

# The use of social media marketing in order to gain brand loyalty in the food sector



## *Bachelor Thesis*

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## 1. Summary

Nowadays, consumers can experience an information overload, resulting in only buying from the brand that is on top of their mind. It is therefore a challenge for brands to gain this spot, for example with the use of social media marketing. For brands it is important to find out how to effectively use social media marketing in order to gain a customers' loyalty towards a brand, so people buy from your brand.

This research is thus conducted in order to investigate the effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty. Specifically, the following food actors are used as the research area: restaurants, grocery sector and food brands. For a more complete view, also in the field of non-food specific brands the effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty is studied. To do so, a systematic literature review was conducted. A query was used, which resulted in 120 articles. After using the Prisma Flow diagram to show the articles excluded and included, the relevant articles remained (n=15). This article output was used for the results section.

Commitment and trust have been found to be important in the process of building strong relationships, which could grow to customers being loyal to a brand. It has been found that the presence of brands on social media, as well as the extent towards which the content is fun and entertaining depend whether people feel connected towards a brand. Social media marketing and its platforms offers customers the option of two-way communication and interaction. Customers who participate actively, are more likely to create trust and commitment towards a brand.

Furthermore, monetary incentives like discounts or coupons have been found to not be a good way of social media marketing for building relationships and gaining brand loyalty of customers. Moreover, no distinctive differences have been found between the food actors, a couple of methods might work better at some social media platforms than for others, but in general the key is trust and commitment in social media marketing. This study contributes to the research about social media marketing in the food sector by bringing together various concepts of the article output from the systematic literature research, about the effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty.

## 2. Introduction

Nowadays consumers can experience an information overload, because there is a lot of information provided online, especially on social media channels, which makes searching for useful information hard (Lai et al., 2019). The number of messages, together with the rate at which they come and the lack of people to be able process these messages, causes increased communication overload for people (Cho et al., 2011; Edmunds & Morris, 2000; Brandel, 2008; Bawden, 2001). Because of this, there is increased cognitive overload in our society, which likely increases the prevalence of shortcut decision-making (Cialdini, 2009).

Despite the information overload experienced by consumers, social media is confirmed to be important for companies and brands. Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) showed that companies used social media for several reasons, namely: making competitions with prices via for example discounts and communicating daily with their customers. Moreover, they use social media to introduce new products or services. When social media is used (often together with other communication channels) to achieve organizational goals by creating value for stakeholders, it is called social media marketing (Felix et al., 2017; p. 123). Tuten and Solomon (2017; p. 19) validate, according to them social media marketing is “the utilization of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for an organization’s stakeholders”. However, social media marketing is broader than only value for stakeholders. Felix et al. (2017) state that companies can use social media marketing in two ways: (1) they can use it as purely communication tool to provide customers, the community or employees with content, or (2) they use it to establish mutual relationships with stakeholders, making use of the interactive and collaborative potential of social media. In this Bachelor Thesis, social media marketing is utilized as the marketing like described above, applied on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat, which Peeroo et al. (2018) call Social Networking Sites (SNSs).

According to Montgomery and Chester (2009) especially food and beverage companies play an outstanding role in the online marketing sphere. Most of the time the major brands like Coca Cola and McDonald’s develop interactive advertising campaigns, focused on adolescents and youth on various platforms. Besides, Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) concluded that customer engagement is the most important benefit from the presence of companies on social media. Other benefits according to their research were: a broader reach of people, establishing and raising brand awareness and the possibility of a sales boost. Thus the company, social media and the marketing used on it, can have huge benefits.

To overcome the challenge of customers’ overload, while also gaining benefits from social media as a company, it could be important for companies to post effective social media posts to which customers feel engaged. As Fallon (2012) also states, companies need to engage with their customers consistently, to be positioned as the top company in the customers’ minds, in order to be the choice of consumption in the shortcut decision-making (Cialdini, 2009). Companies would want to utilize social media to gain long-term relationships based on emotional bonds, through which they can improve their business performance (Mitic & Kapoulas, 2012; Pagani & Mirabello, 2011; Sashi, 2012). Social media is useful for this, because it is very personal and exchanges personal information, which makes that consumers rely on a trust-based relationship (Fallon, 2012). This relationship can be developed if a consumer responds positively towards advertisements or promotions of a company via social media and online marketing, which will lead to brand loyalty of a customer (Fallon, 2012).

Nevertheless, every organization is able to use social media marketing to connect with customers (Tsimonis & Dimitradis, 2014), so how can one organization be outstanding and benefit from it? That is another struggle for an organization. Furthermore, what means loyalty in this current fast changing

society we live in? How do companies survive for a life time in this environment? They have to be present in the minds of consumers, so these consumers feel related to a brand and can have long-term emotion-based relationships with brands. For brands to establish a (long-term) relationship with a consumer, two elements are needed: trust and commitment (Fallon, 2012), this is based on the commitment-trust theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). As said earlier, consumers rely on emotion- and trust-based relationships with brands if gained via social media, because the information that is being exchanged through these channels is personal information. Moreover, commitment of a consumer to a company is only even possible if a consumer trusts the brand or company and sees no risk in a relationship with this company or brand (Fallon, 2012). If this type of risk or threat is minimized in the mind of the consumer, the amount of trust increases and might lead to further purchases and a lasting relationship (Casalo et al., 2007).

However, consumers also do not want to get overloaded with information on social media, as discussed earlier. There should be a way to address this challenge. This study therefore investigates whether social media marketing can be used to achieve a relationship of trust, commitment and engagement between brands and customers, or even brand loyalty, in the food sector. Even though social media is being recognized as the most powerful medium for building relationships, there is lack of understanding on how and why firms use it and lack of research on how firms may benefit from it (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014; Dong-Hun, 2010). Chester and Montgomery (2008) stated that there have been only few studies investigating online food marketing practices. Moreover, almost all of these are about the effects of online food marketing on consumers' health outcomes, like increased obesity etc. (Chester & Montgomery, 2008; Alvy & Calvert, 2008; Chester & Montgomery, 2008; Moore, 2006; Weber et al., 2006; Fielder et al., 2007; Moore & Rideout, 2007). Social media marketing is important for companies (Fallon, 2012), but the effect of this on brand loyalty in the food sector is not extensively studied. Therefore, the focus of this Bachelor Thesis is to investigate the use of social media marketing by companies in the food sector and the effect on brand loyalty, customer equity, customer-relationship management and engagement.

