BUILDING EXPERIENTIAL LIVE CAMPAIGNS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background for the study

They are everywhere. Brands, and their slogans, shouting louder after another. First marketing messages reach consumers upon waking up in the morning and opening social media channels, turning on the tv, reading newspaper, taking transportation to work. They follow consumers in smart phones, ready to expose themselves whenever given a chance. Brands and marketing messages are a part of everyday life, and they have become rather a norm than an exception.

Social media, defined as a large group of disruptive internet-based technologies that build on social networking (Buttle & Maklan 2015, 246), are one of the main reasons for the rapid expansion of brands' visibility in consumers' lives. During recent years, consumers, particularly the generation Y[1], has become affluent with such technologies and spend more and more time in social networking every day (Primack et al. 2017). This offers thrilling marketing opportunities for brands searching for cheap and effective ways of communication, and so far the phenomenon has not gone unutilized: Today it may be difficult to find a major brand that is not taking advantage of social media in their marketing efforts. However, the increasing amount of communication has naturally made consumers more selective about what they like to hear – forcing brands to consider what kind of messages really are effective and pass through consumers' sometimes subconscious filter.

This kind of ability to filter marketing messages, swipe away or banish an unwanted advertisement banner, also referred to as consumer empowerment, has launched a wrecking ball that is rapidly changing traditional marketing, and today it is often the brand itself that is considered as organizations' most important asset, rather than quality of functionalities of a product. Consumers are more demanding than before and take such features as granted. So instead of comparing products and their benefits, what consumers want from products and marketing communications, is a story. When making decisions consumers, consciously or unconsciously, reflect their own values and aspirations to brands and choose to buy products with similar characteristics. (Schmitt 1999.) Buying decisions are thus reflecting consumers' personalities: Who they are or who they want to be. In order to stand out, brands have to be able to deliver a story that excites and is able to make consumers pause and listen for a while.

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[1] Generation Y, also known as Millenials, were born between 1980 and 1999. They were brought up around technology, and as a result, are more affluent, more technologically savvy, better educated and more ethnically diverse than any previous generation. (Spiro 2006, 17.)

Communicating brand personality, whether it is a product, service or a company brand, has thus become increasingly important for marketers. Changes in both socio-economic environment and technologies however are so rapid that established marketing literature struggles to keep up. A good example is the brand definition from the American marketing association AMA, who defines brand as a 'name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors' (AMA dictionary). This is not enough to capture the essence of a brand that needs to be sold for consumers. When looking at brands as a mere differentiator, marketers forget that differentiation, although highly effective when systematic, is not making consumers to raise their heads, look again, listen carefully, or tell someone else about the brand. In social media such messages would sink amid thousands of other attempts that did not manage to excite. De Chernatony (2016, 104) however, offers a more sophisticated definition of a brand that accurately captures its modern essence as a provider of emotional and functional value for consumers. She defines brand as a 'cluster of values that enables a promise to be made about a unique and welcomed experience'.

Definition not only is apt to describe the current trend amid consumers' changing expectations for products, but also to reflect a new marketing phenomenon that has been raising its head during the past years as organizations at the wake of marketing agencies are quickly jumping on board of a bandwagon named experiential marketing (Smith & Hanover 2016, 13). Experiential marketing aims to create unique, holistic experiences that enrich the life of those who experience them. These experiences are created through products, communications and campaigns that incorporate multi-dimensional sensory tools in a way that consumers feel like the brand they are interacting with comes to live – consumers feel like they can relate to the brand and incorporate their lifestyles with it. It is a way for organizations to effectively communicate desired brand personality. (See Schmitt 1999; Luo et al. 2011; Smith & Hanover 2016; Smilansky 2017) Smilansky (2017, 12) defines experiential marketing as a *'process of identifying and satisfying customer needs and aspirations, profitability, engaging them thru two-way communication that bring brand personalities to life and add value to target audience*.'

Experiential marketing is currently the fastest growing marketing trend in the world (Smith & Hanover 2016). However, experiential marketing has existed in the marketing literature for almost a decade – why is it only now that organizations pay an accelerating interest to it? According to Schmitt (1999), the main drivers for experiential marketing are development of technology and further spallation of media, brands' supremacy and the ubiquity of communications and entertainment. These trends have been detectable for a long time, but the reason experiential marketing did not make headway before may be that also technology, media, brands, communication and entertainment were not experiencing changes ten years ago.

Smith and Hanover (2016, 9) consider the raise of experiential marketing so fundamental that it marks as a change of the marketing paradigm. They prolong Schmitt's (1999) theory of experiential marketing's drivers with monetary reasons that arise from the cost-efficiency of the cluttered media space, erosion of mass markets, empowerment of consumers and the trend of mass customization and personalization. Social media notably has contributed to the growth of experiential as brands can take advantage of not only the diverse, increasing possibilities and technologies but also the cost-efficiency it comes with. (Culnan, McHugh & Zubillaga 2010, 246).

While there are several different ways for organizations to engage in experiential marketing, live experiences are today considered the best way to do it as they are able to immerse consumers with the whole essence of the brand through multilateral sensory manipulation. Furthermore live crowds' ability of leveraging feeling of togetherness stimulating consumers' interest in a product and convey brand personality in an exceptional way. (Smilansky 2009, 7.) Consequently, experiential live campaigns (ELCs) are promoted and considered as the main channel for experiential marketing while other marketing communication channels such as social media, print and personal relations are amplification channels that can be used to grow impact of the idea behind the campaign. (Smilansky 2009, 8.)

For instance, Red Bull has become famous for its imposing ELCs that effectively bring the brand personality alive. In 2012 Fred Bull organized a Stratos jump in which their jumper Felix Baumgartner passed the speed of sound breaking a record for the highest recorded parachute jump. Stunt was covered live on several news channels and amplified on YouTube gaining Red Bull enormous visibility and positive PR. (Shakespeare 2012.) What's more, the Stratos jump strongly underlines Red Bull's contested brand personality as sporty, fun-loving athlete going through any obstacle. After the event brand's Facebook followers mentioned Red Bull most frequently together with the words Stratos, Felix and brand's familiar strap-line: "wings" (Shakespeare 2012). The example furthermore underlines how ELCs embrace and turn the fundamentally challenging consumer empowerment to their advantage. By creating something consumers want to see brands can quarantee their place at the heart of earned media and discussion.

Among the possible amplification channels of experiential marketing, social media is the interesting one as it is one of the main reasons why experiential marketing has evolved in the first place. Despite the interconnection of the two, social media – surprisingly – has not gained great emphasis in the academic literature discussing ELCs. So far experiential marketing, without the dimension for live experiences, has been extended to virtual environments in terms of online shopping (see Luo et al. 2011) and social media through a few sector specific case studies and handbooks (see Nugraha 2017; Richilieu & Korai 2014; Soloaga & Guerrero 2016; Smilansky 2009; Smith & Hanover 2016). However,

literature discussing ELCs and social media straightforwardly severely lacks academic research.

There are several evident reasons why social media and ELCs should be further studied. First of them stems from the first paragraph of this introduction chapter, where the author claims consumers being selective on what they like to hear. As practically all social media platforms are occupied by different kinds of marketing messages, social media users are forced to see brands and marketing communication everywhere, even if they could banish the advertisement banner in a few seconds time. Thus, consumers have the power of closing their eyes and ears, but they still cannot have a complete control over their own social media spaces. There is a paradox of empowerment; if consumers cannot choose what they see or have on their own profiles, are they still empowered? And what kind of effects does it have on brand perception? Several researchers have investigated this paradox (see Power & Philips-Wren 2011,) and Zahy (2017) argues that the overuse of engagement ads by brands and the caused information overload is leading to dilution of consumer-brand relationship. ELCs are all about empowerment, so learning how to utilize them on social media could not just increase brand visibility but also help avoid brand dilution and reach the social media natives of generation Y and millennials.

Secondly, there is the cost-efficiency aspect of social media. Referring to the previous example of Red Bull's Stratos jump, it is very clear that only very few brands could engage in such ambitious campaign with high inputs in time, resources and amplification channels. The flickering question is, whether using social media as the main channel for the experience could help organizations reach similar results with fewer efforts?

These possibilities, and what more may come up, have not gained the attention they deserve as literature lacks analysis of not only the opportunities and challenges of ELCs in social media but also the factors that make up a good campaign. As social media today is an integral part of consumers' everyday life and organizations' marketing mixes, the topic inevitably demands further researched.

1.2   Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how organizations can create successful virtual experiential live campaigns in social media. Despite the channel's obvious benefits and advantages, it is evident that ELCs and social media are not perfectly supplementary as social media automatically excludes some key features of ELCs, such as possibility for multilateral sensory manipulations and exploitation of live crowds' authentic atmospheres. In other words, social media and ELCs create an interesting combination, an imperfect fit, that at best could leverage on social media's cost-efficiency, interactional capabilities and the many other opportunities while at worst, when not utilized properly,

experiences could turn out as unsuccessful experiments that lacked real impact and leverage. In order to investigate this phenomenon and answer the research problem, following will be examined:

1. What are the building blocks of a successful experiential live campaign?
2. What are the opportunities and challenges for using social media in experiential live campaigns?
3. Can virtual experiential marketing help organizations overcome the imperfect fit?

As for terminology, successful in the context of this study refers to the degree in which campaign's pursued objectives are fulfilled. Each campaign, despite their individual context, however contains identifiable patterns, or building blocks, that are similar between every successful experiential campaign (Smith & Hanover 2016). By examining how social media and virtual experiential marketing impact their design and implementation, organizations, within the context of their own objectives, can learn how to build better ELCs in social media, overcome challenges of the imperfect fit and bring brand personalities alive virtually. To better understand how this kind of interplay works, a single-case study was chosen as a research method.

Theory covered during the following chapter can be considered exploratory for several reasons, as there is no existing study discovering the phenomenon at scrutiny. First, by analyzing ELCs and social media independently author aims to answer the first two sub-problems, and to understand what are the effects that social media impose on building ELCs. Secondly, to understand the full impact that social media, operated in virtual environments[2], impose on ELCs, the concept of virtual experiential marketing has been added to the discussion. By investigating how virtual marketplaces leverage experiential marketing to boost their sales online, author aims to find tools for overcoming the imperfect fit, and thus answer the third sub-problem.

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[2] Virtual environments can be understood as a hypernym for all environments made possible by computer simulations, such as social media networks (Strikwerda 2013).

2   EXPERIENTIAL LIVE CAMPAIGNS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

2.1   Experiential live campaigns

Experiential live campaigns are a systematic channel for creating brand personality-inspired interactive experiences for consumers in real time, face-to-face. ELCs convey sophisticated messages that traditional marketing approaches cannot easily achieve, effectively communicating complex brand personalities and values. Consumers engaging in a well-tailored ELC are left with a memorable understanding of the brand values and affiliate products or services with not only brand's pursued personalities but also their own aspirational lifestyles. Experience has thus high potentiality to create a genuine and long-lasting connection between the brand and the consumer. (Smilansky 2009, 15.)

These experiences promote achievement of not only short-term benefits but also long-term hard and soft objectives. Potential benefits are broader than the traditional objectives that are affiliated with most marketing communication approaches. For instance, ELCs are effective in yielding brand advocacy, which in turn creates word-of-mouth (WOM) through personal recommendations. (Smilansky 2009, 15.) Estimates show, that a consumer who has engaged in an ELC is likely to tell 17 people. Therefore, a live campaign that has a reach of 500 000 people quickly grows into millions through WOM reach. (Smilansky 2009, 28.) As ELCs are effective in driving WOM, and WOM has a highly significant effect on purchase intention (see Mangold, Miller & Brockway 1999; Ladhari 2009; Wang 2011) organizations can expect results in their long-term objectives such as increasing sales and gaining strategic advantage in maintaining market share. In addition, ELCs are effective in positioning or repositioning the brand, targeting new audiences, increasing consumer loyalty, driving product trial, signing up new members and increasing footfall in-store or website (Smilansky 2009, 28). What is more, ELCs are highly effective whatever the product, target audience or environment (Wood & Moss 2015). For instance, ELCs are considered suitable for reaching both B2C and B2B consumers – regardless of the size of the target audience (Smilansky 2009, 15). Live can thus be an ideal way to differentiate and create memorable experiences especially when the decision makers or senior people are hard to reach through traditional marketing approaches.

In contrast to experiential marketing that does not include live, live campaigns show supremacy due to their capability of including and delivering more complex experiences and experiential elements. Schmitt (1999) divides experiences that organizations can create for consumers into five different experiential dimensions, or strategic experiential modules (SEMs), of *sense, feel, think, act* and *behave*. Each experiential module has its own distinct objectives and particularities as listed in the following table.

Table 1   Strategic experiential modules and their objectives (modified from Schmitt 1999)

Modules	Sense	Feel	Think	Act	Behave
Experience	Sensory	Affective	Cognitive	Physical	Social identity
Objective	Create sensory experiences through sight, sound, touch, taste and smell	Create affective experiences that range from mildly positive moods linked to brand to strong emotions of joy and pride	Create cognitive, problem-solving experiences that engage consumers creatively	Target physical experiences and showing alternative ways of doing things, alternative lifestyles and interactions	Create motivational, inspirational and emotional experiences that are often motivated by role models
Key-principles	Cognitive consistency: providing a concept that is clearly detectable but appears always fresh and new	Close understanding of what stimuli can trigger certain emotions and willingness to engage in perspective taking and empathy	Surprise, intrigue and provocation	Appeal to individual's desire for self-improvement relating person to a broader social system	Contains aspects of sense, feel, think and act marketing expanding beyond individuals personal and private feelings

As seen from the table, SEMs incorporate sensory, affective, cognitive, physical and behavioural experiences that organizations can use to deliver brand-related values and messages. The more experiential modules are incorporated in a campaign, the better results and higher engagement the campaign is likely to reach (Schmitt 1999). This applies, although researchers have found that not all the five modules are equal in terms of importance, as for instance according to Ding and Tseng (2015) hedonic emotions are the

strongest meditators of experience and brand loyalty. Despite the varying level of impact between each module, when consumers are centred with several different experiences, it is evident that the consumer is more likely to understand and embrace the pursued messages than through fewer modules.

Due to face-to-face interactions and product trial as a core element, ELCs are sometimes misunderstood as a synonym to field marketing. SEMs however are the differentiator that draw the line between promotional activities and experience-oriented actions. For ELCs, product quality and functionalities are just one side of the story; when consumers are provided with SEMs, an experience where they can sense, feel, think, act and relate, promotion becomes an experience (Rohatgi 2011). Furthermore, SEMs not just tell how brands can create experiences for consumers, but they also encapsulate the fundamental essence of what ELCs are all about.

Looking at the previous example from Red Bull, several SEMs can be identified: campaign effectively incorporates experiential modules of sense, feel and act through creating an imposing sensory experience, strong emotions of excitement and power as well as motivating consumers to overcome their own personal obstacles. Today footage of the Stratos jump on YouTube has been viewed for more than 43 million times (Felix Baumgartner's supersonic freefall 2012) making it one of the most widespread ELCs in history. Outcome would have been highly different, if Red Bull had hired a stand with brand ambassadors to deliver free energy cans.

Despite the leading position of SEMs in delivering experiences and building ELCs, it should be mentioned that as technology advances, also new possibilities and tools for creating ELCs arise. For instance, Liu et al. (2001) studying virtual experiential marketing (VEM) in the context of e-commerce and virtual marketplaces have identified several elements that can be leveraged as surrogates for the real-world experiences in virtual environments. Such artificial interfaces can be created with elements of *sense, interaction, flow, pleasure* and *community relationship*.

