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**Examining the psychological sense of a brand community in the
case of music festivals with PLS path analysis**

PhD Dissertation Theses

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1. Introduction and topic relevance

Brand loyalty has become a key factor in companies' success in last decades (Reichheld 1994, Oliver 1999, Rust 2004, Hetesí 2007, Curran – Healy 2014). Loyal customers are beneficial for a company because gaining new customers results in extra costs (Reichheld 1994). However, is it enough for concentrating on loyalty? More and more research concentrate not only on loyalty but on the concept of brand community (Schouten – McAlexander 1995, Muniz – O'Guinn 2001, Atkin 2004, Carlson et al. 2008, Acosta – Devasagayam 2010, Hetesí – Prónay 2014). Members of a brand community are the fans of a brand who represent a relatively new research area. Nonetheless, several questions may arise concerning brand communities. How the concept can be interpreted? What kind of types of brand communities can be mentioned? What kind of factors are in the background? What are the consequences of brand communities? In what cases can the concept of brand community be interpreted? Papers concerning brand communities (Muniz – O'Guinn 2001, Schouten – McAlexander 1995, Hollenbeck – Zinkhan 2006, Füller et al. 2008, Scarpi 2010) focus rather on products therefore an application for a service represents an actual research question. Furthermore, a relatively new concept, the psychological sense of a brand community has occurred in the field of brand communities. The essence of the psychological sense of brand communities is that the sense of belonging to somewhere can exist even if there is no social interaction among the members of the brand community (Carlson et al. 2008). In addition, positive effects of brand communities may appear if only the sense of belonging to a community exist (Carlson et al. 2008, Drengner et al. 2012).

Based on all these, I examine the psychological sense of a brand community in a case of a special service, which is a music festival. Why music festivals are in the focus of this study? Music festivals have become a popular entertaining form in our country. Furthermore, music festivals enhance the reputation, the cultural and the economic life of the host city or county of the festival (Leenders 2010, Getz 2010, Hunyadi 2004, Ercsey 2013). As well as, there is relatively low number of papers concerning music festivals from marketing point of view in our country; therefore the topic is important for the festival management and for the scientific sector as well.

The psychological sense of a brand community and the related concepts are mostly non-measurable directly, so they are interpreted as latent variables. To answer the research questions the relations among latent variables should be examined for which structural equation modeling (SEM) can be applied (Henseler et al. 2009). Among SEM techniques, the

partial least squares (PLS) path analysis has a few-decades-long history (Wold 1973, Hair et al. 2014, Haenlein – Kaplan 2004, Tenenhaus et al. Henseler et al. 2009) and is considered as a relative new technique in our country. Therefore, a description about the features and application conditions of PLS may present new elements in our country.

2. Dissertation objectives and hypotheses developing

The research question of this paper is how can the psychological sense of a brand community be interpreted in the case of music festivals and what kind of effects may arise. From the point of view of festival management, it is crucial why the visitors will relate to the given festival. Why will they attend the festival again? Why will they tell the positive experiences of the festival to others? Based on all of these, the research question in a more precise way is that is the psychological sense of a brand community interpretable in a case of a music festival; and if yes, what effects are on commitment, on loyalty and on word-of-mouth. In other words, will anyone visit the festival again if he or she does sense that she or he is a part of a community? Or will anyone share the positive experiences of the festival with others? To answer these questions, a literature overview, qualitative and quantitative primary research techniques were also applied.

Among research objectives, there is the examination of the effects of psychological sense of a brand community on loyalty, on commitment and on word-of-mouth. Besides variables mentioned above, the self-concept congruency has also a relevant role in this research topic based on the results of the literature overview and the qualitative research. The qualitative research shows that examining the effects of self-concept congruency on overall satisfaction is relevant, which is supported by other studies (Lee – Jeong 2014, Koo et al. 2014, Kressmann et al 2006, Sirgy et al. 2008, Prónay 2011) as well. Furthermore, Goulding et al. (2002) highlighted that consumers express their music community membership with a congruency between the image of a music club and the consumer's self-concept. Based on these, the self-concept congruency may enhance the psychological sense of a brand community in the case of a music festival. Thus, the following hypotheses are stated:

H1a: Self-concept congruency has a positive effect on overall satisfaction.

H1b: Self-concept congruency has a positive effect on the psychological sense of a brand community.

