frontiers | Frontiers in Communication

TYPE Original Research
PUBLISHED 29 June 2023
DOI 10.3389/fcomm.2023.1195620

OPEN ACCESS

EDITED BY
Giang Trinh,
University of South Australia, Australia

REVIEWED BY
Li Crystal Jiang,
City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China
Santa Bormane,
Riga Stradiņš University, Latvia

*CORRESPONDENCE
Clemens Koob
✉ clemens.koob@ksh-m.de

RECEIVED 28 March 2023
ACCEPTED 09 June 2023
PUBLISHED 29 June 2023

CITATION
Koob C (2023) Don't forget about customer magazines: the effects of reading experiences on customer magazine effectiveness.
Front. Commun. 8:1195620.
doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2023.1195620

Don't forget about customer magazines: the effects of reading experiences on customer magazine effectiveness

Clemens Koob*

Catholic University of Applied Sciences Munich, Munich, Germany

Introduction: Content marketing continues to gain importance in organizations' marketing mix. However, its effectiveness has received little academic attention. This is particularly true of customer magazines, which, despite increasing digitization, remain a key pillar of content marketing and account for considerable investments. Therefore, this paper examines how reading experiences affect the effectiveness of customer magazines, mediated by media engagement.

Methods: Based on the uses-and-gratifications-theory and literature on sensory perception, journalistic quality, and media engagement, several hypotheses are proposed. To investigate the hypotheses, the study uses a cross-sectional survey. The dataset for the analyses consists of 1,396 consumers and is analyzed by structural equation modeling.

Results: The results indicate that hedonically gratifying, as well as identity-enforcing content experiences and visually and haptically gratifying process experiences are associated with higher effectiveness. Media engagement mediates these effects. Experienced journalistic quality directly and positively influences customer magazine effectiveness.

Discussion: This study's findings are important to marketing communications research. In particular, the study contributes to the still limited literature on content marketing effectiveness and helps practitioners optimize customer magazines.

KEYWORDS

marketing communications, content marketing, customer magazines, effectiveness, media experiences, journalistic quality, media engagement

1. Introduction

Content marketing has gained popularity in recent years and is an important complement to traditional marketing communications instruments (Beard et al., 2021; Content Marketing Institute, 2021; International Content Marketing Forum, 2021). It denotes the creation and distribution of relevant, valuable brand-related content to current or prospective customers or other target groups to drive strategic business objectives (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019; Wang et al., 2019; Beard et al., 2021; Koob, 2021). While classic advertising usually tries to persuade or even push the target group to act (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016), content marketing focuses on adding value by informing, helping solve problems, entertaining, or helping make informed decisions. It is therefore based on the principle of social exchange (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005), which suggests that providing valuable content to a target group may be reciprocated with positive attitudes (e.g., brand trust) or behaviors (e.g., brand-related interactions).

Content marketing includes digital platforms and printed corporate media (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019; Beard et al., 2021). Though digital content marketing is on the rise, printed customer magazines continue to be a cornerstone of content marketing in a rapidly evolving media ecosystem. In Europe, e.g., 56.8% of companies continue to use printed customer magazines (International Content Marketing Forum, 2021). In the German-speaking countries, 2.5 billion euros are invested annually in printed customer magazines, corresponding to 27% of total content marketing investments, and more than two-thirds of companies expect them to remain important (Content Marketing Forum, 2022). Customer magazines are organizational publications that periodically address existing and potential customers, are edited journalistically, and are usually free of charge (Koch et al., 2020). They are hybrids of marketing and journalism, intending to represent the publishing organization's interests and communicate its offerings and brand, while resembling journalistic publications in terms of content and design (Denner et al., 2018).

Despite the increasing importance of content marketing, its effectiveness has received comparatively little attention in academic research (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019; Koob, 2021). Existing studies also focus primarily on digital platforms (Chwialkowska, 2019; Weiger et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2021; He et al., 2021; du Plessis, 2022). To date, there have been only two studies that have examined the effectiveness of customer magazines. Schijns (2008) investigated nine customer magazines and found that reading magazines has positive effects on brand image, loyalty and brand interactions. However, there is no evidence in the study of factors on which those effects might depend. Van Reijmersdal et al. (2010) examined at least one aspect in this regard, the effects of the commerciality of customer magazines on readers' reactions. Their study found that higher commerciality increases a magazine's perceived persuasive intent and diminishes its credibility, which negatively affects readers' attitudes toward the magazine. However, the study only examined readers' reactions to the magazine, not, for example, effects on consumers' attitudes toward the publishing company's brand.

Thus, although the analysis of key determinants of effectiveness has long been an important topic in the marketing communications literature, academic understanding of customer magazine effectiveness and its determinants lags behind (Koch et al., 2020). We address this knowledge gap in this paper.

Our contribution is as follows: first, we create a conceptual framework for investigating factors that potentially affect the effectiveness of customer magazines by bringing together theoretical perspectives that have not yet been combined. Second, we examine the proposed relationships between the factors that might contribute to customer magazine effectiveness and provide empirical insights that could help marketers improve the conception of their customer magazines and thus content marketing initiatives. Third, in doing so, we might help move research on customer magazines to a more evidence-based level, which scholars have called for (Koch et al., 2020). Taken together, we contribute to the field both theoretically and practically.

2. Conceptual framework and hypotheses

2.1. Customer magazine effectiveness

The definition of content marketing effectiveness remains controversial, as the literature shows (Koob, 2021; du Plessis, 2022). However, content marketing effectiveness in the broadest sense indicates the degree to which content marketing activities help reach the strategic business objectives of the focal organization (Holliman and Rowley, 2014; Hollebeek and Macky, 2019; Wang et al., 2019). In addition, three aspects are commonly agreed-upon when it comes to effectiveness in the content marketing domain (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019). First-tier content marketing consequences include cognitive and emotional brand engagement, denoting brand-related thought and mental elaboration, and brand-related affect, respectively (Harrigan et al., 2018). Over multiple interactions, they might trigger brand-related sense-making and identification. Furthermore, first-tier content marketing consequences include brand-related behavioral engagement, i.e., a target group's energy, effort and time spent on a brand, which can foster consumer citizenship behavior (Gruen, 1995). As second-tier consequence, content marketing might affect consumers' brand trust in terms of credibility and benevolence, as well as brand attitudes expressed by more favorable brand evaluations (Ganesan and Hess, 1997; Park et al., 2010; Palazzo and Vollero, 2015). According to Hollebeek and Macky (2019), improved brand trust and attitudes could in turn lead to a higher level of brand equity, implying an increased perceived value level of a brand, as third-tier consequence.

In line with these considerations, customer magazines can be seen as effective if they increase brand-related cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement at appropriate points throughout the customer journey, strengthen brand trust and induce favorable brand attitudes, and increase customers' perceived value of the brand, leading to more favorable responses to the brand, and thus helping the organization reach its strategic business objectives.

2.2. Gratifying content experiences

To identify potential antecedents of customer magazine effectiveness, it seems helpful to start from how consumers connect with customer magazines. Generally, the uses-and-gratifications-theory addresses this question (Katz et al., 1973; Rubin, 2009; Valkenburg et al., 2016). The theory asserts that consumers are aware of their needs, select media in response to those needs, and that media use leads to specific obtained gratifications (Rubin, 2009; Valkenburg et al., 2016). However, there is only limited research in the uses-and-gratifications domain related to magazines (Payne et al., 1988; Jere and Davis, 2011; Kim et al., 2015; Weiss and Sternadori, 2020) and, to our best knowledge, there are no studies on customer magazines.

In recent years, however, the media experience concept has been developed, building on uses-and-gratifications research. According to this concept, media use constitutes a rich set of multidimensional gratifying media experiences (Malthouse et al.,

2007; Calder and Malthouse, 2012; Zhou et al., 2021). Media experiences consist of qualitative thoughts and feelings, as well as actions related to media use (Zhou et al., 2021), and refer to a user's sense of movement toward a goal (Calder et al., 2016). The media experience concept posits that media experiences are context-specific, meaning that different experiences can be more or less characteristic and important depending on the media context (Calder et al., 2016). Numerous specific experiences were identified for media such as digital media (Mersey et al., 2010; Zhou et al., 2021) or newspapers (Calder and Malthouse, 2004; Mersey et al., 2012). Malthouse et al. (2007) identified 39 reading experiences of journalistic magazines. Since customer magazines are also edited in a journalistic way (Denner et al., 2018; Koch et al., 2020), we assume that this comprehensive set of reading experiences could be a platform to determine how consumers connect with customer magazines.

However, we agree with Kim et al. (2015) that a list of so many possible experiences rather resembles an unstructured catalog that lacks a theory-based classification of gratifications. To obtain a theoretically substantiated selection of gratifications from Malthouse et al.'s (2007) extensive list that deserve further investigation in this study, that list can be compared with magazine gratification dimensions determined in previous studies on magazines. In this regard, Roux (2021) examined previous related studies and concluded that a few categories of gratifications dominate for magazines.

Considering extant work, it can be inferred that three gratification dimensions are of particular importance: First, prior studies point to a *functional content gratification dimension* in terms of surveillance, which refers to using magazines to gain new information about one's environment or to confirm, reinforce, or modify existing views about the environment (Payne et al., 1988). Randle (2003) denotes this as the cognitive task-oriented gratification dimension of magazines. This functional content gratification dimension resonates with the *"makes me smarter"-experience* of reading magazines from Malthouse et al. (2007).

Second, previous research points to a *hedonic content gratification dimension* in terms of diversion, which refers to aspects such as relaxing, escaping or passing time with entertaining magazine material (Payne et al., 1988; Stevens et al., 2007; Raney and Bryant, 2019). For Randle (2003), this constitutes part of an affective self-oriented gratification dimension of magazines. This dimension of hedonic content gratification corresponds to what Malthouse et al. (2007) refer to as the *"makes me feel good"-experience* of reading magazines.

Third, prior work indicates an *identity-related content gratification dimension.* This dimension reflects the reading of magazines for aspects like self-growth, development and transformation, involving the use of magazines to continuously create and recreate oneself (Stevens et al., 2007; Roux, 2021). Identity-related gratifications also include that a sense of community can result from magazine reading, through uniting emotionally with others and experiencing a sense of connection (Stevens et al., 2007). This identity-related content gratification dimension corresponds to what Malthouse et al. (2007) have termed *"identity-enforcing"- experience* in reading magazines.

In summary, the literature points to the three gratifying content experiences identified as (1) "makes me smarter"-experience (functional), (2) "makes me feel good"-experience (hedonic), and (3) "identity-enforcing"-experience (identity). Hence, in terms of content gratifications, we assume consumers connect to customer magazines especially in these three ways.

2.3. Gratifying process experiences

Uses-and-gratifications research traditionally differentiates between "content gratifications" and "process gratifications" (Rubin, 2009). This indicates that consumers derive gratification not only from the *content* that the media offer them, but also from a joyful *process* of using the media (Stafford et al., 2004). Gratifying process experiences relate to the interaction opportunities and characteristics offered by the medium (Sundar and Limperos, 2013) and are fundamentally shaped by the sensory perceptions of consumers (Ytre-Arne, 2011). Sensory perception can be defined as the evaluation of an object (e.g., medium) by a consumer, which determines the appeal of the object to the human senses (i.e., visual, haptic, acoustic, olfactory, and gustatory) (Haase and Wiedmann, 2018). In this respect, reading customer magazines can be considered a multisensory experience. This may involve pleasant visual impressions (e.g., of the cover, photos, or size of the magazine), haptic perceptions (e.g., of the surface texture and thickness of the paper or the weight of the magazine), acoustic experiences (e.g., the sound made by touching and turning the pages), olfactory perceptions (e.g., the scent of the paper), and possibly even gustatory sensations (e.g., when moistening the fingers to facilitate turning the pages) (Fortunati et al., 2015; Boczkowski et al., 2020; Spence, 2020a,b). However, in line with prior research on journalistic magazines (Malthouse et al., 2003; Ytre-Arne, 2011; Webb and Fulton, 2019), we assume that the customer magazine reading experience is primarily a matter of vision and touch. In terms of process gratifications, we therefore assume that consumers derive particular pleasure from (1) visual experiences and (2) haptic experiences when reading customer magazines.

2.4. Reading experiences and customer magazine effectiveness

We propose a direct effect from the identified gratifying content and process experiences to customer magazine effectiveness. This proposition finds empirical support in various studies in media areas other than customer magazines, which have shown direct positive links between consumers' media experiences and communication effectiveness outcomes (Malthouse et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2015; Zhou et al., 2021). However, the mechanisms underlying these effects are usually not explained in these studies.

We propose three pathways through which gratifying reading experiences may directly translate into customer magazine effectiveness. First, an *affective pathway* is conceivable.

According to mood management theory (Robinson and Knobloch-Westerwick, 2021), the content and process gratifications associated with reading customer magazines are likely to evoke positive feelings in consumers. Direct affect transfer theory assumes that changes in liking of a target element (= conditioned stimulus) occur because of the pairing of the target element with another stimulus (= unconditioned stimulus), which means that the target element acquires the affective qualities of the unconditioned stimulus (Mitchell and Nelson, 2018). Accordingly, the positive feelings evoked by reading should transfer directly to consumers' attitudes toward the publishing company's brand (= transfer of affect between customer magazine as unconditioned stimulus and brand as conditioned stimulus).

Second, a *cognitive pathway* can be assumed in which gratifying reading experiences affect customer magazine effectiveness. Underlying this is the idea of an "exemplar-based associative learning process" (Van Osselaer, 2014). From this perspective, episodes of reading a customer magazine can be seen as learning phases, in which consumers store the experienced stimuli in terms of the magazine and the publishing company's brand as well as the obtained content and process gratifications as a holistic, exemplary experience. Later, when consumers make consumption decisions, and the publisher's brand is available as a cue, they may look back to the former holistic experience and insert the obtained gratifications from reading the customer magazine to make evaluations in the purchase decision. Thus, consumers may finally buy the publishing company's brand because they regard the brand as a predictive cue for gratifying experiences.

Third, gratifications obtained from reading customer magazines could directly affect customer magazine effectiveness through a *behavioral pathway* that can be explained by social exchange theory (Cropanzano et al., 2017). This theory views consumers and brands as social actors engaged in reciprocal exchanges that foster high-quality consumer-brand-relationships over time (Garg et al., 2016; Hayes et al., 2016; Krishna and Kim, 2021). Applying this theory to our field implies that a customer magazine published by a brand that offers consumers satisfying content and process gratifications can be seen as a contribution to fostering a process of social exchange. Consumers, as relational partners, may feel inclined to reciprocate through brand-related engagement, brand trust and favorable brand attitudes.