Concluding, the aim is to investigate and gain insight on how companies in the food sector can effectively use social media marketing, in order to gain and maintain long-term relationships, engagement and brand loyalty with consumers, without causing an information or social overload. The focus will be on this specific subject, combined with a comparison of this concept for three food actors. Namely a comparison of the use of social media marketing and the effect on engagement, relationships and brand loyalty, between food retailers, food producers and restaurants.

### 3. Research questions

The main research questions of this Bachelor Thesis are:

*“What is the effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty for the food sector?”*

And

*“What are the differences between different actors in the food sector (retailer vs. product brand vs. restaurant) in social media marketing and its effect on brand loyalty?”*

Studying these questions in the food sector will provide insights on how social media marketing can be used to gain and maintain brand loyalty with customers in the food sector. Different food actors will be included, namely food producers, food retailers and restaurants.

## 4. Theory

In order to get grip on the effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty, a couple of concepts have to be defined and linked to either brand loyalty or social media (marketing).

### 4.1. Commitment-trust theory

Morgan and Hunt (1994) argue that commitment and trust are key factors that contribute to successful relationship marketing. So when both are present, it results in cooperative behaviours, which positively stimulate the success of relationship marketing. Trust is “when one party has confidence in an exchange partner’s reliability and integrity” (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; p. 23).

Furthermore, relationships characterized by trust have higher perceived value, so parties are more motivated to commit themselves to such relationships (Hrebiniak, 1974). Relationship commitment is the belief that a long-term relationship is with another person is so important that you should invest in maintaining it (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). As the definition of brand loyalty has changed from initially ‘repeat purchases’, to nowadays a more elaborate definition that comes close to Morgan and Hunt’s (1994) definition of commitment.

### 4.2. Brand loyalty

In this Bachelor Thesis we elaborate on the definition of brand loyalty of Morgan and Hunt (1994) mentioned earlier (section 4.1). Van Doorn et al. (2010) define loyalty as the attitudinal relationship with the brand. Hirschman (1970) also conceptualized earlier that loyalty is an attitudinal antecedent of engagement behaviour. Brand loyalty can also be defined more specific as “the existence of an intention to purchase a product or use the same brand or company again in the future, despite all the existing effects and efforts to generate change” (Chamie & Ikeda, 2015; Rapp et al., 2013; Deng et al., 2010; Oliver, 1999). Brand loyalty is defined as having two sides: it means that consumers are willing to do repurchases from the brand, and that consumers are “reflecting a strong internal disposition towards the brand” (Pedeliento et al, 2016; pp. 198-199). The last is also called the willingness to stay with a brand (Oliver, 1997). For example, this can also be addressed with terms like customer equity, “the discounted sum of customer lifetime values” (Kim & Ko, 2012; p. 1481) and customer-relationship management, “the integration of traditional customer-facing activities with emergent social media applications to engage customers in collaborative conversations and enhance customer relationships” (Trainor, 2012; p. 321). So for this Bachelor Thesis, brand loyalty includes repurchases made, and positive relation towards the brand, which makes customers want to stay with the brand and engage or interact online.

### 4.3. Customer engagement on social media

Customer engagement is a psychological process driving customer loyalty (Van Doorn et al, 2010; p. 254; Kumar & Pansari, 2016), so “the customers’ behavioural manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers” (Van Doorn et al., 2010). According to Van Trijp and Meulenberg (1996; p. 271) a company or brand needs to be familiar and recognizable to consumers in order for them to become loyal.

Social media is the online platform through which consumers are connected with each other and with brands (Sheeraz et al., 2017). The study of Sheeraz et al. (2017) found that the core aim of a significant number of consumers in Pakistan is to join online brand communities (68%) which offer information gathering compared to entertainment (18%), networking (9%), and monetary incentive (5%), which could show a similar image worldwide. According to Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993), much of the value of brand equity is a result of the external relationship that brands have with other members of the value chain. Delgado-Ballester and Luis Munuera-Aléman (2010) conclude that brand equity comes from the set of associations and behaviours that people have developed towards

a brand. Ambler (1997) confirms this by stating that brand equity is a set of relationships between brands and consumers.

#### 4.4. Social media marketing

Social media marketing is the marketing communication that occurs via social media platforms, or SNSs, this can cause consumer to brand relationships, which in the long term can result in customer engagement behaviour (Algesheimer et al., 2005). These engagement behaviours go further than consumers transactions and purchases, have a strong focus towards a brand or firm, resulting from motivational drivers (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Very high levels of important factors affecting consumer engagement behaviour, like customer satisfaction, brand commitment and trust, can lead to engagement (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Whereas trust with a linkage to brand is based on consumer's belief that a brand has specific characteristics that are desired by them (Delgado-Ballester & Luis Munuera-Alemán, 2005).

In this Bachelor thesis the specific link of social media marketing and the various concepts related to brand loyalty in the food sector will be researched. This will be done in order to provide information about brand loyalty and social media marketing and how this can be applied in the future for food actors.

### 5. Method

This Bachelor Thesis addresses the topic of social media marketing and its effect on brand loyalty in the food sector, making use of a systematic literature review. Scopus was used to find the most relevant articles, because of its user-friendly approach when searching for scientific literature. The first step of this systematic review was to develop a search query. In order to search efficiently, a query was set up containing relevant keywords and their synonyms, resulting in between 100 and 300 articles. The next stage was to define screening criteria; some articles were excluded resulting in a more manageable article output. A PRISMA diagram was used to schematically show which papers were included and excluded, also containing arguments for exclusion.

Thereafter, the articles were analysed and put into a table in order to provide the results for answering the research questions of this Bachelor Thesis.

Following the conclusion, the limitations of this study and possible future research are discussed.

