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Online Word-of-Mouth Communication and Consumer Behaviour

*- a Study of the Influence of Word-of-Mouth Communication Through
Social Media*

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Resumé

Online word-of-mouth kommunikation og forbrugeradfærd

- *En undersøgelse af indflydelsen fra word-of-mouth kommunikation via sociale medier*

Brugen af online sociale medier som wikis, blogs, fora og sociale netværk er steget kraftigt inden for de seneste år. Dette har haft en effekt på måden vi vælger at kommunikere og som forbrugere har vi nu indflydelse på samfundets økonomi som aldrig før. Der er sket et kommunikationsmæssigt skift fra at vi som forbrugere før var passive modtagere af reklamer og virksomhedskommunikation til at vi nu er mere aktive kommunikatører.

Den øgede brug af Internettet generelt og sociale medier især har resulteret i nem adgang til information fra ligemænd og brugen af word-of-mouth kommunikation blandt forbrugere synes at have en stigende magt i forhold til virksomheders markedsføringssucces eller mangel herpå. Dette er en udfordring for virksomheder og der er derfor et behov for bedre at forstå den indflydelse word-of-mouth kommunikation har på forbrugeradfærd og købsbeslutninger.

Formålet med denne kandidatafhandling er derfor at undersøge den indflydelse word-of-mouth kommunikation fra venner og andre forbrugere via sociale medier har på forbrugeradfærd. Afhandlingen søger at besvare et antal forskningsspørgsmål omhandlende hvorfor kommunikerede beskeder og udtalelser fra venner og ligemænd er mere troværdige end kommunikationen fra virksomheder og om der er forskel på hvordan henholdsvis negativ og positiv word-of-mouth kommunikation påvirker forbrugeradfærd og -holdninger. Derudover er fire hypoteser blevet formuleret og testet gennem kvantitative og kvalitative undersøgelser. En grundlæggende hypotese da arbejdet med denne afhandling begyndte, var at den øgede brug af sociale medier har resulteret i at forbrugere vælger at kommunikere word-of-mouth beskeder online via sociale medier i højere grad end når de er offline.

En teoretisk ramme for afhandlingen forbinder teorier om sociale medier og Web 2.0 med grundlæggende kommunikationsteorier, teori omhandlende word-of-mouth kommunikation og teorier omkring forbrugeradfærd.

På baggrund af den kvantitative og den kvalitative undersøgelse kunne det konstateres at den øgede brug af sociale medier ikke har resulteret i en øget brug af online word-of-mouth

kommunikation. Det foretrækkes stadig at kommunikere om oplevelser med produkter og virksomheder i offline, ansigt-til-ansigt situationer. Dog anvendes online word-of-mouth i mange tilfælde og det kan påvises at udtalelser fra venner og andre forbrugere har en indflydelse på forbrugeradfærd; både på informationssøgning og på købsbeslutning.

Kommunikation fra venner og ligemænd, så som andre forbrugere, bliver fundet mere troværdige end virksomheders marketing kommunikation, da en vis grad af objektivitet er vigtig. Af samme årsag er der forskel på indflydelsen på forbrugeradfærd fra henholdsvis negativ og positiv word-of-mouth kommunikation, da positive synspunkter ofte synes for subjektive. Dog spiller forholdet mellem afsender og modtager af denne word-of-mouth kommunikation en vigtig rolle, idet kendskab til afsenderen har stor indflydelse på, om kommunikationen findes troværdig eller ej. Negative synspunkter bliver kommunikeret via de sociale medier i højere grad end positive synspunkter, da negative oplevelser med produkter og virksomheder ofte bliver husket bedre og derfor oftere er genstand for refleksion.

På baggrund af undersøgelsens resultater har det været muligt at fremlægge den indflydelse som word-of-mouth kommunikation har på forbrugeradfærd. Denne viden kan danne grundlag for hvorfor virksomheder bør betænke vigtigheden af de sociale medier i deres kommunikationsstrategier og overvåge de sociale medier for at få et overblik over hvem der omtaler dem og hvilke positive eller negative synspunkter der bliver kommunikeret.

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Abstract

The use of online social media such as wikis, blogs, forums and social networking sites has increased rapidly in the last couple of years. This has affected the way we communicate and as consumers we are allowed to participate in the economy like never before. We are experiencing a communicational shift towards consumers being more active communicators and no longer passive recipients of promotional messages. The increased use of social media has resulted in an easy access to peer-information and word-of-mouth communication among consumers has an increasing power on the success or failure of company's branding. This is challenging for companies and therefore there is a need to better understand how online word-of-mouth communication influences consumer behaviour and purchase intention.

Thus, the objective of this thesis is to investigate the use of word-of-mouth communication through social media and how it influences consumer behaviour. A number of research questions are formulated dealing with why messages from friends and peers are more trustworthy than messages from companies and whether there is a difference between how negative and positive sentiments influence consumer behaviour and opinions. Four hypotheses are formulated and tested through a multi-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative data. One of the main statements formulated in the beginning of the thesis work is that the increased use of social media has resulted in consumers choosing to communicate word-of-mouth messages online to a higher degree than they do offline. A theoretical framework for the thesis combines theories about social media and Web 2.0 with basic communication theories and theories on word-of-mouth communication and consumer behaviour.

An online survey is conducted to generate an overview of the use of online word-of-mouth communication among Danish users of social media. Additionally, interviews are employed to go into detail with questions that arise from the quantitative research.

Based on the theoretical framework and the empirical research, it is possible to establish the influence that the online word-of-mouth communication has on consumer behaviour and thereby the importance for companies to monitor social media.

1.0 Introduction

We have experienced a worldwide shift from a 19th century print culture via a 20th century electronic culture to a 21st century digital culture (Deuze, 2006, p. 63). Since its creation, the computer has been transformed into a revolutionary new medium for interpersonal, group and mass communication that has enabled users to communicate in new ways (Harrison and Barthel, 2009, p. 156). However, what have changed are not so much the technologies of the computer medium as it is the way people use these technologies to e.g. communicate or accomplish certain goals.

Due to deep changes in technology, demographics, business, economy and the world, we are entering a new age where people participate in the economy like never before (Tapscott and Williams, 2006, p. 10) and their different opinions on products and companies – whether positive or negative – have an increasing power in determining a company's success – or lack thereof. These changes have resulted in an increased use of social media like wikis, blogs and social networks since “[t]he online world presents a variety of forums and means for social expression, each of which present challenges and opportunities that will reach to the heart of the consumer-marketer relationship” (Kozinets et al., 1999, p. 257). In relation to this, a report by Harvard Business Review Analytic Services states that the average amount of time spent on particularly social networking sites increased 82% last year (in 2010) (Harvard Business Review, p. 2). In Denmark, particularly, the percentage of population (aged 16-74 years) connected to at least one type of social network has increased from 42 percent in 2009 to 54 percent in 2010 (Danmarks Statistik, 2011, p. 26).

The internet has become a collaborative space where people can interact and through social media, people seem to be communicating like never before: “Now, regardless of where they are in the world, people with similar interests, or with similar backgrounds, or with similar attitudes, can join communities of like-minded people, and share views, exchange information, and build relationships” (Gauntlett and Horsley, 2004, p. 16). This form of online word-of-mouth communication seems to offer new opportunities and challenges for businesses because in connection to this, consumers' interests for businesses have grown rapidly and they are therefore to a larger extent communicating about products and companies behind the products online – affecting the images of these companies and brands. Hence, “[a]lthough companies may consider their website to be the premier place that people will

visit to find information about the company, this is no longer the case” (Bradley, 2010, p. 248). Additionally, “[t]he rapid spread of information over the Internet and the heightened impact of the media have broken down physical and geographical boundaries and caused organizations to become increasingly cautious about their reputations” (Deshpande and Sarkar, 2010, p.41). People tend to believe what they hear from their social networks and peers¹ – not what they are told by the companies alone. This is for example supported by a 2007 survey by Deloitte which states that 82 percent of purchase decisions have been directly influenced by consumer reviews (Deloitte & Touche, 2007).

The new social media offer opportunities for companies because “[n]ever before have companies had the opportunity to talk to millions of customers [...]. [However,] never before have millions of consumers had the ability to talk to each other, criticizing or recommending products – without the knowledge and input from a company” (Harvard Business Review, 2011, p. 2). This offers challenges for companies because they are no longer the single source of information about themselves and their products and the power of their communicated messages has decreased in favour of the power of the consumers.

1.1 Problem Statement

This thesis will investigate the use of word-of-mouth communication through social media and. Furthermore, the thesis aims to analyse the influence of this online word-of-mouth communication on Danish social media users’ consumer behaviour².

It is very easy to find literature on the subjects of social media and word-of-mouth communication and suggestions to how companies can benefit from these. Most literature deals with the opportunities that social media and word-of-mouth communication offer for companies and not so much the challenges that it entails. As seen with the Deloitte survey, it is a known fact that purchase decisions are often influenced by reviews and with an increased use of social media these product reviews are easy to distribute and to read online. Therefore, there is a need for companies to better understand how online word-of-mouth communication

¹ As used herein, the word “peers” refers to people who are equal in areas such as age, education or social class as well as fellow consumers.

² Consumer behaviour includes processes of browsing and selection, purchase, use, evaluation, influencing others and disposal (Varey, 2001, p. 42)

can influence consumer behaviour. Furthermore, it is an interesting question why this phenomenon occurs and what this change in influence implies for companies since it is easy to believe that an increased use of social media has affected and increased the consumers' use of online word-of-mouth communication

Based on the above, the thesis will answer the following research questions:

- 1. Why do word-of-mouth messages from friends and peers through social media tend to be more trustworthy than messages from companies?*
- 2. How do communicated word-of-mouth messages from friends and peers affect consumer behaviour?*
- 3. Is there a difference in the influence of positive vs. negative word-of-mouth messages?*
- 4. Are negative word-of-mouth messages being communicated online to a greater extent than positive messages?*

For the purpose of answering the problem statement and the research questions, a number of hypotheses have been formulated. "A hypothesis is a precise expectation as to the relations that will be found when a phenomenon is investigated empirically" (Rasmussen et al. 2006, p. 51). According to Neuman (2000), a hypothesis has five characteristics:

1. It has at least two variables.
2. It expresses a causal or cause-effect relationship between the variables.
3. It can be expressed as a prediction or an expected future outcome.
4. It is logically linked to a research question and a theory.
5. It is falsifiable; that is, it is capable of being tested against empirical evidence and shown to be true or false. (p. 128).

The following hypotheses have been formulated based on the theoretical framework of the thesis and will form the basis of the empirical research. In the literature, it is possible to find good arguments for the hypotheses, but the purpose of the empirical research is to investigate whether they can be empirically verified. For the sake of clarity, the hypotheses are also stated in the review of the theoretical framework to show the link between the hypotheses and the theory. Thus, the following four hypotheses will be tested through the empirical research:

H₁: Through social media, Danish social media users contribute more to word-of-mouth communication than they do in offline, face-to-face situations.

H₂: Danish social media users find word-of-mouth communication from friends and peers more trustworthy users than communicated messages from companies.

H₃: Danish social media users communicate negative word-of-mouth sentiments through social media to a higher extent than they communicate positive sentiments.

H₄: Negative word-of-mouth sentiments have more influence on the consumer behaviour of Danish social media users than positive sentiments.

1.2 Purpose and Delimitation of the Thesis

An important aspect when writing a thesis is stating a specific purpose as this will be a guide to finding an appropriate method for answering the problem statement. According to Andersen (2003), the purpose should be of decisive importance when choosing the appropriate research method (p. 45). As mentioned in the problem statement, this thesis aims at investigating the influence of word-of-mouth communication through social media, the effects that this has and how and when this online word-of-mouth communication is used. Therefore, the purpose is interpretive; to understand how Web users behave in situations of online word-of-mouth communication and the underlying reasons why they behave the way they do.

According to Andersen (2003), the person or the phenomenon that is the subject of research in the interpretive type of research, is seen as an entity embedded in a cultural, social and historical context. The meanings that people have given the phenomenon are subjects of the research and communication has a central role in the process of interpretation (p. 27). It is not the purpose of this thesis to offer recommendations to companies communicating via social media, but rather to offer an insight into the online word-of-mouth behaviour of Danish social media users as to call attention to where these companies will meet challenges.

The empirical research is carried out in the form of a questionnaire and additional interviews. The empirical research is designed to grasp different forms of social media and asks the respondents which social media they are using. The research is directed at particularly Danish social media users and is therefore conducted in Danish. Thus, the results of the empirical research will be limited to specifically Danish social media users and will reflect a tendency

in Danish culture only. It is a possibility that the results would be different if the research was carried out with a focus in another national culture as the use of the Internet in general and social media in particular are expected to differ from country to country.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Research Methods

The thesis is build upon a hypothetico-deductive method. According to the Sage Encyclopaedia of Social Science Research Methods,

[t]his method is commonly known as the “method of hypothesis.” It involves obtaining or developing a theory, from which a hypothesis is logically deduced (deduction), to provide a possible answer to a “why” research question associated with a particular research problem. The hypothesis is tested by comparing it with appropriate data from the context in which the problem is being investigated (Blaikie, 2003)

Hence, the thesis will begin with setting up a theoretical framework where the hypotheses will be formulated. Subsequently, the hypotheses are tested through empirical research in order to answer the overall research question.

As mentioned in the delimitation, the objects of the empirical research are Danish users of social media. Since I, as a researcher, am one of these users, I acknowledge that I can be somewhat biased. Therefore, the thesis is written on the basis of the constructivist paradigm that states that the researcher, as an insider, has to reflect on his/her subjectivity and pre-understanding of the subject and how these reflect the process of for example the formulation of research questions and analysis of research (Jordansen and Madsen, 2010, p. 63).

1.3.2 Primary Data

In order to verify or falsify the formulated hypotheses and answer the research questions, a complementary research approach is chosen. Thus, two sets of data (quantitative and qualitative) are employed to address different but complementary aspects of the investigation (Brannen, 2004, p. 314).

A quantitative method is chosen to form the base of the empirical data. Rasmussen et al. (2006) mention about quantitative methods that “[t]he main aim of carrying out a quantitative study is to be able to generalize – i.e. to be able to draw conclusions from a small part of a larger group that will apply to the whole group” (Rasmussen et al., 2006, p. 123). Therefore, I have chosen to design a questionnaire as I believe this is the most appropriate quantitative tool for collecting data for this thesis.

Furthermore, qualitative interviews are conducted as a complement to the questionnaire. “Qualitative methods (such as *in-depth interviews* and *focus groups*) are typically used [...] for studies in which it is important to go into depth as regards the respondents’ less tangible precursors of behaviour such as attitudes, feelings and motives (Rasmussen et al, 2006, p. 93). Therefore, qualitative interviews are carried out to go into depth with issues investigated in the quantitative questionnaire.

The exact method of this data collection will be reviewed in detail later in the thesis.

1.3.3 Secondary Data

Secondary data is also used in the thesis. “Secondary data is [...] produced by others, i.e. for another purpose than for one’s own project” (Rasmussen et al., 2006, p. 84). The previously mentioned Deloitte survey is an example of this use of secondary data even though it is only used as a source of preliminary knowledge. The same goes for the statistics from the Harvard Business Review Analytics Services report and statistics on Danes’ use of social media by Danmarks Statistik (Statistics Denmark). Furthermore, research results from another CBS Master’s thesis are used. Also, internal statistics from Facebook and YouTube are used to show the popularity of these social media sites. Additionally, research articles are important sources of theoretical information. Most of these articles provide theories based on the results of their own empirical research and are therefore also used in the thesis as a source of secondary data. Because of the delimitation of the thesis, Danish statistics are used where relevant related to the study. However, also more general statistics are used where appropriate.

1.4 Thesis Structure

The following figure shows the structure of the thesis. Afterwards, the different chapters are described shortly as a guide to reading the thesis.



Figure 1: Thesis structure

The final thesis is the result of an iterative process where the collation of knowledge and the formulation of the problem statement are invariably influencing each other. An iterative process is: “A process for arriving at a decision or a desired result by repeating rounds of analysis or a cycle of operations. The objective is to bring the desired decision or result closer to discovery with each operation (iteration)” (Business Dictionary).

1.0: Introduction: General introduction to the thesis. The chapter introduces the study that is carried out in the thesis and why this study is interesting compared to studies that have previously been undertaken. Hence, the problem statement and the associated research questions and hypotheses are important parts of the introduction. Furthermore, the purpose of the thesis is clarified as is the delimitation that ensures that the target of the empirical research is narrowed down. The purpose of the introduction is to set the stage of the thesis. Furthermore, this chapter introduces the chosen methodology and reflections for answering the problem statement.

2.0: Theoretical Framework: Introduction to the theories and concepts being investigated in the thesis. The role of this chapter is to provide an understanding of the theoretical framework of the thesis. An important part of this chapter is to investigate the change in communication theories that has been a result of the way we currently use technologies to communicate. The two key concepts of the thesis – social media and word-of-mouth communication – are reviewed together with theory on Web 2.0 and theories on communication, digital culture, social comparison and consumer behaviour and purchase decision are. As a clarification, two

cases have been chosen to illustrate some of the examined phenomena: ‘Nestlé vs. Greenpeace’ and ‘United Breaks Guitars’. Additionally, this chapter contains a short discussion of the reliability of social media.

3.0: Data Collection: The empirical method introduced in chapter 1 is reviewed in more detail. It is clarified why these methods have been chosen for the thesis and how they are applied. Most importantly, in the review of the empirical method it is explained how the questionnaire has been developed and how the survey has been conducted and how the interviews have been carried out and used as a supplement to the questionnaire.

4.0: Analysis and Discussion of Data: This chapter contains the results and analysis of the empirical research study. Here, the empirical data meets the theoretical background and the formulated hypotheses are tested and either verified or falsified. Furthermore, the research questions are answered.

5.0: Conclusion: In this chapter, the important findings of the thesis are summed up and the issues formulated in the problem statement are answered. Furthermore, the methods used for reaching the objective are evaluated and the results are put into perspective and further research is suggested.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

2.1. Social Media

Social media tools enable mass-conversation among people with Internet access who may want to talk about everything to and about everybody. “Humans like to know about the good, the bad, and the ugly side of people, places, and situations, as well as to share this information with others, often as quickly as possible” (Safko and Brake, 2009, pp. 3-4). Modern technology has made this easier for everybody with Internet access and time and geography are no longer issues that limit communication because people can communicate through social media on a global scale and without time constraints. But what exactly is social media? The concept is defined in a lot of the literature. The following are just a few of these definitions.

In “The Social Media Bible”, the concept of social media is defined as:

[...] activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media. Conversational media are Web-based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos, and audios. (Safko and Brake, 2009, p. 6)

In their research article, Kietzmann et al. (2011) write that: “Social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content” (p. 241).

There is an overall agreement in the literature that social media provide technologies that enable people to connect, share and co-create content online – i.e., it enables conversations. Additionally, Mayfield (2008) sums up five key characteristics of social media: participation, openness, conversation, community and connectedness (p. 5). Thus, social media enable what Kozinets et al. (1999) call “e-tribalising”:

Not only are people retribalizing, they are ‘e-tribalizing’. Networked computers empower people around the world as never before to disregard the limitations of geography and time, find another and gather together in groups based on a wide range of cultural and subcultural interests and social affiliations. (p. 253)

Social media serve many options for Web users – both consumers and companies. As the previously mentioned Harvard study report so perfectly explains it:

The proliferation of social media is mind-boggling. Publishing like TypePad and WordPress offer any company or customer the chance to write a blog, while Microblogging on Twitter allows a rapid-fire stream of real-time commentary, complaints, and recommendations. Social networking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn bring together friends, fans and detractors, while wikis and social news sites the Delicious and Digg quickly move links and ideas around the Web. Customers planning a vacation, a meal, or a haircut can turn to review sites [...]. Meanwhile, on multimedia sites like YouTube, companies can post promotional clips, while disgruntled consumers can capture scenes of poor service or damaged products on their iPhones and quickly upload the video. (Harvard Business Review, 2011, p. 2)

The concepts of Web 2.0 and social media have often been given the same meaning. Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) connect the two concepts and state that: “Social Media is a group of

internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (p. 61). The concept of Web 2.0 will be reviewed later in the thesis

Social media include social networks, wikis, forums, podcasts, content communities and microblogging (Mayfield, 2008, p. 6). This distinction by Mayfield (2008) is just one among many and it can be discussed whether some of Mayfield’s categories may belong to the same form of social media. For example, content communities and microblogging can be said to be forms of social networks as well.

In the following, some of the primary examples of social media are reviewed in more detail. These are the primary distinctions of social media used in this thesis. They are examples of the perhaps most known types of social media and are therefore the primary types under investigation in the empirical research.

2.1.1 Social Networking Sites

Perhaps the best known types of social media are social networking sites that “allow people to build personal websites and then connect with friends to share content and communication” (Mayfield, 2008, p. 6) by electronic means. Most often, these people are connected through common interests, hobbies or goals. According to Preece and Maloney-Krichmar (2002) “[t]hese networks enable people to discuss topics and contact others with whom they would otherwise not communicate” (p.4). Therefore, social networking sites are good examples of the enablement and perhaps increased use of communication because Web users tend to communicate with more people online than they would offline. In addition, Preece and Maloney-Krichmar (2002) state that some of the relationships on social networking sites “would probably flounder without their online component because of geographical distance” (p. 4).

Examples of social networking sites are the microblogging network Twitter and the more business oriented LinkedIn. One of the most well-known social networking sites is Facebook with more than 500m active users worldwide. This makes Facebook “one of the most-trafficked sites in the world” (Facebook Fact Sheet). One of Facebook’s most important features, which makes the site interesting in relation to online word-of-mouth communication,

is the addition of the ‘like-button’ (sometimes known as the ‘share-button’). The ‘like-button’ is increasingly to be found on websites and blog postings and enable people to easily inform their friends about those things that are of interest to them (Bradley, 2011, p. 27). A new social networking site is Google+ where you have more power over who has access to what. In Google+ you can choose to share different things with different people and thereby keep things more private. Google+ has an equivalent to Facebook’s ‘like-button’, ‘+1’, which also enables users to easily share content from other parts of the Web.

