EMOTIONALLY ENGAGING CUSTOMERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE:
The Case Study of ‘Burberry Love’

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Introduction
Disruption through digital innovation has in many cases seen the emergence of an entirely new class of competition in businesses. The challenge faced by companies is keeping up with these changes and in turn developing new theories, models and methods in order to learn, respond and adapt their position in such competitive environments. The mobile internet and social media have created new digital communication channels between a company and its customers labelled as ‘digital channels’ (Edelman 2010). Digital channels have played a major role in the digital revolution through the provision of communication abilities and online connectivity. Brandt and Henning (2002) explain that digital trends in society have allowed individuals to communicate without the boundaries of time or place, accessing multitudes of information worldwide and making multiple transactions in real time. This advancement means that customers are no longer just downloading or searching for static data, but are able to engage, upload and share their own content to a wider online network.

For this reason practitioners as well as scholars are now seeking to understand the extent to which customer interactions through digital channels can and should influence business strategy (Schultz & Peltier 2013; Parent et al. 2011). The main challenge faced by organisations is understanding their customer’s needs through these channels, as traditional customer segmentation is no longer possible in a digital world (Numes & Cespedes 2003). Schultz and Peltier (2013) believe for most companies the difficulty has not been in developing and launching their digital channels, but making them truly engaging and valuable to the customer. A lack of literature exists regarding customer emotions evoked through digital experiences and how companies can design digital channels to induce desired experiences. Established channel theories and existing customer engagement models have helped to improve channel networks in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of its operation, however, are unable to explain how digital channel experiences can be designed. Marketing and design research has proven that emotions affect attitudes and behaviours towards companies and the economic value of long-term customer relationships (Hill 2010; Mattila 2001).
Atwal and Williams (2009) explain that luxury brand managers in particular should focus on experimental marketing by taking the essence of a product and translating it into a set of experiences that amplify the brand. Many luxury brands currently exist in the market, such as Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Gucci and Prada. This study specifically investigates Burberry, ranking ninety-fourth (94th) on the 2015 Forbes list of World most valuable brands and eighth (8th) on the 2015 Luxury Institute of New York list. Known worldwide for their distinctive check pattern, Burberry distributes clothing, fashion accessories, beauty products and until early 2015 it had licensed fragrances from Inter Parfums (who also developed and distributed perfume for other brands such as Jimmy Choo) (Burberry.com 2015). It has been selected for this study due to its digital channel strategy of building the ‘Burberry Love’ theme, becoming a market-leader in digital communications within the competitive sector of luxury brands. Atwal and Williams (2009, p.338) explain that the luxury goods market has become increasingly complex, as it requires successfully conveying “an image of quality, performance and authenticity, but also with attempting to sell an experience by relating it to the lifestyle constructs of consumers”. To understand Burberry’s strategy, an analysis of the company’s mission statement, digital channels and customer responses was conducted. These results have extended upon prior research in this field by the authors. This previous research has developed, a theoretical framework, intersecting the areas of emotions, business communications and digital channel to provide insights into the digital customer experience (Straker et al. 2015a). The findings from this study make significant contributions to developing customer engagement theories and provide a method for de-coding mission statements and customer online responses. As companies continue to invest in new technology to build connections with customer, the impact and success of these interactions are yet to be analysed from an emotional aspect. This study assists those seeking to create and implement digital channel engagements by exploring the customer experience of five Burberry digital campaigns.

