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Mending the end-goal paradox of social and commercial marketing

An explorative case study of brands' emotional communication
influence on consumers behavioural attitudes

by

Klara Käll & Núria Budesca Alameda

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Supervisor: Annette Cerne

Examiner: Javier Cenamor

Abstract

Title: Mending the end-goal paradox of social and commercial marketing - An explorative case study of brands' emotional communication influence on consumers' behavioural attitudes

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Authors: Klara Käll & Núria Budesca Alameda

Supervisor: Annette Cerne

Keywords: Social Marketing; Emotional Communication; Behaviour; Attitudes; Brand Community; Storytelling; Norms; Aim'n; Platanomelón; Sweden; Spain

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate consumers' attitudes toward social marketing behaviours communicated by brands with regards to emotions.

Methodology: This research was carried out with the research philosophies of relativism for ontology and social constructionism for epistemology. Moreover, the study had an abductive approach and the research strategy of a two-cases case study. Finally, the study was explorative with the research question put in context of the two brands, Aim'n from Sweden and Platanomelón from Spain. These were selected to gain an extensive understanding of two different industries operating with a value-driven and wellness focus through their product offerings.

Theoretical Framework: Regarding the theoretical framework the following was included; consumer theory, social marketing, behavioural theory including exchange theory and finally emotional communication including affective intelligence theory, storytelling, and brand communities.

Empirical Data: A total of 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with six for each brand following guidelines based on the theoretical framework. The data was analysed, and three main themes are presented with two common themes and a final one separating the brands.

Conclusion: The main conclusions of this study argue that brands play a vital role for influencing favourable attitudes toward social marketing goals through challenging societal norms and by creating a community impact. For Aim'n, they also work as accepting and exploiting interdependency and for Platanomelón as educational influencers. These influencing factors are further amplified when brands use emotions. Brands should only, however, influence and not be leaders as it creates a risk of capitalising on issues in society that other actors such as governments, should be responsible for. Additionally, the study concludes that brands have more to offer social marketing and further research is encouraged to mend the practices together for a sustainable future.

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Klara Käll



Núria Budesca Alameda

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1. Introduction

According to Cambridge, a paradox is defined as “a situation or statement that seems impossible or is difficult to understand because it contains two opposite facts or characteristics” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d). In this instance, our paradox is the one between “social” and “marketing”. Social matters and movements are about making the world a better place, whilst marketing is the process of developing value and wealth for people who already possess powerful resources and money (French, Merritt & Reynolds, 2011). This paradox is particularly present when we discuss the relationship between social marketing and commercial marketing.

Social marketing is a paradigm from sustainability that concerns itself with promoting healthier and long-term behavioural change for individuals and society (Lim, 2016). Social marketing is built upon commercial marketing practices and tools such as segmentation and 4 P's (Gordon, 2012). The paradox becomes present when we witness the friction that emerges of social marketing's end-goal being behavioural change and commercial marketing being financial gain (Rundle-Thiele et al. 2019). Some scholars have attempted to separate social marketing from its origin (Rundle-Thiele et al. 2019; Dann 2012; Gordon, Zainuddin & Magee 2016) whereas others argue they have more to offer each other (Lim, 2016; Jones et al. 2008). We as authors agree with the latter standpoint that uniting this paradox is of value for both the wellbeing of individuals and societal welfare as well as contributing to the research.

This thesis embarks on the challenge of investigating the relationship between social marketing and commercial marketing through commercial brand's emotional communication efforts. Emotional communication and branding is a highly relevant research focus due to its significant role in marketing since it creates strong consumer-brand relationships and attitude formations (Thompson, Rindfleisch & Arsel, 2006). It is of further significance in building competitive brand strategies as it places the consumers, not the product, at the forefront of a brand's communication efforts (Pandey, 2012). By uniting them we intend to present a scenario where brands take on a bigger role in the promotion of favourable attitudes towards rewarding behaviours for its intended target audience. With this research we present the reader with an alternative approach where

commercial brands can play a larger part in promoting better attitudes towards healthier behaviours for consumers and for society in general even when the end-goal is economic profit.

1.1 Background

Social marketing and commercial marketing are recognised by many scholars as having different end-goals as of the former aiming for behavioural change and the latter for financial gain (Stead et al. 2007; Ross, Zainuddin, & Magee, 2016; Gordon, 2012; Rundle-Thiele et al. 2019; French, Merritt, & Reynolds, 2011). At the same time, researchers for social marketing have attempted to move further away from the commercial foundation it is based upon. For instance, Gordon (2012) reshapes the traditional marketing mix of the 4 P's into a social marketing mix, where he remodels the core tools of marketing as he argues how the original ones have ended up becoming basic and out of date. Other scholars like Dann (2012) have placed focus on reforming existing social marketing definitions away from its origin, commercial marketing. Other scholars like Vallone et al. (2017) states how health communication experts have turned to branding to gain further recognition and success in health promotion campaigns. Their attempt has been to market the healthy behaviour as a product to allow for voluntary behavioural changes upon the basis of brand recognition. All in all, commercial marketing has proven used in social marketing contexts to influence a group to take on favourable behaviour that benefits individuals, groups, or society at large. Repeatedly, within this research, a main focal point has been to separate social marketing away from commercial marketing and making it its own practice. However, some scholars like Lim (2016) take an alternative approach and argues that they do not necessarily need to be further separated.

Lim means that the goal for social marketing is to create long-term social change but concludes that resources and knowledge from commercial marketing can, and should, be used to achieve these goals. Lim further argues that it is crucial to acknowledge the influence economic growth has on the environment and society which calls for a collaboration between social goals and financial gain. Not further separation between the practices. Previous research on commercial marketing and behavioural change has mainly focused on the negative effects. For instance, Dunlop, Freeman and Jones (2016) confirmed how global brands with product offerings like alcohol and tobacco can negatively influence public health as their reach and budget is significantly

larger in contrast to campaigns promoting healthy behaviours that usually comes from smaller jurisdictions and local initiatives. Another example is Arredondo et al. (2009) who showed that brand loyalty and increased recognition in fast-food had a negative influence on young consumers' health habits. Gerard and Michael (2003) further examined tobacco marketing and concluded how the main target effort was directed towards low-income groups and young people. They state how marketing in these industries make the entire practice receptive to scrutiny and criticism should something not be changed. This is a problem that needs to be addressed where Gerard and Michael further state how social marketing has been the main driver in bridging this. Solving this problem is crucial for the future of welfare and here is where our thesis aims to contribute.

1.2 Research Problem

When social marketing initially emerged, it aroused some backlash amongst some scholars who argued that marketing's use should remain for market transactions purposes only and not cover any social marketing activity (Hastings & Saren, 2003). One of the many academics that was not particularly interested in this new marketing variation was Luck, who expressed that "broadening the concept of marketing is not in the interests of the discipline, as it confuses its definition and ultimately threatens its identity" (Hastings & Saren, 2003, p. 307). Moreover, Hastings and Saren refer to Bartels who supported this stance when he stated:

If marketing is to be regarded as so broad as to include both economic and non-economic fields of application, perhaps marketing as originally conceived will ultimately appear under another name.

Bartels (1976, p. 76)

Although previous research has either focused on commercial brands' negative influence on people's behaviour or on social marketing's use of commercial marketing tools, we reckon there could be an incongruity. This incongruity results in a lack of understanding of how commercial marketing can help influence favourable behaviours on its own. This becomes problematic as commercial marketing should be ingrained, as Lim (2016) pointed out to create a more sustainable future. Cova and Cova (2002) further add on how research on economic activities should be ingrained with the societal context which ultimately allows it to take place. As a result, the focus

needs to be placed on how commercial marketing and, namely brands, can promote these positive behavioural changes with the use and implementation of social marketing through its emotional communication efforts. This is where our research becomes relevant to address this problem. To solve this dilemma and end-goal paradox, we will investigate social marketing efforts through brands' emotional communication in relation to social marketing goals of behavioural change of their audience.

Emotional communication should be one of the main instruments that can help the researchers and marketers mend the paradox for different reasons. For instance, emotional communication has grown significantly over the past decades due to its success in building brand-consumer relationships and communities which as a result drives loyalty (Thompson, Rindfleisch & Arsel, 2006). This growth calls for more attention that leads to companies making bigger efforts in their communication messages. In today's marketing climate, we see corporations competing to make their brands and products stand out from the clutter. In order to achieve this, the concluding solution has been to establish a relationship between the consumer and the brand at the sensual and emotional level (Kim & Sullivan, 2019). This way marketers aspire to develop deeper, long-lasting, and strong brand attachments for the consumers with its preferred brands (Akgün, Koçoğlu & İmamoğlu, 2013).

Codrin (2010, p. 64) states that "the shift from functional to emotional communication drives the importance of the personality and public image of the endorser", hence why it is vital to have a clear and well-established presence in that matter. Emotional communication and branding establish themselves as an indispensable factor in developing emotional connections such as increased brand loyalty and communities (Kim & Sullivan, 2019). These emotional connections and extensive communication with its members is an angle worth investigating through the lens of social marketing in order to place further research into overcoming the paradox earlier mentioned. Our research question therefore goes as follows:

How are consumers' behavioural attitudes influenced by social marketing communication efforts with regards to emotions and how does this contribute to mending the end-goal paradox?

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to understand how, and if, brands can contribute in mending the end-goal paradox between social marketing and commercial marketing. This will be done by taking the alternative approach of investigating brands' influence in creating favourable attitudes towards healthier behaviours for society and individuals. It is also of importance to state how we intend to challenge existing literature and scholars arguing the further separation between the two practices. This will be done through a careful examination of the brand's emotional communication efforts and how its target audience receives it. Moreover, we emphasise the novelty and consider it of utmost importance to open further discussion with this research, as well as provide more tools for brand managers and social marketers to better link their missions and improve their strategies. By investigating emotional communication, we further hope to contribute to brand managers of what elements are vital when building a successful marketing strategy using emotions.

With this research, we further aim to contribute to a better understanding of how brands can act as influencers in achieving social goals (i.e the aim of social marketing) for individual consumers and society at large. In order to address this, we will conduct a case study of two brands in order to place our research question in context to be able to answer it. After a careful selection we aim to choose brands that are new but have managed to grow significantly with the use of their emotional communication and have a wellness focus of their product offerings. Also brands that have managed to grow relationships and build brand communities through their communication efforts are of interest to spot these key success factors. Hence two brands will allow a more reliable data analysis. Repeatedly, placing the research in context will allow a better analysis and credibility of this paper. Further detail on this will be given in section 3 of this paper under method after presenting the theoretical framework.

2. Theoretical Framework

The following section will present the reader with definitions and key theories that will follow this thesis. Following theories will be included in this framework; consumer theory, social marketing, behavioural theory and exchange theory, emotional communication including affective intelligence theory, storytelling, and brand communities.

2.1 Consumer Theory

Since this thesis focuses on the consumers' attitudes and the role of receptors of communication, the following is a brief theoretical structure of relevant theories within consumer culture theory. However, the authors of this study would like to state that these theories will not be the main focus but are included regarding our research question. This section is included to set the tone for the following main theories of social marketing and emotional communication.

Consumer culture theorists interpret popular culture texts such as advertisements, television programs, films as lifestyle and identity guides that portray marketplace ideologies (i.e., look like this, act like this, want specific things, aspire to a certain lifestyle...). By decrypting and comprehending these mass-mediated marketplace ideologies, theorists reveal how consumers pursue identity and lifestyle ideals (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). For instance, Cova and Cova (2002) emphasise the work of Elliott who states that we have now entered an era where the ordinary consumer must take personal action to create their own individuality. Moreover, Mick and Buhl (1992) describe how consumers' life themes and life projects shape their interpretations of brand communication. Ritson and Elliott (cited in Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p.875) state that "advertisements often become a social resource for humour or social bonding in which consumers talk about the meaning of a given campaign." For this reason, the academics suggest that consumers are conceptualised as interpretive and active agents rather than passive ones.

With this in mind, new changes for social movements have occurred recently with the rapid evolution of the Internet and cultural shifts as influencers of consumption (Patsiaouras, 2022). Patsiaouras further states how the reach of social media has been able to influence social changes and public perceptions which as a result influence consumer culture. Additionally, Arnould and

Thompson (2005) articulate that consumer culture is seen as a system of commercially produced items that groups utilise to make collective sense of their surroundings as well as circumstances and to orient their members' experiences and lives. The authors (2005, p.869) also disclose that "these meanings are negotiated by consumers in specific social situations, roles, and relationships. Consumer culture makes certain patterns of behaviour more likely than others." Therefore, this can be linked to Holt's (2002) idea that states that consumers form communities around brands, a postmodern social approach, in which consumers are reportedly doing their own thing while doing it with thousands of like-minded others. Hence, brands have become the foremost tool through which people experience and express the social world. Patsiaouras (2022) supports this and further explains how brands are now participating together with consumers through digital campaigns via commercial marketplaces. Brands are moving away from passiveness and are now actively participating with consumers in the marketplace where social matters are the centre point of interest.

One last relevant theory for this research is related to the attitude-behaviour relation as it applies to the consumer perspective and its behaviour. Most theorists today would agree that attitude is the evaluative reaction or tendency to respond to an object with some degree of favourableness or unfavourableness and it is considered to be at the kernel of a person's attitude (Ajzen, 2008). In such a manner, we find the Expectancy-Value (hereinafter EV) theory created by Fishbein (1963), which claims that people's assessments or attitudes about an object are determined by their own beliefs about the object itself.

Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) state that a belief is explained as the subjective probability that the object has an specific attribute. Furthermore, according to Ajzen:

the terms 'object' and 'attribute' are used in the generic sense and they refer to any discriminable aspect of an individual's world. For example, a person may believe that Apple iPod media players (the attitude object) are popular with young people (the attribute) (Ajzen, 2008, p. 531).

Therefore, each belief associates the object with a specific attribute. According to the EV theory, a person's overall attitude towards a product is determined by their own values or assessments of the attributes associated with the object and, more importantly, by the strength of these associations. Ajzen (2008, pp. 531) concludes by saying that "the more positive the beliefs, and the more strongly they are held, the more favourable the attitude should be."

In sum, regarding consumer theory we determine its importance for understanding consumers in the mass-mediated marketplace that has been significantly influenced by digitalisation. Nowadays, brands are reactive in expressing social matters and are playing a significant role for consumers' formation of identities and attitudes. With the EV theory we determine how beliefs influence attitudes and therefore is important to include. Nonetheless, this will play a more introductory role in the data collection whereas the following theories of social marketing and emotional communication are of most importance for this study.

2.2 Social Marketing

After having addressed consumer theory and attitudes, we now dive deeper into social marketing. This practice within marketing has been developing since the 1970s and Kotler and Zaltman (1971) were one of the very first researchers to introduce it. Kotler and Zaltman state in their work how the Americans used it first as "social advertising" in order to achieve certain social objectives such as increasing young people to attend college or within the political sphere of promoting presidential candidates. In their work, they adapt the traditional 4 P's to better fit the social objectives and further state that marketing tools need to be adapted, in order to communicate new social ideas in a way that the intended target audience, or society, can accept. Kotler and Zaltman further raise a word of caution that social marketing must create more valuable exchanges to a larger reach so that it can increase acceptance or achieve specific goals. Hence, the same way commercial marketing offers a duality of value, so should social marketing.

Ever since, social marketing has been taken up by governments and NGOs as a practical and systematic way to develop social change practices. It is also being increasingly applied because it has been shown to make a useful contribution to tackling many of the big social challenges faced by communities and their governments (French, Merritt, & Reynolds, 2011). French, Merritt and

Reynolds further state that social marketing's primary motive is to achieve a particular social good (rather than a commercial gain) and its main focus is on achieving specific behavioural objectives. We remind the reader that this is the main difference it has in contrast to commercial marketing which we clarified in the background and research problem section of this thesis.