#### 5.1. Query

For the systematic literature search, three concepts were used, brand loyalty, social media marketing and food actors. For each concept, relevant search terms were defined (section 4) based on the literature review in order to get familiar with the topics before starting the systematic review. This resulted in the following query (Table 1), which was used in Scopus to find relevant results for the systematic literature review:

Table 1 Search terms social media marketing effect on brand loyalty in the food sector	
Concept	Search term
Brand loyalty	"brand loyal*" OR "customer engagement" OR "customer equity" OR "brand engagement" OR "customer-relationship management" OR CRM OR "company loyal*" OR "customer loyal*" OR "consumer loyal*" OR "consumer engagement" OR "customer-brand relationship" OR

	"consumer-brand relationship" OR "customer-based brand equity" OR "consumer-based brand equity" OR "brand equity"
<b>Social media marketing</b>	AND ("social media" OR Facebook OR Instagram OR Twitter OR Snapchat OR "online media" OR "social media marketing" OR "social marketing")
<b>Food actors</b>	AND ((food OR grocer* OR restaurant* OR retail* OR producer OR "online food" OR "food sector") OR (B2C AND food) OR ("business to consumer" AND food))
<b>Language</b>	AND (limit-to (language, "English"))
<b>Type of publication</b>	AND (exclude (doctype, "cr"))

Table 1: Query Specification

One additional boundary condition that was used is language, the results were limited to only English written results, in order to keep it readable. Moreover, the document type "cr", which are conference reviews, is excluded. No additional boundary conditions regarding publication year were used.

## 6. Results

### 6.1. Screening of the papers

The outcome of the database search using the above described query resulted in 120 results in Scopus. In this section the screening criteria are defined and explained to keep an efficient and useful set of results for the literature review. In the search for duplicates, one article was excluded. After reading the abstracts, it appeared that the conference papers were often not accessible and useful, because they were no journal articles, and not peer-reviewed. Therefore, these 22 results were excluded, after this 97 results remained. The articles from which the abstracts could not be obtained online were deleted, which resulted in 77 remaining documents.

Hereafter, the abstracts of the remaining 77 documents were scanned. The rejection criteria to reject documents based on their abstracts, and later based on the whole text, were the following:

- Lack of (enough of) a link with social media
- Lack of (enough of) a link with loyalty
- Lack of food; too specific about a non-food topic
- Usage of social media by consumers instead of companies or brands
- Focus on one specific (limited) group of people



## Prisma Flow Diagram

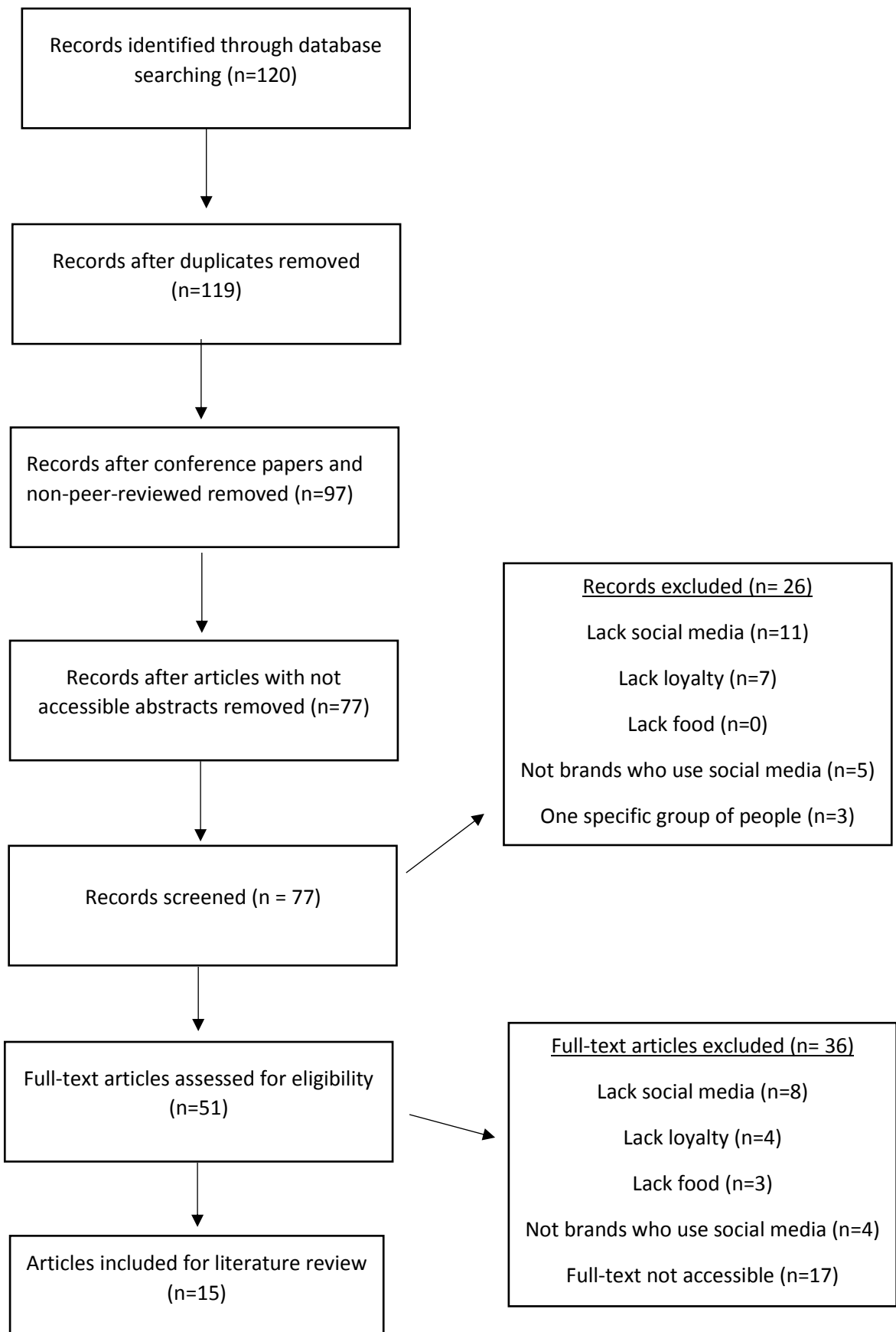


Figure 1: Prisma Flow Diagram

As seen in the Prisma Flow Diagram (Figure 1), 77 abstracts were screened of which 26 documents were excluded based on various criteria. This includes the lack of (enough of) a link with social media (n=11), the lack of (enough of) a link with loyalty (n=7), not the brands or companies who use social media but consumers (n=5), which will not completely answer the research question. When articles contained the subject of social media, but it was about customers who use these channels, instead of companies, the social media marketing of companies cannot be evaluated enough for this Bachelor Thesis, therefore this category of articles was excluded. Lastly, 3 documents were excluded, because they are about one specific group of people, which cannot (easily) be generalized over a larger group of people, or to a Western society. An example from such a specific group was generation y customers in the doughnut retail industry in India (Vasudevan & Senthilkumar, 2017).

