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Approaching the Concept of Negative Engagement in Corporate Communication

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ABSTRACT

Evolution of social media as a crucial communication medium between stakeholders and organizations has its opportunities but also challenges. In fact, communication targeted at organizations in social media is more often negative. To better understand this phenomenon, this article-based dissertation approaches the nascent concept of negative engagement (NE) in the context of corporate communication. Five individual research publications contribute to concept definition and adjustment from a multidisciplinary perspective. The first publication included in this dissertation discusses who is to blame for NE behavior. Publication II introduces affective dimensions involved in the processes when e-commerce consumers engage with organizations and brands in online environments. The third publication focuses NE concept-validation and it positions the still under-research NE across communication disciplines and authenticates author's preliminary definition of NE within the field. Publication IV deepens the process of understanding NE concept, applying the managerial side to investigate how organizations should deal with NE behavior. The fifth and final publication included in this dissertation is a case-specific analysis that introduces an enhanced definition of the NE concept and provides supporting data from social media to categorize NE behaviors. Publications I, II, III, and IV apply literature review -based analysis to support conceptual and theoretical formation of affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of NE. Multi-Grounded Theory (MGT) method is applied in publication V to offer a more developed theoretical definition and a brand-new typology of NE behaviors in social media. Key findings of this dissertation conclude that NE is not just a reversal of positive engagement. NE manifests through its own unique characteristics, and it has several possible triggers, as well as emotional, cognitive, and behavioral levels, that are processed over time. Moreover, visible NE behaviors could carry different consequences for the organizations and brands involved, depending on who engages negatively. On this basis, it is recommended that organizations and brands should monitor their issue arenas for NE. Moreover, it is vital to understand who engages negatively, but also the process of NE behavior, which varies in its level of emotional intensity, object focus, and orientation. To conclude, not all NE is harmful for organizations and brands. In fact, ability to respond transparently in social media on issues raised by the stakeholders should offer a considerable competitive advantage, and an opportunity for organizations to improve their reputation and image.

Keywords: negative engagement, negative communication, corporate communication, social media, concept, definition

TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

Sosiaalinen media on yhä merkittävämmässä roolissa organisaatioiden ja niiden sidosryhmien välisessä viestinnässä. Mahdollisuuksien lisäksi sosiaalinen media luo myös haasteita, sillä sidosryhmien viestintä organisaatioita kohtaan ei ole aina positiivista. Jotta tätä ilmiötä voitaisiin paremmin ymmärtää, tämä viestinnän johtamisen artikkeliväitöskirja pyrkii määrittelemään negatiivisen osallistumisen ja sitoutumisen (Negative Engagement, NE) käsitteen. Viisi erillistä tutkimusartikkelia lähestyvät aihetta monitieteellisestä näkökulmasta. Ensimmäinen julkaisu tarkastelee negatiivista osallistumista ja sitoutumista käytännön tasolla ja siinä pohditaan, kuka tällaisen käyttäytymisen takana yleensä on. Julkaisu II keskittyy sidosryhmistä verkkokauppakuluttajiin ja tunnetason ulottuvuuksiin osallistuvan vuorovaikutuksen osana. Kolmannessa julkaisussa huomio kiinnittyy negatiivisen osallistumisen ja sitoutumisen käsitteen validointiin ja käsite sijoitetaan viestinnän tieteenalalla osaksi laajempaa viitekehystä. Julkaisussa IV syvennetään ymmärrystä käsitteestä ja sovelletaan viestinnän ammattilaisen näkökulmaa siihen, kuinka organisaatioiden tulisi toimia kohdatessaan erilaisia negatiivisia sidosryhmiä. Viides ja samalla viimeinen tämän väitöskirjan julkaisu on tapauskohtainen analyysi, joka esittelee käyttäytymiseen keskittyvän määritelmän ja typologian negatiivisesta osallistumisesta ja sitoutumisesta sosiaalisessa mediassa. Julkaisut I, II, III ja IV hyödyntävät kirjallisuuskatsauksiin perustuvia analyysejä käsitteen ja teorian määrittelyssä tunteiden, ajattelun ja käyttäytymisen tasoilla. Julkaisussa V hyödynnetään Multi-Grounded Theory (MGT) -menetelmää ja esitellään analyysin pohjalta pidemmälle kehitelty teoreettinen määritelmä sekä samalla uusi typologia kuluttajien negatiivisesta viestintäkäyttäytymisestä sosiaalisessa mediassa. Väitöskirjan tulosten mukaan negatiivinen osallistuminen ja sitoutuminen ilmenevät yksilöllisesti ja niiden takana voi olla monia syitä. Sidosryhmät sitoutuvat organisaatioihin ja brändeihin tunteiden, ajattelun ja käyttäytymisen tasoilla. Käyttäytymisen tasolla tapahtuvat negatiivisen osallistumisen ja sitoutumisen muodot aiheuttavat erilaisia seurauksia organisaatioille riippuen siitä, ketkä esimerkiksi negatiiviseen viestintään osallistuvat. Tutkimuksen johtopäätöksiin perustuen voidaan suositella, että organisaatioiden ja brändien tulisi monitoroida ns. teema-areenoitaan negatiivisen osallistumisen ja sitoutumisen havaitsemiseksi. Lisäksi organisaatioiden on tärkeää ymmärtää negatiivisen viestinnän prosesseja: millaiset sidosryhmät negatiiviseen viestintään osallistuvat ja miten sen eri muodot vaihtelevat tunneintensiteetin, negatiivisen viestinnän kohteiden ja orientaation osalta. Tärkeää on myös huomioida, että kaikki sidosryhmien negatiivinen viestintä sosiaalisessa mediassa ei ole pelkästään haitallista organisaatioille. Negatiivisen viestinnän esille nostamat epäkohdat voivat mahdollistaa läpinäkyvän ja julkisen keskustelun aiheen ympärillä, tarjoten samalla mahdollisuuden organisaation maineen ja imagon paranemiselle myös suuremman yleisön silmissä.

Avainsanat: negatiivinen osallistuminen ja sitoutuminen, negatiivinen viestintä, viestinnän johtaminen, sosiaalinen media, käsite, määritelmä

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Looking forward to next challenges!

Jyväskylä 31.8.2020
Matias Lievonen

FIGURE

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study concept

Organizations are facing an evolving set of communication challenges in the 2020s. A strong push toward digitalization means that individuals and groups are involved more actively in public discussions in increasingly networked online arenas than ever before (Hollebeek et al. 2019). Different stakeholders and actors interact with each other publicly on social media and in online brand communities directly, constantly, and even collectively, both in business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) contexts (Brodie et al. 2019; Jaakkola and Aarikka-Stenroos 2019). As such, to accomplish their objectives, organizations cannot merely use traditional communication techniques, as they need to build networks with stakeholders in various social public spheres and issue arenas (Kennedy and Sommerfeldt 2018; Sommerfeldt and Yang 2017; Luoma-aho and Vos 2010). Moreover, the ways in which organizations use social media tools in an interactive manner influence relationship quality with audiences (Saffer et al. 2013). This development has facilitated the use of various online platforms to facilitate interaction, involvement, participation, and co-creation, i.e., *engagement*, between different stakeholder groups inside and outside of organizations (Hollebeek and Chen 2014; Brodie et al. 2013). This increased amount of engagement between different stakeholders – e.g., customers, consumers, and brands – offers possibilities, but also comes with challenges.

Not all means of engagement are positive in nature (Naumann et al. 2020; Naumann et al. 2017; Juric et al. 2016; Hollebeek and Chen 2014). In fact, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) recognized the challenges of social media for business organizations 10 years ago, and Coombs and Holladay (2007) discussed stakeholder anger and negative communication dynamics even earlier. This is problematic from an organizational perspective, as individuals always have been more likely to remember and focus more intently on events and settings that are negative in nature than on neutral or positive events (Baumeister et al. 2001). In

fact, negative emotions often act as motivators and triggers (Frow et al. 2011; Fournier et al. 2012; Gebauer et al. 2013) for stakeholder engagement behavior that potentially could hurt organizations. Various stakeholders are ready to complain, write negative reviews, and even intentionally harm organizations and brands through their behavior in online environments, even though they do not have a close relationship with the brands or organizations with which they are interacting (Park et al. 2013). Thus, the engagement valence can vary from positive to negative and everything in between (Hollebeek and Chen 2014; Juric et al. 2016). This truly tests organizations' abilities to adapt.

Scholars only recently have recognized the importance of conceptualizing negative engagement valences (e.g., Naumann et al. 2020; Juric et al. 2016). For example, Hollebeek and Chen (2014) identified the need for a broader, more comprehensive conceptualization of the emerging brand engagement concept, incorporating not only positively, but also *negatively-valenced brand engagement*. In general, Hollebeek and Chen's (2014) refers to brand engagement as a consumer's emotional, cognitive, and behavioral input and investment, which varies in its intensity and valence. Hollebeek and Chen (2014) developed a conceptualization that includes specific positive- and negative-valenced consumer expressions of brand engagement, thereby generating an enhanced understanding of the focal dynamics that characterize this nascent concept. Moreover, Naumann et al. (2017; 2020) examined positive, disengaged, and negative customer engagement valences in the context of social services, and they observed how different engagement objects could be the focus of different valences and engagement intensities. Despite these conceptualizations, the concept is still somewhat vague, and research on negative engagement is scant and urgently needed (Johnston and Taylor 2018; Dessart 2017; Rissanen et al. 2016). This dissertation aims to fill this literature gap.

Much fragmentation exists concerning the concept of engagement and how it is understood in different academic fields. For the sake of clarity, it is noteworthy to mention that *this dissertation study focuses on* (but is not necessarily limited to) *concept creation around negative engagement in the context of corporate communication*. However, in terms of academic literature, this study lies in the intersection of communication, business, and marketing studies. As such, a multidisciplinary approach is strongly present throughout the study. Eventually, negative engagement could conceptually have many similarities with the traditional but varying definitions of previous engagement concepts introduced in the previous literature. To summarize, the aim in this dissertation is not just strictly categorize this novel concept but also demonstrate how engagement could have different valences in a continuum.

Accordingly, *Negative Engagement (NE)* is this dissertation's umbrella concept. Based on the dissertation journey (including the analysis of previous literature and theories, and collected data), the author states that Negative Engagement behavior captures premeditated, activated, and dedicated behavioral expressions of negativity, which includes unfavorable emotional and cognitive inclinations which precipitate negative and/or destructive impact on

organization or brand value. In fact, NE is not just a reversal of positive engagement because it manifests through its own unique characteristics (Naumann et al. 2020). As such, NE is not limited to negative-review writing, public complaining, or negative electronic word-of-mouth, or mere negative thoughts and emotions. Instead, it has several possible triggers, as well as emotional, cognitive and behavioral levels, that are processed over time. Moreover, visible NE behaviors could carry different consequences for the organizations and brands involved, depending on who engages negatively.

Like positive engagement, NE can be viewed as interaction and exchange, in which it can be "conceptualized as an iterative, dynamic process, where participation, experience, and shared action emerge as central components of engagement" (Johnston and Taylor 2018, p. 3). It also contains social and relational aspects in it (Johnston and Taylor 2018; Naumann et al. 2017). Eventually, this dissertation will take a dynamic and multidimensional approach to the continuum and valences of engagement concept, and as such, it introduces engagement's less-studied dark sides and definitions.

To support negative engagement conceptualization, the author analyzes negative engagement behaviors in social media and evaluates data from the perspective of corporate communication within organizations. That is, the author understands that negative engagement in social media can carry negative consequences for the organization or brand, but at the same time, individuals who engage negatively (from the organization's perspective) actually may possess positive motivations. They can even get satisfaction and joy from these acts of negative engagement (e.g., Naumann et al. 2017). Additionally, the individuals and groups who engage negatively might not even know that their behavior can be viewed from a negative perspective. It is also possible that engagement behavior is not necessarily targeting the organization negatively.

1.2   Key arguments and research questions

Stakeholders engage and interact more publicly nowadays due to the development of social media, and through these various means of engagement behaviors, stakeholder emotions also are visible and, presumably, expressed more commonly in digitalized arenas (Li et al. 2018). Stakeholders are not afraid to share negative experiences and emotions with others. In fact, we are driven by a negativity bias, which refers to the tendency to pay more attention to negative incidents than positive ones (Do et al. 2019; Baumeister et al. 2001). The use of various digital platforms and social media has increased NE's weight further due to negative communication's contagious nature (Coombs and Holladay 2007; Suracharttomkun et al. 2015; Naumann et al. 2017; Li et al. 2017). Moreover, traditional news media long have emphasized negativity, which is both contagious and all-consuming for its subjects, yet increasingly common in communication, both online and offline. Thus, NE is identified as a real-world challenge for

organizations and brands, and should be viewed as one of the approaches and thematic definitions of engagement that can also be situated on a continuum (Johnston and Taylor 2018; Hollebeek and Chen 2014). As such, *this study's first key argument is that organizations and brands should monitor their issue arenas (Luoma-aho and Vos 2010) for NE.*

It is important for organizations and brands to be able to examine various forms of stakeholder engagement and NE behavior in a justifiable manner within their issue arenas. It also is important for communication professionals to be able to distinguish between different engagement dimensions and categorize negatively engaged stakeholders. This will help stakeholders act accordingly and mitigate negativity. As such, *a second key argument in this study is that it is vital for organizations and brands to understand who engages negatively, as well as the process of NE behavior, which varies in its level of emotional intensity, object focus, and orientation.* Through this understanding, organizations and brands can more effectively examine the various forms of stakeholder engagement and NE behavior in their issue arenas.

Engagement have at least two valences from the perspective of brand or organization: positive or negative (Johnston and Taylor 2018; Hollebeek and Chen 2014). The term *engagement* usually implies positive interactions between stakeholders and organizations. On the other hand, much of the focus in research literature on less studied *negative engagement* has been only dedicated to its negative outcomes for organizations and brands. However, NE may occur in both online and offline contexts, and it can elicit both positive and negative outcomes for organizations (Naumann et al. 2017). As such, negative reviews and customer complaints often have been understood as forms of NE and, thus, only harmful for organizations and brands. However, if e.g. a stakeholder or customer reveals a negative issue publicly, it could also "serve an important function when it is constructive (rather than detrimental) and when people desire to acquire new habits or improve existing ones (rather than enhance their self-image)" (Finkelstein and Fishbach 2012, p. 36). In fact, NE could also result in a positive, or at least improved, state of affairs, when these stakeholders seek justice or help, or even help others during the process. Thus, *the third and final key argument in this study is that not all NE is harmful for organizations and brands, and that a competitive advantage should be sought when dealing with negatively engaged stakeholders and when responding to them in social media.* Thus, a denial or avoidance strategy should not always be an option when dealing with NE in online environments.

Despite the fact that varying engagement valences and process natures exist (Johnston and Taylor 2018; Hollebeek and Chen 2014), only a few studies are related closely to the negative end of the engagement continuum to date. Given the highly participatory and co-creative nature of social media and online brand communities, and the propensity for stakeholders to have negative experiences, stakeholders' behavioral reactions to negatively engaged experiences need to be studied. NE is, in a sense, connected to issue management, crisis communication, and risk communication, which are popular topics in the communication field.

Despite this, NE remains a concept that has received surprisingly little attention in academia, especially in the corporate communication field. As such, by following the previously introduced key arguments, this publication-based dissertation is guided by the following research questions introduced in table 1.

TABLE 1.   Research questions and publication contributions to RQs

Research questions (RQs)	Publications answering to RQs	Contributions to RQs
1. What is negative engagement (NE) and who engages negatively?	Publications I, II, and III	- NE defined - Novel literature reviews related to stakeholder anger and consumer behavior
2. Should all NE be treated equally (negative) within organizations, and how should organizations respond to it?	Publication IV	- Applies managerial side to investigate NE behavior- - Discusses the role of ethics when negotiating with negatively engaged stakeholders
3. What are NE's behavioral variations in social media based on emotional intensity, object focus, and orientation?	Publication V	- Novel typology of NE behaviors

In recent engagement literature (e.g., Johnston and Taylor 2018), possible engagement measures are divided into low-, mid-, and higher tiers. Possible measurements vary from low-level presence and occurrence (e.g., counts and amounts interactivity) to higher-level action and impact (e.g., social capital). This study measures indicators of negative engagement dimensions on the behavioral level at Tier 2, which is a mid-level of three conceptual tiers for measuring engagement according to Johnston and Taylor (2018) (see Table 2).

TABLE 2.   Conceptual tiers for measuring engagement

Tier	Possible measurements
1. Low level • Presence • Occurrence • Manifestation	• Indicator of activity • Counts and amounts of interactivity • Social media likes, page visits, click-throughs • Monitoring – social media and traditional • Reading/viewing/visiting/impression/awareness
2. Mid-level • Understanding • Connecting	• Indicators of relationship qualities • Trust, reciprocity, credibility, legitimacy, openness, satisfaction, understanding • Interaction quality • Diffusion – patterns and networks • Dialogue • Voice • Indicators of engagement dimensions at the individual level, measuring affective/cognitive/behavioral outcomes, e.g., user-generated effects or neuroscience/unobtrusive/implicit measures • Antecedent and outcome
3. Higher level • Action • Impact	• Indicators of social embeddedness • Of self and others • Social awareness and civic (greater good) indicators • Acknowledgement of other (diversity/empowerment) • Indicators of action, change, and outcomes at a social level • Engagement in ecological systems • Recognition of diverse perspectives • Social capital • Agency and coordinated action

Adapted from Johnston and Taylor (2018, p. 7)

The empirical data collected during this dissertation study were analyzed through qualitative methods. The mid-level measurements introduced in table 2 focus mostly on engagement dimensions in this study. The collected data consists of negative user-generated behavioral outcomes of engagement. The author also applied a multidisciplinary theoretical approach to the negative engagement concept and analyzed business and communication literature. Five individual publications support the conceptualization. The publications included in this

dissertation lie at the negative end of the engagement continuum. They either have been published or submitted to communication or marketing research outlets, thereby establishing a cross-disciplinary approach. In relation to this, community engagement, consumer engagement, and brand engagement are only a few examples of engagement-concept variations between fields. The author also took a multidisciplinary approach to this study's concepts, i.e., the author sometimes simultaneously refers to varying concepts used in (corporate) communication studies (e.g., organizations and stakeholders) and business studies (e.g., brands and consumers). Eventually, this multidisciplinary approach will support negative engagement concept-building and other goals within this dissertation. In relation to this, this dissertation study's managerial applications mostly are aimed at organizations' corporate communication and marketing departments.

1.3   Dissertation structure and outline

This dissertation is organized into two parts. At the beginning of Part I, the author introduces the study's theoretical background, and this section focuses on previous literature. Supporting the NE concept's creation, various forms of the engagement concept across research fields are discussed, including its process nature and continuity. Engagement's valences and negative aspects are tackled more profoundly when formulation of the NE concept is introduced via previous literature. This is followed by the introduction of research methodologies implemented throughout the dissertation process. Methodolgy section focuses on what kind of data was collected and how it was analyzed during different stages of the analytical process. Summaries of the included publications also are presented. Part I ends with a discussion of key findings and conclusions, including managerial implications, study limitations, and future research directions. Part II focuses entirely on the five individual publications included in this dissertation. The publications and author contributions are introduced in Table 3.

TABLE 3.   The author's independent contributions to this dissertation study's publications

Article	1. Research problem and literature	2. Research design and data	3. Data analysis, results, and writing
Publication I Lievonen, M., & Luoma-aho, V. (2015). Ethical Hateholders and Negative Engagement: A Challenge for Organizational Communication. In: A. Catellani, A. Zerfass, & R. Tench (Eds.), Communication ethics	Mainly responsible for the research problem and literature.	Solely responsible for the research design and data.	Mainly responsible for writing the paper.

in a connected world: Research in public relations and organizational communication (pp. 285–303). Brussels, Belgium: P.I.E. Peter Lang. ISBN:978-3-0352-9813-0			
Publication II Lievonen, M. (2017). Consumer Emotions and E-commerce: A Literature Review. In: A. Pucihar, M. K. Borštnar, C. Kittl, P. Ravesteijn, R. Clarke, & R. Bons (Eds.), Bled 2017: Proceedings of the 30th Bled eConference : Digital transformation: From connecting things to transforming our lives (pp. 385–402). Maribor, Slovenia: University of Maribor Press. doi:10.18690/978-961-286-043-1	Solely responsible for the entire paper.	Solely responsible for the entire paper.	Solely responsible for the entire paper.
Publication III Lievonen, M., Luoma-aho, V., & Bowden, J. (2018). Negative Engagement. In: K. Johnston & M. Taylor (Eds.), The handbook of communication engagement (pp. 531–548). New York: Wiley. ISBN: 978-1-119-16749-5	Responsible for collecting the literature.	Solely responsible for the research design and concept creation.	Solely responsible for the analysis. Mainly responsible for writing the paper.
Publication IV Lievonen, M. (2018). Negatiiviset asiakaskokemukset ja diplomatia. In: E. Melgin & H. Nieminen (Eds.), Diplomaattinen viestintä: ProComma Academic 2018 (pp. 38-49). Helsinki: ProCom - Viestinnän ammattilaiset ry. ISBN: 978-952-68576-2-6.	Solely responsible for the entire paper.	Solely responsible for the entire paper.	Solely responsible for the entire paper.
Publication V. Lievonen, M., Bowden, J., & Luoma-aho, V. (Submitted manuscript). Is All Negative Engagement Equal? Towards a Typology of Negative Engagement Behavior in Social Media. European Journal of Marketing.	Mainly responsible for the research problem and literature.	Solely responsible for collecting and analyzing data.	Solely responsible for typology creation. Mainly responsible for writing the paper.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this section, the key theories related to this study are introduced. Engagement dimensions are first introduced. Engagement concept is then approached with demonstrative examples of the actual engagers and targets of engagement covered in the previous literature. Third, a review of engagement concepts across communication studies is introduced. Fourth, a similar view covering some of the business research field is introduced. Fifth, the key engagement constructs across research fields are discussed in a wrap-up. Toward the end of the chapter, the author covers engagement valences, as well as less-studied NE dimensions and processes.

2.1 Engagement dimensions

Researchers across research fields recognize the various engagement dimensions, which comprise the affective level (e.g., emotions, feelings), cognitive level (e.g., thoughts), and behavioral level (e.g., actions, interactions). Similar to engagement dimensions, a common view is shared in psychology literature concerning human attitude. This view states that attitude consists of the overall evaluation of affective, cognitive, and behavioral information (Maio and Haddock 2009). Table 4 introduces the dimensions and sub-dimensions recognized in the engagement literature across this dissertation's research fields.

TABLE 4.   Recognized engagement dimensions and sub-dimensions in previous literature across communication and business research fields

Engagement dimensions	Affective	Cognitive	Behavioral
Definitions	"The summative and enduring levels of emotions experienced by a consumer with respect to his/her engagement focus" (Dessart et al. 2015, p. 35). "Encompasses positive and negative emotional reactions, such as enjoyment, fear, anger, support, and belonging. Affective engagement is often displayed as identification of belonging, or emotional reactions" (Johnston 2018, p. 22).	"A set of enduring and active mental states that a consumer experiences with respect to the focal object of his/her engagement" (Dessart et al. 2015, p. 35). "Describes an investment in attention, processing, or thinking skills to develop understanding or knowledge" (Johnston 2018, p. 22). "Individual investment in attention and processing to develop understanding or knowledge about a topic or an idea" (Johnston 2018, p. 22).	"The behavioral manifestations toward an engagement focus, beyond purchase, which results from motivational drivers" (Dessart et al. 2015, p. 35). "Embodies concepts of participation, collaboration, action, and involvement. Behavioral engagement also includes intended and unintended behaviors that may be caused by, or result from, cognitive or affective engagement. At a primitive level, behavioral engagement is often equated to interaction (such as "likes" on Facebook), or a single experience (a visit to a webpage)" (Johnston 2018, p.22).
Sub-dimensions	*Motivation* *Involvement* *Salience* *Valence* *Investment* (Johnston 2018) *Enjoyment* *Enthusiasm* (Dessart et al. 2015; 2016)	*Interest* *Understanding* *Knowledge* *Attention* (Johnston 2018) *Attention* (Johnston 2018; Dessart et al. 2015; 2016) *Absorption* (Dessart et al. 2015; 2016)	*Experience* *Participation* *Interaction* *Investment* (Johnston 2018) *Learning* *Endorsing* *Sharing* (Dessart et al. 2015; 2016)

Johnston (2018) introduces a multilevel model of communication engagement in which affective level is divided into several sub-dimensions: *motivation; involvement; salience; valence;* and *investment.* The cognitive level is divided into *interest, understanding, knowledge,* and *attention.* The behavioral level is divided into *experience, participation, involvement,* and *investment.* In Johnston's (2018) multilevel model, each sub-dimension is operationalized as an attribute within a certain group, but they are not necessarily limited to their main dimensional groups. For example, *motivation* is listed as a sub-dimension of affective dimension, but it also could be active at the cognitive level. Moreover, in business research and consumer engagement literature, Dessart et al. (2015; 2016) divide the affective level into the sub-dimensions of *enthusiasm* and *enjoyment,* the cognitive level into *attention* and *absorption,* and the behavioral level into *sharing, learning,* and *endorsing.*

    At the affective engagement level, *motivation* refers to range on intrinsic or extrinsic causes when a highly engaged individual is inspired, connected, and

rational (Johnston 2018). *Involvement* refers to an engaged individual's connection and attachment levels (Johnston 2018), and the individual's involvement levels range from low to high on social media (Barreto and Ramalho 2019). *Salience* refers to emotional importance, and *valence* refers to emotional condition and conditional change in the engagement continuum (Johnston 2018). *Enthusiasm* refers to a "consumer's intrinsic level of excitement and interest regarding the focus of engagement," and *enjoyment* refers to a "consumer's feeling of pleasure and happiness derived from interaction with the focus of their engagement" (Dessart et al. 2015, p. 35). *Investment* refers to the amount of attention and processing used to develop understanding or knowledge, and this also moves toward engagement's cognitive aspects (Johnston 2018).