Moreover, social marketing applies commercial marketing tools such as segmentation, market analysis and the marketing mix (Stead et al., 2007). Dann (2012, p.150) further specifies the fundamental core of the relationship between social marketing and commercial marketing as “the voluntary exchange aspect of commercial marketing, alongside the role of social marketing work as an influencer in society rather than a mandatory behaviour outcome”. Hence, the influential aspect of behaviour change is a key factor where Kotler and Zaltman (1971) also pressed on more focus to be placed on in their introductory work.

2.3 Behavioural Theory and Exchange Theory

From the above theoretical section, we can determine how behaviours are a central part of the theory which we further elaborate on here. Rundle-Thiele et al. (2019) specify how social marketing addresses three types of behaviours; ending current and intrinsic behaviour (e.g., quit smoking), encourage novel behaviours (e.g., engage in new forms of exercise) and adjust existing behaviours (e.g., eating more greens). Behavioural theory is therefore strongly linked to social marketing which David and Rundle-Thiele (2018) bring up in their work with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). TPB is focused on individual behaviour change and is frequently used in the social marketing context. David and Rundle-Thiele present Theory Planned Behaviour's four key components; (1) the individual's personal desirable or undesirable attitudes towards the behaviour, (2) social norms from external environment towards the behaviour, (3) the individual's capability to engage in the behaviour and (4) intentions show the amount of effort and commitment the individual have towards the behaviour. Each of these components sum up the likelihood of the individual adapting the desired behaviour (e.g., increased physical activity and reduced alcohol consumption). These intentions are built up on attitudes and research suggest that positive social norms increase the intention and therefore the behaviour to appear.

Another important component of social marketing and the increasing likelihood of behaviours to change is Exchange Theory by Kotler (2000). This work states that human beings are need-directed

beings with a natural inclination to try and improve our species (Hastings & Saren, 2003). If social marketers want to propel consumers to change, and improve their lot, they must provide purchasers with something beneficial in exchange. In this sense, exchange involves the transfer of tangible or intangible items between two or more social actors (Bagozzi, 1979). Kotler suggests that five preconditions that are required for exchange to take place;

at least two parties present, each party has something that might be of value to the other party, each party is capable of communication and delivery, each party is free to accept or reject the offer and each party believes it is appropriate or desirable to deal with the other party.

Kotler (2000, p. 309)

Furthermore, Hastings and Saren (2003) refer to Maibach who further postulates that if social marketers can prove that the perceived benefits are greater than what the consumer paid for the good, voluntary adoption by the consumer is most likely. Hastings and Saren (2003, p. 309) state how “commercial marketing provides a clear utilitarian benefit with products whereas the perceived benefit in social marketing is more symbolic”. As a result, it is more complex for social marketing to properly and efficiently communicate and put consumers’ self-interest above everything else. Hastings and Saren (2003, p. 310) conclude that the fundamental concept of Exchange Theory is that “the best way for me to get what I want is to convince you that... something I am offering in exchange for it, is in *your* best interest.”

In sum, behavioural theory and Exchange Theory belong within the social marketing paradigm and are of utmost importance. Behavioural theory of TPB concerns itself with attitudes, social norms, individual’s capability, and intentions to engage in the favourable behaviour. Exchange Theory emphasises the value exchange between the parties involved and communicating this with respect to the self-interest of the consumer.

2.4 Emotional Communication

Continuing our theoretical framework, we first introduce the main scope of emotional communication and then go deeper into the two sub parts of storytelling and brand communities. Means of communication such as advertising and marketing need to reflect the ways in which

consumers have changed throughout the years. As differentiation on functional benefits comes closer with technical advances in product performance, distinction on emotional benefits becomes more determining (Pawle & Cooper, 2006). Furthermore, Marquart, Brosius & de Vreese (2019) introduce Affective Intelligence Theory (AIT) which was established by Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen (2000). AIT has become one of the most used theoretical frameworks regarding the study of emotions in political psychology, according to Brader and Marcus (2013). Although this thesis does not strictly aim to touch upon political purposes, it does pretend to examine societal matters, which can be linked to socio-political issues to some extent. Having this in mind, Marquart, Brosius and de Vreese (2019, p. 89) articulate AIT posits that, “depending on the political geography and context, people will react with different emotions to their surroundings”. In turn, Marcus and colleagues (2007) state that these emotional reactions lead them to rely on familiar choices or to consider their actions (e.g., choosing brands that resonate with one’s ethics and morals rather than one that goes against them).

In this regard, Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel refer to Atkin et al. that coincide in the fact that:

this relational, communal, participatory, sensory, and emotive view of consumer–brand relationships is increasingly heralded as a central pillar of market differentiation and sustainable competitive advantage (Atkin et al. cited in Thompson, Rindfleisch & Arsel, 2006, p. 50).

In this way, the importance of (1) placing the functional part and performance of the product in the mind of the consumer and (2) seeding feelings and emotions through emotional communication in the heart of the consumer (Codrin, 2010) becomes vital in order to accomplish the earlier stated distinction and advantage. Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006) build on Atkin’s on how the strategic objective of emotional communication is to forge strong and meaningful sentimental ties with consumers and, in so doing, become part of their life stories, memories, and at the same time an important connection in their social networks. Continuously, we have established two main concepts within emotional communication, namely storytelling and brand communities.

2.4.1 Storytelling

Fog, Budtz and Yakaboylu (2005) state that symbols and visual expressions that reflect our values and psyche help us navigate throughout life and the world. In fact, strong brands are one of the means by which we do this. They further state that a strong corporate culture cannot be bought, hence the only way to reach a well-built culture is to develop your company culture and then make it visible. Regarding this, storytelling is a vital tool for activating and making the company's DNA visible to consumers through communication. Emotional communication has to do with how talented the creative agency staff is (Codrin, 2010), so they can portray the brand's core values successfully. Brand strategists should focus on telling stories that inspire and captivate consumers. Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006) further refer to Roberts who argues that these stories must demonstrate that the brand understands consumers' lifestyles, dreams, and goals and succeed in showing how the brand can enrich their lives, as well as helping them fill their particular needs.

Roper & Fill (2012) builds upon the work of Van Riel and Fombrun that corporate storytelling is a central and critical foundation where corporate communication messages can be developed. The authors also argue that many firms use corporate storytelling to express the *raison d'être* and personality of the organisation, as well as its history, and that is when human beings and companies expressing their personalities collide. According to Roper & Fill, the corporate story helps a company emotionally bond with its employees and creates a position for the firm against its competitors. Therefore, creating an emotional relationship with the stakeholders is fundamental in storytelling. If the values and culture of the brand are communicated correctly through storytelling, it can cement the position of the company in the minds of consumers.

In order to do that, Roper & Fill (2012) establish that stories can be understood in terms of four main categories: Firstly, we find myths and origins, which are used to tell on the one hand, the origin of a company and its principles and on the other hand, how the firm achieved success by facing and overcoming problems. Secondly, future predictions about an organisation that are often based on past events or stories about other companies - they're also known as corporate prophecies. Furthermore, hero stories recall people from the organisation who faced and solved a setback. The story shows different admirable behaviours and values during difficult times that should be to be copied by others. Thirdly, there are the archived narratives. These collections of stories track down

the history and development throughout time of the company, including managerial, financial, and other sorts of changes. Firms go through multiple changes such as adopting new names, strategies, and makeovers, which is why there is a necessity to communicate these stories in order to provide a sense of history. As stated by Fog, Budtz and Yakaboylu (2005, p. 105), storytelling is “a dynamic and continuous process”, thus it needs to be taken care of consistently, especially with the emergence of social media, which can be both a useful and damaging tool. In the technology era, brands can be destroyed in the blink of an eye, therefore managers need to put efforts to align the story’s values and the companies’ values, otherwise, it could backfire.

To summarise, storytelling is important to emotional communication because it does not just involve the consumers’ minds but also their hearts and both come from the same starting point: emotions and values (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu, 2005). At the same time, storytelling has the power to strengthen a company internally and externally; showing a united front is key when communicating to the intended target audience.

2.4.2 Brand Communities

Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006) emphasise the social nature of the brand community. In the community, brand meaning is shared among a diverse range of consumers who come together in solidarity for the specific brand. This solidarity is built from a strategy of narratives that “demonstrate an empathetic understanding of customers’ inspirations, aspirations, and life circumstances and that generate warm feelings of community among brand users” (Thompson, Rindfleisch & Arsel, 2006, p.50). Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001, p. 412) introduced the concept and determined brand communities containing 3 elements namely; “shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility”. Muñiz and O’Guinn determine how each element has a specific expression making it a crucial aspect in the building of the brand’s social construction and ultimate success. In essence, these elements are rooted from sociology, and they claim that a brand community is not too different from traditional communities.

Firstly, shared consciousness is the most important element of community and is the inherent attachment members feel towards each other. It is “a shared knowledge of belonging” which goes deeper than shared beliefs and recognised resemblance Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001, p. 413).

Secondly, rituals and traditions preserve the community's shared past, culture, and apprehension. Rituals "serve to contain the drift of emanings;... [they] are conventions that set up visible public definitions" (Douglas & Isherwood, 1979 cited in Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001 p. 413). Traditions are sets of "social practices which seek to celebrate and inculcate certain behavioural norms and values" (Marshall, 1994 cited in Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001 p. 413). Thirdly, a sense of moral responsibility which is a felt sense of responsibility and accountability to the entire community including individual members. Other scholars like Cova and Cova (2002) claim that the difference from traditional communities is that brand communities are decidedly commercial. Their work focuses on tribes but they align with the statement that research regarding economic activity should not be independent but ingrained in the societal context which ultimately allows it to take place. Due to the changes of online consumption, individualism is more drastic than ever which has led consumers to seek new forms of tribes and communities.

To summarise, brand communities are a relevant component of building an emotional communication due to its strong emotional bonds for the members. We argue that the strong emotional connection within the community could potentially work as an influencing factor in the formation of individuals' attitudes towards behaviours which makes it a relevant theory to include.

3. Methodology and Method

3.1 Methodology

The following section will introduce the methodology for this study which include; research philosophy, research approach, research strategy, case criteria, the selected cases, a description of them separately and connecting them to further argue their suitability for answering our research question.

3.1.1 Research Philosophy

Easterby-Smith, Jaspersen, Thorpe and Valizade (2021) present research philosophy as a foundation of the relationship between theory and data. Research philosophy is a crucial part of methodology as it sets the groundwork for the research and stays present throughout. It is also necessary as it clarifies our role as researchers by being aware of our pre-existing biases and relationship to the topic. Furthermore, defining the research design will be influenced by the philosophy for us to have the best potential in achieving our desired outcomes and to seek new opportunities while being aware of limitations. Ontology is the first component and concerns itself with understanding knowledge through “philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality” (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021, p.71). In other words, the foundation of understanding knowledge is related to ontology where our research relates to relativism.

Relativism states that there are multiple truths in which fact is dependent on the observer and observations are more conclusive coming from different viewpoints. These different viewpoints link to our research focus on emotional communication since emotions are strongly individualistic by nature (Panda, Panda & Mishra, 2013; Singla & Gupta, 2019). It should be noted how relativism focuses on how different viewpoints can provide different explanations. Although it has been previously argued how this can promote subjective and biased research, it is useful when entering new fields and to contribute to the building of theory and identifying new angles to an existing phenomenon (Cope, 2014). Since we are taking a different approach to social marketing and commercial marketing’s relationship and applying it to an emotional communication context, we argue this is new ground making relativism the most suitable ontology.

Having defined our ontology, we now address epistemology. Epistemology is defined as “the study of nature and knowledge and ways of enquiring into the physical and social world” (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021, p.77). The reality in social constructionism is not objective or exterior and is given meaning in everyday interactions. In our standpoint linked with our relativism approach, we stand with the position of social constructionism which states that reality is socially constructed and decided by people. People understand the world differently and these differences should be welcomed. Social constructionism further concerns itself with researchers being included in the research and the goal is to enhance comprehension of the situation in question in order to generalise theoretical abstraction. Repeatedly, as we are approaching a new ground in an attempt to contribute to a greater understanding of the social marketing and commercial marketing paradox, this epistemology is most appropriate. Easterby-Smith et al. further point out the sampling being smaller and elected cases are picked under certain criteria. With this in mind, this epistemology is the most relevant also in linking to an abductive case study approach which will be followed by a case study strategy.

3.1.2 Research Approach

This research takes on an abductive approach. Cramer-Petersen, Christensen and Ahmed-Kristensen (2019) argue that deductive, inductive and abductive approaches all root from reasoning. They mean that abductive is reductive and does not oblige one to make conclusions from available data. The authors also point out that abduction includes making assumptions and interpreting new rules which makes it a creative reasoning. Dubois and Gadde (2014) further confirm the benefits of using abduction when attempting to discover new things and highlights its nature of continuity. They mean that abduction is a continuous relationship between theory and empirical observations. Conaty (2021) supports this and points to the necessity of basing the research of an extensive theoretical framework. This research theoretical framework is built upon (1) consumer theory, (2) social marketing, (3) behavioural and exchange theory, (4) emotional communication including (5) brand communities and (6) storytelling. As we have presented the reader with this extensive theoretical framework we have set the tone for an abductive approach to this thesis in alignment with our research purpose.

Linking back to our research purpose, as we are exploring new grounds of the relationship between social marketing and brand's emotional communication, this approach is most suitable. This explorative nature of our research will allow us flexibility throughout. As we investigate the emotional communication effort of commercial brands, we can simultaneously link it to literature along the way if the selected brands update their communication efforts or publish new campaigns or similar. Furthermore, abductive research places researchers in focus as they decide what theoretical framework they see as suitable which demands them to become susceptible observers in order to spot relevance in the data (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Conaty (2021) points out the challenge of the role the researcher's own experience play in abductive research. It should be noted how this previous experience can allow the potential for the research's improvement rather than being considered an obstacle. Thus, our backgrounds will be kept in consideration when selecting our brands in order to make our significant role as researchers valuable. Conaty (2021) determines how the combination of this experience with the research question and the introductory theoretical framework is an appropriate abductive approach with a case study method. A case study method allows researchers to be in proximity with the phenomenon and will therefore be our research strategy.

3.1.3 Research Strategy

Similar to our research paradox, there appears to be a clash in the researchers in favour of case studies and those opposed. Easterby-Smith et al. (2021) presents the work of Yin who claims how critics have stated how case studies lack scientific validity and the extensive amounts of data it provides can grant researchers to make any explanations they want. Yin answers the criticism by stating how a case study strategy with a constructionist epistemology is less focused on validity and more on contributing with a greater understanding. Easterby-Smith et al. (2021) further refers to Siggelkow's positioning case studies as being valuable for delineating abstract concepts, answering specific research questions and encouraging new ideas. Farquhar (2012) supports this and adds on how case study is a suitable research strategy when investigating the research question in context and also how it allows flexibility for the researchers. In order to address our research question, we must put it in context to allow for analysis and contribute to overcoming the end-goal paradox.

Another point is what Siggelkow highlights: a single case study can, for instance, demonstrate how a company has done substantially better than others in the same industry and therefore provide insights as to why and how this success happened (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Moreover, we argue that by focusing on two cases we can extract more data, which will allow for a more extensive analysis rather than focusing only on one, as well as a bigger outcome of conclusions that could be applied to circumstances henceforward. As researchers we aim to provide an in-depth approach, thus another reason for focusing not focusing on one case but two is the unique aspects of them, which Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019) state is an idiographic approach. Our focus is to highlight the special features of the chosen cases and uncover a significant amount of detailed information about a more specific subject of study which in this case is the paradox between social marketing and commercial marketing that this thesis is circulating.