Luo et al. (2010) have furthermore found a positive relationship between these surrogates, consumer engagement and consumer loyalty. As VEM has not been studied in the context of ELCs, it is questionable whether its elements can be sustained in a real campaign, but it certainly offers an interesting viewpoint for questioning, whether social media could serve as an equally effective channel for ELCs to that of offline? This question will be addressed in more detail at the end of this chapter.

2.1.1 *How to build a successful experiential live campaign*

McLuhan (2009) and Smilansky (2017) argue that the best live experiences are grounded in a strategy, and the best strategies are grounded before the idea, design, look and feel of

the campaign. Therefore, it is relevant for organizations designing ELCs to start with setting budgets and campaign objectives. (McLuhan 2009; Smilansky 2017.) As for budgets, ELCs do not need high resources of economic leverage, as live campaigns can be created based on smaller inputs as well. Thus, instead of being a source of economic manpower, budgets can be considered more important in setting constraints for the campaign, from which creative ideas are built (Smith & Hanover 2016).

As for objectives, ELCs are a flexible tool for leveraging a vide variety of interests. Some organizations use ELCs for generating product trial, others focus on PR disciplines while others wish to create long-term consumer engagement through WOM, positioning the brand, or communicating complex brand messages. (Smilansky 2009, 80-90; Smith & Hanover 2016, 25). Chosen budgets and objectives create a frame for more detailed strategy formation with insights that can be later supplemented with other, more detailed criteria.

Smith and Hanover (2016) outline five core experience strategy platforms that build on disciplines of *connection, control, content, currency*, and *conversion*. Based on the five strategy platforms, organizations can design a strategy that fits their chosen objectives and budgets. Consequently, there is a lot variance between the possible strategic outputs, as different objectives require different kinds of disciplines.

Smith and Hanover (2016, 25-62) present eight different types of connections that five types of control systems, seven experiential currencies and conversions as well as 25 types of different contents that marketers can extract from live experiences. Figure 1 presents framework for experiential live strategy formation and outlines the five strategy platforms.
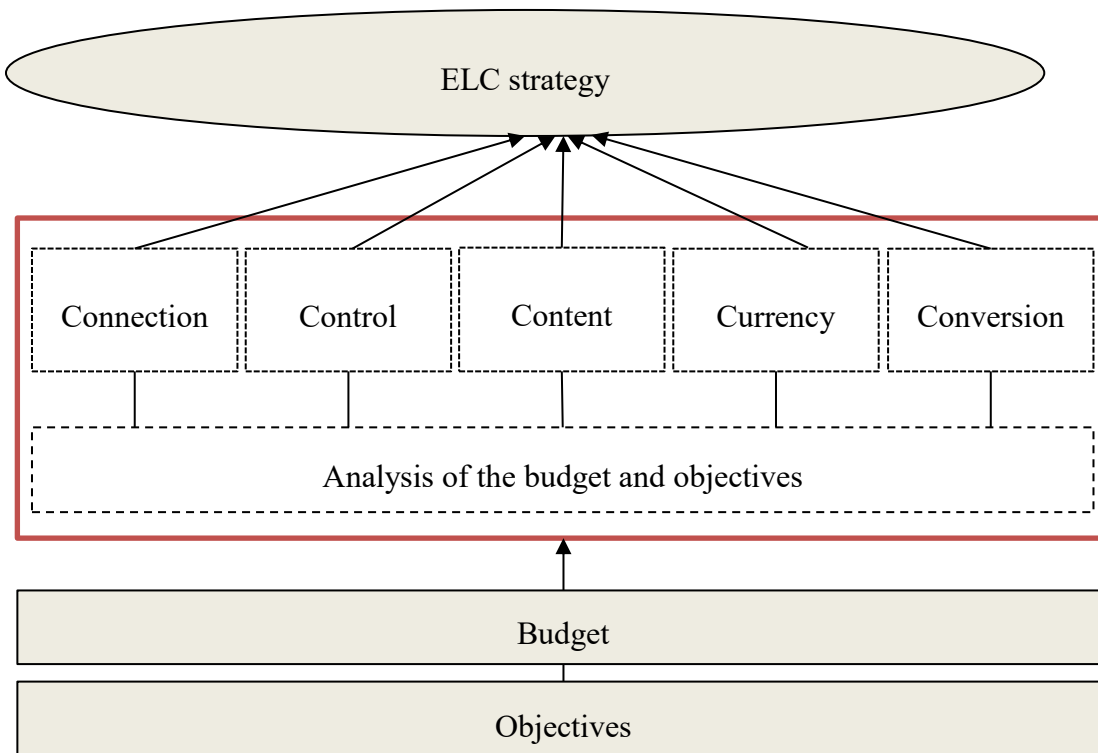
Figure 1   Experiential live strategy formation (Smith & Hanover 2016, 25-62)

Connection, the first strategy platform left on the figure*, is an integral part of ELC strategy formation, as different types of connections are inherently encrypted to every single ELC. Based on objectives, markets can evaluate what kind of connection they need to create with consumers to reach the pursued outcome. (Smith & Hanover 2016.) If objective, for instance, was to provide information about a new product offer, the most effective approach to connection could be educational. If goal on the other hand was to bring brand personality to life, emotional approach could strike to consumers the most. Whatever the objective, brands have a great degree of freedom in terms of choosing and determining their approaches to connection.

Control instead is a more debated strategy platform as it has a high effect on the success of the campaign, and researchers are not unanimous of what type of control works most effectively. For instance, Heinonen, Strandvik and Mickelsson (2010) see live situations as a combination of controlled interactions, while Duggal (2015) manifests freedom: to make consumers engage, they need to be let in charge of the interaction. If brands assert too much control, participants could feel less enthusiasm to engage. On the other hand, if there is too much freedom, brand loses its ability to be the driver for the experience. How much control should brands thus exercise? In a situation of disagreement, the decision on the degree of control can be put, once again, down to the chosen objectives, as well as type of audience, and finally, to organizations' own comfort-zone.

Content refers to campaign's ability to create additional content for rest of the marketing mix, that can be utilized before, during and after the live experience. Delivering such content is considered to increase not just effectiveness of marketing actions but also content's authenticity, as live experiences are considered the most authentic generator of additional content. Therefore, for a good reason, the most effective ELCs are designed to produce a variety of additional content such as blog posts, social media posts, photos, and webcasts, comments and memos. (Smith & Hanover 2016, 42.)

Fourth platform, experiential *currency,* is created, when audience provides something or engages in interaction with ELC provider in exchange of an experience. While some consumers are happy to engage in exchange for a chance to try a product, others are harder to engage. Currencies to choose from are many and in addition to product trial, include for instance information sharing, social sharing or admission paying as experiences can be exchanged to social media post or monetary charge. Pine and Gilmore (2014) argue that creating high-quality experiences that consumers are willing to pay for is today more important than innovating new goods and services.

Finally, the last strategy platform, *conversion*, refers to what all marketing actions ultimately pursue – converting someone into something – to a buyer, advocate, follower, friend, lifetime customer (Smith & Hanover 2016, 55). This makes the last strategy platform the most important one, as choosing what kind of conversions are pursued outlines further insights, actions and decisions on SEMs.

2.1.2   *Criteria for a successful experiential live campaign*

There are several attributes with which researchers describe the criteria for a successful ELC. For instance, to achieve success Poulsson and Kale (2014) suggest that experience should include personal relevance, novelty, surprise, learning and engagement, while Smilansky (2009, 153) emphasizes selection of the right kinds of brand ambassadors to work at the campaign setting. Selection of right personnel is important as they represent the target audience, brand and the chosen experiential objectives. While all approaches have truth in them there, however, is no one unified model to describe the desired attributes of a successful ELC – apart from one created by Smith and Hanover (2016).

In their study, Smith and Hanover (2016, 63) propose a model of 11 success criteria. According to them, a successful ELC is all the same time *connectable, targetable, flexible, measurable, believable, relatable, personal, shareable, memorable*, and lastly, *remarkable*. While the strategy of building ELCs vary depending on objectives, the 11 ex-

periential *pillars* uniformly blended together optimize engagement and amplify possibilities for achieving the brand-building, value-creating, and clutter-breaking power of ELCs. Figure 2 presents the outlined criteria for a successful experiential live campaign.
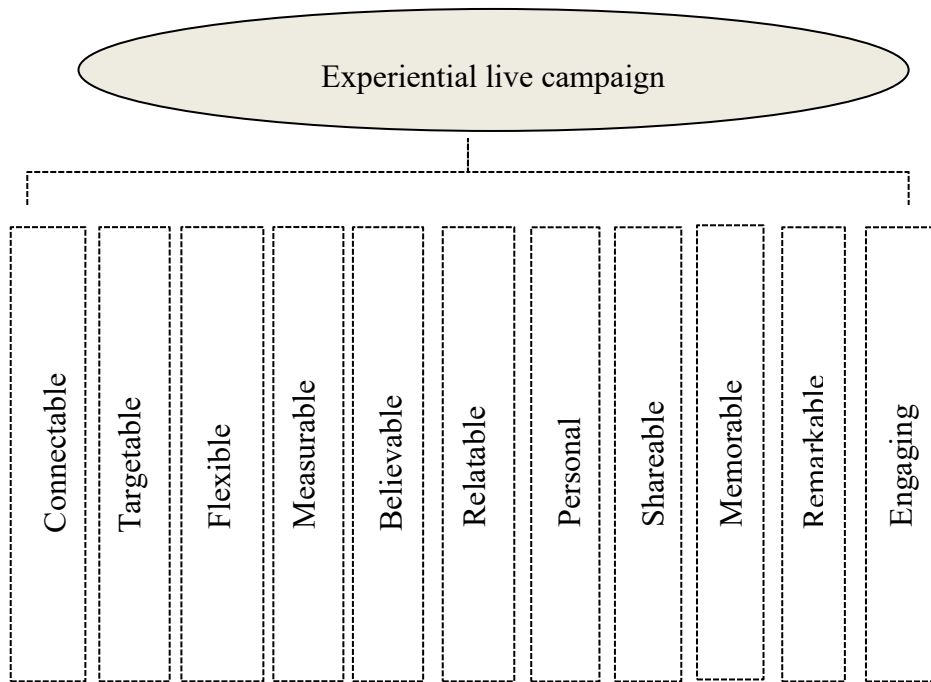
Figure 2   Criteria for a successful experiential live campaign (Smith & Hanover 2016)

Looking at the first pillars, c*onnectability* refers to the already expressed idea, that live experiences should be the main channel, heart of the experiential campaign, that fuels, amplifies and optimizes other marketing platforms. Digital platforms on the other hand are considered the most effective channel for connecting and amplifying the branded messages at the heart of the live experience (Smith & Hanover 2016). *Targetability* on the other hand suggests that by connecting with smaller target audiences that are carefully selected it is easier to create well-tailored content, get it amplified and thus activate other experiential pillars. Consequently, the idea behind ELCs often is to serve smaller, carefully selected target groups, and then through combining several other amplification channels, make the message heard.

Third pillar, *flexibility,* implies that by tailoring content and not thriving on the idea of one-size-fits-all, brands can more easily capitalize on opportunities and tangential locations. Fourthly, to realize the gained opportunities and benefits, ELCs needs to be *measurable*. To succeed in measuring the campaign, it needs to have its own built-in measurement system. Looking at merely readily existing traditional metrics, value may not be realized effectively as many short-term metrics such as sales do not indicate long-term results. (McLuhan 2009; Smilansky 2017, 126.)

It is also crucial that experiences are *believable*. In other words, experiences should be aligned with the brand story and brand promise as consumers want to know which values brands they buy stand for (Smith & Hanover 2016; Smilansky 2017, 127). If consumers believe the story of the campaign, they are more likely to relate to it personally and share the campaign message further. *Relatability* in this context implies that in addition to the existing brand story, campaigns need to be aligned with elements that support consumers' needs and desires. Story needs to be easily relatable.

Personalization on the other hand refers to the factors that makes consumers feel like the campaign was specifically designed for them. This can ultimately make campaigns memorable and remarkable, as after attending a truly memorable live event, attendees are likely to share their experience further by saying "I saw", "I learned", "I discovered", or "I met". In addition to personalization, *memorability* thrives from elements of surprise and delight. (Smith & Hanover 2016) According to Smilansky (2017, 195) live campaign as itself is already memorable, but certain, tangible triggers to pass the experiences on, such as a photo or a gift, keeps the memory alive for longer and simultaneously makes it feel more personal. *Remarkability* on the other hand is created when consumers are engaged in the right way – it is the best tool for fighting against time in social media. To make consumers interested they need to be delighted and engaged from the very beginning to follow the live campaign.

The final pillar, *engagement*, takes place when experience stimulates active involvement of the target audience. Thus, engagement occurs when participants perceive they are going to receive value in exchange for the time they invest in the brand. (Smith & Hanover 2016) Engagement is important as it is the source of consumer loyalty that ultimately creates brand ambassadors (Ladhari 2009; Smilansky 2009; Smith & Hanover 2016; Smilansky 2017).

What is remarkable to point out, is the implicit fact that the company size, longevity, manpower or even budget are not among the criteria that determine failure or success of ELC. This demonstrates the fact that it is a well-thought idea and carefully designed campaign that ultimately create the foundations for a successful campaign. In other words, money can inevitably help organizations to create imposing, memorable experiences for consumers. However, if the idea, strategy and content are not aligned, it is indefinite whether the campaign is able to advance brand's long-term success.

2.2 Social media as a marketing channel

2.2.1 Introduction to social media

Social media are a large group of disruptive, internet-based platforms that build on technologies of the world wide web 2.0, where users can communicate, collaborate and create content taking advantage of social networks. These technologies can be divided into four platforms, each serving different kinds of purpose and interest of a user, including collaborative communities, blogs and micro-blogs, content-sharing communities and social networking communities. (Buttle & Maklan 2015, 246.) Despite the different functions, they all build on one common feature – social networks.

Social media sites that leverage such networks started to burgeon around start of the Millennium. Earlier forms of social media include instant messaging services and bulletin board systems, but the game-changer that emancipated full capacities of social media arrived when Facebook was founded in 2004. It is a quintessential example of a new media taking advantage of amplified social networks as the idea of the platform is to provide an online space that mirrors offline social networks and leverages social influence by minimizing cost to initiate and maintain social connections. (Brown & Wang 2016, 31.) Since then social media landscape has seen introduction, maturity and decline of hundreds of thousands of platforms that build on similar elements, thoroughly changing the foundations of interpersonal communication, as hundreds of millions of people meet virtually every day to find entertainment and meaningful relationships from social networks.

Pew Research Center's study shows that between 2005 and 2015 social media adult user base in U.S. grew from 8 percent to 76 percent (Perrin 2015). While Facebook is the most popular social networking site for adults, younger consumers, especially those aged from 18 to 24, stand out for embracing a number of different platforms and using them frequently. The most popular platforms among all social media users include content-sharing communities of YouTube, Instagram and Pinterst as well as Micro-blogging network Twitter and, Facebook-alike professional social networking community LinkedIn. (Smith & Andersson 2018.)

Brands have carefully followed these trends, and more importantly consumers, and according to Salesforce (2015) survey, 66 percent of marketers believe that social media is core to their business and marketing activities. Accumulated global spending on social media marketing is increasing accordingly; in 2017 it was expected to reach 35,98 billion dollars, with 20,3 percent increase to previous year.

