



WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY

WAGENINGEN UR

# Word of mouth on Social Media

---

IMPACT, MODERATORS AND MANAGEMENT

*Anne-Wil van Lohuizen*

930102526080

YSS 82312

*The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of postings containing word of mouth on consumer attitudes towards products and brands, and how negative impact on attitudes can be minimized. Previous studies indicate that although positive online word of mouth is more frequent, negative online word of mouth has more influence on the attitude of the consumer. Influence of online word of mouth, however, is moderated by aspects of the product, the person who posts the online word of mouth, the post itself and the person who reads the post. When it is about managing negative online word of mouth, companies have to follow a step-by-step model and choose a strategy to minimize the impact of the negative online word of mouth. The strategy that seems most wise to apply is an accommodative strategy. This is a strategy where the company recognizes their responsibility for the problem and wants to something about it. Implications for future research are also discussed.*

Contents

- Foreword ..... 2
- Introduction..... 3
- 2. Negative vs. Positive postings ..... 5
- 3. Types of Social Media..... 7
  - 3.1 Divisions of Social Media ..... 7
  - 3.2 Differences between Social Media types ..... 9
- 4. Moderators..... 12
  - 4.1 Product ..... 12
  - 4.2 Poster ..... 13
  - 4.3 Post..... 14
  - 4.4 Perceivers ..... 14
- 5. Managing negative posts..... 16
  - 5.1 Selecting ..... 16
  - 5.2 Monitoring..... 16
  - 5.3 Choosing strategy ..... 17
  - 5.4 Selecting ..... 18
- Discussion and Conclusion ..... 19
- References..... 21

## Foreword

This thesis is written for my Bachelor Business and Consumer studies at Wageningen University, during the winter and spring of 2013/2014. Throughout the process of getting my ideas in a structured and clear topic, I obtained helpful support of Dianne Hofenk, my supervisor during the start of my thesis. Above all, I would like to thank my supervisor Andres Trujillo Barrera, who helped and supported me during the process of writing my thesis.

## Introduction

Imagine your wedding in one of the four W hotels in New York, and everything goes perfect. You want to share your most beautiful day with the rest of the world, and therefore capture it in Tweets, YouTube movies and Facebook posts. Just to ensure this and not having to Tweet yourself at the altar, you can hire a \$3000 'Social Media wedding concierge' from the W hotel chain. In this way your special day is fully integrated with Social Media (CNN, 2014). What you can derive from this is that Social Media is becoming more popular and important for more occasions. The role of Social Media in our lives is becoming bigger than ever before. But what exactly is Social Media? Xiang and Gretzel (2010) argue that despite the lack of a formal definition "Social Media can be generally understood as Internet-based applications that carry consumer-generated content which encompasses media impressions created by consumers, typically informed by relevant experience, and archived or shared online for easy access by other impressionable consumers" (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010, p. 180). This definition is quite broad, and therefore Social Media includes sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, different forums, reviews on online shopping sites, and blogs.

As the concept Social Media is becoming more familiar with both individuals and companies, our understanding of the use and effects of Social Media has improved. An example of a study that helps understanding the use and effects of Social Media at an individual level is a study of O'keeffe and Clarkepearsen (2011), who discuss benefits and risks of using Social Media. Another example would be studies that discuss which kind of persons use Social Media and in what way (Correa et al., 2010; Seidman, 2013). A study that helps us understand the use and effects of Social Media at a company level is about how Business-to-Business organizations use social networking sites to achieve brand objectives (Michaelidou et al., 2011). A more general study related to Social Media and companies is a study where a model for Social Media success factors was provided. Using Social Media in a marketing strategy while meeting the success factors positively affects sales processes and performance (Rodriguez et al., 2012; Schultz et al., 2012).

Although our understanding of the use and effects of Social Media has improved, the effects of online posts from consumer to consumer on Social Media have been found less well understood, in particular the effects of posts containing word of mouth. Before the existence of Social Media, the impact of word of mouth restricted because of its limited diffusion (Mayzlin, 2006). However, consumers who want to share their opinion about certain products or brands can nowadays easily spread their words with only one post. Word of mouth can be transformed into enduring messages visible to the entire world. That word of mouth is not only reaching a few family members or friends, but thousands or maybe millions of people at once has strong implications for companies. Both organisation's successes and failures are now on displays as never before. As a result, online word of mouth plays a growing role in consumer purchase decisions (Duan et al., 2008). Consumers often believe that other people have better information about products than they have themselves. Because online word of mouth is written by experienced customers, consumers consider the word of mouth as trustworthy (Huang & Cheng, 2006; Huang et al., 2012). Therefore, online word of mouth is perceived as a stronger influencer than advertisements created by marketers (Podnar & Javavernik, 2012; Chiou & Cheng, 2003).

Despite the indications that online word of mouth is a powerful tool in changing attitudes, little information is available about the influence of consumer-generated postings on the attitudes about products or brands of other consumers (Schlosser, 2005; Lee et al., 2009). This is problematic, because not understanding the impact of online word of mouth, or not knowing how to deal with negative online word of mouth as a company can have bad consequences for the entire organization. As Wang et al. (2012) already suggested, it is important that further research investigates this impact on consumer attitudes and how companies can minimize undesired effects.

In this study I describe what the impact is of positive and negative posts on the attitudes of other consumers, and what the moderators are of these impacts. Companies can use this information to minimize the effect of negative posts on attitudes of consumers. The central question in this research is: 'What is the impact of postings on Social Media on consumer attitudes towards products and brands, and how can a negative impact on attitudes be minimized?' To answer this question, there are sub-questions that have to be answered first:

- Is there a difference between the effects of negative postings and positive postings on the consumer attitudes towards products, brands, or companies?
- Is there a difference between the effects of postings on different types of Social Media?
- Which factors moderate the effects of positive and negative postings on Social Media on consumer attitudes?
- How can companies minimize negative effects?

Every question is addressed using a literature study, investigating in past studies. I found that the impact of online word of mouth depends on several moderators, and that the negative effects of online word of mouth can best be minimized by an accommodative strategy.

In the first chapter I discuss the difference between the effects of negative and positive postings on consumer attitudes. In addition, a search in the literature is done to discuss if there are any differences between the effects of different types of Social Media. Next, I did a search in the literature about what the moderators are of the effects on attitudes. Finally, I discuss how companies can minimize negative effects of postings.

## 2. Negative vs. Positive postings

“In January 2012, McDonald's asked its customers to share their positive stories about the company on Twitter, making use of the hashtag #McDStories. After only 2 hours, McDonald's had to withdraw the promotion because the company had suddenly been exposed to a massive amount of negative word-of-mouth. People had used the #McDStories hashtag to share negative customer experiences and to insult McDonald's” (Pfeffer et al., 2013, p. 1). McDonald's had a good reason to withdraw the promotion. 70% of online shoppers trust reviews from people they do not know in the offline world (NielsenWire, 2009). Although there are both negative and positive postings to find on the internet, there seems to be differences between the frequencies and effects of those two types of online word of mouth.

Although the failed Twitter-promotion attempt of McDonald's might suggest that negative word of mouth is more common in the world of Social Media, several studies show that positive word of mouth is more common than negative word of mouth on Social Media. For example, Jansen et al. (2009) analysed more than 150.000 microblog postings on Twitter, finding that about 50% of the tweets on brands contained positive word of mouth, while tweets containing negative word of mouth were considerably less, namely 33%. Similarly, Godes and Mayzlin (2004) studied postings about television shows on the site Usenet newsgroup, an online discussion group. In this study it became clear that three out of four postings were positive or mixed (positive and negative). Additionally, the same results hold for restaurants. Positive reviews on the online restaurant guide [www.london-eating.co.uk](http://www.london-eating.co.uk), far outnumbered negative comments. Almost 78% of the comments were positively formulated, while only 22% was negative (Pantelidis, 2010).

