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# Customer Engagement through Social Media

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<p>Globalization has resulted in the expansion of markets and therefore the proliferation of competitors. With the advent of Web 2.0, consumers have easy access to information on competing brands, including prices and services. They have a range of choices considerably larger, which gives them more power. We can observe a shift of power from businesses to consumers. In addition, Web 2.0 has also allowed social media to grow, providing an alternative to mass media. Companies can interact at all times with their customers in order to maintain their relationships.</p> <p>With this rise of the competition, companies need to engage consumers to reduce their costs, and ensure a sufficient sales volume. Customer engagement is not a new concept, however, companies often have difficulties retaining their customers, and focuses on the acquisition of new customers, which requires more means, time and money.</p> <p>However, social media is the latest platforms that evolve quickly; we can see difficulties in their management. The purpose of the study is to understand how companies can engage consumers through social media. The qualitative survey was conducted to understand consumer reaction to the activities of companies on social media. This research aims to recommend companies to adopt strategies on social media in order to engage consumers at low cost.</p>	
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# SUMMARY

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## INTRODUCTION

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With globalisation, companies are facing a big challenge: the increase of the competition. As the frontiers have lowered; the market has enlarged, and the competition increased. Customers have now access to a wide range of choice. In order to stand out from their competitors and attract customers, companies have to develop competitive advantage. The strongest competitive advantage is to provide good purchase experiences to the customers, and to engage them. Customers benefit from the high competition, they have access to more choice and information, and companies lower their prices to attract them. However, if a company engage its customers, providing them great experiences, the customers will stick around and are likely to advocate the brand to their relatives.

In 1989, Tim Berners-Lee created the World Wide Web, it became public in 1993<sup>1</sup>. Since then, it has continuously evolved, until what is called today the Web 2.0, enabling users to create the content themselves. This emergence of the Web 2.0 has also enlarged the markets, making the offers of products and services available from everyone to everyone using the Internet. In 2004, Mark Zuckerberg has created Facebook, which became available to everyone in 2006. After this, the evolution of wireless Internet, smartphones, tablets, etc. has made social media available everywhere at anytime. This has considerably changed the way businesses interact with their customers. Before social media, companies used to engage and interact with their customers through touch points such as the television, radio, newspaper, advertising... They reached customers by mass media, they were in control of the messages they delivered. But nowadays, the control and power have swift from the companies to the customers. The customers are now controlling the content on the Internet. And mass media advertising is not as efficient as before, because customers choose when they want to be reached by businesses.

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<sup>1</sup> Berners-Lee and Fischetti, 2000

The emergence of the Web 2.0 and of the social media created new challenges for the companies in their relationships with customers and their strategies to create positive customer engagement. Social media have changed the ways businesses interact with their customers, and nowadays a vast majority of companies have social media accounts, and Community Manager to interact with their customers. The interest of this study is to understand the challenges of the two concepts Customer Engagement and Social Media and what strategies are the most efficient for the companies to adopt to interact with their customers.

In the Customer Engagement context, lots of researches have been conducted, but Social Media is a fast evolving context, it changes every day. The data about social media differ from one research to another, as a consequence of this evolution. As Customer Engagement is becoming more and more important for companies, the aim of this study will be to give some recommendations based on customers' point of view. The limits are the restricted mean the author has access to, to interview customers. The social media platforms are still recent, and the theories on how to engage the customers through those platforms are missing. It is exactly the aim of this study, to help companies to better understand why they have to engage customers on social media and how can they do it.

The Social Media concept and the Customer Engagement concept are two important concepts for nowadays companies. The question we will intend to answer is **“How businesses can generate customer engagement through their social media accounts?”**

From this interrogation emerge five hypotheses: the first one is “posting on a regular basis will engage the customers”, the second one is “Co-creation will engage customers by making them feel important”, the third one is “Customers are more likely to share picture posts”, the fourth one is “Targeting its audience through specific social media platforms will engage customers” and the last one is “Customers are more interested by high quality content posts”.

In a first part we will study the theoretical background of customer engagement. The definitions established by prior studies will be presented and examined. The reasons of the needs of a Customer Engagement Strategy will be evoked as well, in order to better understand the challenges of this concept. We will also debate about the different points of contact a company have or can have with its customers to understand the different ways of interactions between them. We will try to understand

what differ between Business-to-Business (B2B) companies and Business-to-Customer (B2C) companies. We will also see the tools the marketing teams can use to engage their customers and how they can measure the efficiency of their strategies.

In a second part, we will study the theoretical background of social media. We will first define social media, in order to better understand the challenges it brings, based on prior studies. We will then enumerate the different social media platforms relevant for this thesis, which are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. And finally, we will see the strategy that can be conducted on social media to engage the customer.

The third part of this work will be the research. We will answer the problematic, based on assumptions made from the theoretical backgrounds of two existing concepts: Customer Engagement and Social Media. We will verify the hypothesis with a quantitative research that will be spread through social media, as the targets are social media users.



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# I. CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

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## 1. INTRODUCTION TO CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

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Nowadays, with all the alternatives available for the consumers and the facility to find a wide range of products on the internet, loyalty has become one of the biggest challenges for a company. Retaining customers is less expensive and more reliable than trying to attract customers. But this is a real challenge for the companies, as because of the internet, it is easy for the customers to search and find offers that can serve their interests. The customers became fickle and demanding. It means that to be successful, a company has to create “an intimate long-term relationship with the customer”<sup>2</sup>.

### A. DEFINITION

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The concept of customer engagement has many aspects. The term engagement can be used to define several different notions, as “Customer marketing, loyalty, satisfaction and retention practices”<sup>3</sup>. According to a study from Economist Intelligence Unit, “engagement refers to the creation of experiences that allow companies to build deeper, more meaningful and sustainable interactions between the company and its customers or external stakeholders”<sup>4</sup>. Forrester Consulting’s research, *How engaged are your customers?* conducted in 2008, defines customer engagement as “creating deep connections with customers that drive purchase decisions, interaction, and participation, over time”<sup>5</sup>. These studies define customer engagement as an effort from the brand to create a connection or an interaction with the customers, in order to retain them.

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<sup>2</sup>Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007b

<sup>3</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007b

<sup>4</sup>Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007b

<sup>5</sup>Forrester Consulting, 2008

Many other authors defined customer engagement in several ways, which we will see below:

Author	Definition of Customer engagement
Hollebeek (2011)	“consumers’ proactive contributions in co-creating their personalized experiences and perceived value with organizations through active, explicit, and ongoing dialogue and interactions”
Vivek et al. (2012)	“The intensity of an individual’s participation and connection with the organisation’s offering and activities initiated by either the customer or the organisation.”
Patterson et al. (2006)	“The level of a customer’s physical, cognitive and emotional presence in their relationship with a service organisation.”
Brodie et al. (2011)	“A motivational state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g. a brand) in focal service relationships.”
Bowden (2009)	“A psychological process that models the underlying mechanisms by which customer loyalty forms for new customers of a service brand, as well as the mechanisms by which loyalty may be maintained for repeat purchase customers of a service brand.”

These five definitions are different when conceptualizing customer engagement. However, they have the two-way relationship between a brand and a customer concept in common.

The four first definitions (Hollebeek, 2011; Vivek, Beatty and Morgan, 2012; Patterson, Yu and De Ruyter, 2006; Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric and Ilic, 2011) have in common the idea of the active participation of the customers in their relationship with a brand, whereas the Bowden’s (2009) definition is more about a psychological phenomenon that occurs when a customer has a contact with a brand, through a first purchase, that makes him continue buying the brand’s products.

We can thus say that from all these definitions, customer engagement is a relationship between a customer and a brand, translated into an active participation from the customer and a creation of experience from the brand, in order to make the customer purchase the brand's products.

Many companies think that a successful customer engagement strategy transforms them from being a simple provider for the customers to being a real partner<sup>6</sup>. It means that customer engagement is more than simply offer a good product to customers; it evolves into creating a real relationship with the customers.

## B. WHY SHOULD COMPANIES ENGAGE THE CUSTOMERS?

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In this section, we will discuss why the companies need to create customer engagement, to sustain the company's growth. There are several reasons.

Firstly, customer engagement saves costs and increases sales volume. According to the infographic of Invespcro.com (2016), customers' acquisition costs five time more than customers' retention. The probability of selling to an existing customer is 60 to 70%, while the probability of selling to a new prospect is 5 to 20%. Existing customers are 50% more likely to try new products and to spend 31% more money, when compared to new customers. Increasing customer retention rates by 5% increases profits by 25 to 95%<sup>7</sup>. A loyal customer is more likely to buy more when he is in a long-term relationship with a brand, than a new, fickle customer.

Secondly, companies need to adopt a customer engagement strategy because of the product proliferation<sup>8</sup>: Indeed, the entry barriers have lowered, making it easier to create and sustain a company. The market has expanded due to the Internet. It is easier for consumers to compare prices, and services for the same product. We can say that competitors are proliferating, and this is a threat

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<sup>6</sup>Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007b

<sup>7</sup>Saleh, 2015

<sup>8</sup>Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007b

for every company. All of this makes brand loyalty harder to achieve. Engaged customers are more likely to stay in a relationship with a brand they're engaged to, than to create a new relationship with a new brand. Whereas unengaged customers are "free" to try new brands, they have nothing to lose in buying another brand's products.

Finally, loyal customers advocate the brand. Customers are more likely to trust another customer than a brand<sup>9</sup>. Advocate customers are doing positive word-of-mouth. According to Ed Keller (2007), word-of-mouth is very important for companies as it drives growth. It is the "most important and effective communications channel"<sup>10</sup> because other customers will be more likely to trust one of their relative, than the brand itself. Brand advocates are the ambassadors of a brand, they will advise other consumers, and make them purchase a brand's products.

80% of the professional interviewed by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2007b) think that a better customer engagement strategy can result in a better customer loyalty, 76% think it results in increasing revenues and 75% in increasing profit.<sup>11</sup> On the contrary, 37% of the professionals interviewed by this same study think that they lose between 25 and 75% of their sales due to a poor customer engagement strategy, which results in "customers not sufficiently engaged"<sup>12</sup>.

Having a good customer engagement strategy has become vital for companies; it is a real competitive advantage<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup>Brown et al., 2007

<sup>10</sup>Ed Keller, 2007

<sup>11</sup>Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007b

<sup>12</sup>Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007b

<sup>13</sup>Collins, 2013

### C. TOUCH-POINTS

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Brand touch points are the points of interaction between a brand and its customers<sup>14</sup>. According to Ray Georges, there are three touch-points' categories: pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase.

The pre-purchase touch-points can be “web sites, word-of-mouth, direct mail, research, sponsorships, public relations, and advertising”<sup>15</sup>. The aim of pre-purchase touch-points is to raise brand awareness. The interactions should be driven to make the potential customers become aware of a brand's products. Through pre-purchase touch-points, companies are trying to acquire new customers. This stage is important in the customer purchase decision making as it is at this moment that the customer will decide if the brand matches his needs and wants.

The purchase touch-points can be “direct field sales, physical stores, and contact with customer representatives”<sup>16</sup>. These touch-points are important to build trust between the customers and the brand and to make them feel they have chose the right brand<sup>17</sup>.

The post-purchase touch-points can be “loyalty programs, customer satisfaction surveys and warranty and rebate activities”<sup>18</sup>. These touch-points are really important are they are the ones who can build customer engagement. Through the post-purchase touch-points, brands can “maximize the customer experience”<sup>19</sup>, to create brand loyalty. This stage allows the brands to retain their customers, and to create a relationship with them. This is where the brand becomes more a partner than a simple provider. A poor post-purchase interaction can make customers feel the purchase was all the brand cared about. A good post-purchase interaction develops the relationship between the brand and the customer.