2.1.2 Content Communities

Content communities are “communities which organise and share particular kinds of content” (Mayfield, 2008, p. 6). Also, “[c]ontent communities are a bit like social networking sites because you have to register, you get a home page and you can make connections with online friends. However, they are focussed on sharing a specific type of content” (Mayfield, 2008, p. 24) such as photographs (Flickr) or videos (YouTube). YouTube is perhaps the best known content community. It is localised in 22 countries across 24 languages and has more than two billion views a day (YouTube Facts and Figures). What is interesting about YouTube is that you do not have to be a member to view the many different videos. This makes YouTube a popular platform for easily accessible information. Moreover, YouTube allows comments to be posted on the videos which extends the communication to other users and enables feedback. However, the commenting is only possible if you are a member, but the comments can be seen by everyone.

2.1.3 Wikis

Another example of social media and how much influence communication through social media can have on Web users is wikis. “A wiki is a website that allows the creation and editing of any number of interlinked web pages via a web browser [...]. Wikis are typically powered by wiki software and are often used to create collaborative works” (Wikipedia A). Examples of wikis are community websites and corporate intranets. However, perhaps the most well-known and used wiki is the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia. “Wikipedia is written collaboratively by largely anonymous Internet volunteers who write without pay. Anyone

with Internet access can write and make changes to Wikipedia articles” (Wikipedia B). This means that the articles on Wikipedia can be written by ordinary people as well as experts. However, Wikipedia is an example of companies being relegated to the sidelines as mere observers: “Wikipedia [...] expressly forbids the participation of firms in its online community” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 60). This offers great challenges for companies because they cannot control what is being written about them. Another perspective that companies must be aware of is that “collaborative projects are trending towards becoming the main source of information for many consumers. As such, although not everything written on Wikipedia may actually be true, it is *believed* to be true by more and more Internet users” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 62).

2.1.4 Forums

An Internet forum is an online discussion site where people can post messages and thereby hold online conversations. Forums “provide consumers with the ability to share their experiences, opinions, and knowledge with others on specific topics” (Bickart and Schindler, 2001, p. 32). A forum can be centred on almost any topic and contain a number of sub forums each centred on several subjects. Forums are often built into Web sites as an added feature but some exist as stand-alone entities (Mayfield, 2008, p. 23). “Forums can be places for lively, vociferous debate, for seeking advice on a subject, for sharing news, for flirting, or simply for willing away time with idle chat” (Mayfield, 2008, p. 23). This makes forums a obvious places for sharing experiences with products and companies.

Thus, what makes forums unavoidable tools for online word-of-mouth communication is that

The opinions and accounts of personal product experiences found on an Internet forum are likely to be judged to be from trustworthy sources because their authors are fellow consumers, perceived to have no vested interest in the product and no intentions to manipulate the reader. Second, information exchanged on Internet forums may be more *relevant* to the consumers. (Bickart and Schindler, 2001, pp. 32-33)

2.1.5 The Social Technographics Profile

Forrester Research has introduced the Social Technographics Profile which is a way to group people based on the social media activities in which they participate. These six groups are each placed on the Social Technographics Ladder which classifies consumers according to their level of involvement in the social media placing them into one or more of the six groups. Making this Social Technographics Ladder can be very helpful to companies interacting on the Web as it shows their customers' online behavioural pattern. The Social Technographics Profile includes creators, critics, collectors, joiners, spectators and inactives (Li and Bernoff, 2008, pp. 41 and 43). The following figure shows the 2007 presentation of the ladder and the relative sizes of each group in Europe:

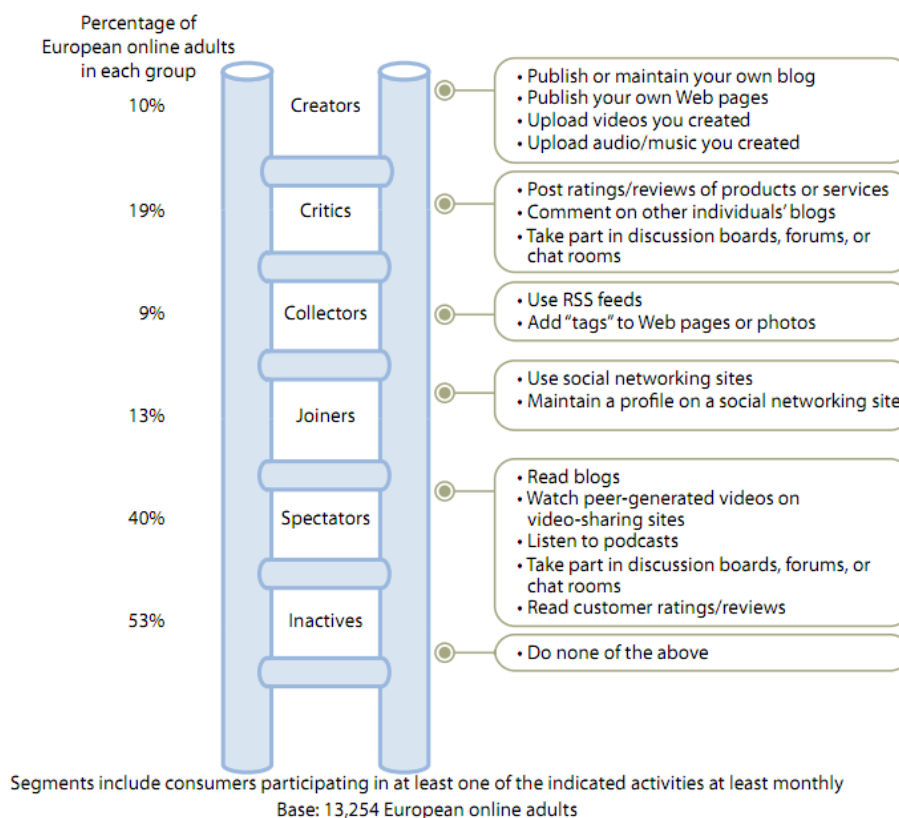


Figure 1: The Social Technographics Profile of Online Europeans. Source: Jennings, 2008, p. 2.

The European countries represented in Forrester's ladder are the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland, Sweden and the Netherlands. Denmark is not represented in this

Forrester ladder. However, a Social Technographics Profile for particularly Danish social network users has been created in another Master's thesis from Copenhagen Business School in which they are divided as follows:

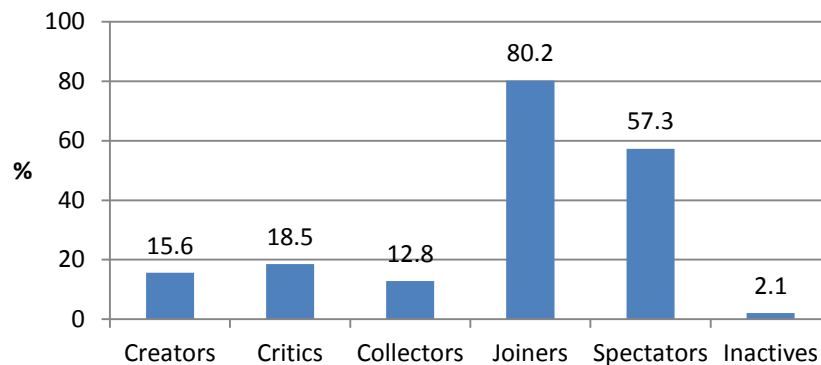


Figure 2: The Social Technographics Profile for Danish users. Adapted from: Christensen, 2011, pp. 71-72.

Comparing the two figures, there is a pronounced difference in the size of one of the profiles: the inactives. The data in both of the figures is the result of quantitative measures. However, the two surveys have been distributed in different ways and to different types of Internet users. Where the Forrester research has been distributed to general Internet users, Christensen's research has been distributed through social media and to users of social networks and few of the respondents are therefore inactives. However, Christensen's focus group is almost similar to that of this thesis and therefore the data in figure 2 will be the data being further considered in the research analysis of the thesis.

2.1.6 How Reliable are Social Media?

As earlier mentioned, even though not everything written on Wikipedia may be true, it is believed to be true by many Internet users. This may also be the case in other social media platforms as well. However, can social media users be sure that what they believe to be written by a peer about a product or company is not really written by the originating company itself? One example that questions this is described in a newly published article by PRWeek. As mentioned above, the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia expressly forbids companies to participate in its online community. However, the PRWeek article explains that "[a] string of senior business figures have had their Wikipedia entries burnished by an anonymous

‘reputation cleanser’, believed to be a senior figure in the PR industry” (Singleton, 2011). According to the article, “the London-based fixer has changed entries for Carphone Warehouse co-founder David Ross, Von Essen Group chairman Andrew Davies, British property developer David Row and billionaire Saudi tycoon Maan Al-Sanea” (Singleton, 2011). An investigation has shown that in most cases negative details were erased but also positive information was sometimes added to the entries.

This case suggests that no one can actually be sure of the senders of the messages on social media platforms. If users of social media do not know exactly who the sender of the message is or maybe actually have an online relationship with the sender, they have no way of knowing who the real sender of the message is. As has been written in a LinkedIn post about the before mentioned article: “The great thing about Wikipedia is that anyone can edit entries. The terrible thing about Wikipedia is that anyone can edit entries” (Allen, 2011). This is an important downside of social media in general because the basic idea of social media is that everyone can participate and so it is almost impossible to control or know who says what. So, we can adjust the quote to: The great thing about social media is that anyone can participate. The terrible thing about social media is that anyone can participate. Can anyone really know if the fellow community member or the ‘independent’ blogger is that independent and not paid by some company to create positive publicity. This poses a challenge to users of these social media because they have to learn to be critical and assess everything they read by someone unknown. However, it may also have a positive effect because as these Internet users learn to be more conscious about what they write and critical about the messages they read, the quality of the online communication may increase.

Other challenges with the fact that anyone can participate are the so called ‘Internet trolls’ or ‘forum trolls’. These are persons who post outrageous messages on forums in order to get a reaction and an answer from other users and perhaps start a debate. Often, these trolls post offensive messages about other forum members, but they can also make negative posts about products and companies. Some of these posts can appear to be ‘real’ and some might therefore find them trustworthy which may result in otherwise false messages influencing the images of companies and brands. This offers a challenge for the success of online word-of-mouth communication. The insecurity it entails to know that anyone can participate and write messages online may result in online word-of-mouth communication being less successful.

2.2 Web 2.0

As previously mentioned, the concepts of social media and Web 2.0 are often compared. Therefore, I have found it appropriate to also review the concept of Web 2.0 so it can be distinguished from the concept of social media.

The phrase ‘Web 2.0’ was invented by Tim O’Reilly, founder and CEO of O’Reilly Media, and is said to signify a new phase in Web development and user experience (Everitt and Mills, 2009, p. 749). The suffix “2.0” suggests a new version of the Web but as previously mentioned the “new” Web 2.0 just shows a change in the way people use the technologies of the “old” Web 1.0 to accomplish goals such as collaboration and participation. According to Gauntlett (2007) “[t]he spirit of ‘Web 2.0’ is that individuals should open themselves to collaborative projects instead of seeking to make and protect their ‘own’ material.” So, the concept of Web 2.0 is more of an ideology – it does not refer to a “new” Web, but to a change in the way we think about and use the Web.

The difference from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 is often mentioned in the literature. For example, Tapscott and Williams (2006) say that: “[w]here the old web was about Web sites, clicks, and “eyeballs”, the new Web is about communities, participation and peering” (p. 19). Also Chiang et al. (2009) mention the shift from the old to the new web: “Web 2.0 implies a new era that liberate Web users from linear, context-binding, and goal-directed information seeking and instead opens doors to easy creation, collaboration, sharing, and remixing of content on the Web for ordinary users” (p. 1354). Harrison and Barthel (2011) mention that “Web 2.0 services and applications make possible more dynamic interactions between clients and servers, more engaging webpage displays and applications and ultimately more direct, interactive and participative user-to-user interactions than heretofore experienced on the web” (p. 157).

Harrison and Barthel (2011) suggest a communicational change in the perception of who is managing the roles of sender and receiver in online communication: “[...] Web 2.0 is founded on a radical reconceptualization of the user, from consumer of online products and information produced by the companies to producer of online products and information that they share with others, including companies” (p. 160).

The idea of Web 2.0 is that people can contribute to Web content regardless of technical expertise: “Web 2.0 applications enable users with little technical knowledge to construct and share their own media and information products, as they do, for example, on social networking sites” (Harrison and Barthel, 2011, p. 157). Harrison and Barthel (2011) further suggest that “users are gratified in significant ways by the ability to play an active role in generating content, rather than only passively consuming that which is created for them by others” (p. 157). This shows a communicational shift from Web users being passive receivers of information to them being active senders of information. So, “Web 2.0 implies a new era that liberates Web users from linear, context-binding, and goal-directed seeking and instead opens doors to easy creation, collaboration, sharing, and remixing of content on the Web for ordinary users” (Chiang et al., 2009, p. 1354).

The concept of social media is more tangible than Web 2.0 since the latter is more of an ideology. However, the concept of Web 2.0 is inevitable when discussing social media. The two concepts are interconnected and some of the literature on the subject “consider Web 2.0 as the platform for the evolution of Social Media” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

2.3 Word-of-Mouth Communication

The concept of word-of-mouth communication is an important one for companies because research has shown that word-of-mouth communication affects the majority of all purchase decisions for the consumers (Kozinets et al., 2010, p. 71). This can be supported by the earlier mentioned survey by Deloitte.

Word-of-mouth communication as a concept has existed for many years. An old definition is that word-of-mouth communication is “oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, regarding a brand, product, or service” (Arndt, 1967, cited in Breazeale, 2008, pp. 297-298). Furthermore, according to Breazeale (2008), word-of-mouth communication has been described as having a fleeting nature because it occurs in a spontaneous manner and then disappears as soon as it has been uttered (p. 298). However, in the age of the internet the old concept of word-of-mouth communication seems to need a redefinition.

The following figure illustrates the evolution of word-of-mouth communication theory:

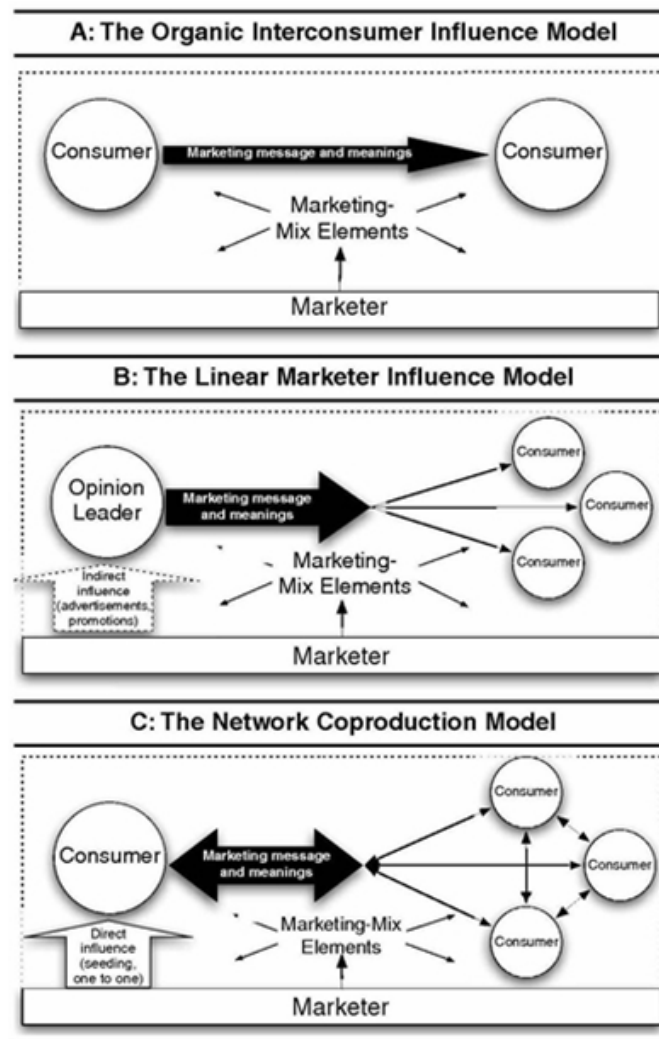


Figure 3: The Evolution of WOM Theory. Source: Kozinets et al. 2010, p. 72

As seen by figure 4, throughout history word-of-mouth theory has developed from (a) an Organic Inter-consumer Influence Model, where the influence occurs between one consumer to another to (b) a Linear Marketer Influence Model, where the marketer actively attempts to influence the consumer to (c) a Network Coproduction Model, where consumers are regarded as active co-producers of value and meaning and whose use of word-of-mouth communication can be creative and even resistant (Kozinets et al., 2010, p. 72). The figure shows that a marketer can have influence on consumers' word-of-mouth communication but it is important to remember that the communication can (and will) also occur without any influence from the marketer at all. In relation to social media, the Network Coproduction

Model can be connected to what Kozinets et al. (1999) call ‘activism’: “[...] the singular experienced reality of online social interaction is as a place where groups of consumers with similar interests actively seek and exchange information about prices, quality, manufacturers, retailers, company ethics, company history, product history, and other consumption-related characteristics” (p. 258). “[O]nline [word-of-mouth communication], in the shape of online communities such as internet forums, bulletin boards, and newsgroups, is providing consumers with the ability to share their experiences, opinions and knowledge with others” (Prendergast et al., 2010, p. 688). This development has especially been possible due to new technology and social media that make communication between people easier. In social media, issues such as time and geographical distance are of no essence and therefore more people can communicate to more people in no time at all. It is important to remember that “[c]ommunication about brands happens, with or without permission of the firm in question” (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 242). Furthermore, “customers who – for one reason or another – turn out to be dissatisfied with or disappointed by the company’s offerings may decide to engage in virtual complaints in the form of protest websites or blogs [...], which results in the availability of potentially damaging information in online space” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 63). This information may be damaging because of the sender-receiver ‘relationship’ – the relationship between peers: “People trust other people, especially those ‘like themselves’. [Word-of-mouth] information is considered more interesting, understandable, reliable, relevant, objective, credible and engaging” (Eccleston and Griseri, 2008, p. 593).

Another feature of the old definition of word-of-mouth communication is that it was not anonymous. Online word-of-mouth communication can be highly anonymous and where offline word-of-mouth communication is very private, online word-of-mouth communication is much more public and can reach a lot of people. As previously mentioned, people have the opportunity to communicate with more people online than they have offline. Together with the anonymity, online communication in general and online word-of-mouth communication in particular have the potential to be more increased than offline communication. In relation to this, Preece and Maloney-Krichmar (2002) mention that “those who lack confidence in face to face situations become more confident online and lose their inhibitions” (p. 7). This may highly be due to the anonymity of the online media.

“Online, information providers may or may not have demographics and lifestyles that are similar to those of the reader, but they are often similar to the reader in that they share a common interest in the topic of the forum [...] and to some extent a shared group identity” (Prendergast et al., 2010, p. 691). Thus, even though the actors in online word-of-mouth communication in social media are anonymous to each other they may still have a perception of similarity: “Forum members may be anonymous to each other, but they are similar to the extent that they have voluntarily joined a forum which presumably deals with their common attitudes and interests” (Prendergast et al., 2010, p. 692). Furthermore, “it is [...] content, rather than the characteristics of the individual members, which demonstrates similarity of interests” (Prendergast et al., 2010, p. 692). It is not always necessary to be an actual member of the forum or other type of social media to feel this form of similarity. When searching for information online about a product or a company, Web users may only visit forums or sites where they believe their interests are met.

Since online word-of-mouth communication is public, companies can easily see what consumers are saying about them. However, companies have, as mentioned, little or no power of how people are acting online and they can therefore seldom foresee what will be written about them. But unlike in offline word-of-mouth communication, which is very private, companies now have the opportunities to see what exactly is being said and react accordingly. However, a study made by Harvard Business Review Analytic Services found that “[m]any organizations seem to operate under old paradigms, viewing social media as one-way flow marketing messages, instead of capitalizing on the opportunity to monitor, analyze, and participate in the millions of conversations between consumers” (Harvard Business Review, 2011, p. 3). Another recent study conducted by researchers at the University of Missouri shows that angry online comments can cause negative perceptions of corporations and that it is therefore crucial for organisations to monitor online comments from victims during crises or to prevent the negative perceptions from spiralling out of control – resulting in a crisis (Hurst, 2011). One example of negative perception spiralling out of control is the case of Nestlé vs. Greenpeace.

In 2010, Greenpeace UK posted a video on YouTube highlighting that food company Nestlé used palm oil from companies that destroyed rainforests in their production of Kit Kat chocolate bars. Nestlé asked YouTube to remove the video which YouTube did. This resulted

in a social media fire storm with Greenpeace encouraging people to comment on Nestlé's situation through Facebook and Twitter. Nestlé decided to respond on the company fan site on Facebook – with little success because the responses seemed too aggressive and even offensive to people who were also Nestlé's consumers: *You have freedom of speech and expression. Here, there are some rules we set. As in almost any other forum. It's to keep things clear* (see Appendix 10). Another very good example is the response to one consumer's comment: Helen Constable: *I'd like to know if the person writing the comments for Nestle, actually have the backing from Nestle? I doubt it. Even a dumb ass company like them would get such an idiot to be their public voice.* Nestle: *I think you missed the 'not' there, Helen.* Helen Constable: *well I'm lacking in the first morning NOT NESTLE coffee. I think you missed your manners in your comments* (see Appendix 10).

This is an example of a company reacting to online WOM. However, the reaction was not appropriate and resulted in a social media crisis for Nestlé. However bad the reaction, the fact that the YouTube video was public gave Nestlé the opportunity to react relatively quickly. Eventually, Nestlé 'surrendered' and committed to stop using products that came from deforestation (see Appendix 11).

The importance of monitoring social media and consumers' conversations on the Web is obvious and the earlier mentioned Harvard study quotes leading author and analytics expert Tom Davenport on this particular aspect: "Without monitoring conversations on the Web, you won't know who's talking about your brand and your products or services, and what the positive or negative sentiments are about them" (Harvard Business Review, 2011, p. 4).

The phenomenon of word-of-mouth communication seems to be infinite and is highly enabled by the increased use of social media. The old definition of word-of-mouth communication as being verbal, one-to-one communication has been redefined and word-of-mouth communication is now also highly written, many-to-many communication. Consumers seem to have become very important co-producers of companies' marketing communications via online word-f-mouth communication and the increased use of social media seems to have a big influence on this phenomenon. Thus, it can be hypothesised that:

H₁: Through social media, Danish social media users contribute more to word-of-mouth communication than they do in offline, face-to-face situations.