The Digital Challenge in Luxury Fashion

The emergence of new technologies has revolutionised the way companies interact and engage with customers. As of 2015 there were approximately 3 billion internet users, a number that is continually rising (Internet World Stats 2015). This has subsequently increased the number of digital channels and routes for communication, leading to customers to become
“detached from the channels that used to claim them” (Numes & Cespedes 2003, p.98). In a society that offers an abundance of choices of products and services from a number of companies, the ability to form relationships with customers is critical for customer retention (Chiu et al. 2011; Payne & Frow 2014; Wallace et al. 2004). The challenges of integrating luxury branding on the internet and digital environments is outlined by Okonkwo (2009, p.302), who states “luxury is neither a product, an object, a service or is it a concept or a lifestyle. It is an identity, a philosophy and a culture”. More recently Kapferer (2015) suggests the digital domain could assist luxury brands by managing omni-channel connections with customers, by diffusing brand content and providing higher levels of service. This diffusion of brand into a digital environment could be associated with what constructs a brand as luxury. Phau and Prendergast (2000) explain the four constructs of brand luxury as 1) evoking exclusivity, 2) have a well-known brand identity, 3) enjoy high brand awareness and perceived quality, and 4) retain sales levels and customer loyalty. The luxury fashion sector is unique in that its customers acquire goods for what they symbolise and represent (Dubois & Duquesne 1993; Belk 2014; Belk 1988). Atwal and Williams (2009, p.339) explain that contemporary customers use these good to “make statements about themselves, to create identities and develop a sense of belonging”. These customers have formed a new individualistic consumption model, driven by new needs and desires for experiences (Atwal & Williams 2009). The importance of understanding customer needs and desires is apparent in design and marketing literature due to customer purchase decisions being based on more subjective terms (Miao & Mattila 2011; Tumbat 2011; Mugge et al. 2010). Consequently, this demand requires companies to possess knowledge and processes that allow them to understand their customers and develop deeper connections to form emotional relationships with them.

Understanding Customer Emotions and Experiences

The process of creating an emotional connection is complex and involves many differing factors, however, it is affect (emotions, feelings and mood) that has the greatest influence on it (Plutchik 1962; Ekkekakis 2008). In Damasio's (1994) theory, a typical case begins with thoughts and evaluations about the stimulus; this mental activity triggers a bodily response (emotion). According to Damasio, these emotions are crucial in the decision making process and the chose of action (behaviour). The as-if-loop in the somatic feedback theory (Figure 1) is the process of directly signalling the brain (the amygdala and the prefrontal cortices).
without the bodily activity actually occurring. Damasio (1994, p.155) explains “this will generate a feeling more quickly and efficiently, although it may not feel the same as a genuine bodily response”. Sections A and B in the somatic feedback theory relate to Damasio’s definition of emotion, which trigger a bodily reaction (C) to create a certain activity in the body (D).

The main concept that lies at the core of design and emotion is ‘experience’. Experience is based on two prominent disciplines: psychology and philosophy (Demir 2008). Designing for an experience goes beyond usability and requires treating the user holistically as a feeling, thinking, active person (Jordan 2000). Forlizzi and Ford (2000) explain that an experience is a process of doing, inherent in all interaction, fluctuating between levels of subconscious, conscious and meaningful stories. Hoffman and Bateson (1997, p.6) suggest “when a consumer purchases a service, he or she purchases an experience”. Experiences are presented as a new economic offering, which emerges as the next step after commodities, goods and services in what Pine and Gilmore (1998) label the “progression of economic value”. This creates a new lever to generate value for both the company and the customer (Forlizzi et al. 2000; Forlizzi et al. 2003; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2003).

**Designing an Approach**

A new attitude to business strategy has only recently incorporated the customer as a driver to create and deliver value. This would allow a company the ability to sense, learn, respond and adapt their strategic position in an evolving environment. One such approach is a customer-centric approach, specifically via the research field of design and emotion, which may be able to overcome technological threats through a deeper understanding of customer needs (Dell’Era et al. 2010). The position of design is explained further by Guenther (2012, p.56),

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who states “Design can be employed to go beyond what exists today, extending the boundaries of thought, and creating new options for strategy and future development”. Two key authorities in this area are Verganti (2006) and Brown (2008) who both build upon and collate theories such as creative culture, thinking styles and design skills to provide new approaches for business management. Both are pushed by a design approach to gain a deeper understanding of customer meaning and value, rather than being informed only on user requirements (Verganti 2006). A prominent distinction of this approach is explained through Brown’s (2008) Venn diagram of design thinking, which intersects the fields of business, technology and people. This framework has been used as the foundation of this study to include the perspectives of emotion, business strategy and digital channels, to explore the customer’s experience of digital channels.