3.1.4 Case Criteria

Certain benchmarks were implemented in alignment with our purpose and goals, so that appropriate cases could align with the motive of the research. Therefore, when selecting our cases we went with the following criteria; (1) brands that were founded in the last ten years and have grown significantly, (2) brands that have used an emotional communication strategy in their communication efforts, (3) existing strong brand community and (4) wellness and value-driven focus. To further justify the criteria of the cases' selection, criteria 1 and 2 were applied in order to investigate the key success factors behind the growth of the brands. This is with the alignment of Siggelkow's promotion of case studies which was presented before. By choosing successful novel brands, we can untangle the key success factors which will be useful for managerial implications. Criteria 2 and 3 were selected in alignment with our purpose of emotional communication where the community the brand has built are a key success factor to investigate.

Criteria number 4 was to cover the behavioural aspect of the brands in which the product offerings should entangle some sort of favourable behaviour. Additionally, the authors of this thesis come from different countries, Sweden and Spain hence the multicultural opportunity was decided to be taken. In other words, we thought that it was the right set of circumstances for us to choose a brand which we are familiar with, in order to be able to have a closer approach to each case. As was discussed earlier, Conaty (2021) emphasised the researcher's role in a case study strategy which we strongly considered when we selected our cases.

3.1.5 The Selected Cases

Upon these criteria we have decided to analyse the two cases of Aim'n and Platanomelón. Both cases follow the criteria above but operate in different industries. First, we present the reader with a short introduction of the brands and their adherence to our preselected criteria. This is followed by an argumentative combination of the two and why investigating both will provide us with fruitful data to analyse.

3.1.6 Case 1: Aim'n

Aim'n is a sports clothes brand which was founded in 2014 in Sweden and goes under the tagline "designed for women by women" (Aimn, n.d). Aimn is a value-driven brand that focuses on innovation, style and sisterhood. Their product range includes workout clothes, casual athleisure, swimwear, and sport accessories. Because of their higher price positioning, their products would be considered high involvement in contrast to lower-priced competitors. Aim'n was founded by two women and by posting teasers on social media, they managed to create a buzz resulting in their first launch selling out within five hours. Today they continuously break records and expand their business in Europe, Asia and Oceania (eEquity, 2021). Aimn's brand community is called "Dream Club" where members can earn points for interacting on their social media platforms as well as shopping. In Dream Club there are three different levels with each offering different benefits such as discounts, early access to new collections, gifts and unique deals (Aimn, n.d). Dream Club is the commercial aspect of the brand community.

Moreover, Aim'n is also about female empowerment and sisterhood, hence a non-commercial aspect of their community. Ever since their first launch and buzz, their marketing content has focused on communicating their strong values. Aim'n uses the platforms of their website and social media forums when delivering their communication messages. Upon observation, their communications are demonstrated through visuals and text upon all different platforms. With this in mind, we consider them a prime example of a start-up that has used significant emotional communication strategies throughout their journey in building their community and brand loyalty.

3.1.7 Case 2: Platanomelón

Platanomelón is the leading online sex toys brand in Spain with a well-defined purpose: to end prejudices and taboos related to sex. The adult-products start-up was founded in 2014 by Catalan entrepreneur Anna Boldú. According to the CEO (Guarin, 2021), the brand was born with the objective of “democratising people’s happiness and well-being through promoting self-esteem and improving complicity with your sexual partner, in order to live the sexuality as it is, something basic to feel good about ourselves”. Because of the experience that is generated around the brand and the community built around it, Platanomelón is more than a sex toy brand. The sale of the wide product range goes hand in hand with the up-close, fun, educational and emotional content becoming a source of learning and inspiration for many people. Platanomelón has already started to expand internationally. They have started off with Mexico since followers from that country showed interest in the brand and its products. In a year they have achieved over 300.000 followers on Instagram (2022a). Boldú (Guarin, 2021) shared that “they are crossing the ocean hoping to achieve what we achieved here: that every day more people live a better sexual life and therefore, can be happier”.

The company works on sex education through tutorials and explanatory content on their multiple social media profiles that explain how their products work and can be used, at the same time as they tackle different sexual topics. Currently their online community has almost 1.5 million subscribers on YouTube (2022b), 950k followers on Instagram (2022c) and 1.2 million on TikTok (2022d). They interact with this broad community daily, and share useful, interesting, and quality information about all types of sex matters, with a very casual and fun tone. Taking this into consideration, Platanomelón is a start-up that has successfully made a name for itself using education and emotional communication to establish a strong brand community.

3.1.8 Connecting the selected Cases

Our selected cases are suitable for analysis as they live up to our predetermined criteria and are both valuable examples of novel brands that have made use of an emotional branding strategy and been successful. In this way they are similar, but we argue they are different in terms of behavioural change scope. Social marketing has a duality of encouraging favourable behaviour for individuals

and for society at large (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). By choosing Aim'n and Platanomelón we answer this duality.

When looking at Aim'n, we see that the focus is mainly on individuals and promoting a more active lifestyle as well as a mental perspective including body positivity and mental health awareness. Today we see an increasingly negative self-view on body image rooted in the influence of social media (Jarman et al., 2022) which is a key issue that Aim'n targets in their communication efforts. The Aim'n community concerns themselves with embracing sisterhood and women becoming the best version of themselves through a positive self-image. Ultimately, it is our standpoint that the behavioural benefit Aim'n provides is encouraging their target audience to have an active yet balanced lifestyle. Their product offerings are similar to many other competitors in the market. Thus, Aim'n could potentially have a strong societal impact alongside other activewear brands, but for the time being their communication efforts concern themselves with individuals attempting to better themselves. Aim'n is also a Swedish brand and Sweden is predominantly an individualistic society (Heu, van Zomeren & Hansen, 2019). Sweden also shows a strong individualism in the Hofstede value dimension measurement with a score of 71 in contrast to Spain scoring 51 (Hofstede Insights, n.d).

Platanomelón is from Spain, which, according to Gouveia, Clemente and Espinosa (2003) who build on Singelis et al., in how its people are slightly seen as more collectivist than individualist. The authors suggest that a possible explanation for that is the Hispanic community's social traits. Gouveia, Clemente and Espinosa (2003) extend on Triandis, Marin, Lisansky and Betancourt by saying that Spaniards are known to be warm and friendly people who try to create affective ties with people. Moreover, the authors add on stating that there's an existing communal sharing which leads to a sense of belonging to a social group. Despite that, there is an existing process of individualisation that continues to extend itself in Spanish society and has increased notably in the last decade and this shall not be overlooked (Gouveia, Clemente & Espinosa, 2003). Similarly, Spain has transitioned from an authoritarian regime to a democracy in a relatively short time span, and this has taken place with an incredibly rapid change in both social and gender roles (Bustelo, 2014). The author further adds on stating that within the last decade, Spanish gender policies have developed well enough to continue to be an indicator and generator of social change. Another

important issue related to what was just discussed is the fact that the liberalisation period of the Spanish dictatorship and the following democratisation of the country were accompanied by a process of relaxation of sexual taboos and repression (Valiente, 2002) that lead to a new era: the sexual revolution.

3.2 Method

Following section argues for the choice of semi-structured interviews, method for sampling, interview preparation, data analysis, validity and reliability and ethical implications.

3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

The study was conducted in a qualitative manner, based on semi-structured personal interviews that were conducted both face-to-face and online. The reasoning behind the selected method of research is that semi-structured interviews are most suited as it aligns with our purpose of understanding how the target audience receives a brand's emotional communication efforts and how this affects their behaviour and their attitudes. This further aligns with our research ontology of relativism and epistemology of social constructionism of embracing people's different perceptions. Following we present our arguments for this method further.

On the one hand, with the aim of exploring and understanding different mindsets of consumers regarding sportswear and sex toys brands it is crucial to collect different opinions and subjective experiences from multiple sources in order to categorise them. Thus, we saw interviews to be the most appropriate primary data collection method since it is based on a list of questions that can be addressed in a more flexible way, as well as reveal an individual's subjective perspectives and beliefs (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). The interviews are guided by a list of questions, the categories' section that involves a selection of focal issues that need to be covered during the interview, while also providing space for spontaneous questions (Easterby-Smith et al. 2018). Having this in mind, we could ensure that the focus was kept on key topics while, at the same time, providing flexibility in order to guarantee a fruitful discussion and to follow interesting and unexpected lines of inquiry. Hence, we opted for open-ended questions which are supported by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980 cited in Sutton et al. 2003, p. 235) when researchers want to investigate "behavioural, normative and control beliefs". We supported this further with the alignment of our

theoretical framework being strongly influenced by the behavioural aspect of social marketing. For further clarification, we decided to follow the same structure of the theoretical framework. This is further discussed in section 3.2.2.

On the other hand, in order to maximise the results, it is important that interviewers are knowledgeable about the relevant substantive issues so they can tackle different aspects that might not come to the participants' mind initially (Adams, 2015). Moreover, as Adams states, one of the advantages compared to focus groups, is that sometimes interviewees might not be candid about some topics when sitting with other peers. Hence, it is beneficial to carry out personal interviews and ask open-ended questions to know the real thoughts of each respondent to eliminate the potential group bias. On top of that, conducting private interviews leads to participants' anonymity and comfortability which can cause interviewees to express themselves more freely than in groups. This is especially the case for our questions as they are sensitive in nature and discuss the participants' own behaviour of their physical and sexual health. It is of further importance to adhere to the ethical considerations of this study which was another reasoning behind choosing interviews in contrast to focus groups. Our ethical considerations are further discussed in section 3.2.5.

3.2.2 Planning

In order to have an organised and well-established plan, our data collection followed the seven stages of interview studies that were developed by Kvale and presented in Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018). These stages include: “1) identifying themes, where the analyst describes what to do as well as how and why, 2) planning, 3) interviews, 4) transcribing, 5) analysis, 6) verification and 7) reporting” (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018, p. 29). In this part of the thesis, we will include the first three steps including sampling and step number five in how the collected data will be analysed. For the sake of simplicity, we will re-name the first step of “identifying themes” to “categories” as our data collection will be presented in the analysis in a themes term. Kvale differentiates between thematic and dynamic aspects in the interview guide. Former refers to topics or ideas upon which the interviewers base their study, whereas the latter concerns the “interpersonal relationship in the interview” (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015, p.157). Dynamic questions are of a more follow-up character and aim to encourage the interviewee to describe what

they are trying to express in more detail. Therefore, it was decided to utilise both aspects so that the interviews would be more exhaustive and profitable.

Similar to our theoretical framework our categories will follow (1) social marketing, behavioural theory and consumer theory (2) Affective Intelligence Theory and Exchange Theory, (3) brand communities and (4) storytelling. Our third and fourth categories belong under the umbrella term of emotional communication, however, for the clarity of our interview participants, they will be separated when asking our questions. Our first component of the consumer attitudes is not included as a separate section for our interview but will work as support when analysing and connecting the findings back to the research question. Our questions work only as a benchmark for ourselves to include all themes and each theme will be discussed openly. Therefore, it will be common for us to ask follow-up questions or clarification. It is our aim to allow the participant to speak freely and openly in order to extract authentic answers and feelings. All questions for the participants are visualised in Appendix 1 (Aim'n Interview Outline) and Appendix 2 (Platanomelón Interview Outline). In these appendices, the reader will also find the material from the brands that we showed our participants. The chosen material to show the partakers depended on the category, however posts and videos were selected from their social media platforms. These platforms included Instagram, Youtube and TikTok. Each post shown was selected to show variety and different types of content with regard to the category discussed, in order to help the interviewees, get an overall and clear overview of the brands' content.

The first category will serve as a benchmark to get an initial perspective of the participants' attitudes towards the behaviour being discussed and serve as an icebreaker to get the conversation flowing. Here we also include consumer theory by getting an overall understanding of their initial attitudes. Another theory we consider highly relevant here is the Theory of Planned Behaviour as it is central in social marketing. For the second category which concerns Affective Intelligence Theory (AIT) and Exchange Theory, it was our aim to place focus on the more educational and rational communication efforts by the brands. Here we showed the participants educational content from the brand's social media accounts as well as socio-political angles. This category is where the brands differed the most in terms of socio-political scope with Platanomelón being the more

collectivist brand and Aim'n individualistic. Hence these questions applied most strongly to Platanomelón.

For the third category, we asked the participants about pre-selected posts from the brand's social media accounts with a focus on the community. Referring back to the three elements of a brand community; shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). These elements were considered when selecting the posts to discuss with the participants. Thus, the posts we select will circulate around the brand's communities which is both the commercial aspect as well as the feeling of togetherness. For the final category of storytelling, we intend to show the participants video campaigns of the brands of storytelling elements. This final theme will be left open for reflection in how the participants feel about the emotions being portrayed in the advertisements.

3.2.3 Sampling

Easterby-Smith et al. (2020), states that the size of the sample and the amount of data to be collected depend on the objectives of the study and the research itself. Thus, in order to respect the limited time for this thesis as well as the abductive approach, the sampling strategies used were a combination of convenience and purposive sampling.

For convenience sampling, which involves selecting sample units based on how easily accessible they are, the reasoning was that it is the least time consuming and least expensive out of all sampling techniques (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015). It is also useful as participants are more likely to engage and cooperate throughout the interview due to the pre-existing relationship with the researchers (Malhotra, 2010; Burns & Burns, 2008). Linking back to our abductive research approach, our role as researchers is notably important, which was pointed out by Conaty (2021). Conaty referred to the researcher's role as being useful and of value rather than being seen as an obstacle or cause for bias. It should also be noted that us researchers being women in our mid 20's should be seen as an advantage point in structuring our sampling. Moreover, as we wanted the respondents to give us the most honest answers possible, as well as make them feel comfortable participating in the interviews, having in mind that one of the two brands comes across being more

sensitive because of the products they sell and the matters they tackle, we thought convenience sample was a method that would secure the participants' tranquillity and openness.

Additionally, purposive sampling is based on predetermined criteria that the researcher views as necessary with the purpose of the study (Easterby-Smith et al. 2020). For this research, it was decided that the candidates should be women in their 20's as this is a main target segment for both brands. Additionally, for Aim'n, the only additional requirement was that the participants had an interest in an active lifestyle and felt comfortable discussing it openly. For Platanomelón the predetermined criteria were that they were Spanish speakers, as the content is mainly displayed in that language. Moreover, another desired requirement was that the participants were familiar with the topic (i.e. sex toys purchasers, knowing or following of sex toys brands). Additionally, participants from international backgrounds were also wanted, since they could not only talk about their experience in their country but also in other places they have lived in and got to know their society.

Searching for participants was done through our own networks but also through our private social media networks to find participants excited and willing to discuss the topic further. Upon contact, we as researchers explained the purpose of this study and confirmed that the participants understood and still wanted to participate, as well as making them feel comfortable talking about both topics. Despite the fact that this research design can be erroneous due to low representation and potential researcher bias (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Malhotra, 2010), other researchers maintain that it can still be effective and useful depending on the purpose of the study (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Hence our strategy was to focus on having fewer interviewees but more in-depth conversation. Our sampling narrowed down to a total of 12 participants for the data collection. Following is the interview table design including their number/letter pseudonym, age, gender, duration of interview, date, pre-existing familiarity to brand and format.

Another point we would like to state is that our interviews took place both in-person and online depending on the availability of the participants. Each interview ranged between 25 to 45 minutes, and we used audio recording on our phones to secure the data. Following the audio recording, we uploaded the files to the site tactiq.io which transcribed the material for us. This extension to

Google allowed the transcriptions to be made in Google Doc's where we could make comments and work simultaneously with the material. We argue that this way of analysing our material was very efficient for us to draw conclusions.