The proposed three mechanisms are not alternative rationales. It seems likely that all three are involved in reading experience effects on customer magazine effectiveness. Taken together, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1. Gratifying content experiences ("makes me smarter"-experience, "makes me feel good"-experience, "identity-enforcing"-experience) with a customer magazine are positively related to the customer magazine's effectiveness.

Hypothesis 2. Gratifying process experiences ("visual imagery"-experience, "haptic pleasure"-experience) with a customer magazine are positively related to the customer magazine's effectiveness.

2.5. The role of perceived journalistic quality

The special nature of customer magazines as hybrids of marketing and *journalism* (Denner et al., 2018) suggests that the journalistic quality of the content provided may be an important determinant of the effectiveness of customer magazines deserving separate consideration. Previous research on the effectiveness of content marketing in general also points in this direction (Koob, 2021). Though there are different views on what constitutes journalistic quality (Jungnickel, 2011; Urban and Schweiger, 2014; Wellbrock and Klein, 2014; Costera Meijer and Bijleveld, 2016; Harbers, 2016), there is high consensus on certain key attributes like relevance, comprehensibility, diversity, impartiality, and accuracy (Kümpel and Springer, 2016). Research on customer magazines' attainment of these criteria shows mixed results, with efforts to advance journalistic professionalization, but also tendencies to avoid or positively frame controversial topics (Rau and Andres, 2011; Denner et al., 2018; Koch et al., 2021). However, a user-centered perspective on journalistic quality (Urban and Schweiger, 2014; Costera Meijer and Bijleveld, 2016; Hasebrink and Hölig, 2020; Kümpel and Unkel, 2020) suggests that consumers' subjective quality perceptions, rather than objective attainment to normative criteria, should be decisive for customer magazine effectiveness.

We propose three reasons why a higher journalistic quality of customer magazines perceived by consumers could lead to a higher effectiveness. First, the associative learning mechanism explained earlier may play a role with consumers learning that the publisher's brand is predictive for high quality consumption experiences. Second, the social exchange mechanism, as explained above, could unfold. The quality of the customer magazine may signal readers they are valued by the brand, satisfying their "need to matter" (Prilleltensky, 2020), which could lead consumers to reciprocate with brand engagement and positive brand attitudes. Third, the persuasion knowledge model (PKM) can be drawn on (Koch et al., 2020). According to the PKM, consumers are permanent recipients of companies' persuasion attempts and develop knowledge of these attempts over time to identify and cope with them (Friestad and Wright, 1994). Consumers' persuasion knowledge includes recognizing and understanding persuasive communication (conceptual dimension), as well as having critical attitudes toward persuasion attempts (evaluative dimension) (Boerman et al., 2018). Boerman et al. (2018) have shown that consumers respond negatively to persuasion attempts when their evaluative persuasion knowledge is activated. If we apply this line of thinking to our context, it could imply that a high perceived journalistic quality would substantiate the journalistic character of a customer magazine. This could mitigate activation of consumers' evaluative persuasion knowledge and negative coping behaviors, eventually increasing the communicative effectiveness of the customer magazine. Cole and Greer's (2013) research supports this argument, finding that consumers who viewed a customer magazine with a journalistic (and not commercial) frame rated the content higher in credibility and held more positive attitudes toward the publisher's brand.

Perceived journalistic quality can be regarded as conceptually distinct from the gratifications mentioned above. It focuses on

the perceived content's integrity and adherence to professional standards and normative criteria (Urban and Schweiger, 2014; Kümpel and Springer, 2016). Gratifications, conversely, refer to the fulfillment of consumers' needs and motivations without necessarily considering normative standards (Haridakis and Humphries, 2019). Consumers may, e.g., prioritize sensationalized content or content that confirms personal biases over journalistic quality. This suggests that the perceived journalistic quality of a customer magazine deserves a separate consideration as a potential determinant of the effectiveness of customer magazines.

Taken together, we expect:

Hypothesis 3. The perceived journalistic quality of a customer magazine is positively related to the customer magazine's effectiveness.

2.6. Media engagement as potential mediator

To investigate how reading experiences affect the effectiveness of customer magazines, their potential effects need to be further scrutinized. Theories of media effects consider effects indirect to a substantial extent (Valkenburg et al., 2016). It is commonly deemed that the path from media experiences to effects is determined by consumers' cognitive, emotional and behavioral processes during and immediately after media usage (Valkenburg et al., 2016). Prior research has repeatedly found that *media engagement* is a mediating variable between consumers' media experiences and media effects. Media engagement refers to a consumer's motivational, medium-related and context-dependent state of mind, and is characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity in interactions with or related to a particular medium (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2016; Dessart, 2017; Ferreira et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2021). Cognitive media engagement is mental activity focused on a medium, involving, e.g., attention and absorption; affective media engagement relates to aspects such as enthusiasm and enjoyment regarding the medium; and behavioral media engagement refers to aspects like sharing or recommending content or searching for more information (Dessart, 2017). Hence, following Dessart et al. (2016) and Dessart (2017), this study defines cognitive engagement with customer magazines as the overall mental activity focused on a magazine's content, involving attention to content, information processing and mental elaboration of content, and absorption in the content. Affective engagement with customer magazines denotes consumers' level of positive emotions related to a magazine, composed of enthusiasm and enjoyment associated with reading it (Dessart et al., 2016; Dessart, 2017). Behavioral engagement related to customer magazines, in turn, represents the active manifestation of engagement and includes sharing magazine content with others and endorsing content to others (Dessart et al., 2016; Dessart, 2017).

The media experience concept mentioned above explains how media engagement may function as an intervening variable between media experiences and media effects. Based on a "primacy of experiences" (Becker and Jaakkola, 2020; Zhou et al., 2021), it can be assumed that media experiences have the motivational capacity to move consumers into a psychological state of media engagement, i.e., consumers' media engagement stems from experiences with the media object (Brodie et al., 2011; Calder et al., 2016). In turn, higher cognitive media engagement involves more comprehensive sense-making by consumers in relation to perceived media content, higher affective media engagement implies stronger identification with the content, and greater behavioral engagement brings about content-amplifying behaviors (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019), implicating stronger media effects.

Prior empirical research supports this argumentation. Zhou et al. (2021) found that certain media experiences make digital newspapers more engaging, which in turn increases consumers' willingness-to-pay for digital news subscriptions. Calder et al. (2016) demonstrated that engagement with newspapers is based on different qualitatively rich experiences and contributes to the explanation of newspaper readership. They also found that media engagement with TV, driven by specific experiences, contributes to program loyalty and increases TV advertising effectiveness. Similarly, Calder et al. (2009) provided evidence that particular experiences produce engagement with a website, which exerts positive effects on advertising effectiveness.

Based on these considerations and findings, we propose that more gratifying reading experiences with a customer magazine lead to a higher media engagement with this magazine, and that this in turn contributes to an increased effectiveness of the magazine. Hence, it is expected that consumers' gratifying reading experiences, in addition to direct positive effects on customer magazine effectiveness, positively affect media engagement, which in turn as a shared mediator, positively affects customer magazine effectiveness:

Hypothesis 4. Media engagement mediates the relationship between gratifying experiences with customer magazines and customer magazine effectiveness.

Figure 1 shows the proposed conceptual model.

3. Method

3.1. Study design

The investigation was realized as an analytical cross-sectional study. For obtaining data, we relied on a structured questionnaire and used measures that have proven valid and reliable in prior research, where available. All questions were asked in German. The questionnaire was implemented online using the software EFS Survey (version EFS Fall) (EFS Survey, 2021). Prior to fielding the survey, a pre-test was conducted, and resulting comments were incorporated.

The university's ethics review board statutes indicated that the study did not require an ethics review. There were no risks in answering the questions, the study did not contain any manipulations or involve vulnerable groups, and participation was voluntary and anonymous. Data were collected in accordance

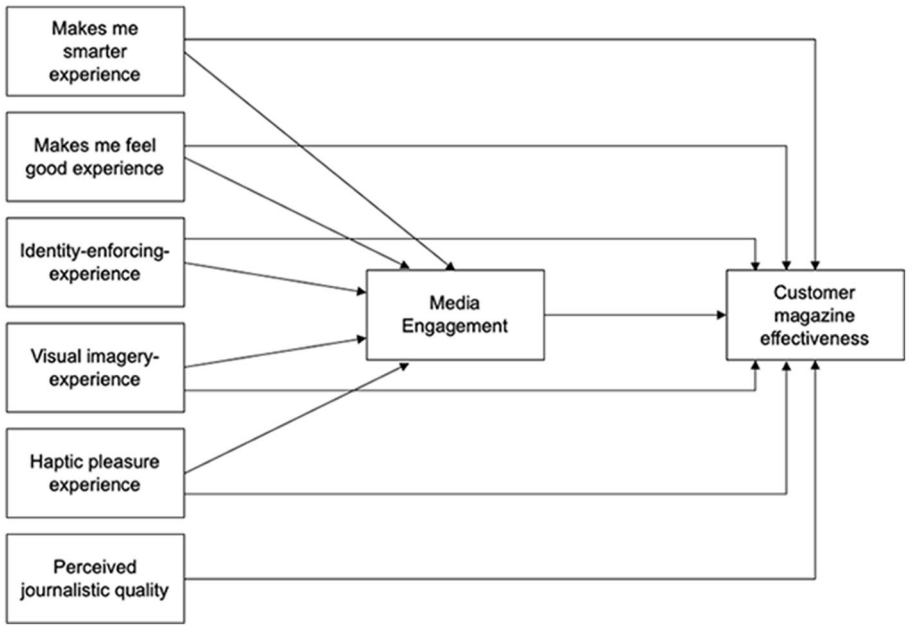

FIGURE 1
Conceptual model of reading experiences and customer magazine effectiveness.

with the EU General Data Protection Regulation. All participants provided informed consent to participate in the study.

3.2. Participants

Consumers between 18 and 65 who lived in Germany, Austria, or Switzerland and generally read customer magazines were eligible to participate in the study. Individuals with different levels of education and employment status were included. We targeted the general population to obtain reasonably generalizable results.

Participants were recruited from an online access panel, as widely done in research (Lehdonvirta et al., 2021), to facilitate data collection. Gapfish was chosen as provider, since they operate the largest ISO-certified online access panel in the German-speaking area. Potential study participants were asked screening questions on country and region of residence, age, gender, education, employment, and use of customer magazines to verify inclusion criteria and allow stratification of the sample. Non-interlocking quotas for the demographic criteria were applied to obtain a sample that mirrors the target population's demographic composition. Mandatory answering was used to avoid missing data (Albaum et al., 2010).

3.3. Measurement model setting and measurement of observed variables

This study's structural model includes eight latent variables: three content experiences, two process experiences, perceived journalistic quality, media engagement, and customer magazine effectiveness. All constructs are treated as reflective, with interchangeable, covarying indicators (Jarvis et al., 2003).

3.3.1. Gratifying content experiences

For measuring content experiences, we drew on the multi-item media experience scales developed by Calder and Malthouse (2012), which have shown good reliability and validity. We adapted the scales to our context, as recommended by previous work (Calder et al., 2016). For this purpose, the reading experiences were assigned appropriate media experience scales. In a second step, three scholars independently assessed the fit of the individual items of the assigned media experience scales to determine whether they represented each latent variable. Any discrepancies between the researchers were resolved through discussion. Unsuitable items that could not be adapted were not included in the survey instrument. Study participants were asked to relate their ratings to reading customer magazines. *Makes me smarter-experiences* were measured with four items. An example item was "Customer magazines update me on things I try to keep up with." *Makes me feel good-experiences* were captured with six items, e.g., "Reading customer magazines leaves me with a good feeling". *Identity-enforcing-experiences* were recorded with two items. One example was "Reading a certain customer magazine is like belonging to a particular group."

3.3.2. Gratifying process experiences

We used the visual appeal-subscale of the sensory perception item set developed by Haase and Wiedmann (2018) to capture consumers' *visual imagery-experiences*. The measure consists of four expressive adjectives that describe how visually appealing a marketing stimulus is to consumers (e.g., "aesthetic"). Study

participants were asked if they associate reading customer magazines with these attributes. Prior research found the measuring instrument to be reliable and valid in various contexts (Haase and Wiedmann, 2018). We measured consumers' *haptic pleasure-experiences* using the haptic pleasure scale developed by Melumad and Pham (2020), which was found to have good psychometric qualities. The measure consists of four items that we slightly adapted to the customer magazine domain, as they originally related to mobile media experiences. An example item is "I enjoy holding a customer magazine in my hands and touching it."

3.3.3. Perceived journalistic quality

We operationalized perceived journalistic quality in a similar way to the content experiences. Since Calder and Malthouse's (2012) media trust and credibility scale was classified as matching our category of perceived journalistic quality, we used four items from this scale as indicators of our latent variable. One example was "Customer magazines are unbiased in their reporting."

3.3.4. Media engagement

Engagement is a construct that varies by subject, object, and context, so different scales coexist to operationalize it. In operationalizing consumers' (= subject) engagement with customer magazines (= object) in content marketing (= context), a suitable scale could not be readily applied (see Ferreira et al., 2020 for a comparison of extant scales). We followed Ferreira et al.'s (2020) recommendations and used measures adapted from proven scales in the literature. Three items assessed cognitive engagement with customer magazines in terms of conscious attention and cognitive processing (e.g., "I make time to think about what I read in customer magazines."); two items captured emotional engagement in terms of enthusiasm and enjoyment (e.g., "Reading customer magazines is like a treat for me."); and three items assessed behavioral engagement in terms of sharing and endorsing (e.g., "I recommend articles that I have read in customer magazines to other people."). The items were derived from the scales of Hollebeek et al. (2014) and Dessart et al. (2016), and reworded considering our study framework. For example, the original item "I make time to think about (engagement focus)" was changed to "I make time to think about what I read in customer magazines".

3.3.5. Customer magazine effectiveness

There are no generally accepted objective indicators for customer magazine effectiveness in the literature. For this reason, and as it is common practice in research on persuasive communication effectiveness (Poels and Dewitte, 2006; Bell et al., 2018), we used self-report measures to assess the effectiveness of customer magazines. Koob (2021) recently proposed a set of items to capture the degree of content marketing effectiveness, which showed good psychometric properties. Thus, we relied on this item set and adapted it slightly to our scope of customer magazines. Three items assess attained brand-related cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement, i.e., consumers' brand processing, affection, and activation. An example item was that customer magazines "get me to think about the publishing company's brand". Further, the item set includes three items related to the degree to which customer magazines trigger brand trust and contribute to favorable brand evaluations. An example item was that customer magazines "strengthen my belief that the publishing company's brand promises can be relied upon."

All items were translated into German, following the procedure recommended by Beaton et al. (2000). Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

3.3.6. Control variables

We followed guidelines for control variable usage recommending a focused approach to avoid reducing degrees of freedom and statistical power (Spector and Brannick, 2011; Klarmann and Feurer, 2018). Consumers' *age* and *gender* were included, as they are established to potentially relate to the variables under investigation (e.g., McKay-Nesbitt et al., 2011; Papyrina, 2015). Gender was considered as a binary-coded variable, while age was recorded in years.