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<sup>14</sup>Georges, 2003

<sup>15</sup>Georges, 2003

<sup>16</sup>Georges, 2003

<sup>17</sup>Georges, 2003

<sup>18</sup>Georges, 2003

<sup>19</sup>Georges, 2003

## 2. BUSINESS TO BUSINESS CONTEXT VERSUS BUSINESS TO CUSTOMER CONTEXT

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Customer engagement is important for all companies, whether they are Business-to-business (B2B) companies or Business-to-customer (B2C) companies. But this concept is critical for B2B companies, as they have a smaller base of clients that buy large volume. If they lose one client, the growth of their company can be threatened. While it is also important for B2C companies to retain their customers, it is not as critical as for B2B companies. They sell to a larger base of clients, who buy smaller volumes.

Business-to-business consumers are expert in the domain of the products their purchase because they are sending them or using them for individual customers. They know how the products work, and what features they need in it. A B2B companies don't provide their consumers knowledge about the product but they have to provide them education on how they should use it, and why they need their products. When business consumers get in contact with a company to purchase their products, they already have this need. The B2B companies should not try to create this need but they should prove how and why the businesses need their products. Business customers are rational, they are purchasing products to drive their business, and they are careful about the price, the efficiency and the speed of the products and the delivery. They are important factors to them. It is really important for B2B companies to create a relationship with their consumers, to build trust and to retain their customers. The relationship has to be personalised, to better answer to the customers' needs.

Business-to-customer consumers are not expert on what they purchase; the companies should create a need and provide them knowledge on their products. Often, individual customers are doing spontaneous purchase. Their purchase and their decision-making process whether to buy to one company or another are emotionally driven. The companies that sell to individual consumers should create a desire in the consumers' mind to make them purchase their products. B2C consumers are fickle; they have a lot of choice to buy a specific product, the companies should create a relationship with those customers to make them loyal and emotionally attached to their brand.

### 3. TOOLS OF ENGAGEMENT

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According to Economist Intelligence Unit (2007b), there are some tools companies can use to create customer engagement. They are listing five tools that will be described below:

The first tool is being available for customers at anytime. Providing help, information and services at any time the customers need to, will make them trust the company<sup>20</sup>. The company will appear as being helpful and caring about its customers, not only in the traditional open hours of the businesses. It can also avoid the customers to buy from the competition, if the competitors answer before to their questions. According to a study conducted by Verint, 46% of the respondents answered that “companies that dealt with their requests quickly delivered a better experience than others”<sup>21</sup>. Being available for the customers at anytime allows them to answer quickly to their customers’ requests.

The second tool is being able to communicate with customers through various channels. Some of a company’s customers might prefer to communicate via emails or online chat, while other of the same company’s customers might prefer communicate via phone. It is important for a company to fulfil its customers’ needs and wants. According to Economist Intelligence Unit, the companies that are available through many communication channels are more likely to create good and strong relationships with their customers. Companies that use those modes of communication to dialogue on a two-way basis will certainly engage their customers by building a true relationship, and being a real partner.<sup>22</sup>

The third tool is adapting the way of contact to the customers. For a same company, different customers can feel engaged by different way of contact. Some customers might more feel engaged by social media, for example, and others by human contact. By enlarging the methods of contact, a company will have more chance to reach a larger number of customers. Moreover, customers that buy

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<sup>20</sup>Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007b

<sup>21</sup>Verint, 2015

<sup>22</sup>Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007b

larger volume might deserve a richer contact, like human contact, than customers that buy fewer volumes, or less often<sup>23</sup>.

The fourth tool is listening and learning. Listening to customers' feedback is important to engage customers. And improving services or products following those feedbacks will make customers feel understood by the company. It can permit a company to resolve a problem or to better design a service or product that will better answer to customers' needs. Many companies have different products or services for different targeted segmentation. For example, a company working in many different countries should listen to its customers to adapt its products or services to every culture<sup>24</sup>.

The last, but not least, tool listing by Economist Intelligence Unit is to "deliver personalised responses"<sup>25</sup>. If a company gives standard answers to its customers' questions, the customers won't engage. Persistent, individualized, and instantaneous answers engage customers by making them feel helped, listened, and important for the brand<sup>26</sup>. 52% of the respondents of Verint's survey stated that they appreciate when the service is personalised<sup>27</sup>. Nowadays, delivering personalized answers are easier thanks to the Internet, through emails, online chat or social media. Moreover, those ways of communication allow the company to keep track of each interaction with customers and this can be useful for further interaction with them, 30% of the respondents of the Verint's survey answered that when the company understood their issues and history, it provides them a better experience<sup>28</sup>. Keeping track of the conversation a company had with a client makes possible to remember the issue the client might have had with them.

A company applying all of these tools will provide a better experience to the customers. Positive customer experience is one of the most important factors to retain customers. 89% of Verint's

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<sup>23</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007b

<sup>24</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007b

<sup>25</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007b

<sup>26</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007b

<sup>27</sup> Verint, 2015

<sup>28</sup> Verint, 2015



respondents declared that a “good service makes them feel more positive about brands”<sup>29</sup>. Moreover, according to Tom Smith, “40% began purchasing from a competitive brand simply because of their reputation for great customer service” and “55% became a customer of a company because of their reputation for great customer service”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Verint, 2015

<sup>30</sup>RightNow, 2010

#### 4. METRICS – HOW TO MEASURE THE ENGAGEMENT

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The difficulty of measuring the engagement is one of the greatest barriers to implement a good customer engagement strategy<sup>31</sup>. Thanks to the internet and the social networks/medias, it is now possible to calculate how engaged are the customers and how efficient are the Customer Relationship Management (CRM), by counting how many of them like the publications, share them, comment them or speak about a brand using mention.

The traditional way of measuring and managing customer engagement was to conduct customer surveys. This metrics is complex and takes long to achieve.

Thanks to Google Analytics and Google Adwords, a company can analyse the customer engagement rate by looking at some data like click-through rate, duration of visits, percentage of repeat visits,

- Click-through rate: This measure is “a ratio showing how often people who see your ad end up clicking it”<sup>32</sup>. It calculates the “number of clicks that your ad receives divided by the number of times your ad is shown”<sup>33</sup>. This measure is useful to see if ads or keywords are working well, and if they are relevant, or if the company needs to improve it.
- Average session duration: This metric calculates the average time a user spends on a website, during his visit. It is calculated by dividing the total duration of all sessions (in seconds) by the number of sessions.<sup>34</sup>
- Average Time on Page: This metric is slightly different from the Average Session Duration as it calculates the time a user spends on a specified page of a website. What differs from the Average session duration is that for Average Time on Page, the time spent on a specific page is calculated taking into account the next page view. It excludes the “bounce visits” (“sessions in which the person left your site from the entrance page without interacting with the page”<sup>35</sup>)

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<sup>31</sup>Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007b

<sup>32</sup> Google, 2016a

<sup>33</sup> Google, 2016a

<sup>34</sup> Google, 2016b

<sup>35</sup>Google, 2016c

- Percentage of repeat visits: To calculate this metric, a company needs to divide the number of return visitors by the number of total unique visitors in a period of time. This metric allows a company to know if its campaigns are working well or if it needs to be improved.<sup>36</sup>

Another metric to calculate customer engagement is the customer churn rate. The churn rate is the percentage of customers that ended their relationship with a brand. The higher the churn rate result is; the more clients have ended their relationship. The churn rate is calculated monthly, quarterly, or annually. Most of the companies calculate their churn rate on an annual basis, but some others calculate it monthly, such as the companies that offer monthly registration, or monthly prices, or those who loose many customers, or those for who it is a big deal to keep their customers. It is possible to look at the lost customers' segments in order to know which category of target are the less loyal, in order to adapt the marketing campaign or the product/service to their needs<sup>37</sup>.

Frederick F. Reichheld, Bain & Company and Satmetrix have developed a customer loyalty metric called Net Promoter Score (NPS). This metric is a single-question customer survey: "How likely is it that you would recommend [company X] to a friend or colleague?"<sup>38</sup>, the scale is a zero to ten scope, ten meaning "extremely likely", five "neutral" and zero meaning "not at all likely". They designed three categories, depending on the results: a result of nine or ten would place the customer in the "Promoter" group, a result of seven or eight would place the customer in the "Passively satisfied" group and a result from zero to six would place the customer in the "detractor" category<sup>39</sup>. This metric is easy to use, and the employees can take advantage of the results immediately. The fact that a company should only focus on the "Promoter" category allows it to increase and improve the most-engaged customer rate.

According to Haven et al., to measure engagement we need to define the engagement framework. They define it as the four I's:

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<sup>36</sup> Cheng, 2015

<sup>37</sup> Gallo, 2014

<sup>38</sup> Reichheld, 2003

<sup>39</sup> Reichheld, 2003

Framework	Definition
Involvement	“The presence of a person at the various brand touchpoints. Metrics include Web site visitors, time spent per page, physical store visits, impressions from mass media advertising, etc. Data sources include Web Analytics, store traffic reports, etc.”
Interaction	“The actions people take while present at those touchpoints. Metrics include click-throughs, online transactions, in-store purchases, uploaded photos or videos, etc. Data sources include eCommerce platforms, POS systems, social media platforms, etc.”
Intimacy	“The affection or aversion a person holds for a brand. Metrics include sentiment measurement in blog posts, blog comments, discussion forums, customer service call sentiment, etc. Data sources include brand monitoring services, survey responses, customer service call centers, etc.”
Influence	“The likelihood a person is to advocate on behalf of the brand. Metrics include brand awareness, loyalty, affinity, repurchases, Net Promoter, satisfaction ratings, forwarded content, etc. Data sources include market research services, brand monitoring, customer service call centers, surveys, etc.”

Source: Haven et al., 2008

Haven et al. explained in their report how a company should proceed to measure its customer engagement rate. According to them, a company needs to go through four steps to achieve measure engagement: define, audit, assess and prioritize.

First step: Define

Firstly, the company has to define its personas, which are its target audience. Secondly, the company has to define the goal of each personas category. Thirdly, it has to find how it can fulfil the customers’ needs. And finally, the company has to define metrics relevant enough, to calculate the customer engagement.

Second step: Audit

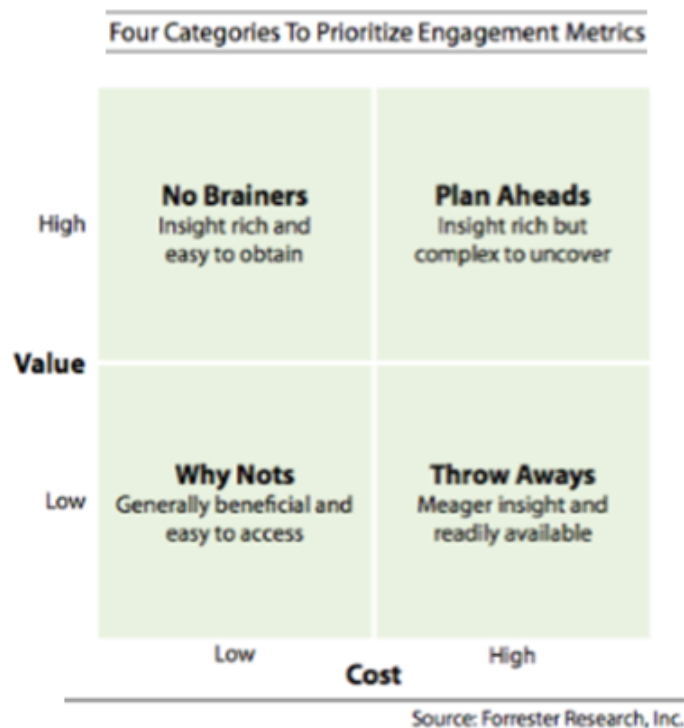
Then, the company has to audit these metrics, to verify if they are enough data available to create these metrics.

Third step: Assess

The third step is to estimate the value and the cost of these metrics.

Fourth step: Prioritize

The last step is prioritizing the metrics according to the budget and the time the company has, and then categorizing them in four groups, which are seen in the table below.



