

# Engaging and sustaining brand community on Facebook: Study of Finnish shopping malls.

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## ENGAGING AND SUSTAINING BRAND COMMUNITY ON FACEBOOK: STUDY OF FINNISH SHOPPING MALLS

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this thesis is to examine how shopping center organizations may gain competitive advantage by facilitating online communities. Research focus is on what kind of content creates engagement and value for a business in online communities. Study is made by observing Finnish shopping centers' Facebook pages and how interaction between brands and customers are taking place in this type of online brand communities. Additionally, this thesis casts light on how engaging community may influence on hedonistic and utilitarian shopping behavior. In the study, motivations for businesses to participate as well as consumers to join brand communities are examined. Furthermore, antecedents of an online community are characterised. The final interest is to draw a blueprint for measuring success in a Facebook community.

### RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA

The main data source is statistical data generated by Facebook insights function. The chosen methodology is mixed methods, where univariate analysis is combined with netnography. The used data are from three Finnish shopping malls' Facebook Pages, which were observed between January 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 and December 31<sup>st</sup> 2012. The data were coded manually, classified, and then analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively, and the results reported.

### KEY FINDINGS

The key findings of this study were that an online brand community such as a Facebook Page serves best hedonistic consumption behavior. Content is crucially important in creating value for a brand and it should be measured by using the quality of engagement. The size of the community did not remarkably change the quantity or quality of the engagement. According to the results, the most engaging content on a shopping center's Facebook Page is non-commercial, entertaining, brief content that is stating in tone and is visual. The study also found that women tend to be more active community members in shopping mall communities than men.

KEYWORDS: brand community, virtual online community, consumer community, Facebook, Social Networking sites, shopping malls, hedonistic consumption, utilitarian consumption

## ENGAGING AND SUSTAINING BRAND COMMUNITY ON FACEBOOK: STUDY OF FINNISH SHOPPING MALLS

### TUTKIMUKSEN TAVOITE

Tämä gradu tutkii kuinka kauppakeskusorganisaatiot voivat saavuttaa kilpailuetua sekä hyötyä aktiivisesta ja osallistavasta online-yhteisöstä. Tutkimuksen keskiössä ovat osallistava sisältö sekä sen arvo yrityksille. Tutkimus on tehty tutkimalla suomalaisten kauppakeskusten Facebook-sivuja ja näillä sivuilla tapahtuvaa organisaation ja kuluttajien välistä vuorovaikutusta. Gradu selventää myös online-brändiyhteisön vaikutusta hedonistiseen sekä utilitaristiseen ostokäyttäytymiseen. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on myös selvittää yrityksen osallistumismotivaatiota sekä kuluttajan motivaatioita liittyä brändiyhteisöön. Lisäksi tavoitteena on selvittää sopivia mittareita onnistuneen Facebook-yhteisön osallistumisen määrittämiseksi.

### TUTKIMUSMENETELMÄ JA LÄHDEAINEISTO

Tutkimus tehtiin havainnoimalla suomalaisten kauppakeskusten Facebook-sivuja 1.1.2012 – 31.12.2012 välisenä ajanjaksona. Lähteenä on käytetty pääosin Facebook-sivun insight-toiminnon keräämää aineistoa. Tutkimusmenetelmänä käytettiin yhdistelmämetodia (mixed-methods), jossa hyödynnettiin yksilömuuttuja-analyysia sekä netnografiaa. Lähteaineisto käsiteltiin manuaalisesti, ja luokiteltiin ja analysoitiin sekä kvantitatiivisesti että kvalitatiivisesti. Analyysin keskeisimmät tulokset on raportoitu tässä työssä.

### KESKEISET TULOKSET

Tulosten mukaan Facebook-tyylinen online-yhteisö palvelee parhaiten hedonistista kuluttajakäytöstä. Sisällön merkitys yhteisössä on olennainen arvon luomisessa brändille, ja tätä arvoa tulisi tutkia osallistumisen laatuun. Online-yhteisön koon muutos ei vaikuttanut olennaisesti osallistumisen määrään tai laatuun. Tutkimus osoittaa, että kauppakeskuksen Facebook-yhteisöissä eniten osallistava sisältö on ei-kaupallista, viihteellistä, kompaktia, toteavaa sekä visuaalista. Lisäksi tutkimus osoittaa, että naiset ovat aktiivisempia yhteisön jäseniä kauppakeskusyhteisössä kuin miehet.

## Hakusanat

Yhteisöt, yhteisöllisyys, kauppakeskukset, Facebook-yhteisöt, sosiaaliset verkostot, sosiaalinen sopimus

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## **1 Introduction**

This first chapter serves as an introduction to this thesis and the research area. The chapter explains the background and motivation for this study and this particular topic as well as introduces the research gap and the research questions. Then main findings are briefly summarized. Structure of this thesis is presented at the end of this chapter.

This thesis concentrates on studying solely Facebook Pages, as they are the most popular community sites. A Facebook Page and its functionalities are introduced comprehensively as a platform for a brand community.

### **1.1 Background of this thesis**

Facebook is the biggest social media platform and the biggest media in the world (Facebook 2013; Parent, Plangger & Bal 2011). It is attractive and a hot topic among both academics and businesses. Studies made of the subject are relatively young, and research directions as well as practices on how to conduct research are still searching for direction.

My aspiration to do this thesis is both professional and personal. I work for social media agency, and a part of my work is related to Facebook communities as well as shopping centers. Moreover, I am a critical Facebook user, who picks only relevant brand communities and therefore it is extremely interesting to study the processes behind the communities from the academic viewpoint. As a marketing student I have noticed that there is no other topic that has been highlighted and hyped as much as the social media in the field of marketing during the past 5 to 8 years. It is my time to put my efforts into it and contribute this thesis for this hype.

86% of the Finns aged between 16-24 years and 78% of the Finns aged 25-34 years use social networking sites (Tilastokeskus 02.11. 2011). Over 2,266,720 Finns are on Facebook (Facebook 19.1.2013), and globally this figure is one billion monthly active users as of January 2013 (Facebook Press 19.1.2013). Facebook is the biggest manifestation of social media and still growing in popularity. It is also the biggest media in the world in terms of active members. Most of this popularity is because it offers something that every human being is looking for: social interaction and sense of belonging, which is made easier than ever before.



Social interaction and belonging are important constituents of a community (e.g. Kozinets 1999, Laroche et al 2012, de Valck, Bruggen, Wierenga 2009). People are constructing their identity in relation to others and their environment. What people consume today is much more than products; services, entertainment, brands, and for example virtual space that has shifted the way consumers behave. Shopping has shifted from rational transaction towards emotional experience and manifestation of values and aspirations (e.g. Arnold & Reynolds 2003, Davis & Hodges 2012). Shopping means spending time and experience, which has led the shopping centers to become places to entertain, enjoy and experience. Therefore shopping mall administration needs to create conditions which will foster joining a community and engagement with the community. In customer relationship management, the social media channels are seen as a key medium towards more interactive customer relationships.

The apex of the social media hype is the Facebook with its millions of groups and communities. Facebook has tremendously lowered the barriers to belong to communities, which is seen as an increase in all kind of communities run by consumers, companies or even governmental organizations. In Finland, Facebook is used by over 41.7% of the people, and the majority of the mid-sized and large companies are present there (Facebook 2013). Therefore the interest of this study is limited to communities in Facebook only.

## **1.2 Contribution and limitations**

There are many studies conducted on the consumer communities and virtual online communities (e.g. Kozinets 1999, de Valck, Bruggen & Wierenga 2009, Spaulding 2010, Lee, Kim & Kim 2011, Laroche, Habibi, Richard & Sankaranarayanan 2012) but there are not many made about Facebook communities. Facebook communities differ in many ways from traditional, high involvement and often anonymous online virtual communities. Joining a Facebook Page or a Facebook group is the easiest way to join a community, and is also the most popular way to belong to a community. This is why more study is needed on this area. There are not many studies, if any, made of shopping center brand communities on Facebook, although almost every major shopping center in Finland have a managed Facebook Page.

The biggest contributions of this thesis are relating to community management and shopping center management. It also serves the academic interest by explaining the causality of content engagement, how it relates to consumer behavior and brand community behavior. In both academic and practical sense it is intriguing to outline how the value of community engagement constructs for business. For managerial purposes, it is easier to sketch best practices for creating engaging content.

The greatest limitation of this study is that it only observes the Facebook community and therefore the findings can be generalized only with caution. The data is also slightly narrow and concentrates on statistics and interpretation of engagement it has created. Therefore the interpretations from this data must be observed rather by providing outlines and directions than exact answers.

### **1.3 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is structured into seven main chapters, this being the first. The following chapter is the literature review and theoretical background, where the theoretical framework is laid, and prevailing research about the theme summarized. The third chapter explains the research questions and introduces the hypotheses for this thesis. Chapter four explains the used data sources, selection process and describes how the raw data was transformed for the analysis. The fifth chapter gives a thorough description on the mixed methods in general, as well as the univariate analysis and netnography. The sixth chapter of the thesis reports the results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Also the hypotheses are processed in this chapter. The seventh – and final – chapter of this paper is the conclusion, which summarizes the results and other findings from the data and literature, as well as discusses the limitations. Also suggestions for future research are proposed.

## **2 Literature review & theoretical background**

This chapter constructs the literature review and forms the theoretical background of the thesis. The chapter illuminates the key concepts and previous studies related to the theme. It also forms the academic framework of this thesis. The chapter begins with the definition of social media in the first sub-chapter. The second sub-chapter is dedicated to the social media communication, and the third sub-chapter consists of extensive introduction made to Facebook as a platform. After this, the fourth part provides the most essential points about research made on brand communities. The fifth sub-chapter is a review of shopping center studies and the role of shopping malls in a consumption society. Sub-chapter six studies consumers' shopping behavior from both utilitarian and hedonistic aspects. In the seventh sub-chapter, consumer motivations of engagement are studied to find out why consumers join brand communities. Sub-chapter eight explores the reasons for business brands to actively sustain brand communities in social media. The final chapter of the literature review takes a quick look at how to measure success in a brand community.

### **2.1 Definition of social media**

Social media can be defined in various ways. In general, it refers to interactive web and mobile environment that enables social exchange in several ways. At simplest it is the creation and exchange of user-generated content made possible by platforms or applications that anyone can use via internet. This chapter defines terms social media and Facebook in a way it is spoken in the academic world.

Kaplan and Haenlein (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010) define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological backgrounds of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.” Constantinides and Fountain (2008) define social media as “a collection of open-source, interactive and user controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes”. They also emphasize the fact that social media platforms support the efficient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing of informational content. In a similar way Palmer et al.

describe social media as “online applications platforms and media which aim to facilitate interactions, collaborations and sharing of content” (Palmer et al. 2009).

As the definitions unveil, social media refers to many different platforms, which can be grouped under term “social media”. It is an umbrella term describing the different types of applications such as collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), blogs/micro-blogs (e.g. Twitter), content communities (e.g. YouTube), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace), virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft) and virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life), to name some of the most popular forms of social media. The common ideology for these technologically different platforms are user generated content, sociality and communication. Kietzmann et al. (2011) note that all major social media sites are versatile platforms that serve more than one functionality, meaning that platforms are built to have many features serving multiple purposes (e.g. messaging, sharing, networking etc.).

Social media has changed consumer behavior as it empowers consumers. At the same time the fundamentals of the whole communication and marketplace have changed. This has raised new challenges for companies and marketing to fit into this relatively new medium that is only partially controllable. The discussion about brands and consumption is happening in social media all the time, with or without blessing from companies. They can only decide if they want to participate in the conversation or ignore it. Not all companies or even industries, or their profile, are fit for social media nor can achieve benefits or value from it. It is certain that some rivals, employees and customers are using social media and total absence in social media may turn into weakness in the long run.

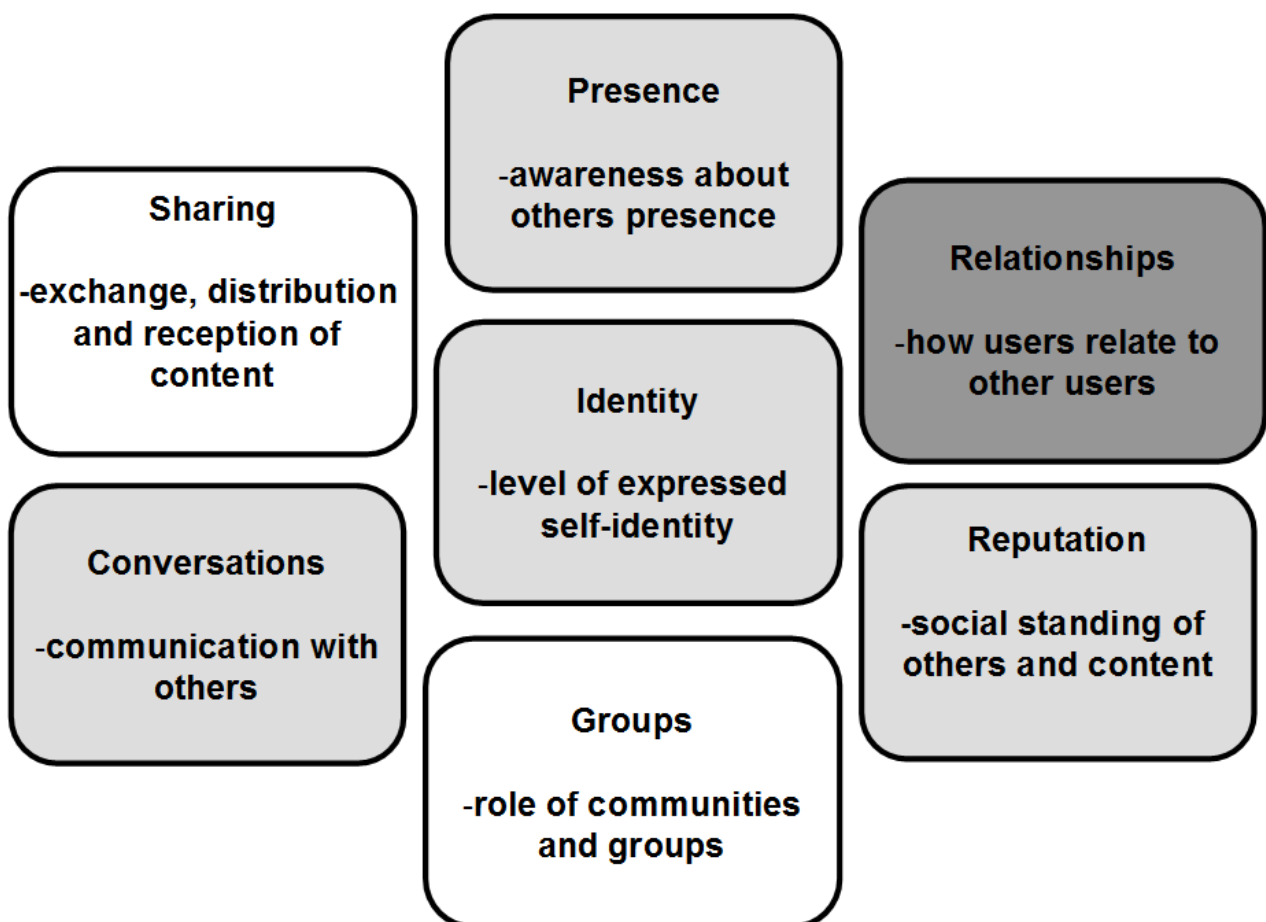
## **2.2 Facebook, the social media giant**

This thesis focuses on Facebook only, as it is the most used and most widely spread of the social media platforms. According to Facebook, there are over 1 billion monthly active users as of January 2013, of which 584 million use Facebook daily (Facebook 2013). This makes it the biggest media in the world as of March 2013. Also in Finland it is the most used social media platform and social networking site in terms of number of users (Markkinointi ja Mainonta 2012).

Social media communication takes place in various different platforms and therefore the characteristic of a particular platform greatly impacts on the nature of interaction. Kietzmann et al. (2011) illustrate the core characteristics of Facebook (see figure 1). According to him, Facebook's core characteristic is in relationship building (relationship) which is marked with the darkest color to emphasize its meaning in this platform. Such secondary characteristics are mentioned as identity building, reputation, presence and conversations, marked with light-grey. Sharing and groups are belonging to third line of characteristics marked with white.

**Figure 1. Facebook's core characteristics (adapted from Kietzmann et al. 2011)**

Depiction of the core characteristics of Facebook as a platform. In case of Facebook, relationships is perceived as the core characteristic.



Facebook is a social networking site (SNS), which encompasses many key characteristics of social media into one, as the figure 1 depicted. Many researchers (e.g. Dogruer et al. 2011, Kietzmann et al. 2011, Laroche et al. 2012) identify Facebook as a social networking

site that enables rapid interpersonal communication across the geographical limits and networking as well as community building. Social networking sites in general provide users a profile and enable them to socialize with other people, upload and share photos and various types of messages that they would like to share with other people. Additionally, Eyadat & Eyadat (2010) state that social networking sites also provide social and emotional support, information resources and ties to other people. Murray and Waller (2007) have identified social networking websites such as Facebook as virtual communities that allow people to connect and interact with each other on a particular subject, or to just spend time together online.

Facebook includes features such as instant messaging, photo viewing and sharing, groups and pages, video sharing, online playing and many other functions that are developed and updated continuously. These features are enabled in the same platform. Features and applications are built systematically in a way which supports efficient social networking. This thesis is focusing on the Facebook functionalities that are important in community building and creating communality on Facebook Pages. On the other hand, companies can create features and applications to attract consumers using Facebook-tab-function, which makes it possible to have “unique” features. Next some of the most common and widely used Facebook features are explained briefly.

**Commenting:** The *comment* feature is a function that enables any user to post comment on topic or status that appears on Facebook. It is open format text that can contain links to a webpage. For the purposes of this thesis, this feature is critical in assessing deeper opinions, thoughts and feedback of customers. Comments are usually short and compact (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Example of the comment feature



**Liking:** The *like* feature is made to reflect a positive attitude towards content in Facebook. This feature is available to almost all public content and is visualized as “thumbs up sign” that appears below the content post. By its simplicity of just clicking it, this function is the most used function of Facebook. Popular/well received posts receive multiple “likes”, which is a clear sign of content that gains attention of Facebook users. Note, that there is no negative version of this function (e.g. dislike-button/“thumb down”-button). Post that is uninteresting or not well received is often ignored or communicated via negative comment. (See picture 3 for liking and sharing features).

**Sharing:** The *sharing* feature is made to spread content that Facebook users consider good, fun, and important, or otherwise regard as provoking to another Facebook users. When a user clicks the *share* button, content appears in a user’s personal profile and is thus visible to all the user’s friends on Facebook. This same content may be re-shared again and again and this feature is especially useful to recognize content that is perceived really important or better than normal “worth sharing” – type of content. When sharing, users often attach a comment that links their reception or opinion on the content. The

number of shares indicates also virality, as every share of that particular content sum up cumulatively to original source of the content (a user or Page may publish content). On the one hand, the *sharing* feature is less used than the *like* and *comment* features, but on the other hand it is the most powerful way to spread the word, as the audience widens up fast after only a couple of shares.

