decision process. The comment sections illustrate a social influence where users can influence one another's decision process

to either make an alternative evaluation or purchase the brand's product. This suggests that the beliefs, attitudes, and intentions within these comment sections influence one another and can potentially stretch beyond the users engaging in the comment section. This means that users, in the case of Harley-Davidson, with a more dynamic comment section that consists of different perspectives, potentially can push users either towards a purchase decision or an alternative evaluation about what to purchase. In the case of Shaping New Tomorrow with a static and singular comment section, it is potentially more likely that users are pushed towards a purchase decision instead of an alternative decision.

6. Discussion

6.1 Discussion of findings

The following section of this thesis will discuss the findings from the analysis in connection with the thesis problem formulation.

In the introduction of this thesis, it was presented that LinkedIn introduces itself as the world's largest professional network whose vision is to create economic opportunities for all members of the global labor market. Where it was additionally presented that LinkedIn's employees and networking professionals post articles about how to utilize the social media for marketing and strategic purposes. This suggests that LinkedIn as a social media has an increased focus on professional content, which extensively indicates that what is posted on LinkedIn is professional content, e.g. what brands post. This furthermore means that users are on LinkedIn for professional reasons rather than private. Therefore, it can be suggested that professional content is related to jobs, career, etc. while private content is what the user likes, e.g. brands where they are consumers. The distinction between content posts as being professional, private, or both may not be so clear. The mapping of Harley-Davidson's and Shaping New Tomorrow's posts showed that the brands utilize various content types in connection with Tafesse and Wien's framework (cf. section 3.2). In the analysis of Harley-Davidson's posts, certain types were utilized multiple times, while in the analysis of Shaping New Tomorrow's posts, there were generally various content types where the job postings were the only form of repeated content. The framework's purpose was not to distinguish whether the content was professional, private, or both. However, in Harley-Davidson's case, the distinction can be difficult. For example, in post number 7, which introduces Harley-Davidson's new CCO Edel Sullivan, it

can be argued that the post is professional since it reflects an organizational topic about management. However, the post can also be argued to be private since from the analysis, it was analyzed that the post was an employee brand post that establishes a relationship between the users and the employee. This can additionally be supported by Harley-Davidson having an active brand community that extends beyond LinkedIn. This is an example that suggests that the distinction between professional and private content is not as clear. The only type of post from the first part of the analysis that can primarily be categorized as professional content is Shaping New Tomorrow's job postings. In the Shaping New Tomorrow sample, the job postings were neither the posts that received the most reactions nor comments. This suggests that, although LinkedIn is a platform used primarily for professional content, there is no clear distinction between whether professional or private content appeals the most to users. The professional content shared on the platform, taken from this sample, is not the content type that receives the most response. Hence, this further suggests that users on the platform do not only utilize the platform for professional related matters. This creates a blurred line for what users utilize the platform for however, it arguably makes all users a form of consumers since they are exposed to various forms of content and consumes it when they read a description, see a photo or a video, or click on a link. Furthermore, the varying amount of reactions, views, and comments indicate that different types of content and topics appeal to different users. This suggests that professional-oriented content on LinkedIn solely does not attract participation from followers.

In the second part of the analysis, Schau and Arnould's community practices framework and Fournier and Lee's community role and community script frameworks were utilized to analyze the two brands' post comment sections. However, the frameworks proved to be lacking in terms of analyzing comments from official brand pages. The practice framework was mainly proven to work when categorizing either overall thematic groups or specific practices. The majority of comments could be categorized by the thematic group rather than the concepts associated with the groups. In the Harley-Davidson analysis, many of the comments could be categorized as forms of social networking even though they could not be categorized under the concepts of welcoming new members, empathizing, or governing. They were rather forms of socializing based on either questions or statements, leading to discussions regarding the brand or the post content. These forms of socialization, not being able to be categorized by the practice framework, proved to be written by users who were either pro-brand, oppositional, or neutral. Specifically, the oppositional and neutral comments, in relation to socialization, could

