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## Post $\neq$ Post: An Experimental Study on Corporate Brand Posts on Facebook

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Markus Kick

# **I POST $\neq$ POST: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY ON CORPORATE BRAND POSTS ON FACEBOOK**

## **Abstract**

Brand presences on social network sites (SNSs) like Facebook, Twitter, or Google<sup>+</sup> form important communication tools for marketers in the social media environment. Engaging the consumer in an ongoing dialogue via brand fan pages, especially on Facebook, becomes more and more important. However, evidence about what drives a successful Facebook brand post is scarce. By means of a field experimental study over a two week treatment period, I study the effect of corporate brand posts on brand fans' post recall capability, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention. I manipulate the degree of brand post interactivity and vividness and the underlying degree of product involvement by posting on two different brand fan pages. Results indicate that Facebook brand posts are able to positively influence fans' attitude toward the brand. The degree of interactivity and vividness positively moderates the main effect as posts with a high degree of interactivity and vividness cause a higher change in attitudinal measures than low interactive and vivid posts. Further, Facebook brand fans are able to better recall posts from high involvement brands due to selective perception effects in the distractive Facebook environment. On the contrary, posts are more effective on fans' attitude toward the brand when posted from a fan page with a comparably lower involvement level. Facebook brand posts activate peripheral routes of information processing which are in favor for communication needs of low involvement products. In addition, a significant interaction effect between the level of involvement and the degree of interactivity and vividness is found. Highly interactive and vivid brand posts are more successful when posted by a low involvement product or brand. Implications for marketing research and practitioners are discussed.

# 1 Motivation

Researchers as well as practitioners more and more realize the tremendous potential inherent in “Social Media”. Especially “Social Network Sites” (SNSs) like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or Google<sup>+</sup> form one of the key tools within the new interactive environment. Facebook, as the largest SNS (HOLLENBECK and KAIKATI, 2012, p. 395), connects over one billion people around the globe with about 700 million daily users (FACEBOOK, 2013, p. 1). Not surprisingly, marketers follow their customers into the social network environment and shift their marketing budgets more and more toward social media and SNSs. With a current level of 7.4% of total marketing expenses, social media spendings are expected to even increase to about 18.1% within the upcoming five years (CMOSURVEY, 2014, p. 25). The fact that 49% of marketing managers see Facebook as the most important social media platform for corporate engagements (STELZNER, 2013, p. 27), underpins the crucial role of Facebook within today’s marketing landscape.

Branded content on Facebook appears in multiple forms and marketing campaigns are executed in many ways. However, the marketing game has drastically changed. Marketers, to a certain degree, have lost control over their brands (HENNIG-THURAU et al., 2010, p. 313). Today, consumers can respond to marketing efforts immediately and even attack companies or brands with invectives or parodies (DEIGHTON and KORNFELD, 2009, p. 4). Rather than pushing a brand’s message at its consumers, it is one of the main tasks for corporate social media engagements to involve consumers into an ongoing dialogue to foster the brand-consumer relationship (cf. e.g., THORBJØRNSSEN et al., 2002, p. 17, HENNIG-THURAU et al., 2010, p. 313). The most common possibility to realize this goal are brand communities in form of brand fan pages where customers can actively interact with the company through liking or commenting corporate brand posts. They can take part in interactive discussions about brand related topics with both, corporate representatives and other consumers (cf. e.g., MCALEXANDER et al., 2002, p. 38, ADJEI et al., 2009, pp. 634-635, ZAGLIA, 2013, pp. 217-218, NAMBISAN and WATT, 2011, p. 889).

However, preliminary research on brand fan pages on Facebook is still in its infancy (JAHN and KUNZ, 2012, p. 344). Especially, evidence on the effects of corporate brand post on Facebook is scarce. Most studies are descriptive, lack a theoretical foundation (e.g., PUGSLEY, 2012), and do not provide clear empirical guidelines about what makes a good brand post on the Facebook platform (HOFFMANN and FODOR, 2010, p. 41). Thus, companies seem to follow a trial and error strategy with their brand fan pages due to the lack of empirical evidence (SHANKAR and

BATRA, 2009, p. 285). DE VRIES et al. (2012) are the first to provide empirical evidence about the factors influencing brand post popularity. They find that posts with a high degree of interactivity and vividness are more popular (i.e., measured by the number of likes and comments of historic brand posts) than their low degree counterparts. As the design of interactive and vivid content as well as the maintenance of brand pages consume a lot of resources and are costly, marketers strive to know more about the effectiveness of corporate brand posts. Questions like: *Are Facebook posts generally able to guide recipients through the purchase funnel? Is the effectiveness of brand posts on Facebook independent of consumers' product involvement? Does the degree of post-interactivity and post-vividness interact with the level of product involvement?* are still unanswered and demand further clarification.

By answering these questions, the paper at hand contributes to the current literature in the following ways. First, this paper uses a field experiment in order to extract information about the effectiveness of Facebook brand posts. While social media literature mainly uses historical posts to retrospectively look at posting effects (e.g., DE VRIES et al., 2012, RAUSCHNABEL et al., 2012) or applies laboratory settings (e.g., NELSON-FIELD et al., 2013, ZHANG et al., 2010), this paper wants to explicitly extract results with high external validity in the distracting Facebook environment. Second, I change perspective away from simple reach measures (i.e., likes and comments) and apply metrics of the purchase funnel (i.e., brand post recall, attitude toward the brand, purchase intent) to assess brand post effectiveness (cf. KELLER and LEHMANN, 2006). Third, I extend the work of DE VRIES et al. (2012) by adding different involvement levels to my experimental approach. And fourth, I propose and show that there is an interaction effect between product involvement and the degree of interactivity and vividness regarding the effectiveness of brand posts.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. First, I describe the role of brand pages in today's social media environment and then develop a theoretical framework to derive hypotheses for the proposed effects of product involvement, interactivity, and vividness on brand post effectiveness. Subsequently, the methodological deliberations and the execution of the experimental setup are discussed, before moving on to the empirical results. I conclude the paper with practical implications and propose some limitations that may act as starting point for further research.

## 2 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

### 2.1 Brand Fan Pages and the Purchase Funnel

Starting as a simple catchphrase after the web 2.0 breakthrough, social media “grew up” and gained a lot of public attention in the past years (RICHTER et al., 2011, p. 89). Especially SNSs have become extremely popular. They can be seen as a mean to allow users to build and host their individual profiles and build and maintain a network of friends for social (e.g., Facebook) or professional (e.g., LinkedIn) interaction. Users acquire new contacts by searching and browsing the network or screening networks of existing contacts and send “friend requests” to connect to other users (TRUSOV et al., 2009, pp. 92-93). It is up to each individual user, how many details he discloses to the social network community and how much content he shares with his social network friends (BOYD and ELLISON, 2007, p. 211, ELLISON et al., 2007, p. 1143). Next to connections between private individuals, profile holders can also become fans of companies or brands on dedicated brand fan pages. They click the “Like” button on the fan page and, thus, enable the brand’s posts to show up in their newsfeed. Similar to status updates and content posted from their peers, they can now like, comment, share, and interact with the content posted by brands. Facebook brand pages, thus, are quite similar to online brand communities where fans interact with the brand and other consumers at the same time (ADJEI et al., 2009, p. 634).

In the past two decades, research about SNSs and online brand communities has grown constantly and applied a multitude of perspectives to shed light on the new phenomenon. Behavioral studies provide evidence on people’s motivations to participate in SNSs and the drivers and motives behind their disclosing behavior. RAACKE and BONDS-RAACKE (2008) find that making new friends, locating old friends, and being up-to-date are the main reasons for participants to use SNSs. Participation behavior in SNSs and brand communities itself can be explained by informational value, entertainment value, altruism, and purposive values that all form a common social network identity (DHOLAKIA et al., 2004). Similar uses and gratifications approaches are also applied in other studies (e.g., DUNNE et al., 2010, SMOCK et al., 2011, JOINSON, 2008, HENNIG-THURAU et al., 2004). They all find that SNSs and brand communities facilitate the participants to execute personal aims (e.g., identity creation and management), social goals (e.g., social interaction and companionship), and help to build group identities with common values and norms. Within brand communities, people strive to create, discuss, and negotiate meaning (MCALEXANDER et al., 2002, p. 38) through sharing information, cementing

the history and culture of a brand or providing assistance to other consumers (MUNIZ and O'GUINN, 2001, pp. 419-426).

Research also sheds light on the effects of a brand community engagement with regards to corporate performance measures and consumer mindset metrics along the purchase funnel. NAMBISAN and WATT (2011) show an increase in attitude toward the brand and products when consumers were engaged in brand related discussions on IT-forums. BRODIE et al. (2013) demonstrate that trust measures could be increased when consumers were highly engaged in virtual brand communities. The authors identify the sharing of knowledge and content, the learning through consuming information, and simple socializing factors as the main drivers for the elevated level of trust across community members. THOMPSON and SINHA (2008) elaborate community messages from four major IT brand communities. They find that the level of community engagement is positively associated with the adoption and choice of new products and even reduces adoption time. Even brand loyalty measures, as the "Holy Grail" of the marketing profession (MCALEXANDER et al., 2002, p. 38), are found to be driven by brand community participation. LAROCHE et al. (2013) report that brand communities show positive effects on the consumers' relationship with the product, the brand, and the company itself, which in turn have positive effects on brand trust and loyalty dimensions (cf. also SCHAU et al., 2009).

Taking a closer look at the studies mentioned above reveals that they mostly derive their implications based on the interpersonal communications between consumers on the respective brand community websites. The company or brand itself is left out and treated like a pure observer of social media discussions not taking over an active role on the brand community platform (GODES et al., 2005, p. 422).

However, Facebook is a highly effective communication and distribution channel and demands the active participation of brands and company representatives (KAPLAN and HAENLEIN, 2010, pp. 64-65, DHOLAKIA and DURHAM, 2010, p. 26). The options for firms to engage are basically threefold. First, companies can develop social games or applications (RAUSCHNABEL et al., 2012, p. 153). Second, they can promote their brands through simple advertising measures similar to online banner ads (e.g., CHANG et al., 2012, p. 634, CHU, 2011, p. 30, LIPSMAN et al., 2012, p. 40). And third, they can get in touch with their consumers through their brand fan pages (GOH et al., 2013, p. 88). They can post photos, videos, quizzes, or any kind of brand related information users can interact with. By using the underlying social network structures, branded content sent out through brand fan pages spreads across the social network and can

reach not only fans, but also the network of friends of fans as an interaction with brand posts is also displayed in the newsfeed of friends (LIPSMAN et al., 2012, p. 44)<sup>1</sup>. As people increasingly use brand fan pages to also learn about unfamiliar brands (NAYLOR et al., 2012, p. 105), the question of how the ideal brand posts should look like becomes crucial.

