



Abstract

Individuals can make a positive difference when it comes to the natural and social environment, by choosing a more sustainable lifestyle. Every day, more technological innovations are made available in order to make a sustainable lifestyle possible. However, sustainable consumption patterns with respect to clothing and other consumer products have not become ‘mainstream’. Social networking websites are a popular platform for interaction and knowledge gathering. Therefore this study explores whether *online* social interaction on SNWs can play a positive role in individuals’ daily lives with respect to the transition to more sustainable consumption practices. Facebook is one of the most popular SNWs. This is why social interaction on Facebook Pages with regard to sustainable clothing or consumer products is the subject of this study. Interaction Ritual Theory is used to examine whether online social interaction can produce enough emotional energy to have a positive effect on sustainable consumer practices. While bodily co-presence is central to Interaction Ritual Theory, this study operationalizes IR theory in such a way that *online* interaction rituals – without face-to-face contact- can be examined. The World Wide Web is used both as an object of analysis and as a medium to collect data from individuals. Through netnography and online surveys, data was gathered. Being the first study about this topic, additional research is needed to shed more light online interaction rituals. However, this study has found evidence which suggests that online interaction rituals have the ability to be successful without face-to-face contact and that they can potentially develop emotional energy within the individual which can be translated into more sustainable consumer behavior.

Keywords: Social networking websites, Netnography, Online interaction, sustainable consumption practices, Interaction Ritual Theory

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1 Introduction

1.1 Problem description

Today it is increasingly recognized that individuals can make a difference when it comes to the natural and social environment, by choosing a more sustainable lifestyle (e.g. Spaargaren and Mol, 2008, Gifford et al., 2011 and Whitmarsh et al., 2011). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its Fourth Assessment Report also recognizes that citizen-consumers are important actors in accomplishing sustainability: “Lifestyle changes can reduce GHG emissions. Changes in lifestyles and consumption patterns that emphasize resource conservation can contribute to developing a low-carbon economy that is both equitable and sustainable.” (IPCC, 2007; 12). Citizen-consumers thus have an important role to play; they are seen as both agents that influence the provisions side of sustainable consumption and they could reduce their own ecological footprint substantially by taking on more sustainable daily practices.

More sustainable choices in the developed world have the potential of increasing people’s livelihoods in the poorer regions of the world. This statement is very true for the clothing and consumer products industry, therefore this subject is central to this thesis. For instance, the supply chain of the clothing industry is globally worth over €600 billion and has a significant environmental and social impact (DEFRA, 2010). Environmental impacts relate to energy use, resource depletion and generation of GHG emissions in all life cycle stages (such as production, distribution, retail and use), significant water use, pollution from fertilizer, pesticide and herbicide use and waste production. Social impacts include poor working conditions such as child labor and bad sweatshop conditions meaning low wages, long hours, non-respect of workers’ rights and health and safety risks and limited market access leading to inequitable trading conditions (DEFRA, 2010).

Ever more technological innovations are made available in order to make a sustainable lifestyle possible, also in the clothing and textile industry (DEFRA, 2010). However, sustainable consumption patterns with respect to clothing and other consumer products have not become ‘mainstream’ (Spaargaren, 2011; 818). It is crucial to understand why citizen-consumers have not widely adopted more sustainable consumption patterns. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to gain insight into what makes people engage in more sustainable behavior with regard to clothing and other consumer products.

This thesis will focus on the cultural dimension of sustainable lifestyles and consumption behavior, following the Social Practices Approach (Spaargaren, 2011). In order to understand why individuals make sustainable lifestyle choices, this thesis focuses on the effects of social interaction on sustainable consumption practices, because as Bauman has noted “lifestyles boil down almost entirely to styles of consumption” (Bauman, 1990; 207 in: Spaargaren and Mol (2008)). This research is inspired by Collins (2004), who was introduced in the social practices literature by Spaargaren (2011). Collins’ theory of ‘interaction ritual chains’ (IR), roughly tells us, that people get excited about certain behavior through interaction rituals with other like-minded individuals.

Many social interaction rituals today are performed in an online setting. Interacting with others on social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn is part of the daily routine of many citizen-

consumers globally. For example, Facebook in The Netherlands alone has almost 6.5 million users and worldwide there are more than 845 million active users (Marketingfacts, 2012-1 and Denti *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, online interaction seems to be an important part of the daily practices of citizen-consumers.

Because of this growing importance of social media in people's lifestyles, this research aims to use the IR theory by Collins in order to understand sustainable behavior inspired by online social interaction. Collins argues that consumers move through several interaction ritual chains in their daily lives. With these interaction rituals, symbols and forms of solidarity are reproduced and people become fueled with sentiments, beliefs and emotional energies (Spaargaren, 2011). Sustainable practices could be inspired by the outcome of interaction ritual chains as is argued by Spaargaren (2011). This research aims to show whether or not these emotional energies are also produced by online interaction rituals, and if these emotional energies lead to more sustainable behavior practices in people's daily lives.