**Figure 3. Introducing the *sharing* and *liking* features of Facebook**

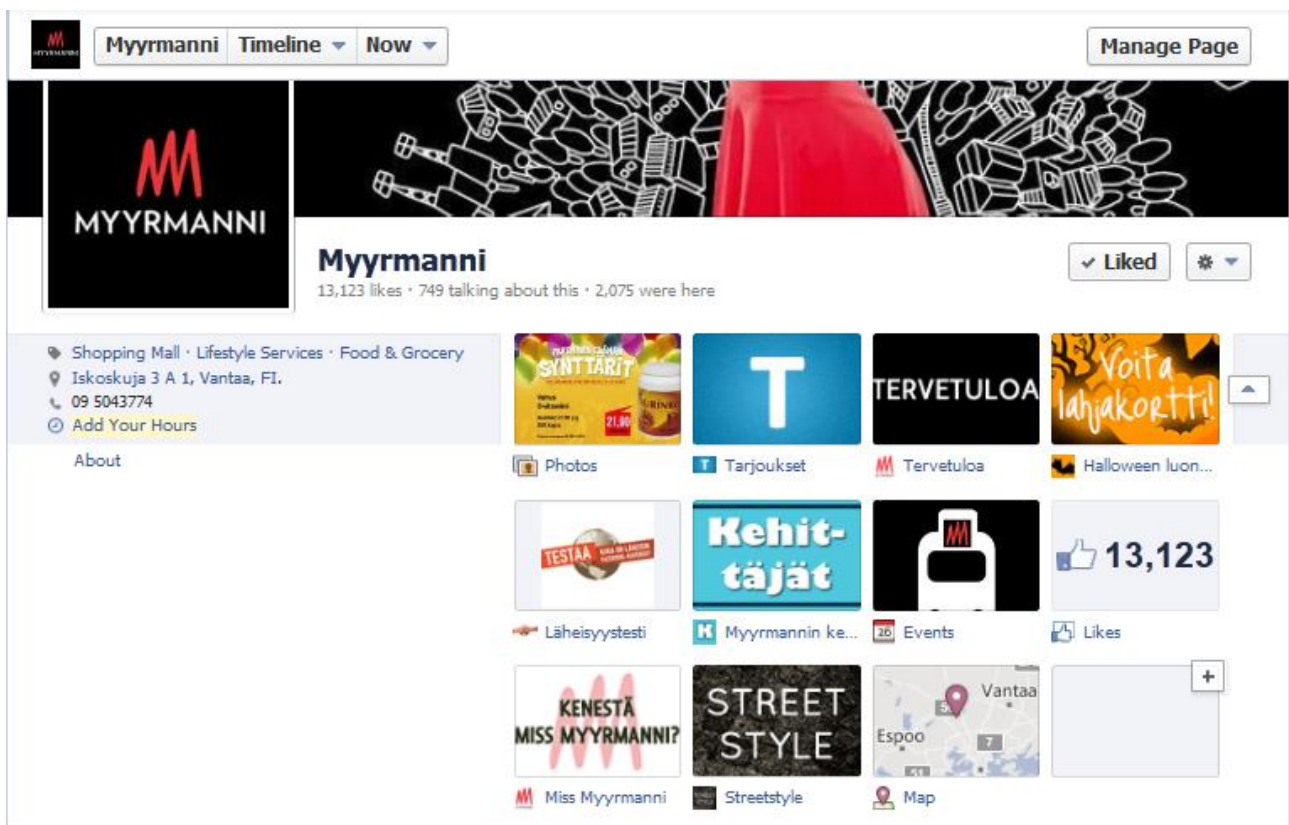


**Page Tab/Application:** The *page tab* is a feature that appears on Facebook Pages that anyone can establish (not available for Facebook Groups). Tabs enable a Facebook Page administrator to develop personalized content and functions that separate the page from others in other than visual means. A tab can contain complex functions and simple animated content that can be shared and spread over Facebook as well as outside Facebook. Professional Facebook Pages that are operated by companies have often



multiple applications and tabs to serve and inform community members as well as to attract new ones. This feature is important as it enables also more complex interaction between a company and a community member and may be used for instance for open feedback, to collect contact information, questionnaire, raffles, entertainment or for many other purposes. These applications as well as other content in Facebook Page must be in line with Facebook rules and policies that set limits for content and in some cases Facebook have stopped campaigns that have been against its rules.

**Figure 4. Example of page tabs/applications of Myyrmanni Facebook Page**



### 2.3 Community, virtual brand community and sense of community

A community in general is a group of interconnected people that have a common characteristic, interest or feature, which brings the group members together. These members are aware of other members and they communicate with each other. Typical communities share similar interests, values, or beliefs, and have some common nominator that ties them. This nominator can be anything from physical material to ideologies and issues. The most important feature for communities is social exchange, i.e. communication.

Along the internet, the concept of community has got less geographical limitations, as people are now able to gather virtually online. These online communities are referred to as virtual online communities (VOC), such as an online brand community, and they share common interests regardless of their physical location. Alavi et al. (2011) define virtual community as a group of people with some shared interest, and who connect and interact with each other over time. Kozinets defines online communities as computer mediated social gathering (Kozinets 2002). These definitions highlight the important features of the communities that are formed in the internet: social exchange is taking place electronically instead of a physical meeting. In this thesis, a brand community refers to a virtual community that is formed around a brand.

The term “community”, which is used to refer these virtual groups, has been debated to a great extent (e.g. Kozinets 1999, Driskell & Lyon 2002, Spaulding 2010). As these group members may never meet physically, they may be anonymous, and the interaction may be fleeting and ostensibly functional. On the other hand, the ultimate definition of a group or a community is meaningful social exchange that happens in space. The attitude towards virtual online communities has shifted from skepticism towards whether they are valid communities, to favor them as authentic and credible communities (Driskell & Lyon 2002). Virtual communities have changed the fundamentals of what a community is and how communality is perceived.

Rothaermel & Sugiyama (2001) note that communities are not stable but constantly changing and evolving. Facebook Page -type of communities tend to change rapidly. Rothaermel & Sugiyama (2001) have also stated that community sizes have impact on behavior and attachment but that this is scalable and depends on the context as well as the platform. In this thesis, one of the interests is to study how the size of a Facebook community impacts on the level of interaction.

Sense of community describes the perception of similarity to others; awareness of interdependence with others, as well as the feeling that one is part of a larger, somewhat stable structure (Sarason 1974 cf. McMillan & Chavis 1986). This description exposes the essence of understanding communities.

*Communality* refers to a condition of being communal or to the feeling of cooperation and belonging that arises from common interests and goals. Communality is the common participation itself as an action. Communality is high when a community member is deeply involved and feels increased sense of communality. Motivation, attachment, and values are the drivers of level of communality (Ren, Harper, Drenner, Terveen, Kiesler, Riedl and Kraut 2012). Kozinets (1999) states that online interaction is an important supplement to social and consumption behavior. This online interaction affects increasingly on consumer behavior. Advanced and deeper marketing knowledge and advantage may rise as a result of the enhanced understanding of these online communities by marketers. Therefore the Facebook communities provide opportunity to study how communality is created in less involved virtual community, and to reveal how it is sustained and how this communality could be used to foster business operations.

### **Antecedents of community and sense of communality**

There are many studies conducted on what the antecedents of an online community are (e.g. Spaulding 2010, Wu & Sukoco 2010, Ridings, Gefen & Arinze 2002, Kozinets 2002, Frey & Lüthje 2011). In their research, Wu & Sukoco (2010) state that the sense of belonging and trust are essential for any community to exist. Also Alavi, Ahuja & Medury (2011) have studied the role of online communities in business-to-consumer spaces. They highlight the need to establish online trust in order to have engagement in communities. Spaulding (2010) also discusses trust and how it plays a significant role in community management. Spaulding (2010) proposes to view consumer communities using trust theory and social contracts theory, which explain the business-community relationship as an exchange relationship.

Community members give up time, money or other resources in exchange for the benefits of the community. In the case of shopping mall communities, the exchanged resource is time and attention, and consumers receive something they value to stay, and participate as members (discounts, benefits, information, credibility, enhanced sense of local identity etc.). If this contract is not attractive for both parties, it leads the consumer to leave the community, or in this case the Facebook Page of a shopping mall. Spaulding (2010) states that expectations are created by social contracts and these contracts define what a company can or cannot do in a community. Often social contracts develop in balance with the reasons why members join a community.

## Communities in Facebook

Communities in Facebook are formed around Facebook Pages and Facebook Groups. These are the types of communities in Facebook that anyone can establish to support a common idea, a brand, a person or whatever that can be a common nominator between people ranging from Sauna, to “I hate...”, or chocolate milk. A Facebook Page and a Facebook Group carry slightly differing features that support the feeling of a community. A Facebook Page is more visible to other users and easier to approach and join, as any Facebook user can join. A Facebook Group is more intensive and has higher barriers to join (which can be adjusted from publicly open to everyone to secret and closed group). One great difference between a Page and a Group is also communication; a Group has more possibilities to interact with its members and thus has a greater communicational cohesion, whereas a Facebook Page is visually more attractive, although more limited by its communicational means. A Facebook Page has a limited ability to customize its visual elements in line with company outlook. For example colors, photos, logo etc. and further customization is enabled in page-tabs that can have various content, ranging from contests and applications to simple landing pages and photos.

This thesis concentrates purely on Facebook Pages as it is the most common type of community that is established for brands and businesses and far more popular than any other group (The most popular business Facebook Pages are Facebook with 90,113,646 likes (source: <http://www.facebook.com/facebook> (checked 03.04.2013 at 03.25) and biggest traditional business page is Coca Cola with 62,442,289 likes (source: <http://www.facebook.com/cocacola> checked 03.04.2013 at 03.24)

An interesting difference between Facebook communities and traditional online communities is that on Facebook people are appearing by their own name, profile and information, which has an impact on the quality of interaction. On the other hand, the credibility and social belonging is higher in Facebook communities, as the perceived trust is higher.

An important issue when inspecting the different Facebook features is to understand the value difference of getting a “like” instead of getting a “share”. These functions carry different meanings if we study them apart of their functional features. When looking at the easiness of use, a *like* is the most simple function (a single click, limited visibility), *commenting* the next simplest (where user can leave a comment short or long), which is

followed by a *share* (a double click, ability to comment and broad visibility to personal profile and friends). This results in a suggestion that a *like* is the most used form of engagement. This is probably because it takes the least effort (fast and simple), and has the lightest message to other users. In addition, its nature is mostly positive (Facebook has no *dislike* button).

The *comment* feature is the possibility to leave a short or long message to Facebook content. This requires thought and more involvement. The message is visible to all community members and to a determined level of friends (this may be adjusted from “only me” to “public”, or some specific friend or group of friends. In this thesis, these features are studied holistically to analyze how they affect on the perceived feeling of a community.

## **2.4 Shopping malls and shopping malls in Finland**

The definition of a shopping mall has transformed and developed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One of the earliest definitions of a modern shopping mall is that of the United States Urban Land Institute in 1947, which defines shopping mall “as a as a group of architecturally unified establishments that are planned, owned and managed as an operating unit” (Peiser and Frej 2003). This definition is broad and unspecified, although it characterizes the core elements of a modern shopping mall. From this early definition the shopping center industry has increased in popularity as well as in size, requiring a more specific definition.

Shopping malls today form a colorful selection ranging from interregional entertainment centers to small local neighborhood malls. Malls can be categorized in several ways according to their size, location and price-range (e.g. Abrudan 2011, Pitt & Musa 2009). The growth and maturity of shopping center business have led to specialization and differentiation of shopping centers into various center formats, ranging from hybrids, crossings, lifestyle centers, mega-malls and outlets to plazas, promenades, town centers, strips and even villages. The original four basic terms to classify shopping malls were neighborhood, community, regional and super-regional centers, which highlights the locality and area of impact.

In Finland, a shopping mall is considered to be an enclosed one, with a minimum gross leasable area of 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> and 10 or more stores, while a single store cannot occupy more than 50% of the total surface. According to the Finnish definition, the gross leasable area

includes offices and storage areas (NCSC 2011). In Finland, most shopping malls fall into the classic four basic types, being mostly neighborhood and community centers, with some regional centers and few super-regional centers. The data in this thesis is from Myyrmanni (regional center), Iso Omena (super-regional entertainment center) and Koskikeskus (super-regional fashion center). Adapting Pitt & Musa's (2009) explanation of a regional center into the Finnish environment, regional centers typically house 70 to 150 stores, have at least one major anchor store (department store or hypermarket like Prisma or Citymarket) and people visiting the center from a distance varying from 10 to 80 kilometers. Super-regional centers are often bigger, have more specialty stores and they attract visitors from a longer distance than regional centers. It will be interesting to see if the type of the shopping center affects the behavior in an online community. The location is the single most attractive factor for a shopping center, the next one is accessibility (Pitt & Musa 2009), and therefore it may also have an impact on community behavior and the reception of content.

Pitt & Musa (2009) remind that the core of shopping center business is not retailing, which is the core business of shopping centers' tenants (Pitt & Musa 2009). The core business is leasing retail space for profit. Therefore the shopping center involvement in marketing must be seen as a supporting function that is not aimed directly at generating profits, but at incurring cost to enable efficient supporting function.

According to Musil (2011), shopping centers and malls have made a substantial impact on both consumers and local communities, which makes it extremely interesting to study how this type of geographical community transmits and evolves in an online community. It is highly common that a shopping center serves local residents as a center of retail commerce and a center of the community that provides necessary services in both urban and rural areas.

Roulac (Roulac 1994 cf. Musil 2011) noted that shopping malls are under an ongoing change (trends, competition, economic forces, shifting demographic trends, consumer preferences, technological and political changes etc.), and that the role of a shopping mall influences the nature of retail economic activity. This casts the challenge of adaptability to meet the current community needs, trends and preferences. Community involvement is therefore one way to stay on the edge in consumer trends and shifts in consumption.

## **2.5 Hedonistic and Utilitarian consumption**

One of the key theories in this thesis is that of hedonistic and utilitarian consumption. Previous research on shopping malls and consumer behavior has been studied from utilitarian and hedonistic perspectives (e.g. Hirschman and Holbrook, 1986; Holbrook 1986, Budisantoso & Mizerski 2010, Arnold & Reynolds 2003, Bardhi & Arnould 2005, Cardoso & Pinto 2010). Commonly shopping behavior has been classified into utilitarian reasons and hedonistic reasons (Tauber 1972, Hirschmann & Holbrook 1982, Babin et al. 1994 etc.), although in reality shopping behavior is taking place somewhere between the utilitarian and hedonistic reasons' equilibrium. It is very unusual to have purely hedonistic or purely utilitarian motives (Arnold & Reynolds 2003, Bardhi & Arnould 2005 cf. Cardoso & Pinto 2010).

The consumption behavior studies (e.g. Budisantoso & Mizerski 2010, Arnold & Reynolds 2003, Bardhi & Arnould 2005, Cardoso & Pinto 2010) have begun to increasingly recognize and attach emotional and hedonistic motives into shopping behavior. Consumption has also become more hedonistic (e.g. Budisantoso & Mizerski 2010), as the perception of value and time have evolved. This has led retailers and shopping malls to introduce entertainment and additional services to make visits to stores and shopping malls more joyful and deeper experiences. Simultaneously, time pressures faced by the modern consumer have lifted the importance of efficient shopping visits, which elevates the utilitarian school of shopping.

### **Hedonistic consumption**

Several researchers report that the meaning of shopping experience and enjoyment have been listed as competitive advantages for retailers and shopping centers (e.g. Arnold & Reynolds 2003, Cardoso & Pinto 2010). Hedonistic consumer behavior has gained stance compared to earlier, mostly utilitarian, efficient and rational visits. Shopping motivation and behavior seem to depend on the day and the feeling. Consumers tend to look for entertainment and experiences during weekends when they have more time to shop. On weekdays shopping trips are more efficient and rational task accomplishing. In reality the researchers agree that the majority of consumers carry on mixture of both utilitarian and

hedonistic motivations (Arnold & Reynolds 2003, Bardhi & Arnould 2005 cf. Cardoso & Pinto 2010).

Tauber (1972) introduced psychosocial needs that motivate shoppers. These needs were divided into personal: (e.g. role playing, diversion, self-gratification, learning about new trends, physical activity and sensory stimulation) and social (e.g. social experiences, communication with others, peer group attractions, status and authority and pleasure of bargaining). One may go shopping for a particular good that fixes a problem for a sufficient amount of resources (money and time) or to fulfill emotional and social needs and spent leisure time. These needs were categorized into seven types of hedonistic shopping (Arnold & Reynolds 2003).

The hedonistic shopping motivations are categorized as:

1. Adventure motivation - shopping is viewed as an adventure
2. Social shopping - shoppers see the main purpose of shopping as social event
3. Gratification shopping - shopping is used as a reward
4. Idea shopping - this shopping is undertaken to provide the shopper with up-to-date information on products and trends
5. Role shopping - shopping motive relates to the shopper's role in society
6. Value shopping - the purpose of this activity is to find a bargain; and,
7. Anticipated utility - the aim of the shopping is to obtain the product. Shoppers expect to gain the utility offered by the product purchased.

Arnold & Reynolds (2003) note that adding entertainment and "hedonistic" aspects into the shopping experience is a tool to compete against other players in the retailing. A high level of service, highly qualified staff, and shopping experience that is fun and entertaining are mentioned as ingredients for this strategy.

### **Utilitarian consumption**

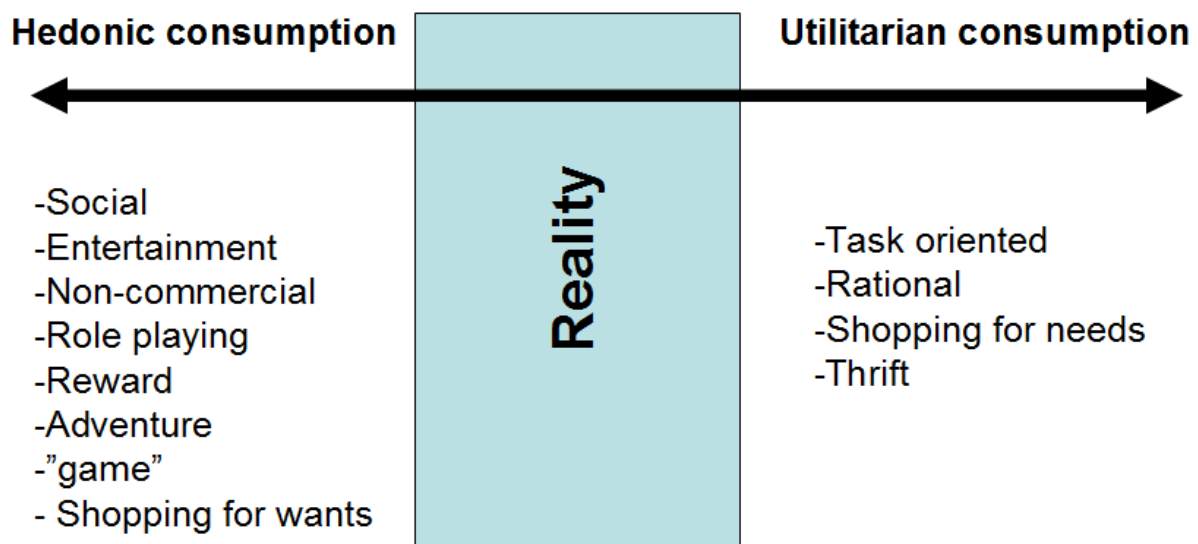
Bloch et al. (1994) state that the reason for shopping mall's popularity is consumers' tendency to gravitate towards a setting which provides favorable climate, potential for social interaction, and a large selection of consumable goods and experiences. Bloch, Ridgway & Dawson (1994) also identify that the malls' role shifted from the point of purchase into the community center for social and recreational activity. They also argue



that much of consumption activity is to obtain satisfying experiences rather than goods, a view that is closer to hedonistic consumption.

Utilitarian shopping refers to the related task and rational shopping behavior of consumers, and is approaching shopping as an accomplishing mission (Babin et al. 1994). This type of shopping research often ignores emotional, experience and entertainment aspects of shopping. Miller (Miller 1998 cf. Cardoso & Pinto 2010) describes utilitarian consumption as “daily shopping that is motivated by necessity, conceptually related with thrift”. The core characteristics of hedonic and utilitarian consumption are listed in figure 5 below.