Explosion of social media offers organizations a powerful tool to communicate, listen and learn from consumers in a way they have never done before (Grewal & Levy 2013;

Smith, Wollan & Zhou 2011) as virtual interactions enable overcoming of traditional constraints of marketing, such as limited resources and geographical distance (Barnes et al. 2012). Although there are some risks involved, means of intensified and multilateral communication offer significant competitive advantages that organizations can use to engage consumers in interaction with brands. When consumers are provided with meaningful and valuable content they, like in offline environments, are likely to share it further and engage, developing loyalty and personal preferences towards the brand (Brodie et al. 2003; Acar & Puntoni 2016). Such actions have potential to result not only in deep, long-term consumer-brand relationships but also in cultivation of brand ambassadors who spread authentic enthusiasm towards the brand in a form of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Cheung, Lee and Rabjohn (2008) define eWOM as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or a company.

Because of eWOM and the control consumers have in social media, social media marketing is considered less invasive than traditional marketing. Consumer empowerment is for evident reasons one of the most crucial elements of social media as the freedom of choice and interaction not only limits to exchanging information in peer-to-peer platforms but also to increasing opportunities for consumers to shape their own experiences (Siano, Vollero & Palazzo 2011; Yuksel, Muke & Vallero 2016). As consumers can freely choose who they follow on social media, who they interact with, what they say, at what times and in what way, the power balance between consumers and organizations has inevitably shifted in favour of consumers.

However, due to the increasing amount of time and effort brands spend to social media, consumer empowerment seems to be decreasing, as brands and marketing messages intrude consumers' personal space and time. It could be argued, that even if consumers can choose how they respond to certain messages, they are not able to decide on the optimized content they see. On the opposite, based on the data consumers, often unconsciously, generate on social media, organizations are able to engage in exquisite consumer profiling and thus allocation of content based on consumers' assumed interests. While the strategic value of these data for organizations is unquestionable, the implications for individuals are less clear, and, needless to say, uncertain from the viewpoint of ethical concerns and consumer empowerment. (Newell & Marabelli 2015.)

Without a careful social media strategy, such loss of consumer empowerment can quickly turn against organizations as consumers, when being exposed to high amounts of information, are more prone to perceive brands in a negative light. (Hutter et al. 2013.) This kind of saturation and loss of consumer empowerment are linked for instance with likability, trust and association of the brand (Zahy 2017), as for instance, during 2018 consumer trust in social media dropped 11percent in the United States, and globally only 41% of consumers expressed to trust brands in social media platforms (Edelman Trust Barometer 2018). Therefore, without a meaningful social media strategy, it is easy to

overload consumers with passively endorsed brand messages that negatively affect consumer experience.

When not necessarily offering solutions for ethical considerations, ECLs can be seen offering brands a better way to take advantage of social media while avoiding dangers of brand dilution. Following sub-chapters discuss this kind of features of social media in more detail. More specifically, discussion will address those features potentially meaningful for organizations building ELCs. Thus, for instance data security, while a clear challenge, is not discussed for it can be considered more relevant for brand's overall social media presence. Towards the end of the chapter, author will draw a more explorative synthesis on what the discussed opportunities and challenges could more specifically mean for organizations building ELCs.

2.2.2   *Social media opportunities for experiential live campaigns*

As social media builds on and evolves through internet-based technologies and its vast social networks (Buttle & Maklan 2015, 246), opportunities for two-way communication between individual consumers, communities and organizations are immense. Consequently, social networks and the continuous technological advancement supporting social interactions, particularly in the context of ELCs where interactions are traditionally limited to offline environments, are some of the most important features that organizations could potentially benefit from. For instance, John et al. (2017) and Nguyen et al. (2015) argue that brand communities sustained by potentially hundreds of thousands of self-identified fans, when used strategically, can enhance brands' relationship-building, involvement raising and knowledge-enriching efforts as well as enhance brand-building and consumer engagement among receptive but typically passive fans. View is supported by several researchers, and for instance Roderick et al. (2013, 107) emphasize that consumer engagement in social media involves "specific interactive experiences between customers and the brand, and other members of the community". Leveraging from new technologies and creating brand communities is thus an opportunity organizations should not overlook.

Secondly, social media and social networks nurture eWOM which, similarly to traditional *WOM*, has a significant impact on consumers' purchase behaviour as individual consumers have more credibility than organizations in the eyes of potential consumers. EWOM is a twofold opportunity, as it is powerful and difficult to control. One negative or positive sentiment can gather impressions from millions of consumers. Consequently, as social media has enabled consumers to take more active role in interacting and sharing opinions, eWOM has a significant impact on brand's overall image. When conversation around the brand is positive, brand image is apt to strengthen and vice versa. (Cova &

Pace 2006; Acar & Puntoni 2016; Brown & Wang 2016.) Creating brand ambassadors and nurturing positive eWOM has thus become increasingly important for organizations. These opportunities for strengthening brand image, gaining positive referrals and new customers through authentic third-party recommendations (Cova & Pace 2006) can be seen as a powerful opportunity, that ELCs could also benefit from.

Thirdly, as one of the features of social media is to minimize cost of initiating and maintaining social connections, it can be argued that both organizations' operations as well as consumer involvement are improving due to the decreased barriers of taking action. For instance, Lam, Yeung and Cheng (2016) argue that social media effectively facilitate firms' information flow and knowledge sharing across internal and external social networks, which allows organizations to be more customer-oriented and innovative. This efficiency can also be looked from monetary viewpoint; in social-media cost of operations is relatively low and cost-effective (Ojoung et al. 2012; Bertot, Jaeger & Grimes 2010). The opportunities such efficiencies give for ELCs are inevitably worth of investigating

Finally, as it was earlier acknowledged, listening and learning in social media is easier than ever, and opportunities for consumer data collection vast. For example, it is estimated that humankind today produces the same amount of data in two days than in all history prior to 2003 (Smolan & Erwitt 2012). In other words, there is no lack of data. More precisely, the only challenge for brands is to know what to ask from data, how to research it and how to take advantage of the billions of consumers self-reporting on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter about their feelings, locations and desires (Strong 2015, 4).

As a summary it can be said, that social media builds on number of features that provide multi-effective opportunities for brands to take advantage on when building ELCs. Although it is not clear yet how the discussed features will specifically affect the process of building ELCs, there are potentialities that should be researched further.

2.2.3   *Social media challenges for experiential live campaigns*

Looking at the negative aspects of social media, the challenges include naturally what can be counted as causes for the imperfect fit; absence of sensory and affective experiences embedded in the strategic experiential modules of sense and feel. As sense marketing appeals to the objective of creating sensory experiences through sight, sound, touch, taste and smell (Schmitt 1999) social media with its current technologies is restricting full utilization of the module by excluding possibilities for delivering experiences related to touch, taste and smell. For instance, in the context of luxury e-commerce, Karl Lagerfeld has said, that internet overall does not convey "the unique feel and sophistication of lux-

ury materials, refined tailoring and extraordinary attention to detail found in luxury fash-ion." (Hennigs, Wiedmann & Klarmann 2012). Sensory experiences are the added value to products and the motivating power that moves consumers (Schmitt 1999); when build-ing ELCs in social media however, organizations need to find other ways for delivering such value.

Module of feel on the other hand, as Wood and Moss (2015) indicate, is fully utilized when experience takes place physically. According to them, live events are situations of heightened emotions and hedonism, which makes live audiences more easy targets for emotional messages brands may wish to deliver. As social media merely enable utiliza-tion of virtual live audiences, it is more difficult for brands to successfully deliver mes-sages that trigger strong hedonic emotions. Question for ELCs thus is, how to overcome this challenge?

Other challenges include high consumer control and stagnant distrust in brands in so-cial media. Due to high consumer control, organizations have a little say in the way in which its brand is discussed as uncontrolled - and unpredicted - consumer behavior forces organizations to consider carefully what they say and in what way to avoid negative eWOM and brand dilution, that follows unthoughtful social media strategy. (Zahy 2017.) Furthermore, because of the low trust towards brand generated content in social media, it can be argued that it is increasingly difficult for brands to create content that is not per-ceived as a lie, trash or another marketing attempt. There is a myriad of examples of this kind of unsuccessful campaigns that triggered a wave of negative, unpredicted sentiment on social media. For instance, Pepsi caused a lot of controversy with its video ad attempt-ing to promote its product within a frame of peace, understanding, and a backdrop of protest against police brutality. Examining the ad, its execution and the noble message, it can be said there is nothing, inherently, wrong with it. However, surprisingly for the cre-ators, campaign according to critics was trivializing the recent, widespread protests against the killings of black people. After continuous attention and criticism in social media, Pepsi removed the ad and apologized for missing the red flag thus avoiding further damage. (Schneier 2017.)

2.2.4 Social media and virtual experiential marketing

As it has become clear, social media and ELCs create a combination that leverages on multiple opportunities, but that also creates numerous challenges for organizations will-ing to create imposing virtual experiences for consumers. Virtual experiential marketing (VEM) has been seen as an interesting viewpoint for observing this combination, espe-cially for its potential to replace the lack of sensory and affective live experiences that burden social media. To start analyzing VEM in this context, it might be interesting to

first observe to what extent VEM elements substitute Schmitt's (1999) strategic experiential modules and, to how high its potential in enhancing ELCs overall impact can thus be valued. The more interconnections there are between VEM and SEMs, it could be argued, the higher possibilities there are for VEM to provide impactful solutions for ELCs. Furthermore, comparing the two could reveal interesting insight for tactics markets can use to pursue fulfilment of Schmitt's (1999) experiential objectives in social media.

Table 2 presents each VEM element - sense, interaction, flow, pleasure and community relationships together with their main objectives. Third row "replaced SEM", on the other hand refers to the preliminary hypothesis on which SEM each VEM element could replace while fourth row, to compare similarities, details their respective objectives.

Table 2   Overcoming the imperfect fit (Schmitt 1999; Liu et al. 2001)

VEM element	Sensory	Interaction	Flow	Pleasure	Community relationship
Objective	Create sensory experiences through sensory stimulus (Voices, colours and animations)	Enhance active involvement through engaging consumers into co-creation and problem-solving	Willingness to follow	Satisfaction though meeting consumers' expectations	Attitude development and encouragement to engage
Replaced SEM	Sense (sensory)	Think (cognitive)	Act (physical)	Feel (affective)	Behave (social identity)
Objective	Create sensory experiences through sight, sound, touch, taste and smell	Create cognitive, problem-solving experiences that engage consumers creatively	Target physical experiences and showing alternative ways of doing things, alternative lifestyles and interactions	Create affective experiences that range from mildly positive moods linked to brand to strong emotions of joy and pride	Creating motivational, inspirational and emotional experiences that are often motivated by role models

Looking at the VEM elements in the table, *sense* in the context of virtual marketplace refers to websites' ability to replace absence of physical experience with the objective of creating sensory experiences through sight, sound, and sensory stimulants, for instance colors, sounds and animations that enhance consumers stickiness to the website (Liu et al. 2001). As different technologic tools have advanced, in addition to just using pictures

and colors, organizations now have a variety of sensory tools they can use to create imposing experiences for consumers. Currently, for instance luxury brands are using so called 360-degree experiences that utilize music, 3D-pictures and videos, to transfer the same magic online that surrounds luxury brands in physical stores. (Hennigs, Wiedmann & Klarmann 2012.) By diversively taking advantage of technology, brands designing ELCs for social media could create similarly imposing experiences– yet the question is, to what extent? Is technology advanced enough to replace nature's five senses?

Interaction in virtual marketplaces on the other hand refers to consumers active involvement in co-creation and problem-solving by encouraging them to participate in modifying content of the mediated environment in real time. (Liu et al. 2001.) As it can be seen on the table, module of think has the same objective. This enables the assumption that organizations, by using interactive media, can create similar cognitive experiences online, for instance, by decreasing control and promoting co-creation in brand communities (Hennigs, Wiedmann & Klarmann 2012).

Third VEM element, *Pleasure,* is described as the degree to which person feels good, joyful, happy or satisfied in a situation, and therefore is more affective for external stimulus (Menon & Kahn 2002). This refers to a linkage with Schmitt's (1999) module of feel where consumers experience moods that range from mildly positive to strong hedonism. Generally, consumers feel pleasure when their expectations are met (Lie et al. 2001), so the question for ELCs is, how can they best promote satisfaction, and thus create moods where consumers feel affectionately about the brand? Collecting data and analysing brand-related conversations in social networks could help organizations to find out.

Fourthly, when consumers peruse the Internet and become immersed in its navigation and activities, they experience, what is regarded as, *flow.* It is an indication of a self-motivating, enjoyable state (Ghani & Desphpande 1994) that has been associated with positive attitudes (Csikszentmihalyi 1977) and exploratory behaviours (Menon & Kahn 2002). On the web, flow controls the way in which consumers determine their current location and the actions required to reach another location within the setting (Titus & Everett 1995). To ensure consumers experience on the site as intended, design and enhancement of flow is crucial. Of all the VEM elements, flow is probably the most loosely related to SEMs. However, there is a connection with the module of act, as by ensuring flow consumers could become physically engaged with the campaign. Even if there is no desire for self-improvement, like the physical module has, campaign with a carefully designed flow could enhance campaigns possibilities for creating an experience that engages consumer in following the campaign for longer. However, it is questionable whether mere flow would be enough to create such an impact, or whether other elements that speak to consumers' curiosity are needed.

Final point, *community relationship* has an impact on attitude development that encourages consumers to share interests, in consumption context of a product or a service

with one another (Rothaermela & Sugiyama 2001). Membership in a community, whether actual or perceived, often fosters loyalty and citizenship (Bergami & Bagozzi 2000) so it could be beneficial for ELCs to incorporate brand communities in their campaigns as well. Brand communities have already been considered as a social media opportunity, so it can be assumed, that community relationships have true potentiality to enhance ELCs and help brands communicate social identity, the final SEM element, when utilized properly. As social identity builds through motivating and inspiring consumers (Schmitt 1999), perhaps ELCs could benefit from community relationships by enabling consumers to co-create positive self-image in brand communities and then encourage to communicate it further?