There are lots of metrics available to calculate customer engagement thanks to the Internet. Despite this, depending of the companies and the industry, not all of them are relevant and not every marketing

team can be able to analyse the data. With the demonstration of Haven et al. all the companies can measure the engagement of their customers. The companies have to choose the metrics that are the most relevant for them, and the most affordable. For example, a clothe shop can measure engagement through loyalty cards registrations, a website can consider the registration to newsletter and the percentage of returning visitors on their websites.

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## 5. CONCLUSION

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This part helped us understand the challenges of engaging the customers. To sustain, a company need to rely on loyal customers that will stay faithful to their brands. However, to do so, a company has to create a relationship with the customers. The relationship may vary depending on the industry and on the kind of customers, but this concept is applicable to all companies, and the challenge is important to every company.

A company can interact with customers in different ways depending of the stage of the relationship: pre-purchase, purchase or post-purchase. Each stage has its own specific touch-points to communicate with the customers.

The main thing to remember is that the customers are now in control of the relationship, they drive it.

All strategies of engagement differ from industry to industry and from companies to companies. However, they are some basic rules that can help marketers to improve the relationships with the customers: being available for customers at anytime, being able to communicate with customers through various channels, adapting the way of contact to the customers, listening and learning in order to improve the services and the products, and personalising the answer to each customer.

We can see that from those tools, the personalisation must be very present in the interactions. The mass communication era is ending, and every customer wants to have a personalised experience.

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## II. SOCIAL MEDIAS

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### 1. INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIAS

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#### A. DEFINITION

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Defining social media can be a challenge, as this concept is always evolving. The office of Communications and Marketing of the Tufts University defines it as “the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks”.

However, according to Miller et al. (2016) “social media is today a place within which we socialise, not just a means of communication”

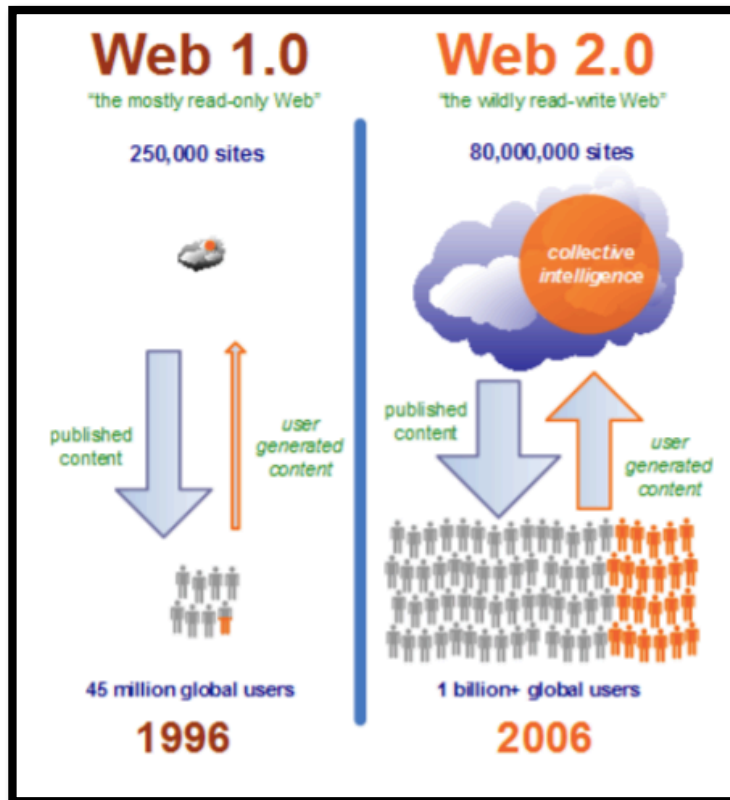
Jonathan A. Obar and Steve Wildman (2015) defined it through four main characteristics which are:

- “Social media services are (currently) Web 2.0 Internet-based applications”

With the arrival of Web 2.0, the behaviour of user has changed from being only consumer (reading writings, watching videos, listening to audio) to being participant. Users no longer only consume, but are active. They are now able to “create, interact, collaborate and share in the process of creating as well as consuming content”<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup>Obar and Wildman, 2015



Source: Perrin, 2009

- “User-generated content is the lifeblood of social media”

User-generated content is the core of social media. This content can be everything from uploaded content such as videos, photos, audios, and writings to taking actions such as liking, connecting with other people, comment, etc. Without this possibility of content generation, social media would be, as the authors said “a ghost town”.

- “Individuals and groups create user-specific profiles for a site or app designed and maintained by a social media service”

The foundation of the social media is the user profile. Depending of the platform, the registration information may vary, but for most of them the user has to indicate his name, contact information (i.e. e-mail address), and upload a picture. Without the requirement of providing this kind of personal information, it would be impossible for users to create connections with other users, upload content, and share it.



- “Social media services facilitate the development of social networks online by connecting a profile with those of other individuals and/or groups”

This characteristic is probably the most disputable as some people can argue that old communication means such as the Telephone, also allows people to “develop, facilitate and maintain social networks”. On social media, the users’ networks are created through connections, which can be called friends, followers or connections for some of the platforms. For most of the social media, it is required to create this list to be able to interact with other users, share content, and interact with them.

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## B. PLATFORMS

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Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn are the most relevant platforms for this study, this is the reason why there will be only these four explained, while there are much more other platforms of social media.

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### I. FACEBOOK

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Facebook has been created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, and his Harvard College colleagues Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. At first, The Facebook (the first name of Facebook) was launched for Harvard students only, and expanded to other colleges in the Boston region, the Ivy League and Stanford University. It continued its expansion until 2006, when everybody older than thirteen years old could register in.<sup>41</sup>

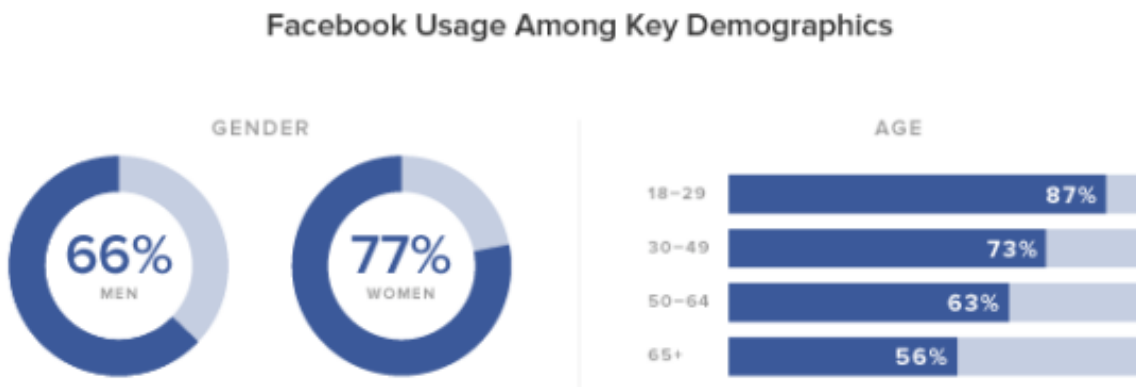
Facebook allows its members to connect with other people, through adding them as “friend”, to post messages and to upload photos and videos. Once a member is friend with another one, he can react to his publications, by liking them, commenting them and sharing them. All members can join common-interest communities. Moreover, every member has a private instant messenger, through which he can have a private conversation with other users.

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<sup>41</sup>Carlson, 2010

In the first quarter of 2016, Facebook reached “1.65 billion monthly active users”<sup>42</sup> which makes it the world’s most popular social network.

Facebook users’ demographics according to gender and ages:



Source: Coëffé, 2015

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## II. TWITTER

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Twitter has been created by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass in 2006. The idea came out of a brainstorming session of the company. It allows its members to register, by creating a profile with their names, contact information and a picture. The principle of this social media and micro-blogging service is to post and read 140-character messages, called “tweets”. The users can also post photos and short videos.

Users are required to create a profile to use the platform, but, unlike Facebook, they can see other users’ profile freely, without having to connect with them, the posts are public by default<sup>43</sup>. However, if they want the posts from other users to appear on what they call their news feed, they have to “follow” them, but without being automatically followed back. Users can “retweet” a tweet posted by

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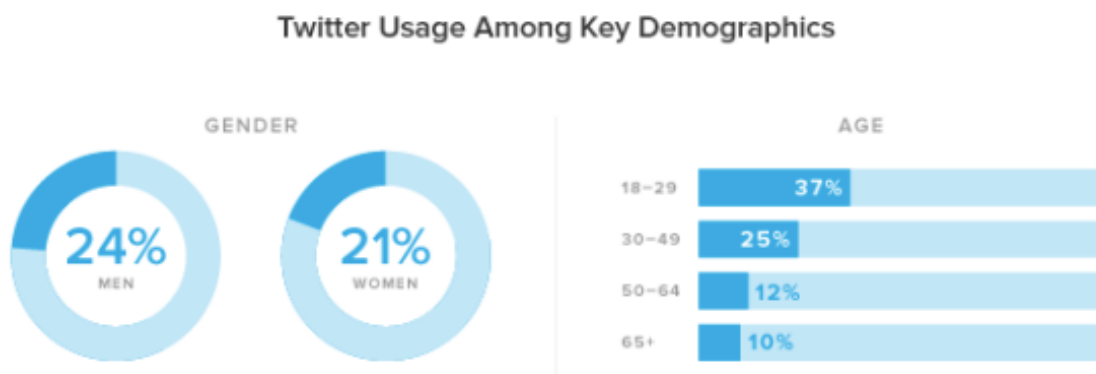
<sup>42</sup> Statista, 2016a

<sup>43</sup> Miller, 2010

another user, which means forward a tweet. Users can also identify another user by using the “@” symbol followed by his username, to speak to him directly. Thanks to the hashtags (#), users can categorize their posts; which enable other users to find more easily the posts about a specific subject.

In the first quarter of 2016, Twitter reached “310 millions monthly active users”<sup>44</sup> which makes it one of the world’s most popular social media.

Twitter users’ demographics according to gender and ages:



Source: Coëffé, 2015

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### III. INSTAGRAM

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Instagram was created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in 2010. The name comes from “instant camera” and “telegram”<sup>45</sup>. In 2012, Facebook bought this platform. This social media allows user to create an account with their email address. The user has, then, to personalize its profile, by uploading a profile picture and choosing a username, which can be changed. The principle of this platform is to share photos and short videos.

It was created to “solve three simple problems”<sup>46</sup>:

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<sup>44</sup>Statista, 2016b

<sup>45</sup>Instagram.com

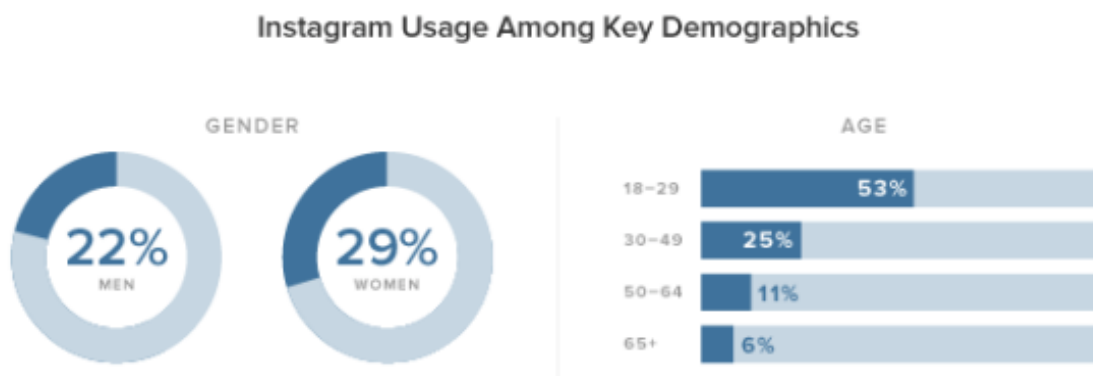
<sup>46</sup>Instagram.com

- 1) To improve the quality of the photos taken with Smartphone thanks to the filters, making them look as professional photos.
- 2) To be able to upload your photos once and share them on other social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and Tumblr.
- 3) To make easier and faster the uploading experience.