not be categorized by the practice framework. In most cases, the pro-comments were a form of governing that protected or reinforced the brand and posted by either users or Harley-Davidson employees. Both pro-brand and oppositional comments were often also categorized as a form of impression management, which in most cases could not be categorized by the concepts of evangelizing or justifying. In this case, many of the comments were primarily posted by users, but a few also by employees. There were instances where Harley-Davidson employees justified the brand and tried to protect it from oppositional comments. These comments by employees were written in various tones, some more moderate and others more aggressive that seemed less professional. The less professional comments by employees suggest that employees were not commenting on the brand's behalf but rather personally. This raises a problem because employee comments often received likes or reactions indicating that other users looked towards the employees to diffuse situations concerning oppositional comments or engage with the users in general. Furthermore, these employees also villainized users who either posted oppositional or neutral comments. How the users perceive the employees could potentially backfire on the brand if the employees acted unprofessionally. Some neutral comments were also categorized as a form of impression management or community engagement. The users would discuss both Harley-Davidson's and competitors' products, where they would present benefits and disadvantages to various products. Through the analysis, there were a few examples where users utilized the practices of milestoning, badging, and commoditizing. Generally, the two thematic groups of community engagement and brand use were only present as the overall categories similar to social networking and impression management. In terms of the role framework, there were only a few instances where the framework could categorize either the users or employees. The pro-brand users were primarily within the framework categorized as either mentors, partners, storytellers, or a form of supporters. The supporter role was not necessarily entirely in connection with the framework, where the supporter participates passively, in this analysis, they were more supportive of pro-brand comments. The employees often assume either a mentor role, which exists inside the framework, or a defender, enforcer, or neutralizer role. As argued, the employees acted either moderately or aggressively, which made the distinction whether the employee was a defender, enforcer, or neutralizer. The more moderate employees would often take a defender or neutralizer role, while the more aggressive employees would act as enforcers that had a certain perception of the brand. In the Harley-Davidson analysis, it was not possible to find any community scripts due to the dynamic nature of an official page contrary to a brand community where the members are informed about the community's beliefs, values, and culture. In the Shaping New Tomorrow analysis, there were

no oppositional nor neutral comments. The users did not interact with one another but rather with the brand. The users socialized and impression managed by expressing their support or excitement for the brand. Due to the limited form of interaction by the users, there were neither any roles from the framework present, except for an elaborate form of the supporter role whereby expressing support, the users could be categorized as such. In Shaping New Tomorrow's post number 1, there were not any community scripts present. However, in post number 2, the tribe script was presented due to the interpersonal relationship that the employee had with the users. This suggests whether Shaping New Tomorrow can be categorized as a brand community or not. Shaping New Tomorrow's official LinkedIn page establishes a space where users can participate with one another and with the brand's employees, however, drawing from the analysis, the page is not being utilized as such a space.

The theories utilized for the analysis did not prove to fully be able to categorize different practices, roles, and scripts within the comment sections due to their more dynamic nature. This suggests that the brand community frameworks were not the most equipped theories to utilize in connection with comment sections on posts from official brand pages. However, the frameworks were partially capable of categorizing different practices and roles within the comment sections. This implies that there exist brand community tendencies within official pages and that the framework could indicate pro-brand, oppositional, and neutral forms of participation to establish a broad spectrum of user opinions. The second part of the analysis has focused on analyzing user and employee perspectives for the purpose of establishing what different kinds of practices and roles are being utilized and negotiated. By analyzing the users and employee perspective, the analysis was able to establish different practices and roles that brands should be aware of when enabling participation through content posts. The posts promote the social construction, which is the brand, through enabling the comment section participation. This suggests that to improve a brand's performance on a social media such as LinkedIn, there needs to be an understanding of what content the platform enables, what kind of content enables the users, and what kinds of participation is being enabled by the content.

6.2 Thesis limitations

In the case of the samples utilized in the analysis, the samples only demonstrate a fraction of the entirety in regards to what content types Harley-Davidson and Shaping New Tomorrow utilizes. However, the samples illustrate how participation variates from post to post and that

each brand utilizes different content types in different frequencies. The comments analyzed in the analysis provide partial insight into the nature of comment sections. Additional samples would have provided additional insight into content types and comment section dynamics. If the findings from these additional samples supported the findings of this analysis, the conclusions that were arrived at in this project would have been strengthened by the larger data sample.

In connection with categorizing forms of participation and roles on official brand pages on LinkedIn, Schau and Arnould's and Fournier and Lee's theoretical brand community frameworks proved to be partially lacking. In the analysis, this thesis argued that even though the comments could not be categorized by the concepts of participation, it could still be categorized by the thematic groups the concepts were assigned to. Since the framework was established on the basis of brand community practices, it suggested that the framework was meant to categorize pro-brand practices. This could argue that practices utilized outside of the framework were either neutral or oppositional. However, the dominant thematic groups were social networking, and impression management could also categorize neutral and oppositional comments. By utilizing the framework, it was able to show how pro-brand comments were able to reinforce the brand while the utilization of the thematic groups was able to suggest which comment sections were an impression management negotiation between pro-brand comments and oppositional comments. Fournier and Lee's community role framework was primarily only able to categorize pro-brand comments, while this thesis extensively suggested other forms of roles that could capture the users based on their participation. From this, the analysis showed that users posting pro-brand comments would assume mentor or supporter roles while employees assumed different roles in correlation to the form of participation the employee utilized either as a defender, enforcer, or neutralizer. Furthermore, did the analysis show that certain users who posted oppositional comments could be categorized as aggressors, while some neutral comments reflected users as bystanders. Fournier and Lee's community scripts were not identified due to the more dynamic and less static nature of the comment section except for one post where the few comments reflected interpersonal connections between users and an employee. Even though the frameworks were partially lacking, the analysis extensively showed that comment sections can either be of a more dynamic or a more static nature. In Harley-Davidson's case, the comment section was more dynamic than static, which was shown by the dynamic comments consisting of positive, neutral, and negative comments where users engaged with one another. Shaping New Tomorrow, on the other hand, was shown to be more

static since the comment section consisted only of positive comments where the users only engaged with the brand or an employee.