At the cognitive level, *interest* is a result of engagement valence, and *understanding* refers to an individual's comprehension level (Johnston 2018). *Knowledge* refers to how knowing, aware, and informed an individual is (Johnston 2018). *Attention* refers to "the cognitive availability and amount of time spent actively thinking about and being attentive to the focus of engagement," and *absorption* refers to "the level of (the) consumer's concentration and immersion with a focal engagement object" (Dessart et al. 2015, p. 35).

At the behavioral engagement level, *experience* is an important aspect for an engaged individual (Johnston 2018). *Participation* refers to the amount of cooperation that is accomplished mutually during engagement, and *interaction* refers to cocreation outcomes from contact, transfer, and transmission (Johnston 2018). *Sharing* refers to "the act of providing content, information, experience, ideas, or other resources to the focus of engagement," *learning* refers to "the act of actively or passively seeking content, information, experience, ideas, or other resources to the focus of engagement," and *endorsing* refers to "the act of sanctioning, showing support, referring. In a community context, endorsement can have (an) internal or external focus" (Dessart et al. 2015, p. 35). Interestingly, Calder et al. (2009) argue that affective and cognitive dimensions should be present before a behavioral engagement level can be claimed.

2.2   Engagers and targets of engagement

When it comes to approaching engagement concept in the context of social media, it is important to first clarify who is actually engaged and what is the target or focus of engagement. Depending on the research field and context of the particular engagement study, it is possible that those who engage are referred as actors, participants, members, individuals, and users to name a few. For example, Dolea (2018) uses the concept of actor, referring to the agency of the individual to make their own choices. Moreover, Storbacka (2019) refers both to single-actors (humans or machines) and a group of actors (collectives or organizations). In cases where actors are online within the context of a service, they are often called users (see e.g.

O'Brien and McKay 2018; Yousuf; 2018; Malthouse et al. 2016), referring to the active engagement within the service.

In communication literature, engagers are not always enclosed, or often stakeholders are recognized as those who engage with or within the organization (see e.g. Everett 2018; Luoma-aho 2015). On the other hand, customers (see e.g. Hollebeek et al. 2016; Bowden 2009) and consumers (see e.g. Hollebeek and Chen 2014) are often referred as engagers in marketing studies literature. Possible target of engagement could simply be a "focal object "(Dessart et al. 2015) or it could vary from individuals to brands, organizations, and communities. For clarification, Table 5 illustrates some examples of engagers and targets of engagement recognized in the literature analyzed in this study. Table 3 is rather demonstrative than conclusive.

TABLE 5.   Demonstrative examples of engagers and possible targets of engagement

Engager	Possible target of engagement	Source
Actor	Brand Another connected actor Service system	Alexander et al. 2019; Brodie et al. 2019; Jaakkola and Aarikka-Stenroos 2019; Li et al. 2018; Storbacka 2019; 2016
Citizen	Authority Community Public sector organization	Bowden et al. 2016; Canel and Luoma-aho 2019; Falco and Kleinhans 2018
Customer	Brand Company Focal object in service relationship	Bowden 2009; Brodie et al. 2011b; Carlson et al. 2019; Connell et al. 2019; Fehrer et al. 2018; Gummerus et al. 2012; Hollebeek et al. 2016a; 2016b; 2018; 2019; Jaakkola and Alexander; 2014; Javornik and Mandelli 2012; Kaltcheva et al. 2014; Kumar et al. 2017; Marbach et al. 2016; Patterson et al. 2006; Van Doorn et al. 2010; Verhoef et al. 2010; Vivek et al. 2012; 2014
Consumer	Brand Company Community	Brodie et al. 2011a; Brodie et al. 2013; Chu and Kim 2011; Dessart et al. 2015; 2016; Marbach 2019; Naumann et al. 2017; Read et al. 2019; Sawhney 2005; Vivek et al. 2014; Wallace et al. 2014
Member	Community Another member	Bowden et al. 2016; Kuo and Feng 2013; Naumann et al. 2017

Participant	Group Individual	Brodie et al. 2013; Chamorro-Koc and Caldwell 2018; Gebauer et al. 2013 Yousuf 2018; Mackey-Smith and Banfield 2018; Willis et al. 2018
Stakeholder	Organization	Coombs and Holladay 2018; Everett 2018; Lane and Kent 2018; Luoma-aho 2015; Luoma-aho and Paloviita 2010; Luoma-aho and Vos 2010; Vos et al. 2014
User	Digital system Service provider Another user	Harrison and Wendorf Muhamad 2018; Li 2016; Malthouse et al. 2016; O'Brien and McKay 2018; Uysal 2018

It is noticeable that in this dissertation the author often refers to (negative) engagement without always disclosing particular engager(s). As such, (negative) engagement could cover different kind of engagers, such as stakeholders, depending on the context engagement. It is also possible that the target of (negative) engagement varies.

Moreover, when talking about i.e. consumers and actors, these concepts do not always precisely specify the actual individuals engaging, even though they are somewhat more descriptive words. Thus, a single word describing the engager in social media could actually encase and cover various different meanings depending on who interprets them. Conceptual approaches to engagement in the context of this dissertation are discussed in more detail in the upcoming chapters.

2.3   The concept of engagement across communication disciplines

Defining the concept of engagement has not exactly been a direct process in previous communication literature. In fact, the word *engagement* "used to describe just about every type of interaction" (Johnston and Taylor 2018, p. 1). In 2014, the first special issue on engagement and public relations was released, and it was not until 2018 that the *Handbook of Communication Engagement* aimed to contextualize and define *engagement* more rigorously from diverse perspectives. For example, Johnston (2018, p. 19) defines engagement "as a dynamic multidimensional relational concept featuring psychological and behavioral attributes of connection, interaction, participation, and involvement designed to achieve or elicit an outcome at individual, organization, or social levels." This section will introduce various forms and perspectives on the engagement concept in previous literature across communication studies.

2.3.1 Social and relational level perspective

Social levels of engagement refer to a collective state in which cognitive, affective, and behavioral forms are all represented (Men and Tsai 2014; Johnston 2018). This definition is based on the idea of collective action and outcomes in which a dynamic and socially situated system, such as social media platform, is engagement's driving force (Johnston 2018). Social level of engagement can evolve into social capital and value, which are a result of organization's understanding and its ability to respond to different stakeholder perspectives and needs (Sommerfeldt 2013b). In fact, engagement is a way to accomplish a common goal between individuals and groups through decision-making tension Heath (2018). Engagement is also a participatory process that involves elements of knowledge sharing, and the process is stimulated by coproduction of knowledge between participants (Chamorro-Koc and Caldwell 2018). Thus, social engagement could be a strategy for an organization (Taylor and Kent 2014), and strengthening and maintaining relational bonds is an important element of engagement (Zaharna 2018). Relational bonds refer to social connections the engagers have with each other, or with the target of engagement.

Citizen engagement (Canel and Luoma-aho 2019) is an example of social and relational engagement at the community level, involving two focal service relationships: horizontal engagement between community members and vertical brand engagement between citizens and the authority that governs them. Moreover, decision-making through *community engagement* builds social capital and enhances social outcomes between parties, and it involves elements of collaboration and participation as well as sustainable and ethical practices (Chamorro- Koc and Caldwell 2018). The evolution of social media also offers various platforms for *virtual engagement* (Chewning 2018), which is part of a larger context of individuals socially connecting to each other and sharing information through co-creation, relationship building, and participation (Chewning and Montemurro 2016). In fact, even non-human entities such as technology could stir communication and contribute to engagement (Luoma-aho and Paloviita 2010; Chewning and Montemurro 2016).

2.3.2 Interaction and exchange perspective

Interaction is important element of engagement that occur in different ways. For example, through *user engagement*, individuals can invest their cognitive, temporal, and emotional resources when interacting with and using different digital systems (O'Brien 2016; O'Brien and McKay 2018). Eventually, these interactions can trigger a change (Uysal 2018), or alternatively, a conflict (Putnam 2006). During conflicts, engagement is a process comprising dialogue and argument in which the interacting parties can reach consensus through shared

decision-making and problem-solving (Putnam 2006; Harrison and Wendorf Muhamad 2018). In fact, *dialogic engagement* refers to an environment in which stakeholders and organizations can share positive views on one another using a means of shared communication or exchange (Lane and Kent 2018). Heath (2014) also emphasizes that those who are involved in dialogic engagement should demonstrate true acceptance, participation, and positive emotions with one another through dialogue. According to Johnston (2018), dialogue offers a context, tool, and technique for facilitating actual engagement. Moreover, Lane and Kent (2018) emphasize that no engagement will exist between parties if they do not take some time and effort to elicit dialogue. Engagers also should generate a positive relationship between each other so that they can achieve and maintain a state of dialogic engagement (Heath 2014).

Doerfel (2018) offers a network view of engagement in which social structures and interactions among partners create the community. Moreover, Yousuf (2018) explains that engagement actually entails purposeful action between participants in which resources are exchanged so that they also can derive their own benefits. These communities and networks could also generate *issue arenas* where stakeholders of an organization engage with each other and with the organization, and discuss and share issues at hand (Vos et al. 2014; Luoma-aho 2015). Eventually, engagement through interaction and dynamic exchange between participants also can be viewed as a signal that connects the whole world together, especially online (Mackey-Smith and Banfield 2018).

Yousuf (2018) also discusses *media engagement*, which entails purposeful interaction through content between engaging users. Content can be either formal or informal, and users exchange their resources with content creators in return for mutual benefits (Yousuf 2018). In relation to different forms of exchange, Engagement can be a construct comprising two main components, experience and behavior, in which brand experience lives in the consumer's mind, and behavior is the actual action from which the experiences arise when they are shared with others (Malthouse and Calder 2018).

2.3.3 Dynamic and multilevel perspective

The engagement process is dynamic, rather than static, and through social interaction, it connects stakeholders with organizations (Everett 2018). In fact, active usage of social media could be an antecedent to a psychological empowerment (Li 2016) encouraging to dynamic interaction between participants. Eventually, engagement can comprise three key elements of cognitive processing of information: affective commitment, positive affectivity, and empowerment, i.e., a psychological bond and deeper levels of emotional responses beyond liking and attraction exist (Macnamara 2018). Coombs and Holladay (2018) discuss the dynamic interplay between stakeholders and organizations that aims for joint decision-making. Willis et al. (2018, p. 384) refer to engagement as a deliberative process "which requires power and decision-making to be dispersed among the participants." Moreover, Coombs and Holladay (2018) also emphasize

communication's role during the process. Participation through dialogue, interactions in which actors mutually influence each other, and cocreation, in which actors try to impose ultimately cocreated discourses, all are involved in this dynamic process (Dolea 2018).

As already mentioned, engagement can also contain multilevel or multidimensional elements. Multilevel refers to dimensions and attributes of engagement, as well as individual and social level engagement where engagement reflects a socially situated systems phenomena integrated by communication (Johnston 2018). Multidimensionality of engagement refers to its foundation for building organizational relationships and how it simultaneously offers a means to community-organization interactions (Johnston 2014). Engagement is a product of an interactive and social sense-making process (Heide and Simonsson 2018), and both a psychological and behavioral phenomenon in which the individual interacts with content on a "branded media platform." (Chan-Olmsted and Wolter 2018) In addition, Weitzl and Einwiller (2018, p. 456) refer to engagement as "an interactive, relational, mental, and behavioral exchange between a specific brand (i.e., engagement object) and an individual customer (i.e., engagement subject), who can be a former, current, or potential customer, but also a critic of the brand." This view also is supported by Bowden et al. (2018), who argue that engagement is a consumer's willingness to invest in interacting with a service brand or specific branded community.

Engagement can also be a strategic choice in corporate diplomacy to manage risks in nonmarket business environments with diverse sets of stakeholders (Kochar 2018). Especially from the perspective of organization, listening is important part of engaging stakeholders (Macnamara 2016). Moreover, Hurst and Ihlen (2018) also argue that commitment is an essential element of engagement, especially at the level of corporate social responsibility. Commitment refers to a state where all the participants feel that it is worth to spend energy to maintain the relationship (Hon and Grunig 1999)

As can be seen in studies across communication research field, the engagement concept is often approached from the perspective of social and dynamic levels. Interaction and exchange are also common approaches in the field. Thus, the research focus is often aimed at other aspects than just the actual engagers or engagement target, focusing also towards the mediums used and also recognising the arenas of engagement. Alternatively, research in the business studies (e.g. in the marketing field) offers somewhat similar but also different approaches to the concept of engagement e.g. in the context of services and social media.

2.4   The concept of engagement in business studies

In the business studies field and especially in the field of marketing, research on different engagement concepts and contexts had been around before appearing in communication research field. For example, Patterson et al. (2006) aimed to conceptualize various engagement intensity levels. This was followed by Bowden (2009), who examined the customer engagement process and aimed to conceptualize a framework around engagement. Moreover, Gambetti and Graffigna (2010) aimed to outline and examine different perspectives on engagement research in the concept's early days. To date, Hollebeek et al.'s (2014 p. 154) definition of engagement as "a consumer's positively valenced, brand-related, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions" has been widely used. Next sections will introduce various forms of the engagement concept perspectives covered in previous literature in the business research field.

2.4.1   Consumer perspective

Consumer engagement is a multidimensional process that comprises cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Brodie et al. 2013), each of which influences consumers' loyalty and propensity to engage in e.g., positive word-of-mouth (Hollebeek and Chen 2014; Brodie et al. 2013). In cognitive component of engagement, a set of enduring and active mental states are involved. Absorption of the cognitive component is engrossing and is experienced by the consumer with the focal object(s) of engagement. These mental states also connect the consumer with the engagement object. (Dessart et al. 2015). The emotional or affective dimension of engagement entails the summative and enduring levels of emotions the consumer experiences with respect to the focal engagement focus (Dessart et al. 2015). The behavioral aspect of engagement includes "behavioral manifestations toward an engagement focus, beyond purchase, which results from motivational drivers" (Dessart et al. 2015, p. 35). Moreover, Dessart et al. (2015) have taken a multi-dimensional perspective on consumer engagement components. As such, they introduced sub-dimensions of consumer engagement in which the affective dimension has two complementary aspects: enthusiasm and enjoyment. The cognitive component comprises attention and absorption. Behavioral engagement is described as sharing, learning, and endorsing (Dessart et al. 2015).

Brodie et al. (2013, p. 105) argue that "the consumer engagement process comprises a range of sub-processes reflecting consumers' interactive experience within online brand communities, and value co-creation among community participants." As such, consumer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activities are related to interactions between consumer and brand but also between other participants of the brand community (Hollebeek et al. 2014). Mollen and Wilson (2010) also define engagement based on cognitive and

affective commitment, and they discuss the online consumer-brand relationship and how it is personified through website use. Moreover, Calder et al. (2009) argue that consumer engagement with communication medium introduces personal and social-interactive engagement levels with online media. Thus, we can assume that the consumer could have some level of engagement with the used engagement medium as well.

Wallace et al. (2014) argue that consumer engagement can develop into a state of brand love, which refers to emotional attachment toward a brand. It is constructed through self-brand integration of the congruity between self-image and product image. In addition, Leckie et al. (2016) argue that consumer engagement (comprising involvement, participation, and self-expressive brand) is directly tied to brand loyalty. Consumer engagement also can entail goal pursuit, and engagement strength can intensify the motivational force (value) by making things either more positive or negative (Higgins and Scholer 2009).

2.4.2 Customer and employee perspective

Brodie et al. (2011, p. 260) define *customer engagement* as a "psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in service relationships." Engagement is developed through a customer's history of brand interactions, the extent to which their experiences have been positive as opposed to negative, and the extent to which the brand category is conducive to the formation of a long-term customer-brand relationship (Chandler and Lusch 2015). In addition, Bowden (2009) approaches customer engagement from a process perspective and argues that involvement, commitment, and trust are important elements of the process. Eventually, the existence of interaction is viewed as a necessity for relevant customer engagement levels (Bowden 2009; Hollebeek 2011b). In addition, Hollebeek et al. (2016a) introduce a service-dominant, logic-informed, customer-engagement framework comprising three foundational processes: customer resource integration; knowledge sharing; and learning.

Gummerus et al. (2012) argue that customer engagement captures all behavioral activities that a customer experiences while interacting with a company. According to van Doorn et al. (2010), customer engagement behaviors result from motivational drivers and can include word-of-mouth (WOM) activity, recommendations, helping others, and writing reviews. Verhoef et al. (2010) also recognize customer engagement as a behavioral manifestation toward a brand, and they argue that customer engagement goes beyond transactions with the company. Vivek et al. (2014) also refer to this and add that customer engagement is the level of interactions and connections customer has with the brand offerings or activities, and often others are involved in the social network created around these.

According to Kaltcheva et al. (2014), customers engage with firms differently depending on their relationship. Fehrer et al. (2018) argue that for higher engagement levels, incentives and ties to other actors in the network are

important and that the behavior must overcome a certain intensity threshold to unfold its effects. Customers also hold different values for firms, and their engagement values also differ (Kaltcheva et al. 2014). According to Kumar et al. (2013), customer engagement value and satisfaction are not always a sufficient condition for predicting customer loyalty. In addition, Jaakkola and Alexander (2014) identify four types of customer engagement behaviors that affect value co-creation: augmenting; codeveloping; influencing; and mobilizing.

It is not uncommon for customer engagement to be mediated by, for example, mobile apps (Gill et al. 2017). Employees also are involved in customer-firm interactions, and according to Kumar and Pansari (2016), *employee engagement* involves attitudes and behaviors that employees have toward organizations, including dimensions of employee satisfaction, employee identification, employee commitment, employee loyalty, and employee performance.

The customer engagement concept also can be approached from an activity perspective. Active customer engagement refers to the degree to which the customer is willing to spend resources, such as time and money, on the brand beyond actual purchase or consumption of the brand (Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen 2010). Similar to consumer engagement, active customer engagement also can take the form of brand love, i.e., individuals can fall in love with brands (Sarkar and Sreejesh 2014). Brand love can be analogous structurally to its romantic counterpart and include such elements as jealousy aimed at other customers who are using the same brand (Sarkar and Sreejesh 2014). Conceptually, brand love resembles the *brand engagement* concept.

2.4.3   Brand perspective

Hollebeek (2011b) presents key *brand engagement* themes – such as immersion, passion, and activation. Immersion refers to a strong focus or reflection on something (Hollebeek 2011b), or even absorption when the consumer is fully concentrating on the role at hand (Patterson et al. 2006). Like immersion, Higgins and Scholer (2009) refer to this engagement dimension as being engrossed. Passion refers to a consumer's strong and positive affect for a brand, including a feeling of pride when associated with or using the brand (Hollebeek 2011b). Passion and immersion both fall under the category of the affective or emotional engagement dimension. Moreover, activation refers to engagement's behavioral facet, and Hollebeek (2011b, p. 569) defines it as "a customer's level of energy, effort, and/or time spent on a brand in particular brand interactions."

Gambetti et al. (2012) view consumer-brand engagement as a dynamic, process-based concept that evolves with varying intensity. Consumer desires and expectations are intercepted across various virtual and physical touchpoints between the consumer and brand, and consumer decision-making dimensions differ from brand preference to brand purchase (Gambetti et al. 2012). In addition, Hollebeek et al. (2014, p. 149) define consumer-brand engagement as a "consumer's positively valenced, brand-related, cognitive, emotional, and

behavioral activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions," in which consumer-brand involvement acts as an antecedent to the consumer's self-brand connection. According to Franzak et al. (2014), the relationship between design benefits and brand engagement is mediated by emotional arousal, which shifts between functional, hedonic, and symbolic. In fact, brand engagement can be viewed as a self-concept in which consumers vary in their tendency to include certain brands as part of their selves (Sprott et al. 2009).

As shown in previous studies, the growth of online environments broadens the approach toward the engagement concept, and inclusions of consumer, customer, and brand engagement also are related to social elements of it (e.g., Vivek et al. 2012). For example, Gambetti et al. (2012, p. 659) argue that consumer-brand engagement "emerges as a multi-dimensional construct that beyond traditional cognitive, emotional, and conative dimensions seems to be based on emerging experiential and social dimensions that appear as its central elements."

2.4.4   Actor perspective

One of the latest emerging engagement concepts in the business research field is *actor engagement*. According to Brodie et al. (2019, p. 174), it can be defined as "a dynamic and iterative process that reflects actors' dispositions to invest resources in their interactions with other connected actors in a service system." Storbacka (2019, p.4) argues that "the 'actor' should be viewed both as a single-actor (humans or machines) and a group of actors (collectives or organizations), and that engagement comprises both exchange-based and non-exchange-based resource contributions, which are facilitated by dispositions, formed partly by actor-specific characteristics and partly by the institutional and organizational arrangements prevalent in the context in which the resource contributions occur." As such, engagement can involve multiple actors beyond dyadic interaction (Brodie et al. 2019). Moreover, Li et al. (2018) argue that changes within multi-actor engagement processes also lead to an evolution in the engagement network.

Actor engagement also can be defined as the actor's disposition to engage, as well as the act of engaging in the interactive process of resource integration within a service ecosystem (Storbacka et al. 2016). One example of actor engagement is customer referencing, which affects value creation at the actor, relationship, and network levels and can transfer reputation, convey experiences, and evidence value (Jaakkola and Aarikka-Stenroos 2019). In fact, Alexander et al. (2018) argue that actors can play multiple roles and that balancing these roles can lead to actor-disengagement behavior.

2.4.5   Collective and social perspective

Another recent dimension of the engagement concept in business research field literature is *collective engagement*. Kleinaltenkamp et al. (2019) suggest that engagement demands more collective-level considerations. Collective engagement refers to "multiple actors' shared cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dispositions,

as manifested in their interactive efforts devoted to a focal object" (Kleinaltenkamp et al. 2019, p. 12). As such, collectivity in this sense means that engagement is not necessarily restricted to a certain group or team, even though they act collectively *per se*.

Social engagement captures interactions between consumers and brands beyond purchases and simultaneously acknowledges the multiple forms of exchange between and among any combination of prospects, such as buyer to seller and consumer to consumer (Vivek et al. 2012; 2014). Social engagement provides consumers with extra-transactional value, which is extracted from the relationships formed between stakeholders (Hollebeek et al. 2016). Vivek et al. (2012) note that social engagement is an inherently interactive aspect of value that evolves within reciprocal relationships and which is given meaning through a network of social connections. Through social interactions, consumers can control and influence brand communication. The evolution of social media plays an important role in influencing the appearance of social engagement and facilitating discussion in online brand communities.

Dessart (2017, p. 377) argues that social media engagement is a "context-specific occurrence of consumer engagement" and can be defined as "the state that reflects consumers' positive individual dispositions toward the community and the focal brand expressed through varying levels of affective, cognitive, and behavioral manifestations that go beyond exchange situations." According to Solem and Pedersen (2016), social media activities affect consumer brand engagement and brand value experiences positively, and they also argue that this engagement is complex and not entirely behavioral. In fact, even though user-generated content offers the potential to engage other consumers actively online and affect consumers' purchases, it is actually active thinking and elaborating on a personal goal that affect actual buying behavior (Malthouse et al. 2016).

Social media engagement also can be viewed as an umbrella concept or even an overlapping concept (Habibi et al. 2014) for consumer engagement in online brand communities. According to Brodie et al. (2013), consumer engagement in a virtual brand community is complex, multi-dimensional, and dynamic in nature. It also emerges at different intensity levels over time and reflects distinct engagement states. Consumers interact with brands and with one another in these communities (Dessart et al. 2015), and engagement with brand-related content might lead to engagement with the brand and its services and products (Schivinski et al. 2016).

According to Wirtz et al. (2013), online brand community engagement is shaped by four key dimensions: brand orientation; Internet use; funding; and governance. Moreover, Baldus et al. (2015) identify independent motivations on why individuals participate in an online brand community: brand influence; brand passion; connecting; helping; like-minded discussion; rewards (hedonic and/or utilitarian); seeking assistance; self-expression; up-to-date information; and validation. Marbach et al. (2016) identify seven personality traits that emerge as antecedents of online customer engagement in social media brand communities. Moreover, six different forms of customer value are perceived

when engaging in an online brand community: social value; play; efficiency; excellence; aesthetics; and altruistic value (Marbach et al. 2016).

According to Algesheimer et al. (2005), social influence and identification with the brand community can lead to positive (e.g., greater community engagement) and negative (e.g., normative community pressure and reactance) consequences. In addition, Kuo and Feng (2013) argue that relationships in online brand communities are interactive and that these characteristics are beneficial for community members. After all, various brand communities in social media have their own characteristics, and Habibi et al. (2014) identify five unique dimensions of brand communities based on social media: social context; structure; scale; content and storytelling; and affiliated brand communities.

2.5 Combined conceptual engagement constructs

Based on this dissertation's literature review, Table 6 combines 16 key engagement constructs and main research focus areas of each construct. Main research focus areas of previous studies consist of *engager* approach (who is engaging) as well as *target* of engagement approach (to whom or where engagement is targeted at). During the literature review it became obvious that a third engagement research focus area of *medium* should be added. It refers to engagement studies with a focus on interaction and exchange through the means of communication and mediums (e.g. internet or social media), and how these are utilized for engagement actions.

