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Title:

Paint it, Black – Exploring the Development of Negative Emotions towards the Brand

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Summary:

While positive emotions in towards brands have already been thoroughly investigated by numerous researchers, negative emotions towards the brand are rarely in the focus. This study explores the development of negative emotions towards brands. We investigate different determinants and influencing factors and how they lead to negative emotions such as anger, sadness, dislike, discontent, worry, or embarrassment. In 20 in-depth interviews consumers referred to 15 different brands from several industries that generated negative feelings. Our research states that the antecedents can be clustered into nine different categories of which seven can be controlled and two cannot directly be controlled by companies. We conclude with suggestions on how to turn negative emotions into positive feelings. Lastly, implications for theory and practice are given and suggestions for a future research agenda are made.

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Relevance of Negative Emotions towards the Brand

Bad is stronger than good – the powerful influence of negative experiences and emotions can be seen daily. Baumeister et al. (2001) investigated the strong power and impact of bad events, processes and interactions. Their findings suggest that bad has more influence than good – whether in terms of relationships, feedback or even parents (Baumeister et al. 2001). Furthermore, it is also more likely to remember and talk about negative information than positive (Fiske 1980; Fournier & Alvarez 2013; Ito et al. 1998; Pratto & John 1991), which inherits negative Word-of-Mouth (WOM), whether offline or online. With social media as a part of our everyday life, negative experiences and emotions can be easily shared with others in an instant. Firestorms as an expression of very negative emotions can be truly damaging for companies and their brand equity as well.

But not only can negative emotions towards the brand lead to negative WOM – they might also end in losing customers. Since it is generally acknowledged that acquiring a new customer costs multiple more than keeping an existing one, it is crucial to retain customers. Consequently, negative emotions towards the brand should be strictly prevented by any company as they might lead to negative brand associations and relationships. Despite that, negative brand relationships are very common (Fournier & Alvarez 2013).

Although the importance of negative emotions towards the brand has been commonly acknowledged, research in the field of emotions towards the brand mainly focused on positive emotions for the last years. While brand love and other concepts have been investigated thoroughly, negative emotions are still an emerging field of research and several topics remain to be focused on (Bryson, Atwal & Hultén 2013; Fournier & Alvarez 2013; Hegner, Fetscherin & van Delzen 2017; Romani, Grappi & Dalli 2012).

Recently, more researchers began to focus on the negative side of brand relationships and raised gaps regarding the pre-conditions of negative emotions towards the brand (NEB) (Hegner, Fetscherin & van Delzen 2017; Zarantonello et al. 2016, 2018). While focusing on the consequences only, Romani et al. recommended "further research on the experiential dimension of specific negative emotions and the antecedent states related to brands" (Romani, Grappi & Dalli 2012, p.65). Although some research about the influencing factors of NEB already exists, they only focused on one emotion individually and did not consider emotions as a co-occurring phenomenon. Yet affect theory states that several emotions commonly occur on one occasion (Babin, Darden & Babin 1998; Plutchik 2001; Plutchik & Kellerman 1980; Terwogt et al. 1986). Accordingly, the antecedents and determinants of the several NEB at a time should also be investigated further (Romani, Grappi & Dalli 2012; Zarantonello & Pauwels-Delassus 2016).
The gaps raised by Romani et al. (2012) lead to the following research questions: (1) Why do consumers feel negative emotions towards the brand and (2) how do these emotions develop? Building on previous literature about NEB, this study therefore reveals the several determinants that lead to NEB and how they evolve. Furthermore, it aims to understand the different pre-conditions, how they can be described and how they differ.

This paper contributes to the literature by exploring the pre-conditions related to negative emotions towards the brand. It enhances our understanding on how these emotions are created and what it means if a consumer feels and thinks negatively about a brand. Thereby we respond to the call of numerous researchers to investigate the different determinants of negative emotions toward the brand (e.g. Romani et al., 2012; Zarantonello & Pauwels-Delassus, 2016). In addition, we seek solutions by exploring if consumers' negative emotions could be turned into positive feelings again. Implications for managers therefore include recommendations on how to prevent negative emotions as well as possible solutions.

Literature Review

Negative Emotions in Marketing

Academic literature on emotions in general reaches back numerous years. Plutchik identified eight bipolar basic or primary emotions, namely joy versus sorrow, anger versus fear, acceptance versus disgust and surprise versus expectancy. These basic emotions in combination lead to other additional and more complex emotions (Izard 1977; Plutchik 1982; Plutchik & Kellerman 1980). His evolutionary perspective regards emotions as unconscious processes which are biologically based and (originally) important in the survival struggle (Plutchik 1982; Plutchik & Kellerman 1980). Plutchik's set of basic emotions served as a starting point for further research and scales of emotions (e.g. Abe & Izard, 1999; Ekman, 1992; Havlena & Holbrook, 1986; Havlena, Holbrook, & Lehmann, 1989). In contrast to the evolutionary theories by e.g. Plutchik or Izard, appraisal theoretical approaches regard emotions as cognitive processes (Lazarus 1991; Lazarus & Folkman 1984). Both theories have received criticism for not taking into account either cognitive or affective processes. Recent research combines both approaches and explains emotions with both processes, e.g. in Scherer's component process model (Kroeber-Riel & Gröppel-Klein 2013; Scherer 2005). Consequently, in the course of this study, emotions are presumed to occur both unconsciously and in other instances as a result of cognitive processes, e.g. through learning from past experiences.