An example of how social media and online word-of-mouth communication can have an effect on consumers if combined, is the case of Dave Carroll vs. United Airlines and the YouTube video 'United Breaks Guitars'. 'United Breaks Guitars' is an example of very creative consumer word-of-mouth communication that shows the influence that online word-of-mouth communication can have on consumers' behaviour towards a company. In 2008, United Airlines broke Canadian musician Dave Carroll's guitar due to wrong handling of luggage. Dave recorded a music video about the experience and posted it on the social media platform YouTube (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 242). The video was posted 6 July 2009 and shows United Airlines in a very unfavourable light. The video quickly went viral and within a few weeks, the video had been played more than 3.5m times (Ayres, 2009, 22 July). To this day (September 2011) it has received almost 11m hits on YouTube (see Appendix 12). The video gained attention in the press and "[s]uch attention led to a brand and public relations crisis for United, as the story was cheered on by a global community of passengers who understood all too well the frustrations of dealing with airline service failures" (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 242). An article in The Times reported the financial effect of the music video: "Meanwhile, within four days of the song going online, the gathering thunderclouds of bad PR caused United Airlines' stock price to suffer a mid-flight stall, and it plunged by 10 per cent, costing shareholders \$180 million" (Ayres, 2009, 22 July). Dave Carroll has written two more songs and posted them on YouTube as well. However, they have not gotten as many hits as the first song. Even though the videos are now two years old, they still get hits on YouTube and people still post comments about the videos and especially about United Airlines. A recent comment on the original video shows that a word-of-mouth video like this can have an influence on consumers' behaviour and purchase decisions: "What class did you fly; if I had seen this last week I wouldnt have bought a United air ticket. I might consider referring this video to my insurance company to see if I can add a rider on my policy. I already made a note not to take any GUITARS on my trip; I want the GUITARIDES to stop. Maybe a law with a penalty of time in a GUITAR FACTORY where they have to make several by HAND!" (Appendix 12).

The previous case shows how fast things can be distributed through social media. In relation to word-of-mouth communication theory, the case is an example that disproves the old definition of the concept that Breazeale (2008) describes as having a fleeting nature because it occurs in a spontaneous manner and then disappears as soon as it has been uttered (p. 298).

The first United Breaks Guitars video was posted July 2009 and is still getting hits on YouTube which shows that online word-of-mouth communication through social media can have a long life as long as the message remains relevant. This illustrates one of the biggest differences between offline and online word-of-mouth communication.

2.4 From ‘Old’ to ‘New’ Media Communication and Digital Culture

The following is a review of the communicational change that we have seen due to the cultural changes mentioned in the thesis introduction.

The idea of sharing and capturing content is something we have always done. Lessig (2004) puts it this way: “Capturing and sharing content, of course, is what humans have done since the dawn of man. It is how we learn and communicate. But capturing and sharing through digital technology is different” (p. 184). The digital culture has given us new ways to communicate with each other online and we use these technologies in ways that enable and extent our abilities to communicate. Online media has highly enabled two-way, many-to-many communication and we have therefore seen a shift away from the old mass media where communication was mostly one-way.

An old believe of the effect of mass media communication is that the receivers of communication are highly passive. One of the first conceptions of the effects of mass communication is that of the very naïve ‘bullet theory’ or ‘hypodermic needle’ that attributes great power to the senders of mass communication in relation to influencing the receivers. The bullet theory suggests that receivers of mass communication are isolated from each other and are vulnerable targets easily influenced by mass communication messages (Severin and Tankard, 1997, pp. 13 and 297). However, communicators can no longer assume “that a message will have the intended meaning for all receivers or even that it will have the same meaning for all receivers” (Severing and Tankard, 1997, p. 73). This complicates and contradicts the bullet theory.

Basically, communication is the activity of passing on information between a source and a receiver. A convenient way to describe an act of communication is to answer the following questions: Who - Says What – In Which Channel – To Whom – With What Effect? (Lasswell,

1948, p. 216). These questions take into consideration the different aspects of the act of communication: the sender, the message, the channel through which the message is being sent, the receiver to which the message is sent and the effect that the message has on the receiver. Lasswell's model is a very simple way of describing a communication situation.

Another, and more developed, model of communication is that of Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver which was first introduced in 1949. The model is also known as the transition model:

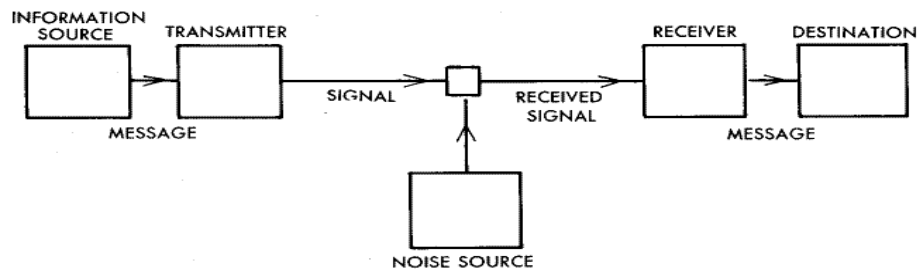


Figure 4: Shannon and Weaver model of communication. Source: Shannon and Weaver (1963, p. 34)

Simply put, the components of the act of communication are here the *information source* which produces a message or sequence of messages to be communicated to the receiver, the *transmitter* operates on the message in some way to produce a signal suitable for transmission over the channel, the *channel* is the medium used to transmit the signal from the transmitter to the receiver, the *receiver* reconstructs the message from the signal and the *destination* is the person for whom the message is intended (Shannon and Weaver, 1963, pp. 33-34). The model was originally designed to mirror the functioning of radio and telephone technologies but “Weaver suggested that the theory is general enough that it can be applied to written language [...] spoken words [...] and many other communication signals” (Severing and Tankard, 1997, p. 49). Using the telephone as an example, the channel is the wire, the signal is the electrical current in the wire and the transmitter and receiver are the telephone handsets. In verbal face-to-face conversation, the mouth is the transmitter, the signal is the sound waves, and the ear of the destination is the receiver. In general, and in the primary of this thesis, the *information source* is known as the sender and the *destination* as the final receiver of information messages.

“Noise is defined as anything added to the signal that is not intended by the information source” (Severin and Tankard, 1997, p. 52). Thus, noise can take many forms. Most commonly known is static on the radio, but noise can also be distortions of sound or images, a smudged photocopy or simply a distracting manner of the speaker which is added to the signal (Severin and Tankard, 1997, p. 52). Hence, noise plays an important role in how well a signal is being transmitted through a channel. Also important is the coding of the message: “[...] one says, in general, that the function of the transmitter is to *encode*, and that of the receiver to *decode*, the message” (Shannon and Weaver, 1963, p. 17). “Encoding is the translation of purpose, intention, or meaning into symbols or codes. Often these symbols are the letters, numbers, and words that make up a language such as English” (Severin and Tankard, 1997, p. 91). Thus, a code can be the language in which the message is spoken or written which can be culturally defined. The challenge is whether the receiver is able to decode correctly what is encoded by the transmitter. This is again the key to the message being successfully passed on to the receiver. The message is then highly subject to the interpretation of the receiver (Severin and Tankard, 1997, p. 74). Noise can often interfere with the decoding of a message.

The Shannon and Weaver model suggest a non-interactive form of communication and does not take into consideration the possibility of feedback between the sender and the receiver. In 1954, Schramm further developed Shannon and Weaver’s model and introduced a series of models among which one deals with communication as an interaction with both parties (sender and receiver) encoding, interpreting, decoding, transmitting and receiving information signals (Severin and Tankard, 1997, pp. 58-59):

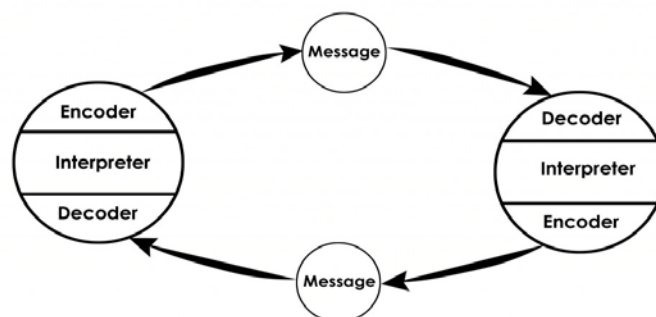


Figure 5: Schramm’s Model of Communication. Source: Severin and Tankard, 1997, p. 58

The model takes feedback and a continuous loop of information into consideration as a form of return message is made possible. To this, Schramm mentions that “[t]he return message, of course, may be feedback or a formal response” (Schramm, 1973, p. 298). The model shows an early step in communication theory towards how we see online communication today and the model can easily be used as an outline of how communication is taking place online today. However, the model still only sees communication as bilateral. Today, the Internet and the resulting new media communication also highly enable multilateral communication between more than two parties.

Based on this notion, the Schramm model can be further developed so that it entails the ‘multilaterality’ of online communication where the communication is many-to-many and can also contain several messages at once. Additionally, people have a choice of communicating both bilaterally or multilaterally.

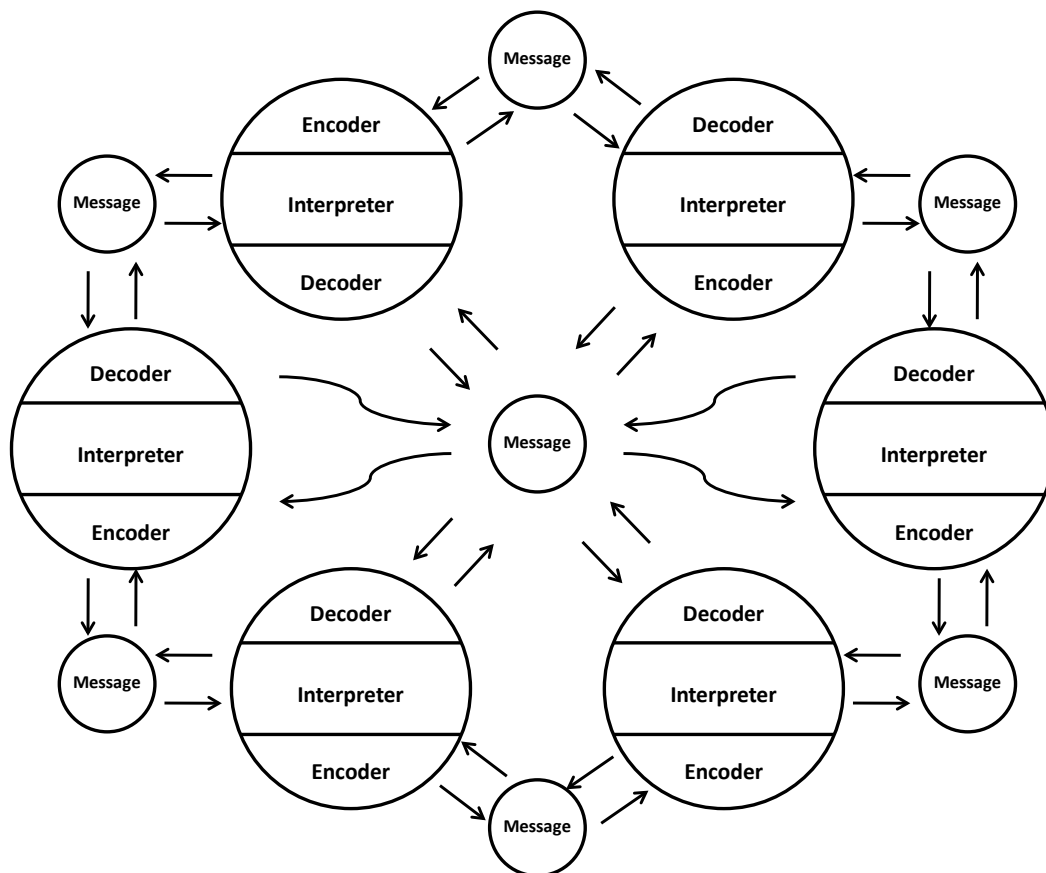


Figure 6: Multilateral communication. Adapted from: Severin and Tankard, 1997, p. 58.

Today, the ways in which we produce and consume information worldwide is gradually changing the way we interact and give meaning to our lives (Deuze, 2006, p. 66). The way we network and stay connected through computerised media is part of our digital culture and has an effect on the way we capture and communicate information. Users of online media have therefore become participants, re-mediators and bricoleurs (Deuze, 2006, p. 66). By this, it is meant that the users have become active participants in the process of meaning-making, that they adopt, modify, manipulate and therefore reform ways of understanding reality and that they reflexively assemble their own versions of this reality (Deuze, 2006, p. 66). Users of online media have therefore become active communicators of information and the meaning of this information – whether it is information about everyday situations or about companies and products. This has proven to be challenging for companies and their marketing communication because:

Historically, companies were able to control the information available about them through strategically placed press announcements and good public relations managers. Today, however, firms have been increasingly relegated to the sidelines as mere observers, having neither the knowledge nor the chance – or, sometimes, even the right – to alter publicly posted comments provided by their customers. (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 60)

Also:

With [the] rise in social media, it appears that corporate communication has been democratized. The power has been taken from those in marketing and public relations by the individuals and communities that create, share, and consume blogs, tweets, Facebook entries, movies, pictures, and so forth. (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 242)

Due to the development in communication practises, we now live in a highly digital culture which has resulted in a shift of power and companies are therefore no longer seen as the strongest communicators of product information. Furthermore, the digital culture and the practises of new media communication have resulted in the elimination of geographical boundaries which enables easy communication on a global scale. Also important is the notion of speed. Bradley (2011) stresses that this issue makes digital communication highly dynamic because:

In the past it was possible to spend a lot of time deciding on a response to a comment or a complaint. However we no longer have that luxury available to us. Blog postings can go live

and can be found by search engines within 20 minutes and tweets from Twitter are available literally within seconds. As a result, speed is of the essence. (p. 249)

Furthermore, the digital culture fosters community. We can be connected to everyone else within the system through social media and “[i]nteractions based on information shift knowledge and power from marketers to consumers” (Kozinets et al., 1999, p. 260). Hence, “[w]ise marketers will realize that online consumers are much more active, participative, resistant, activist, loquacious, social, and communitarian than they have previously been thought to be” (Kozinets et al., 1999, p. 261). An important aspect of our digital culture is therefore that more people have faster access to more communication produced by more sources.

2.5 Social Comparison Theory

Leon Festinger’s theory of social comparison proposes that people evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparison with the opinions and abilities of others (Festinger, 1954, p. 118). However, “[a] person does not tend to evaluate his opinions or his abilities by comparison with others who are too divergent from himself” (Festinger, 1954, p. 120). Thus, “[t]he tendency to compare oneself with another person decreases as the difference between the opinion or ability and one’s own decreases” (Festinger, 1954, p. 120). This is again related to the earlier mentioned ‘peer-relationship’ between senders and receivers of WOM. Additionally, Festinger (1954) mentions that “[o]ne does not evaluate the correctness or incorrectness of an opinion by comparison with others whose opinions are extremely divergent from one’s own” (p. 120). Thus, if another person’s opinion is extremely different from one’s own opinion, one will never, or seldom, change this opinion. As a somewhat old example, Festinger (1954) uses the difference of opinions between a person who believes that Negroes are equals to whites and a person of a very anti-negro belief. These persons would never evaluate their own opinions by comparing it to the other. However, “[t]he availability of comparison with others whose opinions or abilities are [only] somewhat different from one’s own will produce tendencies to change one’s evaluation of the opinion or ability in question” (Festinger, 1954, p. 122). So, it is the degree of dissimilarity of opinions that determines the probability of an opinion change. This suggests that a person cannot be persuaded by

someone who deviates too much from his/her basic opinions, but if they are somewhat social comparable the probability of an opinion change increases.

Festinger's theory has been constructed based on empirical research in different face-to-face situations and despite this and even though the research is nearly 60 years old, it can still be applied to the topic of this thesis. Web users use online WOM to pass on opinions and to find other users' opinions of a product or a company. These opinions can then be used to confirm an already made opinion or to alter it. In relation to this phenomenon, the different types of social media are important because they make it possible for Web users to easily share opinions.

When a person is asked to form an opinion privately and then has made available to him the consensus of opinion in the group of which he is a member, those who discover that most others in the group disagree with them become relatively less confident that their opinion is correct and a goodly proportion changes their opinion. (Festinger, 1954, p. 122)

Here, social media can be seen as providing a diversity of groups where people can be members. These groups are important because if there is a dominating opinion in a group, members of the group tend to change their opinion if it is too divergent. Thus, the relationships of the group members (or users of the social media) are important because the degree to which a member is attracted to the group has an influence on the degree of persuasiveness. Similarly, the importance of the opinion plays a role because "[i]f an opinion or ability is of no importance to a person there will be no drive to evaluate that ability or opinion" (Festinger, 1954, p. 130) and therefore less chance of the opinion being altered or completely changed.

Thus, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H₂: Communicated messages from friends and peers about a product or company have a greater effect on Danish social media users' purchase behaviour than messages being communicated by companies alone.

In the following, aspects of human behaviour and consumerism will be reviewed in order to get an understanding of the core elements of these concepts.

2.6 Consumer Behaviour and Purchase Decision

The theory of social comparison can be connected to theories of consumer behaviour and how WOM can influence how consumers make their purchasing decisions since “[s]ocial comparison theory suggests that similarity ought to be positively related to the persuasiveness of information being communicated, and to behavioural intentions as well” (Prendergast et al., 2010, pp. 692-693). Furthermore, “our behaviour towards an object or event depends on the symbolic meaning ascribed by referent others in society” (Varey, 2001, p. 48). Additionally, “Persuasiveness is a mechanism through which similarity between the forum’s members and those of the receiver influences purchase intention” (Prendergast et al., 2010, pp. 700-701). This means that “[m]uch of the information we take into our decision process is not controlled directly by marketers, despite their best efforts to influence us” (Varey, 2001, p. 49). Maybe the role of marketers is now only to create cognition about products. The remaining of the decision process is controlled and influenced by the consumers themselves and their fellow communicating consumers.

The process of consumer behaviour entails different aspects:

Consumer behavior is what people do as consumers as they seek to live their lives, including exchanging some things for value products or services that satisfy their needs – this includes processes of browsing [...] and selection, purchase, use, evaluation and influencing others, and disposal. (Varey, 2001, p. 42)

Hence, consumer behaviour does not only involve the act of purchase but also processes before and after purchase. Similarly, “[m]uch consumer behaviour is not buying behaviour – window-shopping is a pleasant pastime for some people!” (Varey, 2001, p. 45). In relation to this, it is important to note that window-shopping can take place either when physically window-shopping in e.g. a mall or when browsing for products on the Internet. Thus, “some behaviour results from the situation and other behaviour is deliberate and preceded by planning” (Varey, 2001, p. 45).

In relation to the process of consumer behaviour, Varey (2001) suggests a move away from the old AIDA (attention, interest, desire, action) model of consumer response which assumes that attracting a consumer’s attention automatically leads to desire for the product and the action of purchase (p. 47). According to Varey (2001) “[t]oday, few still cling to the idea that

consumers are passive recipients of promotional messages [and therefore] [t]oday buyers are more realistically seen as often active searchers for suppliers and their products to fulfil their needs” (pp.47-48). This corresponds well with the earlier mentioned communicational shift towards consumers being more active communicators and the discarding of the bullet theory.

Perceived risk plays an important role in consumer behaviour, particularly because it makes a valuable contribution towards explaining information-searching behaviour and consumer purchase decision-making” (Barnes et al., 2007, p.75). Thus, “[c]onsumers search for information prior to making a purchase in order to reduce perceived risk [...]. One such source is word of mouth” (Prendergast et al., 2010, p. 687). Furthermore, consumer’s level of involvement is important: “Our level of involvement reflects the benefits and costs we expect to receive from buying a product to satisfy a need in a situation” (Varey, 2001, p. 50). Hence, the level of involvement also reflects the effort with which consumers search for information about a product prior to making a purchase decision because the higher the involvement the higher the purchase risk. Varey (2001) exemplifies risk vs. involvement with the purchase scenarios of a house and a chocolate bar. Purchase of a house involves high cost, long-term commitment, contract and many uncertain factors. Therefore, the purchase has a high risk and an infrequent decision is needed which results in a high level of involvement. Purchasing a chocolate bar involves low cost and little risk of loss. Therefore, purchase is frequent and the involvement is low (p. 51). This may be reflective in how consumers search for information from other consumers on the internet and how much they are persuaded by online WOM.

According to Varey (2001), the purchase decision-making process consists of five steps:

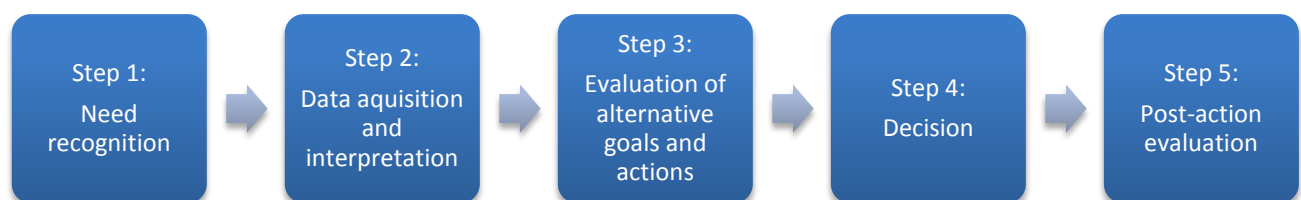


Figure 7: Steps to ordered decision-making. Adapted from: Varey, 2001, p. 56.

