Emotional Branding in Social Media

Case: Barcelona Home

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ABSTRACT

Internet has brought changes in peoples' lives as well as in relationships between sellers and buyers. Businesses have started using the Internet to connect with their customers directly and to promote their products and services online. One of the opportunities the web offers is promotion on social media platforms through creating communities and gaining followers. This change requires a marketing approach, which is different to traditional marketing. Meanwhile, the importance of brand and its connection with customers on an emotional level has grown. It was noticed that customers' emotions towards brands influence their purchase decision. Thus, the term of emotional branding appeared. The aim of the thesis is to study the connection between emotional branding and social media.

An understanding of the concepts related to emotional branding and social media is presented in theoretical and empirical parts of the research. In the first part of the thesis the theories of emotional branding and the role of social media are explained using secondary sources of data. The second part introduces the case company and its practices based on the mix of secondary and primary data collected from the case company. The key findings are presented and analysed in the development plan. The thesis finishes by answering the research questions that are asked in the beginning of the research.

The aim of the thesis is to analyse current performance of the case company in social media and what emotions the brand evokes in its customers. The main purpose is the development plan for the social media in relation to the theory of emotional branding. The results assist the case company to improve social media platforms and brand perception.

Key words: brand, emotion, emotional branding, rental market, social media

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

In the following chapter the general idea of the research is presented. It explains the research reason, questions and how the thesis proceeds in regard to research methods, objectives and data collection.

1.1 Research background

One can observe two very important changes in the business world, in the last ten years. First of all, modern marketing shows a tendency of emotional branding. Customers become emotionally attached to products and services they use, brands they trust and benefit from. Meanwhile, companies build strategies focusing on customer loyalty and use tools to increase awareness of their business and their main mission. (Förster 2014.) Nowadays, competition is fairly tough. Successful companies distinguish by their understanding of the importance that you do not sell in order to survive on the market. You bring your customers the best emotions and experience, so they would help you to survive in that competition. (Shaw 2007.) Another tendency is the increasing role of social media. Its platforms have transformed from leisure tools to efficient marketing communication channels. Obviously, companies have noticed the extent social media platforms connect people and create interaction between customers and businesses. Every day users receive marketing messages and advertisements, which do not disturb them, because they choose themselves what platform to follow. Consequently, the interest of the following investigation lies in understanding these two concepts working together.

On the other hand, the research has a case company which is the rental agency Barcelona Home, located in Barcelona, Spain. It narrows the research focus to the social media and emotional branding of a certain case in a certain industry. The agency offers various services including vacation rentals, leisure activities and rental management services. The company has a strong presence on different social media platforms, but

the management of the agency is willing to improve them. Therefore, the theoretical and practical reseach is conducted.

1.2 Thesis objectives, research questions and limitations

The investigation of the two tendencies of modern world focuses on the theory of emotional branding and the activity of the case company in social media. That leads to the discussion about emotional connection between social media followers/customers and the case company. In other words, the purpose of the research is to see the connection between emotional branding and social media platforms of the case company in order to develop its current strategy. Moreover, the research results show how to increase the level of interaction with followers and strengthen the brand.

In order to get the results, the research questions are defined. The clarity of research questions brings clear conclusions in the end of research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009). The thesis has research questions that help to keep a clear focus in the theoretical and practical investigation. The main research question is as follows:

- How can the social media, of the case company, be improved by applying the theory of emotional branding?

The main research question has a general focus of the thesis. The essence of the question can be expressed through the complication of layers presented by other related questions (Saunders et al. 2009). Therefore, to achieve an answer to the main question, the following sub-questions are composed:

- o What is emotional branding?
- o What is the role of social media in emotional branding?
- o How does the case company currently perform in their social media?
- o What emotions does the case company evoke in customers?

The research takes into consideration theoretical investigation and practical research. The research limitations help to bring a narrow focus on the research that emphasises the details of the topic and answers the research question(s) accurately and correctly (Saunders et al. 2009). The research focuses on the four following directions:

1) Tourism industry including rental services sector

The results cannot be used in another industry due to different perception of customers for different products and services. However, it might show specific elements of emotional branding that can be apply only in a certain industry.

2) Emotions of customers

The research focuses on what emotions customers of the case company feel towards the brand in general. The level of customer satisfaction in the case company is analysed according to the data collection. The emotions of followers in social media are not expressed due to the low level of interaction between followers and the case company.

3) A few social media platforms

The focus is only on several social media pages of the case company, which are presented in following chapters. They are most successful or important for the case company as a tool for emotional branding.

4) Social media marketing communication.

At present moment the case company develops its social media platforms and creates marketing communication content. The research continues in the same flow.

These limitations helps to keep a straight focus to be able to conduct a deep research, answer questions and create the strategy that suits this particular company in the particular situation.

1.3 Theoretical framework

The research focuses on three main themes: emotion, brand and social media. The scheme of theoretical headings and sub-headings is illustrated below, in FIGURE 1.

Emotion	Brand	Social media
• Definition • Connection between emotion and brand • Range of emotions	• Brand value • Brand awareness and recall • Brand loyalty • Brand identity	• Brand development in social media • Social media platforms • Examples of campaigns in social media

FIGURE 1. Theoretical framework

First, the reseacher familiarises with general concepts as emotion and brand that lead us to detailed understanding of these terms. Second, in order to investigate the theory of branding the analysis of the following topics is necessary: brand value, brand awareness, brand recall, brand loyalty and brand identity. Finally, the theory of social media is examined through studying brand development in social media and social media activities in certain platforms. In addition, the examples of campaigns are discussed in order to emphasise the importance of emotional branding in social media.

1.4 Research methodology and data collection

There are two methods in research methodology: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research is the research process of collecting numerical data to answer the research questions, such as 'how many', 'how much' and 'how often'. The data is presented in numerical form collected from questionnaires or tests. (Sukamolson 2017.) Qualitative research answers questions 'what', 'how' or 'why' which leads to an understanding of reasons, some aspects of social life. It can be imprecise and leave possible follow-up questions. This research method generates words rather than numbers through interviews, group discussion, written documents or observations. The number of cases is usually no more than 30 and data collected from these several cases should be sufficient for a deep analysis. (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010.)

The research method of the thesis is qualitative due to answering the research question 'how' and understanding of connection between emotional branding and social media of the case company. Consequently, the choice of this method leads to deciding which research approach the thesis applies and what type of data is collected. The next figure presents these three aspects.
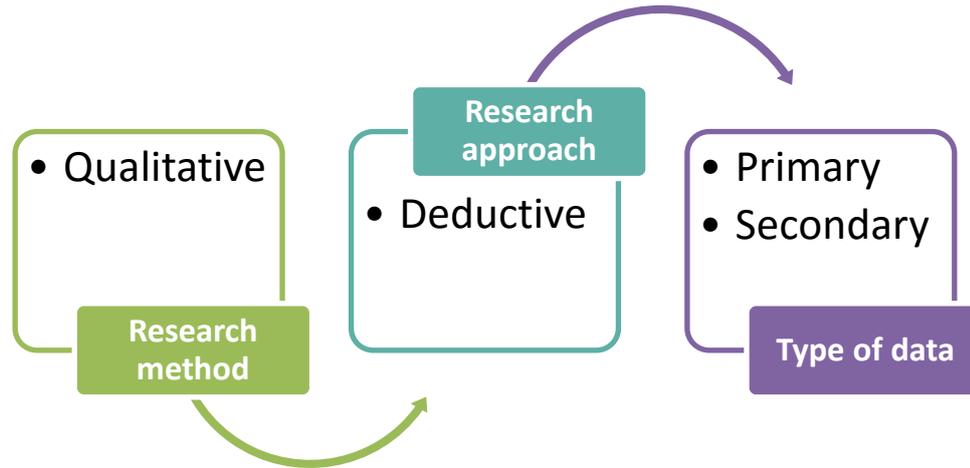
FIGURE 2. Research methodology

According to the figure above, the research approach is deductive, even though in qualitative researches the approach is commonly inductive. The main difference between inductive and deductive approaches is that the inductive approach explores a new theory while the deductive approach tests existing theory. (Soiferman 2010.) The theory is tested in this research and can be applied in the case company. Therefore, the deductive approach is more practical in this thesis.

Deductive reasoning helps the researcher develop current strategy from a theoretical point of view and to predict a phenomena. The steps of deductive approach are as follow: suggesting hypothesis, measuring operational terms, testing hypothesis, examining outcome, modifying the theory. (Saunders et al. 2009.) It leads the research to explanation of casual relationships between two concepts: emotional branding and social media.

In order to answer research questions and meet objectives, the relative data needs to be collected. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) discuss two methods of data collection: primary and secondary sources. Firstly,

this research presents secondary data, which is the data that has already been collected for some other purpose. It contains raw data or published summaries. The case company has statistics of social media platforms, internet site data and online computer database. (Interviewee 1.)

Secondly, the primary data is collected. As the research questions and objectives are concerned with what emotions people feel in social media, observations will be used as one of the primary sources. The observations are conducted with the following steps: systematic observation, recording, description, analysis, interpretation of peoples' behaviour. The qualitative observation is a participant observation. There are several forms of this term, but the research is focused on participation as observer, which means the researcher takes part in an activity and his or her identity is revealed. (Saunders et al. 2009.)

Another primary source is an interview. It helps to collect valid and reliable data that are relevant to the research questions and objective. Two interviews are conducted in the research. The first interview is presented as a discussion between the researcher and head manager of the case company. The type of interview is non-standardised, face-to-face interview. The second interview is between the researcher and one of the clients, which is conducted via a Skype call. The researcher uses semi-structure of interview in both occasions, which means there is a list of themes and questions, but the order may vary with a flow of conversation. During the interviews the notes are taken. (Saunders et al. 2009.)