As a consequence of the psychological sense of a brand community, loyalty (Bagozzi – Dholakia 2010, Drengner et al. 2012, Scarpi 2010), commitment (Carlson et al. 2008, Schouten – McAlexander 1995, Muniz – O’ Guinn 2001) and word-of-mouth (Scarpi 2010, Hudson et al. 2015) can be mentioned. The more a festival visitor sense that he or she is a member of the festival’s community, the higher the chance of re-attendance, commitment and sharing of positive experiences to others.

H2a: Psychological sense of a brand community has a positive effect on commitment.

H2b: Psychological sense of a brand community has a positive effect on word-of-mouth.

H2c: Psychological sense of a brand community has a positive effect on loyalty.

General satisfaction is considered as an influencing factor of loyalty in the case of music festivals as well (Grappi – Montanari 2011, Yoon et al. 2010). However, general satisfaction is influenced by its components too (Ercsey 2014). The role of performers and atmosphere of the festival is highlighted by the qualitative research as well. General satisfaction is influenced by satisfaction with festival’s atmosphere (Drengner et al. 2012), by satisfaction with performers of the festival (Lee et al. 2008, Yoon et al. 2010, Drengner et al. 2012) and by satisfaction with environment of the festival (Lee et al. 2008, Yoon et al. 2010). Based on all these, the following hypotheses are described:

H3a: Satisfaction with the festival’s performers has a positive effect on overall satisfaction.

H3b: Satisfaction with the environment of the festival has a positive effect on overall satisfaction.

H3c: Satisfaction with the atmosphere of the festival has a positive effect on overall satisfaction.

The atmosphere of the festival may connect to the psychological sense of a brand community. Drengner et al. (2012) highlighted that the psychological sense of a brand community has a positive effect on the evaluation of the festival’s atmosphere. However, the results of the qualitative research pointed out a reverse relationship. The results of the focus group interviews shown that a festival visitor can sense that he or she is a part of a community (thanks to visiting the festival) if the atmosphere of the festival is good.

H4: Satisfaction with the atmosphere of the festival has a positive effect on the psychological sense of a brand community.

Considering consequences of overall satisfaction, loyalty has already been mentioned (Grappi – Montanari 2011, Yoon et al. 2010). However, word-of-mouth is also a consequence of overall satisfaction with respect to general and music festival models as well (Westbrook 1987, Zeithaml et al. 1996, Ladhari 2007, Grappi – Montanari 2011). Besides loyalty, overall satisfaction influences commitment too (Bloemer – Kasper 1995). Based on all these, the following hypotheses are concluded:

H5a: Overall satisfaction has a positive effect on word-of-mouth.

H5b: Overall satisfaction has a positive effect on loyalty.

H5c: Overall satisfaction has a positive effect on commitment.

In a complex model, it is necessary to mention the connections among commitment, loyalty and word-of-mouth. I interpret loyalty as a re-attending intention; word-of-mouth refers to the experience sharing intention therefore both of them are behavioral elements. Commitment is grabbed by the positive attitudes towards the festival thus commitment is an attitudinal element. Behavioral elements are interpreted as the consequences of attitudinal elements in the case of music festivals (Grappi – Montanari 2011, Lee et al. 2008), but studies do not focus on music festivals (Pritchard et al. 1999, Bloemer – Kasper 1995) also support the causality described above. The following two hypotheses are stated:

H6a: Commitment has a positive effect on word-of-mouth.

H6b: Commitment has a positive effect on loyalty.

The dissertation focuses on the psychological sense of a brand community experienced in the festival; but this sense can be manifested in the online community of the brand (Lyu 2012) too. Among the followers of a festival's social media page might not be social interaction. Nonetheless, following the social media page express the sense of belonging to the community of the festival which can result in other positive consequences (commitment, loyalty, word-of-mouth) (Lyu 2012). In my opinion the effects of the psychological sense of a brand community may differ in offline and online way. Therefore following the social media page of the festival is described as a moderating factor (Hudson et al. 2015).