It is not only the number of postings that counts, but also the effects of word of mouth. According to Podnar and Javernik (2012), negative word of mouth is usually considered as a stronger influencer compared to positive word of mouth. In their study it was shown that negative word of mouth has an impact on consumers' attitudes, while the influence of positive word of mouth was not significant. Lee et al. (2009) evaluated a fictitious brand name using different types of reviews to show the participants varying in degree of valence (negative or positive) and extremity (moderate or extreme). There were three conditions, namely extremely negative, moderately negative and extremely positive reviews. The extremely negative review caused the most negative attitude towards the brand. The extremely positive review caused the most favourable attitude. Results of this research show that the extremely negative review had the most influence on attitude, compared to the moderately negative and the extremely positive review. The moderately negative review and the extremely positive review had an almost equal degree of effect on attitude toward the brand (Lee et al., 2009).

Additionally, negative reviews are not only more powerful, but consumers also pay more attention to negative word of mouth than to positive or neutral word of mouth when reading it (Daugherty and Hoffman, 2013). With an eye-tracking device it was measured how long participants looked at a certain posting related to luxury and non-luxury brands. Findings showed that the participants looked at an average of 49.7 seconds to negative online word of mouth, 29.4 seconds to the positive word of mouth, and 13.7 seconds to the neutral word of mouth.

There are many other studies showing that negative online word of mouth has more influence on consumers' attitudes than positive word of mouth, using all kinds of products or services (e.g. Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Park et al., 2007; Park & Lee, 2009; Sen & Lerman, 2007; Lee & Cranage, 2012). The phenomenon that negative postings have the most influence is also called the negativity effect, where negative information has a greater weight compared to equally strong positive information in creating judgements (Ahluwalia, 2002).

So although positive word of mouth seems to be more common on the Social Media websites than negative word of mouth, the negative postings have more influence on the attitude of the consumers who read the messages. It has to be said that both types of reviews have an influence on attitudes, so also the positive online word of mouth (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Lee et al, 2009; Park & Lee, 2009). However, negative word of mouth leads to a greater attitude change towards a product or brand than the positive word of mouth.

### 3. Types of Social Media

Consumers can post their word of mouth on multiple types of Social Media. In this chapter two questions will be answered. First, how can Social Media be classified in different subcategories? Second, are there different effects of those different subcategories on the attitude of the consumer?

#### 3.1 Divisions of Social Media

No systematic way exists to categorize different types of Social Media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Several studies make their own categorization based on Social Media literature. As an example, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) use two aspects of Social Media to divide types into social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure. Social presence is “the acoustic, visual and physical contact that can be achieved” (Kaplan & Haelein, 2010, p. 61). Media richness depends on the amount of information a certain type of Social Media allows to be transmitted in a certain time interval (Kaplan & Healein, 2010). Self-presentation/self-disclosure is a social dimension of Social Media. Self-presentation means that people have the desire to control the impressions that other people form of them (Kaplan & Haelein, 2010). What strongly relates to self-presentation is self-disclosure. Self-disclosure is “the conscious or unconscious revelation of personal information (e.g., thoughts, feelings, likes, dislikes) that is consistent with the image one would like to give” (Kaplan & Haelein, 2010, p. 62). The six different types of Social Media that result from those two aspects are blogs, collaborative projects, social networking sites, content communities, virtual social worlds and virtual game worlds (table 1).

**Table1: Types of Social Media based on self-presentation/self-disclosure and social presence/media richness**

	<b>Low social presence/media richness</b>	<b>Medium social presence/media richness</b>	<b>High social presence/media richness</b>
<b>High self-presentation/self-disclosure</b>	Blogs	Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)	Virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life)
<b>Low self-presentation/self-disclosure</b>	Collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia)	Content communities (e.g., YouTube)	Virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft)

Source: Kaplan and Haenlein (2010)

When we talk about word of mouth, we talk about the feelings and opinions that other people have towards products, services or brands and want to express. When a Social Media type has low self-presentation/self-disclosure, it is unlikely to contain word of mouth. It is improbable that you will find word of mouth about products or brands on Wikipedia or World of Warcraft. So the bottom row could be considered as useless Social Media types for online word of mouth. However, there is one exception in the bottom row. Content communities such as YouTube contain numerous videos where people tell their experience about a certain product or brand. When you search for ‘product review’ on Youtube.com, you get about 2.040.000 results (YouTube, 2014). Content communities might therefore be in the wrong row. In the top row, blogs and social networking sites are often used to express word of mouth. Even in virtual social worlds people share word of mouth, both about real brands as virtual brands (Świerczyńska-Kaczor, 2009).

When we take a look at the columns, both with low social presence/media richness as with medium to high social presence/media richness someone can post something about his or her experience with a product, service or a brand. The difference is that one type of Social Media can limit you to 140 characters like Twitter, while other types of Social Media (e.g. virtual social worlds) allow you to chat endlessly about a product, service or a brand.

Another example of dividing different types would be a study of Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011), who used two other dimensions to distinguish different types of Social Media. They use the aspects the



half-life of information and the depth of information. The half-life of information refers to how long the information posted on the Internet will be available and visible. A message on Twitter for example, can move very quickly off the screen (Weinberg and Pehlivan, 2011). The depth of information is determined by “the richness of the content, and the number and diversity of perspectives” (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). The four types of Social Media that results from these two dimensions are blogs, micro-blogs, communities and social networks (table 2).

Both dimensions and therefore all types of Social Media in this study allow for online word of mouth. One post might be more superficial or short lived than others, but you can post your word of mouth on all four types.

**Table 2: Types of Social Media based on half-life of information and depth of information**

	Short life of information	Long life of information
<b>Shallow information depth</b>	Micro-blogs	Blogs
<b>Deep information depth</b>	Social Networks	Communities

Source: Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011)

In a study of Cheung and Thadani (2012), the authors divide different types of Social Media with the focus on posting online word of mouth. Because of this focus, the division of Cheung and Thadani can also be a useful division in this study. Cheung and Thadani distinguish five types of online places where people can place word of mouth postings. These five types are online discussion forums, online consumer review sites, blogs, social networking sites, and online brand/shopping sites (table 3).

**Table 3: Types of Social Media by Cheung and Thadani**

Type of Social Media	Definition
<b>Online discussion forums</b>	Sites where consumers can post a message about a certain topic, where consumers can read the postings of others en where they can react on postings (Webwoordenboek, 2013)
<b>Online consumer review sites</b>	Third-party sites that provides consumer-generated product evaluations (Mudambi and Schuff, 2010)
<b>Blogs</b>	Sites that provide a way to transmit and collect insights and opinions on any subject (Luck and Ginanti, 2013).
<b>Social networking sites</b>	“Member-based internet communities that allow users to post profile information, such as a username and photograph, and to communicate with others in innovative ways such as sending public or private online messages or sharing photos online”(Pempek et al., 2009).
<b>Online brand/shopping sites</b>	Shop on the internet, where you can order products online and pay via an electronic pay system or credit card (Computerwoorden, 2013).

Source: Cheung and Thadani (2012)

A study of Mangold and Smith (2012) also emphasize the places of posting online word of mouth. In this study respondents were asked where they post their opinions the most, offering choices between various online sites. There was also the option to name a type of Social Media yourself if it was not in the pre-selected list, but only 6% of the participants used this option. This indicates that the offered list contained the most used types of Social Media. Six different types of Social Media were divided in this study: Facebook, company websites, consumer rating/review sites, YouTube, Twitter and Blogs.