1.5   Thesis structure

After the introduction chapter the thesis proceeds with theoretical and empirical researches. The following figure visualises the structure of the thesis.
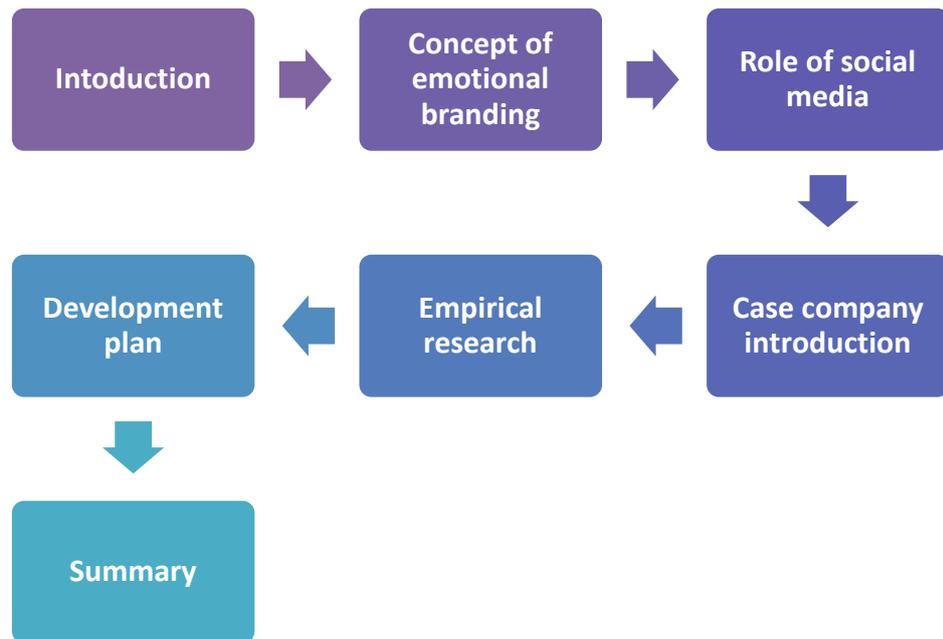
FIGURE 3. Thesis structure

There are two main chapters in the theoretical part studying two concepts of the topic: emotional branding and social media. The specific theoretical topics are covered above in the part of the theoretical framework. Then the case company is introduced to prepare readers for the next empirical research and data analysis of that company. The chapter of empirical research explains how empirical research was conducted and how data was collected and analysed. Deriving conclusions from the theory and empirical research, the development plan is suggested for the case company. In the end the research questions are answered and suggestions on further research are made.

2   THE CONCEPT OF EMOTIONAL BRANDING

The following part answers one of the sub-questions: What is emotional branding? Considering the concept of emotional branding, the author gets familiar with its definition, characteristics and functions. Afterwards, the research leads to a deeper discussion about the terms of emotion, brand values, brand awareness and recall, emotional clusters, brand loyalty and brand identity.

2.1   Definition of emotional branding

The first common association with the term brand are logo and name. However, they only present the brand, but do not define it. A brand is a person's *feeling* about a product, service, or organization. People use a certain product or service and it makes them feel a certain way, because people are emotional and intuitive beings. (Neumeier 2003.)

The term *emotional* branding appears to identify how the process of creating a brand connects with people's emotions. Gobé (2003) defines emotional branding as a promise for delivering customers' expectations, which do not disappoint customers and bring them an experience with a company's product or service.

There are several benefits of emotional branding. Firstly, brand helps to manage risks by creating reputation of a trusted company. If a company reaches a crisis, it has a bigger chance to survive on a market than a company without a trusted brand. Secondly, brand provides growth and increases profit. A loved brand receives preferences and attracts new consumers. Finally, brand helps to maintain long-term sustainability because it creates a relationship with customers on an emotional level. (Kelly 2012.)

Emotional brand combines the following characteristics:

- Clear single-minded promise

A company focuses on one feature of their brand that explains what customers should expect from it. For example, customers of the well-known car brand Volvo expect safety from their product.

- Meaning to people

A brand meets customers' emotional as well as rational needs.

- Uniqueness in market

In a competition a brand helps to differentiate a product or service from other competitors.

- Consistency

A brand is consistent in delivering its promises and do not disappoint people. (Kelly 2012.)

In other words, in order to create a brand it is important for a company to define itself, its differences and promises, to answer the question what reputation they want to have. In accordance Kelly (2012) states in his interview that "great brands know who they are and they tell their story". Emotional branding is a process of creating a brand related to customers on an emotional level. Emotional brand is important for a company as an asset to invest in and reach growth.

2.2   Emotion

As explained above, the term of brand is strongly connected to the term of emotion. Emotion is a complex term and still open for discussions. Burkitt (2014) argues, with the Oxford English Dictionary definition of an emotion, as a "strong feeling deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationships with others". The author believes that emotion is not necessary strong and not all feelings are emotions. For instance, a feeling of hunger cannot be defined as an emotion. In a more general way Kelther, Oately and Jenkins (2014, 4) determine an emotion as an

intermediate psychological state between people's concerns and events in life.

In relation to emotional branding, Martin and Morich (Föster 2014) understand emotions as catalysts that determine what stimulus people attend to or ignore. These catalysts affect people's behaviour and influence what to remember. Consequently, a brand focuses on what emotion to evoke, because it can drive a customers' action.

Föster (2014) distinguishes emotions to be object-related and subjectively felt. Object-related emotions show feelings towards a certain physical item or a situation. Subjectively felt emotions appear due to physiological changes or as behavioural reactions. In the case of emotional branding the obvious type of emotions is object-related which connects to customer's usage of a product or a service.

There is a variety of different kinds of emotions determined by the following features:

    a) quality (e.g. anger, fear or joy)
    b) intensity (weak or strong fear)
    c) duration (emotional episodes)

In addition to the aforementioned emotion quality examples, there are five basic emotion families: anger, fear, enjoyment, sadness, disgust. They are presented as families because they show variations of emotional states related to a common theme. (Burkitt 2014, 26.) These variations are visually presented in Figure 4 of Shaw (2007, 27) shown below.
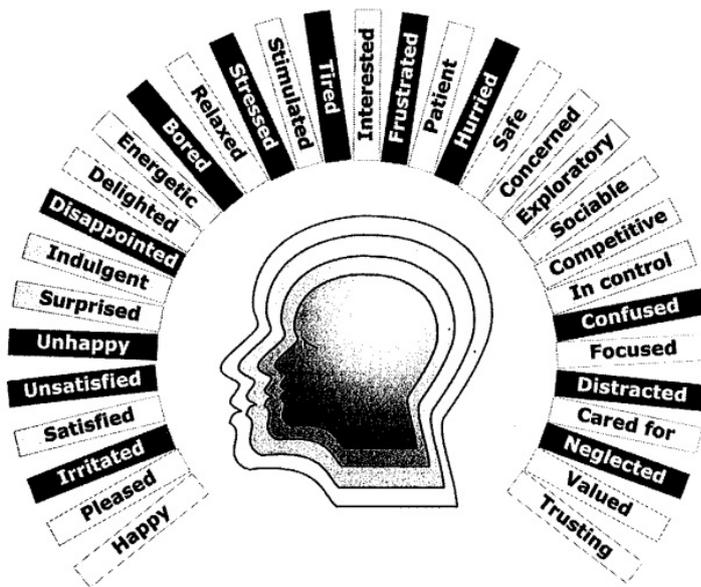
FIGURE 4. Consolidated emotions evaluated (Shaw 2007, 27)

Shaw (2007) studied a customer experience and divided customers' emotions to four following clusters: destroying, attention, recommendation and advocacy. Destroying cluster is highlighted with a black colour in the figure above, while other clusters are in white. These clusters represent groups of emotions that a customer experience evoked in people and lead to different scenarios of brand-customer relationships that are discussed in the later chapters of the research.

Going further, the understanding of the term emotion shows the importance for creating a brand strategy. A brand influences the emotions of its audience as well as emotions affect a brand perception. Burkitt (2014) does not separate the terms of thought, feeling and perception because they are infused with emotion. Customers' emotions perform as a foundation in the relationship with a brand.

2.3   Brand value

Considering emotional branding, the research shows how a brand creates relationships on an emotional level with customers. Simultaneously, it creates value for customers, which drive their purchase decisions. Emotions are the source of our values and help people form and engage in relationship (Kelther 2014, 4).

A brand value delivers the functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits to the customer. Keeping emotional branding in mind, the investigation focuses on emotional benefits. A customer receives emotional benefits, if a brand gives a positive feeling during purchase or usage. Thus, a brand value is based on feelings and emotions of a customer. Some examples might be the following: feeling excited in a BMW car, feeling energetic drinking Coca-Cola, feeling strong and rugged wearing Levi's jeans. These feelings create a brand value for a customer as excitement, energy and strength, which become a competitive advantage of a brand. A person prefers Levi's brand to any other brand, because of the way it makes him or her feel. (Aaker 2002.) Aaker (2002) claims that 50% of a customer experience is emotions and the other 50% is rational needs. Shaw (2007) even believes that over 50% is emotions and that is why they drive value.

2.4   Brand awareness and brand recall

Aaker (2002) describes a study proving the power of a recognised brand name. The study involved two peanut butter jars: one without a name and another with a well-known brand name. The first unnamed jar was filled with the peanut butter preferred by 70% of participants in a blind test conducted beforehand. The second brand jar was filled with not preferred peanut butter. The study showed that 73% of respondents chose the brand-name option as being the best-tasting peanut butter. To summarise, a person who is aware of a brand succumbs to emotions and chooses a brand product or service.

