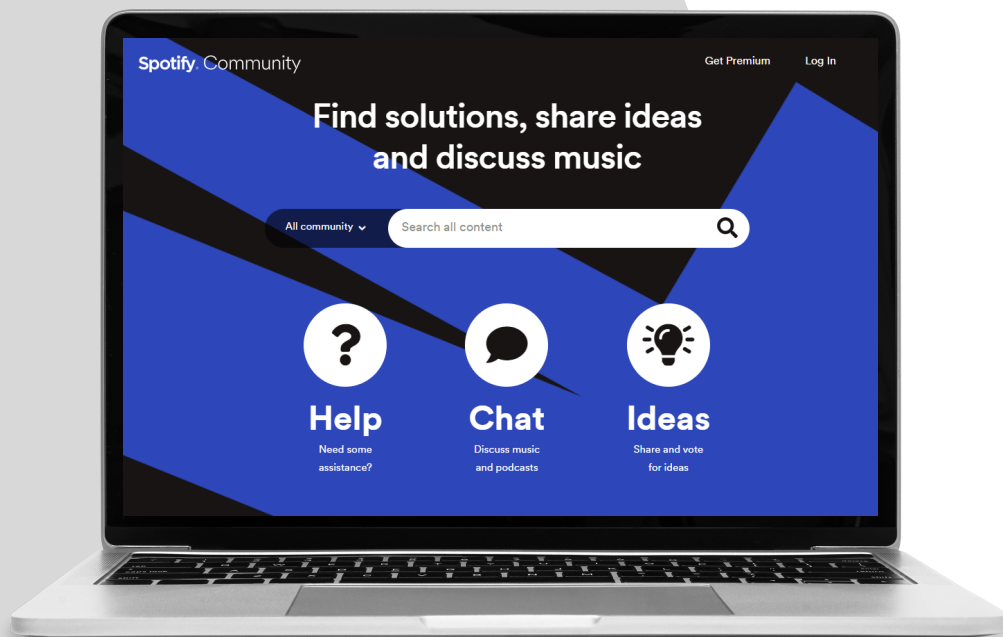




MASTER THESIS

# HOW CAN MEDIA BRANDS MANAGE THEIR ONLINE BRAND COMMUNITIES TO FOSTER CO-INNOVATION WITH CONSUMERS?

The Power of Spotify's Online Brand Community



BY

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## Abstract

Adding to the growing interest in value co-creation and co-innovation literature, this thesis aims to examine the optimal management of consumer behavior in company-initiated online co-innovation communities. In doing so, the study focuses on the motivators to participate in online brand communities, consumer-brand engagement, and consumer-brand relationships as antecedents of co-innovation activities. Based on an extensive literature review of the central themes of online brand communities and value co-creation, a theoretical framework is constructed by applying the Stimulus-Organism-Response model.

Through the distribution of an online survey on various social networks, a total of 160 responses from Spotify users were collected. The collected data was then analyzed using SPSS and the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Model. The findings show that the motivators information, social integration, and empowerment positively impact consumer-brand engagement in virtual brand communities. This, in turn, positively impacts consumer-brand relationships, which ultimately positively influences co-innovation. Further, the findings reveal that the motivators entertainment and remuneration have no significant influence on customer-brand engagement in online brand communities. Besides, consumer-brand engagement and consumer-brand relationship are found to influence as mediators: The first mediates between the motivators and consumer-brand relationships, and the latter between consumer-brand engagement and co-innovation.

This thesis contributes to theory as it provides more knowledge about how value co-creation occurs via online co-innovation communities. Taking a single case study approach limits the results to Spotify's online brand community. Even so, the findings provide general insights into the effective management of online brand communities to foster co-innovation with consumers, thereby improving the brand value.

**Key Words:** Online Brand Communities, Value Co-Creation, Co-innovation, Social Media, Consumer-Brand Engagement, Consumer-Brand Relationships, Consumer Motivations.

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## List of Abbreviations

<i>Average Variance Extracted</i>	<i>AVE</i>
<i>Comma-Separated Values</i>	<i>CSV</i>
<i>Consumer-Brand Engagement</i>	<i>CBE</i>
<i>Consumer-Brand Relationship</i>	<i>CBR</i>
<i>Electronic Word-of-Mouth</i>	<i>e-WOM</i>
<i>Foundational Premises</i>	<i>FP</i>
<i>Heterotrait-Monotrait</i>	<i>HTMT</i>
<i>Online Brand Community</i>	<i>OBC</i>
<i>Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Model</i>	<i>PLS-SEM</i>
<i>Service-Dominant</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Social Media</i>	<i>SoMe</i>
<i>Social Networking Sites</i>	<i>SNS</i>
<i>Stimulus-Organism-Response</i>	<i>SOR</i>
<i>Structural Equation Model</i>	<i>SEM</i>
<i>Variance Inflation Factor</i>	<i>VIF</i>
<i>Word-of-Mouth</i>	<i>WOM</i>

## 1. Introduction

Social media (SoMe) has grown into a central part of society and everyday life. Indeed, social networking sites (SNS) have grown significantly in recent years, resulting in 3.96 billion users in 2022 (Statista Research Department, 2022a). As a matter of fact, the average daily SoMe usage amounts to approximately 2.5 hours among global internet users (Kemp, 2022). From this point of view, it is not surprising that SoMe has become a popular tool for both, consumers and marketers, and is expected to grow even further in the coming years (Statista Research Department, 2022a). Alongside this development consumers are increasingly turning to each other, as electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) is considered to provide higher credibility, empathy, and relevance (Gruen et al., 2006; Mochon et al., 2017).

With the rise of social networks, brands can increase consumer engagement by using online brand communities (OBCs) (Islam et al., 2018). As such, consumers are being enabled to provide authentic feedback and input for brands, and they have the opportunity to interact, as well as exchange ideas, with like-minded individuals (Stanke, 2016; Yu, 2020). This further makes OBCs advantageous for brand managers to gain information on the needs and opinions of their consumer base. Besides providing brand managers with readily available market research material, OBCs create an environment for consumers to connect not only with one another but also with the brands that they admire. In this way, brands can improve both consumer engagement and consumer relationships with the help of OBCs (Ind et al., 2020). Because the platforms allow brands to easily interact with consumers, they further present a golden opportunity for collaboration (i.e., co-creation) between consumers and brands.

Over the last decades, co-creation has changed the way brands market to consumers: they now use and implement ideas from consumers, and benefit from e-WOM as a form of viral marketing (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000; Sarkar & Banerjee, 2021). Like this, value co-creation has become a central part of brand management. Especially in the increasingly dynamic environment consumers get more involved in the co-creation process of brand value (da Silveira et al., 2013). Such involvement in brand value co-creation is beneficial for firms as it can lead to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty (Palma et al., 2018). These developments resulted in a change of focus from a single towards shared ownership of the brand (Swaminathan et al., 2020).

Within the value co-creation process, brands acknowledge the central role of consumers in sharing original ideas for the development of products and services (Sarkar & Banerjee, 2021). This emerging focus on co-innovation mirrors the shift towards more openness of companies (Lee et al., 2012), which ultimately translates into benefits such as increased competitiveness, lower research costs, and increased acceptance and satisfaction by consumers (Li et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2012; Von Hippel, 2005). In particular, the outlined rise of SoMe and the associated increased use of OBCs, offer new possibilities for companies to integrate consumers in brand-value-creation, e.g., in the innovation process (Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Swaminathan et al., 2020). In general, OBCs are a relevant source for co-creating value, especially when the consumers are in control of them (Fournier & Lee, 2009; Stanke, 2016). In such online co-innovation communities companies and consumers can share knowledge and ideas, thereby the engagement in brand-related discussions of community members is a relevant source of innovation (Elia et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020).

Also, the creative industry has not been left untouched by the effects of digitalization and the increased interest of marketers and consumers in value co-creation. In fact, researchers have found that online co-creation activities within the music industry increase consumer trust and engagement (Saragih et al., 2019), resulting in mutual benefits and more positive relationships between the players involved (Choi & Burnes, 2013). With that in mind, this thesis investigates the biggest music streaming service in the world, Spotify (Götting, 2021). The brand is a giant within the creative industry and makes for an interesting case study, as the platform is built on content co-creation with consumers and artists.

### 1.1. Problem Delimitation

Since Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) introduced the idea of co-opting customer competence there has been a rapid growth in research in the field of co-creation (Ind et al., 2013, 2017). However, with this growing research body, the definition of the term co-creation has been blurred, impacting the ability to transform theory into practice (Ind et al., 2017). Besides, the literature has so far not focused heavily on brand value co-creation (Kamboj et al., 2018; Merz et al., 2018). Because the concept of brand value co-creation is not yet fully understood, this results in a largely fragmented research area that offers only little underlying consensus about how co-creation between brands and consumers takes place specifically (Guzmán et al., 2019). Moreover, while a variety of examples and definitions for co-creation can be found, co-innovation as a sub-form remains understudied (Li et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2016). As such, there is missing concrete knowledge

about what motivates customers to engage in OBCs that are targeted towards co-innovation, and about the role consumer engagement and brand relationships play in this regard (Kamboj et al., 2018; Tajvidi et al., 2021).

In more detail, companies are challenged to understand what motivates consumers to engage in co-innovation via OBCs. One main issue is that many brands are currently mismanaging their OBC due to false beliefs about how to use them (Fournier & Lee, 2009). When this happens – and companies fail to listen, act, or give feedback – the consumers might become frustrated as it is central for them to hear what happened to the ideas generated by the community (Ind et al., 2017). Similarly, it is stated that online communities often fail to engage the members in the long term, even if the initial willingness to participate is high (Li et al., 2020; Shulga et al., 2018). Another important point of interest is finding out how to create a platform in which consumers can build positive and long-term relationships with the brand (Helm & Jones, 2010; Merz et al., 2009, 2018). Especially since building closer relationships with consumers is said to increase collaborative innovation activities that result in the development of more relevant and desirable products for the user (Ind et al., 2020). All in all, despite the increased scholarly attention to co-innovation in recent years, more insights into how to effectively benefit from consumer participation in product development are required (Li et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2016).

What is interesting to observe is that co-creative activities are especially important in the music and creative industry (Saragih, 2019). In fact, *“in the music business, consumers can just as well be a ‘creative partner’ in the value-creating process throughout the entire value chain”* (Saragih, 2019, p. 467). Literature provides examples of smaller music labels that successfully use their communities for value co-creation purposes and thereby increasing their revenue and gaining access to intellectual property rights (Choi & Burnes, 2013). However, there seem to be missing examples of how streaming services and bigger media brands can make use of their OBC and integrate users in co-innovation specifically.

## 1.2. Problem Statement

This paper will research the power of OBCs within the creative industry and how they affect co-innovation as an emerging form of brand value co-creation. Furthermore, the focus will be on how brand managers can motivate their consumers to become active members in these online co-

innovation communities. In this regard, customer engagement and brand-consumer relationships are considered antecedents of co-innovation, thus also the focus of the empirical study.

### 1.3. Research Question

The insight gained from the aforementioned problem delimitation leads to the following research question:

*How can brands in the creative industry manage their online brand communities to foster brand value co-creation in the form of co-innovation?*

### 1.4. Aimed Contributions and Objectives

By investigating the stated research question this thesis aims to close the identified gaps introduced above. First, the study aims at contributing to the emerging literature about brand value co-creation by shedding more light on company-initiated online co-innovation communities in particular. Second, in doing so another goal is to investigate how brands can manage their online community to eventually motivate their customers to actively participate in the community site, and ultimately the co-innovation process. Third, the thesis aims to contribute to how brands in the creative industries can use their OBCs to foster long-term online consumer engagement and brand relationships. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, so far only a few scholars investigated consumer behavior in company-initiated online co-innovation communities, especially in the creative and music industry. As a matter of fact, most previous research has focused on SNS like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter (e.g., Akrouf & Nagy, 2018; Kamboj & Rahman, 2016). Overall, the goal is to get a more thorough understanding of how online co-innovation occurs between consumers and brands.

As an exemplary case, the research chooses Spotify due to its relevance and dominance in the music and streaming market. By selecting Spotify, this study aims to gain a better understanding of how larger companies in the creative businesses can effectively use the power given by OBCs to preserve their competitive advantage and relevance to consumers. Additionally, using quantitative methods allows for an easy distribution of the questionnaire to a large number of consumers, faster data collection, cost-effectiveness, and higher representativeness (Queirós et al., 2017). Narrowing down the researched industries (i.e., creative industry) and aspects of value co-creation (i.e., co-innovation) enable a more tangible study and data collection, as it allows the participants to answer the questions more accurately.

## 1.5. Thesis Outline

In order to provide additional knowledge regarding the usage of online co-innovation communities in the creative industries, this thesis follows the structure as follows. First, the literature review provides an overview of existing literature and knowledge about the main concepts, namely OBCs, value co-creation, and co-innovation. Second, the theoretical delimitation introduces the hypotheses and the framework on which the empirical study is based, by applying the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model. Third, after providing an overview of the creative industries and media branding in the modern age, the case company Spotify is introduced. Fourth, the underlying methodology for the research is described, including study design and data collection methods like questionnaire design, measurement scales, target population, and sample size. Fifth, the results of the collected data are analyzed. After that follows a discussion of the results in relation to the stated research question as well as implications for theory and business practices. Finally, the conclusion provides a summary of the thesis, its limitations, and suggestions for future research.

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the research that has been previously done regarding the main concepts and theories of this study. For the collection of literature, several databases have been used to ensure academic and verified sources, mainly Scopus, Emerald, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and the CBS library system Libsearch. Due to the massive amount of research that exists about the keywords brand communities, online brand communities, value co-creation, brand value co-creation, and co-innovation, the most relevant contributions have been identified based on the purpose of the underlying study, the number of previous citations, and the snowball-technique.

First, the concept of OBCs will be explored. Second, the chapter provides a review of available literature about value co-creation, followed by an introduction to consumer engagement, consumer-brand relationships (CBR), and consumer motivations. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a literature review on how value co-creation transforms into co-innovation. Before providing a detailed introduction to OBCs and value co-creation, some key terms will be defined in the following. Like this, the thesis aims to provide a common understanding for the reader and a basis for the research.

### *Brand*

The meaning of a brand has evolved during the past century and has been discussed widely in academic literature (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016). Despite the broad recognition, various definitions of the concept 'brand' exist. In general, brands are considered intangible and one of the most valuable assets of a company (Kapferer, 2012; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Merz et al., 2009). Merz et al. (2009) illustrate how the brand logic evolved throughout the past decades from a simple tool for customers to identify goods, to a dynamic and social process in today's world. Furthermore, Keller and Lehmann (2006) distinguish between three perspectives of brands, i.e., customer-focused, company-focused, and financially focused.

In this thesis, the term 'brand' is considered to be largely determined by the perception of the consumer, as they use it as a tool to identify a company's offering among competitors (Keller, 2001; Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016). Thus, the paper will be based on the definition by Oh et al. (2020) who argue that brands are "*effective carriers of functional and symbolic information about goods, services, and experiences, allowing customers to effectively associate personal meaning to a company's products*" (p. 151). Based on this definition this thesis uses the terms product and brand



interchangeably. Besides, due to the scope of the paper, no distinction will be made between product brands, corporate brands, or service brands.

### *Brand Value*

In general, brand value is the value assigned entirely to a brand (Merz et al., 2018). Gupta et al. (2020) distinguish between three elements of brand value, i.e., emotional value, rational value, and operational efficiency. Being able to provide these different kinds of value to consumers and business partners might ultimately lead to increased demand and competitive advantage (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Merz et al. (2009) argue that generally value is formed by the perception of its recipient, wherefore they describe brand value as “*perceived use value*”, based on the customer’s evaluation of the overall experience with it (p. 329).

Similarly, Merz et al. (2018, p. 80) define brand value as “*the perceived use value of a brand co-created and determined collectively by all actors*”. As previously mentioned, the authors point out that brand value is about the customer perceptions of the experience with the brand, i.e., its use-value. More precisely, brand value takes the perceived value-in-use of multiple stakeholders into account (Merz et al., 2009). Nevertheless, this thesis will focus on the relationship with consumers as this is central to the interaction on OBCs.

### *Brand Management*

Traditionally, brand management focused on product differentiation in the competitive marketplace (Aaker, 1996; Iglesias et al., 2013). With the increasing importance of the service sector after the 2000s, however, a new brand management perspective has been established (Iglesias et al., 2013; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Hence, this thesis departs from the definition by Keller et al. (2008), who see the brand management process as (1) identification and establishment of brand positioning, (2) planning and implementation of brand marketing campaigns, (3) measurement and interpretation of brand performance, and lastly, (4) growth and sustention of brand equity.

### *Customer Value*

Customer value is defined by Holbrook (1994, p. 22) as “*the fundamental basis for all marketing activity*”. Throughout the years, customer value evolved from value-in-exchange to value-in-use (Eggert et al., 2018; Sheth, 2020). The latter means that value for the consumer is created through his or her perceived user experience (Grönroos, 2011). In other words, customer value can be defined through the experiences consumers have with a product, including its technical and

functional quality (Grönroos, 2012). While this definition works as a fundamental basis for understanding the term, it should be noted that value is an individualistic concept and might mean different things to different consumers (Grönroos, 2011). Further, it is important to mention that this thesis will not distinguish between the terms customer and consumer.

## 2.1. Brand Communities

It can be a difficult task to perfectly define brand communities, as from an organizational perspective it is quite a loose concept (Ouwensloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008). In simple terms, brand community members can be described as “*any admirer that has a relationship with another admirer is part of a community*” (Ouwensloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008, p. 573). However, for the purpose of this paper, Muñiz and O’Guinn’s (2001, p. 412) definition is considered to encapsulate the term brand community well as: “*a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand*”. These communities are thus formed by a group of consumers that have developed an emotional attachment to a brand or product (Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001). Depending on the community, the members can all reside within the same geographical community or come from all over the world. The brand community members have some awareness of their membership and feel a sense of duty to their community (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). As the members feel a sense of duty and connection, it enables these communities to influence their members' behavior and perceptions (Algesheimer et al., 2005).

### 2.1.1. Characteristics of Brand Communities

Much like any other community, brand communities display three distinct characteristics, or traditional markers: “*shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility*” (Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001, p. 412).

Shared consciousness refers to the sense that members feel different from other consumers that are not members of their community. This is a core element of brand communities that Gusfield (1978) refers to as ‘consciousness of kind’. The consciousness of kind describes the feelings and emotions that the members of brand communities experience. The sense of belonging, connection with other members, and expression of self-identity (Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001). Bender (1978) describes this sensation as a ‘we-ness’, where the members feel as if they know each other in some way and may even feel a stronger connection to their community members than the brand they admire. This feeling can evolve also if the community members have never met each

other in person. Thus, both offline and online community members can experience this sense of ‘we-ness’. The competitiveness of the marketplace can highlight this feeling within consumers (Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001), a well-known example of this is the rivalry between Coca-Cola and Pepsi admirers. This feeling of group identity, admiration, and avoidance of rival brands can, much like in the case of Coke and Pepsi, create a desirable reputation in society (Black & Veloutsou, 2017).

Rituals and traditions link to the brand communities’ “*shared history, culture, and consciousness*” (Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001, p. 413). In the case of brand communities, these rituals and traditions often come in the form of shared consumption experiences, such as queuing up for the newest iPhone release or the greeting that Saab community members perform when they pass each other on the road (Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001). This can be described as signs of social solidarity (Durkheim, 1965). These acts are social practices that showcase behavioral norms and values that are a part of the community’s identity, both to themselves and others outside the community (ibid.). Some practices are understood by all the community members, while others may only take place within the area where the practices originate.

Moral responsibility describes the sense of duty to the community that the members feel towards one another, as well as the community as a whole (Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001). This shared feeling is what leads to action and cohesion within the group. If the community is threatened in some way, this marker will produce a collective action. An example of a threat to a community would be losing members. Thus, integrating and retaining members are actions displayed to enhance the chances of communal survival (Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001). Another mission that is driven by collective moral responsibility is the act of assisting other members on how to use the product or service. Members may do this without even thinking about it as the feeling of responsibility towards other members can be very powerful (Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001).

### 2.1.2. Drivers of Participation

Looking at consumer behavior for answers to what makes consumers participate in brand communities, Ouwensloot and Odekerken-Schröder (2008) propose four distinct motivators. First, getting quality reassurance from other consumers decreases the level of uncertainty that they might have about a product or service. Second, feeling a higher level of involvement with the brand by sharing their thoughts, experiences, and tips. This motivator serves as a continuation of the consumption experience. Third, is the need for joint consumption, as some products and services

are enjoyed in a group (i.e., board games). Thus, these types of products and services are likely to create an environment for brand communities to flourish (Muñiz & Schau, 2005). Lastly, for the value of the symbolic meaning of a brand, brand identity can be a powerful symbol that expands and carries through to its consumers (Aaker, 1996; Black & Veloutsou, 2017). By showing devotion and admiration to a brand the consumer feels a connection and stronger association with the brand.

### 2.1.3. From Dyad to Triad

Rather than the traditional dyadic brand-customer relationship, brand communities alter the dyad into a triangular social constellation as illustrated in *figure 1* (Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001). Within the communities, the customers have now formed bonds beyond the brand, with other customers. These social links can become, as Cova (1997, p. 307) puts it, “*more important than the thing*”. This means that the relationships formed within brand communities can become more valuable to the members than the brand or product itself. This could be due to the fact that brands, individual

Traditional Model of Customer–Brand Relationship



Muniz and O’Guinn’s (2001) Brand Community Triad

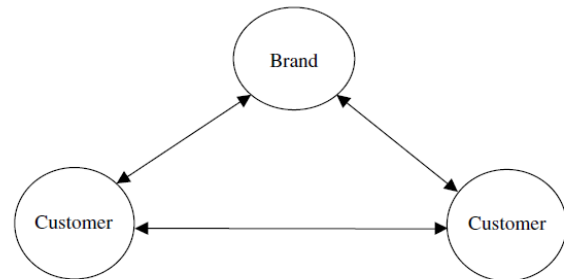


Figure 1: Brand Community Triad by Muñiz & O’Guinn (2001).

identity, and culture, share a strong bond (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). Brand communities are self-selected by their members that come together because they share several things, such as “*a system of values, standards and representations*” (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009, p. 316). The members understand the bonds they create with one another as well as the community.

### 2.1.4. Types of Brand Communities

Brand communities come in various forms and sizes, with varying degrees of participation and levels of co-creation. These communities may conduct themselves in a formal or informal manner, the latter often referred to as brand tribes, and exist both in the offline or online space (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). Furthermore, there is a spectrum of creation and involvement by the brand that the community members admire.

#### Brand Tribes vs Brand Communities

‘Tribes’ and ‘communities’ are terms utilized to reference relationships between consumer groups and brands. Some use the terms interchangeably while others argue that there are slight differences

between the two. What is certain is that brand tribes and brand communities share the same core aspect of the social link and consumer focus. Tribes much like communities come together because of a shared passion and become more than consumers, they become advocates (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). The individuals that join brand tribes share the universal urge of wanting to belong (Mcgee-Cooper, 2005). Literature is not always clear when it comes to identifying the difference between brand communities and brand tribes. These consumer groups may be typified by a level of formality within the group or a degree of enthusiasm towards the brand. This paper adopts Veloutsou and Mafe's (2020, p. 2) definition: “*Groups where members feel part of and a moral responsibility towards the other members are typically named brand communities, while less coherent groupings of consumers are known as brand tribes*”. That is, although the two terms share many similarities, they distinguish themselves in that brand tribes have a looser relationship than brand communities and thus have often shorter lifespans (Jeong et al., 2020).

#### *Company-Initiated vs Consumer-Initiated Brand Communities*

Brand communities may be classified based on who hosts them. They can be created and actively nurtured by brand managers (i.e., company-initiated brand community) to connect with their consumers, build relationships, and get product feedback (Jang et al., 2008). A popular example of this type of community are car and motor vehicle clubs such as Harley-Davidson and Jeep (Algesheimer et al., 2005; McAlexander et al., 2002; Ouwersloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008). These communities have a direct link to the brand involved. The brand managers in some cases are the administrators of the community or may be the coordinators of community gatherings and events (Ouwersloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008; Wang & Ding, 2017). In the online space, company-initiated communities have the advantage that brands can provide easily accessible and detailed information about their products and services (Jang et al., 2008; Wang & Ding, 2017). However, as these communities are curated by employees of the brands, negative reviews or feedback may be removed, which decreases the sense of authenticity and honesty of the community platform (ibid.).

On the other end of the spectrum, there are brand communities that have little to no involvement with the brand (i.e., consumer-initiated brand communities). They could be created and solely facilitated by the community members (Ouwersloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008). An extreme example of this kind of community is the Newton club community which was researched by Muñiz and Schau (2005). This community earned the characterization of an ‘abandoned brand community’

as it had been left behind by marketers after the product had been discontinued by its creator, Apple. The Newton club community survived on online forums. Nowadays this type of community can choose from a variety of third-party sites, such as Facebook or Instagram, to be utilized as a platform for brand fans to find each other and connect with one another and the brand. In fact, brand fan pages have been known to outperform brand-owned websites when it comes to consumer traffic and engagement (Akrouf & Nagy, 2018).

Prior research suggests that the influences of brand community characteristics and brand loyalty are weaker for company-initiated communities when compared to purely consumer-initiated communities (Jang et al., 2008). Company-initiated communities are thus advised to relinquish some control of the community operations to the members (Fournier & Lee, 2009; Wang & Ding, 2017). From the managerial perspective, consumer-initiated communities might sound ideal, as company-initiated platforms require more effort and responsibility from the company. However, research has shown that company-initiated, or company-nurtured, brand communities can greatly influence the success of new product launches (Füller et al., 2008; Gruner et al., 2014).

### *Offline vs. Online Brand Communities*

With the introduction of the digital age, brand communities are no longer confined to the offline space, now they can solely live online. This development has not made offline brand communities obsolete but rather given marketers a new avenue to reach their targeted demographics. Millennials for example make up the biggest piece of the SoMe market pie (Statista Research Department, 2021). This generation has grown up with technology and it has now become a part of their everyday life. The internet is a part of their shopping habits, information sharing, and social interactions (Ozuem et al., 2021). As with the offline communities, OBCs attract individuals seeking out social capital (Etzioni, 1996; Paxton, 1999), only now it is right at their fingertips (i.e., cell phones, tablets, laptops). Social capital for OBCs refers to trust, shared language, values and views, and social interactions among community members (Ozuem et al., 2021). In the following, the paper will provide a more detailed description of OBCs, what types exist, and how consumers and brand managers participate in them.

#### *2.1.5. Online Brand Communities*

When the term brand community comes up, the prime examples are often Harley-Davidson and Jeep. These established brand communities hold in-person events or ‘brandfests’ for their community members to interact in person and further develop their relationships (McAlexander et

al., 2002). With the introduction of the digital age and SoMe, brand communities can prosper both in the offline and online space. OBCs are much like Muñiz and O'Guinn's (2001) description of traditional brand communities with the additive that they exist online. Or as Jang et al. (2008, p. 57) describe them, "*specialised, non-geographically bound communit[ies], based upon social relationships among admirers of a brand in cyberspace*". What differentiates OBCs from traditional brand communities is the speed at which consumers can communicate and connect with other community members and the brand itself (Hakala et al., 2017). Consumers can now express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a brand at a push of a button to millions, instead of a small network of people. This evolution has given more power to the consumers and puts pressure on brands to become more transparent (Hakala et al., 2017).

Previous research has found a link between OBCs' participation and increased brand trust, brand loyalty, and value co-creation (Hajli et al., 2017; Kamboj et al., 2018). Today's consumers, specifically millennials and generation Z (gen Z), crave authenticity and thus are looking towards communities for information from like-minded individuals rather than other outside sources, e.g., SoMe influencers (Petro, 2019). Thus, they flock towards OBCs in search of genuine content created by community members they relate to and want to engage with. Over time new members can form connections and deepen their relationships with fellow community members and the brand alike. Genuine connections take time and thus brand managers need to see OBCs as a commodity that can prosper value for the brand in the long haul.

Online community management has become a part of the marketing strategies of brands that seek to improve their marketing outcomes (Tuten, 2020). However, a study of the quality of a brand's OBC engagement from the State of Social Engagement Report found that few brands were truly engaging (Lithium, 2017 as cited in Tuten, 2020). The study assessed six categories as indicators of quality engagement: "*1) cohesive social channel strategy, 2) active community management, 3) content mission, quality and storytelling, 4) engagement and community relationship building, 5) collaborations with influencers, and 6) amplification efforts*" (Tuten, 2020, p. 215). The results showed that 51 out of the 85 brands assessed scored below 50% and only three brands scored above 80% (i.e., Spring, Pfizer, and AT&T). This outcome shows that brands may have realized the potential positive influence of OBCs but there is still room for improvement on how to successfully manage and engage them (Logan, 2014).

### *Online Brand Community Types*

Besides distinguishing between company- and consumer-initiated platforms, OBCs can further be characterized by their level of exclusivity. Three levels of company-initiated OBCs have been identified by Gruner et al. (2014): open, discerning, and restricted. The three community types are made up of two dimensions, the administrative dimension (i.e., community access and level of control) and the social dimension (i.e., host integration and the level of member engagement) (ibid.). Open brand communities, as the name suggests, are open to all (i.e., community access is high). Members can easily join and communicate with one another as they please. The company does not censor content communication to allow for open communication about their products or services, whether positive or negative. As the activity control level is low and the host integration moderate, the company gives power to the members and thus monitors the site irregularly.