Firstly, the consumer recognises a need. “The acquisition and consumption of products (goods and services) can be thought of as problem-solving behavior” (Varey, 2001, p. 43). Consumers seek and consume products that solve a recognised problem or satisfy a particular

need. Needs can be responses to e.g. hunger, love, vanity, fear, identity, recognition, insecurity or stimulation (Varey, 2001, p. 42). “As consumers, we may readily recognize our needs, while other people may act to spur us to recognize other needs” (Varey, 2001, p. 56). The latter is often what happens in word-of-mouth communication: a consumer hears about a product from other consumers and afterwards recognises the need that the product can meet. Secondly, the purpose of the search process is to find general ways that are available to meet the recognised need. Thirdly, “[o]nce a particular way of satisfying the need is identified, we can seek more specific options” (Varey, 2001, p. 57) and alternatives and evaluate which is best. Fourthly, “[o]nce an alternative is selected, the purchase can take place” (Varey, 2001, p. 58). “During or after consumption we can make a judgement about the extent to which the purchase experience and consumption experience are satisfactory” (Varey, 2001, p. 58). The fifth step, the post-action evaluation, is therefore an important one because “[t]his evaluation is significant because it is remembered when it is necessary to search for alternatives to meet the same need again in the future” (Varey, 2001, p. 58). The post-purchase evaluation can also result in an act of feedback. This is important in connection to WOM because “[w]e tell our friends about what we like and don’t like, and we may try to dissuade them from buying the latter” (Varey, 2001, p. 58). Lastly, we can choose to terminate the particular consumption process and stop using the product.

As previously mentioned, “[w]e evaluate our experience with a product by considering the extent to which our needs were satisfied and how the experience compared with our pre-purchase expectations about how the product would perform” (Varey, 2001, p. 61). “If we feel satisfied with a product purchase and/or use experience, we may be more inclined to remain committed to that supplier and/or product when next we have a need that can be similarly satisfied” (Varey, 2001, p. 61). On the contrary, if we feel dissatisfied we may respond and express dissatisfaction. According to Singh (1988),

“these responses need not be limited to those directed toward the seller (i.e., manufacturer, retailer, etc.). Behaviors involving third parties (e.g., Better Business Bureau, legal actions, etc.) or even friends and relatives (e.g., negative word-of-mouth communication) are also regarded as being in the category of behavioral responses”. (p. 94)

The last behaviour of involving friends and relatives (and additionally peers) is of course of most interest for this thesis. Also an interesting aspect is the effect that this negative word-of-

mouth communication has on the receiver of the word-of-mouth message. Based on this, the following hypotheses will be tested in the empirical research:

H₃: Danish social media users communicate negative word-of-mouth messages through social media to a higher extent than they communicate positive messages.

H₄: The more negative the word-of-mouth message, the more influence it has on the consumer behaviour of Danish social media users.

3.0 Data Collection

3.1 Quantitative Research

The questionnaire was made in the form of a poll. “In a poll, respondents have to complete the questionnaire themselves and receive no help from an interviewer, which means that they are not subject to influence from the interviewer” (Rasmussen et al., 2006, p. 128). The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions that were a mix of multiple choice questions and open-ended questions that invited to text based answers that enabled the respondents to answer in their own words. This strategy could prove to be risky as there is no guarantee that the respondents will use the opportunity to answer in their own words. However, these answers are of great value to the final results of the empirical research and add some qualitative answers to the quantitative measures. Some questions were based on Likert scales where a scale of 1-5 had been chosen from strongly disagree to strongly agree and from very unimportant to very important. These scales of responses were chosen in order to investigate the respondents’ attitudes to pre-formulated statements in the questionnaire, i.e. the level of agreement with or importance of the statements.

A problem with a questionnaire is that it is not possible to elaborate on the questions or the concepts being measured in case the respondent does not understand them. Feedback is very limited which can result in insufficient research data. In addition to this, it is not possible for the researcher to get a clarification of the respondents’ answers. In relation to the first problem, it is “essential to the quality of a quantitative study that the models and concepts it takes as its starting point are defined very clearly, and that a careful operationalisation of the concepts to be used in that study has taken place” (Rasmussen et al., 2006, p. 122). To

overcome these obstacles, the questionnaire did not contain words or concepts that were not believed to be common knowledge for the respondents. Here, the constructivist paradigm was important as it was necessary for me as the researcher to reflect on and overcome my own subjectivity and pre-understanding of the subject and formulate the questions so that they were easily understandable to the respondents. Furthermore, a pilot study has been conducted in order to detect any possible misunderstandings before the final study. Detecting any misunderstandings before the final study also helped in securing the validity of the results of the questionnaire. The pilot study was important in the constructivist process as it clarified parts of the questionnaire where I had been too biased when formulating the questions. Also, conducting the pilot study and adjusting the questionnaire accordingly was part of the iterative process that has been important for the development of this thesis.

The questionnaire was distributed via Facebook, Google+ and LinkedIn. This distribution was chosen in order to ensure that the sample of respondents corresponded to the population (focus group) of the study: Danish users of social media. It is assessed “that the sample can represent the entire population and therefore constitutes a representative sample” (Rasmussen et al., 2006, p. 123). The respondents’ were expected to be familiar with the Internet and since the whole research study in this thesis is related to the use of social media in general, the Internet familiarity was not taken into account in the questionnaire. However, how much the respondents’ are familiar with social media may have an influence on how much they use online word-of-mouth communication and how they can be influenced by online word-of-mouth messages because “[t]he more a person is familiar with a particular medium, the higher he tends to rate it in terms of credibility” (Sweeter et al., 2008, cited in Bouhlef et al, 2010, p. 38). Thus, the respondents’ use of social media was investigated.

The questionnaire was introduced by a short introduction to the purpose of the thesis and an explanation to the investigated phenomenon. Furthermore, to clarify and avoid confusion the introductory paragraph contained examples of what was meant by the most important words in the questionnaire – examples of what counts as products and what counts as service of a company. The questions were designed so that they each measured the validity of one hypothesis and so that there was more than one question per hypothesis. Furthermore, the questionnaire covered some of the additional aspects reviewed in the previous chapter about the theoretical framework. The questionnaire was developed in Danish and has been

translated to English to use in this thesis. The results have also been translated to English. For both the Danish and English versions of the questionnaire, see Appendices 1 and 2.

The research was conducted from 22 July 2011 to 22 August 2011. The questionnaire was answered by 110 respondents with a distribution of 76 complete surveys and 36 incomplete. To this distribution, it should be noted that the majority of the questions did not require an answer and therefore the large number of incomplete surveys. When the survey was initialised, all the questions required an answer which meant that the respondents could not continue the questionnaire unless they answered a question. However, when receiving the first numbers of responses, a large quantity was incomplete because when the respondents could not continue the questionnaire they would simply end the survey. This resulted in particularly the last questions not being answered. Therefore, I quickly chose that only the questions on demographic were to require an answer. The number of incomplete surveys did not increase but more questions were answered which made the strategy an overall success.

3.2 Qualitative Research

After conducting the quantitative research, new questions and a need to go into detail with some questions arose. A multi-method approach was therefore chosen and complementary to the questionnaire qualitative interviews were conducted as to go into depth with certain issues. In an interview it is “a key feature that respondents should, as far as possible, use their own words instead of having to make up their minds as to concepts which the researcher has defined in advance” (Rasmussen et al., 2006, p. 93).

Furthermore, “[a] good interview is not a question and answer session, but a *dialogue* between two people that leads to the establishment of a common understanding of an area” (Rasmussen et al., 2006, p. 101). Additionally, “[...] one must not be so locked in to the structure that he or she ends up lacking sensitivity towards new aspects that crop up during the interview. It is important to be able to pick up on new aspects and pursue them” (Rasmussen et al., 2006, p. 104). With this in mind, the interviews were semi-structured and a common interview guide was made (see Appendix 4) to ensure that each interview correlated to the overall theme and context. However, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed each interview to be adapted to the specific situation. Therefore, not two interviews

were alike. The main focal points of the interviews were: trustworthiness, influence on purchase behaviour/decision making, negativity vs. positivity and attitudes towards online word-of-mouth communication.

Five interviews were conducted with interviewees selected within the focus group. The interviewees had all responded to the questionnaire and therefore were somewhat familiar with the researched concept. However, time was allotted if the interviewees had initial questions about the interview in addition to the general introduction. The interviews were each conducted in places that were most comfortable to the specific interviewee: their own home. This to make the interviewees more relaxed. Including the introductory formalities, the interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes each. Common to the questionnaire, the interviews were conducted in Danish. One interviewee requested not to have her interview recorded and to have equal terms it was found more appropriate to write notes during each interview instead. Based on these notes, full summaries of the interviews have been written in English and will function as interview data (see Appendices 5-9).

4.0 Analysis and Discussion of Data

The questionnaire and the interview data serve as the foundation for the following analysis. The chapter contains results of the empirical research and an analysis of these results. The questionnaire data and answers to the open-ended questions are prioritised and the interview data functions as supplement to the analysis of the questionnaire findings. See Appendix 3 for the answers to the open-ended questions. Each of these answers has been given a number so that they are each easy to refer to. I have chosen to mix the text based answers and use them where they are considered most appropriate in relation to my analysis. For full summaries of the interviews, see Appendices 5-9.

The questionnaire data is shown in charts. All units in the charts are measured in percentage and the questions from the questionnaire are shown in the caption texts below the charts. The data is illustrated by bar charts, pie charts and frequency polygons where each is most appropriate. The frequency polygons have been chosen to illustrate interval and ratio data such as age and Likert scaled answers as to clearly display the mode, i.e. the answer with the largest frequency.

4.1. Demographics and Social Media Use

The gender distribution of the questionnaire respondents was 23 percent male and 77 percent female with the following distribution on age and education:

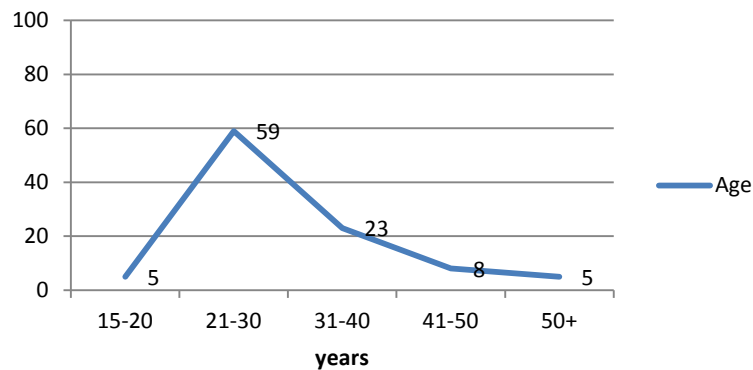


Figure 8: Respondents age distribution (in percent)

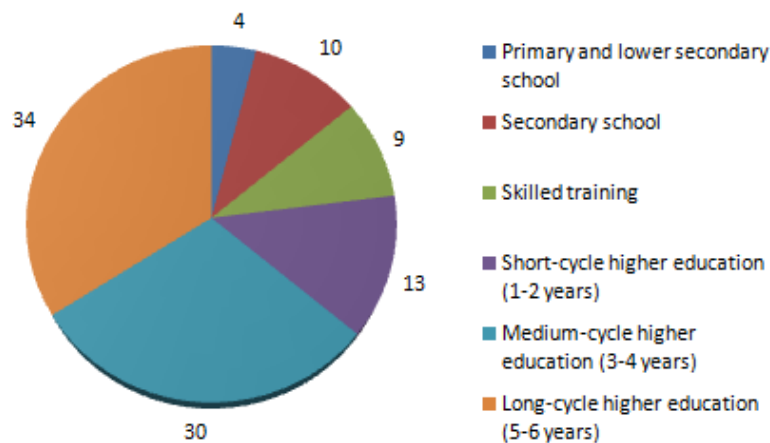


Figure 9: Respondents divided by last graduated (or ongoing) school education (in percent)

As the figures above show, the biggest segments of respondents were those aged between 21-30 years with a medium- or long-cycle higher education. This matches my own demographic which shows that the chosen distribution of the questionnaire has highly influenced the demographic results because a majority of the respondents are very close to my own online social networks and connections. Therefore, the respondents are not an optimal representation of Danish social media users as it is presumed that the general demographic distribution of Danish social media users is if not very different then at least more even. However, statistics

from Danmarks Statistik (Statistics Denmark) show that the majority of the Danish population who are connected to one or more types of social media are the 16-39 year olds (Danmarks Statistik, 2011, p. 26). It should be noted that age and education are not necessarily connected.

When asked which social media the respondents normally use and how often, the result is very clear. Facebook is by far the most popular social media with a high number of respondents using the site very often. The other types of social media are not used as often and the majority of the respondents never use the other listed social media. Some respondents have written some specific social media that they use: Wikipedia File Sharing Community, online innovation communities, www.yammer.com³ and www.taenk.dk⁴.

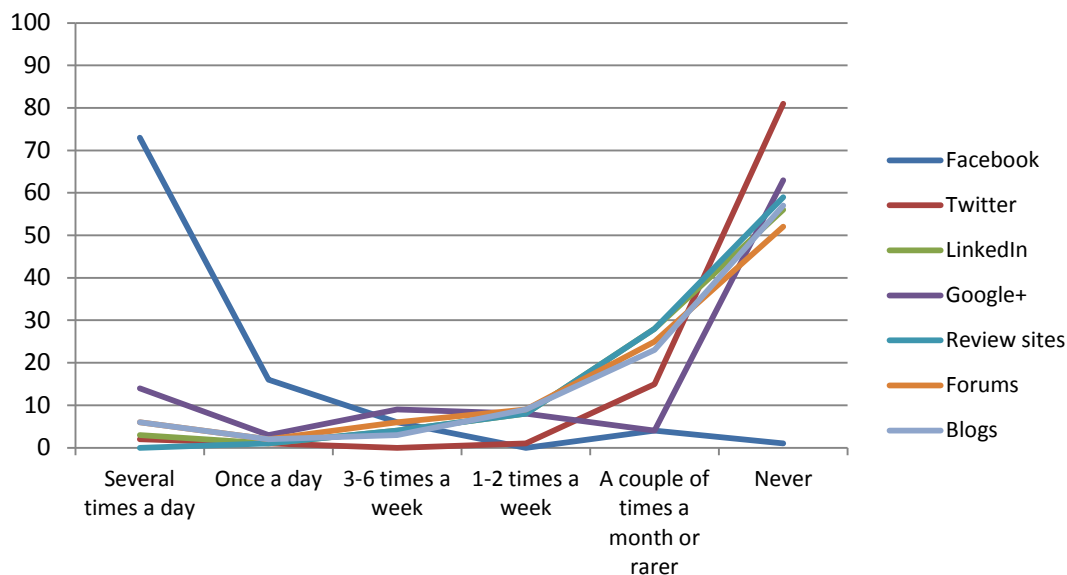


Figure 10: Frequency of social media use (in percentage)

The result may be influenced by the way the questionnaire has been distributed and it is possible that it would be different if the questionnaire had been distributed via e.g. Twitter or a forum. However, the respondents' use of social media reflects the current trend in Danish Web culture where the majority of users of online social media (94 percent) have a profile on Facebook (Danmarks Statistik, 2011, p. 25). Therefore the respondents' social media use is not that surprising. The surprising aspect is the frequency of the use of Facebook. The majority of the respondents use Facebook every day and even several times a day. The

³ Free private social network for companies

⁴ Web site of The Danish Consumer Council

general familiarity with that particular medium is therefore very high. It can therefore be assumed that Facebook and the communicational possibilities that this site offers, have a big influence on the respondents' use of word-of-mouth communication.

4.2 Word-of-Mouth Communication through Social Media

The most interesting aspect of the empirical research was investigating how the subjects of research engage in word-of-mouth communication through social media. The following results show the respondents' use of this online word-of-mouth communication both when actively writing online messages themselves and reading others' messages about products and companies.

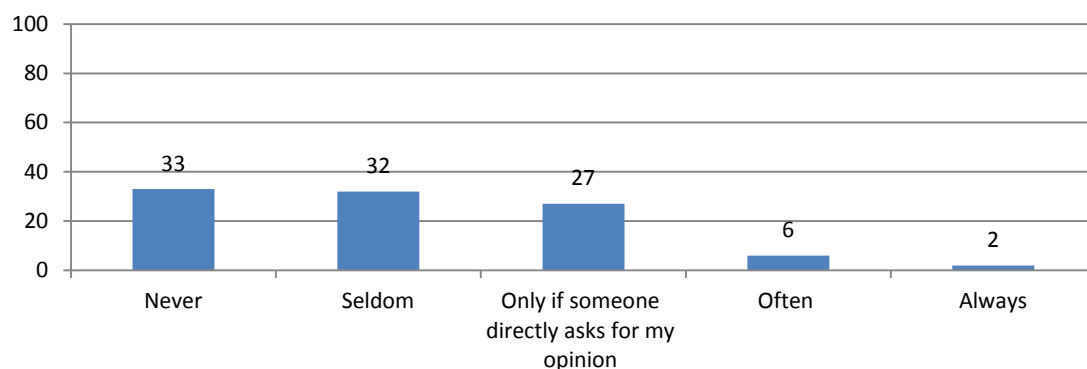


Figure 11: Do you use social media to tell your online-friends or other consumers about experiences with products, companies or companies' service (e.g. recommend or dissuade)? (in percentage)

The data in figure 11 show that the majority of the respondents never or seldom tell friends or other consumers about experiences with products and companies. However, those who have answered “seldom” do still choose to communicate their experiences with products and companies and therefore they do participate to some degree in an online WOM behaviour. Approximately one fourth of the respondents choose only to respond when someone directly asks for an opinion with a product or a company. Thus, most respondents are completely or mostly inactive in passing on their experiences with products and companies through social media.

However, a large amount of social media users choose to be reactive communicators when asked about their opinion with a product or company. Only 8 percent chooses to often or always engage in online word-of-mouth communication. This result very much matches the earlier mentioned Social Technographics Profile which showed that most of social media users in Denmark are joiners and spectators who seldom choose to communicate their own communication messages online but instead read and monitor others'. Therefore, the amount of users being active communicators is very small opposed to those who are reactive. Additionally, none of the interviewees in the qualitative research have ever written an online word-of-mouth message themselves.

The relatively small amount of users being active communicators of WOM messages can be compared to the answers to the subsequent question about how often the respondents choose to search for information from others about products and companies of their interest (figure 12). The result of this is that in the end, respondents search for other's experiences with products and companies rather than choosing to communicate their own. Only 17 percent answered that they never search for information from friends or other consumers while 43 percent often or always search for this type of information:

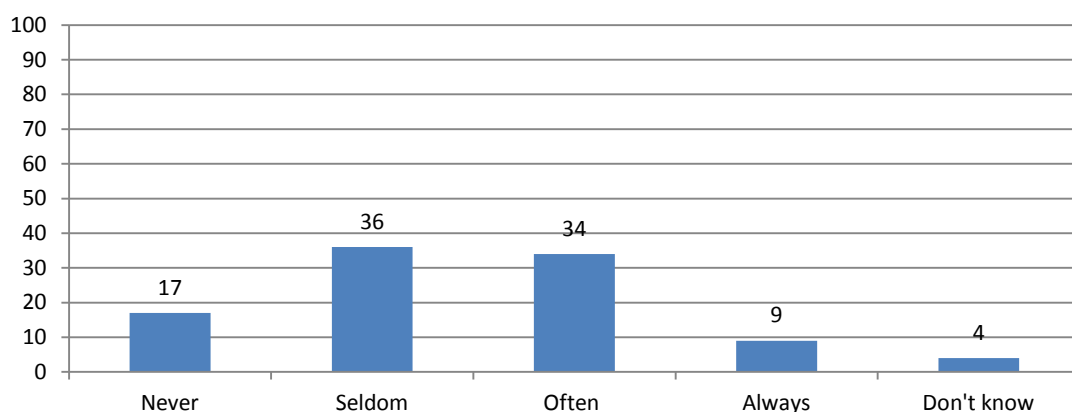


Figure 12: If you are interested in a product or a company, do you use social media to get information (recommendations, dissuasions) about this product, company or the company's service? (in percentage)

In order to investigate how online word-of-mouth communication is used in comparison to offline communication, the respondents were also asked where they prefer to communicate word-of-mouth messages.

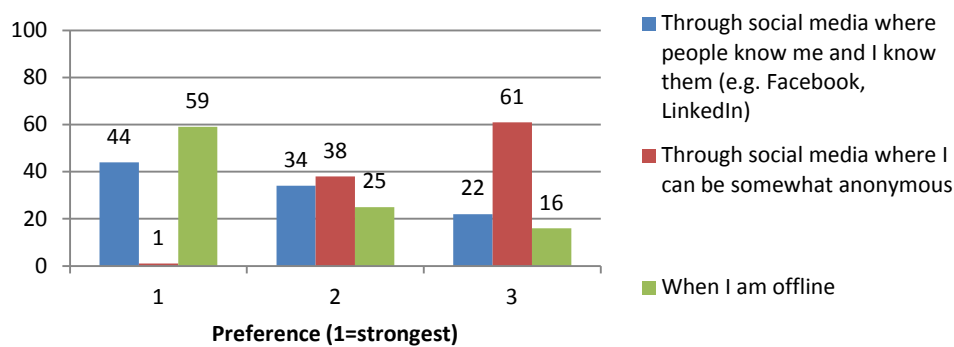


Figure 13: Where do you normally prefer to communicate about products, companies or companies' service? (in percent)

The responses to this question are clear: the majority of the respondents (59 percent) prefer to communicate offline while 44 percent prefer to communicate through social media where they know the receivers of the messages and are themselves known by these receivers. Looking at the other end of the scale, it is clear that it is not preferred to be anonymous when communicating WOM messages. This is a surprising result because it contradicts a previously mentioned theoretical hypothesis that the anonymity of online word-of-mouth will potentially result in this being preferred over offline word-of-mouth communication (see section 2.2).