1.2 Conceptual background

1.2.1 The Social Practices Approach

This thesis investigates sustainable behavior following the Social Practices Approach. The Social Practices Approach introduced by Spaargaren and described in (inc.) Spaargaren & Van Vliet (2000) is a theoretical approach embedded in environmental sociology. The authors borrow from the study of consumption and consumer behavior in trying to understand 'sustainable lifestyles' and 'environmental behavior'. The main idea behind this approach is that we should focus on practices instead of individuals or governments as objects of analysis in a study on sustainable behavior. The social practices approach is elaborated upon in section 2.1.

Spaargaren in 2011 reasons, that there should be more room in the environmental sociology for a positive approach to consumer behavior. Most climate change policy and environmental campaigns directed towards consumers, focus on not doing things or changing behavior which requires additional efforts (Spaargaren, 2011; 820). Indeed, the majority of the consumers will have to move away from their daily life behavioral routines in order to reach more sustainable lifestyles. However, this de- or re-routinization (Spaargaren & Van Vliet, 2000) has a higher chance of occurring when consumers feel more "green commitment, excitement and awareness" (Spaargaren, 2011; 820). Spaargaren points out that interaction among consumers could connect consumers to the "potentially 'energizing' part of sustainable consumption". Therefore he introduces Collins' theory on 'interaction ritual (IR) chains' (2004); "The more frequent, intense and dense the enrolment of individuals in sustainability-related interaction rituals, the higher the chance that their commitments and levels of awareness will increase" (Spaargaren, 2011; 820).

1.2.2 Interaction Ritual Chains

Collins (2004) argues that interaction should be central to the study of rituals. When there is a group of people with a shared mood and a mutual focus of understanding who interact closely with each other, this could result in

a flow of collective effervescence (a sort of mutually enforced sentiment). This in turn, will result in group solidarity, symbols, standards of morality and emotional energy (Collins, 2004; 49). Especially the notion of emotional energy is an important new concept as Spaargaren (2011) argues; it is “a feeling of confidence, elation - an exhilarating psychological state of pride and optimism - , strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action” (Collins, 2004; 49). This thesis investigates whether the theory on IR by Collins can help explain the emergence of more sustainable lifestyle choices through the use of social networking websites.

1.2.3 Online interaction rituals

One of the prerequisites of IR theory is group assembly with bodily co-presence (Collins, 2004; 48). Collins argues that even in the light of ‘the mass computerization’, this will be true for IR theory: “...face-to-face communications will not disappear in the future; nor will people have any great desire to substitute electronic communication for bodily presence” (Collins, 2004; 63). While face-to-face communication will obviously not disappear in the near future, this thesis explores the application of IR theory to situations where there is social interaction without bodily co-presence.

Social media usage is more and more embedded in people’s daily life’s (Marketingfacts, 2013). Because of the growing significance of social media, it is relevant to investigate the role of online social interaction, in the creation of rituals. Through social media people can interact with many different actors such as friends, like-minded people, strangers and companies. Companies, organizations and other interest groups for their part, find a way to communicate with consumers as well via social media. Traditionally, these interest groups would communicate by mass media such as magazines, television commercials or billboards. Nowadays, Social media offers them a change to reach their audience in a more tailor made setting. Participants on social media find companies and organizations of their interest for instance via targeted advertisements or recommendations by friends.

The main idea behind Collins IR theory is that where people interact, emotions play a role. Social media offers people a chance to interact closely with friends and, for example, sustainable organizations. Potentially, social media could therefore provide platforms for sustainability-related interaction rituals to take place. This thesis assumes that when these interaction rituals are successful, emotional energies could create more commitment and raise awareness towards sustainable lifestyles.

1.2.4 Social networking websites

Without elaborating on the aspects that prevent citizen-consumers from engaging in sustainable consumption, the theory of IR provides for the opportunity to focus on the way in which, and under what circumstances, people do make sustainable lifestyle choices in their everyday routines. To do so, this thesis will look at the influence of social media on sustainable behavior patterns. Interaction on social media is a relatively new concept and its influence is growing every day. Social media encompass a broad variety of online sources such as forums or discussion boards, blogs, chat rooms, moblogs (YouTube, Flickr, TED etc.) and social networking websites (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). These social media could be seen as channels through which people get new ideas and insights about sustainable behavior.

There are several different examples of social networking websites (SNWs) of which Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are the most well-known in The Netherlands. Each SNW is unique in its own. LinkedIn, which is used for professional networking, is for example marked as a purpose-specific network (Buns and Bahnisch, 2009). Twitter is referred to as a microblogging service by Bruns and Bahnisch (2009); people use their Twitter account to send out small messages of up to 140 characters, usually containing some news value. Common to all these SNWs is the fact that users create an account on which they reveal information about themselves which is accessible to others (depending on your privacy settings).

The main focus of IR theory is interaction; therefore the empirical layer of this thesis will be formed by a research based on Facebook and its users. Facebook is the most common of all SNWs and it places strong emphasize on social interaction. More so than for other SNWs, social interaction is the basis of its existence. It is what makes Facebook so very popular and also very interesting as both an object and a source of research.

1.3 Research questions and objective

1.3.1 Research Objective

The research objective of this thesis is twofold:

First, in linking interaction ritual chain theory to the use of social networking websites it will give a new and potentially interesting application of this theory;

Second, it aims to provide insight into the ways in which, and to what extent online social interaction leads to more sustainable behavior practices.