Discerning and restricted OBCs both have certain requirements for their members to be able to join (i.e., moderate to low community access). Restricted OBCs have the strictest entry requirements, are monitored with a close eye to the point of restricting certain topics, and the company does not communicate with its members (i.e., low host integration). While discerning OBCs have lower entry requirements, members need to sign up before they can engage with the community and acceptance is not a guarantee. The company moderates the platform to some extent (i.e., moderate activity control) and engages with its members regularly, e.g., by responding to questions and participating in community activities (i.e., high host integration). When it comes to innovation, Gruner et al.'s (2014) research found that open and discerning OBCs are preferable.

### *Consumer Participation*

OBCs share similar motivators to participate as the traditional offline brand communities. Motivators to engage with OBCs on SNS, such as Instagram and Facebook, can be for entertainment purposes, social integration, information seeking, remuneration, and general likability of the brand (Kamboj et al., 2018; Tsai & Men, 2013). In today's digital world, every consumer that has the need to have their voice heard and feel valued, has now several outlets and can become an influencer (Gill, 2020; Yu, 2020). Others may seek a space to be inspired, empowered, or feel a sense of 'we-ness' (Bender, 1978; Gill, 2020; Tsai & Men, 2013). While some in turn enjoy 'peeking behind the curtain' to get behind-the-scenes content from a brand and its consumers, such as a sneak peek at an upcoming product launch, to gain further insights into a brand (Gill, 2020).



Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) observed three advantages for members of brand communities. First, they provide their members with a form of consumer agency. By supplying platforms where consumers can express themselves and have their voices heard by the brand (i.e., empowerment). Second, OBCs are an information hub for consumers to get up to date (i.e., information seeking and problem-solving), and converse with other members if any questions arise. The information differs from that coming directly from the brand itself, as consumer-generated content is not perceived as commercially motivated. These first two elements show a shift in power, away from the brand and towards the consumers. Third, is the affectual social benefit of interacting and connecting with their peers (i.e., social integration). Members may form deep bonds with one another or even long-lasting friendships. These three elements generate value for the members that in return can positively affect brand equity.

### *Managerial Participation*

Due to the influence that OBCs can have, they have become powerful tools in the eyes of marketers (Hakala et al., 2017; Wang & Ding, 2017). Coupled with the fact that the costs of optimizing engagement with OBCs are lower than traditional advertising costs (Tuten, 2020). This has led to brand managers wanting to create and control these communities (Cova & Cova, 2002; Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). The belief that the control should be in the hands of the brand managers is where the mismanagement begins (Fournier & Lee, 2009; Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). These companies struggle to understand how to manage their communities to encourage value co-creation (Fournier & Lee, 2009). The reality is that OBCs' primary function is to serve the needs of the brands' consumers. Therefore, leaving the control to the community members tends to generate more value and shows that dynamic companies should nurture their communities in order to thrive (Fournier & Lee, 2009; Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009).

The relationship-marketing approach proposes that it is in the best interest of brands to actively foster their brand-consumer relationships to gain their loyalty and over time turn them into not only loyal consumers but advocates for the brand. This approach emphasizes the importance of long-term relationship building rather than focusing on the short-term (Grönroos, 1994; Storbacka et al., 1994). That's where OBCs come in handy. They give brands multiple platforms to carry out this strategy to foster meaningful relationships with their consumers while also providing them with a place to connect (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). This is where increasingly loyal customers are handed over to the brands on a silver platter, as OBCs tend to cultivate loyalty and trust towards the brand

(Mathwick, 2006 as cited in Sicilia & Palazón, 2008). Given that the members are having a positive experience in the OBCs, over time the level of loyalty will increase, and in turn, the members become less likely to switch to a substitute brand (McAlexander et al., 2002).

If brand managers are successful in managing their OBCs, they can become a marketing tool for the brand involved. The connection, attachment, and loyalty that are a bi-product of a successful OBC can further result in positive WOM (Islam & Rahman, 2016). Positive WOM is a term describing the action of recommending a product or service from one person to another (Sweeney et al., 2012). Beyond the marketing benefits of increased brand awareness, getting OBC members to spread positive WOM has been shown to have a link to improved sales (Islam & Rahman, 2016). However, there is the risk of negative WOM if the community members are dissatisfied, which can have an adverse effect on sales (Islam & Rahman, 2016). When a brand faces negative WOM managers must react in an appropriate way to avoid further negative influence, as any kind of WOM, either positive or negative, can increase brand involvement (i.e., brand passion and emotion) (Islam & Rahman, 2016).

As showcased above, online community platforms are a recognized tool for marketers to encourage and improve value co-creation between consumers and brands. What exactly value co-creation means, what levels and perspectives of it exist, and how it relates to consumer engagement and brand relationships in the virtual environment will be further outlined in the following chapter.

## 2.2. Value Co-Creation

Although the term ‘value co-creation’ is broadly used in relation to brand management and marketing, it is hard to pinpoint it to one true definition. Several understandings of the concept exist, showcasing its complexity and the difficulty to conceptualize the term (Saha et al., 2022). As a matter of fact, different terms are linked to and often used interchangeably with co-creation, including ‘co-production’ (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000), ‘co-design’ (Füller et al., 2009; Saarijärvi, 2012), ‘co-promotion’ or ‘co-creation of branding’ (e.g., Hajli et al., 2017; Wang & Hajli, 2018 as cited in Thomas et al., 2020), as well as ‘co-innovation’ (Thomke & Von Hippel, 2002; Von Hippel, 2005). *Table 1* presents an overview of different definitions of co-creation.

Definition	Authors
“The joint creation of value by the company and the consumer [...]; allowing the customer to co-construct the service experience to suit their context.”	Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004b, p. 8)
Process of value creation between actors within a service ecosystem on a service platform.	Hein et al. (2019) as cited in Saha et al. (2022)
Joint creation of value by the firm and the customer.	Delpichetre et al. (2018, p. 9); Grönroos (2012); Payne et al. (2009)
Customer participation in various stages of production and use processes through the application of operant resources such as knowledge, skills, and effort.	Sugathan et al. (2017, p. 64); Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008)
“Co-creation is the process by which mutual value is expanded together, where value to participating individuals is a function of their experiences, both their engagement experiences on the platform, and productive and meaningful human experiences that result.”	Ramaswamy (2011, p. 195)
“Co-creation [is] a collaborative innovation method where new ideas are generated together with customers and other stakeholders.”	Ind et al. (2017, p. 311)
“We define brand value co-creation as the process of creating perceived use value for a brand through network relationships and social interactions among all the actors in the ecosystem.”	Merz et al. (2018, p. 80)
“Co-creation can be defined as an active, dynamic, and social process based on interactions between firms and external stakeholders, oriented towards the generation of new products (i.e., goods and/or services).”	Markovic and Bagherzadeh (2018, p. 173); Ind et al. (2013)

Table 1: Definitions of Co-Creation.

In general, the definitions highlight the joint and mutual creation of value by the firm and its consumers, within a service-dominant (SD) environment. Over time, the brand logic evolved from the ‘Individual Goods-Focus Brand Era’ in the early 1900s, to the most recent ‘Stakeholder-Focus Brand Era’ since 2000 (Merz et al., 2009). Indeed, the literature highlights the importance of considering all stakeholders, and not only consumers, as valuable contributors to value co-creation (e.g., Gregory, 2007; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Markovic & Bagherzadeh, 2018). Thereby, stakeholders vary from employees, suppliers, and distributors, to consumers and their communities (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016). By investigating value co-creation through the interaction on OBCs, this research focuses on the brand-consumer interaction in a virtual environment.

While having in mind that value co-creation comprises various aspects and can take on different forms, the present study chooses to focus on co-innovation as the central aspect of value co-creation. Thereby, it follows the emerging concept of an online co-innovation community. Thus, co-

creation is defined in the following research as the dynamic interaction between brand and consumers, that will ultimately generate value for both entities through innovations, based on a mutual engagement and long-term relationship. To conclude, it is evident that while value co-creation has proven to be a promising concept, the need to develop additional insights is still present to allow for a better understanding and effective implementation (Saha et al., 2022).

### 2.2.1. Background of Value Co-Creation

Prahalad and Ramaswamy are recognized as the ‘founders’ of the value co-creation concept by introducing their foundational paper ‘Co-opting Customer Competence’ in 2000. Therein, co-creation is based on the new market view, formerly shaped by Wikström (1996). As the author outlines, the emergence of the post-industrial era brought dramatic changes in the way companies interact with customers, thereby enabling a much closer consumer-company relationship in which the consumer becomes a co-producer (Wikström, 1996). Moreover, co-creation can be seen as an extension of the resource-based model introduced by Barney (1991) as well as the paper by Mauborgne and Kim (1999), suggesting a customer-oriented approach to value innovation.

So, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) were among the first to acknowledge the impact that globalization and the rise of the Internet have on the marketplace, and the central role consumers play in creating and competing for value. In fact, customers were most drastically transforming the existing industrial system, as the Internet enabled them to engage in an active dialogue with companies as well as other customers around the world (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). Like this, consumers became more connected, informed, and active, and are given opportunities to experiment (ibid.). Zwick et al. (2008) point out that this confronts firms with the challenge to attract and retain their customers while simultaneously offering them a creative and open communication environment, where they can use and enhance their knowledge. At the same time, firms are losing control over the dialogue as customer communities gain more power due to the speed with which words spread online, transforming e-WOM into viral marketing for brands (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). This highlights the need to utilize the competencies of consumers and further illustrates the shift of focus on the creation of value between several actors, instead of the value being created solely inside the firm (Ind & Coates, 2013; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). So, how can firms handle this shift in the marketplace and remain successful and competitive?

As the scholars indicate, the answer lies in the co-creation of value together with the consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). This can be achieved through ongoing dialogues, mobilizing

customer communities, managing customer diversity, and co-creating personalized experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). Once high-quality interactions with consumers are ensured, it can unlock new sources of competitive advantage for the firm (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b). This can further strengthen the relevance of the brand as well as generate and drive innovations (Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Ind et al., 2013).

Overall, the new market era introduces the concept of value co-creation and makes it obvious how these new interaction opportunities shifted the view of the marketplace from being firm-centric towards being consumer-centric.

### 2.2.2. The Service-Dominant Logic

Another stream that shaped the understanding of value co-creation is the SD logic of marketing, first introduced by Vargo and Lusch (2004). In the early 2000s marketing has increasingly shifted away from the goods-dominant logic, focusing on the exchange of tangible goods, and towards a more comprehensive and inclusive SD logic, “*that integrates goods with services and provides a richer foundation for the development of marketing thought and practice*” (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 2). In more detail, the goods-dominant logic sees the company as the sole producer of value since the value is embedded in the tangible manufactured product (Merz et al., 2009; Vargo et al., 2020). Contrarily, the new service-focused view shows a change in orientation from the producer to the consumer, meaning that firms collaborate with and learn from consumers while adapting to their individual needs (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This thinking led to an increasingly comprehensive and inclusive market environment (Brodie et al., 2019).

The SD logic forms a parallel to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) since both believe that consumers and markets can best be controlled when offering dynamic platforms for them to become active (Merz et al., 2009; Zwick et al., 2008). Like this, companies free the creativity and knowledge of consumers while, at the same time, channeling their activities in desirable ways for the firm (Zwick et al., 2008). However, Vargo and Lusch (2016) distinguish between ‘co-production’ as introduced by Prahalad and Ramaswamy, i.e., the creation of value proposition, and ‘value co-creation’, i.e., the actions of multiple actors contributing to each other’s wellbeing. During the past decade, the SD logic has transformed through various evolutionary periods, resulting in the current assumption that value co-creating service ecosystems are the building blocks of today’s society (Vargo et al., 2020; Vargo & Lusch, 2016).

According to the SD logic, customers are no longer seen as mere operand resources but rather as operant resources (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). To clarify, operand resources are resources on which an operation is performed to produce benefit, and operant resources are defined as resources that are “*capable of causing benefit by directly acting on other resources, either operand or operant, to create benefit in co-production of service*” (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016, p. 94). Such resource integration further relates to the consumer’s engagement in the production of the product itself, i.e., value is defined by and co-created with the consumer instead of being embedded in the output (Saarijärvi, 2012; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Moreover, Cova and Dall’O (2009) highlight that the empowerment of customers and their communities has more influence on people’s behavior than any company activity could ever achieve.

Overall, the SD logic is understood along several foundational premises (FPs) that act as the groundwork for the development of marketing thinking and practice (Brodie et al., 2019; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Initially, Vargo and Lusch (2004) developed eight FPs that the authors continuously refined and extended with new ones, resulting in eleven FPs in 2016 (Brodie et al., 2019; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). These FPs are arranged numerically, and an overview of the evolution is provided in *appendix A*. Ultimately, the authors classified five FPs (i.e., FP1, FP6, FP9, FP10, and FP11) as fundamentally essential and thus labeled them as the five axioms of the SD logic (Brodie et al., 2019). The most relevant FP for this study is FP6, pointing out that value co-creation is a process that involves multiple actors (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Thereby, the authors highlight that the consumers are constantly co-creating value (ibid.). Due to the fact that firms are unable to deliver value but can only make value propositions (FP7) and exchange is seen as relational (FP8), the SD logic emphasizes value-in-use, contrasting the goods-dominant logic that focuses on value-in-exchange (Merz et al., 2009; Vargo et al., 2008). In other words, value is context-specific and its meaning differs between consumers rather than being rooted in the goods (Font et al., 2021).

Ultimately, the FPs indicate that value must always be understood as part of a dynamic service environment involving complex networks that go beyond the firm and consumer, as they also include communities and other stakeholders (Merz et al., 2009). In such a “*collaborative economy*”, connectivity and sociality among the different players have the power to disrupt existing markets (Brodie et al., 2019, p. 3). Thereby, the service orientation acknowledges the need for firms to maximize customer involvement to better fit their needs while emphasizing the importance of learning how to manage network relationships in the right way (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Summing

up, the SD logic “*represents a dynamic, continuing narrative of value co-creation through resource integration and service exchange that has been constructed by an increasingly large number of academics from various disciplines*” (Vargo & Lusch, 2017, p. 47).

### 2.2.3. Critical Views on Value Co-Creation

While the new dominant logic has been influential in many aspects of marketing and management, some scholars take a rather critical stance towards it. For instance, the problem of blurred definitions of the key terms still prevails (Ballantyne et al., 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013). In fact, the term ‘value’ in itself is described as one of the most elusive and ill-defined concepts in marketing and management, making it difficult to grasp its meaning fully (Grönroos, 2012; Grönroos & Voima, 2013).

On a different note, the whole idea of the ‘working consumers’ within value co-creation activities is being challenged (Cova & Dalli, 2009; Zwick et al., 2008). To prevent consumer backlash due to the arguable exploitation of individuals, who share their time and knowledge to create value for the firm, the need arises to engage all stakeholders in a mutually beneficial way (Ind & Coates, 2013). Moreover, while Vargo and Lusch (2016) state that co-creation occurs in any type of interaction, other scholars limit co-creation to face-to-face or virtual interactions (Grönroos, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013).

Finally, despite the big amount of research on value co-creation, only a few scholars have focused on the co-creation of brand value (Merz et al., 2018). This phenomenon might relate to the lack of understanding of what brand value means within the SD logic and illustrates the missing comprehension of how consumers can assist in co-creating brand value (ibid.). Thus, in the following section, value co-creation within brand management will be outlined in more detail.

### 2.2.4. Brand Value Co-Creation

Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2016) have had a major impact not only on the academic research in general but also on brand management since it challenges the traditional view of brands (Christodoulides, 2008; Iglesias et al., 2013). Hence, just like marketing evolved from a goods dominant logic to an SD logic, the brand logic is also shifting from a rather company-centered view towards a more collaborative concept (Merz et al., 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Looking at marketing in a broader sense, it can be argued to be solely about creating value through an exchange, whereby value co-creation takes in the central purpose of society instead of a subset of

social activity (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). As a matter of fact, the SD logic is even argued to be the theoretical foundation for the future of branding research (Payne et al., 2009). Thus, branding co-creation can be understood through the term ‘service branding’, in which brand and customers co-create brand meanings and experiences (Brodie, 2009). Indeed, customer-firm interactions and value-in-use, i.e., the experience, ultimately determine the brand value (Iglesias et al., 2013). Such consumer-brand-co-creation sets a new theoretical direction of branding, linking traditional marketing thinking to the SD logic, but also other streams like Heinonen et al.’s (2010) customer-dominant logic<sup>1</sup> (Guzmán et al., 2019).

Brand value co-creation is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that acknowledges the significant role of consumers in producing original ideas for product developments (Sarkar & Banerjee, 2021), emphasizing the focus on co-innovation. Especially the rise of SNS and the increased use of virtual communities provide companies with more support in the brand co-creation process (Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Swaminathan et al., 2020). Thus, the focus shifts from single ownership to shared ownership (Swaminathan et al., 2020). However, both sides have to remember that the brands are neither created solely by brand managers nor are they the exclusive property of consumers (Vallaster & von Wallpach, 2013).

These changes in brand management are described by Swaminathan et al. (2020) as the ‘blurring’ and ‘broadening’ of branding boundaries. First, the blurring relates to the fact that consumers are no longer merely exposed to and influenced by brand management methods, but information becomes widely accessible on multiple digital channels (Aaker, 1996; Swaminathan et al., 2020). Second, broadening means that while brands expand their geographic range and roles within society, more stakeholders get involved in shaping brand meaning, value, and identity (Swaminathan et al., 2020). This further illustrates the distinction between different brand value co-creation mechanisms, such as the co-creation of brand meaning (e.g., Iglesias & Bonet, 2012; Ind & Coates, 2013), or brand identity (e.g., da Silveira et al., 2013; Iglesias et al., 2020). Either way, engagement platforms like OBCs provide a successful tool for marketers to continuously improve the management of brands

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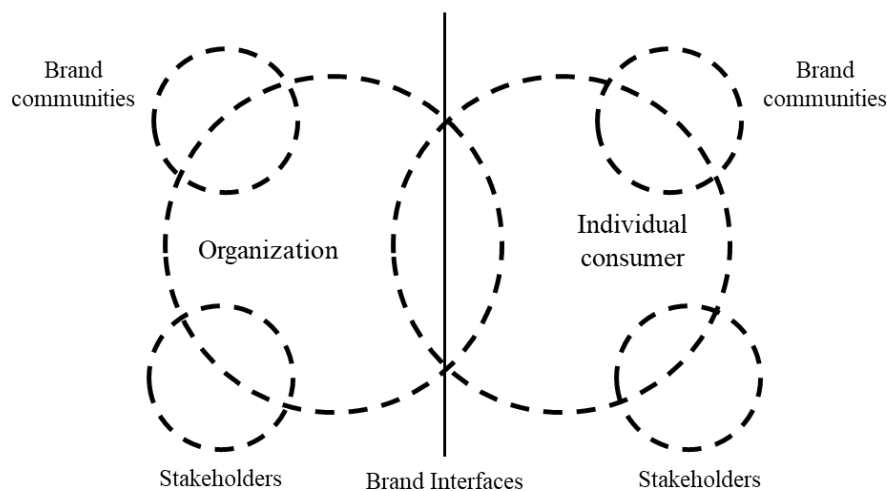
<sup>1</sup> The customer-dominant logic is described as an extended perspective of the SD logic, outlining a customer-based approach to service and value co-creation (Heinonen et al., 2010).



(Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016). To date, rather little focus has been set on how consumers and firms interact as part of a network as most studies focus on their individual roles as buyers and managers (Swaminathan et al., 2020), showing the need to investigate this virtual co-creation interaction further.

### 2.2.5. The Organic View of the Brand

Iglesias et al. (2013) present an organic view of the brand, that includes an integrated brand value co-creation model. The organic view of the brand means that brands are seen as organic entities with several parts that are not in control of the company (Iglesias et al., 2013). As shown in *figure 2*, the organic view of the brand argues that brand value is created when the organization and its stakeholders work together (ibid.). Thereby, it contrasts traditional brand value co-creation models, which place either the consumer (e.g., Van Durme et al., 2003) or the organization (e.g. Brodie et al., 2006) in the center (Iglesias et al., 2013).



*Figure 2: The Organic View of the Brand Based on Iglesias et al. (2013).*

Although it is clearly shown that brand value co-creation is a process that involves numerous stakeholders, this paper focuses on the interrelation between the organization and the consumers specifically. Thus, the paper refers to the upper half of the organic view of the brand. In that sense, it can be distinguished between different spheres of co-creation, i.e., the provider sphere, the joint sphere, and the customer sphere (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). Here, the provider sphere refers to the brand's perspective that manages the OBC (i.e., the organization), the customer sphere relates to the customer's experience (i.e., individual consumer), and the joint sphere represents the brand community as a platform of interaction.

The co-creation of brand value often takes place in OBCs and is largely driven by the engagement of the individual user (Swaminathan et al., 2020). Since customers are considered informed, empowered, active, and connected participants in value co-creation (Ramaswamy, 2008), brands are advised to treat them as knowledgeable while building pleasant customer experiences (Saha et al., 2022; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). These insights indicate the need to explore the role of engagement and relationship-building in OBCs further. Then, the brand can eventually provide an excellent experience for the user before, during, and after consumption, thereby improving the perceived value-in-use of the product.

### 2.3. Value Co-Creation in Online Brand Communities

As previously mentioned, value co-creation in OBCs largely depends on the collaboration of brands and consumers. Merz et al. (2018) take a deeper look at the consumer side of brand value co-creation by introducing customer co-creation value, whereby they determine the two dimensions customer ability and willingness. Therein, a customer's ability to participate in brand value co-creation relates to consumer engagement, and customer willingness is linked to brand relationships and consumer motivation (Merz et al., 2018). Other studies support that approach, for instance, Thomas et al. (2020) and Zhao et al. (2019) similarly identified involvement and willingness to participate as key determinants of co-creation via SNS.

#### 2.3.1. Consumer Engagement

Consumer engagement has received increasing attention in the last decade due to the evolving dynamic business environment (Hollebeek et al., 2019). Besides, the connection between consumer engagement and the SD logic has been recognized in recent years (Brodie, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2019). By expanding the meaning of consumer engagement and the SD logic, customer co-creation is illustrated as an intersection of resource integration and knowledge sharing (Hollebeek et al., 2019; Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016). Out of this approach consumer engagement is defined within an SD environment as “*a customer's motivationally driven, volitional investment of focal operant resources (including cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social knowledge and skills), and operand resources (e.g., equipment) into brand interactions in service systems*” (Hollebeek et al., 2019, p. 166). Similarly, brand engagement means the ability of consumers to “*put the brand into action, participating in the world of the brand*” (Gambetti et al., 2012, p. 669).

In this study, engagement will be referred to as consumer-brand engagement (CBE) and is defined through the three dimensions cognition, emotions, and behavior (Hollebeek, 2011). First, cognition refers to the brand-related thoughts and elaborations of consumers during the interaction with the brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Second, the emotional dimension or affection relates to “*a consumer’s degree of positive brand-related affect in a particular consumer/brand interaction*” (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 154). Third, behavior or activation comprises the amount of energy, effort, and time that customers spend on a brand (ibid.).

CBE in the digital environment is often managed through brand communities (Fournier & Lee, 2009). If such a community is operationalized in the right way, it can successfully generate high levels of passion and commitment from the users (Ind et al., 2020). In addition to stronger relationships with customers, positive outcomes of CBE are stated to be higher (re-)purchase intentions (Cheung et al., 2020; Yen et al., 2011), brand support, self-initiated actions by consumers, and access to feedback on the product (Kumar et al., 2010). Further, Merz et al. (2018) link brand knowledge, brand skill, brand creativity, and brand connectedness to CBE. Thereby, participation in OBCs can enhance all three dimensions of CBE: the cognitive aspect is supported through the immersion into the platform and sharing of knowledge, the emotional aspect relates to the connectedness and commitment of users, and the behavioral dimension links to the participant’s skills and creativity in the co-creation activities. Besides, Hollebeek (2011) emphasizes that the more consumers engage with a brand, the more likely they are to encourage their peers to interact as well, further stressing the impact customer engagement can have on improving a brand’s image and value.

### 2.3.2. Brand Relationships

In addition to providing superior brand experience and stimulating engagement, firms are advised to build strong relationships in order to generate value (Merz et al., 2009, 2018). The idea is in line with Fournier (1998), who outlines the various types of relationships consumers can have with brands. Moreover, these relationships can either be positive or negative, e.g., brands can be identified as buddies or enemies (Avery et al., 2014). Establishing positive and long-lasting relationships is beneficial as they are closely linked to brand loyalty (Fournier, 1998), and loyal customers are assumably willing to spend more resources on the brands.

The customer perspective of value co-creation as introduced by Merz et al. (2018) includes affective and socio-motive brand attachments, brand commitment, and brand trust as three main

aspects of CBR. Similarly, Wang et al. (2020) propose that the relationship elements commitment and trust have a positive influence on consumer participation in brand value co-creation. First, affective and socio-motive brand attachments can take the form of brand passion, admiration, or even love (Merz et al., 2018). Thereby, brand love is a higher-order construct made up of several cognitions, emotions, and behaviors, and can be seen as the core element of a consumer's relationship with brands (Batra et al., 2012). Besides loyalty, it can be associated with positive WOM, willingness to pay a premium price, or forgiveness of brand failure (Batra et al., 2012; Fournier, 1998). Second, brand trust is another key concept of CBR and relates to the belief that a brand keeps its promises (Merz et al., 2018). Thus, the organization should provide an open environment that can endorse mutual trust and commitment, which will in turn improve value co-creation (Liu et al., 2019). Third, brand commitment relates to the degree to which stakeholders are willing to invest their resources for the brand and its success (Merz et al., 2018).

As outlined above, OBCs play an integral role in building stronger attachment and commitment (Zhou et al., 2012). Payne et al., (2009) distinguish between three relationship phases in which co-creation evolves, namely acquisition, stabilization, and enhancement. As the expertise of the stakeholders grows throughout these phases, the company is advised to develop products that better fit the customer's needs and wants in order to increase value for consumers as well (Payne et al., 2009). Still, many brand managers use co-creation as a tactical market research tool instead of unfolding a more strategic approach, in which they actively engage their stakeholders in all stages of the co-creation process, allowing for stronger competitive advantage and differentiation (Ind et al., 2017).

### 2.3.3. Motivation to Participate in Value Co-Creation

The key prerequisite of fostering engagement, relationships, and ultimately brand value co-creation, is motivating consumers in the first place. Going back to the co-creation concept by Merz et al. (2018) consumer motivation links to the consumer's willingness to participate. Before describing consumer motivators in more detail, the paper will first summarize the benefits that managers get from engaging in value co-creation.

#### *Manager Motivations*

From the brand manager's perspective, co-creation can add new ideas and enhance innovation (Füller et al., 2006; Gebauer et al., 2013). By monitoring OBCs, brand managers can obtain insights into how the community responds to their branding and products (Stanke, 2016). Furthermore, the

OBC members' posts, likes, and shares provide them with valuable information about their needs, wants, and preferences regarding the brand (Baldwin et al., 2006; Kamboj et al., 2018). Thus, their activities can provide valuable insights into the market, consumer behavior, and preferences (Füller et al., 2006). Encouraging inputs from consumers can save companies time and money by speeding up the innovation cycle (Füller et al., 2006; Gouillart & Ramaswamy, 2010). Having communities like these right at the companies' fingertips saves time and resources that would otherwise have been spent on market research. Moreover, OBC insights can decrease risk as research has found that value co-creation can prevent product failure (Füller et al., 2006).

Beyond the influence on marketing, innovation, and product development, the literature suggests that brand communities can influence both brand image and brand relationships (Fournier, 1998; Fournier & Yao, 1997; Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). Today's consumers place high regard on brand trust as well as brand symbolic traits, all of them being elements that can alter consumer behavior (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). This positive effect on customer experience may further result in increased positive e-WOM and brand awareness (Füller et al., 2006; Gebauer et al., 2013). Overall, the brand is one of the main factors that attract customers to a specific community (Zhao et al., 2019). Thus, brand managers need to moderate their online platform in a supportive but not controlling manner, in order to build a community culture that allows its members to express themselves freely (Ind et al., 2020).

In the increasingly dynamic and competitive business environment, it is not enough to understand the mere benefit of value co-creation, but companies need to find key motivators for consumers to actively participate (Palma et al., 2018). Few scholars have previously investigated which factors impact consumers' willingness to engage (Zhao et al., 2019). Next to the motivators of joining an OBC, as outlined in chapter 2.1.5, the following section will introduce additional motivators for participating in virtual brand value co-creation based on the aforementioned literature review.

### *Consumer Motivations*

From the consumers' perspective, OBCs enable them a way of being active players in the value co-creation process. As previously mentioned, OBCs give members a platform to form deeper connections and relationships with fellow consumers as well as the brand that they admire. These interactions assist in the building of greater feelings of trust and loyalty (Hajli et al., 2017). Furthermore, having their voices heard and feeling like part of the co-creation process can be empowering for the consumer (Füller et al., 2009). OBCs effectively allow consumers to share their

ideas, concerns, and knowledge to assist in the creation of a product or service for themselves to consume (Kamboj et al., 2018).

Looking to the self-determination theory to answer what motivates consumers to participate in value co-creation within company-initiated OBCs, consumers might be motivated to partake in value co-creation activities if they value the activity in some way (i.e., intrinsic motivation) or if the outcome of said activity interests them (i.e., extrinsic motivation) (Füller, 2010). Intrinsic motivators can be such things as feelings of “*fun, kinship, and altruism*”, while extrinsic motivators may be internalized “*learning, reputation, and own use*” or entirely extrinsic such as monetary gain or career aspirations (Füller, 2010, p. 103). In this regard, intrinsic motivations are identified as being more impactful than extrinsic ones (Ind et al., 2020). Still, brand managers must understand that motivation to engage in value co-creation is driven by a compilation of extrinsic and intrinsic incentives (Füller, 2010; Ind et al., 2017). Thus, it could be one or a combination of several different motivators that drive consumers.