**Figure 5. Characteristics of Hedonistic and Utilitarian consumption behavior**



Studies of hedonistic and utilitarian shopping behavior show that both shopping values have an effect on retail outcomes and enhance such retail variables as satisfaction (Babin et al., 1994, 2005), customer share (Babin and Attaway, 2000), patronage intentions (Stoel et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2006), as well as word-of-mouth and store loyalty (Jones et al., 2006).

## **2.6 Consumer motivation to participate in an online community**

Motivation is a force that shapes community members’ desires or readiness to participate in knowledge and information sharing with other members in online brand communities. Motivations to join and engage in brand communities vary according to one’s own

personality and the cultural context as well many other factors. An individual may have different motivations depending on the day, mood, objectives, friends etc. Many studies have taken a look at what motivates consumers have to participate in social media platforms (e.g. Kunz & Hackworth 2011, Spaulding 2010, Laroche et al. 2012, Frey & Lüthje 2011, Li & Bernoff 2008) and join Facebook Page -like communities and groups. Frey et al. (2011) state that the starting point for joining a community is a shared interest or a goal in which a member can attach to.

Kunz et al. (2011) state that these primary reasons for joining are information about new products, discounts, sales, competitions, events and campaigns. According to the advertising firm DDB (c.f. Weber 2011), the most important reasons to join a Facebook Fan Page that is a product, brand, or company related were promotional benefits, attachment to the brand or product, willingness to get the latest news concerning the product or brand, gaining access to exclusive information, and the ability to provide opinions about the brand. An interesting notion in the DDB's study was the result that the third of the respondents wanted to buy the followed brand's product more likely. Laroche et al. (2012) recognize interactional motivations to join brand communities. Examples of these kinds of motivations are arguing, engaging in intellectual discourse, play games, make fun and create idle talk.

For example Li & Bernoff (2008) list some of the most important reasons for people to participate in communities: a desire to connect with others, a will to create, a will to stay in touch, a desire to help, an affinity around a certain product/brand/behavior/phenomena, social pressure, altruism (willingness to help), a prurient impulse, creativity needs/need to express oneself, and validation needs. Weber (2011) proposes that the main motivations to join a community are professional, informational, social, beneficial, status, locational/geographical/regional. According to Park, Kee and Valenzuela (2009), four primary needs for participating in groups within Facebook are socializing, entertainment, self-identity, and information.

Pillai & Mukherjee (2011) point out in their study that there are social networking sites that are more utilitarian in nature than others, such as LinkedIn and Slideshare which have a utility value and are used for business and professional use. Then there are sites that are serving more hedonistic purposes, such as Facebook, MySpace and Pinterest. Here the

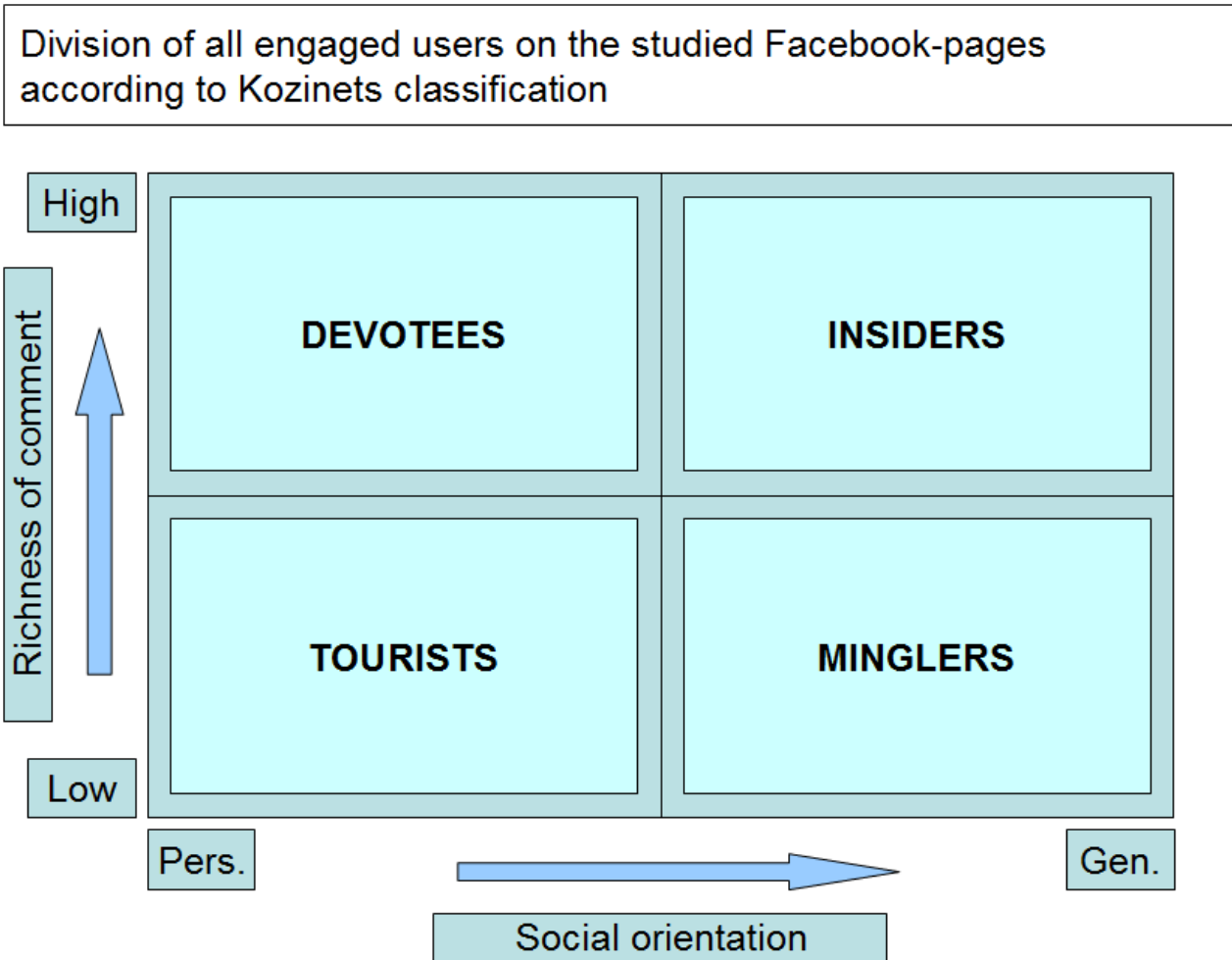
value to use these networking sites stems from the site's entertainment features. The characteristic of a web site also determines what users look for joining these sites. In this case we may expect the motivation for Facebook users to be more entertainment and leisure-like, and therefore perhaps to serve more hedonistic aspirations. According to Pillai & Mukherjee (2011), "social networking site needs to be hedonistic and offer entertainment value proposition to attract large number of users". Also other researchers identify that Facebook with its functions is inclined to serve hedonistic purposes (e.g. Richter et al 2009, Sledgianowski & Kulviwat 2008).

Similar to shopping mall visits, Facebook has both utilitarian and hedonistic features, and therefore it is also necessary to study its utilitarian perspective more carefully. People seek to fulfill their psychosocial needs and wants as well as physical needs, and thus the utilitarian and more rational aspects of Facebook participation are also studied in this paper. Utility relates to a content which features benefits, information, usefulness, and efficiency. This drives to solve what kind of utilitarian content is sought by utilitarian community members.

Gülner, Balci & Cakir (2010) have studied motivations to join Facebook and the most important ones were narcissism and self-expression, media drenching and performance, passing time, information seeking, personal status, relationship maintenance, and entertainment. The behavior in social media is different as the audience is diffused and the receiver is simultaneously also a performer or a producer of content (Gülner et. al. 2010). This enables people to behave and show improved self-image, which affects the actions made and shown in Facebook and online communities.

Kozinets (2002) proposes categorization of active community members into tourists, minglers, devotees and insiders. *Tourists* are less tied into a community and have a low interest towards the topic. They post rarely, if at all. *Minglers* have strong social ties but have a low interest towards the community topic. *Devotees* have strong ties to community topic and consumption activity but they care less about social interaction or other community members. *Insiders* can be described as intensive members having a strong interest towards both community itself and the community interest. Figure 6 describes this categorization.

Figure 6. Kozinets categorization of active community members (Kozinets 2002)



## 2.7 Interest of a business to involve in social media and communities

Almost every major brand and company in Finland has a Facebook Page. This includes shopping centers as well. The reasons for a brand to appear in social media and maintain community are well studied in the past few years. Laroche, Habibi, Richard & Sankaranarayanan (2012) list the following reasons for a brand to participate in social media: advanced learning about customers' perceptions of a brand or product, the possibility to attract and collaborate with loyal customers, influencing members evaluations and actions, rapid communicational tool for news and information, versatile feedback channel, as well as a mean to create and sustain loyal customers. Laroche et al. (2012) also mention that a low cost and potentially high efficiency as a communication medium makes it tempting.

Also Spiller et al. (2011) have studied brands' interests to be actively present in social media. They propose that a brand community facilitates a discussion arena for a brand to customers and for customers to customers, as well as for any potential third party (as for example individual stores in a mall or local associations). Spiller et al. (2011) also mention that Facebook and social media in general enable a direct response channel that is especially suitable for customer relationship management's relationship acquisition and maintenance (Spiller, Tuten & Carpenter 2011). It is a marketing channel that is two-way, low-cost, and relatively easily accessible. Moreover, it offers customers a unique tool for in-depth customer information and feedback, which should theoretically lead to improvement of the customer relationship.

Nevertheless, there is also pressure from wildly scattering media, where traditional media are losing time to new media, and therefore it becomes more reasonable for businesses to appear where the masses are and where the conversation is happening (e.g. Nielsen Report 2009). There are also studies which prove that consumers are happier being a part of a community, rather than a target of a marketing campaign (e.g. Cocheo 2009). Several studies also show that consumers are more likely to buy something that is recommended them by someone they trust (e.g. Kunz & Hackworth 2011, Weber 2011). According to Chadwick Martin Bailey research (c.f. Weber 2011), a Facebook fan of a product or service is approximately 51% more likely to purchase that item or service after becoming a fan. Galeotti and Goyal (2009) state that companies who use social media networking have higher sales and greater profits. In addition, academics (e.g. Harridge-March & Quinton 2009, Weber 2011) state that companies engaging in social media enhance their customer relationship and therefore reduce churn. Also Spiller, Tuten & Carpenter (2011) recognize social media's potential as a sales enhancing channel.

Companies are driven into social media engagement by business process objectives such as communication, research, marketing, sales, support and development. The importance of these functions to a business determines what companies are pursuing in brand communities. However, it is necessary to study how different functions are intermediated to fit the social media context. According to Li & Bernoff (2008), in the social media context these business objectives can be described as listening, talking, energizing, supporting, and embracing.

According to Li & Bernoff (2008), listening is continuous monitoring of consumer conversations, as it happens in a natural environment. Talking is engaging and encouraging multimodal conversations that customers have with each other and with the brand itself. Energizing is enabling the most fundamental consumers to promote the good, brand or service in question to other consumers. Supporting is enabling peer to peer -type of help that happens in a community. Embracing is sustaining an environment that enables the generation of new ideas and product/process improvement by anyone in a community by giving feedback opportunities and sustaining such atmosphere.

Consumption behavior has become more and more diffused and scattered, while the emotional and hedonistic ends of consumption are recognized and considered important. Customer orientation, customer lifecycle –thinking, as well as the relationship marketing are awaking interest among marketers instead of point of sale. This means that the focus has shifted from getting people into the mall to buy products, to also to enjoy themselves, spend time, and have a shopping experience.

Weber (2011) mentions that the modern consumer expects to be engaged with companies even outside the points of purchase, as they are willing to interact with the firms that they are involved with. The intensity to stay in touch varies depending on the product or service and the type of consumer appreciation. Weber (2011) concludes that this motivation to interact may be attachment towards products/service, a common interest in business, a will to affect on product design, development, or for example to provide feedback on their experiences with the firm's products or services. To answer this increased need of consumers, a retailer or in this case a shopping center needs channels where this interaction can happen. In order to conversation and engagement to happen, there must be content that attracts for engagement and interaction. Therefore the value for both the company and the consumer is in interaction, where both sides can pursue and seek benefit.

## **2.8 Willingness to participate (6C Model of Social Media Engagement)**

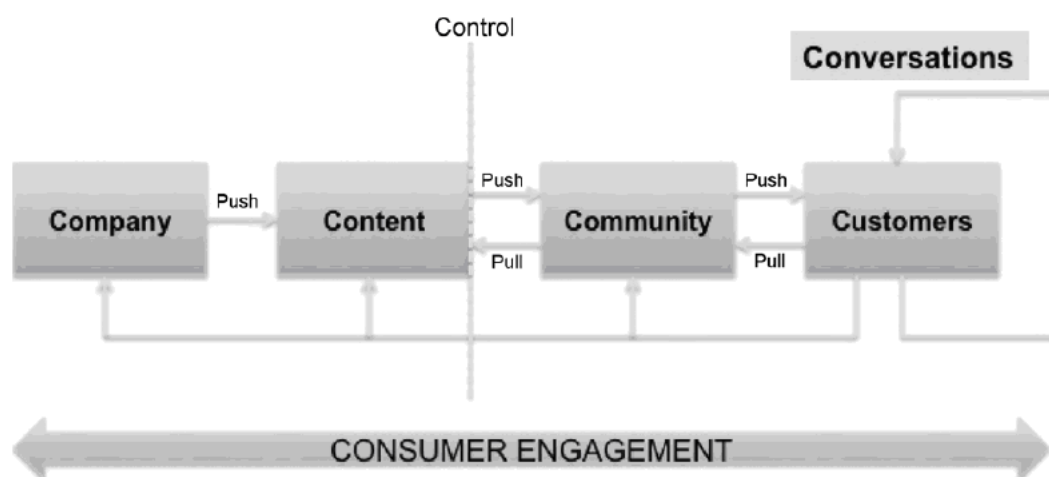
Parent, Kirk and Bal (2011) have introduced the model of consumer engagement called 6C framework, which is visualised in Figure 7. This model conceptualizes how consumers interact with each other and with brands in the social media. Based on this model, Parent et al. (2011) introduce “Willingness to participate”, a concept that is derived and

transformed from “Willingness to pay” thinking, where premium is paid on top of the market price for a product or service that is perceived as high quality. Willingness to pay is competitive advantage created by a company compared to its competitors. This advantage is described as a competitive wedge, a difference between the cost and the price that a consumer is willing to pay for a product/service (Parent et al. 2011). Important in this is to understand that the willingness to pay is the customer’s perception of a greater value, quality, and benefit when purchasing the good or service, which makes it possible for a firm to charge higher price or attract more customers.

One of the most important issues in marketing is to influence this value perception to gain a competitive advantage. Parent et al. (2011) describe that this value perception lies partially in marketing interaction and the richness of the interaction between the consumer and the good/service. Bridging this willingness to pay into willingness to participate is analogous: in social media, environment interaction means conversations between a firm and consumers and between consumers and consumers that happens everywhere but is aggregated in online communities. This calls for bridging social media, user engagement, and value. This value is in the richness of interaction, which is known as engagement.

**Figure 7. 6C model of social media engagement (Parent, Kirk & Bal 2011)**

**6C-model of social engagement describes the company's ability to impact on engagement. Community is the facilitator of engagement.**

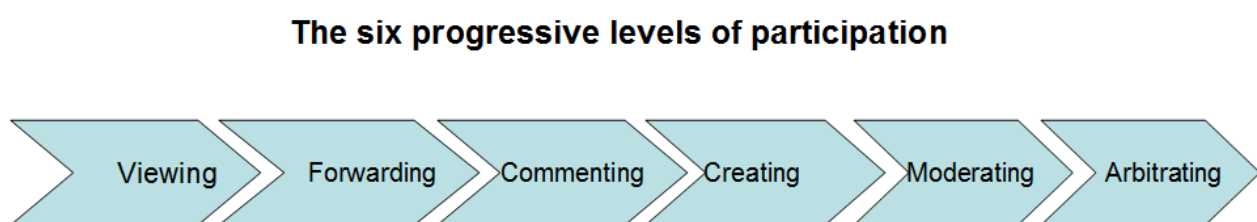


Parent, Kirk and Bal’s (2011) model consists of six components that begin with company and its content that have been traditionally pushed in one-way media. In social media, the content is pulling rather than pushed. The control line marks the border, after which a

company has only limited possibility to influence on what is said about the brand. The community component depicts the interested community of consumers that receives the released content which has crossed the border of control and becomes two-way communication. It circulates between the content creators and the community, which leads to interaction. The ultimate expression of this model is engagement/participation, which forms around the original content. The customer component is distinguished from the community, as customers are a subset of a community.

Parent et al. (2011) add six progressive levels of participation with the 6C-model, starting from *viewing* the content either from the original source or intermediated via other user as seen in Figure 8. A *forwarding* user engages by delivering the content forward whereas *commenting* is participation by writing comments to a content that can be attributed. Users that *create* step into the process of contributing content of their own and showing it publicly. From this stage they also begin *moderating*, as they receive engagement for their own contribution. The last stage is *arbitrating*, which refers to the position of mediating between a brand and other users. The value for a marketer is in this engagement and by directly discussing with customers and receiving feedback that is public the marketer creates more engagement. In communities also non-customers are exposed to flow of brand content. Parent et al. (2011) emphasize that the core of their model is the content and that the value of engagement is highly dependent on it.

**Figure 8. Six progressive levels of participation (Parent et al. 2011)**



## **2.9 Measuring the success**

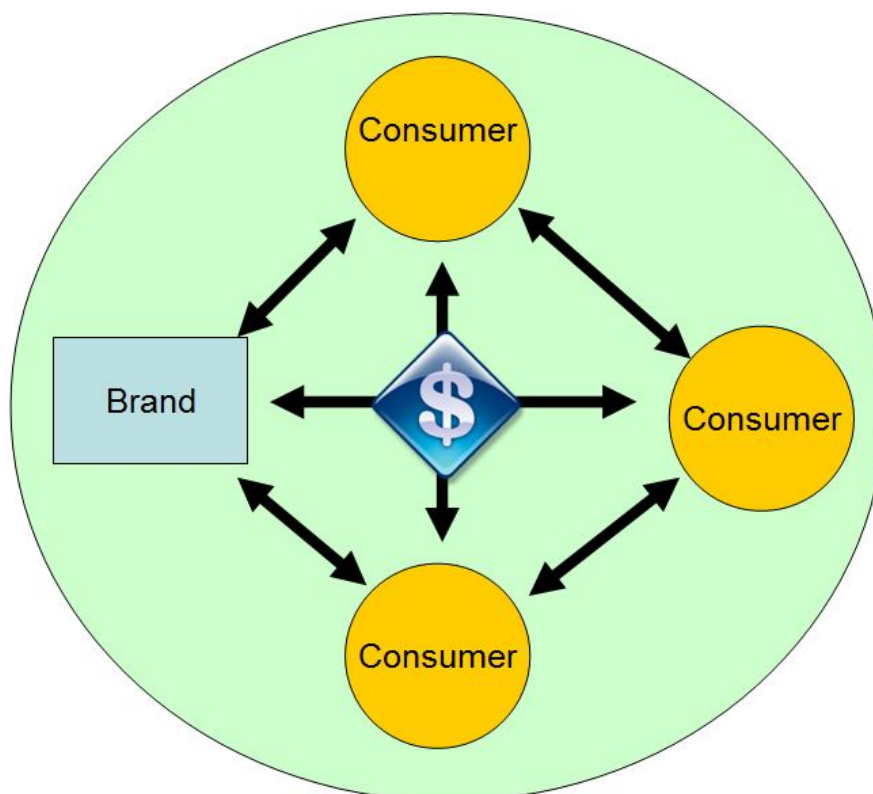
Many researchers point out that the challenge in the social media participation in general is how to measure the success of participation (Weinber & Pehlivan 2011, Weber 2011). Getting a proof of return is important when allocating marketing budgets, as the pressure



is on continuous efficiency and impact. Weinberg et al. (2011) argue that there has been a shift in measuring the marketing Return On Investment (ROI). They mention that the traditional marketing ROI's metrics alone are inadequate to measure and capture the value of marketing actions in social media. Where traditional mass media is a one-way "broadcasted" medium (one to many-type of process), the social media is many-to-many type, interactional channel, which enables a dialogue between a company and a consumer and the value is in interaction that takes place (see figure 9). This fundamental difference changes the way return is measured and extends interest from monetary returns towards social return, such as created conversation and feedback, recommendation of a product or service and sharing of the marketing message.

