



Erasmus School of Economics  
Master Thesis Business and Economics in Marketing

**What is the effect of different online  
interaction strategies with the customers on  
purchase intention for cosmetic products?**

**Student:** Julia Lakomska, 430828

**Supervisor:** Ana Scekic

**Date final version:** 28th of June, 2021

The views stated in this thesis are those of the author and not necessarily those of the supervisor, second assessor, Erasmus School of Economics or Erasmus University Rotterdam.

## **Abstract**

A strong customer relationship is a key to success for every company. Having a dialog with the customers, helping them, and regularly interacting with the target group online and offline help the brands with maintaining the relationship with the customers. Due to the corona pandemic, many companies had to close their physical stores for extended periods of time. Physical and personal interactions with the customers were not possible anymore. This has forced the customers to use other channels to get in contact with the brands and interact with them. Additionally, due to the corona pandemic, the behavior of Dutch customers has changed, which resulted in a brand loyalty switch. It became clear that online interactions with the customers on Social Media channels have become a crucial element for brands in terms of consumer purchase decisions and maintaining the customer relationship. However, little is known about the effect of the different online interaction strategies in the cosmetic branch. The existing literature leaves the Social Media Managers and Customer Care Managers with limited general Social Media guidelines, such as responding at the right time, and using an appropriate tone to the customers. As a result, Social Media Managers do not know how they should interact with their target group. Therefore, the goal of this research is to explore the effect of different online interaction strategies with customers on purchase intention for cosmetic products. Three elements such as tone of voice, response length, and the usage of emoji have been tested with linear regression. The results show that personalized tone of voice and a long length of brand's response to a customer question have a positive significant direct effect on purchase intention. However, the presence of the emoji does not have any effect on purchase intention. Additionally, this study provides insights into the online interaction strategies with the customers used by cosmetic brands in The Netherlands. This investigation established that cosmetic brands do not have strict guidelines regarding the interaction with customers on Social Media. Their communication is based on gut feeling, where being personal plays a crucial role. The outcomes of this study provide a framework for Social Media Managers and Customers Relationship Managers that can be incorporated into the customer interaction strategies on Social Media to communicate more effectively with their target audience.

## Acknowledgements

During the last few months, I have received great support.

I would like to thank my supervisor Ana Scekcic for her valuable guidance and great support. Thank you for your clear feedback, motivation, and enthusiasm. I could not have imagined having a better supervisor for my thesis. I am very grateful that it was possible to write the Master thesis under your guidance.

I would like also to thank two classmates, Isabel and Mathilde, for motivating and supporting each other. Despite the corona pandemic, we have found a way to keep contact with each other, motivate and lift each other up. Having someone to talk with made the writing process more pleasant.

In addition, I would like to thank my family for their mental support, for their warmth, and for always believing in me. Finally, I would also like to give special thanks to my boyfriend. I could not have completed my research without his support. He who was always there for me, motivated me and cheered me up during hard times.

## Table of contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1 Introduction.....   | 1  |
| 1.1 Problem statement.....                                    | 1  |
| 1.2 Research question .....                                   | 2  |
| 1.3 Sub-questions .....                                       | 3  |
| 1.4 Academic relevance.....                                   | 3  |
| 1.5 Managerial relevance .....                                | 5  |
| 1.6 Thesis structure .....                                    | 6  |
| 2 Literature review and conceptual framework.....             | 7  |
| 2.1 Social Media.....   | 7  |
| 2.2 Response style - Personalization .....                    | 8  |
| 2.3 Response length .....                                     | 10 |
| 2.3.1 Gender differences in online shopping orientation ..... | 11 |
| 2.4 The usage of emojis.....                                  | 13 |
| 2.5 Conceptual framework .....                                | 15 |
| 3 Research methodology.....                                   | 17 |
| 3.1 Qualitative method.....                                   | 17 |
| 3.1.1 In-depth interview design .....                         | 17 |
| 3.1.2 Data collection .....                                   | 18 |
| 3.2 Quantitative method .....                                 | 18 |
| 3.2.1 Survey design .....                                     | 18 |
| 3.2.2 Pre-test .....  | 20 |
| 3.2.3 Data collection .....                                   | 20 |
| 3.3 The variables and their descriptive statistics.....       | 20 |
| 3.3.1 Dependent variable.....                                 | 20 |
| 3.3.2 Independent variables.....                              | 21 |
| 3.3.3 Control variables .....                                 | 22 |
| 3.4 Statistical technique .....                               | 22 |
| 3.4.2 Experiment 2 - Model response length.....               | 23 |
| 3.4.3 Experiment 3 - Model usage of emoji.....                | 24 |
| 3.5 Sample .....  | 25 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 4 Results .....  | 26 |
| 4. 1 Results from the qualitative research .....             | 26 |
| 4.1.1 Online interaction strategies of cosmetic brands ..... | 26 |
| 4.1.2 Statement 1 .....                                      | 28 |
| 4.1.3 Statement 2 .....                                      | 28 |
| 4.1.4 Statement 3 .....                                      | 28 |
| 4.1.5 Statement 4 .....                                      | 29 |
| 4.2 Results from the quantitative research .....             | 30 |
| 4.2.1 Experiment 1 - Response style .....                    | 30 |
| 4.2.2 Experiment 2 - Length of the response .....            | 31 |
| 4.2.3 Experiment 3 - The usage of emoji.....                 | 35 |
| 4.2.4 Overview of the hypotheses .....                       | 37 |
| 5 General discussion.....                                    | 38 |
| 5.1 Summary and conclusions .....                            | 38 |
| 5.2 Theoretical and managerial implications.....             | 40 |
| 5.3 Limitations and future research recommendations .....    | 43 |
| References.....  | 45 |

**List of figures**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Figure 1 - Conceptual framework.....  | 16 |
| Figure 2 - Response length condition, long response vs short response ..... | 19 |
| Figure 3 - Conceptual model of Experiment 1.....                            | 22 |
| Figure 4 - Conceptual model of Experiment 2.....                            | 23 |
| Figure 5 - Model of Moderated Mediation of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2c..... | 24 |
| Figure 6 - Statistic visualization of Experiment 1, Hypothesis 1b .....     | 31 |
| Figure 7 - Statistic visualization of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2b .....     | 33 |
| Figure 8 - Experiment 1, personalized tone of voice .....                   | 62 |
| Figure 9 - Experiment 1, standard tone of voice .....                       | 62 |
| Figure 10 - Experiment 2, longer response .....                             | 62 |
| Figure 11 - Experiment 2, short response .....                              | 63 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Figure 12 - Experiment 3, emoji .....    | 63 |
| Figure 13 - Experiment 3, no emoji ..... | 63 |

### List of tables

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Table 1 - Overview of the key findings of the qualitative research .....          | 27 |
| Table 2 - Coefficients of Experiment 1, Hypothesis 1a .....                       | 30 |
| Table 3 - Coefficients of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2a .....                       | 32 |
| Table 4 - Conditional direct effect of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2c .....          | 34 |
| Table 5 - Indirect effect of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2c .....                    | 34 |
| Table 6 - Index of moderated mediation of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2c .....       | 34 |
| Table 7 - Coefficients of Experiment 3, Hypothesis 3a .....                       | 35 |
| Table 8 - Statistical outcomes of moderation of Experiment 3, Hypothesis 3b ..... | 36 |
| Table 9 - Summary of the research hypotheses .....                                | 37 |
| Table 10 - The descriptive statistics, gender .....                               | 65 |
| Table 11 - The descriptive statistics, age .....                                  | 65 |
| Table 12 - Control variables .....  | 65 |
| Table 13 - Assumptions of Linear Regression, Personalization .....                | 66 |
| Table 14 - Assumptions of Linear Regression, Response length .....                | 67 |
| Table 15 - Assumptions of Linear Regression, Emoji .....                          | 68 |
| Table 16 – Statistical results of experiment 1, Hypothesis 1a .....               | 69 |
| Table 17 - Statistical results of experiment 1, Hypothesis 1b .....               | 70 |
| Table 18 - Statistical results of experiment 2, Hypothesis 2a .....               | 71 |
| Table 19 - Statistical results of experiment 2, Hypothesis 2b .....               | 72 |
| Table 20 - Statistical results of experiment 2, Hypothesis 2c .....               | 74 |
| Table 21 - Statistical results of experiment 3, Hypothesis 3a .....               | 75 |
| Table 22 - Statistical results of experiment 3, Hypothesis 3b .....               | 75 |
| Table 23 - Statistical results of experiment 3 (covariate), Hypothesis 3a .....   | 76 |
| Table 24 - Statistical results of experiment 3 (covariate), Hypothesis 3a .....   | 76 |

## 1 Introduction

This selection begins with a general introduction of the problem statement of this study. Following, the research question and sub-questions will be covered. Along, the academic and marginal relevance will be presented. This chapter ends with an illustration of the thesis structure.

### 1.1 Problem statement

A strong customer relationship is the key to success for every company. Especially nowadays when the whole world is facing a pandemic, loyalty and customer relationship play even a bigger role than ever before. Due to Covid-19, Dutch consumers have become more mindful of how they spend their money. Dutch consumers also expect to decrease their spending in different kinds of product categories, among others: skin products and make-up and personal-care products. Further, the shopping behavior of Dutch consumers has also changed. More than half of the consumers have tried new brands (McKinsey & Company, 2020). It is clear that brand loyalty is affected by the corona crisis. Although the corona crisis challenges the brands with keeping their customers, it also brings the brands something positive. This loyalty switch means that there will be customers who might want to try new products. These potential customers will want to gather more information about a product or service. This can be done, either online or offline. However, due to Covid-19 and strict restrictions, many businesses had to close their physical stores. Physical and personal interactions with the customers are not possible. This has forced the customers to use other channels to get in contact with the brands and to be able to ask questions (McKinsey & Company, 2020).

This development emphasizes the importance of online channels, like companies' websites and Social Networks. Especially Social Networks enable fast and direct contact with the target group, where the (potential) customers can ask questions regarding a product or service. It is very convenient to create a dialogue with the target group. Social Media platforms do not only help with creating a stronger bond with the (potential) customers, Social Media have become a crucial element for brands in terms of consumer purchase decisions (Fauser, Wiedenhofer, & Lorenz, 2011). Via Social Networks, companies can help, guide, and inspire customers to purchase a product or service. The online interactions with the customers can influence the brand perception, experience, and brand relationship (Hudson, Roth, & Huang, 2015).

By creating a dialogue, companies can take away the fear of insecurity and strengthen the feeling of making the right purchase decision. Those new developments empathize the importance of understanding what customers value when they interact with the brands online. Aspects such as customer relationship and customer loyalty are becoming more relevant. It is clear that online customer interactions are a crucial element of the Social Media strategy.

Unfortunately, there is not much known about the effect of the different online customer interaction strategies. Social Media Managers and Customer Care Managers do not know how they should respond to customer's questions on Social Networks.

### 1.2 Research question

Due to the lack of any insights about the effect of different online customer interaction strategies, the following research question is defined: *What is the effect of different online interaction strategies with the customers on purchase intention for cosmetic products?*

The motivation for this study is as follows. First of all, based on the annual report of The Dutch Cosmetics Association there is a positive growth seen regarding the cosmetic industry in The Netherlands (The Dutch Cosmetics Association, 2019). Globally, the cosmetic industry is also growing. This makes it interesting to investigate in this industry. Further, there is a noticeable loyalty change seen in this branch. However, the most important reason for choosing this branch for the research is the lack of any insights regarding the effect of different online interaction strategies with the customers in this branch. This research examines the effect of different online interactions on Social Media. Previous research shows that Social Media Marketing is effective in influencing the consumer's purchase decision, therefore it was interesting to investigate this area. Moreover, it is also shown that Social Media Marketing is also an effective tool in communicating to consumers in the digital world (Fauser, Wiedenhofer, & Lorenz, 2011).

Regarding the scope of online interactions, the focus of this research lies on brand or product-related questions. Customer complaints are not going to be analyzed. While existing research does provide some insights on negative complaints, little is known about answers to product and brand-related questions and strategies in answering the questions, which will be the focus of this thesis.



### 1.3 Sub-questions

To answer the main research question, there are several sub-questions defined.

*Sub-question 1:* What is the online interaction strategy of the brands in the cosmetic industry?

*Sub-question 2:* How does the different response style (template response versus personalized response) influence the purchase intention?

*Sub-question 3:* How does the length of the response influence the purchase intention?

*Sub-question 4:* How does the usage of emoji influence the purchase intention?

For this study, it would be interesting to get insights into the effect of online interactions on Social Media from the perspective of the Social Media Managers as well as from the consumers themselves. What do Social Media Managers think about different online interactions? Which online interaction characteristics, such as the response style, length, and usage of emoji, work and which not? Are there other response characteristics that they value? What is the customer perspective, what is their opinion? Which online interaction characteristics do they value the most? Is there an overlap between the Social Media Managers and the consumers? The selection of the specific characteristic of online interactions has been influenced by the two dominant trends, namely personalization, and emojis. There is a clear change happening in how brands do their marketing and communicate with their target group. There is a shift from mass marketing and communication to personalized marketing and communication. The way that customers communicate online has also changed. Emojis have become a dominant part of our online communication and they are being used by 95 percent of online users (The Emoji Report, 2021). These huge changes were an inspiration for this investigation.

### 1.4 Academic relevance

Despite the growing popularity of Social Media, a limited amount of research has been done about the effect of the different interaction strategies with the customers on Social Media. The extant research has primarily focused on providing general Social Media guidelines and focused on identifying the effect of the brand's response on customer's reviews.

The existing research does not provide any findings of the specific elements of online interaction with the customer. The elements such as tone of voice, length, or usage of emoji in the brand's responses on Social Media environment have been uninvestigated.

The aim of this study is to fulfill this gap and provide a framework of specific elements that can be used in the interactions with the customers on Social Media.

The context of the previous research was reviews, which is different from the scope of this study. The study of Wang and Chaundhry (2018) examined different aspects of the effects of the brand's response to positive and negative reviews. The study shows that manager responses to negative hotel reviews can significantly influence subsequent opinions in a positive way. Surprisingly, the authors of the same study show that responding to positive reviews can have negative consequences for the Manager. This study has also tested the impact of tailored communication. The findings indicate that that tailored communication strengthens the impact of brand responses on subsequent opinions. However, the tailored communication has only a positive effect on the negative reviews, because it contributes to service recovery (Wang & Chaudhry, 2018).

Furthermore, the extant research has examined whether a review is helpful or not. This has been done by analyzing the level of information that was given in the review (Pan & Zhang, 2011). The longer the review, the more information it contained. In contrast to this research, this study examines not the actual informativeness of the responses, quantity of information that is given, but the perceived informativeness and, consequently, caring, just because of a higher number of words used, while the information given is kept constant.

Looking at the literature in Social Media context, the existing research does not provide any findings of the specific elements of online interaction with the customer. A study by Parson and Lepkowska-White (2018) provides a quite general framework for how Social Media Managers can engage with the target group. The fourth pillar of this framework is about responding to the customers and provides basic findings, how a brand can respond to the customers on Social Media, such as having clear guidelines, responding at the right time, being honest, and using an appropriate tone. The study did not focus on the effect of certain elements of the online interaction strategy.

In contrast to previous research, this study contributes to the literature by examining the effect of different online interaction strategies on Social Media on purchase intention. It will become clear which online interaction elements such as personalization (tone of voice), the length of the response and the usage of emoji have a positive effect on the purchase intention. Moreover, this study will investigate whether the effect of certain elements is stronger for females or males. Additionally, this study will test whether these elements have an effect on purchase intention due to a change in perceived caring.

Moreover, the existing literature does not provide any insights into the online interaction strategies that are used by cosmetic brands. This study tries to fulfill this gap and draws a picture of the online interaction strategies that are implemented by various cosmetic brands in The Netherlands.

This study illustrates the various effects of different online interaction strategies on Social Media, provides a clear framework for cosmetics brands on how they should interact with the customers, and provides insights into the implemented online interaction strategies in the cosmetic branch that has been not revealed yet by the existing research.

### 1.5 Managerial relevance

This research is relevant for all kinds of companies that are active in the beauty branch. Especially for the Social Media Managers and Customer Service Managers who want to optimize their online customer journey and customer relationship management, this research will be very helpful. The insights of this research give more clarity on how to effectively respond to customers' questions on Social Media. It will become clear which characteristics of the online interaction strategies are effective and can contribute to the brand.

Additionally, this study helps the Social Media Managers with creating their online interaction strategy with the customers. Based on the outcomes of this study the Social Media Managers and the Customer Service Managers will be aware of the possible effects of the different online interaction strategies. Knowing how to respond to customers' questions, how-to guide and help the customers during the orientation and purchase decision can lead to more sales and make the customers happy and satisfied.

Due to the proper online interaction with the customers, the brand will give the current and potential customers a feeling of being heard and helped. Additionally, knowing the preferences and the effect of the different online strategies regarding gender will support the communication of many brands. This study might be an eye-opener for many brands whereby in the future the Social Media Managers will take conscious steps towards communication with the target group online.

### 1.6 Thesis structure

This study is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, the research problem and the research scope can be found. The second chapter provides theoretical background about the different characteristics of brand response to a customer question on Social Media. Following, based on the theory and prior research the hypotheses and research framework are described. The third chapter covers the methodology of this study. This chapter focuses on the data collection, describes the variables of the model, and elaborates on the chosen statistical technique. The next chapter focuses on the analysis of the collected data. Lastly, this study ends with a general discussion, where the findings are being summarized and the theoretical and managerial implications are being covered. The fifth chapter ends with the limitations and future research recommendations.

## 2 Literature review and conceptual framework

In this section, the relevant topics for this study will be covered. The chapter begins with a brief introduction of Social Media and its effects on purchase intention and brand creation. Following, the theory and the concepts of each of the online interaction characteristics, personalization, response length, and the usage of emoji, will be described in more detail. Lastly, based on the literature review, hypotheses will be defined and translated into a conceptual model.