Compared to managerial benefits of value co-creation within OBCs, the consumer perspective appears to be overlooked. Before Füller’s (2010) study into this perspective, little was known about consumers’ expectations of online value co-creation. His study found that four types of consumers engage in these activities: “*reward-oriented, need-driven, curiosity-driven, and intrinsically interested*” (Füller, 2010, p. 115). Furthermore, the results showed that monetary incentives were not the most important when it comes to engagement, with the exemption of the reward-oriented consumer. On the contrary, intangible incentives such as feedback, the feeling of recognition, and the experience of interacting with other like-minded consumers and/or the brand were plenty (Füller, 2010). This result contradicted the perception of 216 marketing managers that were asked to rank what incentivizes consumers, as they placed monetary incentives on top of their lists while intrinsic motivators were placed at the bottom. This showcases how easily misunderstood OBCs can be and how that runs the risk of mismanagement.

In addition to that, Palma et al. (2018) identified six main factors that motivate customers to engage in value co-creation specifically: two are extrinsic, i.e., community feeling and tangible reward, and four are intrinsic, i.e., affiliation, expertise, experience, and recognition. Thus, their findings are in line with the idea that intrinsic motives have a bigger impact. First, community relates to joining a group of like-minded others, where they engage in dialogue and share ideas (Palma et al., 2018). Second, tangible rewards mean material or monetary incentives (ibid.). Third, affiliation relates to

the emotional need to belong and to be socially accepted (Cherry, 2021). Fourth, expertise links to the creative consumers who are often driven by their search for new thrills, or frequently fame and money (Palma et al., 2018). Fifth, experience refers to the consumer's wish to try new things and become part of something meaningful (ibid.). Sixth, recognition relates to recognizing consumers' contributions and providing acknowledgment for what their input has achieved (ibid.). In other words, the participation in value co-creation can be increased by triggering the perceived empowerment of the users (Füller et al., 2009).

## 2.4. From Value Co-Creation to Co-Innovation

### 2.4.1. The Rise of Co-Innovation

Innovation has long been acknowledged as a sustainable competitive advantage of a company (Porter, 1990). With the evolution of Web 2.0, there came drastic changes in consumer behavior and therefore the business environment, wherefore managers are forced to consider external sources of innovation and knowledge formation (Kazadi et al., 2016; Markovic & Bagherzadeh, 2018; Wang et al., 2016). This shift towards greater organizational openness has thus encouraged the attention on open innovation (Ind et al., 2017). The term 'open innovation' is defined as "*the use of purposive inflows and outflows of knowledge to accelerate internal innovation and expand the markets for external use of innovation*" (Chesbrough, 2006, p. 1). Similarly, value co-creation is oftentimes defined in terms of the collaboration with or the contribution of consumers during the innovation process (e.g., Ind et al., 2017; Kazadi et al., 2016). By opening up and considering creative ideas regardless of the expertise of the individual, brands can gain valuable knowledge that would have remained unnoticed (Kirchner & Razmerita, 2019).

Changes within the innovation paradigm led to a shift from closed innovation, through open innovation, to co-innovation (Lee et al., 2012). As an extension of both, open innovation and value co-creation, co-innovation enables close collaboration between consumers and the firm, leading to the creation of value that specifically contributes to product innovations (Kohler et al., 2011; Li et al., 2020). In line with the concept of Vargo and Lusch (2004), co-innovation is thus defined as "*a phase of the innovation process resulting from dynamic and on-going interactions among resources, actions, and a group of actors*" (Russo-Spena & Mele, 2012, p. 527; Wang et al., 2016).

Like this, consumers take on the role of co-innovators in the development of new products (Zhang et al., 2015). Indeed, Füller et al. (2006) state that co-creation is best used along all parts of the new product development process, including (1) idea generation and concepts, (2) designing and

engineering, (3) and the test and launch phase. In that sense, consumers are asked to share and discuss their ideas, suggest solutions, and provide their creativity to co-design together with the brand (Ma et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2015). Not only can collaboration with consumers occur at any stage of the new product development process, but also throughout the whole product life cycle (Schwarz, 2020). Companies benefit from such openness, as it provides them with increased competitiveness, easier and faster acquisition of innovative ideas, lower cost of research and development processes, as well as higher acceptance of new products and services (Li et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2012; Von Hippel, 2005).

#### 2.4.2. Online Co-Innovation Communities

Alongside the increased focus on openness and value co-creation, a new type of OBC emerged recently in the form of online co-innovation communities, in which users can participate in the innovation process of a firm while still benefiting from the social behavior of traditional online communities (Li et al., 2020). SNS enable firms to leverage from the individual as well as the combined knowledge of consumers, thereby taking the collective intelligence of all community members into account (Kirchner & Razmerita, 2019). Virtual co-innovation communities are usually operated and managed by the brand itself because professional knowledge, relevant experience, and guidance are necessary for a successful product or service development (Li et al., 2020). Such brand communities initiated by the firm itself are specifically designed to encourage innovation and the sharing of ideas, such as the 'LEGO Ideas' community and BMW's Co-Creation Lab (Füller et al., 2006). These examples show how, by engaging their consumers in the creation and development of products, brands can improve consumer attitudes, however, the majority of marketers lack confidence when it comes to implementing collaborative features in their branding and communication strategies (Schwarz, 2020).

Characteristically, digital co-innovation communities include website functions such as product introduction, frequently asked questions, message inbox, and community forums (Li et al., 2020). According to MSL Global (2013), the four main functions of online co-innovation communities are to connect, catalyze, crystallize, and celebrate. First, connecting involves establishing close connections with and among the consumers to further foster engagement and participation (Zhang et al., 2015). Second, catalyzing refers to increasing consumer engagement through rewarded competitions (MSL Global, 2013). Third, crystallizing relates to transforming consumer contributions into meaningful services by letting community members vote, share, and suggest



improvements (Zhang et al., 2015). Such collaboration is most likely to happen between individuals who share the goal of creating innovations that benefit themselves, the brand, or even the society (ibid.). Fourth, celebrating refers to the need of acknowledging the contributions made by the consumers which will, in turn, make them more willing to continuously put effort into co-innovation (Yeniyurt et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2015). Generally, these dynamics are fundamental for the sustainability and success of co-innovation communities, and using them in a combination will most likely increase consumer engagement in co-creation activities (Zhang et al., 2015).

It became clear that OBCs offer a great environment for co-innovation because they provide possibilities for brands and consumers to interact and co-create together, develop user-centered products, build strong relationships, and establish long-term engagement (Kröper et al., 2013). Besides, they offer a better and easier way for companies to collaborate with consumers compared to other SoMe platforms, as the likes of Facebook and Instagram are not constructed for co-creation purposes (Schwarz, 2020). Further, value co-creation via virtual communities reinforces the innovation process of a company as it provides a platform for resource integration (Sarkar & Banerjee, 2021). Indeed, the knowledge provided by brand community members as well as their engagement in product-related discussions is an important source of innovation (Elia et al., 2020). By sharing their knowledge with other community members consumers can even benefit directly from it (Von Hippel, 2005). As such, a central aim of co-innovation is to improve existing or create new products for the firm on the one side and to improve the satisfaction of the individual user on the other side. While the willingness of consumers to participate in product development is usually high, keeping them engaged in the long-term has been identified to be a major challenge (Li et al., 2020; Shulga et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2015). These insights further stress the relevance of investigating how brands can engage consumers in online co-innovation communities in the long run.

Although co-innovation in online communities has gained increased scholarly attention in recent years, there is still lacking insights into what makes consumers effective co-creators of innovation (Wang et al., 2016). In fact, there is little focus on what affects consumer participation in product development via co-innovation communities (Li et al., 2020). Thus, more research is required that investigates the motivations of consumers to participate in online co-innovation as well as how engagement and relationships established via OBCs support these innovation activities (Wang et al., 2016).

## 2.5. Chapter Conclusion

To conclude, members of OBCs can be a valuable addition at different stages of the brand value co-creation process of an organization (Elia et al., 2020; Payne et al., 2009; Potts et al., 2008). More precisely, OBCs are recognized as a relevant tool for co-innovation (e.g., Li et al., 2020). To effectively benefit from these ‘empowered consumers’ (Kazadi et al., 2016), companies are faced with the challenge to develop the right tools as well as re-think their business models, mindset, and even the relationship with consumers (Thomke & Von Hippel, 2002). Besides, managers need to create an environment in which people can trust each other and the brand (Ind & Coates, 2013). It is important to notice that consumers will only participate when the outcome produces value for them as well, highlighting the emphasis on creating mutual benefits through co-creation activities (Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010). Also, as shown with the brand community triad, the consumer-consumer interaction is at least as important as the consumer-brand interaction, thus the firm needs to provide open, trustworthy, and engaging online communities.

This research aims at addressing the identified gaps in the literature. First, little is known about the emerging concept that is online co-innovation communities and how brands can effectively include consumers in innovation activities (Li et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2016). Moreover, brand managers need to understand how to effectively integrate consumers’ knowledge and skills without giving away too much control. This highlights the need to further study the concept of brand-related co-innovation in an SD environment (Merz et al., 2018). Second, there is a lack of understanding of how brands and customers interact as a network (Swaminathan et al., 2020), wherefore the impact that interactions on OBCs have on brand value co-creation, i.e., understood as co-innovation in this study, will be investigated. Especially with the huge shift towards online interactions between brands and consumers in recent years, these insights become more and more relevant. Third, the roles of engagement and relationship are the focus of this study as they are expected to be key drivers when turning motivations into actual co-creating behavior. Especially, achieving long-term engagement in co-creation activities is identified as a major challenge for brand managers (Li et al., 2020; Shulga et al., 2018). Although several scholars have studied motivations, brand engagement, and relationship management in relation to value co-creation in the past, research on the topic is still developing and much more insight is needed for it to be fully conceptualized and implemented (Saha et al., 2022).

### 3. Theoretical Delimitation

To understand how brands in the creative industry can enhance CBE, CBR, and ultimately co-innovation within their online communities, the motivations of consumers to participate in online co-innovation communities need to be tested first. This chapter will examine these elements and finally present a theoretical framework that will be the basis of the present study.

#### 3.1. Stimulus-Organism-Response Model

The framework presented in this study will be in the form of the SOR model. The SOR model was originally proposed almost half a century ago by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) and later modified by Jacoby (2002) (see figure 3). It is rooted in consumer behavior as it suggests that “*some environmental aspects provoke the individual’s emotional and cognitive condition, resulting in certain behavioural outcomes*” (Kamboj et al., 2018, p. 170). The model is made up of three elements: stimulus, organism, and response. First, the stimulus is defined as “*an influence that arouses the individual*” (Eroglu et al., 2001, p. 179). In the context of OBCs, a stimulus would be the motivator to engage with the community that affects the consumers’ internal state (Kamboj et al., 2018). Second, the organism refers to the “*affective and cognitive intermediary states and processes that intervene the relationship between the stimulus and individual’s responses*” (Eroglu et al., 2001, p. 180). Consumer behavior literature tends to focus on the pleasure, arousal, and dominance dimensions as relevant emotional responses to environmental stimuli (Eroglu et al., 2001; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Again, looking at this element through the OBC context, this could be the sense of belonging when engaging with other community members or the feeling of being heard by the brand. Third, the response is the consumer behavior that comes as a result of the previous two elements. Ideally, that would be behavior such as active participation in co-innovation within the OBC.

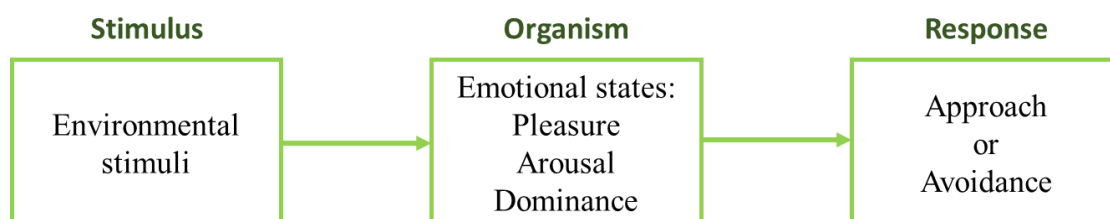


Figure 3: SOR Model Based on Mehrabian & Russell (1974).

The SOR model has been used in the past to examine consumer behavior in both the online and offline space (Eroglu et al., 2001; Kamboj et al., 2018; Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016). This study echoes Zhang and Benyoucef's (2016, p. 99) sentiment, “the SOR model has shown to be a viable theoretical framework to address consumers’ behavior in online environments” and thus will base its theoretical framework on this concept. Furthermore, the framework presented later in this chapter takes inspiration from Kamboj et al. (2018) who previously researched branding co-creation and its antecedents by applying the SOR model (see figure 4).

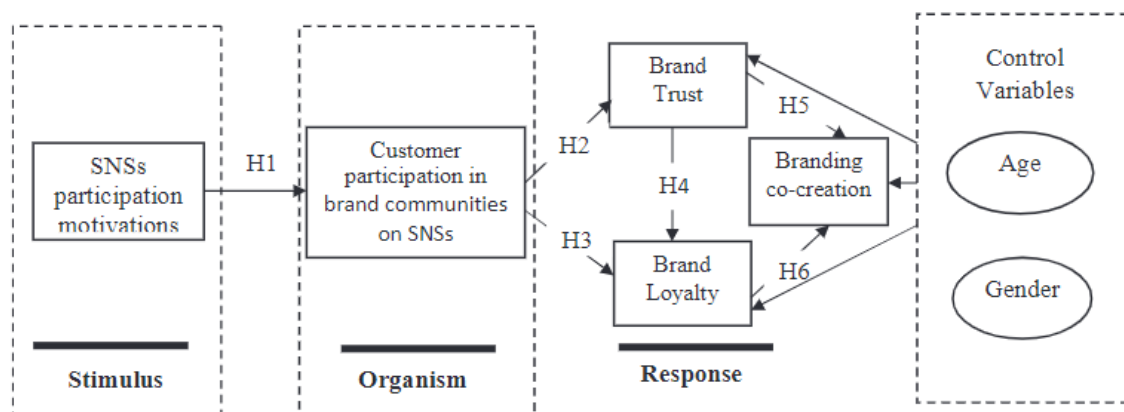


Figure 4: Research Model by Kamboj et al. (2018).

### 3.2. Motivators for Participation in OBCs

The stimulus in this case is the consumer’s motivation to participate within an OBC. Based on Tsai and Men (2013) and Palma et al. (2018) five motivators of participation in branded SNS have been identified as relevant for this case: information, entertainment, social integration, remuneration, and empowerment.

Information is the action of seeking out information, as previously described, within OBCs members’ advice and exchanging information with one another (Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001; Park et al., 2009). Entertainment refers to the positive emotions (i.e., amusement, leisure) that arise when using SNS as an escape from the stress of everyday life (Park et al., 2009). Social integration comes to mind when thinking of OBCs, as it describes the sense of belonging, having a supportive community to turn to, and being able to cultivate relationships within the community (Daugherty et al., 2008; Tsai & Men, 2013). Remuneration was found to be the strongest motivator by Tsai and Men (2013). This is a longing for rewards and benefits such as economic incentives (i.e., coupons, discount codes, prices) (Tsai & Men, 2013). Empowerment describes the feeling of influencing

other consumers or the brand and enforcing excellence, e.g. by participating in co-innovation to ensure quality improvement (Tsai & Men, 2013; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2003).

Tsai and Men's (2013) results showed that remuneration, followed by information and entertainment were the strongest motivators, while empowerment and social integration had less of an impact. However, their research focused on motivations to engage with the brand's Facebook pages, while this study will look at an OBC platform specifically designed for consumers to interact and innovate. As the previous chapter outlined, the feeling of empowerment and social integration can be integral from the consumers' perspective regarding OBCs. Thus, they are considered a relevant motivator in this case. This is also in line with Palma et al. (2018), who highlight the motivators of value co-creation as previously outlined in chapter 2.3.3. Social integration relates to community and affiliation, remuneration links to tangible rewards, information connects with expertise, and entertainment can be a form of experience. However, recognition is not mentioned by Tsai and Men (2013), wherefore this study adds the factor empowerment as one of the key motivators under investigation.

In choosing these motivators the research also extends the study by Kamboj et al. (2018), who included relationship building, brand likeability, entertainment, information, and incentives as motivators for participating in SNS. Brand likeability will not be a focus of the underlying research since it is expected that all users of the brand are somewhat fans or advocates of it, thus likeability is assumed to be a given. This leads to the following hypotheses:

*H1a-e: The consumer motivations to participate in online brand communities (a) information, (b) entertainment, (c) social integration, (d) remuneration, and (e) empowerment have a positive impact on consumer-brand engagement.*

### 3.3. Consumer-Brand Engagement

The component 'organism' refers to the consumer's affective and cognitive condition (Kamboj et al., 2018). Thereby, affection is connected to the emotions triggered by the stimuli, and cognition relates to acquiring, processing, retaining, and retrieving information within consumers' minds (Kamboj et al., 2018).

Based on Kamboj et al. (2018) and Merz et al. (2018), this research proposes engagement as the 'organism' in the framework. Supporting this idea, customer engagement is said to be influenced by consumer's motivation to participate in OBCs, i.e., the stimulus (Sarkar & Banerjee, 2019), and it is

acknowledged as being an antecedent to CBR and co-creation, i.e., response (Behnam et al., 2021; Hollebeek et al., 2017). Like this, positioning CBE in the middle of the framework is justified.

In more detail, engagement is a driver of value co-creation as it activates the consumer's willingness to spend time and effort on the interaction with the brand (Hollebeek, 2011). Due to the increasing consumer-brand interaction happening online, understanding how to leverage engagement in OBCs gains increasing importance (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2017). If the community is managed in the right way, it might lead to increased brand attachment and commitment of the users (Ind et al., 2020). Thus, it is an integral part of the presented framework and leads to the next hypothesis:

*H2: Consumer-brand engagement in online co-innovation communities has a positive impact on consumer-brand relationships.*

### 3.4. Consumer-Brand Relationships

The last component of the SOR model, 'response', links to the consumers' behavior towards the brand, hence it is the consequence of their engagement in OBCs (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Kamboj et al., 2018). In that context, the role of brand loyalty and satisfaction has been extensively studied. Therefore, this research takes a different approach and puts the three dimensions brand trust, brand commitment, and brand attachment in the focus of the CBR constructs (see also chapter 2.3.2.). Thereby, the study builds on the relationship components suggested by Merz et al. (2018), further supported by Wang et al. (2020), and adds a different angle to the insights collected by authors like Kamboj et al. (2018). The ability to prevail in long-term relationships with consumers has been identified as a key driver of long-term brand value (Helm & Jones, 2010). As such, CBR is considered an important antecedent to co-innovation. This leads us to hypothesize the following:

*H3: Consumer-brand relationships have a positive impact on co-innovation in online brand communities.*

### 3.5. Brand Value Co-Creation and Co-Innovation

Another type of response that this study considers is the co-creation of brand value. As previously outlined, brand value co-creation is understood in this research as co-innovation, i.e., the collaboration of the firm and consumers in developing new products and improving existing ones. Likewise, customers' support of the brand includes positive e-WOM, sharing creative ideas and knowledge, and providing feedback (Merz et al., 2018; Palma et al., 2018). Besides being set as the

response in the SOR model, brand value co-creation is identified as the dependent variable in the given framework. Initially, the three stages of relationship marketing are set to be (1) communication, (2) interaction, and (3) value creation (Grönroos, 2004). So, value co-creation is facilitated and reinforced by managing successful relationships (Abeza et al., 2020). As such, investigating consumer engagement and brand relationship performance in connection to and as antecedents of co-innovation was found to be relevant (Nadeem et al., 2021).

### 3.6. Mediating Roles of Engagement and Relationship

Literature suggests that participation in communities encourages the engagement of consumers and, as a result, improves their relationship with the brand (Sarkar & Banerjee, 2021). Likewise, Thakur (2018) found that customer engagement partially mediates the level of customer satisfaction and fully mediates the level of brand trust. Besides, Nadeem et al. (2021) identified consumer engagement as a significant mediator of experiential value, CBR outcomes, and value co-creation. Thus, in this study engagement is expected to have a mediating effect between consumer motivations to participate in OBCs and the strength of their relationship with the brand:

*H4a-e: Consumer-brand engagement in online co-innovation communities mediates the relationship between the customer motivators (a) information, (b) entertainment, (c) social integration, (d) remuneration, and (e) empowerment and consumer-brand relationships.*

Besides, relationship marketing literature considers attachment, commitment, and trust as key mediators of behavior (Kamboj et al., 2018; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This is also indicated by Akrouf and Nagy (2018), whose study revealed the mediating role of trust and commitment (and the resulting strong relationships) on virtual brand fan pages. This is leading to the next hypothesis:

*H5: Consumer-brand relationships mediate the relationship between consumer-brand engagement and co-innovation in online brand communities.*

It should be noted that for the mediators in this study only the indirect effects are considered (Zhao et al., 2010). This means that neither hypotheses regarding the direct effect of consumer motivation to participate in OBC on the customer-brand relationship (i.e., brand attachment, brand trust, and brand commitment) and brand value co-creation (i.e., co-innovation) are formed, nor are hypotheses regarding the direct effect of CBE on co-innovation formed.

### 3.7. Overview of Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical delimitation, thirteen hypotheses can be derived as summarized in *table 2*.

<b>H1a-e</b>	The consumer motivations to participate in online brand communities (a) information, (b) entertainment, (c) social integration, (d) remuneration, and (e) empowerment have a positive impact on consumer-brand engagement.
<b>H2</b>	Consumer-brand engagement in online co-innovation communities has a positive impact on consumer-brand relationships.
<b>H3</b>	Consumer-brand relationships have a positive impact on co-innovation in online brand communities.
<b>H4a-e</b>	Consumer-brand engagement in online co-innovation communities mediates the relationship between the customer motivators (a) information, (b) entertainment, (c) social integration, (d) remuneration, and (e) empowerment and consumer-brand relationships.
<b>H5</b>	Consumer-brand relationships mediate the relationship between consumer-brand engagement and co-innovation in online brand communities.

Table 2: Hypotheses.

### 3.8. Preliminary Theoretical Framework

Taking all the information together, a preliminary theoretical framework can be derived based on the SOR model as illustrated in *figure 5*. Simultaneously, this builds the basis for the following empirical research.

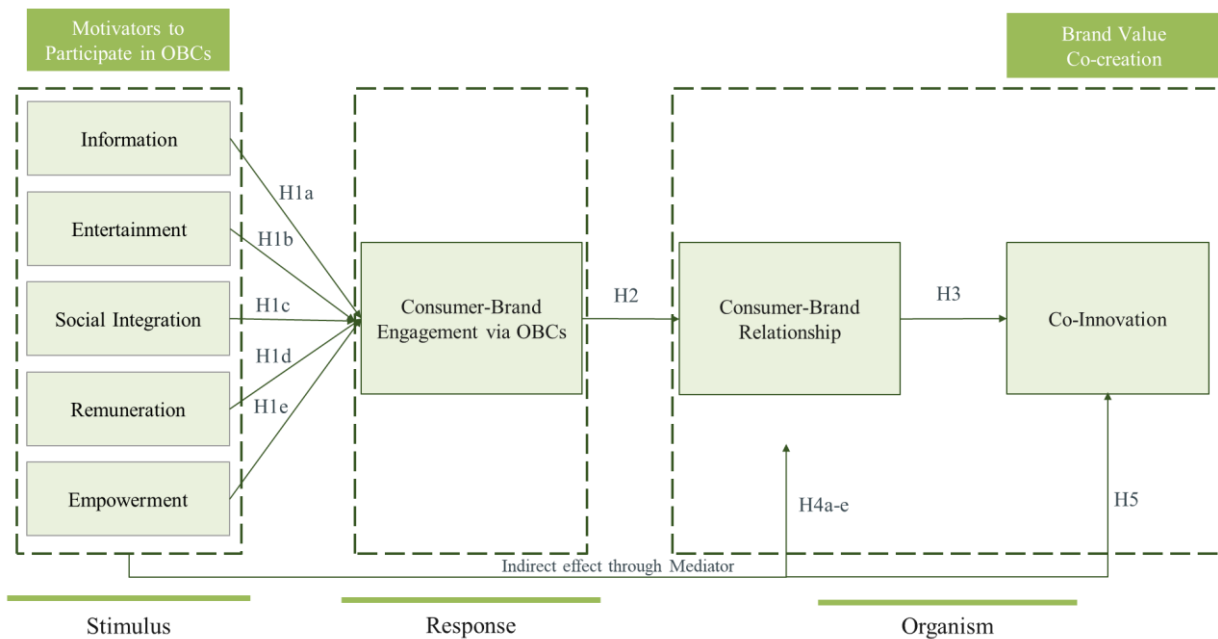


Figure 5: Preliminary Framework – Own Depiction Inspired by Kamboj et al. (2018).



## 4. Case Delimitation: Spotify

To make the research more tangible, the study is based on a specific case. The chosen case brand is Spotify because it is one of the biggest brands in the world, and it offers a relatively large online community to investigate. Before introducing Spotify in more detail, the next section provides a short introduction to the creative and music industry as a basis for the analysis.

### 4.1. Setting the Scene

#### 4.1.1. Introduction of the Creative Industries

Within the cultural field, literature differentiates between performing arts and the creative industries (Chaney, 2012). This study will focus on the music industry, thus on the latter. Creative industries in general are described as a supplier of “*goods and services that we broadly associate with cultural, artistic, or simply entertainment value*” (Caves, 2000, p. 1). Thereby, they comprise visual and performing arts, cinema and TV, sound recording, book and magazine publishing, as well as fashion, toys, and games (Caves, 2000). One of the central characteristics of the cultural sector is the great level of uncertainty that exists about how new products are accepted by the consumers (ibid.). As Bourdieu highlighted, within the field of cultural production success is based on acquiring symbolic, social, economic, and cultural capital (Harvey & MacLean, 2008). Here, the role of the brand comes into play as its promised consumer experience acts as a source of cultural capital (Helm & Jones, 2010). Also, as previously mentioned, OBCs can decrease the feeling of uncertainty for consumers (Ouwensloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008). This outlines the relevance of appropriate brand management within the creative industries.

#### 4.1.2. Media Branding 2.0

In the past decades, SoMe developed into one of the most popular tools used by consumers and marketers alike, with 3.6 billion active users worldwide in 2020 and a projected increase to 4.41 billion users in the next three years (Statista Research Department, 2022a). Here, 90% of all 18- to 29-year-olds in the US use SoMe, making up the largest user group (Statista Research Department, 2022b). At first, SNS were mainly used to connect with friends, family, and communities, however, while that is still happening today, consumers also use them increasingly to connect with their favorite brands (Statista Research Department, 2022c).

The media industry has not been left untouched by the rise of SoMe. To clarify the term, “*media brands offer value propositions about what their customers can expect in terms of type of content,*

*interactivity, and user experience*” (Ots, 2008, p. 3). Web 2.0 triggered, for instance, changes in consumer behavior, communication technologies, and market conditions (Chan-Olmsted, 2011). Besides, there are more players in the field and more possibilities to present media products, e.g., through the introduction of streaming platforms (Chan-Olmsted, 2006). While SoMe created a new way for brands to connect with consumers on a more personal and interactive level, it also turned into a direct competitor for media products as both compete for the customer’s free time (Chan-Olmsted, 2011). Today, all of this results in a highly fragmented entertainment market with an infinite amount of content (Hassler-Forest, 2020). This situation also makes it more difficult for the consumer to decide which product to choose. While there is less risk of spending money on the ‘wrong’ thing, time becomes more valuable (Chan-Olmsted, 2006; Ots, 2008). Because consumers face a high risk of consuming a media product that they do not enjoy, media brands have the central function to signal a familiar positive experience and thus reducing uncertainty regarding the consumption (Caves, 2000; Chan-Olmsted, 2006). Such familiarity is further identified as one aspect of long-term customer-brand relationship and indicates the predictability of future success (Avery et al., 2014). Thus, building long-lasting connections with the audience is a central goal of media brands because the user base is the most valuable asset in such a dynamic and fragmented marketplace (Ots, 2008). Out of this stems the need to provide opportunities to co-create (Chan-Olmsted, 2011), further supporting the motivation of this research.

#### 4.1.3. Value Co-Creation in the Music Industry

Historically, the music industry has transformed substantially in the way it is produced and consumed (Saragih, 2019). Over time, the carriers of music changed from vinyl records to audiotapes, to digitalized music formats like CD and mp3, to the current era of online music including iTunes and Spotify (Lin & Chien, 2015). Next to the dematerialization of music, another trend is the consumption of individual units instead of a set, i.e., a whole album (Chaney, 2012). Besides, the transformation of the SD logic also influenced the music business, as the value of music (brands) is now created through “*dynamic interactions of producer and consumer*” (Lin & Chien, 2015; Saragih, 2019, p. 466). The fact that consumers show a strong desire to interact with music brands and to resist oppressive marketing controls further illustrates that value co-creation is relevant in the music industry (Gamble & Gilmore, 2013).