TABLE 6. Key engagement constructs across studies included in this dissertation

Engagement construct	Main research focus	Research field
Actor engagement	Engager Target Medium	Business research (see e.g. Storbacka et al. 2016) Marketing (see e.g. Storbacka 2019) Service management (see e.g. Alexander et al. 2019)
Brand engagement	Engager Target Medium	Marketing (see e.g. Hollebeek 2011a; 2011b; Hollebeek and Chen 2014)
Citizen engagement	Engager	Organizational Communication (see e.g. Canel and Luoma-aho 2019) Marketing (see e.g. Bowden et al. 2016)
Collective engagement	Engager Target	Marketing (see e.g. Kleinaltenkamp 2019)
Communication engagement	Engager Target Medium	Organizational Communication and Public Relations (see e.g. Johnston and Taylor 2018)

Community engagement	Engager Target Medium	Organizational Communication and Public Relations (see e.g. Johnston 2018; 2014)
Consumer engagement	Engager Target Medium	Business research (see e.g. Brodie et al. 2011a) Marketing (see e.g. Dessart et al. 2016; Naumann et al. 2017; Vivek et al. 2014) Organizational Communication and Public Relations (see e.g. Weitzl and Einwiller 2018)
Customer engagement	Engager Target Medium	Services research (see e.g. Brodie et al. 2011b) Marketing (see e.g. Bowden 2009)
Dialogic engagement	Engager Target Medium	Organizational Communication and Public Relations (see. e.g. Lane and Kent 2018; Heath 2018; Taylor & Kent 2014)
Disengagement	Engager Target	Marketing (see e.g. Bowden et al. 2015) Organizational Communication (see e.g. Canel and Luoma-aho 2019)
Employee engagement	Engager	Marketing (see e.g. Kumar and Pansari 2016; Saks 2006)
Negative engagement	Engager Target Medium	Corporate Communication (see e.g. Lievonen et al. 2018) Marketing (see e.g. Naumann et al. 2020)
Social engagement	Engager Target Medium	Marketing (see e.g. Vivek et al. 2012; 2014; Dolan et al. 2015)
Stakeholder engagement	Engager Target Medium	Public Relations (see e.g. Luoma-aho 2015)
Virtual engagement	Engager Target Medium	Organizational communication and Public Relations (see e.g. Chewning 2018)
User engagement	Engager Medium	Organizational communication and Public Relations (see e.g. O'Brien 2016; O'Brien & McKay 2018) Marketing and management (Geissinger and Laurell 2016)

As shown in Table 6, engagement can be divided into 16 constructs with each having a varying research focuses. Conceptually speaking, a clear distinction between engagement constructs and main research focus areas across disciplines and fields is always somewhat ambiguous and also subjective. As such, this combined list is not completely conclusive.

According to the literature review, certain engagement constructs are studied in certain research fields, but most of the constructs are recognized across them. Moreover, all the main research focus areas are covered in different engagement studies across research fields. Despite the different names of some of the recognized engagement constructs, they actually are pretty close in structure. For example, *social engagement* recognized more often in marketing and *community engagement* recognized more often in organizational communication and public relations take similar approaches to concept creation on social and communal levels. They also share similar research focuses. Certain engagement constructs have only one or two recognized research focus areas, i.e., studies on *citizen engagement* and *employee engagement* often focusing on the engager and studies on *user engagement* often towards the engager and engagement medium. Again, the list is not completely conclusive and contradictory interpretations are thus possible.

Next, the author moves away from positive engagement and toward other engagement valences and dimensions covered in previous literature. In fact, engagement can have a motivational construct, vary in intensity (Vargo 2016; Dessart et al. 2015), and have different valences beyond positive ones (Brodie et al. 2011; Hollebeek and Chen 2014; Vargo 2016; Dolan et al. 2015; 2016). Examples of these include *disengagement* and this dissertation's key concept: *negative engagement*. Formulation of the NE concept and its dimensions are discussed in more detail in the next chapter

2.6 Formulation of the Negative Engagement concept

This section introduces previous studies related to the NE concept and how it can be approached from the perspective of valence and process. Although most previous studies have focused on engagement's neutral and positive aspects, the author also will reflect on NE's process nature with the help of previous literature. The sub-chapters also will introduce various literature related to the formulation of the NE concept through affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions.

2.6.1 Valences of engagement

Engagement can have different valences, and it is important to examine the concept from various perspectives (Heinonen 2018). Studies on negative engagement aspects, such as negatively-valenced brand relationships (e.g. Fournier and Alvarez 2013), negative influencing behavior (e.g. Azer and

Alexander 2018), or negative publicity in general (e.g., Doyle and Lee 2016), are scarce. Some related studies can be found across business and communication research fields. For example, Pfeffer et al. (2014) examined online firestorms' effects on organizational reputation, and Kucuk (2008; 2010; 2015) introduced types of passive and active anti-brand behaviors. Vargo (2016) and Dolan et al. (2016) have recognized in their studies that engagement behavior varies on its intensity and two valences of positive and negative are also usually recognizable. Still, it is only recently that negative engagement valences have gained somewhat more attention in a more combined fashion (e.g., Naumann et al. 2020; Azer and Alexander 2020; Li et al. 2018).

Naumann et al. (2017a; 2017b) examined customer engagement in social services from various perspectives, finding that engagement can have multiple valences and objects, and that valences can be fluid, extending to various aspects of the service relationship. Li et al. (2018) examined actor engagement valences and argued that valence resides in the engaged actor's past, present, and future psychological dispositions. These dispositions can shift between positive, negative, and ambivalent, and it is also possible for the engagement objects and value propositions of other actors in the network to trigger various actor engagement valences (Li et al. 2018). Emotionality plays a key role in the dynamic process of building trust between interacting actors and other stakeholders (Sloan and Oliver 2013). Emotional engagement practices enable stakeholders to connect on an emotional level, and these practices can even help actors navigate in ways that transform negative emotions into positive ones (Sloan and Oliver 2013).

Previous studies also have shown that engagement can occur in multiple forms (Bowden et al. 2016), brand relationships can be bad because of additional negative emotional dimensions (Fournier and Alvarez 2013), and only negative priming significantly affect the public's attitudes toward brands and organizations (Doyle and Lee 2016). Interestingly, it also has been argued that "the potential detrimental effects of negatively-valenced, brand-related WOM may exceed that of its positively-valenced counterpart" (Hollebeek and Chen 2014, p. 71). Some of the recent studies also show (see e.g Wen-Hai et al. 2019; Cooper et al. 2019; Martin 2017) that consumers desire for revenge and negative word-of-mouth is often emotionally motivated. Moreover, Heinonen (2018) did research on how positive and negative valence influence consumer engagement and found out that there are five negative factors influencing the likelihood of engagement: irritation and community intimacy on emotional level, subjectivity on cognitive level, and time and community changes on behavioral level.

However, extant research remains lacking on negative engagement valences especially in the context of social media, and the literature has favored research on positive engagement (Naumann et al. 2020). Recent research on NE suggests that negative engagement valences are associated with various abusive and adversarial relationships, and that unpleasant feelings and negative appraisals of the engagement object or actor often are involved (Li et al. 2018; Naumann et al. 2017; Juric et al. 2016; Fournier et al. 2012). Park et al. (2013) also

approached negatively-valenced engagement. When customers' sense of autonomy and efficacy within the brand relationship diminishes, they can become angry and hostile toward brands (Park et al. 2013). In fact, customers need not be in a close relationship with a brand for them to engage negatively at emotional, cognitive, or behavioral levels (Park et al. 2013).

NE might have different foci, depending on the brand and its attributes, its customer base, and in which online brand community the interaction occurs. Typically, NE is exhibited through the spirited and active spread of negative recommendations and reviews, co-opting other customers and consumers to adopt a particular attitudinal and/or behavioral position about an organization or provider, thereby eliciting deeply negative emotions and attitudes, as well as potential vengeful and retaliatory behaviors (Bowden et al. 2016). In fact, according to research on crisis communication, anger is an example of a deeply negative emotion that could moderate NE behavior, such as intended negative word-of-mouth (Coombs and Holladay 2007). This view of negative communication dynamics anticipates that negative word-of-mouth can spread in online environments and can elicit a longer-lasting effect by influencing purchase behavior (Coombs and Holladay 2007).

According to Li et al. (2018, p. 492), NE "can also sometimes attract unexpected, non-traditional actors outside the focal service network to become connected." These actors can offer an opportunity to create new networks for other negatively engaged actors or help them join existing networks (Li et al. 2017). This all can lead to the co-destruction of the organization or brand's value (Fournier and Alvarez 2013) and potentially can diminish the well-being of the target of NE (Smith et al. 2013). It is also possible that organizations and brands could face poor financial performances as a result (van Doorn et al. 2010), as well as an unexpected amount of negative sentiments and turmoil in online brand communities, social media, and even outside online environments (Juric et al. 2016).

2.6.2 Negative Engagement dimensions and process nature

Based on previous literature, it can be argued that NE has a process-driven nature similar to positive engagement, in which certain triggers (such as perceptions of poor performance, unethical behavior, dissatisfaction, and a lack of perceived distributive, interactional, and procedural justice) lead to actual engagement behavior (Brodie et al. 2013; Vivek et al. 2012; van Doorn et al. 2010). However, NE is not just a reversal of positive engagement because it manifests through its own unique characteristics (Naumann et al. 2020). While negative engagement could have the same affective, cognitive, and behavioral drivers and dimensions as positive engagement, these dimensions are measured and ultimately operate distinctively (Naumann et al. 2020; Juric et al. 2016). In fact, positive and negative engagement share the same high degree of involvement, but are driven and manifested in different ways (Naumann et al. 2020; Rissanen et al. 2016; Dolan et al. 2016).

Based on the synthesis of the literature included in this dissertation, Table 7 combines the affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of negative engagement compiled by the author.

TABLE 7.   Negative engagement dimensions at affective, cognitive, and behavioral levels

Negative Engagement Dimensions	Affective	Cognitive	Behavioral
Definition	Affective negative engagement entails an individual's summative and enduring levels of negative emotional reactions (i.e. anger and dislike) toward engagement focus such as organization, or brand	Cognitive negative engagement is a set of enduring and active negative mental states that an individual experiences with respect to the focal object of engagement, and the degree of interest and attention paid to negative information to develop understanding or knowledge about the organization or brand.	Negative engagement behavior comprises premeditated, activated, and dedicated behavioral expressions of negativity, which includes unfavorable emotional and cognitive inclinations which precipitate negative and/or destructive impact on organization or brand value.
Sub-dimensions	*Disappointment* *Insecurity* (Azer and Alexander 2018; 2020) *Anger* *Dislike* (Naumann et al. 2020)	Motivational factors: *Self-affirmation* *Need for social comparison* *Intention to help others* *Need for social bonding* (Alexandrov et al. 2013) *Service failure* *Overpricing* *Deception* (Azer and Alexander 2018; 2020) *Negative brand information* (Naumann et al. 2020)	*Negative contribution* *Co-destruction* (Dolan et al. 2015) *Detachment* (Dolan et al. 2015; Vargo 2016) *Dormancy* *Destruction* (Vargo 2016) *Venting* (Naumann et al. 2017) Indirect influencing: *Discrediting* *Expressing regret* *Deriding* (Azer and Alexander 2018; 2020) Direct influencing: *Dissuading* *Warning* *Endorsing competitors* (Azer and Alexander 2018; 2020)

Table 7 combines three previously recognized engagement literature dimensions. However, in this table the affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions are defined from the NE perspective. It is also noteworthy that these particular dimensions have a stakeholder focus, i.e., the dimensions are not just limited to external stakeholders of organizations and brands, such as customers and

consumers. The dimensions also recognize internal stakeholders, such as employees.

NE at affective level comprises individual's negative emotional reactions toward the engagement focus. For example, research on negative influencing behavior introduces emotional triggers of disappointment and insecurity that will have an impact on individual in terms of NE at affective level (Azer and Alexander 2018). Moreover, Naumann et al. (2020) argue that feelings of anger and dislike are common in the affective dimension of negative engagement when individuals hold negative emotions toward a service relationship.

Cognitive level of NE combines individual's experiences, interest, attention, and motivation toward the engagement focus. According to Azer and Alexander (2018) cognitive triggers such as service failure, overpricing, and deception could cognitively trigger individual's towards NE. Moreover, Brodie et al. (2013) note that engagement triggers usually are a result of direct or indirect experiences with the targeted organization or service provider. Naumann et al. (2020) argue that when reading, evaluating, and reacting to negative brand information, higher levels of cognitive processing is dedicated towards the brand by negatively engaged individuals. Motivation also influence the likelihood to engage negatively (Oliver 2015). Such things as need for self-affirmation, need for social comparison, intention to help others, and need for social bonding could motivate towards NE behaviors (Alexandrov et al. 2013).

Behavioral level of NE comprises affective and cognitive inclinations that lead into behavioral expressions of negativity toward the engagement focus. For example, Vargo (2016) suggest six distinct types of social media engagement behavior that also reflect engagement behavior's positively or negatively-valenced nature: creating, contributing, and consuming in positive reflection and dormancy, detachment, and destruction in negative reflection. Two valences of positive and negative are usually recognizable and the engagement behavior also varies on its intensity (between low, moderate/medium, and high) (Vargo 2016; Dolan et al. 2015). Consuming content is viewed as a low engagement level, contributing as a medium engagement level and creating content viewed as an active and more intense engagement level (Muntinga et al. 2011). These all support NE's procedural nature.

Moreover, Dolan et al. (2015) introduce seven types of social media engagement behaviors: positively-valenced behavior include consumption (low intensity), positive contribution (medium) and co-creation (high) whereas negatively-valenced behavior include detaching (low), negative contribution (medium), and co-destruction (high). Neutral state of engagement is referred as dormancy. In addition, Azer and Alexander (2018; 2020) also have conceptualized negatively-valenced influencing behavior on review sites, which can occur in six forms: indirectly as discrediting; expressing regret; deriding, and directly as dissuading; warning; and endorsing competitors (Azer and Alexander 2018; 2020). They also argue that certain triggers affect whether customers engage in influencing behavior. This behavior refers to "customer contributions of resources (e.g., time, experience, and knowledge) to affect other actors'

knowledge, preferences, and perceptions about a focal firm, brand, or service (Jaakkola and Alexander 2014, p. 256)."

According to Frow et al. (2011), discordant behaviors such as provider dishonesty, information misuse, privacy invasion, unfair customer favoritism, misleading or lock-in contracts, and other forms of financial exploitation frustrate and antagonize customers and consumers, causing them to retaliate by complaining, spreading negative reviews, and engaging in more generalized negative behaviors. This "dark side" behavior from the service providers could thus antagonize various stakeholder groups (Frow et al. 2011). Outrage can also be a mediator alongside perceived justice and negative disconfirmation as determinants of NE (Do et al. 2019). In fact, Hollebeek and Chen (2014) identified key triggers and antecedents of positively and negatively-valenced brand engagement that affect consumer "immersion," "passion," and "activation" (Hollebeek and Chen 2014).

As already discussed, what most likely predicts NE from a behavioral perspective is individual's ability and motivation (Oliver 2015). From an economic perspective customer's probability to complain is affected by perceived costs and perceived benefits. The probability of the complaint's success also influences the likelihood of NE. (Oliver 2015). The interplay between key triggers and antecedents, as well as between "immersion" and "passion" affects the "activation", i.e. the energy, effort, and time spent by the consumer on a brand in particular forms of behavior (Hollebeek and Chen 2014). In addition, perceived unfairness and dissatisfaction can manifest through excessive complaining and by venting anger and frustration, and it is also is possible that engaged actors start conflicts with other community members (Naumann et al. 2017).

Moreover, deliberate service misuse, spreading negative WOM intentionally (Hollebeek and Chen 2014; Wetzer et al. 2007), and even boycotting (Lee et al. 2009) are not uncommon NE behaviors in social media. Vengeful behaviors also are possible, and stakeholders can even distort brands by re-creating their images in ways that harm their reputations by also exploiting and recruiting other actors to join them (Gebauer et al. 2013; Hollebeek and Chen 2014). In fact, entire online brand communities could engage negatively (Chang et al. 2013; Loureiro and Kaufmann 2018; Zhou et al. 2020). Juric et al. (2016) argue that manifestations of negative consumer brand engagement usually entail diverse states and behaviors in which dynamic and iterative relational-exchange processes are present. The value is usually co-destructed to the brand and also to other actors (Juric et al. 2016).

Social engagement also is connected strongly to NE. Social media and the proliferation of shared content mean that nowadays, the operational environments for brands are mostly within online settings, and NE appears in many behavioral forms in online environments. As such, NE is very impactful, as negative user-generated content has been found to elicit profit losses to the brand and even negative stock returns (Tirunillai and Tellis 2012). As with positive engagement online, social media users can see other consumers' behavioral acts of NE, which can have a contagious effect on other online users'

engagement behavior (Naumann et al. 2017; Einwiller and Steilen 2015). NE exerts a negative and destructive impact on brand value (Hollebeek and Chen 2014), and previous studies also address how negative engagement forms truly harm brands on multiple levels (Hollebeek and Chen 2014; Doyle and Lee 2016). Moreover, NE in social media also has been found to impact consumers' purchase intentions (Hutter et al. 2013), as well as brand equity, especially brand awareness and image (Bruhn et al. 2012).

To understand NE's process nature and behavioral aspects better, it is important to distinguish it from the customer *disengagement* concept (e.g., Bowden et al. 2015; Johnston 2018). Bowden et al. (2015) examine customer disengagement from the perspective of psychological process and define it as "a process by which a customer-brand relationship experiences a trauma or disturbance which may lead to relationship termination, which involves a range of trigger-based events, which varies in intensity and trajectory, which occurs within a specific set of category conditions, and which is dependent on prior levels of customer engagement" (Bowden et al. 2015, p. 779). Their key findings suggest that the propensity for disengagement is greater with functional/utilitarian services than with more participatory/co-creative services (Bowden et al. 2015). Moreover, Johnston (2018) refers to disengagement as nonengagement and argues that it represents the lowest level of affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions that are measured against the engagement continuum. In fact, NE differs from more passive engagement states, with negative triggers such as disengagement (e.g., Bowden et al. 2016; Goode 2012), as NE is more participatory and public in nature. From the NE concept's perspective, disengagement could be a joint aspect of the behavioral dimension if the stakeholder not only engages negatively, but also leaves the organization at the same time. In fact, negative engagement forms involve premeditated, activated, and dedicated expressions of negativity (Luoma-aho 2015; Juric et al. 2016 Hollebeek and Chen 2014), and when combined with disengagement can cause devastating effects on the brand through customer apathy and adversarial brand attitudes and behaviors (Hollebeek and Chen 2014).

One summarizing example of the NE process continuum elicited by cognition and emotions, can be reflected through Turner's (2007) Anger Activism Model. The model identifies four distinct audience types based on feelings of anger and efficacy perceptions: activist; empowered; angry; and disinterested (Turner 2007). The model distinguishes between how people in groups experience feelings of anger and how likely they are to engage in higher commitment behaviors, such as content creation. However, modelling the NE continuum and process, in this sense, is a bit outdated, and in this dissertation, NE is categorized and modelled even further with the inclusion of social media. For example, Luoma-aho's (2010) theory on organizational faithholders, hateholders, and fakeholders, and Brodie et al.'s (2013) theory on engagement in virtual brand communities are utilized when the conceptual model of negative engagement is developed in this dissertation's context.

3 RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

As a new phenomenon, NE requires conceptualization. This is one of the reasons why the research process was steered more toward concept definition, categorization, and typology creation in this dissertation. This chapter briefly introduces research process and research paradigm of this dissertation. Overview of the publications included and the research methods used are also introduced. The full publications are available in Part II of this dissertation.

3.1 Research paradigm

Methodology, ontology, and epistemology are three main dimensions of a research process, which the research paradigm connects (Given 2008). Methodology is a philosophical position of the researchers understanding of the way of doing things and at the same time, it is a strategy or design behind the choice of use of particular methods to desired research outcomes (Byrne 2016). Methodology relates to epistemology and ontology and it connects them together as the philosophy of research, or as the philosophy of methods. Ontology refers to "study of being" and it usually answers to the researchers question of how some particular phenomenon or thing exists (Bricker 2016). Epistemology, on the other hand, is a "study of knowledge" and it looks at how the researcher understands reality and gets knowledge from some particular thing or phenomenon (Byrne 2016).

The publication process in this dissertation utilized both deductive and inductive approaches. At very first, existing literature and theories were collected, which highlights the more deductive approach (Wilson 2010). However, the author moved more towards inductive approach and reasoning when the NE data was collected and analyzed. The author also utilized qualitative methods and did not necessarily applied any specific theories or hypotheses when analyzing the collected data, thus highlighting the more inductive approach (see e.g. Hawthorne 2012) towards the data collection and analysis. However,

completely inductive reasoning is rarely possible, and especially in the context of the analysis of the dissertation data, the author fell towards abductive reasoning, which combines both inductive and deductive reasoning (Lind and Goldkuhl 2006). In fact, the author might have even ended up towards analogical reasoning (see e.g. Bartha 2013), since some similarity exists between previous research and in the components of NE categorization applied in this dissertation.

Consequently, research paradigm of this dissertation fell towards interpretivism and the author applied some grounds from hermeneutics as well. Interpretivism is more subjective than objective, and it accepts that there are multiple ways to create meanings and understand world around as (Myers 2008). In addition, hermeneutics is closely related to interpretivism, and as a research paradigm it emphasizes the methodology of interpretation (Ramberg and Kjesdall 2009). The author tried to interpret the collected data as extensively as possible, and this process followed in some occasions an ontological issue what is called the Hermeneutic Circle (Ramberg and Kjesdall 2009). The 'circle' in understanding belongs to the structure of meaning that is rooted in the understanding which it interprets, and the circle is an empirical phenomenon that arises when one manages to understand meanings less automatically (Mantzavinos 2009). That is, the author created key arguments of the dissertation, NE conceptualization, and theoretical definition of NE as a result of interpretation and learning throughout the dissertation process over a long period of time.

The publications of this dissertation consisted entirely of qualitative studies. Literature reviews and Multi-Grounded Theory (MGT) were applied as main research methods. MGT combined both deductive and inductive thinking and reasoning. Traditional Grounded Theory (GT) approach leaves usually less room for theory, even though it is often described as an abductive approach, thus, to some extent combining both inductive and deductive reasoning (Dey 2004). MGT method allowed the author to acknowledge and utilize both data and previous theories in a multi-grounded manner (Lind and Goldkuhl 2006). The interplay between empirical data and theories was divided into main working areas of research interest reflection and revision, theory generation, and explicit grounding (Goldkuhl and Gronholm 2010). As a result, NE theory was concentrated and conceptualized by utilizing theoretical matching, evaluation of theoretical cohesion, and empirical validation as suggested by Lind and Goldkuhl (2006), and Godkuhl and Gronholm (2010).

3.2 Overview of included publications

Publication I. Ethical Hateholders and Negative Engagement. In: Communication ethics in a connected world: Research in public relations and organizational communication.

The first publication included in this dissertation examines NE on the practice level and discusses who is to blame for NE behavior. This preliminary conceptual study begins the process of NE concept creation and examined what causes negative engagement online and turns stakeholders into organizational *hateholders*. Through a literature review on stakeholder and customer anger, the chapter asks what role organizations and ethics play in creating stakeholder anger.

Publication II. Consumer Emotions and E-commerce: A Literature Review. In: Proceedings of the 30th Bled eConference, 2017: Digital transformation - from connecting things to transforming our lives.

This publication examines engagement's emotional side by applying consumers' perspective within electronic commerce interactions. It introduces the emotions involved in the processes when consumers engage with organizations and brands in online environments. This contributes to affective dimension of NE and further develops how NE can be approached within stakeholder-organization relationships in the e-commerce context from the perspective of emotional valence.

Publication III. Negative Engagement. In: *Handbook of communication engagement.*

The third publication is important from the NE concept-validation perspective. This chapter on negative engagement covers most recent conceptualizations of engagement, takes a futuristic perspective, and focuses on negative stakeholder engagement online in the context of organizations and brands. This publication positions the NE concept across communication disciplines and authenticates the author's preliminary definition of NE within the field.

Publication IV. Negatiiviset asiakaskokemukset ja diplomatia. In: *Diplomaattinen viestintä: ProComma Academic 2018.*

The fourth publication (written in Finnish) deepens the process of understanding the NE concept, applying the managerial side to investigate how organizations should deal with NE behavior. The publication expands on the work in Publication III, introducing NE's consequences for organizations and more profoundly discussing how organizations should negotiate with negatively engaged stakeholders – and potentially turn them into organizational *faith-holders*.

Publication V. Is All Negative Engagement Equal? Towards a Typology of Negative Engagement Behavior in Social Media. Submitted manuscript to *European Journal of Marketing.*

The fifth and final publication included in this dissertation is a case-specific analysis that introduces an enhanced theoretical definition of the NE concept and provides supporting data to categorize it. The publication aims to demonstrate how emotional intensity, object focus, and orientation are part of NE behavior in social media. A brand-new typology concerning NE behaviors also is introduced in this publication.

3.3   Data collection and analysis

Publication I

The data used in this study originally were gathered for a literature review, which was conducted in previous published studies on stakeholder and customer anger. The review aimed to examine issues related to anger toward organizations. Altogether, 11,071 articles were collected, out of which 150 were viewed as the most relevant and were analyzed. Of these, the 59 with the most potential were selected for further review to ascertain how many would be appropriate for inclusion in the final review. Finally, the data in the literature review comprised 24 articles from 18 different journals.

  According to the literature review's findings, multiple issues contribute to negative stakeholder engagement behaviors. Indeed, before negative behaviors manifest, stakeholders and customers experience different negative emotions toward organizations.

  The articles were analyzed via Baker and Martinson's (2001) TARES ethics framework, which was used merely as a tool to examine the kind of ethical issues arising during the content analysis. The TARES framework's five principles are: truthfulness (of the message); authenticity (of the persuader); respect (for the persuadee); equity (of the persuasive appeal); and social responsibility (for the common good).

  The results showed that organizations are more often to blame for stakeholder anger. Based on the limited number of cases analyzed, by utilizing the TARES framework as a guidance it was possible to draw a certain connection between unethical behavior of organizations and stakeholder anger. The results also demonstrated that lack of respect for stakeholders and customers was the most common reason cited for stakeholder anger and NE – apparent in all seven articles analyzed. Similarly, inequities, or lack of fairness, was the second most common reason cited in six cases. Others included a lack of truthfulness and social responsibility, as well as a lack of authenticity. Although these resulted

from a limited, preliminary study, they provide direction as to what kind of organizational behaviors cause *hateholders* to emerge.