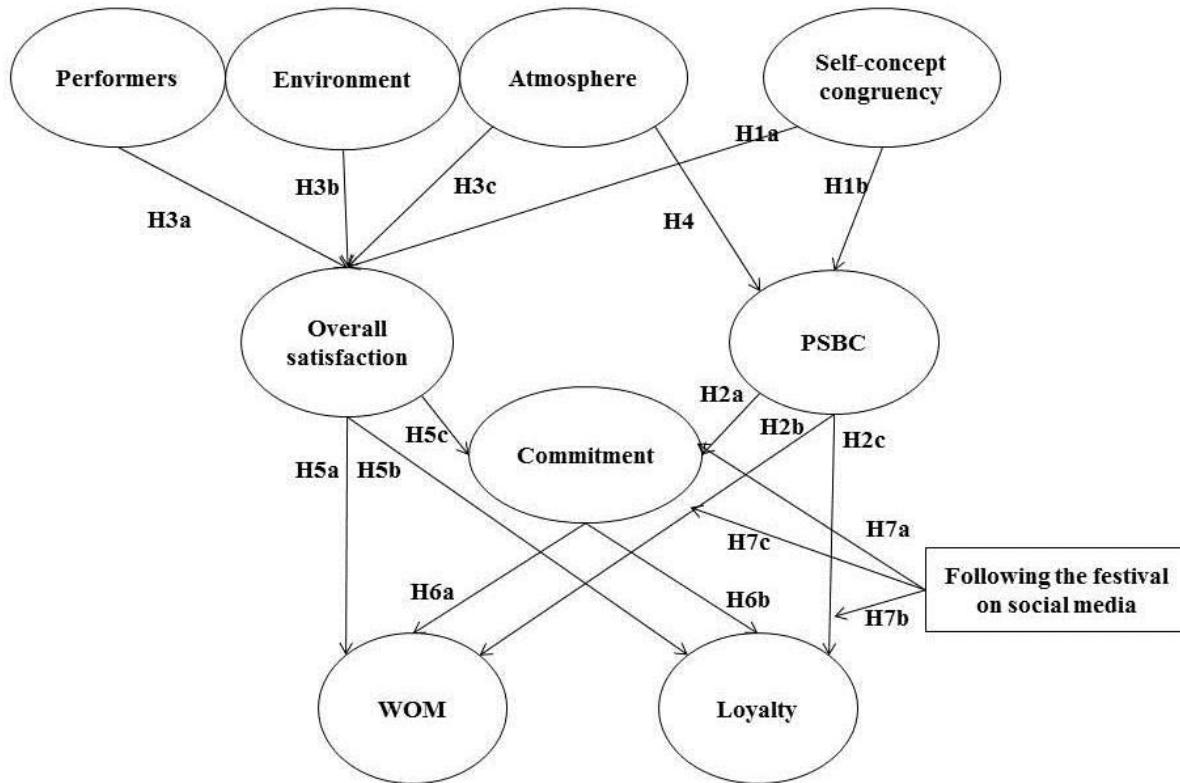
H7a: The effect of psychological sense of a brand community on commitment differs between the followers and non-followers of the festival's social media page.

H7b: The effect of psychological sense of a brand community on loyalty differs between the followers and non-followers of the festival's social media page.

H7c: The effect of psychological sense of a brand community on word-of-mouth differs between the followers and non-followers of the festival's social media page.

Based on the hypotheses stated above, the following relations are drawn in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Hypotheses of quantitative research



Source: own construction

3. Structure of the dissertation and research methodology

3.1. Structure of the dissertation

After an introduction, there is a literature overview from the second to the seventh chapter. The second chapter deals with music festivals. It is important to clarify what the definition of a music festival is and what positive effects of a music festival are. After an overview about the definition and importance of music festivals, interpretation of festival branding is also discussed, because the festival brand is the basis of brand communities in the case of music festivals.

After clarifying questions concerning music festivals, the concept of brand communities is introduced in chapter three. However, brand communities are special groups, therefore the mechanism in the background of groups is needed to be discussed. Concerning brand communities, the concept, several types, the main features and the interpretation for music festivals is described.

It is worth mentioning other concepts connecting to brand communities. Commitment, loyalty and word-of-mouth have occurred in the research question. Nonetheless, the concepts should be examined in a complex model in which other influencing factors take roles too. Concerning commitment and loyalty, satisfaction can be highlighted. Connected to overall satisfaction, the congruency between the musical taste of visitors and the program of the festival can be mentioned, which is described by self-concept congruency theories. Based on all these, brand community is the center of this complex model in which self-concept congruency and satisfaction are input elements; and commitment, loyalty and word-of-mouth are output elements. Further chapters in literature overview are created based on the elements of the described model. In the model connected chapters, first the general theories than the interpretation for music festivals are presented.