**Table 4: Types of Social Media by Mangold and Smith**

<b>Type of social Media</b>
<b>Facebook</b>
<b>Company websites</b>
<b>Consumer rating/review sites</b>
<b>YouTube</b>
<b>Twitter</b>
<b>Blogs</b>

Source: Mangold and Smith (2012)

All four studies have one thing in common: they all find the types blogs and social networking sites, although in different ways. However, the studies of Cheung and Thadani and Mangold and Smith are most applicable to this study, because the focus of these studies is also on online word of mouth. Comparing both studies, they look similar. The difference between these studies lies in some definitions that are used. While Mangold and Smith use the term Facebook, Cheung and Thadani use the broader term social networking sites. The same goes for the term company websites used by Mangold and Smith, where Cheung and Thadani use the broader definition brand/shopping sites. The terms consumer rating/review sites and blogs are in both studies the same. Other differences are that Mangold and Smith specify YouTube and Twitter, and that Cheung and Thadani have an extra type of Social Media, namely online discussion forums.

Because of the similarity between the study of Cheung and Thadani and the study of Mangold and Smith, the two different models can be combined. In this study the broader terms of Cheung and Thadani will be used to define the different types of Social Media. Facebook belongs to the type social networking sites (Hall, 2012). YouTube can be placed under the broader term blogs, because YouTube is a specific kind of blog, namely a video-blog (Harley & Fitzpatrick, 2009). The same goes for Twitter, because Twitter is also a special kind of blog, called a micro-blog (Waters & Jamal, 2011). Once this is combined and you add the term online discussion forums, you have the exact same model of Cheung and Thadani (2012). Because this is the division that is used in this study, a short definition of the types of Social Media is given in table 3.

### 3.2 Differences between Social Media types

According to Mangold and Smith (2012), consumers of Generation Y (born between 1981 and 1994) use most of the time social networking sites and brand sites to share their product or service experience. Social network sites like Facebook are a great tool for online word of mouth, because consumers can freely create and spread messages that contain information about a product or a brand within their own social network (Chu & Kim, 2011). But what makes it that word of mouth on social network sites can have different effects on the attitude of consumers than other types of Social Media? A big difference is that with social networking sites, the people you communicate with

are most of the time people you also know in real life. Because you get information from people you actually 'know', the information they give you about a brand or a product might be perceived as more trustworthy and credible than information from complete strangers (Chu & Kim, 2011). The social tie, social trust and similarity with others are important aspects that influence electronic word of mouth behaviours. Strong ties, high social trust and high similarity affect the influence of word of mouth positively (Lee et al., 2012). On social networking sites, these three aspects should be more positive than on other types of Social Media, because on social networking sites you communicate within a social network with people you know. In other types of Social Media you also communicate with people you do not know. Here it is likely that perceived social ties, social trust and similarity are lower than with social networking sites, so there is probably a less strong influence of word of mouth on the consumer.

The aspect similarity could also be a reason why online discussion forums can be effective for online word of mouth. Virtual communities who host discussion forums connect people with similar interests. "Prior research on online word of mouth has therefore shown that discussion boards present an opportunity for people with similar interests to meet and share their opinions. The opinions presented form a potentially credible source of online word of mouth and this information may be influential to other participants on the discussion boards" (Fong & Burton, 2006, p.54). As indicated before, similarity affects the influence of word of mouth positively.

Next to social networking sites and online discussion forums, consumer review sites are also very popular to post messages containing word of mouth. In previous studies it is stated that review sites are the most widely used electronic word of mouth formats: nine to ten million posts with word of mouth about a product or a company are placed on consumer review sites (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Consumer review sites are widely used because of its easiness. First of all, it is easy to obtain information about a product or a brand. Secondly, consumer review sites contain information "on almost every area of consumption" (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 40). Because of this, Hennig – Thurau (2004) claims that review sites have a stronger impact on consumers than electronic word of mouth published on other types of Social Media.

Then there is also the Social Media type called blogs. Blogs allow posters to use not only text, but also materials like photos, videos and audio in their message. Bloggers can use their own creativity and innovativeness. Because of this, blogs can be very fascinating and attractive to readers (Chen et al., 2014). In addition, there is a difference between face-to-face word of mouth and printed word of mouth. In a study of Herr et al. (1991) one group of participants were exposed to face-to-face word of mouth about a computer, while another group was exposed to the same anecdotes, but in a printed format. The results showed that face-to-face word of mouth had a stronger impact compared to the less vivid printed word of mouth. What does this mean for the different types of Social Media? The main difference between the two experimental groups in the study of Herr et al (1991) is that participants in the face-to-face situation could see the person who delivered the word of mouth, while in the printed situation participants could not see the person who gave the word of mouth. Most types of Social Media contain written word of mouth, for example online discussion forums, online consumer review sites and online brand/shopping sites. However, there is one type of Social Media that has the highest probability of containing 'face-to-face' word of mouth, namely blogs. Blogs that contain a video message where you can see the speaker are called video blogs, or 'vlogs'. Video blogs involves "a speaker shooting video footage of him- or herself, which is later uploaded onto the internet" (Frobenius, 2011, p. 815). According to Herr et al. (1991) people are more influenced by word of mouth when it is more vivid (face-to-face). Following Herr et al., it can be concluded that video blogs have more effect on the attitudes of consumers than written (printed) information from other types of Social Media.

One type of Social Media is still left open for discussion, namely brand sites. Brand sites can be divided into consumer-created sites or marketer-created sites (Lee et al., 2011). The brand sites that are discussed here are marketer-created brand sites. It is indicated that market driven sources are considered as less credible than consumer generated content (Hwang et al., 2013). Consumers associate the market driven brand sites with the company's effort to maximize profit (Lee et al., 2011). To do this, the company might place positive messages about the brand or product on the website itself, edit information or even delete negative reviews from customers (Racherla & Friske, 2012). Because of this, messages on a brand site might be considered as less credible. This probably means that word of mouth on brand sites is less effective in changing the attitude of the consumer compared to word of mouth on other types of Social Media (Sussan et al., 2006).

According to this literature, you may indicate that social networking sites, online discussion forums, online consumer review sites and (video) blogs have an influence on consumers' attitudes, while messages on a brand site might be less effective. However, it is hard to say that a certain type of Social Media is more effective for word of mouth than another type of Social Media. There is no direct comparison made between the different types, it is more a description of the characteristics that these types of Social Media have for writing and obtaining effective word of mouth. It is hard to say that one type of Social Media is more effective in influencing consumers' attitude than other types of Social Media, when there is no study done that compares the effects of different types of Social Media on consumer attitudes.

## 4. Moderators

Although it is stated in chapter 2 that negative online word of mouth is a stronger influencer than positive word of mouth, you have to take into account that the effect of these postings can differ in different contexts. The effects that a certain word of mouth posting will have on the attitude of a consumer depends on all kinds of moderators. To categorize the moderators and make this chapter clearer, this study proposes a model of the relationships among the moderators that influences the effect of the post on consumers' attitudes.

The model is called the four P's model (figure 1). The four P's stand for Product, Poster, Post, and Perceiver. Those four P's all have an influence on the effect of the post on the consumers' attitude. This influence can be both positive and negative, which is indicated with the +/- arrows. In addition to their influence on the effect, the four P's are also related to each other. The relationships are shown with the arrows 1, 2 and 3. First, the product is the reason why a poster writes online word of mouth, whether positive or negative. So the product influences the poster who had a good or bad experience (arrow 1). Secondly, the poster influences the post. The poster decides how to write it and where to place it (arrow 2). Finally, the post influences the persons who read it, the perceivers of the post (arrow 3). This chapter will discuss and elaborate each of the four P's.