### 2.1 Social Media

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) the term “Social Media” can be described as follows: “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content”. Thus, Social Media covers different platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Due to digitalization and the rise of Social Media, the marketing and communication landscape of the brands has entirely changed over the past few years. Social Media has had an enormous impact on the business processes and models of the brands (Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker, & Bloching, 2013). Moreover, the communication between the brands and the customers has been dramatically affected by this rapid growth of Social Media platforms. Where before there was one-way communication and the customer had a passive role, nowadays the consumers are more engaged with the brands than ever before.

In contrast to traditional marketing, where the communication was based on one-side communication, nowadays the communication is entirely based on two-side communication. Aside from having a dialogue with the brands, the customers are able to talk directly with other customers and together create value for each other (Mangolda & Faulds, 2009). This has led to a shift in terms of having control over brand creation and dissemination of information. The power has moved from the brands to the individual customer. Nowadays, brands have relatively little control over the dissemination of information and creating brand equity and brand image. This is caused by trends such as user-generated content (UGC), and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009).

The customers are the main users on the Social networking platforms and are one of the main content creators, where they massively share their experiences with the products and services with other customers. Hence, Social Media is easily accessible for everyone, and having the ability to communicate directly with thousands of other customers, decreases the brand's control over the content and information spread.

However, besides the challenges that the brands are facing within digital era, Social Media brings many benefits to the brands. Through Social Media, brands can easily, efficiently with relatively low costs target their audience across the globe, which is not always the case with traditional media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The brands can get conveniently and quickly access to the customer needs and build deep relationships with the customers (Assaad, Gómez, & Von Ossietzky, 2011). Hence, Social Media platforms are as well being used as an extension of the Customer Care Service, where customers can ask questions and are being helped by having a direct dialogue with the brands. It is expected that customer care via Social Media will be even more personalized and customized (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2019).

Moreover, prior research has shown that Marketing activities on Social Media have a positive effect on consumers' brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty (BİLGİN, 2018). Findings from another study suggest that Social Media marketing activities also have a beneficial impact on users' brand commitment (Barreda, Nusair, Wang, Okumus, & Bilgihan, 2020). Additionally, Social Media can be used as a tool for creating a strong brand image and creating an emotional connection with the target audience. Lastly, another study indicates that Social Media marketing has a positive effect on consumers' purchase intentions (Gautam & Sharma, 2017).

## 2.2 Response style - Personalization

The one-size approach does not work anymore. Nowadays the customers have high expectations towards the brands. The customers want to be helped with their individual problems and be provided with the best for the solution. As a result, there is a new way how brands approach customers: it is done through personalization and customization (Instapage, 2019). Customization and personalization are often seen as the same - in fact, they are not. Customization is initiated by the user and personalization is done for the user. However, the purpose of these terms is the same they make the customer experience more relevant and meaningful (Instapage, 2019).

This tailored approach brings many benefits. Customized messages are for the consumer more memorable and more persuasive (Noar, Benac, & Harris, 2007). Further, customers pay more attention, and the message becomes relevant and more meaningful. Moreover, a brand is seen as warmer and more human, when the brand is interpersonal and uses informal communication (Malone & Fiske, 2013). These benefits have been noticed by the companies and many brands are aware that customization is important for the success of the brand. Therefore, customization has become a crucial factor in the marketing strategy (Katz, 2002). There are multiple strategies for how a brand can make communication with the customers more personalized. One way to make a message personalized to a customer is using personal cues, such as their name (Dijkstra, 2008). Another approach is using personal pronouns, such as: I, we, our, which create a feeling of a relationship between the brand and the customers (Pollach, 2005). It is assumed that using first-person in the communication with the customers, decreases the distance between the brand and audience and makes the connection more personal.

Looking at another theory of the effect of personalization, it is found that personalized services score high on customer's perceived usefulness with the presence of a positive feeling, which can be seen as perceived care (Liang, Chen, Du, Turban, & Li, 2012). For this study, the assumption is that this theory also applies to personalized answers to customer's questions. A personalized answer to a customer question will lead to a higher perceived usefulness which will result in a positive feeling and high perceived caring. This could lead to a higher purchase intention. Based on this it is assumed that there will be a mediation, meaning that perceived caring mediates the relationship between personalized response and purchase intention. Based on the literature and on the overlap between customization and personalization and personalized services the following hypotheses have been defined.

*Hypothesis 1a:* A personalized response to a consumer question results in a higher purchase intention.

*Hypothesis 1b:* Perceived caring mediates the relationship between personalized response and purchase intention. Personalized response to a consumer question increases perceived caring, which then leads to a higher purchase intention.

### 2.3 Response length

There is some research done about the effect of the review length, however, this effect is analyzed from the consumer perspective, thus the review is written by the consumer and not by the brand itself. However, this study examines the response length from a different angle, then it has been done until now. This examination is not only about the actual informativeness of the responses, quantity of information that is given, but about the perceived informativeness and, consequently, caring, just because of a higher number of words used, while the information given is kept constant. Nevertheless, the following insights of the studies are seen as a relevant theoretical background for this research.

Research has shown that the length of a review has a positive influence on helpfulness. This study concluded that reviews with more words have a higher information diagnosticity. Accordingly, these reviews are perceived as more helpful. (Salehana & Kim, 2014). People have trouble making decisions when information is less diagnostic (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Reviews with a bigger length of information can increase the level of diagnosticity. More information about a product or service makes the customer more confident about his purchase decision. In general, long reviews increase the helpfulness of the review (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Another study also confirms this statement. The study of Pan and Zhang (2011) examined the reviewer characteristics on perceived review helpfulness. The reviews were collected on Amazon.com for experiential (CD music, DVD movies, and videogames) and utilitarian products (consumer electronics, healthcare products, and computer software). This study concluded that longer reviews are overall more helpful than shorter ones. However, the effect of the length of the review on perceived helpfulness is more present for utilitarian products than for experiential products. The review length was measured by the number of characters used in a review.

Based on the theory there could be a link put between helpfulness and perceived caring. It is assumed that if the consumers perceive a review as helpful, the consumer will also have a high level of perceived caring. This means that the consumer will have the feeling that the firm is caring about him and wants to help him in the best way possible. Hence, a long and rich information response to a consumer question will also lead to a higher purchase intention.



Based on that, there is a mediation effect expected, meaning a longer response to a consumer question gives the potential customer a high degree of information that is needed for his purchase decision. Thus, a helpful response to a consumer question might result in a high degree of perceived caring. This might lead to a higher purchase intention. Thus, the effect of a longer response to a consumer question on a purchase intention goes through the variable of perceived caring.

As mentioned before, this study does not investigate the actual informativeness of the responses, but it investigates the perceived informativeness and caring. In this study, the information given in a brand's response is kept constant, regardless used number of words (small numbers of words vs long number of words). Thus, the psychological point of view of perceiving the actual response length, not the given information, will be measured. Based on the literature, the following hypotheses have been defined.

*Hypothesis 2a:* A longer response to a consumer question will lead to a higher purchase intention.

*Hypothesis 2b:* Perceived caring mediates the relationship between response length and purchase intention. A longer length to a consumer question increases perceived caring and then perceived caring increases purchase intention.

### 2.3.1 Gender differences in online shopping orientation

Following, the gender difference in online shopping will be discussed, where the focus lies on the different intensities of information needs. Prior research has shown clear differences between females and males regarding shopping orientation and online information search. An example that supports the gender differences of online shopping is study by Bea and Lee (2010). This research has shown that the degree of risk that is being experienced during online shopping is more present for females. As a result of the insecurity, females lean-to hesitate about their online purchases.

Moreover, it was found that the effect of online consumer reviews on purchase intention is stronger for women than for men. This outcome can be supported by a different study, that indicates that females are more open to opinions from others than males (Kemp & Palan, 2006).

This finding is in line with another study, that revealed that females are strongly influenced by recommendations from a friend. This effect is not significant for males. Further, this investigation has established that recommendations that were given by a friend have a huge impact on the reduction of perceived risk for women than for men (Garbarino & Strahilevitz, 2004).

Further, the research for the cosmetics eCommerce industry has also indicated the importance of online reviews on the purchase decision (Photoslurp & Zinklar, 2019).

Female participants from Germany, UK, Italy, and France took part in this research and the majority of the respondents sees the reviews as a fixed element during the product orientation and always gather information from product reviews before making their final purchase decision. Thus, based on that it is assumed that recommendations, also called word-of-mouth information, are an essential element of the online purchase process. Further, it is assumed that females care more about the reviews than males and that recommendations are seen as a helpful and rich source of information. Hence, females will experience a higher level of helpfulness and perceived caring. Thus, in general, women pay more attention to the quality of the reviews compared to men.

Another study that supports the differences between females and males regarding shopping orientation and online information search is the study of Seock and Bailey (2008). This study has indicated that females search for more information online than males. This finding is in line with research done by Liu, Lin, Lee, and Deng (2013). This study revealed that females spend significantly more time and money on cosmetics online than males.

Given the findings, it is clear that there is a difference between females and males, whether they search for cosmetic or non-cosmetics products. Looking at online information search for cosmetic products, the gender difference can be explained as followed. It is assumed that the orientation process is different for females and males because of the different needs in term of skin needs and interests. Prior research gives a clear explanation regarding the skin differences between gender. According to a cosmetic chemist, there are big differences in skin care needs for men versus women (Amber Katz, 2019). In general male skin 20% thicker than female skin. It contains more collagen, which makes the skin tighter and firmer (Eucerin, 2021).

Further, the research of Catherine Escoffier (Pharm, et al., 1989) shows that there is a difference in thickness of the skin between women and men, this study claims that the skin of males is thicker than females' skin over the age range of 5-90 years. Another study supports the skin difference between females and males and this research shows that the skin parameters of hydration, sebum, and thickness are mainly higher for males than for females (Rahrovan, Fanian, Mehryan, Humbert, & Firooz, 2018). These skin differences result in the different skin-product features per gender. Men's skincare products are more functional regarding packaging and ingredients. Women's skincare products are complex in terms of ingredients and claims.

Therefore, it is assumed that women are more interested in skincare and more dedicated to looking for the perfect skincare product. The females will look for more information in order to make the right purchase decision, thus they will rely more on reviews and will appreciate longer, thus informational, brand's responses. Based on the theory, the following hypothesis has been defined.

*Hypothesis 2c:* The mediated relationship between response length and purchase intention via perceived caring will be moderated by gender, in such a way that the effect will be stronger for females.

#### 2.4 The usage of emojis

Emoji has been adopted by society very fast, it might be even the fastest growing language in the history (BBC, 2015). Emoji plays a huge role in the online communication of consumers (Leung & Chan, 2017). According to the Emoji Report by Brandwatch emojis are being used by 95 percent of online users (The Emoji Report, 2021). Besides the consumers, influencers also implement emojis in their Social Media content.

A study analyzed the usage of emoji among influencers on Social Media and this study suggests that emojis are not only used to express opinions and emotions but also used for informational and supportive purposes (Jing & Gretzel, 2018). Emojis are also used for making small talk with the audience. Moreover, this study indicated that emoji strengthens and triggers the engagement degree of the audience.

Additionally, personal conversations with a human touch are a crucial element for engagement on Social Media. Based on these findings, it is assumed that emojis can also stimulate the purchase intention of the customers.

This new communication language is also adopted by brands in their marketing communication (Jaeger, Vidal, Kam, & Ares, 2018). Using emojis makes the communication with the target group less formal, fun, and creative and is used to increase consumer engagement (Mathews & Lee, 2018). A study has shown that an emoticon makes a message less formal and gives it a personal and human touch. This study concluded that emoticons (facial expressions) used in a message reduce the formality (Huang, Yen, & Zhang, 2008).

Although this study has mostly focused on emoticons, the findings of emoticons are also applicable for emojis. Emoticons and emoji are very comparable to each other and have the same purpose (Stark & Crawford, 2015).

Regarding the usage of emoji in customer service, there are mixed outcomes. For example, a study (Li, Wa Chan, & Kim, 2019) found out that employees of the customer service who used emojis in their response to the online customers' comments and questions were seen as warm and friendly. However, these employees were also seen as less competent.

Looking at the usage of emojis in advertising, a study has shown that the presence of emoji in product message advertising leads to higher positive affect (Das, Wiener, & Kareklas, 2019). The study revealed the effect of emoji in advertising on purchase intention, which was positive. Through the usage of emoji in product message advertising, there was a significant increase in purchase intentions. However, this effect was present only for hedonic, rather than utilitarian products. Given the findings, it is assumed that the presence of emoji in the response of the brand to a consumer question can lead to a higher purchase intention.

Looking at the usage of emojis by females and males, an investigation revealed that women use twice as many emojis compared to men (Tossell, et al., 2012). This was tested by analyzing written private messages of females and males to friends and non-friends (strangers).

This outcome goes also in line with another study, that has focused on the usage of emojis in online chat rooms by women and men, where women were more likely than men to use emoticons (Fullwood, Orchard, & Floyd, 2013). Based on these findings it is assumed that gender will moderate the relationship between usage of emojis and purchase intention.

Taking to account the fact that females use emojis significantly more than males, it is assumed that females will be more likely to prefer a brand's response with emojis than, a brand's response without emojis, which will result in a purchase intention.

*Hypothesis 3a:* The presence of emoji in the response of the brand to a consumer question will lead to a higher purchase intention.

*Hypothesis 3b:* The gender will moderate the effect of usage of emojis on purchase intention. The effect of emoji on purchase intention will be stronger for females.

## 2.5 Conceptual framework

Based on the theory presented above, there is a conceptual framework developed.

Hypotheses 1a covers the main effect of personalization of the response to a customer question. In hypothesis 1b, there is a mediation expected. The relationship between personalized response and purchase intention will be mediated by perceived caring. Relying on the theory of personalization there can be an assumption made that a personalized response to a consumer question increases perceived caring, which leads to a purchase intention.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b focus on the variable response length. It is expected that the length of a brand's response to a customer question has an influence on the purchase intention. Based on the theory presented in the chapter before, an assumption is made that, consumers associate a longer response with a lot of information. A longer response perceived as more helpful compared to a shorter response and which will create a high level of perceived caring. It is assumed that even though a longer response contains the same quantity of information as a short response, but expressed in longer or more words, will lead to a higher purchase intention. Based on that it is expected that perceived caring will have a mediation on the response length and the purchase intention.

Further, hypothesis 2c predicts a moderated mediation. The mediated relationship between response length and purchase intention via perceived caring will be moderated by gender, in such a way that the effect will be stronger for females.

The third hypothesis covers the usage of the emoji on purchase intention. The previous study has shown that emoji strengthens and triggers the engagement degree of the target audience on Social Media (Jing & Gretzel, 2018). Moreover, emojis express emotions, opinions, and can have an informative function. Based on these findings, it is expected that the presence of emoji in the response of the brand to a consumer question will lead to a higher purchase intention (H3a).

Additionally, an existing study indicates that females use emojis significantly more than males (Tossell, et al., 2012). Based on that it is assumed that females will be more likely to prefer a brand’s response with emojis than, a brand’s response without emojis, which will result in a purchase intention. Therefore, hypothesis 3b indicates a moderation of gender on the usage of emojis and purchase intention. It is expected that the effect of emoji on purchase intention will be stronger for females.

A visual summary of the hypotheses can be found in Figure 1.

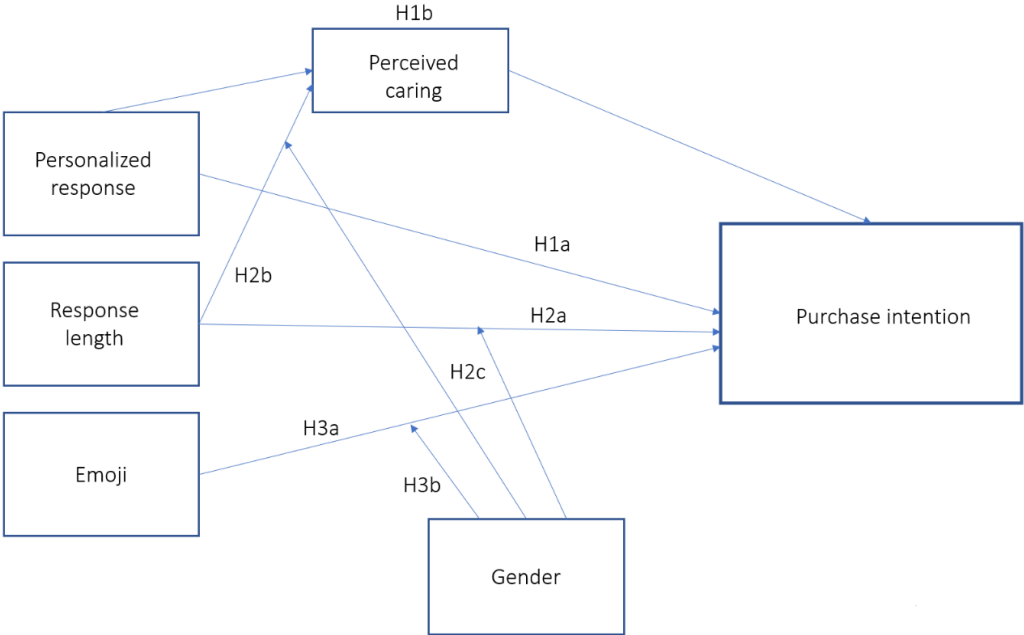


Figure 1 - Conceptual framework

### 3 Research methodology

This chapter focuses on the research design. The data collection and the research design of the qualitative and quantitative methods will be presented. Further, the variables and their descriptive statistics will be covered. This chapter ends with a description of the chosen statistical technique.

For this study, there are two research methodologies applied, qualitative and quantitative methodology. The qualitative methodology is used as an introduction for this study. The purpose of interviewing Social Media Managers of cosmetic brands is to get to know more insights about their online interaction strategy on Social Media and their opinion about certain elements of the online interaction strategies. The main focus of this study lies on the quantitative methodology, where diverse statistic relations are being tested.