Although research in the field of psychology provides useful insights for consumer and brand research, research states that the same measures of emotion might not be appropriate for consumer behaviour. As emotions rely on the context, most existing measures of emotion theory do not take into account the peculiarities of consumption situations, e.g. the wording or intensity might differ (Richins 1997; Romani, Grappi & Dalli 2012).

In the field of consumer behaviour, emotions have been commonly regarded as an important driver and motivational factor (e.g. Allen, Machleit, & Kleine, 1992). The so-called "How-do-I-feel-about-it?" heuristic or "affect as information"-theory shows the importance of emotions in decision making, as it states that emotions are used to evaluate decisions (e.g. Pham, 1998).

Besides, positive emotions like trust are helpful in establishing long-term relationships (Chaudhuri & Holbrook 2001), while negative emotions can lead to feelings of betrayal or violation and finally to actions of revenge (Martin, Borah & Palmatier 2017). Therefore, negative emotions play a significant role in consumers' behaviour and reactions (Babin, Darden & Babin 1998). Numerous research has also been carried out about negative

emotions during the consumption experience itself, such as fear (Dunn & Hoegg 2014), sadness or disgust (Chowdhry et al. 2015). To assess emotions in the consumption experience, the scale "Consumptions Emotions Set (CES)" describing the emotions before, during and after the purchase phase is often used (Richins 1997). As the emotions are not felt towards the brand but during the experience itself, literature regarding this specific topic shall not be regarded further.

Consumer research has also begun to study consumer emotions in connection with brands (Zarantonello & Pauwels-Delassus 2016) and pointed out the relevance of feelings. For example, emotions are decisive in the brand evaluation process, as consumers rather use experienced sentiments than declarative information in order to assess brands (Esch et al. 2012). Therefore, marketing scholars as well as practitioners have established numerous scales for measuring consumers' emotions towards the brand, although they mainly focused on extremely positive emotions (Carroll & Ahuvia 2006; Zarantonello & Pauwels-Delassus 2016), e.g. brand love (Batra, Ahuvia & Bagozzi 2012; Langner, Schmidt & Fischer 2015; Rossiter 2012). Only in recent years, researchers began to explore the negative emotions that consumers may feel about brands.

The Concept of Negative Emotions towards the Brand

Negative Emotions towards the Brand

Romani et al. (2012) specifically investigated the different types of negative emotions and the behavioural outcomes. According to their definition, NEB are "consumers' negative emotional reactions evoked by the appraisal of brand-related stimuli" (Romani, Grappi & Dalli 2012, p.56). They developed the so-called **NEB scale** which measures six different negative emotions toward the brand, in particular anger, dislike, sadness, worry, embarrassment, and discontent with three items each. Yet, their study does not provide any deeper insights into the determinants and the development of NEB.

Numerous parts of the NEB scale have been investigated individually in studies on several kinds of emotions (e.g. brand hate (Zarantonello et al. 2016) or brand embarrassment (Grant & Walsh 2009)), whereby mostly merely one emotion at a time was examined. Hereby, several studies also touched upon the subject of the determinants by investigating the concept of different negative feelings. Although they partly considered antecedents of individual negative emotions, their findings do not provide a comprehensive categorization of the determinants of all NEB. Moreover, the development and trajectories of NEB have not been investigated thoroughly so far. Only one study examined the **development of brand hate**. Several types of trajectories can be identified: "Negative all the way", "Down-up", "Downward slope flattens", "Roller coaster", and "Steady decrease" (Zarantonello et al. 2018). The present study intends to close the gaps regarding the causes and the development of several NEB at the same time.

Influencing Factors of Negative Emotions towards the Brand

Regarding the **different antecedent states of NEB**, there has been a vast lack of studies. Most research focused on the outcomes and impacts and not on the pre-conditions under which NEB develop. Other studies raised the topic of determinants of negative effects, e.g. dilution caused by brand extensions (Loken & John 1993) or decreasing brand choice

caused by sales promotions and product enhancements (Simonson, Carmon & O'Curry 1994). Nevertheless, they neglect to include the role of NEB in the process.

However, there are some studies which touch upon the influencing factors. Romani et al. (2009) could identify three pre-conditions of NEB: **physical object** (the product and its features), **symbolic cultural object** (the symbolic meaning the brand stands for) and **interpretation as an agent** (standing for the company's corporate behaviour). Yet, the development and the determinants in particular were rather neglected in that early study. It focused primarily on the frequency of emotions and states that dislike and anger are more often experienced than sadness, fear or disappointment. In their later research, they see the origin of NEB in brand-related stimuli, which are neither directly product- nor service-related but **marketer-controlled** or **non-marketer-controlled** (Romani, Grappi & Dalli 2012). However, their study does not provide any deeper insights into why and how NEB develop. While focusing on the consequences only, they recommended additional research on the antecedent states of NEB (Romani et al., 2012). Additionally, they suggested to further investigate the pre-conditions of negative emotions in order to comprehend the meaning of these situations. Furthermore, Zarantonello and Pauwels-Delassus explicitly proposed to examine the antecedents that lead to negative emotions (Zarantonello & Pauwels-Delassus, 2016, p. 183). This study aims to reply to the calls for further research regarding these influencing factors.