Publication II

In this study, the author performed an integrative literature review on e-emotions (consumer emotions visible in an online environment) to contribute some light on the affective dimension of NE. Integrative literature reviews balance less-structured descriptive literature reviews and more-structured systematic literature reviews (Birmingham 2000). This method "is a form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated" (Torraco 2005, p. 356). Although this study was integrative, it followed Fink's (2010) systematic literature review model consistently to add more validity and reliability.

This study answers the following research questions: 1) According to previous literature, what kind of research and studies have been put into practice related to consumer emotions in online shopping? 2) According to the literature analyzed in this study, what are the recent key findings related to consumer emotions in e-commerce?

The review (Fink 2010) was conducted in two stages. During the first stage, the studies' headings and abstracts were read. Through this, the most promising and relevant literature to include in the final review was selected, as Jesson et al. (2011) suggested. During the second stage, the literature was scanned more thoroughly. At this stage, it also was important to analyze the studies' research designs, findings, and conclusions before deciding what literature should be included for the final review (Jesson et al. 2011).

After a careful scan of the available literature, 66 peer-reviewed articles were included in the final review, including studies that had interfaces with consumer emotions in the context of e-commerce. They were evaluated through keywords and how, at the same time, the studies focused on the topic in a recognizable way in the research design and/or findings. Articles that did not match the criteria or did not cover the topic clearly enough were excluded from the review. The literature comprised studies covering (either directly or indirectly) information technology, psychology, communication, and/or business research.

As a result of the review, previous studies were classified into four groups: studies related to website design, characteristics, or atmosphere and how they generally affect consumer emotions and behavior; studies related to pre-consumption emotions and predictors of consumers' online shopping intentions and activities, such as online user reviews' effects; studies related to consumer emotions during actual online shopping encounters, e.g., decision making in purchase situations; and studies related to consumer post-consumption emotions and behavior, such as repurchase intentions and commitment to eWOM.

Publication III

This study presented the development of the NE concept over time through a literature review and stakeholder analysis. It introduces other concepts that are related closely to the NE phenomenon in academic literature, and each concept's contribution to NE also is explained. Though NE has been categorized in different ways, the authors reported findings from the related literature based on three nonexclusive, overlapping levels: emotions; messengers; and acts.

The chapter begins by defining what negative stakeholder engagement refers to in the context of organizations and brands. The chapter also introduces the development of negative engagement via related concepts. After introducing the concepts, negative engagement's process and outcomes are identified. Based on the results from the stakeholder analysis included in this publication, the authors proposed a categorization of NE based on two dimensions: stakeholder activity and connectivity. NE can be categorized as inactive, active, or malicious, with either low or high connectivity. The authors also assert that six levels of negatively engaged stakeholders exist.

Publication IV

This study continues the work that began in Publication III and examines, on the conceptual level, how to address NE in organizations with the help of diplomacy. According to the results of the literature review, during negative engagement situations, organizations' communication professionals should be aware of what conversations they should engage in and identify the stakeholders with whom they are interacting. It is important to distinguish online stakeholders from one another because positive and negative engagement forms demand different kinds of attention and responses, depending on the conversations' tone.

The results in this publication showed that triggers and other situational factors shape the communication choice and style for stakeholders on the six recognized levels and the form of NE behavior also defines the NE category for each stakeholder. Communication professionals should respond to NE differently depending on the category level. The theories on crisis communication and response strategies could be drawn on to explain which strategies best meet the various levels of stakeholder categories in case of NE behavior. Crisis-response strategies refer to the selection of words and actions to rectify the negative situation, and different strategies can be drawn on to respond to negative engagement. The author suggests that the most efficient and recommended strategy for turning negative engagement into more positive engagement is the use of high accommodation strategies, such as apologies and compensation.

Publication V

To investigate NE behaviors within social media platforms, this study employed a multi-grounded theory (MGT) approach that Goldkuhl originally introduced in 1993 (Goldkuhl and Cronholm 2010). MGT refers to theoretically, empirically, and internally formed theory (Lind and Goldkuhl 2006). Thus, MGT is a combination or dialectical synthesis of inductive and deductive coding (Lind and Goldkuhl 2006). It is based on empirical grounding data, pre-existing theory grounding, and internal grounding, which refers to "an explicit congruence within the theory itself" Goldkuhl and Cronholm 2010, p. 192). The formulation of the typology of negative engagement behaviors and data analysis was guided by constant interplay between empirically driven analysis ("inductivism") and theory-driven analysis ("deductivism"), eventually creating a combined view of synthesis as a form of MGT sub-categories (Goldkuhl and Cronholm 2010).

The empirical data were collected in a time span of two weeks in 2018. The authors harvested user-generated content via Twitter, a popular online brand community nowadays and a major communication tool for brands. The data comprised a sample of 12,429 user-generated comments taken from Twitter. The consumer tweets were collected from Australian Telstra, Optus, and Vodafone's Twitter feeds, as well as those of Finnish DNA, Telia, and Elisa. The authors used the TweetArchivist software tool to collect the tweets. The tool collected numerous data fields such as the tweet's content, who it originated from, how many likes the tweet generated, etc. However, the focus of the analysis was on the message content itself.

The tweets were analyzed qualitatively by using abductive and internally formed coding methods. The analysis was conducted using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 12. The results show that NE behaviors within social media platforms can be categorized into a distinct typology of four categories (*negative-review writing, justice-seeking complaining, retaliation acts*, and *firestorming*). These categories can be classified according to the tweets' object focus, orientation, and emotional intensity. This study underscores the complex nature of engagement within social media platforms. The study concludes that an understanding of NE behaviors in social media is crucial and it should reflect the need of abilities for brands to encounter different forms of these behaviors.

4 SUMMARIES OF FINDINGS FROM PUBLICATIONS I-V

This section will summarize the findings from publications included in this dissertation. The key findings will answer this dissertation's three research questions.

RQ1. What is negative engagement (NE) and who engages negatively (Publications I, II, and III)?

Based on previous literature analysis included in Publications I, II, and III, the author provides examples of certain behavioral acts of NE. In Publication III (p. 533) included in this dissertation, NE behavior is broken down, and it states that "it includes broader dimensions and meanings than individuals merely posting negative feedback." As such, prime examples of NE behavior could include: negative customer voices; publishing negative information and emotions publicly; placing blame on something; vengeful and retaliatory customer behaviors; complaining behavior; justice-seeking behavior; unfavorable brand-related behavior; brand-sabotage behavior; co-opting others to a negative behavioral position about an organization; political pressure; anti-corporate and anger activism; negative online consumer reviews; anti-brand sites; hate speech; trolling; and hateholder behavior. Moreover, brandjacking (Luoma-aho et al. 2018) and whistleblowing (Davis 2012) are also some of the examples of different closely related NE behavioral concepts. However, not all of these were supported and, thus, covered during this dissertation's empirical data collection and analysis.

Generally, recent studies have focused on consumer emotions during all stages of the (service) relationship. This result supports the assumption that emotions are not just restricted to purchase situations. In fact, consumer emotions and behaviors are under scrutiny in multiple situations. People eagerly read reviews and participate in public discussions before making purchase decisions, and even after the consumption stage, the experience may become negative or positive. Consumers possibly continue the service relationship, disengage from the service provider (Bowden et al. 2015), or even engage in eWOM (Chu and

Kim 2011) after e- commerce encounters. In Publication III, the author proposes a categorization of six levels of negatively engaged stakeholders, which are provided in Table 8.

TABLE 8.   Categories of Negative Engagement

	PRIVATE LOW CONNECTIVITY, (limited audiences)	PUBLIC HIGH CONNECTIVITY, (unlimited audiences)
INACTIVE (weak negative emotions)	Level 1: Passive Discontented Stakeholder	Level 2: Dormant Resentful Stakeholder
ACTIVE (moderate negative emotions)	Level 3: Irate Stakeholder	Level 4: Justice-seeking Stakeholder (Hateholder)
MALICIOUS (extremely strong negative emotions)	Level 5: Revenge-Seeking Stakeholder	Level 6: Troll Stakeholder

As can be seen on Table 8, as long as engagement remains at low connectivity levels in private forums or limited audiences, the individual is viewed as either a passive or irate stakeholder, similar to the unresponsiveness of nonpublics (Lee et al. 2014). Overall, low-connectivity stakeholders at Level 1 seldom have direct access to the target organization because they share their negativity only privately (e.g., in offline conversations or during private online chats with limited audiences).

A Dormant Resentful Stakeholder at Level 2 is inactive, yet characterized as having high public connectivity and the potential to harm an organization. Even though the content that Dormant Resentful Stakeholders reveal is public, they do not have any negative intentions toward an organization (weak negative emotions) and, thus, cannot be viewed as active in terms of NE. Like Level 1, Level 2 stakeholders do not share their negative experiences actively, but instead have a wide variety of forums and audiences available should they choose otherwise. On the other hand, an Irate Stakeholder at Level 3 is active in terms of negative emotions, but is unable to share negative content publicly. The Irate Stakeholder is "dependent" on others as an audience for a public manifestation. Presumably, these stakeholders are unable to gain access to unlimited audiences and, as such, are unable to elicit public discussions.

Level 4's Justice-Seeking Stakeholders, or hateholders (Luoma-aho 2015), are the most damaging to organizations, through both tangible and intangible

means. Through actions such as content creation and contributing to online discussions (Gummerus et al. 2012; Heinonen 2011), hateholders cause actual harm (such as reputational damage) to organizations through NE. Hateholders' moderate negative emotions and justice-seeking behaviors ensure that public actions remain at plausible levels, and that negative contributions are, thus, more effective.

Level 5 indicates extremely strong negative emotions, hostile thoughts, and intended malice toward brands and organizations, e.g., revenge-seeking, brand sabotage, online crime, and even bullying (Bishop 2014; Hardaker 2010; Kähr et al. 2016). However, extremely strong negative emotions often decrease these stakeholders' credibility, impeding them from successfully implementing their retaliatory actions. Revenge seekers and trolls intend to cause harm or impress their peers (Bishop 2014), but they also may be motivated by political, financial, or ideological gain (Bishop 2014). Level 6 often contains false information, and sadistic, psychopathic, narcissistic, and manipulative characteristics have been associated with such online trolling (Buckels et al. 2014). However, trolls are sometimes difficult to notice in online environments, and distinguishing them from more genuine stakeholders (such as hateholders) remains a challenge.

The most harmful stakeholders to organizations are active hateholders with heavy publicity. They potentially have access to unlimited audiences (e.g., through social media). These hateholders, through actions such as content creation and contributing to online discussions, can cause actual harm (such as reputational damage) to organizations. Hateholders' moderate negative emotions and justice-seeking behaviors ensure that public actions remain at plausible levels when interpreted by the audience; thus, negative contributions are more effective.

RQ2. Should all NE be treated equally (negative) within organizations, and how should organizations respond to it (Publication IV)?

Publication IV continues the work that began in Publication III. According to the results, Level 1 stakeholders rarely have connections with the target organization because they take part in conversations privately (e.g., by chatting with their friends), even though they might be somewhat dissatisfied with the target organization. The need for diplomacy with Level 1 stakeholders is low because they can be invisible to the organization.

Dormant Resentful Stakeholders at Level 2 are inactive in terms of negative emotions, but they do have access to unlimited audiences. This creates a potential risk for the organization, but stakeholders at this level are not a threat and not viewed as active from the perspective of NE categorization. Like Level 1, Level 2 stakeholders do not share their negative experiences or emotions publicly, but they have access to unlimited audiences should they choose otherwise. The need for diplomacy at Level 2 is limited to recognition of stakeholders, monitoring public discussions, and possibly taking part in conversations only slightly.

Irate Level 3 stakeholders are active from the perspective of negative emotions, but cannot engage with big audiences. Thus, stakeholders at this level

are dependent on others if they want to share their negative experiences and views about the organization, and engage with bigger audiences. The presumption is that these stakeholders do not have access to unlimited audiences, but that the need for diplomacy somehow increases at least on some level. From communication professionals' perspective, it is important to recognize these stakeholders' moderate negative emotions, but also to keep in mind that these stakeholders have less publicity and more limited audiences. However, limited audiences should not be a reason to bypass irate stakeholders.

Level 4 *hateholders* (Luoma-aho 2015) are the most challenging for organizations, using both tangible and intangible means. Hateholders can harm the organization, including reputational damage, through NE behavior. It should be noted that moderate negative emotions and justice-seeking behavior at Level 4 mean that NE behavior is more efficient and justifiable in the eyes of the audience. Due to Level 4 stakeholders' access to unlimited audiences, the amount of diplomacy needed is high.

Level 5's revenge-seeking stakeholders require that communication professionals have specific diplomatic skills because these negative emotions could be (extremely) strong. It is also vital to act proactively, refute any possible false information, and, above all, anticipate whether the engagement proceeds to a level of unlimited audiences.

Troll stakeholders at Level 6 aim to create confusion in the communities with which they are interacting. NE behavior is also trolling if the user acts against the online (brand) community's rules, and at the same time, distracts and disturbs others. Also important to remember about Level 6 is that it is difficult to notice trolls in online environments, and that distinguishing them from genuine stakeholders (such as hateholders) is challenging. Communication professionals should have a specific set of diplomatic skills, experience with online conversations, and the ability to monitor engagement within online communities (that concern the organization). The interaction should be targeted at stakeholders who encounter misleading messages from trolls and rely on false information that they create. Thus, direct conversations with trolls should be avoided. Because anger is contagious, especially in social media (Obeidat et al. 2017; Ferrara and Yang 2015), and engagement behavior could heat up quickly (Patterson et al. 2009; Gladwell 2001), false and misleading information that trolls generate should be refuted as early as possible. This could prevent the spread of false information and ensure that discussions among stakeholders remain truthful and on the right track.

RQ3. What are NE's behavioral variations in social media based on emotional intensity, object focus, and orientation (Publication V)?

In Publication V of this dissertation, the *NE behavior* definition is developed further. NE behavior captures premeditated, activated, and dedicated behavioral expressions of negativity, which includes unfavorable emotional and cognitive inclinations which precipitate negative and/or destructive impact on organization or brand value. NE varies in social media and in emotional intensity, object focus,

and orientation, and in Publication V of this dissertation, the author analyzed NE data from Twitter and made distinctions between different NE behaviors in social media. Table 9 introduces these behaviors' typology.

TABLE 9.   Typology of Negative Engagement behaviors in social media

Negative Engagement Behavior	Definition	Emotional intensity
Firestorming	**Affective dimension:** NEB reflects a highly activated state of anger and intense indignation within a social media network. **Engagement object:** NEB are expressed against a brand. **Orientation:** General call to collective negative sentiment towards the brand. **Cognitive dimension:** Content does not always point towards a specific criticism with regard to the nature of the problem.	Higher
Retaliation acts	**Affective dimension:** NEB reflects a highly activated and aggressive state with the intention to 'get even' with a brand within a social media network. **Engagement object**: NEB are expressed against a brand. **Orientation:** Reprisal against the brand for personal gain. **Cognitive dimension:** Content does not always point towards a specific criticism with regard to the nature of the problem.	↑ ↓
Justice-seeking complaining	**Affective dimension**: NEB reflects a less activated dissatisfaction and disenchantment with a brand within a social media network. **Engagement object**: NEB are expressed against a brand. **Orientation:** Achievement of personal goals against the brand. **Cognitive dimension:** Content points towards a specific criticism concerning perceived misconduct by a brand.	
Negative-review writing	**Affective dimension:** NEB reflects a less activated and aroused state focused on negative information about a brand within a social media network. **Engagement object:** NEB are expressed against a brand. **Orientation:** Achievement of brand experience enhancement for both brand and other engagement actors. **Cognitive dimension**: Simultaneous provision of diagnostic or informative information (e.g. picture of the situation, link to news article).	Lower

NE behaviors within social media range from more emotionally intensified *firestorms* (e.g., Pfeffer et al. 2014) and *retaliation acts* (e.g., Huefner and Hunt 2000) all the way down to less-intense *justice-seeking complaining* (e.g., Einwiller and Steilen 2015; Huppertz 2003; Blodgett and Anderson 2000) and *negative-review writing* (e.g., Lee et al. 2008).

Firestorms include a large number of negative messages and/or intense indignation expressed against a person, brand, or group without messages or behavior necessarily pointing to an actual specific criticism and/or necessarily providing any information to the brand about the problem's nature. This is also in line with Pfeffer et al.'s (2014) approach on firestorm dynamics in social media. *Firestorming* can result from higher levels of anger and reflect agitated and disturbed emotions, indicating uneasiness that troubles a person's mind, but it also can mean "showing symptoms of emotional illness" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary 2019).

Retaliation acts differ from previous behaviors, as the intention might be to get even with a brand in different ways. At the same time, these actions potentially can create additional problems (such as threats to abandon the brand or recommendations to use another brand) and costs. According to Huefner and Hunt (2000), like *firestorms*, *retaliation acts* potentially can lead to the consumer not revealing or identifying the initial problem's cause, thereby making it difficult for brands to take corrective actions. These individuals or groups who engage in this behavior usually reflect disturbing emotions and have been known to use vulgar language.

Justice-seeking complaining results from dissatisfaction and disconfirmation of expectations in which concerns are voiced in social media to draw attention to perceived misconduct by a brand to achieve personal or collective goals (e.g., Einwiller and Steilen 2015; Huppertz 2003). However, unlike in retaliation acts, consumers use less vulgar language in this category and/or do not pose any threats. Because expectations are violated, consumers most likely have afflicted and confused emotions when they seek justice and complain. *Affliction* means that a person is "in the state of being afflicted by something that causes suffering," such as loss, pain, harm, or misfortune (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary 2019). Moreover, confusion means that a person is in an uncomfortable stage, which also can be described either as "a state of mental uncertainty" or "a state in which everything is out of order" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary 2019).

Finally, *negative-review writing* includes easily observable consumer behavior in social media containing negative information about a brand, product, or service that is simultaneously viewed as diagnostic or informative either for the brand or other consumers. This is also in line with Lee et al.'s (2008) findings that negative online consumer reviews could vary from low-quality to more diagnostic and informative higher-quality reviews. Confused emotions are sometimes present in this NE behavior, i.e., the person can be in a somewhat-uncomfortable state of mind.

To conclude, the main contributions of the publication V are related to the new typology and how it broadens the understanding related to NE behavior in

social media. Because the emotional intensity of consumer NE behavior often varies it also means that brands and organizations should apply different approaches when confronting such behaviors online. As a result, demands for handling *negative review writing* could be totally different than actions needed to deal with *firestorms*. Contributions and managerial implications related to NE handling in organizations are discussed more conclusively in the next chapter.

5 DISCUSSION

This section focuses on this dissertation study's conclusions, managerial implications, and limitations. At the end of this chapter, the author offers suggestions for future research.

5.1 Conclusions

This dissertation aimed at defining the nascent concept of negative engagement (NE). As such, the main contributions of this study are the novel definition of the concept but also the recognition of different dimensions and categorizations of NE. These contributions will support further research around engagement concept in general and also stir up the discussion - especially in the fields of communication and marketing - on how different forms of engagement are approached and understood. This study can provide tools for researchers and scholars to look at different ends of engagement continuum and most importantly, the discussion should continue on when engagement is positive or negative, and who has the authority to define it: the actor, the target of engagement, or somebody else?

The studies included in this dissertation recognized already identified three engagement dimensions and applied them in the context of negative stakeholder engagement. Hence, NE includes affective (e.g., anger, hatred, fear, resentment, shame, humiliation), cognitive (e.g., negative bias, cynicism), and behavioral (e.g., negative reviews and boycotting) dimensions unfavorable from the perspective of organizations and brands. As a novel approach, this dissertation introduced NE categorization based on different levels of negatively engaged stakeholders in online environments, and it also introduced a typology of NE behaviors in social media. NE behavior is defined in this dissertation as premeditated, activated, and dedicated behavioral expressions of negativity, which includes unfavorable emotional and cognitive inclinations which precipitate negative and/or destructive impact on organization or brand value. This differs from the previous engagement definitions which have not taken into account the different

valences of engagement, and possible negative consequences of the engagement behavior to the target of engagement.

It is noteworthy that NE appears in many behavioral forms in online environments, most often in social media, discussion forums, and online brand communities. Behavioral dimensions of NE include forms such as collective complaining and value co-destruction, and it manifests through the spirited and active spread of negative recommendations and reviews. Moreover, in co-opting other customers and consumers to adopt a particular attitudinal and/or behavioral position about an organization or provider, the development of deeply negative emotions and attitudes, as well as potential vengeful and retaliatory behaviors, also is possible.

Previous engagement researchers have focused mostly on positioning only neutral and positive engagement on a certain continuum level (e.g., Dessart et al. 2016, p. 404; Johnston 2018, p. 29). Moreover, Vargo (2016) and Dolan et al. (2016) argue that the engagement behavior also varies in its intensity (between low, moderate, and high) and two valences of positive and negative are also usually recognizable. To add NE valences to a continuum, Figure 1 combines the synthesis of some previous engagement literature with this dissertation's findings, introducing NE dimensions and positioning them in a continuum of emotional valence and social level of engagement. The figure also positions disengagement and positive engagement on the continuum based on recognized cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions.

Stakeholder emotional valence

Positive ———————————————————————————————— Negative

Social level of engagement

High (more visible)

POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT

NEGATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Behavioral

"The behavioural manifestations toward an engagement focus, beyond purchase, which results from motivational drivers." (Dessart et al., 2015, p.35)

"Includes intended and unintended behaviors that may be caused by, or result from, cognitive or affective engagement. At a primitive level, behavioral engagement is often equated to interaction (such as 'likes' on Facebook), or a single experience (a visit to a webpage)." (Johnston, 2018, p.22)

Sharing
Learning
Endorsing
Experience
Participation
Interaction
Investment

Negative contribution
Co-Descruction
Detachment
Dormancy
Destruction
Venting
Dissuading
Warning
Endorsing competitors
Discrediting
Expressing regret
Deriding

Negative review writing	Justice-seeking complaining	Retaliation acts	Firestorming

Negative Engagement behavior captures premeditated, activated, and dedicated behavioral expressions of negativity, which includes unfavorable emotional and cognitive inclinations which precipitate negative and/or destructive impact on organisation or brand value.

Affective

"The summative and enduring levels of emotions experienced by a consumer with respect to his/her engagement focus." (Dessart et al, 2015, p. 35)

"Encompasses positive and negative emotional reactions, such as enjoyment, fear, anger, support, and belonging. Affective engagement is often displayed as identification of belonging, or emotional reactions." (Johnston, 2018, p. 22)

Enthusiasm
Enjoyment
Motivation
Involvement
Salience
Valence
Investment

Dissapointment
Insecurity
Anger
Dislike

Affective Negative Engagement is the summative and enduring levels of negative emotional reactions individual holds towards organisation, brand, or engagement focus.

Cognitive

"A set of enduring and active mental states that a consumer experiences with respect to the focal object of his / her engagement." (Dessart et al., 2015, p. 35)

"Individual investment in attention and processing to develop understanding or knowledge about a topic or an idea." (Johnston, 2018, p.22)

Attention
Absorption
Interest
Understanding
Knowledge

Self-affirmation
Need for social comparison and social bonding
Intention to help others
Negative Brand information
Service failure
Overpricing
Deception

Cognitive Negative Engagement is a set of enduring and active negative mental states that an individual experience with respect to the focal object of engagement, and the degree of interest and attention paid to negative information to develop understanding or knowledge about organisation or brand.