Furthermore, the respondents were asked directly if they think that they participate in online word-of-mouth communication to a higher extent than when they are offline. To this, more than half of the respondents (55 percent) disagreed while only six percent agreed and 20 percent did not experience any difference in whether they communicated online or offline:

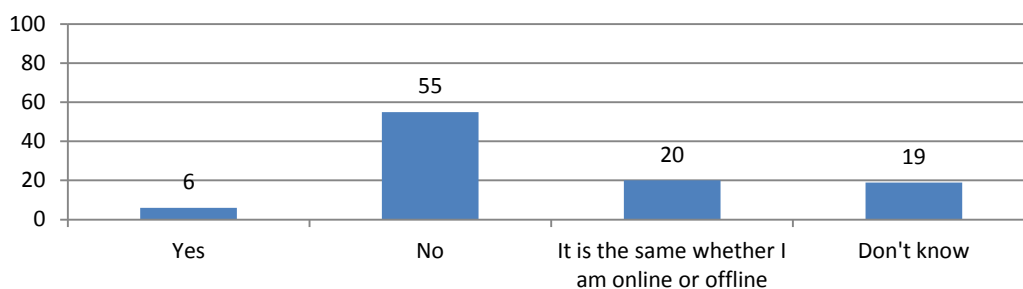


Figure 14: Do you communicate about products and companies to a larger extent through social media, than when you are offline? (in percent)

Additionally, the interviews showed an overall agreement with this. One of the interviewees had a relevant perspective on this behaviour. She believed that more people communicate about products and companies offline because of informality; i.e., that when communicating

face-to-face you do not have to reflect that much about what you are saying because the situation is oral and most often very informal as opposed to online communication which is mostly written and therefore by nature is more formal. Therefore, people reflect more on what they write online and may only choose to communicate online about a product or a company when they have had a particularly good or a particularly bad experience. In offline face-to-face situations, people can choose to communicate about everything – both big and small (Appendix 6). The same perspective was expressed by Riko Sørensen who explained that he has never written an online word-of-mouth message himself but that he often tells friends and acquaintances about his experiences with products in offline situations because he then does not reflect much on when and how he communicates and feels that he is allowed to be more subjective (Appendix 7). This may be one reason why people communicating online word-of-mouth messages prefer to do it through social media where they know people because this gives some sense of informality.

Based on these results, it is clear that H_1 can be falsified; i.e., Danish social media users do *not* participate in word-of-mouth communication through social media to a larger extent than they do in offline, face-to-face situations.

Additionally, in some of the text based answers it was expressed that offline communication about products and companies are sometimes preferred more or are sometimes more trustworthy than online communication:

- “If the persons are a part of my circle of friends (offline) I generally welcome good advice and if they criticise/praise a product/company I am interested in, I trust them...” (Appendix 3, no. 80)
- “It depends on the source of the recommendation. Testimonials on the company Web sites can be more or less trustworthy. [...]. But if it is another consumer I meet on the street or overhear in the metro, I trust it more.” (Appendix 3, no. 92)
- “I ask other people who are not in my online network but whom I can talk to face to face e.g. good friends/parents and then reconsider the purchase after receiving new information” (Appendix 3, no. 99)

In the interview with Line Juvald, she expressed that she finds offline WOM more trustworthy than online because she does not trust the online medium for this purpose because you never know who the sender of the message really is (Appendix 8). Thus, she mentions the

same aspect that was reviewed in the earlier discussion about the trustworthiness of social media. The insecurity it entails to know that anyone can participate and write messages online may result in online word-of-mouth communication being less successful (see section 2.1.5).

The above results also raise a new question that is not answered in the research. It is obvious that the questionnaire respondents and the interviewees for the most part do not write or communicate word-of-mouth messages themselves, but they often read others' messages. A question is thus whether they notice more communicated word-of-mouth messages online than they do offline.

Furthermore, other results show that the use of Facebook is particularly high opposed to the use of other types of social media and very few respondents choose to actively communicate their experiences with products or companies through social media. More respondents are reactive and communicate when someone directly asks for their opinions. Because of the very frequent use of Facebook, it is assumed that this is the most used channel for word-of-mouth communication among the respondents. However, is the number of people answering that they communicate their experiences with products or companies low because many respondents do not realise or reflect on what they communicate on Facebook? Very simple status updates, discussions and threads on social networks can be word-of-mouth communication as well without the communicators even realising it.

4.3 Perceived Risk

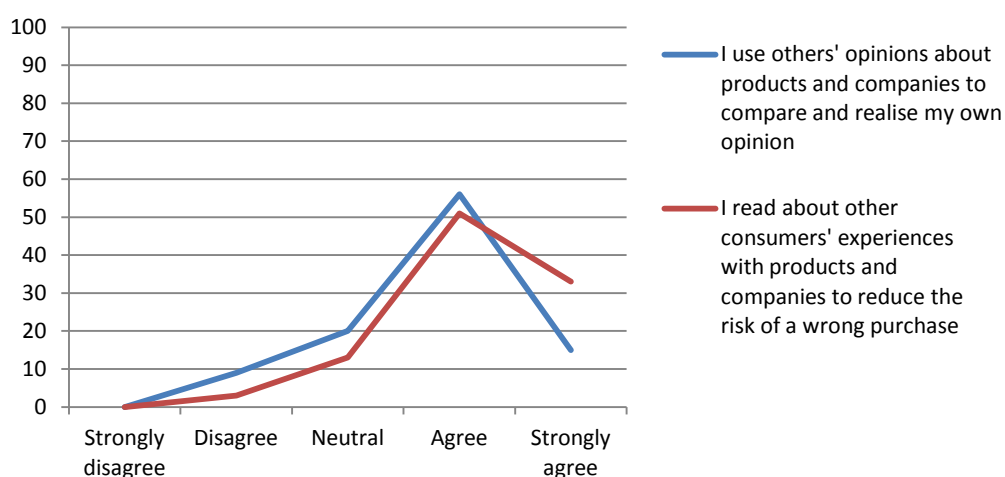
As mentioned in section 2.5 on consumer behaviour and purchase decision, perceived risk plays an important role in consumer behaviour and also the information-seeking behaviour. This is also evident when analysing the results of the empirical research. Combining the quantitative data with the text-based answers in the questionnaire and the interviews, it is clear that the type of product and a degree of perceived risk connected with making a wrong purchase highly influence whether or not people choose to search for product information from other consumers online. To the question of why the respondents would choose to search for word-of-mouth messages, some answered:

- “To avoid buying a bad product” (Appendix 3, no. 29)

- “It very much depends on the type of product – how big the risk of buying a wrong product is. Perhaps mostly if it is a relatively expensive product.” (Appendix 3, no. 35)
- “[...] but I only use it in purchase of ‘big’ products such as washing machines, PC or TV”. (Appendix 3, no. 43)
- “There is less risk of ending with a product that does not meet the expectations” (Appendix 3, no. 63)
- “It helps decreasing the risk of a wrong purchase (Appendix 3, no. 71)

Furthermore, in his interview Riko Sørensen expressed that he especially chooses to search for consumer reviews of products that are relatively expensive and where he feels that there would be a great risk of making a wrong purchase (Appendix 7). Ann Jørgensen expressed the same behaviour of risk aversion (Appendix 6) while both Kirstine Nielsen and Line Juvald are influenced by the high cost of a product (Appendix 5 and 8). Also Stig Larsen agreed that always he searches for word-of-mouth communicated messages when the product is a ‘big’ thing; i.e. when it is supposed to last for a long period of time (Appendix 9).

Additionally, the questionnaire data in the following figure 15 shows the respondents agreement on pre-formulated statements about their word-of-mouth communication searching behaviour and decision-making. The data has been divided into two graphs because one single graph would contain too much data.



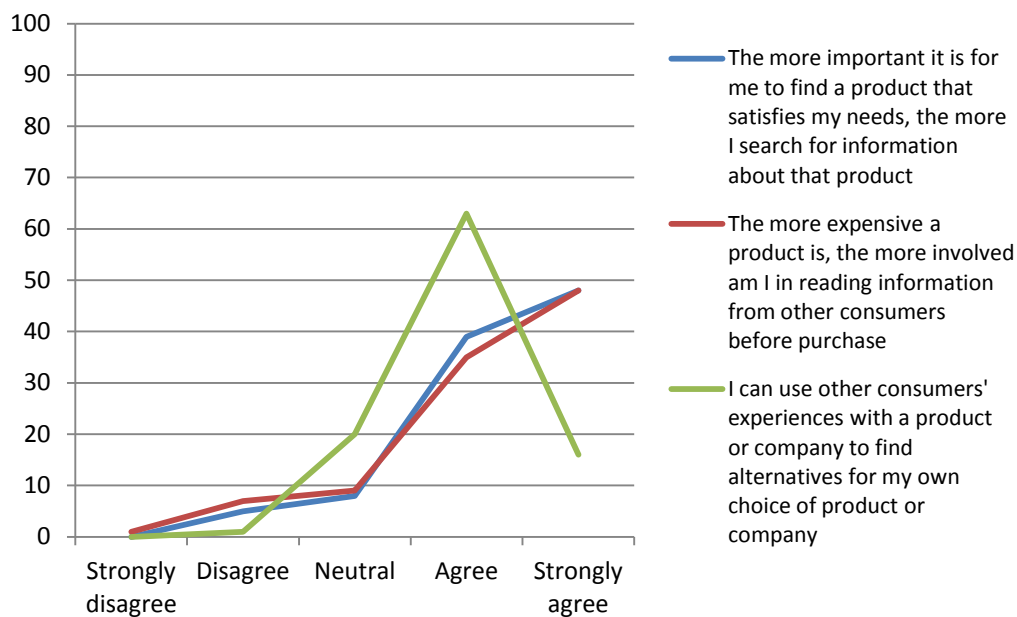


Figure 15: When you search for information about products or companies, how do you agree with the following statements? (in percent)

The data in figure 15 show that there is an overall agreement with the statement about risk aversion influencing the degree to which the respondents are involved in searching for information about products and companies from friends and other consumers and a strong agreement with the expensiveness of a product having an influence on this consumer behaviour. Additionally, the respondents use word-of-mouth messages to find alternatives for their own choice of products or companies thus placing word-of-mouth communication as a tool that can be used in Varey's (2001) earlier mentioned third step of the decision-making process: evaluation of alternative goals and actions (p. 56). Also mentioned by Varey (2001), our level of involvement reflects the benefits and costs that we expect to receive from buying a product to satisfy a need in a situation (p. 50). Thus, the level of involvement reflects the effort with which Danish social media users search for information about a product or a company prior to making a purchase decision and it can be assessed that the higher the perceived purchase risk the higher the involvement.

Additional questionnaire data also show that the respondents would mostly choose to communicate word-of-mouth messages to friends or other consumers in order to help others choose or deselect products or companies:

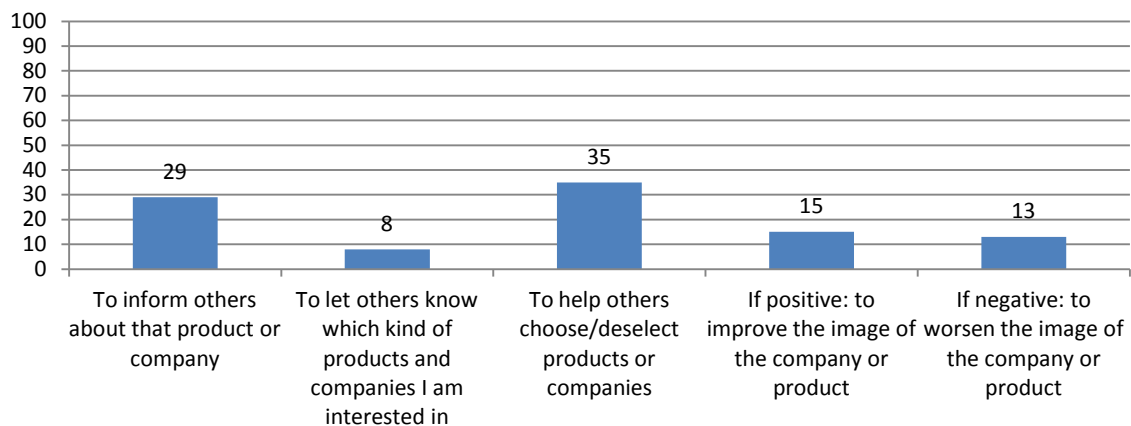


Figure 16: Why would you choose to communicate about a product, company or a company's service? (in percent)

By these data it is evident that the choice to communicate word-of-mouth messages online is highly related to a wish to help other consumers make a purchase decision and help them reduce the risk of making a wrong purchase. Only 8 percent of the respondents would choose this type of communication in order to let others know which products and companies they are interested in while 15 percent would want to improve and 13 percent to worsen the image of the company or brand.

In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked an open-ended question about when they choose to communicate word-of-mouth messages to their friends or other consumers. A lot of these replies show a connection between negative experiences and the choice to share these with others. They show that the respondents choose both to express positivity and negativity but mostly the responses reflect the choice to communicate negative sentiments about a product, company or a company's service if it did not meet the expectations. The following are a few examples:

- “If I am very disappointed with the product, to warn others” (Appendix 3, no. 4)
- “I most often use it to express a negative opinion... I think...:-)” (Appendix 3, no. 5)
- “Or if the service has not been satisfactory” (Appendix 3, no. 7)
- “If the product did not meet my expectations” (Appendix 3, no. 8)
- “When I have been disappointed or have been cheated” (Appendix 3, no. 19)
- “If you experience a bad service” (Appendix 3, no.22)
- “If I have had a bad experience, I would probably warn others about that company” (Appendix 3, no. 55)

Additionally, the respondents were asked directly whether they think that they communicate negativity to a larger extent than positivity:

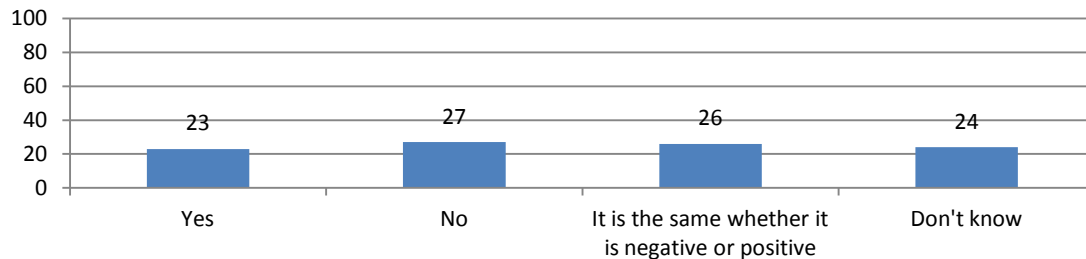


Figure 17: Do you think that you communicate negativity about products and companies more than you do positivity? (in percent)

The answers to this question do not show a definite result. However, combining the quantitative data with the text based answers mentioned above many of the respondents choose to communicate negative sentiments to a higher extent than positive. The value of the text based answers is also great because they are the respondents' own words which are not affected by how the questions have been formulated. In the qualitative research, the interviewees also agreed that negativity is communicated more commonly. According to one of the interviewees, this may be because consumers seldom remember or reflect on positive experiences with products or companies unless they have been extraordinary (Appendix 6). This is also expressed in some of the text-based answers in the questionnaire where a lot of the responses contain words expressing that the degree of both satisfaction and disappointment has an influence:

- “If I have received a really good or a really bad service I would either recommend a company or warn against it.” (Appendix 3, no. 9)
- “By degree of satisfaction of customer service or product quality” (Appendix 3, no. 13)
- “If I am excited about a product” (Appendix 3, no. 16)
- “If it has been a very good experience.” (Appendix 3, no. 17)
- “If I have been particularly satisfied or unsatisfied” (Appendix 3, no. 18)
- “If I am surprised with a product [...]” (Appendix 3, no. 23)

Even though the quantitative research did not provide a definite answer, a combination of the quantitative and the qualitative results verify H₃: Danish social media users communicate

negative word-of-mouth sentiments through social media to a higher extent than they communicate positive sentiments.

Moreover, negative sentiments are noticed more than positive sentiments:

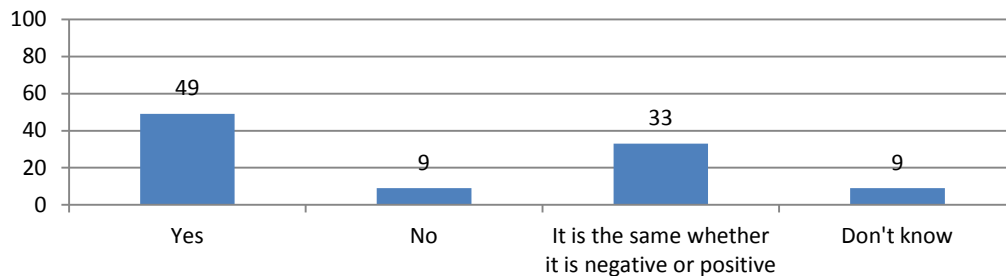


Figure 18: Do you notice more the negative messages from friends and other consumers about products and companies than you notice positive messages? (in percent)

This is also reflected in the interviews where negative messages also have greater influence on purchase decision-making. In his interview, Riko Sørensen responded that he seldom reads positive messages because he does not find them trustworthy because they are often too subjective and not supported by facts. He therefore emphasises negative statements about products and companies because he finds these most trustworthy (Appendix 7). The same goes for Kirstine Nielsen who are mostly affected by negative messages because in her own words: “positive things are more individual” (Appendix 5). Thus, the degree of objectivity or subjectivity interpreted in a word-of-mouth message has a great effect on perceived trustworthiness which is the next aspect being investigated.

4.4 Trustworthiness and Persuasion

On the question concerning trustworthiness of different online information sources, the majority of the respondents (51 percent) answered that friends are trustworthy or even very trustworthy (36 percent). Next are online networks with 59 percent of the respondents finding these sources trustworthy and only 5 percent finding them very trustworthy. No respondents reply that other consumers are very trustworthy, but almost half (47 percent) find these online information sources trustworthy while the rest of the respondents (46 percent) are neutral and only 5 percent find consumers untrustworthy. Only 10 percent of the respondents find

companies and brands trustworthy. The majority of the respondents (55 percent) are neutral while 29 percent find companies and brands untrustworthy or even very untrustworthy (6 percent):

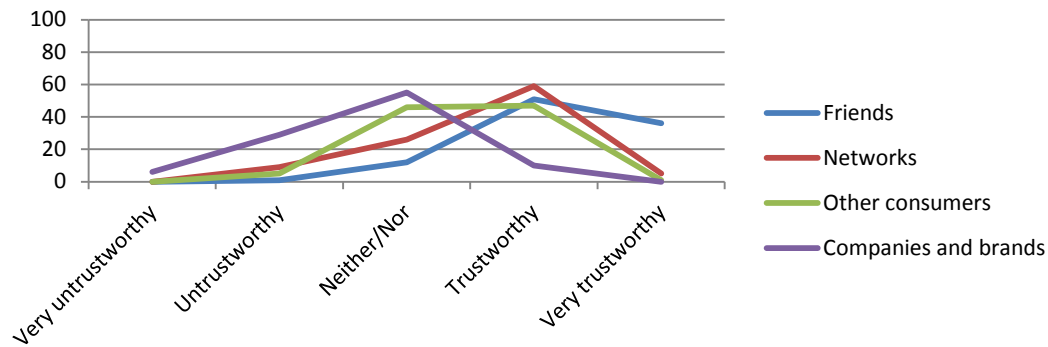


Figure 19: When you read information about experiences with products or companies, how trustworthy do you find the following online sources? (in percent)

Additionally, some respondents directly write:

- “When I use this kind of information it is because it is more trustworthy what my friends say than the company itself..” (Appendix 3, no. 30)
- “[...] I very much trust people when they write reviews on the Internet” (Appendix 3, no. 42)
- “Because I trust that what they say about their experiences is true” (Appendix 3, no. 69)
- “Trustworthiness” (Appendix 3, no. 61)

Thus, a majority is responding that friends and peers are more trustworthy than companies and brands. Communicated messages from friends and peers about a product or company are therefore more trustworthy than messages being communicated by companies and therefore they are assumed to have a greater effect on consumers’ purchase behaviour, thereby verifying H₂.

Furthermore, research results reflect Leon Festinger’s (1954) earlier mentioned theory that a person does not tend to evaluate his/her opinion by comparison with others who are too divergent from him/herself and that the tendency to compare oneself with another person decreases as the difference between that person’s opinion and one’s own decreases. If the receiver does not evaluate or seem to be comparable with the sender, persuasion will not be successful. This proves that the peer-relationship between sender and receiver of the word-of-

mouth message is important if the receiver is to find the message trustworthy and thereby be persuaded to eventually change a purchase decision. In relation to this, one interviewee expressed that the reason she finds consumers who write product reviews online more trustworthy than companies, is that she imagines that they have the same needs as she does (Appendix 6). This perceived trustworthiness among peers reflects the earlier mentioned theory on persuasiveness that stated that persuasiveness is a mechanism through which similarity between the forum's members and those of the receiver influences purchase intention (Prendergast et al., 2010, pp. 700-701).

However, the data also show that the sender-receiver relationship plays a somewhat important role in the question of trustworthiness since it is assumed that the most trustworthy online sources, friends and networks, are well-known to the receiver of the message. Other consumers are unknown to the receivers and it may therefore pose a larger risk to trust these sources. Based on earlier mentioned theoretical findings, relationships were also presumed to play an important part when a receiver was to be persuaded by a word-of-mouth message. Therefore, it is not that surprising to see that a majority of the respondents find it important or even very important to already know and trust the sender of the word-of-mouth message if they are to be persuaded by that message:

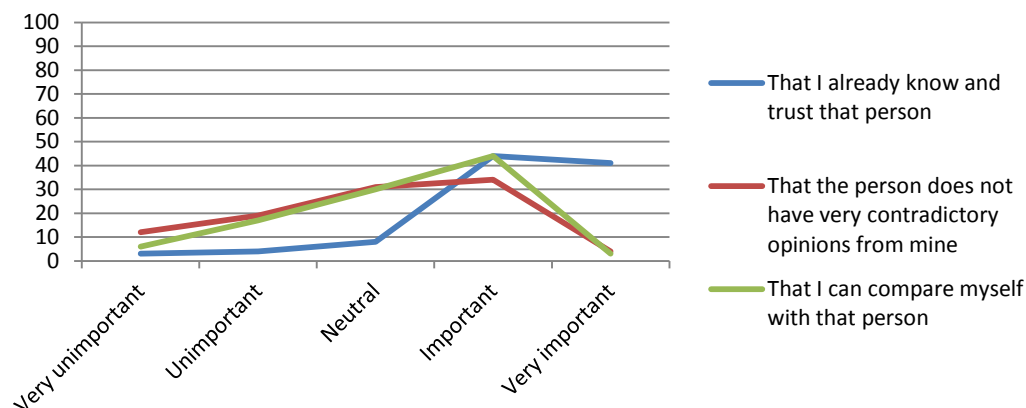


Figure 20: If you are to be persuaded by a person's statement about a product or company, how important are the following statements? (in percent)

The increased persuasiveness of already known communicators is also expressed by one questionnaire respondent:

- “I would only use it to ask people I know and whom I know have knowledge about a specific product or the like” (Appendix 3, no. 36)

Also, one interviewee explains that she finds it easier to trust a message if she knows exactly who the source of the message is because she sometimes believes that it is the company writing the word-of-mouth messages posing as consumers (Appendix 5).