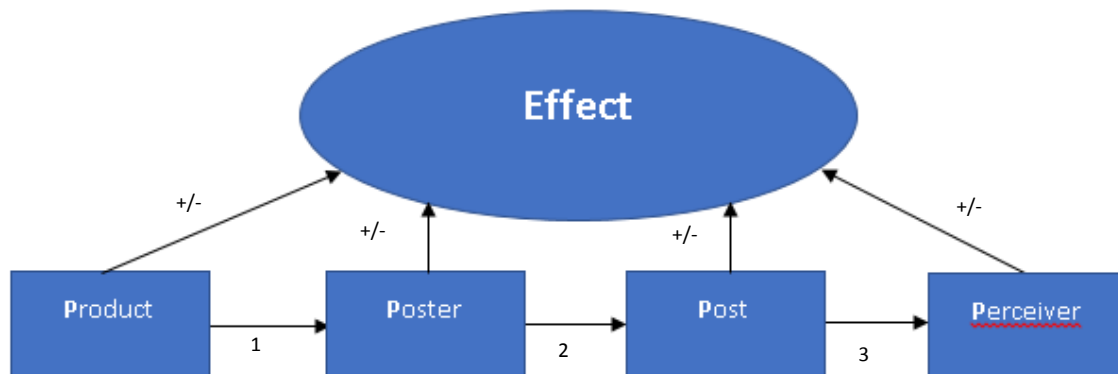


Figure 1: the four P's

### 4.1 Product

The first attribute of products that influences the effect of online word of mouth is tangibility. When consumers have very little or no knowledge about a product or the outcomes of consuming the product, most of the time they will try to reduce this uncertainty to minimize the risks and maximize the outcome value. This is also called the Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Hu et al., 2008). With tangible or search products, consumers can reduce the uncertainty by looking for more details about the maker of the product, the seller or about the product itself. Consumers may stop here, because most of the time they have formed an impression about the product by now. However, when consumers are dealing with intangible or experience goods, they can still feel uncertain. They will probably try to find more information about the products or services. This information can be found in consumer-generated reviews, written by customers who have already consumed the product (Hu et al., 2008). Intangible products are often unstandardized and difficult to evaluate without buying them first. This is why consumers place these products in the higher-risk choices category (Murray, 1991). This is also why consumers are more dependent on word of mouth when reducing uncertainty, and therefore online word of mouth will have a bigger influence on intangible products (Hu et al., 2008; Park et al., 2009).

The second attribute of products that plays a role in the effect of online word of mouth is the age. According to the product life-cycle model of Raymond Vernon, a product can be in one of the four stages. Those stages are the introduction stage, the growth stage, the maturity stage and the decline stage (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In the introduction stage, consumers do not know much about the product and there are not a lot of sources of product information. However, when the product is longer in the market, for example in the maturity stage, there are more information sources available. You hear people talking about the product, you read articles in newspapers and magazines and you might even see it on the television. But because of the lack of information sources in the first stages of a product, consumers depend more on online reviews. Therefore, online reviews probably have a bigger influence in the first phases of a product than in the later phases. Hu et al. (2008), showed that the impact of a review on sales is a decreasing function of age. So as time goes by, the influence of online reviews decline.

Finally, the aspect coverage also has an impact on the effect of online word of mouth on attitude. Product coverage means how much reviewers have written a post about a certain product (Hu et al., 2008). A new post in a low-cover situation contains new additional information about the product that can change the perception of the reader. However, another extra review about a high-covered product is unlikely to contain new information that changes the attitude of the consumer who reads it. So when products are low-covered, a new post is likely to have more impact on the attitude of the consumer than a new post about a high-covered product (Hu et al., 2008).

Another concept that fits this idea is the information overload phenomenon, something that occurs when there is too much information overwhelming the consumer (Malhotra, 1984). With high-covered products, the large number of reviews places a heavy burden on consumers. To solve this problem, consumers read the latest reviews carefully, but just scan the following posts (Park & Lee, 2008). With low-covered products, there is not so much information available about the product, so most of the postings will probably be read carefully. This shows another reason to assume that posts about low-covered products have more influence on the attitude of the consumer than posts about high-covered products.

## 4.2 Poster

A feature of the poster that plays a role in the effect of online word of mouth is the influence of the poster. To measure someone's influence you may look at the number of followers or 'friends' someone has on Twitter or Facebook. This is also called indegree, which represents the popularity of a user (Cha et al., 2010). However, indegree alone tells us not much about the influence of a user. Having a million followers on Twitter does not always mean you are really influential. It is indicated that it is much more influential to have friends and followers that are active and retweet/share or mentions the user (Cha et al., 2010). Retweets or shared posts represent the content value of the post. Mentions mean that someone responds or comments on your post. Sharing a post in a social network is a powerful way to reinforce a message. For example, the probability of adopting an innovation increases when multiple users repeat the same message (Watts and Dodds, 2007). So to gain more influence, you do not need more friends or followers. You need to make sure that you post creative and insightful tweets and that the content is perceived valuable by others so that your posts will be shared (Cha et al., 2010).

Another feature that plays an important role in influencing the effectiveness of the post in changing attitudes is expertise. When someone is an expert in a product category, the post will probably contain more product-related information and terms, and will therefore be more sought and read by consumers than other posts. Posts of experts are also more influential because their knowledge enables them to convince readers more effectively about buying or not buying the product (Wangenheim & Bayón, 2004). Besides, when a person shows his or her knowledge about a product, he or she appears to be more credible than someone who does not show his or her expertise

(Reichelt et al., 2013). When people perceive the poster as credible, his or her post is likely to have a bigger influence on behaviour. Thus, your post will be more effective if you use and show your expertise in the post.

Next to expertise, credibility is also defined by the trustworthiness of the poster. It is difficult to judge someone's trustworthiness in an online environment. Normally, a reviewer is perceived as trustworthy when the word of mouth is valid, honest, and to the point (Betina, 2013). A poster showing a high level of objectivity and sincerity appears more credible than a person who does not show this. Although it is hard to evaluate whether a poster is trustworthy or not, perceivers can evaluate the consistence of the arguments and the objectivity of the information given (Betina, 2013). The more the poster is perceived as trustworthy, the more he or she will be judged as credible and the more influence the post will have on its perceivers.

### 4.3 Post

An aspect of the post that influences the effect on the attitude of its perceivers is emotion. Results from studies about different types of Social Media showed that both positive and negative emotions trigger more cognitive involvement (more attention) as well as higher levels of arousal. Those two aspects influence feedback and reciprocity, participation, and social sharing behaviour (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). People add emotions in their posts by using verbal cues such as emotional words, and by using nonverbal cues such as emoticons (Harris & Paradice, 2007). Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2013) found that Twitter messages with positive or negative emotions are more likely to be shared than neutral messages. It was also found that emotionally charged messages spread more quickly through the Twitter network than neutral posts. This is also called the ripple effect: the more people share a post containing word of mouth, the bigger the ripple effect (Huang et al., 2011).

In addition, Kim and Gupta (2012) showed that emotional posts, both negative and positive, increase informative value of the reviews and influences consumers' product evaluations. However, there should be multiple posts with emotions in the same direction, otherwise readers may believe that the poster is irrational and the value of the review will decrease (Kim & Gupta, 2012). According to the literature, your post is probably more influential if you use emotions in your post, provided that you are not the only one who feels that way.

Another aspect of the post that influences the effect on the attitude of its perceivers is the place. Although it is stated in chapter 3 that it is hard to tell which online place has the biggest effect on consumers, there is some literature available about the location of the post. Sussan et al. (2006) indicates that online word of mouth on a third party website has a larger influence on the consumer to adopt a new product than online word of mouth on a company website. This is because perceivers of the post may see the post on a company website as a deliberate part of manipulated marketing by the company (Sussan et al., 2006). A study of Xue and Phelps (2004) also showed that posts on online forums (third party websites) are more persuasive than posts on a company website. So if you want your post to be more influential, do not place it on a company website but rather on an independent website like a forum.