Chapter four deals with the first input element (self-concept congruency). In this chapter, the theory of self-concept congruency, the connected concepts and the measurement of self-concept congruency is discussed. Introduction of general theories and concepts are important for the interpretation of self-concept congruency in the case of music festivals.

Satisfaction, the second input element of the model, is presented in chapter five. Interpreting and measuring satisfaction may arise several questions; therefore an introduction to the general theories of satisfaction is important. After that, a music festival satisfaction concept is described.

Chapter six focuses on the first input element, where the approaches of loyalty and questions relating the concept of loyalty are introduced. Loyalty and commitment are close to each other considering their meaning; therefore these concepts are described in the same chapter in the frame of approaches of loyalty. After the broader questions of loyalty, the interpretation for music festivals is presented.

Chapter seven introduces the second input element of the model, where the concept of word-of-mouth and its types and effects are described. In this chapter, a word-of-mouth interpretation for music festivals is also discussed.

Chapter eight summarizes the literature overview, which is followed by the primary research in chapter nine. In primary research, qualitative and quantitative techniques were also applied.

3.2. Research methodology

In the primary research, a pilot research was conducted at first. In the pilot research, the research question was whether the international music festival scales are applicable in Hungary and whether the psychological sense of a brand community is interpretable. I applied an online questionnaire for which 185 answers was collected in the spring 2013. It is also important to explore what other influencing factors may occur in Hungarian music festivals and how branding can be interpreted. The questions were answered by a qualitative research where three focus group interviews were applied between April and June 2014. After verifying the application of international scales and exploring other influencing factors, a quantitative research was conducted to examine the hypotheses built on the literature overview, on the pilot and on the qualitative research. The paper based survey was carried out on the spot of a music festival in Szeged (SZIN – Szegedi Ifjúsági Napok in Hungarian) in August 2015. The organizers of the festivals have been conducting a yearly research with the help of a local social research organization (DARTKE – Dél-Alföldi Regionális Társadalomkutató Egyesület in Hungarian) since 2004. In 2015, questions relating to my dissertation were also placed in the yearly research questionnaire; and I participated in the survey as an interviewer. During the survey, 707 answers were collected.

Operationalization of the concepts was based on literature overview; the application of validated scales occurred in international studies was an aim. In the case of concepts, where any music festival applications were not found, the pilot and qualitative research offered a basis for operationalization. Furthermore, there were overlaps between my questions and the questionnaire used for years by DARTKE concerning environmental elements of satisfaction. Therefore, questions concerning environmental elements of satisfaction were based on DARTKE's scales.

In my research, the self-concept congruency for music festivals expresses a festival visitor's similarity with other festival visitors, the similarity between a festival visitor's musical taste and the musical program of the festival; and self-concept congruency expresses also the similarity between a festival visitor's musical style and the festival's style. I applied a

one dimensional approach based on music consumption studies (Larsen et al. 2009, Goulding et al. 2002); so self-concept congruency was measured by “similar to me” statements. As Prónay (2011) highlighted, weights (evaluating importance of the statements too) were not applied to make the questionnaire more understandable.

Brand community consists of festival visitors among who there might not be social interaction; but they feel a sense of community with other festival visitors. Therefore, the psychological sense of a brand community appears in my model; of which application is supported by Drengner et al. (2012) and my pilot research as well. Psychological sense of a brand community is measured by statements focusing on the festival’s ability to giving a sense of community, on the connectedness among the festival visitors, on the strong ties among festival visitors and on a strong feeling of camaraderie among festival visitors (Drengner et al. 2012).

Overall satisfaction on music festivals is a cognitive and emotional answer for an evaluation process of which focus is on the festival generally. Satisfaction evaluations were measured without measuring importances based on Cronin and Taylor (1994); and satisfaction was measured in a one-factor approach (dissatisfaction and satisfaction are endpoints of the same scale) suggested by Hofmeister-Tóth (2003). Based on all these, the overall satisfaction scale by Lee et al. (2008) was applied in the dissertation.

Besides overall satisfaction, its components (satisfaction with the environment, with the atmosphere and with the performers) should be taken into consideration too (Ercsey 2014). Considering the environmental elements of satisfaction, the statements applied by DARTKE were a basis for measurement; hence they have appeared in the questionnaire for many years. The statements referred to the cleanliness of the festival, to the organization of the festival, to the catering points in the festival, to the prices, to musical and to other (non-musical) program elements. The qualitative research revealed that cleanliness and other programs are not the most important factors concerning satisfaction; therefore these two items were left out of my analysis. Prices were not taken into consideration neither because the qualitative research highlighted that prices influence rather final decision not satisfaction. From the rest of the items occurred in environmental elements in the questionnaire, I built that ones in my model which have occurred in more music festival studies (Lee et al. 2008, Yoon et al. 2010). Based on all these, the evaluation of organizers, organizedness, catering points and security services were applied in my dissertation for measuring satisfaction with the environment.