#### 3.1 Qualitative method

The qualitative research was conducted to answer the first sub-question of the research. The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to get more insights into the online interaction strategy of cosmetic brands and their opinion about certain elements of the interaction strategies.

##### 3.1.1 In-depth interview design

The in-depth interviews had semi-structured character and were conducted with The Social Media Managers of cosmetic brands. The interviews consisted of two parts. The theme of the first part of the interview was about the customer interaction strategy on Social Media used by the interviewed brand. The Social Media Managers were asked if they have a clear strategy with guidelines on how they respond to the customer's questions on Social Media. Further, the elements of the online interaction strategy were discussed in more detail. Primary, the respondents were not helped with describing the online interaction elements. Later, depending on the outcome, the respondents were asked about characteristics such as tone of voice, length of the answer, and the usage of emojis. Additionally, topics like gender communication and the influence of Covid-19 on online interaction with the customer were being covered. The second part of the in-depth interview consisted of four statements that were partly based on the hypotheses of this study (Appendix A). The role of the Social Media Manager was to agree or disagree with the statement and give a short motivation of his choice.

### 3.1.2 Data collection

The in-depth interviews with the Social Media Managers of cosmetics brands took place in March. In total there were 30 companies invited for the participation in this study. In the end, six brands were interviewed. Contact with Managers was established via LinkedIn, email, or via the official Social Media channel of the brand. The interviews were held via Zoom and the conversations have been recorded with the permission of the respondents. Each of the in-depth interviews is summarized and can be found in Appendix B.

## 3.2 Quantitative method

The quantitative research was conducted to answer the main research question. The aim was to get insights into the effect of the different online interaction strategies on purchase intention.

### 3.2.1 Survey design

The target group of this survey was Dutch women and men between 18-42 years old. The choice of the target group is based on the financial independence of the customer. Moreover, based on prior research, people after the age of 45 use less Social Media (CBS, 2020) (NewCom, 2019). Upon entering the study, participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to test the different online interaction strategies with customers on Social Media (Appendix C).

The survey contained a scenario where the respondents imagine buying a face cream due to the air pollution development. Moreover, the respondents were asked to imagine that they have written a few questions about the face cream to some brands on Social Media. In the survey, the respondents saw pictures of the different brand's responses.

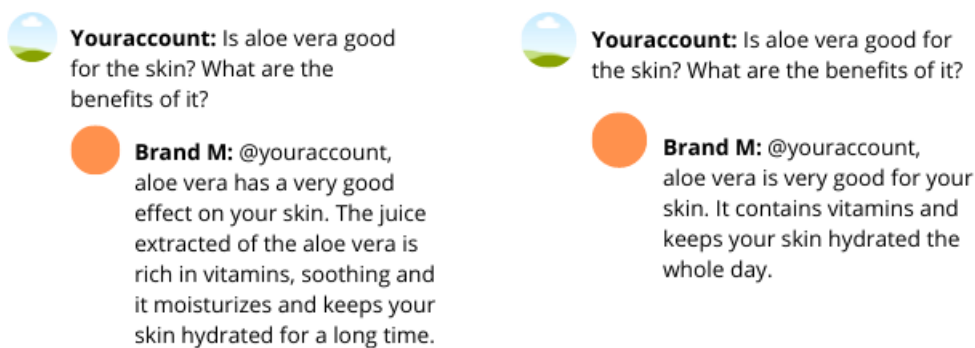
The survey consisted of four sections. In the first three sections of the survey, the following online interaction characteristics were separately manipulated, response style (template vs personalized), length of the response (short vs long), and usage of emoji (response with emoji vs response without emoji). The hypotheses of the online interaction characteristics were tested in three separate tests. Moreover, each of the online interaction characteristics contained two versions. For the response style, there have been two versions made, one representing the template style and another one representing the personalized response style. The variable length of the response had as well two versions, where one version stood for a short length and the other version stood for a longer reply.



For the usage of emoji, there have been as well created two versions, one version contained an emoji and in the other version the emoji was missing. An overview of the versions of each condition can be found in Appendix D.

To increase to the validity of the survey, the sequence of the online interaction characteristic and the versions per online interaction characteristic were randomized.

Each respondent saw a total of three interaction scenarios, where the three factors (personalization, response length, and emoji) were used. Those factors were manipulated between-subject such that each person randomly saw only one condition per factor: e.g., emoji or no emoji, short or long response, personalized or standardized tone of voice. For all three factors, the respondents were asked to indicate their purchase intention for the product. For indicating the purchase intention, a seven-point Likert scale was used. For the variable tone of voice and length of the reaction, there was also perceived caring measured, which was as well measured by a seven-point Likert scale. In each condition, 2 examples of questions and answers were given.



*Figure 2 - Response length condition, long response vs short response*

To avoid the influence of the preference of already existing brand names, the brands in the survey do not have any existing names. Therefore, the following letters of the alphabet were used, Brand F, Brand M, and Brand P. Moreover, to make the survey environment more similar to Instagram, there have been picture created that resembles the Instagram environment, which makes the scenario of the survey even more realistic and authentic. Based on those pictures (replies of brands) the respondents were asked to answer questions regarding purchase intention and perceived caring.

The fourth section of the survey consisted of descriptive statistics and general questions regarding the usage and attitude towards skin-care products. This part of the survey contained questions concerning demographic information about the respondents, gender, and age. In this section, the respondents were asked about their purchase frequency of skin products. The survey ended with the question about the attitude towards animal testing. This question was measured by a seven-point Likert Scale. All questions of this survey can be found in Appendix E.

### 3.2.2 Pre-test

Before distributing the survey, there was a pre-test conducted where the personalization element (tone of voice) was tested. The pre-test contained a few versions of standardized and personalized brand answers. The purpose of this pre-test was to test if the standardized and personalized brand answers are being correctly interpreted by the respondents regarding the level of personalization and standardization of a brand's answer. The clearest versions of personalization and standardization were selected and implemented in the main research survey. The pre-test was conducted to increase the validation of this study.

### 3.2.3 Data collection

For designing the survey Qualtrics Survey Software has been used. The quantitative results were analyzed with the statistical analysis software SPSS. The conduction of the data collection took two weeks (started on 17 April and last till 30 April). The survey was spread on various Social Media channels such as Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Instagram. The survey was only sent to Dutch respondents. Further, flyers with a QR code were distributed in the library of the Erasmus University. Each flyer contained a short explanation with a QR code. On the flyer, it was explicitly told that the survey is intended for only Dutch students.

## 3.3 The variables and their descriptive statistics

In the following paragraph, the dependent and independent variables are going to be presented.

### 3.3.1 Dependent variable

The purchase intention forms the dependent variable of this study. The likeliness to purchase a face cream is a continuous variable and was measured by using a seven-point Likert Scale, where 1 stood for extremely unlikely and 7 stood for extremely likely. After seeing the brand's answers (see figure 2), the participants were asked to indicate their wiliness to buy face cream.

### 3.3.2 Independent variables

For this study, there are three independent variables, the tone of voice, the length of the brand's reaction, and the usage of the emoji. Those variables are described in more detail below.

#### **The tone of voice**

The tone of voice forms a categorical variable. The tone of voice forms also a dummy variable, which equals 1 if the tone of voice was personalized and 0 if the tone of voice was standardized. It is expected that personalization has a direct positive effect on purchase intention.

#### **The length of the reaction**

The length of the reaction is a categorical variable. There were two types of length used: where short stood for 0 and long for 1, which makes this variable a dummy variable. However, the level of information per reaction was the same. It is expected that a longer response has a direct positive effect on the purchase intention.

#### **The usage of emoji**

The usage of emoji is a categorical variable. Moreover, this variable is a dummy variable as well, where 1 equals the presence of an emoji in a reaction and 0 equals the absence of the emoji in the reaction. This measurement was based on a previous experiment (Das, Wiener, & Kareklas, 2019), where one advertisement contained two emojis and whereas in the control condition the advertisement did not contain any emoji. There is a direct positive effect of the usage of emoji on purchase intention predicted.

#### **Moderation variable**

The gender is a categorical variable, where 1 is equal to male, 2 is equal to female, 3 is equal to non-binary/third gender and 4 is equal to prefer not to say.

#### **Mediation variable**

Perceived caring is measured by a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 is equal to strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree. The respondents were asked to indicate to what extent do they agree with the following statement: "I feel that this brand cares about me."

### 3.3.3 Control variables

For this study, there are three control variables. The frequency of purchasing skin-care products was measured by a six-point Likert Scale, ranged from once a year, every few months, once a month, a few times a month, once a week, and a few times per week.

The variable animal testing was measured by a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 stood for do not care at all and 7 stood for care very much. This control variable was measured for background information purposes. Age forms another control variable of this study and is a numerical value.

### 3.4 Statistical technique

The aim of the model in this research is to reveal the relationship between purchasing a face cream and the different elements of the online interaction strategies. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the online interaction characteristics, response style, length, and usage of emoji, are being separately tested. This results in multiple equations for this study.

#### 3.4.1 Experiment 1 – Model Response Style

In the first experiment, there is a main effect of personalized response on purchase intention expected. Additionally, it is expected that perceived caring mediates the relationship between personalized response and purchase intention. Personalized response to a consumer question increases perceived caring, which then leads to a purchase intention.

The work of Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes (2007) and another work of Hayes (2013) was used to estimate the model (Figure 3). This model has only one mediation and it is illustrated in the path diagram in Figure 3.

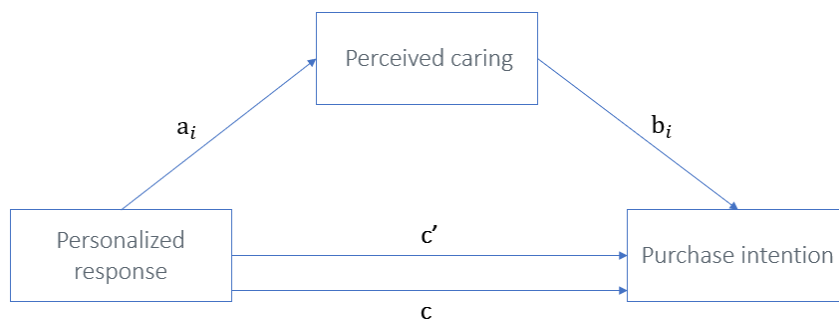


Figure 3 - Conceptual model of Experiment 1

For this model there are the following equations defined.

$$\text{Purchase intention} = i_1 + c\text{PersonalizedResponse} + r_1$$

$$\text{Perceived caring} = i_2 + a\text{PersonalizedResponse} + r_2$$

$$\text{Purchase intention} = i_3 + c'\text{PersonalizedResponse} + b\text{PerceivedCaring} + r_3$$

$AiBi$  represents the indirect effect of personalized response on purchase intention. The direct effect of personalized response on the purchase intention can be defined as  $c'$ .

### 3.4.2 Experiment 2 - Model response length

In the second experiment besides the main effect, there are two other effects expected. There is a mediation expected. Perceived caring mediates the relationship between response length and purchase intention. A longer length to a consumer question increases perceived caring and then perceived caring increases purchase intention. Additionally, there is a moderation mediation expected. The mediated relationship between response length and purchase intention via perceived caring will be moderated by gender, in such a way that the effect will be stronger for females.

#### Mediation

Perceived caring mediates the relationship between response length and purchase intention. A longer length to a consumer question increases perceived caring and then perceived caring increases purchase intention.

The model is based on Model 4 of Process Macro by Hayes (2013) and can be defined as follows.

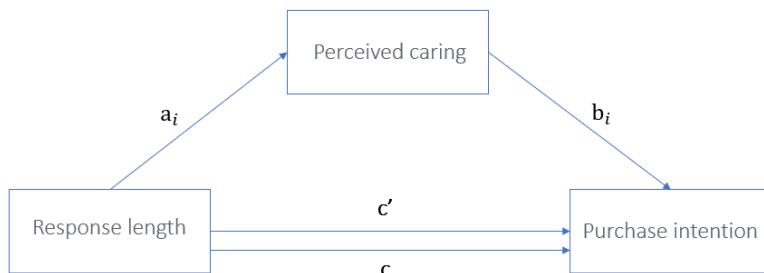


Figure 4 - Conceptual model of Experiment 2

The figure 4 can be defined in the following equations.

$$Purchase\ intention = i_1 + cResponseLength + r_1$$

$$Perceived\ caring = i_2 + aResponseLength + r_2$$

$$Purchase\ intention = i_3 + c'ResponseLength + bPerceivedCaring + r_3$$

### Moderated Mediation

The model is based on Model 8 of Process Macro by Hayes (2013) and can be defined as follows.

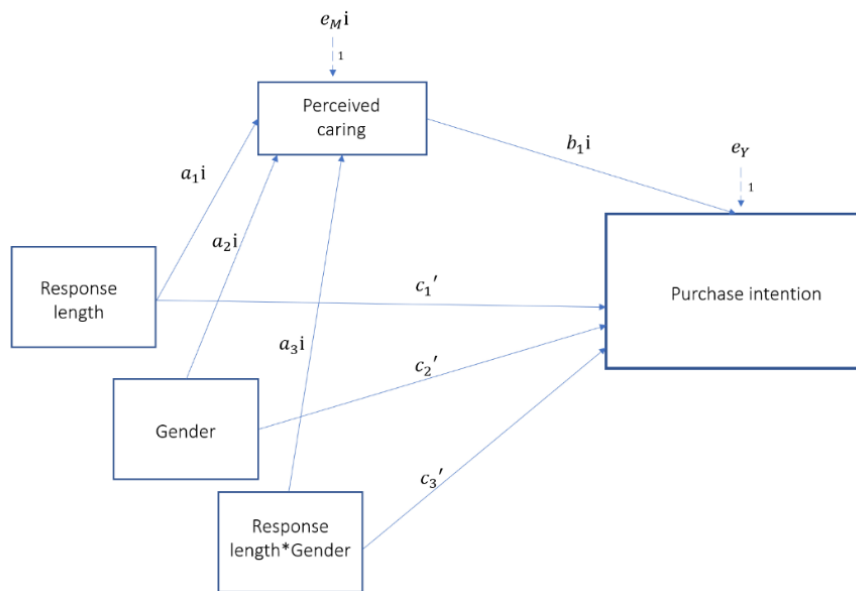


Figure 5 - Model of Moderated Mediation of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2c

The following equation was estimated using Process Macro by Hayes, Model 8 (2013).

The conditional indirect effect of Response length on Purchase intention through perceived caring is equal to  $M_i = (a_1i + a_3iW)b_i$

The conditional direct effect of response length on purchase intention is defined as:  $c_1' + c_3'W$

### 3.4.3 Experiment 3 - Model usage of emoji

In the third experiment, there is a main effect of the usage of emoji on purchase intention expected. Additionally, it is expected that gender will moderate the effect of the usage of emoji on purchase intention. The effect of emoji on purchase intention will be stronger for females.

The gender variable is a binary variable that is equal to 1 if the person is female and equal to 0 if the person is male.

The following equations were estimated using Process Macro by Hayes using model 1 (2013).

$$\text{Purchase intention} = i_1 + b_1 \text{EmojiPresence} + r_1$$

*Purchase intention*

$$= i_2 + b_1 \text{EmojiPresence} + b_2 \text{Gender} + b_3 \text{EmojiPresence} * \text{Gender} + r_2$$

### 3.5 Sample

This study focuses on Dutch women and men between 18-42. The age criterium was based on two aspects, namely on the financial independence of the customer and on the outcomes of the report of Central Statistical Office (2020) and NewCom Research & Consultancy (2019). The findings suggest that usage of Social Media decreases after the age of 45. Thus, the participants were based on the criteria to prevent sampling bias. In total there were 257 respondents that participated in this survey, however, not every respondent did complete the survey. There were 62 respondents that didn't finish the survey (24%).

The actual sample size for data analysis consists of 192, including 105 females, 86 males and 1 third gender. The respondent with the third gender was excluded from the moderation analyses. The sample shows a tendency towards young respondents, where the majority respondents (34%) were 22 years old.

However, there were 3 participants that have not met the age criterium and have been removed from the sample. Regarding, other relevant demographic information, 38% of the respondents buy skin-care products every few months. The opinion about animal testing is spread, where 25% of the respondents care very much about animal testing. An overview of the descriptive statistics can be found in Appendix F.

## 4 Results

In this section, the results of this study will be covered. First, the results of the qualitative research will be presented. Following, the results from the quantitative research will be illustrated. The chapter ends with an overview of the results of the quantitative research.

### 4.1 Results from the qualitative research

The aim of the qualitative research was to get insights into the online interaction strategy on Social Media of cosmetic brands. Additionally, the purpose was to investigate certain elements of the online interaction strategies and the motivation behind them. Bellow, the key insights from the interview conducted with the Social Media Managers of cosmetic brands will be presented.

#### 4.1.1 Online interaction strategies of cosmetic brands

The key findings of the in-depth interview are presented in Table 1.

| <i>Sub-topic</i>  | <i>Findings</i>  |
|---|--|
| General findings of online interaction strategies of cosmetic brand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No strict guidelines on how to interact with the customers on Social Media.</li><li>• Communication based on a gut feeling and on the brand's values, such as being accessible to every, being personal, and being positive.</li><li>• The current focus point is content creation, not online interactions with the customers; optimizing and creating an online interaction strategy will likely take place in the future.</li><li>• The brands do not fully realize the usage of the different elements in a response to a consumer question, citation - "I didn't even know that there are certain strategies for interacting with customers on Social Media".</li></ul> |
| Tone of voice   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The same approach is used; the tone of voice is being adjusted to the tone of voice of the customer.</li><li>• Sharing the same language with the customer.</li></ul>  |



|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
|                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first-person form is used “we” or “I”. This is not well-thought and not elaborated well in the strategy. The brands do not think about the possible effect when using “We” or “I”. The brands do not see any difference between “We” or “I”. It happens spontaneously.</li> <li>• The name of the employee is rarely mentioned in the responses under Social Media posts - brands either did not think about it or do not see any added value in it.</li> <li>• By being personal the brand offers added value; being personal stands for giving customized replies.</li> </ul>  |
| Response length     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Varies per question; rather kept short.</li> <li>• If required – more information is provided via private messages.</li> </ul>   |
| The usage of emojis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than half of the interviewed brands have a couple of emojis that are being used by the brand regularly; based on gut feeling.</li> <li>• No specific policy regarding the frequency of using emojis per response, happens intuitively.</li> <li>• Same approach; adjusting the usage of emoji to the customer.</li> <li>• Role: convey a certain feeling that a word cannot express, for example, softness or a certain smell; express thankfulness; makes the response warmer and less serious.</li> <li>• Used emojis: mostly representing the brand such as a plant, a water drop, or a green heart.</li> <li>• Communication with males customers: no heart emojis are used and make the message more universal.</li> </ul> |
| Covid-19 influence  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No changes in the online interaction strategy.</li> <li>• Increase of the frequency of received customer questions.</li> </ul>   |

Table 1 - Overview of the key findings of the qualitative research

In the second part of the in-depth interview, four statements were presented to the Social Media Managers. The participants were asked to express their opinion about each statement. The results of each statement are presented below.