Park et al. (2013) regard **product experience, associations** and **conflict with consumers' values** as important influencing factors of attachment and aversion towards brands (Park, Eisingerich & Park 2013). Although they take into account emotions like contempt or frustration, they do not link aversion towards the concept of NEB. Therefore it remains uncertain if aversion or detachment and NEB are correlated with each other.

While research on the determinants and the development of NEB in general is rather scarce, especially in highly-ranked journals, there are several papers which investigated the concept and the determinants of other emotions individually, like dislike or brand hate.

In terms of the influencing factors of **dislike**, three different levels of antecedents could be identified: **corporate level** ("manipulation and deceit", "carelessness toward the environment" and "outdated communication"), **user level** ("poor distinction capability" and "excess of distinction") and **product level** ("poor product performance") (Dalli et al. 2007; Dalli, Romani & Gistri 2006).

One emotion which has received more attention in the last few years is **brand hate**, which is also part of the NEB scale by Romani et al. (2012) as an item of the emotion "anger". In the luxury sector, several antecedents may lead to brand hate, namely **country of origin, consumer dissatisfaction**, notably with customer service, and **negative stereotypes of existing brand users**. In contrast, the company's social performance did not seem to have an impact on brand hate (Bryson, Atwal & Hultén 2013). Further studies find that the antecedents of brand hate can be clustered into three categories: "**corporate wrongdoings**", "**violations of expectations**", and "**taste system**", which is defined as negative perception of the brand, e.g. the brand image (Zarantonello et al. 2016, 2018). The most influencing factor in a study by Hegner et al. (2017) was found to be **ideological incompatibility**, followed by **negative past experience** and **symbolic incongruity**.

Regarding the pre-conditions of **brand embarrassment**, **missing social** or **group acceptance** could be identified as a trigger (Walsh et al. 2016). Although brand

embarrassment can be regarded as a very personal emotion influenced by social status etc., **negative brand encounters** or **associations** also seem to be an antecedent (Grant & Walsh 2009).

Revising further literature, it gets salient that the antecedents cannot generally be classified into actual categories.

Moderators of Negative Emotions towards the Brand

In addition to the research on NEB, there are also some papers on moderators that influence the development of NEB. Grant and Walsh (2009) investigated the **influence of the personal-self and brand relationship** on brand embarrassment and state that status, age, interaction within and between groups, social transitions and the growth of self-identity add to brand embarrassment (Grant & Walsh 2009).

Besides, **consumer empathy** seems to influence the intensity of negative emotions like brand hate in terms of corporate wrongdoings. The higher the level of empathy, the stronger brand hate is felt and the stronger actions of anti-branding are influenced (Romani et al. 2015).

A further moderating factor could be the **brand's personality**. Aaker et al. (2004) investigated the evolution of consumer-brand relationships under acts of transgression. They found out that sincere brands might lose relationships after wrongdoings, while relationships with exciting brands astonishingly might even be revived after misbehaviours (Aaker, Fournier & Brasel 2004). Yet, so far the dimensions of brand personality have not been directly connected to the concept of NEB (Aaker 1997; Romani, Grappi & Dalli 2012).

In addition, the **sector** where the brands belong to seems to matter as well. Romani et al. (2012) observed that most respondents referred to brands related to clothes and fashion accessories or groceries. Brands related to cars or hi-fi/audio/video equipment seem to play only a subordinated role in generating negative emotions (Romani, Grappi & Dalli 2012).

Moderators in terms of outcomes like customer revenge and avoidance are **relationship quality** and **time**. While the desire for revenge declines over time, brand avoidance grows. Although a high relationship quality (i.e. relations to former best customers) first leads to lower levels of desire for revenge and avoidance, it results in the most long-lasting negative reactions (love-becomes-hate effect) (Grégoire, Tripp & Legoux 2009).

Impacts of Negative Emotions towards the Brand

Besides the research on several negative emotions, outcomes of NEB are also in the focus of research. Thereby, **purchase intentions, complaining, brand avoidance, brand rejection, brand revenge** and **negative WOM** were investigated. Studies reveal that the type of emotion strongly influences the outcome. Anger can be linked to "brand attack" actions like complaining and **negative WOM**, while worry and discontent are related with **brand avoidance** and brand switching. The feeling of sadness rather leads to **inactivity** (Romani, Grappi & Dalli 2012). Furthermore, **consumer brand sabotage** as an aggressive consumer behaviour can be triggered by frustration, outrage, anger or hatred (Kähr 2016).

Brand hate as a very strong negative emotion can lead to several negative behavioural outcomes, among them **protest, patronage reduction** or **cessation** (Hegner, Fetscherin & van Delzen 2017; Zarantonello et al. 2016). Brand hate that is driven by consumer dissatisfaction can also lead to **online anti-branding**, such as anti-brand websites

(Krishnamurthy & Kucuk 2009). Strong feelings of dislike, anger or hatred as a consequence of international political conflicts and animosity towards the country of origin may also result in negative WOM or product avoidance (Harmeling, Magnusson & Singh 2015). In the context of online public complaining, the consumers' desire for revenge declines with time, while the customers' desire for avoidance still grows (Grégoire, Tripp & Legoux 2009). However, dissatisfaction or NEB do not always seem to be the cause of WOM. The perceived need of others, wanting to give advice or simply the brand being part of a conversation are stated as more common triggers in other studies (East, Hammond & Lomax 2008; Mangold, Miller & Brockway 1999).