The success of corporate brand posts is often assessed using simple popularity measures. A post is, for example, seen as popular when it gets a high number of likes, creates high impressions, has a high number of comments, or is shared by many users (LIPSMAN et al., 2012, p. 46, HOFFMANN and FODOR, 2010, p. 44, DE VRIES et al., 2012, p. 84). Even though these metrics are easy to access and provide a solid approximation of how many people appreciate a certain post, they do not necessarily reflect beneficial effects on a brand's image, reputation, or on people's attitude toward the brand. Moreover, many likes and comments can be generated by simply posting humorous content (BAMPO et al., 2008), that has a high degree of originality (LIN and HUANG, 2006), or just fits the current atmosphere within the target group (HO and DEMPSEY, 2010). However, just using the styles above to quickly generate a high number of likes and comments falls short. It implies the danger of neglecting other factors like a suitable post-brand-link and a unique brand positioning (RAITHEL and TAYLOR, 2013, p. 6). This can also be harmful as the initial interest fades quickly and can even cause inferior long term effectiveness (BERGER and SCHWARTZ, 2011, p. 871).

For a successful and persuasive communication, not only on Facebook, it is necessary to guide the recipients through a hierarchical sequence by creating awareness, facilitate knowledge about the brand and products and create attitudes and feelings that might be able to trigger a purchase act and could ultimately result in loyal customer behavior (cf. e.g., LAVIDGE and STEINER, 1961, pp. 59-61, YOO et al., 2004, p. 50, AMBLER et al., 2002, pp. 14-16, KELLER and LEHMANN, 2006, p. 745). As the long-term value of loyal customers together with a farsighted return on invest calculation has become evident in today's marketing landscape (cf. e.g., RUST et al., 2004, p. 110), I move away from assessing brand posts' effectiveness by simple reach metrics. I herewith support the proposition of LIPSMAN et al. (2012, p. 40), who claims that a good Facebook brand fan page with effective corporate brand posts is able to create a deeper engagement, shapes positive attitudes, enhances customer loyalty and increases purchase intentions amongst the fan base.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that not all activities of a user show up in the newsfeed of his/her friends. The Facebook newsfeed uses an algorithm to rank content based upon the likely interest to a specific Facebook member (LIPSMAN et al., 2012, p. 44).

I consequently formulate the following hypotheses about the effects of corporate brand posts on metrics along the purchase funnel<sup>2</sup>:

*Corporate brand posts on Facebook show a positive effect on consumers'...*

$H_{1b}$  ... attitude toward the brand

$H_{1c}$  ... purchase intention.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework, hypotheses, and moderating effects of the paper at hand. I argue that corporate brand posts on Facebook are able to positively influence metrics along the purchase funnel ( $H_1$ ). Additionally, I propose a positive moderator effect of the degree of interactivity and vividness ( $H_2$ ), a mixed moderator effect of the level of product involvement ( $H_3$ ), and a significant interaction between the two moderators ( $H_4$ ). The dependent variables of interest along the purchase funnel are post recall, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention.

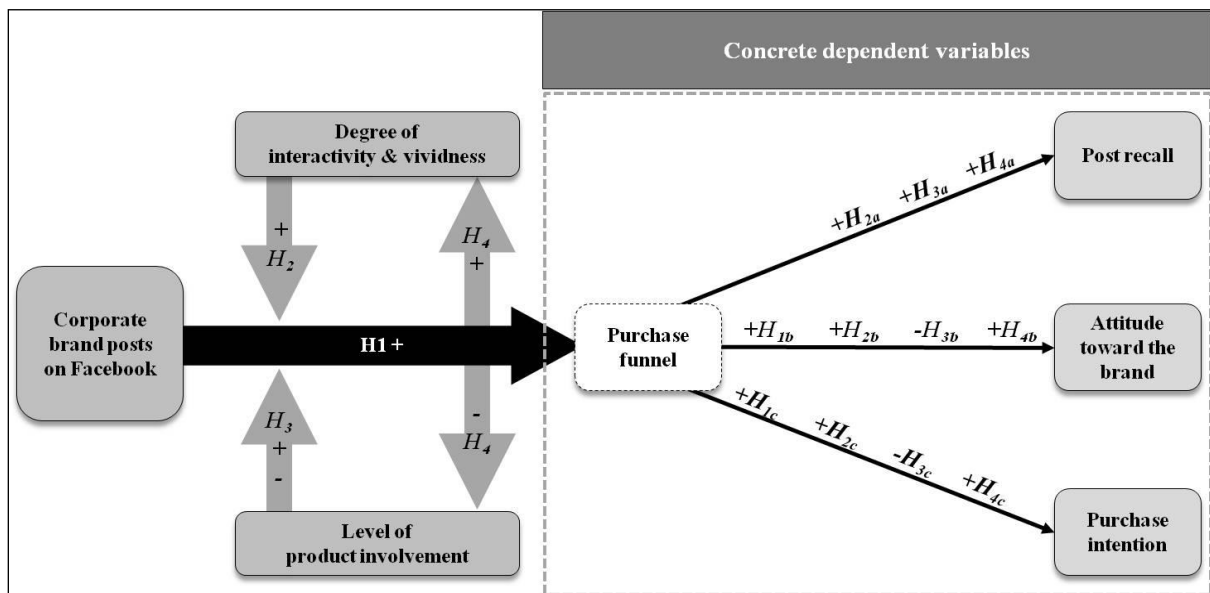


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

## 2.2 The Moderating Role of Interactivity and Vividness

Today, users like approximately 40 brand fan pages that communicate 36 times per month with their respective fan base. On average, each Facebook user sees 1,440 status updates from brand fan pages every month in his newsfeed (SEABROOK, 2013). Given this fact, it becomes obvious that the competition amongst brand fan pages for the attention of Facebook users has long begun. Social media managers have to create content that differs from others, shows a good

<sup>2</sup> Please note that I do not postulate  $H_{1a}$ , since a positive post recall of participants is a natural consequence of any posting activity on Facebook brand pages (cf. also Figure 1).



brand-post fit, and catches the respondent's attention. However, research about what companies should post to achieve these goals is scarce and further insights are needed (JAHN and KUNZ, 2012, p. 344, JAHN et al., 2011, p. 326).

## Interactivity

One way of enhancing brand posts' effectiveness is to use interactive brand post characteristics. The level of interactivity of corporate communication efforts is not predefined by the respective medium (i.e., the internet) or the platform (i.e., Facebook). It is rather the individual execution of communication efforts that creates different levels of interactivity (RAFAELI, 1990, p. 126). Interactivity can be defined as "[t]he degree to which two or more communication parties can act on each other, on the communication medium, and on the messages and the degree to which such influences are synchronized" (LIU and SHRUM, 2002, p. 54)<sup>3</sup>. Further, interactivity on brand fan pages comes along with a real time, two-way communication between participants all given by the internet in general and Facebook in particular (GOLDFARB and TUCKER, 2011). Research has shown many beneficial aspects that come along with a high level of interactivity regarding corporate communication efforts. Table 1 provides an overview of the state of research.

<i>Study</i>	<i>Methodological Approach</i>	<i>Major Findings</i>
<i>LIU and SHRUM (2002)</i>	Theoretical Contribution	Interactivity shows positive effect on user satisfaction
<i>GOLDFARB and TUCKER (2011)</i>	Field Experiment	Interactivity of ad increases its intrusiveness
<i>FORTIN and DHOLAKIA (2005)</i>	Experiment and SEM	Interactivity has a positive effect on social presence
<i>HOFFMAN and NOVAK (2012)</i>	Theoretical Contribution	Interactivity enhances a flow experience
<i>SICILIA et al. (2005)</i>	Experiment	Interactivity leads to higher information processing and higher favorability toward the brand and product
<i>MACIAS (2003)</i>	SEM	Interactivity has positive influence on perceptions of brands and the respective advertisement
<i>MADDOX et al. (1997)</i>	Descriptive Analysis	Interactivity leads to more favorable evaluations of the brand and its products
<i>JEE and LEE (2002)</i>	Experiment	Interactivity increases attitude toward the website
<i>JO and KIM (2003)</i>	Experiment	Interactivity shows positive effects on relationship building (e.g., positivity, trust, commitment etc.)

**Table 1: State of Research - Interactivity**

<sup>3</sup> For a more comprehensive overview of definitions and concepts of interactivity, please refer to the works of FORTIN and DHOLAKIA (2005, p. 388) and McMILLAN and HWANG (2002, pp. 31-33).

By introducing a modified Elaboration Likelihood Model, CHO (1999) adds that high interactive online advertisements provide superior peripheral cues that result in a more enduring, peripheral shift in the recipients' attitude that is predictive of their subsequent behavior. As the Facebook environment is highly distractive by nature, interactivity of brand posts plays an important role to stimulate peripheral cues to achieve advanced brand post effectiveness. Based on the deliberations above, it can be concluded that posts with a high degree of interactivity enhance the positive influence of brand posts on purchase funnel metrics (i.e., brand post recall, attitude toward the brand, purchase intention).

### **Vividness**

Another way to enrich brand posts is the inclusion of vivid characteristics into communication efforts of the brand fan page. STEUER (1992) defines vividness as the representational richness of a mediated environment by its formal features. It is the way, in which an environment presents the information to the senses. Facebook brand pages allow marketers to include many vivid characteristics into their posts. Including videos, presenting pictures, adding animations, or using different colors are just some examples how vividness can be created (CHO, 1999, GOLDFARB and TUCKER, 2011, FORTIN and DHOLAKIA, 2005). But it is, again, not only the ability of a communication medium that influences the degree of vividness. It is also the depth or quality of the sensory information that is presented (STEUER, 1992). Even though, vividness, also referred to as "media richness" (DAFT and LENGEL, 1986), is correlated with interactivity, the both can occur without each other (FORTIN and DHOLAKIA, 2005, p. 389). Research shows that the level of vividness on commercial websites increases users' attitudes toward the website and brand (COYLE and THORSON, 2001). The observed attitudinal change is also found to be more persistent compared to websites with a low degree of vividness. FORTIN and DHOLAKIA (2005) add that the perceived social presence of a web-based advertisement is increased, when vividness features are used. By means of their experimental approach, they could subsequently show an increase of arousal across participants which transfers into a superior advertising effectiveness. I therefore conclude that more vivid brand posts are also able to enhance the positive effects of Facebook brand posts on purchase funnel metrics.