### 4.4 Perceivers

One of the aspects that influences the effect of online word of mouth on the attitude of the consumer is whether the consumer is high or low involved. Perceiver involvement refers to personal relevance to the product/service or brand. It may be about cars, but it could just as well be about paper diapers (Huang et al., 2011). When people are highly involved, they will engage in effortful cognitive thinking. With low product involvement, the consumer is not motivated to devote a great deal of attention to the message. Instead of reading the post with effort, consumers use peripheral cues (Perloff, 2010). An example of such a peripheral cue is quantity. Low-involved consumers are

affected by the quantity rather than the quality of reviews, which means that they are likely to form an attitude on the basis of the posts even if the arguments are of low-quality (Park et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2008). Highly-involved consumers are more influenced by the quality of the arguments in the posts (Lee et al., 2008). In general, online word of mouth has a stronger influence on perceivers when they are highly-involved than when they are low-involved (Ha, 2002; Doh & Hwang, 2009). So if your post will influence the perceivers depends on the involvement that they have with the product or brand.

Another moderator that plays a role on the perceivers' side is consumer expertise. Relating to the paragraph above, consumers with no or little knowledge about a product are more likely to base their opinion or decision on peripheral cues (Cheung et al., 2012). Those consumers will probably only be influenced by clear benefits that are literally written down in the post. Experts prefer technical attribute information and derive their own benefits from the product information. So when we talk about for example food products, experts will probably read the nutritional information, while consumers with no expertise will focus on clear obvious claims like 'healthy for you' (Park & Kim, 2008). Another difference between experts and non-experts is that consumers with high levels of expertise about a certain product are more confident about their own opinions and decisions, and are therefore less susceptible to the influence of others. Consumers with experience or knowledge are less likely to be influenced by the posts and opinions of others (Cheung et al., 2012). Thus, if your word of mouth will influence the perceiver depends on the perceiver's prior knowledge or expertise about the product or the brand.

A third feature that plays an important role in influencing the effectiveness of the post in changing attitudes is gender. Males and females differ significantly in the perception of recommendations from other people. It is indicated that women are more sensitive to other people's opinion than men. Therefore, women are more likely to make their product decision based on online word of mouth than men are (Bae & Lee, 2010). Bae and Lee (2010) also showed that the negativity effect discussed in chapter 2 is stronger for women than for men. Besides this, also the way males and females process information is different. Women engage more in effortful thinking and are more sensitive to details of messages. Men focus only on pieces of information that seem useful to them (Petrevu, 2001). They tend to concentrate on a couple of cues rather than trying to process all the information that is available (Kim et al., 2011). So, the level of influence that online word of mouth has on its perceivers depends on the perceivers' gender.

To give an overview of the information discussed in this chapter, you can see the moderators with their components in table 5.

**Table 5: Moderators influencing the effect of the post on the attitude of the consumer**

<b>Moderators</b>	<b>Components</b>
<b>Product</b>	Tangibility
	Age
	Coverage
<b>Poster</b>	Influence
	Expertise
	Trustworthiness
<b>Post</b>	Emotions
	Place
<b>Perceiver</b>	Involvement
	Consumer Expertise
	Gender



## 5. Managing negative posts

As Warren Buffet once said, “It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it.” This phrase highlights the damage of negative online word of mouth and the importance of managing it.

As indicated in chapter 2, negative postings have a large influence on the attitude of consumers. Before the online world, it was impossible to control consumers’ word of mouth. Online word of mouth, however, is most of the time written and is therefore possible to monitor and analyse (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004).

To make clear which steps are involved in managing negative posts, figure 2 is designed. The first step is selecting the product or brand you want to manage and which review places you think are most important. The second step includes monitoring the posts that contain negative word of mouth and which services may help you with it. When the negative posts are monitored, it is important to decide which strategy you are going to use to manage the negative word of mouth. Finally, because companies can probably not respond to all of the posts, they need to make selection decisions about the posts they want to focus on.



Figure 2: managing negative posts step-by-step

### 5.1 Selecting

The first step is to find out which product or brand you want to manage when it is about posts containing negative word of mouth, and which review places you will keep your eye on.

The company can select a number of products or brands whose image and/or sales are strongly influenced by online word of mouth. To find out which products belong to this category, companies can use the four P’s model discussed in chapter 4. For example, managers can focus on the intangible products, because the word of mouth about intangible products like services has more influence on the consumer than online word of mouth about tangible products (Hu et al., 2008; Park et al., 2009). Companies could also put a focus on products that are in the early stages of the product life cycle. As indicated in chapter 4, online reviews have a bigger influence when the product is in the first phases of the life cycle: the impact of a review on sales is a decreasing function of product age (Hu et al., 2008).

The company can also select certain places of online posts to monitor instead of monitoring posts on every website. In the elaboration of the four P’s model it is discussed that the place of the post moderates the effect of posts on consumer attitudes. Posts on online forums or other third party websites are more persuasive than posts on websites related to the company (Xue & Phelps, 2004). Following Xue and Phelps (2004), it is advised to put no to minimum effort in monitoring websites that are related to the company.

### 5.2 Monitoring

The second step is to find out whether your product or brand receives negative reviews, where those reviews are posted, by who they are posted, and why they are posted. To paraphrase Edward Deming, “You can’t manage what you can’t measure.” In other words, the second step is to monitor the online posts that contain word of mouth about your product or brand. Seen the number of total reviews and the number of review-places are enormous, it is inconvenient to check every website individually that may contain word of mouth about your product or brand. Therefore, there have been programs developed to help companies with monitoring online reviews (Mangold & Smith,

2012). An example of such a program is Tweetdeck ([www.tweetdeck.com](http://www.tweetdeck.com)), which helps users to monitor posts placed on multiple Social Media sites like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and MySpace. A program that is similar to Tweetdeck is Social Mention ([www.socialmention.com](http://www.socialmention.com)), which is able to track and collect product- or brand-related posts from more than hundred sites. Google also offers this kind of services, like Google Alerts ([www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts)) and Google Analytics ([www.google.com/analytics](http://www.google.com/analytics)). Most of those monitoring services are free, so this should be an easy and important first step for a company to manage (negative) reviews.

### 5.3 Choosing strategy

After monitoring posts about the selected products and brands, the company needs to decide how to react on the negative posts. According to Marcus and Goodman (1991), companies can choose a defensive or an accommodative strategy. Additionally, in studies about online word of mouth, a third strategy is considered, called the no action strategy (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013).

Defensive strategies include denying the responsibility for the problem, attack the accusers, and pointing your finger to someone else (Lee & Song, 2010). Although it is called a strategy, it is not a good one. According to Lee and Song (2010), this approach is likely to escalate the problem and damages the reputation of the company even more. However, Noble et al. (2012) indicate that a somewhat aggressive reaction can be successful in certain circumstances. When the negative word of mouth about the product or brand is unjustified, companies can take aggressive decisions. Managers of a company can make strong and public replies or discuss the issue with the poster in a private chat. When the complaint is posted on a website that is run by the company, the company can ban the poster. On the other hand, when the post obtains actual invalid negative word of mouth, other consumers will probably discuss and counter this post and intervention by the company would not be necessary (Nobel et al., 2012).

The second strategy that a company can apply is a no action strategy. When a company does not feels responsible for the problem, the company can react defensive and aggressively like discussed before, but it can also choose to offer no comment and stay silent without any further online action. In this way, the company tries to separate the negative comment from the company (Lee & Song, 2010). Above all, Lee and Song (2010) showed that using a defensive strategy, the consumers believe that the company is responsible for the problem more than when the company used a no action strategy. However, this no action strategies can be acceptable to loyal customers, but the company keeps negative information undiscussed, which may damage the reputation (Lee & Song, 2010).