7. Conclusion

In the introduction, it was presented that this thesis sought out to answer the following problem formulation and the additional sub-research questions:

What are the possibilities and limitations of utilizing LinkedIn compared to other social media for international brand community building? This will be examined focusing on what Shaping New Tomorrow could learn from Harley Davidson MC's brand community communication strategy

1. *Which affordances does LinkedIn as a platform provide? Compared to other social media?*
2. *What features categorize brand communities?*
3. *What kind of content does Harley-Davidson share on LinkedIn? Compared to Shaping New Tomorrow?*

To answer the first research question, LinkedIn's primary affordance compared to other social media platforms was that the media was focused on professional networking. This suggests that there exists a higher focus on utilizing the platform in connection with professional content.

The second research question is concerned with the features of brand communities. In the theory section, it was established that a brand community can be defined as "a specialized, non-geographically bound community based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand" which is constituted by three core component markers: consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility. Elements of these features were argued to be present in the comment sections of Harley-Davidson's posts, however, in the comment sections of Shaping New Tomorrow's posts, the elements were not as present.

The last research question asks what content Harley Davidson and Shaping New Tomorrow share on LinkedIn. The analysis of Harley-Davidson's posts showed that the most frequent post type was the educational brand post, even though it was not the type of post that received the most reactions and comments. The Harley-Davidson posts that received the most reactions and comments were the sales promotion post and the employee brand post, which only was posted once each. From the analysis of Shaping New Tomorrow's posts, it was shown that the only frequent post type was the job postings. While the post type that received the most

reactions and views was the brand resonance post, while the post type with the most comments was the employee brand post. As discussed (cf. section 6.1), in the majority of posts, it is difficult to make a distinction between whether a post relates to solely professional or private content since the distinction between general user and consumer is unclear. Additionally, the analysis showed that it is not solely professional content that appeals to users. The job postings posted by Shaping New Tomorrow showed less appeal than other content posted by the brand. For brands to utilize social media such as LinkedIn for brand communities, there needs to be an understanding of what content the platform enables, what content enables users, and what kinds of participation are enabled by the specific content.

The analysis found that Harley-Davidson and Shaping New Tomorrow utilizes different content types that receive varying forms of participation by users or followers. This suggests that certain content types and topics enable participation more than others. Participation on Harley-Davidson posts was higher than Shaping New Tomorrows, besides Harley-Davidson having more followers, the analysis also indicated that the types of content were more compelling for users to interact with. The possibilities of international brand community building on LinkedIn can be argued to be the participation content posts enables. In the analysis of the comment sections, it was shown that there are neutral, positive, and negative comments that all become a part of the social construction of the brand on LinkedIn. Neutral, positive, and negative comments all become valuable in terms of improving the brand's presence on the specific social media. The neutral comments facilitate relationship building between users and employees, while positive comments express support towards the brand, which reinforces it and establishes a connection between users. The negative comments provide subjective feedback, which can help the brand map out various user opinions, including which products or organizational decisions users are discontent with. Negative comments can also facilitate relationships between users, which establishes collective discontent as feedback. Brand's should additionally consider that different comment types can affect users either positively or negatively. The limitations concern that even though this thesis has analyzed that LinkedIn can be utilized for different content purposes, the social media is still "branded" by being a professional networking social media with professional-oriented content. This suggests that users and brands may not utilize LinkedIn for brand community-related purposes compared to other social media that arguably may seem more equipped for it. As previously presented, Harley-Davidson has a brand community that did not originate on social media but was constructed through organizational changes and engaging consumers. This suggests that the

brand community spilled over into social media from being offline. Because Harley-Davidson's brand community originated offline, this may suggest that their grounds for constructing thriving brand communities were favorable, regardless of which media was utilized. This is due to the fact that the brand community was already established, and therefore did not rely on the features of a particular media to maintain it. In Phua, Jin, and Kim's study (cf. section 2.1.3) on the utilization of different social media, which was presented in this thesis' literature review, there were indications that different social media could be utilized for different purposes in terms of brand communities. For Harley-Davidson, these different social media may be utilized to sustain different elements of the brand community, and different social media may be utilized for different purposes. However, for Shaping New Tomorrow, which does not have an existing brand community, the use of different social media may not be as straightforward. Unlike Harley-Davidson, Shaping New Tomorrow needs to utilize social media to establish a brand community, not sustain one that has already been created. This makes it difficult for them to embrace Harley-Davidson's brand community communication strategy and achieve the same support, however, it also suggests that Shaping New Tomorrow may need to rely more on the different possibilities of different social media than Harley-Davidson.

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