In the last decade, co-creation within the music industry has gained increasing attention. For instance, Gamble and Gilmore (2013) look at co-creational marketing in the recorded and live

sector, Choi and Burnes (2013) illustrate how online co-creation activities in the popular music industry result in mutual benefits and more positive relationships between the players, and Saragih et al. (2019) highlight the relevance of (co-)innovation in the music business and the central part that trust and engagement play in it. Thereby, scholars heavily focus on the role of labels, artists, and fans in co-creating value within the popular music industry and music festivals (Saragih, 2019). While the importance of value co-creation in the development of consumer-provider relationships in the cultural industries has been recognized (Choi & Burnes, 2013), how exactly the engagement in OBCs impact the relationships and level of co-innovation remains understudied.

Another focus of the literature is on virtual communities in different SNS like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, wherefore investigating company-initiated OBCs in that regard could add new insights to this emerging literature stream. Certainly, in the music industry value for consumers is not only created through social connections and recognition within the community but it is also related to the quantity of music that users make available to their peers (Chaney, 2012). Based on this, and to the best knowledge of the authors, no study has so far dealt with the influence of streaming platforms in that context, hence Spotify makes an interesting case brand to investigate. It is assumed that by choosing Spotify, the results will provide relevant insights for other media sectors as well, like the television or cinema business. To sum up, despite the increased awareness of the relevance of innovation in creative industries there seems to be a missing understanding of how streaming platforms can use co-innovation via virtual brand communities (Saragih et al., 2019).

## 4.2. Spotify

The following section introduces the case company Spotify in more detail. First, the background and history of the brand are described. Second, the focus is set on describing the company-initiated online co-innovation community.

### 4.2.1. Background and History

Spotify is a Swedish music service founded by Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon in 2006 as a response to the increasing problem of piracy in the industry (BBC, 2018). Since the launch of the music streaming platform in 2008, Spotify has transformed the way people listen to music substantially (Spotify, 2022). Up until today, the brand has established itself as the biggest music streaming service in the world (Götting, 2021). With 406 million users and 180 million subscribers across 184 countries, it not only outperforms all its competitors but is also listed among the top

social networks in general (Götting, 2021; Pusztai, 2019; Spotify, 2022). But Spotify is not only a strong player in the music and online business. In fact, it is listed on Prophet's Brand Relevance Index 2021 as number three among the top 50 brands in the US – going up from rank 12 in only one year (Prophet, 2022).

The platform allows its users to listen to over 82 million tracks either for free or as a Spotify Premium user (Spotify, 2022). The premium upgrade offers access to improved sound quality as well as an on-demand, offline, and ad-free listening experience (ibid.). The features of the platform do not only include listening to music, but it also allows its consumers to share it and even create their own playlists that can be made accessible to anyone. Thus, the platform lives through the co-creation of content with consumers and artists. Looking at the Spotify user base, in 2018 the dominant consumer group was millennials, i.e., anyone born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimmock, 2017; Götting, 2022b). More precisely, 29% of Spotify users in the US were 25- to 34-years-old and 26% covered 18- to 24-year-olds (i.e., gen Z) (Götting, 2022b). This also represents the most active user group of SNS, as previously mentioned.

#### 4.2.2. Spotify's Online Brand Community

Spotify has a presence on several online platforms that the brand uses to communicate with its users and for its community members to interact, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. Furthermore, they have two platforms specifically for OBC activities on Reddit<sup>2</sup> and their company-owned community site<sup>3</sup>. Their largest platform is Facebook with over 22 million followers, followed by Instagram and their Spotify Community site with over 7 million followers/members respectively, coming in fourth is their Twitter account with over 5 million followers, and lastly their TikTok (800.000) and Reddit community (375.000). However, as the most recent data on the size of the Spotify Community site dates back to 2019, the number is likely even higher today (Millington, 2019). Especially due to the fact that the number of Spotify users has almost doubled from the first quarter of 2019 till the fourth quarter of 2021 (Götting, 2022a). With that in mind, it is safe to assume that the Spotify Community site is likely the brand's second-largest platform.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.reddit.com/r/spotify/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://community.spotify.com>

Previous research on OBCs has heavily focused on Facebook, hence this study deviates from that pattern and aims to add to the existing literature by examining the Spotify Community site. The community was created in 2012 for the brand users to interact, with the tag line “*Find solutions, share ideas and discuss music*” (Spotify, n.d., para. 1). This OBC is company-created, has no entry requirements, and has low activity control. Thus, it is categorized as an open company-initiated OBC (Gruner et al., 2014). Once members enter the community site, they are greeted with three features to choose from: help, chat, and ideas. The tag line sums up well the main objectives of the OBC, to help and support each other, foster innovation, and discuss their shared interests (i.e., music, podcasts). Thus, the community contains the four main functions of online co-innovation communities identified by MSL Global (2013).

First, the ‘help’ feature is where the members come to each other for assistance with the service or technical difficulties. This feature appears to tap into the members’ sense of moral responsibility towards one another and the need to problem solve (Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001). Second, the ‘chat’ feature allows the members to connect on their shared interests (i.e., artists, podcasts) and form a deeper relationship with one another. Third, the ‘ideas’ feature allows the members to introduce suggestions to improve Spotify’s services or the community site itself. Thereafter other members are encouraged to vote on the proposed ideas and discuss them with each other.

While the community is mostly operated by the members rather than the brand, if an idea gets enough votes, it gets forwarded to the Spotify internal team, and moderators of the platform update the members if their idea gets implemented. In spring 2022 eleven ideas were implemented and one was under consideration (*see appendix B*). The idea feature appears to be the brand’s co-innovation incubator. The brand further encourages user engagement with its Spotify Star Program. The program awards its most engaged members with merch, events, and a bigger role on the platform. Once a member becomes a ‘star’ they get to interact with the Spotify team, tweet from the program’s Twitter account, and have an opportunity to be involved with product research and early testing of the brand’s services. It is a step closer to the brand that the members admire to develop a deeper relationship with.

This OBC is a unique case in the way that it is not operated through a widely popular third-party site (i.e., Facebook, Instagram) nor is it heavily advertised by the brand. The success of this site speaks to the dedication and engagement of the community members. It is a community that enhances the brand value by providing customer support and actively participating in co-innovation

(Fisk, 2019; Forsyth, 2019). Spotify has created a platform where they can easily access and collect data on their consumer's needs. By being this consumer-focused, or obsessed, the brand has landed itself on the top three list of the brand relevance index of 2022 and several times in the top ten in previous years (Prophet, 2022). The brands on this list are described as ones that “*adapt quickly to customers' changing needs and expectations. But they do so by remaining ever more true to themselves*” (Prophet, 2022, para. 3). Thus, the efficient management of Spotify's OBC appears to be in part responsible for the brand's continuous success.

## 5. Methodology

The methodology chapter is based on the research onion by Saunders et al. (2019) as illustrated in figure 6. First, the philosophy of science underlying this study is outlined. Second, the chapter covers the research approach and research design. Third, the data collection methods are described, including the methodological approach and variable measurement scales. Fourth, information about the sampling process is provided. Finally, the chapter concludes by describing the research quality criteria and research ethics.

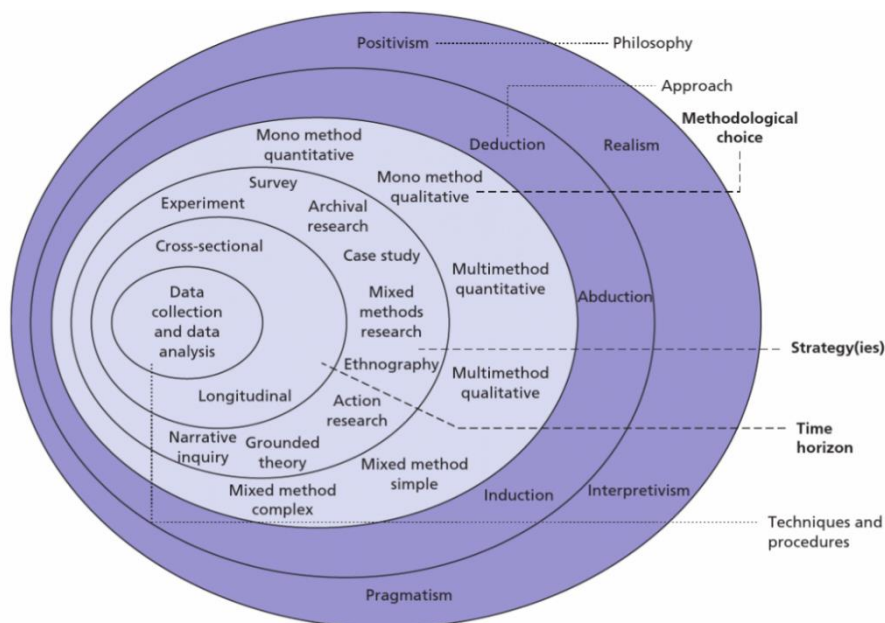


Figure 6: The Research Onion by Saunders et al. (2019).

### 5.1. Philosophy of Science

Each research study is built on underlying philosophical assumptions. The fundamental debates regarding the philosophy of science involve ontology and epistemology (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Ontology describes the nature of reality, i.e., ‘what is’, and epistemology deals with how knowledge is created, acquired, and communicated, i.e., it comprises ‘what it means to know’ (Scotland, 2012).

#### 5.1.1. Ontology

When it comes to ontology, philosophers fundamentally differ between realism and relativism. Realism argues that one single reality exists in the world, that the world is external and that it can be understood and captured only through observations that correspond directly to the phenomena under

investigation (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Moon & Blackman, 2014). Relativist ontology contradicts the view that there is only one truth as it assumes that multiple realities exist (Moon & Blackman, 2014). This study departs from the realist ontology since the chosen quantitative method approaches the external world through observations (i.e., surveys) that will provide evidence for the stated theories. Relativism is not suitable because it suggests that there is no reality, hence it is impossible to know anything for sure. As such, this belief would have made this study irrelevant. Based on realism, no research can study the external reality fully, wherefore this research aims to offer predictions about the phenomenon of virtual co-innovation.

### 5.1.2. Epistemology

Epistemology comprises “*the nature of the relationship between the knower and the known*” (Guba, 1990, p. 18). Here, the two contrasting views are positivism and constructionism (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Within the positivist view, the world exists externally and can be measured using objective methods (ibid.). Contrarily, constructionism believes that the societal reality is determined by people and their subjective sensations, intuitions, and experiences (Burns & Burns, 2008; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

The epistemological approach of this study is positivism because it aims at understanding the objective, external world. Further, positivism relates to the realist ontology as the fundamental belief is that reality exists objectively, and that science is used to discover the external truth (Guba, 1990). In this objectivist epistemology, the researcher takes a distant and independent position (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Guba, 1990). The chosen ontology and epistemology are in line with the quantitative approach as it allows to investigate human behavior as something that exists objectively. Likewise, positivism uses experimental methodology by formulating hypotheses and testing them empirically (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Guba, 1990).

## 5.2. Research Approach

To understand and explain the results of the thesis there are three models of social science research that can be applied: inductive, deductive, and abductive (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Deduction lends itself to quantitative research as it is a linear process where theories are developed through testing hypotheses, resulting in a specific conclusion. While induction lends itself more to qualitative research as it involves gathering data and observing said data to see if a pattern emerges, resulting in a general conclusion. However, it is common that researchers blend deductive and



inductive approaches, using one or the other at different phases of the research. That's what is described as abduction logic (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Saunders et al., 2019).

This thesis introduces hypotheses based on existing literature and aims to test those hypotheses through the quantitative methodology to explain relationships between several variables. After the data is analyzed, the hypotheses will either be confirmed or rejected. Thus, this study takes a deductive approach to ultimately develop a theory regarding the management of co-innovation via OBCs within the creative industry.

### 5.3. Research Design

The research design of the thesis refers to the plan of action regarding how to answer the research question (Marczyk et al., 2010; Saunders et al., 2019). There are several forms of research design that researchers can adhere to, such as exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory (Saunders et al., 2019). As this study seeks to understand how brands can manage their OBCs efficiently, community members are asked what motivates them. To get a broad array of respondents for a more holistic view of this case a quantitative approach is deemed appropriate. A quantitative approach further lends itself to a descriptive research design to “*gain an accurate profile of events, persons or situations*” (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 187). Descriptive research often follows exploratory or explanatory research. It seeks to understand the ‘how?’ of the matter.

Descriptive research design is a subcategory of conclusive research, which aims to test hypotheses and examine relationships (Burns & Burns, 2008). Thus, the research process will be structured and formal, with a relatively large sample of participants to be representative of the OBC that will be studied to answer the research question. To accurately describe how the community members think, feel, and behave the study will investigate how the variables (of the previously presented framework) are related (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010).

### 5.4. Methodological Approach

Methodological approaches can be categorized as either quantitative or qualitative. In simple terms, quantitative is a numerical data collection method and qualitative is a non-numerical (i.e., words, images, etc.) method (Saunders et al., 2019). Quantitative research is associated with structured data collection methods such as surveys or questionnaires, a large sample of participants, and a statistical data analysis. This methodological approach is frequently used to test theories and hypotheses or to develop a theory. While qualitative research is associated with unstructured methods such as in-

depth interviews and focus groups, with a smaller sample, and nonstatistical data analysis. This method aims to test or gain a deeper understanding of existing theoretical perspectives by researching “*participants’ meanings and the relationships between them*” (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 179; Yin, 2009). Researchers can choose between a mono method and a multiple method approach. The first can either be a quantitative or qualitative study, and the latter refers to either a multimethod or mixed method study (Saunders et al., 2012).

This thesis takes a deductive approach to test hypotheses and further develop existing theories from literature. Thus, quantitative research is conducted in the form of an online survey. Quantitative data can be categorized as either descriptive or casual which can be collected in several ways such as surveys, observational studies, correlational studies, or field experiments (Queirós et al., 2017; Williams, 2017). By implementing an online survey, a questionnaire is sent out on the OBC platforms. In this way, data is collected from a larger sample of the Spotify OBCs to get a more holistic understanding of the members’ motivations and behaviors (Saunders et al., 2019).

As this study looks into the OBC of the brand Spotify, it qualifies as a case study strategy (Saunders et al., 2019). In doing so, the research topic will be explored within a certain context. Yin (2009) distinguishes four types of case studies, based on two dimensions: single case or multiple cases, and holistic case or embedded case. This study investigates a particular brand as it presents quite a unique case in terms of OBCs within the creative industry and is thus considered to be a single case study. Concerning the second dimension, the embedded case design will be applied as the study explores several units of analysis rather than the holistic approach which examines the organization as a whole (Saunders et al., 2019). Employing a case study, by looking at phenomena within the context of Spotify’s OBC, can give valuable insights and add to existing theories (ibid.).

### 5.5. Time Horizon

There are two ways of categorizing the time span of a research project, either cross-sectional or longitudinal (Saunders et al., 2019). Cross-sectional research documents “*a particular phenomenon (or phenomena) at a particular time*” (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 212). While longitudinal research follows the phenomenon over a longer period and documents a series of events. This allows researchers to observe changes and development over time. As this thesis is under a time constraint, a cross-sectional approach will be applied to get a picture of the Spotify OBC (i.e., the phenomenon) at a particular moment in time.

## 5.6. Data Collection Method

The survey technique is one of the most common quantitative methods (Queirós et al., 2017; Saunders et al., 2019). Through a strategically developed questionnaire, several carefully selected questions will be asked directly to the OBC members to get insights into their thoughts, perceptions, and behaviors (Queirós et al., 2017). Collecting data through this method offers several benefits. Mainly, it is cost-effective and allows for easy distribution to a larger sample of participants when compared to qualitative methods (Heen et al., 2014; Queirós et al., 2017; Saunders et al., 2019). Meaning that the data offers higher representativeness. Furthermore, it is time-efficient and produces data that can be easily compared (ibid.). Time efficiency is crucial given that this thesis is a cross-sectional study (Saunders et al., 2019). Thus, using this data collection method gives a snapshot of a phenomenon at a given time. However, as with any research method, the reliability of the data is heavily dependent on the quality of the questionnaire and the accuracy of the answers by the participants (Queirós et al., 2017).

The survey strategy is that of a self-completed questionnaire administered via the internet (Saunders et al., 2019). First, the online questionnaire is distributed on the official Spotify Community website and the Spotify communities on Reddit and Facebook, where members can complete it through their mobile or web devices. As these OBCs are brand-related websites, this ensures that these participants of the survey are active community members. Second, the survey is further distributed to Spotify users via the SNS Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Like this, the target group can be expanded to non-community members as well, thereby providing more holistic results for the overall Spotify user. For the survey set-up and data collection, the program Qualtrics is used due to its user-friendliness. To further participation, the respondents are offered an incentive to win six months of Spotify Premium.

### 5.6.1. Questionnaire Design

As Krosnick and Presser (2018, p. 263) put it “*the heart of a survey is its questionnaire*”. Thus, the questionnaire design must be carefully crafted to get the most accurate results. There are many things to consider, starting with the phrasing of the questions. It is important to use simple words and grammar and to avoid technical jargon that could confuse the respondents (Krosnick & Presser, 2018). Moreover, to steer clear of wording that can be interpreted in several ways to ensure all respondents understand the questions in the manner intended. Other guidelines to avoid confusion are to stay on one topic at a time, avoid leading questions and avoid the use of negatives (Easterby-

Smith et al., 2015). In the same vein, the response options will need to be comprehensive (Krosnick & Presser, 2018).

Not only is there the need to consider the wording and grammar but also the most optimal order of the questions. Similar to qualitative interview techniques, starting with simple and easy questions eases the respondent into the questionnaire and builds a positive rapport (Krosnick & Presser, 2018). Further, the questions placed at the beginning of the questionnaire revolve around the main subjects of the survey which the respondents have been somewhat introduced to prior (ibid.). Questions are grouped based on the topic, moving from general questions to more specific ones (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). For the flow of the questionnaire, the questions are in the order of the consumer experience on the community site. Lastly, more sensitive questions are placed towards the end of the questionnaire (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Krosnick & Presser, 2018).

The questionnaire has been structured based on the abovementioned guidelines and the final look can be found in *appendix C*. As mentioned before, using Qualtrics as a tool allows for an easy and clear structure into different sections. The questions and statements in the survey are chosen based on scales that have been previously applied and reviewed by other scholars. Besides, negative wording is avoided and a pre-test is conducted (see chapter 5.6.3.) to ensure the overall high quality of the questionnaire (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

In total, the survey consists of five blocks. The first block includes the introduction of the researchers, the topic, the research aim, and the approximate duration of completing the survey. Then the basic information is collected. By asking the respondents whether they are Spotify users the relevance of the participants is ensured. If answered with ‘no’ the participant is directed to the end of the survey, if answered ‘yes’, the survey proceeds as usual. Then, information about the general Spotify usage is collected and the participants are asked whether they have ever visited the official Spotify Community site. If answered ‘yes’, the respondents are asked how often they visit the community. Also, they proceed to the version of the survey, in which the questions are phrased to fit current community members. If answered ‘no’, the participant proceeds directly to the alternative survey version, which is tailored to non-community members by providing an introduction to and screenshots of the website. Like this, the survey aims at making users familiar with the community site and allows them to situate themselves as possible members.

The second block asks about the motivation of users to participate in the Spotify Community via the identified motivators information, entertainment, social integration, remuneration, and empowerment. The third block includes questions about the level of engagement with the community as well as the relationship the respondents have with Spotify. With the fourth block, brand value co-creation in the community is measured through co-innovation. The fifth and final block asks for socio-demographic information like age, gender, and nationality. Lastly, the participants are offered the opportunity to take part in the lottery of winning six months of Spotify Premium by entering their e-mail addresses. Since this is the most sensitive information, it is positioned at the end of the survey.

### 5.6.2. Measurement Scales and Items

When conducting quantitative analysis, it is necessary to specify the different data types or scales of measurement before the data collection takes place (Saunders et al., 2012). Due to the fact that the questionnaire collects various types of information, also different levels of measurement for the variables have to be defined (Burns & Burns, 2008). Commonly, researchers use category scales (i.e., nominal or ordinal scales) or continuous scales (i.e., ratio or interval scales) to measure the investigated variable (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

First, the gender information is presented in the four categories (1) female, (2) male, (3) non-binary, and (4) prefer not to say. Also, the question regarding the type of membership is divided into categories ('yes' and 'no'; 'free' and 'premium'). Since these categories cannot be ranked the variables are classified as nominal (Burns & Burns, 2008). Second, the age information is again grouped into categories, including 'under 18; 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; over 65'. As these categories have a natural ordering, but neither show equal intervals between the units nor does an absolute zero point apply, they are defined as ordinal instead of ratio or interval variables (Burns & Burns, 2008; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Third, the options for measuring the general Spotify or community usage behavior include 'daily', '4 to 6 days a week', '1 to 3 days a week', and 'less than once a week'. Thus, the variables are again considered ordinal. Fourth, for the evaluation of the hypotheses the questionnaire includes the 5-point Likert scale due to its easy distribution and understandability (Malhotra, 2017). Here, the possible answers range from 1='strongly disagree' to 5='strongly agree'. With five reply options, the scale offers the opportunity to give a neutral response ('3') for participants who might have no opinion on an issue (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Since there are no constant intervals within the Likert scale, it is defined as ordinal variables (Burns

& Burns, 2008). However, in marketing research, Likert scales are usually treated like numerical interval data to enable the estimation of means and standard deviation (Malhotra, 2017; Saunders et al., 2012).

It should be noted that the chosen scales provide useful information about the participant's preferences and subjective opinions, wherefor they cannot be considered to deliver objective facts (Burns & Burns, 2008). Still, the data allows for interpretation that leads to insights about the influences of consumer motivations to participate in co-innovation on Spotify's OBC. Generally, items from existing research are adopted and the statements are modified if needed to better fit our research context. The orientation at existing scales enables the researchers to measure the topic of interest with empirically tested and validated items that are specifically designed for a similar target group (Saunders et al., 2012). Also, for the alternative version (i.e., the survey for non-community members) the questions have been adjusted accordingly. The detailed items of each variable scale are illustrated in *table 3* and will be described in the following section. By using various measurement items for each component, the researchers aim at improving the accuracy of the results as well as reducing possible measurement errors (Hair et al., 2022, 2017a).

### *Motivation to Participate in OBCs*

Information is measured based on a scale by Sung et al. (2010), of which three items have been selected: (1) 'I visit this community to get useful information about the brand and its features', (2) 'I visit this community to solve problems', and (3) 'I visit this community to learn new things about to the brand'.

To measure the importance of entertainment three items by Sung et al. (2010) have been adopted: (1) 'I visit this community to fill my free time', (2) 'I visit this community because it is entertaining', and (3) 'I visit this community because it is relaxing'.

Social integration is measured based on Garbarino and Johnson (1999) and Tsai and Men (2013) resulting in the four items: (1) 'I feel a sense of belonging to this community', (2) 'I feel supported by my peers on this community', (3) 'I feel like I have enhanced interpersonal connections when using this community', and (4) 'I visit this community to connect with like-minded others'.

For the measurement of remuneration three items inspired by Sung et al. (2010) and Palma et al. (2018) have been adopted: (1) 'I visit this community to get a reward for my continued participation', (2) 'I visit this community because it offers incentives', and (3) 'I feel like I can

contribute to something bigger when participating in this community’. Like this, the scale is aimed at collecting information about extrinsic (e.g., economic incentives) but also intrinsic rewards (e.g., contribution to society).

Empowerment is measured along three items inspired by Tsai and Men (2013) and Palma et al. (2018): (1) ‘I visit this community to express my opinion about product features’, (2) ‘I visit this community to influence other people or the brand’, and (3) ‘I visit this community because I can suggest improvements for Spotify’.

### *Consumer-Brand Engagement*

To get a feeling of how engaged consumers are in Spotify’s online community, the three dimensions by Hollebeek (2011) cognition, affection, and activation are investigated based on a scale inspired by Kamboj and Rahman (2016) and Nadeem et al. (2021). To evaluate the cognitive dimension the questionnaire includes the four-item scale: (1) ‘I think about Spotify when I visit the community’, (2) ‘Using this community stimulates my interest to learn more about Spotify’, (3) ‘I read comments/reviews of other community members’, and (4) ‘I frequently post messages and provide responses on the community page’.

To evaluate the emotional dimensions, the following three options have been applied: (1) ‘I think participating in this community is beneficial for me’, (2) ‘I feel good when I use this community’, and (3) ‘I am proud to be part of this community’.

For the evaluation of the behavior dimension, the following three items have been adopted: (1) ‘I actively participate in in the community activities’, (2) ‘I spend a lot of time online in participating in activities on the community site’, and (3) ‘Whenever I am on the community site, I usually also use the Spotify app’.

### *Consumer-Brand Relationship*

As introduced in chapter 2.3.2. brand attachment in this research is understood along the three dimensions brand passion, admiration, and love. Referring to Batra et al. (2012), brand love is a higher-order construct involving 14 features. Out of these elements, the most suitable for this research have been identified to be long-term involvement and emotional connection. Based on this, in addition to elements by Merz et al. (2018), the four-item scale is applied: (1) ‘I admire Spotify’, (2) ‘I am a fan of Spotify’, (3) ‘I am a long-term customer of Spotify’, and (4) ‘I get happy when I use Spotify’.

According to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) brand trust is most relevant in uncertain situations and is made up of the facets reliability, safety, and honesty. Based on this, brand trust is evaluated along the four-item scale: (1) ‘I trust Spotify’, (2) ‘I rely on Spotify’, (3) ‘Spotify always lives up to my expectations’, and (4) ‘Spotify is an honest brand’.

Brand commitment is measured based on a three-item scale inspired by Morgan and Hunt (1994), Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), and Merz et al. (2018): (1) ‘I am willing to pay the Spotify Premium price to have a better user experience’, (2) ‘Spotify is important to me’, and (3) ‘I am committed to support Spotify’s success’.

### Brand Value Co-Creation

The dependent variable brand value co-creation is measured through co-innovation based on a scale inspired by Russo-Spena and Mele (2012), Parmentier and Mangematin (2014), Wang and Hajli (2014), and Palma et al. (2018): (1) ‘I am willing to share my experiences and suggestions when other members of the community want my advice’, (2) ‘I communicate with other members of the community to identify ideas regarding new product features’, (3) ‘I evaluate other members’ ideas regarding the development of new Spotify product features’, (4) ‘I feel like Spotify acknowledges/recognizes the ideas of the community’, (5) ‘I can see how Spotify actually transforms the ideas shared and voted for in the community into action’.

Component	Type	Scale & Items	Source
<i>Motivation to participate in OBC</i>			
<b>Information</b>	Independent variable	I visit the community to get information about the brand and its features. ① Strongly Agree   ② Agree   ③ Neither   ④ Disagree   ⑤ Strongly Disagree	Sung et al. (2010)
		I visit the community to solve problems. ① Strongly Agree   ② Agree   ③ Neither   ④ Disagree   ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I visit the community to learn new things about the brand. ① Strongly Agree   ② Agree   ③ Neither   ④ Disagree   ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
<b>Entertainment</b>	Independent variable	I visit the community to fill my free time. ① Strongly Agree   ② Agree   ③ Neither   ④ Disagree   ⑤ Strongly Disagree	Sung et al. (2010)
		I visit the community because it is entertaining. ① Strongly Agree   ② Agree   ③ Neither   ④ Disagree   ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I visit the community because it is relaxing. ① Strongly Agree   ② Agree   ③ Neither   ④ Disagree   ⑤ Strongly Disagree	



<b>Social Integration</b>	Independent variable	I feel a sense of belonging to this community. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	Garbarino & Johnson (1999); Tsai & Men (2013)
		I feel supported by my peers on this community. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I feel like I have enhanced interpersonal connections when using this community. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I visit the community to connect with like-minded others. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
<b>Remuneration</b>	Independent variable	I visit the community to get a reward for my continued participation. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	Sung et al. (2010); Palma et al. (2018)
		I visit the community because it offers incentives (i.e., the Stars program). ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I feel like I can contribute to something bigger by participating in this community. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
<b>Empowerment</b>	Independent variable	I visit the community to express my opinion about product features. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	Tsai & Men (2013); Palma et al. (2018)
		I visit the community to influence other people or the brand. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I visit the community because I can suggest improvements for Spotify. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
<b>Customer Engagement in OBC</b>			
<b>Cognition</b>	Mediator	I think about Spotify when I visit the community. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	Kamboj & Rahman (2016); Nadeem et al. (2021)
		Using the community stimulates my interest to learn more about Spotify. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I read comments/reviews of other community members. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I frequently post messages and provide responses on the community page. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	

<b>Affection</b>	Mediator	I think participating in this community is beneficial for me. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I feel good when I use this community ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I am proud to be part of this community. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
<b>Activation</b>	Mediator	I actively participate in the community activities. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I spend a lot of time online participating in activities on the community site. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		Whenever I am on the community site, I usually also use the Spotify app. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
<b>Consumer-brand relationship</b>			
<b>Brand attachment</b>	Mediator	I admire Spotify. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	Batra et al. (2012); Merz et al. (2018)
		I am a fan of Spotify. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I am a long-term customer of Spotify. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I get happy when I use Spotify. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
<b>Brand trust</b>	Mediator	I trust Spotify. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001)
		I rely on Spotify. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		Spotify always lives up to my expectations. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		Spotify is an honest brand. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
<b>Brand commitment</b>	Mediator	I am willing to pay the Spotify Premium price to have a better user experience. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	Morgan & Hunt (1994); Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001); Merz et al. (2018)
		Spotify is important to me. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I am committed to support Spotify's success. ① Strongly Agree ② Agree ③ Neither ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree	

<i>Brand-value co-creation</i>			
<b>Co-innovation</b>	Dependent variable	I am willing to share my experiences and suggestions when other members of the community want my advice. ① Strongly Agree   ② Agree   ③ Neither   ④ Disagree   ⑤ Strongly Disagree	Russo-Spena and Mele (2012); Parmentier and Mangematin (2014); Wang & Hajli (2014); Palma et al. (2018)
		I communicate with other members of the community to identify ideas regarding new product features. ① Strongly Agree   ② Agree   ③ Neither   ④ Disagree   ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I evaluate other members' ideas regarding the development of Spotify products features. ① Strongly Agree   ② Agree   ③ Neither   ④ Disagree   ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I feel like Spotify acknowledges/recognizes the ideas of the community. ① Strongly Agree   ② Agree   ③ Neither   ④ Disagree   ⑤ Strongly Disagree	
		I can see how Spotify actually transforms the ideas shared and voted for in the community into action. ① Strongly Agree   ② Agree   ③ Neither   ④ Disagree   ⑤ Strongly Disagree	

Table 3: Independent Variables, Mediators, and Dependent Variables and Their Scales.