**Research Context and Design**

Even though the internet and digital channels “play a significant role in fuelling the universal appeal of luxury brands to a global consumer group” (Okonkwo 2007, p.178) there is a perception that digital channels have a negative impact on the innate attributes of luxury brands such as “prestige” and “exclusivity”. The issues pertaining to luxury brands and their presence in the digital environment is the concern of misrepresentation in the digital translation, such as a loss of aura in the brand. These issues have yet to be addressed in literature. However, the implementation and management of successful digital channels is a necessity to maintain and sustain a competitive advantage in this particular industry sector. As Okonkwo (2007, p.186), explains “consumers of luxury goods are among the global consumer population that craves continuous internet access”. The luxury-purchase decision process utilises a high dose of emotions and irrationality which are boosted by a high-impact experience (Okonkwo 2007, p.186).

The retail environment is becoming more competitive than ever, with e-commerce growing significantly, at a rate that outpaces traditional retail channels (Blázquez 2014). The fashion industry is slower than other sectors to adopt technology, one main reasons for this is the difficulty in translating the in-store experience to the online environment (Blázquez 2014). Clothing is considered to be a high-involvement product category, related to personal identity and products that need to be seen, touched, and tried on (Workman, 2010). However, the development of technology has enabled the experience of shopping online to become
interactive and exciting, which has led this research to explore how the understanding of emotions can build digital channel relationships with customers. Luxury retailer Burberry and five of its digital campaigns have been selected for investigation, due to Burberry becoming a leader in digital strategy.

**Business Case: Burberry**

Burberry has a rich history, at over 150 years old its fashion has seen the trenches of World War I, has been an official supplier to the royal family and worn by a range of celebrities (Ahrents 2013; Phan et al. 2011; Moore & Birtwistle 2004). Upon this historical backdrop Burberry has been known as British fashion royalty, however, over time this has deteriorated (Phan et al. 2011). In 2006, Burberry changed their vision to be “the first company who is fully digital” and “to build a social enterprise” (Ahrents 2013). This vision was formed after a loss of net profits, expansion of fashion and beauty lines, and an incoherent marketing strategy globally. The aim of this new vision was to provide customers with total access to “Burberry across all device, anywhere, anytime and they would get exactly the same feelings of the brand, feelings of the culture regardless of where, when and how they were accessing the brand” (Ahrents 2013). The driving business model of Burberry is “a distinctive global luxury brand” (Burberry.com 2015), with their main strategy outlined as;

> “Burberry has focused on consistently delivering against its strategies, which have underpinned its growth. During the year, Burberry evolved its core strategies to more accurately reflect the current shape of the business and the scope of its future ambitions”

(Burberry.com 2015).

Six core strategies are also outlined in Table 1, with ‘Build our Culture’ being added in 2015 to recognise “the importance of Burberry’s culture and values, and how these are critical to its overall success” (Burberry.com 2015). The aims of this strategy were to “speak to customers with one equally authentic and inspiring brand voice, whenever they encounter the brand” (Burberry.com 2015). To engage consumers with the brand, Burberry developed increasingly personalised and connected experiences across all digital touchpoints.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Burberry’s Mission and Six Core Strategies (Burberry.com 2015).</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mission Statement</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>To be “the first company who is fully digital” and “to build a social enterprise”</td>
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</table>

With this new vision the target audience was aimed at millennials (born between 1980 and 2000). This was decided as “most of us are very digital in our daily lives now” and to shift their marketing efforts “from targeting everyone, everywhere, to focusing on the luxury customers of the future millennial” (Ahrents 2013). With this new target audience, who were overlooked by other luxury brands, Burberry had to rethink their entire marketing approach for these customers. Their response was to make it digital. Starting with their website, which was redesigned to have “everything in one place” to showcase every facet of the brand, becoming the hub of all marketing and branding to highlight the Burberry trench coat. The website was also designed to speak to the millennial customer through “emotive brand content: music, movies, heritage, storytelling” (Ahrents 2013). Their digital strategy makes the brand accessible to a wider audience, from ‘brand browsers’ to ‘brand advocates’. The ‘Burberry Love’ theme has been successful in motivating and engaging its target audience of millennials, which has resulted in the desired behaviour of sharing the experience to others in their digital network. This behaviour is evident through the growth, impact (brand and revenue) and high level of customer engagement with each channel.