**Figure 9. Many-to-many model of communication in social media (adapted from Richardson 2010)**

This model depicts the movement of messages between multiple senders and receivers



One of the most significant benefits of electronic marketing is the ability to trace and track down the impact of a message and the generation of data according to actualized results. This information helps in optimizing and targeting the marketing messages and allocating

the expenses in the most efficient ways. However, the metrics differs depending on the social media platform.

Different social media platforms serve different purposes which yield different returns and therefore it is necessary for a marketer to recognize suitable and context tied platform for its purposes (e.g. Kietzmann et al. 2011, Weinberg et al. 2011). The aim of this thesis is to justify why engagement should be the most used metric to measure success in brand community such as a Facebook Page.

Weber (2011) classifies the most important social media metrics into the areas that analyze reach, engagement and business (ROI) (See figure 10). In case of Facebook communities, the interest is on reach and engagement metrics.

**Figure 10. Weber’s proposed Social Media Metrics (Weber 2011)**

<b>Reach:</b>	<b>Engagement:</b>	<b>Business metrics:</b>
Number of users	Time spent	Brand/product awareness
Number of visits	Repeat visits	Brand affinity
Number of unique visitors	Facebook fan additions	Brand perception
Number of page views	Registrations	Purchase intent
Content viewed	Content entries (comments)	
	Reviews	
	Downloads, viral forwards (shares)	

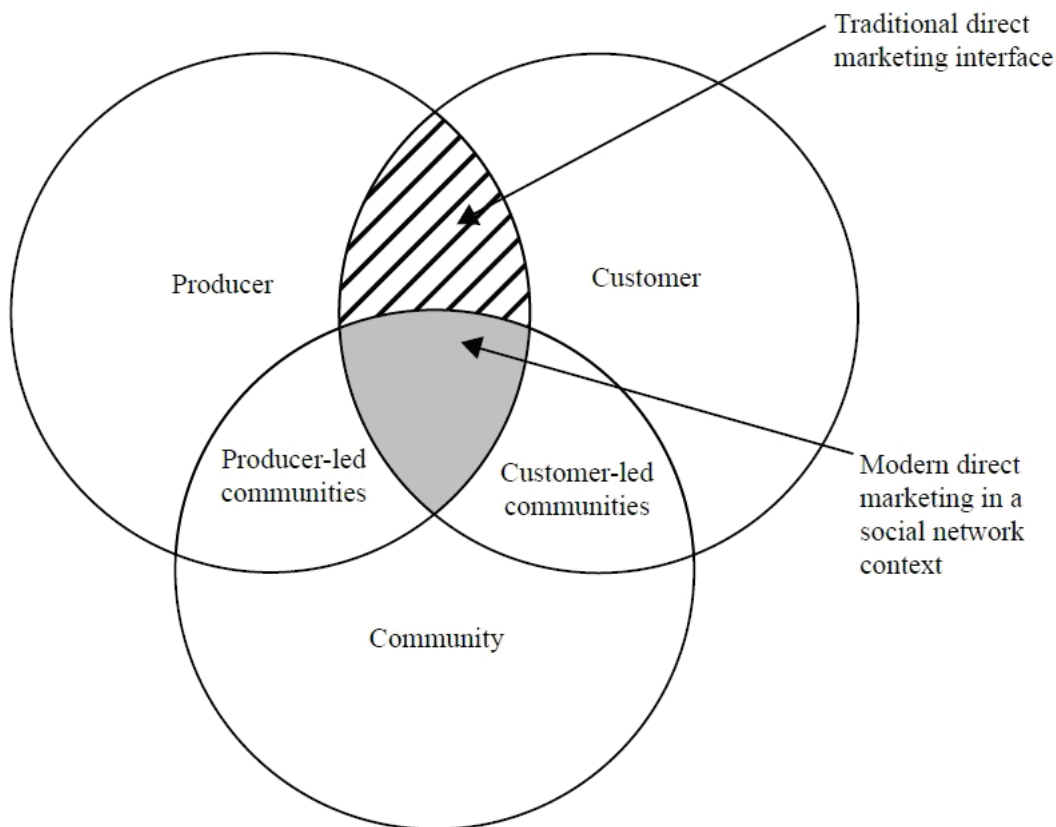
The World Federation of Advertisers (also WFA) (2012) report states that brands that are able to deliver either a sense of fun, variety, innovation, interactivity or community will stand out from other pages and create competitive advantage in the long run. WFA suggests that successful pages deepen both brand equity and engagement. This World Federation of Advertisers study also notes that the social media pages that generate the strongest brand response were not automatically those with the largest number of fans. Interesting fact recognized in this report was that despite the increased time and money being invested, only 50% of the WFA members who took part in research were unsure of their return on social media investment. 23% reported they were getting a good return and 27% regarded ROI as just average or poor.

Also Weinberg et al. (2011) discuss shifting the measurement of results into social currency rather than financial mediums. They propose that a better metrics, which

measures conversation, sharing, supportiveness, helpfulness and similar mediums of social interaction, should be created.

The position of the social media is clarified by Palmer & Koenig-Lewis in the Figure 12 below. Social media lands in the gray area in the middle of these three circles. As Palmer et al. (2009) propose, different types of communities are essential places for interaction between a customer and a producer.

**Figure 7. Position of online community (source: Palmer & Koenig-Lewis 2009)**



Community members express rejection of firm activity by ignoring or ostracizing the firm (Rose, 2007), abandoning the community, or speaking out against the firm (Jarvis, 2007). Therefore, continued presence and action of a firm in a community is an evidence of success. Also indication of success is an indirect result of outcomes such as marketing and brand recognition.

Kunz & Hackworth (2011) recognize that Facebook and other social media is directed towards generating sales but that there is a fine line to successfully entice online consumers without making them feel that they are pressed to buy. Also Wright et al. (Wright, Khanfar, Harrington & Kizer 2010) recognize this caveat of push advertising, which is not appearing natural in the social media. Therefore it is important to study how consumers react to certain content and in this way to characterize what is engaging and suitable content and what is insignificant or even perceived negatively. It is also necessary to find and recognize different types of user groups and craft communication according to the targeted audience. Engagement creates participation and visibility via virality and therefore if Facebook is used as a tool for brand awareness, the content and engagement is again in an important role.

### **3 Research Questions and hypotheses**

This chapter introduces the research questions of the thesis. After that, hypotheses are formed basing on theory and literature reviews.

#### **3.1 Research questions**

This thesis has one main research question and five supporting sub-questions.

The main research question is:

1. How to engage and sustain community on shopping malls' Facebook Pages?

The sub-questions supporting the main research question are the following:

1. How to create engagement and attachment for a shopping mall Facebook community?
2. What stimulates a shopping mall to host a Facebook brand community?
3. What motivates consumers to join a shopping mall brand community?
4. How does the size of a Facebook shopping mall community affect on the interaction?
5. How to measure success in Facebook community?

## 3.2 Hypotheses

The key focus of this thesis is in communities and the content that drives engagement and increases the attachment towards the shopping center. Therefore the first ten hypotheses are concentrating on the content itself and how it has affected the attachment. These hypotheses stem from the presented 6C model of engagement (Parent et al. (2011), where content was in the key position in generating value and “willingness to participate”. Also Kunz & Hackworth (2011) recognize the value of content and remark that there is a fine line to successfully entice online consumers, without making them feel that they are pressed to buy. Therefore it is important to study how consumers react to content and in this way to characterize what is engaging and suitable content and which is insignificant or even perceived negatively. Engagement creates more engagement and increases visibility and therefore if Facebook is used as tool for creating strategic long term competitive advantage, the study of content has a crucial role. Therefore, content analysis is in focus of this study and has led to the formation of hypotheses pairs of H1 and H2, H3 and H4, H5 and H6, H7 and H8, as well as H9 and H10.

H1 = Non-commercial content engages more than commercial content in a shopping mall community

H2 = Commercial content engages more than non-commercial content in a shopping mall community

H3 = Entertaining content engages more than informative content in a shopping mall community

H4 = Informative content engages more than entertaining content in a shopping mall community

H5 = Local content engages more than universal content in a shopping mall community

H6 = Universal content engages more than local content in a shopping mall community

H7 = Short statuses engage more in a shopping mall community

H8 = Long statuses engage more in a shopping mall community

H9 = Statements engage more in a shopping mall community

H10 = Questions engage more in a shopping mall community

One of the interests of this thesis is to analyze whether Facebook communities built around shopping centers serve more hedonistic consumption or utilitarian consumption. According to Pillai & Mukherjee (2011), Facebook is considered to serve more entertaining and leisure-like needs and is therefore inclined to favor hedonistic behavior. Also the fact that a shopping mall experience may be considered leisure time and hedonistic experience led to forming of hypotheses H11 and H12. According to Hill&Knowlton survey (Hill & Knowlton 2012), females tend to be more active on Facebook in general, covering 57% of activity. In addition, hedonistic shopping is perceived to be more popular among females (e.g. Arnold & Reynolds 2003). For these reasons hypothesis H13 is created.

H11 = Hedonistic content engages more than utilitarian content in Facebook brand community

H12 = Utilitarian content engages more than hedonistic content in Facebook brand community

H13 = Females are more active on Facebook shopping mall community than males

The interest towards interaction quality and level of interaction stems from Rothaermel & Sugiyama (2001), who have studied how the size of community affects the level of interaction. This leads to formation of hypotheses H14 and H15:

H14 = A larger Facebook community decreases the level of interaction

H 15 = A larger Facebook community increases the level of interaction

## **4 Data description**

This part of the thesis introduces the data used in this study, as well as provides the basic statistics behind the empirical part. I will start by introducing the original data source and explanation of what kind of data is used. This section also describes what the studied core factors are, and how these are produced from the data. After this the summary tables of used data are portrayed and explained, as well as the visualization of the qualitative data shown in a few examples.

### **4.1 Data sources**

The main source of data used in this thesis is Facebook and Facebook Pages' own insight data, which is collected automatically by Facebook. In this thesis both quantitative and qualitative data are used. This thesis studies the interaction in the Finnish shopping malls' Facebook Pages and for the purposes of this study, data from three different Facebook Pages were used. Shopping centers that were chosen to this study were Myyrmanni (Vantaa), Iso Omena (Espoo), and Koskikeskus (Tampere). The data used is collected between the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2012 and the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2012.

In the choosing process several attributes were looked upon in order to find relevant communities for this research. These attributes were the size of the community, the age of the Facebook Page, the activity on the page, content that is managed by someone (a community member or an employee), and the content that is occurring frequently. Only shopping centers that were located in urban area were selected. Smaller rural shopping centers were left out in this thesis as they had smaller communities and lacked the critical mass that is needed for this kind of qualitative study. Furthermore, they seemed to be relatively passive in their content. There is no similar push to activate and reach customers.

#### **4.1.1 Quantitative data description**

For the quantitative part of this thesis, data was uploaded from Facebook's insight function. From this raw data, some new important figures were calculated manually and then added to the data. These calculated figures are mainly ratios that are explained later in this chapter. Also words per status were counted manually and added to the data. The

data used is from one full calendar year and comprises of all interaction that occurred during the year 2012 in the three selected shopping malls' Facebook Pages. The data were downloaded in two occasions in September 2012 and January 2013 because it is not possible to download full year data from Facebook insights at once. Therefore it was divided and later integrated into a single data entity.

An important remark about the data and its span is that Facebook updated its data collection practices during the data collection periods, which resulted in that at the end of the year, more data attributes were available. Unfortunately these new figures were not available in the statistics collected earlier so I was not able to use them. Instead, the study concentrated on the data attributes that were available during the whole study period.

The original quantitative data itself was downloaded in separated excel files from each of the used shopping mall page and integrated during the process in a way which enabled the identification of the original data source (shopping center) later. The raw dataset from Facebook insights contains various figures of which only some were relevant for the purposes of this study. In Table 1 is the list of data that was originally available during the whole observed period. The bolded ones are considered relevant and chosen for further analysis. This list does not show the data topics that were introduced during the year.



**Table 1 Description of raw data available from Facebook-insights**

<b>Attribute (original)</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Post ID</b>	Code that identifies the post
<b>Post Message</b>	<b>Text in the post</b>
<b>Type</b>	Type of post (photo, link, status update etc.)
<b>Posted</b>	<b>Date of posting</b>
<b>Lifetime Post Total Reach</b>	<b>How many unique Facebook-user the post reached</b>
Lifetime Post organic reach	How many unique Facebook-user the post reached without advertising
Lifetime Post Paid Reach	How many unique Facebook-user the post reached via advertising
Lifetime Post viral reach	How many unique Facebook-user saw the post virally
Lifetime Post Total Impressions	How many times post appeared in total
Lifetime Post Organic Impressions	How many times post appeared in total without advertising
Lifetime Post Paid Impressions	How many times post appeared in total via advertising
Lifetime Post Viral Impressions	How many Facebook-user saw the post virally
<b>Lifetime Engaged Users</b>	<b>Sum of users who have engaged with the post in total</b>
Lifetime Talking About This (Post)	How many unique users have mentioned story about post
Lifetime Post Stories	How many times post have been mentioned in total
Lifetime Post Consumers	Sum of how many users have consumed the content
Lifetime Post Consumptions	Sum of how many times the content is consumed in total
Lifetime Negative feedback	Sum of negative feedback per post from unique users
<b>Lifetime Negative Feedback from Users</b>	<b>Total sum of negative feedback per post from users</b>
<b>Likes</b>	<b>Sum of likes per post</b>
<b>Comments</b>	<b>Sum of comments per post</b>
<b>Shares</b>	<b>Sum of shares per post</b>
<b>Attribute (calculated)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Month	Month when post was posted
Length	Length of post, divided either short or long
Words	How many words in post
Tone	Tone of voice, divided into statement and ask
Inf/Ent	Purpose of the post message, divided into inform and entertain
Locality	Defines if the post was local or general
Commerciality	Defines if the post had commercial message or non-commercial
Shopping Center	Which Shopping mall Facebook-page published the post

From these data topics, new factors were calculated for the analysis: L-ratio, Share-ratio, N-ratio, C-ratio, and Engagement-ratio. In addition, new factors that were also manually calculated or coded from the existing data were Month, Length, Words, Tone, Informative/Entertaining, Locality and Commerciality. The data analysis began with coding and then classifying all the 921 statuses during the observation period according to their length, type, commerciality, locality and tone of voice. These factors and their impact on statuses was compared to ratios of engagement (e-ratio), number of likes generated (l-ratio), comments (c-ratio), shares (s-ratio) and generated negative feedback (n-ratio).

## **Introducing the variables in quantitative data**

### **Negative feedback (negativity-ratio/n-ratio)**

The amount of negative feedback is analyzed to see which statuses generated negative reaction among the audience that had seen the message. This negative reaction is consisting of four kinds of feedback:

1. User's ability to hide a single post that he seems to consider irritating or unnecessary,
2. User's ability to hide all posts by the page if the content in general is considered unnecessary.
3. User's ability to unlike the page (exiting the page permanently)
4. User can report the message as spam when that specific post is considered misleading and uninteresting.

This feedback is counted in the analysis as one total number named "negative feedback". The negativity ratio is calculated as percentage of the negative feedback from the total reach.

### **Engagement (engagement-ratio, e-ratio)**

Engagement refers to the reactions and functions of all form that the status has generated in the reached audience. This engagement includes functionalities such as likes, comments, shares and clicks. Facebook defines engagement as "Engaged Users is the number of people who have clicked anywhere on your post", which consists of liking, commenting and sharing and people who have viewed your video, clicked on your links and photos. It also includes the users who have clicked on a commenter's name, liked a comment, clicked on the page name and the amount of negative feedback. Engagement-ratio is calculated as percentage of the engagement from the total reach.

### **Number of likes (like-ratio/l-ratio)**

Liking is the most used functionality of Facebook and therefore it appears the most often. The number of likes is the amount of likes that a status has received over a lifetime. Like-ratio is calculated as percentage of the post likes from the total reach.

### **Number of comments (comment-ratio/c-ratio)**

Commenting as a function of Facebook is occurring less frequently than likes. It is consisting of all the comments that a page post has received since its existence on a page. Comment-ratio is calculated as a percentage of the comments of the post from the total reach of the post.

### **Number of shares (share-ratio)**

Shares are appearing less frequently than likes and comments. Number of shares is the total amount of shares that a post has received in a lifetime. Often there are no shares at all in a page post or the share-ratio is really small, as only a few shares have occurred. The share-ratio is calculated as percentage of the total number of shares of the post from the total reach of the post.

### **Introducing the variables in qualitative data**

#### **Type of a status**

The classification of a status type is based on Facebook features that enable different kinds of main elements in which the status is based on. The most common types are: a status update (sole text status), a photo status (the main element is a photo), a question (a poll-type of question), a link (to a URL), share (sharing someone else's Facebook content), a video status (the main element is a downloaded video or a link to Facebook embedded video servers like youtube.com or vimeo.com), an offer (a special offer that can be deemed from Facebook only), an event (created in Facebook) or a milestone (some remarkable milestone that is highlighted).

#### **Length of a status (short/long)**

A short status is challenging to define as it depends on the case and language. For this thesis it is necessary to define what is perceived as a short status. Classifying statuses into long and short ones is not black and white and therefore the limit must be considered using several criteria that fit into context: word count, language and space in the Facebook text field (line of text).

Short statuses in general are one or two sentences and occupy one or one and a half rows of text in Facebook. One and a half a line has mostly around 15-20 Finnish words of text.

In this thesis, a short status is a status that is 15 words or less and does not occupy more than one and a half a line when using Facebook on its optimal screen size (which is 100% on any web browser). Note that a link is counted as one word and their spanning into other lines is ignored as they are single objects, not mentioned to be read. It is also crucial to point out that the word count depends on a language and therefore is tied to a cultural context.

### **Tone of voice (state/ask)**

This factor reveals how community members are spoken to in content and how it affects on the engagement. One of the interests in the analysis is to classify the type of dominating discourse that is used in that particular content (status). In this thesis, the data were classified for clarity reasons into statements and questions (asking). A statement is referring to content, whose tone of voice is claiming or announcing, with no call to action or engagement. Questions or asking type of posts refer to any type of direct or indirect questions that drives users to answer by commenting or liking.

### **Purpose of a status (informative/entertaining)**

Informative content is content that has information or news about something and whose main purpose is to deliver this message to community members. Informative content is mainly utilitarian and rational in nature and it is fact-based. Informative content is clear and direct: for example messages that tell about discounts, local news, opening hours, renovation news, shop openings, and so forth.