Research Focus of the Present Study

By reviewing the literature it gets salient that the research on the antecedents of NEB so far remains fragmented since there is no unified categorization of the determinants of NEB. For many reasons, however, this is a very important point to which this work is devoted for the first time. In this respect, it offers an essential contribution to the topic of the antecedents and the development of NEB. In addition to the influencing factors of NEB, the trajectories of NEB shall be investigated further.

Although several previous studies already take a brief look at the antecedents of negative emotions, they treat these emotions isolated from each other. These studies only investigate one emotion at a time. Yet among other research, Babin et al. (1998) already criticized the so-called bipolarity of emotions which states that either a positive or a negative emotion can be felt. They state that what costumers feel is rather an "emotional mishmash" (Babin, Darden & Babin 1998). Therefore, negative consumer emotions should neither be treated separately as they may also co-occur (Plutchik 2001; Russell 2003, 2009; Zhang 2013). Consequently this paper pursues the view that different antecedents might result in numerous negative emotions, which consumers may experience at the same time. To the authors' best knowledge, the present study of antecedents of NEB is the first to take a look at several NEB together and not isolated.

Methodology

Qualitative In-Depth Interviews

In order to gain profound insights about the pre-conditions and antecedents of NEB, semi-structured, in-depth consumer interviews were conducted. A qualitative research approach is used to explore individual stories, problems and to emerge theories wherever existing theories do not cover the full scope of the problem (Creswell 2013). To attain a comprehensive understanding of consumers' feelings, this method seems appropriate.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were chosen as they are a useful technique to gain profound responses about consumers' experiences, emotions, and views (Patton 2002). NEB are very subjective feelings and are built upon singular impressions. Individual interviews may therefore expose very personal views and opinions which might not be revealed in groups (Stokes & Bergin 2006).

Sample

As the grounded theory approach has been applied, the selection of our sample was done according to the theoretical sampling logic which states that theoretical relevance is the essential criterion in sampling. In doing so, respondents were chosen if their case could provide new theoretical insights or generate new categories (Corbin 2017; Glaser & Strauss 1967).

In the selection process, two important criteria for selecting the respondents were implied: (1) the participants had to be able to think of at least one brand they had negative feelings towards. At the same time, we sought for different intensities of feelings and different emotions in the attempt of covering several negative emotions. Furthermore, (2) the participants should provide different reasons to cover a wide spectrum of determinants. Overall, 20 consumer interviews were conducted personally with persons who had negative feelings toward a brand of their choice, e.g. Ikea or Apple. Ten of our 20 interviewees were female. While the age ranged from 18 to 66, the mean age was 37.0 years.

Consistent with other qualitative research studies, theoretical saturation could be achieved by interviewing 20 consumers (Charmaz 2006; Creswell 2014). At this point, no further insights could be discovered (Eisenhardt 1989; Glaser & Strauss 1967).

Interview Guidelines

The interview questions were derived from literature and gathered in an interview guideline. In the beginning, the interviewees were shown several pictures of famous but slightly controversial persons like Donald Trump. As an analogy to brands, they should depict one or more persons who they feel negative about and explain why. In doing so, the introduction was stated very general and served to generate a positive atmosphere, so that the participant was encouraged to answer in a free way (Legard, Keegan & Ward 2003; McCracken 1988). Furthermore, by using these interactive techniques, the interviewees' attention was supposed to be increased (Lohaus 1989).

Thereafter, the participants were asked to pick one brand of their choice which they feel negatively about. Afterwards, the interview exclusively focused on that chosen brand. This proceeding is in line with the literature reviewed earlier (Alba & Lutz 2013; Zarantonello et al. 2016, 2018). Subsequently, the NEB scale by Romani et al. (2012) was asked in order to find out which specific emotions they felt towards that brand. For this cause, the scale was translated to German beforehand, pre-tested with two participants and was found to be appropriate.

In order to find out how these emotions developed, the interviewees sketched the trajectories on a prepared sheet of paper with two axes. The horizontal axis showed the time and the vertical line the intensity of feelings (very positive – very negative). This approach was used to facilitate the participants' memory and is often used when exploring trajectories (e.g. Langner, Bruns, Fischer, & Rossiter, 2016). We asked the interviewees to think of and to sketch in salient contact points with their brand, e.g. the first or last contact. While they drew the trajectory, they elaborated on their feelings. Additionally, they were requested to allocate their emotions depending on the several points of contact. In a next step, we asked for the reasons of NEB, first openly, afterwards specifically. Lastly, we also wanted to know the consumers' reactions and if they could think of a way how to ease their NEB or to even turn them into positive feelings towards the brand.

Data Collection & Analysis

Data Collection

Before collecting the data, three research experts reviewed the questionnaire. Furthermore, a pre-test with two participants was done and as a result, some adjustments were made.
All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed subsequently. The interviews were undertaken face-to-face which proved helpful to gain comprehensive in-depth answers (Legard, Keegan & Ward 2003) and was moreover necessary for the interactive parts. They took place in Germany from January to March 2018 and their average time was 29.4 minutes. The language of all interviews was German. Therefore, in order to prevent misleading interpretations and to maintain the actual meaning, back-translation was applied (Miller 2011).