Concluding, after reading the 77 abstracts, 26 documents were excluded, and 51 documents remained. As shown in Figure 1, 51 full-text articles were read of which 36 documents were excluded based on the rejection criteria. Documents were excluded, because they lack content on social media (n=8), loyalty (n=4), food (n=3) or are not about brands using social media but consumers (n=4). Another 17 documents were excluded, because the full-texts were not accessible on Scopus. Summarizing, after reading 51 full-texts, 15 articles remain included for the literature review, all published between 2012 and 2019.

## 6.2. Overview systematic literature review results

Table 2 shows an overview of the key results and topics of the articles from the systematic review in alphabetic order.

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Key results</b>	<b>Type of sector</b>
<b>Bianchi &amp; Andrews (2018)</b>	Concepts that might affect loyalty from social media perspective	Engagement of customers towards a brand is influenced by peer communication, credibility and compatibility.	Non-food specific retail industry
<b>Chan et al. (2018)</b>	Social CRM (customer relationship management) in tourism and hospitality	Supply-focused research and demand-focused research are unequally distributed in the field of CRM in tourism and hospitality.	Restaurant industry
<b>Confos &amp; Davis (2016)</b>	Identification of key strategies for HFSS food companies to engage with young consumers online.	Young consumers feel appealed to the branded communication strategies food companies use, leading to new ways to engage with them.	Food brands
<b>Javornik &amp; Mandelli (2012)</b>	Behavioural customer engagement in FMCG industry	Without a value proposition, customers are not willing to engage with Fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) brands.	Fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) brands

<b>Jun et al. (2017)</b>	Investigating the effect between three dimensions, formation of social capital and the relationship with brand trust and brand loyalty in the restaurant industry.	Social interaction tie, community trust and shared vision all contribute significantly to social capital, which in turn has a significant positive relationship with brand trust, which affects brand loyalty positively. No significant link was found with brand trust and negative WOM	Restaurant industry
<b>Kang et al. (2014)</b>	Building consumer-brand relationship with the use of restaurant Facebook pages, including trust.	Social-psychological and hedonic benefits from interactions with brands on Fan pages, make customers more likely to visit the restaurant Facebook fan pages.	Restaurant industry
<b>Kang et al. (2015)</b>	Investigations on the impact of members' active participation in customer-brand relationships in an online community context.	Feeling of trustworthiness and commitment toward a brand was achieved by customers who actively participated on restaurant, Facebook fan pages.	Restaurant industry
<b>Mathur (2018)</b>	How social media effects the trust-commitment theory and that effect on loyalty and word-of-mouth (WOM).	Brand recommendations on social media are important for improving customer-based brand equity. Customers use social media for various purposes.	Non-food specific retail industry
<b>Park &amp; Kim (2014)</b>	Whether social network website influence the relationship customers have with a brand.	Positive relation found between benefits of a Brand's Social Network (BSN) and consumer's perception of the relationship with the brand.	Restaurant industry/Coffeehouses
<b>Peeroo et al. (2016)</b>	Types of interactions between customers and grocery stores on Facebook which can create or destroy value for firms.	Social media empowers customers, has influence on the relationship they have with grocery stores and generates customer engagement.	Grocery sector; Walmart and Tesco
<b>Peeroo et al. (2017)</b>	Analysis of reactions of customers on Facebook pages of grocery stores.	Consumers respond to company posts on social media in order to: express their feelings, to talk with other customers, to communicate with the brand/store and to share their experiences.	Grocery sector

<b>Peeroo et al. (2018)</b>	Challenges and opportunities of social media marketing on Facebook and the effect on customer engagement in the grocery sector	Customers are empowered by social media, their relationships with companies are influenced by it and customer engagement can be generated through it.	Grocery sector
<b>Sashi et al. (2019)</b>	The effect of Twitter activities on advocacy for QSR (=quick service restaurants)	Effort and calculative commitment have a strong influence on advocacy	Restaurant industry/Quick Service Restaurants
<b>Šerić &amp; Praničević (2018)</b>	Effects of consumer-generated content at social media on brand trust, commitment and loyalty in fast food chain brands	Consumer-generated reviews on social media for fast food chains have a direct influence on brand commitment and an indirect influence on brand loyalty.	Hospitality industry
<b>Wongkitrungrueng &amp; Assarut (2018)</b>	Analysis of the relationship between the value of live streaming on customers trust and engagement	Utilitarian, symbolic and hedonic values of live streaming have impact on customer trust and engagement.	Non-food specific retail industry

Table 2: Overview key results

### 6.3. Elaboration key results systematic literature review

Advocacy is defined by Sashi et al. (2019) as one of the most important effects of building customer engagement. According to Walz and Celuch (2010), it is a special case of Word-of-Mouth (WOM) and happens specifically when customers are loyal and delighted. Sashi et al. (2019) found a strong influence of calculative commitment and retention effort towards advocacy. Customers with calculative commitment “have enduring relationships with sellers and are loyal but may not be delighted customers with an emotional attachment to them” (Sashi et al., 2019; p. 8). Retention effort is the effort sellers undertake to retain satisfied customers, so they hopefully can create an enduring relationship with them (Sashi et al., 2019).