Posts that are viewed as entertaining refer to content that is light, fun, pleasurable and delightful, or the core message of the post is aiming at entertainment either online or offline, or both. Online entertainment may be posts that promote online competition or a draw. It can also be a general wish of celebration or a general question (how are you feeling?). It can also be an entertaining photo or video. These kinds of posts are not necessarily fact-based or related to shopping center, or its activity. Posts that aim for offline entertainment are content which tells about entertaining news and events that link to the shopping center. This is seen as entertaining content, although the message may have indirect commercial purpose, as people enter the shopping center. This factor is also considered to reveal hedonistic (entertaining) and utilitarian (informative) consumer reception.

This classification is harsh, although in reality the content may be both entertaining and informative. In this analysis, the dominating feature of a status is counted in order to classify it.

### **Link to locality (local/general)**

Local content in this thesis means content that is relating to a shopping center itself or its geographical location. For example for Myyrmanni that is located in Myyrmäki (a region in Vantaa municipality in greater Helsinki area), this locality would mean referrals to Vantaa or Myyrmäki or neighboring city parts. Finland or Uusimaa (province in southern Finland) would not be considered as local. General content is referral for some general topic or issue that the content is about and that has no close geographical link to the shopping center's location.

### **Commerciality (commercial/non-commercial)**

Commerciality of content in this thesis is referring to a content that has either commercial or non-commercial purpose or aim. A commercial message has a connection to business activity that the mall has; stores, services, commercial feedback, development, advertising, offers and similar). Non-commercial content refers to the statuses that have no link to the shopping mall's business activities, or the connection to business is exceptionally weak. This factor is also considered to reveal hedonistic (non-commercial) and utilitarian (commercial) consumer reception.

All original and created data were combined into a single master excel sheet, each shopping center data coded in a way that they can be separated for analysis. After this the data were analyzed by using the Microsoft Excel 2004 and its advanced functions, such as the Pivot-table and the scatter plot diagram.

### **Engagement types and summaries**

Next I will present and explain some interesting summaries of data from all three shopping centers. As can be seen from the Table 2, there were 921 statuses from three Finnish shopping centers in total; 324 in Iso Omena, 310 in Koskikeskus and 287 in Myyrmanni. From the Table 2 one can see how the engagement was divided among the three shopping centers. In terms of actions, there were 23929 likes in total, contrasted to 3468

comments and 1650 shares. From the table it becomes visible that the comments were divided evenly. However, Iso Omena and Myyrmanni received more likes than Koskikeskus. It also shows that Iso Omena received least negative feedback and Myyrmanni clearly generated the most engagement.

**Table 2: Division of engagement per shopping center**

Division of engagement per shopping center. In total there were 921 posts together in all of the studied shopping centers		
Attribute	Number	Shopping center
Comments	1042	Iso Omena
	1038	Myyrmanni
	1388	Koskikeskus
<b>Total</b>	<b>3468</b>	
Likes	9595	Iso Omena
	5016	Myyrmanni
	9318	Koskikeskus
<b>Total</b>	<b>23929</b>	
Shares	807	Iso Omena
	284	Myyrmanni
	559	Koskikeskus
<b>Total</b>	<b>1650</b>	
Negative feedback	3001	Iso Omena
	7275	Myyrmanni
	5558	Koskikeskus
<b>Total</b>	<b>15834</b>	
Engaged users	53077	Iso Omena
	65645	Myyrmanni
	73228	Koskikeskus
<b>Total</b>	<b>191950</b>	
Posts	324	Iso Omena
	310	Myyrmanni
	287	Koskikeskus
<b>Total</b>	<b>921</b>	

During the observation period, each of the three shopping centers' Facebook community increased tremendously due to active content production, competitions and advertising. On the other hand some members left the community.

Iso Omena fan count changed from 5,256 to 21,485 (+408%)

Koskikeskus fan count changed from 3,641 to 23,964 (+658%)

Myyrmanni fan count changed from 1,176 to 15,845 (1347%)

Table 3 describes the division of the status types between the shopping malls comparing the grand total of all shopping centers, which enables the comparison between the malls. From the table it becomes evident that the most typical posts are links (462 link statuses) and photos (261 photo statuses). Koskikeskus had significantly more video statuses, Iso Omena had most shared statuses (17 whereas only Myyrmanni had photo album posted (1 photo album)).

**Table 3. Distribution of status types between the shopping malls**

Distribution of status types per shopping center, compared to grand total of all centers. Most status types are links 462 and photos 261.								
	Iso Omena	%	Koskikeskus	%	Myyrmanni	%	Total	%
<b>Link</b>	169,00	37 %	147,00	32 %	146,00	32 %	<b>462,00</b>	100 %
<b>Photo</b>	89,00	34 %	86,00	33 %	86,00	33 %	<b>261,00</b>	100 %
<b>Photoalbum</b>		0 %		0 %	1,00	100 %	<b>1,00</b>	100 %
<b>Question</b>	8,00	23 %	14,00	40 %	13,00	37 %	<b>35,00</b>	100 %
<b>Share</b>	17,00	65 %	3,00	12 %	6,00	23 %	<b>26,00</b>	100 %
<b>Status Update</b>	34,00	29 %	49,00	42 %	33,00	28 %	<b>116,00</b>	100 %
<b>Video</b>	7,00	35 %	11,00	55 %	2,00	10 %	<b>20,00</b>	100 %
					287,00	31 %	<b>921,00</b>	31 %

Table 4 indicates division of status types according to individual shopping mall average, enabling the analysis of shopping mall specific comparison. Table verifies that Links and Photos are the most occurring status posts. Comparing individual values with each other it becomes clear that the content is proportionally similarly distributed.

**Table 4. Proportional division of status types between each other**

Distribution of status types per shopping center, compared to center total.								
	Iso Omena	%	Koskikeskus	%	Myyrmanni	%	Total	avg %
<b>Link</b>	169,00	52 %	147,00	47 %	146,00	51 %	<b>462,00</b>	50 %
<b>Photo</b>	89,00	27 %	86,00	28 %	86,00	30 %	<b>261,00</b>	28 %
<b>Photoalbum</b>		0 %		0 %	1,00	0 %	<b>1,00</b>	0 %
<b>Question</b>	8,00	2 %	14,00	5 %	13,00	5 %	<b>35,00</b>	4 %
<b>Share</b>	17,00	5 %	3,00	1 %	6,00	2 %	<b>26,00</b>	3 %
<b>Status Update</b>	34,00	10 %	49,00	16 %	33,00	11 %	<b>116,00</b>	13 %
<b>Video</b>	7,00	2 %	11,00	4 %	2,00	1 %	<b>20,00</b>	2 %
	324,00		310,00		287,00	31 %	<b>921,00</b>	100 %

#### **4.1.2 Qualitative data description**

This part describes the qualitative part of this thesis, which comprises of thorough description of analysis process of comments that were conducted for the 30 most commented posts in the shopping malls' pages observed during the observation period. In total, 1,325 comments out of 3,468 comments of the whole observation period were analyzed, which comprises 38% of all the comments made.

##### **Choosing the data sample**

The data for netnography is chosen using the non-probability sampling technique known as the judgment sample (also purposive sample). It is highly common for qualitative study (e.g. Lewis & Ritchie 2003, Marshall 1996). The criterion for this kind of sampling in this case is the amount of comments per status in order to obtain versatile conversation and reveal intentions and motivations for community members and other interest groups to engage in content. The purpose is also to reveal interesting meta-data and meanings about the quality of conversation between a brand and a customer, as well as to study what kind of content induces comments.

##### **How qualitative data was coded and classified**

The data for this qualitative analysis is based on the absolute amount of comments made about the statuses. All comments made to the top 30 of the most commented statuses were studied, coded, and then processed further, and finally analyzed. In coding, the following factors were formed: word count, length of comment, sex of source, positivity/negativity of the comment, personal/general orientation, topic relation, purpose of message and richness of the status. Next the meaning of these factors is explained briefly.

**Sex** = the sex of the commentator, f=female, m=male

**Word count** = the total sum of words in a comment

**Length** = determined either long or short according to the word count and conquered space in the comment field. A long comment contains over 12 words and takes more than one line in the comment field.



- Negative/Positive** = if the comment is positive or negative in tone. Emoticons, positive words, praising, fun etc. determines positive and vice versa.
- Personal/General** = if the comment is expressing or serving personal purpose and meaning or if it is more general and directed to general audience and public interests.
- On Topic/Off Topic** = if the comment is linked to the topic or not
- Entertaining/Informative** = if the comment is serving an entertaining purpose or an informative purpose. This factor is also used to study hedonistic (entertaining) and utilitarian (informative) behavior in community.
- Richness** = refers to richness of the comment's content. It is either low or high. Often short comments deliver less information. Longer and more complex comments are valuable for a brand and may be a useful source of information, and are therefore classified as high.

During the coding, some comments had to be left out of the analysis for the clarity reasons (five non-understandable comments [unknown language] and eight unidentifiable users [companies or non-real persons]). Also comments that were made by the page upkeep (a total of 28 comments) were decided to be left out, as they did not represent customers or community members. After these eliminations, the final qualitative data consisted of 1325 comments, which is 37% of all comments.

Following the coding phase, the qualitative data were classified into categories by using the Microsoft Excel Pivot-tool. The categories were named as Kozinets (2002) active member classification suggests: insiders, devotees, minglers, and tourists, and analyzed. Afterwards, several tables were produced for analyzing the results.

## **5 Methodology**

This chapter is devoted to methodology and the research structure of the empirical part. It begins with the justification of the chosen methods and explanation of the methodologies in detail. This thesis uses mixed methods approach and both quantitative and qualitative methods alongside with a methodology process known as inter–method mixing.

### **5.1 Mixed methods and inter-method mixing**

For this thesis, both quantitative and qualitative methods are utilized in order to study the data. The usage of two different kinds of methodologies is known as mixed methods (e.g. Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, Osborne 2008, Leech & Onwuegbuzie 2009). The quantitative methods chosen is the univariate analysis combined with qualitative method of naturalistic/non-obtrusive netnography. These chosen methods are used and findings analyzed concurrently in a way that the findings are interpreted using both methodologies. This means that both the quantitative and qualitative aspects are integrated and as a result, the findings of one aspect influence the analysis of the other aspect.

Quantitative methods have different starting point contrasted to qualitative methods. Qualitative methods stem from the interpretivist school of research that builds upon a constructivist paradigm. This school examines the multiplicity of realities or truths that are based on one's construction of reality (Sale & Brazil, 2004 cf. Osborne 2008). Quantitative methods are based in positivist paradigm which suggests “that all phenomena can be reduced to empirical indicators which represent the truth” (Osborne 2008). The strength in choosing mixed methods in a single research is that these differing approaches produce better justified results and improves the depth of the study. The usage of multiple methods also prevents some of the disadvantages of single methods. Nevertheless, it also challenges the researcher to understand and implement multiple procedures and strengths and weaknesses of the methods chosen.

According to Morse (Morse 2003 cf. Tashakkori & Teddlie 2003), there are three options when data is simultaneously collected and mixed method employed. These options depend on which one of the methods employed are emphasized more or are the methods

used equally in the process. In Tashakkori's & Teddlies Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research these alternatives are classified as follows:

1. QUAN → qual (emphasis on quantitative aspect, with quantitative leading to qualitative)
2. QUAL → quan (emphasis on qualitative aspect, with qualitative leading to quantitative)
3. QUAN → QUAL (equal emphasis on both methods, with quantitative leading to qualitative).

In this thesis QUAN -> QUAL model is used and results from quantitative analysis is enriched and combined with the analysis of qualitative method employed.

## **5.2 Quantitative methodology: Univariate analysis and summary statistics**

Univariate analysis is the simplest form of statistical analysis which uses single variable in categorizing data and produces results (Babbie 2013). In this thesis, univariate analysis is used to study each of the five chosen independent variables and their relation to the ratios separately. For each variable, there is a summary table that describes the occurrences in averages. The averages are then compared and analyzed. This procedure begins by coding the raw data set that is generated from Facebook Insight Analysis.

Summary tables provide simple summaries about the studied data. However, it does not provide any information on studying causality; therefore we need to integrate qualitative methods with it.

## **5.3 Netnography as a research method**

Netnography is ethnographic study that is adapted to the study of online communities. It is a relatively new qualitative methodology to study communities that are emerging in computer mediated environment. As a method, netnography is faster, less expensive and simpler compared to traditional ethnography (Kozinets 2002). Its strength is its flexibility and adaptability to varying themes and according to researchers' interests and skill sets. The aim of this method is to provide information on meanings, symbolism and consumption patterns of consumers in a community. Ethnography is naturalistic

observation, where observed behavior is taking place in a natural setting, without any attempt of being intervened or manipulated by the researcher.

In netnography, information is gathered from online communities that are available. For the purposes of marketing research, netnography is a good fit as it enlightens and identifies the tastes, desires, relevant symbolism, hidden needs and the decision making processes of consumers and consumer groups that appear naturally in social appearance and interaction in a community (Kozinets 2002, 2010, Murthy 2008, Bartl et al 2009). This research opportunity has a great potential for both market-oriented and customer-oriented organizations to gain deeper knowledge of their customers. As ethnography, netnography is an open-ended practice by nature. It bases itself in observation in a particular arena (in this case in an online community) where the observer's interpretation is in a crucial position and therefore relies heavily on researchers-as-instrument (Kozinets 2002, Prior & Miller 2011). This calls for skill for a researcher to stay neutral and unobtrusive. The challenges and limitations of netnographic study are the narrow focus on online communities and requirements for the researcher's interpretive skill and the difficulty of generalizing the findings outside the online community example.

Kozinets identifies five steps in netnographic study as a process (Kozinets 2002). These are: entrée, data gathering and analysis, ensuring trustworthy interpretation, conducting ethical research and providing opportunities for community member feedback. Also Bartl, M. et al. (2009) define netnography as a five stepped process; 1. definition of research, 2. identification and selection of online communities, 3. community observation and data collection, 4. data analysis and aggregation of consumer insights and 5. community insights translation into motivation/participation/feedback.

**Entrée** refers to the initial step of preparing the research and includes research questions and identifying relevant and appropriate online forums (the chosen Facebook Pages).

**Data and analysis** step includes the collection of the data. Kozinets (2002) mentions that there are two important elements in the data collection: 1. the actual real data that is copied from the community 2. the data that is interpreted by the researcher according to the researcher's observations about the community members, their interactions and meanings. The challenge in this part is to choose the relevant kind of data. Moreover, this choosing process should be guided by research questions and available resources.

Content richness, descriptiveness, topic relevance, topic matter, conversational participation by other members are good points to consider in the data collection phase. Kozinets also proposes classification of data medium (messages) according to relevance into two classes: social vs. informational and on-topic vs. off-topic.

Data analysis commences contextualization of online data, which is a challenging task as the social cues are weaker in an online context as it is text that can be considered one-dimensional. Comments on Facebook are also often short and shallow compared to the conversations in online forums. Kozinets and Prior & Miller (2012) report that as a result of one dimensionality, a part of symbolic richness is traded off to construct clarity.

**Trustworthy interpretation** links to netnography as it is less stand-alone medium in studying marketing related behavior in online communities. It opens a way to understand the discourse and interaction between community members. Interpreting this discourse and interaction requires that a researcher follows conventional procedures so that the results are trustworthy. In qualitative study, the term trustworthiness is often used instead of validity.

The analyzed and interpreted data is textual and the interest of research is on the behavior or act, not the person (Kozinets 2002). Therefore the unit of analysis is behavior or act, making all postings of comments, likings, shares etc. as social action and itself relevant observational data that is trustworthy. The radical difference between ethnography and netnography is that ethnography observes a person's behavior whereas netnography observes conversational/communicational acts.

An important notion in trustworthiness comes from the weak link to authentic demographics due to the computerized "faceless" communication. In Facebook, each of the members should represent themselves and in communities in general the social pressure to follow a good etiquette is high. Facebook is not as anonym as bulletin boards or online forums in general, as people appear with their own name, profile picture and plenty of other personal information depending on what they want to reveal to others. This personal information may be adjusted at a Facebook user's own will.

**Ethical research** As in ethnographic study, also in netnography the ethical codes of conduct must be followed. Good ethical consideration in ethnography includes that the observed persons are aware of the being studied for academic research. There are no commonly recognized ethical rules considering netnography but broad guidelines are proposed by Kozinets (2002). These are: 1. disclosure of researcher presence and intentions in an online community 2. ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the observant 3. providing opportunity of feedback 4. considerations of publicizing data that is private in nature and ask permission for this specific data.

As this study is purely naturalistic and observational and conducted in communities that are publicly open for every Facebook user, these recommendations are loosened and the disclosure of research is not informed as it may change the communication and the behavior of members and therefore harm important naturalistic and unobtrusive nature of this netnographic study. The anonymity of the posters of the observed postings is strictly protected in the data reporting and the results.

**Opportunity for member feedback/member check** is not conducted in this thesis. On the one hand this raises the risk of misinterpretation but is on the other hand unbiased and unobtrusive, as the objects are not aware of the researcher's presence.

**Validity and trustworthiness** in mixed methods research concerns examining the aspects of truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. Observation was made in natural settings without interference with the community members. Applicability is limited to online communities as all of data is gathered from Facebook Pages. However, the usage of mixed-methods mitigates the risk of one-dimensional interpretation, as well as strengthens the pursuit of neutrality. Quantitative data integrated with qualitative data complement each other and increase the trustworthiness. The researcher was a member of online communities observed but without actual participating into interaction itself. The access to use the pages as a page admin revealed insights that are non-visible for a normal user. However, this was used only in quantitative analysis and data importing.

## 6 Results

This part of thesis presents the analysis of the data as well as the findings. Firstly, the results from quantitative data are reported and analyzed and findings compared to the hypotheses. Secondly, the analysis from the netnographic observation is reported and analyzed and compared to the hypotheses.

### 6.1. Results of the quantitative analysis

Table 5 shows how statuses divide per month and how many likes one status on average generated on a monthly basis. In the table, the term ASLY means Average Status Like Yield, which tells how many likes one status generated on average. This gives a better picture on how successful the content has been in terms of likes and in which month.