### 5.6.3. Pre-test

After setting up an advanced draft of the questionnaire, a pre-test needs to be conducted. This is a crucial step in quantitative research since it enables the researcher to identify problematic questions (Burns & Burns, 2008). Thereby, spelling mistakes and bad wordings can be identified which helps in further reducing the measurement error (Hair et al., 2022). Besides, pre-testing assists in confirming the reliability and validity of the survey instruments (Burns & Burns, 2008; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Therefore, the questionnaire has been distributed to a sample that was determined based on the expected demographics of the final sample.

Based on their feedback, one spelling error was identified, a couple of wordings were simplified to better suit the target audience, and one measurement scale was adjusted as two variables seemed too similar. Besides, the alternative option of the questionnaire was edited, allowing consumers who have not yet visited the official Spotify Community to get a better introduction to it, hence being able to imagine themselves being a member. Overall, the pre-test allowed the researchers to confirm that the distributed survey was clear and understandable, hence usable.

## 5.7. Sampling

Since it is not possible to ask all Spotify users or members of the Spotify online community for their opinion, it is important to find a representative sample (Saunders et al., 2019). For that, first the target group is defined. Second, an appropriate sampling technique is chosen. Third, the sample size is determined.

### 5.7.1. Target Population

In general, the chosen sample needs to represent the target population of the research (Saunders et al., 2019). In this thesis, the target group comprises active Spotify users that are between 16- and 54-years old, with the majority being millennials and gen Z. Like this, the target group represents the most active SoMe demographics as outlined in chapter 4, but still provides a comprehensive picture of all Spotify users. As a next step, the sampling technique and sample size need to be defined, as described in the following.

### 5.7.2. Sampling Technique

Two types of sampling techniques exist, probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Saunders et al., 2019). Probability or representative samples are characterized by the equal chance for all cases to be selected from the population (ibid.). Contrarily, the chance for each case to be selected from the total population for non-probability samples is unknown (ibid.).

Due to the fact that the online survey is shared on several SNS like the official Spotify Community, Reddit, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, the participation is open to anyone. Thus, the selection of respondents is unknown. This results in non-probability sampling; more precisely volunteer sampling is applied (Saunders et al., 2019). Within the volunteer sampling, the self-selection technique is chosen by allowing each individual to voluntarily decide whether they want to take part in the survey or not, simply by clicking on the link shared on the SNS (Saunders et al., 2019). In order to provide a greater incentive to the respondents, they are offered the chance to take part in a lottery to win six months of Spotify Premium.

It should be noted, that although the online distribution of the non-probability sampling allows for a cheaper and quicker data collection, generalization on statistical grounds becomes impossible (Burns & Burns, 2008; Saunders et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the high representativeness of the sample is expected to allow for interpretation that can provide more theoretical insight into co-innovation in OBCs (Saunders et al., 2019). Overall, the chosen sampling technique shows a high

likelihood that the participants have strong feelings and opinions about the brand and topic, which is relevant to answering the research question (Saunders et al., 2019).

### 5.7.3. Sample Size

For the sample size, the rule-of-thumb by Barclay et al. (1995) is applied, stating that the minimum sample size should be equal to “*ten times the maximum number of paths aiming at any construct in the outer [...] and inner model [...]*” (Hair et al., 2012, p. 420). With a maximum of five paths aiming at a construct in the model (see the framework in chapter 3.8) this results in a minimum sample size of 50 for this study. In addition, the minimum sample size is defined following the inverse square root approach as introduced by Kock and Hadaya (2018). This method “*considers the probability that the ratio of a path coefficient, and its standard error will be greater than the critical value of a test statistic for a given significance level*” (Legate et al., 2021, p. 5). According to Cohen (1988, 1992), an acceptable value of the minimum path coefficient is 0.02 (Kock & Hadaya, 2018). Combined with an expected significance level of 5%, this results in a minimum sample size of 155. In total, during a period of two weeks, the survey collected 181 responses of which 160 are applicable. Some are eliminated due to unfinished surveys or answers from individuals that do not fit the targeted demographics, e.g., non-Spotify users. All in all, the final sample size exceeds the minimum required.

### 5.8. Research Quality Criteria

Using questionnaires to collect data comes with the concern about whether the accuracy and stability of measurement variables are sufficient (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). While the pre-test provides a level of assurance about the reliability and validity of the survey, statistical measures need to be taken to evaluate research quality further (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The two research quality criteria – reliability and validity – are ones that researchers must concern themselves with when conducting a study. Validity refers to the accuracy of the measured data, while reliability concerns the accuracy of the ‘instrument’ (Heale & Twycross, 2015). That is if the study was repeated using the same data collection methods and analytical procedures it would produce consistent findings.

Reliability can be looked at as either internal or external (Saunders et al., 2019). Internal reliability concerns ensuring consistency while conducting research. This can be achieved through having a clear structure and plan of how to analyze the data. Moreover, it can be beneficial to work in groups to promote stability, as this study does, where multiple researchers analyze the data and see if they

agree on the findings (Saunders et al., 2019). External reliability concerns if the data collection techniques used, as well as the data analysis procedures, will produce similar results if the research would be repeated or if another researcher would recreate the research. It is not an easy task to ensure external reliability as several measurement errors need to be considered. Measurement errors such as participant error, participant biases, researcher error, and researcher biases can pose a threat to the quality of the research (Saunders et al., 2019). Any research that is deemed unreliable will also be proven invalid as errors or biases will produce tainted results and findings.

Ensuring reliability is necessary but not sufficient since researchers must also consider the validity of their research. While internal reliability reflects on the quality of research design, internal validity concerns the findings of the research and if they mirror what the research question intended to answer (Heale & Twycross, 2015; Saunders et al., 2019). As this study uses quantitative research methods (i.e., survey), there are several measurement validity aspects to assess, such as content validity, criterion validity, and construct validity (Saunders et al., 2019). Meaning, whether the questionnaire is truly measuring the concepts and relationships that it intends to and thus producing accurate data for the researchers to analyze (ibid.). The following chapter will delve into the methods that will be used to ensure reliability and validity in more detail.

### 5.9. Research Ethics

Ethics are defined as “*the application of moral principles and/or ethical standards that guide our behavior in human relationships*” (Burns & Burns, 2008, p. 31). To meet ethical standards, this study follows the ethical principles outlined by Saunders et al. (2019). These principles ensure integrity, fairness, and open-mindedness of the researcher, and further protect the participants by ensuring respect for others and avoidance of harm (Saunders et al., 2019). For the survey, participants were not asked for their name, birth date, or exact address. Only the e-mail address was collected from those who wanted to participate in the lottery. Overall, the right to privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity could be secured (Saunders et al., 2019). By choosing the self-selection sampling technique the data collection also ensured the right to voluntary participation (ibid.). Moreover, the ethical principles request informed consent of the participants (ibid.). Therefore, the survey provided an introduction and description of our research aim in the beginning.

Following these ethical principles, the researchers aim at protecting both, the participants and themselves, during all stages of collecting, analyzing, and managing data.

## 6. Data Analysis and Findings

The following chapter will introduce the data analysis methods used, including descriptive statistics and the Structural Equation Model (SEM). After describing the most important methods and steps in the analysis, the results and findings of the study are presented.

### 6.1. Data Analysis Methods

Before starting with the analysis, the collected data needs to be sufficiently prepared. For that, the survey answers are exported from Qualtrics, which offers the opportunity to access the data in different formats, like comma-separated values (CSV), Excel, or SPSS files. For the analysis in the program SmartPLS, the CSV file is required, while for the descriptive statistics the SPSS file is appropriate. After exporting the data, the files then need to be prepared to be used. Specifically, the spaces must be removed, and the descriptions have to be shortened according to the associated coding. Besides, non-eligible participants are removed including individuals who are not Spotify users, do not meet the targeted age group, or did not fully complete the survey. After the data preparation, it is possible to start with the analysis as described in the following.

#### 6.1.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are used to make the collected data easily understandable by collecting, presenting, summarizing, and describing it (Burns & Burns, 2008). After the data preparation, the first step is to analyze the socio-demographic information of the sample as well as the Spotify and Community usage behavior on a descriptive level. For this, the data is imported into SPSS, which is one of the most widely used programs for statistical analysis (Burns & Burns, 2008). The program helps to analyze, amongst others, frequencies, means, reliability tests, correlation coefficients, and standard deviations (Courtney, 2018). Thus, it provides an easy way to analyze information about the age, gender, location, and usage behavior of the participants. Due to its user-friendliness, SPSS allows for predictive and comparative data insights (Courtney, 2018). Then, the technique for hypothesis testing is applied as introduced subsequently.

#### 6.1.2. Introduction of the Structural Equation Model

Introduced in 1970, the SEM has been established as a common multivariate statistical approach to test complex models including multiple variables (Jöreskog & Wold, 1982; Legate et al., 2021; Willaby et al., 2015). Thereby, this statistical method offers a combination of factor, regression, and correlation analyses that allows for simultaneous analysis of multiple variable relationships

(Kamboj et al., 2018; Kline, 2016; Legate et al., 2021). When it comes to the SEM it can be distinguished between two types, the covariance-based SEM and the Partial Least Squares SEM (PLS-SEM) or PLS path modeling (Hair et al., 2022). While the covariance-based model has in the past been more commonly used for the analysis of complex relationships between variables, PLS-SEM has gained increasing awareness in recent years (Hair et al., 2019). The reason for the growing popularity of the PLS-SEM method is that it allows for an estimation of complex models “*without imposing distributional assumptions on the data*” (Hair et al., 2019, p. 3). Compared to the covariance-based SEM, PLS-SEM has been found to provide a higher degree of statistical power (Hair et al., 2017b, 2019; Reinartz et al., 2009). Moreover, PLS-SEM can accommodate a wide range of sample sizes, hence is also suitable for smaller samples (Legate et al., 2021).

Based on these considerations as well as the choice of Kamboj et al. (2018), i.e., one of the main references for this study, the SEM technique is applied for the analysis of the hypotheses. The PLS-SEM method is chosen as it helps to test the introduced theoretical framework, including several constructs and relationships between latent variables (Hair et al., 2019). Besides, the size of the sample does not present an issue when choosing PLS-SEM. For the analysis, SmartPLS offers an easy-to-use software that requires little prior knowledge about the method (Hair et al., 2019). In more detail, the PLS path model includes two central elements: The structural model, i.e., the inner model, describes the relationships between the different constructs, and the measurement model, i.e., the outer model, illustrates the constructs and variables with their respective indicators (Hair et al., 2017a; Legate et al., 2021). The two elements will be described in the following, and an illustration of the PLS path model can be found in *figure 7*.

### 6.1.3. Reflective Measurement Model

The first step when evaluating the PLS-SEM model results is to examine the measurement model (Hair et al., 2019). Assessing the measurement model, or outer model, revolves around looking at the relations between indicators and constructs (Hair et al., 2012, 2017a). This is done by establishing the reliabilities and validities of the variables. To determine which criteria are relevant for this study researchers must identify between reflective and formative, as the criteria differ between the two (Hair et al., 2019). In reflective measurement models, the indicators are a reflection of the construct and are therefore expected to have a high positive correlation with each other, while formative measurement models show a relationship where the indicators are the cause



of the construct and are thus not affected by the construct (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2004). Moreover, there is no expectation of a high positive correlation between the indicators (ibid).

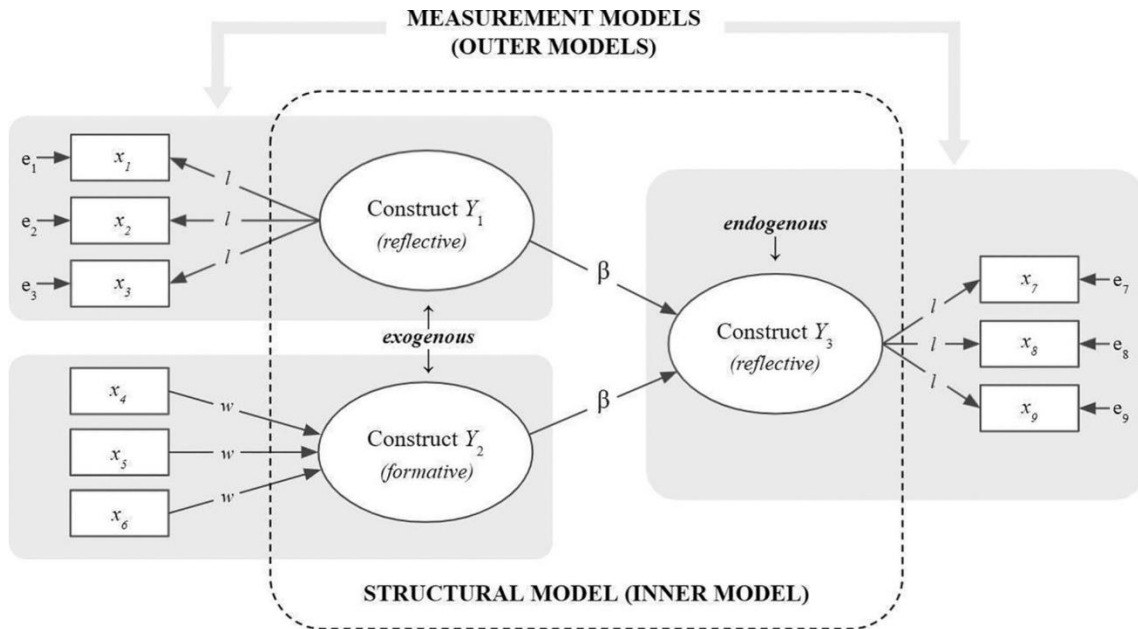


Figure 7: Measurement and Structural Model by Legate et al. (2021).

### Reliability

This study examines the reflective measurement model by first observing the indicator reliability. The indicator threshold is 0.50, however, a recommended loading score is 0.708 or above, as this result “indicate[s] that the construct explains more than 50 per cent of the indicator’s variance” (Hair et al., 2019, p. 8; Hulland, 1999). If the data reflects the recommended loadings, it will prove adequate item reliability (ibid.). The next step is to examine internal consistency reliability. The most common measurements for that are composite reliability and Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha$ ) (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). When using composite reliability higher values equal higher reliability (Jöreskog, 1971). Acceptable composite reliability values are between 0.60 and 0.70, whereby levels from 0.70 to 0.90 are deemed satisfactory/recommended, however, if the values are 0.95 or higher that might indicate a redundancy with the items and thus reducing construct validity (Hair et al., 2019). Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ , when compared to composite reliability, is considered a more conservative approach (ibid.). It is a less precise measure as it assumes the same levels of reliability when it comes to all indicators, as opposed to composite reliability which takes indicator loadings into account. To sum up, Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  and composite reliability are different ends of the spectrum when it comes to measuring internal consistency reliability, where Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  is conservative and composite

reliability is liberal. That is, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  might underestimate reliability while composite reliability might overestimate the reliability of a construct (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). Therefore, the true reliability of a construct may be found between the two. Thus, Dijkstra and Henseler (2015) proposed a new measure that typically lies between the two aforementioned measures:  $\rho_A$  (also illustrated as 'rho\_A').  $\rho_A$  differentiates from composite reliability as it evaluates "*a construct's weights, not its loadings*" (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015, p. 300). Furthermore, as Dijkstra and Henseler (2015, p. 300) explain: " *$\rho_A$  is determined such that the off-diagonal elements of a latent variable's indicator correlation matrix are reproduced as well as possible in a least squares sense*".

### Validity

The next step when assessing the reflective measurement model is to establish validity. To do so the convergent validity and discriminant validity of the construct measures need to be assessed (Hair et al., 2019). Convergent validity is often used in behavioral sciences and refers "*to the degree to which two measures of constructs that theoretically should be related, are in fact related*" (Taherdoost, 2016, p. 31). This is done by using the average variance extracted (AVE) metrics for all items of each construct (Hair et al., 2019). The desired AVE measurement is 0.50 or higher, as this metric indicates that "*the construct explains at least 50 per cent of the variance of its items*" (Hair et al., 2019, p. 9).

Next, the discriminant validity needs assessment. Discriminant validity refers to how the constructs differ from one another. A common method for measuring discriminant validity was proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981), where the AVE of each construct is compared to the squared inter-construct correlation (i.e. shared variance) of the construct in question and all other constructs within the model (Hair et al., 2019). When using this method, it is important that the shared variance is not greater than each individual construct's AVEs. However, the Fornell-Lacker criterion has been criticized over the years, with scholars such as Henseler et al. (2015) finding that the method does not effectively detect deficiency of discriminant validity in certain research scenarios. Therefore, Henseler et al. (2015) proposed an alternative method to assess discriminant validity, i.e., the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations. HTMT is defined as "*the average of the heterotrait-heteromethod correlations (i.e., the correlations of indicators across constructs measuring different phenomena), relative to the average of the monotrait-heteromethod correlations (i.e., the correlations of indicators within the same construct)*" (Henseler et al., 2015, p. 121). Using this method, an indication that there is a lack or absence of discriminant validity

appears when the HTMT values are high (above 0.90) (ibid.). An HTMT value below 0.90 for conceptually similar constructs and a value below 0.85 for conceptually different constructs validates the discriminant validity of the constructs.

#### 6.1.4. Structural Model

After making sure that the collected data is reliable and valid it is time to assess the structural model (Hair et al., 2019). The main goal of the structural model is to identify the relationships between the latent variables and it includes exogenous, i.e., independent variables, and endogenous constructs, i.e., dependent variables (Hair et al., 2022, 2011).

The sequence of the different constructs is presented from left to right, whereby their predictive power follows the same order (Hair et al., 2022). In this study, the motivations to participate in OBCs (i.e., information, entertainment, social integration, remuneration, and empowerment) represent the independent variables, hence are seen as exogenous constructs. The outcome, co-innovation, is defined as the dependent variable. The two mediators, CBE and CBR, have dual relationships as they act both as independent and dependent variables in the structural model. All latent variables that are considered to be dependent variables or independent and dependent variables are called endogenous (Hair et al., 2022). In addition, CBE and CBR are defined in this framework as higher-order constructs, involving the lower-order constructs cognition, affection, and activation (CBE) and brand attachment, brand trust, and brand commitment (CBR) respectively.

Assessing the model through higher-order constructs is beneficial as the complexity can be reduced and collinearity problems can be avoided (Hair et al., 2022; Legate et al., 2021). Since the lower-order constructs of CBE and CBR are highly correlated (Hollebeek, 2011; Merz et al., 2018), estimating the model relationships via higher-order models avoids biased results, collinearity issues, and ensures discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017a). Moreover, the study follows the repeated indicators approach, whereby all indicators of the lower-order constructs are assigned to the higher-order model (Hair et al., 2017a). As a result, the indicators of cognition, affection, and activation are assigned to CBE, while the brand attachment, brand trust, and brand commitment indicators are assigned to CBR. Like this, the higher-order constructs can be adequately presented and measured (Hair et al., 2017a). An overview of the path model including the higher- and lower-order components is illustrated in *figure 8*.

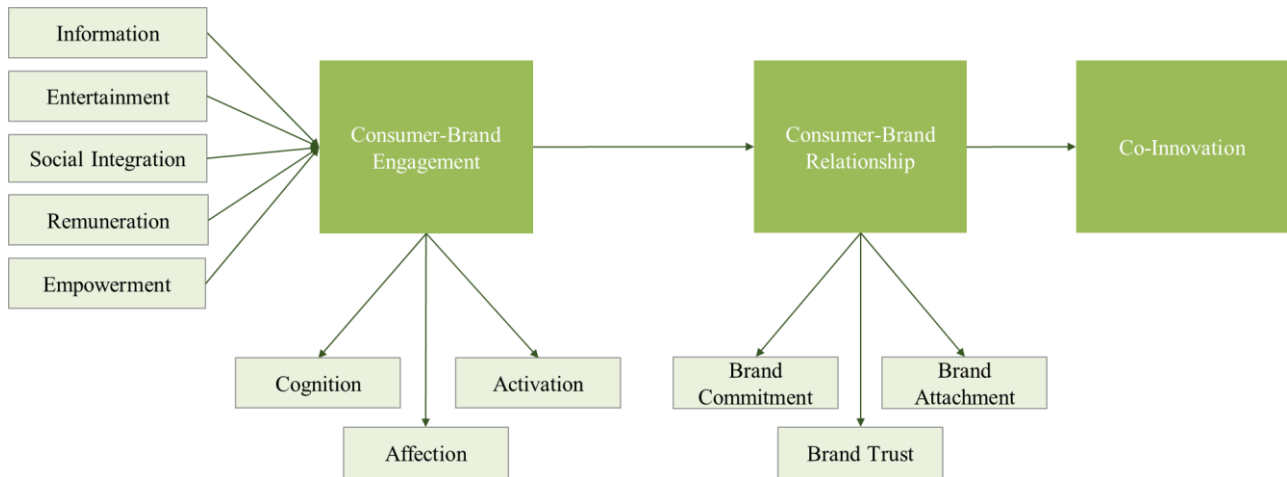


Figure 8: Framework Including Reflective Higher-Order Constructs.

In this study, the reflective-reflective hierarchical component model type is applied, thus indicating a reflective relationship between the higher-order and lower-order variables (Hair et al., 2017a). For these reflective higher-order models additional assessments (e.g., discriminant validity) need to be considered to ensure the correct results of the measurement model (Sarstedt et al., 2019). Following the calculations suggested by Sarstedt et al. (2019), the composite reliability results are 0.94 for CBE and 0.96 for CBR, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  resulted in 0.94 (CBE) and 0.92 (CBR), thereby showing high levels of reliability. Although the composite reliability for CBR exceeds 0.95, thus could hint towards redundancy (Hair et al., 2019), the reliability is considered to be confirmed due to its Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and expected rho\_A results lying within the recommended scores. Besides, the AVE for both, CBE and CBR, is larger than 0.80 thus well exceeding the suggested threshold of 0.50. Lastly, the discriminant validity is ensured with all HTMT calculations not exceeding 0.85. The correlation matrix and cross-loadings of the constructs, that are used for the calculations, are illustrated in *appendices D and E* respectively. Besides, all performed calculations can be found in *appendices F and G*. The remaining constructs in the framework follow the evaluation process as previously described.

For the assessment of the structural model, no additional calculations for higher-order constructs are required (Sarstedt et al., 2019). The first step is to test the collinearity of the different predictors (or independent variables) to ensure that the regression result is not biased (Hair et al., 2019). For the assessment of the multicollinearity between endogenous constructs, the outer variance inflation factor (VIF) values are estimated, and the result is ideally close to three or lower (Hair et al., 2019; Legate et al., 2021). The next step is calculating the  $R^2$  value, i.e., the variance of the endogenous

constructs or in-sample predictive ability (Hair et al., 2019). Here, the numbers range from zero to one, and the higher the value the greater is its explanatory power (Hair et al., 2019). Although the acceptable  $R^2$  values differ across disciplines, for marketing the rule-of-thumb states that results of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 are considered as weak, moderate, and substantial respectively (Hair et al., 2017a). Next follows the evaluation of the Stone–Geisser’s  $Q^2$  value in order to prove the out-of-sample predictive relevance of the structural model (Hair et al., 2011, 2019). While results larger than zero do indicate predictive accuracy, the rule-of-thumb argues that values of 0.50 or higher ensure large predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2019). Finally, the effect size as measured by the  $f^2$  value evaluates how the  $R^2$  value is affected when removing a certain construct from the model (Hair et al., 2019). Thereby, an effect size of 0.02 to 0.15 is considered small, between 0.15 and 0.35 it counts as medium, and any  $f^2$  value over 0.35 counts as large (Legate et al., 2021).

### *Hypotheses Testing*

In order to estimate whether the stated hypotheses are supported or not, the path coefficients, p-values, and t-values of the construct relationships need to be examined (Legate et al., 2021).

The path coefficients indicate the structural model relationships, thus representing the hypothesized relationships between the different constructs (Hair et al., 2017a). While the values usually fall between -1 and +1, anything close to the latter illustrates a strong positive relationship that is statistically significant (ibid.). Nevertheless, the ultimate significance of a path coefficient relies on its standard error, wherefore they should be retrieved via bootstrapping (Hair et al., 2017a, 2019). Bootstrapping “*involves repeated random sampling with replacement from the original sample to create a bootstrap sample, to obtain standard errors for hypothesis testing*”, and is especially suitable for PLS-SEM as data is not considered to be normally distributed (Hair et al., 2011, p. 148). Out of the different bootstrapping types it is suggested to choose the bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap over the other options like percentile bootstrap, standardized bootstrap, or double bootstrap (Ramayah et al., 2018).

To then assess significance levels, it is necessary to calculate the t-values and p-values for all of the path coefficients (Hair et al., 2017a). Here, the p-value represents the probability of rejecting a true hypothesis, whereby values below 0.05 indicate strong significance (Hair et al., 2017a; Legate et al., 2021). Similarly, the t-value is another criterion of a path coefficient’s significance (Hair et al., 2017a). For two-tailed tests, any t-value above 1.96 suggests a significant result, as it converts into a

p-value of 0.05 (ibid.). This means that all relationships with a calculated p-value close to zero can be considered significant at a confidence level of 95%.

### *Mediation Effect Testing*

A mediator is classified as a variable that intervenes in the relationship between two related constructs, e.g., an independent and dependent variable (Sarstedt et al., 2020). Different methods of testing mediator effects exist. One widely used option is Baron and Kenny's (1986) Sobel test (Kamboj et al., 2018). However, it is suggested that the bootstrapping technique is a better fit for the PLS-SEM approach as no assumptions regarding the shape of the variable or sampling distribution are made (Hair et al., 2017a; Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Ramayah et al., 2018). Besides, it is found to have higher statistical power and overcomes several key issues related to the Sobel test, for instance, its inability to test indirect effects (Hair et al., 2017a; Zhao et al., 2010). Further, mediation via PLS-SEM eliminates measurement errors, takes the entire model structure into account, and provides more flexibility (Sarstedt et al., 2020). Despite its greater technical complexity, SEM is preferred as it enables simultaneous evaluation compared to running three regressions like in the Sobel technique (Zhao et al., 2010).

Generally, when applying the bootstrapping method to measure the mediator's effect, the direct, indirect, and total effects are examined (Kamboj et al., 2018). It should be noted that the indirect effect is most relevant when examining the mediation (Zhao et al., 2010), especially since the underlying study does neither form hypothesis regarding the direct effects of the motivators on CBR and co-innovation, nor of CBE on co-innovation. In addition, this research requires multiple mediation analyses as the impact of two mediators, i.e., CBE and CBR, is investigated (Hair et al., 2017a). Possible results of mediation tests can be identifying full mediation, partial mediation, or non-mediation (Zhao et al., 2010). Partial mediation can further be divided into complementary and competitive mediation (Ramayah et al., 2018). Thereby the first refers to the case when the mediated and direct effect point in the same direction, while for the latter both indirect and direct effects exist but point in opposite directions (Zhao et al., 2010). Besides, non-mediation can occur as a direct-only effect or no effect at all, the latter meaning that neither direct nor indirect effects exist (ibid.).

The central steps of both, the measurement and structural model, are summarized in *figure 9*.

Step 1	Reflective Measurement Model:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estimating individual scale items via factor loadings</li> <li>• Determining reliability via composite reliability, <math>\rho_A</math>, and cronbach's alpha</li> <li>• Determining convergent validity via AVE</li> <li>• Determining discriminant validity via HTMT</li> </ul>
Step 2	Structural Model:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessing multicollinearity via VIF</li> <li>• Estimating in-sample predictive ability via <math>R^2</math> values</li> <li>• Estimating out-of-sample predictive ability via <math>Q^2</math> value</li> <li>• Assessing effect size via <math>f^2</math> value</li> <li>• Hypothesis testing via path coefficients, p-value, and t-value</li> <li>• Mediation testing via bootstrapping</li> </ul>

Figure 9: Summary of the PLS-SEM Steps Based on Legate et al. (2021) & Hair et al. (2019).

## 6.2. Results and Findings

In the following, the results and findings of the research will be outlined, following the PLS-SEM structure as outlined above. For the analysis the data is imported into SmartPLS; an illustration of the framework as built in the program can be found in *appendix H*.

### 6.2.1. Evaluation of the Descriptive Statistics

The questionnaire for this study was open for two weeks on several online platforms to reach Spotify users, such as the Spotify Community site, the Spotify Reddit community, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. During those two weeks, 160 eligible answers were collected. Using SPSS and SmartPLS, the data collected is analyzed, presented, and summarized below.