2.2.5   Synthesis: social media and experiential live campaigns

After covering ELCs and social media independently, it is now possible to examine how social media and VEM could potentially affect ELC formation. Figure 3 outlines the process of building ELCs, combining the two previously discussed steps of strategic decision-making and success factors into one body. In the model, social media is presented as an entity traversing through the whole process, influencing decision-making on both steps at critical points. VEM on the other hand is outlined in the same context to demonstrate how its elements could potentially help organizations overcome challenges of the imperfect fit and enhance creation of, what can be called, virtual experiential live campaigns (vELCs).
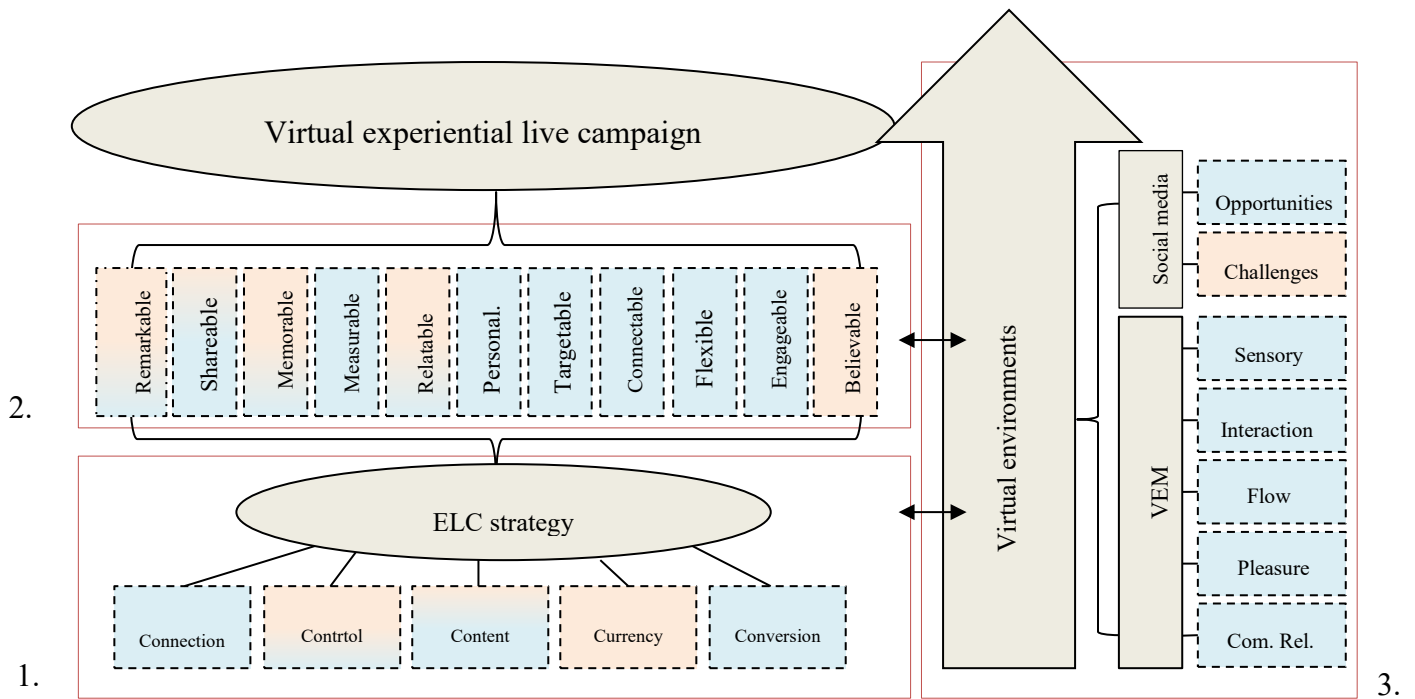
Figure 3   Creating virtual experiential live campaigns

As seen on the figure, social media and VEM, despite their differences, are combined in the same body to demonstrate the effects that virtual environments can have on ELCs as a whole. Small arrows represent this influence, and, based on previous literature review, points where virtual environments can be argued to have a positive or negative impact on ELC formation are highlighted in blue as providing potential opportunities and red as providing potential challenges. Therefore, to link everything discussed before, the questions is what kind of opportunities do social networks, technology, eWOM, operational efficiency and data collection have on ELCs and what kind of challenges do lack of sensory and affective experiences, high consumer control and distrust in social media impose? Furthermore, how could VEM elements - sensory stimulus, interaction, community relationship, flow and pleasure - enhance organizations' opportunities to overcome these challenges, or, what is more, make campaigns even better?

Examining the first step, strategic factors, it seems that virtual environments have mainly positive impact on strategy platforms of connection, content and conversion. Creating connections in social media in particular seems to be easier than ever as only Facebook enables organizations to reach and connect with more than one billion global users (LaRose et al. 2014). Within these social networks, brands can create communities in which they can easily connect with the self-imposed fans and, with the help of eWOM, increase the number of people that eventually becomes connected with the brand. This kind of support in creating, whatever the type, connections is arguably one of the biggest reasons for brands to utilize social media in the first place, as the opportunities are so obvious.

Secondly, social media seems to offer a particularly cost-effective path for generating and delivering additional content, as for instance digital infographics are potentially much more high performing in terms of reach and faster to create in comparison to the ones printed and published in magazine. Furthermore, social media support delivery of nearly all types of content, which gives brands more opportunities and variety to work with when designing campaigns. Whether low trust in social media however affects usability of additional content is under question mark, as it is difficult to evaluate, whether ELCs ability to generate content that feels authentic (Smith & Hanover 2016, 42 would be enough to compensate the distrust consumers traditionally feel towards brand generated content.

Finally, making conversions, as converting someone into something, due to social media's efficiency, can be argued to be far easier than in other channels. For instance, encouraging consumers to buy something online is easier than ushering them to walk into a store, as online button that enables consumer to purchase a product without moving physically not just saves him or her time but also gives time to think of the purchase. Furthermore, creating high impact experiences through sensory stimulus, and using community relationships to build motivation that inspire consumers to act (Schmitt 1999) could be the kind of encouragement consumers need to become converted.

Challenges that virtual environments impose on the other hand seem to be mostly concerned with the strategy platforms of control and currency. Control in particular can be argued to cause struggles for organizations because of the power balance that due to high consumer empowerment in social media has switched to favour consumers. Because of the lesser control that organizations have on their social media presence, they may be forced to abandon control strategies that exercise higher control and adapt to the rules created by consumers and virtual platforms. In social media, control could thus build on structures exercising no control, such as crowdsourcing, or low-control, as 'informed influence', which builds on experience design that uses information and content as the control platform. (Smith & Hanover 2016, 40.) As a positive notion, it seems that community relationship could somewhat enhance organizations opportunities for grasping better control, as it has been related with consumers' attitude development and loyalty (Rothaermela & Sugiyama 2001), which can be argued to make their behavior less unpredictable.

Currency presents the second, yet a controversial challenge, as it is questionable whether creating experiences that consumers are willing to pay for is the most effective way to take advantage of currencies in social media (Pine & Gilmore 2014). Instead, the reason why organizations are on social media bases on their objective to connect and reach consumers effectively which, it could be argued, would not be possible if entry charge, whatever the type, would be taken. The evident question thus is, whether ELCs executed in social media should merely rely on low effort currencies, if to any.

Proceeding to the second step of the model, success factors, it seems that virtual environments enhance campaign's shareability, remarkability measurability, personalization,

targetability, connectability and engageability. *Shareability* and *engageability* of the campaign increase dramatically in social media as consumers' efforts for engaging in an activity, such as sharing a post or writing a comment, decrease. By conducting experiences particularly in brand communities, organizations could also leverage from the feeling of togetherness that in offline environments not just enhances impact of the experience but also makes it more *remarkable* for consumers. (Smith & Hanover 2016.) This way, it could be argued, consumers could become subject to share their interests and feelings with one another (Rothaermela & Sugiyama 2001) and thus become more engaged with the campaign. Interestingly, it also seems that flow could have an indirect relation with engagement and remarkability as, at best, the self-motivating, enjoyable mindset it creates could result in a situation where consumer feels physically fixed with the campaign (Ghani & Desphpande 1994). Therefore, if not create active involvement, flow could at least increase the time consumers follow the campaign and thus help organizations battle against the lack of authentic sensory and affective experiences that engage consumers in offline environments.

As for *connectability,* it seems that especially brand communities are a great tool for enhancing organizations possibilities to connect with consumers throughout the campaign. For instance, pre-campaign, social media can be used for crowdsourcing ideas, checking brand perception or building engagement in a brand community. During campaign on the other hand, brands can share photos and extra content while after the campaign social media can be utilized for reliving the highlights, to leverage influencers, summarize content, measure results and create satisfaction polls. (Smith & Hanover 2016, 85.)

Similar logic applies to *targeting*, as brand communities enable organizations to connect with those consumers who can be argued to be most favorable for the brand and thus better embrace message of the campaign. Furthermore, through data collection and different technological tools such as geo-gadgets and location detectors, organizations cannot just extract useful patterns but also gain insight into market requirements (Wu et al. 2015) and create simultaneously a mix of mass-reach online engagement and intimate one-on-one experiences that enhance personalization and targeting of consumers (Smith & Hanover 2016, 114).

Finally, as for *measuring* effectiveness of a campaign, social media, especially networks like Facebook, offer organizations a variety of tools for ready-made analysis that enable them to identify consumer engagement. These metrics are typically easy to use, and help organizations evaluate how engagement has changed over time. Despite their effectiveness, however, there is a reverse side as in addition to general view of a campaign they provide, there is no much other value in them. In other words, without metrics that specifically measure precise objectives of the campaign, it would be difficult to determine long-term success.

To discuss the challenges virtual environments impose for success factors, it seems there are especially challenges related to campaign's memorability, *relatability* and *believability*. As it has been discussed, power of eWOM that amplifies experiences and helps organizations to connect with consumers, lies in its authenticity, as without sensory proof and at the era of fake news consumers have lower trust in content created by brands themselves. This can be argued to challenge ELC creation in social media in relation to its believability and, consequently, relatability and shareability as when consumers believe the story of the campaign, they are also more likely to relate to it personally and share the message further. (Smith & Hanover 2016, 95.) However, similarly to additional content, it will be interesting to see whether ELCs are authentic enough source of content to overcome this challenge and thus enable consumers believe in and relate with what organizations have to say. Finally, the last question that challenges ELCs in social media is related to campaign's remarkability. How, without sensory and affective experiences, could organizations create experiences that truly surprise consumers? In social media they also do not have the advantage of tangible triggers such as goodie bags, photographs and other tangible gifts, that increase the memory campaign leaves consumers with. Therefore, it might be up to campaign's creativity and technologic tools to create the experiences that consumers are to remember. Next chapter will discuss the empirical research design, detailing the methods used within investigating the phenomenon.

3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research approach

This study takes a qualitative approach for examining ELCs in social media. Qualitative study can be considered the best choice for investigating under researched, increasingly important, yet complex phenomenon that requires rich, full and holistic data to be fundamentally understood. In comparison to qualitative approach, quantitative view builds on more detailed conventions and structured measures that cannot be considered in this study due to the lack of general knowledge that would enable setting of carefully specified, empirically measurable questions. (Miles 1979.) The insights gained through this study can help future research to design quantitative studies that can provide more structured, and detailed information. At this stage, however, freedom to investigate ELCs in social media extensively and intuitively is a condition required to build tentative understanding of the phenomenon.

Methodologically, this study can be best described as an instrumental case study. While qualitative approach is useful in learning about multi-dimensional, less researched topics, case study method within the approach is considered particularly suitable in new topic areas that have not been explored before (Kidder 1982) like it is in the case of this study. When strategically chosen, case study can provide researcher with authentic, in-depth data that due to its highly iterative process that is tightly linked to data, is likely to be consistent with empirical observations (Eisenhardt 1989) and replicate emergent theory (Pettigrew 1990). This is highly valuable as, motivated by its aims, this study looks to find evidence in the previously presented model of social media's effects on ELCs and potentially find similarities and connections between real life and theory. For this reason, this study is simultaneously considered instrumental; aim is not to learn about the case itself but rather connect it with the phenomenon and facilitate learning about it (Stake 2005).

Based on these fundamentals, this study investigates a Facebook live campaign Checkout247, carried out by the Finnish retailing cooperative organisation S-Group together with the Unit for Public Diplomacy (UFPD) at the Foreign Ministry of Finland. Campaign was considered the most suitable example of an ELC in social media as it combines live and social media by casting a 12-hour live stream from the checkout belt of Prisma Kaari on Facebook to both participants' channels, UFPD's "thisisFINLAND" and S-Groups "Prisma". A complementary channel was also provided, as Finnish followers were able to listen to a live narrative from the conveyor belt through radio Suomipop's reportage. Campaign can thus be argued to have clear boundaries, which makes it ideal to be studied from a case point of view (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). It also fulfils Eisenhardt's

(1989) criteria of a theoretically useable case, as it gathered together tens of thousands of views, over one million overall views, tens of thousands of Facebook comments and Twitter posts (Laakso 2017). Furthermore, campaign gained a finalist position at the 'Best citizen engagement' category in City Nation Place awards in 2018 (Finalists 2018), and can thus be considered as an example of real life that successfully reflects theory in a form of a single case. Finally, the author is also previously familiar with the campaign as she worked at the UFPD at the time of its implementation. It could be argued, that this enables her to understand campaign's basic functionalities, motivations and objectives, and therefore to analyse it better.

3.2   Data collection

To take into consideration the whole complexity of the relationships between social media and ELCs, methodological triangulation that has been associated with more comprehensive data, increased validity and enhanced understanding of the studied phenomenon, (Risjord, Moloney & Dunpar 2001) was applied in the process of data collection. Triangulation method used in this study could be best described as within-method triangulation, where at least two different techniques for collecting data are used within one methodological paradigm. Within-method triangulation can be considered particularly suitable within a single case study like this, as it enables multi-dimensional examination of the phenomenon and its different variables, as organizers in contrast to each other and organizators in contrast to their target audiences. This, as Jick (1979) advocates, enhances reliability and accuracy of conclusions.

Based on these fundamentals, this study used primary data gathered through interviews, in which two key personnel in charge of the case campaign at the UFPD and S-Group were interviewed, and secondary data gathered from conversation taking place at the brand communities of "thisisFINLAND" and "Prisma" at the time of the campaign. Such time-based data collection was possible, as Facebook enables storing of a live feed for later viewing, which made it possible to examine and analyze consumers' reactions and responses to the campaign months after the initial launch of the campaign.

Decision to gather data from interviews and conversations based on the objective not just to understand campaign creators but also to match their perceptions with those of consumers. Furthermore, consumers' online behavior, as how they reacted to the campaign and how was it differentiated in the two respective brand communities was perceived particularly interesting. This kind of data would be hard to obtain through collection of primary data.

3.2.1   Primary data

Primary data gathered consisted of two interviews, where the vice president for publishing and media at S-Group and social media editor at the Unit for Public Diplomacy were interviewed. Interviews followed a semi-structured interview schedule, as it was considered the most suitable for a case study and the in-depth analysis it requires (Freeman et al. 2012). For instance, Qu and Dumay (2011) argue that pre-prepared, semi-structured questions that incorporate a series of broad themes help gain more elaborated answers and direct conversation towards topics and issues that are at the centre of interest. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews give researcher flexibility to diverge and explore topics emerging during the interview that are pertinent to the research themes but are not predicted (Cooksey & McDonald 2011). This kind of approach can be considered particularly valuable, as it enables systematic exploration of the emerging theory, while leaving space for new findings as well. Furthermore, as Schwartzman (1993, X) points out, semi-structured interviews enjoy popularity due to their capability of disclosing diligent facets such as motivations, objectives and results - that could be hard to seize otherwise.

The themes covered during the interviews were based on theory to ensure appropriate coverage of the phenomenon and thus the fulfilment of the aim of the study. Consequently, the themes discussed were *strategic factors* and *success factors* of the campaign, *social media opportunities* and *challenges* and the *potential effects of VEM elements* on success of the campaign. Furthermore, a fifth theme focusing on the two participatory *organizations as independent actors* was added to understand the different fundamentals, reasons and objectives behind creation of the campaign. Importance of identifying distinctive motivations could not be overstated, as the decisions on campaign's objectives determine the perceived success of the campaign. It could be argued, that the UFPD being a non-profit organization and S-group, one of the biggest retail chains in Finland, possess somewhat distinctive objectives that drove initial participation to the campaign. To make conclusions, it was important to identify these objectives.

As the author worked at the UFPD at the time of designing the campaign, she was in the position to identify the personnel most essential to the campaign, not only at the UFPD but also at S-Group. The interviewees were chosen because of their experience amidst social media marketing and, more importantly, comprehensive knowledge about the campaign.