**Table 5. Annual likes and status updates in absolute and relative terms.**

This table indicates the amount of likes generated by a content on monthly bases. ASLY is average status like yield, which shows how many likes one status have produced on average in that particular month. Difference is calculated as deviation from the grand ASLY, which is the average ASLY from all centers.																
		Iso Omena	ASLY	Diff	%	Koskikeskus	ASLY	Diff	%	Myyrmanni	ASLY	Diff	%	Total	Grand ASLY	Diff
January	Statuses	13,00	8,38	-0,72	4 %	24,00	2,38	-0,85	8 %	11,00	4,55	-0,86	4 %	48,00	5,10	-0,80
	Sum / likes	109,00			1 %	57,00			1 %	50,00			1 %	216,00		
February	Statuses	24,00	8,83	-0,70	7 %	22,00	7,91	-0,51	7 %	20,00	11,25	-0,65	7 %	66,00	9,33	-0,64
	Sum / likes	212,00			2 %	174,00			3 %	225,00			2 %	611,00		
March	Statuses	31,00	12,39	-0,58	10 %	38,00	8,71	-0,46	12 %	19,00	17,47	-0,46	7 %	88,00	12,86	-0,51
	Sum / likes	384,00			4 %	331,00			7 %	332,00			4 %	1047,00		
April	Statuses	22,00	20,18	-0,32	7 %	25,00	15,76	-0,03	8 %	26,00	31,12	-0,04	9 %	73,00	22,35	-0,14
	Sum / likes	444,00			5 %	394,00			8 %	809,00			9 %	1647,00		
May	Statuses	24,00	19,00	-0,36	7 %	24,00	9,08	-0,44	8 %	29,00	23,17	-0,29	10 %	77,00	17,09	-0,35
	Sum / likes	456,00			5 %	218,00			4 %	672,00			7 %	1346,00		
June	Statuses	25,00	20,36	-0,31	8 %	25,00	19,36	0,20	8 %	26,00	16,58	-0,49	9 %	76,00	18,77	-0,28
	Sum / likes	509,00			5 %	484,00			10 %	431,00			5 %	1424,00		
July	Statuses	21,00	16,57	-0,44	6 %	19,00	5,32	-0,67	6 %	17,00	51,12	0,57	6 %	57,00	24,33	-0,07
	Sum / likes	348,00			4 %	101,00			2 %	869,00			9 %	1318,00		
August	Statuses	32,00	17,38	-0,41	10 %	25,00	8,92	-0,45	8 %	27,00	49,44	0,52	9 %	84,00	25,25	-0,03
	Sum / likes	556,00			6 %	223,00			4 %	1335,00			14 %	2114,00		
September	Statuses	24,00	72,38	1,44	7 %	25,00	38,92	1,41	8 %	22,00	31,27	-0,04	8 %	71,00	47,52	0,82
	Sum / likes	1737,00			18 %	973,00			19 %	688,00			7 %	3398,00		
October	Statuses	35,00	29,26	-0,01	11 %	29,00	32,34	1,00	9 %	29,00	32,34	0,00	10 %	93,00	31,32	0,20
	Sum / likes	1024,00			11 %	938,00			19 %	938,00			10 %	2900,00		
November	Statuses	35,00	61,17	1,07	11 %	28,00	17,54	0,08	9 %	35,00	52,20	0,61	12 %	98,00	43,64	0,67
	Sum / likes	2141,00			22 %	491,00			10 %	1827,00			20 %	4459,00		
December	Statuses	38,00	44,08	0,49	12 %	26,00	24,31	0,50	8 %	26,00	43,92	0,35	9 %	90,00	37,44	0,44
	Sum / likes	1675,00			17 %	632,00			13 %	1142,00			12 %	3449,00		
Total	Statuses	324,00	29,61	0,00	100 %	310,00	16,18	0,00	100 %	287,00	32,47	0,00	100 %	921,00	26,09	0,00
Total	Sum / likes	9595,00			100 %	5016,00			100 %	9318,00			100 %	23929,00		

The most active months in terms of status updates made by the pages were March (38) for Koskikeskus, November for Myyrmanni (35) and December for Iso Omena (38). In general it seems that the beginning of the year is quieter on average in terms of likes compared to the end of the year, which is much more active. Also comments and shares supported this,

although it is not visible here in this table. One reason for exceptionally high activity in the end of the year may be Christmas, which is the high season for shopping centers and stores. For Iso Omena this is September, with a status update generating 72.38 likes on average, which is +144% more compared to annual average. For Koskikeskus this is also September, with a status update generating 38.92 likes on average, which is 141% more compared to the annual average. For Myyrmanni this is November with a status update generating 52.20 likes on average, which is 61% more compared to the annual average.

Figure 13 shows the impact of the community size on the engagement quantity. The x-axis depicts the proportion of the engagement as the percentage of the community size. In this way, all three shopping centers are comparable. From the diagram we see that there is no trend that engagement would decrease as the community grows. However, there is no clear trend of increased engagement due to increased community size. According to the data, the proportional engagement stays on the approximately same level despite of the amount of community members.

**Figure 8. Impact of community size to engagement**

This figure illustrates how fan amount impacts the level of engagement. The Y-axis depicts the amount of fans and the X-axis depicts engagement, where 0,05 is same as 5%.

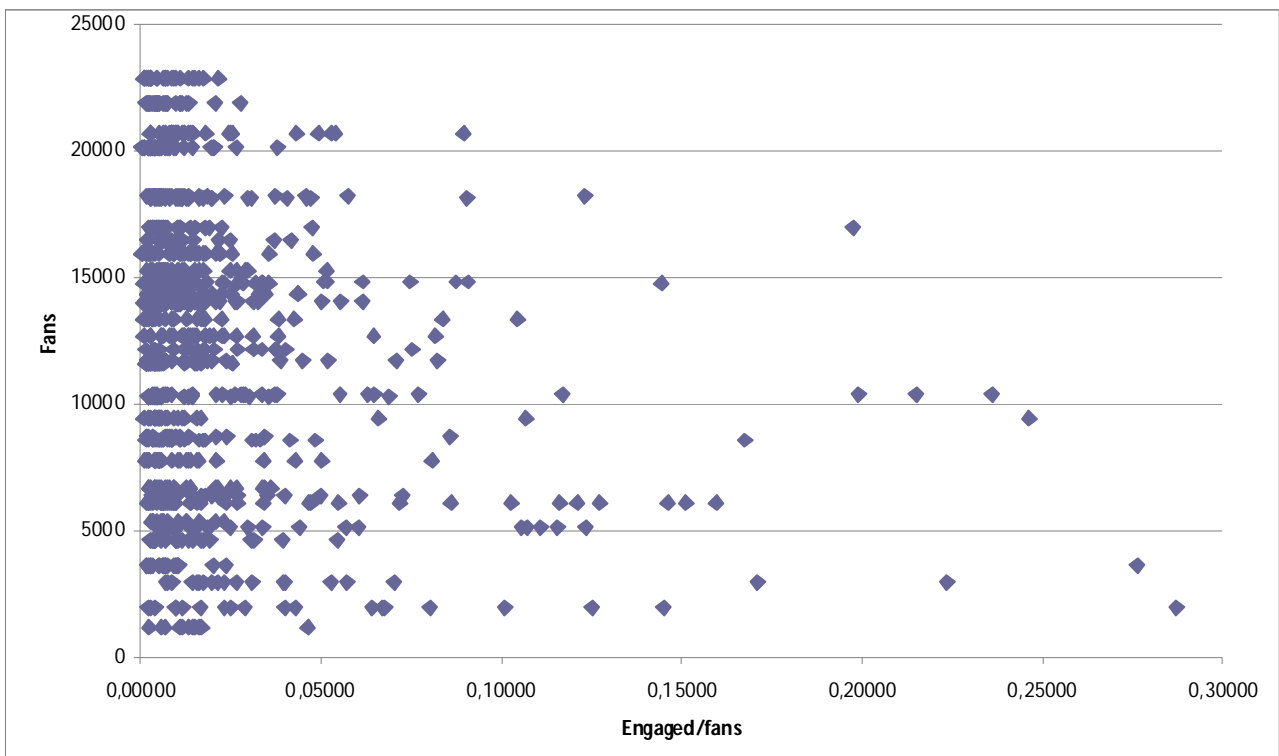




Figure 13 also reveals that the engagement rarely exceeds 5% no matter what the community size is. 842 (91%) of observations have the engagement less than 5% of community. Therefore both hypotheses H14 "a larger Facebook community decreases the level of interaction" and H15 "a larger Facebook community increases the level of interaction" are untrue: There is no clear evidence that the level of engagement would change according to the size of community.

## **Engagement**

The analysis of engagement is two edged sword as it also lumps all the negative feedback and counts it as engagement. Therefore not too much emphasis should count for this variable. Instead, the sub-components of it ought to be studied with greater interest and meaning.

### **Analysis of top 30 most engaging statuses**

The sample of the top 30 ranking statuses according to the engagement ratio revealed interesting factors that affected on the engagement. The most significant finding was that 100% of engagement was driven by photos and that 80% of these statuses were statements by their tone. 80% of the top 30 most engaging statuses were short and 63% were non-commercial. The locally oriented statuses formed 90% of the top 30 statuses. These can be seen from the table 6. There is also a clear division in engagement when observing the information or entertainment orientation (70% were informative). The top 30 engaged statuses have on average 9.7 words, 116 likes, 18.5 comments, 10 shares and 31 negative feedbacks.

**Table 6. Top 30 most engaged statuses**

Top 30 most engaged statuses			
		occurrence	%
type	Photo	30	100 %
	Link	0	0 %
	Photoalbum	0	0 %
	Question	0	0 %
	Share	0	0 %
	Status Update	0	0 %
	Video	0	0 %
	total	30	100 %
tone	ask	6	20 %
	state	24	80 %
	total	30	100 %
length	long	6	20 %
	short	24	80 %
	total	30	100 %
commercial	commercial	11	37 %
	non-comm.	19	63 %
	total	30	100 %
locality	general	3	10 %
	local	27	90 %
	total	30	100 %
orientation	entertaining	9	30 %
	informative	21	70 %
	total	30	100 %

According to the analysis it seems that the most engaging content is or has the following features:

- Photo
- Stating tone
- Short
- Non-commercial
- Local
- Informative

**Analyzing the results of the engagement-ratio table**

Table 7 shows how engagement reacts with different arguments. The most evident finding is that commercial statuses generate less engagement than non-commercial statuses in every shopping center. It is possible that the commercial messages are often perceived meaningless for consumers and are easier to skip rather than engage with them.

A clear finding is also that Myyrmanni’s engagement rates are clearly higher than those of Iso Omena’s and Koskikeskus’s, which is visible also in the results of each sub-component of engagement (negative feedback, likes, comments, shares). This is an extremely

interesting finding and may be caused by a more intensive and motivated community members and relevant content. This may be also due to fact that negative feedback is counted as engagement, too, but this does not explain the fact that Myyrmanni's content produced also more likes, comments and shares as will be shown in the parts to follow. Also the length shows a weak sign that shorter content would produce more engagement. Other figures in the table do not signal clear patterns for what engages people, as the differences in engagement between shopping centers are evenly distributed or vary non-systematically.

It is irrelevant to make an accurate conclusion based on the engagement analysis, as it counts all the interaction both negative and positive into a single entity. Therefore this should be inspected with caution and without giving too deep a meaning for these figures.

**Table 7. Engagement ratio distribution (e-ratio)**

This table indicates the generated engagement between each shopping mall. Diff means difference from the weighted grand average (w. avg) of all shopping centers combined. l=long, s=short, c=commercial, nc=non-commercial, g=general, lcl=local, ent=entertaining, inf=informative, ask=question, state=statement								
		Average / e-ratio						
		Iso Omena	Diff	Koskikeskus	Diff	Myyrmanni	Diff	w. avg
length	l	3,33	-0,22	3,28	-0,28	4,16	0,61	<b>3,55</b>
	s	3,18	-0,93	3,93	-0,18	5,31	1,20	<b>4,11</b>
	avg	3,24	-0,62	3,61	-0,25	4,84	0,97	<b>3,86</b>
commercial	c	3,19	-0,31	2,89	-0,61	4,81	1,31	<b>3,50</b>
	nc	3,29	-0,89	4,42	0,23	4,85	0,67	<b>4,19</b>
	avg	3,24	-0,62	3,61	-0,25	4,84	0,97	<b>3,86</b>
locality	g	3,29	-0,31	3,13	-0,47	4,68	1,08	<b>3,60</b>
	lcl	3,24	-0,70	3,78	-0,15	4,87	0,94	<b>3,93</b>
	avg	3,24	-0,62	3,61	-0,25	4,84	0,97	<b>3,86</b>
inf./ent.	ent	3,18	-0,80	4,25	0,27	4,44	0,46	<b>3,98</b>
	inf	3,27	-0,53	3,29	-0,51	5,09	1,29	<b>3,80</b>
	avg	3,24	-0,62	3,61	-0,25	4,84	0,97	<b>3,86</b>
tone	ask	2,85	-0,85	3,17	-0,54	5,22	1,51	<b>3,70</b>
	state	3,33	-0,59	3,83	-0,09	4,72	0,81	<b>3,92</b>
	avg	3,24	-0,62	3,61	-0,25	4,84	0,97	<b>3,86</b>

## Negative feedback

### Top 30 statuses according to the negative feedback

The analysis carried out for the top 30 ranking statuses according to the negative feedback provide information on what is perceived negative or uninteresting statuses (See Table 8). Surprisingly, 57 % of the negative feedback is generated by links and 17% by photos in the top 30. Longer statuses were perceived slightly more irritating comprising 53% of top 30. In tone of voice, statements comprised of 90% in top 30. 90% of highly ranking statuses were locally oriented. However, no great differences appeared between entertaining versus informative statuses, where informative counted for 60% of statuses. Similarly, non-commercial statuses (53%) divided almost evenly with commercial statuses. The top ranking statuses by negative feedback had the word count average of 18.2, the negative feedback average of 36, the average of 15 likes, 3 comments, and 0.5 shares.

**Table 8. Top 30 statuses with most negative feedback**

Top 30 most negative feedback			
		occurrence	%
type	Photo	5	17 %
	Link	17	57 %
	Photoalbum	0	0 %
	Question	0	0 %
	Share	1	3 %
	Status Update	0	0 %
	Video	0	0 %
	total	30	100 %
tone	ask	3	10 %
	state	27	90 %
	total	30	100 %
length	long	16	53 %
	short	14	47 %
	total	30	100 %
commercial	commercial	14	47 %
	non-comm.	16	53 %
	total	30	100 %
locality	general	3	10 %
	local	27	90 %
	total	30	100 %
orientation	entertaining	12	40 %
	informative	18	60 %
	total	30	100 %

According to these results, more negative feedback is generated for a status that is:

- Link
- Stating
- Non-commercial
- Long
- Local
- Informative

### **Analyzing the results of the negative feedback-ratio**

The negativity-ratio indicates the amount of the negative feedback that is generated by the content (unlike, hide post, “mark as spam”). According to Table 9 there is weak evidence that statuses that were classified as “long” generated stronger negative feedback than others. This may be partially because long statuses are time consuming and require concentration. These statuses also disappear more easily in the rapid flow of statuses in the Facebook, where only the beginning of a long status is shown. From Table 9 it becomes evident that also content that is containing commercial messages are generating more negative feedback, which shows in each of the shopping centers investigated. Commercial messages are found to have a greater negative impact on customers. This is in line with the earlier research (e.g. Cocheo 2009) that people have negative reaction when they perceived being targets of advertising.

The most remarkable finding is that of locality, where local content causes more negative feedback compared to general content. This may be because of all these shopping centers are big in size and therefore their audience grows bigger than their physical/geographical presences are. This has an impact on the tolerance for local content. This suggests that if negative feedback is avoided, it is more suitable to make content that is general. On the other hand, general content like wishes on celebration days and general questions are more often tolerated, whereas local statuses are only interesting for a limited amount of people that live nearby or have easier access to the shopping center. In terms of virality, general content has more potential than local.

The table shows also that statuses that were defined as statements, led to a higher negative feedback, whereas content that was in the form of a question (ask) received less negative feedback. This result may be due to the fact that statements are easier to

disagree with than questions. On the other hand, most of the content was made using the stating tone (75.7%), which makes it more probable for the negative feedback to fall into statements instead of question-like statuses.

**Table 9. Negative feedback ratio distribution (n-ratio)**

This table indicates the negative feedback in each shopping mall using n-ratio. Diff means difference from the weighted grand average (w. avg) of all shopping centers combined. l=long, s=short, c=commercial, nc=non-commercial, g=general, lcl=local, ent=entertaining, inf=informative, ask=question, state=statement								
		Average / n-ratio						
		Iso Omena	Diff	Koskikeskus	Diff	Myymanni	Diff	w. avg
length	l	0,26	-0,20	0,40	-0,07	0,78	0,32	<b>0,47</b>
	s	0,26	-0,17	0,32	-0,11	0,73	0,30	<b>0,43</b>
	avg	0,26	-0,19	0,36	-0,09	0,75	0,31	<b>0,45</b>
commercial	c	0,33	-0,13	0,37	-0,09	0,77	0,31	<b>0,46</b>
	nc	0,20	-0,24	0,35	-0,09	0,74	0,30	<b>0,44</b>
	avg	0,26	-0,19	0,36	-0,09	0,75	0,31	<b>0,45</b>
locality	g	0,15	-0,18	0,30	-0,04	0,60	0,26	<b>0,34</b>
	lcl	0,28	-0,19	0,38	-0,10	0,79	0,31	<b>0,48</b>
	avg	0,26	-0,19	0,36	-0,09	0,75	0,31	<b>0,45</b>
inf./ent.	ent	0,33	-0,14	0,32	-0,15	0,73	0,26	<b>0,47</b>
	inf	0,23	-0,20	0,37	-0,06	0,76	0,33	<b>0,43</b>
	avg	0,26	-0,19	0,36	-0,09	0,75	0,31	<b>0,45</b>
tone	ask	0,18	-0,19	0,32	-0,05	0,61	0,24	<b>0,37</b>
	state	0,28	-0,19	0,38	-0,09	0,80	0,33	<b>0,47</b>
	avg	0,26	-0,19	0,36	-0,09	0,75	0,31	<b>0,45</b>

No visible pattern was found comparing the negativity generated by informative and entertaining messages. When comparing the three shopping centers with each other, the outstanding result is that Myymanni is generating significantly more negative feedback in each category compared to Iso Omena and Koskikeskus. Myymanni's amount of negative feedback is probably connected to its profile as a more local shopping center in an area, where there is fierce competition and all of the three biggest shopping centers in Finland are located within the distance of 10 kilometers. For this reason it may be that the local content faces borders of tolerance sooner than other content. Also the name *Myymanni* is closely linked to local neighborhood of Myyrmäki in Vantaa, where it serves as a central meeting place for local consumers. Although big in size, Myymanni is a regional shopping center and may not have enough attraction to people outside Myyrmäki or other neighboring areas, which makes it more tied to its geographical location. Iso Omena in Espoo is both bigger and can be classified as a superregional entertainment center with a more versatile tenant mix, a library and a movie theatre. Iso Omena may therefore attract

visitors from a larger area. Therefore tolerance for the local content may be bigger. Koskikeskus is the biggest shopping center in Tampere and attracts customers from a very large area outside Tampere. Its location in the city center makes all the local content relevant as they often concern the whole city.

## Likes

### The top 30 most liked statuses

The results of the 30 top ranking statuses according to the *likes* in relative terms (c-ratio) revealed interesting facts about the most liked statuses (See Table 10). 90% of these top 30 statuses were short (on average 8.2 words). Of these, 63% were photos and 87% were non-commercial in nature. 83% were statements in tone and 73% were entertaining. Locality showed no clear remarkable distribution difference, as local and general issues were almost evenly divided (53% were general). On average, the top 30 most liked statuses had 246 likes, 21 comments, 16 shares and 23 negative feedbacks.

**Table 10. Top 30 most liked statuses**

Top 30 most likes			
		occurrence	%
type	Photo	19	63 %
	Link	5	17 %
	Photoalbum	1	3 %
	Question	0	0 %
	Share	0	0 %
	Status Update	5	17 %
	Video	0	0 %
	total	30	100 %
tone	ask	5	17 %
	state	25	83 %
	total	30	100 %
length	long	3	10 %
	short	27	90 %
	total	30	100 %
commercial	commercial	4	13 %
	non-comm.	26	87 %
	total	30	100 %
locality	general	16	53 %
	local	14	47 %
	total	30	100 %
orientation	entertaining	22	73 %
	informative	8	27 %
	total	30	100 %

This sample suggests that most popular statuses in terms of likes are:

- Photos
- Statements
- Short
- Non-commercial
- General
- Entertaining

Table 11 indicates that the vast majority of likes are accumulating to photos in all of the shopping centers. Links receive also notable amount of likes ranging from 25% to 34%. This gives a strong signal of the liked status types. Table 11 shows the apparent result that photos and links generate the most likes. This indicates that community members seem to value it as content and engage with it most probably. It also may be that photo content are liked easier as they are visual, stand out and draw attention better than text. A photo is possibly easier content to receive and register by consumers. Thus it seems that photos are the cornerstones in generating engagement.