Advocacy can be linked to brand loyalty, as according to Sashi et al. (2019) advocacy has to do with the extent to which customers talk positively about a company, promote the company to future new customers, defend the company from negative spread and support it. According to Kang and Hyun (2012) advocacy is key in the relationship marketing of restaurants.

Park and Kim (2014) state that the interactive component of Social Networking, deepens the drive of people to respond on the network. This research shows that the quality of the relationship customers have with the Brand’s Social Network website (BSN) exists and that it has a favourable impact on the Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) and WOM intentions customers have. So, in order to achieve this higher intention in BRQ and WOM, Park and Kim (2014) suggest marketers to go into two-way communication on their BSN websites and be interactive, while at the same time not forming a barricade for their process of selling.

Other customer relationship management (CRM) outcomes include for example: customers' emotional bond with the firm (Hudson et al., 2015) and relationship quality management between firms and customers, which finally turns out to be good for customer satisfaction, trust and commitment (Chan et al., 2018). According Javornik and Mandelli (2012) customer engagement contains various aspects: willingness for repurchase, willingness to engage in WOM, willingness for participating in an online brand community and willingness for brand advocacy. Hudson et al. (2015) have shown that interactions using social CRM has effect on the relationship between customers and brand and customers' willingness to recommend a brand to others. Besides, Chan et al. (2018) conclude that trust of the customer in the hospitality social media platforms drives the commitment of the customer, which has positive impact on WOM and willingness to do repurchases. The last can also be called customer loyal behaviour (Chan et al., 2018).

### 6.3.1. Restaurant sector

Kang et al. (2014) show that restaurant Facebook pages have a strong positive impact on improving consumer-brand relationships. Brand trust and brand commitment, useful for strengthening consumer-brand relationships, can be increased by encouraging the active participation of customers on their Facebook pages (Kang et al., 2014). Brand trust can be seen as the link from active participation to brand commitment, with participation creating reliability of information which leads to trust. This trust leads to stronger customer-brand relationships, together with commitment causing loyalty towards a brand, like the commitment-trust theory describes (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

#### 6.3.1.1 Social media marketing in practice

Jun et al. (2017) emphasize that SNSs bring a new form of capital generation, through the possibility of interacting and building relationships among people. This new form of capital generation is called social capital, which is "the sum of the actual and potential resources derived from a network of relationships" (Jun et al., 2017; p. 379). Jun et al. (2017) found that social interaction, trust and shared vision all contribute to building social capital. Social capital has three functions: it strengthens the interactions among individuals, it reflects a customers' support towards a brand and members can form some type of community of people who have the same interests. Social capital provides the opportunity for consumers to create an identity through which they can distinguish themselves from people outside of the community (Chiu et al., 2006; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). When a Facebook page can fulfil all three functions of social capital, it could become an effective marketing channel for restaurants, which results in an increase of trust between customer and brand, resulting in customer loyalty towards the brand. The "Like" button on Facebook is a good example of a combination of all three functions of social capital (Jun et al., 2017).

Especially strengthening the interaction between individuals in a group or community has been emphasized in other papers (Kang et al., 2015; Dagger et al., 2011; Scanzoni, 1979; Park & Kim, 2014; Kang et al., 2014). Kang et al. (2015) found that active participation of Facebook users had a positive impact on brand trust and brand commitment. This is also supported by the subjective cost-benefit analysis in the social exchange theory (Dagger et al., 2011). This theory argues that consumers are likely to get a feeling of more trust and commitment to the brand when they participate more actively to get information. This comes from the theory (Dagger et al., 2011) which describes that individuals will maintain the relationships when the perceived benefits are higher than the perceived costs. Consumers increase their participation, because they want to receive information or communicate with other members, so this is likely to lead to trust and commitment toward restaurant brands. Besides, according to Scanzoni (1979) peoples' interdependence to maintain relationships leads to people helping each other in a community, because people feel increased

emotional bonds in an active environment. After all, if people become more emotionally bonded to a community, they are becoming committed to it (Kang et al., 2015).

Also, monetary sales promotions have an effect on the relationship between active participation of consumers and their brand trust towards a restaurant (Kang et al., 2015). Park and Kim (2014) state that relationships are becoming less meaningful and tenacious when brands provide monetary offers and repeated offers to consumers. Consumers then namely experience a boredom effect when the repeated offer is less than they got the first time. This can result in negative attitudes towards the brand and create Negative WOM. These one-time monetary promotions can nonetheless create some type of exchange relationship (Park & Kim, 2014). To come back to what actually works for these long-term relationships, Li (2010) suggests BSN websites to become a forum on which opinions about customer needs and wants can be exchanged. Companies can then learn from the consumer conversations, can identify unmet consumer needs and try to adjust or react on it immediately. Therefore, managers should focus on the long-term relationships with customers (Park & Kim, 2014) without monetary promotions, because then customers' active participation would lead to generating more brand trust (Kang et al., 2015). This can be explained by the fact that if people mainly follow and participate on Facebook fan pages in order to receive discounts or vouchers, they engage less strongly and are therefore less likely to build brand commitment and brand trust with the brands (Pitta et al., 2006). Nevertheless, people who have the intrinsic motivation to gain something from the activities of restaurants on Facebook and want to actively participate, are more likely to generate brand commitment and brand trust with the specific brand (Ha & Perks, 2005).

However, social-psychological benefits have been found to have a significant effect on active participation (Kang et al., 2014). This means that consumers are interested in gaining psychological attachment to the network and forming social relationships with other consumers participating on the networking sites of restaurants. If the SNSs appeal to people and they get entertainment and relaxation, they are more likely to spend time on the restaurant Facebook pages (Dholakia et al., 2004).