DE VRIES et al. (2012), for the first time, tested the effects of both, interactivity and vividness in the Facebook environment. They find that especially posts with a high degree of interactivity and vividness get more likes and comments and are, thus, more popular among brand fans. As a result of their analysis on post individual level, they looked at interactivity and vividness separately. For the purpose of the field experiment at hand, this approach has to be changed. I

conducted extensive desk research and screened 20 Facebook brand fan pages of the Top 100 Facebook Brands (SOCIALBAKERS, 2013) and their respective posting behavior. It became obvious that there is no single brand fan page that uses exclusively high (low) interactive or exclusively high (low) vivid brand posts<sup>4</sup>. To keep the field experiment and its treatment realistic, the compilations of brand posts cannot be purely interactive or vivid — it is rather a mix between both elements. For this reason, I will not separate the two dimensions but formulate common hypotheses for both, interactivity and vividness:

*Highly interactive and vivid brand posts on Facebook are more effective than posts with a low degree of interactivity and vividness regarding their effect on consumers'...*

*H<sub>2a</sub> ... post recall capability*

*H<sub>2b</sub> ... attitude toward the brand*

*H<sub>2c</sub> ... purchase intention.*

### **2.3 The Moderating Role of Product Involvement**

For many decades, product involvement has played a crucial role in advertising research. Defined as “[a] person’s perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests” (ZAICHKOWSKY, 1985, p. 342), people with different levels of product involvement will vary in the extensiveness of their purchase decision process. People with higher involvement will need more attributes to compare alternatives, need more time for the decision process, have a higher willingness to reach a maximum or a threshold level of satisfaction within their decision process, and need a higher degree of information (KRUGMAN, 1966). Based on these deliberations, LAURENT and KAPFERER (1985, p. 42) state that product involvement is a consequence of antecedents like personal interest, hedonic value, sign value, and perceived importance of a specific product. CELSI and OLSON (1988, p. 211) add that the personal relevance or importance is represented by the perceived link between one’s personal goals and values and their respective product knowledge. In addition, the authors state that individuals are more attentive and more cognitively activated when processing information regarding a high involvement product. Thus, research demands corporate communication to consequently adjust their actions along the requirements of recipients’ involvement level to increase advertising or communication effectiveness (FU et al., 2012, p. 195, DE PELSMACKER et al., 2002, p. 51). People demand detailed product information and high quality arguments in case of high product involvement and, thus, use more cognitive resources for information processing. People focus more on peripheral cues like the attractiveness of a message or pure

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<sup>4</sup> Please note that a detailed overview of different brand posts and their assigned level of vividness and interactivity will be presented and discussed in chapter 3.1.

design and layout aspects when it comes to the low involvement product category (e.g., PETTY et al., 1983, DENS and DE PELSMACKER, 2009, DENS and DE PELSMACKER, 2010, BAUER et al., 2006). For this reason I propose a difference in brand post effectiveness along the purchase funnel for brand pages of high versus low involvement products.

Branded content on Facebook is primarily consumed within the newsfeed of users. Users are up to 150 times more likely to consume branded content in the newsfeed than to visit the brand fan page itself (LIPSMAN et al., 2012, p. 40). Given the fact that Facebook users are confronted with a huge number of brand messages and status updates of their peers on their newsfeed, they are simply not able to fully process all information presented. Rather, people sift through their newsfeed and apply cognitive filtering mechanisms to reduce the complexity of the Facebook environment. Messages from high involvement products, characterized by peoples' higher product knowledge (PARK and MOON, 2003, pp. 982-987), higher interest in the product/brand (ZAICHKOWSKY, 1985, p. 347), and a superior conformity with consumers' personal values and norms (CELSI and OLSON, 1988, p. 221), are, therefore, more likely to be perceived and should be recalled more often:

*H<sub>3a</sub>: Facebook brand posts are more effective for companies in the high involvement product category than for comparably low involvement product companies with respect to their effect on consumers' post recall capability.*

The involvement construct also shows positive moderating effects on other variables along the purchase funnel. Advertising shows a higher influence on recipients' attitude toward the brand/product/company under a high compared to a low involvement condition (e.g., ANDREWS and SHIMP, 1990, p. 210, SPIELMANN and RICHARD, 2013, p. 499). Similar effects could also be shown on trust, satisfaction, and commitment measures (e.g., MARTÍN et al., 2011, pp. 148-152, GNEPA, 2012, p. 42), as well as for purchase related variables like purchase intention or willingness to pay (e.g., WIESEKE and HAUMANN, 2010, pp. 178-179). The argumentations of these studies almost exclusively follow the logic of the elaboration likelihood model. The elaboration likelihood model suggests that recipients of brand communication engage in more effortful cognitive processing of the messages in case of a high involvement situation or product. They process the presented information in more detail and form new cognitive structures based on the evaluation of the respective content. Information about low involvement products is processed in a more superficial way. Peripheral cues like source attractiveness, music, humor, or visual stimuli play the dominant role and result in a temporary attitudinal change (PETTY and CACIOPPO, 1986, PETTY et al., 1983, PETTY et al., 2004). Having said this, one could argue that Facebook brand posts work better under a high involvement condition.

However, the central route of cognitive processing can only be activated when recipients have the ability to process the information in depth consistent with their involvement state (PETTY et al., 1983, p. 143, PETTY et al., 2004, p. 69). Two main reasons support the fact that social network users do not have the possibility to systematically process the information presented by brands. First, even though Facebook allows messages up to 60,000 characters to distribute detailed information, most brands stick to messages of about 80 characters to achieve the best interaction rates (WIESE, 2013). The necessary depth of information that high involvement fans demand can hardly be transferred through 80 character messages. Second, through the tremendously high number of status updates from peers and brands (cf. also chapter 2.2), the Facebook page and especially a fan's newsfeed form a highly complex environment that is bounded by the problem of information overload. KOROLEVA et al. (2011) confirm the inherent information overload and state that users constantly try to reduce complexity though applying perceptual filters and heuristics. The authors further confirm that Facebook mainly activates affective and more superficial ways of information processing that are in line with the peripheral routes of the elaboration likelihood model. Especially, attitudinal measures and behavioral intentions seem to be driven by a more emotional and superficial way of information processing that argues in favor of a higher effectiveness of brand related Facebook communication in case low involvement brands, products, or situations. Following these arguments, I propose that Facebook posts better fit the communication goals of low involvement products and formulate the following two hypotheses:

*Facebook brand posts are more effective for companies in the low involvement product category than for comparably high involvement product companies with respect to their effect on consumers'...*

*H<sub>3b</sub> ... attitude toward the brand*

*H<sub>3c</sub> ... purchase intention.*

## The Interplay of Interactivity, Vividness and Involvement

Advertising research defines peripheral cues as the attractiveness of a message (PETTY et al., 1983, p. 137). These attention-getting and curiosity-generating visual cues like size, animation or color can be seen as closely related to the levels of interactivity and vividness (CHO, 1999, p. 37). CHO (1999, p. 39) also confirms that people indeed are more likely to interact with interactive and vivid banner ads in case of low involvement situations. Both dimensions fit the peripheral route of the Facebook environment. I therefore hypothesize:

*High interactive & vivid brand posts are more effective for low involvement products than high involvement products with regards to their effect on consumers' ...*

*H<sub>4a</sub> ... post recall capability*

*H<sub>4b</sub> ... attitude toward the brand*

*H<sub>4c</sub> ... purchase intention.*

## 3 Research Design

As one of the main contributions of this paper is to test whether Facebook brand posts are able to influence fans' mindset metrics along the purchase funnel in a realistic setting, I conduct an online field experiment to elevate the external validity of the paper at hand. The study design consists of an online Facebook experiment over a two week treatment period. I set up brand fan pages for two brands. One is representing a high involvement product and one shows a comparably low product involvement. Furthermore, I designed two compilations of Facebook brand posts. One consists of mainly high interactive and vivid brand posts where the other shows a lower degree of interactivity and vividness.

### 3.1 Choice of Brands and Treatment

To minimize preexisting knowledge and affect due to a prior familiarity and exposure with the content presented in the field experiment, fictitious brands from the product categories relevant to our student biased sample population were created — a young fashion label *attraction*, a sports drink *ISOPOWA*<sup>®</sup>, and a fixed gear bicycle manufacturer *BikeBelow*. Online research revealed that the brand names were not preallocated or connected to any existing companies. In line with the deliberations and findings of TILL and SHIMP (1998), I expect the bicycle manufacturer *BikeBelow* to be the representative of the high involvement product category, whereas *ISOPOWA*<sup>®</sup> and *attraction* should be located in the lower involvement segment.

### Pretest I

To assure a correct manipulation of the different product involvement levels, the three fictitious brand profiles<sup>5</sup> were fed into a pretest. Product involvement was measured by applying the 20-item semantic differential scale suggested by ZAICHKOWSKY (1985)<sup>6</sup> as it has been applied to a myriad of different setting and studies and has proven high reliability (e.g., SPIELMANN and RICHARD, 2013, KIM et al., 2008, DE PELSMACKER et al., 2002). A total of 60 respondents answered the questionnaire. 46.9% were female and the ages ranged between 19 and 30. Table 2 gives a detailed overview of the generated results.

<i>Brands</i>	<i>Involvement Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Post-Hoc-Comparison Bonferroni</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
(1) <i>attraction</i>	2.400 (1.075)	20	(1) vs. (2): $p = .039$ (1) vs. (3): $p < .001$	<b>Comparably Low Involvement</b>
(2) <i>ISOPOWA®</i>	3.265 (1.538)	21	(2) vs. (1): $p = .039$ (2) vs. (3): $p = .024$	Excluded
(3) <i>BikeBelow</i>	4.203 (0.758)	19	(3) vs. (1): $p < .001$ (3) vs. (2): $p = .024$	<b>Comparably High Involvement</b>

*Note:* Involvement means are scores on seven-point Likert-scales; Standard deviations in parentheses; Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of involvement scale = 0.966; Alternative post-hoc-tests revealed similar results

**Table 2: Pretest Involvement - ANOVA**

Analysis of variance revealed that there is a significant difference between the involvement level of the three brands ( $F(2,58) = 13.568$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The post-hoc test indicates that the bicycle as rather high and the fashion label as comparably low involvement product are significantly different from each other. However, it has to be noted that *BikeBelow* did not reach a high involvement level on the seven point Likert scale. With its mean score of 4.203 it rather ranges in the middle of the involvement spectrum. As the difference between the two brands is close to two scale points, I still consider the two brands appropriate to be used as vehicles in the subsequent field experiment. For clarity reasons, I will still address the two brands as representatives of the “high” and “low” involvement category, even though they can only be seen in relation to each other representing a “comparably high” and a “comparably low” involvement level. The sports drink *ISOPOWA®* also proved to be significantly different but ranged between *attraction* and *BikeBelow*. It was, therefore, excluded from the subsequent field experiment.