However, brand awareness is not enough to bring a brand recall. These terms are not similar: being known does not mean being loved or relevant (Gobé 2003). In the case described above those 73% of respondents did not just recognise a brand name, but also had trusting feelings towards it.

Trust and brand are commonly associated together as a positive feeling a customer has during a purchase decision. A trust develops from reliability and delight (Neumeier 2003). Sardi (Shaw 2007) defines a delight as "meeting customer needs and going beyond them and building qualities like personality, fun and surprise". As a result, a brand that understands customers' emotions effect their behaviour and loyalty.

2.5 Brand loyalty

The main goal of branding is brand loyalty. When consumers positively respond to a brand experience they repeat their experience because of a brand value they receive. A brand loyalty becomes the heart of any brand's value and strengthens the size and intensity of each loyalty segmentation (Aaker 2009, 17).

Loyalty segmentation presents the following groups of customers:

- Non-customers

   They are customers who buy competitor's product.

- Price switchers

   Customers are sensitive to price and change a purchase decision to the acceptable price.

- Passively loyal

   Customers buy the same brand throughout the time not because of the loyalty to it, but more of a habit.

- Fence sitters

Customers are indifferent between brands and choose a brand that brings more benefit in a certain time.

- Committed

Customers are loyal and buy a brand because of a brand value they like to receive. (Aaker 2002, 22.)

Organizations commonly have primal principles in relation to brand loyalty. Shaw (2007, 12) characterises them from a financial perspective as follows:

1) Enhance loyal customers who require less costs than new consumers
2) Engage new customers with the least possible spending
3) Decrease expenses at maximum
4) Grow income by increasing sales

These principles show the importance of brand loyalty in terms of the financial stability of an organization. Loyal customers help a company maximise sales and minimize costs. Moreover, brand loyalty presumes brand-customer relationship for a long period of time. Brand loyalty reflects a customer's commitment to remain in a long-term relationship with a brand (So, Parsons, & Yap 2013).

2.6   Emotional clusters

The next question is how to produce loyal customers taking into consideration customer emotions and experience. As it was mentioned is the previous chapter, there are four clusters representing groups of emotions. Each cluster evokes certain feelings during a customer experience, which results in different brand-customer relationships.

At first Shaw (2007) introduces an overview of four clusters in relation to loyalty and value. In FIGURE 5 below, Destroying Cluster is presented as

a value destroyer while other clusters, such as Attention, Recommendation and Advocacy, are shown as values drivers.
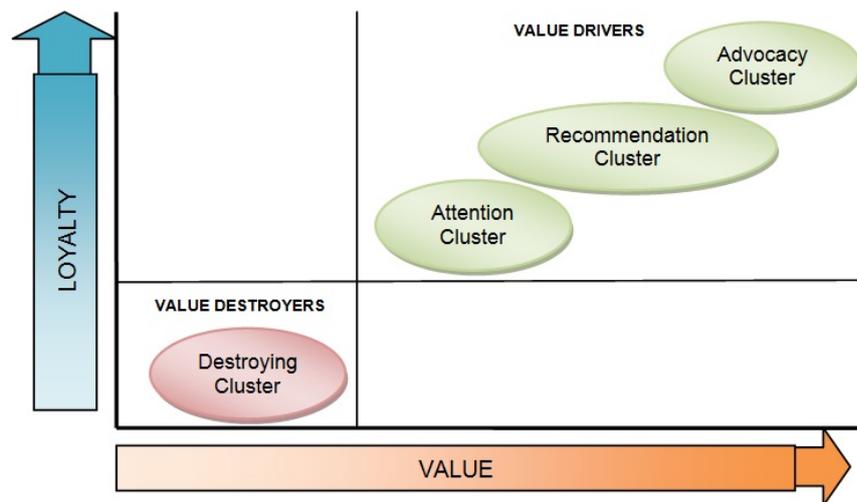

FIGURE 5. Emotional signature of value (Shaw 2007, 13)

Destroying Cluster includes emotions, such as feeling stressed, neglected, unsatisfied, frustrated, disappointed, unhappy, hurried, and irritated. If a customer feels that way, it kills a brand value and a customer does not want to have any relationship with a brand. Attention Cluster of emotions consists of feeling stimulated, interested, exploratory, energetic, and indulgent. If a brand evokes these emotions, a customer stays to enjoy a first experience with a brand. However, this cluster is considered as short-term lift of emotions. If the emotions are not stimulated throughout the time, they fade away. Shaw (2007) illustrates a figure of an emotional burnout that is replicated below.
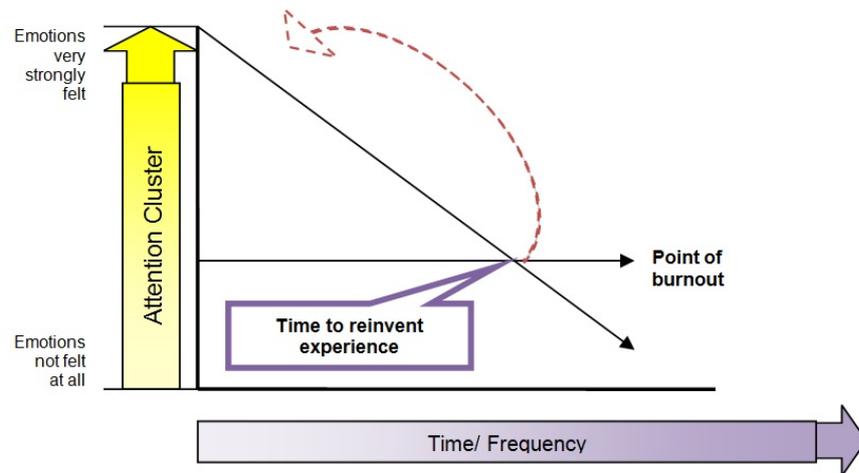
FIGURE 6. Emotional burnout (Shaw 2007, 70)

The figure demonstrates that when emotion of Attention Cluster starts decreasing, an experience has to be reinvented. For example, the brand Zara is well-known for its frequent change of clothes range in stores, which then attracts customers to return more often. Recommendation Cluster becomes a foundation of customer loyalty. It drives a long-term relationship with customers. They would recommend a brand to people around them because customers feel valued, cared for, trusted, focused and safe during their experience. Advocacy Cluster is the ideal goal for a brand. Customers feel happy and pleased and would proactively recommend it even without anyone asking about a brand. (Shaw 2007.)

Therefore, if a brand focuses on that evoking emotions as trust, safe or happiness during customer experience, it causes customer loyalty and long-term relationship with customers.

2.7   Brand identity

The examination of the terms as brand value, brand awareness and brand loyalty leads to the discussion of brand identity. Brand identity means a set of associations that are created or maintained in a brand strategy depending on what the organization wishes the brand to stand for. Knowing that brand identity is essential for the brand strategy to guide the development. Brand identity analyses customers, competitors and self to find a direction, purpose and meaning of the brand. It builds associations in customers' mind and creates brand differentiation among competition. (Aaker 2009.)

If a market is saturated with competitors, building a brand becomes an alternative solution to win competition. Aaker (2009) quotes the famous Peter's phrase:

> *In an increasingly crowded marketplace fools will compete on price. Winners will find a way to create lasting value in the customer's mind.*

Strong-brand strategies include a clear brand identity regarding brand personality, logo, slogan and value proposition. Aaker (2002) gives the following example of the Nike brand identity:

- Brand personality is exciting, provocative, spirited, cool, innovative, aggressive; into health and fitness and the pursuit of excellence
- Logo demonstrates a "swoosh" symbol
- Slogan is "Just do it"
- Value proposition includes the following benefits:
    - Functional: high-technology shoe that will improve performance and provide comfort
    - Emotional: the exhilaration of athletic performance excellence; feeling engaged, active, and healthy
    - Self-expressive: self-expression is generated by using a shoe with a strong personality associated with a visible athlete

Each of the characteristics is coherent and presents a unique set of associations when you see the brand of Nike.

In conclusion of the chapter, brand and emotion closely stand together and involve terms as emotional branding, brand value, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand identity that helps to understand how brand strategy can be built. It shows the importance of a brand being a valuable asset. Investing into it brings a stability of an organization due to long-term customer relationship. It proves the idea that brand strategies should be about mindshare and "emotions share", rather than market share (Gobé 2003).

3 THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN EMOTIONAL BRANDING

Social media is a major part of internet. Before considering the role of social media in emotional branding the following chapter discusses a general role of internet in marketing. Afterwards social media is defined and integrated in brand development theory. Finally, the following social media platforms are presented: Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest. The chapter answers on the second sub-question of the thesis.

3.1 The role of the Internet in marketing

Nowadays, the Internet has become a powerful provider of information. Anyone who has access to the Internet can learn, read, communicate and explore an uncountable number of subjects. Throughout time the benefits of the Internet has been used in commercial as well as in non-commercial and mixed purposes. As a result, the Internet has changed the concept of traditional "push-oriented" marketing. Commercial organizations have started connecting with their customers directly via the Internet. Moreover, it has shown new ways to attract new customers by word of mouth. (Charlesworth 2009, 7.)

The Internet has also changed customers' perspective on a buying process. Charlesworth (2009) notices that now information has become a power for buyers. Customers are able to search information about a certain product they need and decide which to choose from a large number of competitors. Their decision might rely on reviews from other customers, descriptions of products or services or company's reputation. Information helps people benefit as a customer.