Interviewee	Age	Gender	Duration	Date	Familiar with brand	Format
A1	25	Female	35 min	20.04.2022	Yes	Online
A2	23	Female	29 min	20.04.2022	Yes	Online
A3	26	Female	45 min	24.04.2022	No	Online
A4	21	Female	28 min	25.04.2022	Yes	Online
A5	22	Female	35 min	25.04.2022	Yes	Online
A6	29	Female	32 min	26.04.2022	No	Online

Table 1: Interview table for Aim'n

Interviewee	Age	Gender	Duration	Date	Familiar with brand	Format
B1	22	Female	35 min	20.04.2022	Yes	In-person
B2	22	Female	27 min	22.04.2022	Yes	Online
B3	20	Female	43 min	25.04.2022	Yes	Online
B4	24	Female	30 min	26.04.2022	Yes	Online
B5	25	Female	25 min	26.04.2022	No	In-person
B6	23	Female	37 min	26.04.2022	No	Online

Table 2: Interview table for Platanomelón

3.2.4 Data Analysis

Common for qualitative research is the huge amount of data collected throughout the study which must be systematically sorted, analysed, and interpreted (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015; Collis & Hussey, 2014; Stake, 2010). In order to make the analysing process more flexible and manageable, we have opted to follow Miles and Huberman's General Analytic Procedure (GAP). This method consists of three main activities that occur simultaneously: data reduction, data displaying and drawing conclusions and verification of validity (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Since each step takes place at the same time, this procedure works well with our abductive research approach, as we alternate between theory examination, data collection and data analysis. While carrying out these steps, we also wanted to refer to Kvale (2015) of the interviewee's lifeworld. According to Kvale, the analysis begins during the interviews by encouraging the participant to make own conclusions while the analyst interprets and distils what is being said. Thus, our data analysis will be presented with the following three activities of GAP while staying analytic of what is being said throughout according to Kvale (2015). Following the three activities of GAP will be explained.

In the first step, the intention is to select, focus, simplify and transform the data from your transcriptions or field notes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To make this first stage easier, we made sure to take notes of each interview whenever something highly interesting or relevant was brought up. After all the interviews were completed, we went over the transcriptions together to discuss the content and see if something else could be of interest to the theory. The main reason to conduct this first analysis together was to make sure that both researchers had understood the information accordingly and to avoid misinterpretations as well as prepare for a comparison in a later stage. In this first phase, we also focused on data where relationships of interest existed as we progressed with our interviews and observations, a so-called continuous data reduction (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Furthermore, this approach was chosen because it allowed for rigorous and substantial data collection.

In a second term we find data display, which concerns the organisation and summary of the data into a visual format that is later used to draw conclusions from (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this stage, we developed themes. These emanated from the data that was gathered in the first stage and

were formed to better understand and portray the data, as well as to draw further conclusions. As previously stated, after going through the transcriptions, it was an easier task to form themes so that all the answers would be better organised and therefore, understood. Extracting themes into visual formats was done by highlighting the relevant quotes and putting them into tables of commonly discussed topics. Most commonly we found similar quotes by multiple participants and narrowed them into categories. The final stage was narrowing further down into themes. This stage was done “back-stage” of this work and was finalised into three themes. For quick access, the reader can find the overview in Appendix 3 (Theme visualisation Aim’n) and Appendix 4 (Theme visualisation Platanomelón).

The last step covers the drawing of conclusions and its verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). During this stage, we went back to the theory in order to confirm, deny or better understand previous assumptions. This was also done to reduce our own researcher bias and remember the most relevant works on this. Another reason for connecting back to our theoretical framework was in order to see where our work could contribute, extend or challenge existing literature. From the start, this thesis has taken an alternative approach and in order to give accurate answers we needed extensive knowledge to feel confident enough to make conclusions. Furthermore, we connected back to our research question that has guided this study throughout as our benchmark. Finally, in order to confirm our conclusions, we also investigated theories regarding validity and reliability. The following section will discuss why our data analysis has provided ethical and valid material.

3.2.5 Ethical Implications

Research requires consideration of ethical implications and we as researchers must adhere to this. Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001) point out how qualitative research concerns itself with exploring and illustrating people, making ethics very important to consider. With regard to this, we will follow the four main ethical principles as explained by Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019, pp. 136) that researchers should follow; “avoidance of harm, obtaining informed consent, protection of privacy through confidentiality and preventing deception.” Avoidance of harm can entail many things but what is relevant for our research is the potential harm of self-esteem and confidence of the participants. As we will ask them about their personal behaviours and emotions, caution should be placed. In order to address this, we will clearly inform each participant that they

have the option to avoid answering certain questions or stop the interview entirely. If the participant wants to withdraw, we will not ask anything further but terminate the interview immediately and delete the voice recording together with any written notes. Each case should be treated with sensitivity although we acknowledge the sensitivity of disclosing behavioural responses to physical health (Aim'n) and to sexual health (Platanomelón).

This information will be given together with ensuring verbal consent at the start of the interview. When scheduling the interviews, we will ask in advance for a verbal consent of participation and voice recording together with a brief description of our purpose. Upon starting the interview, we will disclose further information about the purpose of the interview and confirm consent a second time for both participation and voice recording. In order to ensure anonymity, we will be using a letter and numeric pseudonym rather than their personal name when analysing and presenting our findings. The true identities of the participants will only remain in one Google document with a second password shared among us as authors in addition to our already password protected files. In any other place the pseudonym will be used for instance when transcribing the audio files or when presenting the results.

Lastly, regarding how we intend to avoid deception is demonstrated in us informing the participants on two occasions of the purpose of the interview and thesis in general. This is done to create a safe and transparent environment. Furthermore, Orb, Eisenhower and Wynaden (2001) emphasise the existing power relationship between researchers and participants. We as researchers rely on participants' willingness to participate which ultimately have them place their trust in us. It is with utmost seriousness that we acknowledge this trust and embark on the data collection with a strong consideration of ethics.

3.2.6 Validity and Reliability

In this section, the validity and the reliability of the study are discussed, as the authors of this research want to assure the integrity and a high quality of standards which in our case refers to our data collection method.

Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019) state that two of the most prominent criteria for the evaluation of business and management research are reliability and validity. Rose and Johnson (2020, pp. 4) affirm that the first term refers to “the soundness of the research, particularly in relation to the appropriate methods chosen, and the ways in which those methods were applied and implemented in a qualitative research study”, whereas the latter concerns the integrity of the conclusions drawn from a piece of research (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). Both of these criteria increase transparency and, at the same time, decrease opportunities for researcher bias in qualitative research to occur (Singh, 2014). We reckon that the interpretation of the data is the most decisive part of a qualitative research study. Moreover, as Rose and Johnson (2020) state, implementing actions such as providing a justification of the methods used and clarity and coherence in the analytical procedures, develops and increments a sense of reliability. Hence, in order for our work to be trustworthy, we established the following criteria.

First of all, the cases were carefully selected as we wanted them to be highly relevant for our study. Thus, we followed specific criteria stated in section 3.1.4 that was in line with the thesis’ purpose. Since we aim for our work to be congruent, we developed a criteria for sampling as well that included purposive sampling, as specific candidates were wanted so that the purpose of our study could be successfully pursued. As established in 3.2.3 our procedure was to intend on achieving a more in-depth, honest and transparent conversation with the interviewees so that the findings would indicate integrity and trustworthiness. Moreover, we assured that the participants’ identity would remain anonymous and their answers honest by letting the participants know the intent of the interview and thesis, as well as putting to good use the solid relationship between the researchers and participants, as we rely on interviewees’ willingness to take part in the interviews which ultimately have them place their trust in us, as discussed more thoroughly in the previous section.

4. Analysis

This section analyses our findings where the theoretical framework previously established serves as the base for our research. As this analysis is based on a thematic foundation, the discoveries will be presented as an individual portrayal of each brand. We emphasise that the two first themes united the brands whereas a third theme separated them. Thus, in the analysis, they will be investigated separately but come together in the discussion with light to the research question. In Appendix 3 and 4, the themes are visualised with quotes for a quick and easy overview for the reader.

4.1 Aim'n

4.1.1 Social marketing as Challenging Societal Norms

4.1.1.2 Fighting Stereotypes of Femininity

Aim'n is prominent in communicating how it is “for women by women” and their communication showed a red thread of fighting stereotypes and battling sexism. A key finding was in how the participants felt their communication challenged gender norms through both their rough and soft emotions. One recurring point was the strong kickboxing featured in the New Collection video. A4 brought up that kickboxing as a martial art used to not be a sport associated with women and the Aim'n video brought it up in a new light combining it with the woman doing it as a mental workout also. A3 also pointed out the realness it gave when the woman was making sounds and hitting her opponent intensely. She mentioned that in workout videos, women are usually quiet as making sounds is seen as undesirable and ugly. Another take on the softer posts of body positivity content and the International Plan charity posts opened up for more accepting and warm emotions from the participants.

When discussing early in the interview regarding the societal norms of women in fitness all participants agreed it was influenced strongly but what ideals are present in the moment. A5 highlighted how a few years ago the “thigh-gap” was the ideal but was simply unattainable for her and many others because of their body types. Nowadays she felt that the ideal is strongly

influenced by a hyper-femininity of the hourglass body type which is sustained by famous reality stars such as Kim Kardashian. Regardless, A5 pointed out the pressure of fitting into these ideals and welcomed the fact that Aimn’s communication is embracing to all body types. These societal pressures influenced by social media was a prominent theme throughout where many felt it created an unhealthy environment with fitness.

A4	A3	A5
<p><i>“Like in the past, kickboxing wouldn't be something associated with a sport that a woman would practice like ... that would be something that a strong man would do.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Like the kickboxing lady, she was making a lot of sound and noises when she was kickboxing. And I feel like in a lot of ads for women working out, they're expected to be quiet... because it's like ugly to make a sound. So I really appreciate that. It was like real.”</i></p>	<p><i>“When you showed me some of those posts, it feels like a warm hug that I think a lot of women deserve to have because we have so much pressure to look a certain way.”</i></p>

Table 3.

Accordingly, by challenging these gender norms through both rougher and softer emotions, Aim’n confront the norms of women’s role in fitness. This can be connected to the first and second component of the Theory of Planned behaviour (TPB) by David and Rundle-Thiele (2018) mentioned in section 2.3; (1) the individual’s personal desirable or undesirable attitudes towards the behaviour and (2) influence from social norms from the external environment towards the behaviour.

Starting with the second component, the norms here relate to what is accepted for women and what is considered feminine behaviour. Norms towards rougher and traditionally more masculine sports are challenged through these communication efforts. An implication of this can be linked to a more societal behavioural change where women can take part in different workout regimes without feeling restricted by norms. Furthermore, this implies that not only can women participate in various forms of sports but also how they participate. By Aim’n showing women in action through

the New Collection video but also the educational workout video, participants felt it created an acceptance of not needing to look desirable or beautiful when doing the exercises. Another benefit of showing these workouts was to witness the functional benefit of their products in action. Rather than showing the body, participants felt the workout wear was in focus and demonstrated in a real-life workout setting. Many participants appreciated the rawness and Aim'n being more authentic in contrast to other brands. As a result, the rough communication from Aim'n influenced the attitudes of some of the participants in viewing the workouts as motivational, inspiring, and providing functional value.

This further links to the pressure of society's influence on appearance which was notable throughout the interviews. As previously mentioned, all participants agreed and mentioned how a prominent norm was related to women fitting into certain ideals. It was discussed how ideals change but are all unattainable given different body types which ultimately brings negative and pressured feelings. Hence this duality of demonstrating women performing in a more masculine setting opens for women trying new sports and the softness of accepting body parts act as an influential factor in reducing the pressure of looking a certain way. Through body acceptance the first component of TBD, the individual's personal desirable or undesirable attitudes towards the behaviour, is influenced as a result. Through softer and more welcoming emotions it reduced the negative pressure of the participants and encouraged more women to participate and find their way in fitness hence fueling more positive attitudes. These positive attitudes were more prominent in relations to the younger participants under 25 years old and demonstrated itself also in the diverse representation of Aimn's communication which will be analysed next.

4.1.1.3 Representation

Another key finding within this theme was in the representation of women Aim'n featured in their communication. This representation referred to different bodies, ages and ethnicities of the women featured in the communication. In the quotes from A5 and A4 (see Table 4) some of the emotional communication came as surprising and welcoming to challenge existing societal norms. It was discussed how the Inspired by You and Plan International campaigns featured women from different ages and ethnicities which many claimed is not common to find in communication from fitness brands. Majority of the participants felt that fitness and staying active is a lifestyle choice

that comes and goes in intensity, but never completely leaves. All participants experienced a strong societal influence of having to look fit and follow a certain ideal. When featuring middle-aged women, it opened up a bigger picture of why we stay active and the main reason being health rather than a pressure of appearance. Therefore, as A5 expressed, it changes the norms of how we both view women and fitness. Another representation linked to diversity, as stated by A4, is not only the different sizes but also women of different ethnicities.

<i>A5</i>	<i>A4</i>
<p><i>“I feel like women, once we hit 30, then we're considered as old and undesirable...So I think it's very important for women of older ages to be represented. So it changes society's way of looking at women and fitness.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Yes, I would say so [Aim'n being authentic] because Aim'n is a brand that's by women for women... also the fact that I know the brand that they are quite inclusive, both by sizes and colors...It's not only really young people are shown but that also spans... to a little bit older which is nice to see as well.”</i></p>

Table 4.

The implications of this theme with respect to the research question is strongly linked to the theme above of challenging gender norms and influence from the external environment on behaviour from the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Another theory discussed in our framework which can be analysed is the one by Rundle-Thiele et al. (2019) regarding the three types of behaviours social marketing addresses; ending current unfavourable behaviour, encouraging novel behaviours, and adjusting existing behaviours. Aimn’s communication is mainly applicable to the second and third behaviour mentioned by Rundle-Thiele and colleagues. With representation, they are encouraging novel behaviours and adjusting existing behaviours by creating a welcoming atmosphere of new people to join.

As mentioned by the quotes from Table 3 and 4 the representation creates an inclusive environment where the status quo of fitness is challenged. Many participants stressed the unrealistic ideals of appearance and with representation it decreases the pressure to oblige them. Therefore, the third component of adjusting existing behaviours is influenced as of why the participants exercise and

stay active. By taking away the norm of attaining a certain ideal, focus is placed on the individual’s own capabilities and specific body type. This representation also opens a welcoming environment for new members to join which relates to a key component of the brand community, namely, a sense of belonging which continues to the second theme to be included in this analysis.

4.1.2 Social marketing as Creating Community Impact

With regards to Aimn’s value-driven focus and all-women background, a strong recurring theme was the women empowerment rooted in the community impact. From the community content of the charity initiative of Plan International and the interview campaign of Inspired by You, many of the participants expressed positive emotions of solidarity and sisterhood as a result. Another empowerment was rooted in the storytelling of showing role models and the women talking about the sports they were passionate about in the New Collection Video. None of the participants felt that they belonged to the commercial part of the brand community of Aim’n but connected to the women’s aspect of it and were positive towards what the community brings for members.

<i>A1</i>	<i>A2</i>	<i>A6</i>
<p><i>“...you feel empowered just by watching it [New Collection Video] because you see those strong women and you kind of like want to do the same. So probably like motivates me to go maybe like I will buy that and then I run as well because I feel like also, I also feel like an empowered woman or something.”</i></p>	<p><i>“I think it's all about women. Women's empowerment and just show that being part of such a community can really help other people with not like a very strong mindset or feel alone sometimes and I think those can be like a safe place for many people to refer back to... other people who then become their role models and it's not about supermodels that I'm talking about, it's more about the everyday woman who can accomplish things with the help of a brand.”</i></p>	<p><i>“We are taught that we need to do all of this and we need to love ourselves so much and if we don't do that, that's something wrong. But at the same time, I am sure that this sort of inspiration and this encouragement can help people and people find meaning and if they do that at the same time as they sell some leggings, what's wrong with that.”</i></p>

Table 5.

These quotes and the discussion of the community empowerment is applicable to the components of brand communities mentioned in section 2.2.2 by Muñiz and O'Guinn namely; shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility. In this analysis, we position the empirical data mostly with the first and third component. Regarding the second component, which relates to external visualisations of meanings and social solidarity of the community, did not fit in the analysis as none of the participants felt as an active member of the specific brand community. Nonetheless, as participants emphasised with the strong feminist values that Aim'n communicated, they connected to the Aim'n community as women.