Besides the possibility of posting pictures and short videos, users can see the photos and short videos of other users. The privacy policy by default for the content and the profile is public, which means that every user can see one's pictures and videos, even if they are not connected. However, it is possible to make your profile private; in this case, the user has to accept the follow requests. A user can follow another user, without being automatically followed back. When a user uploads a picture or a video, he or she has the possibility to add hashtags in the description, in order to enable the other users to see the post if they search for this hashtag.

In April 2016, Instagram reached the “400 million monthly active accounts”<sup>47</sup> which makes it the world's eighth most popular social media.

Instagram users' demographics according to gender and age:



Source: Coëffé, 2015

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<sup>47</sup>Statista, 2016c

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#### IV. LINKEDIN

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LinkedIn was launched in 2003 by Reid Hoffman and Allen Blue and their team members from Paypal, Eric Ly, Jean-Luc Vaillant, Lee Hower, Konstantin Guericke, Stephen Beitzel, David Eves, Ian McNish and Yan Pujante. LinkedIn is a business-oriented platform, used to create professional networks between its members. LinkedIn allows its users to create a profile, with contact information, real name and a photo, and to connect with other users, known in the real life, and this network is like real-world relationships between professionals.

LinkedIn can be used in various ways depending if the user is a job seeker, an employer or a simple user:

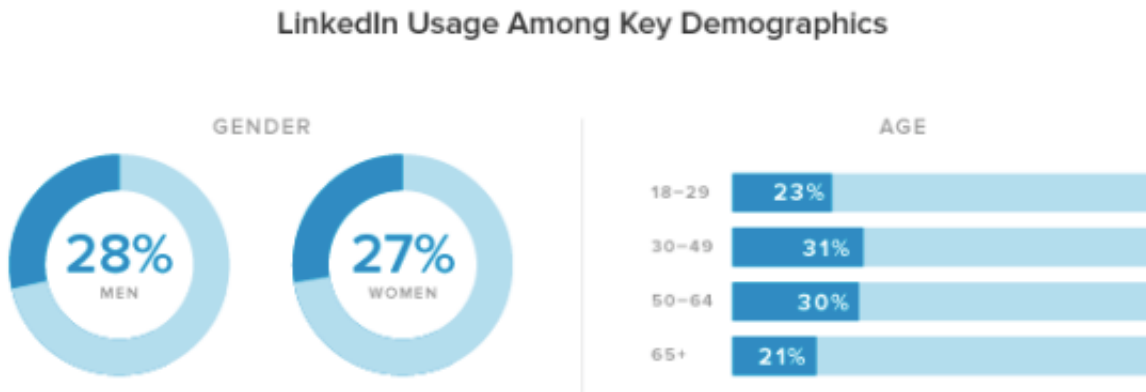
Profiles	Job seeker	Employer	User
<b>“Obtaining introductions to the connections of connections (called second-degree connections) and connections of second-degree connections (called third-degree connections)”</b>	x	x	x
<b>“Finding jobs, people and business opportunities recommended by someone in one’s contact network”</b>	x	x	x
<b>“Listing jobs and searching for potential candidates”</b>		x	
<b>“Reviewing the profile of hiring managers and discover which of their existing contacts can introduce them”</b>	x	x	x
<b>“Posting own photos and viewing photos of others to aid in identification”</b>	x	x	x
<b>“Following different companies and receiving notifications about the new joining and offers available”</b>	x	x	x
<b>“Saving jobs that they would like to apply for”</b>	x		x

<b>“Liking and congratulating each other’s updates and new employments”</b>	X	X	X
<b>“Seeing who has visited one’s profile page”</b>	X	X	X

Source: Wikipedia, 2015

In the first quarter of 2016, LinkedIn reached “433 million members”<sup>48</sup>

LinkedIn users’ demographics according to gender and age:



Source: Coëffé, 2015

## 2. SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS TO CREATE ENGAGEMENT

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### A. CO-CREATION

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The creation of value is not anymore only company-centred. With the possibility for customers to have access to more choices of products and services, resulting from the Web 2.0 development, and social medias, customers are more and more demanding. They want personalized experiences, they

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<sup>48</sup>Statista, 2016d

are more “informed, empowered and active”<sup>49</sup> thanks to social medias because they have access to communities, they can give and read feedbacks about a company’s services and they will be more likely listening to other consumers’ voice than to the firm itself. The consumers are not dependent on the firms to receive information anymore; the social media give them an alternative source of information through other consumers’ reviews.

The customers can now easily access the information, they have more power and they are more active. These changes in the customers’ behaviours challenge the companies. Companies moved on from the traditional model, where companies were the only value creator and the customers were only the demand target for the firm’s offerings, to a new model of value creation, where both companies and customers collaborate to create value and compete to extract the economic value<sup>50</sup>. This concept is called value co-creation, both parts join to create value. Prahalad and Ramaswamy defined it as a strategy conducted by two parties, or more, (a company and its customers) to produce a valued outcome.

As we have seen before, social media are an important tool for the companies to communicate with their customers. Once more, companies can use social media to create co-creation as it allows them to communicate more directly and quickly with the customers. Moreover, they can receive feedbacks easily. Kane and Fichman argued that firms cannot neglect this great opportunity that social media bring them, to co-create value with their customers<sup>51</sup>.

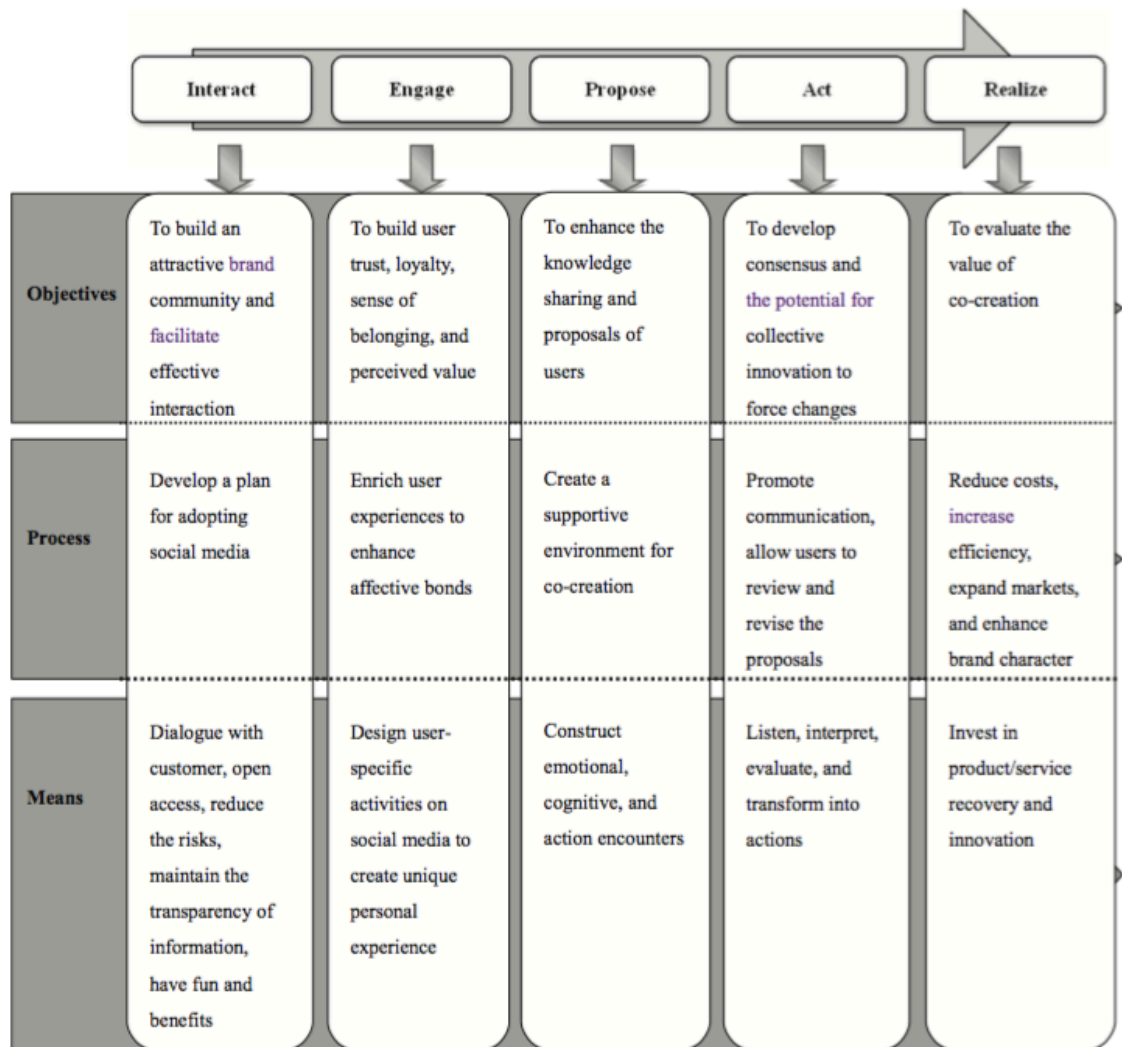
Kao et al. created a co-creation process model, in which there are five stage to go through to co-create with their customers:

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<sup>49</sup>Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004

<sup>50</sup>Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004

<sup>51</sup>Kane and Fichman, 2009



Source: Kao et al., 2016

In this model, we can see that the first stage needs adoption of social media. Throughout all the steps, companies have to use social media in order to get feedbacks and reviews from their customers, and the proposals.



## B. PICTURE MARKETING

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The concept of Picture Marketing can be defined as a set of techniques to promote a product, a service or a company through images<sup>52</sup>. This strategy can help the company to engage the customers, to foster the shares of a post or developed the online reputation of the company.

Pictures are easy to assimilate, and faster to understand than texts. They are more captivating and emotionally affecting users than textual content<sup>53</sup>, images have the power to make people react, much more than words. First, because the message carried by images is faster to get and to understand. Second, because it humanizes the concept presented through it, and the brand itself. It is easier for people to realize and to believe something they see, than something they read. It catches more their attention, and can carry strong messages that can be understood and assimilated as fast as in 13 milliseconds<sup>54</sup>.

Moreover, a picture doesn't require any language comprehension. It can reach a lot bigger number of people than texts. According to Manic (2015), "most people remember 80% of what they see and only 20% of what they read"<sup>55</sup>, a consequent number which confirms the importance of Pictures in online marketing campaigns.

Moreover, Instagram, the picture-based platform, is producing 50 times more customer engagement and interaction with the customers than other platforms, such as Twitter<sup>56</sup>. This data proves social media users are attracted by Pictures.

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<sup>52</sup> Oeblinger, 2014

<sup>53</sup> Gupta, 2013

<sup>54</sup> Trafton, 2014

<sup>55</sup> Manic, 2015

<sup>56</sup> Peterson, 2014

With the development of social media, more and more companies are registered on the different platforms. Here also, companies have to face competition to attract the users. The content published is one important criterion to stand out from the competition. In order to attract the most users, companies have to publish high-quality content, to gain their interest; even if user-generated content has more impact than marketers-generated content.

When a company posts too often, it can clutter users' feed, it will make it difficult for them to see other posts in which they might be interested. Secondly, if these posts are not of interest for them, it will bother them and they might "unfollow", or "unfriend" the brand's account.

Nowadays, it is important for a company to show its expertise to its customers, to provide them education on things they don't know, to appear useful to them by providing them added value compared to competitors<sup>57</sup>. However, posts should differ depending on the social media platform used. For example, on Twitter, users can only publish 140 characters, and on LinkedIn users publish less and are more focused on connections with other users.

### 3. CONCLUSION

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We have seen in the previous part that social media are considered as new media. It marks an end to the mass media era, and to the businesses' control over the consumers. We can say that the mass communication is no longer efficient; to reach their targets companies need to focus on communities. The social media have abundance of communities, and the companies can directly target their customers on them.