Burberry’s digital channel presence includes over 16 million followers on Facebook, 3 million on Twitter and over 2 million on Instagram (Burberry.com 2015). This increase in online customer engagement has resulted in an increase in gross revenue. Figure 2 illustrates this growth over a ten-year period (2004 to 2014) and its relationship to the launch of five digital campaigns. From this data it can be inferred that the new vision in 2006 and development of digital channels since 2009 has had a substantial impact on the growth in revenue.
Analysing Burberry’s Success

To understand Burberry’s success, the mission statement, core strategies and five digital campaigns between 2009 to 2014 were analysed via a content analysis methodology (Krippendorff 1989) and triangulation analysis techniques (Denzin 1978; Thurmond 2001). For the content analysis, digital campaigns were defined using Straker et al (2015) definition of a digital channel as a technology based platforms that use the internet to:

(i) Connect with customer via digital channels,
(ii) Provide a range of different content and purposes, and
(iii) Communication can be simplex or duplex with a range of different interaction levels.

The data collection for each digital campaign began with a search of the company’s website, and from there, documentation such as annual reports and other publically available reports

were analysed. Five different modes of data were collected from secondary sources. Data in Mode I focused on information directly from the corresponding company, Mode II consisted of organisational information found in annual and financial reports, Mode III consisted of public media releases, Mode IV included content in digital channels and Mode V was advertisements and public comments on the campaigns not present on digital channels. Collection of data across a diverse set of sources increases the reliability and validity of the analysis by means of data triangulation (Thurmond 2001). Information on the digital campaigns and channels were mapped onto a predesigned data sheet developed by the research team. The content was analysed using the categorisation of information outlined in Straker, et al. (2015b). The purpose of analysing the information into selected themes indicated the purpose and aims of the digital campaign objectively. A limitation of this approach is its descriptive nature, which is unable to reveal the complete underlying motives for the observed patterns. To overcome this a second analysis phase took place to code this data emotionally.

**Emotional Coding**
Following a content analysis of ‘campaign objective’ and ‘digital channels’ (Table 3) emergent coding was used and described in detail by Haney et al (1998). Many texts have an affective or emotional content, which if ignored may reduce the validity of the analysis but which if attended to may increase the researcher’s ability to interpret the text. There are a number of difficulties in attending to the affective content of the text many of which stem from the fact that a large number of ‘emotions’ are not semantically distinct. Researchers have attempted to classify and measure emotions (Scherer 2005; Ekman 1994; Richins 1997; Desmet & Hekkert 2002; Kleinginna & Kleinginna 1981). For this study Desmet’s (2005) emotional typology was chosen for the emotional analysis (Table 2). Through the use of emergent coding and content analysis, twenty-two emotions, along with the eliciting conditions were used to analyse campaign objectives and emotions evoked and infer the strategy of each. The purpose of the analysis is to understand the emotional drivers of the business strategy and understand the connection to the emotional response of customers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Eliciting Condition</th>
<th>Example of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admiration</td>
<td>Approving of someone else’s praiseworthy action</td>
<td>Inspirational, amazing, epic, brilliant, captivating, unique, awesome, fabulous, impressed, incredible, only getting better</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desire</th>
<th>Purchase, wanted, favourite, obsessed, must have, One day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stimulation</td>
<td>A promise for understanding through exploration or a new action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curious, So beautiful I want to cry, he warms my heart, OMG,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>An expected goal realisation (or concern match)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have one, great, Thanks Burberry, Timeless style, classic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Liking an appealing object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful, aesthetically pleasing, gorgeous, cute, stunning, love it so much,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Liking a desirable or pleasant event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sent a Burberry kiss, sharing the experience</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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**Results**

Results of the emotional analysis of Burberry’s mission statement and six core strategies revealed that the two emotional drivers were stimulation (a promise for understanding through exploration or a new action) and pride (approving of one’s own praiseworthy action). Table 3 outlines the results; first the digital channel campaign objects of each, details of the digital touchpoints implemented for each campaign, a sample of customer responses from these digital touchpoints, the emotional coding of these comments, how this relates to the strategy and the overall impact of the campaign.