## Pretest II

<sup>5</sup> The detailed brand profiles can be found in Appendix 1.

<sup>6</sup> Please note that the full 20-item scale was only used in pretest I. For efficiency reasons, the further experimental procedure relied on a subset of seven involvement items (cf. chapter 3.2).

In order to design actual Facebook brand posts for the two selected companies (i.e., *BikeBelow* and *attraction*) and to properly manipulate the degree of interactivity and vividness, it is necessary to understand what posting options companies have and how they can be classified regarding their interactivity and vividness. DE VRIES et al. (2012) provide an overview of different posting styles and their respective classifications. The grouping of DE VRIES et al. (2012) shall also be the basis for the post compilations used in the study at hand. Table 3 shows that textual and pure pictorial posts show a low degree of vividness, whereas videos address multiple senses and, therefore, belong to the high vividness category. A company can further increase the degree of interactivity by e.g., not posting simple links to websites, but asking questions or announcing quizzes.

<i>Level</i>	<i>Vividness</i>	<i>Interactivity</i>
<i>Low</i>	Textual posts	Link to website (mainly news sites, blogs, but not to company website)
	Pictorial (photo or image)	Voting (brand fans are able to vote for alternatives, e.g., design or taste)
<i>Medium</i>	Event (application at the brand page and announces an upcoming event)	Call to act (urges brand fans to do something)
		Contest (brand fans are requested to do something for which they can win prizes)
<i>High</i>	Video (mainly videos from YouTube)	Question
		Quiz (similar to question, but now brand fans can win prizes)

**Table 3: Interactivity and Vividness Classification of DE VRIES 2012**

Desk research revealed that brands — again referring to the Top 100 Facebook Brands (SOCIALBAKERS, 2013) — mostly do not post on a daily base. To assure a realistic environment for the field experiment, I leave four days without a post in the two-week treatment period and designed two post compilations (i.e., high interactivity/vividness and low interactivity/vividness) for both brands, each consisting of ten posts.

Next to the posting frequency, important deliberations regarding the posting content have to be made. SNSs are often used for promotional means by posting special offers, social media vouchers and discounts, or launching product based advertising campaigns (e.g., SZABO and HUBERMAN, 2010, p. 80, SMITH et al., 2012, p. 102). As the field experiment at hand is based on fictitious brands, a focus on product-advertisement or promotion goals would fall short. Rather than posting purely product related posts, I focus on corporate brand posts that do not center on a pure selling aspect but represent the corporate brand's self image. The respective style and content is kept constant across the two brands to assure a high degree of comparability. Of course, content is different in that the bicycle content is transferred over to comparable topics in the fashion industry. I hereby also control for a similar mix of informative and entertaining posts in all treatment groups. Further, it has to be noted, that each post comes with a short text



to keep posting activities realistic. Table 4 shows the post compilations for both brands. The compilation for the high interactive/vividness treatment group of each brand mainly consists of videos and questions. Following the classification of DE VRIES et al. (2012), they both represent the highest manifestation in the interactivity and vividness category.

<i>Post Number</i>	<i>High Interactivity/Vividness</i>	<i>Low Interactivity/Vividness</i>
1	Video + Question (information product category)	Photo (product picture)
2	Question (fans' expectations)	Photo (product picture)
3	Video + Question (fans' vacation plans)	Link (product category expert blog)
4	Question (design trends)	Vote (use of product)
5	Video + Question (use of product)	Photo (product picture)
6	Question (where to buy the product)	Photo (new designs)
7	Question (how to enjoy weather with product)	Link (product category expert blog)
8	Video (passion with product category)	Vote (most important attribute of product)
9	Question (favorite city to use/buy product)	Link (newspaper article about product category)
10	Video & Contest (image video about the company)	Vote (product picture in action)

**Table 4: Overview of Post Compilations<sup>7</sup>**

To validate the correct manipulation of the different interactivity and vividness levels, a second pretest was conducted. An online questionnaire was designed which presented all posts of the compilations. Each respondent was randomly assigned to one of the four compilations (high and low interactivity/vividness for *attraction* and *BikeBelow*) and was confronted with the short brand profile. Subsequently, all posts of the respective compilation were shown and participants were asked to indicate the perceived level of vividness and interactivity. To assess the perceived level of interactivity, I applied six items<sup>8</sup> of the perceived interactivity scale by McMILLAN and HWANG (2002, p. 37). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of appreciation of each statement on a seven point Likert scale with 1 = “do not agree at all” to 7 = “fully agree”. Vividness was measured by means of a four item seven-point semantic differential of KRISHNAMURTHY and SUJAN (1999)<sup>9</sup>. Participants were only part of one treatment group pretest to avoid learning effects. Again, in total, 60 respondents took part in the pretest. 27 participants rated posts from *attraction* and 33 from *BikeBelow*. Table 5 shows the results of the interactivity and vividness pretest.

<i>Interactivity/Vividness Levels</i>	<i>Interactivity Mean</i>	<i>Vividness Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>ANOVA Results</i>
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<sup>7</sup> The different post compilations together with the pictures and videos used can be found on the data-CD handed in together with this thesis.

<sup>8</sup> i.e. enable concurrent communication, enable two-way communication, are interactive, primarily enable one-way communication, are interpersonal, and enabled conversations.

<sup>9</sup> i.e. abstract/concrete, dull/vivid, vague/clear, and not figurative/figurative.

<i>High Interactive/Vivid Compilation</i>	5.229 (0.685)	5.225 (0.764)	30	Interactivity: <b>F(1,59) = 59.984; p &lt; .001</b>
<i>Low Interactive/Vivid Compilation</i>	4.014 (0.518)	4.475 (0.781)	30	Vividness: <b>F(1,59) = 14.149; p &lt; .001</b>

Note: Interactivity and vividness means are scores on seven-point Likert-scales; Standard deviations in parentheses; Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of interactivity-scale = .804 and of vividness-scale  $\alpha$  = .724

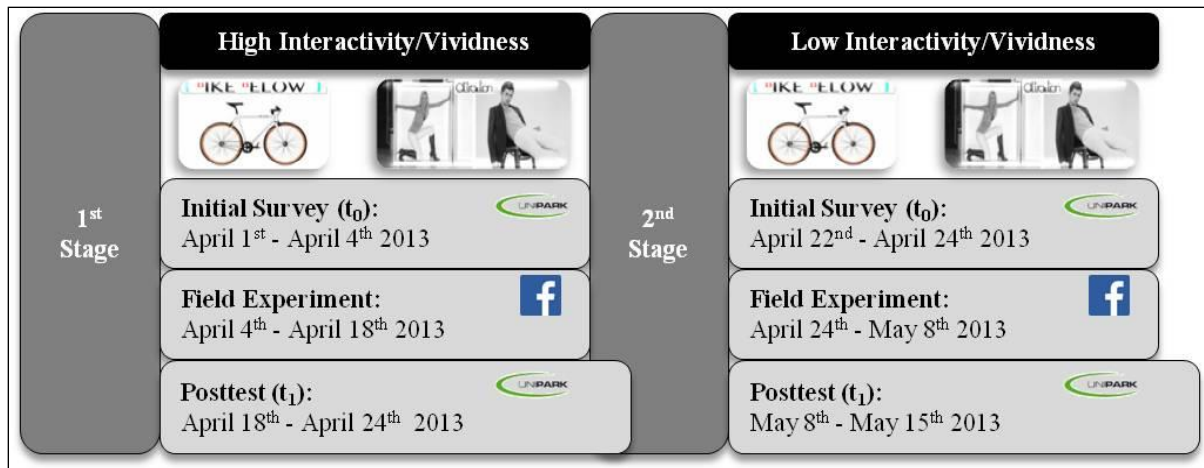
**Table 5: Pretest Interactivity and Vividness**

As intended, the designed post compilations are perceived more interactive and more vivid in the high interactivity and vividness posting compilations (i.e., interactivity:  $F(1,59) = 59.984$ ,  $p < .001$ ; vividness:  $F(1,59) = 14.149$ ,  $p < .001$ ). There are no significant differences between the two brands. This confirms that the differences in interactivity and vividness are caused by the posting compilations. The posts are, therefore, sufficient to be included into the field experiment.

### 3.2 Design and Measurement

#### Design

The field experiment is conducted as a before-and-after 2 (interactivity/vividness: high or low)  $\times$  2 (involvement: high or low) between- and within-subjects design. The whole experimental procedure includes an initial survey, a treatment period of two weeks on Facebook, and a posttest. The treatments are posted on the Facebook brand fan pages of *attraction* and *BikeBelow*. For this reason, the whole experimental procedure is carried out as an online field experiment. To receive the treatments, participants had to become fan of the created brand fan pages on Facebook. As each brand appears in the experimental procedure twice (i.e., low and high interactivity and vividness), it had to be assured that participants from one experimental group are not connected to participants from the other treatment group of the brand. In other words, if two Facebook friends are part of the experimental set up in the different treatment groups of one brand, their newsfeed would show any liking, sharing, or commenting activity of their friend connected to the other group. Therefore, the experimental treatments would not be mutually exclusive to the treatment group anymore. For this reason, I execute the experiment in two stages. The treatment groups of high interactive and vivid brand posts for *BikeBelow* and *attraction* are launched and completed first. Subsequently, the low interactivity and vividness counterparts are fielded. Figure 2 shows the design and execution of the field experiment with the respective timeframes from April to May 2013. Consequently, the experiment shows two recruiting stages before stage 1 and 2. Thus, I conducted two initial surveys, two experimental stages, and two posttests.



**Figure 2: Design and Execution of the Field Experiment**

### Initial Survey

Participants were invited to the initial survey<sup>10</sup> and had to indicate their email address. Email addresses were used to match respondents' answers of the initial survey with posttest responses. Afterwards, participants were led through the demographic block which concluded with the screener-question: "*Do you have an own Facebook profile?*". The next part of the questionnaire dealt with people's internet experience. To assess participants' internet usage behavior measured in time intervals, I used five categories from "0-1 hour per day" up to "over 4 hours per day" (cf. also THORBJØRNSSEN et al., 2002, p. 26). The Facebook usage behavior measured in hours spent per day<sup>11</sup> and the number of Facebook friends were further questioned (cf. ELLISON et al., 2007, p. 1150). Those who indicated to be a fan of a company or brand on Facebook were asked additional questions about how many posts they consciously realize and how they interact with these corporate communication efforts. The next set of questions asked respondents to indicate their attitude toward Facebook, again, taken from ELLISON et al. (2007, p. 1150). Following, trust toward Facebook was surveyed by a single item (cf. LIN and LU, 2011, p. 568). In addition, I asked respondents to indicate their privacy concerns toward Facebook, also by means of the single item introduced by HOY and MILNE (2010, p. 33). At this point, respondents are assigned randomly to either *attraction* or *BikeBelow* and confronted with the respective brand profiles. Similar to pretest I, the level of product involvement is

<sup>10</sup> Please note that the initial survey and the posttest in t<sub>1</sub> are conducted with EFS survey from Unipark. The language throughout the whole experiment is German. If not indicated otherwise, all items are measured on seven-point Likert scales.