Shared consciousness refers to the connecting values and beliefs the members feel towards each other and a shared knowledge of belonging. The authors emphasise that this goes further than shared beliefs and recognised resemblance. In the quotes and overall throughout the interviews, the community involves the first theme of fighting stereotypes of femininity and representation as well in order to create a community for women by women. Therefore the shared consciousness is the common mindset of women empowerment and sisterhood in which all participants strongly valued. Aim'n provides a safe place to be whoever you wish as a woman and treat fitness the way you see fit. For some it means high-intensity workouts and for others it is taking a walk and keeping activeness to a minimum. This contrast is an important component of brand communities that thrive on conflict (Fournier & Lee, 2009), hence a proven success in the Aim'n communication collected from the empirical data. Moreover, this first component links best to the third component of sense of moral responsibility which is a felt sense of responsibility and accountability to the entire community including individual members.

The sense of responsibility demonstrated itself in an appreciation towards Aimn's inclusiveness and also in the participants that were more critical towards it. The criticism will be further discussed in the final theme, however, it was notable how it was not purely negative. In the older demographic of participants above age 25, they acknowledged that this communication and community is certainly valuable for younger people. Although they were critical in the role that the brand takes as a more emotional attachment, it was still appreciated as it would be helpful for some. On the contrary, those that felt that they sympathised with the community related strongly to the entrepreneurial background and functionality of the products. Some also valued the food

recipes published and the wide range of content that Aim'n featured on their social media. For many of the participants, the new information about the background and communication shown were encouraging them to follow the accounts and take a more active role in the community.

Therefore, as the 3 markers of brand community by Muñiz and O'Guinn are the same for a "regular" community, a key finding is that consumers can relate to the community without being consumers of it. This contradicts Cova and Cova (2002) in saying how brand communities are inherently commercial and ultimately addresses the research question of the end-goal paradox. With the empirical data we interpret how the shared consciousness, and a sense of moral responsibility are the strongest markers in making members feel connected to, but not necessarily a part of the commercial aspect of the community. As a result, non-members can still have positive attitudes towards the brand's cause while taking a passive stance to it. Ultimately, half of the participants, all above 25, took "a step back" to any sort of commercial brand communities as the attempt of connection was not welcomed by them as the value-exchange was not evident. Repeatedly, they appreciated the role a brand can have for others and favoured the values featured in empowering women. Furthermore, this discrepancy of the members was also demonstrated in the final theme.

4.1.3 Social Marketing as Accepting and Exploiting Interdependency

For Aim'n a unique finding was the interdependency of mental health to an active lifestyle. It was said how they tie together and are strongly correlated with each other. All participants expressed the strong influence an active lifestyle had on their overall mental health and it was a main driver of motivation to stay active. One participant even mentioned scheduling time for workouts during busy exam periods to ensure them getting done. This was mainly discussed in the beginning of the interviews when talking about their relationship with fitness. For the content they were shown from Aim'n, the most impactful emotional communication was the duality of storytelling with the New Collection and Self-Love videos.

For the New Collection, the background storytelling of the two women and showing the workout wear in action through running and kickboxing was all met with positive responses. In the storytelling it also brought up some mental health such as linking kickboxing to the mental exercise

of chess or running tiring your body but energising your mind. Both videos had specific emotions portrayed by the women who some participants said you can strongly relate to if you are a part of that community of running or martial arts. Some strongly stated how it felt relatable and raw to listen to these women’s passion for their respective sports. Other’s appreciated seeing others find their passion in fitness and felt it was overall positive and motivational for all participants. Other emotions mentioned by the participant were realness, motivational, inspiring, and empowering. Quotes that demonstrate the positive reactions from seeing the mental health interdependency is demonstrated by the quotes from A2, A4 and A5 in Table 6 who all valued the balance between caring for their mental and physical health as the main aim for staying active.

<i>A2</i>	<i>A4</i>	<i>A5</i>
<p><i>“Everybody who went for a run and had that feeling once in their life, knows what this person is talking about and Aim’n provides sportswear for that moment. On the other hand, it's not just the extreme. It's also like these small moments and taking care of your body and rest. Their commercials are so strong. And it's so touching so you can really connect to the brand.”</i></p>	<p><i>“She was meditating and all these things that you like, appreciate the small things as well, which are also just as important as going to the gym to get endorphins.”</i></p>	<p><i>“That's where I think it's very holistic. And I think both of them balance the mindfulness of fitness which is very nice for the mental and physical aspects of it that comes within the fitness lifestyle.”</i></p>

Table 6.

The second video about Self-Love was dedicated to showing the small things in your everyday life and taking care of yourself. This video was slow-paced and more focused on body appreciation, resting your mind and highlighting glimpses of happiness. It was strongly appreciated by the participants under 25 years old which can be supported by the quotes above but faced criticism from above 25-year-old participants. Participants A1, A3 and A6 were all above the ages of 25 and expressed a certain cynicism and critique of brands getting involved with mental health in this

way. They argued that mental health and physical health are strongly correlated, but questioned brand’s role in communicating this.

All of them highlighted how a younger audience may be more appreciative and receptive of this communication as your younger years can be a turbulent time influenced by self-doubt. Participant A3 shared her story of battling anxiety and felt that brands like Aim’n should have more realistic content when discussing mental health. She expressed how content like the self-love video could have a negative implication for people with severe mental health problems and have the opposite effect for them as they may feel insufficient in those “small things” not working for them. A6 also felt like self-love videos have the opposite effect as they are claiming something is wrong if you don’t practice self-love often enough. She thinks they add pressure and similar to A1 that they can be overwhelming.

<i>A6</i>	<i>A3</i>	<i>A1</i>
<p><i>“I’ve comforted the realisation that the less I care [about seeking self-love] that makes me feel the best. So I find them [self-love videos] quite provoking.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Oh, like I love taking a walk by the water... It’s like, no, when I’m taking a walk by the water, my mind is racing and I can’t calm down even though there’s water next to me. So like I feel brands need to be more real. When they’re connecting mental health with physical health, I feel like It’s great for content to be general, but it’s better for your community and your consumers to be real.”</i></p>	<p><i>“I feel overwhelmed by the amount of brands that all of the sudden start to promote self-love... with Aim’n I find it authentic as they were founded by two women and that. But overall you’re just bombarded on Instagram with these messages.”</i></p>

Table 7.

Linking this theme of interdependency back to the theoretical framework, we can connect the New Collection video as a successful example of storytelling. Referring back to Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006) who stated that storytelling must show the brand's understanding of their audience's lifestyles, dreams, and goals and succeed in showing how the brand can enrich their lives, as well as helping them fill their particular needs. When the video showed a detailed background story of the women's relationship with fitness and specific information of why they loved kickboxing and running, it became very relatable to two participants who stated they belong in these sport communities also. Moreover, as Codrin (2010) stated, the creative aspect of communicating core values is also a prominent feature of storytelling. Participants appreciated the workout wear being shown in action and also the casual athleisure. This duality answered Aim'n core purpose of their product offerings in the first video.

Investigating the criticism towards the Self-Love video, it is most suitable to analyse with respect to the Exchange Theory by Kotler (2000) discussed in section 2.3. According to Kotler's input on Exchange Theory, both tangible and intangible offers are present where the Aim'n self-love is an intangible value offer to their consumers. According to the five preconditions, two conditions involve the received value and appropriateness to exchange with the other party must be present. In essence, a likely cause for the participants' expressed cynicism and criticism is due to the lack of perceived value and Aim'n taking a too shallow approach to mental health making it less appropriate. As A3 pointed out, her perceived value was not related to simple breathing exercises but expressed a desire for more real content. In her view, brands taking a too soft approach to mental health is sugarcoating real issues and something Aim'n needs to consider when publishing emotional content. Nonetheless, all participants above 25 agreed that this is most likely very valuable for a younger audience which was true with regards to the other participants' positive responses.

One likely cause of this was brought up with participant A6 who claimed her younger years were turbulent and influenced with self-doubt but how social media was not present at the time. In her view, the younger generation today was fed with the picture-perfect image of social media which could potentially fuel their value of a more authentic climate of acceptance. Therefore, the perceived value of seeing more accepting and softer emotions may be more impactful for a younger

generation. This criticism was not purely negative, but it was a conflicting doubt to whether brands are entitled to get involved in tackling mental health issues.

4.2 Platanomelón

4.2.1 Social Marketing as Challenging Societal Norms

Repeatedly, as we are aware this brand tackles sensitive topics for society, the participants were asked about some of the societal norms associated with sex and sex toys. There are a lot of ideas associated with these topics, therefore we wanted to discover what the participants thought both about society and the matter itself. As seen in quote by B1 in Table 8, the majority of interviewees expressed the idea that society has an idea about how sex toys are associated to single people or that if you have a sexual partner, you don't or shouldn't need sex toy(s). Additionally, B5 shares an opinion that other interviewees expressed as well about how sex and pleasure is related to men. Although Affective Intelligence Theory (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen, 2000) states that geographical and political context are a factor which will make people react differently to their surroundings, our data analysis reveals that the participants, who come from different backgrounds, have similar opinions regarding societal norms related to sex.

<i>B1</i>	<i>B5</i>
<i>“Society thinks that sex toys are just for single people.”</i>	<i>“I feel like in the last centuries pleasure has always been about men.”</i>

Table 8.

Furthermore, the interviewees also discussed that there are a lot of misconceptions and taboos around the topic, as well as gender stereotypes. Quotes by B2, B4 and B5 in Table 9 express some of the ideas that the participants think regarding this matter. Although the interviewees point out how there are differences between men and women, when looking at Platanomelón's content, the representation of women from different backgrounds as well as men, opens up for an ability to relate and widen their target audience while challenging the norms simultaneously. Yet again a finding we come across is the fact that the geographical context aspect from AIT by Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen (2000) is not that relevant in this particular topic. Our results show that

regardless the participants' different geographical and political backgrounds, they have similar opinions regarding societal norms related to sex. It was expected that our participants would have different reactions and opinions as they have contrasting geographical and political backgrounds, however they all had similar responses to the Spanish brand content, as well as the norms society contains.

B2	B4	B5
<p><i>“Especially if you are a girl it's like, you know, taboo, no one talks about it, it doesn't exist. And then, boys, maybe talk and they love it. And they comment about how many girls have they sexually been with. But if you are a girl, you can't because you are seen as promiscuous [sic].”</i></p>	<p><i>“Some years ago you could only find sex toys in very weird shops and toys were very explicit. There was also like a lot of sexism around sex toys.”</i></p>	<p><i>“They [Platanomelón] normalise it [sex toys] for me in my head and maybe when I was 15 or something, I would still think it's something you can never ever talk about like super dirty or maybe you have to go to those like shady sex shops.”</i></p>

Table 9.

Finally, similar to Aim'n, we could analyse this theme with light to the first and second component of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by David and Rundle-Thiele (2018) mentioned in section 2.3; (1) the individual's personal desirable or undesirable attitudes towards the behaviour and (2) influence from social norms from the external environment towards the behaviour. We can determine this and combine the theme with the quotes mentioned in Table 9. For instance, the quote by B5 show how the brand's communication normalise her individual attitudes towards the behaviour by addressing the norms that sex shops are seen as shady. From B2, we can also determine that norms from the external environment towards the behaviour were rooted in a sexist matter of women's sexuality. In essence, the TPB is strongly influenced by these two themes which allowed us to make the same theme generalisation for the two brands.

4.2.2 Social Marketing as Creating Community Impact

4.2.2.1 Empowerment

Regarding Platanomelón's main findings, we would like to highlight how the brand helps their community feel empowered. As mentioned by multiple interviewees, there has been a change of how sex is viewed by people in recent years. On top of that, sex toys have become a symbol of female empowerment and are seen (and marketed) as tools for women's sexual liberation. Moreover, they have become a prominent factor in maintaining one's sexual 'wellbeing', as well as a disruptive force in challenging heteronormative views on female pleasure linked to penetrative sex (Locatelli, 2022). As seen in quotes by B3, B4 and B5 in Table 10, empowerment is a topic participants make highly noticeable when it comes to seeing what the brand's content is capable of doing and how it affects its community.

These connection feelings can be linked to Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006)'s work who build upon Roberts who argues that the stories the brand tells must demonstrate that the company understands the consumers' lifestyles, dreams, and goals and succeed in showing how the brand can enrich their lives, as well as helping them fill their particular needs. With this in mind, the empirical data and quotes in Table 10 show how the brand helps the consumers with their own sexual health by creating the empowerment within the brand community. In particular, the brand succeeds at showing how their products, but also online content, can enrich their lives and address their needs. Similar to Aim'n, we can see that the representation such as showing different body types and gender identities was of value to the participants. Therefore, we could connect this theme together with empowerment and representation.

Moreover, Roper and Fill (2012) state that corporate storytelling is an essential foundation where corporate communication messages can be developed. Additionally, the authors also express that many companies use corporate storytelling to express their *raison d'être* and personality, as well as their history. For instance, it was discussed with the participants that Platanomelón started off as a small start-up that later became the leading company in the sex toys industry in Spain. Similar to Aim'n, the entrepreneurial background paved the way for an authentic brand core which the participants expressed as significantly positive. Their history is highly relevant as it goes hand in

hand with their values and what they communicate. Moreover, according to the authors, the corporate story helps a company emotionally bond with both its employees and consumers. Hence why Platanomelón has successfully achieved creating a strong bond between the brand and its consumer by using storytelling to express their principles.

B3	B5	B4
<p><i>“It [the brand and its content] gives you empowerment. It makes you feel like there's nothing wrong with you, that it's nice and it's right.”</i></p>	<p><i>“So I feel it's good to kind of empower women to not get awkward or embarrassed by them [sexual topics] because it's really important that we all know stuff about it. I feel like it probably helps to empower females and helps, maybe female or women to be more confident with sexuality in general and also like, with their private parts.”</i></p>	<p><i>“They are also very inclusive with different body types, with different gender identities, sexual orientation... So I feel that these brands are also very useful in normalising other gender identities and other sexual orientations that are different from the mainstream heterosexual and cisgender person.”</i></p>

Table 10.

4.2.2.2 Sense of belonging

One of the main findings from Platanomelón-related interviews was that some of the participants mentioned that they could feel a sense of belonging between the brand, themselves, and the community. Therefore, we reckon this could be linked to Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel's work (2006) which emphasises the social nature of the brand community. In the community, brand meaning is shared among a diverse range of consumers who come together for the specific brand because they share the same or similar opinions, feelings, and values. As the majority of participants expressed and as seen in Table 11 in a quote by B4, the interviewees feel part of something and express that there is an existing bond is created in the community thanks to the type of content Platanomelón shares. Furthermore, Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) touch upon the three

main features; (1) shared consciousness, (2) rituals and traditions, and (3) a sense of moral responsibility. These three components are key for the brand to achieve social construction, as well as determine brand communities per se, and we can find them in Platanomelón’s community. Firstly, shared consciousness is highly relevant as it is the deep-rooted bond members of a community have for each other. As we earlier saw in Table 11 and as B3 also expresses, taking part in Platanomelón’s social dynamic makes the consumers feel a sense of belonging.

B4	B3	B6
<p><i>“That really helps to connect with the consumer. Because in the end, everyone thinks about sex, experiments with sex, has sex. Even if it's you know, with your own self or with a partner like everyone can relate to sex and that creates a bond.”</i></p>	<p><i>“It feels like, it makes you part of something. It makes you feel understood, it makes you feel valid because they show you many things of being valid.”</i></p>	<p><i>“The fact that it [opinions on sex-related topics] is such a relevant topic for a lot of people more and more every day and the brand talks about it so much, makes you think that you have some sort of responsibility and you have to take a stand.”</i></p>

Table 11.