#### 6.3.1.2 Social media marketing influence

Šerić and Praničević (2018) found strong evidence for the impact of trust and commitment on brand loyalty in the hospitality industry. They define brand loyalty in terms of both repurchases and consumer willingness to recommend a brand. They show that if consumers are satisfied, this positively and significantly influences brand trust, commitment and brand loyalty (Šerić & Praničević, 2018). As Šerić and Praničević (2018) show that all concepts of satisfaction, trust and commitment are positively and significantly connected, this means that all of them have to be considered to understand the impact of social media on brand loyalty. This study furthermore concludes that online reviews on social media can improve the emotional bond customers have with a brand, probably because of the feeling of belonging to the network of the SNS. Nevertheless, brands then do need to be present at SNSs. Park and Kim (2014) have even found out that consumers criticize brands and might feel irritated when brands are not present (enough) on SNSs. Consumers include this as one of the criteria for their judgement of the overall relationship marketing effort of a brand (Park & Kim, 2014). So, consumers brands' presence on SNSs is important for the brands' process of building relationships.

The customers of Quick Service Restaurants (QSR) are found to be often influenced by social media (Hur et al., 2017). Therefore, these companies are actively trying to engage, and communicate with their customers (QSR, 2014). Also according to Kandampully et al. (2015), marketing plays a pivotal role in a restaurant's success. The goal of using social media for restaurants is to engage customers, so they participate more, and become more involved in the business, through which they develop

bonds and thus become loyal to a certain restaurant (Sashi et al., 2019). Mainly because Twitter is used often by consumers for posting messages about Food service Brands (32% of the brand mentions on Twitter; Bach, 2015), it is an important instrument for marketing in the restaurant industry, by attracting and engaging their customers (Kang et al., 2018).

Specifically for restaurants, Chan et al. (2018) conclude that effective social media for small enterprises is defined by: providing regular information, responding to customers, doing promotions, posting entertainment and fun messages and supporting a local community. Jun et al. (2017) advice restaurants to use SNSs for providing their community a special opportunity to try new products. These people can then be offered rewards or compensation when they share their (positive) experience with the new product of the brand online. Jun et al. (2017) further suggest to even give the new product the name of one of the Facebook fan page members to contributed most to the promotion of it. This would make them feel special and even more attracted to the brand.

### 6.3.2 Grocery sector

Competition in the food retail sector is huge and the industry is growing rapidly worldwide, therefore each grocery retailer wants to provide superior customer value in order to gain customer satisfaction (Peeroo et al., 2018). In order to get these levels of customers satisfaction, food retailers increasingly use social media to enhance consumers' shopping experience (Pookulangara & Koesler, 2011). For these reasons Tesco and Walmart have made their own Facebook pages to communicate, interact and engage with their customers to provide superior customer value and improve their relationship with the customer (Peeroo et al., 2018).

#### 6.3.2.1 Social media marketing in practice

The study of Peeroo et al. (2018) found that three customer engagement dimensions were most present on Facebook pages of Tesco and Walmart: cognitive, emotional and behavioural. The study of Peeroo et al. (2018) proves that emotional bonding is important for strong brand relationships.

The benefit of social media for companies is that it provides immediate, widespread and interactive communication between retailers and customers, which is called a triologue (Peeroo et al., 2018). It stands for meaningful conversations between consumers and companies, in which companies engage with customers and create relationship with them (Porter et al., 2011). Customers tend to show their emotional bonding by posting positive comments in which they voice their satisfaction with a product bought. This type of Facebook posts of customers was recognized by the word 'love' (Peeroo et al., 2018) which also provides a considerably competitive advantage (Harridge-March & Quinton, 2009). Furthermore, Peeroo et al. (2018) state that interaction on social media platforms improve the relationship between two parties and personify a brand, so a brand or company feels like a human friend on social media for the customers.

Moreover, Peeroo et al. (2016) state that customer engagement via social media can create value which results in enhanced relationships between customers and Walmart or Tesco. Cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement were the three types of comments that were monitored at the Facebook pages of Tesco and Walmart in the customers' engaging process (Peeroo et al., 2016). The first can be seen in providing help to others or giving advice. Emotional engagement covers posts about feelings and emotions. Behavioural engagement is the case if customers ask for entertainment, additional information or incentives, and when they respond to posts of the stores. These three types can lead to strong customer engagement, however Peeroo et al. (2016) state that engaged customers can also post negative comments, which can harm the company (section 6.3.2.2).

#### 6.3.2.2. Social media marketing influence

Positive comments have been found by Peeroo et al. (2016) to have the aim to inform the company and other customers about services or product with which they have experience, to let know what their opinion is. However, when retailers do not meet what customers expect from the product or service, the relationship is declared over, and customers will go to competitors (Zeithaml et al., 1996).

Peeroo et al. (2017) conclude that one of the reasons why customer engage with grocery stores on social media is to ask questions, for example about the product on the advertisement that Tesco or Walmart had shared. Therefore Peeroo et al. (2017) state that customers perceive Facebook pages of for example Tesco and Walmart as a communication channel with direct response. Besides, customers seem to engage more if the grocery stores post content that involves enjoyment and fun (Peeroo et al., 2017). They furthermore found that customers are engaged in multiple forms when interacting on Facebook pages: cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally.

Normally social media marketing and its interaction can also be helpful for businesses in the process and advertising of new product development (Peeroo et al., 2016). However, for grocery stores, this is not possible as they do not create products, but only sell products from their suppliers to the end-users. Customers can nevertheless be useful by expressing their needs and wants, suggesting products they would like to buy, and they can recommend products in their (online) network.

Building relationships with customers in self-service outlets, like grocery stores, has until the beginning of social media marketing been hard, because there is little possibility to interact with customers in real time (Tarnowski, 2011). By using social media, companies like Tesco and Walmart try to compensate for the lack of interaction within the store (Peeroo et al., 2018). Social media could thus give a solution.

Moreover, customers feel empowered through the use of social media marketing by grocery stores, because they can express their opinions to the online community, by which they can add or destroy value for the company. Especially emotional bonding has been found to be important in the process of building strong brand relationships with customers (Fournier & Avery, 2011).

However, there are also some challenges, like easier spread of negative WOM by consumers and complaint handling (Peeroo et al., 2018). Customers placing complaints or negative messages creates a snowball effect causing others complaining as well (Schulze et al., 2015). Einwiller and Steilen (2015) support this with saying that because the complaint is available online, this negative message is spread easily and others could support this angry customer. For a customer, platforms like Facebook empower him to express his opinion (Peeroo et al., 2018). This type of negative messages can harm the company and its image, customers destroy value of the company by complaining, asking others to boycott and thus endangering relationships between the brand and its customer (Peeroo et al., 2018) this concept is called Customer Enragement (Peeroo et al., 2016).