So, why are word-of-mouth messages from friends and peers through social media more trustworthy than messages from companies? The following are statements from questionnaire respondents:

- “The consumers’ opinions about things can often provide a different view than the companies provide in their commercials” (Appendix 3, no. 26)
- “Experiences with the product are preferable instead of only reading about it on various Web sites. Then you also get to read if there are any negative things you should know” (Appendix 3, no. 31)
- “Often, it says more about a company how it treats its customers. And you get an honest answer” (Appendix, no. 33)
- “Because collective intelligence often gives an exact view of the quality of the product” (Appendix, no. 37)
- “It is good to find neutral information about the products I am intending to purchase [...]” (Appendix 3, no. 43)
- “[...] because commercials rarely include negative facts..” (Appendix 3, no. 45)
- “Customer reviews about products often give a good average view on the actual quality of the product” (Appendix 3, no. 72)

The interviews show an agreement with this: Ann Jørgensen responded that she does not read what a specific company says about the product that she is interested in because she does not think that the company would write anything negative about their own product – they are not objective. She imagines that people who write product reviews have the same needs as she has and therefore she finds them more trustworthy than companies (Appendix 6). The same goes for Kirstine Nielsen who believes that a company would never say anything negatively about the product (Appendix 5). Nor Riko Sørensen believes that a company would ever write negatively about its own product. Therefore, he finds statements from other consumers most trustworthy. Also, he thinks that people who write product reviews online do not benefit financially when writing positively about a product or a company (Appendix 7).

Thus, friends and other consumers (peers) are more trustworthy than companies because they are more neutral and objective in their opinions about products and companies. Furthermore, the amount of information and statements available from other consumers is an important factor if people find the messages trustworthy because it enables people to compare a lot of different statements and thereby get an overall view of the quality and opinion about a product or company. This may also be why the interviewees all express a need to read a variety of consumer statements before valuing what is most trustworthy.

Moreover, even though some respondents express that they do not think that it is important what others say about products and companies that they are interested in, there is an overall agreement that it is important what other consumers say about products and companies:

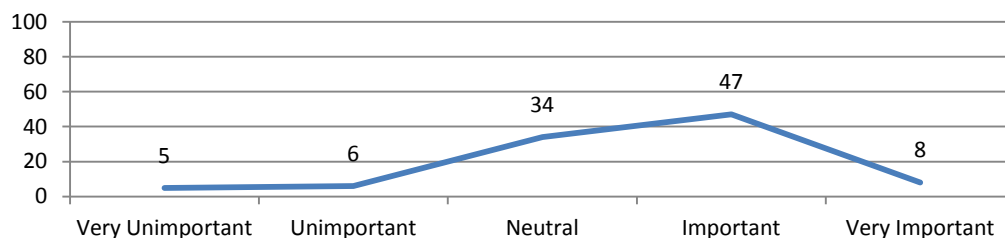


Figure 21: How important is it to you what other consumers and people from you social networks say about products or companies you are interested in? (in percent)

This may also be an indicator that word-of-mouth messages are trustworthy because they would not be important if they are not considered to be trustworthy.

However, the amount of statements about the same product or company seems to be important in relation to trustworthiness. This is especially evident the interviews. When asked how they would measure the trustworthiness of a word-of-mouth message, the interviewees agreed that they would always read more than one statement. When Riko Sørensen reads online word-of-mouth messages, he always reads at least 10 to maybe 30 statements in order to evaluate which sentiments are most trustworthy (Appendix 7). Ann Jørgensen reads several messages or reviews to see whether they are predominantly positive or negative (Appendix 6). The same goes for Kirstine Nielsen who answered that whether she finds word-of-mouth messages trustworthy depends on how often she hears or reads the same statement from different sources. If a lot of people say the same, she believes it more (Appendix 5). Similarly,

Stig Larsen always chooses to search for as many statements as possible so that he does not need to make a decision based on one single statement. He chooses to believe the majority (Appendix 9). This also suggests that parts of the opinion-making process are socially constructed and, as reviewed in section 2.4, users have become active participants in the process of meaning-making. They adopt and modify others' sentiments in order to realise their own.

4.5 A Digital Information Culture

When asked why they choose to search online for word-of-mouth messages, many questionnaire respondents mentioned the easy access to a lot of information from a variety of sources that the Internet and social media have to offer opposed to the offline world:

- “It is easy to google e.g. “the products name” and then “review” etc. [...] By googleing I have access to millions of people’s buying experiences – not only my close friends’/family’s” (Appendix 3, no. 25)
- “Because I can” (Appendix 3, no. 27)
- You can ask a question to a lot of people at once and quickly get information from sources of who you can easily value the trustworthiness” (Appendix 3, no. 38)
- “It is the easiest way to get an honest opinion about the product” (Appendix 3, no. 41)
- “To get an overview of price and quality without going to the physical store” (Appendix 3, no. 46)
- “Well, the Internet is the way to go and it has a larger number of information” (Appendix 3, no. 47)
- “It is easiest and you are there anyway” (Appendix 3, no. 50)

This shows that people participate in the digital culture and choose to explore the easy access that the technology gives to information and the possibilities that the Web 2.0 offers for multilateral communication. It is easy to find information from other consumers online even though you do not know exactly where or on which Web site to begin because all online resources are available by just one click in a search engine.

The easy online access to information about products and companies in general and word-of-mouth messages through social media in particular, enables Web users to browse for products

even though they have not yet considered to buy them or have a particular interest in them. Hence, it is relevant to repeat Varey's (2001) statement that much consumer behaviour is not buying behaviour and that also window shopping is a pleasant pastime for some people (p. 45). Some purchase behaviour may therefore be preceded by planning while other results from the situation.

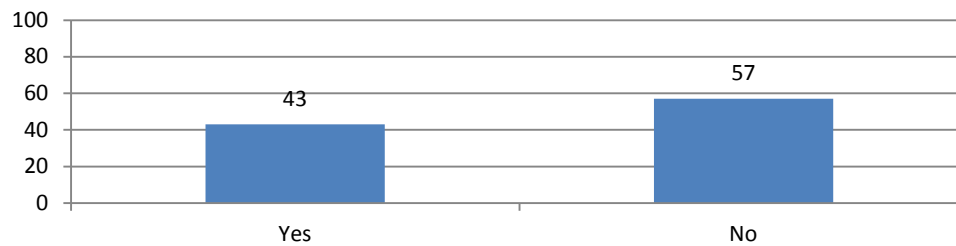


Figure 22: Do you use social media to browse for products that you have not yet considered to buy? (in percent)

It is not a definite majority of the questionnaire respondents who do not use social media to browse for products that they have not yet considered to buy. Almost half of the respondents do in fact use the browsing possibilities of social media. It is assessed that Facebook and other social networks play a big role in this browsing behaviour because they are the most used type of social media and online-friends' word-of-mouth messages in their status updates are often read by users who have not actively been searching for this type of information. Thus, social media can also be used for the first step of Varey's (2001) purchase decision-making process, need recognition, because often a consumer hears about a product from another consumer and afterwards recognises the need that the product can meet. This is evident in one of the interviews where Kirstine Nielsen explained that she never actively searches for information about products or companies online. When she reads a statement on Facebook, she decides whether it is relevant for her and then remembers it the next time she wants to buy a product (Appendix 5). Thus, even though it is not recognised as browsing it can have an influence on future consumer behaviour.

4.6 Online Word-of-Mouth Communication and Consumer Behaviour

Before analysing the effect of word-of-mouth communication on consumer behaviour, it should be repeated that consumer behaviour relates to different aspects in the consumption

process. Consumer behaviour includes processes of browsing and selection, purchase, use, evaluation, influencing others and disposal (Varey, 2001, p. 42). Thus, consumer behaviour includes information-seeking behaviour and purchase decision-making.

The following charts are related to consumer behaviour and purchase decision-making. How do the respondents use social media and word-of-mouth communication for purchase decision-making and do recommendations and dissuasions have any effect on consumer behaviour and purchase intention?

As previously stated, there is a difference in the trustworthiness of friends and networks and other consumers. Knowing and trusting the source of the word-of-mouth message has a great influence on persuasiveness. This is also established by the following charts which show the consumer behaviour of the questionnaire respondents based on online recommendations and dissuasions respectively from friends and online networks/connections and from other consumers. In the questionnaire, the respondents were pointed out that in this situation friends and online connections are seen as well-known and other consumers as unknown.

Firstly, two graphs show the responses to positive word-of-mouth sentiments from friends and online connections and from other consumers respectively. It should be noted that the questions are seen in relation to products that the respondents have already intended to purchase and not for browsing.



Figure 23: What do you do if an online connection/friend recommends a product that you have already intended to buy?
(in percentage)

When the statements about products or companies are written by known sources, the majority of the respondents (68 percent) answer that they are even more inclined to buy the product but

that they would continue their information search but perhaps take the recommendation into consideration. However, 21 percent respond that they would finish their search and buy the product and a purchase-decision is then made based on word-of-mouth communication. The remaining 11 percent of the respondents would not read any word-of-mouth messages because they stick to their own decision. As previously seen, not all the respondents would choose to read statements from friends and peers about products and companies. Thus, it is not surprising to see that some of the respondents choose to ignore any word-of-mouth messages.

As a comparison, the following figure shows the responses to positive word-of-mouth sentiments from other consumers:



Figure 24: What do you do if another consumer recommends a product that you have already intended to buy?
(in percentage)

Here, we can see some differences in responses as opposed to the previous figure 23. The number of respondents who would choose to finish their information search and buy the product has decreased from 21 percent to 5 percent and the number of respondents choosing to ignore all statements has increased slightly. Hence, word-of-mouth communication from known sources is more influential than similar communication from unknown sources. Furthermore, in relation to messages from other consumers one respondent answered:

- “I will reflect on it, but not in the same way as if a friend recommends the product.”
(Appendix 3, no. 93)

The above results are responses to positive word-of-mouth communication. Next, responses to negative communication are illustrated by the following figures showing the responses to communication from friends and online connections and other consumers respectively (figures 25 and 26).

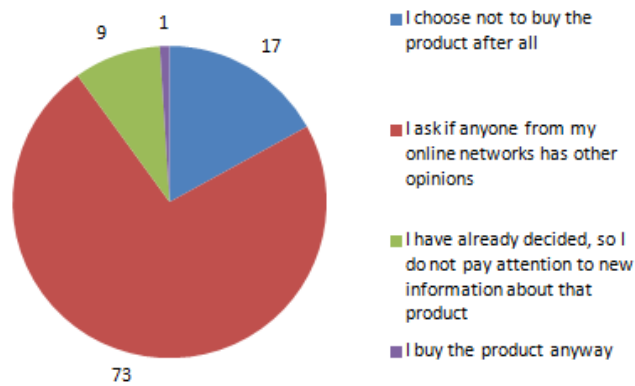


Figure 25: What do you do if an online connection/friend dissuades a product that you have already intended to buy? (in percentage)

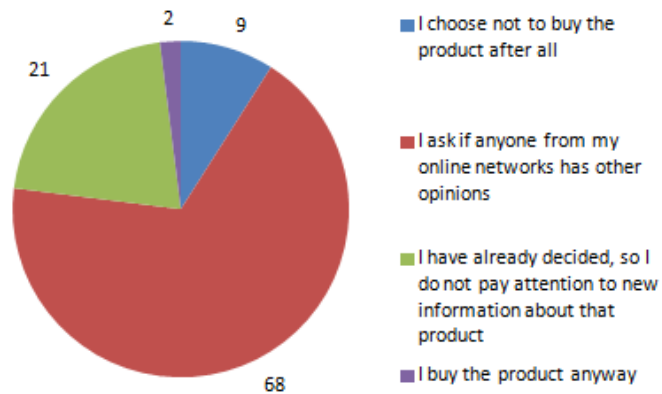


Figure 26: What do you do if another consumer dissuades a product that you have already intended to buy? (in percentage)

Again, it is evident that statements from friends and online connections have more influence on purchase decision-making than those from other consumers. 17 percent of the respondents choose not to buy the product if a friend or online connection dissuades it and only 9 percent choose this if another consumer dissuades the product. Also, more respondents choose to

ignore messages from other consumers than those from friends and connections. Only a very small percentage of respondents choose to buy the product even it has been dissuaded by others while by far the majority searches for further information.

Based on these results, it is clear that online word-of-mouth communication affects consumer behaviour and purchase intention. One respondent directly replies that he/she uses social media to read information about relevant products or companies because

- “[...] hearing others’ opinions about products/companies has an influence on my choice” (Appendix 3, no. 49)

The interviews also show an overall agreement with this because Ann Jørgensen, Riko Sørensen and Stig Larsen all explain that they have changed opinions about a product that they have intended to purchase (Appendices 6, 7 & 9).

However, common to the answers to the four previous questions is that the majority of the respondents express a need to continue their information search. One message alone does seldom change consumer behaviour. This is also connected to what was previously stated that the amount of statements seems to be important in relation to trustworthiness and thereby persuasiveness. This is also evident when reading the text-based answers. Here are just some examples:

- “I continue my information search, but take the recommendation into consideration” (Appendix 3, no. 87, 90, 94 & 109)
- “I want to have more opinions” (Appendix 3, no. 88 & 91)
- “I research more thoroughly, depends on the type of product” (Appendix 3, no. 95)
- “ “I will seek more information via the Internet” (Appendix 3, no. 97)
- “Then I would investigate more about that product and then make my decision (Appendix 3, no. 104 & 117).
- “I will further investigate the product specifications [...]” (Appendix 3, no. 105 & 118)

However, there is one very clear and important pattern in these text-based answers; by far the majority of these answers are connected to the questions about negative word-of-mouth messages. This cannot be mere coincidence that more respondents choose to answer the open-ended questions about negative sentiments and not those about positive sentiments. Comparing this to previous results, it is even more evident that negative word-of-mouth

messages have a larger effect on information-seeking behaviour than positive messages. However, the interesting aspect is to see whether there is a difference in the influence of positive word-of-mouth communication vs. negative word-of-mouth communication. The interviews contribute to answering this question.

As mentioned, three of the interviewees have experienced or agree to being inclined to change an opinion about a product based on online word-of-mouth communication. Riko Sørensen responded that he has often made a radical change of opinion about a product and that it is mostly negative sentiments that influence this because objectiveness is important and positive sentiments are often too subjective (Appendix 7). Ann Jørgensen recalled a specific situation where she changed her purchase decision based on negative sentiments about a product that she had intended to buy (Appendix 6). However, Ann also expressed that perceived risk is an important factor in how positive and negative sentiments respectively influences her behaviour. Whether she is mostly influenced by positive or negative word-of-mouth communication depends on how much she is willing to risk. By what she thinks as low-risk products such as concerts, exhibits and restaurants, she is very much influenced by positive recommendations and then only one single recommendation is enough for her to make a decision. However, by high-risk products she is more involved in searching for statements from a lot of other consumers and dissuasions are very influential in her purchase decision-making (Appendix 6). Similarly, Stig Larsen agrees that both negative as well as positive sentiments influence him (Appendix 9).

Thus, both negative and positive word-of-mouth communication influence Danish social media users' information-seeking behaviour and purchase decision-making. However, comparing this result to previous results stating that negative sentiments are both being communicated and noticed to a higher extent than positive sentiments suggests that negative sentiments are also more effective than positive sentiments.

5.0 Conclusion

Quantitative and qualitative research has contributed to establishing the use of online word-of-mouth communication by Danish social media users and the influence that this has on consumer behaviour. Moreover, it was possible to combine the different theoretical aspects to

make a common theoretical framework for the thesis. The hypotheses formulated in the theoretical framework have been tested and either verified or falsified and the research questions have been answered. The following is a conclusion of the main findings.

One of the main preliminary hypothesis when beginning the process of writing this thesis was that the increased use of social media has resulted in Danish social media users contributing more to word-of-mouth communication through social media than they do in offline, face-to-face situations. Surprisingly, the empirical research falsified this hypothesis (H_1). The tendency among the respondents is that it is preferred to communicate offline and with people who are well-known because a certain level of informality is important. Thus, the subjects of the empirical research matched the Social Technographics Profile of Danish users made by Christensen (2011) which showed that most of social media users in Denmark are joiners and spectators who seldom choose to communicate their own communication messages online but instead read and monitor others'. Hence, more Danish users of social media choose to search for online word-of-mouth communication from friends and other consumers than communicating themselves. The main objective of this information-seeking behaviour is mainly to decrease the level of perceived risk. Therefore, the choice to search for word-of-mouth communication is highly connected to expensive products and products that are going to last for a long period of time.

The second hypothesis, that Danish social media users find communicated word-of-mouth messages from friends and peers are more trustworthy than messages being communicated by companies, was verified. Friends and peers are more trustworthy than companies mainly because of the perceived level of objectivity in the word-of-mouth messages from friends and peers. However, it is evident that the level of trustworthiness is higher in relation to friends and online networks as opposed to other consumers. Furthermore, already knowing and trusting the sender of the word-of-mouth message is important in relation to persuasiveness and thereby in relation to how messages influence consumer behaviour. Online word-of-mouth communication influences consumer behaviour like purchase decision-making and information seeking. Most often, word-of-mouth messages result in increased information seeking but in many cases they also result in a change of opinion about products and companies and a change of purchase decision. Thus, word-of-mouth communication was proven to be important in the process of decision-making.

The third hypothesis, that Danish social media users communicate negative word-of-mouth messages through social media to a higher extent than they communicate positive messages, was also verified. The reason for this behaviour is explained by how much consumers reflect on experiences with a product or a company. Negative experiences are remembered more often than positive experiences. Therefore, negative sentiments are more often communicated than positive sentiments.

Lastly, the fourth hypothesis, stating that the more negative the word-of-mouth message the more influence it has on Danish social media users' consumer behaviour, was tested and verified. This phenomenon is connected to the perceived trustworthiness and the persuasiveness of word-of-mouth communication. Positive messages are most often believed to be too subjective and thereby less trustworthy than negative messages. Thus, positive sentiments are less persuasive and less successful in influencing consumer behaviour.

The research methodology was appropriate in that it contributed to testing the hypotheses and answering the research questions. However, conducting a focus-group interview instead of the separate interviews could have proved to be a better strategy since a focus-group interview focuses on the social construction of meaning and data is collected through the interaction of respondents around few themes. Additionally, more complete questionnaire responses would be preferable since the number of incomplete responses questions the validity of some of the quantitative data.

Based on the research results, it was possible to establish the great influence that word-of-mouth communication has on consumer behaviour and thereby the importance for companies to monitor social media to know who is talking about their brand or services, and what the positive or negative sentiments are about them and react accordingly. During the theoretical framework it was suggested that many organisations seem to operate under old paradigms, viewing social media as one-way flow marketing messages, instead of capitalising on the opportunities that social media offer for monitoring, analysing and participating in the millions of conversations between consumers. Conducting sentiment analyses should be an important part of a company's marketing and communication strategies. Hence, the findings of this thesis can form the bases of further research on company strategies for appropriate social media communication and sentiment analysis.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire in Danish (screen shots)

Formålet med dette spørgeskema er at undersøge din brug af online mund-til-mund kommunikation via de sociale medier du bruger. Med dette forstås de handlinger du foretager dig når du fortæller om et produkt eller en virksomhed til dine venner f.eks. via dine statusopdateringer på Facebook – uanset om det er positivt eller negativt.

Ved produkter forstås f.eks. film, spil, mobiltelefoner, computere mm.

Ved en virksomhed eller en virksomheds service forstås f.eks. kundeservice, virksomhedens etik mm.

Der er i alt 20 spørgsmål og et afsluttende felt til evt. yderligere kommentarer.

På forhånd tak for din hjælp

Først nogle spørgsmål om dig selv

* 1.
Køn

☐ Mand
☐ Kvinde

[Reset](#)

* 2.
Alder

☐ 15-20 år
☐ 21-30 år
☐ 31-40 år
☐ 41-50 år
☐ 50+ år

[Reset](#)

* 3.
Senest afsluttede (eller igangværende) uddannelse:

☐ Folkeskole
☐ Gymnasial uddannelse
☐ Faglært
☐ Kort videregående uddannelse (1-2 år)
☐ Mellemlang videregående uddannelse (3-4 år)
☐ Lang videregående uddannelse (5-6 år)

[Reset](#)

Does Online Word-of-Mouth Communication Affect Consumer Behaviour?
– a Study of Word-of-Mouth Communication through Social Media

Dernæst et spørgsmål om din generelle brug af sociale medier

* 4. Hvilke sociale medier bruger du og hvor tit?

	Flere gange om dagen	En gang om dagen	3-6 gange om ugen	1-2 gange om ugen	Et par gange om måneden eller sjældnere	Aldrig
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LinkedIn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Google+	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anbefalingssider	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Diverse fora	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Diverse blogs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

Andre:

Følgende er spørgsmål til din brug af de sociale medier og fornævnte mund-til-mund kommunikation

5. Bruger du de sociale medier til at fortælle dine online-venner, netværk eller andre forbrugere om oplevelser med produkter, virksomheder eller virksomheders service? (fx anbefaler eller fraråder produkter)

Aldrig	Sjældent	Kun hvis nogle spørger om min mening	Ofte	Altid
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

I hvilke tilfælde vælger du denne form for kommunikation? (f.eks. hvis produktet har været dyrt?)

6. Tror du at du udtrykker dig mere negativt om produkter og virksomheder end du udtrykker dig positivt?

Ja	Nej	Det er det samme om det er positivt eller negativt	Ved ikke
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

7. Hvis du er interesseret i et produkt eller en virksomhed, bruger du de sociale medier til at finde information (anbefalinger, fraråd) om det produkt, virksomheden eller virksomhedens service?

Aldrig	Sjældent	Ofte	Altid	Ved ikke
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

Hvorfor vælger du evt. at søge denne information?

8. Hvorfor vil du vælge at udtrykke dig om et produkt, en virksomhed eller en virksomheds service? (gerne flere svar)

- ☐ For at informere andre om produktet eller virksomheden
- ☐ For at fortælle andre hvilke produkter eller virksomheder, der interesserer mig
- ☐ For at hjælpe andre med at vælge/fravælge produkter eller virksomheder
- ☐ Hvis positivt: for at hjælpe virksomhedens eller produktets image
- ☐ Hvis negativt: for at give virksomheden eller produktet et dårligt image

[Reset](#)

Andre årsager?