"Disengagement is where the individual state of engagement represents the lowest levels of cognitive, affective, or behavioral dimensions measured against the engagement continuum." (Johnston, 2018, p.22)
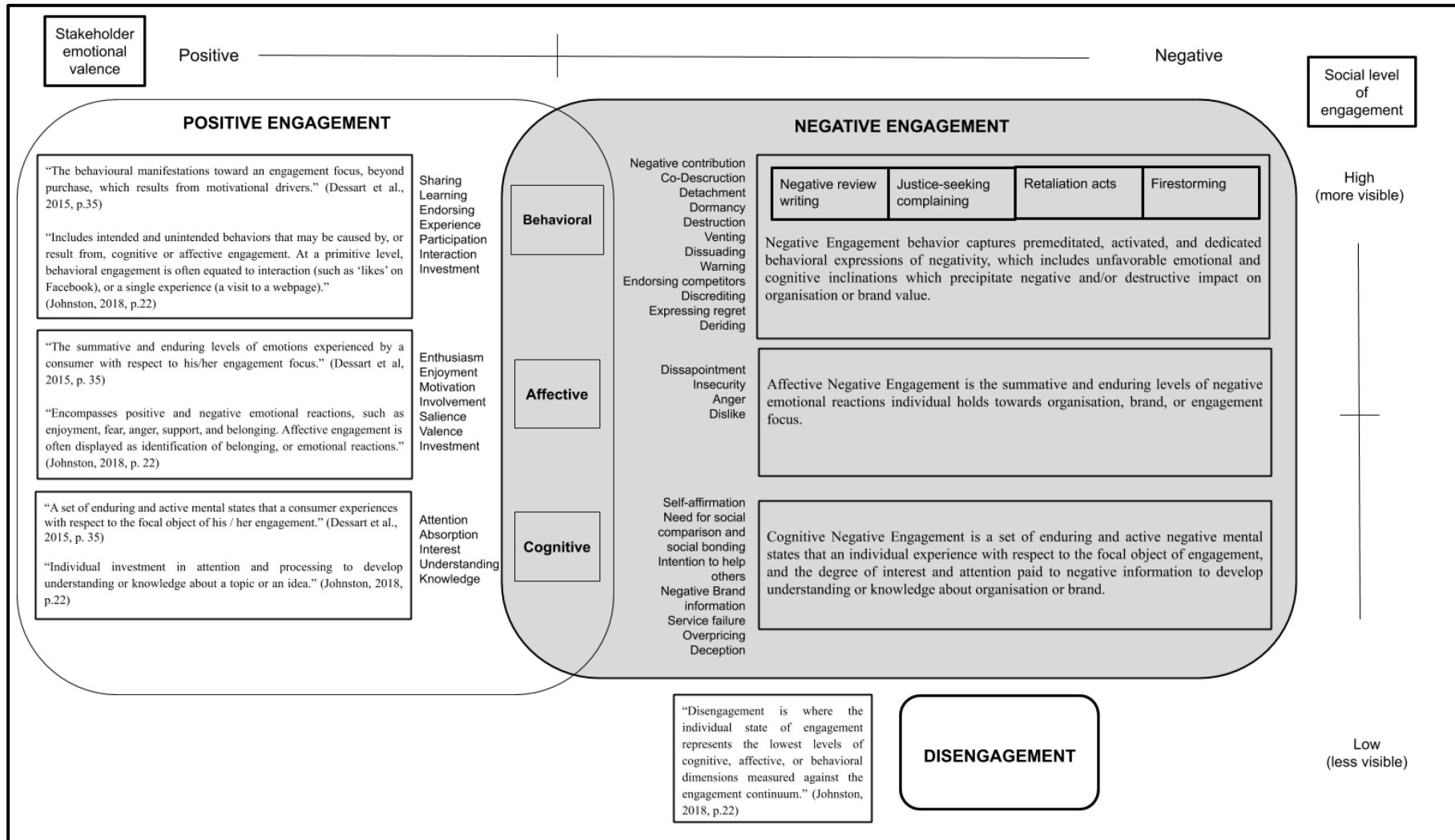
DISENGAGEMENT

Low (less visible)

FIGURE 1.   Negative Engagement in social media on a continuum of stakeholder emotional valence and social level of engagement

As seen in Figure 1, three varying concepts from one another are distinguished: positive engagement; disengagement; and negative engagement (NE). The horizontal continuum on stakeholder emotional valence positions engagement concepts and dimensions on a scale from positive to negative. The vertical continuum on the social level of engagement positions concepts and dimensions based on engagement's potential visibility in social media. It also takes into consideration the potential of collective action, especially at the behavioral level of both positive and NE. NE is not just a reversal of positive engagement because it manifests through its own unique characteristics (Naumann et al. 2020). As such, NE in not just limited to negative-review writing, public complaining, or negative electronic word-of-mouth, nor merely negative thoughts and emotions. Instead, it has a variety of possible triggers, as well as emotional, cognitive, and behavioral levels that are processed over time. Moreover, visible NE behaviors could carry different consequences for the organizations and brands involved, depending on who engages negatively. In fact, one of the recent studies of online brand communities show that individuals share negative brand experiences to vent their emotion and seek support, and negative sharing may enhance a sharer's happiness through the received social support (Zhou et al. 2020), emphasizing the social level and role of the online brand community in NE situations.

In Publication V of this dissertation, the author analyzed NE data from Twitter and distinguished between different NE behaviors in social media based on their emotional intensity, object focus, and orientation. These four behaviors – *negative-review writing*, *justice-seeking complaining*, *retaliation acts*, and *firestorming* – also are included in Figure 1. The NE behaviors also are located in the figure based on the negative emotional valence's intensity. The less-intense *writing negative reviews* refers to "easily observable consumer behavior in social media containing negative information about a brand, product, or service that is simultaneously viewed as diagnostic or informative (e.g., a picture of the situation or a link to a news article) for either the brand or other consumers." Somewhat more negatively intense *justice-seeking complaining* is "consumer behavior resulting from dissatisfaction and disconfirmation of expectations where (voices are) raised in social media to draw attention to a perceived misconduct by a brand for achieving personal or collective goals." Highly negative and intense *retaliation acts* are "somewhat more aggressive consumer behavior in social media with the intention to get even with a brand, which has the potential to create additional problems and costs (e.g., the customer abandoning the brand) and/or (the) consumer not giving any information to the brand about the nature of the problem." *Firestorming,* a more intense behavior, refers to "consumer behavior presumably resulting from higher levels of anger in social media networks where (a) high number of negative messages and/or intense indignation is expressed against a person, brands, or groups. Messages or behavior does not always point to an actual specific criticism."

NE falls into the engagement-theme category of interaction and exchange, where it can be "conceptualized as an iterative, dynamic process, where participation, experience, and shared action emerge as central components of

engagement" (Johnston and Taylor 2018, p. 3). Like positive engagement, NE can be viewed as interaction and exchange, but it also can have social and relational aspects in it (Johnston and Taylor 2018; Naumann et al. 2017). As such, social engagement also is connected strongly to NE and eventually should be viewed as a core element, especially at the behavioral level. As with positive engagement online, social media users can see other consumers' behavioral acts of NE, which can have a contagious effect on other online users' engagement behaviors (Einwiller and Steilen 2015). Moreover, NE's behavioral dimension is not just more visible (e.g., in social media), but also could be collective and even co-creational. This is one reason why the NE definition's behavioral dimension does not mention individuals the way cognitive and emotional dimension definitions do. It also can be argued that cognitive and emotional engagement are less visible in social media until they manifest through NE behavior. However, as already mentioned, the affective and cognitive dimensions should be present before the behavioral engagement level can be claimed (Calder et al. 2009).

The NE outcome may exert a negative and/or destructive impact on brand value (Hollebeek and Chen 2014), as previous studies address how NE forms truly harm brands (Hollebeek and Chen 2014; Doyle and Lee 2016). This is one of the main aspects that distinguishes NE from positive engagement, and also explains why the concepts also are presented on different ends of the horizontal continuum of emotional valence in Figure 1.

NE also can elicit positive outcomes for organizations (Naumann et al. 2017; Bitter and Grabner-Kräuter 2016). Much of the focus in the research literature has been dedicated to negative NE outcomes because negative reviews and customer complaints traditionally have been understood as NE forms and, thus, only harmful to organizations and brands. However, revealing a negative issue publicly "seems to serve an important function when it is constructive (rather than detrimental) and when people want to acquire new habits or improve existing ones (rather than enhance their self-image)" (Finkelstein and Fishbach 2012, p. 36). Thus, NE can turn into positive engagement for an organization if proper actions take place.

Disengagement is situated on the lower end of the figure for a couple of reasons. First, in this context the author does not see positive outcomes in disengagement for organizations. In terms of visibility (in social media), disengagement is usually less visible from the perspective of social engagement level, even though it could be orchestrated collectively. Moreover, according to Johnston (2018, p. 22), it "represent(s) the lowest levels of cognitive, affective, or behavioral dimensions measured against the engagement continuum." If the orchestration of disengagement manifests in public spheres, it usually falls under NE behavior, e.g., in the form of retaliation acts or collective complaining, and it is not just disengagement anymore, but a combination of both. For the sake of clarity, disengagement is situated on the negative end of the horizontal emotional valence continuum, as well as on the low end of the vertical continuum. This also distinguishes it more clearly from positive engagement concepts in terms of emotional valence and from NE concepts in terms of social engagement level.

5.2   Managerial implications

We are driven by a negativity bias, i.e., we tend to focus more on negative incidents than positive ones (Baumeister et al. 2001). Due to the contagious nature of negative communication (Coombs and Holladay 2007; Suracharttomkun et al. 2015; Naumann et al. 2017; Li et al. 2017), it is also all-consuming for its subjects and increasingly common in communication, both online and offline. The interaction between stakeholders and organizations is more public nowadays, and it also means that through various means of engagement behavior, both positive and negative stakeholder emotions are visible and, presumably, are more common in digitalized environments (Li et al. 2018). Moreover, NE is identified as a real-world challenge for organizations and brands, and should be viewed as one of the authentic approaches and thematic definitions of engagement on a continuum (Johnston and Taylor 2018; Hollebeek and Chen 2014).

Overall, the way that NE is managed in organizations is important as, for example, unsuccessful handling of it poses a risk for the reputation and value of the organization and brand. As such, the first key argument in this study was that *organizations and brands should monitor their issue arenas (Luoma-aho* and *Vos 2010) for NE.* Findings in Publications I, II, and III support the notion that NE could be defined on a scale of three engagement dimensions: affective; cognitive; and behavioral. From an organizational perspective, this means that recognizing engagement's dimensions and valences, and understanding the process nature that leads to public NE behavior are important. Thus, monitoring and understanding different stakeholders online is a recipe for success.

The second key argument in this study was that *it is vital for organizations and brands to understand who engages negatively, but also the process of NE behavior, which varies in its level of emotional intensity, object focus, and orientation.* Through this understanding, organizations and brands can examine the various engaged stakeholders and different forms of NE behavior in a justifiable manner within their issue arenas. In fact, recent studies show that intensity level of NE behavior is one of the most important things that matter in online environments, and it is no more useful for brands and organizations to just simply compare the amount of negative and positive content within the online community (see e.g Azer and Alexander 2018; 2020). That is, brands and organizations should focus on quality over quantity when deciding whether or not the actions of engagers have an impact on brand or organization value.

Particularly in Publications III and IV, the author distinguishes between and categorizes different negatively engaged actors in social media. From a managerial and communication perspective, this means that organizational *hateholders* demand engagement approaches and responses that differ from *troll stakeholders*. For example, at level 1 of the negatively engaged stakeholders (see table 7) the main thing for communication professionals to understand is that no action is needed until stakeholders' negative emotions get stronger, or if

engagement behavior gets more public. It is also important to note that communication professionals who can understand level 2's NE potential are one step ahead of other professionals in terms of responding if the negative emotions suddenly get stronger and engagement escalates to other categorization levels. Due to increased negative emotions at level 3, communication professionals should increase the amount of monitoring and be prepared to react and have the ability to interact if needed. At level 4 communication professionals actively and transparently should engage in negative conversations that hateholders orchestrate. Even though the limited audiences and strong negative manifestations decrease level 5 stakeholders' credibility, at least to some degree, it is important for communication professionals to monitor discussions at this level carefully. By taking proper actions at level 6, communication professionals can also keep online conversations' tone reasonable, possibly limit any contagion, and even weaken negative emotions among engaged stakeholders.

The third and final key argument in this study was that *not all NE is harmful for organizations and brands, and that they should look for competitive advantage when dealing with negatively engaged stakeholders, and when responding to them on social media.* Publication V of this dissertation distinguishes between NE behaviors based on their emotional intensity, object focus, and orientation. *Justice-seeking complaining* and *negative-review writing* are less intense NE behaviors than *retaliation acts* or *firestorming.* Thus, it is important for communication professionals to be able to distinguish these forms from one another and act accordingly to mitigate negativity.

From a managerial and organizational perspective, preparing for NE encounters offers a considerable competitive advantage for organizations and brands, and could enhance their reputations among potential consumers and current stakeholders if proper actions take place (Einwiller and Steilen 2015). From the perspective of the whole industry, it is important that the communication professionals educate themselves to be able to better recognize, monitor, and respond to NE in social media. Even though the amount of NE will not decrease in social media, the ability to respond should be a priority for organizations and brands in the foreseeable future. As already mentioned, engagement quality is the key and it more often overplays the quantity.

Even though service-recovery strategies were not within this dissertation's main scope, the author recognized, during data collection, that consumers who actually took part in NE behavior were more satisfied after service recovery and more willing to repurchase products or use the brand's services again. In fact, some previous studies also support this (e.g., Bijmolt et al. 2014). NE may occur in both online and offline contexts, and it can lead to both positive and negative outcomes for organizations (Naumann et al. 2017). Still, much of the focus in previous research literature has been dedicated to negative NE outcomes. As such, negative reviews and customer complaints often have been understood as NE forms that are only harmful for organizations and brands. However, revealing a negative issue publicly "seems to serve an important function when it is constructive (rather than detrimental) and when people desire to acquire new

habits or improve existing ones (rather than enhance their self-image)" (Finkelstein and Fishbach 2012, p. 36). In fact, the underlying aim of NE often is a positive, or at least improved, state of affairs, when a stakeholder seeks justice, is looking for help, or is helping others during the process. Thus, denial or an avoidance strategy should not be an option when dealing with NE in online environments.

Based on an analysis of NE literature and data, the author presents a summary of five diplomacy-based suggestions for communication professionals on how to handle NE on social media and in online brand communities:

1. Build up social capital in advance

Strong social capital positively impacts a negative engagement situation. The ability to create trust quickly and make distinctions between other actors is important because it is sometimes challenging to distinguish between reliable stakeholders in digital environments. Organizations should be prepared to create strong counter-narratives and bring them into conversations (Stewart 2017).

2. Recognize, detect, and categorize engaged actors and evaluate the conversations' tone and valence

Distinguishing between engaged actors online is crucial, and joining conversations should be proactive, rather than reactive. The most important steps are to gauge the conversation's tone, engage actors, and evaluate negative messages' intention and purpose. After this, a fast decision should be made as to whether to engage in the conversation and whether such a move risks generating more negativity, or even hate, among engaged actors. At the very least, false and misleading information should be refuted.

3. Take real concerns into account and remember to listen

It is important to identify engaged actors' real concerns and track the reasons behind negative engagement behavior when observing and monitoring discussions. Develop communication protocols, communication skills, and articulation, and integrate them as part of a broader culture of listening within the organization. Particularly important is pointing out that the organization will listen and hear issues that, for example, *hateholders* justifiably raise (Stewart 2017; Macnamara 2016).

4. Mitigate the hate and humanize discussions

One important aspect when facing negative engagement is the ability to humanize discussions. In principle, humans are ready to discuss with real people, rather than faceless individuals or organizations. By reliably showing engaged actors that a real human being exists behind the organization's messages, it is possible to mitigate and crop the amount of hate significantly (Stewart 2017; O'Reilly 2017). It is more likely that negative stakeholder experiences can be turned into more positive ones when the conversation's tone involves humane aspects and dialogue (Johansen and Nielsen 2011).

5. Maintain your own balance

Despite all the negativity, the conversation's tone usually softens and becomes more positive when the right actions are taken during the process. To counterbalance negative engagement, it is important to read positive feedback and encouraging content, as well as notice that there is absolutely no reason to highlight the amount of negativity on display. Usually, anger is limited to a small group, which means that negative engagement targeted at an organization eventually might be very marginal, yet worth noticing.

5.3   Limitations and suggestions for future research

This dissertation study was a novel attempt to approach NE more collectively and, as such, it should also be treated more from a conceptual perspective. As a novel attempt it also raised some interesting conclusions. It became more obvious during the research process that conceptualization is indeed needed but not necessarily because negative forms of engagement has not been covered in the previous studies. In fact, many researchers recognize negative valences of engagement. As such, the need for conceptualization emerged because NE hasn't been discussed collectively under a single, specific umbrella-like conceptualization, especially in corporate communication field.

This study measured NE on the behavioral level at tier 2, which is a mid-level of the three conceptual tiers for measuring engagement (e.g., Johnston and Taylor 2018). Moreover, this dissertation study applied a qualitative and mostly abductive approach during data analysis, closing in the NE concept and typology creation from an engagement-valence and intensity perspective. The methods used in the publications mostly comprised literature reviews, and the multi-grounded theory (MGT) approach was applied in Publication V. MGT refers to theoretically, empirically, and internally formed theory (Lind and Goldkuhl 2006), which to some extent also connects the overall dissertation process of the author.

Main data-related limitations of this dissertation study include lack of case studies and lack of focus on different industries during empirical data collection. As such, the results are limitedly representative or applicable e.g. outside telecommunication sector. The methodological approach is also somewhat limited in this dissertation, and analyzed literature and empirical analysis could raise some issues in terms of scope. Other research fields than communication and business studies (and there mostly marketing) were not covered that extensively during literature reviews, which limits this dissertation's approach to some extent.

In addition, challenges emerged as the literature reviews were not always the best way to answer all the research questions in the first publications included in this dissertation. This also explains the lack of structure in the shell to some extent. Even though concepts related to NE were examined in the literature

reviews somewhat consistently, some issues were still apparent. For example, literature findings were updated as new engagement research studies were published throughout the dissertation process but this was often too late from the perspective of dissertation's publications. Moreover, i.e. crisis communication studies should have been better connected with the literature reviews included in this dissertation. In addition, concepts such as brandjacking (Luoma-aho et al. 2018) and whistleblowing (Davis 2012) are some variations of different, closely related NE concepts that are not covered in the studies that this dissertation examined.

Some of the disadvantages associated with interpretivist research paradigm are related to subjective nature of research, and how it allows a room for subjective bias to the researcher (Ramberg and Kjesdall 2009; Myers 2008). The author analyzed the literature and a big Twitter data set over a long period of time, and NE categorization based on this combined analysis is strongly subjective. Due to long dissertation and analysis process, the research focus has also developed over time and created a situation where the authors understanding of NE concept, its antecedents, and dimensions has changed over time. Even though the included publications follow a rather linear and continuous publishing path throughout the dissertation process over the years, the overall process has still been somewhat inconsistent. This is especially visible between the first and last publications. This could also explain reliability and validity issues of this dissertation study to some extent.

Qualitative methodological approach also has its limitations. Applying a quantitative approach in both data collection and analysis could have provided different opportunities to approach the NE concept's creation and its dimensions. In this dissertation much of the focus was on the NE behaviors, and cognitive and affective dimensions did not get that much of attention. Different data collection and analysis methods, as well as different data units could have provided different kinds of results, as well as extend the opportunities to approach the NE concept from different perspectives. For example, the empirical research in this dissertation was limited to Twitter and other social media channels and outlets could have provided alternative approaches to NE concept.

Given online brand communities' highly participatory and co-creative nature and consumers' propensity to experience negative brand experiences, more research is needed to examine stakeholders' behavioral reactions to negatively engaged brand experiences and how they manifest in different environments and issue arenas. For example, by measuring engagement at Tier 3 (e.g., Johnston and Taylor 2018) could deepen the understanding related to NE. In fact, future studies should measure engagement on indicators such as social embeddedness and awareness – as well as on indicators of action, change, and outcomes at the social level. These could provide new information on NE's outcomes and impacts for the greater good. For example, measuring engagement behavior from a contribution perspective (e.g. retweets and likes on Twitter) could increase the knowledge of engagement mechanics in social media. Moreover, brand marketing, big data, and social innovations are also suggested

as possible future research directions of engagement (Calder et al. 2016), also applicable to NE research.

Future studies should also apply alternative methodological approaches – such as interviews and surveys, or even computer-assisted methods, such as brain imaging, during engagement encounters. These could increase understanding of NE on affective, cognitive, and behavioral levels. Analyses of different internal and external stakeholders – such as employees, customers, and consumers – also could provide new information on NE and how it emerges at different levels of the organization. It also would be interesting to see whether NE is targeted more often at organizations and brands, or toward individuals instead.

SUMMARY (IN FINNISH)

Tämän väitöstutkimuksen perusteella voidaan päätellä, että sidosryhmien negatiivinen osallistuminen ja sitoutuminen sosiaalisessa mediassa on monimuotoista. Ilmiötä voidaan sekä positiivisesta että negatiivisesta näkökulmasta luokitella kolmen ulottuvuuden tasolla: tunnetasolla, ajattelun tasolla ja käyttäytymisen tasolla. Nämä tasot jakautuvat puolestaan lukuisiin alatasoihin. On myös olennaista huomioida ja erotella toisistaan itse osallistujat ja sitoutujat, sekä osallistumisen ja sitoutumisen kohteet.

Negatiivinen osallistuminen ja sitoutuminen on dynaamista ja usein siihen liittyy eri osapuolia, erityisesti sosiaalisessa mediassa. Ilmiön tarkastelussa voidaankin puhua sekä *osallistamisesta* ja *sitouttamisesta* että *osallistumisesta* ja *sitoutumisesta*. Osallistujat ja sitoutujat, eli usein eri sidosryhmät kuten kuluttajat pyrkivät omalla viestinnällään vaikuttamaan ko. toiminnan kohteeseen. Osallistaminen ja sitouttaminen ovat puolestaan organisaation tai brändin keinoja houkutella näitä sidosryhmiä osallistumaan ja sitoutumaan toimintaansa jollain tapaa positiivisesti, esim. omissa sosiaalisen median kanavissaan. Mikäli tämä sidosryhmien viestintä onkin organisaation tai brändin kannalta negatiivista, voidaan puhua negatiivisesta osallistumisesta ja sitoutumisesta. Tässä väitöskirjassa sidosryhmien negatiivinen osallistuminen ja sitoutuminen voitiin käyttäytymisen tasolla määritellä pohdinnan ja aktivoitumisen johdattelemana tapahtuvaksi näkyväksi toiminnaksi, joka ilmenee epätoivottujen tunteiden ja ajatusten kautta, aiheuttaen negatiivisia tai haitallisia seurauksia organisaatiolle tai brändille.

Väitöskirjassa esiteltiin negatiivisten sidosryhmien luokittelu perustuen negatiivisen viestinnän julkisuuteen ja sidosryhmien tunteiden tasoon negatiivisen viestinnän osana. Lisäksi luokiteltiin negatiivista osallistumista ja sitoutumista sosiaalisessa mediassa käyttäytymisen tasoilla perustuen negatiivisen viestinnän tunneintensiteettiin, sekä negatiivisen viestinnän kohdistamiseen ja orientaatioon.

Tämän väitöstutkimuksen tärkeimmät johtopäätökset liittyvät negatiivisen viestinnän havainnointiin ja sen kohtaamiseen sosiaalisessa mediassa. Organisaatioiden tulisi omassa toiminnassaan huomioida negatiivisen viestinnän intensiteetti ja syyt toiminnan taustalla, sekä mitoittaa oma toimintansa sen mukaisesti. Oikeaoppinen toiminta negatiivisen viestinnän yhteydessä voi luoda selkeän kilpailuedun muihin ja parantaa yrityksen mainetta ja imagoa.

Jatkossa tutkimusten tulisi tarkastella negatiivista osallistumista ja sitoutumista eri konteksteissa ja erilaisilla menetelmillä. Lisätutkimusten avulla ilmiön havainnointiin avautuu mahdollisuuksia sellaisilla organisaatioiden viestinnän johtamisen eri tasoilla, joihin tässä väitöstutkimuksessa ei kenties vielä vastattu.

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I

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II

CONSUMER EMOTIONS AND E-COMMERCE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Consumer Emotions and E-commerce: A Literature Review

MATIAS LIEVONEN

Abstract The purpose of this paper is to take a look at the current state of the research related to consumer emotions in the context of electronic commerce (e-commerce). As the popularity of online shopping is constantly growing, the author performed an integrative literature review of 66 journal articles on e-emotions (consumer emotions visible in an online environment) and classified the articles into four groups. According to the analysis of the groups, consumer emotions are present at various points of the e-commerce relationship from pre-purchase intentions to post-consumption behavior. Based on this literature review, directions for future research in e-emotions are also introduced.

Keywords: • Emotions • Electronic Commerce • Online Shopping • Literature Review •

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1   Introduction

Recent statistics show that consumers are more committed to electronic commerce (e-commerce) than ever. The prediction is that 46.4 % of all Internet users worldwide will purchase products online in 2017 (Statista, 2017). The growing interest in e-commerce also means that varying consumer emotions are likely involved before, during, and after online shopping encounters. Emotions are important during these encounters as alongside trust they attempt to moderate the relationship quality between the consumer and the service provider of online services (Sanchez-Franco & Rondan-Cataluna, 2009). New technologies can enhance the shopping experience, but long-lasting evidence shows that online users are individuals with unique characteristics and emotions (Burke, 2002). Almost two decades ago, scholars indicated that affective and emotional dimensions truly matter as part of the consumer decision-making process on- and offline (Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999).

Emotions differ from similar concepts, such as sensations and feelings, and emotions "are also initiated by some particular objects or events, real or imagined, and they tend to motivate particular kinds of behavior" (Robinson, 2008, p. 155). In this paper, the focus is on e-emotions, which are seen as emotional states of a consumer that are somehow apparent and visible in an online environment. Consequently, consumer e-emotions matter at multiple levels of the service relationship, including pre- and post-consumption stages. Thanks to the development of technology and the expansion of social networking environments, the online environment has changed drastically in recent years making especially post-consumption behaviors more public. For example, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has a significant role in consumer emotion build-up and affects other consumers' pre-consumption stages (Chu & Kim, 2011). The current development has led to the situation in which communication is also more dynamic and active than ever before (Brodie et al., 2011; Freeman et al., 2010; Luoma-aho & Paloviita, 2010; Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010).

Active interaction between consumers, stakeholders, and organizations is part of the so-called engagement process (Brodie et al., 2013; Brodie et al., 2011; van Doorn et al., 2010). Additionally, online users engage with various objects, such as brands, products, and virtual brand communities (Brodie et al., 2013). These engagement processes are often accompanied by different emotions and behaviors that thus play a central role in e-commerce, as well as in stakeholder relations in general (Luoma-aho & Paloviita, 2010).

Although literature reviews of online shopping motives and intentions (e.g., Monsuwé, Dellaert, & de Ruyter, 2004), as well as of the adoption of computer-mediated services (e.g., Beldad, de Jong, & Steehouder, 2010), exist, there is an emerging need to generalize the current state of the research related to consumer emotions in the context of online shopping. As technology and consumer behavior are changing, management must understand this development and identify possible consumers' and customers' pain points (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Currently, the research related to e-emotions and e-commerce

is fragmented across various fields and disciplines, and a comprehensive understanding of the topic is difficult.

This study responds to this need and is implemented as an integrative literature review. This paper is a preliminary attempt to gather the research literature related to consumer e-emotions in the context of online shopping and the current state of the research across various disciplines—information technology, psychology, communication, and marketing—was synthesized and analyzed. By gathering previous articles published in peer-reviewed journals, the goal in this paper is to classify the literature related to the topic, and through review and synthesis introduce the key findings.

This paper is organized as follows: First, the process of the integrative literature review is introduced. Second, the relevant literature gathered during the process is assembled and the results introduced. Third, the results are combined, and the synthesis and analysis of the literature review are presented. The key findings in the literature are addressed. Finally, the validity and reliability of the study are discussed, and suggestions for future research are provided.