For each campaign, key digital touchpoints included the Burberry website and social touchpoints Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube to engage customers. The content on these touchpoints are primarily for promotion (to attract customers), with the purpose of diversion (the ability for customers to participate in recreational and social activities through the channel) and interaction (allow for a two-way communication with the company or a community of customers). The customer comments selected from these digital touchpoints were coded and were categorised into six emotions (satisfaction, desire, admiration, enjoyment, stimulation and love). These emotions were then linked to a key strategy of Burberry’s mission statement and core strategies. The impacts of the campaigns are also included to understand the success and reach of each. Details of these results are explored in the next section and explained through a conceptual framework.
### Table 3. Emotional Analysis of Digital Channel Campaigns and Customer Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digital Channel Information</th>
<th>Customer Response</th>
<th>Digital Engagement</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>My Burberry My Fragrance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Personalised TV Commercial</strong></td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Diversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burberry's Awake</td>
<td>Effective Billboard</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Diversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Burberry Kisses</td>
<td>Facebook Facebook Google+</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Diversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Website</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Functional Discussion</td>
<td>Samples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barber’s Rogue</strong></td>
<td>Website Website</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Functional Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barber’s Rogue</strong></td>
<td>YouTube YouTube</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Diversion</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Website Website</td>
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</tr>
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### References

Exploring the relationship between emotions, identity and digital engagements.

By starting with people, companies can uncover individual customer needs, and in turn understand how to design for their needs (Guenther 2012). This research aims to address the intersection of business requirements and human needs guided by technology. To do so the results from this study have built upon Brown (2009) and Guenther’s (2012) theories to inform the digital engagement conceptual model (Figure 3). It is the proposition of the model that implementing customer emotions at the centre of a company’s business strategy can strengthen relationships and provide innovative digital channel experiences. The model illustrates the intersection of emotion (people), identity (business) and digital channels (technology) to explore how emotional engagement can be designed with customers. These areas are 1) Company and customer engagement, 2) Digital channel strategy and 3) Digital customer experience. It is important to note that the framework should start with the customer and not an existing technology or digital channel (1, 2 to 3). The conceptual process of the model builds upon Damasio’s (1994) somatic feedback theory, to include the customer’s emotional experience to the digital channel experience. The three aspects of association,
creates and evokes relate to Damasio’s (1994) theory which begins with a person’s thoughts and evaluations about the stimulus in a situation. The first aspect association is in connection to a customer’s existing feeling, emotion and/or mood of the company. Associations are informed from past experiences with the company, and can be linked to branding, advertisements or social interactions with the company (Lundahl 2011). This mental activity evokes an emotion, which Damasio (1994) explains as crucial in the decision making process and ultimately creates the action and behaviour required. The findings of this study have been used to explain and develop this conceptual model in more depth.

![Digital Engagement Conceptual Framework](image)

Figure 3. Digital Engagement Conceptual Framework  
(Synthesised Guenther, 2012; Brown, 2009; Damasio, 1994)

1) Company and Customer Engagement  
Associated: Feelings, Emotion, Mood and Experiences

Customer needs outline the type of interaction the customer wants, highlighting certain feelings, emotions and moods, which are evoked through this interaction with the company. The process of creating an emotional experience is complex and involves many differing factors. However it is affect (feelings, emotion and mood) that will have the greatest influence. Associations could be linked to branding, advertising or social interactions with the
company. In order to provide customers with experiences, the underlining emotions must first be understood in considerable depth.

**Burberry: Aligning brand DNA (British roots) and Customers (Millennials)**

The customer journey is first understanding the customers’ needs and desires, and then designing an experience that best meets those needs. Burberry observed their target customer and realised that millennials are more influenced by peers than by anything that a brand may have to say. Insight into customer emotions and behaviour is imperative in the luxury sector as the luxury customer is individualistic, knowing what they want and how they prefer to interpret their personal style (Okonkwo 2007). They therefore want to stamp their personality on a luxury brand, and use products and fashion as a definition of their individual personality and identity. Doing so in their way and according to their own terms, while highlighting the “luxury” prestige status (Ahrents 2013). Through evoking key emotions such as desire and stimulation, Burberry’s touchpoints such as Burberry Bespoke and Art of the Trench turn this interaction into a social activity. Customers invest time into either designing their own Burberry trench coat or express a wanting to be photographed wearing it (Figure 4).

2) **Designing Digital Channels**

**Evoking: Feelings, Emotion and Moods that align with the brand and customer**

The emotional association with the company will evoke an affective response, starting with feelings, which informs emotions that over time will create a mood. The design of digital channels needs to evoke positive responses, satisfaction and pleasurable experiences over a period of time informing the emotional experience created.