#### 4.1.2 Statement 1

The first statement was formulated as follows, “personalized response to a consumer question is better perceived by a consumer than a generic (non-personalized) response”. All interviewed Social Media Managers completely agreed with this statement. The following citation ideal reflects the personalized mindset of the brands “Personalized responses are particularly important in the digital world because through the personalized message you make the company more human.” Another of the interviewed company said that “as a brand, you do not want to come over like a robot. Being personal towards the customer is very essential these days”.

#### 4.1.3 Statement 2

The topic of the second statement was the length of the response. This statement was formulated as follows, “a long response to a consumer question is seen as more helpful to the customer”. The majority of the interviewed Social Media Managers didn’t entirely agree with this statement. The argumentation for not agreeing with this statement was as follows: “If the customer is not looking for a long answer, the brand will not give the customer a long answer.” However, the participants did realize that in general long responses can be seen as more helpful because they contain more details. Nevertheless, Brand number 6 argued that “Social Media itself gives a limited number of characters that can be used, thus this implies that the response needs to be kept short.” One of the companies is the opinion that the consumer likes to get short and to the point responses.

#### 4.1.4 Statement 3

The third statement was about the presence of emojis in the reply of the brand. This statement was formulated as follows, “the presence of emoji in the response of the brand to a consumer question is better perceived by a consumer than a response without an emoji”. The majority of the brand completely agrees with this statement. According to one of the interviewed brands, “the customers get happy from emojis”. Moreover, brand number 6 says that “the emoji helps with transmitting the emotion”.

Brand number 3 also shared this opinion “emojis are used to convey a certain feeling that a word cannot express, for example, softness or modesty”. Overall, all the companies adjust their usage of emojis depending on the tone of voice of the user. Another interesting insight is that all companies share the same attitude towards emoji usage. Whenever the company gets a serious question from the customer, the brand deliberately does not use emojis. By that, the company wants to show that they take the customer seriously.

#### 4.1.5 Statement 4

The fourth statement was defined as follows “the presence of emoji in the response of the brand to a consumer question makes the answer even more personalized.” The majority of the participants agreed with this statement. One of the brands claimed that “the emoji makes the message less serious, it makes the response more fun (gezellig).” Another brand expressed the following opinion “the emoji enhances the message and makes the response also more personal”. Emojis are in general used in communication with friends and family. Therefore, people associate an emoji with informal and personal communication. Despite that the majority agreed with the fourth statement, not all brands shared the same opinion. According to one of the participants “using the customer's name and giving personalized advice makes the response more personal”. This impression is also shared by another brand, where the brand indicated that the tone of voice plays here a bigger role than an emoji.

Overall, the brands agreed that an emoji can make the response less serious and more cheerful. However, emojis need to be used carefully. As a brand, you need to have a balance between being cheerful and serious. According to the participants, it is important to use a similar tone of voice and usage of emoji as the customer. The customer should have a feeling that the brand shares the same language as the customer.

## 4.2 Results from the quantitative research

The aim of this quantitative research is to provide insights into the effect of different online interaction strategies on the purchase intention of a product in the cosmetic sector. The study investigates whether a personalized tone of voice of response, response length, or the presence of an emoji has an effect on purchase intention.

Before implementing the analysis of the results in SPSS software, the assumptions of linear regression were tested for every three factors (Field, 2013). The statistical outcomes with an explanation can be found in Appendix G. It seems that each factor meets the assumptions of linear regression.

### 4.2.1 Experiment 1 - Response style

The first experiment contains an analysis of two effects, namely the main effect of personalized response on purchase intention and the mediation of perceived caring.

*H1a: A personalized response to a consumer question results in a higher purchase intention.*

After creating a dummy variable (0 = standardized, 1 = personalized tone of voice) linear regression was performed (Field, 2013). Table 2 shows the linear regression effect on the dependent variable. As predicted, personalizing a response to a customer has a positive significant effect on the purchase intention with an effect size of 0.992 (see Table 2). Further, the significance level of p is smaller than 0.05 ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Thus, a personalized response to a consumer question results in a higher purchase intention. Therefore, hypothesis 1a is supported.

Furthermore, the findings of ANOVA show a significant effect of personalization on purchase intention with the following values ( $F(1, 188) = 20571, p = 0.000$ ).

| <i>Model: 1</i>    | <i>Unstandardized Coefficients B</i> | <i>Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error</i> | <i>Standardized Coefficients Beta</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>Sig.</i> |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|----------|-------------|
| Constant           | 4.247                                | 0.156   |                                       | 27.240   | 0.000       |
| Personalized dummy | 0.992                                | 0.219   | 0.315                                 | 4.536    | 0.000       |

Table 2 - Coefficients of Experiment 1, Hypothesis 1a

H1b: Perceived caring mediates the relationship between personalized response and purchase intention. Personalized response to a consumer question increases perceived caring, which then leads to a higher purchase intention.

Moving to the mediation, to analyze the mediation the Process Macro by Hayes (2013), Model 4 was used. Figure 6 illustrates the statistical outcomes of the main effect and the mediation.

The independent variable personalized response does not have a direct significant impact (-0.0003,  $p = 0.9983$ ) on the dependent variable purchase intention. However, the personalized response has a significant impact (1.444,  $p = 0.000$ ) on the mediator (perceived caring), which also has a significant impact (0.687,  $p = 0.000$ ) on the dependent variable purchase intention. The indirect effect is significant as well, the confidence interval does not include zero. Based on that, hypothesis 1b can be confirmed. That means that perceived caring fully mediates the relationship between personalized response and purchase intention. Personalized response to a consumer question increases perceived caring, which then leads to a purchase intention.

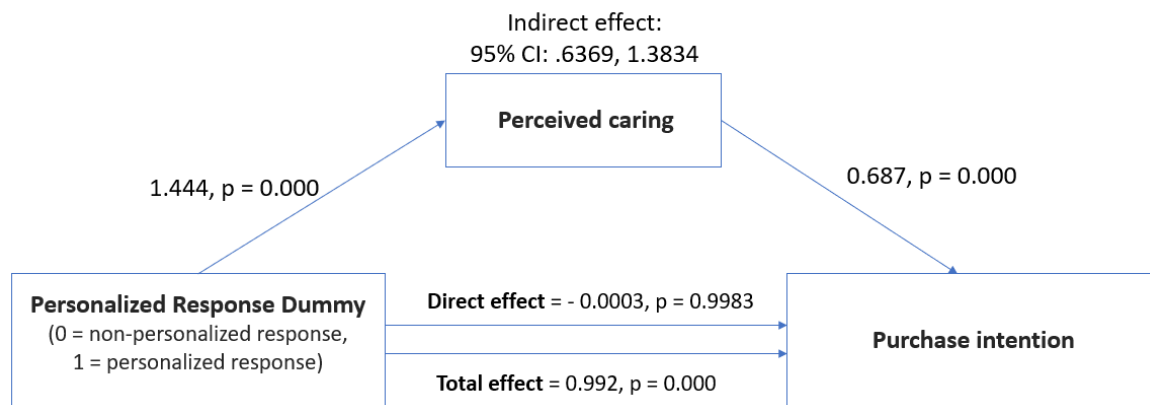


Figure 6 - Statistic visualization of Experiment 1, Hypothesis 1b

#### 4.2.2 Experiment 2 - Length of the response

The second experiment was focusing on the effect of the length of a response on the purchase intention. Besides the main effect, there was a mediation and moderation expected.

H2a: A longer response to a consumer question will lead to a higher purchase intention.

After creating a dummy variable (0 = short response, 1 = longer response), linear regression was performed.

Table 3 illustrates that a longer response to a customer question has a positive significant effect on the purchase intention with an effect size of 0.471. The significance level of p is smaller than 0.05.

Furthermore, the findings of ANOVA show a significant effect of length on purchase intention with the following values ( $F(1, 188) = 5.370, p = 0.022$ ). From the results, it is clear that hypothesis 2a is confirmed.

| <i>Model: 1</i> | <i>Unstandardized Coefficients B</i> | <i>Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error</i> | <i>Standardized Coefficients Beta</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>Sig.</i> |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|----------|-------------|
| Constant        | 4.660                                | 0.142   |                                       | 32.885   | 0.000       |
| Length dummy    | 0.471                                | 0.203   | 0.167                                 | 2.317    | 0.022       |

*Table 3 - Coefficients of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2a*

*H2b: Perceived caring mediates the relationship between response length and purchase intention. A longer length of a response increases perceived caring and then perceived caring increases purchase intention.*

For performing the mediation analysis for this experiment, model 4 of Process Macro by Hayes (2013) was applied. Figure 7 illustrates the statistical outcomes of the main effect and the mediation.

The independent variable response length does not have a direct significant impact ( $-0.063, p = 0.657$ ) on the dependent variable purchase intention. However, response length has a significant impact ( $0.772, p = 0.004$ ) on the mediator perceived caring, which also has a significant impact ( $0.691, p = 0.000$ ) on the dependent variable purchase intention. The confidence interval of the indirect effect does not include zero (CI: .2274, .8363) which means that the indirect effect is significant. Thus, the results support hypothesis 2b and indicate full mediation.

This means that perceived caring mediates the relationship between response length and purchase intention. A longer length of a response increases perceived caring and then perceived caring increases purchase intention.

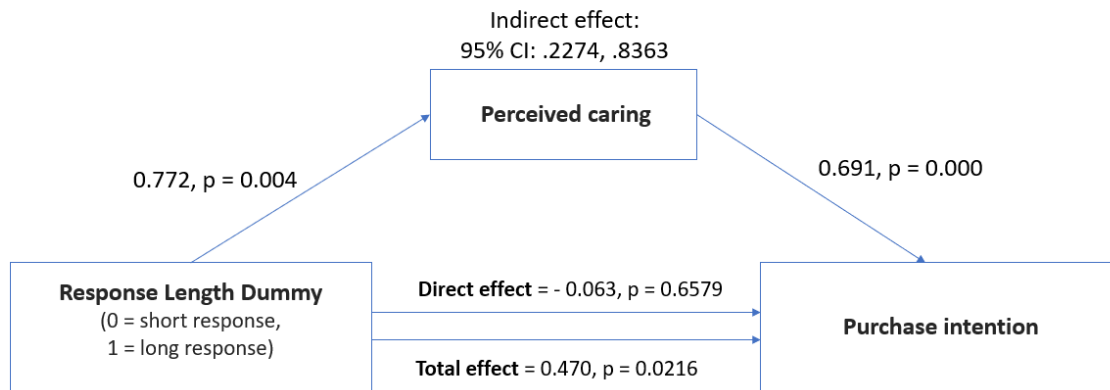


Figure 7 - Statistic visualization of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2b

#### Moderated mediation

H2c: The mediated relationship between response length and purchase intention via perceived caring will be moderated by gender, in such a way that the effect will be stronger for females.

For performing the moderated mediation analysis for this experiment, model 8 of Process Macro by Hayes (2013) was applied.

For the outcome variable perceived caring, the length variable ( $p = .5963$ ) and gender ( $p = .8416$ ) not significant. Additionally, the interaction is also not significant ( $p = .5879$ ). The statistical output of the results can be found in Appendix K. Moving to the results for the outcome variable purchase intention, the following variables are not significant: response length ( $p = .0974$ ), gender ( $p = .3518$ ), and the interaction ( $p = .1151$ ). Only the variable perceived caring has a positive significant effect with a p-value of .0000.

Table 4 shows the results of the conditional direct effect of response length on purchase intention. The results clearly show that males have a negative not significant effect on purchase intention and females have a positive not significant effect on purchase intention.

| <i>Gender</i> | <i>Effect</i> | <i>se</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>LLCI</i> | <i>ULCI</i> |
|---------------|---------------|-----------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| Males         | -.3228        | .2135     | -1.5124  | .1321    | -.7440      | .0983       |
| Females       | .1268         | .1936     | .6549    | .5134    | -.2551      | 0.5087      |

*Table 4 - Conditional direct effect of response length on purchase intention of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2c*

Table 5 with of the indirect effect shows that the male variable has the value of zero between the lower and higher bound of the 95% confidence interval (CI: -.0657, .9218), meaning that for males, there is no significant effect from response length (independent variable) on purchase intention (the dependent variable) mediated by the mediation perceived caring.

There does seem to be an expected indirect effect in such that for females. For females, the value of zero is not seen between the lower and higher bound of the 95% confidence interval (CI: .2298, .9831). Based on those outcomes, there seems to be a mediation through perceived caring for females. However, there is no statistical evidence to be comfortable to support this hypothesis (2c).

| <i>Gender</i>   | <i>Effect</i> | <i>BootSE</i> | <i>BootLLCI</i> | <i>BootULCI</i> |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1.0000 (male)   | .4324         | .2519         | -.0657          | .9218           |
| 2.0000 (female) | .5990         | .1904         | .2298           | .9831           |

*Table 5 - Indirect effect, response length via perceived caring on purchase intention of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2c*

Finally, the results of Table 6 of the index of moderated mediation show the lower and higher bound of the 95% confidence interval contains the value of zero, meaning there is no conditional indirect effect. Thus, there is no moderated mediation. Hence, hypothesis 2c is rejected.

| <i>Gender</i> | <i>Index</i> | <i>BootSE</i> | <i>BootLLCI</i> | <i>BootULCI</i> |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Gender        | .1666        | .3139         | -.4612          | .7798           |

*Table 6 - Index of moderated mediation of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2c*



### 4.2.3 Experiment 3 - The usage of emoji

The third experiment examined the effect of the usage of emoji on purchase intention.

H3a: The presence of emoji in the response of the brand to a consumer question will lead to a higher purchase intention.

After creating a dummy variable (1 = emoji, 0 = no emoji), linear regression was performed. Table 7 shows that the emoji variable has a positive coefficient of 0.280.

However, the p-value is 0.135, ceteris paribus, which is bigger than 0.05. This means that the main effect of the usage of emoji on purchase intention is not significant. Thus, hypothesis 3a cannot be supported.

| <i>Model: 1</i> | <i>Unstandardized Coefficients B</i> | <i>Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error</i> | <i>Standardized Coefficients Beta</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>Sig.</i> |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|----------|-------------|
| Constant        | 5.376                                | 0.133   |                                       | 40.433   | 0.000       |
| Emoji dummy     | 0.280                                | 0.187   | 0.109                                 | 1.500    | 0.135       |

Table 7 - Coefficients of Experiment 3, Hypothesis 3a

H3b: The gender will moderate the effect of usage of emojis on purchase intention. The effect of emoji on purchase intention will be stronger for females.

This experiment has also investigated whether gender has an impact on the effect between the usage of emoji and purchase intention in the cosmetic industry. Therefore, model 1 of Process Macro by Hayes (2013) was applied. This analysis has been carried out to test whether the effect might be there for females and not for males.

Table 8 shows that the interaction effect of gender with a coefficient of 0.6106 has a p-value of 0.0989 and the lower bound of the 95% confidence interval is -0.1158 and the upper bound is 1,3369. Those results clearly demonstrate that moderation is not significant in this case. Thus, hypothesis 3b is not supported. This means that there is no effect, either for females as for males.

|              | <i>Coeff</i> | <i>se</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>LLCI</i> | <i>ULCI</i> |
|--------------|--------------|-----------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| Constant     | 5.6781       | 0.4361    | 13.0209  | 0.0000   | 4.8177      | 6.5384      |
| Length dummy | -0.6195      | 0.5990    | -1.0343  | 0.3024   | -1.8012     | 0.5622      |
| Gender       | -0.1909      | 0.2633    | -0.7248  | 0.4695   | -0.7105     | 0.3287      |
| Interaction  | 0.6106       | 0.3682    | 1.6585   | 0.0989   | -0.1158     | 1.3369      |

*Table 8 - Statistical outcomes of moderation of Experiment 3, Hypothesis 3b*

After applying the variable animal testing caring or the variable the frequency of buying cosmetic products as covariance, the results for this hypothesis do not change (Appendix N and O). For both covariance variables, the whole model does not have any significant p-value, which means that hypothesis 3b cannot be supported.

#### 4.2.4 Overview of the hypotheses

A summary of the tested hypotheses for this study is presented below in table 9.

| #  | Hypotheses   | Supported or Rejected         |
|----|--|-------------------------------|
| 1a | A personalized response to a consumer question results in a higher purchase intention.   | <del>Supported/Rejected</del> |
| 1b | Perceived caring mediates the relationship between personalized response and purchase intention. Personalized response to a consumer question increases perceived caring, which then leads to a purchase intention.  | <del>Supported/Rejected</del> |
| 2a | A longer response to a consumer question will lead to a higher purchase intention.   | <del>Supported/Rejected</del> |
| 2b | Perceived caring mediates the relationship between response length and purchase intention. A longer length to a consumer question increases perceived caring and then perceived caring increases purchase intention. | <del>Supported/Rejected</del> |
| 2c | The mediated relationship between response length and purchase intention via perceived caring will be moderated by gender, in such a way that the effect will be stronger for females.                               | <del>Supported/Rejected</del> |
| 3a | The presence of emoji in the response of the brand to a consumer question will lead to a higher purchase intention.  | <del>Supported/Rejected</del> |
| 3b | The gender will moderate the effect of usage of emojis on purchase intention. The effect of emoji on purchase intention will be stronger for females.  | <del>Supported/Rejected</del> |

Table 9 - Summary of the research hypotheses

## 5 General discussion

The aim of this study was to clarify the effect of different online interaction strategies, such as response style, response length, and the usage of emoji on purchase intention in the cosmetic industry. In this chapter, the main question of this research will be answered. Furthermore, the theoretical and managerial implications will be presented. The chapter ends with an illustration of the limitations of this study and future recommendations.