<sup>11</sup> The intervals were questioned on a per day basis. Six categories were used from "less than 10 minutes" up to "more than 3 hours".

assessed by using seven items<sup>12</sup> of the 20-item semantic differential scale suggested by ZAICHKOWSKY (1985).

Next, the  $t_0$ -values of the dependent variables of interest are questioned. I measure *attitude toward the brand* by applying three semantic differential scale items of MACKENZIE et al. (1986, p. 134) with the anchors: positive/negative, good/bad, and favorable/unfavorable. For evaluating *purchase intention* I used the three-item differential scale of WANG et al. (2012, p. 203) with the bipolar pairs “unlikely/likely”, “uncertain/certain”, and “definitely not/definitely”<sup>13</sup>. The final page in this section explains the following course of action for the experimental procedure. Further, it questions respondents’ Facebook aliases to track if they become fan of the respective brand page. Finally, participants are forwarded to the brand fan page on Facebook of either *attraction* or *BikeBelow* and are asked to become fan of the brand.

### Posttest

After the two week treatment period, participants are invited by email to take part in the posttest of the experiment. To match the dataset of the posttest with the initial survey, email addresses are questioned first and checked with initial responses. Respondents are further questioned if they became fan of the respective brand to screen out people that did not click the like button. Subsequently, the posttest assessed the number of perceived brand posts as the third dependent variable. To ensure that participants really perceived at least one post, an open text field asked them to name the topic or content of one or more brand posts. To match the open answers with actual postings allowed controlling for the actual perception of Facebook fans in the study set up and generated a reliable variable of *post recall*. The procedure was necessary due to the fact that Facebook fans are able to hide status updates from brands, friends, or apps in their newsfeed anytime. In addition, there is no reliable source of information, if and how long participants have been interacting with Facebook during the experimental procedure.

The following part involves the identical questions and scales posed in the initial survey to generate  $t_1$  data for the dependent variables of *attitude toward the brand* and *purchase intention*.

---

<sup>12</sup> i.e. important/unimportant, matters to me/doesn’t matter, means a lot to me/means nothing to me, useless/useful, of no concern/of concern to me, uninterested/interested, and essential/nonessential.

<sup>13</sup> At this point it has to be noted that developing purchase intention toward a brand’s product, of course, is dependent from many aspects other than Facebook posts. However, as already stated in chapter 2.1, people more and more use brand fan pages to also learn about unfamiliar brands (NAYLOR et al., 2012, p. 105). Therefore, the experimental stimulation of brand page interaction seems appropriate as it reflects Facebook users’ information search behavior regarding new and rather unfamiliar brands. As the positive effect of brand posts on attitude toward the brand can be expected, it will be interesting to see if the attitudinal effect caused by posts of the fictitious brands is strong enough to also influence respondents’ purchase intention.

Changes of the dependent variables are determined by the difference between the  $t_1$  means and the respective  $t_0$  values. The questionnaire concluded with manipulation checks regarding the effect of the respective treatments. Again, the perceived level of interactivity and vividness of the brand posts was measured using the scales of McMILLAN and HWANG (2002) and KRISHNAMURTHY and SUJAN (1999) similar to the second pretest. To assure the reliability of the applied scales, Cronbach's-alpha values are calculated. Table 6 provides an overview of the  $\alpha$ -values. They all exceed the recommended threshold of .70, show a good level of reliability, and are, therefore, sufficient for the study at hand (cf. NUNALLY, 1978, KIM and KO, 2012, p. 1484).

<i>Cronbach's Alpha Values of Scales</i>					
<i>Attitude toward the Brand</i>	<i>Purchase Intention</i>	<i>Interactivity</i>	<i>Vividness</i>	<i>Involvement</i>	<i>Attitude toward Facebook</i>
.901	.883	.840	.825	.903	.805

**Table 6: Reliability Scores**

## **4 Analysis and Results**

### **4.1 Sample, Manipulation Checks, and Covariates**

#### **Sample**

The initial survey was completed by a total of 212 respondents from a convenience sample. They were randomly assigned to one of the four treatments groups. To motivate participation, respondents that completed the whole experiment over the two week period automatically took part in a lottery in which ten €20 Amazon vouchers were raffled. I had to exclude 44 participants that did not take part in the posttest survey and an additional 25 respondents that did not become fan of the brand pages on Facebook. Even though generalized linear models would allow answering the hypotheses derived in this paper without a balanced group size, for pragmatic reasons and to increase the robustness of the statistical analyses, I decided to randomly exclude three of the remaining 143 participants. This resulted in a group size of  $n = 35$  in all four treatment groups. A total of 140 complete responses were fed into the conducted (co-)variance-analytical analyses.

Participants were between 16 and 47 years old with an average age of 24.91. 53.6% were female ( $n = 75$ ) and 46.4% were male ( $n = 65$ ). The predominant educational background was A-level with 56.4% of the sample<sup>14</sup>. Taking a closer look at respondents' internet usage behavior reveals, that one half is online up to three hours a day, whereas the other half even exceeds those numbers. Regarding people's Facebook usage behavior, close to fifty percent indicated to spend up to half an hour on Facebook daily. The other half clearly invests more time. The average participant in the sample is connected to about 350 peers and exactly 70% ( $n = 98$ ) are already fan of one or more brands on Facebook. When people interact with brand posts, they mostly "like" a status update ( $M = 3.429$ ,  $SD = 1.492$  on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 = "never" to 7 = "very frequently"). Participants further state that they rarely use the "commenting" ( $M = 1.745$ ,  $SD = 1.087$ ) or "sharing" ( $M = 1.806$ ,  $SD = 1.081$ ) functions to interact with brand posts on Facebook.

### Manipulation Checks

To assure a proper perception of the experimental manipulations among participants, two different manipulation checks are built into the posttest. First, the involvement level for the two brands *attraction* and *BikeBelow* is assessed, again using seven items of the scale suggested by ZAICHKOWSKY (1985). As intended, Table 7 shows that *BikeBelow* is perceived higher in product involvement than the fashion label *attraction*. The results from the conducted ANOVA confirm the findings from pretest I and verify a successful manipulation of the involvement level. However, *BikeBelow*, again, only shows a medium involvement level on the seven point scale. As this study relies on fictitious brand profiles, simulating a high involvement level among participants was not successful. However, working with real brands would have led to different problems that also counteract the feasibility of the experimental design (e.g. preexisting attitudes toward real brands, no right for posting content on real brand fan pages etc.). Thus, it has to be kept in mind that the inherent involvement level of *attraction* has to be interpreted as comparably low and the level of *BikeBelow* as comparably high for the remainder of this paper (cf. also chapter 3.1).

<sup>14</sup> Please note that there are no significant differences in demographic measures across the single treatment groups that could bias the study's results (ANOVA<sub>interactivity/vividness</sub>: age  $F(1,138) = 3.720$ ,  $p > .05$ ; gender  $F(1,138) = 2.332$ ,  $p > .05$ ; education  $F(1,138) = .926$ ,  $p > .05$  and ANOVA<sub>involvement</sub>: age  $F(1,138) = 2.986$ ,  $p > .05$ ; gender  $F(1,138) = 3.512$ ,  $p > .05$ ; education  $F(1,138) = 1.537$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

<i>Brands</i>	<i>Involvement Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>ANOVA Results</i>
<i>Comparably High Involvement (BikeBelow)</i>	3.922 (1.097)	70	<b>F(1,138) = 8.585; p &lt; .01</b>
<i>Comparably Low Involvement (attraction)</i>	3.045 (1.174)	70	

*Note:* Involvement means are scores on seven-point, Likert-scales; Standard deviations in parentheses; Involvement was measured in  $t_1$  after the two week treatment period

**Table 7: Manipulation Check Involvement**

Second, the experimental manipulation of the different interactivity and vividness levels is also challenged. The posttest, again, assesses the perceived interactivity and vividness (cf. MCMILLAN and HWANG, 2002, KRISHNAMURTHY and SUJAN, 1999) of posting compilations among experimental participants. Following Pretest II, the manipulation check shows a statistically significant difference between the two experimental groups regarding respondents' perceived level of interactivity and vividness (cf. Table 8). Therefore, the manipulation of the vividness and interactivity level proved to be successful for the study's purposes. However, respondents' assessments about the different interactivity and vividness levels are more similar than indicated in pretest II. Embedding the posts in a real Facebook setting might have led to a different perception of posts' interactivity and vividness levels compared to the stand alone presentation in the online survey of pretest II (cf. chapter 3.1).

<i>Treatment Groups</i>	<i>Interactivity/Vividness Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>ANOVA Results</i>
<i>High Interactive/Vivid Group</i>	4.057 (1.197)	70	<b>F(1,138) = 3.944; p &lt; .05</b>
<i>Low Interactive/Vivid Group</i>	3.852 (1.144)	70	

*Note:* Interactivity/vividness means are scores on seven-point, Likert-scales; Standard deviations in parentheses

**Table 8: Manipulation Check Interactivity/Vividness**

## Covariates

To control for effects that might bias the results of the paper at hand, I also measured covariates as potential controls. GOLDFARB and TUCKER (2011) argue that privacy concerns play a huge role within the online environment. People react more sensitive to postings on social networks when their privacy concerns are high. For this reason I include a single item in the initial survey stating “*I am concerned regarding the private information that can be found about me on Facebook*” with 1 = “do not agree at all” and 7 = “fully agree” (cf. HOY and MILNE, 2010). The covariate privacy concerns is split after the neutral scale point four and sums up 55.7% of

respondents that show lower privacy concerns compared to 44.3% with higher privacy concerns.

Again following GOLDFARB and TUCKER (2011), I use the average time spent on Facebook to control for effects that stem from experiences through heavy use of the highly distracting Facebook environment. Especially attitudinal changes can differ drastically when experienced and non-experienced users are treated equally (cf. COYLE and THORSON, 2001, p. 72). Therefore, I split the variable “On average, how much time do you spend on Facebook per day?” into 44.7% of the sample using Facebook up to 30 minutes a day and contrast them to the remaining 55.3% of more frequent users.

## 4.2 Results

Table 9 presents the mean values for the dependent variables of the study at hand.