2   Methodology: Integrative Literature Review

This study utilized the integrative literature review method (see Torraco, 2005). Integrative literature reviews balance between less structured descriptive literature reviews and more structured systematic literature reviews (Birmingham, 2000). This method "is a form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated" (Torraco, 2005, p. 356). Although this study was integrative, it followed Fink's (2010) model of systematic literature review consistently to add more validity and reliability.

The first step in Fink (2010) model is to select the research questions. This step is critical because the research questions aim the researcher in the decision-making process and address what kind of articles should be included (Jesson, Matheson, & Lacey, 2011). This study answers the following research questions: 1) According to previous literature, what kind of research and studies have been put into practice related to consumer emotions in online shopping? 2) According to the literature analyzed in this study, what are the recent key findings related to consumer emotions in e-commerce?

The second step was selecting the databases from which to look for literature (Fink, 2010). In this study, the goal was to cover interdisciplinary literature related to emotions in e-commerce across the following disciplines: information technology, psychology, communication, and marketing. The following bibliographic databases were utilized: ABI/INFORM Complete (ProQuest), Business Source Elite (EBSCO), Computer and Information Systems Abstracts (ProQuest), Emerald Insights (Journals) (Emerald), ProQuest Psychology Journals (ProQuest), and PsycARTICLES (the American Psychological Association).

After the databases were selected, search terms were chosen (Fink, 2010). Search terms should frame the topic enough so the appropriate literature can be found. However, the framing should not be too tight (Fink, 2010). The search terms were defined based on the research questions. The literature searches were conducted in February 2017. Advanced or multi-field searches were used in the databases, and the following search terms were applied in order to find relevant literature: emotion* AND online AND shop* OR e-commerce. The search terms were restricted to be present in the key words or subject terms. The author also applied the limitation of the search to peer-reviewed content if this option was applicable in the databases in the advanced search options. The ProQuest and EBSCO databases offered this option and the Emerald and American Psychological Association databases did not offer this option in the advanced search. The input of the search terms in the databases gave the following results: ABI/INFORM Complete (ProQuest), 73 results; Business Source Elite (EBSCO), 13 results; Computer and Information Systems Abstracts (ProQuest), 73 results; Emerald Insights (Journals) (Emerald), 251 results; ProQuest Psychology Journals (ProQuest), 73 results; and PsycARTICLES (American Psychological Association), 1 result.

As can be seen from the search results, all ProQuest databases offered the same amount of literature. The results were also similar in content so the three ProQuest databases were treated as one entity during the review process. According to Fink (2010), the preliminary literature searches usually give many results. Therefore, it is important to screen for articles with certain criteria to find the relevant articles (Fink, 2010). After the searches were conducted in the databases, the practical screen and methodological quality screen (Fink, 2010) was applied by executing following inclusion criteria: peer-reviewed journal articles (also including content from the Emerald and APA databases), published since 2006, and studies related to emotions in the context of e-commerce or online shopping. The following research designs and content were excluded from the review: literature reviews and conference proceedings.

The review (Fink, 2010) was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, the headings and abstracts of the studies were read. Through this, the most likely relevant literature to include in the final review was found as Jesson et al. (2011) suggested. In the second stage, the literature was scanned more thoroughly. At this stage, it was also important to analyze research designs, findings, and conclusions of the studies before deciding what literature should be included for the final review (Jesson et al., 2011). The articles in the review are shown in Table 1 in the next section.

After the literature for the final review was apparent, it was time to synthesize the results (Fink, 2010). These conclusions are introduced in a more specific manner in the following sections, where the content of the review is interpreted and analyzed. The key findings of the studies are also reviewed more thoroughly in later parts of this paper.

3   Results of the Literature Review

After a careful scan of the available literature, 66 peer-reviewed articles were included in the final review. Studies that had interfaces with consumer emotions in the context of e-commerce were included. This was evaluated through keywords, and how, at the same time, the studies focused on the topic in a recognizable way in the research design and/or findings. Articles that did not match the criteria or did not cover the topic clearly enough were excluded from the review.

The literature consisted of studies covering (either directly or indirectly) information technology, psychology, communication, and/or marketing. The articles were classified into four groups: studies related to website design, characteristics, or atmosphere and how they generally affect consumer emotions and behavior; studies related to pre-consumption emotions and predictors of consumers' online shopping intentions and activities, such as the effects of online user reviews; studies related to consumer emotions during actual online shopping encounters, for example, decision making in purchase situations; and studies related to consumer post-consumption emotions and behavior, such as repurchase intention and commitment to eWOM.

In general, recent studies focused on consumer e-emotions during all stages of the (service) relationship. This result supports the assumption that e-emotions are not just restricted to the purchase or buying situation. In fact, consumer emotions and behaviors are under scrutiny in multiple situations. People eagerly read reviews and participate in public discussion before making a purchase decision, and even after the consumption stage, there is a possibility that the experience turns either good or bad. Consumers possibly continue the service relationship, disengage with the service provider (Bowden, Gabbott, & Naumann, 2015), or even engage in eWOM (Chu & Kim, 2011) after e-commerce encounters.

4   Analysis of the Key Findings in the Reviewed Articles

The literature was analyzed in the four groups. The idea was to explore and compare the key findings within the groups and draw conclusions based on these findings. The literature is presented in Table 1. In addition, the most relevant and synthesized key findings of the studies of each group, and the authors, are introduced.

Table 1: Reviewed literature

Group of the reviewed articles	Relevant key findings	Author and year
1) **Studies related to website design, characteristics, or atmosphere and how they generally affect consumer emotions and behavior**	Consumers' emotions influence their perception of atmospheric cues (such as music and color) on websites affecting site attitude, site involvement, and purchase intention. Human images and human brands on websites stimulate higher levels of enjoyment and positive emotions. Product presentation has a significant effect on consumers' emotional responses on websites.	▪ Wang et al., 2014 ▪ Mazaheri et al., 2014 ▪ Mazaheri, Richard, & Laroche, 2012 ▪ Fei-Fei et al., 2009 ▪ Bui & Kemp, 2013 ▪ Zhang et al., 2014a ▪ Davis, Wang, & Lindridge, 2008 ▪ Young & Im, 2012 ▪ Jung-Hwan, Kim, & Lennon, 2009 ▪ Porat & Tractinsky, 2012 ▪ Wu, Cheng, & Yen, 2008 ▪ Ding & Lin, 2012 ▪ Wu et al., 2014 ▪ Jeong et al., 2009 ▪ López & Ruiz, 2011
2) **Studies related to pre-consumption emotions and predictors of consumers' online shopping decisions and activities, such as the effects of online user reviews**	Cultural differences exist between online retailer reputation and retail quality, and how they affect consumer emotional and cognitive reactions and intentions before shopping. If online user reviews are inconsistent, they affect consumers' purchase intention. In addition, positive emotions mediate the relationship between personalization and purchase intentions. Consumer attitude, perceived difficulty of	▪ Zhang et al., 2014b ▪ Pappas et al., 2014 ▪ Lee et al., 2016 ▪ Kim, Yang, & Bu, 2013 ▪ Scholl-Grissemann & Schnurr, 2016 ▪ Yin, Bond, & Zhang, 2014 ▪ Luo et al., 2011 ▪ Kang, 2014 ▪ Peng et al., 2016 ▪ Sharma & Lijuan, 2014 ▪ Quevedo-Silva et al., 2016 ▪ Choi & Nazareth, 2014 ▪ Yen, 2014 ▪ Chen, Wu, & Chang, 2013

	website use, and shoppers' previous experience are also antecedents of purchase intentions. To create an emotional attachment to browsing and increase purchase intention, online retailers should focus on consumer pleasure and community relationships.	▪ Hernandez, Jimenez, & Martín, 2009 ▪ Soto-Acosta et al., 2014 ▪ Jin & Lee, 2014
3) **Studies related to consumer emotions during actual online shopping encounters: for example, decision making in purchase situations**	High-quality web design interface and consumers' product involvement elicit positive emotions during shopping. In addition, consumers' product involvement is important for eliciting positive emotions. Cognitive and emotional responses play a key role in communication through online stores. A linear relationship exists between the level of interactivity provided by an online store and pleasure, which increases the likelihood of purchasing. Enhanced perceptions of human connection and the formation of emotional bonds provide a competitive advantage for online retailers. Mixed emotions are likely to lead consumers to leave the stores.	▪ Chechen et al., 2016 ▪ Richard & Chebat, 2016 ▪ Guo et al., 2015 ▪ Moody et al., 2014 ▪ Bonera, 2011 ▪ Peiris, Kulkarni, & Mawatha, 2015 ▪ Huang & Kuo, 2012 ▪ Yao & Liao, 2011 ▪ Li, Sarathy, & Zhang, 2008 ▪ Ozen & Engizek, 2014 ▪ Kim & Lennon, 2010 ▪ Ballantine & Fortin, 2009 ▪ Hsin & Hsin-Wei, 2011 ▪ Moran & Kwak, 2015 ▪ Penz & Hogg, 2011 ▪ Liao et al., 2016 ▪ Chae & Kun, 2013 ▪ Wang et al., 2007 ▪ Wen et al., 2014

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	Hedonic value drives online impulse buying tendencies.	
4) Studies related to consumer post-consumption emotions and behavior, such as repurchase intention and commitment to word-of-mouth	Positive emotions increase post-consumption satisfaction, which positively affects post-purchase intentions. In turn, negative emotions are an important mediator between dissatisfaction and repurchase intention. Satisfaction and perceived usefulness of a website contribute to individual online shopping continuance intention in the future. Transaction cost advantage, preview, and trust significantly and positively affect satisfaction, which, in turn, influences repurchase intention. Emotions felt after visiting a web store positively influence the perceptions of the website atmospherics that, in turn, influence a set of behavioral variables ending with intention to (re-)purchase. Online shoppers' excitement and positive perceived quality lead to positive word-of-mouth (WOM) and increase the intent to return.	▪ Kuo & Wu, 2012 ▪ Yunfan, Yaobin, & Bin, 2012 ▪ Lu, Lu, & Wang, 2012 ▪ Urueña & Hidalgo, 2016 ▪ Mohamed et al., 2014 ▪ Chou & Hsu, 2016 ▪ Richard & Habibi, 2016 ▪ Jayawardhena & Len, 2009 ▪ Gounaris, Dimitriadis, & Stathakopoulos, 2010 ▪ Kim et al., 2014 ▪ Lim, 2015 ▪ Lin, 2012 ▪ Sharma & Lijuan, 2015 ▪ Vos et al., 2014 ▪ Matute et al., 2016

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As can be seen in table 1, the studies indicated that the research in e-emotions is diverse and versatile. Moreover, the perspectives in these articles were broad and interdisciplinary. The studies explored consumer online emotions, behaviors, and their relations to e-commerce at multiple levels from pre-purchase to post-consumption stages. Next, this paper takes a closer look on the key findings presented in Table 1.

4.1 Website Design Effects on Consumer Emotions

According to the key findings in the articles in Group 1, the website characteristics, design, and atmosphere usually have a major influence on consumers' emotions, as well as on behavior. First, cultural differences exist in emotional responses and perceptions in online shopping environments (Davis et al., 2008; Mazaheri et al., 2014). Emotions are crucial in the perception stage of the atmospheric and characteristic cues of websites and affect consumers' attitude toward the site, level of involvement, and purchase intention (Mazaheri et al., 2012; Porat & Tractinsky, 2012; Wang et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2014a).

Studies show a website that uses images of humans, instead of generic cues, stimulates higher levels of positive emotions and enjoyment (Wang et al., 2014). Music and colors used on these sites also have an effect on the emotional responses of potential customers and users (Bui & Kemp, 2013; Ding & Lin, 2012; Fei-Fei et al., 2009; Wu et al., 2008). Product presentation and store layout are also important as they are emotionally valid characteristics and part of a pleasant shopping experience (Jung-Hwan et al., 2009; Young & Im, 2012). Interestingly, emotional trust has a role in influencing consumers' purchase intention (Zhang et al., 2014), and cognitive and emotional responses play a key role in communication through the websites (López & Ruiz, 2011). In addition, website patronage intention is affected by pleasure, arousal, entertainment, and esthetic experiences consumers receive (Jeong et al., 2009).

4.2 Pre-consumption Emotions

According to the key findings in the articles in Group 2, pre-consumption emotions and expectations of certain e-commerce services are usually influenced by the information available online. The information is often available through user reviews, and through public discussion on social media and discussion forums. However, information overload has a negative effect on consumer emotions and thus affects purchase intention (Soto-Acosta et al., 2014).

Short- or long-term price drops significantly affect how consumers respond in public product reviews (Lee et al., 2016). If online user reviews are inconsistent, cognitive trust and emotional trust are affected (Zhang et al., 2014b). As Zhang et al. (2014a) claimed, emotional trust most likely affects purchase intention (Sharma & Lijuan, 2014). Anxious or enthusiastic online reviews are considered more helpful than angry reviews (Yin et al., 2014). The amount of review manipulation also matters. Consumers usually have a

negative view if online reviews are deceptive or manipulated, but the degree of negativity varies depending on the manipulation tactics (Jin & Lee, 2014; Peng et al., 2016).

If there is proof that the potential e-commerce retailer has had severe trust violations in the past, reconciliation efforts are meaningful when consumers ruminate on their potential options (Choi & Nazareth, 2014). Strategies for repairing trust are effective in building a positive mood, which, in turn, is an important mediator in rebuilding consumer trust (Chen et al., 2013). Additionally, positive emotions mediate the relationship between personalization and purchase intentions (Pappas et al., 2014), and the consumer's experience affects these intentions as well (Hernandez et al., 2009). However, the reconciliation tactics should be moderate, as consumers are affected by the tactics used (Choi & Nazareth, 2014; Peng et al., 2016). Moreover, the severity of the trust violation also affects consumer perceptions (Choi & Nazareth, 2014). How these efforts are documented and presented publicly is also important. Consumers seek this information, and they evaluate the firm's reputation (Kim et al., 2013) so that they can be certain and trust the online shop they are going to use.

To create an emotional attachment to browsing and increase purchase intention, online retailers should focus on consumer pleasure and community relationships (Luo et al., 2011). Hedonic choice options are also important as they are more strongly related to positive emotions and pleasurable experiences than utilitarian online shopping options (Scholl-Grissemann & Schnurr, 2016), even though hedonic performance expectancies are not always positively related to usage intentions (Kang, 2014). Cognitive and emotional responses, as well as the interaction, play a key role in communication through websites (Yen, 2014). This also indicates how tempting the websites look to potential customers and how easy the sites are to use (Quevedo-Silva et al., 2016).

4.3 Consumer Emotions During Actual Online Shopping Encounters

According to the key findings in the articles in Group 3, emotional and rational routes, as well as e-service quality, influence consumers during the online shopping process (Hsin & Hsin-Wei, 2011; Wen et al., 2014). Not only high-quality website design but also consumers' product involvement elicits positive emotions during these encounters (Chechen et al., 2016). Emotions encompass pleasure, arousal, and dominance, and they precede cognition (Richard & Chebat, 2016). Moreover, a linear relationship exists between the level of interactivity provided by an online store and pleasure (Ballantine & Fortin, 2009). Pleasure increases the likelihood of purchasing during the e-commerce encounters (Kim & Lennon, 2010), and at the same time, consumers' previous emotional experiences can affect their behavior (Guo et al., 2015). In these circumstances, using human brands, and utilizing enhanced perceptions of human connections and the formation of emotional bonds, could provide a competitive advantage for online retailers (Ballantine & Fortin, 2009; Chae & Kun, 2013; Wang et al., 2007).

Incidental moods tend to increase process impulsivity in online shopping decisions (Huang & Kuo, 2012). Differences in users' emotional experiences on e-commerce

websites are primarily embodied in subjective emotional ratings and eye movements (Guo eta al., 2015). Mixed emotions are likely to lead to consumers leaving the stores (Penz & Hogg, 2011).

A common issue for e-commerce retailers is that customers are not ready to proceed through checkout procedures. For example, emotions can have a significant impact on the decision to give personal information that is necessary (such as credit card numbers) to complete a purchase on a website (Li et al., 2008). The consumer's online shopping cart might already be filled with various products, but especially first-time customers might be suspicious (Li et al., 2008). Trust and distrust coexist in online e-commerce relationships and can result in ambivalence when they have high attitudinal values represented in emotions, beliefs, or behaviors (Moody et al., 2014). Use of the principles of web usability guidelines and trust indicators will improve consumers' emotion about adopting e-commerce (Peiris et al., 2015) and increase the likelihood that consumers complete the checkout process. The purchase encounter must be as reliable as possible because perceived risk in e-commerce has a significant negative effect on consumers' satisfaction (Yao & Liao, 2011).

Hedonic values and aspects are important for online store users. Hedonic values increase online impulse buying tendencies (Ozen & Engizek, 2014). Interestingly, consumers who are under stress have a higher impulse buying tendency as well (Moran & Kwak, 2015). High or low hedonistic emotional commitment seems to be important to the perception of the usefulness of an online store (Bonera, 2011). For utilitarian products, therefore, it is important to offer a high-quality web design interface and move toward enhancing consumers' product involvement, as they are also crucial for eliciting positive consumer emotions (Chechen et al., 2016; Liao et al., 2016).

4.4   Post-purchase Emotions

According to the key findings in the Group 4 articles, the post-consumption or post-purchase stages are crucial for e-commerce retailers. Customers and consumers tend to expect that after the purchase has been successfully executed, the service relationship will continue, ordered products are received on time, and the product qualities are as expected (Sharma & Lijuan, 2015; Vos et al., 2014). Positive emotions increase post-satisfaction, which positively affects post-purchase intentions as well (Kuo & Wu, 2012).

Emotional stability moderates the relationship between the perceived usefulness of a website and satisfaction in online shopping (Mohamed et al., 2014). Emotions felt after visiting a website positively influence consumers' perceptions of the website atmospherics that, in turn, influence a set of behavioral variables ending with intention to purchase again (Richard & Habibi, 2016). For example, transaction cost advantage, preview, and trust significantly and positively affect satisfaction, which, in turn, influences repurchase intention (Kim et al., 2014). Moreover, satisfaction and perceived usefulness of the website contribute to individual online shopping continuance intention (Lim, 2015; Mohamed et al., 2014). Interestingly, shopping habit increases the influence

of emotional evaluation on continuance, while at the same time habit weakens the impact of rational evaluation on continuance intention (Chou & Hsu, 2016).

Online shoppers' excitement leads to positive word-of-mouth (WOM) and increases the intent to return (Jayawardhena & Len, 2009). Moreover, online service quality has a positive effect on satisfaction, while also influencing, directly and indirectly through satisfaction, consumers' behavioral intentions: site revisit, word-of-mouth communication, and repeat purchases (Gounaris et al., 2010). Although electronic WOM has a positive direct effect on consumers' intention to repurchase, quantity has a negative influence (Matute et al., 2016). Thus, it is necessary to monitor the tone of consumers' public discussion during the post-purchase stage.

If service failures have occurred, the switching intentions of consumers who are affected by negative emotions become stronger when the failures are controllable factors that could be managed and prevented (Lin, 2012). However, if consumers are treated in an appropriate way after the failure, the studies show that distributive justice (such as monetary compensation) increases positive emotions and decreases negative ones (Kuo & Wu, 2012). Furthermore, negative emotions also affect repurchase intention (Lu et al., 2012; Yunfan et al., 2012). In addition, procedural justice, such as received fairness from the company, enhances satisfaction, especially after the consumer has complained and the company seeks service recovery (Urueña & Hidalgo, 2016).

5   Conclusions

This study was a preliminary attempt to group and analyze peer-reviewed journal articles related to consumer emotions in the context of e-commerce. The author aimed at contributing to academia and practice, and introduced four groups of the current state of consumer e-emotions research in the context of online shopping. Groups 1 and 2 included studies on the effects of website design on emotions and studies on pre-purchase emotions. Groups 3 and 4 included studies on actual online shopping encounters and their effects on emotions, as well as studies on post-purchase emotions and behavior. In addition, the author synthesized and analyzed the key findings of the reviewed studies. By recognizing the emerging need and timely challenge of understanding online users and their emotions better, the goal of this paper was to increase the knowledge of the topic, and the paper brought up new perspectives by combining the previous research findings.

According to the analysis, consumer emotions are present at various stages of the e-commerce relationship. For example, website design and characteristics affect consumer emotions, which, in turn, mediate site involvement. In the pre-consumption stage, emotions initiate the purchase intention, and during actual online shopping encounters, positive emotions and trust increase the likelihood of purchases. Post-consumption emotions are also interesting as they mediate the behavioral responses of the consumer, such as word-of-mouth and intention to return to the web store.

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As a preliminary attempt, this study has several limitations. Most noticeably, the search terms and databases used in the process affected the availability of the reviewable literature. Using different search criteria and databases could, naturally, provide alternative results and guide the indications to alternative directions than presented in this paper. However, using similar search terms should be possible in almost any academic database and give similar results.

From a research method perspective, an integrative literature review has advantages and disadvantages. The most recognizable difference between this study and systematic reviews was the analysis. Systematic reviews aim at offering a systematic descriptive review analysis or even perform a meta-analysis (Fink, 2010), while the goal of this paper was simply to combine the current state of the research in a condensed form and reconstitute the current knowledge by utilizing conceptual grouping. The author also wanted to synthesize the results and analyze the key findings with flexibility in mind to add something new to the topic as Baumeister and Leary (1997) suggested. Reviews that were conducted too systematically and mechanically might lack essential details.

Additionally, integrative literature reviews do not have to differ much from systematic reviews, if they follow a clear pattern and utilize a structured methodological grasp (Salminen, 2011). The author accomplished this by implementing Fink's (2010) systematic method diversely during the review process. These actions also added credibility and validity to the study (Dixon-Woods, Booth, & Sutton, 2007). This mixed approach was also flexible, as the literature related to the topic was fragmented across various fields and disciplines. Finally, yet importantly, the author's goal was to follow Torraco (2005) who implied that an integrative literature review has "an important role in stimulating future research on the topic" (p. 364). As the tendency of positive and negative consumer e-emotions in e-commerce is still somewhat unclear, the author suggests that future studies should answer the following research questions: What usually causes positive emotions in the context of e-commerce when customers are motivated and intend to buy from an online store? What emotions are present when consumers have negative e-commerce experiences? What prevents consumers from buying from an online store?

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III

NEGATIVE ENGAGEMENT

by

Matias Lievonen, Vilma Luoma-aho, & Jana Bowden, 2018

The Handbook of Communication Engagement (pp. 531-548)

Negative Engagement

Matias Lievonen, Vilma Luoma-aho, and Jana Bowden

Negative customer and stakeholder emotions and experiences are common in the context of organizations and brands, and they often act as motivators for behavior both inside and outside the organization. Though traditional news criteria have long emphasized negativity, the Internet has further increased the weight of negative engagement, due to the contagious nature of negative communication. We argue that the online environment has made the phenomenon of negative engagement and its consequences more serious, as negative engagement online is more visible and ubiquitous when compared to traditional channels of communication.

Negativity is contagious and consuming for its subjects, yet increasingly common in communication both online and offline. In fact, humans are driven by a *negativity bias,* the tendency to weigh negative incidents as more important than positive events (Baumeister, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). Since individuals are more likely to remember and intensify events and settings that were unpleasant or traumatic when compared to neutral or positive events (Baumeister, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001), it is vital for brands and organizations to understand the drivers and processes of negative stakeholder emotions, and through them, negative engagement.

Negative engagement may occur in both online and offline contexts and it can have both positive and negative outcomes though much of the focus in the literature has been dedicated to the negative outcomes of negative engagement. Negative feedback is often understood as a negative form of engagement, yet "negative feedback seems to serve an important function when it is constructive (rather than detrimental) and when people desire to acquire new habits or improve existing ones (rather than enhance their self-image)" (Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012, p. 36). In fact, often the underlying aim of negative engagement is a positive or at least improved state of affairs.

This chapter takes a future perspective and focuses on negative stakeholder engagement online in the context of organizations and brands, which increasingly face visible forms of negative stakeholder emotions or even fierce "shit storms" (Steinke, 2014). Engagement is considered to be multidimensional, consisting of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). According to Brodie, Ilic, Juric, and Hollebeek (2013, p. 107), "engagement in a virtual brand community involves specific interactive experiences between consumers and the brand, and/or other members of the community." In contrast to this, we understand negative engagement to refer to unfavorable organization or brand-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviors within some form of a relationship. This phenomenon manifests through a stakeholder's

negatively valenced immersion (cognition), passion (affect), and activation (behavior) resulting in focal organization-related denial, rejection, avoidance, and negative WOM (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014).

In practice, negative engagement emerges in diverse settings and contexts. Negative engagement is related to theorized areas of communication studies such as crisis, issues, and activism (Coombs & Holladay, 2012a). In fact, sometimes the borders of these different phenomena are difficult to establish, and one can lead to another. A practical example of this is the activism leaking out the "Panama papers" in 2016. The leak revealed the secret bank accounts of political leaders, causing several crises and resulting in negative stakeholder engagement both online and offline across cultures. Similarly, the Volkswagen exhaust measures manipulation (2016) started out as a crisis leading to several forms of negative engagement that included boycotting and activism.

As online social platforms are becoming increasingly integrated within a networked communications ecosystem, negative engagement can affect both the individuals involved as well as the targets, such as brands and organizations through causing reputational damage (Coombs & Holladay, 2012a; Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011). Online environments enable individuals to transform from passive recipients to highly active contributors sharing their experiences (Friman, Edvardsson, & Gärling, 2001) and cocreating experiences (McColl-Kennedy, Cheung, & Ferrier, 2015). For communities and organizations, negative engagement online may be especially damaging due to the high levels of media and platform connectivity, and as critical messages remain more credible than positive ones, even organizational legitimacy may be challenged. For example, outcomes of negative engagement could potentially include decreased revenue and image losses, and even product or service boycotts are possible (Coombs & Holladay, 2007).

For the sake of clarity, we choose in this chapter the word "stakeholder" to address negative engagement referring to various different stakeholders including employees, customers, shareholders, and all the other groups or individuals important for brands and organizations and their survival. Though these individuals may not acknowledge themselves as stakeholders of their target brand or organization, the concept best conveys the dynamic nature of the communication and the relationship between the actor and the target.