### 5.1 Summary and conclusions

The main goal of this study is to investigate the effect of the different online interaction strategies on purchase intention and to answer the following research question: *“What is the effect of different online interaction strategies with the customers on purchase intention for cosmetic products?”*. To answer the research question the sub-questions need to be answered first.

The first aspect that was investigated by this study was the online interaction strategy that is being used by the brands in the cosmetic industry in The Netherlands. The analysis of interviews conducted with Social Media Managers showed that cosmetic brands do not have strict guidelines regarding the interaction with the customers on Social Media. Overall, the communication of the brands with the customers is based on a gut feeling and on the brand's values such as being accessible to every, being personal, and being positive. Regarding the usage of the tone of voice, the brands use the same approach, the communication is based on being personal. However, the brands adjust their tone of voice to the tone of voice of the customer. “We” or “I” is the most used person-form by the cosmetic brands, however, this is based on gut feeling. Moving to the length of the reply, it varies per customer question. If it requires more information, the brand provides a longer answer. However, the brands share the same mindset and keep the answer short on Social Media, but if the customer needs more information, the brands usually provide longer replies through private messages. The third element that is being used in the interactions by the brands is emoji. The brands do not have a specific policy regarding the frequency of using emojis per reply, it happens intuitively. Furthermore, the usage of the emoji is always adjusted to the customer. Thus, if the customer does use emoji in his question, the brand's reply will also consist of an emoji.

Additionally, emojis are used for expressing emotions or convey a certain feeling that a word cannot express, for example, softness or a certain smell. Emoji is used as well to make the reply warmer and less serious.

This study investigated the influence of the different online interaction strategies such as tone of voice, the response length, and the usage of emoji on purchase intention. Out of the three elements of the online interaction strategy, personalization is seen as the most important element. For the company, it is the most beneficial when they are being personal and helpful to the customer. It delivers the most value, in terms of customer relationship and sales.

Based on previous literature, it was expected, that personalized response has a positive significant effect on the purchase intention of face cream. This investigation supports the literature (Noar, Benac, & Harris, 2007) and the result of this study shows that using a personalized response results in a higher purchase intention (H1a). As predicted when a brand is being personal in the interaction with the customer, the customer gets a feeling that the brand cares about him. The findings of this study indicate that perceived caring fully mediates the relationship between personalized response and purchase intention (H1b).

The second element of this study that was examined, is the response length. In the survey, two types of responses were examined, one short and one long response. Both responses contained the same amount of information but using different words. This examination shows a positive significant effect of a longer response to a consumer question on purchase intention (H2a). Moreover, perceived caring mediates the relationship between response length and purchase intention. A longer length to a consumer question increases perceived caring and then perceived caring increases purchase intention (H2b). Based on this outcome and the theory (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010) there can be a deduction made that when the consumer perceives a review as helpful, this increases the perceived caring, which led to a higher purchase intention.

Moreover, it was expected that the mediated relationship between response length and purchase intention via perceived caring will be moderated by gender, in such a way that the effect will be stronger for females (H2c).

In contrast to the existing literature (Garbarino & Strahilevitz, 2004), there was not enough statistical evidence to find support for this hypothesis. Perhaps with a larger sample size, the moderation mediation would be significant.

The last element of the online interaction strategy that was investigated is the usage of emoji. It was expected that the emoji would lead to a higher purchase intention (H3a). Yet, the investigation revealed no influence of the emoji on the purchase intention. Furthermore, it was expected that gender would moderate the effect of usage of emojis on purchase intention (H3b). However, the findings of this study do not go in line with the literature. This means that there is no effect of emoji on purchase intention for females and males.

Summarizing, personalized tone of voice and a long length of brand's response to a customer question have a positive significant direct effect on purchase intention. The presence of the emoji does not have any effect on purchase intention. Furthermore, there is a mediation seen, where perceived caring mediates the relationship between personalized response and purchase intention. Personalized response to consumer questions increases perceived caring, which then leads to a purchase intention. Another mediation is seen at the length variable, where perceived caring mediates the relationship between response length and purchase intention. A longer response increases perceived caring, which then leads to a purchase intention.

## 5.2 Theoretical and managerial implications

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the existing literature in three ways.

First of all, this study tries to fulfill the relatively big gap in the literature in the context of Social Media Network Channels. No research has previously explored the effect of different interaction strategies (tone of voice, response length, and emoji) in the Social Media context. This makes the findings of this study unique. The focus of the previous studies lied on different areas such as the effect of online reviews or the effect of Manager' responses on online reviews. In contrast to other studies, this study provides findings of the effect of different online interaction strategies on Social Media Networks and it enhances insights about how to interact with the customers on Social Media and highlights the effect of the different interaction strategies, such as personalization (tone of voice), response length, and the usage of emoji.

Secondly, especially the findings regarding the length of the brand's response richly contributes to the existing literature. Previous research examined the length of reviews, where a short answer stood for a little amount of information and a longer answer stood for a rich amount of information.

This experiment of this study is not only about actual informativeness of the responses, the quantity of information that is given, but about perceived informativeness and, consequently, caring, just because of a higher number of words used, while the information given is kept constant. This study shows, indeed, that even keeping the information constant, purchase intention increases by merely having a longer response.

Lastly, the current theory does not provide any background information about the different online interaction strategies used in the cosmetic industry. This study contributes to the theory and provides findings of the different online interaction approaches that are being used by cosmetic brands in The Netherlands. Those approaches can be used as an inspiration and an eye-opener for other brands.

Moving to the managerial implications, the outcomes of this study provide a framework that can be incorporated into the customer interaction strategies on Social Media to communicate more effectively with their target audience.

First of all, the findings emphasized the importance of knowingly implementing an online interaction strategy. It is important that the Social Media Managers and Customer Service Managers are aware of the usage of the different online interaction elements and the effect on the relationship with the customer and the purchase intention. Especially in times when the world is facing a Covid-19 pandemic, loyalty and customer relationship plays even a bigger role than ever before. The outcomes of this study can be seen for many brands that do not have a properly settled online interaction strategy as a wake-up call. As a brand, you need to be aware of your actions and communication towards the target group. Working from a gut feeling might lead to less effective results, than implementing an attentive and conscious online interaction strategy. Especially with direct communication, as a brand you need to be very aware of your communication with the customer.

Nowadays, besides the influence of the corona pandemic, the competition level is very high, therefore it is highly recommended to invest time to develop a successful online interaction strategy that will exceed the customers' expectations.

Secondly, this study provides Social Media Managers guidelines for a better understanding of the customer interactions that are taking place on Social Media. Elements such as personalization and the length of the response have a significant impact on the purchase intention. Based on the current trends, it is clear that customers are expecting more personalized interactions with the brands.

Thus, it is advised to implement personalization in the online interactions with the customers. The level of personalized responses needs to match the brand identity.

In line with Noar, Benac, and Harris (2007), being personal and customizing the communication with the customers makes the interactions more memorable and more persuasive. Additionally, the customers pay more attention to a personalized message. The personalized message is seen as more meaningful and relevant in the eyes of the customers.

Furthermore, this study advises the cosmetic brands to implement longer responses than short responses in the interactions with the customers. Female and male customers prefer getting longer responses from the brands. A longer response creates a higher perceived caring and gives the customers a feeling that the brand cares about them. This finding is particularly relevant to know for Social Media and Customer Relationship Managers, given that in the in-depth interviews the Managers did not share the belief that the length of the response is important for the customers. This study has shown that a longer response length (while the information level is kept constant) does increase purchase intention. By all means, the length of the response needs to be adequate to the type of question that is being asked. Overall, it is important to help the customer as well as possible, by providing a proper amount of information that is needed to make the right purchase decision.

Although the outcomes of the quantitative research do not support the hypotheses about the presence of an emoji, it is still advised to make use of emoji in the interaction with the customers.



If the emoji fits the brand identity and brand personality, the brand can make regular use of emojis in the responses.

However, not every response needs to contain an emoji. Based on the findings of qualitative research, emojis help with expressing emotions and make the response warmer and less serious. Especially in written communication, emojis can give the response certain energy that can be difficult to express in words. Moreover, emojis are useful to use if the tone of voice of the response is not completely clear. In case of doubt, the brand can adjust the usage of the emoji to the customers. If the customer uses emojis, the brand's response can also include emojis.

The customer of the 21st century is critical and wants to be helped in the best possible way (Janet Balis, 2021). Thus, it is crucial to utilize an online interaction strategy. Consequently, helping the customers by sharing useful product information and becoming human as a brand, by being personal, and by creating an emotional bond with the customer seems to be a promising future for the brands.

### 5.3 Limitations and future research recommendations

Although this study revealed some interesting new findings of the effect of different online interaction strategies, there are several limitations that can be addressed in future studies.

The first limitation is the aspect of the setting of the online experiments. The setting of the online experiments was more a Social Media simulation. The pictures that were used in the survey resemble screenshots of some comments of some fictional brands on a Social Media channel. Based on those screenshots, the respondents needed to apply their imagination to answer the survey questions. This experimental setting might need to be improved in the future. There might be other elements that can influence the purchase intention of the customers, that are not analyzed and tested during this study. For the future, it might be interesting to test the different online interactions on a Social Media channel, while the respondent is being active on the Social Media network. Moreover, it would be interesting to explore this while using eye-tracking, this could provide some very intriguing insights. By that, it would get even more clear which aspects of the online response the respondents are focusing on while interacting with the brands. This might bring this investigation to a higher level.

The second limitation is the language that was used in the survey, namely English. This aspect could be seen as a limitation because the target group of this study was Dutch women and men. Despite the fact that English is seen as the second language in The Netherlands, and thus the majority of Dutch people master the English language perfectly, answering the survey in English and not in the mother language might lead to some unpleasantness. This could have some impact on the quality of the results of this study.

The third limitation is the sample size. There might not be big enough statistical evidence to prove that the mediated relationship between response length and purchase intention via perceived caring is moderated by gender (H2c), in such a way that the effect will be stronger for females. Additionally, the effect size might be small, thus it needs more statistical power to uncover this effect. Further, in the future, it might be interesting to investigate the effect of the different online interaction strategies with another product category. It might provide intriguing insights.

Lastly, this study could not find any effect of emoji on purchase intention. Perhaps the not right emojis have been chosen for this test. In the future, it is recommended to do a deep pre-research to find the proper type of emoji that can be used in future research.

Although this study provides valuable insights into the effect of the different interaction strategies on purchase intention in the cosmetic industry, there are more opportunities for future research.

## References

- Amber Katz. (2019, November 11). *So, What's The Difference Between Men's And Women's Skincare?* Retrieved from Aedit: <https://aedit.com/aedition/difference-between-mens-womens-skincare-products>
- Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R., & Stephen, A. T. (2019). The future of social media in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*.
- Aral, S., Brynjolfsson, E., & Van Alstyne, M. W. (2010, November 17). *Harnessing the Digital Lens to Measure and Manage Information Work*. Retrieved from Papers.ssrn: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1709943](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1709943)
- Assaad, W., Gómez, J. M., & Von Ossietzky, C. (2011). Social Network in marketing (Social Media Marketing) Opportunities and Risks. *International Journal of Managing Public Sector Information and Communication Technologies*.
- Bae, S., & Lee, T. (2010). Gender differences in consumers' perception of online consumer reviews. *Electronic Commerce Research*.
- Barreda, A. A., Nusair, K., Wang, Y., Okumus, F., & Bilgihan, A. (2020). The impact of social media activities on brand image and emotional attachment: A case in the travel context. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*.
- BBC. (2015, May 19). *UK's fastest growing language is emoji*. Retrieved from BBC: <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-32793732>
- BİLGİN, Y. (2018). The effect of Social Media Marketing activities on brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty. *Business & Management Studies: An International Journal*.
- CBS. (2020). *Wie gebruikt het vaakst sociale media?* Retrieved from Longreads.cbs.nl: <https://longreads.cbs.nl/nederland-in-cijfers-2020/wie-gebruikt-het-vaakst-sociale-media/>
- Das, G., Wiener, H. J., & Kareklas, I. (2019). To emoji or not to emoji? Examining the influence of emoji on consumer reactions to advertising. *Journal of Business Research*, 147-156.

- Dijkstra, A. (2008, March). The Psychology of Tailoring-Ingredients in Computer-Tailored Persuasion. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*.
- Eucerin. (2021, January). *Understanding skin – How does male and female skin differ?* Retrieved from Eucerin: <https://int.eucerin.com/about-skin/basic-skin-knowledge/male-and-female-skin>
- Fausser, S. G., Wiedenhofer, J., & Lorenz, M. (2011, January). "Touchpoint social web": An explorative study about using the social web for influencing high involvement purchase decisions. Retrieved from Researchgate.net: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289210396\\_Touchpoint\\_social\\_web\\_An\\_explorative\\_study\\_about\\_using\\_the\\_social\\_web\\_for\\_influencing\\_high\\_involvement\\_purchase\\_decisions](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289210396_Touchpoint_social_web_An_explorative_study_about_using_the_social_web_for_influencing_high_involvement_purchase_decisions)
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics*. Sage Publications Ltd.
- Fullwood, C., Orchard, L. J., & Floyd, S. A. (2013). Emoticon Convergence in Internet Chat Rooms. *Social Semiotics*.
- Garbarino, E., & Strahilevitz, M. (2004). Gender differences in the perceived risk of buying online and the effects of receiving a site recommendation. *Journal of Business Research*.
- Gautam, V., & Sharma, V. (2017). The Mediating Role of Customer Relationship on the Social Media Marketing and Purchase Intention Relationship with Special Reference to Luxury Fashion Brands. *Journal of Promotion Management*.
- Hayes, A. F. (2013). Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis.
- Hennig-Thurau, T., Hofacker, C. F., & Bloching, B. (2013). Marketing the Pinball Way: Understanding How Social Media Change the Generation of Value for Consumers and Companies. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*.
- Huang, A. H., Yen, D. C., & Zhang, X. (2008). Exploring the potential effects of emoticons. *Information & Management Journal*.

- Hudson, S., Roth, M. S., & Huang, L. (2015, July). The influence of social media interactions on consumer–brand relationships: A three-country study of brand perceptions and marketing behaviors. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*.
- Instapage. (2019, October 1). *Customization vs. Personalization: What is the Difference?*  
Retrieved from Instapage: <https://instapage.com/blog/customized-vs-personalized>
- Jaeger, S. R., Vidal, L., Kam, K., & Ares, G. (2018). Can emoji be used as a direct method to measure emotional associations to food names? 391-410.
- Jing, G., & Gretzel, U. (2018, October). Emoji rhetoric: a social media influencer perspective. *Journal of Marketing Management*.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*.
- Katz, R. (2002, January 1). Web portals and higher education: Technologies to make IT personal.
- Kemp, D. S., & Palan, K. M. (2006). The effects of gender and argument strength on the processing of word-of-mouth communication. *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*.
- Leung, C. H., & Chan, W. T. (2017). Using emoji effectively in marketing: An empirical study. *Journal of Digital & Social Media Marketing*, 76-95.
- Li, X., Wa Chan, K., & Kim, S. (2019). Service with emoticons: How customers interpret employee use of emoticons in online service encounters. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 973–987.
- Liang, T.-P., Chen, H.-Y., Du, T., Turban, E., & Li, Y. (2012). Effect of personalization on the perceived usefulness of online customer services: a dual-core theory. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*.
- Liu, W.-Y., Lin, C.-C., Lee, Y. S., & Deng, D.-J. (2013). On gender differences in consumer behavior for online financial transaction of cosmetics. *Mathematical and Computer Modelling*.
- Malone, C., & Fiske, S. T. (2013). *The Human Brand: How We Relate to People, Products, and Companies*.

- Mangolda, G. W., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons*.
- Mathews, S., & Lee, S.-E. (2018). Use of Emoji as a Marketing Tool.: *Fashion, industry and education*, 46-55.
- McKinsey & Company. (2020, April 15). *Connecting with customers in times of crisis*. Retrieved from McKinsey & Company: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/connecting-with-customers-in-times-of-crisis>
- McKinsey & Company. (2020, June 30). *Dutch consumer sentiment during the coronavirus crisis*. Retrieved from McKinsey & Company: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/survey-dutch-consumer-sentiment-during-the-coronavirus-crisis>
- Mudambi, S. M., & Schuff, D. (2010, March). *What makes a helpful review? A study of customer reviews on Amazon.com*. Retrieved from JSTOR: [https://www.jstor.org/stable/20721420?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/20721420?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)
- NewCom. (2019, January 26). *Nationale Social Media Onderzoek 2019* . Retrieved from NewCom Research & Consultancy.
- NewCom Research and Consultancy. (2020, January 25). *Nationale Social Media Onderzoek 2020*. The Netherlands.
- Nikki Canning. (2020, November 11). *Social Shopping: How Instagram is Changing the Way We Shop*. Retrieved from Later: <https://later.com/blog/how-instagram-changing-shopping/>
- Noar, S. M., Benac, Christina , C. N., & Harris. (2007). Does tailoring matter? Meta-analytic review of tailored print health behavior change interventions. *Psychological Bulletin*, 673–693.
- Pan, Y., & Zhang, J. Q. (2011, April). Born Unequal: A Study of the Helpfulness of User-Generated ProductReviews. *Journal of Retailing*.
- Parsons, A. L., & Lepkowska-White, E. (2018). Social Media Marketing Management: A Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Internet Commerce*.