Satisfaction with the atmosphere is important for modeling the emotional components of satisfaction (Ercsey 2014). Satisfaction with the atmosphere of the festival occurred in

Drengner et al. (2012), but it was necessary to widen their measurement scale with other items. The qualitative research pointed out that SZIN, which is in the center of the quantitative research, has a friendly and homely atmosphere too.

Satisfaction with performers was an important element in the qualitative research. The concept took a role in Drengner et al. (2012); therefore I applied their (Drengner et al. 2012) scale for measuring satisfaction with performers.

Commitment was defined as a positive attitude towards the festival and a preference against other festivals. Commitment was built in my model as an attitudinal component based on Bloemer and Kasper (1995) and Pritchard et al. (1999); and Bloemer and Kasper's (1995) scale was a basis for measuring commitment. However, the authors (Bloemer – Kasper 1995) scale was applied for products; hence some modification was needed in their scale.

Loyalty was interpreted as a re-attending intention, which is interpreted as an outcome of commitment (Bloemer – Kasper 1995, Pritchard et al. 1999). This interpretation of loyalty occurred in Drengner et al. (2012), so I applied their (Drengner et al. 2012) scale for measuring loyalty.

I described word-of-mouth as an intention for sharing positive experiences about the festival. To grab this definition, I used the scales applied by Zeithaml et al. (1996) and Grappi and Montanari (2011) for measuring word-of-mouth.

Constructs occurring in my model are latent variables. Latent variables are not measurable directly, but they are measurable indirectly through manifest variables (indicators) (Diamantopoulos – Siguaw 2000). Latent variables can be created from manifest variables by principal components and factor analysis; however structural equation modeling (SEM) estimates of latent variables and examines the relationships between them simultaneously (Sajtos – Fache 2005). Within the model family, a covariance based (CB-SEM, which is frequently identified with LISREL software) and a variance based (PLS-SEM, PLS path analysis, where PLS refers to partial least squares) methods are frequently applied (Henseler et al. 2009).

Normal distribution is an application condition of CB-SEM, while PLS-SEM can be applied in the case of variables with nominal, ordinal or interval-level measurement level without any conditions concerning the distribution (Haenlein–Kaplan 2004, Henseler et al. 2009). Additionally, PLS works on samples with relatively small sample sizes (Haenlein–Kaplan 2004, Henseler et al. 2009), while a large sample (even with more hundred cases) is needed for applying CB-SEM (Diamantopoulos–Siguaw 2000, Henseler et al. 2009). The usage of PLS-SEM is also suggested if there is an explorative research where the aim is

extending an existing model or testing the relations in a newly built model; while if there are well established theories and relations, the application of the other method (CB-SEM) is recommended (Henseler et al. 2009, Hair et al. 2011).

However, PLS-SEM has some shortages. CB-SEM has several fit-indexes – e.g. goodness-of-fit index, RMSEA (root mean square of approximation), EVCI (expected cross validation index) (Diamantopoulos–Sighaw 2000, Hair et al. 2009) for evaluation the goodness of the model; while in the case of PLS-SEM, there is a lack of an overall global fit index. Moreover, in the case of PLS-SEM, testing of path coefficients cannot be applied directly (due to the optional non-normal distribution). However, the latter problem can be solved: testing of path coefficients can be implemented with the help of the bootstrap algorithm (Hair et al. 2012). In my dissertation, the manifest variables do not have a normal distribution; therefore PLS path analysis was applied.

4. Main results and theses

As a result of the pilot research, the application of scales found in international studies and the role of psychological sense of a brand community in my model can be mentioned. However, extending the pilot model with other explaining variables is necessary.