#### *Demographics*

Out of the 160 respondents, 107 (66.9%) were female and 53 (33.1%) were male. The age demographic of this study somewhat mirrored the Spotify user demographic, with millennials and gen Z making up 77% of the sample (*see table 4*). More precisely, millennials represent 51.9% of the sample, followed by gen Z at 25.1%. A large majority of the respondents were European (90%) consisting of seventeen different nationalities (*see appendix I*). Followed by 8.8% from North and South America.

Demographics		
<i>Gender</i>	<i>Counts</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Male	53	33.1%
Female	107	66.9%
<i>Age</i>	<i>Counts</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Under 18	2	1.3%
18 - 24	38	23.8%
25 - 34	83	51.9%
35 - 44	21	13.1%
45 - 54	16	10.0%

Table 4: Demographics.

### Usage Behavior

The questionnaire was only made available for Spotify users by filtering out respondents that stated that they did not have a Spotify account. Most of the respondents had a Spotify Premium account (91.9%), meaning that they pay monthly for their subscription service. Furthermore, 68.8% stated that they use the service every day and 15.6% use it four to six times per week (*see table 5*). Thus, the data shows that most of the respondents are active Spotify users.

Usage Behavior of Spotify Users		
<i>Level</i>	<i>Counts</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Less than once a week	6	3.8%
1 to 3 days a week	19	11.9%
4 to 6 days a week	25	15.6%
Every day	110	68.8%

Table 5: Usage Behavior of Spotify Users.

Out of the 160 respondents, 25% had visited the official Spotify Community site. Concerning the frequency of usage, 37.5% of the community members that participated in the questionnaire visit the site every day, while 32.5% use the site less than once per week (*see table 6*). Thus, the level of activation of the community members was more varied across the board, from quite passive members that visit the site less than once a week to devoted members that visit it every day.



Usage Behavior of Spotify Community Members		
<i>Level</i>	<i>Counts</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Less than once a week	13	32.5%
1 to 3 days a week	7	17.5%
4 to 6 days a week	5	12.5%
Every day	15	37.5%

Table 6: Usage Behavior of Spotify Community Members.

### *Mean and Standard Deviation*

Looking at the mean and standard deviation (SD) of each question from the questionnaire gives insights into the consumer perspective. Using the 5-point Likert scale gave the respondents five options on the scale from 1 to 5, ranging from (1) strongly disagree, (2) somewhat disagree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) somewhat agree, to (5) strongly agree. *Tables 7 to 10* show that most respondents had a positive response to five of the questions regarding CBR. Three questions concerning brand attachment are particularly positive (CBR\_Attach2, CBR\_Attach3, CBR\_Attach4): ‘I am a fan of Spotify’, ‘I am a long-term customer of Spotify’, and ‘I get happy when I use Spotify’. As well as two questions regarding brand commitment (CBR\_Commit1, CBR\_Commit2): ‘I am willing to pay the Spotify Premium price to have a better user experience’ and ‘Spotify is important to me’. The high mean explains the average of the respondents, while the low SD indicates that the responses are clustered around the mean. Meaning that many respondents of this study have a positive relationship with Spotify and show a high level of commitment to this relationship.

On the other end of the spectrum, three questions stand out with a low mean score. The two lowest values were questions regarding entertainment as a motivator (Ent1, Ent3): ‘I visit the Spotify Community to fill my free time’ and ‘I visit the Spotify Community because it is relaxing’. Meanwhile, empowerment and information have the highest mean value out of the motivators to engage with the community. These results reveal that when it comes to an OBC where co-innovation and problem-solving are highlighted and encouraged, empowerment and information have a higher influence than entertainment. The third question that the respondents had a negative response to is regarding CBE, specifically concerning activation (CBE\_Act2): ‘I spend a lot of time online participating in activities on the community site’. However, for Ent1 and CBE\_Act2 the SD

is higher than average, indicating that the responses were largely spread out around the mean. All questions regarding co-innovation (BVC1-5) and CBR had a mean value greater than the average (i.e., 3.024). These results show that most participants had positive responses to questions regarding their relationship with the brand and their willingness to participate in co-innovation with other community members and the brand.

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Item Code</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Motivation to Participate in OBCs</i>	Information	Info1	I visit this community to get useful information about the brand and its features	2.788	1.343
		Info2	I visit this community to solve problems.	3.731	1.166
		Info3	I visit this community to learn new things about to the brand.	2.644	1.301
	Entertainment	Ent1	I visit this community to fill my free time.	1.894	1.192
		Ent2	I visit this community because it is entertaining.	2.312	1.261
		Ent3	I visit this community because it is relaxing.	1.931	1.141
	Social Integration	SI1	I feel a sense of belonging to this community.	2.225	1.27
		SI2	I feel supported by my peers on this community.	2.400	1.314
		SI3	I feel like I have enhanced interpersonal connections when using this community.	2.169	1.276
		SI4	I visit this community to connect with like-minded others.	2.644	1.407
	Remuneration	Rem1	I visit this community to get a reward for my continued participation.	2.506	1.318
		Rem2	I visit this community because it offers incentives, such as the Stars program.	2.894	1.354
		Rem3	I feel like I can contribute to something bigger by participating in this community.	2.356	1.257
	Empowerment	Emp1	I visit this community to express my opinion about product features.	3.025	1.36
		Emp2	I visit this community to influence other people or the brand.	2.556	1.298
		Emp3	I visit this community because I can suggest improvements for Spotify.	3.419	1.242

*Table 7: Motivation Items' Mean and Standard Deviation.*

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Item Code</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Consumer-Brand Engagement</i>	<i>Cognition</i>	CBE_Cog1	I think about Spotify when I visit the community.	3.362	1.227
		CBE_Cog2	Using the community stimulates my interest to learn more about Spotify.	2.956	1.306
		CBE_Cog3	I read comments/reviews of other community members.	3.294	1.278
		CBE_Cog4	I frequently post messages and provide responses on the community page.	2.406	1.195
	<i>Affection</i>	CBE_Aff1	I think participating in this community is beneficial for me.	2.681	1.267
		CBE_Aff2	I feel good when I use this community	2.619	1.167
		CBE_Aff3	I am proud to be part of this community.	2.525	1.112
	<i>Activation</i>	CBE_Act1	I actively participate in the community activities.	2.112	1.101
		CBE_Act2	I spend a lot of time online in participating in activities on the community site.	1.981	1.175
		CBE_Act3	Whenever I am on the community site, I usually also use the Spotify app.	3.194	1.325

*Table 8: CBE Items' Mean and Standard Deviation.*

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Item Code</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Consumer-Brand Relationship</i>	<i>Brand Attachment</i>	CBR_Attach1	I admire Spotify.	3.688	0.903
		CBR_Attach2	I am a fan of Spotify.	4.056	0.930
		CBR_Attach3	I am a long-term customer of Spotify.	4.606	0.742
		CBR_Attach4	I get happy when I use Spotify.	4.350	0.718
	<i>Brand Trust</i>	CBR_Trust1	I trust Spotify.	3.631	1.053
		CBR_Trust2	I rely on Spotify.	3.913	1.148
		CBR_Trust3	Spotify always lives up to my expectations.	3.644	0.958
		CBR_Trust4	Spotify is an honest brand.	3.419	1.052
	<i>Brand Commitment</i>	CBR_Commit1	I am willing to pay the Spotify Premium price to have a better user experience.	4.350	0.963
		CBR_Commit2	Spotify is important to me.	4.219	0.842
		CBR_Commit3	I am committed to support Spotify's success.	3.300	1.083

*Table 9: CBR Items' Mean and Standard Deviation.*

Construct	Variable	Item Code	Item	Mean	SD
<i>Brand Value Co-Creation</i>	Co-Innovation	BVC1	I am willing to share my experiences and suggestions when other members of the community want my advice.	3.275	1.151
		BVC2	I communicate with other members of the community to identify ideas regarding new product features.	3.025	1.188
		BVC3	I evaluate other members' ideas regarding the development of Spotify products features.	3.237	1.217
		BVC4	I feel like Spotify acknowledges/recognizes the ideas of the community.	3.656	1.178
		BVC5	I can see how Spotify actually transforms the ideas shared and voted for in the community into action.	3.594	1.153

Table 10: Co-Innovation Items' Mean and Standard Deviation.

### 6.2.2. Evaluation of the Measurement Model

The first step of evaluating the measurement model is confirming the indicator reliability. Tables 11 to 14 break down the loadings by construct, variable, and item. The results show that 90% of the indicator loadings scored higher than the recommended 0.708. Meaning reliability is assured as these loadings are much greater than the threshold of 0.50. Four items (Info2, CBE\_Cog1, CBR\_Trust2, CBR\_Commit1) had loadings between 0.57 and 0.70, which is slightly lower than recommended but still an acceptable score.

One item (CBR\_Attach3) needed to be dropped as it scored a 0.509 which was deemed too close to the threshold. That loading was an indicator of brand attachment. In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to rate themselves on how much they agree with the following statement: 'I am a long-term customer of Spotify'. There are several reasons for low loadings, in this case, it is possible that the statement was poorly worded and left too much room for bias (Hulland, 1999), long-term being a subjective term. The item had to be dropped to guarantee indicator reliability and assure it does not negatively affect the overall reliability of the study.

Construct	Variable	Item	Outer Loadings
Motivation to Participate in OBCs	Information	Info1	0.887
		Info2	0.676
		Info3	0.895
	Entertainment	Ent1	0.874
		Ent2	0.897
		Ent3	0.894
	Social Integration	SI1	0.923
		SI2	0.922
		SI3	0.919
		SI4	0.854
	Remuneration	Rem1	0.856
		Rem2	0.794
		Rem3	0.825
	Empowerment	Emp1	0.886
		Emp2	0.877
Emp3		0.880	

Table 11: Motivators Outer Loadings.

Construct	Variable	Item	Outer Loadings
Consumer-Brand Engagement	Cognition	CBE_Cog1	0.578
		CBE_Cog2	0.774
		CBE_Cog3	0.762
		CBE_Cog4	0.725
	Affection	CBE_Aff1	0.882
		CBE_Aff2	0.867
		CBE_Aff3	0.803
	Activation	CBE_Act1	0.813
		CBE_Act2	0.779
		CBE_Act3	0.773

Table 12: CBE Outer Loadings.

Construct	Variable	Item	Outer Loadings
Consumer-Brand Relationship	Brand Attachment	CBR_Attach1	0.753
		CBR_Attach2	0.758
		CBR_Attach3	0.509
		CBR_Attach4	0.790
	Brand Trust	CBR_Trust1	0.754
		CBR_Trust2	0.682
		CBR_Trust3	0.702
		CBR_Trust4	0.701
	Brand Commitment	CBR_Commit1	0.654
		CBR_Commit2	0.779
		CBR_Commit3	0.724

Table 13: CBR Outer Loadings.

Construct	Variable	Item	Outer Loadings
Brand Value Co-Creation	Co-Innovation	BVC1	0.759
		BVC2	0.808
		BVC3	0.704
		BVC4	0.852
		BVC5	0.825

Table 14: Co-Innovation Outer Loadings.

Second, after the indicator reliability is confirmed, the next step is to assess the internal consistency reliability. *Table 15* shows that Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , rho\_A, and composite reliability values are all within the recommended minimum and maximum threshold. Thus, the construct reliability is confirmed as well as the reliability of the measurement model.

Third, now that the reliability of the measurement model is assured, the convergent validity of the constructs is positively assessed. *Table 15* shows that all constructs' AVE measurements stand above 0.50, meaning that the constructs explain more than 50% of the variance of their items (Hair et al., 2019).

Construct	Cronbach's $\alpha$	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
<b>Activation (ACT)</b>	0.818	0.820	0.892	0.735
<b>Affection (AFF)</b>	0.912	0.915	0.945	0.851
<b>Attachment (ATT)</b>	0.821	0.820	0.893	0.737
<b>Co-Innovation (CO-I)</b>	0.927	0.933	0.939	0.608
<b>CBE</b>	0.904	0.906	0.921	0.538
<b>CBR</b>	0.854	0.877	0.893	0.626
<b>Cognition (COG)</b>	0.803	0.814	0.871	0.630
<b>Commitment (COM)</b>	0.745	0.752	0.855	0.664
<b>Empowerment (EMP)</b>	0.856	0.856	0.912	0.776
<b>Entertainment (ENT)</b>	0.867	0.868	0.918	0.789
<b>Information (INF)</b>	0.763	0.812	0.863	0.681
<b>Remuneration (REM)</b>	0.773	0.799	0.865	0.681
<b>Social Integration (SOC)</b>	0.926	0.931	0.948	0.819
<b>Trust (TRU)</b>	0.792	0.797	0.866	0.620

*Table 15: Reliability and Validity Assessment.*

The fourth step is to confirm the validity of the study by assessing the discriminant validity through the HTMT of the correlations. *Table 16* shows that the correlations for all constructs measured below the 0.85 threshold and therefore discriminant validity is assured. Note that where values are missing (-) there would have been the measurements of the correlations between higher-order and lower-order constructs. These measurements are not necessary to assure the validity of the study, as a lack of discriminant validity between these constructs is to be expected (Sarstedt et al., 2019).

	ACT	AFF	ATT	CO-I	CBE	CBR	COG	COM	EMP	ENT	INF	REM	SOC	TRU
ACT														
AFF	-													
ATT	0.466	0.495												
CO-I	0.729	0.608	0.468											
CBE	-	-	0.508	0.715										
CBR	0.472	0.559	-	0.434	0.515									
COG	-	0.836	0.495	0.719	-	0.447								
COM	0.412	0.503	0.773	0.326	0.455	-	0.392							
EMP	0.731	0.638	0.337	0.765	0.724	0.302	0.713	0.245						
ENT	0.738	0.712	0.349	0.434	0.733	0.352	0.660	0.285	0.615					
INF	0.722	0.76	0.352	0.626	0.815	0.337	0.847	0.330	0.724	0.746				
REM	0.665	0.59	0.476	0.614	0.657	0.505	0.635	0.408	0.689	0.673	0.589			
SOC	0.761	0.753	0.455	0.530	0.767	0.446	0.694	0.357	0.657	0.825	0.693	0.684		
TRU	0.465	0.557	0.818	0.446	0.490	-	0.392	-	0.283	0.365	0.304	0.528	0.452	

Table 16: Discriminant Validity Assessment Using HTMT.

### 6.2.3. Evaluation of the Structural Model

For the evaluation of the structural model, the relevant values of each variable are assessed. Since the lower-order constructs are not considered as part of the structural model (Sarstedt et al., 2019) and no hypotheses are formed regarding them, no calculations for cognition, activation, affection, brand attachment, brand trust, or brand commitment are conducted in the following. First, *table 17* shows the inner VIF and  $f^2$  values of the different relationships in the framework. By estimating the VIF it is possible to test the collinearity of the predictive values. All numbers are below three, meaning that the results of the regression are not biased and collinearity is not an issue in the model (Hair et al., 2019).

For the effect size, the relationship of all motivators and CBE (H1a-e) show  $f^2$  values below 0.15, meaning that the strength of the relationships between these variables is rather low (Hair et al., 2019). In fact, the  $f^2$  values between CBE and entertainment (H1b) and remuneration (H1d) do not exceed 0.02, indicating irrelevant effect sizes (Legate et al., 2021). Concerning these relationships, information has the strongest effect on CBE with an  $f^2$  value of 0.145. Contrarily, the relationship between CBE and CBR (H2), as well as CBR and co-innovation (H3), are much stronger (effect sizes between 0.15 and 0.35), whereby the strongest effect can be seen between CBE on CBR with an effect size of 0.299.



Hypothesis	Relationship	Inner VIF	f <sup>2</sup>
<b>H1a</b>	Information → CBE	1.967	0.145
<b>H1b</b>	Entertainment → CBE	2.616	0.010
<b>H1c</b>	Social Integration → CBE	2.679	0.098
<b>H1d</b>	Remuneration → CBE	1.844	0.016
<b>H1e</b>	Empowerment → CBE	1.952	0.051
<b>H2</b>	CBE → CBR	1.000	0.299
<b>H3</b>	CBR → Co-Innovation	1.000	0.190

Table 17: Structural Model – Inner VIF, and Effect Size Figures.

To further analyze the predictive power of the model, the R<sup>2</sup> and Q<sup>2</sup> values of the different endogenous constructs are assessed as shown in *table 18*. To recap, the R<sup>2</sup> value evaluates the coefficient of determination, or in-sample predictive power, i.e., the amount of variance in the dependent variables that can be explained by all independent variables that point to it (Hair et al., 2017a). For CBE, 66.7% of the variation can be explained by the five motivators information, entertainment, social integration, remuneration, and empowerment. Besides, 23% of the variance in CBR can be explained by CBE. Moreover, 16% of the variation of co-innovation is explained by CBR. This means that co-innovation is indeed explained by CBR, however, other factors are also meaningful predictors. It can be concluded that the motivators strongly predict CBE, while the explanatory power of CBE on CBR and CBR on co-innovation is rather low to moderate.

Additionally to the R<sup>2</sup> value, the Q<sup>2</sup> value is applied to examine the out-of-sample predictive accuracy of the endogenous constructs (Geisser, 1974; Hair et al., 2017a; Stone, 1974). Using the blindfolding procedure in SmartPLS, the findings show that CBE is the most accurate variable with a Q<sup>2</sup> value of 0.395, and co-innovation shows the least accuracy with 0.091. Nevertheless, all numbers result above 0 hence indicating predictive relevance for the dependent variables. Thereby, it confirms the out-of-sample predictive power of the endogenous constructs, in other words, it provides accurate forecasts for data that is not used in the model (Hair et al., 2017a).

Dependent Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>
<b>CBE</b>	0.667	0.395
<b>CBR</b>	0.230	0.120
<b>Co-Innovation</b>	0.160	0.091

Table 18: Structural Model – R<sup>2</sup> and Q<sup>2</sup> Figures.

#### 6.2.4. Hypotheses Testing

Using the PLS-SEM method for testing the hypotheses, the path coefficients, t-values, and p-values of all constructs are evaluated. *Table 19* shows an overview of the results for the hypotheses H1a-e, H2, and H3. The remaining hypotheses H4a-e and H5 are evaluated in the subsequent sub-chapter as they concern mediation effects which require additional calculations.

First, the path coefficients are all above zero, more precisely they vary between 0.095 and 0.479. Thereby they also exceed the minimum of 0.02 as defined by Cohen (Kock & Hadaya, 2018). This means that all hypothesized relationships are positive, hence an effect between the constructs exists. In line with the results of the effect sizes, the five motivators and CBE (H1a-e) have weaker relationships than CBE with CBR (H2) and CBR with co-innovation (H3). In more detail, out of the motivators information has the strongest relationship with CBE (H1a) with a path coefficient of 0.309, followed by social integration (H1c) with a coefficient of 0.296, and empowerment (H1e) with a coefficient of 0.183. Entertainment (H1b) and remuneration (H1d) have the weakest relationship with CBE, as indicated by the path coefficients of 0.095 and 0.10 respectively. Moving on, the two constructs CBE and CBR have the strongest relationship in the model with a path coefficient of 0.479. Also, the relationship between CBR and co-innovation is strong as implied by a coefficient of 0.40. Overall, these results support the preliminary findings of the structural model.

Regarding the significance levels, any p-value below 0.05 and any t-value above 1.96 confirms that hypotheses are statistically significant, and thus supported. Here, the p-values of H1a, H1c, H2, and H3 are all at 0.001 or lower, and H1e results in a p-value of 0.011. So, the relationship between the three motivators information, social integration as well as empowerment and CBE can be supported. Likewise, the positive impact of CBE on CBR, and CBR on co-innovation can be equally confirmed. However, the relationship between entertainment and CBE (H1b) and remuneration and CBE (H1d) is not found significant based on the p-values of 0.257 and 0.164 respectively.

Looking at the t-values of the constructs, the findings further support the results of the p-values since for all supported hypotheses the t-value is larger than 1.96. In more detail, the highest t-value can be found between CBE and CBR (7.307), followed by CBR and co-innovation, (5.481), information and CBE (4.754), social integration and CBE (3.328), and lastly empowerment and CBE (2.556). Similar to the p-values, the t-values confirm that the impact of entertainment (1.081) and remuneration (1.364) on CBE is not significant as the numbers do not exceed the threshold of

1.96. Again, out of the five motivators, information has the strongest effect on CBE and entertainment has the least. In general, these numbers are also in line with the findings of the path coefficients and the previous structural model results.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	p-value	p-value	Result
<b>H1a</b>	Information → CBE	0.309	4.754	<0.001	<i>Supported</i>
<b>H1b</b>	Entertainment → CBE	0.095	1.135	0.257	<i>Not supported</i>
<b>H1c</b>	Social Integration → CBE	0.296	3.328	0.001	<i>Supported</i>
<b>H1d</b>	Remuneration → CBE	0.100	1.393	0.164	<i>Not supported</i>
<b>H1e</b>	Empowerment → CBE	0.183	2.556	0.011	<i>Supported</i>
<b>H2</b>	CBE → CBR	0.479	7.307	<0.001	<i>Supported</i>
<b>H3</b>	CBR → Co-Innovation	0.400	5.481	<0.001	<i>Supported</i>

Table 19: Hypotheses Testing via Path Coefficients, T-Values, and P-Values.

To summarize the findings, the five hypotheses H1a, H1c, H1e, H2, and H3 can be confirmed in this study, while the two hypotheses H1b and H1d are rejected.

#### 6.2.5. Mediation Effect Testing

To test the hypothesized mediation effects, the indirect, direct, and total effects need to be evaluated. Because this research investigates indirect-only mediation, no hypothesis is made regarding the total and direct effect as suggested by Zhao et al. (2010). Nevertheless, these results assist in identifying the type of mediation, wherefore all three effects are tested and summarized in tables 20 and 21.

Following the steps by Ramayah et al. (2018), the two-tailed bias-corrected bootstrap is run in SmartPLS as it is the favored approach to identify mediation (Hayes & Scharkow, 2013). First, the significance of the indirect effects between the variables needs to be tested (Ramayah et al., 2018). As shown in table 20, the indirect effects of information (H4a), social integration (H4c), and empowerment (H4e) on CBR through CBE are significant with p-values below 0.05 and t-values above 1.96. Also, the indirect effect of CBE on co-innovation through CBR (H5) is statistically significant with a p-value below 0.001 and a t-value of 4.097. However, no indirect effect of entertainment (H4b) and remuneration (H4d) on CBR can be confirmed since the p-values result at 0.273 and 1.097, and t-values are 1.097 and 1.319, respectively. Nevertheless, all path coefficients are positive, meaning that an effect exists for all hypothesized relationships, even though not all are significant.

After assessing the significance of the indirect effect, the direct effects of the relationships need to be evaluated to test what type of mediation exists, i.e., whether it is full mediation, partial mediation, or non-mediation (Ramayah et al., 2018). With negative path coefficients, no direct effect between information and CBR (H4a), entertainment and CBR (H4b), and empowerment and CBR (H4e) is detected. Further, the relationships between the four motivators information, entertainment, social integration, and empowerment and CBR are not statistically significant as the p-values and t-values do not exceed their thresholds. Interestingly, the direct effect of remuneration on CBR (H4d) is significant with a strong path coefficient of 0.265, a p-value of 0.010, and a t-value of 2.572. Likewise, the direct effect of CBE on co-innovation (H5) is significant with a path coefficient of 0.598, a t-value of 8.433, and a p-value below 0.001.

H	Relationship	Indirect Effect			Direct Effect			Results
		path coefficient	t-value	p-value	path coefficient	t-value	p-value	
H4a	Information → CBE → CBR	0.148	4.561	< 0.001	-0.094	0.923	0.356	Indirect-only mediation
H4b	Entertainment → CBE → CBR	0.046	1.097	0.273	-0.107	1.080	0.280	No effect
H4c	Social Integration → CBE → CBR	0.142	2.855	0.004	0.163	1.459	0.145	Indirect-only mediation
H4d	Remuneration → CBE → CBR	0.048	1.319	0.188	0.265	2.572	0.010	No mediation
H4e	Empowerment → CBE → CBR	0.088	2.586	0.010	-0.158	1.682	0.093	Indirect-only mediation
H5	CBE → CBR → Co-Innovation	0.432	4.097	< 0.001	0.598	8.433	< 0.001	Complementary mediation

Table 20: Direct and Indirect Effects of the Constructs.

Based on these results, indirect-only, i.e., full mediation, is confirmed between information and CBR (H4a), social integration and CBR (H4c), and empowerment and CBR (H4e) because only the indirect effect through CBE is significant but not the direct effects. Complementary partial mediation is detected between CBE and co-innovation through CBR (H5) as both the direct and indirect effects are significant. No mediation, only a direct effect, is found for the relationship between remuneration and CBR through CBE (H4d). Lastly, the variables entertainment and CBR (H4b) show no effect at all, neither direct nor indirect through CBE. Here, the strongest mediation can be seen between information and CBR through CBE, followed by CBE and co-innovation through CBR.

These results are further supported by the bootstrapped confidence interval bias as illustrated in table 20. Both the lower and upper levels are positive for H4a (0.075; 0.208), H4c (0.041; 0.236), H4e (0.020; 0.154), and H5 (0.108; 0.290), which indicates that mediation is present (Preacher &

Hayes, 2004, 2008). In line with the previous results, for H4b (-0.031; 0.138) and H4d (-0.016; 0.123) no mediation is found since there is a 0 between the lower and upper level.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Confidence Interval Bias	
		lower level (2,5%)	upper level (97,5%)
<b>H4a</b>	Information → CBE → CBR	0.075	0.208
<b>H4b</b>	Entertainment → CBE → CBR	-0.031	0.138
<b>H4c</b>	Social Integration → CBE → CBR	0.041	0.236
<b>H4d</b>	Remuneration → CBE → CBR	-0.016	0.123
<b>H4e</b>	Empowerment → CBE → CBR	0.020	0.154
<b>H5</b>	CBE → CBR → Co-Innovation	0.108	0.290

Table 21: Bootstrapped Confidence Interval Bias of the Construct Relationships.

Additionally, the total effect is summarized in *table 22*. As presented, for all relationships for which mediation effects have been detected, total effects exist as well (H4a, H4c, H4e, H5) with t-values and p-values well exceeding their thresholds. Additionally, the strongest effect is found between CBE and co-innovation (H5), followed by information and CBR (H4a), social integration and CBR (H4c), and lastly empowerment and CBR (H4e). As indicated by the previous results, the variables entertainment (H4b), as well as remuneration (H4d) have no total effect as implied by the t-values below 1.96 and p-values above 0.05. Although the path coefficients are positive, these two relationships further contain the lowest numbers with 0.046 and 0.048 specifically. Overall, entertainment is found to be the least significant variable since neither indirect, direct, nor total effects could be observed.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Total Effect		
		path coefficient	t-value	p-value
<b>H4a</b>	Information → CBR	0.148	4.299	< 0.001
<b>H4b</b>	Entertainment → CBR	0.046	1.169	0.243
<b>H4c</b>	Social Integration → CBR	0.142	3.115	0.002
<b>H4d</b>	Remuneration → CBR	0.048	1.377	0.169
<b>H4e</b>	Empowerment → CBR	0.088	2.455	0.014
<b>H5</b>	CBE → Co-Innovation	0.192	4.449	0.001

Table 22: Total Effects Between the Constructs.

To summarize the mediation findings, the hypotheses H4a, H4c, H4e, and H5 can be confirmed, while the two hypotheses H4b and H4d are rejected.

### 6.2.6. Theoretical Framework with Path Representation

To visualize the results of the structural model, *figure 10* illustrates the theoretical framework including the path coefficients based on the results described above.

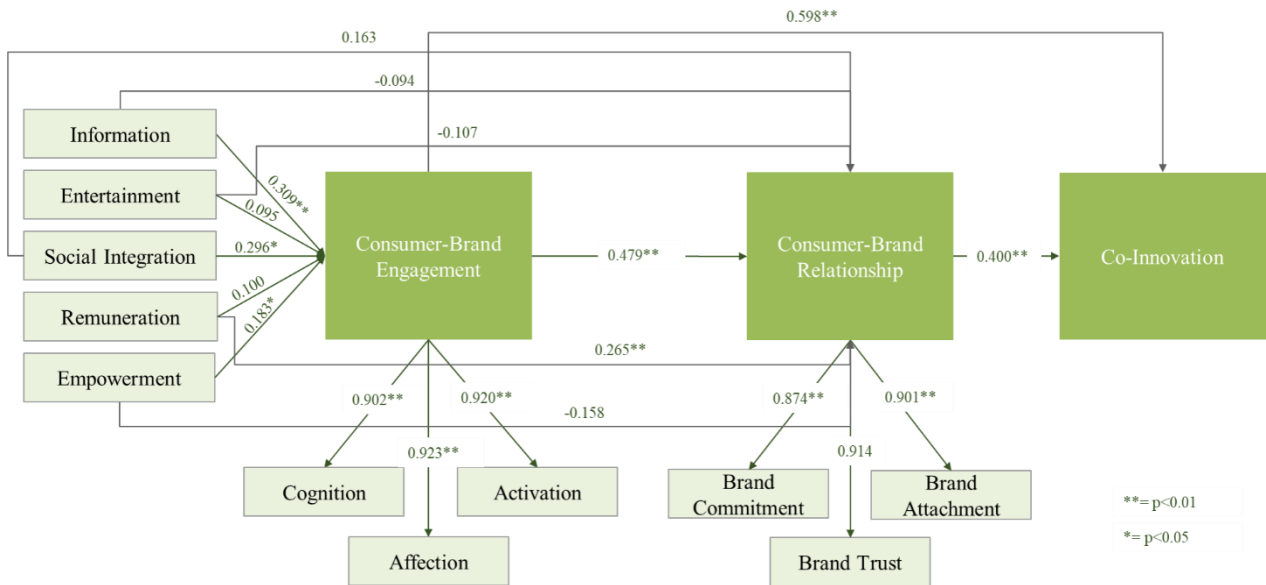


Figure 10: Theoretical Framework with Path Coefficients.