3.4. Bias and data quality

To address common method bias concerns, we followed Podsakoff et al.'s (2011) recommendations for procedural remedies. The questionnaire was sectioned to psychologically separate the measures. Response options were verbalized to ensure consistency of understanding. We kept items specific to minimize ambiguity. Anonymity was ensured to reduce social desirability bias, and the questionnaire was kept brief to encourage accurate answers. In addition, we used the directly measured latent method factor technique to assess whether significant method effects were present (Podsakoff et al., 2011). The procedure is described in the section on statistical analyses.

To alleviate potential data quality concerns related to the use of an online panel, we adhered to recommendations synthesized from the literature by Porter et al. (2019), in addition to the previously mentioned screener questions. To ensure high-quality responses, we applied attentiveness checks and the longstring index (i.e., the maximum number of identical responses given uninterruptedly), excluding respondents with the 5 percent highest longstring index values (DeSimone et al., 2015). To mitigate possible nonresponse bias, the objective of achieving a representative sample was highlighted, and reminders were sent to prospective contributors to encourage completion of the survey. The potential for economic self-selection bias (Lehdonvirta et al., 2021) was alleviated by controlling the socioeconomic composition of the sample, and by offering a fair but not overly appealing incentive for participation (Porter et al., 2019).

3.5. Study size

Three perspectives were considered to determine the target sample size (Kline, 2016).

3.5.1. Statistical precision

First, the sample size must be large enough for the results to have sufficient statistical precision (Kline, 2016). We employed the *N:q* heuristic, which uses the ratio of participants (*N*) to estimated model parameters (*q*) as a guideline, with a recommended ratio of at least 10:1 (Bentler and Chou, 1987; Schreiber et al., 2006). Since our proposed model included $q = 123$ free estimated parameters, i.e., 30 loadings, eight variances and 28 covariances, 40 error terms as well as 17 slope parameters, this heuristic indicated a required sample size of at least 1,230 participants.

3.5.2. Power at model level

Second, we considered what minimum sample size was required to obtain sufficient statistical power to detect a meaningful degree of model misspecification. An a priori power analysis following MacCallum et al.'s (1996) RMSEA-based method was performed using the power4SEM application (Jak et al., 2021). Given that the entire RMSEA confidence interval should be beneath a threshold of 0.05, indicating close fit, the power analysis was conducted for rejecting not-close fit (with H_0 RMSEA $\geq$0.05 for not-close fit and H_1 RMSEA = 0.01 for close fit) (MacCallum et al., 1996). Our proposed model comprised 40 indicators and hence 40 x 41/2 = 820 unique observed statistics. Given 123 estimated parameters, the model had 820 – 123 = 697 degrees of freedom. The power analysis showed that for a target power of 1-$\beta = 0.80$ given an alpha level of $\alpha = 0.05$, a model $df = 697$, RMSEA $H_0 \geq 0.05$, and RMSEA $H_1 = 0.01$, a minimum sample size of 61 participants would have been required from the model fit perspective.

3.5.3. Power to detect individual effects

Third, we considered the minimum sample size needed to detect individual effects within our model with adequate power. We performed a series of a priori power analyses for parameter estimations using the Monte Carlo simulation approach (Muthén and Muthén, 2002) and the pwrSEM application (Wang and Rhemtulla, 2021). First, our model was specified in the application. Next, all population parameter values of the model needed to be set, since the power to detect a target effect depends on the value of the target parameter as well as the values of the other model parameters (Wang and Rhemtulla, 2021). Lacking previous research on our topic, no information was available to specify the model parameters, so they were set to reasonable values in line with common conventions and pwrSEM guidelines (Wang and Rhemtulla, 2021). After these values were set, we ran a series of simulations, each with 1,000 simulated samples and an alpha level of 0.05, to determine the minimum sample size that provided a target power of at least 0.80 for all our hypothesized effects. These analyses indicated that a minimum sample size of 1,150 participants would have been required.

Taking all three perspectives into account, the minimum sample size needed was 1,230 participants.

3.6. Statistical analyses

3.6.1. Participant data and descriptive statistics

After verifying that inclusion criteria and data quality were met, participants were described. For these purposes, IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26) and RStudio (Version 2021.09.0+351) with R (Version 4.1.2) and package careless (Version 1.2.1) were used. Next, the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations between the study variables were calculated using R.

3.6.2. Measurement model

In the next step, the measurement part of our model was evaluated. We specified a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model with 8 reflective factors and 38 indicators and analyzed whether it fitted the data. RStudio and R with the packages lavaan (Version 0.6-9), semTools (Version 0.5-5) and psych (Version 2.1.9) were used for the analyses. The robust MLR estimator was employed since the multivariate normality assumption was not met (Mardia Statistics: skew = 107.95, $p < 0.001$ and kurtosis = 1,989.27, $p < 0.001$).

Goodness-of-fit was examined with RMSEA $\leq$ 0.05 (90% CI $\leq$ 0.05), SRMR $\leq$ 0.08, and CFI $\geq$ 0.95, the chi-square/df ratio was additionally inspected as a heuristic with a reference value < 3 (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Schreiber et al., 2006; Kline, 2016).

Reliability and convergent validity were assessed by examining (a) standardized factor loadings, (b) tau-equivalent reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas), (c) composite or congeneric reliabilities (McDonald's omegas) (Padilla and Divers, 2016), and (d) average variance extracted (AVE) (average indicator reliability) (Rönkkö and Cho, 2022). For standardized factor loadings (Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2016), alphas (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), and omegas (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010), values >0.70 were considered adequate. A value of >0.50 was used as the reference value for AVE (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

We also assessed the *discriminant validity* of measures, i.e., whether the absolute values of the correlations between our latent variables were low enough to consider them representing distinct constructs. According to the recommendations of Rönkkö and Cho (2022), the CI_{CFA}(sys) method was used to evaluate discriminant validity. We first calculated the 95% CIs of the estimated factor correlations for the latent factors in our model. Second, we compared the upper limits (UL) of the CIs with the proposed classification system, assuming a severe problem with discriminant validity in case of 1.00 $\leq$ UL, a moderate problem in case of 0.90 $\leq$ UL < 1.00, a marginal problem in case of 0.80 $\leq$ UL < 0.90, and no problem in case of UL < 0.80 (Rönkkö and Cho, 2022).

Further, we applied the directly measured latent method factor technique to assess potential *method bias* (Podsakoff et al., 2011). Following Spector et al.'s (2019) categorization of potential sources of method variance, social desirability was the primary source expected for the present study, given that "attitudinal" and "behavioral" constructs were primarily examined. Therefore, a brief social desirability measure was included to capture this hypothesized source of method variance, consisting of two items from Winkler et al.'s (2006) social desirability scale. An example item was "There have been occasions when I have taken advantage

of someone." The items were measured on a 5-point agreement scale. To assess potential bias, we conducted a comparative model test (Williams et al., 1996; Rafferty and Griffin, 2004). Each model was based on our measurement model and additionally included a directly measured latent method factor that was indicated by the two social desirability items. Method effects were represented by factor loadings from the method factor to the indicators of the substantive constructs of interest. In Model A, the factor loadings from the method factor to the 38 indicators assessing the 8 substantive constructs were allowed to vary. In Model B, all paths from the method factor to the substantive constructs of interest were constrained to zero. The comparison of Models A and B assessed whether social desirability was a relevant contaminating factor. For comparing model fit, we did not rely on a chi-square difference test for these two nested models due to the oversensitivity of $\chi 2$ to even minor deviations from perfect models in large samples (Putnick and Bornstein, 2016). Instead, we followed the approximate fit approach and employed the cutoff criteria recommended by Chen (2007). A deterioration in fit of Model B relative to Model A was assumed in case of ΔCFI ≥ -0.010, paired by ΔRMSEA ≥ 0.015 or ΔSRMR ≥ 0.030.

3.6.3. Structural model

After evaluating the measurement model, a structural model corresponding to the hypothesized model was estimated (Model 1, Figure 2). It linked the exogenous latent variables (three gratifying content experiences, two process experiences) to the mediator (media engagement) and the outcome (customer magazine effectiveness), while perceived journalistic quality was directly linked to the outcome. The exogenous latent variables were free to intercorrelate. Following Williams et al. (2009), the control variables age and gender were included as exogenous latent variables, allowed to covary with the exogenous variables of interest, and had direct paths to the endogenous variables media engagement and customer magazine effectiveness.

The same software was used for the analyses as for the CFA. The robust MLR estimator was employed because the multivariate normality assumption was not met (Mardia Statistics: skew = 122.94, $p < 0.001$ and kurtosis = 2,152.60, $p < 0.001$). To evaluate the model fit, the same indices and reference values were used as in the CFA.

We next considered alternative models and performed comparative model tests (Kline, 2016). For this purpose, a common parent model in which all other models were nested was used. This parent Model 2 assumed that perceived journalistic quality also had both direct and indirect effects on customer magazine effectiveness. Accordingly, the relationship between the perceived journalistic quality factor and the media engagement factor, which was constrained to zero in Model 1, was unconstrained. Alternative Model 3 assumed that all media experiences and perceived journalistic quality cause customer magazine effectiveness only directly, so a model without mediation was postulated. Therefore, all structural paths corresponding to indirect effects were set to zero. Alternative Model 4 was based on the premise that media experiences and perceived journalistic quality have no direct influence on customer magazine effectiveness, but only have an indirect effect through media engagement. Accordingly, all structural paths representing direct effects were set to zero. Each model (our hypothesized Model 1 and alternative Models 3 and 4) was then compared with the common parent Model 2 in which all models were nested. This procedure allowed us to indirectly compare the (in some cases) non-nested models and decide between them. For comparing model fit, as in the CFA, the approximate fit approach and the corresponding cutoff criteria were employed.

3.6.4. Hypotheses testing

The retained structural model was used to test the hypotheses of this study. R^2 was used as effect size (Kline, 2016) to assess the explanatory power of the model for the individual endogenous variables. Since no research existed that could have provided an indication of the magnitude of effects obtained in previous studies, we referred to Hair et al.'s (2017) guidelines and regarded values of R^2 of < 0.25, ≥ 0.25, ≥ 0.50, and ≥ 0.75 as very weak, weak, medium, and substantial.

Further, unstandardized parameter estimates, standardized estimates referring to the completely standardized solution, standard errors, and p-values are reported. A $p < 0.05$ was considered significant. To assess the effects of the individual latent variables, the standardized path coefficients were used as effect size indices (Kline, 2016). Without previous findings to contextualize current results, absolute standardized path coefficients ≥ 0.05, ≥ 0.10, ≥ 0.20, ≥ 0.30, and ≥ 0.40 were regarded as very small, small, medium, large, and very large effects, respectively (Funder and Ozer, 2019).

Regarding mediation, estimates of direct, indirect, and total effects are reported, both unstandardized and standardized, plus the values of standard errors. For testing the statistical significance of indirect effects, bootstrapping was used with 5,000 bootstrap draws and computation of the bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap (BCa) 95 percent confidence intervals (CIs) of indirect effects estimates (Efron, 1987). The R package boot (Version 1.3-28) was used for these analyses. Effects for which the confidence intervals did not contain zero were considered significant. Standardized indirect effects were used as effect size measures (Cheung, 2009; Lachowicz et al., 2018). Since an indirect effect is a product of two effects, following Kenny (2021), the above-mentioned Funder and Ozer (2019) standards were squared and values of ≥ 0.0025, ≥ 0.01, ≥ 0.04, ≥ 0.09, and ≥ 0.16 were classified as very small, small, medium, large, and very large effects. The decision tree of Zhao et al. (2010) was used to identify and classify types of mediation and non-mediation.

4. Results

4.1. Participant data

Data collection yielded 1,626 responses. After eliminating responses that failed to fit with the inclusion criteria or did not meet the quality checks, the final sample comprised $N = 1,396$ consumers. It consisted of about half women (50.1%) and half men (49.9%), with the 50–65 age group (34.7%) making up the

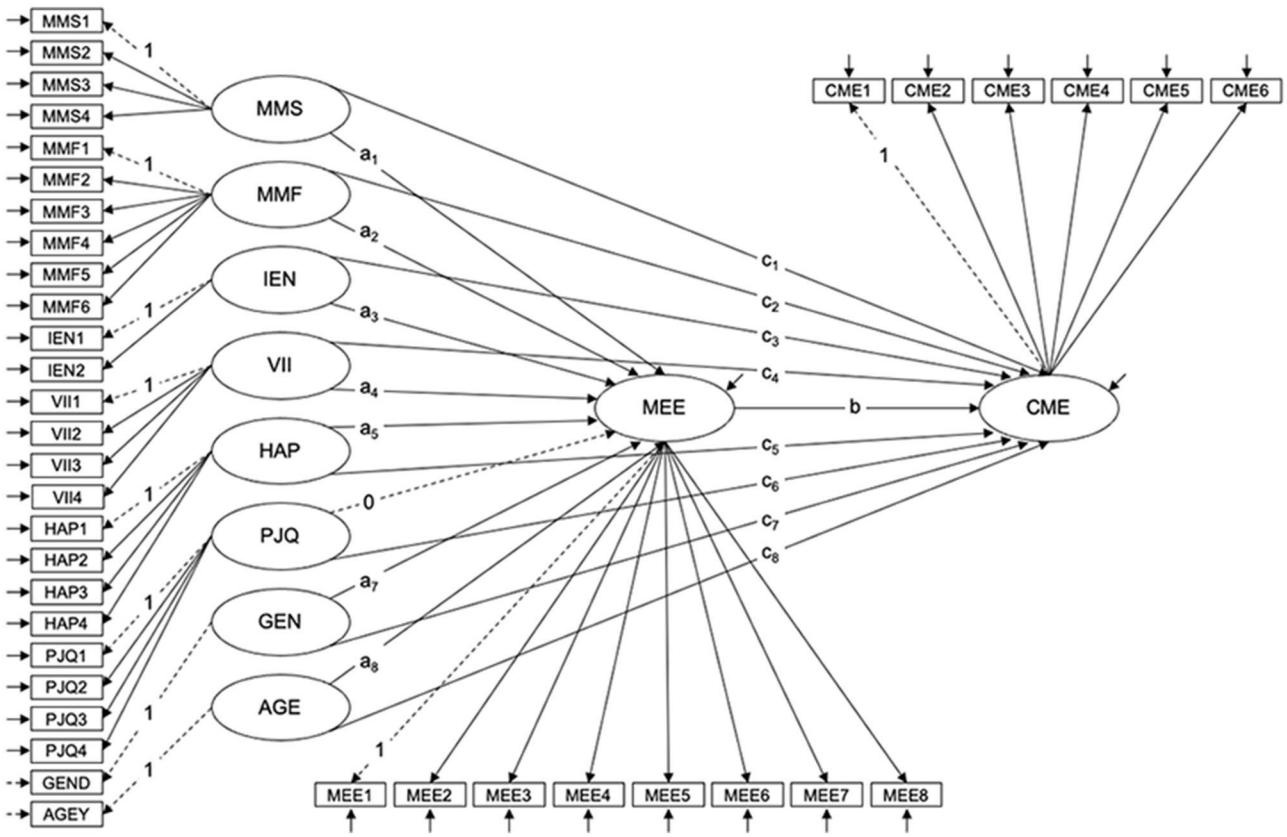

FIGURE 2
Operationalized Model 1.

largest group (Table 1). Consumers with higher (41.4%) and mid-level educational attainment (39.8%) were represented with similar shares in the sample, while consumers with lower levels accounted for a smaller proportion (18.8%). The majority of the sample belonged to the labor force (77.7%).