Data Analysis

The data of the present study was analysed according to a grounded theory approach. This is particularly suitable for negative case analysis which helps researchers to detect further dimensions of a construct, to identify new relationships (Fischer & Otnes 2006) or to explain certain processes (Locke 2001). As the objective of this study is to broaden existing theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and to develop a new categorization of the antecedents, this approach seems especially appropriate (Corbin 2017). During gathering data, the cases were cross-compared in order to identify parallels and variances. While doing so, concepts were developed which were brought together into several categories if they colluded in terms of dimensions (Corbin 2017; Strauss & Corbin 2008). These emerging categories were constantly compared and amplified through new cases. Each category describes a phenomenon of importance for the participants, e.g. an event or issue, and was developed through open, axial and selective coding (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Locke 2001; Strauss & Corbin 2008).
The data analysis was done with MAXQDA. After assessing the analysis by an additional experienced coder, the results were compared and discussed. The intercoder-reliability amounted to 82%. In addition, the Holsti measure was calculated (Holsti 1969) and amounted to 0,90. Both can be considered good measures of reliability (Früh 2017; Grayson & Rust 2001; Kassarjian 1977; Kolbe & Burnett 1991; Lombard, Snyder-Duch & Bracken 2002; Neuendorf 2002). In the end, the categorization entails two general dimensions and nine factors consisting of different components. Lastly, five research experts reviewed the categories.

Findings and Discussion

Antecedents of Negative Emotions towards the Brand

The present study finds that the factors influencing NEB can be divided into two main categories: company controlled and company non-controlled determinants. This classification builds upon Romani et al. (2012), who differentiated between marketer- and marketer non-controlled factors. While companies are in full control of the first antecedents, they cannot directly influence the latter. The interviews reveal that the

category company controlled consists of seven sub-categories, whereas the company non-controlled category comprises two sub-categories. Sample quotes will be given to enhance the comprehensibility of each category. Table 1 provides an overview of all categories (number of mentions behind each category, multiple answers were possible).

Table 1: Overview of all categories

Company controlled	Company non-controlled
• **Company Offerings (80%)** insufficient product, insufficient service, bad price-performance ratio, unreliability, user unfriendliness, bad expectation management • **Corporate Social Responsibility (65%)** lack of environmental efforts, exploitation of employees, irresponsibility towards society, greed for profit, lack of transparency of the company • **Customer Service (35%)** • **Employee Behaviour (30%)** social incompetence (unfriendliness, lack of empathy), professional incompetence, long waiting times • **Corporate Communication (30%)** • **Corporate Management (20%)** lack of traceability, poor management style, unbearable CEO, lack of appreciation of customers • **Store Environment (20%)** negative atmosphere, bad appearance	• **Environmental Factors (55%)** negative private influence (through negative WOM or different trends), negative public influence (through negative reports) • **Identification with Company and Average Customer (50%)** different value systems, intentional separation from customers/brand lovers

Company Controlled Determinants

The determinants which can be influenced by the company are categorized as company controlled factors. This category includes company offerings, employee behaviour, customer service, corporate social responsibility, corporate management, corporate communication, and store environment.

The sub-category **company offerings** stands for attributes of the main product or service which lead to a bad consumer brand experience. Over the whole study, this antecedent was the most common trigger for NEB. It consists of different factors. An **insufficient product** means that either the bad design of the product or its inflexibility lead to negative emotions. In terms of **insufficient services**, it is often a malfunctioning process, its inflexibility or a lack of security which leads to negative feelings. Moreover, **bad price-performance ratio** triggers NEB if seen as inappropriate, whether the quality is regarded as bad or the price as unsuitable. **Unreliability** leads to a negative evaluation as well as **user-unfriendliness**, which implies inconveniences for the customer. When customer requirements and

anticipations are not met, a **bad expectation management** can be the reason for NEB. This builds upon earlier studies which investigated violations of expectations as an antecedent (e.g. Zarantonello, Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2016). Table 2 presents exemplary quotes.

Table 2: Sample Quotations Reflecting Company Offerings

Component	Sample quotation
Insufficient product	But (…) also the design, because I always associate it with furniture that is a little bit loveless and very functionally oriented (...). (C1)
Insufficient service	This coordination, that it is simply a smooth process, that you get your connections, that a standard of service is on board. (C15)
Bad price-performance ratio	(…) I think it is rather expensive, but the quality... so I've had several things, they are not good, have always broken quickly or have just not corresponded to the price (…). (C4)
Unreliability	And especially lately - I use one of their products which has a lot of dropouts and a lot of mistakes, which is exhausting (...). (C10)
User-unfriendliness	Those programs crashed over and over again. At the same time compatibility problems and finally that I have not found functions, i.e. a bad user friendliness. (C11)
Bad expectation management	Because the expectations, which the catalogues arouse, the commercials and that the online shop arouses, that is, wherever I come into contact with the brand, where it represents its products, these expectations are not fulfilled in reality. (C1)

Furthermore, poor **corporate social responsibility** is a salient antecedent of NEB. This sub-category includes several dimensions. A lack of **environmental efforts** refers to violations or damage of the environment. Bad working conditions and bad payment belong to the dimension **exploitation of employees**. **Irresponsibility towards society** comprises reckless behaviour concerning the general public. **Greed for profit** also includes fraud and betrayal besides the quest for profit. A **lack of transparency** of the company generates NEB by not being authentical or not communicating frankly. This builds upon literature that shows that ethical concerns and corporate social irresponsibility play a decisive role as a trigger of brand avoidance (Strandvik, Rindell & Wilén 2013) and can even increase consumers' willingness-to-punish the brand (Sweetin et al. 2013).