9. Hvor foretrækker du normalt at udtrykke dig om produkter, virksomheder og virksomheders service?
 (List følgende efter præference (1=højest))

	1	2	3
Via de sociale medier hvor folk kender mig og jeg kender dem (fx Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Via de sociale medier hvor jeg kan være forholdsvis anonym (fx fora og anbefalingssider)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Når jeg er offline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

10. Kommunikerer du mere om produkter og virksomheder via de sociale medier, end når du er offline?

Ja	Nej	Det er det samme om jeg er online eller offline	Ved ikke
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

13. Hvis du læser information om oplevelser med produkter eller virksomheder, hvor troværdigt synes du følgende online informationskilder er?

	Meget utroværdigt	Utroværdigt	Hverken utroværdigt eller troværdigt	Troværdigt	Meget troværdigt
Venner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Netværk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Andre forbrugere	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Virksomheder og brands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

14. Hvor vigtigt er det for dig, hvad andre forbrugere og personer fra dine online netværk fortæller om produkter og virksomheder, du har interesse i?

Slet ikke vigtigt	Ikke vigtigt	Neutral	Vigtigt	Meget vigtigt
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

Hvorfor?

15. Hvor vigtigt er følgende for at du kan blive overbevist af en persons udtalelse/beskrivelse om et produkt eller en virksomhed?

	Slet ikke vigtigt	Ikke vigtigt	Neutral	Vigtigt	Meget vigtigt
At jeg allerede kender og stoler på personen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At personen ikke har meget anderledes holdninger end mig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At jeg kan sammenligne mig selv med personen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

Evt. andet?

Følgende spørgsmål handler om din forbrugeradfærd og hvad du bruger din informationssøgning om produkter eller virksomheder til

16. Hvis du søger information om produkter og virksomheder inden et evt. køb, hvor enig er du da i følgende:

	Meget uenig	Uenig	Neutral	Enig	Helt enig
Jeg bruger andres meninger og holdninger til produkter og virksomheder til at sammenligne med og blive klar over min egen mening eller holdning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg læser om andres oplevelser med produkter og virksomheder for at reducere risikoen for et evt. fejkøb	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jo vigtigere det er for mig at finde et produkt der tilfredsstiller mine behov, jo mere søger jeg information om det produkt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jo dyrere et produkt er, jo mere involveret er jeg i at finde information fra andre forbrugere	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg kan bruge andre forbrugeres oplevelser med produkter eller virksomheder til at finde alternativer til mit eget valg af produkt eller virksomhed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

Følgende spørgsmål skal vise, om der er forskel på hvordan du reagerer over for beskeder om produkter fra henholdsvis folk fra dit netværk/online-venner og andre forbrugere.

Her lægges der op til at venner og netværk er nogle du kender, mens andre forbrugere er ukendte for dig.

17.

Hvad gør du, hvis en fra dit online netværk/en ven anbefaler et produkt, du allerede har overvejet at købe?

- ☐ Jeg er mere opsat på at købe produktet, men fortsætter min informationssøgning på nettet
- ☐ Jeg afslutter min informationssøgning og køber produktet
- ☐ Jeg har allerede besluttet mig, så jeg ignorerer det

[Reset](#)

Evt. andet?

18. Hvad gør du, hvis en anden forbruger anbefaler et produkt, du allerede har overvejet at købe?

- ☐ Jeg er mere opsat på at købe produktet, men fortsætter min informationssøgning på nettet
- ☐ Jeg afslutter min informationssøgning og køber produktet
- ☐ Jeg har allerede besluttet mig, så jeg ignorerer det

[Reset](#)

Evt. andet?

19.

Hvad gør du, hvis en fra dit online netværk/en ven fraråder et produkt, du allerede har overvejet at købe?

- ☐ Jeg vælger ikke at købe produktet alligevel, men finder et alternativt produkt at købe
- ☐ Jeg spørger om andre fra mine online netværk har andre holdninger
- ☐ Jeg har allerede besluttet mig, så jeg ignorerer det
- ☐ Jeg køber produktet alligevel

[Reset](#)

Evt. andet?

20. Hvad gør du, hvis en anden forbruger fraråder et produkt, du allerede har overvejet at købe?

- ☐ Jeg vælger ikke at købe produktet alligevel, men finder et alternativt produkt at købe
- ☐ Jeg spørger om andre fra mine online netværk har andre holdninger
- ☐ Jeg har allerede besluttet mig, så jeg ignorerer det
- ☐ Jeg køber produktet alligevel

[Reset](#)

Evt. andet?

Og hvis du har yderligere kommentarer:

21.

Evt. yderligere kommentarer

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire in English (screen shots)

The purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate your use of online word-of-mouth communication through social media. By word-of-mouth communication is meant the action that you carry out when recommending or telling about a product like a movie or service of a company to online-friends or other consumers through e.g. your status updates on Facebook – whether it is positive or negative.

By products is meant e.g. movies, computer games, mobile phones, computers etc.

By a company or a company's service is meant e.g. customer service, company ethics etc.

Firstly, some questions about you

*** 1. Gender**

☐ Male

☐ Female

[Reset](#)

*** 2. Age**

☐ 15-20 years

☐ 21-30 years

☐ 31-40 years

☐ 41-50 years

☐ 50+ years

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*** 3. Last graduated (or ongoing) school education**

☐ Primary and lower secondary school

☐ Secondary school

☐ Skilled training

☐ Short-cycle higher education (1-2 years)

☐ Medium-cycle higher education (3-4 years)

☐ Long-cycle higher education (5-6 years)

[Reset](#)

Secondly, a question about your general use of social media

*** 4. Which social media do you use and how often?**

	Several times a day	Once a day	3-6 times a week	1-2 times a week	A couple of times a month or rarer	Never
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LinkedIn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Google+	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Review sites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forums	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blogs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

Other:

Does Online Word-of-Mouth Communication Affect Consumer Behaviour?
– a Study of Word-of-Mouth Communication through Social Media

The following questions are about your use of social media and the before mentioned word-of-mouth communication

* 5. Do you use social media to tell your online-friends or other consumers about experiences with products, companies or companies' service? (e.g. recommend or dissuade)

Never	Seldom	Only if someone directly asks for my opinion	Often	Always
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

When do you choose this form of communication? (e.g. if the product is very expensive?)

* 6. Do you think that you communicate negatively about products or companies more than you do positively?

Yes	No	It is the same whether it is negative or positive	Don't know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

* 7. If you are interested in a product or a company, do you use social media to get information (recommendations, dissuasions) about this product, company the the company's service?

Never	Seldom	Some times	Often	Always
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

Why do you choose to search for this form of information?

8. Why would you choose to communicate about a product, company or a company's service?

- ☐ To inform others about that product or company
- ☐ To let others know which kind of products and companies I am interested in
- ☐ To help others choose/deselect products or companies
- ☐ If positive: to improve the image of the company or product
- ☐ If negative: to worsen the image of the company or product

[Reset](#)

Other reasons?

* 9. Where do you normally prefer to communicate about products, companies or companies' service?
(list the following according to preference (1=strongest))

	1	2	3
Through social media where people know me and I know them (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Through social media where I can be somewhat anonymous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I am offline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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* 10. Do you communicate about products and companies to a larger extent through social media, that when you are offline?

Yes	No	It is the same whether I am online or offline	Don't know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

* 11. Do you use social media to browse for products that you have not yet considered to buy?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

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* 12. Do you notice more the negative messages from friends and other consumers about products and companies than you notice positive messages?

Yes	No	It is the same whether it is negative or positive	Don't know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Does Online Word-of-Mouth Communication Affect Consumer Behaviour?
– a Study of Word-of-Mouth Communication through Social Media

* 13. If you read information about experiences with products or companies, how trustworthy do you find the following online sources?

	Very untrustworthy	Untrustworthy	Neither untrustworthy or trustworthy	Trustworthy	Very trustworthy
Friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Networks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other consumers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Companies and brands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

14. How important is it to you what other consumers and people from you social networks say about products or companies that you are interested in?

	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very Important
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

Why?

* 15. If you are to be persuaded by a person's statement about a product or company, how important are the following statements?

	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very Important
That I already know and trust that person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
That the person does not have very contradictory opinions from mine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
That I can compare myself with that person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Other:

The following question is about your consumer behaviour and what you use your information search on products and companies for

* 16. If you search for information about products or companies, how do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I use others' opinions about products and companies to compare and realise my own opinion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I read about other consumers' experiences with products and companies as to reduce the risk of a wrong purchase	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The more important it is for me to find a product that satisfies my needs, the more I search for information about that product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The more expensive a product is, the more involved am I in reading information from other consumers before purchase	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can use other consumers' experiences with a product or company to find alternatives for my own choice of product or company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Reset](#)

Does Online Word-of-Mouth Communication Affect Consumer Behaviour?
– a Study of Word-of-Mouth Communication through Social Media

The purpose of the following questions is to show whether there is a difference in your reaction to messages about products from people from your online networks/online-friends and other consumers. Here, it is assumed that friends and people from your networks are someone you already know while other consumers are unknown to you.

* 17. What do you do if an online connection/friend recommends a product that you have already intended to buy?

- ☐ I am even more inclined to buy the product but continue searching for information about that product
- ☐ I finish my information search and buy the product
- ☐ I have already decided, so I ignore it

[Reset](#)

Other?

* 18. What do you do if another consumer recommends a product that you have already intended to buy?

- ☐ I am even more inclined to buy the product but continue searching for information about that product
- ☐ I finish my information search and buy the product
- ☐ I have already decided, so I ignore it

[Reset](#)

Other?

* 19. What do you do if an online connection/friend dissuades a product that you have already intended to buy?

- ☐ I choose not to buy the product after all
- ☐ I ask if anyone from my online networks has other opinions
- ☐ I have already decided, so I do not pay attention to new information about that product
- ☐ I buy the product anyway

[Reset](#)

Other?

* 20. What do you do if another consumer dissuades a product that you have already intended to buy?

- ☐ I choose not to buy the product after all
- ☐ I ask if anyone from my online networks has other opinions
- ☐ I find an alternative product to buy
- ☐ I have already decided, so I do not pay attention to new information about that product
- ☐ I buy the product anyway

[Reset](#)

Other?

And for any additional comments

21. Additional comments

Appendix 3 – Survey Results: Text based answers

- with English (direct) translations

Question 5: Do you use social media to tell your online-friends or other consumers about experiences with products, companies or companies' service? (e.g. recommend or dissuade). When do you choose this form of communication?

Hvis det er noget jeg mener andre kan få glæde af at vide
Gode og dårlige oplevelser i B & B
Både hvis jeg er tilfreds med noget, men også hvis jeg er utilfreds.
Hvis jeg har været meget skuffet over produktet, for at advare andre
Jeg bruger det oftest for at udtrykke en negativ holdning.. Tror jeg.. :-)
Kun i tilfælde af manglende viden om et produkt spørger jeg over facebook.. Altså hvis jeg skal vide mere om en ting (fx. en mikrofon)
Eller hvis servicen ikke har været tilfredsstillende..
hvis produktet ikke har levet op til forventning
Hvis jeg har fået virkelig god eller virkelig dårlig service vil jeg enten anbefale et firma eller advare imod dem.
Hvis jeg har haft en dårlig oplevelse. Senest gjorde jeg det i forbindelse med en biografilm, som jeg fandt enormt dårlig.
Hvis produktet/servicen har været dårlig. Eller hvis jeg har set en god film.
Hvis jeg har været meget skuffet over et produkt, ellers kun hvis nogen spørger direkte om et produkt jeg kender og har en holdning til
Ved tilfredsthedsniveau af kundeservice eller produktkvalitet
Hvis jeg synes det er interessant nok for andre at høre om mine erfaringer med et produkt.
hvis det er et godt produkt eller et fund til prisen
Hvis jeg er begejstret for et produkt, eller hvis jeg kender producenten bag produktet eller virksomheden (som en vennetjeneste).
Hvis det har været en rigtig god oplevelse.
Hvis jeg har været særlig tilfreds eller utilfreds
Når jeg er blevet skuffet eller snydt
Enten positive Eller negative erfaringer med produktet ..
gode tilbud
Hvis man oplever dårlig service
Hvis jeg er overrasket over et produkt eller hvis det kan bruges i en morsom sammenhæng
facebook mobil

1. “If I believe that others can benefit from it”
2. “Good and bad experiences in B&B”
3. “Both when I am satisfied with something, but also when I am unsatisfied”
4. “If I am very disappointed with the product, to warn others”
5. “I most often use it to express a negative opinion... I think:-)”
6. “Only when I lack knowledge about a product I ask via Facebook.. i.e. when I need to know more about a product (e.g. a microphone)”
7. “Or if the service has not been satisfactory..”
8. “If the product did not meet my expectations”
9. “If I have received a really good or a really bad service I would either recommend a company or warn against it.”
10. “If I have had a bad experience. Last time was in connection with a movie that I found really bad.”
11. “If the product/service has been really bad. Or if I have seen a good movie.”

12. “If I have been very disappointed with a product, otherwise only if someone directly asks about a product that I know and have an opinion on”
13. “By degree of satisfaction of customer service or product quality”
14. “If I think it is interesting enough for others to hear about my experiences with a product.”
15. “If it is a good product or a bargain at the price”
16. “If I am excited about a product, or if I know the producer of the product or the company (as an act of friendship).”
17. “If it has been a very good experience.”
18. “If I have been particularly satisfied or unsatisfied”
19. “When I have been disappointed or have been cheated”
20. “Either positive or negative experiences with the product..”
21. “Good offers”
22. “If you experience a bad service”
23. “If I am surprised with a product or if it can be used in a funny context.”
24. “Facebook mobile”

Question 7: If you are interested in a product or a company, do you use social media to get information (recommendations, dissuasions) about this product, company or the company's service? Why do you choose to search for this form of information?

Det er let at google fx "produktets navn" og "anbefaling" etc. Det er jo ikke sikkert at nogen i min nære omgangskreds har kendskab til det produkt/service, jeg overvejer at købe. Ved at google har jeg adgang til millioner af menneskers købsoplevelser - ikke kun mine nære venner / familie. Dog er google vel ikke et socialt medie? Derfor har jeg svaret "aldrig". For jeg bruger ingen af de sites, som i lister op som sociale medier, til at finde oplysninger i...
Brugernes mening om ting kan ofte give et lidt andet syn, end hvad producenterne skriver i deres annoncer
Fordi det er muligt.
Især restauranter og computer udstyr.
For at undgå at købe et dårligt produkt.
Når jeg bruger denne slags information, er det fordi, det er mere troværdigt, hvad mine venner siger end selve virksomheden..
Erfaringer med produktet er klart at foretrække, fremfor bare at læse om det på diverse sider på nettet. Så får man også de eventuelle dårlige ting med.
For dér er det sandsynligt, at andre har oplevet og skrevet om produktet
Det er tit det der siger mest om et firma, hvordan de behandler deres kunder. Og så får man et ærligt svar.
for at høre om andres erfaringer.
Det kommer meget an på type af produkt - hvor stor risiko der er ved at købe et forkert produkt. Det er vel mest hvis det er et forholdsvis dyrt produkt.
Vil kun bruge det til at spørge folk jeg kender, som jeg ved har viden om et givent produkt eller lign.
Fordi collective intelligence ofte giver et nøjagtigt billede af produktets kvalitet
Man kan stille et spørgsmål til mange personer samtidig og hurtigt få information fra kilder man forholdsvis nemt kan vurdere pålideligheden af.
Nemt
For at se, hvor kendt produktet er eller virksomheden
Det er den letteste måde at få en ærlig mening om produktet.
For at få mere viden omkring produktet, som regel er der mange der allerede lavet reviews/anbefalinger som jeg kan bruge. JEg har stor tiltro til folk når de skriver reviews på nettet.

Continued next page...

Det er godt at finde neutral info om de produkter, jeg har i sinde at købe, men jeg bruger det kun til køb af store ting fx vaskemaskine, tv, pc
Svære at vurdere en vare eller serviceydelse på grundlag af beskrivelse på netter, derfor godt at få kommentar fra andre købere
for at være afklaret med om hvorvidt det passer til mine behov.. da reklamer som oftes ikke har de negative facts med..
For at danne mig et overblik over pris og kvalitet uden at skulle hen til en fysisk butik.
Internettet er vel egentlig vejen frem, og der er et udstræk af informationer.
For at høre andre meninger
For det at høre andres mening om produkter/virksomheder har en indflydelse på, hvad jeg vælger
Det er nemmest, og så er man derinde alligevel :)
Bruger kun blogs
Bruger trustpilot.dk. Især hvis man skal købe varer over nettet.
for at få andres erfaringer, det kan f.eks. hjælpe en af man har 20 drenge venner der nemt kan svare på om den computer man kigger på er noget værd - facebook

25. "It is easy to google e.g. "the product's name" and then "review" etc. I cannot be sure that anyone in my close network knows about the product/service that I consider to buy. By googleing I have access to millions of people's buying experiences - not only my close friends'/family's. Yet, Google is not a social media? Therefore, I have answered "never" because I do not use any of the sites you list as social media to find information..."
26. "The consumers' opinions about things can often provide a different view than the companies provide in their commercials"
27. "Because I can"
28. "Especially restaurants and computer equipment"
29. "To avoid buying a bad product"
30. "When I use this kind of information it is because it is more trustworthy what my friends say than the company itself.."
31. "Experiences with the product are preferable instead of only reading about it on various Web sites. Then you also get to read if there are any negative things you should know."
32. "Because there it is more likely that others have experienced and written about the product"
33. "Often, it says more about a company how it treats its customers. And you get an honest answer."
34. "To hear about others' recommendations."
35. "It very much depends on the type of product - how big the risk of buying a wrong product is. Perhaps mostly if it is a relatively expensive product."

36. “I would only use it to ask people I know and whom I know have knowledge about a specific product or the like.”
37. “Because collective intelligence often gives an exact view of the quality of the product”
38. “You can ask a question to a lot of people at once and quickly get information from sources of who you can easily value the trustworthiness.”
39. “Easy”
40. “To see how well-known the product or company is”
41. “It is the easiest way to get an honest opinion about the product.”
42. “To get more knowledge about the product, usually there are many who have already written reviews that I can use. I very much trust people when they write reviews on the Internet.”
43. “It is good to find neutral information about the products I am intending to purchase, but I only use it in purchase of ‘big’ products such as washing machine, PC or TV”
44. “It is harder to judge a product or a service based on descriptions on the Internet, therefore it is good to have comments from other buyers”
45. “To clarify whether it matches my needs.. because commercials rarely include negative facts..”
46. “To get an overview of price and quality without going to the physical store.”
47. “Well, the Internet is the way to go and it has a larger number of information. “
48. “To hear other opinions”
49. “Because hearing others’ opinions about products/companies has an influence on my choice.”
50. “It is easiest, and you are there anyway :)”
51. “I only use blogs”
52. “I use trustpilot.dk. Especially if [I] want to buy products online.”
53. “To know others’ opinions, for example it can be helpful to have 20 male friends who can easily answer whether the computer that you are looking at is worth something – Facebook”

Question 8: Why would you choose to express yourself about a product, company or a company's service? Other reasons?

det ville jeg ikke gøre fordi jeg synes statusopdateringer i 99% af tilfældene er vildt lamme.
Hvis jeg har haft en rigtig dårlig oplevelse vil jeg nok fraråde andre at bruge denne virksomhed
Det gør jeg ikke
Melde tilbage til virksomheden om ens oplevelse.
Til en joke

54. "I wouldn't because in 99 percent of the time, I find status updates really lame."
55. "If I have had a bad experience, I would probably warn others about that company"
56. "I don't"
57. "Give the company feedback about your experience"
58. "For a joke"

Question 14: How important is it to you what other consumers and people from you social networks say about products or companies that are of interest to you? Why?

Hvad er chancen for, at de lige udtrykker sig om de produkter jeg gerne vil købe eller bare overvejer at købe. Så hellere søge efter andres anbefalinger via fx google.
Som skrevet tidligere, så giver det en idé om hvilke oplevelser andre forbrugere har haft og hvad man måske selv skal være opmærksom på.
Troværdighed
Egentlig er det vigtigt for mig, hvad andre mener om produkter, men jeg påkalder mig også min ret til at danne min egen mening, derfor har jeg skrevet neutral..
Det sparer en for en masse tid og besvær, at kunne tage del i andres erfaringer. Der er mindre risiko for at ende op med et produkt der ikke lever op til forventningerne.
Føler ikke det er vigtig. Vil hellere selv finde ud af det.
For at være sikker på kvaliteten af mit produkt
det er en personlig holdning
Fordi det er der man får det mest ærlige svar.
normalt tager jeg mig af hvad folk skriver på facebook og finder det meget utroværdigt, men hvis det handler om noget der vedkommer mig kan jeg ikke ignorere det
Fordi jeg stoler på, at det de fortæller om deres erfaringer er sandt.
Hvis mange af mine venner har haft dårlige oplevelser med en virksomhed vil jeg nok fravælge netop den, da der sikkert er en masse andre
Det hjælper til at mindske risikoen for et fejlkøb
Customer reviews af produkter giver ofte et godt gennemsnitsbillede omkring produktets reelle kvalitet
For at drage nytte af andres erfaringer
Det er godt at høre om andres erfaringer inden for det produkt, man selv har en interesse i.
Jeg bruger mest kommentarer om produkter og virksomheder til at danne mig et overblik. Folk har jo forskellige udgangspunkter for at vurdere et produkt/en virksomhed - udgangspunkter der ikke nødvendigvis er de samme som mine.
Som vejledning
Since I had experience working at Panasonic in Japan as consumer behavior researcher, product planner and marketing, I have some skills to evaluate product concepts, quality, value etc. and to read "mind" behind product marketings etc... So I believe my intuition that has been trained over 10 years.
Vis man ikke hører noget positivt, er oddsne for det er godt, heller ikke så store..
ud fra hvilket produkt det er danner jeg gerne helst mit eget indtryk.
Er personerne en del af min vennekreds (off-line) tager jeg generelt imod gode råd og kritiserer/roser de et produkt/ virksomhed jeg har interesse i, stoler jeg på dem...
Hvis jeg er glad for noget, betyder det ikke noget, hvad andre mener.
det er en god måde at danne sin egen mening på.
Jeg ønsker ikke at handle i en butik, hvor der er dårlig service
jeg afgiver gerne min mening, hvis en ven har skrevet at de har haft en dårlig oplevelse med et firma, som jeg selv har haft det godt med. Det kan jo være det er et engangstilfælde

59. “What are the chances that they express themselves about those products that I want to buy or consider buying. I'd rather search for others' recommendations via e.g. google.”
60. “As written earlier, it gives an idea about which experiences that other consumers have had and maybe what to pay attention to.”
61. “Trustworthiness”
62. “It is important for me what others think about products, but I also choose the right to have my own opinion, therefore I have answered neutral..”
63. “It saves a lot of time and hassle to take part in others' experiences. There is less risk of ending with a product that does not meet the expectations.”
64. “I do not feel that it is important. I'd rather find out by myself.”
65. “To be certain about the quality of my product”
66. “it is a personal opinion”
67. “Because there you get the most honest response.”
68. “Normally, I take care of what people write on Facebook and find it very untrustworthy, but if it is about something that concerns me, I can't ignore it.”
69. “Because I trust that what they say about their experiences is true.”
70. “If many of my friends have had bad experiences with a company, I would probably opt out that company since there are probably others”
71. “It helps decreasing the risk of a wrong purchase”
72. “Customer reviews about products often give a good average view on the actual quality of the product”
73. “To profit from others' experiences”
74. “It is good to hear about others' experiences with the product you are interested in.”
75. “I mostly use comments about products and companies to form a general view. People have different bases for valuing a product/company – bases that are not necessarily the same as mine.”
76. “As a guide”
77. “Since I had experience working at Panasonic in Japan as consumer behavior researcher, product planner and marketing, I have some skills to evaluate product concepts, quality, value etc. and to read "mind" behind product marketing etc... So I believe my intuition that has been trained over 10 years.”