The characteristics of the sample corresponded well with the demographic composition of the target population (Eurostat, 2022a,b,c), with only 50–65-year-olds and persons with lower education being mildly underrepresented.

4.2. Descriptive statistics

Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations between the study variables.

Consistent with theoretical considerations, all media experiences were found to correlate significantly and positively with customer magazine effectiveness. In line with theory, there were also significant positive correlations between the media experiences and media engagement as well as between media engagement and customer magazine effectiveness. In accordance with theory, there was a statistically significant positive correlation between perceived journalistic quality and customer magazine effectiveness, too. Perceived journalistic quality was further found to be significantly positively correlated with media engagement, though this relationship was not hypothesized.

4.3. Evaluation of the measurement model

4.3.1. Goodness-of-fit

The CFA showed generally favorable values of the fit statistics (RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.041 [0.039, 0.043], SRMR = 0.026, CFI = 0.958, $\chi 2/df$ = 1,774.69/637 = 2.786) (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Schreiber et al., 2006; Kline, 2016).

4.3.2. Reliability and convergent validity

The values of the standardized factor loadings for all factors' indicators were consistently high (Table 3), ranging from 0.646 to 0.848, with 35 of 38 loadings >0.70, in line with relevant guidelines (Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2016); all factor loadings were significant at $p < 0.001$. Further, all measures' Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0.739 to 0.921, surpassing the acceptable level of 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Composite reliabilities ranged from 0.743 to 0.921 and thus also exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010). The average variance extracted (AVE) for the factors had values between 0.555 and 0.662, and thus also exceeded the recommended reference value of 0.50

(Fornell and Larcker, 1981). In conclusion, these findings indicated good properties of the measures.

TABLE 1 Characteristics of the sample and the target population.

	Sample		Target population
	n	%	%
Gender			
Women	699	50.1	49.6
Men	697	49.9	50.4
Age (years)			
18–29	299	21.4	19.6
30–39	299	21.4	20.9
40–49	313	22.4	20.5
50–65	485	34.7	38.9
Education level*			
Low	262	18.8	25.1
Mid	556	39.8	36.1
High	578	41.4	38.7
Employment			
Employed (incl. actively seeking work)	1,084	77.7	77.7
Education/training	117	8.4	8.6
Housemen/-wives	108	7.7	7.9
Pension	87	6.2	5.8

N = 1,396.

*Classification of respondents according to the respective country classification system; Germany: highest school-leaving qualification according to Mikrozensus, low = compulsory school/lower secondary level school (completion grade 9), mid = lower secondary level school (completion grade 10), high = university (of applied sciences) entry qualification/university degree; Switzerland: classification according to Federal Statistical Office, low = compulsory education, mid = upper secondary education, high = tertiary education; Austria: classification according to International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), low = primary and lower secondary education, mid = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education, high = tertiary education.

4.3.3. Discriminant validity

Our model with 8 latent factors included 28 estimated factor correlations. The factors were positively correlated with each other (Table 4), as expected from the posited causal relationships on the one hand and the theoretically suggested entanglement of reading experiences on the other hand (Ytre-Arne, 2011; Boczkowski et al., 2020; Spence, 2020b). The upper limit of all confidence intervals of the correlations was below the cut-off-value of 1.00, which would have indicated a severe problem with discriminant validity (Rönkkö and Cho, 2022). The upper limit of all confidence intervals was also below the cut-off-value of 0.90, which would have signaled a moderate problem with discriminant validity (Rönkkö and Cho, 2022). Nine of 28 confidence intervals had upper limits above 0.80, which could have indicated marginal concerns. However, four of these correlations concerned the hypothesized relationships, and were insofar to be expected. The other five correlations concerned the predictors and were reconcilable with the theoretically suggested entanglement of reading experiences (Ytre-Arne, 2011; Boczkowski et al., 2020; Spence, 2020b) and with the results of previous studies that have shown that media gratifications are interrelated (Rubin and Perse, 1987). For the remaining 19 confidence intervals, the upper limit was below 0.80, so there was no indication of a problem with discriminant validity in these cases. Taken together, we did not find evidence of problematically high unexpected correlations, so that satisfactory discriminant validity can be assumed (Rönkkö and Cho, 2022).

4.3.4. Common method bias

A comparative model test was performed to assess social desirability as a potential source of method bias. Model A, which included method effects in terms of loadings from the method factor to the indicators measuring the substantive constructs, showed a good fit to the data (RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.037 [0.035, 0.039], SRMR = 0.027, CFI = 0.964, $\chi 2(674) = 1{,}678.68$, $p < 0.001$). For Model B, where the paths from the directly measured latent method factor to the indicators of the substantive constructs were restricted to zero, the fit statistics were also favorable (RMSEA

TABLE 2 Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
MMS	3.612	0.753									
MMF	3.371	0.792	0.687								
IEN	3.187	0.999	0.613	0.667							
VII	3.624	0.754	0.590	0.588	0.494						
HAP	3.488	0.826	0.601	0.665	0.542	0.590					
PJQ	3.374	0.779	0.652	0.571	0.540	0.499	0.511				
GEND	0.501	0.500	0.044^{ns}	0.003^{ns}	−0.067	0.015^{ns}	0.064	0.010^{ns}			
AGEY	41.998	13.121	-0.024^{ns}	−0.143	−0.084	−0.105	−0.166	-0.007^{ns}	−0.055		
MEE	3.370	0.804	0.734	0.757	0.660	0.642	0.697	0.584	-0.013^{ns}	−0.122	
CME	3.227	0.866	0.642	0.675	0.629	0.599	0.633	0.563	-0.027^{ns}	−0.163	0.770

N = 1,396.

MMS, Makes me smarter experience; MMF, Makes me feel good experience; IEN, Identity-enforcing-experience; VII, Visual imagery-experience; HAP, Haptic pleasure experience; PJQ, Perceived journalistic quality; GEND, Gender/dummy coded; AGEY, Age/in years; MEE, Media Engagement; CME, Customer magazine effectiveness. All correlations are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ except those marked "ns" for not significant.

TABLE 3 Statistics of the measurement model.

Latent variables	Indicators	Factor loadings			p	SMC	CA	CR	AVE
		Unstandardized		Standardized					
		Est.	SE	Est.					
Makes me smarter experience (MMS)	MMS1	1.000	–	0.780	–	0.608	0.855	0.854	0.596
	MMS2	0.980	0.032	0.759	<0.001	0.576			
	MMS3	0.979	0.032	0.795	<0.001	0.632			
	MMS4	0.926	0.033	0.754	<0.001	0.568			
Makes me feel good experience (MMF)	MMF1	1.000	–	0.788	–	0.620	0.880	0.878	0.555
	MMF2	0.702	0.029	0.646	<0.001	0.417			
	MMF3	0.854	0.030	0.698	<0.001	0.487			
	MMF4	0.986	0.029	0.725	<0.001	0.525			
	MMF5	0.863	0.026	0.811	<0.001	0.657			
	MMF6	0.863	0.028	0.801	<0.001	0.641			
Identity-enforcing-experience (IEN)	IEN1	1.000	–	0.701	–	0.491	0.739	0.743	0.591
	IEN2	1.146	0.045	0.837	<0.001	0.700			
Visual imagery-experience (VII)	VII1	1.000	–	0.757	–	0.573	0.861	0.862	0.610
	VII2	1.051	0.032	0.806	<0.001	0.649			
	VII3	1.020	0.032	0.801	<0.001	0.641			
	VII4	0.915	0.031	0.757	<0.001	0.573			
Haptic pleasure experience (HAP)	HAP1	1.000	–	0.839	–	0.703	0.880	0.880	0.649
	HAP2	0.892	0.024	0.828	<0.001	0.685			
	HAP3	0.903	0.026	0.798	<0.001	0.636			
	HAP4	0.869	0.027	0.754	<0.001	0.568			
Perceived journalistic quality (PJQ)	PJQ1	1.000	–	0.743	–	0.552	0.845	0.844	0.577
	PJQ2	1.058	0.039	0.723	<0.001	0.522			
	PJQ3	1.033	0.035	0.771	<0.001	0.594			
	PJQ4	1.049	0.038	0.810	<0.001	0.656			
Media Engagement (MEE)	MEE1	1.000	–	0.751	–	0.564	0.913	0.909	0.566
	MEE2	1.104	0.032	0.789	<0.001	0.622			
	MEE3	1.087	0.033	0.801	<0.001	0.641			
	MEE4	1.046	0.035	0.770	<0.001	0.592			
	MEE5	1.101	0.035	0.788	<0.001	0.620			
	MEE6	0.980	0.038	0.656	<0.001	0.430			
	MEE7	1.039	0.039	0.714	<0.001	0.509			
	MEE8	1.173	0.040	0.756	<0.001	0.571			
Customer magazine effectiveness (CME)	CME1	1.000	–	0.762	–	0.580	0.921	0.921	0.662
	CME2	1.153	0.030	0.828	<0.001	0.685			
	CME3	1.082	0.028	0.796	<0.001	0.633			
	CME4	1.151	0.034	0.848	<0.001	0.719			
	CME5	1.167	0.036	0.834	<0.001	0.695			
	CME6	1.072	0.032	0.806	<0.001	0.649			

N = 1,396.

Est., estimate; SMC, squared multiple correlations; CA, Cronbach's alpha; CR, Composite reliability/McDonald's omega; AVE, average variance extracted; Model fit: RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.041 [0.039, 0.043], SRMR = 0.026, CFI = 0.958, $\chi 2/df = 1{,}774.69/637 = 2.786$.

TABLE 4 Estimated factor correlations with confidence intervals.

Latent variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Makes me smarter experience							
Makes me feel good experience	0.796 [0.761, 0.832]						
Identity-enforcing-experience	0.785 [0.744, 0.827]	0.817 [0.779, 0.855]					
Visual imagery-experience	0.688 [0.642, 0.733]	0.672 [0.627, 0.716]	0.623 [0.573, 0.673]				
Haptic pleasure experience	0.695 [0.649, 0.741]	0.757 [0.718, 0.796]	0.670 [0.620, 0.719]	0.677 [0.629, 0.726]			
Perceived journalistic quality	0.768 [0.731, 0.805]	0.663 [0.614, 0.712]	0.690 [0.641, 0.738]	0.588 [0.535, 0.640]	0.596 [0.543, 0.650]		
Media Engagement	0.836 [0.808, 0.864]	0.854 [0.829, 0.878]	0.801 [0.765, 0.837]	0.730 [0.689, 0.772]	0.785 [0.751, 0.820]	0.669 [0.623, 0.714]	
Customer magazine effectiveness	0.726 [0.688, 0.763]	0.752 [0.716, 0.787]	0.752 [0.708, 0.795]	0.673 [0.628, 0.718]	0.703 [0.663, 0.744]	0.640 [0.596, 0.684]	0.838 [0.812, 0.864]

N = 1,396; values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation; all correlations are significant at $p < 0.001$.

[90% CI] = 0.040 [0.038, 0.042], SRMR = 0.033, CFI = 0.956, $\chi 2(712) = 1{,}936.89$, $p < 0.001$). The comparison of Model B with A revealed changes in the fit indices of ΔCFI = −0.008, ΔRMSEA = 0.003, and ΔSRMR = 0.006 which were below the recommended cutoff points of −0.010, 0.015 and 0.030. Hence, a rejection of the additional restrictions of Model B was not warranted. The model comparison gave confidence that common method bias from social desirability was a limited concern. Therefore, the original measurement model was retained for the subsequent analyses.

4.4. Estimates of structural model and mediating effects

In the second step of our two-step modeling, we used SEM to evaluate alternative models and examine the structural paths between the factors of interest.

4.4.1. Goodness-of-fit

The values of the fit statistics for our hypothesized Model 1 were favorable (RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.041 [0.039, 0.044], SRMR = 0.027, CFI = 0.953, $\chi 2/df = 1{,}988.35/698 = 2.849$) (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Schreiber et al., 2006; Kline, 2016).

4.4.2. Model comparisons

First, our hypothesized Model 1 was compared with parent Model 2. The values of the fit statistics for parent Model 2 were generally favorable (RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.041 [0.039, 0.044], SRMR = 0.027, CFI = 0.953, $\chi 2/df = 1{,}986.21/697 = 2.850$). Comparison of the nested Models 2 and 1 revealed almost identical fit (ΔCFI < −0.0001, ΔRMSEA < 0.0001, ΔSRMR < 0.0001). Model 1 was more parsimonious, so it was preferred over Model 2.

Next, the alternative Model 3 assuming only direct effects was compared with parent Model 2. The values of the fit statistics for Model 3 looked problematic (RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.061 [0.059, 0.063], SRMR = 0.255, CFI = 0.897, $\chi 2(706) = 3{,}535.08$, $p < 0.001$). Its fit was worse than that of parent Model 2 with deteriorations in the fit indices of ΔCFI = −0.056, ΔRMSEA = 0.020, and ΔSRMR = 0.228, which were above the cutoff points of −0.010, 0.015, and 0.030. Therefore, Model 3 was rejected.