The evaluation of the measurement and structural model supports that the theoretical framework is successful. Using the PLS-SEM method, the constructs and their relationships within the path model have been examined, whereby nine out of the 13 predicted hypotheses could be confirmed.

In the following, the collected answers to the survey will be divided into community and non-community members. Like this, the study aims to offer an outlook of possible differences between these two consumer groups. It should be noted, however, that these alternative results are not fully representative due to the low sample size of community members and the resulting unequal portrayal of the different groups. Therefore, it does not help in answering the research question, but it is still expected to provide additional knowledge that highlights interesting areas for future research.

### 6.3. Outlook: Community vs. Non-Community Members

When separating the data into community members and non-community members, the results hint towards possible differences between the two target groups. The evaluation of the measurement model for both groups is demonstrated in *appendix J*. The numbers show, that for non-community members the reliability and validity are ensured since the values of Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , rho\_A, composite

reliability, AVE, as well as HTMT lie within the desired spectrum. However, while for the community member sample reliability and convergent validity are ensured, the discriminant validity does not fully meet the requirements as several HTMT figures exceed the threshold of 0.90. Therefore, the results might be biased and are not fully representative, which further supports the decision to look at the combined answers in the main analysis. Still, the findings are considered in this chapter to provide an outlook on what differences might exist between these two consumer groups.

In *table 23* the hypotheses H1a-e, H2, and H3 are tested for both groups. It should be noted that the complete structural model and the mediation effects (H4a-e, H5) are not tested as the findings cannot be considered valid. Looking at the motivators, for community members, social integration (H1c) is the strongest reason to participate in Spotify’s OBC as it is the only one with a p-value below 0.05. This is followed by empowerment (H1d), entertainment (H1b), information (H1a), and lastly remuneration (H1d), which has almost no effect. Contrarily, for non-community members, information and social integration are the strongest motivators with both being statistically significant. Interestingly, these two are closely followed by remuneration, which is much stronger here than for community members. Empowerment and entertainment have the least impact for non-community members when thinking about participating in Spotify’s OBC.

Regarding H2 and H3, both consumer groups show a strong positive impact of CBE on CBR as well as CBR on co-innovation. Moreover, the numbers indicate that for community members the impact is even more powerful based on higher t-values and lower p-values, especially regarding the relationship between CBR and co-innovation.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Community Members			Non-Community Members		
		path coefficient	t-value	p-value	path coefficient	t-value	p-value
<b>H1a</b>	Information → CBE	0.033	0.263	0.793	0.380	4.962	<0.001
<b>H1b</b>	Entertainment → CBE	0.163	0.999	0.318	0.093	1.000	0.318
<b>H1c</b>	Social Integration → CBE	0.614	3.878	<0.001	0.191	2.047	0.041
<b>H1d</b>	Remuneration → CBE	0.001	0.008	0.994	0.156	1.838	0.067
<b>H1e</b>	Empowerment → CBE	0.184	1.666	0.096	0.127	1.425	0.155
<b>H2</b>	CBE → CBR	0.695	8.932	<0.001	0.346	3.785	<0.001
<b>H3</b>	CBR → Co-Innovation	0.687	6.843	<0.001	0.270	3.187	0.002

*Table 23: Hypotheses Testing – Community vs. Non-community Members.*

## 7. Discussion

In this chapter, the meanings of the introduced results and findings will be further discussed and interpreted for the research question. Because to date, not much literature exists that explores consumer engagement in OBCs through the SOR model (Kamboj et al., 2018) – and especially studies on online co-innovation communities in that regard are missing – the present research contributes to both, theory and practice. Subsequently, the results will be discussed in more detail, beginning with reflections on the impact consumer motivation has on the participation in OBCs, followed by the positive effect CBE has on relationship building, and lastly reflections on the positive impact on co-innovation activities.

### 7.1. Reflections on Consumer Motivators

When discussing communities of any kind, motivators ultimately come up, as they are integral to their survival. Much like the SOR model explains, motivators act as a stimulus for consumers to participate with an organism, in this case, OBCs. Based on Tsai and Men (2013) and Palma et al. (2018), five motivators were identified in chapter 3.2. as relevant for this study and hypothesized that all would have a positive impact on engagement. The results somewhat contradict Tsai and Men's (2013) findings, which found that remuneration was the strongest motivator for consumers to engage with brands on SNS, followed by information and entertainment. In this study, remuneration did in fact have one of the lowest impacts on engagement. Due to the insignificant impact, the hypothesis was ultimately rejected. Further, entertainment had the lowest impact of the five motivators identified, showing an insignificant impact on CBE. However, information was found to be the motivator with the strongest positive impact on CBE in this study, followed by social integration and empowerment, which is in line with the literature.

Indeed, the findings concerning consumer motivations were likely to somewhat contradict Tsai and Men's (2013) study, as they researched a social networking platform (i.e., brand Facebook pages) rather than sites specifically created for OBCs. However, entertainment was expected to be a contributing motivator, as this study focuses on an OBC within the creative industry, specifically a brand that provides a service for the purpose of entertainment. Nevertheless, the results showing social integration and empowerment as significant and entertainment as insignificant are in line with existing literature about motivators to participate in co-creation via OBCs (Gill, 2020; Ind et al., 2020; Kamboj et al., 2018; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001; Palma et al., 2018; Yu, 2020). Palma et al. (2018) and Zhang et al. (2015) researched motivators for consumers to engage with co-creation/co-



innovation and found that the sense of community (i.e., social integration) and empowerment had a positive effect and had no mention of entertainment as a contributing factor. Rather emphasizing, that consumers coming together to collaborate and solve problems was at the essence of the co-creation/co-innovation processes. Their findings are echoed in this study, as the core of open co-innovation communities is idea-sharing and problem-solving. In fact, when it comes to the questionnaire, questions regarding problem-solving, suggesting improvements to the brand, and a desire to express opinions about product features have the highest mean. These questions further indicate that alongside social integration, information, and empowerment are effective motivators to engage in online co-innovation communities.

The lack of remuneration as a motivator is further in line with Füller's (2010) research on the consumer perspective of virtual co-creation. In that, he found that there are four types of consumers that tend to engage in co-creation, whereof three types did not put high importance on monetary incentives. Further, the findings point towards the fact that the motives of consumers of open co-innovation communities, such as the Spotify community, are internalized extrinsic (i.e., information seeking, community support, recognition). Placing the Spotify consumers in Füller's (2010) consumer type, they could be categorized as curiosity-driven and intrinsically interested consumers. These types of consumers "*show high and enduring interest in virtual co-creation projects. They like to contribute to development projects in different product categories, innovation stages, and activities.*" (Füller, 2010, p. 113).

Beyond the effect of the motivators on CBE, there were some interesting findings on the effect they have on CBR. Remuneration turned out to be the only motivator that has a direct effect on brand-consumer relationships. As it had an insignificant effect on CBE in the first place, CBE has also no mediation effect on this motivator. Meaning, that although offering incentives does not help to activate these consumers in terms of engagement, it does positively impact the consumers' feelings towards the brand and thus strengthens their relationship with them. Surprisingly, entertainment had no direct effect on CBR, and CBE did not show a mediation effect. Therefore, entertainment showed no effect whatsoever. Yet, CBE plays an important role as a mediator for the other three motivators, as they did not have a direct effect on CBR. Hence, engaging consumers is essential to transform motivators like information, empowerment, and social integration into stronger consumer-brand relationships.

### *Community vs. Non-Community Members*

The extrinsic factor, remuneration, not having a significant impact on CBE not only contradicts Tsai and Men (2013) but Palma et al. (2018) and Zhang et al. (2015) as well. This finding was thus rather surprising, as the latter two papers researched similar communities and consumer behavior. What might have impacted these results is the feelings of current community members of this open co-innovation brand community. This indication is observable when comparing the results from community members versus non-community members. Interestingly, remuneration seems to be a strong motivator for non-community members but not for community members. This may indicate that remuneration is an effective motivator for recruiting consumers to become community members. However, when the consumer becomes integrated into the community this motivator becomes weaker, while social integration and empowerment strengthen. Comparing the two groups further indicates that information is the strongest motivator for non-community members. That is, they would visit the community site to get information about the brand and its services, or to solve problems. While for the current members, information was the second-lowest ranking motivator.

To conclude, this study shows that the strongest motivators for consumers to participate in an online co-innovation brand community are information, followed by social integration and empowerment. However, there are indications that remuneration and information are essential motivators to acquire new members. While social integration, empowerment, and entertainment become stronger motivators for existing members to continuously engage with the community.

### *7.2. Reflections on Consumer-Brand Engagement*

Several studies have suggested that customer engagement with OBCs improves the relationship consumers have with the brand of interest (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2017; Kamboj et al., 2018; Nadeem et al., 2021). However, the impact has so far not been extensively tested in company-initiated online co-innovation communities, especially not in the creative industry. The findings of the present study confirm that CBE in virtual brand communities positively impacts CBR, more precisely the relationship dimensions brand attachment, brand trust, and brand commitment. Thereby, the results are in line with Ind et al. (2020), who found a positive impact of CBE on brand attachment and commitment, as well as Kamboj et al. (2018), whose research indicates the significant impact of CBE on brand trust. As a matter of fact, CBE and CBR show the strongest relationship of all constructs in the framework, whereby the importance of these two variables in co-innovating with consumers is further emphasized.

Out of the three engagement dimensions (Hollebeek et al., 2014), cognition and affection are the strongest in the context of the Spotify community. As such, for the majority using the community stimulates brand-related thoughts and creates positive emotions, like perceiving the OBC as beneficial and helpful. While consumers might not spend an extensive amount of energy and time on the community site, this is found to be different for the Spotify app itself. In fact, the streaming service seems to make up a large part of consumers' lives which will be further discussed in chapter 7.3.

Furthermore, the findings partially support scholars who suggest that CBE acts as a mediator of CBR outcomes like brand trust, as well as value co-creation (Nadeem et al., 2021; Thakur, 2018). To recap, in the present study CBE is found to have a full mediation effect on the impact of the three motivators information, social integration, and empowerment on CBR. However, no motivator except remuneration has a significant direct impact on CBR. This leads to the conclusion that engagement is fundamental as an accelerator that turns motivations into long-term relationships, which are in turn vital for the creation of long-term value (Helm & Jones, 2010). Without consumer engagement, brands will not be able to benefit from the preliminary motivations of their users. Also, CBE positively impacts co-innovation and thus previous research is supported that claims engagement to be an antecedent of both, brand-consumer relationships and value co-creation (Behnam et al., 2021; Hollebeek et al., 2017). Although the direct effect of CBE on co-innovation was not hypothesized and investigated, the results indicate a significant impact that should be further researched. Thus, CBE is not only a very effective mediator that strengthens relationships but also ultimately enhances co-innovation practices.

In general, these insights support the rather practical use of the community, although the fact that the majority of participants are non-community members might affect the results. Still, the return rate of community members remained rather low despite sharing the survey on several Spotify communities (official Community site, Facebook, Reddit), which further supports the identified passive behavior of the Spotify community members. This is in accordance with information being the strongest motivator. While scholars like Logan (2014) point out that engagement on SoMe is mostly passive, it can be assumed that OBCs are more active since only invested fans participate in it. Nevertheless, the results of the study fit with the low member engagement characteristics of open and company-initiated OBCs outlined by Gruner et al. (2014). Moreover, these findings further fit with other scholars who have highlighted the challenge to keep users engaged in the long run, even

when the willingness to participate in product development and co-innovation is high in the first place (Li et al., 2020; Shulga et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2015).

It can be concluded that the members of this open online co-innovation community are primarily engaged in a cognitive and affective manner. As a result, hosts of such open communities should focus on activating the members by making the environment more engaging, while at the same time ensuring that consumers equally benefit from spending their time and knowledge on the brand. Thereby, the results support Ramaswamy and Gouillart (2010) who emphasized the importance of creating mutual benefits for the brand and the consumers. If managed openly and appreciatively, online co-innovation communities can engage their consumers in a way that generates higher levels of brand attachment, brand trust, and brand commitment, and ultimately enhances co-innovative activities.

### 7.3. Reflections on Consumer-Brand Relationships

To get a deeper understanding of the role relationships plays in co-creating brand value, this study analyzed the impact of CBR on co-innovation. While many scholars investigated value co-creation and brand communities in relation to loyalty, trust, and satisfaction (e.g., Akrouf & Nagy, 2018; Fournier & Yao, 1997; Kamboj et al., 2018; Kaur et al., 2020; Ozuem et al., 2021), other aspects of relationships remain understudied. Hence, this study adds to the literature by shedding light on the impact brand attachment, brand trust, and brand commitment have on co-innovation. In fact, not only does CBR enhance co-innovation, but it also mediates the impact of consumer engagement on co-innovation, which supports relationship marketing scholars like Kamboj et al. (2018) and Morgan and Hunt (1994). Further, these results are in line with previous research as they show that strong relationships with consumers are key to generating and creating brand value (Helm & Jones, 2010; Merz et al., 2009, 2018). Particularly, attachment, trust, and commitment concerning the brand have been confirmed to be significant relationship aspects in the co-creation of value as suggested by Merz et al. (2018).

Based on the analysis, Spotify users have a very strong relationship with the streaming service. More precisely, CBR is the strongest construct in the model. Looking at brand attachment, most of the participants have been using Spotify for a long time, they use it every day, and get happy when using it. This implies that users depend on the brand, and they integrate it into several aspects of their lives. Also, brand commitment is a strong driver of CBR since most participants are Spotify Premium users and highlight the importance of the brand to themselves. Such attachment and

commitment are further enforced by engagement on the community site, thereby fitting the research of Zhou et al. (2012). Compared to the other two components, brand trust is not as dominant. While people admit that they rely on the brand, not as many users think of Spotify as an honest brand. This mistrust of the brand is dangerous for future success because it is a central ingredient to improving value co-creation in open communities (Liu et al., 2019).

Spotify managed to take a unique role in consumers' lives, but it needs to find a way to re-establish the trusted belief in the product. Otherwise, the existing brand love could eventually turn into brand hate, and consumers might even turn against it (Batra et al., 2012). On a different note, this highlights the increased interest in responsibility and authenticity within society. Consumers are looking for honest brands that align with their self-identity, morality, and ethical values (Morhart et al., 2013). Self-identity is not the focus of this research, but the findings highlight that investigating this motivator in the context of online co-innovation communities could be interesting. This suggestion is also based on Cherry (2021), who suggests affiliation as a relevant motivator of value co-creation. Nowadays, especially millennials and gen Z have an increased desire for authenticity and transparency, which is why they turn to OBCs, thus like-minded peers, to get information about a certain topic (Hakala et al., 2017; Petro, 2019). This idea can be supported by the results of the present study. In light of these developments, open online communities are likely to become more and more important, also because they are considered as more genuine, honest, and authentic than the brand itself (Chu & Kim, 2011). Due to that, such OBCs are considered useful in creating strong relationships as well as improving the trustworthiness of a brand.

Interestingly, Spotify has cultivated strong relationships and established long-term customers, but this does not significantly transmit onto active community engagement. This implies the need to find a way to create a spill-over effect so that more Spotify users visit the community and share their ideas. It should be noted that this study did not investigate how CBR can improve CBE, wherefore no detailed insight is available just yet. Summing up, establishing strong relationships is powerful in increasing co-innovation activities on OBCs. Besides, by taking on the role of 'response' in the SOR model, it is proven that CBR is a consequence of engagement, which further fits existing research (e.g., Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Kamboj et al., 2018).

#### 7.4. Reflections on Brand Value Co-Creation and Co-Innovation

Another main finding of this study is the power of an online co-innovation community in generating brand value. The survey participants responded positively to the opportunity to share their ideas,

provide feedback, and get empowered to improve Spotify's features. Thereby, Hollebeek et al.'s (2019) view can be confirmed that in an SD environment co-creation with customers exists through resource integration and the sharing of knowledge. The results further support Fournier and Lee (2009) and Ind et al. (2017) by highlighting the importance of giving consumers more control of the community, actually transforming ideas of the community into action, and being transparent with how exactly the members influence the brand and its products. This is seen in the fact that the users highly valued that shared ideas are recognized by the brand and actually implemented.

Thereby, CBE and CBR have a significant positive impact on co-innovation via online community sites. This is in line with scholars like Abeza et al. (2020), Helm and Jones (2010), Kamboj et al. (2018), and Nadeem et al. (2021). Also, Gruner et al.'s (2014) findings are supported, that open OBCs are preferable when the goal is to improve innovation. Like this, brand value co-creation could be successfully confirmed as the dependent variable in the underlying framework. Besides, an interesting difference between community and non-community members could be identified: While for both consumer groups the impact of engagement and brand relationships on co-innovation is significant, the t-values of community members resulted in much higher numbers. This implies, that the value co-creation in the community is successful and brands should aim at activating non-community members to increase the benefits of consumer knowledge further.

Additionally, the main characteristics of online co-innovation communities (MSL Global, 2013) could be partially confirmed with the study of Spotify's community. It is shown that participation is enhanced by providing a platform where consumers can easily connect with like-minded others, as suggested by Zhang et al. (2015). Likewise, it was validated that the opportunity to share ideas and vote for new improvements allows the brand to transform the customer's contribution into meaningful services (ibid.). As previously outlined, celebration or acknowledgment of consumer contributions is also confirmed as key to encouraging continuous participation in co-innovation. This fits with the scholars Yenyurt et al. (2014) and Zhang et al. (2015). However, for the catalyzation of the community, the present study shows somewhat opposing results since rewards are not valued as much as expected based on the literature. Thus, only three out of the four characteristics (i.e., connect, crystallize, celebrate) could be confirmed as important drivers of the success of an OBC. Concluding, the more engaged consumers are in the community and the stronger the relationship with the brand is, the more they are willing to participate in co-innovation activities, thereby creating value for the brand and themselves.

### 7.5. Theoretical Implications

The present study makes several contributions to the existing literature as described in the preceding discussion, inspired by the growing interest in OBCs and co-innovation. The study provides a conceptual background, presenting multiple theories concerning brand management, SoMe management, marketing (i.e., relationship marketing), and consumer behavior (i.e., motivators, CBE, CBR, co-innovation). Adding to emerging literature, the consumer perspective was explored in relation to OBCs, in particular open company-initiated online co-innovation communities.

Using the SOR model, the study analyzed the effects of consumer motivators (i.e., information, entertainment, social integration, remuneration, empowerment) on CBE, CBR, and co-innovation. Preceding literature has focused on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, and often mentions remuneration and entertainment as key motivators to increase engagement. However, the findings of this study emphasize how open company-initiated co-innovation communities differ from other types of OBCs and SoMe platforms. Furthermore, they highlighted the critical role that CBE and CBR play in cultivating a prosperous co-innovation community. Thus, the present study adds novel and unique knowledge to the emerging literature about co-innovation via OBCs.

### 7.6. Business Practices Implications

Now that the theoretical implications of this study have been outlined, the implications for business practices will be discussed. It is important to reiterate that this study is case-specific and applied non-probability sampling for a quicker and cheaper data collection. Thus, the findings are not generalizable. However, they are still considered to provide valuable insights into brand management and marketing for brands within the creative industry.

First, the findings highlighted an important distinction between co-innovation communities when compared to other types of OBCs and SoMe platforms. Remuneration and entertainment do not appear to be key drivers for these communities, rather information, social integration, and empowerment play an important role. As a result, brand managers are advised to focus on providing an easy solution to problems or concerns of their users, establishing a sense of wee-ness among members, and allowing for possibilities to actively influence the development of the brand/product. In this regard, transparency is highly valued and can be achieved through, for instance, monthly updates on implemented measures or ideas under consideration. This seems to be very effective for the Spotify Community and can be easily implemented in any other OBC. Despite these implications, managers should keep in mind that the data collected in this research hinted that

remuneration and entertainment are applicable motivators to acquire new community members. Further research is needed to confirm this insight.

Second, managers need to understand that engagement is an essential driver of strong brand-consumer relationships and co-innovation. In other words, consumer engagement is significant to turn motivation into action. Even though running a community site positively impacts co-innovation practices, CBE has been found to be rather low. Therefore, brand managers are recommended to continuously foster the main drivers of CBE (i.e., information, social integration, and empowerment). This can be achieved by making information widely and readily available for the members, encouraging community interactions, and ensuring free expression. Moreover, brand managers are instructed to take the role of the community moderator, thereby being present in the background, to provide professional knowledge and guidance if needed. Participating in some communications additionally makes the community members feel heard and appreciated by the brand.

Third, the value of CBR as a driver of co-innovation is highlighted, both directly and indirectly through improved consumer engagement. This emphasizes the importance of cultivating positive relationships with consumers, especially regarding co-innovation communities. In the case of Spotify, their consumers showed high commitment and attachment towards the brand. However, brand trust was not as dominant. In these circumstances, action from the management side is needed to signal to the consumers that the brand is trustworthy and authentic. By increasing trust, brands can strengthen their relationships with consumers, which in turn results in active and co-innovating members. This element is integral to developing a prospering co-innovation community, that is if CBR weakens, co-innovation suffers as well.

To conclude, for brand managers to effectively manage online co-innovation communities there are several moving parts to consider. Understanding the community type, what motivates the members, how it operates, and how to efficiently communicate and participate in the community can be a challenging task for managers. There is a delicate power balance at play here that needs to be handled with care. Members of online co-innovation communities show a willingness to participate in the co-creation process but low engagement in the long term. To activate these members and increase engagement in co-innovation, tapping into their intrinsic motivators is integral, while extrinsic motivators do not appear to play an important role. However, extrinsic motivators, such as the Stars Program in the case of Spotify, are beneficial in the way of strengthening the relationships



between the members and the brand and activating new members. After all, managers need to create an outcome that is beneficial for the consumers as well. Thus, when aiming at long-term engagement in value co-creation through co-innovation, offering mutual benefits is crucial. If users do not see the benefit of sharing their time, knowledge, and creativity on the brand they are more likely to distance themselves from the community site again.

## 8. Conclusion

This chapter presents a conclusion of the findings in order to answer the research question: “*How can brands in the creative industry manage their online brand communities to foster brand value co-creation in the form of co-innovation?*”. Thereby, the problem formulation and aimed contributions are addressed. Thereafter, the limitations of the study are outlined as well as opportunities for future research.

The emerging focus on value co-creation in the marketing theory and practice raises awareness of the benefits of consumer-brand collaboration, which in the case of this thesis relates to co-innovation between brands and consumers. To make the study more tangible, the case company Spotify was chosen. According to the results of this thesis, open company-initiated online communities are a beneficial way of collaborating with customers and getting access to their knowledge and creativity. The findings further show that important motivators of participation in open online co-innovation communities are information, social integration, and empowerment. Therefore, brands are advised to create platforms where information is readily available for the consumer to problem solve and connect with like-minded others. Furthermore, brands need to interact with the community, so the members feel heard and see that their ideas are appreciated as they become a reality. Like this, marketers can ensure that the consumers feel acknowledged as valued members of the brand value co-creation process.

However, these types of communities have been found to have low consumer engagement, which the data analysis further supports. While Spotify has a large and committed consumer base, making them engaged in the company-initiated community site, especially in the long term, is a major challenge. Therefore, focusing on providing an informing, socially integrating, and empowering environment is key to driving more engagement. Also, being transparent with the outcomes and creating mutual benefits for consumers and the brand is important to keep users engaged in the long run. Another focus of the thesis is on establishing positive and long-term relationships because they are found to be of major relevance for co-innovation processes. The results show that despite consumers having a positive perception of the brand and a high willingness to participate in co-innovation, the brand relationship can be fragile. Thus, fostering long-term relationships is deemed important. Especially in online co-innovation communities, the results are giving a sense of the importance of commitment to the future success of the brand. Thus, encouraging brand attachment, brand trust, and brand commitment is found to be key drivers of long-term CBR and co-innovation.

It can be concluded that creating open company-initiated online communities is a very effective way to mobilize the consumer base to engage in co-innovation. Thereby, the results give insights into how brands within the creative industry can manage their OBCs to foster strong relationships with consumers. Moreover, the study provides additional insights into how to encourage online consumer engagement and active participation in the co-innovation process, also in the long run. Like this, brands get valuable insights into the customer's needs and can develop the product accordingly, whereby value is created for both sides.

### 8.1. Limitations

This thesis is subject to certain limitations. First, quantitative research methods present some limitations when researching the thoughts and feelings of consumers as questionnaires have closed-ended questions and thus do not provide respondents the opportunity to further explain or expand their answers. To get a deeper understanding of the respondent's perception of the concepts that are under investigation, a qualitative approach such as in-depth interviews and netnography would be advantageous.

Second, further limitations exist concerning the data collection method. Indeed, a great emphasis was put on creating a comprehensive survey for non-community members to picture themselves as active members of the community site. Still, their responses are possibly not in line with how they would really behave once they interact with the site itself, as consumer behavior is not always conscious. Also, one of the chosen measurement items for brand attachment had to be removed due to a low factor loading. The reason for the poor performance could be unprecise wording that leaves room for bias. As a result, the measurement of brand attachment is limited to three instead of four items.

Third, the chosen sample comes with a few limitations. In order to get an adequate number of respondents, the survey was open to a bigger age group, rather than getting a clearer understanding of the brand's largest demographic (i.e., millennials and gen Z). Consumers that are older than millennials might not be as familiar with brand communities based online, as they did not grow up with the phenomenon. Thus, the results could be influenced by consumers that are not as familiar or open to the concept of co-innovation via OBCs. Additionally, the nationalities of the respondents are limited to Europeans as well as South and North Americans. Therefore, the results might not represent the opinion of the global consumer base. Next, the number of respondents from the community itself was lower than anticipated, as it resulted in too small a sample to make a valid

comparison between respondents that are currently not members of the community site and active community members. Furthermore, the study chose to use non-probability sampling and focused on a specific case company, consequently limiting the generalization of the findings.

Finally, the theoretical framework comes with several limitations itself that indicate fields for future research which will be outlined in the following.

## 8.2. Opportunities for Future Research

Alongside the insights and implications of the present study, it shed light on interesting areas for future research. First, as mentioned earlier, using qualitative research methods could provide more precise insights into the sub-consciousness of the users and more detailed descriptions of their motivations and perceptions. Netnography for example, a type of qualitative research specifically designed for online platforms, would be an interesting alternative to the present quantitative study. As previously outlined, the Spotify Community offers many discussion forums and even monthly reviews from the company itself, which seem to provide a nice basis for netnographic analysis. However, traditional interviews are also considered an interesting alternative to the quantitative survey technique because it allows the researchers to get a more in-depth understanding of the underlying motivations, feelings, and perceptions of consumers.

Second, future research is advised to investigate different types of OBCs, such as discerning and restricted communities, to see how they differ in terms of the value co-creation process and what possible differences in what motivates the consumer of these communities exist. Further, it is expected to be useful to provide insights into how managers can delegate the power balance within each community type. This seems especially relevant as literature seems to be somewhat lacking when it comes to the management of OBCs that are designed to encourage value co-creation. Specifically, future studies can focus on how involved the brand should be when interacting with the community (i.e., host integration) as well as where the line is when dealing with the delicate power balance between the members and the brand (i.e., level of control).

Third, a different sample would give more concrete findings regarding specific demographics of consumers. Based on the findings it would be interesting to collect a larger sample that has equal numbers of community and non-community members to give more reliable and valid insights into the differences between the two groups. This would provide a greater understanding of how brands can acquire new members as well as retain their current members. Furthermore, as previously

discussed, looking at only millennials and/or gen Z consumers could produce different results. This would generate valuable information for brands in the creative industry, such as Spotify, as their consumer base is largely made up of these age demographics.

Fourth, several constraints of the theoretical framework reveal ideas for future research. To start, different motivators could have been at the center of the empirical study. One thing that the present thesis particularly indicates is to look into self-identity and/or affiliation as a more relevant motivator for online co-innovation (e.g., instead of entertainment). In addition, although neither the direct effect of remuneration on CBR nor of CBE on co-innovation was hypothesized and investigated, the results show a significant impact between these relationships that should be further researched. Likewise, studying the direct effect of CBR on CBE could be interesting to find out how strong relationships can translate into more engagement, especially in the long term. Another point of interest is the role of the mediators. While the mediating effects of CBE and CBR are found to be significant, future research is recommended to choose alternative relationship dimensions like interdependence, duration, actual behavior, or self-concept connection (Fritz & Lorenz, 2010 as cited in Ghani & Tuhin, 2016; Swaminathan et al., 2007). Similarly, future studies could change the roles of the current mediators into that of a moderator, thereby providing additional knowledge to the topic. Another suggestion is to look at completely different mediators or moderators such as consumer experience or involvement (Brakus et al., 2009; Bruhn et al., 2014; Kamboj et al., 2018). Lastly, despite the outlined constraints, future research is recommended to apply the present study or framework to different case studies.