Secondly, as Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001) states, traditions are social practices that aim for the celebration and implementation of specific behavioural norms as well as values. Therefore, brand pursues that by sharing education content through emotional communication that reaches the heart of the consumer and enhances both the brands’ values and the societal norms regarding sex practices. Lastly, as B6 states in Table 11, there is also a sense of responsibility within the community where members feel accountable for societal changes both individual and collectively. Although online consumption has increased a lot and this factor has led to individualism being more severe than it has ever been before, consumers of this specific market have stuck to their circle and it has become even stronger and closer, instead of consumers trying to escape from it and seeking new ways of communities.

4.2.3 Social Marketing as an Educational Influencer

The final theme which was a unique finding to Platanomelón was the educational value they received from the brand. When they were shown the content, several of them expressed a value in the brand educating them through emotional communication. In such a manner, Codrin (2010) calls attention to the importance for brands to, on the one hand, place the functional part and performance of the product in the mind of the consumer and, on the other hand, place emotions and feelings in the heart of the consumer through emotional communication efforts. As seen in Table 12, B2 points out how the brand not only does share informative content about the topics but also about how to properly use the products they sell.

Moreover, another discussed topic related to education was connected to the absence of institutions such as governments and schools making economic efforts to provide their citizens with sex education. All of Platanomelón’s participants expressed their opinion about the brand being an educational source for sex related topics and a main character filling the gap where educational institutions lack. Although they thought this was beneficial for both consumers and society, multiple participants expressed how it also has a downside to it. In quotes by B3 and B5, we see that the interviewees express how neither politicians nor educational institutions provide sex education, despite it being a highly interesting topic to many. Additionally, B4 expresses a similar opinion but adds on by saying that brands like Platanomelón are capitalising sex education. In this regard, we see that although the participants’ opinions regarding the brand are overall good, there is also a criticism both towards institutions and the brand itself.

B2	B3	B5	B4
<p><i>“I think that's great because if you sell products that are meant to be used in certain situations, you also have to show how to use them or wash them, or be hygienic with your private parts and so on.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Politicians don’t invest in this [sex education]. That’s why all we have learned at school is how to put a condom on.”</i></p>	<p><i>“I feel like it's really good to learn that because it's not something you learn in school.”</i></p>	<p><i>“My opinion is that although these brands are very necessary, in the end, they are a company that wants to make profit and they capitalise education.”</i></p>

Table 12.

On another note, the Spanish sex toys brand uses their content to educate people and influence their behaviour on the matters they tackle as well as filling the gap that institutions create due to their lack of sex education investment. Thus, as mentioned in the first section, an applicable theory is TPB, which addresses the individual's personal desirable or undesirable attitudes towards the behaviour, social norms from external environment towards the behaviour, the individual's capability to engage in the behaviour and intentions show the amount of effort and commitment the individual have towards the behaviour. Furthermore, another applicable theory to the education from Platanomelón is Rundle-Thiele et al. (2019). Repeatedly, they specify how social marketing addresses three types of behaviours; ending current and intrinsic behaviour, encouraging novel behaviours and adjusting existing behaviours. Hence, by sharing education and inclusive content, they are able to educate people and impact on their opposing behaviours changing and encouraging them to adopt more favourable ones regarding the matters the brand tackles, achieving an adjustment of their existing behaviours. Thus, the educational content is relevant to these behaviours as it addresses the sexual health practice and their products holistically.

Moreover, another work that is highly relevant for these findings is Exchange Theory (Kotler, 2000). Hastings and Saren (2003) state that human beings are need-directed beings with a natural inclination to improve our lot. Therefore, if social marketers want to drive consumers to change, and improve their species, they must provide purchasers with something beneficial in exchange. Kotler (2000) suggests that five preconditions are required for the exchange to take place; (1) at least two parties are present -the brand and its consumers-, (2) each party has something that might be of value to the other party -educational value and good positioning-, as seen in quotes by B2, B3 and B4, for instance-, (3) each party is capable of communication and delivery -through social media-, (4) each party is free to accept or reject the offer and (5) each party believes it is appropriate or desirable to deal with the other party.

B2	B3	B4
<p><i>“They get a really good positioning as a brand who has always been seen as a sex brand. Not like the brands that we are all used to seeing selling clothes, or selling food or selling cars. They have placed themselves in a good position.”</i></p>	<p><i>“I think they want to spread awareness and to be one of the main characters, you know, like the leaders. You know, providing all this information. It's hard to say but it's kind of a social project, it seems.”</i></p>	<p><i>“The benefits they can get are to have people talk about them and get influence. It's the fact that everyone's talking about them and sometimes when they post, people send that to their friends, even though they're not looking for any specific product or they don't want to buy anything from them yet they still engage with the posts. This is one of the things that Platanomelón does, to get people to talk about them, even though the people that talk about them are not necessarily consumers.”</i></p>

Table 14.

We see that these requirements are met successfully as demonstrated by some of the participants. Thus, Kotler’s theory is highly relevant for this analysis.

Moreover, these findings allow us to link to Theory of Planned Behaviour by David and Rundle-Thiele (2018), as well as Fishbein’s (1963) Expectancy-Value (EV) theory. This theory states that people’s attitudes about an object are determined by their own beliefs which have specific attributes. In other words, a person’s general attitude towards a product is determined by their own principles or evaluation of the attributes associated with the object, as well as by how strong these associations are. Therefore, throughout this section we have seen the participants’ general positive attitudes and opinions regarding the brand and the affairs. Ajzen (2008, pp. 531) further explains that “the more positive the beliefs, and the more strongly they are held, the more favourable the attitude should be.” Thus, as stated by B2 and B5 in Table 15, it is confirmed that the Spanish brand has a positive impact in the consumers’ mind (and hearts) and they feel strongly about it.

Finally, as mentioned earlier for Aim'n, Theory of Planned Behaviour by David and Rundle-Thiele (2018) can also be linked to this theme for the Spanish brand. This theory indicates that a person's intention to perform a certain behaviour is the key reason for that behaviour being executed in practice. These intentions are accumulated on attitudes and research suggests that positive social norms increase the intention and therefore the behaviour to be carried out. Thus, Platanomelón's aim is to spread awareness of sex and sex toys which can lead to a change of behaviour of not only its products' consumers, but also their social media profiles followers. On the other hand, in section 2.3 the academics present the Theory of Planned Behaviour's four key components; (1) the individual's personal desirable or undesirable attitudes towards the behaviour, (2) social norms from external environment towards the behaviour, (3) the individual's capability to engage in the behaviour and (4) intentions show the amount of effort and commitment the individual have towards the behaviour. Each component sums up the likelihood of the individual adapting the desired behaviour. Therefore, related to this theory, participants were asked if the brand had influenced either their opinion or habits regarding the matters they tackled. Although different answers were found, most of the participants agreed on the fact that even though there might be different aspects (e.g., age, surroundings and background...) that can affect their opinion regarding these issues, this type of brands take an important role as an actor for changing their attitudes, opinions and/or habits.

B2	B5
<p><i>“Sometimes I see I’m influenced by brands and I’m not happy about it but with Platanomelón it’s great. They post important and useful content that is very necessary. I love their message.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Those companies have become stronger and it’s more normalised in my head now. They’re very positive when sharing content and target women which I think is very important. Their task is cool and I like their content because they become sex education leaders and it helps people feel less ashamed.”</i></p>

Table 15.

5. Discussion

This chapter discusses the results from the analysis and connects the two cases together with light to the research purpose. Throughout the analysis, each theme was linked back to the theoretical framework in more detail to each specific case. This section merely focuses on highlighting the main findings which leads to the final conclusions of this study.

From our data analysis, we have identified three main themes where the two first combine the cases and the third separates them. Repeatedly, our first two themes are; *social marketing as challenging societal norms* and *social marketing as creating community impact*. Ultimately, with regard to the individual themes for each brand, we find *social marketing as accepting and exploiting interdependency* for Aim'n and *social marketing as an educational influencer* for Platanomelón. Initially, it was anticipated how Aim'n would have a more individualist influence whereas Platanomelón a more collectivist one, as they were selected to answer the duality of social marketing. Nevertheless, it came as a surprising finding that both brands shared a significant collectivist influence on the attitudes towards the industry specific behaviours and society overall. This was proven by the themes extracted from the data. According to our results and as previously stated, two main influences of the attitudes concerned; (1) the brands' capability of challenging norms and (2) the impact and empowerment created from their respective brand communities. These topics touch upon societal norms affecting the brands and its products, as well as the effect the community has on each brand.

For the first theme, we have seen in the data analysis section that the society-shared norms are highly relevant as to understanding how consumers from the chosen brands perceive specific subject matters and how these opinions influence their attitude towards the brands. Furthermore, throughout the analysis we emphasised the use of several theories from the theoretical framework to these two themes. Here, we linked it to the Theory of Planned Behaviour of (1) the individual's personal desirable or undesirable attitudes towards the behaviour and (2) social norms from the external environment towards the behaviour (David & Rundle-Thiele, 2018). It was a salient finding how both brands contributed to the normalisation of norms which eventually influenced

the individual's attitudes towards them positively. Hence, the first component arises as a result from the brand communicating the second component successfully.

To exemplify this, we found this for Aim'n concerning the fighting of stereotypes of femininity and representation. From our findings it was prominent in how fitness brands have typically been associated with toxic diet cultures and unattainable beauty norms. Aim'n took an alternative approach by featuring women of different ethnicities, bodies and ages. Because of this new positioning, participants responded positively and appreciated Aim'n featuring women participating in sports in action in a rough way. This was contrasting to other brand's communications showing women in a softer way. Our findings showed how women participating in stereotypically masculine sports, making noises, and not minding their appearance influenced attitudes positively and more genuinely. Ultimately Aim'n placed health in focus rather than appearance which improved participants' attitudes towards them and their communication. In sum, the most relevant norms referred to them challenging stereotypes of femininity and showing a wide range of representation in fitness.

For Platanomelón, the normalisation of specific norms was concerning the challenge of taboos and myths surrounding sexuality and sex toys. These taboos surrounded pre existing assumptions of who uses sex toys and also about gender stereotypes of women's role in sex. Similarly, the industry and sex shops has previously been associated with its own prejudices of shame and located in, what the participants expressed, as shady areas. Our findings show how Platanomelón ultimately created a safe space where representation of different bodies was also prominent. Participants appreciated seeing diversity and both brands did this successfully which created in positive attitudes towards the behaviours of physical health and sexual health.

Regarding the second theme, our study demonstrated that the community formed around each brand is strong and growing thanks, in part, to their emotional communication efforts, as well as their social marketing strategies. Moreover, we see how Patsiaouras (2022) brings up the importance of social media in these contexts and how this type of communication can affect people's opinions regarding specific matters. Interviewees for both brands openly appreciate the brands' content on social media, the way they communicate, as well as their carefully curated

content. This was demonstrated for Aim'n when the brand posted personal interviews with people from their community and also through their charity initiatives of promoting education for girls. Our findings showed that this type of content stirred up positive associations with the brand and a further desire to engage. It was also appreciated that the community content was closely related to their core values of women empowerment which the participants expressed gave them authenticity. Empowerment was also prominent for Platanomelón and they further demonstrated a strong ability to connect with its consumers thanks to the way they carried out emotional communication strategies. For instance, interview participants mentioned newsletters from the brand and their content to be highly interesting and it was one of the newsletters that they were subscribed to that they looked forward to receiving.

Another finding related to the second theme concerned the brand communities by Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001). Here we found that the brands connected strongest to creating a shared consciousness and a sense of moral responsibility with their emotional engagement. An example of this related to the brand's communication of women's empowerment and coming together to lift each other up. For Aim'n, even the participants that were critical towards the brand, valued the safe-space they created for others to join. These brand communities were also influenced by the storytelling theories of Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006) and Roper and Fill (2012). These theories identified both brands' success in telling stories through their communities that were relatable for the participants and also understood their personal lifestyles. For instance, the most positive responses from Aim'n were from the storytelling videos related to the New Collection Video. In the campaign, the women shared their specific passion for their sports and how they connected to them. This demonstrated how the community can welcome participants of different sports but unite them with the final product value of a more active lifestyle.

Summarising the second theme, the brand communities created a community impact which ultimately influenced the participants' attitudes positively. As a result, we show that favourable attitudes increase the likelihood for beginners to join a community and existing members to stay and engage, which can lead to a strong and well-established bond between the actors. The findings demonstrated that emotions amplified the sense of belonging, engagement and a successful strategy is using social media content in context and storytelling related to the brand values.

Regarding the two separating themes of the brands, here the discussion enters a more critical nature of the findings from our study. Repeatedly, the final themes included *social marketing as accepting and exploiting interdependency* for Aim'n and *social marketing as educational influencer* for Platanomelón. Concerning the themes, the most relevant theoretical connections were Kotler's (2000) work on Exchange Theory, Rundle-Thiele et al. 's (2019) work on different types of behaviours and ultimately, Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) work on consumer culture theory.

For the theme of *accepting and exploiting interdependency* for Aim'n, it was strongly criticised how they position themselves as a wellness brand that touches upon the mental health aspect of an active lifestyle. All participants clearly articulated the benefit physical activeness had on their psychological well-being and the participants under 25 were positive to Aimn's ability to communicate both sides. Hence it was expressed how Aim'n accepts the duality of physical health in their communication. Despite this, for participants above 25, it became a question of whether wellness brands selling workout wear should communicate on sensitive topics of self-love and managing stress. In this regard, the findings relate strongly to Kotler's work on Exchange Theory as the Aim'n has both tangible and intangible offers; where the portrayal of self-love is an intangible value offer to their consumers and its products a tangible one. Nonetheless the value of this theory separated the participants as two conditions of Kotler referred to the received value and appropriateness to exchange with the other party must be present. For the participants that did not consider it appropriate for Aim'n to tackle mental health it created cynicism and a critical nature. This critique rooted itself in Aim'n romanticising the actual issues of mental health and stress. For instance, related to the storytelling of self-love, the video contained little highlights of happiness throughout the day which included going for a cup of coffee or meditating. For the participants above age 25, they disliked the way Aim'n portrayed difficult issues of handling stress as something easy. In essence, it was expressed how the brand takes advantage of existing insecurities and a high level of stress amongst young women which ultimately capitalises and exploits on the industry specific norms.

Continuously, this theory can also be applied to Platanomelón as the sex toys brand is seen as an educational authority for many. In this case, the company offers both tangible and intangible

contributions where the first are their products and the latter are informative content, as well as a sense of belonging, safety, and acceptance. Finally, Platanomelón sharing educational content is a way to engage with consumers' behaviours and consequently influencing them. As seen in the data analysis section and connecting to Rundle-Thiele et al.'s (2019) work of research, the Spanish brand seeks ending current and inherent unwanted behaviours that the consumer might have, encouraging new behaviours and adjusting existing ones. Hence, our study shows that by sharing education and inclusive content, they are able to educate people and impact on their opposing behaviours changing and encouraging them to adopt more favourable ones regarding the matters the brand addresses. However, there was a strong criticism coming from some of the participants related to the final theme of Platanomelón being social marketing as an educational influencer. The interviewees pointed out how the brand participates in a system in which they can capitalise sex education as there is a lack of it being available for consumers from governmental or institutional sources. Some of the arguments used to support this opinion were related to schools not being a source of information regarding sex education. For instance, participants expressed, from their own experience, that schools only teach their students the most basic facets of sex education (e.g learning how to correctly put a condom) and do not necessarily spend too much time or resources on building a solid knowledge regarding sex health and practices. As a result, important components such as anatomy or LGBTQ+ are lost making the education inadequate.

We conclude this section by linking this theme to Fishbein and Ajzen's work (1975). As stated in Section 4.2.3, the authors' work is relevant for our findings as it encapsulates the person's attitude towards a product, which is determined by their own values or appraisal of the attributes associated with the object in question and, more remarkably, by the strength of these associations. Therefore, as we have seen, Platanomelón's consumers think highly of both the brand and its products. Additionally, Ajzen (2008) expresses that the stronger and more positive the beliefs are, the better the attitude should be. Thus, even though there is some judgement regarding brands accidentally (or not) taking a governmental and educational role, interviewees applaud the brand and more importantly, its educational content.