Another strategy, and probably the best strategy a manager can choose, is an accommodative strategy, where you care most about the complainer's concerns. The company recognizes (often publicly) their responsibility for the problem and is willing to do something about it. A form of an accommodative strategy can be an apology, compensation and/or corrective action (Lee & Song, 2010). This is a kind of reaction that consumers expect from a company when the company is accountable for the dissatisfaction. When companies fulfil the expectations of their customers and choose for the accommodative strategy, the negative feeling of the consumer reduces and turns into a favourable evaluation of the company (Lee & Song, 2010). Lee and Song (2010) showed that a company using an accommodative strategy is more likely to be positively evaluated than a company that uses defensive or no action strategies. This favourable evaluation may turn into positive word of mouth about the company and diminishes the negative word of mouth.

On the other hand, a study of Park et al. (2012) showed that bad news about a company spreads faster than other posts (e.g. an apology). It is therefore recommended that companies should be prepared, fast and react within hours instead of days (Park et al., 2012). According to Park et al. (2012), the best way to react is react quickly, admit mistakes and apologize appropriately. More

studies showed that an apology from the company is effective in practice. An example is a study about the apology of the CEO of E-Mart, who was caught selling imported beef as domestic beef. The apology made negative feelings of both non-followers and followers decrease, and made positive sentiments among followers increase (Park et al., 2011).

However, an accommodative strategy does not always have to be a boring post containing the word sorry. The company Electronic Arts, for example, reacted very creative when a player found a mistake in the Tiger Woods PGA Tour game and made it public. The player found a bug in the game, where Tiger Woods can walk on water. He posted a video of this on YouTube, called "Jesus shot". Electronic Arts reacted quickly by not only taking corrective actions, but also by posting a video with the real Tiger Woods walking on water, claiming it was not a bug in the game, but that Tiger Woods is just that good (Businessweek, 2008).

## 5.4 Selecting

Once the company has chosen a strategy, it can start dealing with negative posts. However, when the company chose for an active strategy (defensive or accommodative) and there are a lot of customers posting or sharing negative word of mouth, they cannot react on every single negative post about their product or brand. Again the company will need to make a selection. Just as with the selection before monitoring, the four P's model can help the company selecting the right posts.

In the elaboration of the four P's model it is indicated that the influence, expertise and credibility of a poster plays an important role in influencing other consumers. When managers want to respond on the same kind of posts from different persons, it is wise to take a look at the influence of the posters. As Cha et al (2010) indicate, it is much more effective to target the people who are top influential than to respond to a massive number of less influential posters. So when the company want to make an apology or defence itself, it is convenient to respond to the top influential. The top influential may share or tweet something about your apology or defence. Seen the fact that posts of top influential are shared more often, the apology or defence will probably be retweeted to less influential posters (Cha et al., 2010). This is a more efficient way to reach multiple customers than reacting on every individual post.

Another moderator that is elaborated in the four P's model is emotion. When none of the negative word of mouth posters is really influential or when there are too many influential posters, you can select posts based on emotions. As indicated in paragraph 4.3, emotions in posts that are in the same direction (negative or positive) have a larger influence on perceivers' attitudes than posts that do not contain emotions (Kim & Gupta, 2012). So when the company needs to select posts because it cannot react on every single one of them, it is wise to choose the posts that contain strong emotional cues. As Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2013) indicate, companies should pay more attention to sentimental posts related to their product or brand. However, when managers are selecting posts which contain strong emotions, they should apply the accommodative strategy. As indicated before, when you use the defensive strategy, the problem can escalate and the poster may use even stronger negative emotional cues in a post about the product or brand.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of postings on consumer attitudes towards products and brands, and how negative impact on attitudes can be minimized. I found differences between the impact of negative postings and positive postings on consumer attitudes. Although positive postings are more common on Social Media, negative postings have more influence on the attitude of the consumer than positive postings. However, the influence of online word of mouth is moderated by different factors. One of these factors is the type of Social Media where the post is placed. Although it is hard to compare different types of Social Media due to limited literature, it can be stated that online word of mouth on a third party website has a larger influence on the attitude of the consumer than word of mouth on a company website. Not only the types of Social Media influence the effect of posts on the attitude of the consumer. Also different factors of the product, poster, post and perceiver moderate the effect of positive and negative postings. The factors include tangibility, age, and coverage of the product; influence, expertise, and trustworthiness of the poster; emotions and place of the post, and finally involvement, expertise, and gender of the perceiver.

The knowledge about the moderators can be used to minimize negative effects in an efficient way. Companies can choose between three different strategies to address negative posts, but it is most wise to choose the accommodative strategy. Using this strategy gives you the most positive evaluations compared to a defensive or no action strategy. You might use a defensive approach when the negative word of mouth about the product is unjustified, but this approach is likely to make the problem even worse. Above all, when the post is really unjustified, other posters will solve the problem for you. In most cases, being sorry is the best way to go.

Concluding, the impact of online word of mouth depends on several moderators, and negative effects of online word of mouth can best be minimized by an accommodative strategy. This understanding about the impact of online word of mouth and which factors moderate the impact is important, because it can help companies deal with negative online word of mouth. A lack of this understanding can escalate problems, and has bad consequences for the entire organizations reputation and sales.

We know that positive word of mouth is more common on Social Media, but that negative word of mouth has a bigger impact on consumers' attitudes. What I do not understand is why people pay more attention to negative word of mouth, while the biggest part of online word of mouth is positive. Seen the indication that people find negative postings more interesting and powerful, it is contradicting to see that they mostly share positive word of mouth. It is indicated that positive postings might be written by companies themselves, but this is only a fraction of what is written by consumers. So, in particular, we need survey or interview studies on why people like to read the negative online word of mouth, but post most of the time positive word of mouth.

The indication that online negative word of mouth has more impact on consumers' attitudes than word of mouth with a positive valence is maybe too brusque. It might be interesting to find out which roles moderators play in this comparison. My suggestion for future research would be to investigate whether negative reviews still have a larger influence on the attitude of the consumer when the positive posts use the moderators in the right way, while the negative posts use the moderators in the wrong way. For example, you might use a positive post showing expertise about the product, and a negative post without any sign of expertise. Comparing the two experimental groups with a control group may yield different results than both posts showing the same level of expertise.

During my literature study, I also found something that seems contradictory. In chapter 3 it is stated that aspects like social tie, social trust and similarity positively influence the effect of word of mouth. However, in chapter 2 it is stated that 70% of the online shoppers trust reviews from people they do not know. Beyond the reach of this study, it may be interesting to find out what makes a post from an unknown person seem trustworthy to a perceiver. This can be done with for example an

experiment, using different cues in different experimental groups to find out which aspects of a user-profile or message increase trustworthiness.

Another possibility for future research is to fill the gap I found in the literature about comparing the influence of different types of Social Media. It is indicated that posts on third party sites are perceived as more persuasive than posts on company websites, but there is hardly any comparison made between the different types of third party sites. A reason is that comparisons are hard to make for with instance with Facebook, because of privacy. The content of Facebook is not available for every Facebook user, but is limited to a specific group. When monitoring and managing online word of mouth also an ethical issue raises, for both researchers and companies. In most studies, consumers are asked for permission to use the data they provided. When participating in online word of mouth, consumers probably did not consider the fact that researchers or firms may be monitoring their postings, and that companies can use their information for its own purposes. A solution would be to make up your own posts for your research in a Facebook lay-out.