**Table 11. Distribution of likes in shopping centers**

This table indicates division of likes according to status type per shopping mall. Most liked are Photos and Links.				
Type	Iso Omena	Koskikeskus	Myymanni	Total
Link	2361,00	1428,00	3208,00	<b>6997,00</b>
Photo	6091,00	2496,00	5103,00	<b>13690,00</b>
Photoalbum			266,00	<b>266,00</b>
Question	1,00	0,00	0,00	<b>1,00</b>
Share	198,00	24,00	36,00	<b>258,00</b>
Status Update	881,00	932,00	692,00	<b>2505,00</b>
Video	63,00	136,00	13,00	<b>212,00</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>9595,00</b>	<b>5016,00</b>	<b>9318,00</b>	<b>23929,00</b>

Also links receive a remarkable share of likes. A link on a Facebook Page has a small preview photo, a description text, and a URL that redirects to another place. This content can be consumed as it is on the Facebook Page or click to original source to consume it there. Links are often richer in content than plain text status updates. A link can redirect to almost any content available in the web and therefore it offers a possibility for versatile content. It also may appear more authentic for consumers if a link is from a source that is perceived credible, for instance a newspaper website. On the other hand, photos and links are also the most used status types.



## Analyzing the likes and the like-ratio

Table 12 indicates the average amount of likes that the content has generated. The findings in Table 12 follow a similar pattern in each of the shopping malls, indicating that the same reasons generate likes in these communities. In terms of length, shorter statuses lead to higher amount of likes. This may be because they are fast and easy to read and fit better to hectic ad-hoc nature of the social media and Facebook. Longer statuses are more easily disappearing among the flow of content. Additionally, Facebook favors shorter statuses (in case of long status, the beginning of the text is shown in the news feed view, rest are readable after clicking). Also short statuses are often combined with a photo, where there is less need for text. As mentioned, photos receive most likes and this probably also boosts short statuses.

**Table 12. Like-ratio distribution between the shopping malls**

This table indicates the average like-ratio between each shopping mall. Diff means difference from the weighted grand average (w. avg) of all shopping centers combined. l=long, s=short, c=commercial, nc=non-commercial, g=general, lcl=local, ent=entertaining, inf=informative, ask=question, state=statement								
		Average / l-ratio						
		Iso Omena	Diff	Koskikeskus	Diff	Myymanni	Diff	w. avg
length	l	0,33	-0,06	0,26	-0,13	0,63	0,24	<b>0,39</b>
	s	0,63	0,04	0,29	-0,30	0,83	0,24	<b>0,59</b>
	avg	0,50	0,00	0,27	-0,23	0,75	0,24	<b>0,50</b>
commercial	c	0,33	-0,02	0,22	-0,12	0,55	0,20	<b>0,35</b>
	nc	0,67	0,03	0,33	-0,31	0,88	0,23	<b>0,64</b>
	avg	0,50	0,00	0,27	-0,23	0,75	0,24	<b>0,50</b>
locality	g	0,80	0,12	0,31	-0,36	1,12	0,45	<b>0,67</b>
	lcl	0,44	-0,01	0,26	-0,20	0,66	0,21	<b>0,46</b>
	avg	0,50	0,00	0,27	-0,23	0,75	0,24	<b>0,50</b>
inf./ent.	ent	0,74	0,10	0,31	-0,33	0,86	0,22	<b>0,64</b>
	inf	0,40	-0,03	0,26	-0,17	0,67	0,24	<b>0,43</b>
	avg	0,50	0,00	0,27	-0,23	0,75	0,24	<b>0,50</b>
tone	ask	0,40	0,05	0,20	-0,15	0,54	0,19	<b>0,35</b>
	state	0,53	-0,02	0,31	-0,24	0,81	0,26	<b>0,55</b>
	avg	0,50	0,00	0,27	-0,23	0,75	0,24	<b>0,50</b>

Strongest evidence in liking is seen between commercial/non-commercial and local/general, where non-commercial and general content leads to a much higher likelihood of likes. Non-commercial content includes elements and topics that are entertaining, light, less imposing and easier to tolerate as for example celebration wishes, general topics about common issues, events that are entertaining, local news or necessary

information about renovations or questions like “how was your weekend?”. These types of messages are perceived as convenient, neutral, and less irritating (generates less negative feedback as seen in n-ratio table). The barrier to like non-commercial content for most people is probably low compared to commercial messages. Commercial messages often have one specific product or shop, which limits the audience. On the other hand, commercial messages are often combined with images that are simple, product-focused, less entertaining and have less engagement value as such. Here again, if the commercial message is disconnected and too obvious, community members see no reason to like it. However, if the commercial message is beneficial enough (i.e. exceeding the “cost” of clicking it), it may receive likes.

When studying the locality aspect, the content that is not tied to locality seems to have a higher yield of likes. General content is probably easier to attach for a larger crowd compared to local content that is geographically tied and relevant for mostly local audience. In this case the observed subjects are large shopping centers (the 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> biggest in Finland) that are tied to a geographical location compared to some universal brands (such as soda or car brands) that are less tied to a physical location. Nevertheless, shopping malls also need to serve local needs, as these often form the most loyal customers and the most fanatic community members, as the qualitative data revealed.

It also becomes evident from the Table 12 that informative content results in less likes compared to the content that is perceived as entertaining. These are the similarities with commercial vs. non-commercial content, as a great deal of informative content is also commercial, such as discounts, price-information, or new arrivals in the shopping center. Informative content is probably perceived more formal and stiff and therefore not as engaging compared to entertaining content, which is meant to be delightful and liked, and in that sense more suitable for Facebook-like environment. This also shows some preliminary support for the argument that hedonistic content serves better community members than a utilitarian one.

Tone of voice figure indicates that statement types of statuses generate more likes. This may be because most of the content falls into the statement-category (24.3% of statuses are question-like and 75.7% falls into statements). Questions also serve different kind of

functionality than statements, as question ask for a reaction by comments rather than likes, which is shown in the table that discusses the comment-ratio (c-ratio) and shows that questions (asking) yield much greater amounts of comments as engagement.

## Comments

### The top 30 most commented statuses

Based on the results of the top 30 statuses ranked according to the like-ratio, I may draw guidelines of what kind of statuses gain most comments. The most notable finding was that 47% of comments in the top 30 are made for photos and 23% for links. 77% of the commented statuses in this group are short and 67% informative. Locally oriented statuses comprise 77% of the top 30 and 73% are non-commercial. The tone of voice is evenly distributed: 50% for statements and questions. The top 30 commented statuses have an average word count of 13.3, an average like count of 111, an average amount of comments of 44, an average share count of 9.3, and it receives 27 negative feedbacks on average.

**Table 13 Top 30 commented statuses**

Top 30 most commented statuses			
		occurrence	%
type	Photo	14	47 %
	Link	7	23 %
	Photoalbum	1	3 %
	Question	0	0 %
	Share	2	7 %
	Status Update	6	20 %
	Video	0	0 %
	total	30	100 %
tone	ask	15	50 %
	state	15	50 %
	total	30	100 %
length	long	7	23 %
	short	23	77 %
	total	30	100 %
commercial	commercial	8	27 %
	non-comm.	22	73 %
	total	30	100 %
locality	general	7	23 %
	local	23	77 %
	total	30	100 %
orientation	entertaining	10	33 %
	informative	20	67 %
	total	30	100 %

From this I may conclude that the most commented statuses are likely:

- Photos
- Informative
- Local
- Non-commercial
- Short

Table 14 shows that also in the case of comments, photos generate most comments in every shopping mall. Also links rank high, with the only exception being Koskikeskus, where status updates have a remarkable share of comments. This significant exception in Koskikeskus is explained by more asked questions in the statuses (102 questions compared to 67 in Myyrmanni and 55 in Iso Omena).

**Table 14. Division of comments according to status types per shopping mall**

This table indicates division of comments according to status type per shopping mall. Most commented are Photos, Links and Status Updates (plain text statuses)				
Type	Iso Omena	Koskikeskus	Myyrmanni	Total
Link	287,00	77,00	428,00	<b>792,00</b>
Photo	584,00	496,00	713,00	<b>1793,00</b>
Photoalbum			40,00	<b>40,00</b>
Question	0,00	0,00	0,00	<b>0,00</b>
Share	45,00	1,00	21,00	<b>67,00</b>
Status Update	113,00	445,00	183,00	<b>741,00</b>
Video	13,00	19,00	3,00	<b>35,00</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1042,00</b>	<b>1038,00</b>	<b>1388,00</b>	<b>3468,00</b>

### Analyzing the comments and the comment-ratio

Table 15 shows the amount of comments that a certain type of status yields. One must bear in mind that comments are occurring less frequently compared to likes. There were 23,929 likes in total compared to 3,468 comments and 1,635 shares. The results show that shorter statuses generate more comments. Moreover, non-commercial content as well as general statuses lead to a higher quantity of comments. The most visible results are that of the tone of voice, where question-like content leads to a much higher amount of comments. It is also an interesting finding that Myyrmanni's content is commented much more than other centers' content.

**Table 15. Comment-ratio distribution between shopping centers**

This table indicates the average comment-ratio between each shopping mall. Diff means difference from the weighted grand average (w. avg) of all shopping centers combined. l=long, s=short, c=commercial, nc=non-commercial, g=general, lcl=local, ent=entertaining, inf=informative, ask=question, state=statement								
		Average / c-ratio						
		Iso Omena	Diff	Koskikeskus	Diff	Myymanni	Diff	w. avg
length	l	0,04	-0,01	0,02	-0,03	0,10	0,05	<b>0,05</b>
	s	0,06	-0,03	0,07	-0,02	0,13	0,04	<b>0,08</b>
	avg	0,05	-0,02	0,04	-0,02	0,12	0,05	<b>0,07</b>
commercial	c	0,03	-0,02	0,02	-0,03	0,11	0,06	<b>0,04</b>
	nc	0,07	-0,02	0,08	-0,01	0,12	0,03	<b>0,09</b>
	avg	0,05	-0,02	0,04	-0,02	0,12	0,05	<b>0,07</b>
locality	g	0,09	-0,01	0,07	-0,02	0,14	0,05	<b>0,09</b>
	lcl	0,04	-0,02	0,04	-0,03	0,11	0,05	<b>0,06</b>
	avg	0,05	-0,02	0,04	-0,02	0,12	0,05	<b>0,07</b>
inf./ent.	ent	0,08	0,00	0,06	-0,02	0,09	0,02	<b>0,08</b>
	inf	0,04	-0,02	0,04	-0,03	0,13	0,07	<b>0,06</b>
	avg	0,05	-0,02	0,04	-0,02	0,12	0,05	<b>0,07</b>
tone	ask	0,09	-0,02	0,10	-0,02	0,16	0,05	<b>0,12</b>
	state	0,04	-0,01	0,02	-0,04	0,10	0,05	<b>0,05</b>
	avg	0,05	-0,02	0,04	-0,02	0,12	0,05	<b>0,07</b>

Short statuses yield more comments than longer ones. This may be partially because question-like statuses are often short and call for action. In the same way popular photo content often have short texts and they receive a great amount of comments. Photo content is often more versatile and rich, as the publisher can combine attractive picture which speaks for itself and leave only a short supporting or activating text like “What do you think of this picture?”. Non-commercial statuses generate much more comments, as these are maybe more easier to attach and identify. Furthermore, they speak to larger audience and the barrier to comment is lower. In the social media there is less tolerance towards directly sales oriented content and this kind of content is easily resisted or skipped, especially if the commercial message is not perceived beneficial enough.

Local content is receiving fewer comments than general content. This may be explained by the limitations of audience. Geographically tied content have limited audience compared to general, which is suitable for more users. It is easier for a non-local to participate by commenting in issues that are general compared to local content. Nevertheless, local consumers may be more motivated and active in participating in the discussion about local issues, whereas they probably participate in general discussions, too.

The difference between informative and entertaining content shows no clear pattern in the results, as the outcomes are mixed. In Myyrmanni entertaining content produces more comments, whereas in Iso Omena and Koskikeskus informative content is commented more. From the data I could not find any particular reason for this difference in behavior as the amount of entertaining and informative content are on the same level in each shopping center.

The most significant finding is that of the tone of voice, which strongly indicates that questions receive more comments than statements. This is understandable as the question-like statuses have a call for action that drives users to comment and therefore results in frequent commenting. The reason why Myyrmanni's content is significantly more commented on could be explained by more attached community members. This active commenting is in line with Myyrmanni's outstanding overall engagement rate compared to Iso Omena and Koskikeskus.

## **Shares**

### **The top 30 shared statuses**

When studying the shares in relative numbers using quick study made of the top 30 most shared statuses according to share ratio, it is visible that the shares accumulate to photos (63%) and links (33%). In the same way non-commercial statuses comprises 80% shared content in the top 30 and short statuses comprise 63% of shared content. The statement type of statuses comprises 86.6% of shares if the tone of voice is observed. Entertaining statuses comprise 60% of the top 30 and locally oriented statuses 70%. The top 30 shared statuses have 11.8 words on average, 181 likes, 20 comments, and 21 shares on average, and they receive 18 negative feedbacks on average.

**Table 16 Top 30 shared statuses**

Top 30 most shared statuses			
		occurrence	%
type	Photo	19	63 %
	Link	10	33 %
	Photoalbum	1	3 %
	Question	0	0 %
	Share	0	0 %
	Status Update	0	0 %
	Video	0	0 %
	total	30	100 %
tone	ask	4	13 %
	state	26	87 %
	total	30	100 %
length	long	11	37 %
	short	19	63 %
	total	30	100 %
commercial	commercial	6	20 %
	non-comm.	24	80 %
	total	30	100 %
locality	general	9	30 %
	local	21	70 %
	total	30	100 %
orientation	entertaining	18	60 %
	informative	12	40 %
	total	30	100 %

According to this evidence from the top 30 the most shared statuses are:

- Photo
- Non-commercial
- Short
- Statement
- Entertaining
- Local

**Analyzing the sharing and the share-ratio**

Table 17 indicates that most shares accumulate to photos and links. This is in line with the earlier results regarding likes and comments but here the concentration is much higher as photos and links capture over 90% of shares in each shopping center. Sharing is the rarest occurring basic feature on Facebook Pages with the total of 1,635 shares during the observation period compared to 23,929 likes and 3,468 comments. Sharing a post is an action that requires more from the user as it shares the content further by using the user’s profile. Therefore it also sets higher standards for content compared to likes and comments that users are willing to share. For this reason the share amounts are very low,

occurring numerously only in photos and links in all of the studied shopping centers as Table 17 shows.

**Table 17. Division of shares according to type of status**

This table indicates division of shares according to status type per shopping mall. Most shared are Photos and Links				
Type	Iso Omena	Koskikeskus	Myyrmani	Total
Link	176,00	125,00	168,00	<b>469,00</b>
Photo	571,00	128,00	361,00	<b>1060,00</b>
Photoalbum			15,00	<b>15,00</b>
Question	0,00	0,00	0,00	<b>0,00</b>
Share	18,00	2,00	1,00	<b>21,00</b>
Status Update	28,00	13,00	13,00	<b>54,00</b>
Video	14,00	16,00	1,00	<b>31,00</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>807,00</b>	<b>284,00</b>	<b>559,00</b>	<b>1650,00</b>

Table 18 shows that non-commercial statuses are shared more than commercial statuses. Similarly, entertaining content is receiving more shares than informative content. Both non-commercial statuses and entertaining statuses share some similarities in why they generate more shares: They are both closely associated with photo content, which is the most shared content according to statistics. Sharing means that content is shared in one's personal profile and visible to all or limited group of friends, which lifts the barrier of this functionality higher than in the case of liking and commenting. Moreover, the sharing of the content that does not carry commercial message is probably more tolerated among Facebook users. Non-commercial and entertaining content seems to be lighter and easier to engage and attach to. Statuses that are question-like are not shared often, as there is not much motivation for users to share them.

Table 18 indicates that statuses which are stating in tone receive more shares. One reason that might affect this is that 74.7% of the statuses are classified as statements and it is more likely that content that is classified as statement is shared. Claims, statements, wishes, and everything else than questions are marked as statements.

When looking at the length's relation to number of shares, there is no clear pattern of behavior. Therefore it seems that it is not in the key position in terms of share if a status is short or long. In the same way, the locality's impact to the share-ratio shows no apparent similarities between the three shopping malls, but is notably higher for Myyrmani. In Myyrmani, the local content is shared more. An interesting finding here again is that



Myyrmanni stands out from others also in terms of shares. Myyrmanni's particular share activity indicates that consumers are engaging more to its content.

**Table 18. S-ratio distribution according to the shopping centers.**

This table indicates the average share-ratio between each shopping mall. Diff means difference from the weighted grand average (w. avg) of all shopping centers combined. l=long, s=short, c=commercial, nc=non-commercial, g=general, lcl=local, ent=entertaining, inf=informative, ask=question, state=statement								
		Average / s-ratio						
		Iso Omena	Diff	Koskikeskus	Diff	Myyrmanni	Diff	w. avg
length	l	0,04	0,00	0,02	-0,02	0,07	0,03	<b>0,04</b>
	s	0,05	0,01	0,01	-0,02	0,04	0,00	<b>0,03</b>
	avg	0,04	0,01	0,02	-0,02	0,05	0,01	<b>0,04</b>
commercial	c	0,03	0,01	0,01	-0,01	0,03	0,00	<b>0,03</b>
	nc	0,05	0,01	0,02	-0,03	0,06	0,02	<b>0,05</b>
	avg	0,04	0,01	0,02	-0,02	0,05	0,01	<b>0,04</b>
locality	g	0,04	0,00	0,01	-0,03	0,08	0,04	<b>0,04</b>
	lcl	0,04	0,01	0,02	-0,02	0,04	0,01	<b>0,04</b>
	avg	0,04	0,01	0,02	-0,02	0,05	0,01	<b>0,04</b>
inf./ent	ent	0,06	0,01	0,02	-0,03	0,07	0,02	<b>0,05</b>
	inf	0,04	0,01	0,01	-0,02	0,04	0,01	<b>0,03</b>
	avg	0,04	0,01	0,02	-0,02	0,05	0,01	<b>0,04</b>
tone	ask	0,03	0,01	0,01	-0,01	0,02	0,00	<b>0,02</b>
	state	0,05	0,00	0,02	-0,02	0,06	0,02	<b>0,04</b>
	avg	0,04	0,01	0,02	-0,02	0,05	0,01	<b>0,04</b>

### Summary of the analysis findings

Figures 14 and 15 are summaries of both the top 30 ranking statuses and the analysis from full dataset of 921 statuses. The top 30 analysis gave more apparent results, whereas the analysis made of full set of 921 statuses provided several weak or ambiguous results and are marked therefore with a bar ( - ) .

**Figure 13. Summary of results from the analysis of top 30 statuses**

This table summarises results of top 30 ranking statuses according engagement, likes, comments, shares and negative feedback. Green section indicates content that increases engagement, orange indicates what is found to lead increase in negative feedback.					
	Increases engagement				Increases negative feedback
	Engagement	Likes	Comments	Shares	Neg
Type	Photo	Photo	Photo	Photo	Link
Length	Short	Short	Short	Short	Long
Commerciality	Non-comm.	Non-comm.	Non-comm.	Non-comm.	Non-comm.
Orientation	Informative	Entertaining	Informative	Entertaining	Informative
Tone	Statement	Statement	-	Statement	Statement
Locality	Local	General	Local	Local	Local

Figure 15 has more ambiguous results due to the conflicting results or diminishing differences in the tables. Next results from both analyses are contrasted with the hypotheses.

**Figure 14. Summary of results from the analysis of all 921 statuses**

This table summarises results of full analysis of all 921 statuses. Green section indicates content that increases engagement. Orange indicates what is found to lead increase in negative feedback.

	Increases engagement				Increases negative feedback
	Engagement	Likes	Comments	Shares	Neg
<b>Type</b>	Photo	Photo	Status Update	Photo	Status Update
<b>Length</b>	-	Short	Short	-	Long
<b>Commerciality</b>	Non-comm.	Non-comm.	Non-comm.	Non-comm.	Commercial
<b>Orientation</b>	-	Entertaining	-	Entertaining	-
<b>Tone</b>	-	Statement	Ask	Statement	Statement
<b>Locality</b>	-	General	General	-	Local

### Hypotheses in relation to findings

Based on the results I verify and reject some of the hypotheses.