In sum, the final themes separating the brands connect with the first themes. Thus, the norms the brands challenged can both create positive and negative attitudes. For Aim'n, the difference related

to the product scope where promoting self-love and self-image was considered too far out of it. For Platanomelón, it questioned whether brands should take on the major role of educator in markets where there is a lack of governmental resources available for consumers. With everything discussed, we now enter the final part of this study to make our final conclusions.

6. Conclusion

In this final chapter of our study, the final conclusions of this study are presented basing upon the findings and discussion. Finally, theoretical, and managerial contributions as well as limitations and future research are presented.

The purpose of this study was to analyse commercial brands' role in influencing social marketing end-goals while making an economic profit. We phrased this approach as the end-goal paradox where we had the standpoint that mending the divided scholars would be of both academic and social value. Therefore, aiming to tackle this enigma, we built a solid theoretical framework that would later help us address our data findings after conducting six interviews each for Aim'n and Platanomelón. These brands were selected to place our research question in context.

Following we invite the reader back to our research question:

How are consumers' behavioural attitudes influenced by social marketing communication efforts from commercial brands with regards to emotions and how does this contribute to mending the end-goal paradox?

Following we will go through the most salient discoveries of this research in answering the research question.

First of all, related to the challenging norms, we understand that the brands have played an active role in the normalisation of the industry specific norms of physical health (Aim'n) and sexual health (Platanomelón). Our research participants emphasised that society has been changing within the past years and people, especially younger generations, are more willing to openly talk about specific topics, even if they are sensitive. Moreover, they also bring up how awareness is becoming more prominent in society and it is an easy and effective way of normalising things that were perceived as a taboo not so long ago. In these changes, we find that the two brands have actively taken part in joining in the discussion and do so more intensely with the use of emotions in their communication efforts. This resulted in a normalisation of engaging in the behaviours as well.

Consequently, the positive attitudes were built from the brands' ability to normalise former misconceptions of each industry specific norms.

For the building of impactful brand communities, we conclude that emotions lead to brands connecting with its consumers on a deep and intimate level which creates a circular dependent engagement for its members. This further assists them into participating, joining and engaging in the brands' dynamics such as following them on social media, consuming their content (as well as sharing it with others), purchasing their products and ultimately being a part of their (online) brand community. It was further determined how the impact was amplified with the use of emotions which created an empowering environment and a sense of belonging. Consequently, the brand community creates a welcoming feeling to take part in a safe and comfortable environment to engage with the brand and its product offerings. This creates an inclination for outsiders to join, invite other hesitant ones and reassure existing participants which ultimately opens up for more people engaging both in the brand and most likely in its product offerings. From this, we determine how more people joining the communities, the likelihood of starting to engage in rewarding behaviours comes as a result. Since the theories of communities and brand communities are alike, the brand communities open up for a significant long-term impact in joining in the welcoming environments created. Thus, we conclude that brand communities act as endorsers of empowerment by creating a community impact where beginners feel safe to join and participate.

Continuously, we further highlight the criticism towards the potential risks that come together with these conclusions that are based upon the final theme of each brand. Ultimately, the criticism towards the brands roots itself in the profitable capitalisation of the industries' specific norms which can result in romanticising the actual issues and creating further stress and stigma around them. This is further amplified with the use of emotions and an attempt to connect to the consumers on a deeper emotional level which we as authors argue can be a risk. On a larger scale, we recognise the potential hazard that could take place if more brands capitalise on existing gaps related to societal norms in markets where there is an absence in available resources for consumers. Especially we consider it a risk for brands that go too far outside their product scope where the ethics can be questioned.

So, how do these influences contribute in mending the end-goal paradox? As was recognised in the problematisation, several scholars argued how commercial marketing should be kept separate from social marketing's due to the different end goals. In the starting phase of this thesis, we were of the opinion that simply because brands make an economic profit, does not mean they cannot be important actors in assisting social marketing goals. Thus, after having done exhaustive research, conducted interviews, and having analysed the data, we are concluding that brands can achieve both social and commercial success by implementing a successful marketing strategy, well aligned with their values and connected to emotions. We determine how social and commercial goals align in terms of the addressing the norms and creating an impactful community. Our brands are building a community where it creates a safe environment for others to take on new favourable behaviours and also build brand loyalty through the emotional attachment created. Moreover, brands are actively playing a role in addressing norms by showing representation and opening up for a (social) debate to be formed. In essence, these brands can actively contribute to sharing knowledge and addressing societal issues that are present in society. Nonetheless, we conclude that they should be considered as influencers and not leaders as that poses a risk of them capitalising and taking over the responsibility of political and educational leaders.

With our research we conclude that brands play a vital role in social marketing goals and more research should be placed on mending their specific end-goals. This is crucial for the sake of creating a long-term solution where social matters and economic gain can co-exist to create a better future for all.

6.1 Theoretical contributions

For theoretical contributions, we contribute mainly to theories of social marketing including behavioural and exchange theory. Regarding the emotional communication theories, we expand on this in section 6.2.2 as we consider them more relevant for brand managers.

For the theories that have guided this study throughout, the main theoretical contributions are related to theories within social marketing which is; behavioural theory (David & Rundle-Thiele, 2018; Rundle-Thiele et al. 2019) and exchange theory (Kotler, 2000; Hastings & Saren, 2003).

Throughout the analysis, focus has been placed on discussing the themes and linking them back to the theoretical framework. This section will highlight the main contributions for the theories.

For behavioural theory we have contributed to placing the Theory of Planned Behaviour (David & Rundle-Thiele, 2018) into context of our cases and their specific industries. We remind the reader again of its components; (1) the individual's personal desirable or undesirable attitudes towards the behaviour, (2) social norms from the external environment towards the behaviour, (3) the individual's capability to engage in the behaviour and (4) intentions show the amount of effort and commitment the individual has towards the behaviour. From our findings, we determined that brands influence the first component because of communicating the second component. For Aim'n, it was related to including representation of different sizes and ages that challenged existing prejudices of how women are portrayed in fitness. For Platanomelón, it was attributed to addressing norms of who "can" use sex toys, where the stores are located and overall misconceptions about sexual health. Ultimately, the brands normalised industry specific prejudices leading to more positive and accepting attitudes from the individuals.

Regarding the third component, Platanomelón, influenced this most strongly as sex education has not been easily accessible in Spain which then helped individuals to start engaging in the behaviour. They did this mostly relating to the educational value of free, open and easy access. Thus, individuals' capability increases as there is no need to buy the products, they offer considering the brand fills the gap where governments lack. Thus, we contribute to this theory by adding on how brands can act as influencers and help individuals engage in said behaviour. However, as we mentioned in our conclusion, they should not take on the role as the ultimate educational leaders. Regarding the fourth component, we consider this the least relevant component due to our purposive sampling strategy. Our chosen participants were already committed to their physical and sexual health; hence the engagement was already strong.

For the three behaviours that social marketing concerns, we remind the reader; (1) ending current and intrinsic behaviour, (2) encourage novel behaviours and (3) adjust existing behaviours. (Rundle-Thiele et al. 2019). Regarding this work of study, the findings of our research have contributed to this theory by showing two different brands from two contrasting industries that

affected its consumers' attitudes and behaviours. On the one hand, we have seen that Aim'n focuses more on mental health as well as physical activity, body positivity and diversity. Following are examples from our data how Aimn's communication influenced these behaviours; ending current and intrinsic behaviour (e.g., stop aspiring certain body ideals impossible for the individuals' capabilities), encourage novel behaviours (e.g., start new forms of exercises without limitation to norms) and adjust novel behaviours (e.g., engage in exercise with a focus on health rather than appearance). On the other hand, Platanomelón covers sexual health and education. Following are examples from our data how Platanomelón's communication influenced these behaviours; ending current and intrinsic behaviour (e.g., stop engaging in unhealthy sexual behaviours), encouraging novel behaviours (e.g., discovering and engaging in new forms of enjoying sexual practices) and adjusting to existing behaviours (e.g., learning how to use the sex toys better by watching their videos). With these examples, we contribute to the discussion by showing the reader that brands can address the three types of behaviour of social marketing. It can also be positive for the brand as it raises brand awareness and increases its image, inviting new people to join the ongoing discussion and motivating current actors to stay active and present. Finally, our results show that behaviour and attitudes are affected by the way a brand communicates using emotions, as well as information regarding the specific topic it addresses.

Relating to Exchange Theory, this study contributed to Kotler's (2000) preconditions. In this matter, two of Kotler's preconditions included value offerings between the parties must be present and also if each party considers it appropriate or desirable to engage in an exchange. Regarding the first component, we extend the theory by emphasising the longevity of the value offerings. For example, we saw in our findings how some consumers of Platanomelón did not engage in the tangible items (e.g., products), but only followed the brands' educational content such as newsletters or social media content. For these consumers, the value is rather intangible and provides a sense of belonging for the consumer which leads to increased brand loyalty and improved brand image. As a result, we extend on the "something" of the first component as the value being equally important when offering both intangible and tangible worth. Thus, the intangible values should not be forgotten when researching or applying Exchange Theory.

Regarding the second component, we contribute to this theory by adding on how actors need to be particularly mindful of the second component of appropriateness and desire to engage with their audience. It was demonstrated by our findings that the scope of the communication cannot be too far outside the tangible offerings from the brand. For instance, some participants expressed a criticism of Aimn's role targeting mental health concerns of reducing stress when their product offerings are workout wear. Some felt it was not in their place to communicate on these matters which actors should be cautious about. From our data, we saw how cynicism was raised by participants who experienced a discrepancy of appropriateness from the brands. This component from Kotler is particularly sensitive and can jeopardise the entire value exchange if not treated with caution. Nonetheless, if the tangible value offering is communicated successfully and within the scope, brands or other actors can further extend their reach. Thus, if each party considers it appropriate to participate in the exchange and they find there is a relevant value offering between them, social marketers will be able to conduct a successful interchange and consequently, drive consumers to change their behaviour. Hence, actors should not leave out consumers that do not engage with the tangible items, as intangible are just as valuable which we further use to challenge the input on Exchange Theory by Hastings and Saren (2003).

We remind the reader with a quote from their work; "commercial marketing provides a clear utilitarian benefit with products whereas the perceived benefit in social marketing is more symbolic" (Hastings & Saren, 2003, p. 309). With this quote, we can see the authors making a clear distinction of the practices. This places them into two separate categories which we have attempted to challenge and mend with our study. As we have determined from our conclusion, both brands provide value offerings that go beyond this statement which merges the two marketing practices together. The brands are not only providing utilitarian benefits from their products as some consumers do not engage with the products at all, but only with the communication and symbolic benefits such as education and belonging. Therefore, we contribute to the theory by challenging it and allowing the researchers to consider the possibility of commercial brands working interchangeably with social marketing when communicating and offering both the utilitarian and symbolic benefits.

6.2 Practical contributions

Regarding the practical findings from our study, we contribute to governmental and political actors as well as brand managers wanting to implement emotions in their branding strategies.

6.2.1 Governmental and Political

Due to the sensitive nature of this study, we believe we have contributed to governmental and political actors working with physical activeness and sexual health. Repeatedly, our targeted demographic was women in their 20's hence these contributions adhere to their insights.

Starting with physical activity of young women, general habits were discussed in the beginning of the interviews. All participants expressed a strong need to exercise and how it linked to their mental health and overall norms of pressure to look a certain way and societal influences of body ideals was a significant finding for the participants below 25 as well. They described how their upbringing and teenage years were strongly influenced by mass media and certain body ideals. This was in alignment with current research from scholars like Jarman et al. (2022). Even though this is not radical, we do raise a word of caution to politicians to place further effort into researching how to tackle a suffering mental health and poor body image of young women. Furthermore, social media and body ideals proved to have been a significant influence which needs further research also. This was in correlation to the final theme of Aim'n accepting and exploiting interdependency related to mental and physical health. If not being cautious, brands like Aim'n will continuously take on the leader of promoting body positivity or a healthy self-image which we have already pointed out is a potential risk of capitalising on the norms.

This contribution is closely related to Platanomelón, as the Spanish brand is seen as an educational source for sex matters. All the participants expressed positive feedback regarding the way the company executed their online content strategy, as it is both informative and entertaining. Moreover, the interviewees also manifested that the *look & feel* of the brand and its content is enjoyable and pleases them aesthetically. For this reason, participant B4, who is a former worker of the firm, revealed that although Platanomelón has a huge online community, half or more of its followers haven't purchased any of their products, as their main interest is in the information they

share. Hence, we observe and further consider the importance for people to get easy access to sex education subjects. In relation to this, here comes the criticism for governmental entities as they lack to provide sex education for citizens, more specifically educational institutions such as schools and their students. This is especially true for Spain as the results of a voluntary online questionnaire that a total of 3,695 Infant, Primary, Secondary and High school teachers (66.1% women, 33.9% men) took part in, asked about the teachers' training and attitudes towards sex education (Martínez et al. 2014). The analysis indicated that 43.3% of teachers are not trained in this issue, and 48.6% do not teach it at school in the Southern European country. Moreover, the authors argue that there is scarce information on the subject and consequently, sex education taught in Spanish schools is still limited and insufficient.

Therefore, we encourage governments to do something about this problem and mend the situation. Otherwise, brands will start (or have already) to slowly take over their role of educational leaders. We further call attention to this matter and invite readers to reflect on the passive role of institutions and for the latter to work on to better providing teenagers and young adults with sexual health. Thus, although governments should be more present in providing sex education information to people, we acknowledge Platanomelón as an educational influencer whilst setting the scene for a future where sex and sex toys are seen as less of a taboo and more of a positive influence for society and individuals.

In sum, the contribution here refers to using the brands as influencers within physical and sexual health while not allowing them to become leaders. If brands become leaders in the mental and sexual health debate, the risk can be that they are taking on a role in which they do not have all the knowledge or resources to fulfil. Hence, the risk can be that they romanticise or capitalise on gaps in the governmental systems. Despite the overall positive opinions of our selected brands, we do consider it a risk that new actors gain significant economic profit by filling the gaps that governmental actors fail to address.

6.2.2 Brand Managers

Complementing governmental and political contributions just mentioned, this study further makes several managerial contributions for brand managers wanting to implement an emotional branding strategy.

A key managerial contribution of our study refers to the perceived authenticity when using emotions in the marketing communication. Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006) acknowledge emotions as a key factor for marketing and investigate the lesser focused aspect of the potential negative side. In their work, they investigate the perceived risk of losing authenticity by using emotions as a branding strategy. They stress that more scrutiny needs to be put on risks and in their recommendations for future research they highlight that more brands and context needs to be investigated. For this study, the context is both related to social marketing and also the specific industries of Aim'n and Platanomelón.

For Aim'n, the perceived authenticity was high due to the entrepreneurial background of the two female founders. In the first interview with A1, this was not mentioned until the end which completely changed the participants' perceived authenticity from critical to positive. For the remaining interviews, this was brought up earlier when informing the participants about the brand in context of discussion. This proved also the case for Platanomelón that also has an entrepreneurial background with clear values which had a positive influence on the participants. Hence, a key managerial contribution to increasing the perceived authenticity is the clear presentation of the background in which the brand was created *and* operated.

Therefore, a potential danger to the perceived authenticity is a discrepancy and hypocrisy in the founding of the brand and values communicated. Two other scholars referring to authenticity are Kim and Sullivan (2019), who also pointed out the existing gap of investigating the positive and negative aspects of emotional branding and how it could potentially affect brand image if done unsuccessful. For the more critical participants, they felt that brands like Aim'n were taking advantage of existing insecurities and, as a result, taking heavy topics of mental issues too lightly. This further connects to the more negative side of using emotions in the marketing strategy that strays too far away from the product offerings. For that reason, the negative side of using emotions

in the market communication can be a backlash of the perceived authenticity when entering topics too far outside the product offering scope. A further negative risk is to use emotional communication on emotionally distant consumers who are becoming desensitised. This was especially true for the Aim'n participants over the age of 25. Thus, brands must be cautious of the risk that comes with using emotions as cynicism can arise as a result and be mindful of their target audience.