## References

- Ahluwalia, R. (2002). How Prevalent Is the Negativity Effect in Consumer Environments? *Journal of Consumer Research*, volume 29, issue 2, pp. 270-279
- Bae, S., Lee, T. (2011). Gender differences in consumers' perception of online consumer reviews. *Electronic Commerce Research*, volume 11, issue 2, pp. 201-214
- Betina L. (2013). In eWOM We Trust: A Framework of Factors that Determine the eWOM Credibility. *Business & Information Systems Engineering*, 2013, volume 5, issue 3, pp. 129-140
- Bruns, A., Stieglitz, S. (2012). Quantitative Approaches to Comparing Communication Patterns on Twitter. *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, volume 30, issue 3-4, pp. 160-185
- Businessweek (2008). Tiger Woods can walk on water. Retrieved on 09-04-2014, from <http://www.businessweek.com/stories/2008-09-17/tiger-woods-can-walk-on-waterbusinessweek-business-news-stock-market-and-financial-advice>
- Cha, M., Haddadi, H., Benevenuto, F., Gummadi, K.P. (2010). Measuring User Influence in Twitter: The Million Follower Fallacy. *4<sup>th</sup> International Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AAAI) Conference on Weblogs and Social Media ICWSM*
- Cheung, C.M.K., Thadani, D.R. (2012). The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: A literature analysis and integrative model. *Decision Support Systems*, volume 54, issue 1, pp. 461-470
- Cheung, C.M.K., Xiao, B., Liu, I.L.B. (2012). The Impact of Observational Learning and Electronic Word of Mouth on Consumer Purchase Decisions: The Moderating Role of Consumer Expertise and Consumer Involvement. *45<sup>th</sup> Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, pp. 3228-3237
- Chevalier, J.A., Mayzlin, D. (2006). The Effect of Word of Mouth on Sales: Online Book Reviews. *Journal of Marketing Research*, volume 43, issue 3, pp. 345-354
- Chiou, J. S., Cheng, C. (2003). Should a company have message boards on its web sites? *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, volume 17, issue 3, pp. 50-61.
- Chu, S.C., Kim, Y. (2011). Determinants of consumer engagement in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social networking sites. *International Journal of Advertising*, volume 30, issue 1, pp. 47-75
- CNN (2014). Lovely wedding, but did it trend on Twitter? Retrieved on 07-04-2014, from <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/26/tech/social-media/wedding-social-media-concierge/index.html>
- Computerwoorden (2013). E-shop. Retrieved 06-12-2013, from <http://www.computerwoorden.nl/direct--10219--E-Shop.htm>
- Correa, T., Willard Hinsley, A., de Zúñiga, H.G. (2010). Who interacts on the Web?: The intersection of users' personality and social media use. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, volume 26, issue 2, pp. 247-253
- Daugherty, T., Hoffman, E. (2013). eWOM and the importance of capturing consumer attention within social media. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, pp. 1-21
- Doh, S.J., Hwang, J.S. (2009) How consumers evaluate eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth) messages.

*CyberPsychology & Behavior*, volume 12, issue 2, pp 193–197

Duan, W., Gu, B., Whinston, A.B. (2008). Do online reviews matter? – An empirical investigation of panel data. *Decision Support Systems*, volume 45, issue 4, pp. 1007-1016

Fong, J., Burton, S. (2006). Electronic word-of-mouth: a comparison of stated and revealed behavior on electronic discussion boards. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, volume 6, issue 2, pp. 53-62

Frobenius, M. (2011). Beginning a monologue: The opening sequence of video blogs. *Journal of Pragmatics*, volume 43, issue 3, pp.814-827

Godes, D., Mayzlin, D.(2004). Using Online Conversations to Study Word-of-Mouth Communication. *Marketing Science*, volume 23, issue 4, pp. 545-560

Ha, H. Y. (2002). The effects of Consumer Risk Perception on Pre-purchase Information in Online Auctions: Brand, Word-of-Mouth, and Customized Information. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, volume 8, issue 1

Hall, M. (2012). Facebook. *Britannica*. Retrieved 3-2-2014, from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1366111/Facebook?gathStatIcon=true>

Harley, D., Fitzpatrick, G. (2009). YouTube and intergenerational communication: the case of Geriatric 1927. *Universal Acces in the Information Society*, volume 8, issue 1, pp. 5-20

Harris, R.B., Paradice, D. (2007). An Investigation of the Computer-mediated Communication of Emotions. *Journal of Applied Sciences Research*, volume 3, issue 12, pp. 2081-2090

Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K.P., Walsh, G., Gremler, D.D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: what motives consumers to articulate themselves on the internet? *Journal of interactive marketing*, volume 18, issue 1, pp. 38-52

Herr, P.M., Kardes, F.R., Kim, J. (1991). Effects of Word-of-Mouth and Product-Attribute Information on Persuasion: An accessibility-Diagnosticity Perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, volume 17, issue 4, pp.454-462

Hu, N., Liu, L., Zhang, J.J. (2008). Do online reviews affect product sales? The role of reviewer characteristics and temporal effects. *Information Technology and Management*, volume 9, issue 3, pp. 201-214

Huang, J.H., Chen, Y.F. (2006). Herding in Online Product Choice. *Psychology & Marketing*, volume 23, issue 5, pp. 413–428

Huang, M., Cai, F., Tsang, A.S.L., Zhou, N. (2011). Making your online voice loud: the critical role of WOM information. *European Journal of Marketing*, volume 45, issue 7/8, pp. 1277-1297

Huang, J., Hsiao, T., Cheng, Y. (2012). The Effects of Electronic Word of Mouth on Product Judgement and Choice: The Moderating Role of Sense of Virtual Community 1. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, volume 42, issue 9, pp. 2326-2347

Hwang, Y.H., Jani, D., Jeong, H.K. (2013). Analyzing international tourists' functional information needs: A comparative analysis of inquiries in an on-line travel forum. *Journal of Business Research*, volume 66, issue 6, pp. 700-705

- Jansen, B.J., Zhang, M., Sobel, K., Chowdury, A. (2009). Twitter power: Tweets as electronic word of mouth. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, volume 60, issue 11, pp. 2169-2188
- Kaplan, A.M., Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, volume 53, issue 1, pp. 59-68
- Kim, E.E.K., Mattila, A.S., Baloglu, S. (2011). Effects of Gender and Expertise on Consumers' Motivation to Read Online Hotel Reviews. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, volume 52, issue 4, pp. 399-406
- Kim, J., Gupta, P. (2012). Emotional expressions in online user reviews: How they influence consumers' product evaluations. *Journal of Business Research*, volume 65, issue 7, pp. 985-992
- Kotler, P., Keller, K.L. (2012). *Marketing Management*. Pearson, pp. 332
- Lee, M., Rodgers, S., Kim, M. (2009). Effects of Valence and Extremity of eWOM on Attitude toward the Brand and Website. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, volume 31, issue 2, pp.1-11
- Lee, Y.L., Song, S. (2010).. *Computers in Human Behavior*, volume 26, issue 5, pp. 1073-1080
- Lee, D. Kim, H.S., Kim, J.K. (2011). The Impact of Online Brand Community Type on Consumer's Community Engagement Behaviors: Consumer-Created vs. Marketer-Created Online Brand Community in Online Social-Networking Web Sites. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, volume, 14, issue 1-2, pp. 59-63
- Lee, C.H., An empirical investigation of electronic word-of-mouth: Informational motive and corporate response strategy Cranage, D.A. (2012). Toward Understanding Consumer Processing of Negative Online Word-of-Mouth Communication: The Roles of Opinion Consensus and Organizational Response Strategies. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, volume
- Lee, D., Kim, H.S., Kim, J.K. (2012). The role of self-construal in consumers' electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in social networking sites: A social cognitive approach. *Computers in Human Behavior*, volume 28, issue 3, pp. 1054-1062
- Luck, E., Ginanti, A. (2013). Online Environmental Citizenship: Blogs, Green Marketing and consumer sentiment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. *Electronic Green Journal*, volume 1, issue 35, pp. 1-26
- Malhotra, N.K. (1984). Reflections on the information overload paradigm in consumer decision making. *Journal of Consumer Research*, volume 10, issue 4, pp. 436-440
- Marcus, A.A., Goodman, R.S. (1991). Victims and shareholders: the dilemmas of presenting corporate policy during a crisis. *Academy of Management Journal*, volume 34, issue 2, pp. 281-305
- Mayzlin, D. (2006). Promotional chat on the internet. *Marketing Science*, volume 25, issue 2, pp.155-163
- Mangold, W.G., Smith, K.T. (2012). Selling to Millennials with online reviews. *Business Horizons*, volume 55, issue 2, pp. 141-153