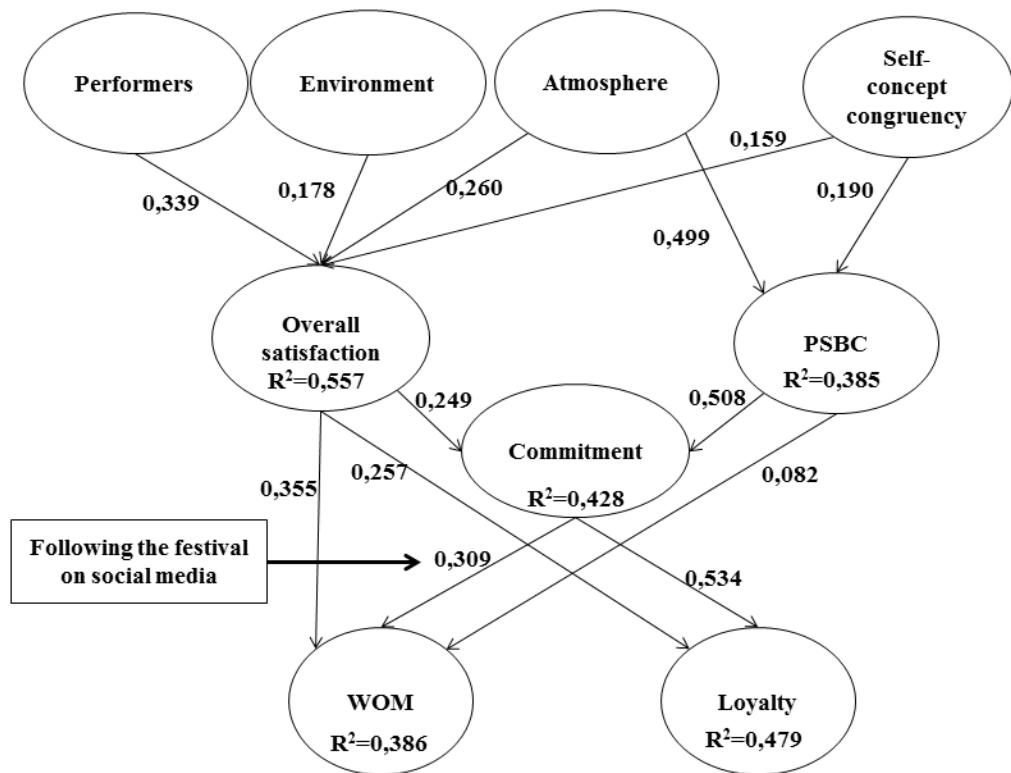
It is highlighted from the results of qualitative research that branding in Hungarian music festivals is interpretable and self-concept congruency occurred as an important factor, which suggest the extension of the pilot model by self-concept congruency. The qualitative research pointed out that friends and prices take important roles in the final decision of visiting a festival. However, those two factors might not be influence the re-attending intention, but they might be modifying factors in the final decision.

In the quantitative research, PLS path analysis and bootstrap algorithm were applied for testing the relations and hypotheses among latent variables. After examining hypotheses, the following theses are stated (seen in Figure 2):

- Thesis 1: Self-concept congruency has a positive, significant effect on overall satisfaction and on psychological sense of a brand community.
- Thesis 2: Psychological sense of a brand community has a positive, significant effect on commitment and on word-of-mouth; however, there is no significant direct effect on loyalty.

- Thesis 3: Satisfaction with festival's performers, with environment of the festival and with atmosphere of the festival has also a positive, significant effect on overall satisfaction.
- Thesis 4: Satisfaction with the atmosphere of the festival has a positive, significant effect on the psychological sense of a brand community.
- Thesis 5: Overall satisfaction has a positive, significant effect on word-of-mouth, on loyalty and on commitment.
- Thesis 6: Commitment has a positive, significant effect on word-of-mouth and on loyalty.
- Thesis 7: The effects of psychological sense of a brand community on commitment, on loyalty and on word-of-mouth do not differ between the followers and non-followers of the festival's social media page. However, the effect of commitment on word-of-mouth is stronger in the case of followers compared to the non-followers of the festival's social media page.

Figure 2. The psychological sense of a brand community's role in a commitment – loyalty – word-of-mouth model



Note: standardized path coefficients and total variances explained are seen on the figure

Source: own construction

It is surprising from the results of the quantitative research that a direct, significant effect of psychological sense of a brand community on loyalty cannot be justified. However, psychological sense of a brand community influences loyalty indirectly through commitment. Furthermore, the significant direct effects through the atmosphere – psychological sense of a brand community – loyalty path highlights the important role of the psychological sense of a brand community. Other important path is identified in the model through performers – overall satisfaction – word-of-mouth direction.