Moreover, the customers are more likely to share a good or bad experience on social media and the Community Managers can easily find those discussions, and take action if the sharing is bad, or

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<sup>57</sup> Tsimonis et al., 2016

thank the customers if the sharing is good, for example. Being active on social media will humanize the brands, and make easier the relationships between the customers and the brands.

However, as social media are still new tools of communication, there is not a lot of theories and advice for companies to help them to understand how they can engage their consumers. Nevertheless, few tools are starting to interest the academicians, as the Picture Marketing to promote products or service through pictures, and content Marketing, to educate customers on a specific domain. The co-creation tool is already well known, and identified as being efficient. It makes customers feeling useful and important for the brands. They appreciate to be listened, and it engages them. We will now see in the next part what engage customers on social media.

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## III. INVESTIGATION

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### 1. OBJECTIVES

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The main objective of this thesis is to understand how marketing teams can create engagement on the social media, and which techniques are more efficient. As seen in the literature review, the customers are now controlling the content about brands on social media. The research will be, thus, conducted through customers' point of view, in order to know what they feel about brands on social media, to be able to discover the most efficient techniques marketers can use.

The objectives are:

- To know what kind of marketing strategy will engage customers by creating interactions between the brand and the customers, and between customers themselves
- To define what kind of marketing strategy will encourage positive Word of Mouth

### 2. HYPOTHESIS

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From the information in the literature review, and to answer to the objectives, five assumptions have been made and will be analysed in this study:

H1: Posting on a regular basis will engage the customers

H2: Co-creation will engage customers by making them feel important

H3: Customers are more willing to share picture posts

H4: Targeting its audience through specific social media platforms will engage customers

H5: Customers are more interested by high quality content posts

### 3. METHODOLOGY

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As the research will be conducted based on customers' point of view, the method used will be a quantitative approach. As the main objective is to know how social media users react to brand-generated content on social media platforms, it is better to collect data from a large number of people, and to compare the responses for each question, that will be designed to answer to the objectives and to verify the hypothesis.

According to We Are Social, the total population is 7.395 billion, among them 3.419 billion are Internet users, and among them 2.307 billion are active social media users<sup>58</sup>. The questionnaire will be web-based and delivered on social networks in order to directly touch the concerned population. There is no need to conduct a postal questionnaire as the survey only need to be answered by people having access to the Internet and the social media. This questionnaire has been shared through expatriates and professionals' communities in order to get answers from people over 18 years old, as the legislation considered that, when a minor is buying something on the Internet, he is under the responsibility of his or her legal tutor. It is the legal tutor's opinion that plays the biggest role in minors' purchases.

The questionnaire form used is Google Form as it does not require any payments, or does not limit the questions to a certain number. There are 22 questions designed to prove or disprove the assumptions made (See Annexe 1).

In this following table we will see for what purpose each question is designed:

Question	Purpose
Questions 1, 2 and 3	Demographic classification
Question 4	To make sure the respondents are using social media
Questions 5, 6, 7 and 8	To know how the respondents are using social media

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<sup>58</sup> Chaffey, 2016

Questions 9 and 10	To prove or disprove hypothesis 3
Questions 11, 12, 13 and 14	To prove or disprove hypothesis 2
Question 15	To prove or disprove hypothesis 1
Question 16 and 17	To prove or disprove hypothesis 4
Questions 18 and 19	To prove or disprove hypothesis 5
Question 20	To understand why people unfollow brands
Question 21	To make sure interacting with brands engage the customers
Question 22	To know if people are likely to advocate the brand

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#### 4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

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This survey has been conducted in May 2016, and gathered answers from 250 respondents. All the questions were closed-end questions as the information needed to prove or disprove the assumptions made was specific. However, some of the questions had a section “Other” where the respondents could freely add information. The results of the survey are detailed below (See Annexe 2 for the results’ graphics):

##### Answers to questions 1, 2 and 3:

Among the 250 respondents who answered to the questionnaire, 60% are women, and 40% are men. This result is not surprising as the survey has been uploaded and share on the author’s Facebook account, and 77% of women are registered on Facebook against 66% of men, according to Coëffé’s study<sup>59</sup>. All the respondents are over 18 years old, a big majority of them (72%) are between 18 and

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<sup>59</sup>Coëffé, 2015

29 years old, 16% are between 30 and 49 years old, 8% are between 50 and 64 years old, and only 4% are over than 65 years old. These results are due to the fact that the author shared the survey on her own online communities, which gather members with common interests, and similar demographics positions. Moreover, the users over 50 years old are a minority on social media as these platforms are quite new. Unsurprisingly, the majority of the respondents have either an active life with an employ (44%), or without an employ (12%), and the other majority is student (40%). Only 4% of them are retired. These results correspond to the age of the respondents: a majority are between 18 and 49 years old, people in this age range are either students or professionally active.

#### Answers to question 4:

Among the 250 respondents, 4% of them don't have social media accounts. The survey will then continue with 240 respondents, as it is about their behaviour on social media. This percentage of people who don't have social media accounts correspond to the respondents who answered they are over 65 years old and retired.

#### Answers to questions 5, 6, 7 and 8:

Among the 240 remaining respondents, 91,7% of them are registered on Facebook, 75% on Instagram, 37,5% on Twitter, 37,5% on LinkedIn, and 8,3% of them also choose the "other" options, and answered they are also registered on Snapchat. Through these result, we can see that the majority of the respondents are on Facebook, which is the world's most popular platform, with 1.65 billion members. However, in the second position is Instagram, the picture social media. A minority of respondents also added Snapchat, which is also a recent picture social media. We can see here how important the pictures are for the social media users, as pictures are the core of Instagram and Snapchat.

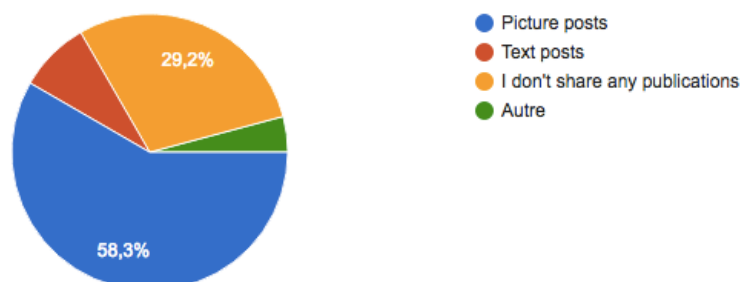
79,2% of the respondents registered on social media interact with brands on these platforms, and among these 79,2%, 66,7% interact with brands mostly on Facebook, 58,3% on Instagram, 12,5% on Twitter, 12,5% on LinkedIn, and 12,5% on none. Brands can nowadays reach most of their clients or potential clients through social media platforms, these results prove how important is the communication between brands and customers on social media. Social media are an important mean of communication between customers and brands. The social media platforms have applications on mobile and tablets, it means that users are reachable everywhere at anytime.

70,8% of these same respondents interact with brands by liking their publications, 54,2% by sharing the posts, 20,8% by commenting the publications, 12,5% by speaking to the brand through private chat, 12,5% don't interact with brands, and 4,2% by other mean, such as through online events. The likes are fast, and are a great metrics to see if a campaign works and is successful. The more like a post get, the more visible it is. Liking a publication is the faster way of interacting with a brand, as it only requires one click. However, this is not considered as word-of-mouth as it stays between the users and the brand who published the liked post. Sharing is considered as word-of-mouth, because when a user shares a publication it then appears on his own social media account, and is visible from his friends, that may not have seen the original post before the share. Commenting the publication can also be considered as word-of-mouth as a user can comment tagging one of his friend on it. The tagged user will receive a notification saying that he has been tagged in a publication, and he will see the publication by clicking on the notification. If the comment does not include a tag, this is not considered as word-of-mouth, however, the user who comments can give feedback to the brand about the publications. From these results, we can see that most of the users will create word-of-mouth by sharing the publications.

#### Answers to questions 9 and 10:

58,3% of the people who answered the survey are most likely to share picture posts, 29,2% don't share any publications, 8,3% are sharing text posts and 4,2% share other kind of publications, such as link and new products launching posts. As seen in the theoretical part about Picture Marketing, pictures are appreciated by users as they are easy to understand and fast to spread a message. The majority of the respondents are more likely to share pictures than texts.

#### **9. What type of a brand's publications are you most likely to share?**





Among the respondents who share picture posts, 29,2% share it at least once per month, 20,8% less than once per month, and 8,3% at least once per week. 41,7% declare they never share picture posts. The majority of the respondents, who share picture posts, do it at least once per month.

These results confirm the assumption 3 which is “Customers are more willing to share picture posts.”

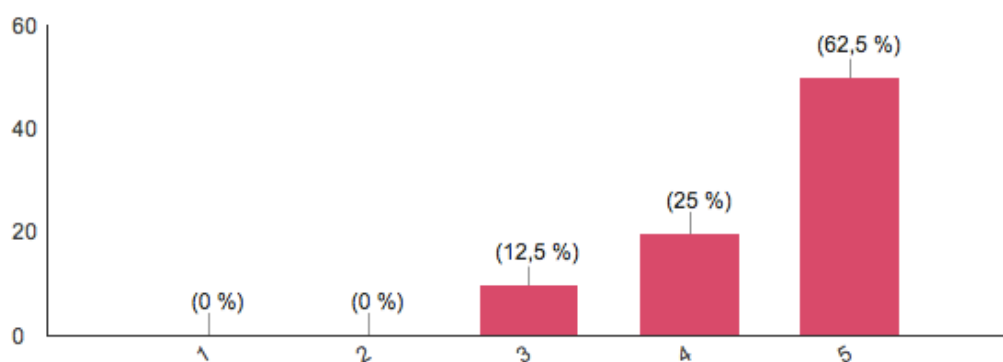
Answers to questions 11, 12, 13 and 14:

The percentage of respondents who have already contributed to develop or improve a product or service with a company through social media is 29,2% against 70,8% who never have. However, 33,3% of the respondents have already suggested something to a brand on social media.

Among the respondents who have already contributed to develop or improve a product and service and/or suggested something to a brand, 62,5% declared being listened by a brand made them feel very important, 25% felt important, 12,5% didn't feel important or not important, and no one felt not important or not important at all. 75% of these same respondents appreciate very much being listened, 12,5% appreciated it and 12,5% didn't appreciate or disparage it.

The percentage of users that have already co-create with a company is low, however the results to the questions 13 and 14 show, for most of them, that co-creation made them feel important or very important and they appreciate or very appreciate being listened by the brands, and cooperate with it to improve or develop a product or a service. These results confirm the assumption 2, which is “Co-creation will engage customers by making them feel important”.

**13. If the brand listened to you, how did it make you feel?**



#### Answers to question 15:

50% of the respondents, consider very important the regularity of posting on social media for a brand, 20,8% consider it important, 12,5% consider it not important at all, 12,5% consider it not important, and 4,2% consider it neutral.

The majority of the respondents prefer when a brand follow a regularity when posting on social media. Posting on a regular basis give a balance to the brand, and make it appears as serious. Posting once in a while don't show the expertise of a brand, and can be interpreted as a lack of resources. This result confirms the assumption 1, which is "Posting on a regular basis will engage the customers".

#### Answers to questions 16 and 17:

50% of the respondents declared they prefer being contacted by a company on specific social media, 20,8% prefer being contacted on any social media, and 29,2% don't want to be contacted by a brand.

Among the respondents who prefer being contacted by brands on specific social media, 71,4% admit they better answer to brands when being contacted the way they prefer. 28,6% admit they don't answer better to the brand.