Model 4, which only assumed indirect effects, was then compared to parent Model 2. The values of the fit statistics for Model 4 showed a generally acceptable fit to the data (RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.042 [0.040, 0.044], SRMR = 0.029, CFI = 0.951, $\chi 2(705) = 2{,}044.77$, $p < 0.001$). The fit of Model 4 was slightly worse than the less restricted parent Model 2, with ΔCFI = −0.002, ΔRMSEA = 0.001, and ΔSRMR = 0.002. However, these deviations were below the cutoffs of −0.010, 0.015, and 0.030 (Chen, 2007). Statistically, both models seemed to fit similarly well based on the conducted analyses and the reference values. However, retaining the more parsimonious Model 4 without direct effects would have been theoretically tenuous, and model selection should be driven both empirically *and* theoretically (Thompson, 2000; Stone, 2021). To substantiate the decision on the preferable model, we performed a two-step *post-hoc* procedure. First, we examined

differences in McDonald's noncentrality fit index (MFI) (Meade et al., 2008). The simulations of Meade et al. (2008) suggest an appropriate cutoff value in the range of >0.0115 for our model conditions. Comparison of our Models 2 and 4 yielded a ΔMFI of 0.0121, suggesting that the difference between the models may not be negligible. Second, we assessed the fit of both models at a local level by inspecting correlation residuals which measure discrepancies between observed and model-predicted inter-item correlations (Kline, 2016). Both models had only three correlation residuals whose absolute values exceeded the threshold of 0.10, signaling some disagreement between model and data, which is not bad in a larger model (Kline, 2016). However, the correlation residuals for Model 4 were, on average, 7.6% higher than those of parent Model 2. Given these additional results, the parent Model 2 was a better fit to the data than Model 4, so the later was rejected from an empirical and theoretical perspective.

In summary, the common parent Model 2 (with both direct and indirect effects of all exogenous latent variables on customer magazine effectiveness) was a better fit to the data than Model 3 (with only direct effects) and Model 4 (with only indirect effects). This led to the rejection of the two latter models. Both the parent Model 2 and the hypothesized Model 1 fit the data well, but Model 1 was more parsimonious, so it was retained to test the hypotheses.

4.4.3. Hypotheses testing

The retained model accounted for 83.3% of the variance in media engagement ($R^2 = 0.833$) and 73.7% of the variance in customer magazine effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.737$). These results indicated that the model had substantial explanatory power for media engagement ($R^2 \geq 0.75$) and moderate explanatory power, just below the threshold for substantial power, for customer magazine effectiveness (Hair et al., 2017).

Hypothesis 1 stated that gratifying content experiences with customer magazines are positively directly related to customer magazine effectiveness. Consistent with predictions, the identity-enforcing-experience had a significant, positive, moderate direct effect on customer magazine effectiveness ($c = 0.188$ (0.059), $p = 0.001$; $c^* = 0.201$ (0.063), $p = 0.002$) (Table 5). Contrary to expectations, the makes me smarter-experience ($c = -0.066$ (0.063), $p = 0.291$; $c^* = -0.063$ (0.060), $p = 0.292$) and the makes me feel good-experience ($c = -0.020$ (0.053), $p = 0.706$; $c^* = -0.022$ (0.059), $p = 0.706$) did not have significant positive direct relationships with customer magazine effectiveness. Hence, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported.

Hypothesis 2 postulated that gratifying process experiences with customer magazines are positively directly related to customer magazine effectiveness. The results revealed a significant positive direct association between visual imagery-experience and customer magazine effectiveness ($c = 0.099$ (0.038), $p = 0.010$; $c^* = 0.093$ (0.035), $p = 0.009$), supporting Hypothesis 2. The standardized direct effect (< 0.10) indicates a rather small effect. Other than expected the coefficients for the direct effect of haptic pleasure on customer magazine effectiveness were not significant ($c = 0.049$ (0.036), $p = 0.166$; $c^* = 0.055$ (0.040), $p = 0.166$). Hypothesis 2 thus found partial support.

Hypothesis 3 asserted a positive direct effect of perceived journalistic quality on customer magazine effectiveness. Consistent with this prediction, perceived journalistic quality was significantly positively directly associated with customer magazine effectiveness ($c = 0.106$ (0.042), $p = 0.012$; $c^* = 0.097$ (0.039), $p = 0.012$), with a small effect size (standardized effect <0.10). Hence, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Hypothesis 4 stated the relationship between gratifying experiences with customer magazines and customer magazine effectiveness to be mediated by media engagement. The results in Table 6 show that the indirect effects of all three gratifying content experiences on customer magazine effectiveness, through media engagement, were statistically different from zero and positive. The unstandardized indirect effect of the makes me smarter-experience on customer magazine effectiveness through media engagement was statistically significant and positive ($a_1b = 0.162$ (0.033), BCa 95% CI [0.104; 0.234], $p < 0.001$) as was the standardized indirect effect ($a_1^*b^* = 0.154$ (0.031), BCa 95% CI [0.098; 0.226], $p < 0.001$). Since, as specified above, there was no related significant direct effect c, this result signaled indirect-only mediation (Zhao et al., 2010) consistent with Hypothesis 4. The mediation effect was large, because the 95% CI of the standardized indirect effect did not include values < 0.09. However, no significant total effect was found here ($TE = 0.096$ (0.062), BCa 95% CI [−0.020; 0.223], $p = 0.119$; $TE^* = 0.091$ (0.058), BCa 95% CI [−0.027; 0.208], $p = 0.117$).

Further, the results revealed a significant and positive indirect effect of the makes me feel good-experience on customer magazine effectiveness through media engagement ($a_2b = 0.143$ (0.029), BCa 95% CI [0.090; 0.208], $p < 0.001$; $a_2^*b^* = 0.160$ (0.032), BCa 95% CI [0.096; 0.233], $p < 0.001$). As previously stated, there was no related significant direct effect c, thus indicating an indirect-only type of mediation, in line with Hypothesis 4. The 95% CI of the standardized indirect effect suggests the mediation effect is large. The analyses also showed that the makes me feel good-experience manifested a statistically significant and positive total effect on customer magazine effectiveness ($TE = 0.123$ (0.054), BCa 95% CI [0.018; 0.230], $p = 0.022$; $TE^* = 0.138$ (0.060), BCa 95% CI [0.022; 0.258], $p = 0.022$). The identity-enforcing-experience was also found to affect customer magazine effectiveness significantly and positively indirectly through media engagement ($a_3b = 0.070$ (0.026), BCa 95% CI [0.022; 0.130], $p = 0.006$; $a_3^*b^* = 0.075$ (0.027), BCa 95% CI [0.024; 0.134], $p = 0.005$). Since there was a significant positive direct effect linking the identity-enforcing-experience to customer magazine effectiveness, too, this signaled complementary mediation (Zhao et al., 2010) consistent with Hypothesis 4. The 95% CI of the standardized indirect effect included values ≥0.01 to ≥0.09 and thus the mediation effect was in the small to large range. The total effect of the identity-enforcing-experience on customer magazine effectiveness was significant and positive ($TE = 0.258$ (0.061), BCa 95% CI [0.141; 0.383], $p < 0.001$; $TE^* = 0.276$ (0.065), BCa 95% CI [0.152; 0.406], $p < 0.001$).

The findings on mediational pathways (Table 6) also show that gratifying process experiences had significant, positive indirect effects on customer magazine effectiveness, through media engagement. The unstandardized indirect effect of the visual imagery-experience on customer magazine effectiveness through media engagement was statistically significant and

TABLE 5 Estimates of the structural model.

Parameter	Unstandardized			Standardized		
	Estimate	SE	p	Estimate	SE	p
Regressions: Direct effects						
MMS → MEE	0.275	0.043	<0.001	0.274	0.042	<0.001
MMF → MEE	0.242	0.043	<0.001	0.285	0.050	<0.001
IEN → MEE	0.119	0.042	0.004	0.133	0.046	0.004
VII → MEE	0.132	0.033	<0.001	0.129	0.032	<0.001
HAP → MEE	0.172	0.032	<0.001	0.202	0.036	<0.001
GEN → MEE	−0.043	0.022	0.047	−0.030	0.015	0.046
AGE → MEE	−0.001	0.001	0.372	−0.014	0.015	0.373
MEE → CME	0.589	0.069	<0.001	0.563	0.062	<0.001
MMS → CME	−0.066	0.063	0.291	−0.063	0.060	0.292
MMF → CME	−0.020	0.053	0.706	−0.022	0.059	0.706
IEN → CME	0.188	0.059	0.001	0.201	0.063	0.002
VII → CME	0.099	0.038	0.010	0.093	0.035	0.009
HAP → CME	0.049	0.036	0.166	0.055	0.040	0.166
PJQ → CME	0.106	0.042	0.012	0.097	0.039	0.012
GEN → CME	−0.025	0.027	0.347	−0.017	0.018	0.346
AGE → CME	−0.004	0.001	<0.001	−0.070	0.017	<0.001
Disturbance variances and factor variances						
CME	0.149	0.013	<0.001	0.263	0.020	<0.001
MEE	0.087	0.008	<0.001	0.167	0.014	<0.001
MMS	0.514	0.032	<0.001	1.000	–	–
MMF	0.714	0.040	<0.001	1.000	–	–
IEN	0.649	0.048	<0.001	1.000	–	–
VII	0.493	0.031	<0.001	1.000	–	–
HAP	0.714	0.038	<0.001	1.000	–	–
PJQ	0.477	0.033	<0.001	1.000	–	–
GEN	0.250	<0.001	<0.001	1.000	–	–
AGE	172.045	4.258	<0.001	1.000	–	–

N = 1,396.

MMS, Makes me smarter experience; MMF, Makes me feel good experience; IEN, Identity-enforcing-experience; VII, Visual imagery-experience; HAP, Haptic pleasure experience; PJQ, Perceived journalistic quality; MEE, Media Engagement; CME, Customer magazine effectiveness; GEN, Gender; AGE, Age. Standardized estimates for disturbance variances are proportions of unexplained variance. The standardized solution is completely standardized.

positive (a_4b = 0.078 (0.022), BCa 95% CI [0.041; 0.126], $p < 0.001$). The same holds for the standardized indirect effect ($a_4^*b^*$ = 0.073 (0.020), BCa 95% CI [0.036; 0.119], $p < 0.001$), with its absolute value being in the small to large range based on the 95% CI. As there was also a significant positive direct effect linking the visual imagery-experience to customer magazine effectiveness, this indicated complementary mediation (Zhao et al., 2010) consistent with Hypothesis 4. The visual imagery-experience furthermore was found to exert a statistically significant and positive total effect on customer magazine effectiveness (TE = 0.177 (0.040), BCa 95% CI [0.098; 0.262], $p < 0.001$; TE* = 0.165 (0.037), BCa 95% CI [0.090; 0.236], $p < 0.001$). The haptic pleasure-experience was also found to affect customer magazine effectiveness significantly and positively indirectly through media engagement (a_5b = 0.101 (0.022), BCa 95% CI [0.061; 0.149], $p < 0.001$; $a_5^*b^*$ = 0.114 (0.024), BCa 95% CI [0.070; 0.168], $p < 0.001$). The 95% CI of the standardized indirect effect included values ≥ 0.04 as well as ≥ 0.16, pointing to an at least moderate to potentially very large effect. Since, as specified above, there was no related significant direct effect c, this finding signaled indirect-only mediation supporting Hypothesis 4. Finally, the analyses revealed a statistically significant and positive total effect of the haptic pleasure-experience on customer magazine effectiveness (TE =

TABLE 6 Results of the mediation analyses.

Parameter			Direct effects		Indirect effects	Total effects
			On mediator MEE	On outcome CME		
MEE	Unst.	Est. (SE)	–	0.589 (0.069)	–	0.589 (0.069)
		[CI], p		[0.453, 0.723], < 0.001		[0.453, 0.723], < 0.001
	St.	Est. (SE)		0.563 (0.062)		0.563 (0.062)
		[CI], p		[0.433, 0.688], < 0.001		[0.433, 0.688], < 0.001
MMS	Unst.	Est. (SE)	0.275 (0.043)	−0.066 (0.063)	0.162 (0.033)	0.096 (0.062)
		[CI], p	[0.187, 0.361], < 0.001	[-0.183, 0.068], 0.291	[0.104; 0.234], < 0.001	[−0.020, 0.223], 0.119
	St.	Est. (SE)	0.274 (0.042)	−0.063 (0.060)	0.154 (0.031)	0.091 (0.058)
		[CI], p	[0.186, 0.362], < 0.001	[−0.177, 0.058], 0.292	[0.098, 0.226], < 0.001	[−0.027, 0.208], 0.117
MMF	Unst.	Est. (SE)	0.242 (0.043)	−0.020 (0.053)	0.143 (0.029)	0.123 (0.054)
		[CI], p	[0.159, 0.328], < 0.001	[−0.125, 0.087], 0.706	[0.090, 0.208], < 0.001	[0.018, 0.230], 0.022
	St.	Est. (SE)	0.285 (0.050)	−0.022 (0.059)	0.160 (0.032)	0.138 (0.060)
		[CI], p	[0.179, 0.382], < 0.001	[−0.139, 0.099], 0.706	[0.096, 0.233], < 0.001	[0.022, 0.258], 0.022
IEN	Unst.	Est. (SE)	0.119 (0.042)	0.188 (0.059)	0.070 (0.026)	0.258 (0.061)
		[CI], p	[0.036, 0.209], 0.004	[0.070, 0.311], 0.001	[0.022, 0.130], 0.006	[0.141, 0.383], < 0.001
	St.	Est. (SE)	0.133 (0.046)	0.201 (0.063)	0.075 (0.027)	0.276 (0.065)
		[CI], p	[0.040, 0.228], 0.004	[0.078, 0.332], 0.002	[0.024, 0.134], 0.005	[0.152, 0.406], < 0.001
VII	Unst.	Est. (SE)	0.132 (0.033)	0.099 (0.038)	0.078 (0.022)	0.177 (0.040)
		[CI], p	[0.071, 0.201], < 0.001	[0.024, 0.179], 0.010	[0.041, 0.126], < 0.001	[0.098, 0.262], < 0.001
	St.	Est. (SE)	0.129 (0.032)	0.093 (0.035)	0.073 (0.020)	0.165 (0.037)
		[CI], p	[0.065, 0.196], < 0.001	[0.021, 0.161], 0.009	[0.036, 0.119], < 0.001	[0.090, 0.236], < 0.001
HAP	Unst.	Est. (SE)	0.172 (0.032)	0.049 (0.036)	0.101 (0.022)	0.151 (0.036)
		[CI], p	[0.109, 0.239], < 0.001	[−0.020, 0.123], 0.166	[0.061, 0.149], < 0.001	[0.078, 0.225], < 0.001
	St.	Est. (SE)	0.202 (0.036)	0.055 (0.040)	0.114 (0.024)	0.169 (0.041)
		[CI], p	[0.129, 0.276], < 0.001	[−0.023, 0.135], 0.166	[0.070, 0.168], < 0.001	[0.086, 0.249], < 0.001
PJQ	Unst.	Est. (SE)	—	0.106 (0.042)	—	0.106 (0.042)
		[CI], p		[0.023, 0.190], 0.012		[0.023, 0.190], 0.012
	St.	Est. (SE)		0.097 (0.039)		0.097 (0.039)
		[CI], p		[0.025, 0.176], 0.012		[0.025, 0.176], 0.012
GEN	Unst.	Est. (SE)	−0.043 (0.022)	−0.025 (0.027)	−0.026 (0.013)	−0.051 (0.028)
		[CI], p	[−0.087, −0.001], 0.047	[−0.076, 0.028], 0.347	[−0.054, −0.001], 0.049	[−0.106, 0.003], 0.074
	St.	Est. (SE)	−0.030 (0.015)	−0.017 (0.018)	−0.017 (0.009)	−0.034 (0.019)
		[CI], p	[−0.060, −0.0001], 0.046	[−0.051, 0.019], 0.346	[−0.036, −0.001], 0.049	[−0.071, 0.004], 0.073
AGE	Unst.	Est. (SE)	−0.001 (0.001)	−0.004 (0.001)	< −0.001 (0.001)	−0.004 (0.001)
		[CI], p	[−0.002, 0.001], 0.372	[−0.006, −0.002], < 0.001	[−0.002, 0.001], 0.380	[−0.007, −0.002], < 0.001
	St.	Est. (SE)	−0.014 (0.015)	−0.070 (0.017)	−0.008 (0.009)	−0.078 (0.018)
		[CI], p	[−0.043, 0.017], 0.373	[−0.103, −0.035], < 0.001	[−0.025, 0.009], 0.380	[−0.114, −0.042], < 0.001

N = 1,396.