Furthermore, we determine how storytelling and building brand communities should be at the forefront of a brands' strategy when using emotions to their audience. Storytelling was proven to be a successful strategy which was especially the case when using a combination of rough and soft emotions with their stories. This we connected to Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006) that emphasised that storytelling must involve a deep understanding of their audience's lifestyles, dreams, and goals and succeed in showing how the brand can enrich their lives, as well as helping them fill their particular needs. For Aim'n, some participants were active participants of the sports presented, running and kickboxing. They claimed how it was sincere and gave them a positive attitude from the brand. In essence, the storytelling managed to communicate the core values of the brands which we confirmed with Codrin's (2010) work is a key success component of doing storytelling. We further contribute to this by emphasising that communicating different stories is a key success factor for brands as well.

Continuously, we also contribute to brand communities. For brand managers wanting to build their brand communities, we contribute with numerous success factors from our findings. When selecting our cases, an existing strong brand community was one of the predetermined criteria. For our cases, we argue that their communities have paved the way for their success in the last ten years of their start. We determine how emotions should be at the forefront of building a strong connection with the consumers which was in alignment with Muñiz and O'Guinn's (2001) and Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006)'s research of the components of a brand community. From our findings we determine how creating a sense of belonging within the community and achieving consumers' engagement and relatability to the brand is vital to successfully accomplishing a strong brand community. Creating a sense of moral responsibility is of further importance for brand managers to address socio-political issues within the scope of the industry.

For instance, both brands included representation and emotions to target industry specific norms which opened up for an empowering contribution from the participants. In addition, we emphasise the key success in addressing consumers that are not using the products to the community in order to extend the reach and impact. This is done successfully through educating the users within the products scope through social media content and newsletters. By doing this, brand managers are able to widen their target audience and reach.

In sum, creating a sense of belonging and moral responsibility should be in alignment with the brand's core values and purpose in order to create a positive attitude formation for its members. This will create a positive community impact and a circular engagement where existing members invite beginners to join and participate. If a brand also provides symbolic and intangible offerings, there is no need for money to be present and it is more likely that the brand community grows thanks to this. With this we challenge two other scholars, Cova and Cova (2002) who claim that brand communities are inherently commercial. Our findings show that consumers do not need to spend their money in order to be a part of and engage with the community.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

For this study, we acknowledge the several limitations and how these can be addressed for future research. First and foremost, we acknowledge the limitations to this study as follows; limitations to sampling including potential participant bias and language barrier, type of brands and the industries investigated (i.e., workout wear for Sweden and sex toys for Spain). These limitations can open up for future research.

To begin with the sampling, an evident limitation to this study refers to the sampling and sampling size. Although we are confident that the empirical data is trustworthy and generalisable with the theoretical framework and in-depth interviews, a larger sampling was not conducted as the study was limited to time. Another limitation refers to the sampling strategy of convenience and purposive sampling. Although we acknowledge the benefit of selecting participants in our close network, we also admit the potential bias they may have in their answers. Despite encouraging honesty and transparency, a limitation could be their wish to disclose "what we wanted to hear". Therefore, a sampling strategy without a pre-existing relationship to the researchers would address

this potential bias. Also, for the purposive sampling we had some initial criteria of participation. For the brands, we selected participants that were all somewhat already interested in the brands and/or brand offerings. It would be an intriguing starting point for future researchers to investigate the attitudes of consumers that do not have a pre-existing relationship and explore their potential change of attitude upon being shown the emotional content. Another limitation refers to the communication from Sweden being in English while the communication from Spain was only in Spanish which also limited the sampling availability to Spanish speakers' participants. This language limitation was a further obstacle as only one of the researchers is fluent in the language. Finally, it would be relevant to look into an older demographic as well.

Regarding the limitation of type of brand and industry, the scope and trustworthiness of our result could have been more generalisable if also investigating larger corporate brands as well instead of novel brands founded from scratch in the past ten years. This would be of value because of the increased scrutiny and attention corporate brands have due to mass media (Roper & Fill, 2012). Roper and Fill also states how corporate brands are increasingly viewed by the public with cynicism. Hence, the final themes involving criticism from the participants may be further enhanced if larger corporate brands are selected for analysis. With this in mind, we do acknowledge the increased trust our selected brands have from their entrepreneurial background and value driven focus. In order to involve brands from small to larger size, further research is also encouraged for new brands and in different contexts. Moreover, our study is limited to two industries and two countries (i.e., workout wear for Sweden and sex toys for Spain). Future research can also place the focus on a more comparative study of geographical context and how culture impacts the attitudes formed.

In essence, we believe that it is essential to conduct further research on brands' role in aiding social marketing goals for a more harmonic relationship between the practices. Finally, we refresh the definition of a paradox for the reader as “a situation or statement that seems impossible or is difficult to understand because it contains two opposite facts or characteristics” (Cambridge, n.d). We would like to point out that “seems impossible” and “difficult” does not mean trying is out of the picture or not of value. With this being said, we look forward to following the research of the

two practices and we argue that our study has taken a valuable approach in mending social and commercial marketing goals together towards the common good.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Aim'n Interview Outline

Category	Questions	Material (if applicable)	Purpose and Theoretical Connection
Presenting Aim'n and Familiarity	<p>What is your relationship with Aim'n?</p> <p>Are you a consumer of their products?</p>		<p>The purpose of this part is to establish the participants current relationship and familiarity with the brand</p>
Social Marketing, Behavioural Theory and Consumer Theory	<p>Can you tell me about your relationship with fitness? How would you describe your feelings towards it?</p> <p>What societal norms do you associate with fitness? Are there any norms that are more distinct than others?</p> <p>How much effort and commitment goes into you staying fit?</p>		<p>These questions were asked to get initial insights of consumer's attitudes towards the behaviour and served to work as an icebreaker to get the conversation started.</p> <p>Applicable theory: (e.g., Dann, 2012; David & Rundle-Thiele, 2018; Rundle-Thiele et al. 2019, Fishbein & Ajzen, 1963, Arnould & Thompson, 2005)</p>
Affective Intelligence Theory and Exchange Theory	<p>What is your opinion of fitness brands posting workout videos or educational content?</p> <p>When you see these posts of (dessert recipes & body positivity) what do you feel?</p> <p>Do you think Aim'n can get other benefits than only economic profit with these messages?</p> <p>What are the benefits that</p>	<p>Aim'n Workout Video (2022), Instagram [video online], Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/CbsUBWSKmkU/ [Accessed 19 April 2022]</p> <p>Aim'n Cookie Recipe (2022), Instagram [post online], Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/CbZ_ffwqoCh/ [Accessed 19 April 2022]</p>	<p>The aim of asking these questions was to dig deeper into the participants' opinion and feelings towards the societal part of the brand, as well as, getting to know their point of view about the benefits of buying the brand's products.</p> <p>Applicable theory: (Hastings & Saren, 2003; Bagozzi, 1979; Kotler, 2000; Marquart, Brosius & de Vreese, 2019; Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen, 2000; Thompson,</p>

	Aimn's consumers get?	Aim'n Body Positivity (2022) Instagram, [post online], Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/Cbz2bhyKxfX/ [Accessed 19 April 2022]	Rindfleisch & Arsel, 2006)
Brand Communities	How do you feel about brand communities within fitness? Do you feel you're a part of any? What is your overall opinion when seeing these Instagram campaigns and posts by Aim'n?	Aim'n Inspired by You (2022), Instagram, [post online], Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/Cbz2bhyKxfX/ [Accessed 19 April 2022] International charity Initiative (2022), Instagram [post online], Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/CcNvfIAqS5B/ [Accessed 19 April 2022]	These questions were asked to understand the participants feelings towards brand communities and if they were influenced by the emotions communicated by the brand. Applicable theory: (e.g., Thompson, Rindfleisch & Arsel, 2006; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001; Cova & Cova, 2002)
Storytelling	What kind of feelings do you get when watching these videos?	Aim'n Sportswear. (2022). New Collection 24.02.22, Youtube, [video online], Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsQktfdyIW0 [Accessed 13 April 2022] Aim'n Self-love. (2022). Self-love is;, Instagram [video online], Available at: https://www.instagram.com/reel/CZ9OFVPALsb/?igshid=MDJmNzVkMj	These questions were asked to cover the visual aspect of emotional communication of video formats where emotions can be strengthened with music and storytelling. Applicable theory: (e.g., Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu, 2005); Thompson, Rindfleisch & Arsel, 2006; Roper & Fill, 2012)

		Y%3D&fbclid=IwAR35 pfyIhIX0-NnE8- eKfZSomY_f7oJcIz0Xri LaY5YTfzyjBOfKwyF4 QSM [Accessed 14 April 2022]	
Ending	<p>With everything discussed today, do you have any final reflections regarding Aim'n and their communication?</p> <p>Do you think fitness brands, like Aim'n could influence your behaviour and habits in terms of staying active?</p>		These questions were asked to give the participants a final chance to reflect. The final question was asked to connect to the introductory questions regarding their behaviours.

Appendix 2: Platanomelón Interview Outline

Category	Questions	Material (if applicable)	Purpose and Theoretical Connection
Presenting Platanomelón and Familiarity	<p>How long have you known Platanomelón for?</p> <p>How long have you been a consumer of its products?</p> <p>Do you follow them on their social media? If so, which social platforms?</p>		The purpose of this part is to establish the participants current relationship and familiarity with the brand.
Social Marketing, Behavioural Theory and Consumer Theory	<p>What societal norms do you associate with sex toys? Are there any norms that are more distinct than others?</p>		These questions were asked to get initial insights of consumer's attitudes towards the behaviour and served to work as an icebreaker to get the conversation started.

			Applicable theory: (e.g., Dann, 2012; David & Rundle-Thiele, 2018; Rundle-Thiele et al. 2019, Fishbein & Ajzen, 1963, Arnould & Thompson, 2005)
Affective Intelligence Theory and Exchange Theory	<p>What is your opinion of sex toys brands posting educational content?</p> <p>When you see these posts of (educational content about sex related topics) what do you feel?</p> <p>Do you think the majority of people in Spain have the same opinion as you?</p> <p>Platanomelón is planning to expand internationally. They have started to do so in Mexico, how do you think Mexicans react to a sex toys brand and its products?</p> <p>Do you think Platanomelón can get other benefits than only economic profit with these messages? If so, which ones?</p> <p>What are the benefits that Platanomelón's consumers get?</p>	<p>Platanomelón (2022) TikTok [post online], Available at: https://www.tiktok.com/@platanomelon/video/7086102772512312581?is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1 [Accessed 19 April 2022]</p> <p>Platanomelón (2022) TikTok [post online], Available at: https://www.tiktok.com/@platanomelon/video/7080169357355044101?is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1 [Accessed 19 April 2022]</p> <p>Platanomelón (2022) Instagram [post online], Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/CbZ7y4YqCLN/ [Accessed 19 April 2022]</p> <p>Platanomelón (2022) Instagram [post online], Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/Cap4E7oI7O9/ [Accessed 19 April 2022]</p>	<p>The aim of asking these questions was to dig deeper into the participants' opinion and feelings towards the societal part of the brand, as well as, getting to know their point of view about the benefits of buying the brand's products.</p> <p>Applicable theory: (Hastings & Saren, 2003; Bagozzi, 1979; Kotler, 2000; Marquart, Brosius & de Vreese, 2019; Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen, 2000; Thompson, Rindfleisch & Arsel, 2006)</p>

<p>Emotional Communication and Brand Communities</p>	<p>Have you ever or do you send Platanomelón's content to friends/family/partner?</p> <p>How do you feel about brand communities within sexual topics?</p> <p>What development of sex toys brand communities do you anticipate?</p>		<p>These questions were asked to understand the participants feelings towards brand communities and if they were influenced by the emotions communicated by the brand.</p> <p>Applicable theory: (e.g., Thompson, Rindfleisch & Arsel, 2006; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001; Cova & Cova, 2002)</p>
<p>Emotional Communication and Storytelling</p>	<p>What do you think about Platanomelón's content on their social media? Is there any particular feeling you have?</p>		<p>These questions were asked to cover the visual aspect of emotional communication of video formats where emotions can be strengthened with music and storytelling.</p> <p>Applicable theory: (e.g., Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu, 2005); Thompson, Rindfleisch & Arsel, 2006; Roper & Fill, 2012)</p>
<p>Ending</p>	<p>Do you think sex toys brands, like Platanomelón, could or already have influenced your opinion on the matters they tackle? What about your own habits?</p> <p>With everything discussed today, do you have any final reflections regarding Platanomelón and their communication?</p>		<p>These questions were asked to give the participants a final chance to reflect. The final question was asked to connect to the introductory questions regarding their behaviours.</p>

Appendix 3. Theme visualisation Aim'n

Themes	Key-words	Example Quotes
<p>Social Marketing as Challenging Societal Norms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fighting Stereotypes of Femininity ● Representation 	<p><i>“I feel like women, once we hit 30, then we're considered as old and undesirable...So I think it's very important for women of older ages to be represented. So it changes society's way of looking at women and fitness.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">- A5</p> <p><i>“Yes, I would say so [Aim'n being authentic] because Aim'n is a brand that's by women for women... also the fact that I know the brand that they are quite inclusive, both by sizes and colours...It's not only really young people are shown but that also spans... to a little bit older which is nice to see as well.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">- A4</p>
<p>Social Marketing as Creating Community Impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Empowerment ● Belonging 	<p><i>“...you feel empowered just by watching it [New Collection Video] because you see those strong women and you kind of like want to do the same. So probably like motivates me to go maybe like I will buy that and then I run as well because I feel like also, I also feel like an empowered woman or something.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">- A1</p> <p><i>“I think it's all about women. Women's</i></p>

		<p><i>empowerment and just show that being part of such a community can really help other people with not like a very strong mindset or feel alone sometimes and I think those can be like a safe place for many people to refer back to... other people who then become their role models and it's not about supermodels that I'm talking about, it's more about the everyday woman who can accomplish things with the help of a brand."</i></p> <p>- A2</p>
<p>Social Marketing as Accepting and Exploiting Interdependency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mental health involvement ● Criticism 	<p><i>"I've comforted the realisation that the less I care [about seeking self-love] that makes me feel the best. So I find them [self-love videos] quite provoking."</i></p> <p>- A6</p> <p><i>"I feel overwhelmed by the amount of brands that all of the sudden start to promote self-love... with Aim'n I find it authentic as they were founded by two women and that. But overall you're just bombarded on Instagram with these messages."</i></p> <p>- A1</p>

Appendix 4. Theme visualisation Platanomelón

Themes	Key-words	Example Quotes
Social Marketing as Challenging Societal Norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stereotypes ● Taboos and myths 	<p><i>“Society thinks that sex toys are just for single people.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">- B1</p> <p><i>“Some years ago you could only find sex toys in very weird shops and toys were very explicit. There was also like a lot of sexism around sex toys.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">- B4</p>
Social Marketing as Creating Community Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Empowerment ● Sense of belonging 	<p><i>“It [the brand and its content] gives you empowerment. It makes you feel like there's nothing wrong with you, that it's nice and it's right.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">- B3</p> <p><i>“That really helps to connect with the consumer. Because in the end, everyone thinks about sex, experiments with sex, has sex. Even if it's you know, with your own self or with a partner like everyone can relate to sex and that creates a bond.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">- B4</p>
Social Marketing as an Educational Influencer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sex education ● capitalism ● Institutions 	<p><i>“I feel like it's really good to learn that because it's not something you learn in school.”</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Politicians	<p>- B5</p> <p><i>“My opinion is that although these brands are very necessary, in the end, they are a company that wants to make profit and they capitalise on education.”</i></p> <p>- B4</p>
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