At the time of the interview, participant A was working at the UFPD as a communication assistant and social media editor. She holds a master's degree in economics and has several years of relevant working experience within social media inside the organization. Overseeing all UFPD's social media channels, she also held a central role in both executive and operative levels within the case campaign. Therefore, it could be assumed that the participant understands the nature of ELCs in the context of social media and is able

to answer to author's questions about the campaign. Participant B on the other hand at the time of the interview was working as a vice president for publishing and media at S-Group. She oversaw payed media in all media channels and had worked at S-Group for six years. Furthermore, she had completed a master's degree in economics similarly as participant A. Most notably, she was the person in charge of the campaign at S-Group, thus being the best possible person for answering the questions about the campaign. What is more, she had previous experience from executing a similar slow television campaign in May 2017, when the Checkout 247 was aired on Facebook and television in cooperation with Sub. At the time, campaign targeted mainly Finnish consumers and was S-Group's first attempt to utilize social media and experiential live marketing. Consequently, participant B's views not only about the case campaign itself but also on the differences in between conducting ELCs in social media and television can be considered valuable.

The interviews were held between April and May 2018 in person to ensure a natural setting for equal and open intercourse (Qu & Dumay 2011). Both participants were met during work day in their respective offices, representative of thisisFINLAND in a meeting room and representative of Prisma less formally in a work cafeteria. The opportunity to meet in person in such environments promotes establishment of rapport that according to Hannabuss (1996, 26) promotes quality and validity of the answers. It could be argued, that due to earlier acquaintance with both participants, confidence in the interviewing situation was also initially higher and more open than traditionally. Both interviews were conducted in interviewees preferred language Finnish, recorded with their permission and transcribed. Interviews lasted 33 and 39 minutes.

Before the interview, the interviewees were informed about the topic, themes and the aim of the interview so that they would be better able to answer the questions. To ensure quality of the answers, participants were also provided with an open list of topics that the author was interested in covering during the interview. Finally, they lasted for 33 and 39 minutes.

3.2.2   Secondary data

The method applied for gathering the conversation data could be best described as netnographic, approach focused on observing, describing and interpreting consumers' online behavior. It was chosen as the second data collection method, as it was considered to enhance author's opportunities for understanding how consumers truly perceived and responded to the case campaign. Netnography is also linked to the nature and development of social media, which makes it a natural pair to this particular case study. (La Rocca, Mandelli & Snehota 2014.) To enrich the netnographic findings and to compare

the overall engagement, other relevant engagement figures such as number of reactions, shares and views were gathered from Facebook conversations. These figures, however, were not at the heart of the analysis.

Secondary data was gathered during June 2018 from six individual videos, that together contain 24 hours of comments. This was due to Facebook's legislations that limits live stream's maximum length to four hours (Tips for using Facebook Live). Therefore, campaign's 12-hour live feed on both brand communities was divided into three separate videos, first starting at 16.00 (+2 UTC), second at 20.00 and final one at 0.00. Furthermore, consumer engagement figures – reactions, shares and views – were also gathered from each video and added together to form overall engagement numbers.

The data collected thus consists of 13,9 thousand reactions, 3200 shares and 790 thousand views, while the number of comments amounted 27,6 thousand. Due to the high number of comments, a theoretical sample was taken to best utilize the limited resources available, and 'focus efforts on the most usable cases' that best help answering the research questions (Eisenhardt 1989). Theoretical sampling is associated with such objective-driven, rather than random decisions which, when looking at data as adapted to its purpose and asking questions such as what kind of data is available and how does it appear from the point of view of analysis, also advocates for theoretical sampling. (Sarajärvi & Tuomi 2002, 88-89.) Within this study, theoretically most usable cases are undoubtedly the most popular comments that have gained most reactions from other consumers. Such comments can be argued to reveal more interesting, and rich information as well as to unveil what has appealed to consumers and what kind of opinions have been popular among them. Furthermore, this way comments that do not give more value for analysis, as include one or two words or irrelevant commenting, were disclosed from the sample.

To get the most representative units for analysis, comments on each six videos were first filtered based on their popularity. This was done with Facebook's automatic filtering function that places first comments with most reactions and responses in an arithmetic order. Latest are the comments with least engagement. In addition to the most popular comments, system also highlights comments generated by the host channel, regardless of their popularity. This can be considered as an advantage, as it enables observing how the two brands interacted with consumers in real life at the time of the campaign. After applying the filtering, 500 most popular comments on each stream were chosen for further analysis, the final comment pool thus consisting of 3000 comments. Despite the focus on most usable cases, it was in author's interest to ensure that also, what can be called normal or general conversation, remains included in the analysis, which is why 500 was considered optimal sample size. Table 3 presents in detail the aforesaid data including all numeric comparisons and the samples on comments in their time-based clusters.

Table 3   Facebook figures and comments gathered for empirical research

Data	ThisisFINLAND	Prisma
Reactions	4200	12 300
"like"	2000	8000
"love"	511	1636
"ha-ha"	581	1957
"wow"	61	312
"sad"	11	163
"mad"	20	322
Shares	1447	1749
Views	243 thousand	547 thousand
Comments	4,6 thousand	23 thousand
"4-8pm"	500	500
"8-12pm"	500	500
"12-4am"	500	500

At the time of gathering data, thisisFINLAND's Facebook community had 173 613 followers (ThisisFINLAND) and Prisma's respective 348 259. Simon, Brexendorf and Fassnacht (2016) interestingly argue that as community size increases, consumer engagement simultaneously decreases. This however, based on the above numbers seems not to be the case as being approximately two time bigger, Prisma had gathered three times more reactions, two times more views and five times more comments. In proportion, only the number of shares has been decreased. It thus will be interesting to see, whether community influenced quality of the conversation, or whether other similar causalities come to the fore. For instance, reactions "mad" and "sad" implicate that thisisFINLAND followers were more pleased with the campaign, as the relative number of dislikes is significantly smaller compared to the overall amount of reactions. Ratio of overall reactions between thisisFINLAND and Prisma is 0,3 while the ratio of "mad" is 0,06 in favor of thisisFINLAND. Numeric comparisons are not at the heart of analysis, but they are included as they may reveal interesting insights.

3.3   Data analysis

Technique used for analysing data could be best described as pattern matching, where the focus is on finding direct replications of theoretical propositions from empirical data (Yin 2009). In other words, the pragmatic reality – empirically based patterns – are compared

with theoretical ideas or theoretical patterns (Guangming 2007, 7). If predicted patterns coincide, initial propositions are confirmed and symmetry between the patterns strengthens internal validity of the research. (Cambell 1975; Yin 2009.) On the other hand, if the patterns do not match, the theory might be incorrect or inadequately developed, and should thus be re-examined and reformulated (Guangming 2007, 7). Pattern matching fits to this study as it, in the aforesaid manner, enables investigating the relationship between emerging theory and pragmatic reality that the case study represents. Furthermore, method has been recognised as one of the best case study strategies, (see Pauwels & Matthyssens 1999; Kohn 2005; Heffernan & Farrell 2005; Thompson & Perry 2004) and is closely associated with three important components of a case study research design. (Yin 1984, 20–26).

In this study, as Guangmin (2007, 446) describes, pattern is any consistent and characteristic form that is non-random and potentially describable. To find such patterns, data was categorized according to theory, that within ELCs is heavily based on *strategic and creative decision-making* while theory on social media is focused on *opportunities and challenges* as well as *virtual experiential marketing*. Themes thus follow closely those used in the semi structured interview schedule, which enabled author to conduct more effective and thorough examination on each individual subject.

Data analysis was started by reading and coding the transcribed interviews according to the chosen themes. On a second phase, the codes were brought together and associated to their respective categories, as the previously chosen themes, where similarities and differences within answers of the interviewees were detected. Similar process was done with the data on Facebook comments, and, after that, the similarities and differences within the interviewees and consumers' perceptions were detected and matched with theoretical patterns. The following table presents the four main themes and the codes as subcategories used in the analysis.

Table 4   Themes used in the analysis of empirical data

Main themes	1. Strategic factors	2. Success factors	3. Social media	4. VEM
Sub-categories	Connection Control Content Currency Conversion	Remarkable Shareable Memorable Measurable Relatable Personable Targetable Connectable Flexible Engageable Believable	Opportunities Challenges	Sensory Interaction Pleasure Flow Community rela-tionships

As seen on the table, the analysis follows closely theory and the figure seen in the synthetizing chapter 2.2.5. Unlike the other themes, social media did not have carefully detailed individual sub-categories, as they were perceived to limit richness of the analysis. At the final phase of the analysis, theoretical framework was re-examined in the light of the newly gained findings, and then modified to reflect the most recent academic knowledge thus obtained.

3.4   Evaluation of the study

This study can be considered valuable for its potential to learn from one case and under-stand many in a study area that is novel, under researched and meets increasing interest from organizations. Its ability to answer "how" and "why" type of questions that are as-sociated with all ELCs in social media can be argued to provide significant and relevant information for brands looking to better utilize social media in their marketing mix (Yin 2002). To objectively evaluate these achievements, Guba and Lincoln's (1985) criteria for justifying trustworthiness of the research process was applied. This was done by in-vestigating credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability of the methods used.

Credibility can be measured by analysing how detailed description of the case study is, and how truthful the gathered data is (Guba & Lincoln 1985). Within this research it

could be argued, that the single case focus and author's previous familiarity with the campaign made it easier for her to provide thick description of the phenomenon that help reader to convey the situations that have been investigated and the context that surrounds them. As for the data on the other hand, author used well established data collection methods for gathering it and ensured its adequate quality through triangulation and saturation. (Shenton 2003.)

As for dependability and transferability of the study, it could be argued, that there are some restrictions that limit applicability of the theoretical framework to other any research context. The reason for this lay not just in the nature of the research method applied and its subjective nature (Yin 2009) but also in the phenomena scrutinised (Fidel 1993; Marshall & Rossman 1999) and its theoretical propositions, exclaiming that the success of ELC is always dependent on its objectives. In other words, this means that to make consistent findings future cases should share the same objectives with the Checkout247. However, it should be noted, that investigating multiple realities and understanding the whole variety of strategies and tools that are applicable within ELCs in social media could prove just as useful. To enable future researchers to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results, author focused efforts for instance on clear identification of the dominating objectives that mark out success of the campaign, and devoted specific sections for discussing the research design, its implementation and data gathering process. (Shenton 2003.) Transferability on the other hand was enhanced by providing rich contextual information about the fieldwork that conveyed, for instance, clear boundaries and number of organizations taking part in the study, information on where they were based, and the time over which the data was collected (Cole & Gardner 1979).

Finally, conformability of the research and author's reasoning was achieved by reflecting the predispositions that might have influenced author's decision making (Miles & Huberman 1994). To demonstrate unbiased, objective thinking, every decision made throughout the research process were carefully motivated, and, for instance, explained why certain methods were chosen over another. Furthermore, to make it easier for the reader to follow author's interpretation and demonstrate neutrality in the analysis, visuals, figures and quotations that objectively capture individuals' experiences, were used. (Guba & Lincoln 1989.) The following chapter will introduce the case campaign in more detail and present findings of the study.

4 FINDINGS OF THE CASE CAMPAIGN

4.1 Introduction of the case campaign

The case studied in this research was S-group and Unit for Public Diplomacy's "Checkout247", a 12-hour live broadcast streaming unedited footage from a checkout counter of a supermarket, revealing what Finnish shoppers have put in their baskets at the eve of Finland's 100th Independence Day. The idea behind the campaign results from a business case where S-group, due to liberation of store opening times, had renewed its Prismas' operating hours and added several round-the-clock open Prismas to it offering. The problem was to find a fun and inspiring way of telling consumers about the new operating hours and, as a result, the first Checkout247, or then "Hihna247", targeting Finnish consumers was launched in Midsummer 2017.

The original campaign, Hihna247, was channeled on TV in cooperation with Sub TV channel, and further amplified on social media. Campaign got hundreds of thousands Finnish consumers hooked, as the continuous slow movement of the conveyor was considered somewhat meditative and ordinarily charming. Following campaign's success, the Unit for Public Diplomacy initiated the idea of creating a similar experience for larger, international audiences in cooperation. Concept of the campaign was considered to serve well UFPD's agenda of sharing stories about Finland in a truthful and fun way by opening consumers all around the world an authentic window to Finland, where the everyday life is regarded best in the world. Furthermore, it was in UFPD's interest to find ways to engage Finnish consumers in grass roots country image work. Idea for co-operation became in suitable time for S-group as well, as the company had opened new overnight Prismas, consumers were asking for a sequel, and the modified concept of Hihna247 with a new international aspect was a fresh extension to the original idea:

"Consumers kept asking for a sequel to the campaign, and with Christmas time at hands, new open Prismas and the continuing overnight opening times, this was a particularly good time for us to fulfil the request". (Vice President for publishing and media, Prisma, 31.5.2018.)

Eve of the Independence Day was a natural choice of a day to carry out the campaign for its several commercial opportunities. First, it suited well S-group's objectives as it was apt for attracting thousands of consumers for last-minute holiday shopping. For the UFPD on the other hand, the date offered an opportunity to show its foreign viewers how Finnish consumers prepare for centenary celebrations and let everybody participate regardless of their geographical locations. This is also one of the reasons, why Facebook

was selected as the main channel of the experience, as reaching vast audiences from around the world was not considered possible through any other channel. Furthermore, both organizations had strong followership on Facebook, which was perceived to help launching the campaign. From Prisma's point of view on the other hand, channel's engaging and interactional capabilities were a strength as Prisma's consumers were already interacting with the brand for instance by making questions or sending feedback. This was seen as a strength in comparison to TV, for instance.

On implementation of the campaign, Prisma's Facebook community was directed for Finnish consumers and discussion in Finnish while thisisFINLAND's community encouraged discussion in English in a global environment. Both communities had two online moderators in place taking care of the conversations, for instance making sure the conversations remained at the preferred language and informing consumers about each new four-hour broadcast, throughout the 12 hours. The two streams appeared identical for consumers with the only practical difference being the generally spoken language. Below figure demonstrates how consumers saw the campaign in practise.

Figure 4   Checkout247 broadcast on Facebook in December 2018

As it is seen, live stream was featured on left side of the page while commenting option was placed on the right. In addition to writing comments, consumers were able to tag their friends, show emotions through different emoticons from love to anger and share the broadcast with their own followers. Live stream on both communities was also featured with info texts that were created to educate, mainly the foreign consumers, about Finnish everyday life and consumption. As seen on the camera angle, the camera at Prisma Kaari was fixed straight on top of the conveyor, so that only the groceries floating on the conveyor could be seen.

Following theoretical framework seen in chapter 2.2.5, the subsequent sub-chapters first examine findings of the case study in relation to strategic factors and success factors.

After discussing the overall process of building vELCs, the impact of virtual environments on them together with main findings, are discussed in the concluding sub-chaper.

4.2 Perceived foundations for a successful virtual experiential live campaign

4.2.1 Strategic factors

Findings of this study seem to support the idea, that consumer engagement increases when consumers are enabled to take control over the interactions (Duggal 2015). This kind of approach to control was dominant within the Chekout247, although talking about complete consumer freedom would be misleading as there were several, carefully controlled practices that imply more of a shared control between consumers and the two organizations.

Shared control was indispensable, as both interviewees perceived, that when using social media, full control can never be reached. On the opposite, there is a little to be done to ensure consumers follow the desired code of conduct throughout the campaign. Furthermore, it is impossible to know what happens in social media in the first place, how consumers will react or whether they will engage with the campaign or not. For this reason, thorough planning and preparation are fundamental to succeed navigating the campaign in the unpredictable virtual map of social media, both physically and online, as the representor of Prisma commented:

"*Broadly thinking, the whole campaign was well planned, and we had a tight control over of what happened at the store physically. We had well trained security on call, cashiers, personnel… Overall a clear plan for how to execute the campaign and how to handle issues such as data privacy and security policies.*" (Vice President for publishing and media, Prisma, 31.5.2018.)