MEE, Media Engagement; CME, Customer magazine effectiveness; MMS, Makes me smarter experience; MMF, Makes me feel good experience; IEN, Identity-enforcing-experience; VII, Visual imagery-experience; HAP, Haptic pleasure experience; PJQ, Perceived journalistic quality; GEN, Gender; AGE, Age; Unst., unstandardized; St., standardized; Est., Estimate. [CI] values refer to the lower and upper limits of the bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap (BCa) 95% confidence intervals of the effects estimates. Direct effects on the mediator correspond to the a_i (unstandardized) and a_i^* (standardized) paths from the respective explanatory latent variable X_i ($X_i \rightarrow M$). Direct effects on the outcome refer to the b/b* path linking the mediator with the outcome ($M \rightarrow Y$) and to the c_i/c_i^* paths from the respective explanatory latent variable X_i ($X_i \rightarrow Y_{adjM}$). Indirect effects on the outcome refer to the $a_ib/a_i^*b^*$ paths from the respective explanatory latent variable X_i ($X_i \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$). Total effects refer to the total associations $c_i + a_ib/c_i^* + a_i^*b^*$ ($X_i \rightarrow Y$). The standardized solution is completely standardized.

0.151 (0.036), BCa 95% CI [0.078; 0.225], $p < 0.001$; TE* = 0.169 (0.041), BCa 95% CI [0.086; 0.249], $p < 0.001$).

5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical implications

Few studies have looked at what determines customer magazine effectiveness. Thus, we conceptualized and tested a model that proposed reading experiences and a customer magazine's perceived journalistic quality to be essential for effectiveness. Media engagement was proposed to mediate the relationships between reading experiences and effectiveness.

The analyses first supported that, based on the model-data correspondence, our model may be a tenable explanation for the relationships observed in the data. By providing a theoretically informed and empirically substantiated explanatory model, this study advances research on the effectiveness of content marketing in general and customer magazines in particular, which scholars have called for (Koch et al., 2020; Koob, 2021). Our work lends weight to the notion that linking uses-and-gratifications-theory, the media experiences concept, and sensory perception literature with media engagement and journalistic quality research—approaches not combined before—is conducive to explaining the effectiveness of customer magazines.

Second, our investigation contributes to developing a picture of the importance of different categories of reading experiences that were considered typical of magazine reading in previous research for the effectiveness of customer magazines. Referring to the total effects, it emerged from the present study that gratifying *content* and *process* experiences are positively related to a customer magazine's effectiveness. Consistent with uses-and-gratifications-theory (Stafford et al., 2004) and studies of other media (Malthouse et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2015; Zhou et al., 2021) our findings imply that customer magazines are effective when the content is valued and the reading process is positive. Thus, the communicative effectiveness of a customer magazine is linked to serving both the "efferent stance," where the reader is concerned with what she will take away from the text and retain after reading, and the "aesthetic stance," in which the reading experience itself is significant for the reader during reading (Rosenblatt, 1986).

Third, the results on the effects of individual reading experiences on customer magazine effectiveness and the mediating role of media engagement in these relationships are noteworthy. Consistent with theory and previous studies (Calder et al., 2009, 2016; Zhou et al., 2021), all media experiences were found to indirectly positively relate to the effectiveness of customer magazines, mediated by media engagement. This result substantiates prior research that demonstrated the path from media experiences to media effects to be determined by how consumers process media (Valkenburg et al., 2016) and expands this reasoning to customer magazines. The established indirect links thus corroborate a media engagement mechanism by which gratifying content and process experiences with a customer magazine induce positive media-related cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes during and after reading that, in turn, translate into increased customer magazine effectiveness. Further, we found that identity-enforcing experiences, i.e., content experiences that help consumers construct and consolidate who they are, also contribute to customer magazine effectiveness directly and positively. The same was found for gratifying visual imagery-experiences, i.e., pleasant visual impressions while reading. These direct effects were in line with our expectations and previous research (Malthouse et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2015; Zhou et al., 2021). However, content experiences that were functionally (makes me smarter) and hedonically (makes me feel good) gratifying and process experiences that were haptically gratifying did not directly affect the effectiveness of customer magazines, contrary to expectations. Still, the mediated effects via media engagement existed, indicating indirect-only mediation.

Given the presence or absence of direct effects, there might therefore be differences between identity-enforcing- and visual imagery-experiences on the one hand and makes me smarter, makes me feel good, and haptic pleasure-experiences on the other with respect to the effectiveness of customer magazines. Further research is needed to elicit the possible reasons for these differences. It could be beneficial, e.g., to draw on consumer identity research (Forehand et al., 2021) and aesthetics theories (Welsch, 2017) to find an explanatory approach. Consumer identity research could contribute to a more precise understanding of the role of customer magazines in identity management and identity change processes, leading to a better understanding of why identity-relevant content seems particularly important for the effectiveness of customer magazines. Aesthetic theories could offer an approach to improve our understanding of the salient importance of visual sensory perceptions. Further research on the role of functional content gratifications in the form of information or advice for the effectiveness of customer magazines also seems warranted, as the analyses in this regard only pointed to a significant indirect effect in the absence of a direct and total effect. One possible explanation for this could be the existence of a suppressor variable that, by its omission, attenuates the effect of makes me smarter-experiences on the effectiveness of customer magazines and thus could lead to both the total effect and the direct effect not being significant (Rucker et al., 2011). Examining alternative and potentially competing indirect effects could enhance theory at this point. Future research might also investigate moderating variables. Epistemic curiosity (Litman, 2008), for example, may moderate the effect of makes me smarter-experiences on customer magazine effectiveness.

Fourth, we theoretically incorporated the journalistic quality perceived by consumers when reading customer magazines as a potential factor influencing the effectiveness of customer magazines, as called for by researchers (Koob, 2021). Our empirical investigation found that, consistent with prior research (e.g., Cole and Greer, 2013), consumers' perception of journalistic quality influences the effectiveness of customer magazines. This reinforces the notion that customer magazines can only adequately fulfill their marketing function if they do justice to their hybrid character between marketing and journalism (Denner et al., 2018), that is, irrespective of representing the interests of the publishing company and communicating its offerings and brand, they must also sufficiently preserve their journalistic character.

5.2. Practical implications

This investigation's insights could help marketers improve the conception of their customer magazines and content marketing initiatives. The strength of the association between the examined influencing factors and the communicative effectiveness of customer magazines varies, as the standardized total effects show. This suggests that content marketers might prioritize improvements in these factors in the order of importance for effectiveness.

On this basis, a first recommendation would be to consider which content offerings could further support readers' identity management, as identity enforcing experiences had emerged as the most important factor in the effectiveness of customer magazines. Ideas could be derived from narrative approaches to identity, which see the self as constituted in narratives including views of past and future, reality and possibilities, and the self in relation to others (Kirchner et al., 2006). With this in mind, promising magazine content could include not only advice on how to present and change oneself. It could also be about bringing readers in touch with themselves or other life concepts, with the past or inspiring futures, the real or alternative worlds.

Second, the study results suggest that it is pivotal to carefully arrange the haptic reading experience and to provide adequate gratifications in terms of the sensory perceptions of touch. Haptic appeal can be achieved by shaping magazine parameters such as format (size, shape, binding), weight of the magazine, or quality, surface texture and thickness of the paper (Le Masurier, 2012). These factors could be designed in such a way that a magazine's experience of touch corresponds to the needs of the target group in terms of the haptic core dimensions of comfort (with perceptions such as relaxing, calming) and arousal (with perceptions such as exciting, thrilling) (Guest et al., 2011).

Third, visual experiences during the reading process have emerged as a relevant influencing factor on the effectiveness of customer magazines. The visual appeal of a customer magazine can be enhanced by purposefully configuring design elements such as cover (with qualities like colors and simplicity of cognitive processing) (Püchel and Wellbrock, 2022), macrotopography (including aspects like size and position of text and images) and microtopography (with parameters like the spacing between letters and words) (Rolo, 2019). Other design options include the deliberate use of white space (e.g., to achieve calmness) (Rolo, 2018) or pictorial elements (e.g., to reach iconicity) (Jokeit and Blochwitz, 2020).

Fourth, offering content that provides optimized hedonic gratifications (makes me feel good-experiences) should be considered. It would be advisable to examine how an optimization of journalistic formats, thematic focus, thematic architectures, and topics could improve reader enjoyment and mood states. This usually involves content that offers benefits such as excitement, calming, distraction from worry, escape, diversion, or relaxation (Raney and Bryant, 2019). However, consumers' attribution of hedonic value to content is complex (Raney and Bryant, 2019) and warrants a magazine-specific approach. This should consider the target groups' characteristics (e.g., socio-demographic factors, personality variables) and the situational context in which a magazine is read. Hedonic reversal effects, which assume that enjoyment can follow a homeostatic function, should also be taken into account. This means that reduced enjoyment can occur at too high or too low levels of excitation (Ellingsen et al., 2015).

The results of this study fifth suggest that customer magazines need to maintain a high level of journalistic quality, as perceived by readers. Ensuring a high quality of the content production process, making a clear commitment to the values on which quality is based, and complying with normative quality criteria such as accuracy, diversity, or transparency is essential to this end (Meier, 2019). This also applies to reporting on the publishing company or sensitive topics, as consumers usually notice when these criteria are disregarded (Urban and Schweiger, 2014). From a user-centered perspective (Costera Meijer, 2020), however, it is not sufficient to comply with these objective criteria; rather, it is necessary to decipher consumers' journalistic quality expectations to be able to acknowledge them appropriately (Swart et al., 2022).

5.3. Limitations and future research

This study relied on a cross-sectional design for drawing causal inferences and analyzing mediation. However, mediated models and their causal paths implicate effects that take time and testing these paths using cross-sectional data may lead to biased estimates (Aguinis et al., 2017). Future studies should thus employ experimental or longitudinal designs.

The sample matched the population, which supports the generalizability of the results. However, non-probability online panel sampling was used for data collection. Since panel respondents were paid to participate, economic self-selection could have potentially biased the panel sample. To mitigate this, the socioeconomic composition of the sample was controlled using appropriate quotas, and no overly appealing incentive for participation was offered.

A third limitation is that the sample focuses on the population in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. Future investigations should cross-validate the suggested relationships in other countries. In addition, it cannot be assured that the findings can also be generalized to customer magazines in specific industries, to specific types of customer magazines, or for specific target groups. Future research could also address this matter.

Fourth, the mandatory answering approach used in this study could be a limitation. There are concerns that this approach could trigger reactance effects among respondents that could lead to lower data quality (Sischka et al., 2020). However, the findings on the effects of the approach on response behavior are mixed (Albaum et al., 2010; Sischka et al., 2020). Negative effects are to be expected in the investigation of sensitive domains, which was not the case in the present study.

Fifth, although approaches established in previous research were drawn on, the measurement of the study variables could be a limitation. A limiting factor could be the reliance on self-report measures. Future research could validate the results by employing physiological and neuroscientific measures (Alvino et al., 2020; Thissen et al., 2022).

Sixth, our discriminant validity assessment suggested satisfactory discriminant validity overall. There have been correlations between some model variables that, although theoretically expected and in line with previous studies, could still

be indicative of a marginal problem with discriminant validity. While the guidelines for assessing discriminant validity in such cases support the assumption of discriminant validity (Rönkkö and Cho, 2022), future studies could further scrutinize the discriminant validity of the respective constructs.

This study also offers directions for future research. It may be worthwhile to examine the importance of further reading experiences for customer magazine effectiveness. Examples would be social gratifications by providing conversation topics or contemplative gratifications by encouraging timeouts from digital media. It could also be valuable to investigate interaction effects between gratifications. Finally, future studies could investigate the role of negative reading experiences in the effectiveness of customer magazines, for example, triggered by sensationalist content.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the author, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

CK: conceptualization, methodology, software, validation, formal analysis, investigation, resources, data curation, writing—original draft preparation, writing—review and editing, visualization, supervision, project administration, and funding acquisition.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

References

Aguinis, H., Edwards, J. R., and Bradley, K. J. (2017). Improving our understanding of moderation and mediation in strategic management research. *Organ. Res. Methods* 20, 665–685. doi: 10.1177/1094428115627498

Albaum, G., Roster, C. A., Wiley, J., Rossiter, J., and Smith., S. M. (2010). Designing web surveys in marketing research: does use of forced answering affect completion rates? *J. Mark. Theory Pract.* 18, 285–294. doi: 10.2753/MTP1069-6679180306

Alvino, L., Pavone, L., Abhishta, A., and Robben, H. (2020). Picking your brains: where and how neuroscience tools can enhance marketing research. *Front. Neurosci.* 14, 577666. doi: 10.3389/fnins.2020.577666

Beard, F., Petrotta, B., and Dischner, L. (2021). A history of content marketing. *J. Hist. Res.* 13, 139–158. doi: 10.1108/JHRM-10-2020-0052

Beaton, D. E., Bombardier, C., Guillemin, F., and Ferraz, M. B. (2000). Guidelines for the process of cross-cultural adaptation of self-report measures. *Spine* 25, 3186–3191. doi: 10.1097/00007632-200012150-00014

Becker, L., and Jaakkola, E. (2020). Customer experience: fundamental premises and implications for research. *J. Acad. Mark. Sci.* 48, 630–648. doi: 10.1007/s11747-019-00718-x

Bell, L., Vogt, J., Willemse, C., Routledge, T., Butler, L. T., and Sakaki, M. (2018). Beyond Self-report: a review of physiological and neuroscientific methods to investigate consumer behavior. *Front. Psychol.* 9, 1655. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01655

Bentler, P. M., and Chou, C. P. (1987). Practical issues in structural modeling. *Sociol. Methods Res.* 16, 78–117. doi: 10.1177/0049124187016001004

Boczkowski, P. J., Mitchelstein, E., and Suenzo, F. (2020). The smells, sights, and pleasures of ink on paper: the consumption of print newspapers during a period marked by their crisis. *J. Stud.* 21, 565–581. doi: 10.1080/1461670X.2019.1670092

Boerman, S. C., van Reijmersdal, E. A., Rozendaal, E., and Dima, A. L. (2018). Development of the Persuasion Knowledge Scales of Sponsored Content (PKS-SC). *International Journal of Advertising* 37, 1–27. doi: 10.1080/02650487.2018.1470485

Brodie, B. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Juri,ć, B., and Ilić, A. (2011). Customer engagement: conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research. *J. Serv. Res.* 14, 252–271. doi: 10.1177/1094670511411703

Calder, B. J., Isaac, M. S., and Malthouse, E. C. (2016). How to capture consumer experiences: a context-specific approach to measuring engagement. *J. Advert. Res.* 56, 39. doi: 10.2501/JAR-2015-028

Calder, B. J., and Malthouse, E. C. (2004). Qualitative media measures: newspaper experiences. *Int. J. Media Manag.* 6, 123–30. doi: 10.1080/14241277.2004.9669388

Calder, B. J., and Malthouse, E. C. (2012). "Media engagement and advertising effectiveness," in *Kellogg on Advertising & Media.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. p. 1–36.