Table 3: Sample Quotations Reflecting Corporate Social Responsibility

Component	Sample quotation
Lack of environmental efforts	(...) that the company is clearing up palm oil for production or that it is

	also doing a huge business with water by keeping the water very scarce in some regions, but then bottling it. These are simply machinations of one of the many companies that work in this way, where one then tries to avoid the whole thing as far as possible and to buy no products in this direction. (C3)
Exploitation of employees	I first heard about the working conditions in autumn 2016. (…) And since then the brand has had a very negative touch for me. (C12)
Irresponsibility towards society	Then simply the ever-growing market power, i.e. that they force many other companies or retailers out of the market (...). (C6)
Greed for profit	(…) but really this profit striving is in the foreground. So not only in terms of corporate strategy, but you obviously also get this communicated. (C2)
Lack of transparency of the company	If a company does not work openly and is not transparent, this has become an exclusion factor for me. (C3)

Bad or missing **customer service** can also lead to NEB. Thereby it strongly depends on the way the service is structured, e.g. regarding the call center or the contact with customer support. The handling of concerns and underlying conditions further belong to this sub-category, e.g. the response to customers' requests. Research also states that negative incidents especially happen when the requested service is special from the customer's point of view (Bitner, Booms & Tetreault 1990).

Table 4: Sample Quotations Reflecting Customer Service

Component	Sample quotation
Customer service	(…) the contact with the customer support was also not positive. Because there was not really a personal contact, but rather a forum that many large companies use, which I always find insane. (C18)

Another important sub-category is **employee behaviour** which includes several factors that describe situations in which employees behave critically. **Social incompetence** comprises their social behaviour towards customers and includes e.g. a lack of friendliness or empathy. Being rude or not paying attention to the customer certainly is a dissatisfactory incident and belongs to negative employee behaviour (Bitner, Booms & Tetreault 1990). Regarding their performance, consumers mainly complained about employees' **professional incompetence**. Furthermore, **long waiting times** during the customer interaction also lead to NEB. Although waiting times may be subjective, there are several incidents in which subjective feelings are not dominant, e.g. in terms of delays (Wang, Hong & Zhou 2017).

Table 5: Sample Quotations Reflecting Employee Behaviour

Component	Sample quotation
Social incompetence	Then I got up, wanted to go to the toilet and suddenly it was rather unfriendly pointed out by the stewardesses that I would have to sit down now. (C2)
Professional incompetence	But these guys who come home, they can do anything, but not really, they don't know their trade. (C1)
Long waiting times	If everything works, it's always great, but if it doesn't work, it always takes time to find a solution. Especially when problems are still unknown. (C10)

Corporate communication might also lead to NEB, as advertisement is regarded as inappropriate, annoying or boring. Dalli et al. (2007) further speak of outdated communication which leads to brand dislike on the corporate level. Although several participants of the study considered the advertising in a negative way, there were also contrary opinions. Numerous participants liked the corporate communication of the brand which they had negative emotions towards. Despite their NEB, they claimed that the advertisements were likeable or even funny.

Table 6: Sample Quotations Reflecting Corporate Communication

Component	Sample quotation
Corporate communication	Awful and embarrassing. That one notices the decline of the brand. (C18)

According to the respondents, **corporate management** can also be a determinant of NEB. It includes the **lack of traceability**, which means that certain decisions or actions are not comprehensible enough. A **poor management style** refers to the way the company is lead. In addition, the head of the company as a person can also be regarded as unacceptable, which falls into the sub-category of "**unbearable CEO**". By not valuing its customers, companies further generate NEB through a **lack of appreciation of customers**. Table 7 shows a sample of quotes.

Table 7: Sample Quotations Reflecting Corporate Management

Component	Sample quotation
Lack of traceability	(...) important to me were these bad management decisions and because I have also seen the consequences of them and actually feared these consequences. And despite several attempts to change what didn't work – because the management was of the opinion, no, that's exactly what we're doing now. They were reminded, and they wouldn't listen. (C10)

Poor management style	(...) this is a bad management style for me, because as a manager I have to enable my employees to achieve the key figures (...). They could also invest much more in training these managers in order to teach them how to lead. There are few exceptions that have the natural talent, but many do not. (C10)
Unbearable CEO	(…) after several attempts I had the opportunity to talk to him myself. It was one of the worst conversations I could think of in my life, the man was very domineering, very moody, despotic, and likewise. (C13)
Lack of appreciation of customers	(…) that you are simply not appreciated as a customer. In fact, they should have been designed to promote customer loyalty, but generally speaking they do not. They don't care if you fly with them or not. (C19)

Additionally, the **store environment** contributes to customers' feelings, either through a negative atmosphere or a bad appearance. In contrast, a pleasant shopping environment also leads to positive effects on unplanned spending, duration of the store visit, and social interaction (Kaltcheva & Weitz 2006).