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>n = 140</i>		<i>High Involvement (BikeBelow, n = 70)</i>		<i>Low Involvement (attraction, n = 70)</i>			
					High Interactive & Vivid (n = 35)		Low Interactive & Vivid (n = 35)	
	t <sub>0</sub>	t <sub>1</sub>	t <sub>0</sub>	t <sub>1</sub>	t <sub>0</sub>	t <sub>1</sub>	t <sub>0</sub>	t <sub>1</sub>
<i>Perceived Number of Posts</i>	---	3.200 (1.876)	---	2.830 (1.774)	---	2.460 (2.119)	---	2.140 (2.158)
<i>Attitude Toward the Brand</i>	5.141 (0.684)	5.253 (1.054)	4.794 (1.111)	4.995 (1.149)	3.983 (1.152)	4.840 (0.962)	4.271 (1.047)	4.349 (1.064)
<i>Purchase Intention</i>	3.779 (1.117)	3.750 (1.291)	3.142 (1.582)	2.960 (1.387)	3.333 (1.207)	3.571 (1.312)	3.294 (1.374)	3.168 (1.405)

Note: Cells are mean scores across items on seven-point, Likert-scales; Standard deviations in parentheses

**Table 9: Overview of Mean-Values for Dependent Variables in Treatment-Groups**

The mean values reveal that the triggered movements within the dependent variables attitude toward the brand and purchase intention between t<sub>0</sub> and t<sub>1</sub> are rather small. Participants purchase intention does not seem to be influenced by the posting activities in the experimental setup, whereas the attitude toward the brand measure was slightly increased in all groups. However, the movement in the group of highly interactivity and vivid brand posts of the low involvement product *attraction* seems to not fit the pattern of the overall experiment. The delta of almost one scale point indicates that participants seem to be distinctly influenced by the high interactive and vivid brand posts in the low involvement category which appears to be rather high compared to the overall experiment. To comprehend this phenomenon, one of the first thoughts goes to a measurement error in the respective group. Respondents in this group could be



systematically biased regarding their demographics, attitudes toward the experimental procedure, or other unobserved characteristics. Nevertheless, two arguments speak in favor of the experimental approach and the suitability of the collected data. First, as already shown in footnote 14, there are no significant differences across groups regarding the collected demographic variables. I further tested for differences regarding other variables that might differentiate the treatment groups. The variables attitude toward Facebook ( $F(1, 136) = 2.477$ ,  $p > .05$ ), trust toward Facebook ( $F(1, 136) = .956$ ,  $p > .05$ ), internet experience ( $F(1, 136) = .670$ ,  $p > .05$ ), and time on Facebook ( $F(1, 136) = 2.235$ ,  $p > .05$ ) did not reveal any significant differences that might explain the high sensitivity to the highly interactive and vivid brand posts in the low involvement treatment group. Second, two recruitment stages were used to collect participants for the experiment. It has to be noted that participants were not exclusively collected for one treatment group. As figure 2 already showed, both groups using highly interactive and vivid brand posts (i.e. *attraction* and *BikeBelow* as representatives of rather high and rather low involvement) were recruited at the same time and use the same convenience sampling procedure through campus mailing lists and snowballing. As participants were randomly assigned to either *BikeBelow* or *attraction*, a possible bias of the recruiting process would also be reflected in the high interactive and vivid treatment group of *BikeBelow*. As the delta value in the highly interactive and vivid posting group of the high involvement product did not react in the same way, a measurement error can at least partly be ruled out. Of course, all results in the following have to be seen as only derived from the findings of this study under the assumption that the results are unbiased for the above reasons. For further analyses, I calculate the deltas of the dependent variables *attitude toward the brand* and *purchase intention* as  $t_1$  minus  $t_0$  to reduce the design's dimensionality. As the *perceived number of posts* is only assessed in  $t_1$ , I use the posttest values for statistical evaluation.

### **General Effectiveness of Facebook Brand Posts**

Hypothesis 1 predicts that Facebook brand posts are generally able to positively influence people's attitude toward the brand and purchase intention irrespective of the involvement situation or the level of post interactivity and vividness. To test this assumption, I use all 140 responses because all are part of the experimental manipulation at hand. Every participant received ten Facebook brand posts of either high or low interactivity/vividness in either a high or low involvement setting in the two-week treatment period. Thus, I conduct a one-sample t-test, testing the respective delta values against zero to assure there is a significant main effect. Table 10 provides the corresponding test statistics.

<i>One Sample T-Test - Testing Value = 0; n = 140</i>						
<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>t<sub>0</sub></i>	<i>t<sub>1</sub></i>	$\Delta$	<i>T</i>	<i>sig.</i>	<i>Hypothesis</i>
<i>Attitude Toward the Brand</i>	4.547 (1.101)	4.859 (1.099)	+0.312 (1.019)	3.626	p < .001	<i>H<sub>1b</sub></i> supported
<i>Purchase Intention</i>	3.387 (1.338)	3.362 (1.372)	-0.0245 (1.286)	-0.226	n.sig	<i>H<sub>1c</sub></i> not supported

*Note:* Values represent the mean scores across items on seven-point, Likert-scales; Standard deviations in parentheses; all respondents did see ten posts in the two-week period

**Table 10: Effectiveness of Corporate Brand Posts on Facebook**

Within the experimental manipulation it was possible to positively influence respondents' attitude toward the brand ( $\Delta_{\text{attitude}} = +0.312$ ,  $p < .001$ ) independently of the posting style or product involvement group. The results support *H<sub>1b</sub>* and confirm that Facebook postings are indeed able to influence attitudinal measures of the fan popularity. In contrast, purchase intention almost stayed constant and could not be influenced through posting activities ( $\Delta_{\text{purchase intention}} = -0.0245$ , n.sig.). The attitudinal change over the two week treatment period was too small to trigger any subsequent movement in purchase intention. One reason might, again, be the use of fictitious brand profiles and the awareness of participants that they cannot purchase the products presented anyway. Moreover, I relied on more general brand posts not having a special sales or promotion focus. *H<sub>1c</sub>* is, thus, not supported.

### **The Moderating Role of Interactivity and Vividness**

To examine the moderating effect of post interactivity and vividness on the general effectiveness of Facebook brand posts, I conduct analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) using the covariates of chapter 4.1. Time spent on Facebook ( $F(1,137) = 6.064$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and privacy concerns ( $F(1,137) = 4.350$ ,  $p < .05$ ) indeed show a significant influence on the dependent variables and confirm the prior deliberations based on GOLDFARB and TUCKER (2011) and COYLE and THORSON (2001). The sample is split up into two groups. One summarizes the high interactive and vivid posting groups from both *attraction* and *BikeBelow*, the other sums up their low interactive and vivid counterparts. Table 11 shows the results of the conducted ANCOVA.

		<i>Perceived Number of Posts</i>	<i>Attitude Toward the Brand</i>	<i>Purchase Intention</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>Level of Interactivity and Vividness</i>	<i>High</i>	2.829 (2.021)	$\Delta +0.485$ (1.236)	$\Delta +0.105$ (1.379)	70
	<i>Low</i>	2.486 (1.991)	$\Delta +0.140$ (0.709)	$\Delta -0.154$ (1.181)	70
<i>ANCOVA Results</i>		F(1,137) = 0.754 n.sig.	<b>F(1,137) = 3.096</b> <b>p &lt; .081, <math>\eta^2 = 0.024</math></b>	F(1,137) = 0.672 n.sig.	
<i>Hypothesis</i>		<i>H<sub>2a</sub></i> not supported	<b><i>H<sub>2b</sub></i> weak support</b>	<i>H<sub>2c</sub></i> not supported	

Note:  $\Delta$ -values calculated out of the mean scores across items  $t_1$ - $t_0$ ; Number of perceived posts calculated as mean from open answers in  $t_1$  (0-10 posts); Standard deviations in parentheses

**Table 11: The Moderating Effect of Interactivity and Vividness**

The manipulation of interactivity and vividness in the posting compilations causes a slight movement in the number of perceived posts and, therefore, post recall capability among participants ( $M_{\text{high}} = 2.829$  vs.  $M_{\text{low}} = 2.486$ ). However, ANCOVA results reveal that there is no statistical evidence for this effect to be significantly different from chance. Therefore,  $H_{2a}$  is not supported. Nevertheless, high interactive and vivid brand posts show a superior effect on respondents' attitude toward the brand compared to their low interactive and vivid equivalents ( $\Delta_{\text{high}} = +0.485$  vs.  $\Delta_{\text{low}} = +0.140$  with  $p < .10$ ). Posting in an interactive and vivid manner is, therefore, superior when corporate social media responsible try to influence attitudinal measure in consumers' heads. An  $\eta^2 = 0.024$  reveals a small to medium effect size which is comparable to other experimental studies (cf. e.g., VAN NOORT and WILLEMSSEN, 2012) and meaningful for field experimental setups (COHEN, 1988, p. 355). Thus, results weakly support  $H_{2b}$ . With regard to the effects of interactive and vivid postings on participants' purchase intent, the same constellation as for the perceived number of posts is identified. Even though purchase intention is influenced in the intended direction ( $\Delta_{\text{high}} = +0.105$  vs.  $\Delta_{\text{low}} = -0.154$ ), no significant results could be found. Therefore, I find no support for  $H_{2c}$ .

### The Moderating Role of Product Involvement

Similar to the approach in the upper paragraph, I also conduct ANCOVAs to investigate the moderating effect of product involvement on Facebook post effectiveness. For this purpose, the sample is again split up into two groups. The first group sums up the respondents from the two treatments groups of the high involvement brand *BikeBelow*, independent from the respective posting style. The second group pools both groups from *attraction* as representatives of a comparably lower product involvement level. Table 12 shows the respective results.

	<i>Perceived Number of Posts</i>	<i>Attitude Toward the Brand</i>	<i>Purchase Intention</i>	<i>N</i>
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<i>Level of Product Involvement</i>	<i>High (BikeBelow)</i>	3.014 (1.822)	$\Delta +0.157$ (0.873)	$\Delta -0.105$ (1.297)	70
	<i>Low (attraction)</i>	2.300 (2.129)	$\Delta +0.468$ (1.131)	$\Delta +0.056$ (1.278)	70
<i>ANCOVA Results</i>		<b>F(1,137) = 3.884</b> <b>p = .05, <math>\eta^2 = 0.028</math></b>	<b>F(1,137) = 5.041</b> <b>p &lt; .05, <math>\eta^2 = 0.036</math></b>	F(1,137) = 1.269 n.sig.	
<i>Hypothesis</i>		<b>H<sub>3a</sub> supported</b>	<b>H<sub>3b</sub> supported</b>	H <sub>3c</sub> not supported	

Note:  $\Delta$ -values calculated out of the mean scores across items  $t_1$ - $t_0$ ; Number of perceived posts calculated as mean from open answers in  $t_1$  (0-10 posts); Standard deviations in parentheses

**Table 12: The Moderating Effect of Product Involvement**

Hypothesis 3a suggests that, due to selective perception filters applied to the Facebook environment, brand fans perceive more posts from brands with a higher level in product involvement. This coherence could be supported by the experimental results at hand. Whereas respondents in the *attraction* groups on average can recall  $M = 2.300$  posts, *BikeBelow* fans are able to recall on average  $M = 3.014$  posts ( $p = .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.028$ ). Users indeed apply perceptual filters when confronted with status updates and brand posts on Facebook and tend to perceive posts from high involvement brands that fit their interest (cf. also ZAICHKOWSKY, 1985, p. 347) and their personal values and norms (cf. also CELSI and OLSON, 1988, p. 221). Thus, a moderating effect of product involvement on fans' post recall capability is found and  $H_{3a}$  supported. However, the brand posts used might not have been perceived equally across the two brands. Even though the posting compilations of *BikeBelow* and *attraction* were arranged carefully, were pretested regarding their interactivity and vividness level, and the content as well as the execution style was kept constant across the treatment groups, there still might be unobservable quality differences in the posting compilations that could have led to the higher perception in the high involvement group of *BikeBelow*.