Calder, B. J., Malthouse, E. C., and Schaedel, U. (2009). An experimental study of the relationship between online engagement and advertising effectiveness. *J. Interact. Market.* 23, 321–331. doi: 10.1016/j.intmar.2009.07.002

Chen, F. F. (2007). Sensitivity of goodness of fit indexes to lack of measurement invariance. *Struct. Equ. Modeling.* 14, 464–504. doi: 10.1080/10705510701301834

Chen, X., Shen, X., Huang, X., and Li, Y. (2021). Research on social media content marketing: an empirical analysis based on china's 10 metropolis for Korean brands. *SAGE Open.* 11, 21582440211052951. doi: 10.1177/21582440211052951

Cheung, M. W. L. (2009). Comparison of methods for constructing confidence intervals of standardized indirect effects. *Behav. Res. Methods.* 41, 425–438. doi: 10.3758/BRM.41.2.425

Chwialkowska, A. (2019). The effectiveness of brand- and customer-centric content strategies at generating shares, 'likes', and comments. *J. Promot. Manag.* 25, 270–300. doi: 10.1080/10496491.2018.1443307

Cole, J. T., and Greer, J. D. (2013). Audience response to brand journalism: the effect of frame, source, and involvement. *J. Mass Commun. Q.* 90, 673–690. doi: 10.1177/1077699013503160

Content Marketing Forum (2022). *Content Marketing Baseline Study 2022.* Munich. Available online at: https://content-marketing-forum.com/cmf-studie/ (accessed February 02, 2023).

Content Marketing Institute (2021). *B2C Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends: Insights for 2021*. Available online at: https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2021/01/b2c-content-marketing-research-2021/ (accessed February 02, 2023).

Costera Meijer, I. (2020). Understanding the audience turn in journalism: from quality discourse to innovation discourse as anchoring practices 1995–2020. *J. Stud.* 21, 2326–2342. doi: 10.1080/1461670X.2020.1847681

Costera Meijer, I., and Bijleveld, H. P. (2016). Valuable journalism. *J. Stud.* 17, 827–839. doi: 10.1080/1461670X.2016.1175963

Cropanzano, R., Anthony, E. L., Daniels, S. R., and Hall, A. V. (2017). Social exchange theory: a critical review with theoretical remedies. *Acad. Manag. Ann.* 11, 479–516. doi: 10.5465/annals.2015.0099

Cropanzano, R., and Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: an interdisciplinary review. *J. Manage.* 31, 874–900. doi: 10.1177/0149206305279602

Dahlen, M., and Rosengren, S. (2016). If advertising won't die, what will it be? Toward a working definition of advertising. *J. Advertising.* 45, 334–345. doi: 10.1080/00913367.2016.1172387

Denner, N., Koch, T., and Himmelreich, S. (2018). News selection within customer magazines. *J. Pract.* 12, 888–900. doi: 10.1080/17512786.2017.1343092

DeSimone, J. A., Harms, P. D., and DeSimone, A. J. (2015). Best practice recommendations for data screening. *J. Organ. Behav.* 36, 171–181. doi: 10.1002/job.1962

Dessart, L. (2017). Social media engagement: a model of antecedents and relational outcomes. *J. Mark. Manag.* 33, 375–99. doi: 10.1080/0267257X.2017.1302975

Dessart, L., Veloutsou, C., and Morgan-Thomas, A. (2016). Capturing consumer engagement: duality, dimensionality and measurement. *J. Mark. Manag.* 32 (5–6):399–426. doi: 10.1080/0267257X.2015.1130738

du Plessis, C. (2022). A scoping review of the effect of content marketing on online consumer behavior. *SAGE Open.* 12, 21582440221093042. doi: 10.1177/21582440221093042

Efron, B. (1987). Better bootstrap confidence intervals. *J. Am. Stat. Assoc.* 82, 171–85. doi: 10.1080/01621459.1987.10478410

EFS Survey (2021). *Cologne.* Tivian XI.

Ellingsen, D.-M., Leknes, S., and Kringelbach, M. L. (2015). "Hedonic Value," in *Handbook of Value: Perspectives from Economics, Neuroscience, Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology* Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 265—86. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198716600.003.0013

Eurostat (2022a). *Employment and Activity by Sex and Age - Annual Data*. (2022). Available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/lfsi_emp_a/default/table?lang=en (accessed February 18, 2022).

Eurostat (2022b). *Population by Educational Attainment Level, Sex and Age (%)*. (2022). Available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/EDAT_LFS_9903__custom_2120662/default/table?lang=en (accessed February 18, 2022).

Eurostat (2022c). *Population on 1st January by Age, Sex and Type of Projection*. (2022). Available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/PROJ_19NP/default/table?lang=en&category=proj.proj_19n (accessed February 18, 2022).

Ferreira, M., Zambaldi, F., and de Sousa Guerra, D. (2020). Consumer engagement in social media: scale comparison analysis. *J. Product Brand Manag.* 29, 491–503. doi: 10.1108/JPBM-10-2018-2095

Forehand, M., Reed, A., and Saint Clair, J. K. (2021). Identity interplay: the importance and challenges of consumer research on multiple identities. *Consumer Psychol. Rev.* 4, 100–120. doi: 10.1002/arcp.1066

Fornell, C., and Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *J. Market. Res.* 18, 39–50. doi: 10.1177/002224378101800104

Fortunati, L., Taipale, S., and Farinosi, M. (2015). Print and online newspapers as material artefacts. *Journalism.* 16, 830–846. doi: 10.1177/1464884914545439

Friestad, M., and Wright, P. (1994). The persuasion knowledge model: how people cope with persuasion attempts. *J. Consumer Res.* 21, 1–31. doi: 10.1086/209380

Funder, D. C., and Ozer, D. J. (2019). Evaluating effect size in psychological research: sense and nonsense. *Adv. Methods Pract. Psychol. Sci.* 2, 156–168. doi: 10.1177/2515245919847202

Ganesan, S., and Hess, R. (1997). Dimensions and levels of trust: implications for commitment to a relationship. *Mark. Lett.* 8, 439–448. doi: 10.1023/A:1007955514781

Garg, R., Mukherjee, J., Biswas, S., and Kataria, A. (2016). An investigation into the concept of brand love and its proximal and distal covariates. *J. Relation. Market.* 15, 135–153. doi: 10.1080/15332667.2016.1209047

Gruen, T. W. (1995). The outcome set of relationship marketing in consumer markets. *Int. Business Rev. Relationship Market.* 4, 447–469. doi: 10.1016/0969-5931(95)00026-7

Guest, S., Dessirier, J. M., Mehrabyan, A., McGlone, F., Essick, G., Gescheider, G., et al. (2011). The development and validation of sensory and emotional scales of touch perception. *Attention, Perception, & Psychophys.* 73, 531–550. doi: 10.3758/s13414-010-0037-y

Haase, J., and Wiedmann, K. P. (2018). The sensory perception item set (spi): an exploratory effort to develop a holistic scale for sensory marketing. *Psychol. Market.* 35, 727–739. doi: 10.1002/mar.21130

Hair, J., Hult, G., Ringle, C., and Sarstedt, M. (2017). *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc. doi: 10.15358/9783800653614

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., and Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate Data Analysis*. Hoboken: Prentice Hall.

Harbers, F. (2016). Time to engage. *Digital J.* 4, 494–511. doi: 10.1080/21670811.2015.1124726

Haridakis, P., and Humphries, Z. (2019). "Uses and Gratifications," in *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research*. Oxfordshire: Routledge. p. 139–54. doi: 10.4324/9780203710753-13

Harrigan, P., Evers, U., Miles, M. P., and Daly, T. (2018). Customer engagement and the relationship between involvement, engagement, self-brand connection and brand usage intent. *J. Bus. Res.* 88, 388–396. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.11.046

Hasebrink, U., and Hölig, S. (2020). Audience-based indicators for news media performance: a conceptual framework and findings from Germany. *Media Commun.* 8, 3. doi: 10.17645/mac.v8i3.3191

Hayes, J. L., King, K. W., and Ramirez, A. (2016). Brands, friends, & viral advertising: a social exchange perspective on the ad referral processes. *J. Interactive Market.* 36, 31–45. doi: 10.1016/j.intmar.2016.04.001

He, A.-Z., Cai, Y., Cai, L., and Zhang, Y. (2021). Conversation, storytelling, or consumer interaction and participation? The impact of brand-owned social media content marketing on consumers' brand perceptions and attitudes. *J. Res. Interactive Market.* 15, 419–440. doi: 10.1108/JRIM-08-2019-0128

Hollebeek, L. D. (2011). Demystifying customer brand engagement: exploring the loyalty Nexus. *J. Marketing Manag.* 27, 785–807. doi: 10.1080/0267257X.2010.500132

Hollebeek, L. D., Conduit, J., and Brodie, R. (2016). Strategic drivers, anticipated and unanticipated outcomes of customer engagement. *J. Marketing Manag.* 32, 393–98. doi: 10.1080/0267257X.2016.1144360

Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., and Brodie, R. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: conceptualization, scale development and validation. *J. Interactive Market.* 28 (2):149–165. doi: 10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.002

Hollebeek, L. D., and Macky, K. (2019). Digital content marketing's role in fostering consumer engagement, trust, and value: framework, fundamental propositions, and implications. *J. Interact. Market.* 45, 27–41. doi: 10.1016/j.intmar.2018.07.003

Holliman, G., and Rowley, J. (2014). Business to business digital content marketing: marketers' perceptions of best practice. *J. Res. Interact. Market.* 8, 269–293. doi: 10.1108/JRIM-02-2014-0013

Hu, L., and Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equat. Model.* 6, 1–55. doi: 10.1080/10705519909540118

International Content Marketing Forum (2021). *ICMF Survey 2021: Europe's Biggest Content Marketing Study*. Available online at: https://content-marketing-forum.com/icmf-survey-2021-deutschland-kann-content-marketing-und-hat-die-nase-vorn (accessed February 02, 2023).

Jak, S., Jorgensen, T. D., Verdam, M. G. E., Oort, F. J., and Elffers, L. (2021). Analytical power calculations for structural equation modeling: a tutorial and shiny app. *Behav. Res. Methods* 53, 1385–1406. doi: 10.3758/s13428-020-01479-0

Jarvis, C. B., MacKenzie, S. B., and Podsakoff, P. M. (2003). A critical review of construct indicators and measurement model misspecification in marketing and consumer research. *J. Cons. Res.* 30, 199–218. doi: 10.1086/376806

Jere, M. G., and Davis, S. V. (2011). *An Application of Uses and Gratifications Theory to Compare Consumer Motivations for Magazine and Internet Usage among South African Women's Magazine Readers*. Pretoria: Southern African Business Review.

Jokeit, H., and Blochwitz, D. (2020). Neuro-Aesthetics and the Iconography in Photography. *PsyCh J.* 9, 444–457. doi: 10.1002/pchj.379

Jungnickel, K. (2011). Nachrichtenqualität aus Nutzersicht. Ein Vergleich zwischen Leserurteilen und wissenschaftlich-normativen Qualitätsansprüchen. *M&K Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft.* 59, 360–378. doi: 10.5771/1615-634x-2011-3-360

Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., and Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *Public Opin. Q.* 37, 509–523. doi: 10.1086/268109

Kenny, D. A. (2021). *Mediation 2021*. Available online at: https://davidakenny.net/cm/mediate.htm#IE (accessed February 12, 2023).

Kim, J., Lee, J., Jo, S., Jung, J., and Kang, J. (2015). Magazine reading experience and advertising engagement: a uses and gratifications perspective. *J. Mass Commun. Q.* 42, 147–60. doi: 10.1177/1077699014559914

Kirchner, C., Ferrari, M., and Spinner, K. (2006). Teil I: Ästhetische Bildung und Identität. *Ästhetische Bildung und Identität: Fächerverbindende Vorschläge für die Sekundarstufe I und II* (Munich). p. 11—33.

Klarmann, M., and Feurer, S. (2018). Control variables in marketing research. *Marketing ZFP.* 40, 26–40. doi: 10.15358/0344-1369-2018-2-26

Kline, R. B. (2016). *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling, 4th Ed*. New York, NY, US: Guilford Press.

Koch, T., Benno, V., and Schulz-Knappe, C. (2021). How much journalism is in brand journalism? How brand journalists perceive their roles and blur the boundaries between journalism and strategic communication. *Journalism.* 24, 146488492110298. doi: 10.1177/14648849211029802

Koch, T., Denner, N., and Gutheil, B. (2020). "Customer magazines as hybrids of journalism and PR," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. p. 136–45. doi: 10.1002/9781119168102.ch10

Koob, C. (2021). Determinants of content marketing effectiveness: conceptual framework and empirical findings from a managerial perspective. *PLoS ONE.* 16, e0249457. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0249457

Krishna, A., and Kim, S. (2021). Exploring the dynamics between brand investment, customer investment, brand identification, and brand identity fusion. *J. Bus. Res.* 137, 267–277. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.08.039

Kümpel, A. S., and Springer, N. (2016). Commenting Quality. *SCM Studies in Communication and Media* 5, 353–366. doi: 10.5771/2192-4007-2016-3-353

Kümpel, A. S., and Unkel, J. (2020). Negativity wins at last. *J. Media Psychol. Theories Methods Applicat.* 32, 89–99. doi: 10.1027/1864-1105/a000261

Lachowicz, M. J., Preacher, K. J., and Kelley, K. (2018). A novel measure of effect size for mediation analysis. *Psychol. Methods* 23, 244–261. doi: 10.1037/met0000165

Le Masurier, M. (2012). Independent magazines and the rejuvenation of print. *Int. J. Cultural Studies* 15, 383–398. doi: 10.1177/1367877911432059

Lehdonvirta, V., Oksanen, A., Räsänen, P., and Blank, G. (2021). Social media, web, and panel surveys: using non-probability samples in social and policy research. *Policy & Internet.* 13, 134–155. doi: 10.1002/poi3.238

Litman, J. A. (2008). Interest and deprivation factors of epistemic curiosity. *Pers. Individ. Dif.* 44, 1585–1595. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2008.01.014

MacCallum, T. C., Browne, M. W., and Sugawara, H. M. (1996). Power analysis and determination of sample size for covariance structure modeling. *Psychol. Methods* 1, 130–149. doi: 10.1037/1082-989X.1.2.130

Malthouse, E., Calder, B., and Eadie, P. (2003). "Conceptualizing and measuring magazine reader experiences," in *Worldwide Readership Research Symposia.* Evanston, IL: Media Management Center, Northwestern University. p. 285–306.