- Pharm, M., de Rigal, J., Rochefort, A., Vasselet, R., Leveque, J.-L., & Agache, P. G. (1989). Age-Related Mechanical Properties of Human Skin: An In Vivo Study. *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*.
- Photoslurp & Zinklar. (2019). 2019 eCommerce Cosmetics trends: How European women purchase cosmetics online.
- Pollach, I. (2005). Corporate self-presentation on the WWW: Strategies for enhancing usability, credibility and utility. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*.
- Preacher, K. J., Rucker, D. D., & Hayes, A. F. (2007). Addressing Moderated Mediation Hypotheses: Theory, Methods, and Prescriptions. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*.
- Rahrovan, S., Fanian, F., Mehryan, P., Humbert, P., & Firooz, A. (2018). Male versus female skin: What dermatologists and cosmeticians should know. *International Journal of Women's Dermatology*.
- Salehana, M., & Kim, D. J. (2014, November 13). *Predicting the performance of online consumer reviews: A sentiment mining approach to big data analytics*. Retrieved from Science Direct:  
[https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167923615002006?casa\\_token=o6HougU\\_PvOAAAAA:MDqhHbciBZPUChfCpbjDWglXh2RQ-ICZmSkuiuyI04tJHHXGJWYw5Q80FVhicUZTqdzX2YS2zQ](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167923615002006?casa_token=o6HougU_PvOAAAAA:MDqhHbciBZPUChfCpbjDWglXh2RQ-ICZmSkuiuyI04tJHHXGJWYw5Q80FVhicUZTqdzX2YS2zQ)
- Stark, L., & Crawford, K. (2015, October 8). *The Conservatism of Emoji: Work, Affect, and Communication*. Retrieved from SAGE Journals:  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2056305115604853>
- The Dutch Cosmetics Association. (2019). NCV Annual report 2019. The Netherlands.
- The Emoji Report*. (2021, January 11). Retrieved from Brandwatch:  
<https://www.brandwatch.com/reports/the-emoji-report/view/>

- The influence of college students' shopping orientations and gender differences on online information searches and purchase behaviours. (2008). *International journal of consumer studies*.
- Tossell, C. C., Kortum, P., Shepard, C., Barg-Walkow, L. H., Rahmati, A., & Zhong, L. (2012, March). A longitudinal study of emoticon use in text messaging from smartphones. *Computers in Human Behavior*.
- Trusov, M., Bucklin, R. E., & Pauwels, K. (2009). Effects of Word-of-Mouth versus Traditional Marketing: Findings from an Internet Social Networking Site. *Journal of Marketing*.
- Wang, Y., & Chaudhry, A. (2018). When and How Managers' Responses to Online Reviews Affect Subsequent Reviews. *Journal of Marketing Research*.
- Yuki, T. (2015). What Makes Brands' Social Content Shareable on Facebook? *Journal of Advertising Research*.



## Appendix A – In-depth interview concept

*Location: Online (Zoom)*

*Expected duration: 30-45 minutes*

1. Asking for permission for digital sound recording.
2. Explaining the purpose of the interview, including research scope.
3. Short company introduction.
4. The first part of the interview - questions regarding the online interactions strategy.
  - A. Do you have at all a strategy on how you as a brand interact (written) with your target group? Or is it more based on gut feeling?
    - Fixed guidelines
    - Certain characteristics that can or cannot be used and work
  - B. When answering a customer question, is the gender of the user taken into account? Is there a difference in answering the question?
  - C. Was your Social Media interaction strategy the same before Covid?
    - Influence of Covid on the interactions with your customers
5. The second part of the interview – 4 statements:
  - Statement 1: A personalized response to a consumer question is better perceived by a consumer than a generic/non-personalized response.
  - Statement 2: A long response to a consumer question is seen as more helpful to the customer.
  - Statement 3: The presence of emoji in the response of the brand to a consumer question is better perceived by a consumer than a response without an emoji.
  - Statement 4: The presence of emoji in the response of the brand to a consumer question makes the answer even more personalized.

## **Appendix B – Summaries of the in-depth interviews with the cosmetics companies**

### **Interview summary with company number 1**

The interview was conducted with a middle small company that is active in the cosmetic branch in the Netherlands. The company is regularly active on Social Media channels, such as Instagram (14 thousand followers) and Facebook (6 thousand followers). The interview was held with the owner of this brand, who is also responsible for the written Social Media interactions with the customers.

This company does not follow a clear and precise online interaction strategy. The written interactions with their customers are based on gut feeling. The company was surprised that there can be a strategy how to interact with customers by replying to their questions under the Social Media posts. However, after digging deeper into their strategy, the company concluded that the online interactions, think about answering the comments and questions of the customers, is based on their key values, such as: accessible, convenient, and durable. Further, the company does not have fixed guidelines on how an employee should respond to a question from a customer, but it needs to be personal, and it is important to adjust the tone of voice and usage of emoji to the customers' tone of voice. If the customer is personal and uses emoji in her question, the company reacts the same way. For personalizing the reply, the company always tags the user and depending on the user's tone of voice, the company uses emoji. There are certain types of emojis that are being used by the company that represent sustainability, such as green heart, plants, tree or a palm tree. The user is tagged in the reply at the end of the message, the reason behind this is that the company thinks that if you tag someone at the end of the message, that this message will be seen not only by the tagged user but also by the rest of the followers. While answering the customer questions, the gender of the user is not taken into account, whether the questions come from a female or male user, the company tries to keep their answers unisex and accessible for everyone. Regarding the Social Media interaction strategy before and during Covid-19, there is no difference seen. The frequency of answering and engaging with the customers stays the same. The company tries to reply to every question they get and to make their reply as personal as possible. By making the reply personal the company wants to show that they care about their followers.

During the interview, there were four statements presented, on which the company should say if they agree or disagree with the statement. Overall, the company agreed with each statement. The company thinks that a personalized response to a consumer question is better perceived by a consumer than a generic/non-personalized response. By personalizing the reply, the customer will feel special and have the feeling that the company cares about him. The company also agrees that a long response to a consumer question is seen as more helpful to the customer. A long reply can contain more information, which makes the reply helpful. The company also engage with their followers on DM (private messages on Instagram and Facebook) and if they see that the customer needs a comprehensive answer, they will provide more information to the customer. Going to the third statement, the company partly agrees with it. They do agree that the presence of emoji in the response of the brand to a consumer question can better be perceived by a consumer than a response without an emoji, but if the customer question is more serious, an emoji can harm. Emojis are used by the company mostly to express happiness, fun, or being thankful for a compliment that they have got from the customer. Like mentioned before, the company adjusts their usage of emoji depending on the tone of voice of the user. But in the end, the message is the most important. The reply must be strong enough without having to use an emoji. The company thinks that most people are not so sensitive towards emojis, however, young people might be more enthusiastic about emoji than older people. The company does agree that the presence of emoji in the response of the brand to a consumer question makes the answer even more personalized (statement 4). The company said that the emoji makes the message less serious, and it makes the reply fun (gezellig).

### **Interview summary with company number 2**

The interview was conducted with a Social Media Manager that works at a cosmetic brand. The brand is active on Instagram (29 thousand followers) and on Facebook (41 thousand followers).

This company does not have strict guidelines on how they respond to customer questions on Social Media. The brand wants to help every customer, so they respond to each customer's question. This behavior is also advantageous for the Instagram algorithm. By interacting with the customers online, the company wants to be seen as open, welcoming, and accessible to everyone.

Under the social media posts, the brand replies cheerful and uses emojis. However, in the private messages the company behaves differently, the tone of voice is more formal and the emojis are not so often used. The brand does not use a specific response length, it depends asked on the question. The company has an internal FAQ, and this information is sometimes being copied and rewritten. Further, in their replies the company uses emojis, but it is based on gut feeling, the most used emoji is a smiling face with two hands. The online interactions are mostly held with female users. However, if the company would get a question from a male user, the brand response would be universal. Regarding Covid-19, the coronavirus hasn't had any impact on the brand's interaction strategy. However, there is a huge increase in customer questions seen.

Regarding the statements, the company totally agrees that a personalized response to a consumer question is better perceived by a consumer than a generic response. From their own experience, when the company copied a text from their website or from the internal FAQ, the message does not come across well. The customer can get a feeling that she is not being heard and appreciated by the company. Moving to the second statement. A longer message does not always lead to high perceived helpfulness. It depends on the type of asked question. If it requires details and a lot of information from the brand, a longer message is always better and more helpful for the customer. The company noticed when they have got serious questions and the company answered shortly, the customers were asking more questions to get enough information they actually need. Thus, it is better to give the customer a longer response.

Looking at the usage of emoji, the brand agrees that the presence of emoji in the response to a consumer question is better perceived by a consumer than a response without an emoji. Social Media Managers use emojis unconsciously. The customers get happy from emojis. The brand also agrees that the presence of emoji in the response to a consumer response makes the answer even more personalized, except when it comes to a serious question. The brand responds to certain events with emojis to make the message even more personalized. The brand has also noticed that emoji are in general used by friends, thus the thought of using an emoji in a reply, makes the reply automatically personal.

### Interview summary with company number 3

The interview was conducted with a middle small company that is active in the cosmetic branch in the Netherlands. The owner who is in charge of replying the questions and comments on Social Media was interviewed. This company is active on Social Media channels, especially on Instagram (5 thousand followers). The interaction with the customers is on this channel the biggest.

This company does not have an elaborated online interaction strategy. The interaction with the customers is based on gut feeling, however, the gut feeling is based on a few values, such as positivity, honesty, confirmative, and interactivity. The underlying idea is to be able to help someone as best as possible. There are certain elements that are used by the company, but not every element is used knowingly. For example, emojis are not completely consciously used by the company. The company does research on which emojis are the most popular under the target group and uses these emojis in their reply. There are three types of emojis that are used the most by the company, such as heart, green plant and, a smiling face with smiling eyes. Further, the company wants to be as personal as possible, that's why the company always replies in the first person. Sometimes the name of the owner/replier is used in the answer like "Love, *the name of the owner*". By that, the company wants to show that they really care about their consumers. Moreover, the company finds it important to be spontaneous in their interactions with their customers, that's why they never use standard or template text. The replies are custom-made.

Further, the company does not attract any males, so they do not have another strategy how to replay to male customers. However, the company said that they would not use emojis in a reply to a male. The owner said that through Covid-19 they get much more questions from the consumers. Most of the time the customers get a customized answer, but the company would like to save some time by automizing some of the answers or by outsourcing it. But with skincare, it is quite difficult to automize the answer, because the skin is very personal and each time the questions are a bit different. The company hasn't changed their strategy due to Covid-19, but it is noticeable that the interaction intensity has increased over the time.

Regarding the statements, this company agrees that a personalized response to a consumer question is better perceived by a consumer than a generic/non-personalized response.

Personalized answers are particularly important in the digital world because through the personalized message you make the company more human. As a company, you show that you care about the customer. The company generated a lot of conversions through personalized advice. In addition, skin is something very private, so the customer also expects personalized advice. The company also agrees that a longer response to a consumer question is seen as more helpful. According to the company, a longer message gives a complete answer, it must be as easy as possible for the consumer to obtain information. Through words (information) you can offer some value to the customer. Regarding the third statement, the company had some mixed feelings. From their experience, they have seen that emoji used in the post-caption do have a huge effect on consumers. Emojis attract attention and the post can be easily read. But the company hasn't noticed any effect when they use emoji in comments. According to the company, emojis are used to convey a certain feeling that a word cannot express, for example, softness or modesty. Further, while replying to a male question, the company would not make any use of a heart emoji. The presence of emoji in the response of the brand to a consumer question makes the answer somehow personalized. The brand looks first if the consumer has used an emoji and if so, the brand used the same emoji back in their reply, to show that the brand and the consumer are on one line.

#### **Interview summary with company number 4**

The interview was conducted with a middle small company that is active in the cosmetic branch in the Netherlands. The brand interacts with the customer mostly on Instagram. There is also a Facebook group created by the company to get an even better connection with the customers. In this group, customers can feel free to ask questions and help each other.

There are two pillars that the company focuses on. The first pillar is being as friendly, personal, and open as possible. The tone of voice that is used, depending on the age of the customer, is either an older sister that is giving advice or just like a friend. Moreover, it depends on the tone of voice that the customer is using. Usually, the brand can easily predict the age of the customer.

Older customers write differently to the company than younger customers, and they use phrases like: "Dear X, here is my concern... Kind regards, Y".

If the user is older, then the brand does not use hip and new phrases like “LOL” or slang language that the older user might not understand. The customer experiences the products mostly online. Thus, for the company, it is very important to have a good relationship with the customers and answer the questions as directly as possible.

The second pillar of their online interaction strategy is political correctness. The company wants to be very open to the customer’s identity and does not use personal pronouns. The company wants to be inclusive as possible, this is seen through the graphics, content but also the way how the company talks with its audience. In the responses to the customers, the company uses emojis to soften the message and make it warmer. There are a few emojis that are regularly such as water drop, plant, and a smiling face. From the brand’s, the company has noticed that the older users are most of the time using more emojis in their responses than younger customers. To the older type of customer, the brand still keeps their response up to one emoji. Further, in the replies to the customers, the company signs off with the mascot’s name. The brand’s replies are always addressed to the customer, that the customers do not feel that the answer is generic. The length of the reply depends on the type of question that is being asked, if the question requires detailed explanation, then the company provides longer answers. Sometimes the company only responds with an emoji, for example, a heart or a smiley. Covid-19 did not have any influence on the online interaction strategy of this brand. The brand gets much more questions from customers than before the coronavirus pandemic.

Regarding the statements, the brand completely agrees that personalized responses are better perceived by the customers than a generic answer. The brand does not want to come over like a robot. The brand does not agree that a longer response can be perceived as more helpful. If the customer is not looking for a long response, the brand will not give the customer a long answer. Regarding the usage of emoji, the brand agrees that a reply with an emoji is better perceived by the customer than a reply without an emoji. According to the Social Media Managers, a response with a smiley makes the message much warmer. However, the brand does not agree, that an emoji can make a response even more personalized. The tone of voice plays here a bigger role than an emoji.

## Interview summary with company number 5

The interview was conducted with a Social Media Managers that is working at a middle small cosmetic company in the Netherlands.

The interaction with the customers on Social Media is based on gut feeling. However, the gut feeling is based on values such as: gratitude, helpfulness and personal. In the customer-reply the company always used the name of the user. The company wants to show gratitude and engage with each customer's comment. The user is tagged at the beginning of the message. Moreover, to create a human touch the reply ends with a greeting and the name of the employee. The company makes conscious use of emojis. Brown and white heart emojis are the most used emoji by this brand and are a signature colors of the brand. Further, the brand wants to be associated with luxury, thus according to the brand, those emojis reflect their brand value. In addition, the heart stands for gratitude for the customers. Moreover, the emoji makes the message less boring and more esthetic. Regarding the tone of voice, adjust it to the customer. If the question is more serious, no emojis are used by the company. The company makes no difference in the usage of emojis between females and males. Looking at the influence of Covid-19, there is no adjustment made in the online interaction strategy.

The way how the brand responses to the customers is the same as before Covid-19. However, the intensity of customers questions has increased over the time.

Regarding the statements, the company agrees that a personalized response to a consumer question is better perceived by a consumer than a generic response. By making the message personal, the customer will feel special and appreciated. Looking at the effect of length on perceived helpfulness, the company does not entirely agree with the second statement. As a company, you want to help customers as best as possible, but if the question does not request a long answer, then the reply stays short. However, in general long messages can be indeed seen as more helpful because they contain more details. The length of the reply depends on the type of question that the company gets. Looking at the usage of the emoji in a reply, the Social Media Manager was not quite sure about the effectiveness of it.



However, if the customer used an emoji in her question and the company replied without an emoji, the customer can feel a little bit rejected. Thus, it is important to use the same tone of voice as the customer. The company says that the presence of emoji in the response of the brand to a consumer question does not make the reply even more personalized. The text plays a more important role here. Using the customer's name and giving personalized advice makes the response more personal.

### **Interview summary with company number 6**

The interview was conducted with a Social Media Manager that works at cosmetic brand. The brand is active on Instagram (14.5 thousand followers) and on Facebook (28 thousand followers).

The online interactions with the customers on Social Media are based on a semi-structured strategy. The company wants to interact with the customer as if the customers were their friends, thus the online interaction strategy is based on friendliness, positivity and personal-touch. The tone of voice is informal and spoken language. In their responses to the customer the company uses emojis. The company does not have specific rules regarding the usage of emojis in the responses. The number of emojis used per reaction varies, sometimes it is 1 sometimes 2 per reaction. It is not a conscious choice; it depends on the person who is replying to the question. The brand does not have a policy for that.

One of the most used emojis is a face with two hearts as eyes and “thank you” emoji. The brand sees emoji as a tool to spread more happiness and make the reaction more playful. The brand does not necessary adjust their communication to male users, however the brand would use less emojis in a reaction to a male user than to a female user.

The brand makes the responses also more personal by using the “we” or “I” form. The person-form differs, but there is no motivation behind this. It differs, depending on the context and who is answering the message. Moreover, the company never uses the name of the employee answering the message. The brand does not see the benefits in adding the name of the employee in public communication does not add much. Customers also do not write 'love, name' after their responses. Regarding the length of the responses – it various. However, the company take their time to answer the question.

Short answers or only emoji answers are not commonly seen on the Social Media channels of this brand. If the answer is not enough, the brand offers the customers to get in contact by sending a private message, or via email or even via the telephone. Regarding Covid-19, the online interaction strategy with the customers is unchanged. The brand communicates the same way as before.

Looking at the statements, the brand agrees that a personalized response to a consumer's question is perceived better by the consumer than a generic response. By making the answer personalized, the consumer feels the attention that the brand is trying to give to him.