In addition to ensuring physical settings, it is necessary to set clear codes for what is not accepted from consumers and the strategies for increasing engagement whenever needed. In effort to increase such control, both interviewees mentioned the importance of having Facebook moderators at standby throughout the campaign. Role of the moderators however was rather twofold, as on the one, they were prepared with a set of questions and games for increasing activity in a situation of low engagement, while on the other, they were instructed not to disturb floating conversation. Therefore, it could be argued, it is important that moderators are well familiar with the brand so that they are able to make

circumspect decisions, as to react to unpredetermined situations. Representor of thisisFINLAND commented:

"*Anything could happen with live. Of course, we were prepared with different scenarios asking what if, what if… We tried to be anticipate everything, but you never can. That is why it is important to be able to be reactive as well*." (Social media editor, the UFPD, 5.4.2018)

In implementation of the campaign, Prisma and its moderators adopted the viewpoint of more circumspect behaviour while thisisFINLAND remained more passive letting consumers to build their own experience. By taking a significantly more active role in moderating the conversations, Prisma contributed an overall number of 79 times, while thisisFINLAND's moderators used their voice a distinctly lesser nine times. For example, Prisma was active in cross-channel marketing and answering consumers' questions. It also made several apropos comments and questions that each gained on average 13 positive consumer reactions in relation to the 6,3 thisisFINLAND gained per comment.

It is interesting that the two organizations adopted such different approaches within the same campaign. It however reveals interesting insights, as up to date researchers have been unanimous of what type of control works most effectively (see Heinonen, Strandvik & Mickelsson 2010; Duggal 2015; Smith & Hanover 2016). Within Checkout247, both approaches seemed to work parallelly well, which implies that lesser emphasis should be put on previous theoretical conclusions and more on determining 'who are the audience, what are campaign's objectives, and how comfortable the organization is with lesser control' (Duggal 2015). For instance, when comparing the objectives, it seems it was more important for Prisma to highlight its brand and thus exercise more control. ThisisFINLAND on the other hand had no such need, and staying on the background, and thus letting go its role as the leader of the experience (Duggal 2015) was well justified.

For brands designing their control strategies in social media in the future, it might be important to notify the fine line between of what can be called too much freedom and freedom that still enables the brand to shine out. Furthermore, where is the other end, where interaction is not free anymore and brand begins to interfere too much? Another take away from these findings would be to ask, whether it is enough to talk about control at all as a strategy platform, as full control in social media cannot be reached. Instead, perhaps talking about the level of moderation could be more timely and accurate. Furthermore, as seen, there are many different levels of moderating with rather diligent differences that certainly will give future ELCs food of thought.

Findings on the second strategy platform, connection, also revealed interesting insights. First, they seemed to support the idea that creating connections with consumers, whatever the type, in social media are easier than ever – for a cautious brand. While

Prisma aimed at creating connections of delight and surprise, thisisFINLAND perceived that the campaign itself was enough to advocate for the brand personality that the brand had previously pursued in the "only-in-Finland"-spirit. Therefore, it was interested in pursuing more educational connections with consumers:

"We had a small educational objective here as we wanted to tell consumer, who had no idea what Finland is or what people in Finland do, about our country" (Social media editor, the UFPD, 5.4.2018).

To do this, the lower section of the live broadcast on Facebook, on both Prisma and thisisFINLAND's channels, was inscribed for facts about Finnish life and lifestyle. Soon after the launch of the campaign foreign viewers started to make further questions, having *previously unknown Finnish civil moderators*, answering them. It can be argued, that such educational approach was a great strategy for thisisFINLAND, as it seemed to highly affect on the quality of conversations and to activate Finnish consumers on the grassroot level to participate in the country image work. For Prisma's consumers instead, the English-speaking info texts seemed to cause more of a confusion and reduce impact of the experience rather than to bring more value. Therefore, it could be argued that creating connections that have potential to speak for the audience and to enhance brands opportunities for reaching its objectives is important. Despite such drawback, Prisma succeeded in achieving its real connection objectives, as Prisma's audience filled the comment box with comments that seemed to imply of delight, pleasure and entertainment.

XX Puujalka · 1:04:59 "It is so much fun to read these comments and laugh out loud in a metro 😂 😂 😂 😂 😂" (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Näätänen · 32:09 "Mummu, what did you do when Finland turned 100 years?", "Well, first I was watching chechkout247 and later president shaking hands for a couple of hours. It was great time!" Maybe I will go through this conversation later in the future. But for now, couldn't come up with better things to do for the night: knitting and checkout!" (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

What seems to be the drawback of thisisFINLAND in relation to Prisma, is the language spoken in the two communities. While Prima hosted mostly Finnish speaking conversations, thisisFINLAND suffered from Finnish speaking conversation, which can be argued to have decreased brand's opportunities to connect with its true audience outside Finland. Reasons for this seem to come back down to the platform of control. While Prisma was active in promoting the English-speaking channel for those wishing to interact in English, thisisFINLAND did no such efforts. Therefore, it seems that the two strategy

platforms are somewhat overlapping and need common coordination to be thoroughly successful.

As for conversions, social media indeed supports pursuing aimed conversions, even abstract ones, as it was within the Checkout247. This however seems to have nothing to do with social media's effortlessness as assumed before. Instead, the combination of live and social media arguably provides a communication channel, where messages can be bold and straightforward instead of ambiguous, as it is possible to *show* consumers the same thing that otherwise would have been explained. This functioned particularly well with Prisma, who wanted to advertise its store opening times.

XX Hämäläinen · 1:06:58 *"I didn't know that Prisma is open during the night"* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Suominen · 1:07:17 *"This Prisma is 24/7 open I guess...?"* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Virkki · 35:23 *"It's great the stores are open throughout the night. Sending my best wishes for all shoppers this evening!"* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

As it is already seen, social media seems to reveal new sides and aspects to ELCs and the idea of how they should be created and implemented most effectively. One of the most prominent aspects based on theory was evidently brands' opportunities to extract new content from the campaign for rest of the marketing mix, as it was seen potential in tackling the problem of authenticity in social media and in increasing the overall efficiency of the campaign. Both interviewees however refused to have used the opportunity, as it was on the opposite seen to decrease authenticity and the unique nature of the campaign, even though both brands gained amounts of authentic and easy-to-use consumer-created content. For example, thisisFINLAND gathered a group of questions from foreigners – common assumptions – and answers from the civil moderators, that could have been shared further. Prisma on the other hand gathered a lot of entertaining and funny comments. To engage consumers after the campaign, perhaps it could have gathered the best comments and let consumers to vote which one they considered the best – and reward the commenter.

Representative of thisisFINLAND however particularly emphasized, that thisisFINLAND is of the type of a channel, where it is not common to repeat something that has already been done. This kind of approach seems to be both true and not true, as Prisma having executed the concept for the second time seemed not to lack pleased consumers still buying its authenticity. Furthermore, it seems that the sequel enabled consumer to create small communities inside the bigger community, as conversation initiated between

'online friends', those who had already met during the original 'Hihna247'. On the other hand, while most were satisfied, some compared the two campaigns between each other and pondered the differences, not always in a positive way. Furthermore, duplicating the concept can be argued to have decreased the element of surprise and created expectations that are sometimes hard to fulfil - with the cost of potentially letting consumers down.

XX Rantanen · 23:46 *"Am I the only one thinking this is 'worse' than before? Everybody is looking for a moment in fame* 😅*"* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Diefenbaugh · 21:49 *"I wish there was voices like before".* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

Nevertheless, it is hard to tell whether the campaign would have been more successful if extra content was utilized in the marketing mix. However, one assumption can be done, as for those organizations wishing to utilize the campaign further the most visible opportunity inevitably is the consumer created content. Thus, perhaps talking about consumer created content instead of mere content, would be more appropriate?

Finally, as for the currency within which consumers were exchanging the experience for, it seems that in social media such currency is not needed. For the Checkout247, it can be argued to have been an advantage, that anyone was able to access the experience, easily and whenever wanted. The comments where consumers, having watched the broadcast for more than several hours, wondered how it possibly happened that they ended up following a conveyor belt for such a long time, seemed to offer particularly entertaining, and easily identifiable, content for other consumers.

XXX Hietanen · 1:05:50 *"Why am I watching this again* 😆 😆 *this is just so addicting, could just watch more and more* 🤭 *ps. Conveyor should have a cleaning break, it starts to be dirty"* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XXX Lifländer · 2:18:12 *"I watched this live almost for two hours during the day, forgot it, ended up to Facebook later and here I sit again watching D:..."* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XXX Jääskeläinen · 34:03 *"there was over 1k on here earlier watch so glad I not the only one who finds this interesting lol* 😁 😆 😆*".* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

Free and uncomplicated access proved to be an advantage also because the longer the live succeeds to hold consumer's interest, the vaster crowds can see the feed on Facebook. Such technology could not have been utilized with a currency. Therefore, it can be argued

that the previous assumption of the potential harmfulness of the use of a currency in social media is correct.

4.2.2   Success factors

Findings of this study seem to verify the assumption that social media, due to its engaging and interacting capabilities, is a great channel for delivering ELCs. It could be even argued, that engageability and connectability within the channel are completely in its own level compared to any other channel, as with small efforts and right triggers Checkout247 succeeded in engaging masses of consumers in conversation chains of thousands of comments, even without any major utilization of the channel before and after the campaign.

The rambling, uncontrolled conversations within the campaign in particular seemed to be the main reason for consumers to stay online for hours, as they followed the annotation in search of entertainment or self-satisfaction the conversations provided for them. Without these conversations, it could be argued, the experience would not have been the same, and the experience would have lacked both remarkability. Representor of Prisma commented:

"*Campaign became a phenomenon and the reason behind this must be directly linked to the fact that consumers truly embraced it. There were communities and a chain of thousands and thousands of comments… That's why it succeeded so well.*" (Vice President for publishing and media, Prisma 31.5.2018.)

Findings thus seem to support the assumption, that to cause remarkability, consumers need to be engaged in the right way (Smith & Hanover 2016). Checkout247 succeeded in this particularly well with two simple features that should be highlighted – group setting and right kind of content the consumers are able to relate to. Organizing the experience within a group setting is particularly important for any brand creating ELCs, not just in relation to campaign's remarkability and engageability but also shareability, as without a group setting, and thus interactions there would not really be an experience and, consequently, anything to share with personal networks. Saying 'engagement fuels engagement' thus seems to hold true, and it could be even argued that the importance of a group setting is more vital in social media than in offline environments. Perhaps instead of talking about factors that make campaign shareable in social media, it would be more appropriate to highlight communality, the source that seems to fuel the sharing and creating of experiences.

XX Jääskeläinen · 1:55:21 "*I can't stop watching it is addicting you seeing what people are buying and the comments are fun*" (ThisisFINLAND, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Ågren · 1:54:30 "*Commenting is the best feature in the whole thing indeed* 😊 *Last time this thing went "live" on TV and people went bit angry about it I think...*" (thisisFINLAND, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Pynnönen · 7:12 "*This really is insanely hypnotic to watch :D Damn, we Finnish people don't like others around us, but boy do we love to watch and comment what other people do, got to love us <3*" (thisisFINLAND, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

In addition to campaign's success, the pillar of remarkability was assumed to enhance organizators' ability to win consumers over other irritants in social media. This seemed to hold true, although the findings did not support the assumption that to make consumers interested they need to be delighted and engaged from the very beginning (Smith & Hanover 2016). On the opposite, due to the length of the campaign consumers were able to join the broadcast whenever they wanted – often more than once. This proved to be a great strategy, as it arguably not just increased consumer empowerment but also decreased costs related to marketing. Furthermore, consumers seemed to be delighted about the fact that they were able to join in whenever they wanted. The fact that social media does not offer external sensory stimulus did not thus seem to hinder campaign's ability to capture and retain consumers' interest in the campaign.

As for the engaging content on the other hand, Checkout247 was described by the representor of thisisFINLAND as a 'tedium to Finnish everyday life'. As it can be assumed, consumers, especially those living – or having lived – in Finland, seemed not just to believe the story but also relate to it personally. Within this campaign, the correlation between believability and relatability seemed to particularly straightforward (Smith & Hanover 2016). Furthermore, it was evident that the campaign was not perceived as a marketing attempt – or if it was, as a very bright one. For instance, in thisisFINLAND's community expat Finns seemed to share the same longing for their favourite Finnish products while in Prisma's community consumers commented on the things they desired at the moment:

XX Salonen · 5:10 "*Makes me miss Suomi even more...love getting groceries at Prisma*" (ThisisFINLAND, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Jg · 49:07 "*I was in Finland for the start of the festivities in the beginning of the year. And I am desperate for the chocolate with licorice!!*" (ThisisFINLAND, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Emilia · 3:28:14 *"Can you imagine, my man went to a store to buy me chips because I cannot go myself."* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018.)

XX Lahtikallio · 1:31:54 *"As I see products on the conveyor I send messages to my man and tell him what I want from the store* 😊 *all kind of desires..."* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

In addition to relating to what they saw on the conveyor, it seemed like the campaign brought together groups of complete strangers who found relatability in each other. For example, foreigners living in Finland immersed themselves in long conversations about the perks and challenges of living in Finland, while nocturnal conversationalists in Prisma's community continued discussions throughout the night, even when there was nothing at the conveyor to talk about.

Findings thus seem to support the assumption, that when campaign is aligned with elements that enhance consumers' needs and desires, they are more prone to relate to it (Smith & Hanover 2016). Furthermore, consumers' ability to relate to the campaign not just physically but also emotionally allude that social media's traditional problem of lower trust towards branded content (Smith and Hanover 2016) does not meddle ELCs in social media, as when offering sensory proof and content that is aligned with the brand story, it could be argued, that organizations can provide imposing experiences without the fear of intruding consumers.

As for targeting, within Checkout247, social media, it could be argued, not just made the experience but also made the audience. First reason lies within the fact, that social media was the only possible channel for delivering the campaign, as it was the only channel where the broad masses of foreign consumers could be reached and connected with in a cost-effective way. Secondly, on the opposite to the expectation assuming that brands would always utilize Facebook's technology for limiting audiences and thus to find the most responsive ones (Smith & Hanover 2016), within Checkout247, no such actions were done. On the opposite, the two organizators let social media do the work and find the audiences. This however may not to have been possible, or successful, without the two big brand communities, as it is questionable whether the campaign would have found its audiences had the communities been smaller and launching of the broadcast thus less influential. Nevertheless, it seems that targeting smaller audiences who amplify the message is after all not a necessity. Therefore, it could be suggested that replacing the pillar of 'targetability' with 'reachability' would be suitable in this context, as it seems like finding audiences at the era of social media is not about mere targeting any more. Check-

out247 is a good example of this kind of new campaign that by reaching as many consumers as possible resembles more mass marketing than the carefully targeted campaigns that have become a norm at the digital age.

Despite such orientation, campaign seemed to feature several elements that made it appear highly personal, and thus memorable, to consumers. This supports the assumption, that social media can enable creation of campaigns that feature both a mix of mass-reach online engagement and intimate one-on-one experiences (Smith & Hanover 2016, 114). The reason that enabled such, however, is different than originally assumed, as within Checkout247, the personal feeling seemed to stem from free interactions which enabled consumers to influence the experience and make it look their own, which furthermore seemed to delight consumers thus enhancing campaign's memorability. Furthermore, by making zero modifications the campaign preserved its ordinality, which inevitably is one of the reasons that made it feel more personal and different from all the other campaigns.