The usage of the Internet grows and individuals promote their websites, products or services through online social channels, where their current and potential customers receive a marketing message. In opposition to traditional marketing, the marketing efforts should be different in the world of the Internet. The focus is shifted from seller to buyer. A marketer tries to help the buyer buy a product or service instead of helping the seller to sell.

Therefore, a marketer has to listen to the audience and its opinion on a product or service. The Internet offers a great opportunity of two-way communication, which enables to send marketing messages and receive customers' opinion. (Charlesworth 2009, 14-15.)

3.2 Definition of social media

All web users are familiar with the term of social media. People communicate and share content, such as photos, text, videos, news and opinion through social media channels (Alharbi 2015). To publish any kind of information social media websites require submission that allows participating, creating content and communicating with other users. Social media differs from traditional media with the possibility of leaving ratings, reviews and comments. (Evans & Bratton 2008.)

People visit social media for following reasons. Firstly, social media has become a part of social life, because it enables people to chat with their friends, spread a word of what is an interest to them, share reviews and opinions. Secondly, it accompanies their offline hobby, which people would like to share with online users. Thirdly, people share their knowledge to help and support themselves and others. Finally, online networking helps people to find or realise career. (Charlesworth 2009, 8.)

3.3 Brand development in social media

Marketing applies social media to attract new customers and meet their wants and needs. Social media offers online connection with individuals through communities. (Alharbi 2015.) Users have an opportunity to act together around a certain theme in conversations which creates a community. Participating in online community involves members at the individual level. Consequently, if social media influences the collective, the individual is reached. It positively impacts brand-building strategy and develops personal loyalty. (Evans & Bratton 2008.)

The traditional marketing in social media results in message saturation that does not work efficiently on the web. Social media offers two-way communication and businesses are required to actively participate in communities. The participation needs to be simple and honest in order to be trusted by audience. (Evans & Bratton 2008, 81.) Thanks to the direct contact via social media customers feel treated more as a friend rather than a customer (Charlesworth 2009, 14). They emotionally relate themselves to brands, which builds brand-customer relationship.

Social media enables companies to follow insights. It presents analytics of any action in social media. There is information on a number of page visits, views, likes and shares, which expose interests in brand offerings, possible brand loyalty and reach. (Charlesworth 2009, 54.) Reach in social media means the percentage of people in target audience. Brands aim to expand the reach, the target audience, which improves their brand awareness. (Alharbi 2015.)

To sum up, social media allows brands to develop their brand loyalty, brand-customer relationship and brand awareness. Nevertheless, Evans and Bratton (2008) emphasise that social media marketing do not replace traditional marketing efforts of companies, but extend their possibilities for brand development.

3.4   Social media platforms

Social media has various channels to use. Evans and Bratton (2008) divide social media channels into three sections: platforms, content and interaction. In interest of the case company the following investigation focuses on one of these sections – social media platforms.

Social media platforms are social networks with communities and forum applications (Evans & Bratton 2008). For example, one of the most famous social networks is Facebook, which offers variety of communities and applications.

Social networks are saturated with entertaining content, such as photos, videos, podcasts, ratings and reviews in feeds, groups and pages (Evans & Bratton 2008). The survey (Charlesworth 2009, 300-301) showed that users join social networks, because they want to meet people, entertain themselves, learn something new and influence others.

3.4.1 Facebook

Facebook was founded in 2004. Throughout time the website gained more than 1.8 billion users. It offers people a possibility to connect with their friends and family, to discover and share what is happening in their life and in the world in general. (Facebook Newsroom 2017.) In the social media site matrix, Charlesworth (2009, 303) characterises Facebook as a socialising platform. In addition to communication with other users, individuals share video, music and photo in Facebook.

For businesses the website allows creating online communities, promoting themselves, interacting with customers and gather customer insights. Facebook offers marketing tools that help to find new customers and build lasting relationships with them. Marketing tools include options for different business goals, such as to build a presence, create awareness, drive discovery, generate ideas, boost sales and earn loyalty. (Facebook Business 2017.)

The value of Facebook in marketing is presented as a branding opportunity for business. Facebook offers an excellent brand-building environment where a marketer can interact with Facebook users to build a customer relationship with a brand. Moreover, Facebook page improves a company's search engine rankings. Some examples of companies which actively use Facebook might be Coca-Cola, Nutella and Pringles. These brands assemble a large audience on their Facebook pages and create entertaining content. (Dunay & Krueger 2010.)

3.4.2   Instagram

Instagram was launched in 2010 and then acquired by Facebook in 2012. At present, over 600 million people use the app every month. The company offers the app and the website for sharing photos and short videos editing them with a selection of photo filters. Instagram differs from other photo platforms by fast and efficient uploading on multiple services. Founders believed in an idea of instant photo sharing with friends to show them what moments in life a person experiences. (Instagram FAQ 2017.)

Similarly to Facebook, Instagram offers advertisement for businesses in Instagram stories and feed. Advertising focuses on three following objectives: awareness, consideration and conversion. They help to increase reach, brand awareness, website clicks, views, sales and engagement. (Instagram Business 2017.)

Instagram displays success stories of companies using the platform as a marketing tool. For instant, Lionsgate UK worked with Instagram on the creation of short videos to promote a new movie. The videos inspired the audience that increased ad recall and awareness. Another example might be the Instagram account of Disney with 9.1 million followers, which frequently updates with new films, new interesting or old favourite moments and interviews. (Instagram Business 2017.)

3.4.3   Pinterest

Pinterest, launched in 2010, presents itself as a "catalogue of ideas" where a user can find and save ideas for creating, cooking, building, trying and inspiring. One hundred seventy five millions of people use Pinterest monthly. It helps them to discover and share ideas in different spheres of life. (About Pinterest 2017.) Users can create their own Pins or save other Pins they have found and liked. A board of saved Pins can be created and sorted by different themes.

The majority of ideas on Pinterest are created by businesses. Pinterest (2017) claims that "Pins help audience understand what a brand stands for

and how it can fit into their lives". That is why it is an important platform for brand-building strategy. L'Oreal Paris uses Pinterest for visual content of products, tutorials and make-up art. The platform helps them reach the target audience and introduce their new products. L'Oreal Paris offers customers to create a digital shopping list of products. Boards have diversity of interests that attract people and build a community. Pinterest helps to strengthen the brand by inspiring the audience. (Pinterest Business 2017.)

Another famous brand Sony Electronics wanted to reach more lifestyle-oriented audience and attract sales. Connecting images and brand value in Pinterest, they increased visits to the official website and revenue. The company also sent dedicated emails about their new Pins and an offer to follow the account. It increased open rate and a click through rate higher than their set goal. (Pinterest Business 2017.)

These examples introduce the possibilities of social media platforms and their efficiency as a marketing tool. The social media gives customers a chance to share their opinion with a brand about its products or services. Thanks to social media companies present interesting content on their platforms to attract audience which pick up marketing message on its own. Thus, an advertisement becomes an "invited guest" and impact brand perception by touching feelings of customers through humour and emotion (Evans & Bratton 2008).

4   CASE COMPANY INTRODUCTION

The following chapter introduces the case company of the thesis. Before analysis of empirical research in the next chapter it is necessary to learn the basic information about the case company. At first, the author presents an overview of their business. Then brand identity and marketing of the company are described. In the end, competition in the rental market of Barcelona is discussed.

4.1   Overview of rental agency Barcelona Home

Barcelona Home is a rental agency founded in 1996 when tourism in Barcelona began growing (Barcelona Home website 2017). In 2014 the agency was acquired by Borges Esebe Inversiones, S.L.U. (span. *Sociedad Limitada Unipersonal*). Borges Esebe Inversiones represents Unipersonal Limited Partnership which characterizes by limited responsibility and a single shareholder. (CEO Barcelona Home 2017.)

The agency offers various types of rentals in Barcelona and its surroundings: mainly shared apartments or student rooms, vacation rentals, monthly or yearly rentals. Other rental offerings are villas, properties for sale, venues for events, yacht charters and parking places. The rental agency assists not only with accommodation, but also leisure activities in Barcelona. There is a wide range of services that includes online guide, organization of events, free promotions and partnership programmes. (Barcelona Home 2017.)

Barcelona Home operates online as a website and in offices in Barcelona. The company features its customer service via phone calls and e-mails seven days per week (including holidays). Plus, there is an international team of about 13 nationalities speaking different languages. Accordingly, the website offers content in 13 languages. There are other characteristics to bring a bigger picture on the company. The turnover of the company is 3 million euros. Barcelona Home has around 50 employees. Three offices are located in the city centre of Barcelona, Spain. (Interviewee 1.) In

addition, Barcelona Home participates in award contests, for instance in European Holiday Home. Some examples of accommodation were presented in different categories of the contest and the company became a winner in 2015 and a finalist in 2016. (European Holiday Home 2017.)

4.2   Barcelona Home brand identity

In the following quote the company generally defines their brand:

> *We do not want to sell you an accommodation, tour or event. Our goal is to make a unique experience possible, a trip that will make your stay memorable for the rest of your life (Barcelona Home 2017).*

Barcelona Home considerably builds its brand and promotes it within marketing efforts that are discussed later in the chapter. The brand identity of Barcelona Home is explained below.

- Logo

  A letter B is designed in blue and white colours for a logo. The whole brand name is in blue and yellow colours. The logo is visualised in Figure 7 below.

FIGURE 7. The logo of Barcelona Home (Barcelona Home 2017)

- Slogan

  As shown above, the slogan says "Wish Find Enjoy", which means "Make a *wish*. *Find* your place. *Enjoy* your stay".

- Brand values

  The company stands for quality, best price guarantee, secure booking, customer satisfaction, efficiency.

- Brand personality

  The brand gives an impression of a young, active, fast-pace, efficient, multifunctional and multinational company.