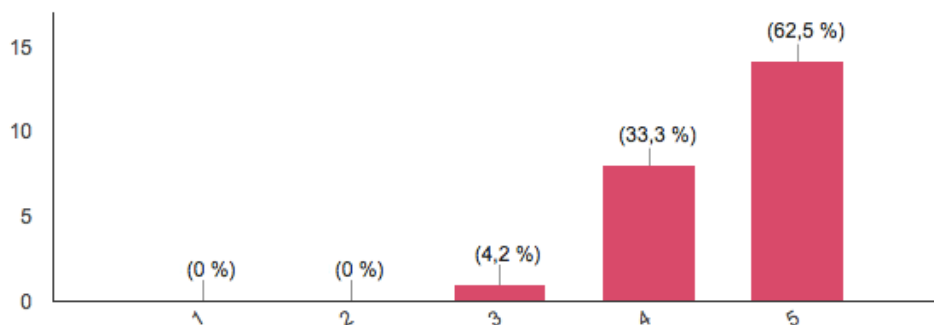
The majority of the respondents admit they prefer to be contacted on specific social media depending of the industry and target of a brand. For example, a B2B company should contact its customers on platforms as LinkedIn, because it is a professional-oriented social media, they will have more impact and appear as more serious. The customers will be directly targeting in the right place, which is very important as the mass-communication is over. Customers want to have a personalised service. And being contacted on the right social media will make them answer better to the brand. Therefore, if a brand contacts its customers on adequate platforms it will have a better impact on the customers, and the value of the exchange will be improved. These results confirm the assumption 4, which is "Targeting its audience through specific social media platforms will engage the customers".

#### Answers to questions 18, 19 and 20:

For 62,5% of respondents, the quality of a post is very important, 33,3% of them consider it as important and 4,2% are indifferent to it. To the next question, 62,5% of the respondents answered they

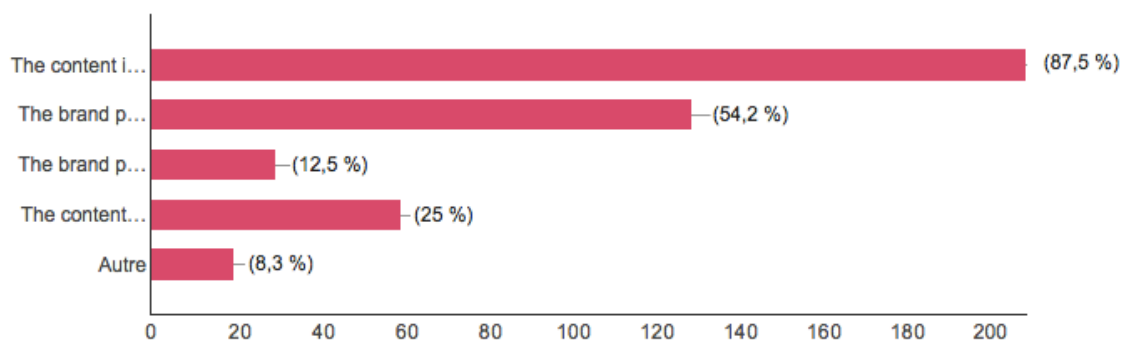
prefer high quality content posts, 16,7% of them prefer the regularity of posting, and 20,8% consider both activity as important.

### 18. From your point of view, how important is the quality of a post?



87,5% of the respondents would unfollow a brand because the content of its posts is repetitive and boring, 54,2% because the brand posts too often and/or their newsfeed gets crowded by its publications, 12,5% because the brand posts not often enough, 25% because the content of the posts is irrelevant to the brand and 8,3% for other reasons (ethical reasons: if the brand value are too far from their personal values).

### 20. What main reason will make you unfollow a brand?



Those results show how important the quality of a post is for customers. If the content of the posts is repetitive and boring, or irrelevant to the brand, the customers are likely to unfollow the brand and, thus, end their relationship with it. The brand has to post content that is interesting and that show

its expertise in their domain. It will also prove the brand is serious. These results confirm the assumption 5, which is “Customers are more interested by high quality content”.

Answers to question 21:

29,2% of the respondents feel absolutely more engaged when a brand interacts with them on social media, 25% feel more engaged, 33,3% don't feel more or less engaged, 4,2% don't feel more engaged, and 8,3% don't feel at all more engaged.

These results prove how important it is to have a good social media marketing strategy, as it will engage the customers and therefore increase their loyalty to the brand.

Answers to question 22:

Among the respondents, 29,2% are likely to recommend a brand they like on social media, 25% are very likely to recommend a brand on social media, 20,8% are not likely to do it, 16,7% are neutral, and 8,3% are not likely at all to recommend a brand on social media.

If a brand achieves to satisfy its customers on social media, the majority of them are likely or very likely to advocate the brand to their relatives and friends. The reputation of the company will then be better, and it will increase the trust of customers in this same brand.

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## CONCLUSION

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Thanks to the academicians, experts and professionals of Marketing we've been able to further understand the notion of Customer Engagement and Social media. In this study, we have seen that customer engagement is a relationship between a customer and a brand, translated into an active participation from the customer and a creation of experience from the brand, in order to make the customer purchase the brand's products.

Customer engagement is very important for a brand as it will allow the company to save cost and increase sales volume, because attracting new customers costs more than retaining existing customers. Moreover, loyal customers are more likely to buy bigger volume, and remain faithful even if the competition prices are lower. With the proliferation of competition, companies have to be careful, and to engage their customers in order to have a security, and continue to sustain. Furthermore, loyal and satisfied customers are likely to speak about a brand to their relatives, and people are more likely to trust a customer than the brand itself when spreading messages. Loyal customers will allow a company to save cost, to have a security regarding the competition, and they will convert other potential customers into customers, and loyal customers, without any additional cost for the company.

A company can grow a relationship with its customers through different touch-points, through the three different step of a purchase (pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase). In this work we focused on one kind of touch-points: the social media. We've seen, thanks to academicians, that social media are online network platforms that allow members to create, share and exchange content through communities. This touch-point is recent, but already very important for the brand. Users are reachable at anytime, anywhere. And more than that, nowadays, customers want personalised experience; the mass-communication is ending. They want to be seen as individuals and not as targeted group anymore. On social media, it is easier for a brand to personalise each message or interaction to each customer they have contact with. They can easily know when customers speak about their brand, they can react to it (whether it is good or bad) and they have access to lots of information about their customers. On social media platforms, companies can interact with customers throughout all the steps of a purchase: before, during and after the purchase.

There are many ways to create engagement for a company, and it also depends of the industry the company belongs to and the customers it targets. However, there are some general activities that can create engagement, such as being available for its customers at anytime, which is challenging but easier nowadays with social media, as they can get notification when a user is talking to them or about them with other users. Another important tool to create customer engagement is listening and learning. When a company is launching a marketing campaign on social media, it is to reach customers and to aware them of their products, or services. When a customer gives a feedback, whether it is negative or positive, if the company listen to it, and use it to improve its campaign, its products, its services, for example, it will be appreciated by the community, and the company will be seen as human, and caring about its customers.

Using tools that create engagement is important; however, if the company does not measure the efficiency of it, it is useless. There is no universal metric to calculate engagement; however, each type of company has its metrics to calculate customer engagement. On social media, measuring engagement is easier as the company can see how many people liked, shared, or commented one particular post. It is important to measuring the success of a campaign to be able to improve or change what is needed to be changed, in order to please the customers and create more customer engagement, and visibility.

In this study, we have focused on four social media platforms: Facebook, because it is the most popular in the world, Twitter, because it is the second most popular in the world, Instagram, because this is the most popular picture-oriented platform in the word, and LinkedIn, because it is the most popular business-oriented platform. Each of these platforms and their use are different. Facebook is more focused on the communities, enabling users to be part of a limitless number of communities. Twitter is more humoristic than any other of these four platforms, where the distance between a brand and its customers is shorter than anywhere else. Instagram is focused on pictures; it is the core activity of this platform. And LinkedIn is focused on business communities, and activities.

On these platforms, different strategies are useful to engage customers such as co-creation, picture marketing and content marketing. These strategies are recent, and not really exploited by academicians to prove their utility on customer engagement. I have conducted a study, in order to know what strategies engage customers on social media, and create positive Word of Mouth.

In the results, we have seen that the five assumptions have been confirmed:

Assumption 1: Posting on a regular basis will engage the customer

If the posting activity of a company is not regular, the company will appear as not serious. If the company regularly makes updates of the statuses, it will give recent information to customers and they will feel like they can trust the brand. A lack of regularity can result in an instable reputation. Companies have to entertain the relationships with their customers, on a regular basis, and not only once in a while.

Assumption 2: Co-creation will engage customers by making them feel important

A company being attentive to its customers' feedbacks will satisfy them. As seen in the results of the survey, being listened make the customers feel important, and they appreciate it. Satisfaction is the key to customer engagement. Customers engage with brands when they are satisfied not only with their products or services, but also with the experiences they provide. Customers who give feedbacks to the companies are satisfied by their offers, but they realize improvements could be done. When the company which receives the feedback, listens to these feedbacks, the customers feel more like partners in a relationship than only people who give them money in exchange of its products or services.

Assumption 3: Customers are more willing to share picture posts

As we have seen in the theoretical part, Picture is a powerful way to carry a message; it can be understood by most of the people as it doesn't need any language comprehension, and they are assimilated in around 13 milliseconds. In the results of the survey, we have seen that social media users are more likely to share pictures than text. This result empowers Picture Marketing; which is a very recent theory. Word-of-Mouth is better transmitted through pictures, and it gives the brand more visibility.

Assumption 4: Targeting its audience through specific social media platforms will engage customers

As we have seen through academicians works, mass-communication is disappearing because it is no longer efficient. Customers are now in control of what they want to see and when they want to see it. The time is at the personalisation of the services. For this purpose, companies are more and more communicating on social media. However, they have to take into consideration that if they don't communicate on the right platform, in the right communities, their campaign won't be efficient, and won't have any impact on customers.

Moreover, when a brand interacts with a customer on the right platform, the customer is more likely to better answer to the brand. This exchange will create better value for the brand, as it will get better feedback or better contact with the customer; and for the customers as he or she will feel listened and important to the brand.

Assumption 5: Customers are more interested by high quality content posts

On social media, content is generating by users, but also by the companies themselves. High-quality content is an important criterion for customers as we've seen that 87,5% of the respondents would unfollow the brand if the content is repetitive and boring, and 25% if the content is irrelevant to the brand. Generating high-quality content in the domain of the company will demonstrate its expertise and its seriousness. We have seen through the theoretical part that the content a company generates should educate its customers, especially in B2B companies, where they already have knowledge about the domain. Posting uninteresting content on social media can make the customers end the relationship with a brand.

As seen above, social media marketing is important for companies to feed their relationships with the clients. We went through some steps that companies can follow to create customer engagement. Social media are always evolving, and companies should work on it on a full-time basis to be able to answer users' needs. However, even if a company follow these rules carefully, it doesn't guarantee the success of their social media strategy. One particular answer retained my attention, to the question 20, 8,3% respondents have answered that they would unfollow a brand on social media if their values don't match. One of these respondents had elaborate this answer by giving the example of Starbucks, saying that since Starbucks open a store in Saudi Arabia where women are prohibited, he stopped following Starbucks on social media, and consuming Starbucks products. Values remain important for customers, as they will engage with a brand that shares the same values. Customers build relationships with brands that share their values. One important thing companies has to do to keep the customers loyal, is to be loyal to their own values.



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# ANNEXES

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## Annexe 1: Survey

### CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

1. What is your gender? \*

- Men
- Women

2. What is your age? \*

- <18
- 18-29
- 30-49
- 50-64
- >65

3. What is your current professional position? \*

- Employed
- Unemployed
- Student
- Retired

4. Do you have any social accounts? \*

- Yes
- No (stop the survey here)

5. On which of the following social media platforms do you follow brand? (Choose more than one if necessary)

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- None
- Autre : \_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you interact with brands on social media?