The brand does not entirely agree that a longer response to a consumer's question is considered useful to the customer. Social Media itself gives a limited number of characteristics that can be used; thus this implies that as a brand the message needs to be kept short. The consumer likes to get short and to the point answers. In case that the situation requires a longer message, the company ask the customer to get in contact with them via a direct message on Social Media. Looking at the usage of emoji, the brand does agree that the presence of an emoji in the response to a consumer question is perceived better by a consumer than an answer without an emoji. The emoji helps with transmitting the emotions. The emoji enhances the message and makes the response also more personal.

## Appendix C – Survey introduction text

Dear respondent,

First of all, I would like to thank you for participating in this study. I am a master's student in Business and Economics, specialization Marketing at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, and currently, I am working on my thesis.

In my thesis I research different online interaction strategies with customers on Social Media. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes. Your participation in this research is voluntary and totally confidential. The survey data is collected for my thesis and the results will be processed completely anonymously. You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you have any questions or comments about my research, please contact me by sending an email [j.c.lakomska@gmail.com](mailto:j.c.lakomska@gmail.com). By clicking on "-->" you are implying that you have read the information in this form and voluntarily consent to take part in the research. Thank you again for taking your time for participating in this study! - Julia

Imagine the following scenario: The air is being more and more polluted. Our skin is being exposed to dangerous pollution and dryness. It is clear that our skin needs more protection. It is highly recommended for everyone to use a face cream daily.

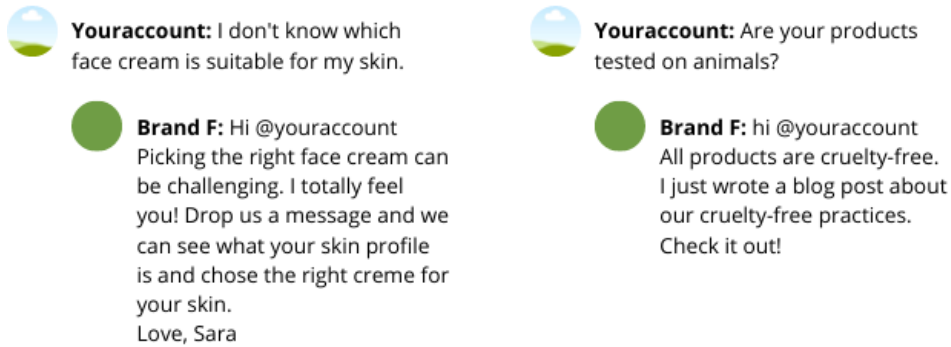
Due to these developments, you have decided to look for a suitable face cream. However, you are not quite sure about your purchase, and you have decided to ask a few questions about the face cream to some brands on Social Media. The brands have responded to you. On the next pages, you will see some pictures of the answers you have received from the brands. Please read all the information carefully and answers the questions on each page. Important: If you are using a phone for filling in this survey, please flip your phone horizontally. When you are ready click on the arrow-button to start the survey.

**IMPORTANT: Now please click on "-->" to complete the survey and save your responses.**

Thank you again for taking your time for participating in this study! If you have any questions or comments about my research, please contact me by sending an email [j.c.lakomska@gmail.com](mailto:j.c.lakomska@gmail.com)  
-Julia

## Appendix D – Overview of the versions per condition

Experiment 1, Condition: response style (personalized tone of voice vs standard tone of voice)



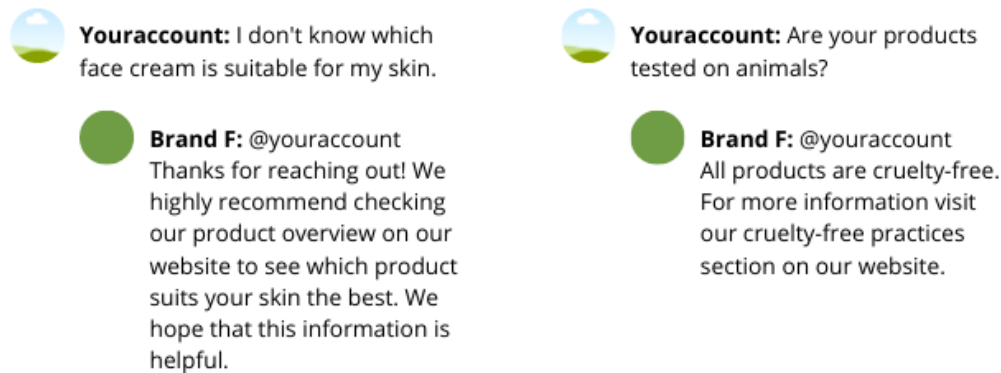
**Youraccount:** I don't know which face cream is suitable for my skin.

**Brand F:** Hi @youraccount Picking the right face cream can be challenging. I totally feel you! Drop us a message and we can see what your skin profile is and chose the right creme for your skin.  
Love, Sara

**Youraccount:** Are your products tested on animals?

**Brand F:** hi @youraccount All products are cruelty-free. I just wrote a blog post about our cruelty-free practices. Check it out!

Figure 8 - Experiment 1, personalized tone of voice



**Youraccount:** I don't know which face cream is suitable for my skin.

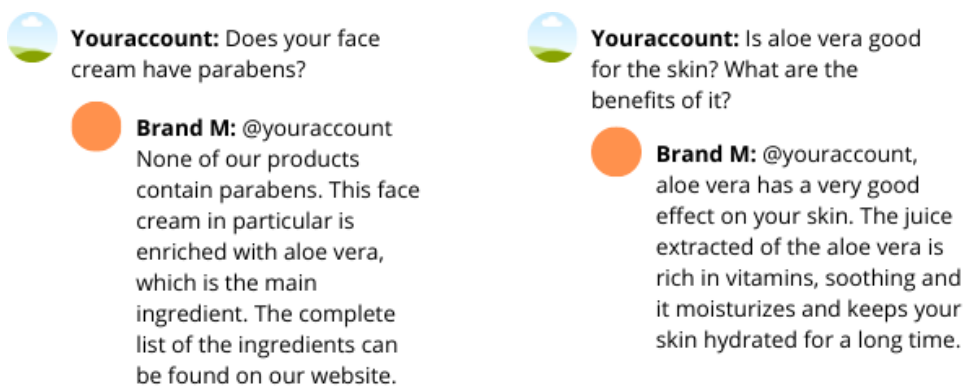
**Brand F:** @youraccount Thanks for reaching out! We highly recommend checking our product overview on our website to see which product suits your skin the best. We hope that this information is helpful.

**Youraccount:** Are your products tested on animals?

**Brand F:** @youraccount All products are cruelty-free. For more information visit our cruelty-free practices section on our website.

Figure 9 - Experiment 1, standard tone of voice

Experiment 2, Condition: the length of the response (longer response vs short response)




**Youraccount:** Does your face cream have parabens?


**Brand M:** @youraccount None of our products contain parabens. This face cream in particular is enriched with aloe vera, which is the main ingredient. The complete list of the ingredients can be found on our website.


**Youraccount:** Is aloe vera good for the skin? What are the benefits of it?

**Brand M:** @youraccount, aloe vera has a very good effect on your skin. The juice extracted of the aloe vera is rich in vitamins, soothing and it moisturizes and keeps your skin hydrated for a long time.

Figure 10 - Experiment 2, longer response

 **Youraccount:** Does your face cream have parabens?

 **Brand M:** @youraccount, None of our products contain parabens. The main ingredient is aloe vera. The list of the ingredients can be found on our website.

 **Youraccount:** Is aloe vera good for the skin? What are the benefits of it?





 **Brand M:** @youraccount, aloe vera is very good for your skin. It contains vitamins and keeps your skin hydrated the whole day.

Figure 11 - Experiment 2, short response

Experiment 3, Condition: the usage of emoji (emoji vs no emoji)

 **Youraccount:** Do you have a face cream with sun protection?

 **Brand P:** Yes, we have! With the sun protection 'Milky Face Cream' factor 30 or 50, you can enjoy the sun without any worries. 🌟

 **Youraccount:** How does the face cream smell?





 **Brand P:** This face creme has an orange and citrus scent, @youraccount! It gives you a fresh and 🍊 energized feeling. I hope you can experience it soon. Best wishes, Katie 💛

Figure 12 - Experiment 3, emoji

 **Youraccount:** Do you have a face cream with sun protection?

 **Brand P:** Yes, we have! With the sun protection 'Milky Face Cream' factor 30 or 50, you can enjoy the sun without any worries.

 **Youraccount:** How does the face cream smell?


 **Brand P:** This face creme has an orange and citrus scent, @youraccount! It gives you a fresh and energized feeling. I hope you can experience it soon. Best wishes, Katie

Figure 13 - Experiment 3, no emoji

## Appendix E – Survey questions

Imagine that you are looking for a face cream and you wrote a few questions to brand F on Social Media. Here are two answers that you have got from the brand.

\* Picture \*

1.

How likely would you be to purchase a face cream from this brand after seeing these responses?

- 2.
- |                       |                       |                       |                             |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Extremely unlikely    | Somewhat unlikely     | Slightly unlikely     | Neither likely nor unlikely | Slightly likely       | Somewhat likely       | Extremely likely      |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I feel that this brand cares about me."

- 3.
- |                       |                       |                       |                           |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree     | Disagree              | Somewhat disagree     | Neither agree or disagree | Somewhat agree        | Agree                 | Strongly agree        |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

What is your gender?

- 4.
- Male
  - Female
  - Non-binary / third gender
  - Prefer not to say

What is your age?

- 5.
- 

How frequently do you buy skin-care products?

- 6.
- |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Once or twice a year  | Every few months      | Once a month          | A few times a month   | Once a week           | A few times a week    |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

How much do you care about animal testing?

- |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Don't care at all     |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       | Care very much        |
| 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## Appendix F – Overview of the descriptive statistics

### What is your gender?

|       |                           | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Male                      | 89        | 45.6    | 45.6          | 45.6               |
|       | Female                    | 105       | 53.8    | 53.8          | 99.5               |
|       | Non-binary / third gender | 1         | .5      | .5            | 100.0              |
|       | Total                     | 195       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 10 - The descriptive statistics, gender

### Descriptive Statistics

|                    | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean  | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|---------|---------|-------|----------------|
| What is your age?  | 195 | 18      | 68      | 26.09 | 6.179          |
| Valid N (listwise) | 195 |         |         |       |                |

Table 11 - The descriptive statistics, age

### How frequently do you buy skin-care products?

|       |                      | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Once or twice a year | 70        | 37.0    | 37.0          | 37.0               |
|       | Every few months     | 72        | 38.1    | 38.1          | 75.1               |
|       | Once a month         | 30        | 15.9    | 15.9          | 91.0               |
|       | A few times a month  | 12        | 6.3     | 6.3           | 97.4               |
|       | A few times a week   | 5         | 2.6     | 2.6           | 100.0              |
|       | Total                | 189       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

### How much do you care about animal testing?

|       |                        | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Don't care at all<br>1 | 9         | 4.8     | 4.8           | 4.8                |
|       | 2                      | 16        | 8.5     | 8.5           | 13.2               |
|       | 3                      | 21        | 11.1    | 11.1          | 24.3               |
|       | 4                      | 28        | 14.8    | 14.8          | 39.2               |
|       | 5                      | 34        | 18.0    | 18.0          | 57.1               |
|       | 6                      | 33        | 17.5    | 17.5          | 74.6               |
|       | Care very much<br>7    | 48        | 25.4    | 25.4          | 100.0              |
|       | Total                  | 189       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 12 - Control variables

Appendix G – SPSS Output of Assumptions of Linear Regression, Factor 1: Personalization

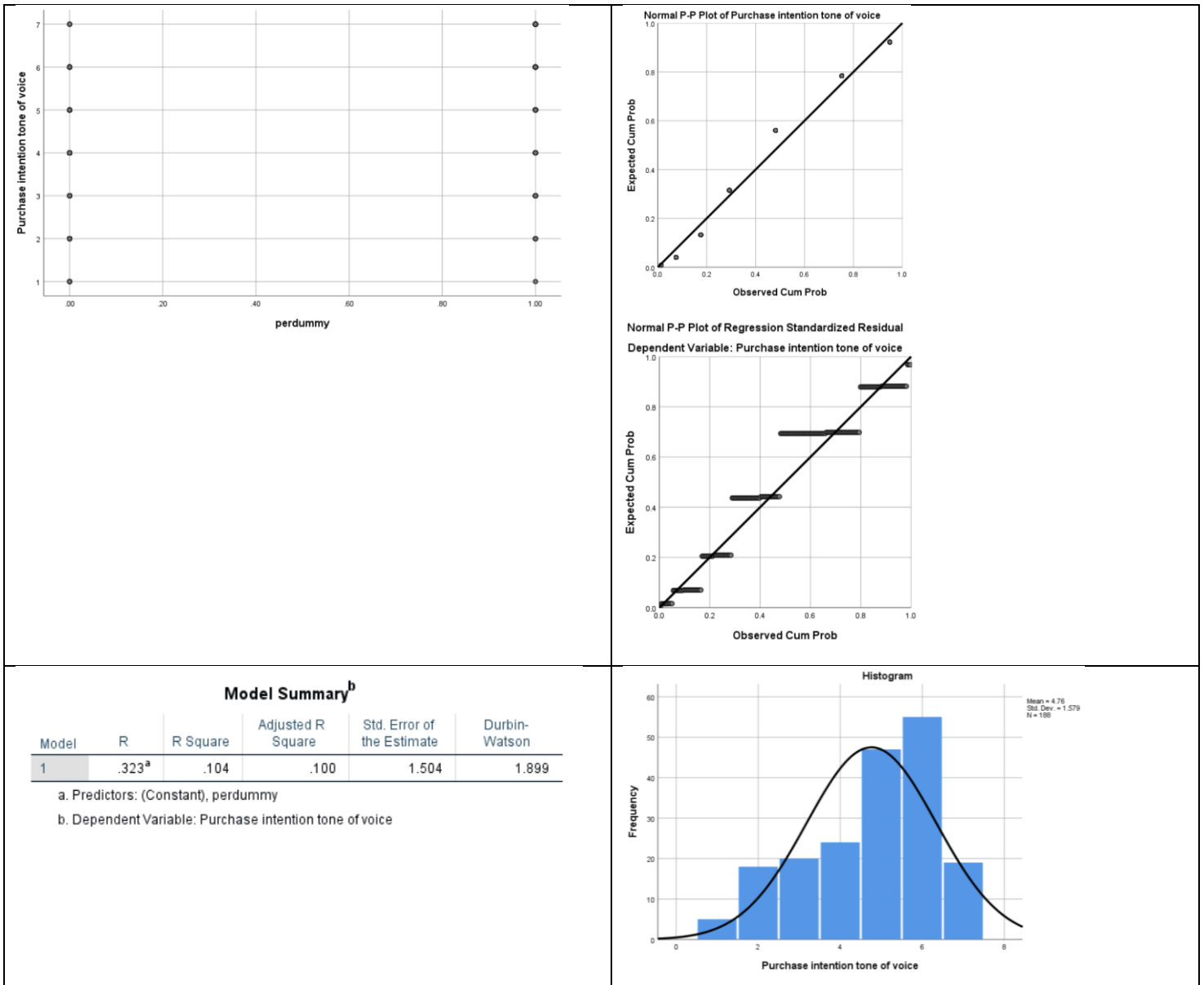


Table 13 - Assumptions of Linear Regression, Personalization

Explanation: Because the personalization variable is a dummy variable, from the scatterplot, it is difficult to say if the residuals are equally distributed (linearity checked). The p-plot shows that the residuals are normally distributed (normality check). Durbin-Watson is 1.899, which is close to 2, which indicates that the residuals are uncorrelated. The histogram shows that the data lies between 4 and 6, it seems that the data is normally distributed.



## Appendix G – SPSS Output of Assumptions of Linear Regression, Factor 2: Response length

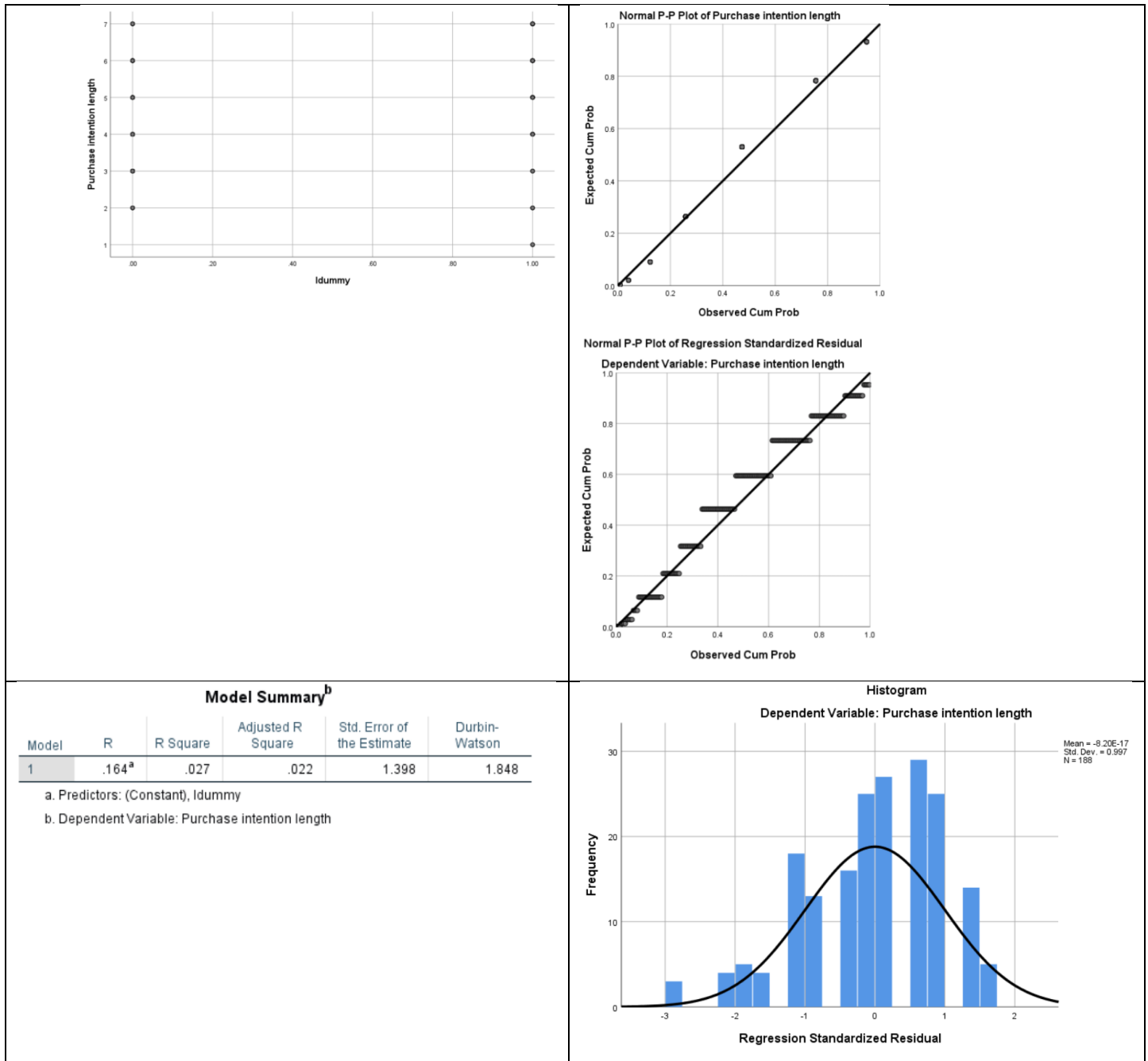


Table 14 - Assumptions of Linear Regression, Response length

Explanation: Because the response length variable is a dummy variable, from the scatterplot, it is difficult to say if the residuals are equally distributed. The p-plot shows that the residuals are normally distributed. Durbin-Watson is 1.848 which is close to 2, which indicates that the residuals are uncorrelated. The histogram shows that the data is normally distributed.