Table 8: Sample Quotations Reflecting Store Environment

Component	Sample quotation
Negative atmosphere	(…) but that was the tightest plane I've ever been on in my life. Well, it was tight for me, and I'm really small. (C19)
Bad appearance	Confusing for me, yeah. With all those shelves where you have to take out your own stuff, because there's nobody there to show you that. (...) I don't know where to go. (C14)

Company Non-Controlled Determinants

The first sub-category which was revealed by the interviews are influencing **environmental factors**. It is divided into negative private influence, e.g. through negative WOM or different trends, and negative public influence. In general, social influence can not only lead to attitudes or opinions, but also to emotions, feelings or even behaviour (Mason, Conrey & Smith 2007). The fact that emotions are adapted towards comparison groups has already been shown by Schachter and Singer (Schachter, 1959; Schachter & Singer, 1962). Negative public influence is e.g. triggered through negative reports on TV or newspapers. Generally, articles are especially used by consumers when they look for information about corporate ethics (Humphreys et al. 1993; Schmalz & Orth 2012).

Table 9: Sample Quotations Reflecting Environmental Factors

Component	Sample quotation
Negative private influence	I assume that I didn't have a lot of contact with it in my childhood either, because my parents just weren't fans of the brand back then, either. (C3)
Negative public influence	My negative feelings started when I saw a report on TV, and last year I saw it again. And I also did research on the Internet. (C12)

Missing **identification with the company and average customer** is the second category which companies cannot control directly. It applies to customers who do not experience a **feeling of belonging to typical customers and/or the company**. The respondents claimed that they would like to intentionally separate themselves from customers or brand lovers. Zarantonello et al. (2016) and Hegner et al. (2017) considered it to be a determinant of brand hate and refer to this category as taste system or symbolic incongruity. Furthermore, **different value systems** also belong to this sub-category. Hereby, consumers do not agree with the principles the company stands for.

Table 10: Sample Quotations Reflecting Identification with Company and Average Customer

Component	Sample quotation
Different value systems	(…) organic is also very important to me. But they do not produce a single product organically. That's just one of those exclusion criteria. The company is of absolutely no importance to me in my life. (...) so in the end I always get back to the point that it's not my company. (C3)
Intentional separation from customers/brand lovers	For me, the main reason, I actually think it's the audience. So the other customers who surround you. (…) This radiates on everything. (C1)

Trajectories of Negative Emotions towards the Brand

The most common emotions in the present study were anger, discontent and dislike. This is partly in line with the findings in literature so far, as studies observed that dislike and anger are more often felt than e.g. sadness (Romani, Sadeh & Dalli 2009). Moreover, the combination of these three emotions occurred frequently. Among the brands which were claimed to raise NEB were e.g. Nestlé, Apple, Microsoft, Ryanair, Deutsche Bahn, Amazon or Facebook.

Research so far has not taken into account the development of NEB, which shall be elaborated in the following. In almost every case, the consumers developed NEB over a longer period of time. While the feelings often intensified over time, the majority of participants ($N = 16$) also experienced positive emotions at some point, of whom some ($N = 8$) even felt very strong positive feelings. In the remaining cases an emotional indifference

towards the brand was felt beforehand. The strong positive and negative feelings can be explained by the changing nature of feelings like love or hate, which are both closely connected from a psychological perspective. Furthermore, they can turn into each other (Sternberg 2003; Zarantonello et al. 2018).

In terms of the further development of the NEB, the interviews revealed that the strength of the feelings did not soften without contact. Some participants even reported from experiences they had years ago, while they still feel in a very strong negative way about that brand today.

Regarding the evolvement of NEB over time, there were different trajectories. Only a small number of participants ($N = 2$) reported that the negative emotions were developing immediately through one salient incident. In the other cases ($N = 18$) there were several factors that lead to NEB over a longer period of time, which could also be supported by the graphical part of the interview that was sketched by the respondents. As the majority of respondents experienced positive emotions beforehand, the trajectories mostly portrayed a deteriorating of emotions, which builds upon previous research (Zarantonello et al. 2018). Flat periods with no change of intensity occurred as well. In most cases ($N = 13$), the graph started in the positive part of the diagram. The other respondents ($N = 5$) had negative feelings approximately since the first point of contact, while in only two cases the feelings remained rather neutral for a longer period of time. Building on the different trajectories of brand hate (Zarantonello et al. 2018), four different patterns of trajectories could be found. Seven interviewees described patterns of positive and negative emotions, which then turned into positive again (type "Roller Coaster"). Six respondents sketched curves which decreased from positive to negative until a steady negative level was reached (type "Downward slope flattens"). Four participants showed curves that were "negative all the way" and did not display any positive tendency. The last type "steady decrease" was depicted by three consumers who experienced feelings that declined all along the way.

Depending on the different types of development, there might be differences in terms of treating these consumer emotions. Especially consumers of the type "Roller coaster" seem to be interested in maintaining the relationship with the brand. Therefore, brands should particularly try to solve existing problems or conflicts with these consumers as their potential for a positive brand relationship is very high. In contrast, it might be difficult to ease the NEB that consumer of the type "Downward slope flattens" and "Steady decrease" experience. In these cases, consumers are already trying to avoid the brand. Yet it might also be possible to stop the negative impacts of their NEB by trying to recover the relationships or at least listen to their problems. Recovering a relationship with "Negative all the way" type of consumers might not possible at all and a "divorce" with these consumers should be considered (Zarantonello et al. 2018).