- Yes
- No

7. On which social media do you most interact with brands? (Choose more than one if necessary.)

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- None
- Autre : \_\_\_\_\_

### 8. How do you interact with brands on social media?

- Commenting the brand's publications
- Liking the brand's publications
- Sharing the brand's publications
- Private messages
- I don't interact with brands
- Autre : \_\_\_\_\_

### 9. What type of a brand's publications are you most likely to share?

- Picture posts
- Text posts
- I don't share any publications
- Autre : \_\_\_\_\_

### 10. How often are you sharing picture posts by brands?

- At least one time per day
- At least one per week
- At least one per month
- Less than one per month
- Never



11. Have you ever contributed to develop or improve a product or service with a company through social media?

- Yes
- No

12. Have you ever suggested something to a brand?

- Yes
- No (go directly to question 15)

13. If the brand listened to you, how did it make you feel?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

14. To what extent did you appreciate being listened by a brand?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not appreciated at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very appreciated

15. How important do you consider the regularity of posting on social media, for a company?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

**16. How do you prefer to be contacted by a brand**

- On specific social media (for example: only on LinkedIn for professional purpose)
- Any social media (it has no importance for me) (go directly to question 18)
- I don't want to be contacted by brands (go directly to question 18)

**17. Being contacted the way you prefer, does it make you better answer to brands?**

- Yes
- No

**18. From your point of view, how important is the quality of a post?**

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

**19. Which of the following do you prefer?**

- High quality content
- Regularity of posting
- All of the above
- None of the above

**20. What main reason will make you unfollow a brand?**

- The content is boring and/or repetitive
- The brand posts too often and/or my newsfeed is getting crowded by its publications
- The brand posts not often enough
- The content of the post is irrelevant to the brand
- Autre : \_\_\_\_\_

**21. Do you feel more engaged with a brand if they are interacting with you on social media?**

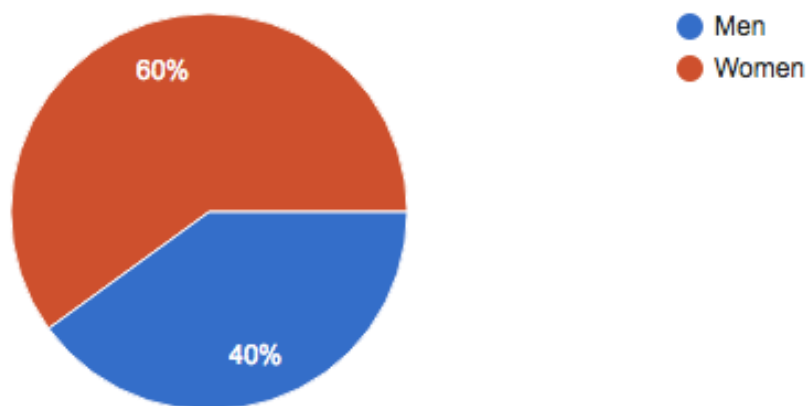
	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Absolutely

**22. Are you likely to recommend a brand you like, on social media?**

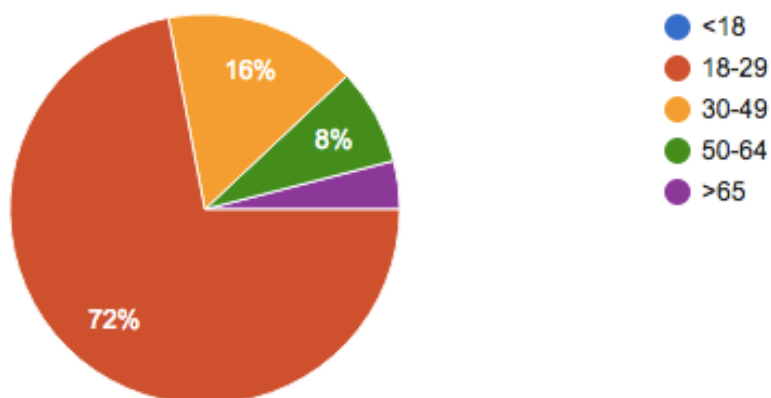
	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely

Annexe 2: Results of the survey

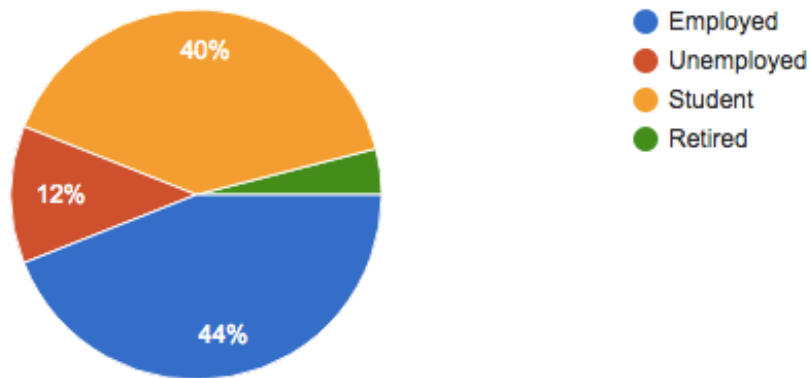
1. What is your gender?



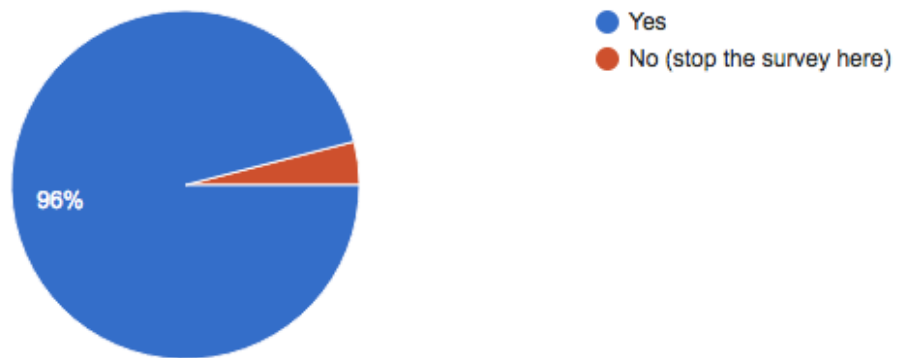
2. What is your age?



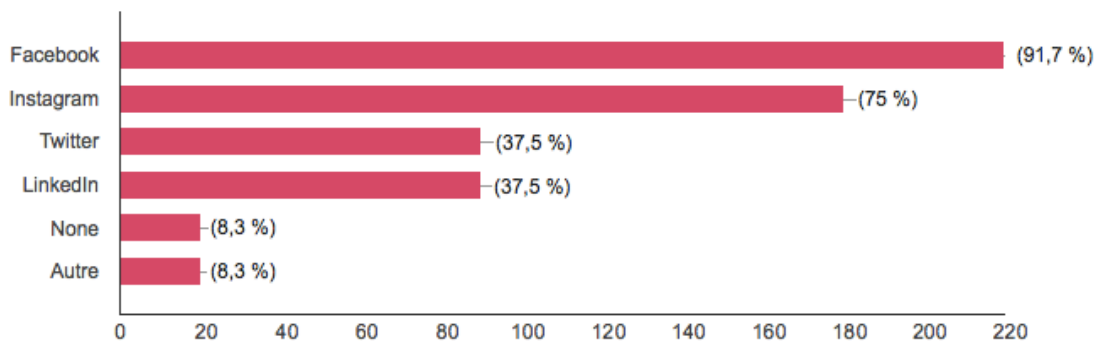
### 3. What is your current professional position?



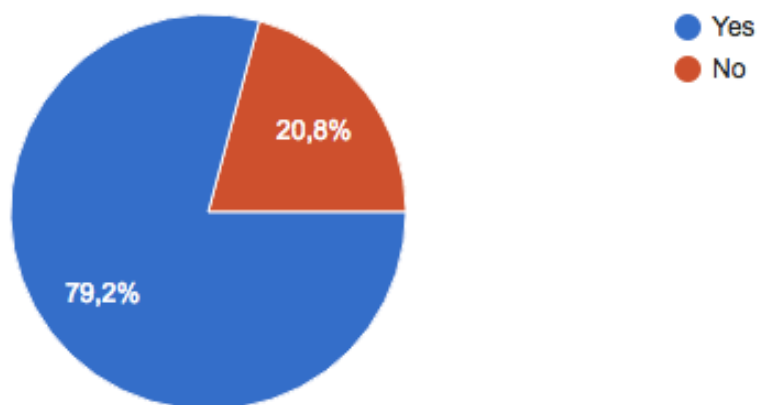
### 4. Do you have any social accounts?



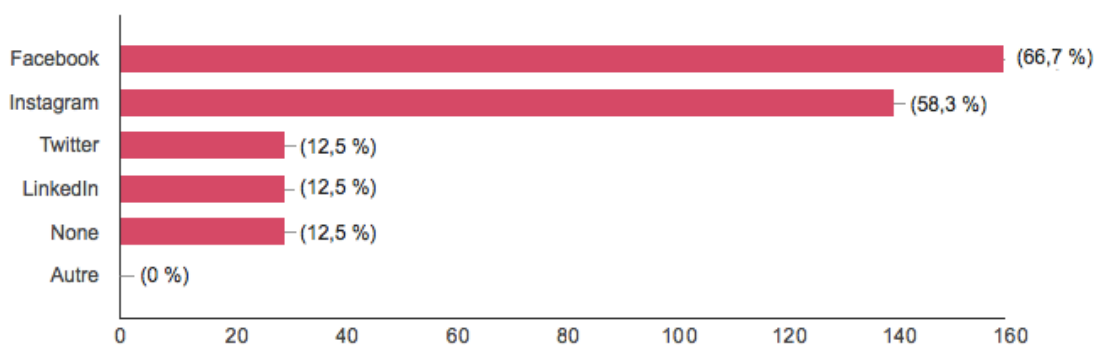
### 5. On which of the following social media platforms do you follow brand? (Choose more than one if necessary)



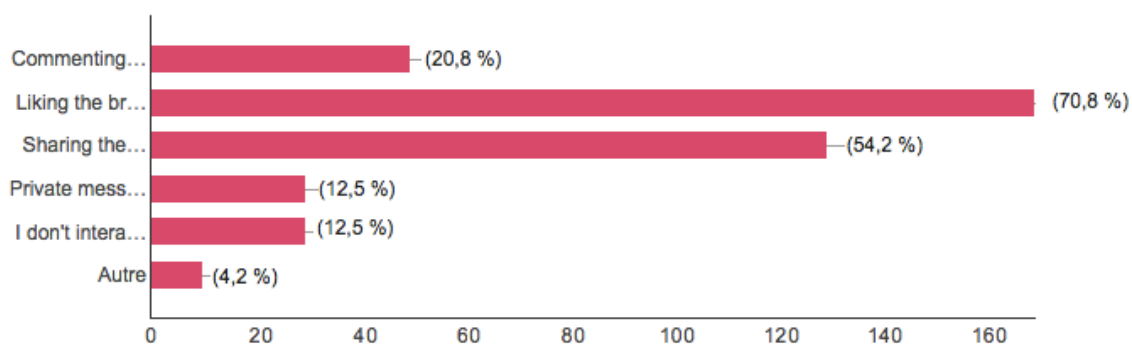
## 6. Do you interact with brands on social media?



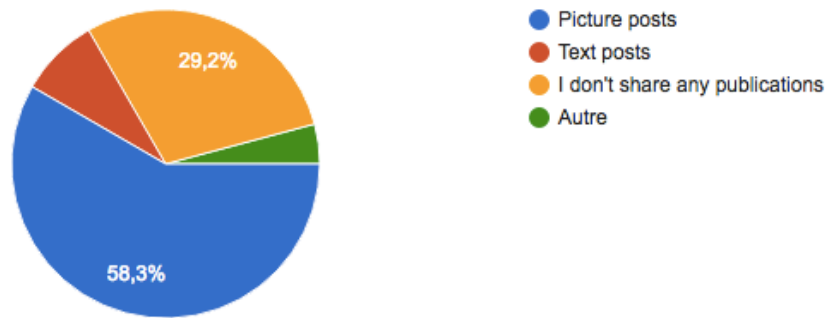
## 7. On which social media do you most interact with brands? (Choose more than one if necessary.)