Fifth, recent trends have seen streaming services investing in AI technology to further enhance the user experience. In the case of Spotify, the company has been using AI to generate personalized playlists for its users (Catchpole, 2021). Meaning that the machine is learning the users' likes and preferences to co-create playlists that are tailored specifically for each person. However, as this technology advances, the value co-creational aspect of the service might come across as one-sided. It would be interesting to follow this direction the brand is going towards, to investigate how consumers perceive the changes and how they affect value co-creation and thus the co-innovation process.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: The Foundational Premises of the SD Logic

Foundational Premise	2004	2008	2016
FP1	The application of specialized skills and knowledge is the fundamental unit of exchange.	Service is the fundamental basis of exchange.	No Change. <b>Axiom Status</b>
FP2	Indirect exchange masks the fundamental unit of exchange	Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange.	No Change.
FP3	Goods are distribution mechanisms for service provision.	No Change.	No Change.
FP4	Knowledge is the fundamental source of competitive advantage.	Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage.	Operant resources are the fundamental source of strategic benefit.
FP5	All economies are service economies.	No Change.	No Change.
FP6	The customer is always the co-producer.	The customer is always a co-creator of value.	Value is cocreated by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary. <b>Axiom Status</b>
FP7	The enterprise can only make value propositions.	The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions.	Actors cannot deliver value but can participate in the creation and offering of value propositions.
FP8	Service-centered view is customer oriented and relational.	A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational.	A service-centered view is inherently beneficiary oriented and relational.
FP9		All social and economic actors are resource integrators.	No Change. <b>Axiom Status</b>
FP10		Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.	No Change. <b>Axiom Status</b>
FP11			Value cocreation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements. <b>Axiom Status</b>

## Appendix B: Spotify Community Ideas Feature

### *Example of an Idea That Got Over 1900 Votes on the Spotify Community*

# [Discover] Please add a "Not Interested" Button ...

Submitted by jasonedokpa on 2021-10-11 10:49 AM

As the title suggests, it would be useful if Spotify had a "not interested" button like YouTube does for videos. I have been using Spotify for many years and still receive a lot of recommendations for playlists and podcasts that I am simply not interested in. One such example is "Learn Korean and Korean Culture" by jerry. I have no interest in learning Korean whatsoever, so it would be useful for me to remove recommendations such as these.

## Status Update

Updated on 2021-10-24

Hey everyone,

Thanks for bringing us your feedback in the Spotify Idea Exchange.

Your suggestion has gathered the votes necessary and your feedback is now reaching the internal teams at Spotify. They're aware of the vote count and popularity of this idea. We'll continue to monitor and check out the comments here, too.

As soon as we have any updates on its status, we'll let you know.

More info on how your feedback reaches Spotify via the Idea Exchange can be found [here](#).

# Spring 2022 Ideas Review 🔗



✓ Kiril / Moderator / 3 weeks ago

The Community Team reviews our [Ideas Board](#) and highlights the statuses we've updated in the past few months.

Below you can find the statuses changed for the last couple of months. For more information read: [Idea Exchange: How does my feedback reach Spotify?](#)

## IMPLEMENTED

### 1. [Auto-delete played and/or downloaded podcast episodes](#)

After couple of submissions this idea for having such an option for auto-removing played Podcasts has gained speed and it has been implemented.

### 2. [\[Desktop\] Put the Liked Songs back under each band's/artist's page for the desktop app](#)

Users have requested to have the old UX/UI experience in this idea, and we've listened!

### 3. [\[Mobile\] Mobile app playlists INSIDE FOLDERS should have option to sort in custom order](#)

This suggestion for keeping the custom order of playlists inside folders was also quickly implemented, after users have requested it.

### 4. [\[AutoPlay\] Option to toggle Autoplay on/off across all devices/platforms](#)

Heavily requested and massively voted for, now the idea about having Autoplay settings across all platforms is reality!

### 5. [\[Mobile\] View & Play local Files on your Device directly in Spotify](#)

Users requested to use the mobile version of the Spotify app as media player for Local files, just like on desktop. And now they can!

## UNDER CONSIDERATION

### 12. [\[Desktop\]\[Developer\] Spotify for Windows on ARM \(Win32\) Desktop app badly needed](#)

We also think having this is a great idea and that there's an opportunity to make it happen, so we're looking into it further.

## We thrive on Ideas

We're actively bringing your comments and feedback to the teams here so they know which features are important to you. If you've got a good idea, you can submit it [here](#).

If you'd also like to see some changes before other users [you can sign-up to join our thousands of Beta testers here](#).



6. [\[Playlists\] Only selected Playlist Authors for Collaborative Playlist](#)

There was a lot of feedback around Playlist Privacy and especially about the Collaborative ones. We can happily say that now we have new settings that were implemented and they were inspired by the ideas related to this (also see the two ideas below).

7. [\[Playlists\] Limit Editing Access in Collaborative Playlists](#)

8. [\[All Platforms\]\[Playlists\] Public Collaborative Playlist](#)

9. [\[Subscription\] Google Play Payment](#)

A great idea that has been implemented and now users have the option to use Google play credit as a payment method. The more options the better!

10. [Swipe to queue a track in Android](#)

This was one of the most popular requests for the past months. We're happy to announce that this feature is now rolling out on Android devices. If you don't see it yet, don't worry as it will be available for you soon. Just make sure to keep your app up to date.

11. [\[All Platforms\]\[Podcasts\] Rating Podcasts](#)

Happy to share it's been implemented: you can now rate shows as well as take a look at their rating average and total count on mobile 🤗

## Appendix C: Survey

### *Introduction*

Hello,

We are Kristin and Maike, and we are currently writing our Master Thesis at the Copenhagen Business School about the impact of Online Brand Communities on product innovation. We chose the Spotify Community as the focus of our study. Therefore, we are aiming to collect insights into the Spotify user's perspective.

The participation is completely anonymous. The survey will take you about 5-8 minutes to complete, and you'll have the chance to win 6 months Spotify Premium!

Thank you so much for helping us out, it means the world to us!

Next

### *General Information*

Do you use Spotify?

Yes, I use it for free.

Yes, I use Spotify Premium.

No

Next

How often do you use Spotify?

less than once a week

1 to 3 days a week

4 to 6 days a week

Every day

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Have you ever visited the official Spotify Community (<https://community.spotify.com/>)?

No

Yes

Next

*If Answered 'Yes':*

How often do you visit the official Spotify Community?

less than once a week

1 to 3 days a week

4 to 6 days a week

Every day

Next

## Survey Option 1 – “Yes” to “Have you ever visited the official Spotify Community”

### *Motivation to Participate in Spotify’s OBC*

How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I visit the community to get information about the brand and its features.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I visit the community to solve problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I visit the community to learn new things about the brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I visit the community to fill my free time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I visit the community because it is entertaining.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I visit the community because it is relaxing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I feel a sense of belonging to this community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel supported by my peers on this community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like I have enhanced interpersonal connections when using this community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I visit the community to connect with like-minded others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I visit the community to get a reward for my continued participation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I visit the community because it offers incentives (i.e. the Stars program).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like I can contribute to something bigger by participating in this community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I visit the community to express my opinion about product features.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I visit the community to influence other people or the brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I visit the community because I can suggest improvements for Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Next



*Consumer-Brand Engagement (Cognition, Affection, Activation)*

How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I think about Spotify when I visit the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using the community stimulates my interest to learn more about Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I read comments/reviews of other community members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I frequently post messages and provide responses on the community page.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I think participating in this community is beneficial for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel good when I use this community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am proud to be part of this community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I actively participate in the community activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I spend a lot of time online participating in activities on the community site.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Whenever I am on the community site, I usually also use the Spotify app.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Next

### *Consumer-Brand Relationship (Brand Attachment, Brand Trust, Brand Commitment)*

How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I admire Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am a fan of Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am a long-term customer of Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get happy when I use Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I trust Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I rely on Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spotify always lives up to my expectations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spotify is an honest brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I am willing to pay the Spotify Premium price to have a better user experience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spotify is important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am committed to support Spotify's success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Next

### *Brand Value Co-Creation / Co-Innovation*

How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I am willing to share my experiences and suggestions when other members of the community want my advice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I communicate with other members of the community to identify ideas regarding new product features.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I evaluate other members' ideas regarding the development of Spotify product features.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like Spotify acknowledges/recognizes the ideas of the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can see how Spotify actually transforms the ideas shared and voted for in the community into action.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

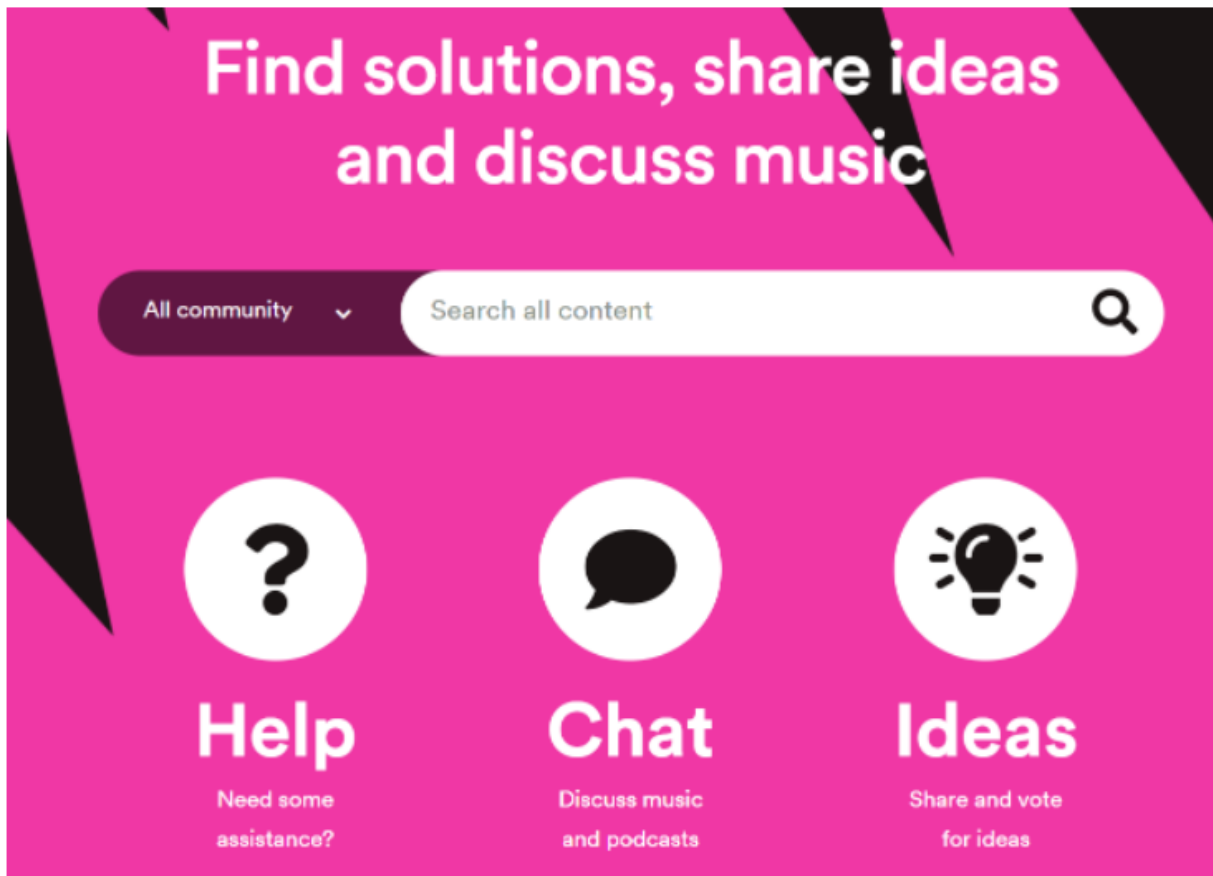
Next

*Survey Option 2 – “No” to “Have you ever visited the official Spotify Community”*

The official Spotify Community is a website that is run by the brand, where Spotify users can ask for advice, discuss music and podcasts, and share/vote for ideas on how to improve Spotify.

It also offers the Stars Program, which rewards community members who have proven themselves Spotify experts, helped countless users and posted great ideas.

The community site looks like this:



## Motivation to Participate in Spotify's OBC Site

This section will ask you to reflect on what would motivate you to visit the Spotify Community.

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How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I'd consider visiting the community to get information about the brand and its features.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd consider visiting the community to solve problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd consider visiting the community to learn new things about the brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I'd consider visiting the community to fill my free time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd consider visiting the community to be entertained.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd consider visiting the community to relax.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I'd consider visiting the community to feel a sense of belonging.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd consider visiting the community to feel supported by my peers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd consider visiting the community to enhance interpersonal connections.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd consider visiting the community to connect with like-minded others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I'd consider visiting the community to get a reward for my continued participation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd consider visiting the community because it offers incentives (i.e., special events, merchandise)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd consider visiting the community because I feel like I can contribute to something bigger.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I'd consider visiting the community to express my opinion about product features.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd consider visiting the community to influence other people or the brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd consider visiting the community because I can suggest improvements for Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Next

### Consumer-Brand Engagement (Cognition, Affection, Activation)

In this section we want you to reflect on how being a member of the Spotify Community could impact your engagement.

The following photo is a screenshot of the community chat. Please take a look and picture yourself being a member of the Spotify Community.



### Featured Topics

#### Question of the Week: What's your favorite joke?

Hey lovely people, happy Friday and happy April! From pulling pranks to rickrolling people on the internet, today we're celebrating April Fools day...

 Katarina / Moderator / 5 days ago in Chat

#### Las Raras - Spanish-speaking Documentary and Socia...

Hey, friends! We've been hard at working finding the best podcasts for you to add to your listening list, and we've got a real winner on our hands...

 SpotifyPodcasts / Creator / 75 days ago in Chat

#### Podcast of the Year - Spotify Podcasts Community...

Here we are on the other side of the New Year. With our resolutions soundly in place, it's time to return to life as usual. Before you open up your...

 SpotifyPodcasts / Creator / 91 days ago in Chat

#### RESULTS ARE IN: The Best Podcasts of the Year as...

First, we asked you to tell us what all of your favorite shows of 2021 were, and you did just that. Then, we put all of those shows...

 SpotifyPodcasts / Creator / 103 days ago in Chat

MORE ▾

How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The community makes me think about Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The community stimulates my interest to learn more about Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd consider reading comments/reviews of other community members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd consider posting messages and providing responses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I think participating in this community would be beneficial for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think participating in this community would make me feel good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be proud to be a member of the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I'd participate actively in the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can picture myself spending a lot of time on the community site.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can picture myself using the Spotify app while visiting the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Next



## Consumer-Brand Relationship (Brand Attachment, Brand Trust, Brand Commitment)

In this section we want you to reflect on your relationship with Spotify.

How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I admire Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am a fan of Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am a long-term customer of Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get happy when I use Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I trust Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I rely on Spotify.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spotify always lives up to my expectations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spotify is an honest brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I am willing to pay the Spotify Premium price to have a better user experience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spotify is important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am committed to support Spotify's success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Next

## Brand Value Co-Creation / Co-Innovation

Finally, Spotify offers the option to share and vote for ideas. Please take a look at the pictures below and then answer the following questions.

## Got an idea?

Have you got an idea for a new Spotify app feature taking up space in your head?  
Let us know what's got those cogs turning and we'll check to see if anyone else  
has already thought the same as you.

Tell us the title of your idea... >>

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Here you can vote for other ideas.

## Browse

Popular Ideas Trending Ideas New Ideas

**[Mobile]** Please bring back the old group session. "Play from same device"  
Submitted by tgerhard1

VOTES:  
**436**

82 **LIVE IDEA**

**[Browse]** Show upcoming album and release date on artist's homepage  
Submitted by dchris

VOTES:  
**126**

8 **GOOD SUGGESTION**

**[Community][Other]** Do not close ideas until the customer has accepted so  
Submitted by boel

VOTES:  
**45**

5 **NEW SUGGESTION**

How much do you agree with the following statements about the Spotify Community?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I'm willing to share my experiences and suggestions when other members of the community want my advice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm willing to identify and share ideas regarding new product features.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm willing to evaluate other members' ideas regarding the development of Spotify product features.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd expect Spotify acknowledges the ideas of the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'd expect Spotify transforms the ideas from the community into action.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Next

## Demographics

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Non-binary / third gender

Prefer not to say

How old are you?

Under 18

18-24 years old

25-34 years old

35-44 years old

45-54 years old

55-64 years old

65+ years old

Where are you from?

Next

### *End of Survey*

If you want to join the lottery to win 6 months of Spotify Premium, please enter your e-mail address here.

Next

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.  
Your response has been recorded.





## Appendix F: Higher-Order Calculations for Consumer-Brand Engagement

All calculations are based on Sarstedt et al. (2019).

### 1. AVE

Formula:

$$AVE = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^M l_i^2)}{M},$$

AVE for consumer-brand engagement:

$$AVE = \frac{0.920^2 + 0.902^2 + 0.923^2}{3} = 0.84$$

The result of the AVE value is above the threshold of 0.50, thus it validates the convergent validity of the constructs.

### 2. Composite reliability

Formula:

$$\rho_C = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^M l_i)^2}{(\sum_{i=1}^M l_i)^2 + \sum_{i=1}^M var(e_i)},$$

Composite reliability for consumer-brand engagement:

$$\rho_C = \frac{7.53}{7.53 + (1 - 0.85) + (1 - 0.812) + (1 - 0.852)} = 0.94$$

### 3. Cronbach's $\alpha$

Formula:

$$Cronbach's \alpha = \frac{M \cdot \bar{r}}{(1 + (M - 1) \cdot \bar{r})},$$

Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for consumer-brand engagement:

$$\text{Cronbach's } \alpha = \frac{3 \times 0.837}{(1+(3-1)) \times 0.837} = 0.94$$

The results of the composite reliability value and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  are above the threshold of 0.60, thus it validates the reliability of the constructs.

#### **4. HTMT**

HTMT for consumer-brand engagement:

$$\text{HTMT (CBE, CBR)} = \frac{0.376}{\sqrt{0.5472 \times 0.4552}} = 0.70$$

$$\text{HTMT (CBE, BVC)} = \frac{0.4656}{\sqrt{0.5472 \times 0.538}} = 0.85$$

The results of the HTMT values are below the threshold of 0.90 and do not exceed 0.85, thus it validates the discriminant validity of the constructs.



## Appendix G: Higher-Order Calculations for Consumer-Brand Relationship

All calculations are based on Sarstedt et al. (2019).

### 1. AVE

Formula:

$$AVE = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^M l_i^2)}{M},$$

AVE for consumer-brand relationship:

$$AVE = \frac{0.874^2 + 0.901^2 + 0.914^2}{3} = 0.80$$

The result of the AVE value is above the threshold of 0.50, thus it validates the convergent validity of the constructs.

### 2. Composite reliability

Formula:

$$\rho_C = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^M l_i)^2}{(\sum_{i=1}^M l_i)^2 + \sum_{i=1}^M var(e_i)},$$

Composite reliability for consumer-brand relationship:

$$\rho_C = \frac{12.8}{12.8 + (1 - 0.835) + (1 - 0.764) + (1 - 0.812)} = 0.96$$

### 3. Cronbach's $\alpha$

Formula:

$$Cronbach's \alpha = \frac{M \cdot \bar{r}}{(1 + (M - 1) \cdot \bar{r})},$$

Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for consumer-brand relationship:

$$\text{Cronbach's } \alpha = \frac{3 \times 0.804}{(1 + (3-1)) \times 0.804} = 0.92$$

The results of the composite reliability value and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  are above the threshold of 0.60, thus it validates the reliability of the constructs.

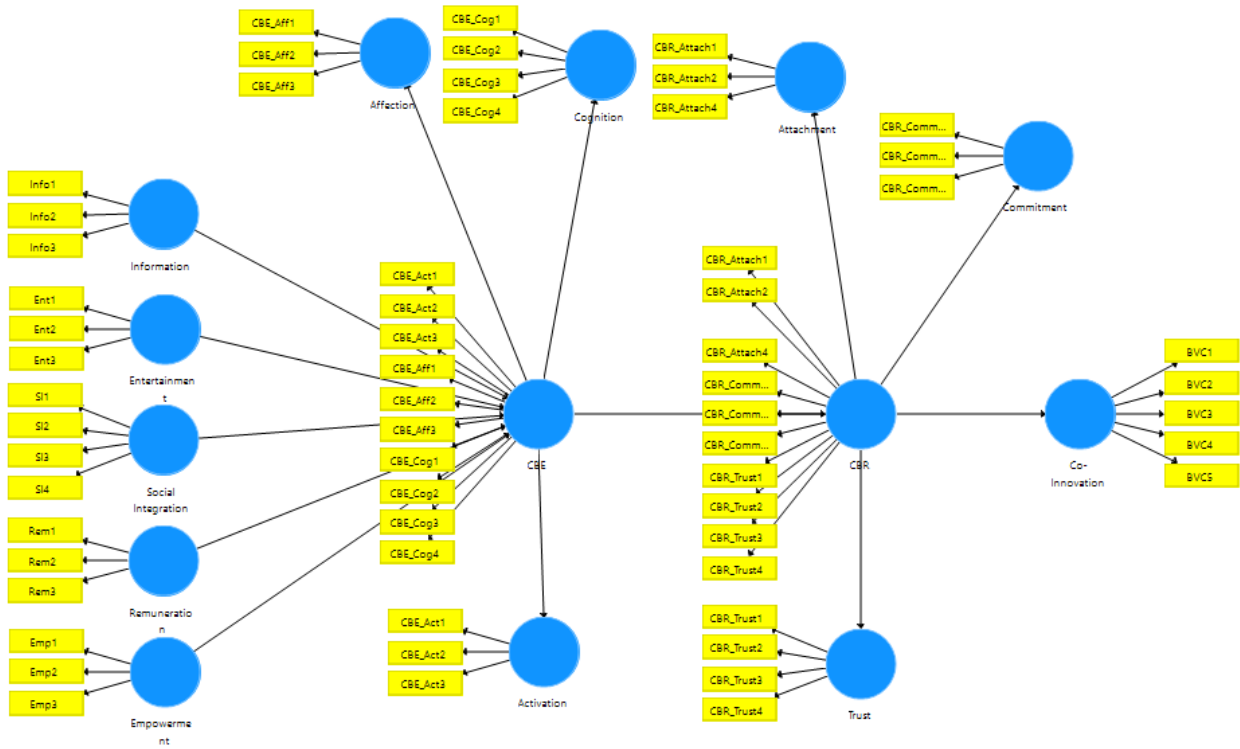
#### **4. HTMT:**

HTMT for consumer-brand relationship:

$$\text{HTMT (CBR, BVC)} = \frac{0.27}{\sqrt{0.4552 \times 0.538}} = 0.54$$

The result of the HTMT value is below the thresholds of 0.90 and 0.85, thus it validates the discriminant validity of the constructs.

## Appendix H: Framework in SmartPLS



## Appendix I: Descriptive Statistics Results

### Demographics

Age	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
<b>under 18</b>	2	1.3%	1.3%
<b>18-24</b>	38	23.8%	25.0%
<b>25-34</b>	83	51.9%	76.9%
<b>35-44</b>	21	13.1%	90.0%
<b>45-54</b>	16	10.0%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	160	100.0%	

Gender	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
<b>Male</b>	53	33.1%	33.1%
<b>Female</b>	107	66.9%	66.9%
<b>Non-binary</b>	0	0%	0%
<b>Not specified</b>	0	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	160	100%	

Country	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
<b>Australia</b>	1	0.6%	0.6%
<b>Austria</b>	3	1.9%	2.5%
<b>Botswana</b>	1	0.6%	3.1%
<b>Canada</b>	3	1.9%	5.0%
<b>Colombia</b>	2	1.3%	6.3%
<b>Czech Republic</b>	1	0.6%	6.9%
<b>Denmark</b>	28	17.5%	24.4%
<b>Finland</b>	2	1.3%	25.6%
<b>France</b>	4	2.5%	28.1%
<b>Germany</b>	45	28.1%	56.3%
<b>Hungary</b>	1	0.6%	56.9%
<b>Iceland</b>	36	22.5%	79.4%
<b>Ireland</b>	1	0.6%	80.0%
<b>Italy</b>	4	2.5%	82.5%
<b>Netherlands</b>	1	0.6%	83.1%
<b>Norway</b>	7	4.4%	87.5%
<b>Poland</b>	1	0.6%	88.1%
<b>Portugal</b>	1	0.6%	88.8%
<b>Spain</b>	1	0.6%	89.4%
<b>Sweden</b>	3	1.9%	91.3%

<b>UK</b>	5	3.1%	94.4%
<b>USA</b>	9	5.6%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	160	100%	

### *Usage Behavior*

<b>Spotify User Type</b>	<b>Counts</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
<b>Free</b>	13	8.1%	8.1%
<b>Premium</b>	147	91.9%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	160	100%	

<b>Spotify Usage Frequency</b>	<b>Counts</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
<b>Less than once a week</b>	6	3.8%	3.8%
<b>1 to 3 days a week</b>	19	11.9%	15.6%
<b>4 to 6 days a week</b>	25	15.6%	31.3%
<b>Every day</b>	110	68.8%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	160	100%	

<b>Community Site Member</b>	<b>Counts</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
<b>Yes</b>	40	25.0%	100.0%
<b>No</b>	120	75.0%	75.0%
<b>Total</b>	160	100%	

<b>Community Members' Usage Frequency</b>	<b>Counts</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
<b>Less than once a week</b>	13	32.5%	32.5%
<b>1 to 3 days a week</b>	7	17.5%	50.0%
<b>4 to 6 days a week</b>	5	12.5%	62.5%
<b>Every day</b>	15	37.5%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	40	100.0%	

## Appendix J: Results of Measurement Model – Non-Community vs. Community Members

### Non-Community Members

Cronbach's Alpha, rho\_A, composite reliability, and AVE:

Construct	Cronbach's $\alpha$	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Activation	0,789	0,790	0,877	0,704
Affection	0,888	0,893	0,931	0,818
Attachment	0,808	0,808	0,887	0,723
CBE	0,915	0,923	0,929	0,571
CBR	0,891	0,894	0,911	0,507
Co-Innovation	0,816	0,884	0,856	0,548
Cognition	0,781	0,794	0,859	0,605
Commitment	0,737	0,747	0,851	0,657
Empowerment	0,801	0,801	0,883	0,715
Entertainment	0,858	0,868	0,913	0,778
Information	0,771	0,816	0,866	0,684
Remuneration	0,743	0,787	0,847	0,649
Social Integration	0,925	0,928	0,947	0,817
Trust	0,749	0,755	0,843	0,576

HTMT:

	Activation	Affection	Attachment	CBE	CBR	Co-Innovation	Cognition	Commitment	Empowerment	Entertainment	Information	Remuneration	Social Integration	Trust
Activation														
Affection	-													
Attachment	0,332	0,418												
CBE	-	-	0,390											
CBR	0,357	0,430	-	0,385										
Co-Innovation	0,612	0,508	0,277	0,634	0,275									
Cognition	-	0,825	0,362	-	0,316	0,688								
Commitment	0,320	0,384	0,864	0,335	-	0,239	0,258							
Empowerment	0,594	0,539	0,178	0,592	0,174	0,692	0,566	0,223						
Entertainment	0,608	0,637	0,199	0,605	0,240	0,224	0,496	0,220	0,447					
Information	0,657	0,728	0,184	0,744	0,204	0,521	0,734	0,230	0,627	0,636				
Remuneration	0,568	0,569	0,447	0,589	0,514	0,475	0,549	0,468	0,628	0,538	0,496			
Social Integration	0,625	0,626	0,317	0,620	0,316	0,333	0,531	0,234	0,510	0,758	0,549	0,644		
Trust	0,369	0,430	0,893	0,377	-	0,272	0,287	-	0,113	0,266	0,179	0,554	0,346	

*Community Members*

Cronbach's alpha, rho\_A, composite reliability, and AVE:

Construct	Cronbach's $\alpha$	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Activation	0,861	0,862	0,915	0,783
Affection	0,940	0,942	0,962	0,893
Attachment	0,854	0,855	0,911	0,775
CBE	0,942	0,948	0,951	0,664
CBR	0,934	0,938	0,944	0,629
Co-Innovation	0,923	0,952	0,942	0,765
Cognition	0,845	0,861	0,896	0,685
Commitment	0,771	0,775	0,867	0,686
cEmpowerment	0,939	0,944	0,961	0,891
Entertainment	0,885	0,892	0,929	0,815
Information	0,730	0,785	0,852	0,664
Remuneration	0,865	0,867	0,918	0,790
Social Integration	0,926	0,934	0,948	0,820
Trust	0,877	0,883	0,916	0,731

HTMT:

	Action	Affection	Attachment	CBE	CBR	Co-Innovation	Cognition	Commitment	Empowerment	Entertainment	Information	Remuneration	Social Integration	Trust
Action														
Affection	-													
Attachment	0,721	0,800												
CBE	-	-	0,803											
CBR	0,644	0,772	-	0,726										
Co-Innovation	0,931	0,854	0,783	0,903	0,702									
Cognition	-	0,833	0,772	-	0,658	0,812								
Commitment	0,575	0,665	0,937	0,646	-	0,587	0,606							
Empowerment	0,889	0,755	0,640	0,891	0,533	0,892	0,903	0,392						
Entertainment	0,932	0,819	0,649	0,929	0,537	0,828	0,909	0,393	0,856					
Information	0,817	0,813	0,740	0,942	0,647	0,853	1,042	0,653	0,875	0,945				
Remuneration	0,913	0,770	0,636	0,881	0,517	0,777	0,844	0,398	0,840	0,995	0,844			
Social Integration	0,952	0,931	0,769	0,989	0,675	0,920	0,946	0,554	0,871	0,934	0,951	0,898		
Trust	0,600	0,784	0,902	0,682	-	0,682	0,572	-	0,518	0,522	0,539	0,480	0,649	