H1 = Non-commercial content engages more than commercial content in a shopping mall community  
H2 = Commercial content engages more than non-commercial content in a shopping mall community

Both analysis provided unanimous evidence that non-commercial content provides more engagement, therefore H1 is accepted, whereas H2 is rejected.

H3 = Entertaining content engages more than informative content in a shopping mall community  
H4 = Informative content engages more than entertaining content in a shopping mall community

Analysis made of all 921 statuses supported H3 in likes and shares, while engagement and comments had neither approving or disagreeing results. The top 30 analysis supported H3 in likes and shares, but comments supported H4. This results accepting H3 and rejecting H4

H5 = Local content engages more than universal content in a shopping mall community  
H6 = Universal content engages more than local content in a shopping mall community

Analysis made of all 921 statuses support H6. However, the analysis made of the top 30 ranking statuses support H5. This contradiction leads to rejection of both hypotheses.

H7 = Short statuses engage more than long statuses in a shopping mall community  
H8 = Long statuses engage more than short statuses in a shopping mall community

Both analysis show support for H7, therefore it is accepted and H8 rejected.

H9 = Statements engage more than questions in a shopping mall community  
H10 = Questions engage more than statements in a shopping mall community

Analysis made of top 30 ranking statuses shows unanimous support for H9 and from analysis made of all 921 statuses likes and shares support H9. However, comments disagree with H9 and supports H10. Therefore we accept H9 and reject H10

H11 = Hedonistic content engages more than utilitarian content in Facebook brand community  
H12 = Utilitarian content engages more than hedonistic content in Facebook brand community

Results made of all 921 statuses unanimously supported H11. Also results from top30 mostly supported H11 the only exception being comments that supported H12. However, it is evident that entertainment and non-commercial (hedonic) content created more engagement than utilitarian. Therefore H11 is accepted, H12 rejected.

H14 = Larger Facebook-community decrease the level of interaction  
H 15 = Larger Facebook-community increase the level of interaction

Earlier in this chapter I rejected H14 and H15 as data supported neither of them. Increase in size did not affect the level of engagement in any way.

Hypothesis H13 is researched in the qualitative part of this thesis.

## 6.2 Results from qualitative analysis (netnography)

Table 19 shows how comments distribute according to gender. This supports the earlier findings that females are more active in the social media. The data show that significantly more females (68%) comment on statuses in general. The inter-comparison between the malls shows a similar distribution. The reason for the higher female activity may also be partially explained by the fact that shopping and shopping center visits are often associated to be more popular among women. Therefore it is expected that women also participate more online. This verifies our H13 that females are more active on Facebook shopping mall community than males.

**Table 19.** Distribution of comments by gender

This table shows how comments in the sample distributed by gender and shopping mall					
Center	f	%	m	%	Total
Iso Omena	155	78 %	45	22 %	200
Koskikeskus	441	73 %	165	27 %	606
Myyrmanni	310	60 %	209	40 %	519
<b>Total</b>	<b>906</b>	<b>68 %</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>32 %</b>	<b>1325</b>

H13 = Females are more active on Facebook shopping mall community than males

H13 is accepted as 68% of active participants are female

The following Table 20 shows the average word amount in a comment per shopping center. It became clear that most comments on these kinds of Facebook Pages are short and content is low quality. However, the rich comments tend to be longer as it is more challenging to convey a great deal of information in short comments. This signals low attachment to conversation on Facebook Pages in general. The average comment consists of 7.19 words and comparison between sexes shows that females have slightly longer comments; the average of 7.42 words compared to the males' average of 6.69 words. When comparing the shopping centers, the word average is significantly lower for Iso Omena than in other shopping centers. Then there are fewer comments for Iso Omena too, which may have small impact on the low average.

**Table 20.** Words on average

This table shows how many words there were in a comment on average per shopping mall Iso Omena has shorter comments based on sample			
Center	Female	Male	avg.
Iso Omena	4,08	4,36	4,14
Koskikeskus	7,96	6,96	7,69
Myyrmanni	8,32	6,98	7,78
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,42</b>	<b>6,69</b>	<b>7,19</b>

A significant finding that appears in Table 21 is the very high topic relevance. In the sample data, comments were related to the topic with 97.7% probability. It seems that people tend to comment properly, which is probably because the posts are visible to other users and non-topic related comments may be judged negatively among the public and denounce the user. On Facebook, appearing and transmitting embellished and correct image of oneself is common. The data also revealed that if content is entertaining, people tend to provide answers that serve entertaining purposes.

**Table 21.** Topic relevance per sex

This table shows topic relevance of comments.					
Sex	Off	%	On	%	Total
Female	15	1,66	891	98,34	906
Male	15	3,58	404	96,42	419
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2,26</b>	<b>1295</b>	<b>97,74</b>	<b>1325</b>

The example posts found in Appendix C were classified as having rich content that is relevant to the shopping center and having social meaning for general audience.

Comments like these transmit information that can be used by shopping centers or brands in general for development work or indent loyal customers by paying attention to what they say and reply. This also reveals the interactive nature of the social media and many-to-many structure of communication. This could be interesting in many ways for shopping center management as it may provide valuable feedback, deeper discussion on the services, products, shopping experiences, and routines or otherwise useful information that can be used to develop the center or enhance relationship with customers.

Appendix D contains few examples of what majority of the comments are on Facebook. They are short, their content value is low and they are personal or otherwise opinion-like statements that are short lived flow of information. Comments like these may be analyzed in larger quantities and in this way they may offer information and value for a marketer. Solely studied, they are rather random and disconnected.

### **Categorizing the engaged users**

From the studied sample data of comments there stood out clear groups of users that had differing behavior. Based on their comments, these users were categorized into four groups: insiders, devotees, minglers and tourists. This classification is based on Kozinets work (2002). For the classification I used criterions of richness of comment as well as the social orientation of comment. The results are visible in Table 22.

**Table 22.** Richness of comment and social orientation

This table depicts richness of comment with the social orientation of the comment.					
Richness	Hgh	%	Low	%	Total
Soc. Orientation					
General	22	1,663	157	11,87	179
Personal	44	3,326	1100	83,14	1144
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>		<b>1257</b>		<b>1323</b>

These results from Table 22 are placed on Figure 16 which exposes the social orientation and the richness of the comment in Kozinets's quad. The most involved commentators are the ones who have rich content in their comments and strong social ties. In this table the social ties are associated with comments that were aimed at the general audience. Kozinets (2002) refers to this group as Insiders and they seem to form 1.7% of the

commentators in this sample. Users that are more topic-oriented have rich content in their comments but they are less social and therefore their messages are rather personal. This group is also found in Kozinets (2002) categorization named as Devotees. According to this data, they form 33% of the commentators. Low richness of content but high social orientation comprises 11.9% of commentators and this group is termed as Minglers. Commentators with low richness in comments and less social ties form the largest commentator group are called Tourists. They form 83% of the commentators and are mostly random commentators.

From the viewpoint of shopping center management, Insiders are the most valuable user group, since their social motivation and interest for the group subject are high. They are valuable for the shopping center as well as to other community members. Examples of comments that were analyzed as both rich in content and with social orientation are found in Appendix C. They provide information and their messages are mostly targeted at general audience. Also devotees can be seen as a highly motivated group and valuable for shopping center management although they are not similarly interested in social aspects of the community.

**Figure 15.** Categorization of comments according to Kozinets' model (adapt. Kozinets 2002)

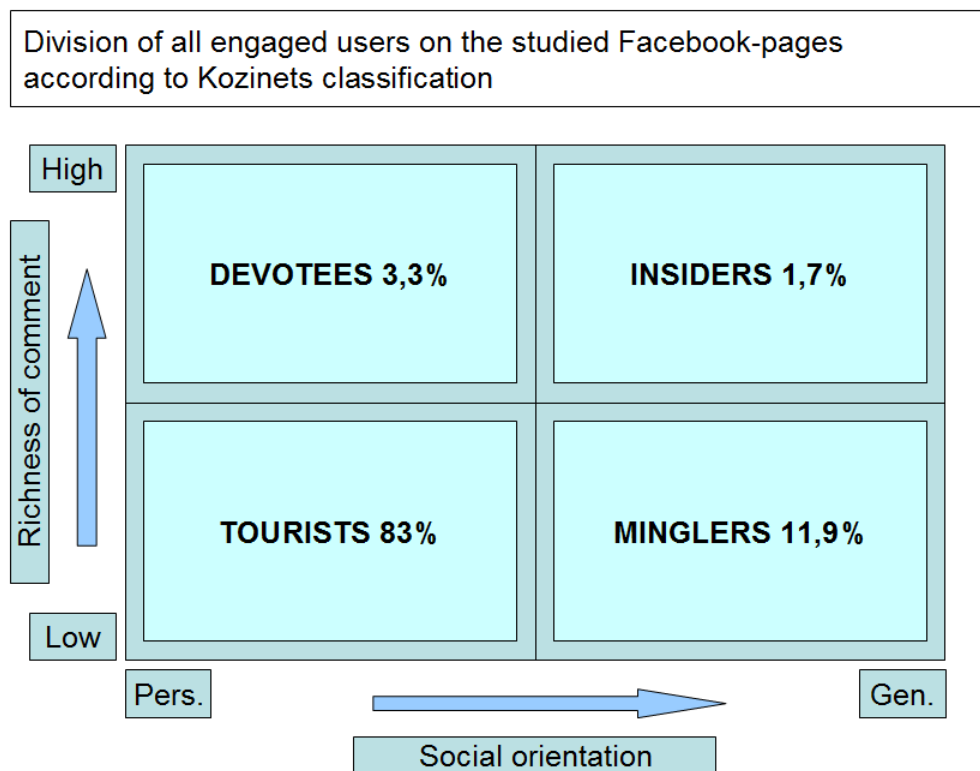


Table 24 shows the connection between sex and richness of comment. According to this table, both females and males post equally rich and low-quality comments. This finding suggests that among the group Insiders, there are equally females and males as well as in other categories, although in general females seems to be more active in community participation.

**Table 23.** Distribution of content richness according to sex

This table depicts how comment richness is distributed according to sex. Results are quite equal for both sexes.					
Sex	High	%	Low	%	Total
Female	45	4,97	861	95,03	<b>906</b>
Male	21	5,01	398	94,99	<b>419</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>4,98</b>	<b>1259</b>	<b>95,02</b>	<b>1325</b>

Table 25 indicates how the richness of comment distributes according to sex and shopping center. This table implies that although females are more active in commenting, the relative amount of rich content appears to be approximately same for both males and females (5%). The comparison between shopping centers exposed that there is no great difference between them. Only Iso Omena appears to have slightly less comments classified as rich. This may be due to smaller amount of Iso Omena comments in the sample. It is also worth noting that in Myyrmanni, the proportion of actively commenting males is higher compared to other centers.

**Table 24.** Distribution of content richness per shopping center and sex

Distribution of comment richness according to sex and shopping center. The percentage is proportion from the total comments in right column.						
Center	Sex	Richness				Total
		high	%	low	%	
Iso Omena	Female	1	0,5	154	77	<b>155</b>
	Male	3	1,5	42	21	<b>45</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>200</b>
Koskikeskus	Female	20	3,3	421	69,47	<b>441</b>
	Male	11	1,815	154	25,41	<b>165</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>5,1</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>94,9</b>	<b>606</b>
Myyrmanni	Female	24	4,624	286	55,11	<b>310</b>
	Male	7	1,349	202	38,92	<b>209</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>6,0</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>94,0</b>	<b>519</b>
<b>Grand total</b>		<b>66</b>		<b>1259</b>		<b>1325</b>

## 7 Discussion and conclusion

This is the final chapter of this thesis. It begins with a summary of the findings followed by proposals regarding managerial contribution. Finally it discusses the limitations of the study and proposes further research on this topic.

### 7.1 Summary of findings

This thesis provided a number of results that are summarized here. First I present the accepted and rejected hypotheses. Out of 15 hypotheses, six were accepted. These were H1, H3, H7, H9, H11 and H13.

**Figure 16. Summary of hypotheses**

Accepted hypotheses are bolded. The accepted hypotheses were H1, H3, H7, H9, H11 and H13.	
Accept	<b>H1 = Non-commercial content engages more than commercial content in a shopping mall community</b>
Reject	H2 = Commercial content engages more than non-commercial content in a shopping mall community
Accept	<b>H3 = Entertaining content engages more than informative content in a shopping mall community</b>
Reject	H4 = Informative content engages more than entertaining content in a shopping mall community
Reject	H5 = Local content engages more than universal content in a shopping mall community
Reject	H6 = Universal content engages more than local content in a shopping mall community
Accept	<b>H7 = Short statuses engage more in a shopping mall community</b>
Reject	H8 = Long statuses engage more in a shopping mall community
Accept	<b>H9 = Statements engage more in a shopping mall community</b>
Reject	H10 = Questions engage more in a shopping mall community
Accept	<b>H11 = Hedonistic content engages more than utilitarian content in Facebook brand community</b>
Reject	H12 = Utilitarian content engages more than hedonistic content in Facebook brand community
Accept	<b>H13 = Females are more active on Facebook shopping mall community than males</b>
Reject	H14 = Larger Facebook-community decrease the level of interaction
Reject	H15 = Larger Facebook-community increase the level of interaction

Several other findings that are crucial when discussing engaging content emerged from the results. It became clear that photos and links generated engagement in great volumes. Combined with the hypotheses H1, H3, H7, H9, H11 and H13 these provide an excellent starting point for any Facebook brand community to plan and execute their content.

A surprising result was the rejection of both H14 and H15, as neither of them realized using this particular data. Another stunning result was the remarkably higher level of engagement that appeared in Myrmani's Facebook Page. There is not an unambiguous explanation for this and I refuse to explain it only by better quality content. For this reason,



it would be necessary to extend this data to include more shopping centers from various locations. Myyrmanni was the only shopping center of the three which was clearly regional.

As the presented 6C model proposes the value of the social media for business stems from engagement and conversations. Companies that can continuously create engaging content that in the best case creates itself provides competitive advantage far beyond the reach of traditional marketing communication and advertising. Along the engagement and conversation comes the attachment to the brand.

This thesis proved that Facebook brand communities offer tools that support many core business functions directly or indirectly. A community may be used for marketing research, co-creation, communication, HRM (there was one public job offer during the observation period), CRM, and sales. It became evident that there are frictions between the commercial nature of business and the entertaining nature of the social media as evidenced by both the literature and the empirical part. The challenge is to integrate messages with the content and fit the context in order to achieve engagement (i.e. value).

For a brand such as a shopping mall, there is a need to sustain and feed the customer relationship also when the customers are not physically present in the mall. For this need, online brand communities are beneficial.

What motivates consumers to join a shopping mall brand community? Content that is inclined to hedonism, instead of informative/commercial messages, feeling of community/attachment, benefits, and honest and trusted content.

## **7.1 Limitations and future research**

This study was rather narrow and concentrated on three large shopping centers and their Facebook communities. It also concentrated on the content and less into actual shopping center visits. The findings of this study are not easy to generalize outside the social media. When used in other context than Facebook, it should be taken care that many of these findings are characteristic only for Facebook.

One of the biggest challenges faced in this thesis was the lack of previous studies on the topic, and the processes in analyzing solely the Facebook content. The processes and analyzing practices used in the empirical part of this thesis provide useful tools for measuring and interpreting community interaction.

Despite of the challenges, this thesis also opened new doors for further research on the chosen themes. The process of analyzing the content is unique and new and provides a basis for further quantitative and qualitative analysis using these methods. It would be necessary to widen this research to include more shopping centers that vary in terms of size and location and make comparison between them. Furthermore, it would be attractive to study community members by interviewing how they see their membership and benefits of belonging to a community. It would be also interesting to study the membership of brand communities as identity building for consumers. An interesting study subject would also be to investigate the role of community manager in communality building and content creation.

This study fostered existing research made of brand communities on Facebook. In addition, it provided new aspects for shopping center marketing research by setting a shopping center management in key position in content creation. Also brand communities' link to hedonistic and utilitarian shopping behavior was extended. The results of this thesis were straightforward and practical and hopefully they stir up thoughts and ideas for managerial purposes.

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## Appendix C – examples of rich comments

Comment posted on Myyrmanni's page on November 2012:

*User S "Myyrmannin kuten monen muunkin kauppakeskuksen ongelma on parkkipaikat. 3 tuntia kiekolla ei riitä mihinkään, jos perheen kanssa shoppailee ja käy vielä syömässä, yhden on koko ajan juostava kääntään kiekkoa sakkojen pelossa ja nyt vielä tämä kaunis lastenhuonekin. Ei 4-5 tuntia ole aika eikä mikään, minkä saa kulumaan. Tosin mannissa on maksullistakin pysäköintiä, mut kuka haluaa maksaa."*

Comment posted on Myyrmanni's page on December 2012:

*User K "Hienoa, että tämäkin kylä uudistuu. Autoista ei huolta, kun kävellen pääsee, mutta eikös se ollut niin, että nykyinen "avokenttä" vedetään muutamaan kerrokseen maan alle. Näin ainakin jossain suunnitelmissa. "*

Comment posted on Koskikeskus's page on June 2012:

*User Y "<http://i45.tinypic.com/2n85sty.png> tein nyt piruuttani tällaisen nopean vaihtoehdon. kuinka moni tykkää enemmän tästä kuin koskarin omasta ehdotuksesta?  
<http://i45.tinypic.com/2n85sty.png>  
[i45.tinypic.com](http://i45.tinypic.com)"*

This Koskikeskus example contains a link to a user's web page, where user have created alternative version for the shopping center logo. The status is about the new logo of the shopping center.

Comment posted on Koskikeskus' page on June 2012:

*User X "Edellä on jo mainittu monta vikaa kyseisestä logosta, mutta vielä on sanomatta kai se että tekstin ja noiden sinisten "viivojen" väri ei edes ole sama... Kannatan sitä ehdotusta yllä, että otetaan käyttöön logossa samat värit kuin koskari goes new kamppanjassa on käytetty, ja myös sitä että logossa ei pitäisi lukea nimeä, vaan että Koskikeskus täytyy pystyä tunnistamaan ilman nimeäkin! miksi logo pidettäisiin vanhana, jos kerran "Koskari goes NEW!" "*

## Appendix D – examples of typical short comments on Facebook

These comments are a few examples from Koskikeskus January, 2012, when Koskikeskus asked *Which store you wish to appear in Koskikeskus?* It received 118 comments in total.

“europehouse”  
” fiorella ”  
“ H&M “  
“ Zara “  
“ H&M tai europehouse “  
“ Zara “  
“ H&M “  
“Zara! “  
” new yorker, monki, pimkie ”  
“ Tommy Hilfiger “  
“ europehouse “  
“ zara, h&m mut mielummi zara:) ”

Another example from Iso Omena from February 2012, when Iso Omena asked “What is your favourite device in amusement park Linnanmäki? Vote and take part in competition” This status received 62 comments in total.

“ vonkaputous!”  
”Ehdottomasti vuoristorata!”  
”Ukko!”  
”takuuvarma heikko happi ;)”  
”Vuoristorata”  
” Vuoristorata ”  
” Ihanan-kamala nitisevä vuoristorata=) ”  
” vuoristorata, melkein parasta siinä on se puun tuoksu!”  
” Kummitusjuna.”  
” Mustekala kieputuksineen”  
” Ikiromanttinen Maailmanpyörä ”  
” Vuoristorata ”  
” Vuoristorata ”  
” Vuoristorata ehdottomasti!”  
” Monorail”