**Burberry: Designing Channels to Evoke ‘Burberry Love’**

All Burberry’s digital channels are driven by promotional content, to evoke the theme of ‘Burberry love’. This is created by the range of Burberry composed stories expressed across the digital channels through products, events, social media and PR. The importance of digital channel design is attaining enhanced customer experiences by emphasising and accentuating the brand characteristics (Figure 4). Burberry’s digital channels are not driven by revenue, but the main objective is to connect people through the Burberry brand. Through these channels Burberry is able to create its own community inspired from its core product: the trench coat. The design of the channels also allow for personalisation and customisation of products and

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services, which contribute to customer emotions such as enjoyment, stimulation and satisfaction leading to brand loyalty and enhanced relationships. This is supported by all channels capability of creating and sharing content among Burberry communities generating online brand circulation. All these individual components add to the overall strategy of inviting others to be part of the Burberry story.

3) Digital Customer Experience

Creating: Attitude, Behaviour and Meaning

The emotions evoked through the digital channel create an attitude, behaviour, and/or meaning to the brand. Over time these experiences will affect attitude, behaviour and meaning towards the experience and will form positive emotional connections with the experience and company. Memorable positive experiences lead to positive behaviours towards the company and in turn forms loyal customers.

Burberry: Creating a community from ‘Burberry Love’

The digital channels evoke positive emotions usually associated to those of being in love, which is a strong emotion for motivating certain behaviours. Love as an emotion is seemingly irrational, and the behaviour outcomes of being in love, could lead to customers seeing that money is no object in achieving their desired feelings (Figure 4). Through the five different channels, customers are brought together to be part of the Burberry story. In return customers “thank Burberry” (satisfaction and admiration) for a range of reasons including supporting new local artists on Burberry Acoustic, or exciting customers by receiving a Burberry Kiss, to customising their very own Burberry trench. Music, kisses and customising are free of charge and help build ‘good will’ for a loyal customer who in the future will make purchases (Davis 2014). The resulting customer behaviours from the engagement with all digital channels, is either by liking, commenting, personalising, purchasing or sharing the experience with others. These customer behaviours aid in Burberry’s strategy of “a company can only make potential customers aware of the brand, current customers and advocates help sell it” (Ahrents 2013).

Explaining the Success of Burberry’s Digital Engagement

Through all Burberry’s digital campaigns, their customers are motivated by a set of key emotions, resulting in them to “be part of the Burberry story”. Each digital channel provides a unique and consistent message, which bring together the brand, culture and customers to be part of the same story. This story aligns with the brand DNA (British heritage) and the key product (trench coat).

As explained by Okonkwo (2007) emotions play a large part in luxury goods purchasing. The conventional consumer buying decision-making process starts from recognising the need for the product. Consumers’ attitude is shaped by auxiliary series of emotions and feelings, indicating a distinct process. Prior experience with the brand yields a higher chance of interacting with and purchasing online. Burberry plays on this concept of the ‘emotional affair’ by building such a relationship using diversion through the digital channels and designing the interaction to allow customers to participate in the experience and then communicate this with others.

The Burberry channels outlined also match the digital knowledge and daily habits of their millennial target customer. The target audience currently uses most of the digital channels in...
their daily lives, therefore engagement via these channels is easy to navigate and intuitive to use. Easy sharing across each channel allows for quick sharing, spreading the awareness of the brand through online word of mouth. The range of different interactions across the Burberry digital channels allows the user to borrow the Burberry brand to reflect upon their own identities, such as representing someone with great, high-end fashion sense. This is the other key strategy of all of Burberry’s digital channels, ‘personalisation’ through the strategic positioning of the ‘Burberry Love’ theme. From personalising the perfume bottle to customisation of the classic Burberry coat, personalisation has been proven to strengthen the connection between users and a product and has been explored in product design literature, as the ownership of possessions can symbolically define and express who they are (Sirgy 1982). Richins (1997) explains that by injecting meaning into products consumers own and view as valuable, they are able to display a piece of themselves through that product. Reinforcing the “sense of self” (Govers & Mugge 2004; Richins 1997; Belk 2014; Dubois & Duquesne 1993). Hekkert et al. (2004) also explain that strong emotions, memories and enjoyment during use can also contribute to the level of attachment an individual feels towards a certain object.