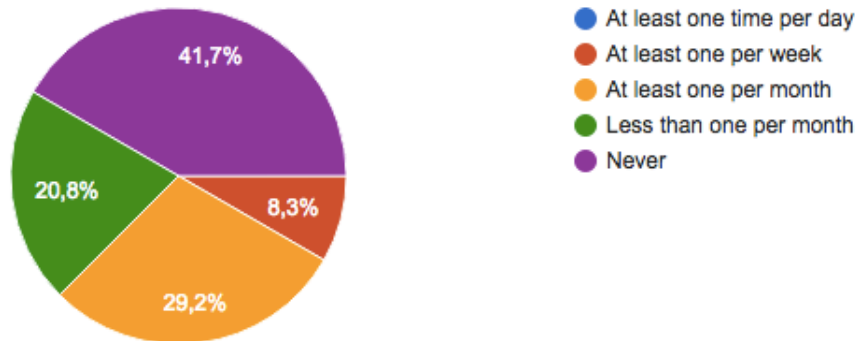
## 8. How do you interact with brands on social media?



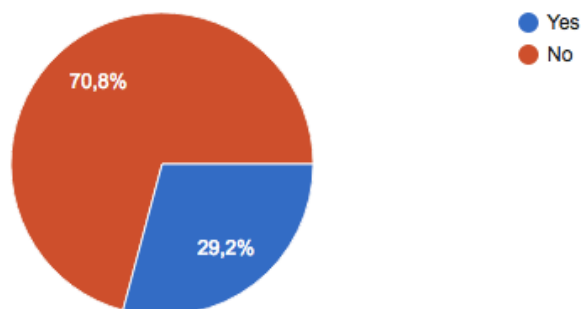
9. What type of a brand's publications are you most likely to share?



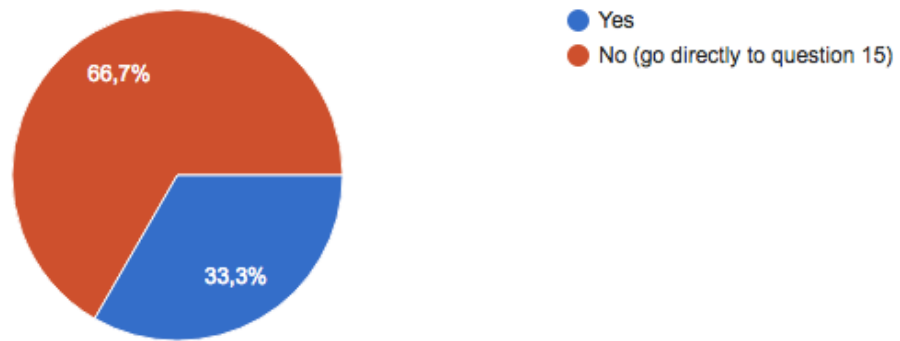
10. How often are you sharing picture posts by brands?



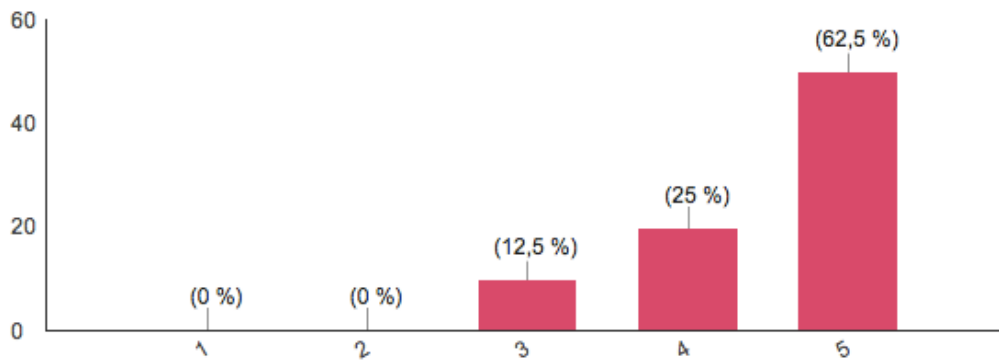
11. Have you ever contributed to develop or improve a product or service with a company through social media?



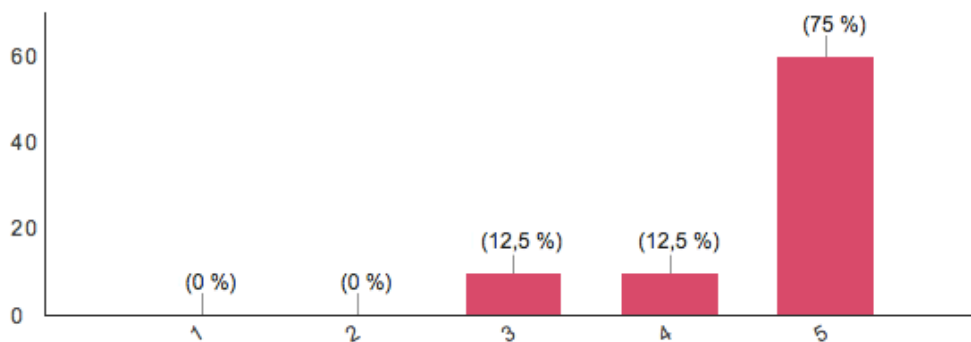
## 12. Have you ever suggested something to a brand?



## 13. If the brand listened to you, how did it make you feel?

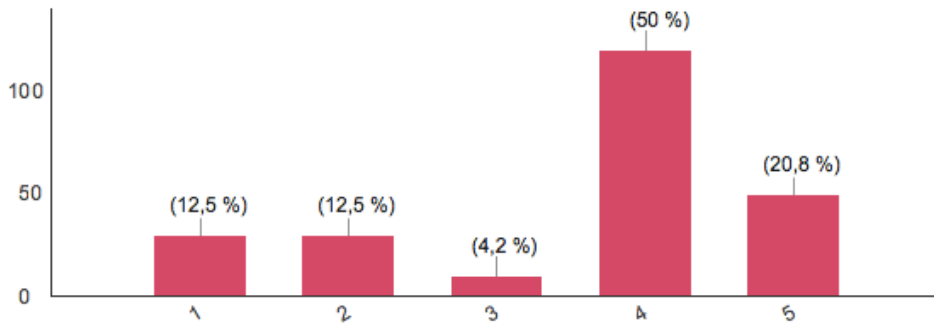


## 14. To what extent did you appreciate being listened by a brand?

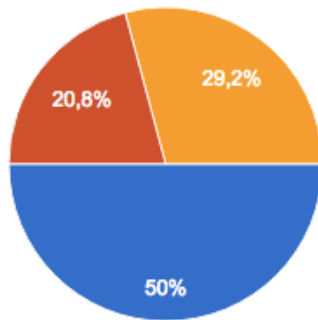




15. How important do you consider the regularity of posting on social media, for a company?

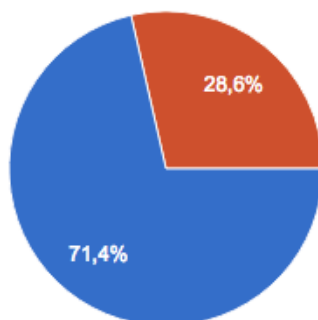


16. How do you prefer to be contacted by a brand



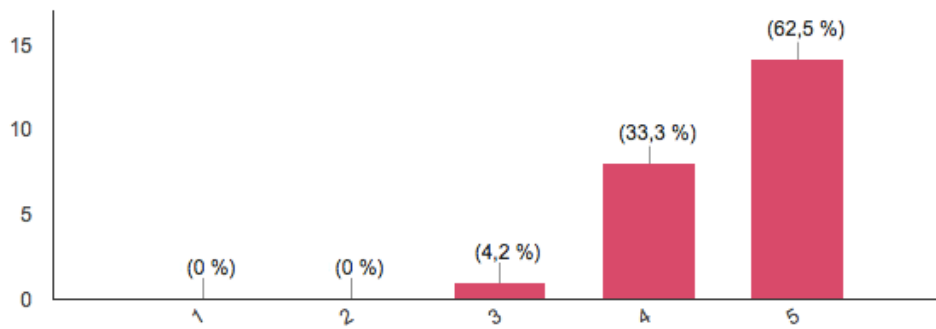
- On specific social media (for example: only on LinkedIn for professional purpose)
- Any social media (it has no importance for me) (go directly to question 18)
- I don't want to be contacted by brands (go directly to question 18)

17. Being contacted the way you prefer, does it make you better answer to brands?

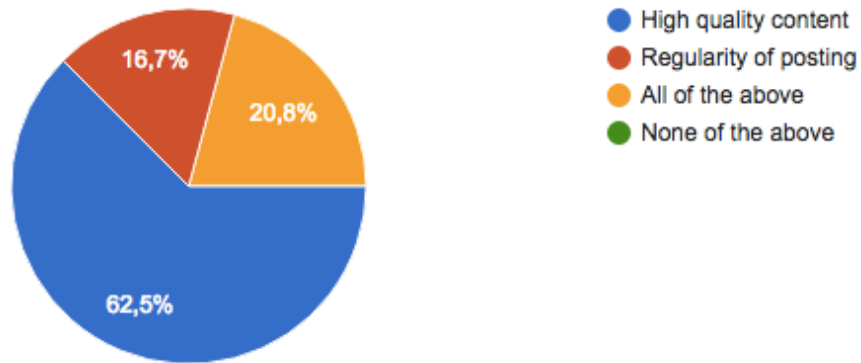


- Yes
- No

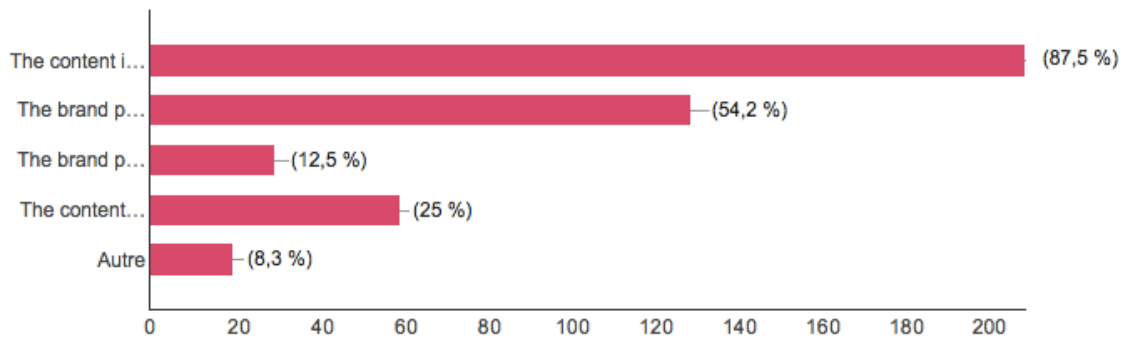
18. From your point of view, how important is the quality of a post?



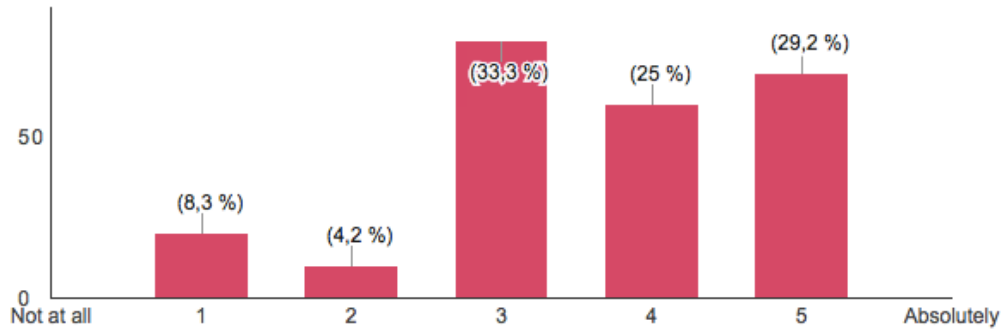
19. Which of the following do you prefer?



20. What main reason will make you unfollow a brand?



21. Do you feel more engaged with a brand if they are interacting with you on social media?



22. Are you likely to recommend a brand you like, on social media?