- Target audience

  The agency attracts people from all over the world, especially from Europe, over 18 years old (the legal age of booking), who loves travelling and prefers an easy and efficient way to do it with a help of online sources.

Overall, Barcelona Home is willing to give people an opportunity to explore Barcelona to the fullest along with accommodation, activities, city guide, safety and comfort. (Barcelona Home 2017.)

4.3   Current marketing strategy

Barcelona Home as an online company builds its marketing strategy around online promotion of the website and its offerings. In practice the company uses sponsorship, affiliation programmes, online advertising and social media marketing.

Their sponsors are companies of various services that might be interesting for travellers and habitants in Barcelona. The current sponsors are food delivery, hair dresser and beauty salon, motorbike and bicycle rentals, jazz club, flamenco dance show, night clubs, sport centre, tour tickets platform and luggage service. The marketing department creates affiliation links for

sponsors who agreed to receive the percentage from booking profit via the link. It works for a sponsor as for Barcelona Home, if both companies offer services of each other to their clients. Affiliation links are inserted in the blog, online guide and social media of the company.

The website displays multiple pages, one of which is a blog about Barcelona. In the blog company writes articles about sightseeing, transport, travel advices and the city in general. Another page is an online guide of Barcelona. It represents a catalogue with a spectrum of news, events, activities, ticket sales, guest lists for parties, places to visit and more. In addition, website visitors can register to Barcelona Home newsletter to be notified about all events in Barcelona during their stay.

Barcelona Home has a strong presence on social media. The company has accounts in 9 social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Vimeo, Youtube and VK. Each network helps to distribute the information about the company, their services, sponsors, advertisement and entertaining content about Barcelona. (Barcelona Home 2017.)

4.4   Competitors in rental market

According to official statistics (Servihabitat 2016), the demand for rentals has increased among tourists as well as households. Twenty two percent of residences in Spain were occupied by renters in 2015. The majority of tenants are foreigners who stay in Spain for both work and tourism. Barcelona is one of the provinces in Spain with the highest gross profitability for a rental home. It increases from one year to the next becoming higher than the Spanish average. (Servihabitat 2016.)

Barcelona is a touristic city and it hosts millions of tourists every year. Therefore, the competition in rental market of Barcelona is strong and challenging. The market offers a big number of rental agencies, hotels and online hospitality services, such as Idealista and Airbnb. (Interviewee 1.)

The list of the main competitors of Barcelona Home is presented as follows:

AB Apartment Barcelona

OK Apartment Barcelona

BBarcelona Apartment

BCN Apartment Rentals

Key2bcn-Long Term Rentals Barcelona

ShBarcelona

All these companies have similar business to Barcelona Home and serve to find accommodation in Barcelona for a short or long stay on their websites. The company is searching for some ways of differentiation to win competition and increase revenue. (Interviewee 1.)

To summarise, the case company is considered from different points of view in order to show a general idea behind their business. Understanding the company's history, brand identity, marketing strategy and current situation in the market helps in analysing further empirical research presented in the thesis.

5   EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS

The following chapter introduces the empirical research of the thesis. It consists of three parts: research design and formulation, data collection and data analysis. In the beginning of the chapter the researcher tells how and why the research was designed and conducted. Then the data analysis exposes the current performance of the case company, its social media platforms, namely Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest, the management view on the Barcelona Home brand and its customers' feelings.

5.1   Design and formulation of the empirical research

As mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, the method of the empirical research is qualitative. The data is collected and analysed from interviews, company database and written documents. The research is based on understanding how social media of the case company performs in terms of emotional branding. The overview of design and formulation of the empirical research is presented in Figure 8 below.

CEO	Statistics	Social media	Emails	Client
•management ideology	•company's performance	•current situation	•customer experiences	•brand perception

FIGURE 8. The design and formulation of the empirical research

First, the interview with the CEO of Barcelona Home is presented, the questions of which can be found in appendices of the thesis. The interview shows personal opinion of the CEO and answers questions concerning

emotional branding. Second, data statistics of rental bookings and Barcelona Home clients is collected. It explains the case company's performance by showing a number of bookings by affiliation, age, countries, language, purpose and source. Third, the researcher interprets social media analytics of the following social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest. The narrow look on three out of nine existing social media accounts of the case company helps to deeply analyse the data. The importance of that focus is explained later in the chapter. Forth, customers' emails are analysed from emotional perspective. Thanks to the emails of customers the researcher can have a closer look at what emotions they feel during their experience with the case company. Finally, in order to conclude the empirical research the interview with one of the clients is described. The interview shows subjective point of view on the case company and its brand which helps to answer questions about emotions and brand experience.

5.2   Data collection

The data collection focuses on the period from November 2016 to April 2017, the time when the researcher attended the case company as an intern. This focus helps to explain changes in social media, because the researcher is familiar with the reasons of these variations.

The thesis writing started in January 2017, on the third month of the internship at Barcelona Home. All data was collected in the end of March when the researcher's project finished. Figure 9 below demonstrates the process of data collection.

FIGURE 9. The process of data collection

The data presents the internal and external view of the company in order to understand the emotional branding efforts of marketing department and customers' view on the brand. The internal view involves the interview with the CEO, statistics of the company and social media analytics. The external view includes customers' emails and the interview with the client.

5.2.1   Internal view

Before the end of the internship in March 2017, the researcher asked Interviewee 1 for an interview. The interview was conducted in person and in semi-structured way. A list of 10 questions was prepared beforehand and contained questions about brand identity, brand values, long-term relationship, social media approach, customer loyalty and competition in the market. The CEO gave answers in suggested order and shared more details answering follow-up questions which appeared in the conversation flow. The target of the interview was to understand how the management identifies its brand and what is important for the company to maintain the brand.

The company manages its rental bookings through the website. Therefore, backend of the website gathers the whole information about bookings including list of accommodation, data of commissions and information of

bookings. The data consists of tables and charts which were collected by the researcher. The reason of presenting this information in the thesis is an insight on the target audience: what is customer age, what country they are from, what language they speak, why they visit Barcelona or its surroundings and how they prefer to book accommodation. Knowing the target audience leads to an understanding of the wants and needs of a customer.

Social Media analytics were taken from the social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest. Facebook page settings allow seeing insights of the page including the information about followers or Fans as it is named in the analytics. The information helps to understand who is interested in the page. Moreover, the insights show reach, engagement, page likes and reactions. The researcher gathered analytics during aforementioned period of time and compared the first and last month of the social media project in the case company. Instagram of the company did not display statistical insights. Therefore, the account was analysed according to the amount of followers, content, likes and comments. Pinterest offered the analytics during last 30 days from the day of data collection. The analytics exposes view or Impression rates, top Pins and boards, saves and number of followers. The data of these analytics demonstrates the current social media performance of the case company and helps to understand influence of the social media on brand-customer relationship of Barcelona Home.

5.2.2   External view

During the project in Barcelona Home the researcher had an access to email inbox of the company. Customers wrote to the company asking information about accommodation, booking and check-in process, complaining or asking for help and sharing opinion on services. The emails were looked through and analysed considering the range of emotions described in the second chapter of the thesis. Using the search engine of the inbox the researcher found emails with the following words: happy,

interested, cared for, surprised, irritated, unsatisfied, unhappy, disappointed, bored, stressed, tired, frustrated, hurried, concerned, confused. In addition the words 'angry' and 'complaint' were found and added to the list of feelings. The wide diapason of expressions helps to analyse different situations evoking various emotions of the customers. Due to the large amount of emails not all emails were analysed, but the top-5 emails which were offered by the search engine for every emotion. The customers' words are very important for the research to see what emotions they have during their experience of the brand.

In the end of the research it was decided to have a deeper discussion about emotions and customer experience with one of the clients who rented the apartment from Barcelona Home for a long stay in Barcelona. During internship the researcher personally assisted the client in the booking process. The choice of interviewee was made due to personal acquaintance with the client, which helps to conduct an open and honest conversation about feelings towards the brand. The interview was conducted in May 2017 via a Skype call. The researcher prepared 6 questions for the interview, which can be found in appendices of the thesis. The goal of the interview was to see personal perspective of the client on brand experience.

5.3   Data analysis

The data analysis of the research exposes the company's focus and branding efforts, social media performance, emotions of clients and brand-customer relationship. Each phase of the research process gives detailed information, which is presented and analysed further.

5.3.1   Interview with the CEO

The CEO of Barcelona Home acquired the company three years ago. However, in total he has eight years of experience in marketing and focuses his attention on marketing department to promote the brand. After the acquisition the website was crucially changed along with a design of

the brand. It became more visually modern and the website launched a blog about Barcelona. The decision to write a blog was made due to better position in search ranking and an opportunity to attract customers by providing useful information about the city.

The interviewee presents Barcelona Home as the online booking and multiservice company, which offers quality, diversity, safety and availability to its clients. These features present the values of the brand and lay in the foundation of brand-customer relationships.

The company looks forward to long-term relationship with customers. It offers discounts for second bookings. Occasionally, clients return and book with Barcelona Home again. However, the CEO would say there is only one loyal customer who uses company services during 3 years.

The competition in rental market is hard and big. Many people rent out apartments privately or through agencies. Plus, inhabitants protect against massive tourism and government considers limitations of rental apartments for tourists. The situation seems to be risky and unstable in the rental market. Meanwhile, the company puts its efforts in differentiation and brand awareness to support its business.

Barcelona Home sees social media as one of the ways of differentiation and rise of brand awareness. Social networking spreads a word across friends and family, across friends of friends and further. The CEO believes the more people are reached in social media, the more awareness the brand can get. Thus, social media gives an opportunity to reach new customers. The most important platform for the company is Facebook, which is the most popular platform of the company. It helps to create an informative and entertaining content for the followers. The second significant social media for Barcelona Home is Instagram. It attracts people by its simplicity and entertaining visual content.