The next pillar of success, flexibility, on the opposite to others, seems to be a controversial one, as social media seems to offer both advantages and disadvantages as for modifying content. On the one, modification of content seemed rather easy because of real-time interactions, as it enabled brands to interact with consumers and react to any rising issue. Prisma in particular was active in taking advantage of the feature as brand's moderators were quick to react to any complaints, for example about the lack of voices. As the following comments show, this kind of positive reactivity seemed to turn a negative situation into positive:

XX Diefenbaugh · 21:49 *"I wish there was voices"* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Enola · 3:11:22 *"Next year this live should have voices! 😖"* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

Prisma · 28:21 *"Broadcast is silent. Home commenting however is permitted ;)"* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

On the other, as a drawback, it should be mentioned, that in addition to commenting there seemed not to be much other possibilities for modifying content. For instance, the representor of thisisFINLAND perceived that if there were any bigger troubles, such as major technical issues, the only possible action would have been to shut down the whole broadcast. Prisma furthermore proofed, that also minor technical issues can be troubling, as in particular the Finnish consumers were complaining about issues like slow video, that inevitably affected to pleasureability of the experience. This kind of inflexibility related to technical issues can be argued to be the problem of all digital channels, as functionality is hard to guarantee, not just in the low end but also in the high end. Therefore,

ensuring technical functionality without a doubt can be counted as organizations' biggest priorities when launching an ELC in social media.

It has without a doubt become clear that the campaign was highly successful in several levels. As for measuring results, the two interviewees however expressed rather different approaches and attitudes towards it. The most significant reason for the polarization inevitably lies within the fact that thisisFINLAND is not a commercial channel, where results are measured profit in mind. S-group on the opposite as a commercial retail company had more elaborated approaches to metrics, as it according to the representor of Prisma, utilized several different tools for measuring and analysing consumer behaviour, the value of gained media, growth of sales and reach of the campaign among other cardinal metrics that are easily accessible in social media. Out of these tools, the UFPD focused merely on social media for analysing consumer demographics, geographical polarization, perceptions, number of viewers, reach and overall engagement. Findings thus support the assumption that measuring results with digital tools available in social media is easier than in any other channel. Interviewees appreciated the simplicity and readily existence of the digital metrics, where results can be achieved instantly – advance is particularly significant when compared to traditional channels such as TV and print.

4.3 Perceived impact of virtual environments on virtual experiential live campaigns

4.3.1 Social media opportunities

Both interviewees perceived that social media had a significant impact on the success of the campaign, and believed, that the number of positive features and effects could, or even should, be utilized in the future more actively when designing marketing campaigns. As it has been seen, there are several features in social media that facilitate the process of building and implementing an ELC, especially within the context of this campaign. Among the many positive aspects, social media's authenticity and interactional capabilities however seem to be the channel's biggest opportunities. This is interesting, as authenticity was initially listed as among the challenges, while interaction were not considered as neither an opportunity or a challenge. Social networks that support creation of interactions however were mentioned, and for instance, the representor of Prisma pointed out, that the communicational aspect is strongly related to social network and experiences of involvement, whether it is general conversations or, as it was in thisisFINLAND's case, acting as a civil moderator. Compared to any other channel, for instance TV - even when facilitated with a chat option - the easiness of interaction and involvement within

social media is inevitably unparalleled. Furthermore, the authentic experience that was shared between the brands and the consumers on the other hand seemed to create something extraordinary, that made the consumers not just relate to and believe in it, but also thoroughly embrace it. In addition to authenticity, the visionary impact seemed to be particularly strong on Facebook, as consumers were able to see the open store on their screens without entering it physically.

"For this particular campaign Facebook was absolutely the best. The channel kind of mediated an authentic illustration of life that is familiar for everyone. I am sure people believed the story. It was just as real as it looked like." (Vice President for publishing and media, Prisma, 31.5.2018.)

As for the initially assumed opportunities – apart from social networks and technology –eWOM, operational efficiency and data collection seemed not to play a vital role within the case campaign. Interviewees however highlighted the economical aspect of social media that can be linked with operational efficiency, as the channel's ability to reach masses of consumers in cost-effective way was mentioned among the reasons for choosing social media as the main channel of the experience. For instance, according to representor of thisisFINLAND, the UFPD's only expenses within the campaign were related to the salaries of the employees, which can be argued to be quite extraordinary. Furthermore, data analysis in social media has been proved to be increasingly effective. On the negative, the initial assumption that social media frees resources due to its efficiency seems not to hold true: Channel requires constant observation and monitoring similarly to offline environments. Representor of Prisma commented:

*"One was needed to make questions in case of silent moments while other's duty was to follow the conversations. In a Facebook campaign one must thus take into consideration that you have a team of sufficient size." (*Vice President for publishing and media, Prisma*, 31.5.2018.)*

As for technology, it seems, as a matter of fact, to offer both opportunities and challenges for ELCs. Among the positive aspects can be seen for example Facebook's feature of showing content for vaster audiences when it is liked and engaged with by other consumers. Similar features can be detected elsewhere in the web as for instance Google attempts to provide consumers with the content they assume will match their preferences. This can be argued to have also enhanced campaign's operational efficiency as well as to provide some kind of technological eWOM, where the word about the campaign spreads based on consumers personal digital footprint. In other words, social networks hear about the campaign if the algorithm assumes consumer to like the content – even if the consumer

him or herself chooses not to mention the campaign. In addition, both interviewees perceived that technology in the future might offer features that enable creation of even better and more impactful campaigns.

4.3.2 Social media challenges

Analysis of the challenges that are most prone to cause difficulties when designing and implementing ELCs in social media seemed to highlight the uncontrollability of the channel, and especially the campaign's ability to engage consumers. Because of the uncertainty, scenario planning and moderation became vital to survive a potential situation where consumers would not be engaged enough with the campaign. Representor of thisisFINLAND commented:

*"The biggest challenge was of course, that if the live is on and no one is commenting, it feels rather dull." (*Social media editor, the UFPD, 5.4.2018*)*

Even these efforts however can be argued not to be enough, as at the end of the day control remains with consumers, and organizators can never reach it in full form. Social media is thoroughly consumer drawn and consequently there is and always will be abeyance. These findings support the initial assumption of high consumer control as a challenge, as it is so clearly linked with the uncontrollability of the channel.

Another challenge, as previously mentioned, seems to be linked with technological difficulties. For one it is very difficult to ensure smooth functioning of technology for both ends, and for the other, social media itself seems to enfold aspects that need to be carefully considered when building ELCs. For instance, the fact that the broadcast had to be cut after every four hours inevitably unengaged several consumers, as it in a way cut the flow, and the consumers chose not to follow the campaign in a new video. As for the technological malfunctioning, the questions such as what if the broadcast could not have been started or it would have been cut midway through the evening are hard to answer. In this kind of situation, the malfunctioning inevitably would ruin the whole campaign and not just a part of it, as it might be the case within offline experiences.

These findings are slightly surprising, as technology was expected to cause opportunities rather than difficulties. However, on practical level whatever the environment or channel, there are guidelines that limit the possibilities of operation. Furthermore, when technology is not familiar, or something is tried for the first or second time, there is always technology related tension. Therefore, it could be argued, perhaps it is not useful to try to adapt to every new, popular social media channel with the motive of creating an ELC

there as it was initially assumed. Instead, learning first how to use a channel and building a strong community to interact with seems to be much more important.

Second finding that does not support initial expectations on challenges is related to the imperfect fit, as on the positive the lack of sensory experiences did not prove to be as demanding of a challenge as initially assumed. What consumers seemed to be missing the most were voices, which can be argued to be caused by expectations that the original Hihna247 broadcasted created. The lack of feel and other sensory experiences on the other hand did not seem to bother consumers or affect campaign's ability to mediate a story with variety of emotions. Therefore, it indeed seems that there are a number of elements in social media that can help overcome the challenge of the imperfect fit.

4.3.3   Virtual experiential marketing

Findings of this study confirm that there are a number of interconnections between the elements of VEM and success of the campaign. Particularly interaction, pleasure, flow and community relationship seemed to contribute to the campaign positively while sensory stimulation was found less important. Reason for the less important role of sensory stimulus seems to be in the fact that the campaign was meant to be meditative, and therefore any excessive distraction might have affected negatively the flow of the experience. Therefore, an interesting assumption can be done, as it seems that even without the use of any additional sensory stimulus that within VEM is considered to enhance consumers' stickiness to website (Liu et al. 2001), Checkout247 succeeded in creating an experience that consumers were deeply drawn to. Consumer comments within both communities furthermore verify this, as it seems they perceived that the simple movement of the conveyor somewhat hypnotizing, and thus were more drawn to follow the campaign.

XX Herranen · 11:33 *"Hypnotising!" (*Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Kugler · 1:30:02 *"Ye I don't get it, this is kinda hypnotizing* 😁*"* (thisisFIN-LAND, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Kesti · 2:40:32 *"This would be more hypnotizing if we could hear the peeping of the bar code reader."* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

Therefore, it seems that the feeling of flow indeed can enhance consumers' willingness to follow the campaign, while sensory stimulus on the other hand is not necessarily needed to create experiences that resemble real life. It could be argued that virtual marketplaces, unlike social media, are dependent on such stimulus because of their stability

– they need something extra to appear interesting for consumers. Social media on the other hand is full of stimulus that derives from channel's interactional capabilities, such as the opportunity to comment and express emotions. What organizations need to do, is to facilitate this stimulus correctly. In other words, create not just sensory triggers but also emotional and mental ones, that stimulate and encourage consumers to converse and exchange feelings. Therefore, perhaps taking advantage of all 'stimulus' instead of mere sensory stimulus would enhance creation and implementation of ELCs even better.

These findings further underline the important role of interactions within ELCs. As it has been seen, interactions are the one element that arguably can have the biggest impact on success of the campaign. However, findings also seem to verify the assumption that by decreasing control and encouraging consumers to participate in modifying content of the mediated environment in real time, cognitive, problem-solving experiences that engage consumers creatively can be created in virtual environments (Liu et al. 2001), similarly as Schmitt's (1999) cognitive module does in offline environments.

Similarly, to interactions, community relationship was found to have a high impact on success of the campaign through shareability of experiences and interactions. Findings on the VEM framework also seemed to confirm that community relationship indeed encourages consumers to engage – straight connection with attitude development however was more difficult to find. Comparing community relationship with the behavioural module however reveals more interconnections, as the behavioural module aims on creating motivational, inspirational and emotional experiences (Schmitt 1999), which inevitably were present within Checkout247. Representor of thisisFINLAND perceived, that where ever people were coming from, they were connected by a similar interest and commenting similar type of things, which in a way made strangers to turn into friends for 12 hours. This kind of community relationship was apparent within the conversations in both communities, particularly however in thisisFINLAND where people were not just relating to each other but also supporting and enjoying each other's company:

Caz XX · 2:08:25 "And I speak English as I am English married to a Finnish husband. after 11 years here, Finnish is still hard for me to speak :)" (ThisisFINLAND, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Hare · 2:09:22 "Caz I feel your pain my mother never taught us and now just throws shade because we don't know it lol" (ThisisFINLAND, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

According to Schmitt (1999), motivational experiences within the behavioural module are often created by role models, such as celebrities or brand ambassadors. In social media and in communities especially, it however seems that the role of the role models was

taken by consumers themselves as they found relatability and reality in each other's personal lives. Marko-phenomenon in Prisma's community is a good example of this kind of behaviour, where Marko, previously unknown conveyor worker, was unintendedly put on a pedestal. Working at the conveyor, Marko seemed to represent something very ordinary and therefore comically charming for other consumers, and therefore gained the role of the hero of the people, who's makings people liked commenting.

XX Pratt · 2:43:11 *"Everyone who works at Prisma is Marko"* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Lahtinen · 1:45:51 *"Marko is a great man* ♡*"* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Kolander · 3:43:40 *"15 minutes to go, the Finnish straight. My heart's beating my heart's beating, my hands are shaking, my hands are shaking. Boom, Marko is back."* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

Prisma · 3:56:58 *"THANKS to all nocturnal heroes for staying awake together. You all have a small Prisma-Marko inside you <3 #checkout247 sweeps to the left!* ♥*"* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

Finally, as for the element of pleasure, it seems that the campaign overall succeeded in causing pleasure for consumers through meeting their expectations (Liu et al. 2001) as positive moods and excitement seemed to dominate both brand communities. For instance, consumers were highly engaged with everything Prisma's moderators posted, as Prisma's comments gained an average of 13 likes per comment. The representor of thisisFINLAND also perceived, that several consumers only intended to take a brief look at the campaign, but because they perceived it so enjoyable they became more engaged and followed longer than originally intended. Based on these findings, it could be argued that pleasure indeed has a linkage with Schmitt's (1999) affective module, as pleasure within Checkout247 seemed to enhance organizations' ability to create affective experiences that range from mildly positive moods linked to brand to strong emotions of joy and pride. On the negative, findings also seemed to support the assumption, that when expectations are not met, pleasure decreases (Lui et al. 2001). Within Checkout247, such displeasure was mainly caused by either disappointment in expectations or failure in technology, which enables the assumption, that when duplicating a concept, potential displeasure increases:

XX Dang · 23:22 *"I liked the previous Midsummer Checkout belt's camera angle much more. No one had space to show their face for the camera* 😅 😩 *the camera was about vertically above the belt.* "(Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Salminen · 1:19:08 *"The previous Checkout was much better… Then it was more fun… Now people just go there so that their purchases can be seen on screen…"* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

XX Hiltunen · 1:55:52 *"Video is not moving, I have had the same picture the last couple of minutes. I will not continue staring of the one same picture. Video is just not functioning. :("* (Prisma, Facebook, 15.6.2018)

Having now covered all of the elements within the theoretical framework – strategic factors, success factors and virtual environments including social media and VEM – it is now possible to draw a synthesis on what can be considered the most important findings of the study. Consequently, the following, and similarly concluding chapter, outlines a new, modified theoretical framework based on the newly gained insights of virtual experiential live campaigns.