- Mauri, A.G., Minazzi, R. (2013). Web reviews influence on expectations and purchasing intentions of hotel potential customers. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, volume 34, pp. 99-107
- Michaelidou, N., Siamagka, N.T., Christodoulides, G. (2011). Usage, barriers and measurements of social media marketing: An exploratory investigation of small and medium B2B brands. *Industrial Marketing Management*, volume 40, issue 7, pp. 1153-1159
- Mohammadian, M., Mohammadreza, M. (2012). Identify the Success Factors of Social Media (Marketing Perspective). *International Business and Management*, volume 4, issue 2, pp. 58-66
- Mudambi, S.M., Schuff, D. (2010). What Makes a Helpful Online Review? A Study of Customer Reviews on Amazon.com. *MIS Quarterly*, volume 34, issue 1, pp. 185-200
- Murray, K.B. (1991). A Test of Services Marketing Theory: Consumer Information Acquisition Activities. *Journal of Marketing*, volume 55, issue 1, pp. 10-25
- NeilsenWire (2009). Global advertising: Consumers trust real friends and virtual strangers the most. Retrieved 14-11-2013, from <http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/consumer/global-advertising-consumers-trust-real-friends-and-virtual-strangers-the-most/>
- Noble, C.H., Noble, S.M., Adjei, M.T. (2012). Let them talk! Managing primary and extended online brand communities for success. *Business Horizons*, volume 55, issue 5, pp. 475-483
- O'keeffe, G.S., Clarke-pearsen, K. (2011). The impact of social media on children, adolescents, and families. *Pediatrics*, volume 127, issue 4, pp. 800-804
- Pantelidis, I.S. (2010). Electronic Meal Experience: A Content Analysis of Online Restaurant Comments. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, volume 51, issue 4, pp. 483-491
- Park, D.H., Lee, J., Han, I. (2007). The Effect of On-Line Consumer Reviews on Consumer Purchasing Intention: The Moderating Role of Involvement. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, volume 11, issue 4, pp. 125-148
- Park, D.H., Kim, S. (2008). The effects of consumer knowledge on message processing of electronic word-of-mouth via online consumer reviews. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, volume 7, issue 4, pp. 399-410
- Park, D.H., Lee, J. (2008). eWOM overload and its effect on consumer behavioral intention depending on consumer involvement. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, volume 7, issue 4, pp. 386-398
- Park, C., Lee, T.M. (2009). Information direction, website reputation and eWOM effect: A moderating role of product type. *Journal of Business Research*, volume 62, issue 1, pp. 61-67
- Park, J., Kim, H., Cha, M., Jeong, J. (2011). CEO's Apology in Twitter: A Case Study of the Fake Beef Labelling Incident by E-Mart. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, volume 6984, pp. 300-303
- Park, J., Cha, M., Kim, H., Jeong, J. (2012). Managing Bad News in Social Media: A Case Study on Domino's Pizza Crisis. *6<sup>th</sup> International Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AAAI) Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*, pp.282-289

- Pempek, T.A., Yermolayeva, Y.A., Calvert, S.L. (2009). College students' social networking experiences on Facebook. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, volume 30, issue 3, pp.227-238
- Perloff, R.M. (2010). *The dynamics of persuasion: communication and attitudes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Routledge, New York, pp. 137
- Pfeffer, J., Zorbach, T., Carley, K.M. (2013). Understanding online firestorms: Negative word-of-mouth dynamics in social media networks. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, pp. 1-12
- Podnar, K., Javernik, P. (2012). The effect of Word of Mouth on Consumers' Attitudes Toward Products and Their Purchase Probability. *Journal of Promotion Management*, volume 18, issue 2, pp, 145-168
- Racherla, P., Friske, W. (2012). Perceived 'usefulness' of online consumer reviews: An exploratory investigation across three services categories. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, volume 11, issue 6, pp. 548-559
- Reichelt, J., Sievert, J., Jacob, F. (2013). How credibility affects eWOM reading: The influence of expertise, trustworthiness, and similarity on utilitarian and social functions. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, volume 20, issue 1-2, pp. 1-17
- Rodriguez, M., Peterson, R.M., Krishnan, V. (2012). Social Media's Influence on Business-To-Business Sales Performance. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, volume 32, issue 3, pp. 365-378
- Schultz, R.J., Schwepker, C.H., Good, D.J. (2012). Social media usage: an investigation of B2B salespeople. *American Journal of Business*, volume 27, issue 2, pp. 174-194
- Schlosser, A.E. (2005). Posting versus Lurking: Communicating in a Multiple Audience Context. *Journal of Consumer Research*, volume 32, issue 2, pp. 260-265
- Seidman, G. (2013). Self-presentation and belonging on Facebook: How personality influences social media use and motivations. *Personality and Individual Differences*, volume 54, issue 3, pp. 402-407
- Sen, S. & Lerman, D. (2007). Why are You Telling Me This? An Examination into Negative Consumer Reviews on the Web. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, volume 21, issue 4, pp. 76-94.
- Stieglitz, S., Dang-Xuan, L. (2013). Emotions and Information Diffusion in Social Media – Sentiment of Microblogs and Sharing Behavior. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, volume 29, issue 4, pp. 217-247
- Sussan, F., Gould, S. & Weisfeld-Spolter, S. (2006). Location, Location, Location: The Relative Roles of Virtual Location, Online Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and Advertising in the New-Product Adoption Process. *Advances in Consumer Research*, volume 33, issue 1, pp. 649-650
- Świerczyńska-Kaczor, U. (2009). Spreading Word-of-Mouth about the Brand within Virtual World. *Proceedings of the International Multiconference on Computer Science and Information Technology*, pp. 337-341

Wang, X., Chunling, Y., Wei, Y. (2012). Social Media Peer Communication and Impacts on Purchase Intentions: A Consumer Socialization Framework. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, volume 26, issue 4, pp. 198-208

Wangenheim, F., Bayón, T. (2004). The effect of word of mouth on service switching: measurement and moderating variables. *European Journal of Marketing*, volume 38, issue 9/10, pp. 1173-1185

Waters, R.D., Jamal, J.Y.(2011). Tweet, tweet, tweet: A content analysis of non-profit organizations' Twitter updates. *Public Relations Review*, volume 37, issue 3, pp. 321-324

Watts, D.J., Dodds, P.S. (2007). Influentials, Networks, and Public Opinion Formation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, volume 34

Webwoordenboek (n.d.). Discussieforum. Retrieved 5-12-2013, from <http://www.webwoordenboek.be/verklaring/discussieforum/>

Weinberg, B.D., Pehlivan, E. (2011). Social spending: Managing the social media mix. *Business Horizons*, volume 54, issue 3, pp. 275-282

Xiang, Z., Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*, volume 31, issue 2, pp. 179-188

Xue, F. & Phelps, J.E. (2004). Internet-facilitated consumer-to-consumer communication: the moderating role of receiver characteristics. *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*, volume 1, issue 2, pp. 121–136

Youtube. Product Review. Retrieved 3-2-2014, from [http://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=product%20review&sm=3](http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=product%20review&sm=3)