In contrast to the superior effect of the high involvement product on brand post recall,  $H_{3b}$  proposes an opposite effect as the distracting Facebook environment does not allow for an in depth information processing needed to trigger an attitudinal change in the high involvement product category. The prevalence of peripheral cues, therefore, better fits the communication efforts of low involvement products. ANCOVA results confirm the suggested effect as participants in the low involvement groups show a significantly higher change in attitude toward the brand than their high involvement counterparts ( $\Delta_{\text{high}} = +0.157$  vs.  $\Delta_{\text{low}} = +0.468$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.036$ ). Hypothesis 3b is supported. However, the involvement literature consistently states that involvement is not only product or service specific. Moreover, the involvement level is influenced by situational factors, a respective person's personality traits and attitudes, as well as a preexisting knowledge regarding a specific situation, product, or brand (e.g., ZAICHKOWSKY,

1985, CELSI and OLSON, 1988, LAURENT and KAPFERER, 1985). To also test if personal or situative factors influence the dependent variables independently from the presented product or brand, I divided participants into high and low involvement regarding their individual reported involvement score. A median split was conducted separating 50 % of the 140 participants with high (i.e., > 3.82 on a seven point scale) from the remaining half with low involvement. Results of the conducted ANCOVAs reveal that there are no significant influences of the personal or situative involvement level across all three dependent variables<sup>15</sup>. For this reason, the manipulation of the involvement levels through the brand profiles at the beginning of the experiment can be seen as successful which further argues in favor of Hypothesis 3b.

With regard to the effect of Facebook brand posts on brand fans' purchase intention, Hypothesis 3c expects the same cohesion. Although a slight tendency toward the desired effect can be observed ( $\Delta_{\text{high}} = -0.105$  vs.  $\Delta_{\text{low}} = +0.056$ ), the effect of Facebook brand post on purchase intention is not significant and Hypothesis 3c, consequently, not supported.

### **The Interplay of Interactivity, Vividness and Involvement**

To test the final set of Hypothesis 4, the experimental groups are now looked at separately. Each experimental group with  $n = 35$  is fed into the ANCOVA to identify the potential interaction effect between the two categories manipulated in the experimental setup. The analysis of covariance is calculated including both factors — interactivity/vividness and product involvement. Again, the two covariates time on Facebook and privacy concerns are included and both showed a significant effect on the dependent variables. Table 13 presents the results of the analyses.

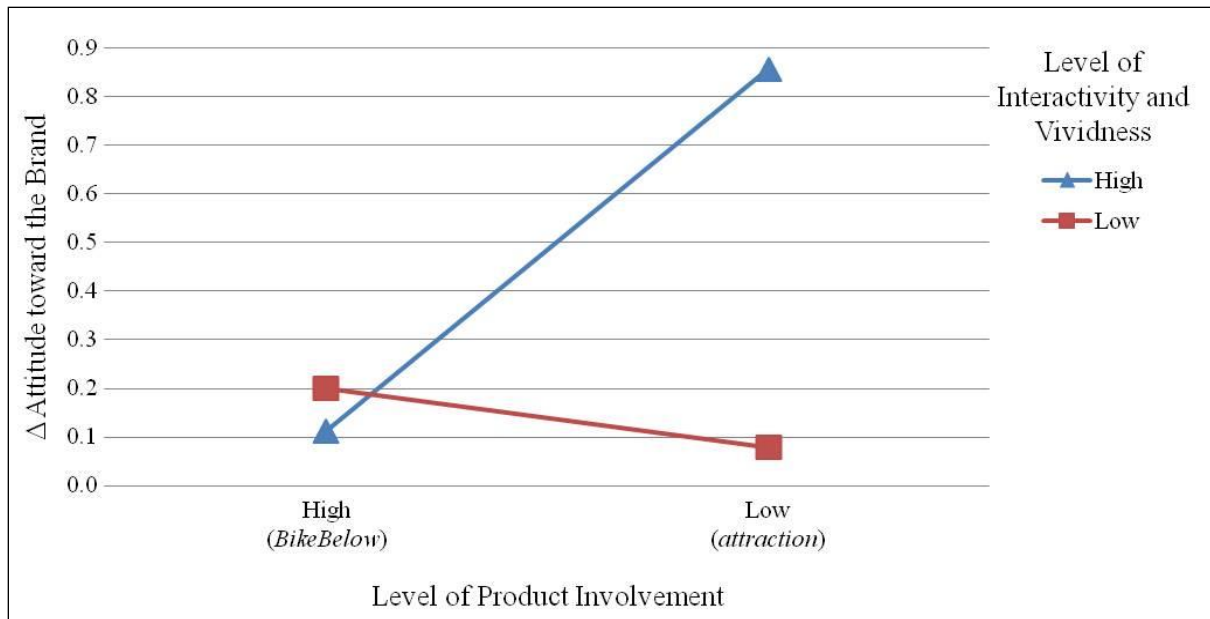
<sup>15</sup> The respective test statistics are: post recall -  $M_{\text{high}} = 2.57$  vs.  $M_{\text{low}} = 2.74$  ( $F(1,137) = .316$ , n.sig.); attitude toward the brand -  $\Delta_{\text{high}} = .220$  vs.  $\Delta_{\text{low}} = .405$  ( $F(1,137) = 1.484$ , n.sig.); purchase intention -  $\Delta_{\text{high}} = -.102$  vs.  $\Delta_{\text{low}} = .053$  ( $F(1,137) = 1.179$ , n.sig.).

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>High Involvement (BikeBelow, n = 70)</i>		<i>Low Involvement (attraction, n = 70)</i>		<i>ANCOVA Results</i>	<i>Hypothesis</i>
	High Interactive & Vivid	Low Interactive & Vivid	High Interactive & Vivid	Low Interactive & Vivid		
<i>Perceived Number of Posts</i>	3.200 (1.876)	2.830 (1.774)	2.460 (2.119)	2.140 (2.158)	F(3,135) = 0.041, p = .84	H <sub>4a</sub> not supported
<i>Attitude Toward the Brand</i>	$\Delta$ +0.112 (1.029)	$\Delta$ +0.201 (0.697)	$\Delta$ +0.857 (1.326)	$\Delta$ +0.079 (0.727)	<b>F(3,135) = 5.426, p &lt; .05, <math>\eta^2 = 0.039</math></b>	<b>H<sub>4b</sub> supported</b>
<i>Purchase Intention</i>	$\Delta$ -0.029 (1.416)	$\Delta$ -0.182 (1.182)	$\Delta$ +0.238 (1.348)	$\Delta$ -0.126 (1.196)	F(3,135) = 0.070, p = .79	H <sub>4c</sub> not supported

Note:  $\Delta$ -values calculated out of the mean scores across items t1-t0; Number of perceived posts calculated as mean from open answers in t1 (0-10 posts); Standard deviations in parentheses

**Table 13: The Interplay of Interactivity, Vividness and Involvement**

When perceived number of posts is the dependent variable, product involvement and the level of interactivity and vividness do not interact ( $F(1,135) = 0.041$ ,  $p = .84$ ). Moreover, respondents' purchase intention was also not influenced by the interaction term ( $F(3,135) = 0.070$ ,  $p = .79$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 4a and 4c are not supported. On the contrary, the ANCOVA with attitude toward the brand as dependent variable reveals a clear interaction between product involvement and the respective level of post interactivity/vividness ( $F(3,135) = 5.426$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.039$ ). Following Hypothesis 4b, highly interactive and vivid brand posts on Facebook are more effective when distributed by the comparably low involvement brand *attraction*. Postings that show high interactivity and vividness do not cause a greater shift in attitude toward the brand in case of a high involvement product *BikeBelow*. Figure 3 illustrates the interaction effect of product involvement and interactivity/vividness on the dependent variable attitude toward the brand.



**Figure 3: The Interaction between Interactivity/Vividness and Product Involvement**

High and low interactive/vivid postings do not cause significantly different attitudinal changes in the high involvement group ( $\Delta_{\text{high interactivity/vividness}} +0.112$  and  $\Delta_{\text{low interactivity/vividness}} +0.201$ ). Thus, posting style seems to be less critical in case of a high involvement brand. Furthermore, the effect of low interactive/vivid posts does not differ much between the low and high involvement group ( $\Delta_{\text{high involvement}} +0.201$  and  $\Delta_{\text{low involvement}} +0.079$ ). However, a high degree of interactivity and vividness significantly increases Facebook fans' attitude toward the brand of the low involvement brand compared to their low interactive and vivid complements ( $\Delta_{\text{high interactivity/vividness}} +0.857$  vs.  $\Delta_{\text{low interactivity/vividness}} +0.079$ ). Hence, it is of high importance to post in an interactive and vivid manner in case of a low involvement product when aiming to positively influence fans' attitude toward the brand. Hypothesis 4b is supported.

## 5 Conclusion, Limitations, and Implications

### Conclusion

In the field experiment at hand, I manipulated the levels of interactivity/vividness and product involvement of Facebook brand fan pages and their respective posts over a two week treatment period. The dependent variables of interest (i.e., post recall, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention) were chosen and aligned along the purchase funnel. Next to the fact that Facebook posts in general should be able to positively influence purchase funnel metrics independent from the conducted manipulations, it was expected that the positive influence of brand posts is higher when more interactive and vivid posts are used. Further, it was hypothesized that respondents perceive more posts in case of a high involvement situation, whereas the distracting Facebook environment leads to an inferior effectiveness of brand posts on people's attitude toward the brand and purchase intention compared to the low involvement setting. In addition, I proposed an interaction effect between posts' degree of interactivity/vividness and the level of product involvement. It is assumed that high interactive and vivid posts are more effective in case of a low involvement product as the necessary depth of information transmitted through Facebook brand posts better fits the communicational setting of low involvement products (cf. e.g., PETTY et al., 1983, p. 137, CHO, 1999, p. 39).