Creating an emotional bond between consumer and product can leave to increased levels of attachment and loyalty (Mugge et al. 2010). Customers form attachments through personalisation but also through the process of choosing an item that they unconsciously have a connection to. Franke and Schreier (2007) also found that customers who value the opportunity to personalise a product are willing to pay more. Through the social sharing of the brand and the personalisation of Burberry products the customer is able to place themselves in the brand, community and personalisation becomes a way into the brand and a way to form emotion connections with it. Through sharing content such as ‘selfies’ of their customised coats and ownership of their perfume bottle, their identity is connected to that of the Burberry brand.

**Impact and Challenges of Emotion-Driven Digital Innovation**

The results from this study illustrate the impact of digital channel engagement, and act of falling in ‘love’ with the Burberry brand is aided through the emotions evoked and connection formed throughout the experiences via the digital channels. Failure to engage customers emotionally may result in under-performance, loss of competitive advantage and/or missed opportunities (Wrigley 2013). Designing, managing and continually evolving a customer’s emotional experience is incredibly complex, due to the varying expectations,
messages and values of not only the customer but also for the company and digital channels. Benefits such as financial and competitive advantages could result from positive experiences, due to the higher user involvement with a digital channel (e.g. time spent, number of pages viewed, amount of personal information revealed) translating into firm revenue (Trusov et al. 2010). The understanding of customer emotions is key to innovating through digital channels. This research proposes that innovation requires insights into how and why customers behave in order to deliver emotional digital engagements.

Customer perceptions of the investment made by a company in the interactivity of digital channels can impact upon the relationship quality and their willingness to provide and share positive company experiences with others (Song & Zinkhan 2008). The ability to create engaging interactions via digital channels with customers can impact company growth via revenue and the customer’s emotional investment (advocacy) to the company. This process requires a combination of creativity, deep emotional understanding, knowledge of digital behaviour and a strong company to customer strategy. This requires a formalised process model that implies customer motivations and consequent behaviour guided by a strong company to customer emotional strategy for initiating relationships.

**Theoretical Development**

The aim of this study was to explore how a sucessful case study communicated and emotionally engaged with customers via digital channels, to develop new theories and models to aid in the utilisation of digital channels. Damasio’s (1994) Somatic Feedback Theory, Brown’s (2008) and Guenther’s (2012) design theories have been developed into a conceptual model outlining the process of a customer’s digital channel engagement. Similar to Damasio’s (1994) original theory this model includes the fundamental emotional response to stimulus in a situation, however focuses on a digital engagement and resulting experience (Figure 5). The model begins with an existing association of feelings, emotions and moods derived from the company, an interaction with the company’s digital channel will evoke a feeling, emotion or moods, which informs and creates an attitude, behaviour or meaning towards the company. This process is a loop, as after progressing through steps 1, 2 and 3, (seen on Figure 5) the experience will alter original associations made regarding the company stimulus.
This process requires a deeper analysis of customer emotions and their engagements with digital channels, however by detailing and subsequently understanding this process at a theoretical level, research in this area can advance. This study has provided a perspective on how stimulus is processed (associations), responded to (emotions) and the effect of (behaviours) in the context of customers’ digital channel experiences. Awareness of this process can allow organisations to align their company strategy with their customer’s latent needs and desires, providing digital channels with an opportunity to improve a customer’s emotional experience.

Conclusions
In a society that offers an abundance of choices among products, services and businesses the ability to form relationships with customers is critical for customer retention. Fulfilling an emotional experience depends on the overall emotional consumption experience, which is determined not only by the consumption of the product but all engagements with customers. The Burberry business case provides academics and practitioners avenues for future research and applied considerations. In times of digitisation, organisations are required to rethink the traditional concept of customer relationships, as new technologies are empowering customers. The conceptual framework presented leverages the role of design, highlighting opportunities made possible through digital channels. This research contributes by providing processes to better enable companies to build highly engaging customer experiences via technology, specifically digital channels. With the ability to impact scholars and practitioners alike, future research should focus on extending the theoretical domain of digital channels to include customer emotional experiences and requires practitioners to publish best practice and outline key strategies and tactics with proven results.

References


http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2011.10593099.