#### 6.3.3. Food brands

Confos and Davis (2016) show that the type of advertising and branding of food marketers via digital platforms has changed over time. Online environments now give young consumers the ability to be part of brand communities, regardless of restrictions this group has in the real world (Confos & Davis, 2016).

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry sector is defined by Javornik and Mandelli (2012)



as a sector where it is above average hard to gain meaningful interactions with customers. Two types of FMCG products can be distinguished: basic and premium. Premium FMCG products are represented by Lindt, Nespresso and Mövenpick. Engagement with basic FMCG products is low to medium (Leahy, 2011), while for the premium ones this can be high, because of the luxury image they carry along (Javornik & Mandelli, 2012).

#### 6.3.3.1. Social media marketing in practice

They furthermore discovered that food companies used various tactics to persuade their customers to engage with their brand: encouraging purchase behaviour, extending the online experience, viral marketing, providing downloadable items and providing opportunities to customize the brand. Facebook is the perfect environment for this, as it provides the opportunity to generate engaged communities very fast (Confos & Davis, 2016). Facebook uses the mechanism that you see updates of the companies you have liked posts of before, so you do not visit the specific Facebook page to receive information and updates.

For the three premium FMCG products most people were willing to do repurchases if they had positive prior experience with the brand (92,4 percent of all respondents), moreover 93,9 percent of the respondents was willing to spread positive WOM about the products if they were happy with them. However, the aspects of customer engagement which are perceived by respondents as being more behaviourally complex like advocacy and participation to (online) community, show a decreased willingness (Javornik & Mandelli, 2012).

The focus group found out that privacy is an important issue of limited willingness to engage with FMCG brands (Javornik & Mandelli, 2012). Nevertheless, if brands don't aggressively approach customers consumers are willing to look at the brands' page and comment or even participate in discussions. This is specifically the case if their friends have done the same, or if the subject suits the customer's interests.

#### 6.3.3.2. Social media marketing influence

General strategies that work for building relationships with young consumers on online platforms are for example making advertising entertaining or educational, so it generates a positive memorable experience (Brand as educator/Entertainer). Another strategy is using the brand to get and retain social connections on digital media (Brand as social enabler). Furthermore, seeing Brand as a social enabler or seeing Brand as person are strategies that are used with young consumers. The latter focuses on characterizing or animating the brand, the brand is then portrayed as a person, especially on Facebook this provides extra dimensions because people see you as the same kind of Facebook user as they are. According to Confos and Davis (2016) this makes that the brand does not only own human characteristics, but is also able to engage in two-way communication.

Fournier (1998) constructed a theory where the brand is described as "an active contributing member of the relationship dyad", instead of a passive object. The brand is thus seen as behaving interactive which has human characteristics. Before the digital era, personification of brands was done using the characteristics of a brand or its unique personality was designed. Nowadays, consumers can share everything with brands and they can have conversations through posts and tweets immediately. It is not only easier to build such a relationship, but it is also a stronger relationship, that it is a relationship that goes in both directions (Fournier, 1998).

An important reason for consumers to talk online about especially luxury brands is to improve their personal image with the image the luxury brands bring (Javornik & Mandelli, 2012). The three brands of that paper however are not the first choice of the respondents for engaging with brands. According to them, these brands do not represent the 'cool' aspect and do not cost enough and are

perceived enough to be luxury brands. Therefore, they feel like they cannot improve their personal image with these brands, and thus feel less motivated to engage.

The main reason why consumers do not feel attracted enough to engage with these FMCG brands, is that they do not provide enough value to them. Javornik and Mandelli (2012) describe that these brands do not provide enough useful information on their social media sites or websites, and that the consumers do not feel entertained by the content that is provided. Various respondents emphasize they would engage more intensively on social media with Mövenpick, Nespresso and Lindt if they for instance would provide content that entertains them, shows videos of good quality, recommendations by celebrities and active campaigning.

According to Leahy (2011) traditional marketing tools have been proved to be less successful for effective customer engagement. Social media marketing however, can work according to the respondents when a creative approach is used, including meaningful content, relevant videos, celebrity endorsement and campaigns of high quality (Javornik & Mandelli, 2012). Respondents agreed that creative campaigns can create WOM, regardless of the type of product. They emphasized the campaign of Nespresso with George Clooney, which made individuals talk about the coffee and the brand, regardless of their affinity with the brand beforehand (Javornik & Mandelli, 2012).

#### 6.3.4. Non-food specific retail industry

Consumer engagement and consumer confidence on social media, together with perceived usefulness of social media content about a brand, are key predictors of customer-based brand equity, with two factors having influence: consumer responses on social media posts and brand recommendations (Mathur, 2018). Furthermore, Mathur found that consumers use social media for various purposes, because of its multiple sides it offers different opportunities: connect with personal, professional and business networks.

##### 6.3.4.1. Social media marketing in practice

Consumers look for branded content, brand related experiences of others and provide their own opinion on social media (Mathur, 2018). The increased use and popularity of social media platforms among consumers, requires marketers to change their strategy (Mathur, 2018), to still reach consumers and make them participate, involve or even engage with companies or brands. Marketers have to find new ways to create content for the brand on social platforms and try to get response of consumers (Mathur, 2018). By doing this, social media can emphasize the relationships between companies and customers and strengthens these, which is a beneficial role of retail marketing for companies or brands (Paine, 2011).

On social media, especially Facebook, companies or brands can present video clips, pictures and stories in order to attract consumers. However, they do not only use it for Public Relations reasons, they also provide information, offer a place to make a connection and interaction with customers or use social media as customer service and answer their questions (Mathur, 2018).

##### 6.3.4.2. Social media marketing influence

Attitudes have a positive impact on the engagement of customers to engage with brand via social media (Bianchi & Andrews, 2018). They conclude that the concept that has the largest impact on attitude is peer communication, so customers engage more with retail brands via social media if their perception is that many peers are using social media platforms (Bianchi & Andrews, 2018). Compatibility and credibility are also perceived to be important for customers to engage with brands (Bianchi & Andrews, 2018). Compatibility in this sense means that engaging with a specific brand, is

in line with their needs and lifestyle on social media. Credibility can be linked to customers trusting a brand (Bianchi & Andrews, 2018).

Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut (2018) conclude that live streaming has effect on customer trust and engagement. In this paper, live streaming was explained to be useful to demonstrate how products are made and used, to answer customer questions on the spot, to show various perspectives of a product and to entertain customers with activities to encourage them to buy their products.

## 7. Conclusion

The aim of this Bachelor Thesis was to investigate and to provide information about the effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty in the food sector. It is found that trust and commitment are key to the process of building relationships between customers and brands SNSs, which can be also called the commitment-trust theory. This can evolve towards brand loyalty between customers and a brand. Brand loyalty was defined in this Bachelor Thesis including repurchases, interaction of customers with brands on social media and willingness to recommend a brand. The last would then also lead to WOM.

Besides, monetary incentives like vouchers and discounts might work for more short-term purchases at a certain brand, however they are not useful for brand loyalty building. These incentives are only perceived as nice and used by people, because they have to pay less. Another time in the future when a product is needed, people will not explicitly look for the specific brand where they used the discount from last time. Furthermore, when the next offer or discount is not as great as the first, a feeling of boredom is experienced by the consumer. Therefore, these monetary incentives are not useful for brand loyalty, as loyalty is defined as repurchases, which is proved not to happen with this type of stimulus.

The advantage of social media marketing and its platforms is that it provides the option of two-way communication or sometimes called dialogue. It is proven that social media users who participate actively, are more likely to have brand trust and brand commitment. This enhances the emotional bond between companies and customers and will improve the relationship quality. This turns out to be good for customer satisfaction, trust and commitment. The last two are key factors for consumer engagement. So, interactivity on social media platforms can lead to advocacy and more customer engagement and thus more willingness to do repurchases and brand loyalty.

SNSs bring an innovative form of capital generation: social capital. Social interaction among individuals, trust and shared vision all contribute to building social capital, all contribute to social capital, which provides the opportunity for people to create an identity and distinguish from other groups or communities. A social media platform of a brand could use all these three functions in order to become an effective marketing channel for restaurants. It will enhance trust between customer and brand and cause increased brand loyalty. Moreover, customers perceive advantages from SNSs, because they can build communities and talk to others that have the same interests.

From a company it is expected to be participating actively on SNSs, moreover it is expected to interact with its customers, this will make the content more appealing to customers, which makes them likely to spend more time on these social media platforms. If the content is appealing, customers of grocery stores react with enjoyment and fun, so then be emotionally engaged with SNSs. This could therefore also be useful for the other food actors.

Specifically for restaurants, effective social media is defined by: providing information, interact with customers, posting entertainment and fun messages and supporting a local community. It is therefore advised to restaurants to use SNSs for providing their community an opportunity to see

information, try new products and be entertained. For food brands, social media marketing can also be used to involve the customer in the process of new product development, and to engage maybe even mention the name of the most important online contributor on the package of the new product to build more interaction and brand loyalty. However, for grocery stores this is not possible, as they do not make new products themselves. For grocery stores then is advised to stay active, answer customers' questions and thus provide a communication channel with direct response.

No clear differences between the actors in the food chain are found in this study. The articles of the different actors do provide different examples and outcomes, but there are no restrictions of implementing practices of restaurants on the social media sites of grocery stores. Specifically from papers about FMCG products it turned out that customers also use the image of certain brands for improvement of their own image. Social media messages and interaction of customers on the BSN sites is therefore helpful, to spread their new personal image. This paper also concluded that the product or brand should contain enough value for the customer, in order for them to be willing to interact and engage with it. The core finding in all actors of the food chain is that trust and commitment are key to brand loyalty.

## 8. Limitations and Future Research

Almost all the articles use different terminology for the one using social media (customer, consumer etc.) or for the relationship between them and the brand (CRM, brand equity, engagement etc.), which is causing the main reason to be the query that large. The goal of this bachelor thesis is to gain understanding in the effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty. So, it was needed to use different terms for concepts, in order to get multiple articles and thus multiple views. Nevertheless, different terminology also makes it difficult to easily draw conclusions.

Although consumer and customer are two different concepts, they are used like they are interchangeable. However, there is a difference as customers have bought from a company (Dictionary.com, n.d.-a), while consumers use a product (Dictionary.com, n.d.-b), and are not directly the ones who bought it. For further research it could therefore be interesting to see whether there are differences between these roles humans have in relation to the effect of social media marketing on their brand loyalty.

Future research could investigate whether consumer social media posts about brands on their personal pages contribute to brand loyalty. For this Bachelor Thesis a lot of articles in the output of the systematic literature research were excluded because they were not relevant enough. Only the papers about social media posts of companies and brands were a contribution for this research. Therefore, future research could focus on consumer posts, including WOM, as this might represent more about the consumer view of brand loyalty.

Further investigation could also dig deeper into the quantitative research, to see whether the conclusions of this Bachelor's systematic literature review can be supported or contradicted. Hypotheses could be formed using the conclusions of this study, to test whether these findings can be supported by quantitative research. It can be very interesting to test whether some of the finding of this study work when they are applied in the social media marketing of actors in the food sector. For example, multiple posts can be showed and with the use of A/B testing, conclusions about what works the best for brand loyalty in the food sector can be drawn based on practical evidence.

Other research could investigate whether food specific social media platforms could give different outcomes for the process of building customer engagement and loyalty. In this study only the general social media were investigated, but maybe there is a whole social media marketing world going on at food specific social media sites, which easily generate brand loyalty. This could therefore be a reason to investigate this specific kind of social media in other research.

Trust and commitment are proven in this Bachelor Thesis to be important factors for consumer engagement and brand loyalty. It could be interesting to see in which practical cases social media posts cause trust and commitment and thereafter brand loyalty. This research could also investigate ways in which the food sector could easily implement the type of social media posts that work for trust and commitment, and thus consumer engagement and brand loyalty.

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