I found that Facebook brand posts are able to drive attitude toward a brand. This effect could be shown irrespectively of the degree of interactivity and vividness as well as the product involvement level at hand. As I chose corporate brand post content that focuses on the (fictitious) company's overall self image and not sales and product related promotion activities, purchase intention could not be increased significantly throughout the whole experiment. However, slight tendencies in the intended directions could be observed. I also found that participants who saw the Facebook brand pages with highly interactive and vivid brand posts developed a stronger attitude toward the brand than those who saw the comparably low interactivity and vivid brand fan page communication. This finding is in line with the findings of DE VRIES et al. (2012). Contrary to my expectations, the same effect could not be found for the number of posts recalled. Further, participants that were assigned to the Facebook fan pages of the high involvement product were able to recall a higher number of Facebook brand post than those in the comparably low product involvement groups. On the contrary, the positive effect on attitude toward the brand was confirmed to be superior in the low involvement product setting as hypothesized in  $H_{3b}$ . Finally, I found support for the hypothesis that high interactive



and vivid brand posts help to create a greater attitudinal increase when posted from companies that are connected to a lower level of product involvement.

Before drawing further implication for research and practitioners, it has to be stated that due to the limitations already stated in chapters 4.1 and 4.2, the results and implications derived in the section at hand have to be treated with caution. Even though the experiment was conducted thoroughly, the following four points became evident. First, the manipulation of involvement levels did not result in a clear distinction between high and low involvement. Second, the application of fictitious brand profiles as base for the experimental manipulation could have been problematic. Third, the perceived differences in interactivity and vividness across the treatment groups were rather small. And fourth, posting compilations could have been perceived differently with regards to their (entertainment) qualities in the different treatment groups. Summarizing, the reported results are solely based on the study at hand and do not claim to be representative for the overall Facebook environment. Further research, outlined at the end of this paper, is necessary to counteract the current limitations and strengthen the robustness of the findings at hand. Nevertheless, this paper provides a valuable first step in field experimental literature on Facebook and encourages replications and subsequent works following the outlined approach.

## **Implications**

The field experiment confirms that Facebook brand posts are able to influence consumer mindset metrics along the purchase funnel. Independently of posting style or the underlying brand, corporate brand posts are able to influence attitudinal measures toward the brand. This is consistent with the findings of LIPSMAN et al. (2012). Marketers, therefore, should see social media communication via brand posts as means to engage consumers in an ongoing dialogue often claimed by current research (e.g., HENNIG-THURAU et al., 2010, p. 313). Posting seems to be the superior strategy versus no posting activities. Solely communicating image related corporate brand information can drive attitude toward the brand, but falls short when aiming at an increase in purchase intention. A posting strategy that combines corporate and product/sales related information seems promising to also trigger purchase intention.

Findings regarding the ideal posting style reveal that the magnitude of the attitudinal change is indeed dependent on the posts' level of interactivity and vividness. The experiment revealed that the magnitude is over three times bigger for highly interactive and vivid brand posts ( $\Delta_{\text{high}} + 0.485$  /  $\Delta_{\text{low}} + 0.140$ ) than for posts of the low interactivity/vividness category. This finding

is in line with JAHN et al. (2013) who state that interactivity of members and the companies themselves are crucial success factors of Facebook brand pages. Nevertheless, highly interactive and vivid brand posts do not come without costs. Highly vivid posts like image videos about the brand or highly interactive quizzes and contests in which prizes are given away consume a lot of resources and, therefore, create cost that have to be kept in mind. Not every post has to be highly interactive and vivid to be successful. As the experiment at hand used realistic compilations of ten Facebook posts that, in sum, consisted of rather high or low interactive and vivid posts, the overall picture of the company's posting activities has to be considered.

The effectiveness of Facebook brand communication is also moderated by the underlying product involvement of a specific product or category. Comparably high involvement products do not benefit from Facebook postings in the same way low involvement products do. Whereas people that see posts of a high involvement product show a better recall rate due to selective perception effects in the distractive Facebook environment (cf. also PARK and MOON, 2003, pp. 982-987, ZAICHKOWSKY, 1985, p. 347, CELSI and OLSON, 1988, p. 221), the positive effect on attitude toward the brand is higher in the low involvement category (cf. also ANDREWS and SHIMP, 1990, p. 210, SPIELMANN and RICHARD, 2013, p. 499). This stems from different information needs of customers regarding the product category and the superficial and distractive environment on the Facebook newsfeed. It emphasizes the peripheral route of information processing that better fits to low involvement products. With regard to low involvement products, customers do not require as detailed and as extensive information to develop attitude toward a brand or purchase intention as in high product involvement situations (cf. also PETTY et al., 1983, p. 143, PETTY et al., 2004, p. 69).

The combined evaluation of both moderators revealed, that there is a significant interaction effect between interactivity and vividness and the level of product involvement. High interactive and vivid posts are more effective when posted from low involvement product brand-fan pages. The peripheral cue of interactivity and vividness better matches the peripheral information processing sequence of low involvement products. In the high involvement category, interactivity and vividness do not make a significant difference regarding a change in attitude toward the brand. For marketers dealing with a comparably high involvement product this essentially means that it does not always have to be a highly interactive and vivid brand post to keep Facebook fans content. On the contrary, it is important for low involvement products to keep the interactivity and vividness-level of posts as high as possible to get the most

out of Facebook posts concerning an optimal increase in attitude toward the brand. However, to not suffer a strategic disadvantage, high involvement product companies should also follow a strategy of rather high than low interactive and vivid brand posts but keep in mind that they probably won't reach the same effectiveness. This underlines the necessity for a solid benefit and cost rational of effectiveness and costs for interactivity and vividness for high involvement goods. Multi-brand companies should also follow a product based Facebook strategy along the involvement levels of their different goods and exploit the differences in effects described above.

## Limitations

A number of limitations became apparent while conducting and analyzing the field experiment at hand that shall be starting point for further research. First, due to limits in budget, time, and participant recruiting only two fictitious brands represent the two levels of product involvement — a fashion label and a bicycle manufacturer. Research should further replicate the findings at hand and use at least two products representing one involvement dimension. A validation of the findings by means of other brand profiles representing the involvement levels seems promising. Second, it would be interesting to also transfer the experimental design over to Fanpages of already existing brand fan pages to increase external validity of the experimental design. Even though Facebook users more and more use the SNS to inform themselves about unfamiliar brands (cf. e.g., NAYLOR et al., 2012, BAIRD and PARASNIS, 2011, NEWMAN, 2011), the use of fictitious brands, of course, is dependent on the artificially created brand profiles used in the study at hand and suffers from a restricted sales and promotion focus. Third, financial resources did not allow for a proper simulation of the brand fan page interactivity between members. The experimental setup had to rely on the interaction of experimental participants with the fictitious brand fan pages. I did not pay fans to simulate interactivity through commenting and liking similar to an existing brand fan page. Even though the manipulation of interactivity was successful, the level of interactivity between experimental brand fans was still below average. As JAHN et al. (2013, p. 362) state that “[...]member interactivity [is a] crucial success factor for driving customer engagement [...]” on Facebook brand fan pages, the reported effects of the study at hand regarding the combination of interactivity and vividness probably originates more from the vividness dimension of the Facebook posts. Research should take this as starting point and replicate the findings with a realistic simulation of member interactions in the treatment groups. Forth and last, the number of posts representing the interactivity and vividness dimensions should be enhanced in future studies. The experiment at hand uses 20

posts per brand to simulate the interactivity and vividness levels. Other compilations and post variations have to be tried out to validate the findings of the paper at hand. Testing the different (entertainment) quality perceptions among participants of the compilations used seems promising. It allows keeping brand posts as comparable as possible even though different brand profiles are used. In addition, other timeframes exceeding the two week treatment period are worth an in depth look.

## Appendix

### Brand Profiles

#### **Brand 1:** Fashion Label - *attraction*



*attraction* — that's what it does! Das neue, innovative Label *attraction* vereint den Zeitgeist der aktuellen Modewelt und ermöglicht jungen Nachwuchsdesignern ihrer Kreativität freien Lauf zu lassen. Die Produkte des deutschen Nachwuchslabels sind im mittleren Preissegment angesiedelt. *attraction*

bietet modernste und qualitativ hochwertige Fashion. Mode, gemacht von jungen Designern mit dem Ziel anzuziehen, anziehend zu sein, zu begeistern — *attraction*!

- *attraction* - ist bald in Deutschland zu haben
- *attraction* - gemacht für Mann & Frau
- *attraction* - erscheint mit zwei neuen Kollektionen

#### **Brand 2:** Softdrink - *ISOPOWA*®



2012 revolutionierten Sportwissenschaftler den Markt der Energy-Drinks — *ISOPOWA*® wurde kreiert. *ISOPOWA*® ist ein innovatives isotonisches Sportgetränk, das Sie dabei unterstützt Elektrolyte aufzufüllen, die während der sportlichen Anstrengung verloren gegangen sind. *ISOPOWA*® hilft bei Ihrem Kampf um die Spitze im Sport. Hergestellt in Deutschland ohne künstliche Geschmacksstoffe, Farben und Süßungsmittel ist *ISOPOWA*® nun erhältlich – in drei Sorten: Black Currant, Orange und Lemon. Die *ISOPOWA*® GmbH entwickelt, produziert und vertreibt die Energy-Drinks und garantiert ein Höchstmaß an Qualität und Zufriedenheit.

#### **Brand 3:** Bicycle Manufacturer - *BikeBelow*



2012 war ein Jahr der Superlative für diejenigen, die an Dynamik, Design und Handling im Bereich des Fahrrads interessiert sind. *BikeBelow*, hat es sich zur Aufgabe gemacht qualitativ hochwertige, gut aussehende aber doch bezahlbare Stadtfahrräder zu entwickeln. Ein Team aus fahrradverrückten Ingenieuren, Wirtschaftlern und Studenten war daran federführend beteiligt, dass demnächst die ersten *BikeBelow*, Zweiräder präsentiert

werden können. Egal ob im Alltag, auf dem Weg zur Schule, Universität oder Arbeitsplatz – mit einem *BikeBelow* kommt man immer mit Stil ans Ziel! Bald wird eine kleine aber feine Auswahl an Singlespeed Bikes auf den Markt gebracht, bei denen auf überflüssige, wartungsintensive Komponenten verzichtet wird. *BikeBelow* fährt mit nur einem Gang von A nach B — Back to basic!

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