78. “If you don’t hear anything positive, then the odds that it is good is not that great..”
79. “Based on what product it is, I create my own opinion.”
80. “If the persons are a part of my circle of friends (offline) I generally welcome good advice and if they criticise/praise a product/company I’m interested in, I trust them...”
81. “If I like something, it doesn’t matter what others think”
82. “It is a good way to make your own opinion.”
83. “I do not wish to purchase at a store with bad service”
84. “I gladly give my opinion if a friend has written that he/she has had a bad experience with a company with which I have had a good experience. It might be a one-off situation”

Question 15: If you are to be persuaded by a person's statement about a product or company, how important is the following? Other?

Kvaliteten af personens udtalelser/beskrivelser generelt.
At vurderingen af et produkt går igen forskellige steder. Det er ikke kun en enkelt persons vurdering, der danner grundlag for, hvorvidt jeg vil vælge et produkt/en virksomhed eller ej.

85. “The general quality of that person’s statements/descriptions.”
86. “That the evaluation of a product recurs different places. It is not just one single person’s valuation that forms the base of whether I would choose a product/company or not.”

Question 17: What do you do if an online connection/friend recommends a product that you have already intended to buy? Other?

Jeg fortsætter min informationssøgning, men tager anbefalingen i betragtning
Jeg vil gerne have flere meninger
Jo flere der skriver noget godt om produktet, desto tættere er jeg på at købe det

87. “I continue my information search, but take the recommendation into consideration”
88. “I want to have more opinions”
89. “The more people are writing something good about the product, the closer I am to buying it”

Question 18: What do you do if another consumer recommends a product that you have already intended to buy? Other?

Jeg fortsætter min informationsøgning, men tager anbefalingen i betragtning
Jeg vil gerne have flere meninger
Det kommer an på hvor anbefalingen kommer fra. Testimonials på virksomheders websites kan være mere eller mindre troværdige. Reklamer har en negativ effekt, fordi man ved at folk er blevet betalt for at sige et produkt er godt - så er der nok en grund til at produktet skal "highlightes" - fordi det ikke er godt nok i sig selv. Men hvis det er en anden forbruger jeg møder på gaden eller overhører i metron, stoler jeg mere på det.
Jeg tager det til eftertanke, men ikke på samme måde, som hvis en ven anbefaler et produkt.

90. "I continue my information search, but take the recommendation into consideration"
91. "I want to have more opinions"
92. "It depends on the source of the recommendation. Testimonials on the company Web sites can be more or less trustworthy. Commercials have a negative effect because you know that people are being paid to say that the product is good – so there is probably a reason why the product needs to be "highlighted" – because it is not good enough in itself. But if it is another consumer I meet on the street or overhear in the metro, I trust it more."
93. "I reflect on it, but not in the same way as if a friend recommends the product. "

Question 19: What do you do if an online connection/friend dissuades a product that you have already intended to buy? Other?

Jeg fortsætter min informationsøgning, men tager anbefalingen i betragtning
Jeg undersøger mere dybdegående. Kommer an på type af produkt.
Vil høre mere en én mening
Jeg vil søge yderligere info via nettet
Jeg spørger den pågældende ind til hvorfor han/hun var utilfreds med produktet og genovervejer så om jeg vil købe det.
Jeg spørger andre mennesker som ikke indgår i mit online netværk, men som jeg kan tale med face to face fx gode venner/forældre og tager derefter købet op til overvejelse efter ny info er modtaget
Det kommer an på graden af beskeden. Er det tydeligt at han/hun er meget utilfreds, finder jeg et alternativt produkt. Ellers søger jeg efter andres meninger om det samme produkt
Søger yderligere information på diverse blogs/review sites
Undersøger produktet på forskellige websider
Genovervejer mit valg
Så vil jeg undersøge mere om det pågældende produkt og dernæst træffe mit valg
I will further investigate the product specifications and figure out what was wrong with this friend.
Jeg tænker lidt længere over det
Det påvirker mig, men jeg fortsætter informationsøgning
Søger yderligere information

94. "I continue my information search, but take the recommendation into consideration"
95. "I research more thoroughly, depends on the type of product"
96. "I want to have more than one opinion"

97. "I will seek more information via the Internet"
98. "I ask that person why he/she was discontent with the product and then reconsider if I want to buy it."
99. "I ask other people who are not in my online network but whom I can talk to face to face e.g. good friends/parents and then reconsider the purchase after receiving new information"
100. "It depends on the degree of the message. If it is obvious that he/she is very discontent, I will find an alternative product. Otherwise I search for others' opinions about the same product"
101. "I search for more information on blogs/review sites"
102. "I research the product on different Web sites"
103. "I reconsider my choice"
104. "Then I would investigate more about that product and then make my decision"
105. "I will further investigate the product specifications and figure out what was wrong with this friend."
106. "I think about it a little bit longer"
107. "It affects me, but I continue information search"
108. "Search for more information"

Question 20: What do you do if another consumer dissuades a product that you have already intended to buy? Other?

Jeg fortsætter min informationssøgning, men tager anbefalingen i betragtning
Hvis jeg allerede har besluttet mig, søger jeg jo ikke efter information fra andre forbrugere
jeg vil søge yderligere info via nettet
Det kommer igen an på kilden.
Jeg læser for det meste mange meninger før jeg selv tager endelig stilling til produktet
Søger yderligere information på diverse blogs/review sites
UNDersøger produktet på forskellige websider.
Genovervejer mit valg
Så vil jeg undersøge mere om det pågældende produkt og dernæst træffe mit valg
I will further investigate the product specifications and figure out what was wrong with this consumer.
Jeg tænker længere over mit valg
Det påvirker mig, men jeg fortsætter informationssøgning

109. "I continue my information search, but take the recommendation into consideration"
110. "If I have already decided, then I do not search for recommendations from other consumers"

111. “I will seek further information via the Internet”
112. “Again, it depends on the source”
113. “I mostly read many opinions before I consider the product”
114. “I search for more information on blogs/review sites”
115. “I research on the product on different Web sites”
116. “I reconsider my choice”
117. “Then I would investigate more about that product and then make my decision”
118. “I will further investigate the product specifications and figure out what was wrong with this consumer.”
119. “I think about my choice a little bit longer”
120. “I affects me, but I continue information search”
121. “Search more information”

Appendix 4 – Interview Guide

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Do you read or listen to word-of-mouth messages from friends and other consumers before making a purchase decision?
4. In which cases (by which kinds of products) do you choose to search for this form of information?
5. Which kind of Web sites/social media sites do you choose to use for this form of information?
6. Do you feel that word-of-mouth messages from friends and other consumers are more trustworthy than those from a company? Why?
7. Is there a difference in the trustworthiness of people you know and other consumers who you don't know?
8. How do you measure the trustworthiness of a word-of-mouth message?
9. Would you change your decision of buying a specific product if you read about negative experiences with that product?
10. Do you think that negative messages have more affect on you than positive messages? Why?

Appendix 5 – Summary of interview with Kirstine Nielsen

Gender: Female

Age: 24 years

Depending on the type of product, Kirstine chooses to search for word-of-mouth messages from friends and other consumers. It is mostly when she feels that the product is a “big thing” – when it is expensive, e.g. a computer or a phone. She never asks friends about specific products on e.g. Facebook but she notices if others write about product on Facebook. Mostly, she notices if someone writes something negative about a product; especially mobile phones. She then remembers that statement the next time she wants to buy a phone and opts out that specific product.

Kirstine feels that messages from friends and other consumers are more trustworthy than those from the company because she does not believe that the company would say anything negatively about the product. However, there is a difference in the trustworthiness of friends and other consumers. Kirstine thinks that friends are most trustworthy because sometimes she believes that it is the company writing the messages posing as consumers. It is easier to trust the message if she knows exactly who the source of the message is. Therefore, she seldom searches for word-of-mouth messages on other social media than her social network, Facebook.

Kirstine listens to word-of-mouth messages, but whether she finds them trustworthy depends on how often she hears or reads the same message from different sources. If a lot of people say the same, she believes it more. However, she has never experienced changing an already made purchase decision based on word-of-mouth messages. When she reads a statement on Facebook, she decides whether it is relevant for her and remembers it the next time she wants to buy a product. She seldom actively searches for information about products or companies online. Mostly negative messages have an effect on her opinion about a product because as Kirstine describes it: “positive things are more individual”.

Appendix 6 – Summary of interview with Ann Jørgensen

Gender: Female

Age: 24 years

Before making a purchase decision, Ann often reads recommendations or dissuasions from other consumers or friends. However, it very much depends on the type of product. It is mostly when she wants to buy a new phone or other electronics. She does not have that much knowledge in that specific product area so she thinks it is good to hear others' opinions. It is mostly when she thinks that there is a great risk in buying a wrong product e.g. when the product is expensive.

Ann does not read what a specific company says about the product that she is interested in because she does not think that the company would write anything negative about their own product – they are not objective. She imagines that people who write product reviews have the same needs as she has and therefore she finds them more trustworthy than companies.

When she needs information from other consumers about a product, she usually uses Google or asks through her status updates on Facebook. She does not go directly to a specific site. She likes to read about tests made by TÆNK (the Danish Consumers' Advisory Council).

When asked how she measures the trustworthiness of a review from another consumer, she answers that she seldom reflects on whether the message is real. She reads several messages or reviews and then sees whether they are predominantly positive or negative. Does the product live up to her own standards and which specific features are being highlighted as negative or positive? Are these features what she finds most interesting herself?

She listens to what others say about products. She remembers one experience where she changed her purchase-decision because she heard about a lot of negative experiences with that particular product. She had decided to buy an iPhone 4, but read that the phone had issues with the antenna among other things, so she decided to buy an alternative product.

It differs how she is influenced with negative or positive word-of-mouth communication. Often she decides to go see a specific concert or an art exhibit or eat at a particular restaurant if she reads or hears them being recommended by another consumer. In these cases, positive messages are of great influence. Again, it depends on how much she is willing to risk.

Concerts, exhibits and restaurants are low-risk products and only one positive recommendation may be needed for her to make a decision. By high-risk products, she is more involved in searching for information from a lot of other consumers and dissuasions are very influential when she is making a purchase decision in these cases.

Ann agrees that she thinks people participate in word-of-mouth communication to a higher extent offline than online. She says that she very often tells her friends about an experience with a product when she is face-to-face with them because she does not have to reflect that much on what she is saying and the importance of what she is saying. She believes that people do not reflect that much on the message when they say it orally to friends as opposed to when they have to write it down. She therefore believes that when people chooses to write about a product online it is often because they have had a particularly good or bad experience with a product or a company. She also believes that there is a majority of people choosing to write about negative experiences. People remember negative experiences to a very high extent whereas they do not reflect on very simple positive experiences unless they are directly asked about it. Only when the experience has been particularly positive they remember it and reflect on it and perhaps choose to actively inform others about it.

Appendix 7 – Summary of interview with Riko Sørensen

Gender: Male

Age: 27 years

Riko especially chooses to search online for consumer reviews on electronics where there can be a lot of defects. Also when he feels that a product is relatively expensive and he feels that there would be a great risk of making a wrong purchase.

When searching for these product reviews, he uses Google. Mostly, he uses forums but sorts out Forums that he can see only give special preference to one specific product and where the reviews are too subjective. He finds it most trustworthy when a statement contains specific facts to support the message; this shows a certain degree of objectiveness.

Riko mentions that there are a lot of “trolls” that only write messages in e.g. online forums in order to get some reactions from the other users – mostly these are very controversial messages or very negative messages. These messages are very easy to distinct and therefore very easy to ignore.

When Riko reads online word-of-mouth messages, he always reads at least 10 to maybe 30 statements in order to evaluate which messages are most trustworthy. He does not believe that a company would ever speak negatively about its own product. Therefore, he finds statements from other consumers most trustworthy. Also, people who write reviews do not benefit financially when writing positively about a product or a company.

Online, Riko does not ask his friends or online networks for product reviews. He only searches online for other consumers’ statements about products that he is interested in. Otherwise, he asks his friends and people he knows when he is offline.

When asked whether he has ever changed a purchase decision based on online word-of-mouth messages, he answers that he has often made a radical change of opinion about a product; when the writers of the messages have pointed out specific product malfunctions. He does not find it trustworthy when it is only the writer’s personal opinion about the product – then he often chooses to search more thoroughly to find out whether it is trustworthy or not.

You never know who the sender of the word-of-mouth message is or what the intention of writing the message is. Therefore, Riko mostly searches for negative messages because he finds those most trustworthy – then he is certain that the sender does not get paid for writing something positive. Riko strongly agrees that he emphasises negative online word-of-mouth messages over positive messages because he is not that easy to excite.

Riko has never written an online word-of-mouth message himself. But he can imagine that he would only write something positive about a product. He would only choose to write something negative if he has had a very negative experience with a product and if he can support his arguments with specific facts – to make the statement more objective. Online, he would therefore probably write mostly positive messages because he then feels that he is allowed to be more subjective. However, when he is offline he does not have to think about when and how he says anything about a product. Therefore, he often tells friends and acquaintances about his experiences with products offline.

Appendix 8 – Summary of Interview with Line Juvald

Gender: Female

Age: 25 years

Line does not participate in online WOM that much but she admits that she does sometimes search for information from other consumers online. Mostly, it is when she feels that a product that she is interested in is relatively expensive that she would choose to investigate it further. However, Line thinks that it is important to remember who the senders of the WOM messages are because you never really know who they are. It may be those who have produced the products that write the messages – and then we are back to square one. When it comes to trustworthiness, she therefore does not find online written WOM very trustworthy because as she puts it: “I do not trust the medium”.

She does, however, find other consumers more trustworthy than companies. However, her relationship with the sender of the WOM message plays a very important role in whether or not she finds it trustworthy. Only people with whom she has an offline relationship are found trustworthy. She has a lot of Facebook friends who she does not have a deeper personal relationship with and she therefore does not trust them. She does read if some of her Facebook friends write something about a product in their status updates but only if it is a close friend does she trust it. However, when Line has made up her mind about a product that she wants to buy, it will take a lot to convince her otherwise.

Appendix 9 – Summary of Interview with Stig Larsen

Gender: Male

Age: 28 years

When Stig decides to search online for information about products it is when they are big things – products that should last for a long time. This is for example televisions, washing machines, refrigerators, computers etc. He does this for two reasons: 1) to find the best price and 2) to find the right product that satisfies his needs and within a certain price limit. If he needs a new computer, he does not just go to the first and the best computer store and buy what they recommend. He uses the possibilities that you have today and that is primarily the Internet. He has never written an online WOM message himself.

Stig uses forums and expert reviews. He does not use Facebook at all to search for WOM messages. He thinks that Facebook is too superfluous in cases like that. You can hear about friends' opinions with product and that is it. If he needs information in connection with buying a new product he primarily searches for expert reviews/tests and preferably more than just one.

When asked whether he feels that friends and other consumers are more trustworthy than companies, Stig answers both yes and no but mostly yes. He has some criteria that he looks for: What kind of product is it and how does the friend or the other consumer use it? Is this the same way he is going to use it? Do they use it more often than he would or something completely different? Has the friend been thorough in his/her search about the product? Has he/she just purchased something based on a commercial from an advertiser or producer or listened to some random shop assistant? This is also why he finds friends more trustworthy than other consumers whom he does not know. However, he does not read WOM messages from friends online. He is suspicious about other consumers because he would never know whether the consumer is communicating about something that he/she really does not know anything about. Stig therefore always chooses to search for as many statements as possible so that he does not need to judge everything based on one single statement. If one consumer has written one thing but five other consumers write something opposing he chooses to believe the majority.

Stig has changed his opinion about a product based on online WOM messages from other consumers. It is both negative and positive statements that influence him. If he finds a product that is well praised but then finds a similar product that is even more praised, he is very inclined to change his opinion. Similarly, if he reads a lot of negative things about a product that he is interested in, he searches for another similar product.

Appendix 10 – Nestlé responses on Facebook



The screenshot shows a Facebook post from Nestlé with a warning about profile pictures. Below the post are several comments and responses. The comments include a request for freedom of speech, a complaint about a lost customer, a claim of censorship, a question about deleting comments, a compliment for a factory, and a demand for an explanation of a logo. The responses from Nestlé include a clarification of rules, a correction of a comment, an explanation of the logo, and a link to a marketing page.

Nestlé To repeat: we welcome your comments, but please don't post using an altered version of any of our logos as your profile pic - they will be deleted.
6 hours ago
12 people like this.
View previous comments 50 of 57

Nestlé you have freedom of speech and expression. Here, there are some rules we set. As in almost any other forum. It's to keep things clear.
5 hours ago · Report

Paul Griffin Your page, your rules, true, and you just lost a customer, won the battle and lost the war! Happy?
5 hours ago · Report

Nestlé Oh please .. it's like we're censoring everything to allow only positive comments.
5 hours ago · Report

Sara Bu Perche 'cancellare i commenti ?
5 hours ago · Report

Joko Susanto hi.. kejayan factory is the best lho
5 hours ago · Report

Paul Griffin Don't beg, this debate for me is over, only boycotting your products will make you feel any pain I think, although your arrogance is quite extraordinary, it wasn't me that bought that palm oil!
5 hours ago · Report

4 hours ago · Report

Killer **Helen Constable** I'd like to know if the person writing the comments for Nestlé, actually has the backing from Nestlé? I doubt it. Even a dumb ass company like them would get such an idiot to be their public voice.
4 hours ago · Report

Nestlé I think you missed out the 'not' there, Helen
4 hours ago · Report

Killer **Helen Constable** Yes well I'm lacking in the first morning NOT NESTLÉ coffee. I think you missed your manners in your comments.
4 hours ago · Report

Matt Konig I'm not sure why you dislike the moulding of your kitkat logo into "killer" I personally think it's quite catchy
4 hours ago · Report

Nestlé @Matt - you could start here:
<http://marketing.about.com/cs/brandmktg/a/whatisbranding.htm>
4 hours ago · Report

Retrieved 11 May 2011 from: <http://www.techeye.net/internet/nestle-fails-at-social-media>

Also see:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=107128462646736&id=24287259392

Appendix 11 – Greenpeace vs. Kit Kat



Sweet success for Kit Kat campaign: you asked, Nestlé has answered

Feature story - May 17, 2010

A big 'Thank You!' to the hundreds of thousands of you who supported our two-month Kit Kat campaign by e-mailing Nestlé, calling them, or spreading the campaign message via your Facebook, Twitter and other social media profiles. This morning, Nestlé finally announced a break for the orang-utan - as well as Indonesian rainforests and peatlands - by committing to stop using products that come from rainforest destruction.

The new policy commits Nestlé to identify and exclude

On this page

- › Let's celebrate our sweet success!
- › Watch 'Have a break?'
- › Images from the campaign
- › Read blogs from the campaign

Retrieved 11 May 2011 from:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/news/features/Sweet-success-for-Kit-Kat-campaign/>

Appendix 12 – ‘United Breaks Guitars’ on YouTube

United Breaks Guitars

sonsofmaxwell 17 videoer



10.880.261

Uploadet af sonsofmaxwell den 06/07/2009

Visit <http://www.UnitedBreaksGuitars.com> for case studies and highlights from Dave's speaking tour.

51.919 synes godt om, 1.028

synes ikke godt om

Next time, get a Martin.

Broyale26 8 timer siden

what a movie..watched 5 times in webmovietube

becomea1celebrity 21 timer siden

@pwakamole Watch his other videos => Yes

adhdboy699 1 dag siden

@creepygirl94 that is creepy girl!

RattleMyZipper 1 dag siden

did you had any response after this from united?

pwakamole 1 dag siden

lÖl_äNyÖnE_wÄñNä_chÄt_with_mE_ï_fEËl_sÖ_lÖÑely_t0day-J

SupaauNorahaa740 1 dag siden

A protest song for the consumer age. Bravo! Just read a baggage handler posting on reddit.com saying he thinks this might be the reason that they treat musical instruments like gold.

thecaveofthedeatd 1 dag siden

What class did you fly; if I had seen this last week I wouldnt have bought a United air ticket. I might consider referring this video to my insurance company to see if I can add a rider on my policy. I already made a note not to take any GUITARS on my trip; I want the GUITARIDES to stop. Maybe a law with a penalty of time in a GUITAR FACTORY where they have to make several by HAND!

bluetheta 2 dage siden

I hate United Airlines soooo much. Not once I had a great experience with them. Even on first class, I had the most terrible service. Check-in counter treat you like a slave.

Btw, I love you song!!!!

Retrieved 23 March 2011 from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YGc4zOqozo>