For the last question the interviewer asked what precise emotion the CEO wants to evoke in people using Barcelona Home services. The answer was excitement. The city of Barcelona offers an uncountable number of

exciting experiences and the company wants to be a part of these exciting experiences of its customers. (Interviewee 1.)

5.3.2   Company statistics

The statistics of the website shows the information on rental bookings of customers. The statistical charts are extracted and presented in the following text. The data is described and analysed in order to understand the outcomes.

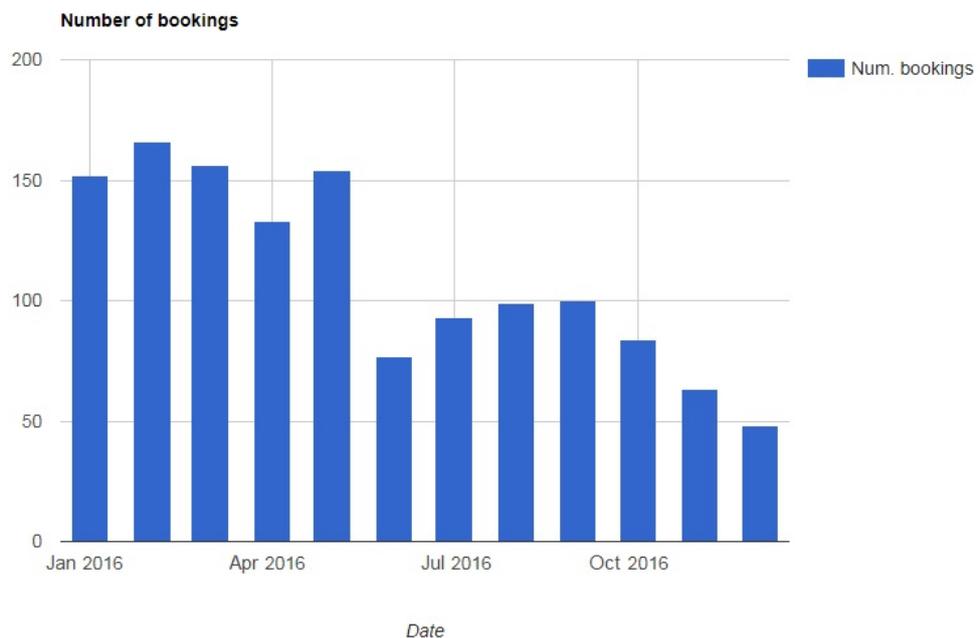The bar chart illustrates the number of bookings in the year of 2016 below, in FIGURE 10.

FIGURE 10. The number of bookings 2016 (Barcelona Home 2017)

According to the data, the most of bookings happens in the beginning of the year, from January to May 2016. From September by the end of the year the number of bookings steadily decreases. The similar situation can be predicted for 2017. In Figure 11 below, the bar chart indicates the growth in the beginning of the year.
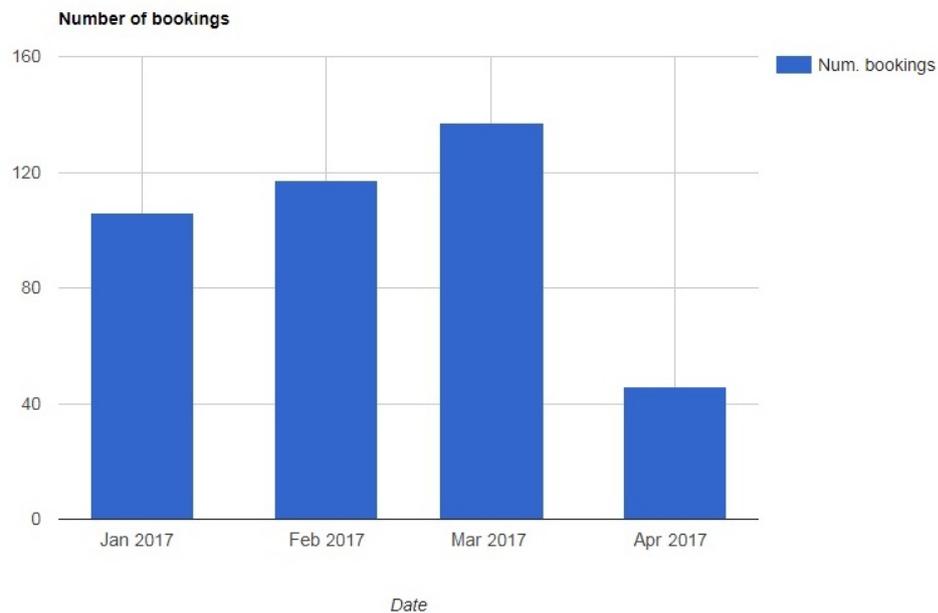

FIGURE 11. The number of bookings 2017 (Barcelona Home 2017)

As shown above, the peak of reservations in the present year is in March. The reason can be that the majority of clients book accommodation when they plan visits to Barcelona during winter and spring.

The statistics of booking by affiliate demonstrate that Facebook promotion resulted in just one reservation throughout the period from November 2016 to April 2017. There are no bookings via Instagram or Pinterest affiliation

links. The most popular source of booking is the website, which managed 79.5% of bookings. The affiliation links of guide directory and blog also led clients to reservation process on the website. In comparison, the bookings arranged in the office are only 2.3%. As a result, the customers prefer online booking system of the website. On the other hand, the social media do not attract clients to rent accommodation.

According to the statistics, the booker age varies from under 20 to over 50 years old. Approximately the equal amounts of frequent bookers are people between 20 and 29 and people over 50. These ages shares the percentage of 25.9 % and 25.3% of the bookings as presented below, in FIGURE 12.

Booker age

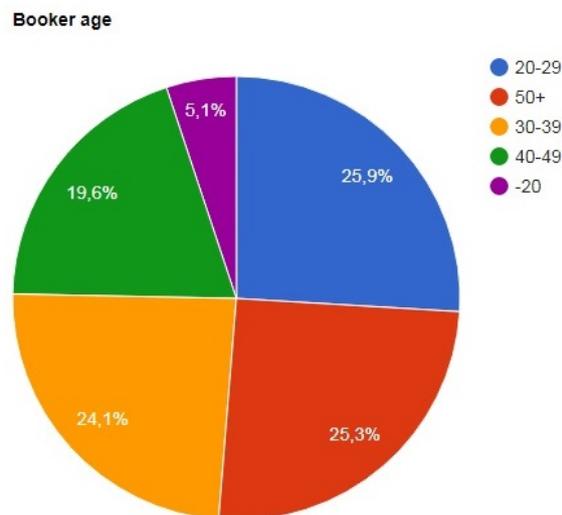|	
●	20-29
●	50+
●	30-39
●	40-49
●	-20

25,9%
25,3%
24,1%
19,6%
5,1%

FIGURE 12. The booker age (Barcelona Home 2017)

The pie chart above outlines the audience under 20 years old owns the least percentage of bookings. Consequently, the majority of clients are young adults and elderly people.

The following pie chart presents the countries of customers who reserve accommodation at Barcelona Home.
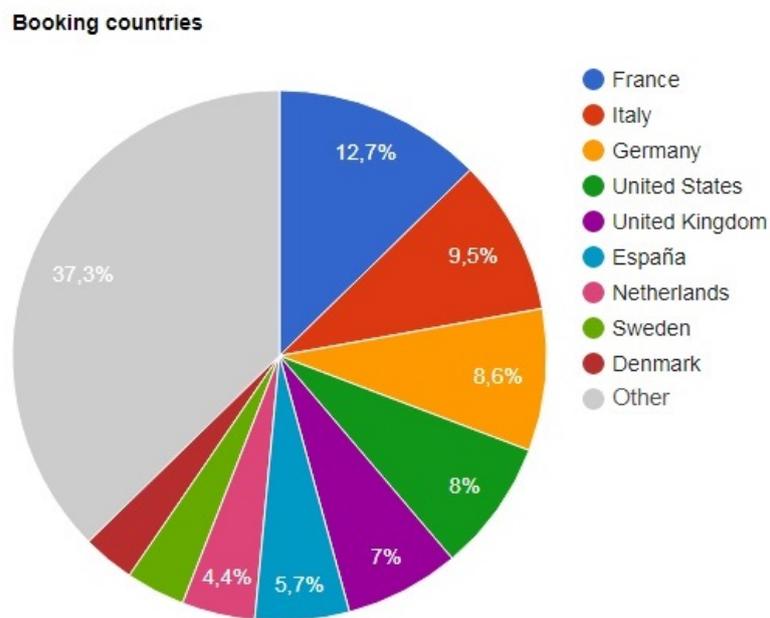

FIGURE 13. The booking countries (Barcelona Home 2017)

The majority of people books from France, which contains 12.7% of bookings. The second country is Italy, where 9.5% of reservations were made from. Other countries are Germany, United States and United Kingdom. Spain takes only 6th place at the chart presenting 5.7% of the bookings. The data shows the international variety of customers who use the company's services.

The most common language of booking is English, which is used in 53% of the bookings at Barcelona Home. Spanish is the second language which people speak during reservation process.

The booking purpose statistics shows the proportion of 38.4%, 13.1% and 4.2% for the most popular purposes of visiting Barcelona, such as holidays, work and study. The company attracts clients mostly due to holiday rentals.

5.3.3   Social media analytics

The following social media analytics are divided into three parts: Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest.