Is highlighted as a novelty that the dissertation examined fields which have been relatively less studied in Hungary. The dissertation offers an overview about music festivals, about psychological sense of a brand community and about PLS path analysis too. Furthermore, the primary research developed a new model, which offers a basis for further scientific and practical applications as well.

The results of the thesis are applicable for the scientific sphere and for the management of festivals too. From the point of view of the scientific sphere, the dissertation presents a positive added value due to a systemization in the literature of brand communities, music festivals and PLS path analysis. Besides the application of music festivals, other more general results are highlighted.

Placing self-concept congruency into the model is mentioned as a novelty, and its effect on psychological sense of a brand community is a new result. The relation between satisfaction and loyalty is debated and has a history for decades; and it is also questionable whether any kind of relationship does exist between the two concepts. The result of my research strengthens the side of relationship supporters; hence overall satisfaction has a direct effect and an indirect effect (through commitment) on loyalty. The connection between loyalty and commitment (between behavioral and attitudinal elements) is also disputed. At the same time, the results show if loyalty is interpreted as a behavioral element, commitment influences it in the case of music festivals. It is also an interesting result from quantitative research that psychological sense of a brand community does not have a significant, direct effect on loyalty; but it influences loyalty indirectly through commitment. It reveals that the attitudinal elements connect to each other strengthening the effect which occurs through commitment concerning loyalty.

From the point of view of a festival's management, the following suggestions are stated based on the results:

- It is worth organizing brand community building activities to enhance commitment and re-attending intention, and there should be a congruency between the festival's

atmosphere and the self-concept of the festival visitors to reach higher level of overall satisfaction. Group programs, group tasks, group competitions can be organized in the frame of brand community building actions. Festival visitors may be interviewed about the preferred performers to have higher level of congruency between the festival's style and the self-concept of festival visitors – there have already been steps taken in this issue independently on this research.

- Maintaining and increasing overall satisfaction has a key role in enhancing positive word-of-mouth. To reach overall satisfaction, satisfaction with the performers plays an important role. Therefore, choosing musicians whose performance has a high quality and compiling the festival's program based on the needs of festival visitors is a major issue.
- The effects of psychological sense of a brand community on commitment, on loyalty and on word-of-mouth do not differ between the followers and non-followers of the festival's social media page. It means that it is not necessary to follow the festival on social media; a festival visitor can feel the sense of community without the following activity and sense of community can have a positive effect on loyalty, commitment and word-of-mouth. However, the effect of commitment on word-of-mouth is stronger in the case of followers compared to the non-followers of the festival's social media page. It reveals that evolving commitment towards the festival is important and the online community (the social media page followers of the festival) can enhance this commitment building process.

5. Limitations, future research directions

There are several limitations and opened question of this research. The consequences of primary research are valid for the examined festival in Szeged. However, are the results applicable in general for other Hungarian festivals too? Generalizability has also limits due to the relatively young age of festival visitors. Youngsters change their preferences relatively frequently, thus results are interpreted as a kind of snapshot. A future research concerning other music festivals or a longitudinal study may answer to these questions.

Due to the relatively young visitors, it is also questionable in what time extent brand loyalty is interpretable. Is it possible that festival visitors will leave entertaining in festivals within a few years? A longitudinal study could also answer to this question. Furthermore,

preference changes could be examined in the case of festival organizers where more kind of festivals are situated in the brand portfolio. The preference changes of youngsters could also be examined by extending the topic of research. Instead of pop music festivals, classical music festivals could be examined; in the case of visitors of classical music festivals, there might not be such a quick preference changes than in the case of younger pop music festival visitors. However, interpretation of concepts occurring in the model is depending on the product, service or situation for which they were applied. Therefore, operationalization and model development should be modified due to the special features of the other research field.

The relationship between the psycholocigal sense of a brand community and loyalty occurred in a different way in the pilot and in the quantitative research; this issue needs also further examinations. It can be mentioned as a possible reason that the pilot research was an evaluation after the festival and the quantitative research was an evaluation during, on the spot of the festival. Furthermore, based on the result of the qualitative research, the model of the quantitative research was an extended version of the pilot model. Finally, exploring further connections in the model, other moderating factors could be included in the analysis which can be implemented in a future research. Nonetheless, the dissertation reveals that the examination of the psychological sense of a brand community is important and appears as an actural research area in the future.

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