We begin the chapter by defining what negative stakeholder engagement refers to in the context of organizations and brands. We also introduce the development of negative engagement via related concepts. After introducing the concepts, the process and the outcomes of negative engagement are identified. In addition, we propose a categorization of negative engagement based on two dimensions: stakeholder activity and connectivity. To conclude, we discuss the implications of negative engagement.

Negative Engagement Defined

Like positive engagement, negative engagement is understood to be multidimensional, consisting of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014), yet drawing on thoughts, perceptions, and mental connections (Vivek *et al.*, 2012), personal relevance for the engager (Zaichkowsky, 1985), or significance of the target or object (Men & Tsai, 2013). In the marketing literature, negative engagement refers to unfavorable "thoughts, feelings, and behaviours" related to brands and organizations (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014, p. 62). It is viewed as a holistic representation of negative thought processes and feelings of stakeholders. Hollebeek and Chen (2013, p. 2) suggest that this kind of engagement process results in organization or brand-related "denial, rejection, avoidance, and negative word-of-mouth."

Negative engagement in the public relations literature from the organizational perspective has been defined as an "experience-based series of participative actions where negative issues concerning an organization or brand are publicly discussed" (Lievonen & Luoma-aho, 2015, p. 288).

From the perspective of the individual engaging, it has been argued to occur in response to an individual stakeholders' "threat appraisal" including the nature of the negative experience and the extent and intensity of dissonance that is experienced at an individual level (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). Consequently, negative engagement is considered to be premeditated and emergent as a dedicated behavior toward the focal issue. In this sense, negative engagement goes beyond plain immersion and mere disengagement, as it involves a clear target and stimulus, arises from anger, and results in deliberate, motivated, and targeted negative action (Kuppens, van Mechelen, Smits, & de Boeck, 2003).

Building on Bowden, Luoma-aho, and Naumann (2016), negative engagement manifests through the active and spirited spread of negative WOM recommendation, co-opting others to adopt a particular attitudinal and/or behavioral position about a provider, the development of deeply negative attitudes, as well as potential retaliation and revenge behaviors. Negative engagement has a target, making it of central relevance for brands, organizations, and individuals. Furthermore, the previous literature suggests that stakeholder engagement with an organization is often a relatively long process (Bowden-Everson & Naumann, 2013).

Related Concepts and the Development of Negative Engagement

Engagement theory is a mid-range theory within the marketing and communication literature and applies generally across contexts, both online and offline. Although forms of negative engagement (such as cognitive and affective and especially behavioral elements) may vary across online and offline contexts, most research on engagement stems from the online environment due to its measurable nature.

The disciplines most relevant for definitions of negative engagement include communications, marketing, public relations, economics, and psychology. Negative engagement is different from the more passive state of disengagement and from positive expressions of engagement. Customer disengagement reflects a passive but weak negative orientation toward a focal object or relationship that manifests when customers physically or emotionally distance themselves from the focal object or relationship (Bowden *et al.*, 2016; Goode, 2012). On the other hand, negative engagement refers to the negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and the associated disdain and activated anger that stakeholders may express toward the focal object or relationship (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014). To encapsulate, negative engagement has a more visible, active, and stronger nature than disengagement and it includes broader dimensions and meanings than individuals merely posting negative feedback.

The roots of negative engagement can be found in the academic disciplines focusing on human interaction: interpersonal psychology and organizational behavior (e.g., Dishion, Nelson, Winter, & Bullock, 2004; Nordahl, Janson, Manger, & Zachrisson, 2014). This literature suggests that negative engagement involves negative cognition and emotion coupled with active behavioral resistance and avoidance of a focal object. Academic discussion around negative engagement has also focused on customer behavior and on individual efforts related to negative behavioral responses (Hollebeek & Chen, 2013, 2014; Park, Eisingerich, Pol, & Park, 2013; Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010).

Table 36.1 presents the development of negative engagement over time. It introduces the concepts that are closely related to the phenomenon of negative engagement in the academic literature. The contribution of each concept to negative engagement is also explained. Though negative engagement has been categorized in different ways (see, e.g., Hollebeek & Chen's (2014) categorization of cognitive, affective, and behavioral), we report findings from the negative engagement literature according to three nonexclusive, overlapping levels: emotions, messengers, and acts. The levels of focus matter, as they clarify the theoretical points of view of a certain literature related to negative engagement. Here emotions refer to individual emotions that are

Table 36.1 The development of negative engagement

Decade	Concepts related	Authors	Field	Contribution to negative engagement	Level of focus
1970s	Customer exit, customer voice	Hirschman (1970)	Economics, business research	Negative experiences lead to exit, voice, or loyalty; loyalty seen as positive, voicing both positive and negative, exit as negative	Emotions, messenger, acts
1980s	Negative behavioral responses, publishing negative information, public expression of negative emotions	Fiske (1980); Turner (2007); Coombs and Holladay (2007); Simola (2009); Chen, Tsai, and Chuang (2010)	Psychology, public relations, communication management, business research, social behavior and personality research	Reduce dissonance; self-expression; warn others	Emotions, acts
	Placing blame on someone or something	Stein and Levine (1990); Coombs and Holladay (2012b)	Psychology, communication management	Attribution to other(s) in order to absolve psychological disequilibrium	Acts
1990s	Negative word of mouth, active and spirited negative word-of-mouth recommendations	Naylor (1999); Naylor and Keiser (2000); Halstead (2002); Zeelenberg and Pieters (2004); Wetzer, Zeelenberg, and Pieters (2007); Coombs and Holladay (2007); Lee, Park, and Han (2008); Wuyts, Dekimpe, Gijsbrechts, and Pieters (2010); McColl-Kennedy, Sparks, and Nguyen (2011); Hollebeek and Chen (2013)	Consumer behavior, psychology, marketing, communication management, electronic commerce research	Consumer voicing behavior as a source of information to influence and deter others from use	Emotions, acts
	Customer retaliation, revenge behaviors	Huefner and Hunt (2000)	Consumer behavior	Unheard customers may take revenge	Emotions, messenger, acts

2000s	First-stage complaining behavior	Huppertz (2003)	Consumer behavior	First-stage complaining behavior includes complaints voiced to seller as well as other behaviors such as negative word of mouth and exit; Those consumers who find it easier will more likely to complain	Acts
	Seeking justice through public complaining, public manifestation	Davidow (2003); Huppertz (2003); Van Doorn *et al.* (2010); Brodie and Hollebeek (2011); Brodie *et al.* (2011, 2013)	Consumer behavior, service research	Achieve interactional, distributive, and procedural justice	Acts
	Brand sabotage, sabotage behavior, attempts to hurt the service provider	Zeelenberg and Pieters (2004); McColl-Kennedy, Sparks, and Nguyen (2011); Kähr, Nyffenegger, Krohmer, and Hoyer (2016)	Business research, marketing	Malice can be the sole aim of brand saboteurs	Acts
	Negative electronic word of mouth (eWOM)	Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler (2004); Lee *et al.* (2008); Mangold and Faulds (2009); Chu and Kim (2011); Sedereviciute and Valentini (2011); Chen and Lurie (2013); Pfeffer, Zorbach, and Carley (2014); Kim *et al.* (2016)	Interactive marketing, electronic commerce research, business research, advertising, strategic communication, marketing communication, computer science	Seek remedy and alleviate level of dissatisfaction in online environment, warning others online	Emotions, acts

Table 36.1 (*Continued*)

Decade	Concepts related	Authors	Field	Contribution to negative engagement	Level of focus
	Political pressure, political engagement, civic engagement	Cooper (2005); Dahlgren (2005); Ihlen and Berntzen (2007)	Public administration research, political communication, communication management	Collective participation aiming at deliberation, collective actions including array of interests and networks, developing common (civic) identity and generating public spheres	Acts
	Activism, anger activism, anticorporate activism	Turner (2007); Simola (2009)	Public relations, business research	Anger empowers new forms of activism online	Emotions, acts
	Negative online reports and reviews, negative online consumer reviews	Lee *et al.* (2008); Chen and Lurie (2013); Smith, Juric, and Niu (2013)	Electronic commerce research, marketing	User-generated content empowers contributors to co-opt others to a similar point of view	Emotions, messenger, acts
	Antibrand sites	Kucuk (2008); Krishnamurthy and Kucuk (2009)	Brand marketing, business research	Antibrand sites target negative focus on specific, targeted brands and the sites use negative visual expressions, memorable domain names, and they are often used to exchange negative experiences. The sites even organize boycotts and lawsuits against the brands	Messenger, acts

	Customer rage, customer's angry voice	McColl-Kennedy, Patterson, Smith, and Brady (2009); McColl-Kennedy, Sparks, and Nguyen (2011); Surachartkumtonkun *et al.* (2013)	Business research, retailing (marketing)	Rancorous rage (disgust, contempt, resentment) expressed through nonverbals to express dissatisfaction and retaliatory rage (ferocity, malice, fury) to achieve retribution and revenge	Emotions, messenger, acts
	Boycotting, boycott communication	Van Doorn *et al.* (2010)	Service research	Avoidance and public boycotts force the target to notice	Acts
2010s	All manifestations beyond exit, ceasing to purchase, and disengagement	Van Doorn *et al.* (2010); Brodie *et al.* (2013)	Service research	Distancing, detachment and disassociation, reducing relevancy of focal object	Acts
	Engagement spectrum: informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, or empowering	Grant, Dollery, and Kortt (2011); Herriman (2011)	Business research, community engagement research	Enhancement of participation of target audience	Acts
	Stakeholder participation, involvement, co-opting others to adopt a particular attitudinal and/or behavioral position about a provider	Brodie *et al.* (2011); Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2012)	Service research, marketing	Cognitive, affective and behavioral deepening of connection, persuasion, and ownership	Messenger, acts

(*continued*)

Table 36.1 (*Continued*)

Decade	Concepts related	Authors	Field	Contribution to negative engagement	Level of focus
	Negative stakeholder interaction in social media; Undiscovered stakeholders in social media	Sedereviciute and Valentini (2011); Johansen and Nielsen (2011); Pagani and Mirabello (2011); Chu and Kim (2011); Hansen, Arvidsson, Nielsen, Colleoni, and Etter (2011); Heinonen (2011); Sashi (2012); Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, and Pihlström (2012); Champoux, Durgee, and McGlynn (2012); Smith *et al.* (2013)	Strategic communication, corporate communications, electronic commerce, advertising, technology communications in computer and information science, consumer behavior, management research, business research, marketing	New, undiscovered (online) stakeholders could generate a threat for organizational legitimacy	Messenger
	Stakeholder being negatively present in an online environment; Any negative interaction between stakeholders and organizations also beyond the services	Hollebeek and Chen (2013); Brodie *et al.* (2013).	Product and brand management (business and marketing), service research	Stakeholder's negative online presence could harm the brands and companies involved; Negative stakeholder presence might not necessarily be product- or service-related	Messenger, acts
	Hate speech	Oboler (2013)	Computer science	Apart from single individuals, hate speech could also be targeted at parties and different groups of people, even organizations; Hate speech is often insulting and occurs without a proper reason	Acts

Brand-related denial, rejection, and avoidance; Unfavorable brand-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; Negative brand attitude, the development of deeply negative attitudes	Hollebeek and Chen (2013, 2014)	Product and brand management (business and marketing)	Attempts to convince and/or convert others to the same set of negative beliefs; Venting of negative emotions, seeking of social support from like-minded constituents	Emotions, acts
Trolls, trolling	Bishop (2014); Buckels, Trapnell, and Paulhus (2014)	Communication, sociology, psychology	Trolls fulfill their own unhealthy and pathological needs; Trolls purposely mislead conversations and public discussions online, and could cause harm for individuals and organizations	Messenger, acts
Negatively valenced engagement	Hollebeek and Chen (2014)	Product and brand management (business and marketing)	"Exhibited through consumers' unfavorable brand-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviors during focal brand interactions"	Emotions, messenger, acts
Hateholders, hateholder behavior	Luoma-aho (2015)	Communication, public relations	Hateholders have a clear target and cause that can be used as an excuse for their public behavior	Emotions, messenger, acts

visible (e.g., customer anger or rage, public expression of negative emotions, customer retaliation), messengers refer to individuals or stakeholders involved (e.g., hateholders, trolls), and acts refer to behavioral responses and actions (e.g., negative electronic WOM, negative reviews). The fields and concepts appear in chronological order where the first occurrence of a specific related concept is located in a certain decade, and followed by similar but later introduced concepts.

As shown in Table 36.1, even though negative behavioral responses such as customer exit and voice (Hirschman, 1970) and negative information publishing (Fiske, 1980) have been recognized in the academic literature for decades, the power of stakeholder revenge (e.g., Huefner & Hunt, 2000) and public interaction of customers (e.g., negative WOM) (e.g., Naylor, 1999; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004) have gained more scholarly attention later on. Recent WOM research has confirmed that negative information has a much higher propensity for being shared amongst stakeholder networks because it is more salient to consumers than positive information (McColl-Kennedy, Sparks, & Nguyen, 2011; Park & Lee, 2009). Similarly, this is related to the exponential increase of online interaction between organizations, stakeholders, and customers (e.g., Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011; Brodie *et al.*, 2013; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004), which has initiated completely new forms of negative interaction such as trolling (e.g., Bishop, 2014; Fosdick, 2012), and created often ignored negative stakeholder groups such as organizational *hateholders* (Luoma-aho, 2015).

Process Nature and Outcomes

Like positive engagement, negative engagement is understood to be a process by nature. In general, similarly to positive forms of engagement, negative engagement is evoked by individuals' experiences or other types of triggers (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Vivek *et al.*, 2012) leading to the actual engagement behaviors (Brodie *et al.*, 2013; Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Vivek *et al.*, 2012). Building from insights from the consumer and customer engagement literature, we determine the negative engagement process to entail several stages. The triggers for negative engagement include perceptions of poor performance, unethical behavior, dissatisfaction, and a lack of perceived distributive, interactional, and procedural justice, and these triggers may arise from both direct and indirect experiences with the focal organization (Brodie *et al.*, 2013). In a parallel stream of research on cocreation, Frow, Payne, Wilkinson, and Young (2011) identify 10 forms of discordant behaviors that antagonize and frustrate stakeholders. These range from provider dishonesty, information misuse, and privacy invasion to unfair customer favoritism, misleading, or lock-in contracts and financial exploitation. These actions can cause stakeholders to retaliate through complaining, the spreading of negative WOM, and a range of more generalized misbehaviors.

Since negative engagement involves premeditated, activated, and dedicated expressions of negativity throughout various aspects of a focal relationship, stakeholders are highly committed to achieving impactful detrimental outcomes (Hollebeek & Chen, 2013, 2014; Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010). The recent literature on negative engagement suggests the contempt felt toward a focal relationship leads negatively engaged stakeholders to engage in destructive punitive behaviors and these may include co-opting other stakeholders to disengage from, avoid, or boycott the focal organization primarily through the highly activated spread of negative WOM (Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2013). In this sense, then, unlike the more passive form of disengagement, negative engagement involves a collective orientation whereby the stakeholder deliberately seeks to involve others in an active, dedicated, and even destructive attack. Often the objective is to achieve the reclamation of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and a sense of control or financial compensation.

In contrast, negative engagement can have some positive outcomes for both the agent and the focal organization. This is because stakeholder feedback, albeit phrased in the negative, is

ultimately directed at a specific issue or problem. From an organizational perspective this highlights specific areas of weakness in performance and in effect provides a stream of "free" market research and innovation. This enables firms to target specific areas for service improvement and also allows organizations to engage in public relations initiatives focused on specific issues identified by stakeholders (Romani *et al.*, 2013).

Categories of Negative Engagement

Though negative emotions or experiences often serve as a starting point for negative engagement, not all stakeholders express their emotions. Such unreported stakeholder anger often stays unrecognized but can help explain instances where unexpected anger seems to spread virally. Passive behavior is usually associated with different consuming actions (e.g., Heinonen, 2011; Muntinga *et al.*, 2011), such as information seeking or reading comments (e.g., Gummerus *et al.*, 2012). The more public the negative engagement is, the more harmful its outcomes for brands and organizations are. As negative engagement also requires motivation and determination (Chu & Kim, 2011; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004), there is a threshold to actually engage negatively. For example, studies of negative emotions show that the negative emotions usually result from a real or perceived injustice or wrong. Sharing experiences and emotions online, however, allows for multidimensional interaction (Chu & Kim, 2011; Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Negative engagement can be categorized as inactive, active, or malice of either low or high connectivity. Table 36.2 presents the categories of negative engagement based on connectivity and activity of the stakeholders who are negatively engaged. As shown in Table 36.2, we propose that the most harmful for organization are the active and hence often contagious forms of negatively engaged stakeholders.

As shown in Table 36.2, as long as engagement stays at the low connectivity levels of private forums or limited audiences, the individual is considered to be either a passive or irate stakeholder, similar to the unresponsiveness of nonpublics (Lee, Oshita, Oh, & Hove, 2014). Overall, the low connectivity stakeholders on level 1 seldom have direct access to the target organization because they share their negativity only privately (e.g., in offline conversations or on private online chats with limited audiences).

A Dormant Resentful Stakeholder on level 2 is inactive yet described by high public connectivity and has the potential to harm an organization. Even though the content the Dormant Resentful Stakeholders reveal is public, they do not have any negative intentions toward an organization (weak negative emotions) and thus cannot be considered active in terms of negative engagement. Similarly to level 1, level 2 stakeholders do not share their negative experiences actively, but instead have a wide variety of forums and audiences available should they choose

Table 36.2 The categories of negative engagement

	Private low connectivity (limited audiences)	*Public high connectivity (unlimited audiences)*
Inactive (weak negative emotions)	Level 1: Passive discontented stakeholder	Level 2: Dormant resentful stakeholder
Active (moderate negative emotions)	Level 3: Irate stakeholder	Level 4: Justice-seeking stakeholder (hateholder)
Malicious (extremely strong negative emotions)	Level 5: Revenge-seeking stakeholder	Level 6: Troll stakeholder

otherwise. On the other hand, an Irate Stakeholder on level 3 is active in terms of negative emotions but is not able to share negative content publicly. The Irate Stakeholder is "dependent" of others in order to get some audience for a public manifestation. Presumably, these stakeholders are not able to gain access to unlimited audiences and, as such, are unable to stir public discussion.

Level 4 Justice-seeking Stakeholders or *hateholders* (Luoma-aho, 2015), are the most damaging to organizations via both tangible and intangible means. Through actions such as content creation and contributing to online discussions (Gummerus *et al.*, 2012; Heinonen, 2011), hateholders cause actual harm (such as reputational damage) to organizations through negative engagement. Moderate negative emotions and justice-seeking behaviors of the hateholders ensure that the public actions stay at plausible levels, and the negative contributions are thus more effective.

Level 5 indicates extremely strong negative emotions, hostile thoughts, and intended malice toward brands and organizations such as revenge-seeking, brand sabotage, online crime, and even bullying (Bishop, 2014; Hardaker, 2010; Kähr *et al.*, 2016). However, extremely strong negative emotions often decrease the credibility of these stakeholders, which also impedes them to successfully implement their retaliatory actions. Often revenge seekers and trolls intend to cause harm or impress their peers (Bishop, 2014), but they may also be motivated by political, financial, or ideological gain (Bishop, 2014; Fosdick, 2012). Level 6 of Trolling often contains false information, and sadistic, psychopathic, narcissistic, and manipulative characteristics have been associated with online trolls (Buckels *et al.*, 2014). However, trolls are sometimes difficult to notice in online environment, and separating them from genuine stakeholders (such as hateholders) remains a challenge.

Communication and Response Strategies Related to Different Forms of Negative Engagement

The triggers of negative engagement shape the choice and style of communication from both sides. The theories on crisis communication and response strategies could be drawn on to explain which strategies best meet the different category stakeholders. Previous research suggests that a well-matched reaction from the brand or organizational side to the negative engagement behavior may actually result in a better relationship between the actor and the target than even before the incident (Hocutt, Bowers, & Donavan, 2006). Crisis response strategies refer to the selection of words and actions to rectify the negative situation, and they can be drawn on to understand communication related to organizations' and brands' reactions to negative engagement. Coombs and Holladay (2007) note that communicated responses to crises aim at reputation cultivation via influencing the attributions related to the negative event and changing the existing perceptions about the organizations as well as reducing the negative affect generated. Depending on the type of the crises, the organization or brand attacked may choose to follow (Coombs & Holladay, 2007, pp. 301–302):

1 low accommodation strategies (e.g., denial or scapegoating),
2 moderate accommodation strategies (excuse, justification), or
3 high accommodation strategies (apology and compensation)

The most efficient of these to turn negative engagement to more positive are the high accommodation strategies. Findings on crisis response strategies of organizations to negative engagement and crises highlight that doing nothing is a common option for corporations. Recent European data suggest (Zerfass, Moreno, Tench, Verčič, & Verhoeven, 2013) that among the selections of (a) Information strategy, (b) Sympathy strategy, (c) Defense strategy, (d) Apology strategy, and

(e) Sit out strategy, the European organizations and brands most often resort to the nonemotional strategies such as information, defense, or sit out. This would indicate that brands and organizations are ill-equipped to address the negative emotions associated with negative engagement and are hence leaving potential crises unresolved.

On the whole, earlier studies show that unsuccessful response strategies are still an obstacle for organizations to overcome, especially in the online environment. Future research should look into more effective ways to manage negative engagement. Further, the emotional processes of stakeholders in various stages of the service relationships require more attention, as do the potential targeting of negative engagement. In addition, more research is needed on the efficient response strategies for organizations confronted by various and potentially harmful engagement behaviors, such as sabotage, disengagement, and online trolling.

Conclusions

Negative engagement has steeply increased on the scholarly agenda along with the introduction of real time and social media, though negative experiences and emotions are as such not new phenomena. The roots of negative engagement were shown to stem from several different disciplines, with a common focus on negative emotions and behaviors. The studies ranging from psychology and sociology to communications, PR, business, and marketing research showed that negative engagement behaviors varied from exit to writing negative reviews, extending to more severe forms of engagement such as organizing antibrand sites and implementing large-scale boycotts. Our categorization based on activity and connectivity of negatively engaged stakeholders serves as a starting point to better understand negative engagement in the context of brands and organizations, and enable organizations to construct necessary communication strategies. In practice, organizations should actively monitor stakeholder discussions both online and offline, and be encouraged to participate in the interaction between various stakeholder groups despite their strong emotions.

Though much of the focus has been on the negative consequences of negative engagement, not all negative engagement is harmful, and some is needed to enable a more just society and democracy. By raising their voice, stakeholders could bring up unheard issues and stir up the public discussion. In fact, negative stakeholder engagement could have constructive elements and result in innovation and improvements in organizations. For example, negative issues concerning a brand or an organization might not be fixed without negative stakeholder engagement actually revealing the ongoing issues.

Furthermore, as negativity is contagious, brands and organizations are facing novel challenges in the online environment. In fact, we predict that negative engagement in the future will be increasingly more fake (Lock, Seele, & Heath, 2016; Luoma-aho, 2015) and organized to influence stakeholder opinions toward both ethical and unethical outcomes.

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IV

NEGATIIVISET ASIAKASKOKEMUKSET JA DIPLOMATIA

by

Matias Lievonen, 2018

Negatiiviset asiakaskokemukset ja diplomatia

Matias Lievonen

Tässä artikkelissa kerrotaan, kuinka negatiivisten sidosryhmien edustajat verkossa eritellään toisistaan ja milloin organisaation tulisi osallistua negatiivisiin asiakaskokemuksiin liittyviin keskusteluihin digitaalisissa ympäristöissä. Lisäksi tarkastellaan miten niin sanottu kuuntelemisen arkkitehtuuri hyödyttää organisaatioita negatiivisen viestinnän yhteydessä. Kappaleen lopussa annetaan myös viisi diplomatiaan pohjautuvaa neuvoa negatiivisen viestinnän kohtaamiseen.

Johdanto

Diplomatiaa tarvitaan kasvavissa määrin asiakassuhteiden hallinnassa. Tämä näkyy monella tapaa digitaalisissa verkkoympäristöissä, joissa yritykset ja organisaatiot ovat vuorovaikutuksessa asiakkaidensa ja muiden sidosryhmiensä kanssa yhä useammin. Digitaalisen vuorovaikutuksen lisääntyessä myös negatiivisen viestinnän määrä korostuu. Näin ollen negatiivisten viestien tunnistaminen ja niihin oikeaoppisesti reagoiminen ovat nykyisin kiinteä osa yritysten ja organisaatioiden viestintää sosiaalisessa mediassa ja netin keskustelufoorumeilla. Diplomatiataidot ovat erityisesti negatiivisten asiakaskokemusten yhteydessä myös koetuksella ja näissä tilanteissa asiakkaiden ja erilaisten sidosryhmien kuunteleminen muodostaa merkittävän osan diplomatiataitojen toteuttamista käytännössä. Verkkokeskustelijoiden kuuntelemisen ohessa eri keskustelijoiden havainnointi ja keskustelun sävyn aistiminen ovat myös olennaisia negatiiviseen keskusteluun osallistuvan viestintäammattilaisen taitoja.

Negatiivinen viestintä digitaalisissa ympäristöissä ja negatiivisten sidosryhmien kategoriat

Asiakkaiden sitoutuminen tiettyihin brändeihin, yhdessä luominen ja sidosryhmien erilaiset osallistumisen muodot ovat merkittävä osa nykyaikaisten organisaatioiden digitaalisia toimintaympäristöjä, niin hyvässä kuin pahassa (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014; Brodie, Ilić, Jurić & Hollebeek, 2013; Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić & Ilić, 2011). Nykyisin keskustelu onkin verkossa hyvin aktiivista ja tästä johtuen suuresta massasta on tarpeen erotella tietyt ryhmät ja keskustelut toisistaan. Varsinkin negatiivisen viestinnän yhteydessä organisaatioiden tulee olla erityisen tarkkana sen suhteen, mihin keskusteluihin ollaan osallistumassa ja millaisia sidosryhmiä keskusteluihin osallistuu. Sidosryhmien erotteleminen toisistaan on tärkeää, koska positiivinen ja negatiivinen viestintä vaativat erilaista huomiota keskustelun sävystä riippuen ja verkkokeskusteluihin osallistumiseen kuuluu olennaisena osana keskustelijoiden tunnistaminen. Taulukossa 1 kategorisoidaan sidosryhmien negatiivista osallistumista (*negative engagement*) digitaalisissa verkkoympäristöissä jakamalla negatiiviseen

viestintään osallistuvien sidosryhmien edustajia eri ryhmiin negatiivisten tunteiden voimakkuuden ja verkostoyhteyksien mukaan.