Facebook

Facebook insights help the researcher analyse followers of the page and their reactions to the content. Figure 14 below gives information on the total page likes of the company's Facebook page.

FIGURE 14. The total page likes (Barcelona Home Facebook 2017)

The number of followers rocketed in December 2016 due to paid promotion of the company. Therefore, the clearer picture of the followers dimension can be seen between January and April 2017. During that period the number of likes slightly decreased by 36 fans.

The information of engaged fans includes their country and language. The majority of fans are from Spain, Egypt, Turkey, Sweden and Brazil. The most spoken languages among followers are English and Spanish.

The researcher managed the project of the Facebook page during the period between November and April with the goal to increase reactions of followers. Below, Figure 15, demonstrates a slight change between the beginning and the end of the project.

FIGURE 15. Facebook insights April 2017 and November 2016 (Barcelona Home Facebook 2017)

The engagement and reach increase due to changes in the strategy of the project. To be noted the most stabilised reach appeared in February 2017 according to Figure 16 below.

FIGURE 16. The post reach (Barcelona Home Facebook 2017)

During the period the reaction chart shows 337 clicks on Like were gained on the posts. Other expressions such as Love and Wow were rarely clicked, and Haha, Sad and Angry were not used at all.

Instagram

The company database shows the increase of Instagram followers from 570 followers in November 2016 to 780 followers in April 2017. The most rapid growth happened in March gaining 74 followers. Below Figure 17 illustrates the evolution of Instagram followers.
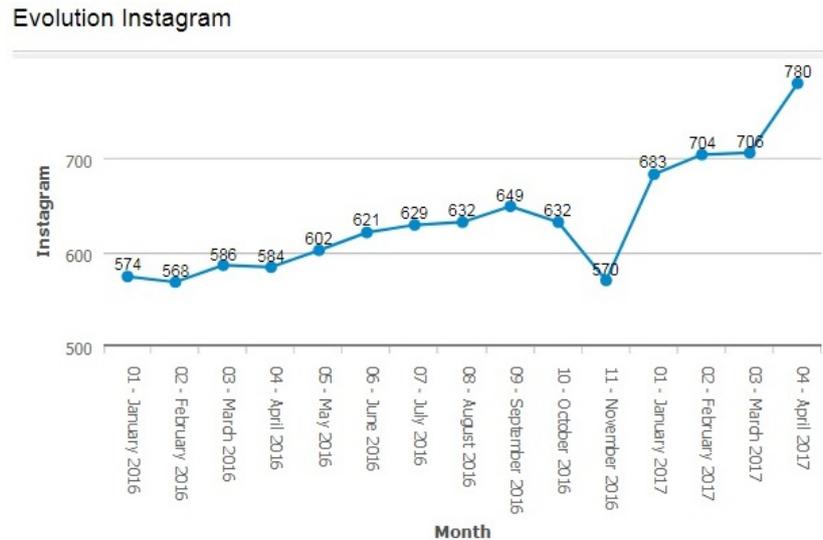
FIGURE 17. The evolution of Instagram (Barcelona Home 2017)

The account showed the most reactive results in the project gaining likes and comments from followers. The most liked photo during the period of the project has 60 likes. The most commented photo has seven comments of positive responds.

The platform allows publishing an entertaining content in relation to tourism in Barcelona: landscapes, views, sights, beaches, parks, places to visit and things to try. The content of the account changed to privately taken pictures of the team with the decrease of sponsorship and advertisement of accommodations.

Pinterest

Pinterest strategy was changed in February due to analysing the purpose of the platform. The Pinterest is important to use for promotion of the blog articles. Each article contains ideas for tourists in Barcelona. As a result, it was decided with the team of the project to start creating Pins with links of the blog posts. According to Pinterest analytics, the change caused the following improvements:

- The number of followers increased from 310 to 442 people
- The views (impressions) rose by 68.75% during March:
    - The top pin has 751 views
    - The top board has 1449 views
- The number of saves fell by 50%:
    - The top saved pin has 4 saves
    - The top board saved 7 times

5.3.4 Customer views from emails

The researcher collected 36 emails, five of which showed a positive interest in certain apartments. Four emails showed customers' emotions not caused by the service, but in order to express their wishes. Other 27 emails contained negative expressions of emotions, such as disappointment, irritation, frustration, unhappiness, concerns, confusion, angriness and complaints.

The emails of interest show customers' eagerness to know more details and availability of a certain apartment. One of the emails contains the phrase 'this amazing apartment'. It shows customers' attitude to the range of products on the website.

Another category of emails presents feelings of worries to be bored, stress due to hurriedness to find a place to stay, asking for personal exceptions due to tiredness of long journey to Barcelona. These emails ask for the help from the company to arrange a better service depending on special circumstances.

The negative responses on services of Barcelona Home are the most destroying for the brand value. The main reasons of negative response are linked to the following feelings:

- *Disappointment*: incorrect information on availability, dissimilarity between online description and conditions of the apartment, payment issues.

- *Irritation*: incorrect information on availability and prices, website system.
- *Complaints*: monetary issues, uninformative service about a construction in a building, spoiled holidays due to uncomfortable conditions of an apartment, noise, unsatisfied service, nobody take care of money reclamation.
- *Unhappiness*: quality of an apartment, a noise of construction.
- *Concerns*: long waiting for confirmation.
- *Confusion*: price dissimilarity, cancellation, unstructured picture order.
- *Angriness*: price dissimilarity, cancellation.
- *Frustration*: price change due to a number of people, cancellation, no answering.

5.3.5 Interview with the client

The researcher interviewed a woman (Interviewee 2) who moved to one of the Barcelona Home apartments in December 2016 for six months. In the interview the client told her opinion about service at the company. In general, the client expressed her satisfaction with the whole experience and the apartment. She and her family found all what they were looking for, which is location near hospital, quiet region and good heating system in two bedroom apartment. There were no problems with the rent. The customer said she felt very glad and lucky to find this accommodation for a reasonable price and a long period. She emphasised that the apartment was clean and warm with all necessary equipment as she expected. The only uncomfortable issue for her was that the lift in the building did not work a couple of times, but was fixed quickly enough. The client also enjoyed the region with many shops and metro station nearby.

Barcelona Home services were found on the Internet. The client told that it was the only company offering Russian speaking services, which was essential, because she does not speak Spanish or English. The company

provides Russian speaking service as one of 13 languages it specialises in. In addition, the client does not use social media, except Whatsapp.

On the other hand, the customer noticed a few disadvantages of the service. She would prefer to receive information on surroundings and transportation when she arrived. Especially, the information in her native language would help her adapt faster and more comfortable at the new place. Moreover, there was a long wait for the invoice, which she asked twice. Plus, a mistake in the rental payment was made by the accountant and the client was asked to pay the amount of money she had already paid. Anyway, this situation was settled and the extra payment was refunded. Overall, the customer shared a desire to have a further contact with the company for future visits to Barcelona. She even recommended the company to her Russian speaking friends, who were coming to Barcelona as well.

6   DEVELOPMENT PLAN

After the theoretical and empirical researches are completed the development plan is suggested in the following chapter. The development plan is based on understanding strengths and weaknesses of the case company and what opportunities and threats it has. Therefore, the SWOT-analysis is presented in relation to previous theoretical and practical analyses of emotional branding and social media. Then the researcher more thoroughly considers development via emotional branding and social media explaining opportunities for the case company. In conclusion, the suggestions for implementation are discussed in order to present additional ideas for the development plan.

6.1   SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis is a technique used in business to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The clear presentation of analysis allows understanding how to achieve future growth. The strengths and weaknesses present internal analysis from an organization's point of view. The opportunities and threats are considered regarding external environment and composed external analysis. (SWOT Analysis 2013.) Those analyses are introduced in the following sub-chapters.

6.1.1   Internal analysis

The case company's strengths include features of differentiation and current social media achievements that help Barcelona Home grow. First of all, the company orientates in multiservice and multilingual operations. Barcelona Home offers variety of rentals and services. It operates in several languages to avoid misunderstanding and provide an easy and comfortable service for its customers. In addition, the service is available 7 days a week including holidays that allows clients to contact the company in any day. Second of all, the company has a presentable brand and clear brand definition that creates a value for the customers. It gives a promise of safe and high quality service. Third of all, online booking of the website

allows internet customers of all ages (over 18 years old) and from all countries to use the rental service. The diversity of clients gives a chance to reach larger audience and new customers. Another strong advantage of Barcelona Home is holiday oriented offerings. The majority of current customers are interested in rentals as a place to stay during their holidays in Barcelona. Along with long term accommodation, the company offers holiday apartments and services for tourists. Moreover, the online guide and website blog provide useful information for tourists. Finally, the company has a valuable presence on social media, especially on Facebook with approximately 14,000 followers and on Instagram with the fast growing number of followers.

On the other hand, there are weaknesses of the company that should be considered for improvement. Barcelona Home is a young company with a small group of employees. As a result, there is the lack of control in the following areas: customer service, payment system, availability control, quality control, personal customer approach, confirmation and cancellation system, price variations and website layout. Customers express negative emotions in emails about their unsatisfied experience in those areas, which is destroying for the brand value. However, writing about problems and asking for help is a necessary need for customers. Although emails are not confirmatory enough to confirm how many customers are satisfied or dissatisfied, the system of handling customer's negative emotions is weak. The development is needed in order to improve customer experience of the brand. Furthermore, the social media marketing efforts are too diverse for a small group of employees in marketing department. There are nine social media platforms that require maintenance of entertaining content and increase of awareness. In opposite, the focus on a few platforms would save time and efforts to improve content of the platforms that attracts more followers. Meanwhile, the content of the current social media in saturated with promotional messages. There is no creative approach to differentiate the content from competitors.