Malthouse, E. C., Calder, B. J., and Tamhane, A. (2007). The effects of media context experiences on advertising effectiveness. *J. Advert.* 36, 7–18. doi: 10.2753/JOA0091-3367360301

McKay-Nesbitt, J., Manchanda, R. V., Smith, M. C., and Huhmann, B. A. (2011). Effects of age, need for cognition, and affective intensity on advertising effectiveness. *Marketing Commun. Consumer Behah.* 64, 12–17. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2009.09.013

Meade, A. W., Johnson, E. C., and Braddy, P. W. (2008). Power and sensitivity of alternative fit indices in tests of measurement invariance. *J. Appl. Psychol.* 93, 568–592. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.93.3.568

Meier, K. (2019). Quality in Journalism. *Int. Encyclopedia J. Stud.* 73, 73–85. doi: 10.1002/9781118841570.iejs0041

Melumad, S., and Pham, M. T. (2020). The smartphone as a pacifying technology. *J. Consumer Research* 47, 237–255. doi: 10.1093/jcr/ucaa005

Mersey, R. D., Malthouse, E. C., and Calder, B. J. (2010). Engagement with online media. *J. Media Business Stud.* 7, 39–56. doi: 10.1080/16522354.2010.11073506

Mersey, R. D., Malthouse, E. C., and Calder, B. J. (2012). Focusing on the reader. *J. Mass Commun. Q.* 89, 695–709. doi: 10.1177/107769901245 5391

Mitchell, T. A., and Nelson, M. R. (2018). Brand placement in emotional scenes: excitation transfer or direct affect transfer? *J. Current Issues Res Advertisin.* 39, 206–219. doi: 10.1080/10641734.2018.1428252

Muthén, L. K., and Muthén, B. O. (2002). How to use a monte carlo study to decide on sample size and determine power. *Struct. Equat. Model.* 9, 599–620. doi: 10.1207/S15328007SEM0904_8

Nunnally, J., and Bernstein, I. (1994). *Psychometric Theory 3rd Edition.* New York, NY: MacGraw-Hill.

Padilla, M. A., and Divers, J. (2016). A comparison of composite reliability estimators: coefficient omega confidence intervals in the current literature. *Educ. Psychol. Meas.* 76, 436–453. doi: 10.1177/00131644155 93776

Palazzo, M., and Vollero, A. (2015). Conceptualizing content marketing: a delphi approach. *Mercati Competitività.* 1, 25–44. doi: 10.3280/MC2015-0 01003

Papyrina, V. (2015). Men and women watching and reading: gender and information processing opportunity effects in advertising. *J. Marketing Commun.* 21, 125–143. doi: 10.1080/13527266.2012.731423

Park, C. W., Macinnis, D. J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A. B., and Iacobucci, D. (2010). Brand attachment and brand attitude strength: conceptual and empirical differentiation of two critical brand equity drivers. *J. Mark.* 74, 1–17. doi: 10.1509/jmkg.74.6.1

Payne, G. A., Severn, J., and Dozier, D. (1988). Uses and gratifications motives as indicators of magazine readership. *J. Mass Commun. Q.* 65, 909–913. doi: 10.1177/107769908806500411

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S., and Podsakoff, N. (2011). Sources of method bias in social science research and recommendations on how to control it. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* 63, 539–569. doi: 10.1146/annurev-psych-120710-100452

Poels, K., and Dewitte, S. (2006). How to capture the heart? Reviewing 20 years of emotion measurement in advertising. *J. Advertising Res.* 46, 18–37. doi: 10.2501/S0021849906060041

Porter, C. O. L. H., Outlaw, R., Gale, J., and Cho, T. (2019). The use of online panel data in management research: a review and recommendations. *J. Manage.* 45, 319–344. doi: 10.1177/0149206318811569

Prilleltensky, I. (2020). Mattering at the intersection of psychology, philosophy, and politics. *Am. J. Community Psychol.* 65, 16–34. doi: 10.1002/ajcp.12368

Püchel, L., and Wellbrock, C.-M. (2022). Judging a magazine by its cover – a conceptual framework to understand sales through content and design interaction. *Int. J. Media Manag.* 24, 87–116. doi: 10.1080/14241277.2022.2089990

Putnick, D. L., and Bornstein, M. H. (2016). Measurement invariance conventions and reporting: the state of the art and future directions for psychological research. *Dev. Rev.* 41, 71–90. doi: 10.1016/j.dr.2016.06.004

Rafferty, A. E., and Griffin, M. A. (2004). Dimensions of transformational leadership: conceptual and empirical extensions. *Leadersh. Q.* 15, 329–354. doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2004.02.009

Randle, Q. (2003). Gratification niches of monthly print magazines and the world wide web among a group of special-interest magazine subscribers. *J. Comp.-Mediated Communicat.* 8, JCMC849. doi: 10.1111/j.1083-6101.2003.tb00224.x

Raney, A. A., and Bryant, J. (2019). "Entertainment and Enjoyment as Media Effect," in *Media Effects.* Oxfordshire: Routledge. p. 324–41. doi: 10.4324/9780429491146-21

Rau, H., and Andres, K. (2011). "Corporate publishing: tomorrow's journalism? From parajournalism to a post journalistic era?," in *ICA Conference 2011* (Boston, MA: International Communication Association).

Robinson, M. J., and Knobloch-Westerwick, S. (2021). "The role of affect and mood management in selective exposure to media messages," in *Routledge International Handbook of Emotions and Media.* p. 69—84. New York, NY: Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9780429465758-5

Rolo, E. (2018). "White Space in Editorial Design," in *Advances in Ergonomics in Design*, Rebelo, F., and Soares, M. Cham: Springer International Publishing. p. 443–52. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-60582-1_44

Rolo, E. (2019). "The Typographic Grid in the Editorial Project: An Essential Resource to the Graphic Consistency and Perception," in *Proceedings of the 20th Congress of the International Ergonomics Association (IEA 2018),* Bagnara, S., Tartaglia, R., Albolino, S., Alexander, T., and Fujita, Y. Cham: Springer International Publishing. p. 61–72. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-96059-3_7

Rönkkö, M., and Cho, E. (2022). An updated guideline for assessing discriminant validity. *Organ. Res. Methods* 25, 6–14. doi: 10.1177/1094428120968614

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1986). The Aesthetic Transaction. *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 20, no. 4 122–28. doi: 10.2307/3332615

Roux, T. (2021). Gratifications and readership of women's magazines in South Africa. *Global Media Commun.* 17, 189–212. doi: 10.1177/17427665211009935

Rubin, A. M. (2009). "Uses-and-gratifications perspective on media effects," in *Media Effects*. Oxfordshire: Routledge. p. 181–200. doi: 10.4324/9780203877111-14

Rubin, A. M., and Perse, E. M. (1987). Audience activity and television news gratifications. *Communic. Res.* 14, 58–84. doi: 10.1177/009365087014001004

Rucker, D. D., Kristopher, J., Preacher, Z. L., and Petty, R. (2011). Mediation analysis in social psychology: current practices and new recommendations. *Soc. Personal. Psychol. Compass* 5, 359–371. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-9004.2011.00355.x

Schijns, J. (2008). Customer magazines: an effective weapon in the direct marketing armory. *J. Int. Business and Econ.* 8, 70–78.

Schreiber, J. B., Nora, A., Stage, F. K., Barlow, E. A., and King, J. (2006). Reporting structural equation modeling and confirmatory factor analysis results: a review. *J. Educ. Res.* 99, 323–338. doi: 10.3200/JOER.99.6.323-338

Sischka, P. E., Alexandra, M., Neufang, K., and Schmidt, A. (2020). The impact of forced answering and reactance on answering behavior in online surveys. *Social Sci Comp. Rev.* 0894439320907067. doi: 10.1177/0894439320907067

Spector, P. E., and Brannick, M. T. (2011). Methodological urban legends: the misuse of statistical control variables. *Organ. Res. Methods* 14, 287–305. doi: 10.1177/1094428110369842

Spector, P. E., Rosen, H. A., Williams, R., and Johnson, R. (2019). A new perspective on method variance: a measure-centric approach. *J. Manage.* 45, 855–880. doi: 10.1177/0149206316687295

Spence, C. (2020a). Shitsukan — the multisensory perception of quality. *Multisens. Res.* 33, 737–775. doi: 10.1163/22134808-bja10003

Spence, C. (2020b). The multisensory experience of handling and reading books. *Multisens. Res.* 33, 902–928. doi: 10.1163/22134808-bja10015

Stafford, T. F., Stafford, M. R., and Schkade, L. (2004). Determining uses and gratifications for the internet. *Decision Sci.* 35, 259–288. doi: 10.1111/j.00117315.2004.02524.x

Stevens, L., Maclaran, P., and Catterall, M. (2007). A space of one's own: women's magazine consumption within family life. *J. Consumer Behav.* 6, 236–252. doi: 10.1002/cb.219

Stone, B. M. (2021). The ethical use of fit indices in structural equation modeling: recommendations for psychologists. *Front. Psychol.* 12, 783226. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.783226

Sundar, S. S., and Limperos, A. M. (2013). Uses and Grats 2.0: New gratifications for new media. *J. Broadcast. Electron. Media* 57, 504–525. doi: 10.1080/08838151.2013.845827

Swart, J., Kormelink, T. G., Meijer, I. C., and Broersma, M. (2022). Advancing a radical audience turn in journalism. Fundamental dilemmas for journalism studies. *Digital J.* 10, 8–22. doi: 10.1080/21670811.2021.2024764

Thissen, B. A. K., Schlotz, W., Abel, C., Scharinger, M., Frieler, K., Merrill, J., et al. (2022). At the heart of optimal reading experiences: cardiovascular activity and flow experiences in fiction reading. *Read. Res. Q.* 57, 831–845. doi: 10.1002/rrq.448

Thompson, B. (2000). "Ten Commandments of Structural Equation Modeling," in *Reading and Understanding MORE Multivariate Statistics*. Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association. p. 261–83.

Urban, J., and Schweiger, W. (2014). News quality from the recipients' perspective. *J. Stud.* 15, 821–840. doi: 10.1080/1461670X.2013.856670

Valkenburg, P. M., Peter, J., and Walther, J. (2016). Media effects: theory and research. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* 67:315–338. doi: 10.1146/annurev-psych-122414-033608

Van Osselaer, S. M. J. (2014). "Associative Learning and Consumer Decisions," in *Handbook of Consumer Psychology*. New York, NY: Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9780203809570.ch28

Van Reijmersdal, E. A., Neijens, P. C., and Smit, E. G. (2010). Customer magazines: effects of commerciality on readers' reactions. *J. Current Issues Res. Advert.* 32, 59–67. doi: 10.1080/10641734.2010.10505275

Wang, W., Malthouse, E., Calder, B., and Uzunoglu, E. (2019). B2B content marketing for professional services: in-person versus digital contacts. *Industrial Marketing Manag.* 81, 160–168. doi: 10.1016/j.indmarman.2017.11.006

Wang, Y. A., and Rhemtulla, M. (2021). Power analysis for parameter estimation in structural equation modeling: a discussion and tutorial. *Adv. Methods Pract. Psychological Sci.* 4, 2515245920918253. doi: 10.1177/2515245920918253

Webb, S., and Fulton, J. (2019). 'I Want to read it in my hands': the aesthetic attraction of independent women's magazines. *Aust. J. Rev.* 41, 273–287. doi: 10.1386/ajr_00011_1

Weiger, W. H., Wetzel, H. A., and Hammerschmidt, M. (2019). Who's pulling the strings? The motivational paths from marketer actions to user engagement in social media. *Eur. J. of Market.* 53, 1808–1832. doi: 10.1108/EJM-10-2017-0777

Weiss, D., and Sternadori, M. (2020). Viewing the Magazine Form Through the Lens of Classic Media Theories. *In The Handbook of Magazine Studies* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. 51–64. doi: 10.1002/9781119168102.ch4

Wellbrock, C., and Klein, K. (2014). Journalistische Qualität – eine empirische Untersuchung des Konstrukts mithilfe der Concept Map Methode. *Publizistik.* 59, 387–410. doi: 10.1007/s11616-014-0212-6

Welsch, W. (2017). *Ästhetisches Denken. 8th edition*. Ditzingen: Reclam.

Williams, L. J., Gavin, M. B., and Williams, M. L. (1996). Measurement and nonmeasurement processes with negative affectivity and employee attitudes. *J. Appl. Psychol.* 81, 88–101. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.81.1.88

Williams, L. J., Vandenberg, R. J., and Edwards, J. R. (2009). 12 Structural equation modeling in management research: a guide for improved analysis. *Acad. Manag. Annals* 3, 543–604. doi: 10.5465/19416520903065683

Winkler, N., Kroh, M., and Spiess, M. (2006). *Entwicklung einer deutschen Kurzskala zur zweidimensionalen Messung von sozialer Erwünschtheit. DIW Discussion Papers 579*. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (DIW). Available online at: http://hdl.handle.net/10419/18472 (accessed January 17, 2022).

Ytre-Arne, B. (2011). 'I Want to hold it in my hands': readers' experiences of the phenomenological differences between women's magazines online and in print. *Media Culture Society.* 33, 467–477. doi: 10.1177/0163443711398766

Zhao, X., Lynch, J. G., Chen, Q., and Deighton, J. (2010). Reconsidering Baron and Kenny: myths and truths about mediation analysis. *J. Consumer Res.* 37, 197–206. doi: 10.1086/651257

Zhou, Y., Calder, B. J., Malthouse, E. C., and Hessary, Y. K. (2021). Not all clicks are equal: detecting engagement with digital content. *J. Media Business Stud.* 2021, 1–18. doi: 10.1080/16522354.2021.1924558