Taulukko 1. *Negatiivisen osallistumisen (Negative Engagement) kategoriat* (Lievonen, Luoma-aho & Bowden, 2018)

	YKSITYINEN TOIMINTA, VÄHÄINEN YHTEYS VERKOSTOIHIN (rajoitettu yleisö)	JULKINEN TOIMINTA, HYVÄ YHTEYS VERKOSTOIHIN (rajoittamattomat yleisöt)
JOUTILAS (vähäisiä negatiivisia tunteita)	**Ryhmä 1**: Passiivinen, tyytymätön sidosryhmän edustaja (Passive Discontended Stakeholder)	**Ryhmä 2**: Uinuva, harmistunut sidosryhmän edustaja (Dormant Resentful Stakeholder)
AKTIIVINEN (kohtalaisia negatiivisia tunteita)	**Ryhmä 3**: Vihastunut sidosryhmän edustaja (Irate Stakeholder)	**Ryhmä 4**: Oikeutta ja/tai hyvitystä tavoitteleva *vihajoukon (hateholders)* edustaja, (Justice-seeking Stakeholder)
ILKEÄ, PAHANSUOPA (voimakkaita negatiivisia tunteita)	**Ryhmä 5**: Kostoa tavoitteleva sidosryhmän edustaja (Revenge-seeking Stakeholder)	**Ryhmä 6**: Provosoiva, harhauttava ja vahinkoa aiheuttamaan pyrkivä sidosryhmän edustaja, ns. *trolli* (Troll Stakeholder)

Taulukon perusteella sidosryhmien negatiiviseen viestintään osallistumista voidaan kategorisoida erottelemalla kuusi erilaista ryhmää. Taulukossa esiteltävällä yksityisellä toiminnalla viitataan julkisten keskusteluiden ulkopuolella tapahtuvaan viestintään ja vähäinen yhteys verkostoihin tarkoittaa sitä, että sidosryhmän edustajien negatiivinen viestintä ei tavoita yleisöjä merkittävissä määrin. Julkinen toiminta puolestaan viittaa viestintään, jota käydään julkisilla foorumeilla ja hyvä yhteys verkostoihin tarkoittaa sitä, että sidosryhmän edustajien negatiivinen viestintä tavoittaa julkista yleisöä organisaation kannalta merkittävissä määrin. Yhtenä esimerkkinä erityisen hyvistä yhteyksistä verkostoihin voidaan pitää julkisuuden henkilön omaa sosiaalisen median sivustoa, jolla on paljon seuraajia. Sosiaalisen median luonteesta johtuen on kuitenkin täysin mahdollista, että myös henkilöt, joilla on vähemmän seuraajia ja jotka eivät muuten ole julkisuudessa esillä, voivat saada julkisuutta viestinnälleen verkkoyhteisön tuen ja sisältöjen jakamisen avulla.

Taulukon kategorisointi ottaa huomioon myös negatiivisten tunteiden voimistumisen, jonka voidaan nähdä kasvattavan todennäköisyyttä negatiiviseen viestintään osallistumiseen (katso esim. Donoghue & Klerk, 2012; Surachartkumtonkun, McColl-Kennedy & Patterson, 2015). Negatiivisten tunteiden voimistuessa sidosryhmien edustajat voivat myös siirtyä ryhmästä toiseen. On myös toisaalta mahdollista, että ryhmästä toiseen siirtyminen

tapahtuu yksityisestä julkiseen, jolloin esimerkiksi yhteisön tuen avulla yhteys verkostoihin paranee, vaikka negatiiviset tunteet eivät voimistuisikaan.

Diplomatian tarve vaihtelee

Negatiivisen osallistumisen kategorisoinnin **ryhmässä 1** negatiiviset tunteet pysyvät vähäisenä ja yhteydet julkisiin verkostoihin ovat rajoitetut, jolloin sidosryhmän edustajaa voidaan pitää passiivisena. Tämä vertautuu myös Leen, Oshitan, Oh:n ja Hoven (2014) ajatukseen ei-julkisten henkilöiden välinpitämättömyydestä. Näin ollen sidosryhmän edustajilla ryhmässä 1 on harvemmin suoraa yhteyttä kohdeorganisaatioon, koska he osallistuvat negatiiviseen keskusteluun korkeintaan yksityisesti (esim. keskusteluissa verkon ulkopuolella tai yksityisissä chat-viestittelyissään tuttaviensa kanssa), vaikka saattavatkin olla jollain tasolla tyytymättömiä organisaatioon. Tämän ryhmän kanssa diplomatian tarve on vähäinen, koska ryhmän edustajat voivat olla hyvinkin näkymättömiä. Olennaisinta viestinnän ammattilaiselle onkin tiedostaa, että toimenpiteitä edellytetään vasta siinä vaiheessa, kun negatiiviset tunteet ryhmässä voimistuvat tai jos toiminta siirtyy julkisemmalle tasolle.

Uinuvat, harmistuneet sidosryhmän edustajat **ryhmässä 2** ovat joutilaita, mutta heillä on hyvät yhteydet verkostoihin ja näin ollen piilevää potentiaalia aiheuttaa harmia organisaatiolle. Negatiiviset tunteet tässä ryhmässä ovat kuitenkin edelleen vähäisiä. Sidosryhmän edustajien ei tällöin nähdä kohdistavan suurempia aikeita organisaatiota kohtaan, eikä ryhmää näin ollen pidetä aktiivisena negatiivisen osallistumisen kategorisoinnin näkökulmasta. Samoin kuin ryhmässä 1, ryhmän 2 sidosryhmän edustajat eivät jaa negatiivisia kokemuksiaan aktiivisesti, mutta heillä on kuitenkin käytössään laajempi valikoima julkisia foorumeita ja rajoittamattomammat yleisöt, mikäli he päättäisivätkin toimia toisin.

Ryhmässä 2 diplomatian tarve rajoittuu ryhmän olemassaolon tiedostamiseen, keskustelun seuraamiseen ja mahdollisesti vähäiseen osallistumiseen. On kuitenkin hyvä huomioida, että ne viestinnän ammattilaiset, jotka tiedostavat tämän ryhmän potentiaaliset verkostoyhteydet ovat askeleen muita edellä. Tällöin ollaan valmiimpia toimimaan, mikäli negatiiviset tunteet yllättäen voimistuvat ja toiminta siirtyy kategorisoinnin seuraaville tasoille.

Vihastunut sidosryhmän edustaja **ryhmässä 3** on aktiivisempi negatiivisten tunteiden näkökulmasta, mutta ei kuitenkaan pysty jakamaan negatiivisia viestejään suuremmalle yleisölle. Ryhmän 3 sidosryhmän edustaja onkin "riippuvainen" muista saadakseen yleisöjä julkiselle mielipiteelleen. Oletettavasti näillä sidosryhmillä ei ole pääsyä rajoittamattomiin yleisöihin ja he ovat näin ollen voimattomampia synnyttämään julkista keskustelua.

Tämän ryhmän kanssa diplomatian tarve kasvaa jossain määrin. Viestinnän ammattilaisen näkökulmasta olennaista on tiedostaa ryhmän edustajien kohtalaiset negatiiviset tunteet, mutta myös samaan aikaan huomioida tällä tasolla vallitseva keskustelun vähäisempi julkisuus ja rajoitetummat yleisöt. Rajoitetummat yleisöt eivät kuitenkaan saa olla perusteena tämän ryhmän sivuuttamiselle. Valmiutta reagoida keskusteluihin tulee nostaa kohonneesta negatiivisuudesta johtuen, keskustelujen monitoroinnin määrää tulee lisätä ja

osallistumisaktiivisuuden tulee myös olla suurempi, vaikka keskustelun julkinen näkyvyys olisikin vähistä.

Vihajoukot ja maineriskit

Ryhmän 4 oikeutta ja/tai hyvitystä tavoittelevat negatiivisen sidosryhmän edustajat ovat kaikkein haastavimpia organisaatioille sekä aineellisesta että aineettomasta näkökulmasta. Nämä sidosryhmät edellyttävät myös usein aktiivista vuorovaikutusta organisaation puolelta. Tähän ryhmään kuuluvia voidaan kutsua myös nimellä *hateholder,* eli organisaation *vihajoukon* edustaja (Luoma-aho, 2015). Vihajoukot tuottavat negatiivisia sisältöjä osallistumalla julkisesti verkkokeskusteluihin ja olemalla aktiivisia esimerkiksi sosiaalisessa mediassa (Gummerus ym., 2012; Heinonen, 2011). Vihajoukot aiheuttavat omalla negatiivisella osallistumisellaan todellista harmia organisaatioille esimerkiksi maineen menetyksen muodossa.

Olennaista ja merkittävää ryhmässä 4 on se, että vihajoukkojen kohtalaiset negatiiviset tunteet sekä oikeutta ja/tai hyvitystä tavoittelevat toimet yleensä varmistavat sen, että tämän ryhmän julkinen osallistuminen säilyy uskottavalla tasolla ja negatiivinen viestintä on näin ollen tehokkaampaa ja perustellumpaa myös muun yleisön silmissä. Ryhmän 4 kanssa diplomatian tarve onkin suurimmillaan ja viestinnän ammattilaisten tulee tällöin osallistua aktiivisesti ja läpinäkyvästi mukaan organisaatiota käsittelevään negatiiviseen keskusteluun.

Ryhmässä 5 ilmaistaan voimakkaita negatiivisia tunteita, ilkeitä ajatuksia ja tarkoituksenmukaista pahansuopuutta brändejä ja organisaatioita kohtaan, joka ilmenee kostonhimona, brändin sabotoimisena, verkkorikollisuutena, ja –kiusaamisena (Bishop, 2014; Hardaker, 2010; Kähr ym., 2016). Tässä yhteydessä voidaan puhua myös ns. vihapuheesta tai uusimpien määritelmien mukaan vaarallisesta puheesta, joka yllyttää syrjimään, boikotoimaan, tai toimimaan yksilöitä tai organisaatioita vastaan (katso esim. Dangerous Speech Project, 2016). Kuitenkin, erityisen voimakkaat negatiiviset tunteenpurkaukset usein vähentävät näiden sidosryhmien edustajien uskottavuutta, mikä myös omalta osaltaan vaikeuttaa kostoon ja syrjimiseen pyrkivien toimien toteuttamista, verrattuna esimerkiksi oikeudenmukaisuutta tavoitteleviin vihajoukkoihin. Lisäksi rajoitetut yleisöt heikentävät toiminnan julkisuutta tässä ryhmässä.

Tämän ryhmän kanssa edellytetään erityisiä diplomatian taitoja, koska negatiiviset tunteet ovat kasvaneet voimakkaiksi. Vaikka voimakkaat tunteenpurkaukset heikentävätkin keskustelijoiden uskottavuutta jossain määrin ja vähäiset yleisöt rajoittavat keskustelun julkisuutta tässä ryhmässä, tulee viestinnän ammattilaisten kuitenkin tarkasti seurata keskustelua tälläkin tasolla. Tärkeää on myös toimia proaktiivisesti, korjata mahdollisia virheellisiä väittämiä ja ennen kaikkea ennakoida mahdollinen keskustelun siirtyminen julkisemmalle tasolle.

Harhauttavalla, tuhoisalla tai häiritsevällä tavalla toimivat sidosryhmät, eli ns. *trollit* pyrkivät aiheuttamaan harmia tai tekemään vaikutuksen vertaistensa joukossa (Bishop, 2014). Lisäksi heillä voi myös olla poliittisia, taloudellisia, tai ideologisia motiiveja toiminnalleen (Bishop, 2014; Fosdick, 2012). **Ryhmässä 6** tapahtuva trollaaminen pitääkin usein sisällään väärien tietojen levittämistä ja jopa sadistisia, psykopaattisia, narsistisia ja manipuloivia tunnusmerkkejä on liitetty verkon trolleihin (Buckels, Trapnell & Paulhus, 2014). Näiden

keskustelijoiden pääasiallinen tarkoitus onkin aiheuttaa sekaannusta yhteisöissä, joihin ne ovat vaikuttamassa. Negatiivinen viestintä menee trollaamisen puolelle myös silloin, kun toimitaan verkkoyhteisön yleisiä sääntöjä vastaan, samalla harhauttaen ja häiriköiden muiden keskustelijoiden toimintaa.

Olennaista ryhmässä 6 on huomioida se, että hyviä yhteyksiä verkostoihin ja yleisöihin saavuttavia trolleja on joskus hankalaa havaita ja niiden erotteleminen on vaativaa muista negatiiviseen viestintään osallistuvista sidosryhmien edustajista (kuten ryhmän 4 vihajoukoista). Viestinnän ammattilaiselta edellytetäänkin tällöin kokemusta verkkokeskusteluista ja keskustelujen monitorointiin tulee kiinnittää erityistä huomiota. Vuorovaikutus tulee ensisijaisesti kohdentaa niiden keskustelijoiden suuntaan, jotka ovat trollien harhaanjohtavien viestien kohteena ja samalla näiden tietojen varassa. Suoraan vuoropuheluun trollien kanssa on siis turhaa lähteä. Koska viha leviää vauhdilla erityisesti sosiaalisessa mediassa (Obeidat, Xiao, Iyer & Nicholson, 2017; Ferrara & Yang, 2015) ja keskustelut leimahtavat liekkeihin yllättävän nopeasti (Patterson, McColl-Kennedy, Smith & Lu, 2009; Gladwell, 2001), tulee trollien valheelliset ja harhaanjohtavat väitteet korjata mahdollisimman aikaisessa vaiheessa. Tällöin voidaan välttyä julkisen keskustelun suuntautumiselta väärille urille ja väärien tietojen leviämiseltä laajemmalle, sekä varmistetaan asioiden totuudenmukaisuus. Keskustelu pysyy näin ollen mielekkäämmällä tasolla ja mahdollisesti muihin keskustelijoihin tarttuneet voimakkaimmat negatiiviset tunteet saadaan heikentymään.

Kuuntelemisen arkkitehtuuri

Kuten aiemmin on jo tuotu esille, erilaisten negatiivisten sidosryhmien ja keskustelijoiden tunnistaminen on tärkeä osa negatiivisiin verkkokeskusteluihin osallistumista. Organisaatiosta tulee lisäksi löytyä kykyä ja halua hahmottaa mahdollisia piileviä aiheita, jotka saattavat nousta pinnalle negatiivisina asiakaskokemuksina ja ilmetä negatiivisina viesteinä. Tällöin muun muassa sosiaalisen median keskusteluiden monitorointi korostuu, jotta negatiivisiin viesteihin ehditään reagoida ajoissa ja keskusteluun osallistujat voidaan erotella toisistaan. Monitoroinnin ohessa on tärkeää keskittyä asiakkaiden kuuntelemiseen digitaalisissa ympäristöissä.

Asiakkaiden kuunteleminen palvelee organisaatiota monella tapaa. Esimerkiksi lisääntynyt ymmärrys asiakkaiden tarpeista ja negatiivisista kokemuksista edesauttaa oikeiden toimenpiteiden valinnoissa ja mahdollistaa ennakoivan toiminnan tulevaisuudessa. Kuunteleminen kasvattaa lisäksi organisaatioon kohdistuvaa luottamuksen määrää, kohentaen samalla organisaation mainetta ja asiakastyytyväisyyttä organisaatiota kohtaan (Macnamara, 2016). Tästä huolimatta viimeisimmät tutkimukset osoittavat, että liikeyritykset, julkishallinnon toimijat ja muut instituutiot eivät hyödynnä esimerkiksi sosiaalista mediaa ensisijaisesti asiakkaidensa tai muidenkaan sidosryhmiensä kuuntelemiseen. Sen sijaan organisaatiot keskittyvät edelleen enemmän oman äänensä korostamiseen (katso esim. Macnamara, 2016), vaikka nimenomaan kuunteleminen tarjoaisi oivia mahdollisuuksia organisaatioiden toiminnan kehittämiselle.

Macnamara (2016) ehdottaa ns. *kuuntelemisen arkkitehtuurin* rakentamista, jolloin organisaation kulttuuri, käytännöt, järjestelmät, teknologia, resurssit, taidot ja artikulaatio valjastetaan asiakkaiden ja sidosryhmien kuuntelemiseen. Viestinnän ammattilaisen roolina

tässä kokonaisuudessa on erityisesti viestintäkäytäntöjen, viestintätaitojen ja artikulaation kehittäminen ja näiden integroiminen erilaisten viestintäteknologioiden avulla osaksi laajempaa kuuntelemisen arkkitehtuuria organisaatiossa. Näillä toimenpiteillä myös negatiivisten asiakaskokemusten kohtaamiseen ollaan valmiimpia, kun organisaation toimintaympäristö on rakennettu tämän tyyppisen arkkitehtuurin ympärille.

On tärkeää huomioida, että kaikkia negatiivisia sidosryhmiä ei voi kohdata ja kuunnella samoilla periaatteilla. Kuten edellä on esitetty, vihajoukkojen kanssa on kyettävä verkossa aktiiviseen vuorovaikutukseen ja keskusteluun, kun taas trolleille pyrittävä antamaan mahdollisimman vähän huomiota ja eväitä heidän omien harhauttavien toimiensa edistämiselle (Bishop, 2014; Fosdick, 2012). Yleisesti käytössä oleva ohje "Don't feed the troll" toimii kuitenkin ainoastaan niin pitkään, kun kyseisen sidosryhmän edustajan pystyy tunnistamaan.

Negatiiviset tunteenpurkaukset: Piilevä mahdollisuus?

Vaikka ihmiset ovatkin taipuvaisempia muistamaan helpommin negatiivisia kokemuksia (Bauemeister, Finkenauer & Vohs, 2001) ja lisäksi negatiivissävytteisellä viestinnällään tartuttamaan negatiivisia tunteita digitaalisissa ympäristöissä myös muihin keskustelijoihin (Ferrara & Yang, 2015; Kramer, Guillory & Hancock, 2014; Fowler & Christakis, 2008), voi kaiken tämän takaa löytää myös hyödyllistä tietoa organisaation toiminnan kehittämiseksi. Keskustelun taustojen ymmärtäminen onkin kuuntelemisen ja negatiiviseen viestintään osallistumisen ydin. Lisäksi tiettyjen negatiivisten sidosryhmien kanssa tulisi olla vuorovaikutuksessa, vaikka itse keskustelun sävy saattaa ainakin alkuun olla ikävää ja jopa uhkaavaa. Keskustelun sävyn takaa voi kuitenkin usein huomata, että negatiiviseen kokemukseen perustuva ja oikeudenmukaisuutta tavoitteleva tunteiden purkaminen vihajoukkojen toimesta onkin perusteltua ja se nostaa esille uusia asioita, tarjoten samalla hyödyllistä tietoa organisaatiolle.

Olennainen havainto aiemmista tutkimuksista on se, että asiakkaat jotka valittavat verkossa organisaatiosta, ovat myös halukkaampia ostamaan ja kuluttamaan saman organisaation tuotteita ja palveluita uudelleen (Bijmolt, Huizingh & Krawczyk, 2014). Tämä perustuu ajatukseen negatiivisten kokemusten ja odotusten kääntämisestä positiivisemmaksi, jolloin henkilö kokee saavansa parempaa palvelua kuin aiemmin. Vaikka kulttuurien välillä vallitseekin tiettyjä eroja valituskäyttäytymisessä (Park, Kim & O'Neill, 2014), voi negatiivisten kokemusten esille tuomiseen jopa kannustaa. Mikäli tyytymättömät asiakkaat eivät tuo tai saa ääntään kuuluviin, ei myöskään negatiiviseen kokemukseen ole mahdollista saada positiivisempia sävyjä (Bijmolt, Huizingh & Krawczyk, 2014).

Organisaation toimintaa parannetaan välittömästi puuttumalla niihin epäkohtiin, joita negatiiviset asiakaskokemukset nostavat esille. Mikäli tilanne mahdollistaa läpinäkyvän ja julkisen keskustelun aiheen ympärillä, tarjoaa se mahdollisuuden organisaation maineen ja imagon paranemiselle myös suuremman yleisön silmissä. Tämän vuoksi negatiivissävytteistä keskustelua ei ole aina tarpeen ohjata yksityisiin viestintäkanaviin, vaan keskustelua voidaan käydä julkisilla foorumeilla, jolloin kuuntelemisen ja myötäelämisen taitoja voidaan osoittaa myös muille. Läpinäkyvän viestinnän avulla voidaan siis käsitellä myös negatiivisia aiheita.

Vinkkejä negatiivisen viestinnän kohtaamiseen verkossa

Tässä artikkelissa on kuvattu, kuinka negatiivisten sidosryhmien tunnistaminen ja negatiivisten asiakaskokemusten kuunteleminen ovat olennaisia viestintäammattilaisen taitoja digitalisoituvassa maailmassa. Verkkokeskusteluihin osallistuvan organisaation henkilöstön on lisäksi tärkeää pystyä luotettavasti identifioitumaan verkkoyhteisön keskellä, koska monissa yhteisöissä keskusteluihin voi osallistua lähes kuka tahansa, eikä osallistumiseen välttämättä vaadita kirjautumista tai jäsenyyttä.

Anonyymit keskustelijat luovat omat haasteensa, koska tällöin keskustelijoiden identifiointi on vaikeampaa ja esimerkiksi trollien ja vihajoukkojen erotteleminen toisistaan hankaloituu. Anonymiteetti ei kuitenkaan tarkoita sitä, etteikö verkkokeskustelija voisi olla uskottava viesteissään. Joka tapauksessa organisaation oma näkyvyys ja selkeä erottuminen mahdollisten nimettömien keskustelijoiden joukossa lisää uskottavuutta ja mahdollistaa myös sen, että organisaation näkemykset nousevat paremmin massasta esille. Negatiiviseen viestintään verkossa osallistuville viestinnän ammattilaisille on paikallaan tarjota viisi tiivistävää, diplomatiaan pohjautuvaa neuvoa:

1. **Rakenna sosiaalinen pääoma etukäteen**

   Ennakkoon rakennetulla vahvalla sosiaalisella pääomalla on myönteisiä vaikutuksia erityisesti negatiivisen viestinnän keskellä. Luottamuksen luominen nopeasti ja sen avulla erottuminen on tärkeää, sillä digitaalisissa ympäristöissä uskottavien keskustelijoiden tunnistaminen on haasteellista. Organisaatioiden tuleekin olla valmiita luomaan omia vahvoja vastanarratiivejaan osaksi keskustelua (Stewart, 2017).

2. **Tunnista, havaitse ja luokittele keskustelijat sekä arvioi keskustelun sävy**

   Verkkokeskustelijoiden erotteleminen toisistaan on tärkeää ja keskusteluihin tulee osallistua ajoissa ja ennakoivalla otteella. Tärkeimmät vaiheet ovat keskustelun sisällön havaitseminen, sidosryhmien tunnistaminen ja negatiivisten viestien tarkoitusperän arvioiminen. Tämän jälkeen tulee nopeasti tehdä päätös siitä kannattaako keskusteluun osallistua, vai onko se omiaan synnyttämään lisää negatiivisuutta tai jopa vihaa. Vähimmäisvaatimuksena on kuitenkin se, että virheelliset ja harhaanjohtavat väittämät tulee pyrkiä oikaisemaan.

3. **Huomioi aidot huolenaiheet, muista kuunteleminen**

   Keskusteluja monitoroidessa ja havainnoidessa on tärkeintä erotella keskustelijoiden aidot huolenaiheet ja syyt negatiiviseen viestintään. Kehitä viestintäkäytäntöjä, viestintätaitoja ja artikulaatiota ja integroi nämä erilaisia viestintäteknologioita hyödyntäen osaksi laajempaa kuuntelemisen arkkitehtuuria organisaatiossa. Erityisen tärkeää on osoittaa kuulevansa ne epäkohdat, joita esimerkiksi vihajoukot nostavat perustellusti esille (Stewart, 2017; Macnamara, 2016).

4. **Rajaa viha ja inhimillistä keskustelu**

Tärkeä tekijä negatiivisen viestinnän kohtaamisessa on keskustelun inhimillistäminen. Ihmiset ovat lähtökohtaisesti valmiimpia keskustelemaan oikeiden ihmisten kanssa kasvottomien yksilöiden tai organisaatioiden sijaan. Osoittamalla verkkokeskustelijoille luotettavasti sen, että organisaation viestien takana on ihan oikea ihminen, voidaan negatiivisuuden ja vihan määrää merkittävästi rajata (Stewart, 2017; O'Reilly, 2017). Negatiivisen kokemuksen kääntäminen positiivisemmaksi on todennäköisempää, kun keskusteluun saadaan mukaan inhimillisempiä sävyjä.

5. Säilytä oma tasapaino

Negatiivisuudesta huolimatta keskustelun sävy yleensä pehmittyy ja muuttuu positiivisemmaksi oikeilla toimenpiteillä prosessin edetessä. Negatiivisen viestinnän vastapainoksi onkin tärkeää lukea myös positiivista palautetta ja rohkaisevaa sisältöä ja olennaista on myös huomata, että negatiivisuuden määrää ei ole tarvetta liikaa korostaa. Yleensä vihaisuus koskettaa rajallista joukkoa, jolloin organisaatioon kohdistettu negatiivinen viestintä saattaa lopulta olla hyvinkin marginaalista, mutta toki keskusteluun osallistumisen arvoista.

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by

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