6.1.2 External analysis

In spite of weaknesses of the company, there are opportunities to solve problems and improve their operations. The project of the social media during the period from November to April showed possibilities of improvement on social media platforms. The reactions and reach on Facebook page increased due to changes in the strategy. Facebook gives an opportunity to share what is happening in Barcelona, share photos, videos and communicate with clients. Instagram account also presented possible growth in awareness and interest in the content. Instagram offers sharing real life experience in Barcelona to boost interest and inspire people to visit the city. Pinterest provides a chance to promote the blog, which inspires audience to visit Barcelona and increase website visits. Consequently, the opportunities of social media help the company to develop its weaknesses and build its strategy around what emotions to evoke using emotional branding as a foundation.

Anyway, the threats of external environment should be taken into account to prevent risks of collapse. Firstly, the rental market in Barcelona has a big competition. Secondly, the risk of changes in rental legislation could decrease the number of rentals the company acquires. Finally, the received emails of complaints can cause bad reviews and reputation.

6.2 Development via emotional branding and social media

The theoretical research showed principles of emotional branding and how it can be applied in social media. There are a few points that the researcher would like to emphasise in the development plan regarding the theory of emotional branding and social media.

Internet marketing is discussed in the third chapter of the thesis. The change of traditional marketing to internet marketing efforts means less message saturation and more communicative marketing messages that audience collects by its own. Accordingly, instead of frequent promotions the case company should consider how to create a marketing message

that causes reaction and evoke emotions in followers. The social media offers a possibility of listening to the audience. The focus on buyer helps improve brand experience and brand-customer relationship. The bad reviews should not be ignored. Their acceptance helps make changes in the system and reinvent experience to surprise and excite customers. If Barcelona Home finds a reason for a customer to follow their social media, people start joining the community. For example, the reason can be sharing knowledge of tourism in Barcelona and help customers to improve their experience in the city. It would give a user reason to stay on the page to learn something new. After the development of content, the company can try marketing tools of Facebook to increase awareness and loyalty. The differentiation of social media platforms should be also taken into account. Each platform attracts for different reasons, such as informative for Facebook, visual for Instagram and sharing for Pinterest.

If the management focuses on excitement as an emotion to evoke in customers, then the development of customer experience is necessary to not disappoint customers and constantly deliver the brand promise during renting accommodation and other services. The focus on emotional branding helps to accomplish the following goals: create a positive brand perception, improve reputation to win competition, increase profits through development of customer experience and create long-term relationship via positive emotional connection with customers.

The negative emotions presented in the empirical research destroy brand value. Accordingly, the Attention cluster of emotion is considered in the development process. Along with excitement the company should focus on the range of emotions included in the cluster, such as stimulated, interested, exploratory, energetic and indulgent. The reinvented experience arouses these emotions. Stimulating customers' emotions leads to the next Recommendation cluster that causes customer loyalty and long-term relationship. In addition, in competitive market customers can relation to the group of price switchers mentioned in the theoretical research. While attracting new customers, it is important to remember to enhance current clients and provide with the satisfied service.

6.3   Suggestions for implementation

In order to implement the development plan the suggestions are made as follows:

- Hire a team for social media development apart from marketing department. It could increase marketing efforts of the team by focusing only on social media of the company. Uploading creative content of high quality, communication with clients on emotional level and analysis of followers' reaction require time and professional skills of the employees.
- Decrease efforts on social media platforms except Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest.
- Increase focus on customer experience in the department of customer service. Creating a system of handling emails from unsatisfied customers can help to improve customers' opinion, even when customers have a problematic situation.
- Develop the website for customers to ease booking system, avoid mistakes and dissimilarities, provide high quality of service and deliver brand promise. The management should focus on the development in different departments of the company to avoid evoking negative emotions in the first place.

To conclude, the development plan is presented in the thesis to show the possibilities for future growth of the case company. The SWOT analysis summarises advantages and disadvantages of Barcelona Home. Then the development is considered in relation to the theoretical research. In the end the suggestions for implementation are described.

7   CONCLUSION

The following chapter answers the research questions based on the data collected and key findings of the research. Next validity and reliability are presented with the description of research sources. In the end the researcher makes the suggestions on future research.

7.1   Answers to research questions

In the beginning of the thesis the research questions were introduced. The research focused on emotional branding in social media of the case company. Therefore, the main question of the research was: **How can the social media, of the case company, be improved by applying the theory of emotional branding?** In order to answer the question, at first the researcher investigated how to answer the sub-questions. The answers on sub-questions are described below.

What is emotional branding?

Emotional branding is a process in marketing that creates a brand and builds brand-customer relationship on emotional level. Businesses noticed that customers have certain feelings and emotions while experiencing a product or service. Brand started to create values for customers and became an asset that drives their purchase decision. The concept relates to the terms, such as brand value, brand awareness, brand recall, brand loyalty, brand identity, that contribute to brand-building process.

What is the role of social media in emotional branding?

The role of social media in emotional branding is a direct contact with customers. Social media offers two-way communication and reaches individuals through collective. It became a part of people's social life and changed traditional media marketing. Internet provides information to people that benefit their buying process. Businesses use social media platforms as a marketing tool to extend their marketing efforts. Social

media allows brands to develop their brand loyalty, brand-customer relationship and brand awareness.

How does the case company currently perform in their social media?

The company has nine social media platforms that do not result in the increase of bookings or the emotional connection with followers. The current strategy does not involve creative content and the focus on emotional impact. According to the analysis of three main social media, such as Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest, the researcher's project in the company showed slight improvement on the platforms. Consequently, there are opportunities of social media development. The brand has a presentable identity and clear brand promise that can help to build relationship on emotional level via social media.

What emotions does the case company evoke in customers?

The company focuses on evoking excitement in its customers. However, the lack of control over customer service destroys the brand experience. The majority of expressed emotions in the analysed emails are disappointment, irritation, frustration, unhappiness, concerns, confusion, angriness and complaints. The development in customer experience and regulation of customers' emotions is needed to avoid bad reviews and deliver the brand promise of safety and high quality.

To summarise the answers on sub-questions, the main question of the research is responded below.

How can the social media, of the case company, be improved by applying the theory of emotional branding?

Social media offers an opportunity to interest, inspire and excite people to visit Barcelona and use the company's rental and other services. The close communication with followers allows understanding customers' opinion. It develops customer experience and creates positive emotions towards the brand. Having a clear focus on how the brand can be presented in social media and creating diverse content related to tourism

in Barcelona will interest web users to join the communities of social media. Emotional branding enables to develop social media to the level of emotional attachment to the brand.

7.2 Validity and reliability

The validity and reliability can be examined via the data collection process. The researcher gathered information from secondary and primary sources. During the theoretical research the following secondary sources were used: book literature, digital journal articles, online presentations and interview, and official websites. The empirical research was based on the data from the company database, online analytics and email database of the company. The primary sources conducted by the researcher were personal interviews with the CEO and client. All data was collected in the present year from university library, open online academic platforms, official sources and the case company, where the researcher conducted the internship project.

7.3 Suggestions on further research

The research aimed to understand the connection between emotional branding and social media. The case company was presented and analysed in the empirical research in order to create the development plan. The further researches could conduct personal interviews with more clients of the company to examine their emotions during brand experiences. In addition, emotions on social media of the case company could be analysed to indicate current emotions of followers. The deeper analysis of emotions will help the case company to improve their brand strategy further.

8   SUMMARY

The goal of the research was to understand how the theory of emotional branding can be applied in practice using social media of the case company. In sum the development plan was presented and the research questions were answered. The results showed how the case company can improve its social media and brand strategy in order to achieve increase in brand awareness and revenue of the company.

At first, the theoretical research was presented. The aim of theoretical research was to define the terms of emotional branding and social media. The concept of emotional branding and social media were investigated including the role of social media and Internet in general. It led the researcher to understanding where to focus in the empirical research.

The availability of the case company for the investigation helped to connect the theoretical point of view with the practical approach to the theory. Before the empirical research the case company was introduced giving the overall picture of its business and general situation in the market. Going further the research presented and analysed the data of conducted interviews, collected statistics, analytics and emails of company's clients. The purpose of data collection and data analyses was to see current performance of the company in relation to social media and emotional branding.

Finally, the development plan was suggested based on findings from the theoretical and empirical research. The plan consisted of SWOT analysis of company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threads, following by development via emotional branding and social media, concluding with suggestions on implementation. The idea of the development plan was to show what changes can be made and how it can affect the company's brand performance in social media. In the end, all the research questions were answered according to findings of the theoretical and practical researches combined. The thesis concludes by suggesting ideas for further research.

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Interviewee 1. 2017. CEO. Barcelona Home. Interview 31 March 2017.

Interviewee 2. 2017. Client. Barcelona Home. Interview 10 May 2017.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. Interview with the CEO

1) How long do you have experience in marketing?
2) How do you present your company?
3) How do you identify your brand?
4) What brand values do you offer your customers?
5) Do you focus on long-term relationship with customers?
6) How do you think social media will help you to reach more customers?
7) What emotions do you want your customers to feel?
8) Do you have loyal customers?
9) How do you find a competition in the rental market of Barcelona?
10) What social media platforms do you focus on and why?

APPENDIX 2. Interview with the client

1) Do you feel satisfied with the company's services? Would you book with Barcelona Home again?
2) How did you know about the company?
3) Do you use social media? Would it be easier for you to communicate with the company via social media?
4) Do you use Facebook? Instagram? Pinterest?
5) What information would help you during your stay in Barcelona?
6) Did you enjoy your stay in Barcelona in the apartment? What is the worst and the best moment?