Appendix G – SPSS Output of Assumptions of Linear Regression, Factor 3: Emoji

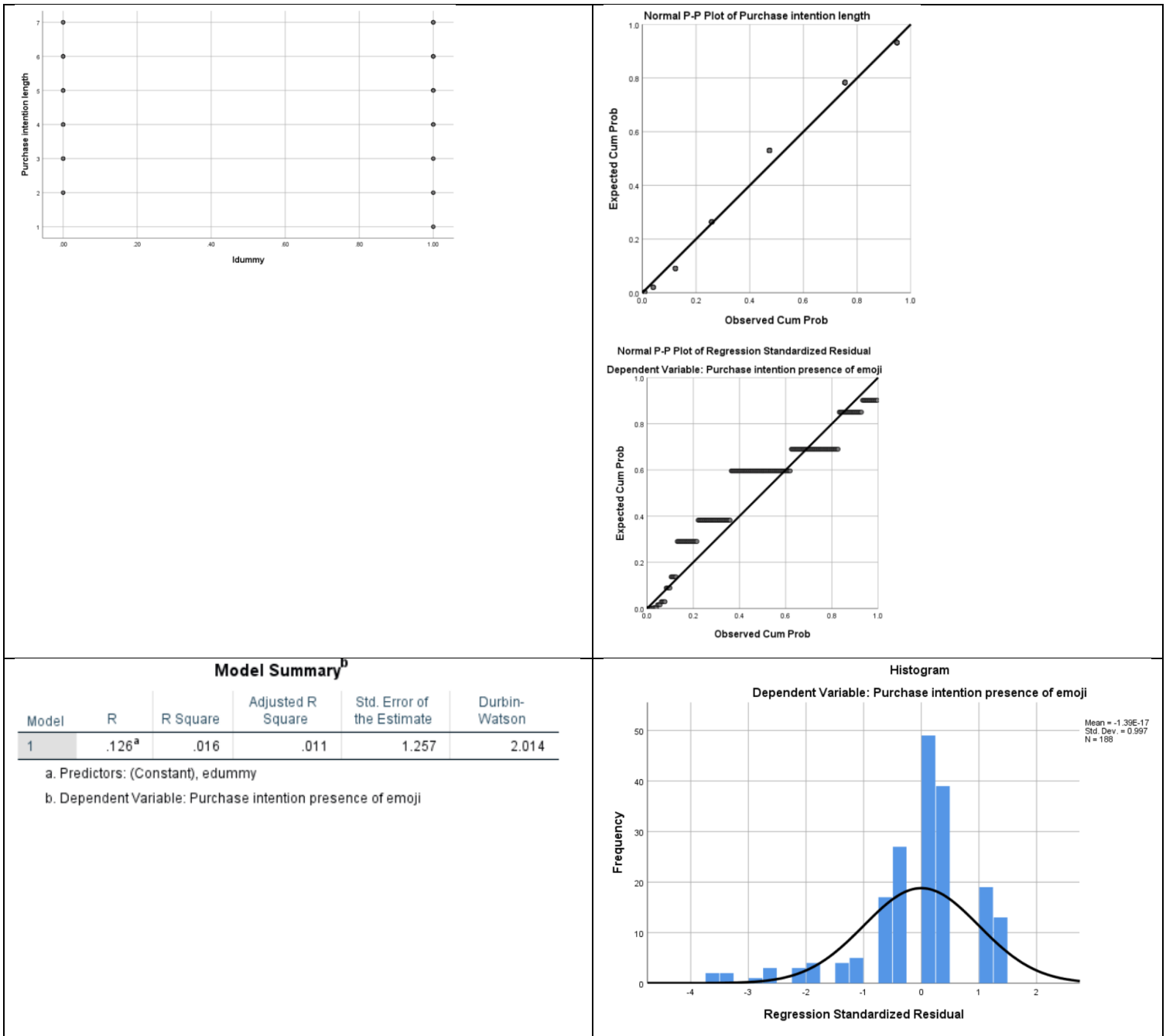


Table 15 - Assumptions of Linear Regression, Emoji

Explanation: Because the emoji variable is a dummy variable, from the scatterplot, it is difficult to say if the residuals are equally distributed. The p-plot shows that the residuals are normally distributed. Durbin-Watson is 2.014, meaning that the residuals are uncorrelated. The histogram shows that the data is normally distributed.

Appendix H – SPSS Outputs of Experiment 1, Hypothesis 1a

**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .315 <sup>a</sup> | .099     | .094              | 1.504                      |

a. Predictors: (Constant), perdummy

b. Dependent Variable: Purchase intention tone of voice

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

| Model |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F      | Sig.              |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1     | Regression | 46.511         | 1   | 46.511      | 20.571 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|       | Residual   | 422.801        | 187 | 2.261       |        |                   |
|       | Total      | 469.312        | 188 |             |        |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase intention tone of voice

b. Predictors: (Constant), perdummy

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

| Model |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. | Collinearity Statistics |       |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|-------------------------|-------|
|       |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      | Tolerance               | VIF   |
| 1     | (Constant) | 4.247                       | .156       |                           | 27.240 | .000 |                         |       |
|       | perdummy   | .992                        | .219       | .315                      | 4.536  | .000 | 1.000                   | 1.000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase intention tone of voice

Table 16 – Statistical results of experiment 1, Hypothesis 1a

## Appendix I – Outcomes of Experiment 1, Hypothesis 1b

```

*****
Model : 4
  Y : Q2.3
  X : perdummy
  M : Q2.4

Sample
Size: 189

*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
Q2.4

Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      .4147      .1720      2.5383      38.8344      1.0000      187.0000      .0000

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant      3.7742      .1652      22.8451      .0000      3.4483      4.1001
perdummy      1.4446      .2318      6.2317      .0000      .9873      1.9018

Standardized coefficients
      coeff
perdummy      .8273

*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
Q2.3

Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      .7594      .5767      1.0682      126.6787      2.0000      186.0000      .0000

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant      1.6539      .2087      7.9261      .0000      1.2422      2.0656
perdummy      -.0003      .1653      -.0021      .9983      -.3264      .3257
Q2.4          .6871      .0474      14.4850      .0000      .5936      .7807

Standardized coefficients
      coeff
perdummy      -.0002
Q2.4          .7594

***** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Total effect of X on Y
      Effect      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI      c_ps
      .9923      .2188      4.5355      .0000      .5607      1.4239      .6280

Direct effect of X on Y
      Effect      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI      c'_ps
      -.0003      .1653      -.0021      .9983      -.3264      .3257      -.0002

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
      Effect      BootSE      BootLLCI      BootULCI
Q2.4      .9926      .1910      .6459      1.3951

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
      Effect      BootSE      BootLLCI      BootULCI
Q2.4      .6282      .1092      .4244      .8519

```

Table 17 - Statistical results of experiment 1, Hypothesis 1b

Appendix I – SPSS output of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2a

**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .167 <sup>a</sup> | .028     | .023              | 1.396                      |

a. Predictors: (Constant), ldummy

b. Dependent Variable: Purchase intention length

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

| Model |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F     | Sig.              |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1     | Regression | 10.459         | 1   | 10.459      | 5.370 | .022 <sup>b</sup> |
|       | Residual   | 364.208        | 187 | 1.948       |       |                   |
|       | Total      | 374.667        | 188 |             |       |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase intention length

b. Predictors: (Constant), ldummy

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

| Model |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. | Collinearity Statistics |       |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|-------------------------|-------|
|       |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      | Tolerance               | VIF   |
| 1     | (Constant) | 4.660                       | .142       |                           | 32.885 | .000 |                         |       |
|       | ldummy     | .471                        | .203       | .167                      | 2.317  | .022 | 1.000                   | 1.000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase intention length

Table 18 - Statistical results of experiment 2, Hypothesis 2a

Appendix J – SPSS output of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2b

```

Model : 4
Y : Q3.3
X : ldummy
M : Q3.4

Sample
Size: 189

*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
Q3.4

Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      .2533   .0642   2.1959  12.8247  1.0000  187.0000  .0004

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant  4.0103   .1505  26.6534  .0000   3.7135   4.3071
ldummy    .7723    .2157   3.5812  .0004   .3469   1.1977

Standardized coefficients
      coeff
ldummy  .5055
    
```

```

*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
Q3.3

Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      .7429      .5520      .9025     114.5726     2.0000     186.0000     .0000

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant     1.8868     .2113     8.9291     .0000     1.4699     2.3036
ldummy      -.0634     .1429     -.4435     .6579     -.3453     .2186
Q3.4         .6915     .0469     14.7498     .0000     .5990     .7840

Standardized coefficients
      coeff
ldummy     -.0449
Q3.4       .7483

***** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL *****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
Q3.3

Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      .1671     .0279     1.9476     5.3699     1.0000     187.0000     .0216

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant     4.6598     .1417     32.8851     .0000     4.3803     4.9393
ldummy       .4706     .2031     2.3173     .0216     .0700     .8713

Standardized coefficients
      coeff
ldummy      .3334

***** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****

Total effect of X on Y
      Effect      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI      c_ps
      .4706     .2031     2.3173     .0216     .0700     .8713     .3334

Direct effect of X on Y
      Effect      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI      c'_ps
      -.0634     .1429     -.4435     .6579     -.3453     .2186     -.0449

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
      Effect      BootSE      BootLLCI      BootULCI
Q3.4     .5340     .1536     .2274     .8363

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
      Effect      BootSE      BootLLCI      BootULCI
Q3.4     .3783     .1072     .1638     .5894

```

Table 19 - Statistical results of experiment 2, Hypothesis 2b

## Appendix K – SPSS output of Experiment 2, Hypothesis 2c (moderated mediation)

```

Model : 8
Y : Q3.3
X : ldummy
M : Q3.4
W : Q5.1

Sample
Size: 188

*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
Q3.4

Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      .2562    .0656    2.2275    4.3088    3.0000    184.0000    .0058

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant    4.0997    .4711    8.7016    .0000    3.1701    5.0292
ldummy      .3862    .7278    .5307    .5963    -1.0497    1.8222
Q5.1       -.0612    .3057    -.2001    .8416    -.6643    .5420
Int_1      .2420    .4458    .5428    .5879    -.6375    1.1215

Product terms key:
Int_1 :      ldummy x      Q5.1

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):
      R2-chng      F      df1      df2      p
X*W      .0015      .2947    1.0000    184.0000    .5879

*****

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
Q3.3

Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      .7472    .5583    .9024    57.8319    4.0000    183.0000    .0000

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant    2.1711    .3563    6.0942    .0000    1.4682    2.8741
ldummy     -.7725    .4636   -1.6662    .0974   -1.6871    .1422
Q3.4       .6883    .0469   14.6696    .0000    .5957    .7809
Q5.1      -.1817    .1946   -.9335    .3518   -.5656    .2023
Int_1      .4496    .2840    1.5834    .1151   -.1106    1.0099

Product terms key:
Int_1 :      ldummy x      Q5.1

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):
      R2-chng      F      df1      df2      p
X*W      .0061      2.5072    1.0000    183.0000    .1151

```

\*\*\*\*\* DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y \*\*\*\*\*

Conditional direct effect(s) of X on Y:

| Q5.1   | Effect | se    | t       | p     | LLCI   | ULCI  |
|--------|--------|-------|---------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1.0000 | -.3228 | .2135 | -1.5124 | .1321 | -.7440 | .0983 |
| 2.0000 | .1268  | .1936 | .6549   | .5134 | -.2551 | .5087 |

Conditional indirect effects of X on Y:

INDIRECT EFFECT:

ldummy -> Q3.4 -> Q3.3

| Q5.1   | Effect | BootSE | BootLLCI | BootULCI |
|--------|--------|--------|----------|----------|
| 1.0000 | .4324  | .2519  | -.0657   | .9218    |
| 2.0000 | .5990  | .1904  | .2298    | .9831    |

Index of moderated mediation (difference between conditional indirect effects):

|      | Index | BootSE | BootLLCI | BootULCI |
|------|-------|--------|----------|----------|
| Q5.1 | .1666 | .3139  | -.4612   | .7798    |

---

Table 20 - Statistical results of experiment 2, Hypothesis 2c



## Appendix L – SPSS output of Experiment 3, Hypothesis 3a

**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .109 <sup>a</sup> | .012     | .007              | 1.282                      |

a. Predictors: (Constant), edummy  
b. Dependent Variable: Purchase intention presence of emoji

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

| Model |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F     | Sig.              |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1     | Regression | 3.701          | 1   | 3.701       | 2.251 | .135 <sup>b</sup> |
|       | Residual   | 307.484        | 187 | 1.644       |       |                   |
|       | Total      | 311.185        | 188 |             |       |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase intention presence of emoji  
b. Predictors: (Constant), edummy

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

| Model |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. | Collinearity Statistics |       |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|-------------------------|-------|
|       |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      | Tolerance               | VIF   |
| 1     | (Constant) | 5.376                       | .133       |                           | 40.433 | .000 |                         |       |
|       | edummy     | .280                        | .187       | .109                      | 1.500  | .135 | 1.000                   | 1.000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase intention presence of emoji

Table 21 - Statistical results of experiment 3, Hypothesis 3a

## Appendix M – SPSS output of Experiment 3, Hypothesis 3b

```

Model : 1
Y : Q4.3
X : edummy
W : Q5.1

Sample
Size: 188

*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
Q4.3

Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      .1808   .0327   1.5705   2.0733   3.0000   184.0000   .1053

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant   5.6781   .4361  13.0209   .0000   4.8177   6.5384
edummy    -.6195   .5990  -1.0343   .3024  -1.8012   .5622
Q5.1     -.1909   .2633  -.7248   .4695  -.7105   .3287
Int_1     .6106   .3682   1.6585   .0989  -.1158   1.3369

Product terms key:
Int_1 :      edummy x      Q5.1

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):
      R2-chng      F      df1      df2      p
X*W      .0145   2.7505   1.0000   184.0000   .0989
    
```

Table 22 - Statistical results of experiment 3, Hypothesis 3b

## Appendix N – SPSS output of experiment 3, Hypothesis 3a, covariate: purchase frequency of cosmetic product

```

Model : 1
  Y : Q4.3
  X : edummy
  W : Q5.1

Covariates:
Q5.3

Sample
Size: 191

*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
Q4.3

Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      .2012    .0405    1.6077    1.9617    4.0000    186.0000    .1021

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant    5.4377    .4389    12.3887    .0000    4.5718    6.3036
edummy     -1.4562    .5969    -1.7643    .4457    -1.6337    .7213
Q5.1       -1.1958    .2701    -1.7247    .4695    -1.7287    .3371
Int_1      .5228    .3688    1.4177    .1580    -.2047    1.2504
Q5.3       .1089    .0889    1.2259    .2218    -.0664    .2842

Product terms key:
Int_1 :      edummy x      Q5.1

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):
      R2-chng      F      df1      df2      p
X*W      .0104      2.0098      1.0000      186.0000      .1580

```

Table 23 - Statistical results of experiment 3 (covariate), Hypothesis 3a

## Appendix O – SPSS output of experiment 3, Hypothesis 3a, covariate: animal testing caring

```

Model : 1
  Y : Q4.3
  X : edummy
  W : Q5.1

Covariates:
Q5.4

Sample
Size: 191

*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
Q4.3

Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
      .2123    .0451    1.6000    2.1943    4.0000    186.0000    .0713

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant    5.7244    .4483    12.7689    .0000    4.8400    6.6089
edummy     -1.4533    .5954    -1.7613    .4474    -1.6280    .7214
Q5.1       .0432    .2820    .1532    .8784    -.5131    .5995
Int_1      .5191    .3679    1.4109    .1600    -.2068    1.2450
Q5.4       -1.0893    .0576    -1.5501    .1228    -.2030    .0244

Product terms key:
Int_1 :      edummy x      Q5.1

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):
      R2-chng      F      df1      df2      p
X*W      .0102      1.9905      1.0000      186.0000      .1600

```

Table 24 - Statistical results of experiment 3 (covariate), Hypothesis 3a