Regarding the different antecedents and their impacts on the trajectories no regularities could be found. This may result from the relatively small sample and the very distinct and individual cases. Even respondents who claimed corporate wrongdoings to be the main reason for their NEB showed curves of the "Roller coaster" type, although according to literature this determinant is typical for "Negative all the way" (Zarantonello et al. 2018).

Impacts of Negative Emotions towards the Brand

Regarding the outcomes and impacts of NEB the observations build upon the reviewed literature. Most respondents try to avoid the brand, switch to alternatives and talk negatively about their brand experiences (Hegner, Fetscherin & van Delzen 2017; Romani, Grappi & Dalli 2012). Brand revenge or anti-brand actions which is mostly associated with brand hate (Grégoire, Tripp & Legoux 2009; Hegner, Fetscherin & van Delzen 2017; Romani et al. 2015) could not be observed. This might be due to the fact that brand hate as a very extreme feeling was hardly experienced in the sample.

Ways to Win Consumers Back

At the end of the interview, participants were asked to think of a way their negative emotions could be turned into positive again. Some stated that it was utopic and unrealistic that they would return to be customers. This would only be possible by restructuring the total company or strategy of the firm. These consumers could be considered as "lost", as there might be no solution to win them back. Nevertheless other participants expressed some potential ways to turn negative into positive feelings. One salient factor which was voiced several times are the employees. By showing more social and professional competence, e.g. a helpful and polite behaviour, commitment, competence, and empathy, consumers could feel better about the brand as well. This could be achieved through employee training, fair working conditions, reliability, transparency, and reflexion.
In general, there was a call for more appreciation of customers and an increase of customer orientation.
Moreover, fair prices, a better usability and safety were demanded to ameliorate the product or service. Customer delight might also be a way to debilitate the NEB of consumers.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to existing literature in several ways. First, it enhances prevailing studies which focus on the outcomes of NEB. Thereby it answers to research calls of numerous authors who asked for studies in terms of negative emotions towards the brand in general (e.g. Fournier & Alvarez, 2013; Zarantonello et al., 2016) and specifically on the pre-conditions of NEB (Bryson, Atwal & Hultén 2013; Fournier & Alvarez 2013; Romani, Grappi & Dalli 2012).
Furthermore, the present study concludes with different findings to the previous posed research questions. A comprehensive and detailed categorization of nine different determinants could be classified (1). Therefore this study enriches the prevailing literature so far which has mainly focused on some dominant and general stated antecedents like bad brand experiences. In this study, the respondents most often claimed that their NEB were triggered by the company offerings, e.g. by an insufficient product or service.
In addition, the paper aimed to examine the development and different trajectories of NEB (2). In the vast majority of cases, there were multiple influencing factors that lead to NEB over a longer period of time. Before their NEB developed, the consumers felt positive about the brand in most cases. Moreover, different types of trajectories could be identified.

Depending on the type of development, it might be possible to determine the probability of recovering the relationship to the consumer.

Besides, due to the phenomenon of co-occurring emotions, consumers may experience several emotions at once. Hence the present study assesses the determinants by not focusing on one emotion only, like several studies in this research stream have already done, but by observing several emotions at the same time. The interviews revealed that anger, discontent and dislike were the most common NEB which seem to co-occur frequently.

Furthermore, the paper concludes with outcomes and ways to generate positive emotions again. Although the interviews showed that most participants avoid the brand they feel negative about, there are some possible solutions to make them feel less negative, e.g. by showing more appreciation of consumers in general or by being more transparent.

Managerial Implications

Negative consumer emotions towards the brand are very damaging, not only to the company itself, but also for the brand. Negative consequences can affect the brand itself, its image, reputation, and equity (Fournier & Alvarez 2013; Zarantonello & Pauwels-Delassus 2016). What is more, negative impacts could be amplified in the online context, e.g. through firestorms, social media bashing etc. Therefore it is crucial to understand why consumers feel in a certain way and how their feelings develop. This paper offers a variety of consumer insights for this purpose.

As negative emotions are hard to change, controlling for potential factors of NEB might help to decrease the risk of NEB and outcomes of these. Moreover, preventive actions and countermeasures can be taken. Depending on which determinant can be identified, different strategies of addressing these NEB can be applied. Together with using the NEB scale by Romani et al. (2012), managers can comprehend consumers' feelings and check for possible negative feelings.

Furthermore, managers should think of ways to ease the NEB, e.g. by showing more appreciation of customers and establishing employee training. Although some relationships with consumers can probably not be fully recovered, it might still be possible to stop the negative outcomes of these "lost" consumers, like negative WOM (Zarantonello et al. 2018). However, not all consumers can agree with a company's values or its business model. Hence there are some relationships where companies simply have to accept that negative feelings towards the brand might evolve.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Limitations of the present study include the data which is based on the consumers' memory. Conducting a long-term study (Rindfleisch et al. 2008) and comparing different cultural backgrounds might be useful for future research directions. Furthermore, future research could validate the qualitative results by a quantitative study (Calder 1977) and thereby extend the NEB scale by Romani et al. (2012). By doing so, differences in industries, products or service categories and their impact on the development of NEB could be analysed.

Another promising avenue for future research is to explore the determinants individually and in more depth. In doing so, their different effects and how they lead to the phenomenon of NEB should be investigated separately.

Finally, it would be interesting to examine the effectiveness of different solutions which were also proposed in this present study or recovery strategies in terms of easing NEB.

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