4.3.4   Main findings of the study

As it has been seen, whether positive or negative, virtual environments impact the design and implementation of vELCs in several ways. While some implications are less essential, some can be considered of such importance they should be incorporated as part of the theoretical framework guiding vELC marketers in their decision-making. Consequently, figure 5 outlines a modified framework for creating vELCs, where the main findings of the study are annexed with the model seen in chapter 2.2.5. Highlighting the most important suggestions and improvements in yellow, the model, especially in steps one and two, also points out the main differences between building ELCs in offline and online environments.
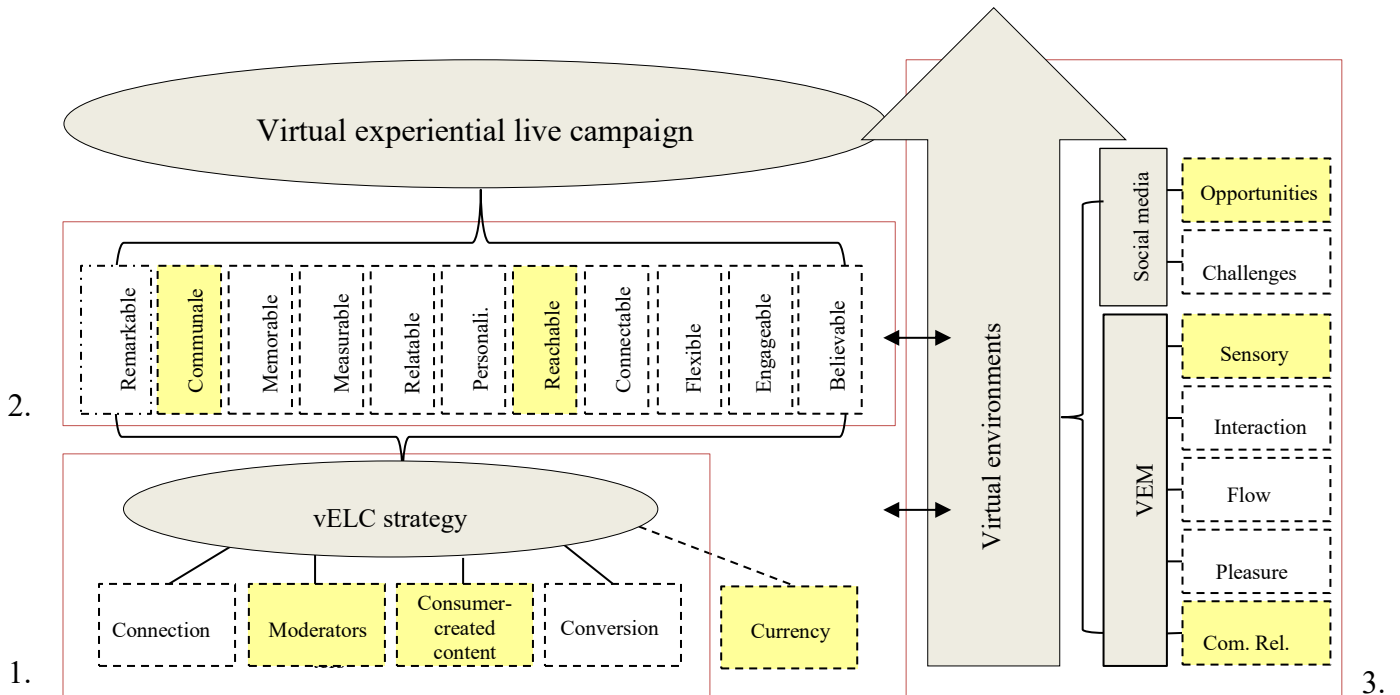
Figure 5   Modified framework: creating virtual experiential live campaigns

Looking at the first step of the model, as it can be seen, *moderators*, *consumer-created content* and *currency* have been highlighted. While currency is suggested to be disregarded from the overall model, moderators and consumer-created content on the other hand are suggested to replace their prevailing modules of control and content.

Existence of online moderators steering vELCs can be considered particularly important, as they provide considerably more flexible and timely source of control over a campaign than the traditional control models themselves. With well-educated moderators, organizations are not just able to interact with consumers but also to influence proceeding of the experience, that due to technology is otherwise rather inflexible, react to potential threads and to grasp opportunities in real-time. Since consumers are in charge of the interactions in social media, it can be considered useless to spend efforts on trying to control eWOM and the fast traversing communication. In other words, replacing the outdated control models with moderators can be argued well-motivated.

As for content on the other hand, it seems that when consumer-created, organizations have higher capabilities for enhancing their credibility in the eyes of the consumers. Furthermore, consumer-created content, starting from simple interactions, is high in number, easy to use, extremely authentic, and seems potential for advancing organizations opportunities for further engaging consumers. Therefore, especially within social media, it can be argued that talking about consumer-created content rather than mere content can prove

a successful strategy for organization interested in extracting content from the experience for the rest of the marketing-mix.

Finally, the platform of currency is suggested to be disregarded from the overall strategy model, as use of any kind of currency for attending a virtual experience can be seen to disadvantage organizations' possibilities for engaging consumers. Easy and uncomplicated access seems to have several advantages. First, consumers are more encouraged not just to engage but also return, and second, the waster audience the campaign has the waster number of consumers sees the campaign message in their own personal feeds which enables organizations to gain even more viewers. Therefore, use of currencies cannot be recommended for organizations wishing to reach as many consumers as possible.

As for the step two on the other hand, as it can be seen, the second, initial pillar of shareability is suggested to being changed to *communal*, as sharing and creating experiences in social media seems to be most effective when taking place in communities – preferably in brand communities. A group setting where consumers can freely converse and discuss was considered particularly important for its ability to advance sharing and creating of experiences that, eventually, highly contributed to organizations' opportunities for creating truly impactful experiences.

While other pillars within the success factors shall remain the same, the seventh pillar is suggested to be changed from targetable into *reachable*, as in social media, following the same logic with currency, it is not necessarily useful to target audiences. On the opposite, one of social media's biggest advantage lies within its ability to reach masses of consumers in a cost-effective way – with different kinds of algorithms and easy access to data, organizations can reach almost anyone they wish.

Finally, within virtual environments, sections of *opportunities*, *sensory experiences* and *community relationships* have been highlighted. On the opposite to the first two steps, findings on virtual environments can be considered more of an insightful type rather than radical. Therefore, they can be argued not require a profound change in the name of the module, but should be rather discussed for the insights and the surprising findings they revealed.

First, as for opportunities, interactions seem to be the most important opportunity that social media has to offer, as they were distinguished as the one single element that truly made the case campaign significant. Furthermore, on the opposite to expectations, social media seems to facilitate *authenticity* that at the beginning of the research was considered more of a threat than an opportunity. Consequently, combined with a live video and consumer *interactions*, vELCs showed evidence of being able to leverage authenticity and thus create engaging, integrating, memorable and, most of all, relatable experiences for consumers.

Within VEM elements on the other hand, as it can be seen, *sensory stimulus* has been highlighted. The main reason for this lies within the fact, that sensory experiences, apart

from simple sight, seem not to have such a central impact on overcoming the imperfect that was initially expected. Furthermore, as the case campaign did not suffer from imperfect fit, it is motivated to assume that perhaps it can be overcome in other ways – such as by promoting interactions and brand communities that provide other kind of stimulus for consumers. In other words, perhaps all stimulus does not need to be sensory?

At the other end, community relationships on the other hand were found to have the most powerful impact on organizations opportunities for overcoming the imperfect fit as it was discussed in relation to campaign's shareability and, thus, communality. These differences and modifications within the theoretical model offer some important managerial implications that will be discussed in the following chapter together with discussion on theoretical contributions of the study, limitations and suggestions for future studies.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Theoretical contribution

Most of the findings in this study that examined a single vELC situation through large netnographic dataset and interviews, supported initial propositions in regard of building successful vELCs. Study reported also some important nuances that were mainly related to campaign's strategic foundations, especially within the composition of control and currency. Furthermore, this study gave strong evidence indicating that promotion of *free, uncontrolled interactions and utilization of brand communities within vELCs have a high impact on success of the campaign*. Furthermore, adding to the previous literature, it was found that *virtual experiential marketing* indeed *can enhance the impact of vELCs* when correctly utilized. Interestingly, it was also recognized that the *imperfect fit between ELCs and social media is not as drastic* as the previous literature had indicated, in a sense that for instance sensory stimulus, apart from sight, is not necessarily needed to create an experience that resembles real life. Most importantly, however, it was found that *social media are an impactful and cost-efficient channel for delivering experiences* that, at best, equal to traditional ELCs.

Regarding the first sub-problem, this study found several interconnections that are consistent between the hypotised building blocks of successful vELCs and traditional ELCs (see Smilansky 2008; Smith & Hanover 2016). Largely replicating prior studies, free interactions were reported to have a positive relationship with consumer engagement, remarkability and personalization of the campaign. For instance, findings supported the evidence of vELCs capability to create remarkable experiences and to capitalize on a mix of mass-reach engagement that due to consumer led interactions can retain a personal touch within them (Smith & Hanover 2016, 114). Furthermore, supporting prior literature on ELCs, it was found that *lower trust in social media does not meddle vELCs*. On the opposite, it seemed that when providing consumers visual proof and creating a story that enhances their needs and desires (Smith and Hanover 2016), social media indeed can serve as highly effective – and authentic – tool for sharing stories for thousands of consumers, and to extract consumer created, additional content for rest of the marketing mix.

Adding to the prior literature, this study also showed evidence for the need to reform the strategic modules of control and currency, and the success pillar of targetability. First, it seemed that *in social media it is not possible to exercise high control strategies* at all due to channel's high consumer empowerment. Furthermore, promoting lose control and assessing online moderators who interact with consumers seemed to have a positive relationship with consumer engagement, flexibility, remarkability and memorability. Use of currencies on the other hand was found to have no place at all within social media, as

they, on the contrary to previous literature, were reported to contribute negatively in organizations' possibilities to reach and connect with consumers.

Together these findings indicate, regarding the second sub-problem, that *the most prominent opportunities of social media are*, as prior literature advocates*, interactions, and* on the contrary to what has been previously learned, social media's *authenticity*. As for the challenges, less surprisingly, social media's uncontrollability was found among the biggest challenges together with technology, that because of social media's inflexibility seemed to prevent organizations from effectively modifying campaign after its launch. These findings ad to the prior literature mainly by demonstrating the importance of having qualified moderators in place, that are highly familiar with the brand and capable to act, not just reactively but also proactively.

Finally, findings on the third sup-problem revealed substantial similarities between the elements of virtual experiential marketing and success of vELCs. Adding to previous literature, it seemed that *interactions, flow, pleasure and community relationship facilitated creation of vELCs, while sensory stimulus* on the contrary to prior literature *was not found to have similarly high impact*. Within the more significant elements, especially consumer relationships were found important, as they seemed to contribute positively on remarkability, engageability, sharing of stories and feelings, and consumers' ability to relate not just to the campaign but also in each other. Furthermore, as for flow, it seemed that creation of a positive, self-motivating environment and understanding consumers expectations highly correlated with both active and passive engagement.

5.2   Limitations of the study

The aforesaid findings are an important addition to the literature, as there has been no previous research discussing the phenomenon. For this reason, the only practical tools vELC managers have at the moment are the recommendations regarding traditional ELCs in offline environment. These findings can thus be seen as important observations and notions about real life, that can help organizations make right decisions about their virtual campaigns in the future.

However, a few limitations should be noted. First, qualitative studies are always subjective, and second, this is a single case study that operates in the constraints of its own objectives. These objectives should be taken into consideration before applying the suggested framework for building vELCs. Furthermore, author had been engaged with the creation of the campaign and has thus unique understanding of its motivations and functionalities that in another research context cannot be reached without careful background

research. Therefore, to reach similar results, it is important that the situation specific resources and objectives are carefully analysed and evaluated, and the overall research framework fully implemented.

5.3   Managerial implications

Based on the previous discussions, it is now possible to detail and highlight some of the most important managerial implications for organizations building vELCs. First, campaign managers are highly advised to *promote free interactions*, as strict control is prone to prevent consumers from engaging and enjoying the experience. Too much control could furthermore severely harm spontaneous flow of the experience that makes them authentic and enjoyable. In practise, managers thus are highly advised to *cede control over their campaign for consumers, and* instead *educate moderators*, who, in relation to campaign specific objectives, audiences and organization's own comfort zone (Duggal 2015), oversee and interact with the audience during the campaign. It is important to make sure these moderators are familiar with the brand and are thus enabled to act not just reactively but also proactively.

As vELCs have been seen as a useful source of co-operation and crowdsourcing, managers are also advised to reflect their own campaign objectives and t*hink of the different connection strategies that might best trigger the will in consumers to participate in co-creation* with the brand. Managers are also highly advised to think of the different ways in which they could further *utilize* this kind of authentic *consumer-created content*. What kind of role could it have during and after the campaign? Would it be possible to utilize consumer-created content also before the campaign? By thinking creatively, it is possible to even increase consumer engagement. For instance, by sharing the best consumer comments post-campaign and – of course – rewarding them, can be argued an effective way for increasing consumer engagement.

Another useful managerial advice is to *focus on reaching as many consumers as possible* rather than limiting and targeting audiences. Social media's power is in its reach and capitalizing on its cost-effectiveness is an opportunity that should not be missed. Based on this logic, *it is also not recommended to engage in the use of any kind of currencies* in social media, unless the experience is designed to be highly exclusive.

Finally, *utilization of brand communities and promoting VEM elements, especially community relationships* can be counted among the most important managerial implications. The opportunities within brand communities and community relationships are immense and, at the end of the day make, they, combined with interactions are what make a truly successful campaign. Furthermore, to add to the quality of the experience, manag-

ers are advised to *spend time for understanding what consumers expect from the campaign*, and to *ensure* that *no distractions*, whether coming from inside or outside of the experience, *such as technological issues, disturb the flow of the experience*.

5.4   Suggestions for future studies

This study is the first attempt to understand how ELCs operate in social media and how virtual environments impact their design and implementation. There is space for a variety of new research, and consequently, future researchers are highly encouraged to start investigating the phenomenon further. For instance, examining how different case study situations react to the same research framework, can be considered to help gain more knowledge, and widen general understanding of the overall phenomenon as discussed before.

This study provides also interesting foundations for conducting different quantitative studies. For instance, it would be interesting to conduct a numerical study comparing consumer perceptions between ELCs in offline environments and in virtual environments. This way it would be possible to gain validated information about the real impact these campaigns have on consumers, and thus be better able to compare the two different types of ELCs.

Finally, third fertile area for future research could be VEM and its relation to vELCs. As this study gives indication of a positive relationship, it would be interesting to conduct a more thorough study focused on investigating the different ways in which interaction, flow, pleasure and community relationship affect vELCs.

6   SUMMARY

This study investigated how organizations can create successful virtual experiential live campaigns (vELCs) in social media. Experiential live campaigns (ELCs) are defined as a systematic channel for creating brand personality-inspired interactive experiences for consumers in real time, face-to-face (Smilansky 2009, 15) while social media are defined as a large group of disruptive, internet-based platforms that build on technologies of the world wide web 2.0. (Buttle & Maklan 2015, 246.) When combined in computer stimulated virtual environments, social media and ELCs form, what has been referred as, vELCs. Investigating how organizations can successfully create them is vital as there has been no previous research discussing the phenomenon. For this reason, the only practical tools vELCs have at the moment are the recommendations regarding traditional ELCs in offline environments. Consequently, providing organizations with tools and strategies that enable them to create better vELCs and bring brand personalities alive virtually can be considered of primary importance.

This study was conducted qualitatively by examining a case campaign 'Checkout247'. Campaign was considered as a good exemplary case study as it had achieved considerable global success that enabled it to act as a suitable reference point between theory and pragmatic reality. Data for the analysis was gathered through interviews with creators of the campaign and netnographic analysis on 3000 consumer comments on Facebook's brand communities. Data was analysed by using pattern matching, where the focus is on finding direct replications of theoretical propositions from empirical data (Yin 2009).

The research found multiple interconnections between ELCs and virtual environments that can be combined into three main points. First, findings suggested that promoting interactions and creating experiences in brand communities has a positive relationship with the following success pillars: engageability, connectability, targetability, personalization, remarkability and shareability. Furthermore, interactions and brand communities seemed to be the most important single factors that contributed to the success of the campaign. Secondly, findings reported that instead of exercising high control strategies, organizations should harness social media moderators and cede control over the campaign for consumers. Within this study, these actions were found to have a positive relationship with consumer engagement, flexibility, remarkability and memorability. Furthermore, it seemed that without authorities consumers are more encouraged to participate in modifying content and participating in co-creation of the brand. As a final point, this study recognized that virtual experiential marketing can help organizations create better, more impactful virtual experiences for consumers. On the other hand, it seemed that the imperfect fit between ELCs and social media is not as drastic as originally assumed.

To conclude, social media can indeed serve as an impactful and cost-efficient channel for delivering virtual experiences. By utilizing and adapting the insight gained from this

study, organizations can be considered better equipped to build successful experiential live campaigns for social media.

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