1.3.2 Research Questions

The main and sub research questions of this thesis are as follows:

1. To what extent is IR theory suitable for explaining online interaction with respect to social networking websites?
 - a) What is IR theory and how does it fit into the Social Practices Approach?
 - b) What are the implications of the incorporation of online interaction through Facebook, as opposed bodily co-presence, in IR theory?
2. To what extent and in what way does online social interaction contribute to more sustainable behavior?
 - a) Do subject specific Facebook Pages produce emotional energy among their users?

- b) Is this emotional energy translated into or related with more sustainable consumer behavior with regard to clothing and other consumer products?

1.4 Scope

In order to keep the scope of the research realistic, practical and in line with the time limit, this research will take the following delimitations into consideration:

1.4.1 Sustainable clothing and other consumer products

An important part of a sustainable lifestyle is greener and more social responsible consumption practices. Therefore this research focuses on green and social responsible consumer behavior. Spaargaren en Van Koppen (2009) identified a number of consumption practices which are especially relevant for environmental governance because they “*combine the familiarity of everyday life with considerable environmental impacts*” (Spaargaren and Van Koppen, 2009; 82). These consumption practices are equally important when it comes to social responsibility, as the way people go about these practices effect other people all over the world. The consumption practices are divided in several consumption domains of which “food”, “housing”, “leisure and tourism”, “clothing and personal care” and “everyday mobility” are main examples (Spaargaren and Van Koppen, 2009; 82).

In choosing a delimited aspect of sustainable consumption for this thesis to focus upon, three main conditions are of importance. First, it should be relatively easy to fit this kind of sustainable consumption into the daily lives and practices of citizen-consumers. Second, the proposed aspect of sustainable consumption should have considerable effect on the environment such as mitigating climate change as well as the social aspect of sustainability such as equity and working conditions. And third, for the purpose of this research, the sustainable consumption practice should be widely shared and talked about on social networking websites such as Facebook.

During the exploratory phase of this research there were many sustainability-related Facebook pages found and they all have different subjects and purposes. Some dealt with food issues, fair trade products, green household energy use and others had a more generic sustainability message to express. Because the practice focused upon in this research should be easily identifiable and widely talked about, this research will focus mainly on the practice of shopping for sustainable clothing and consumer products. The consumption domain “clothing” seems to fit all of the above mentioned preconditions and is therefore the main focus of this thesis. This consumption domain is broadened for the purpose of this study and will also include others consumer products used in people’s everyday life. On Facebook, there are many initiatives around sustainable clothing and consumer products.

Sustainable clothing and other consumer products are made with care for both the environment and people. Hereby it is important that the whole production chain is taken into consideration as well the way people use the product. For clothing it can be said as such: “*clothing that is sustainable does not adversely impact people or the planet in its production, manufacture, transport, retail or end of life management* (DEFRA, 2010; 5). Examples

of actions to improve sustainability of clothing are: using certified organic cotton; using non-toxic dyes and producing Fair Trade certified clothes which enables more equitable trading conditions, ensuring labor standards are adhered to in practice and preventing exploitation. Also, a product could ensure more sustainable use of resources after its purchase, for example a durable bag or water bottle which discourages people to buy bottled water. In one way or the other, above points are all matters of attention for the labels in the subject-specific Facebook Pages in this study, whether they concern clothing, accessories made from natural products or other sustainable consumer products.

This thesis is mainly concerned with interaction ritual chains and therefore the practices side of this consumption domain. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind the provisions side of the domain. Phenomena such as “green washing” are important to consider. Some labels might not be as green as they appear to be. However, this is of secondary importance when it comes to the central focus of this thesis: the way in which citizen-consumers come towards more sustainable consumption patterns through the practice of online social networking and shopping for clothing and other consumer products. Critique about the actual effect that the sustainable clothing by the labels in this study have on the environment and social ethical issues is only stipulated when this is explicitly put forward within an online conversation on the Facebook Page.

1.4.2 Facebook pages in this study

This study analyzes online interaction rituals mainly based on four Facebook Pages. These Pages all belong to a sustainability-related company. While at first, the focus of this thesis was primarily on sustainable clothing, these four Pages show that this focus has shifted towards other consumer products as well. Because this study was reliant on the cooperation of the companies belonging to the selected Facebook Pages, this shift was largely determined by the methodology used. A more detailed explanation of the methods used can be found in section 1.5.3. A description of these four companies and their Pages is found below.

One for One

One for One (OfO), founded by Wouter Durville in 2010, is a social enterprise which cares for direct aid in developing countries. Buying one of their products means One for One will give away a similar product to a person in a developing country; buy one give one. One for One’s key product is its sustainable water bottle. They also sell green energy and health insurances. Buying a water bottle from One for One will provide one individual in a developing country with a lifetime of clean drinking water; the revenues from the water bottles are partly used for the building of wells in cooperation with Pump Aid. A health insurance by One for One will provide a child in Tanzania with a micro insurance from MicroEnsure for at least three years. And by choosing green energy from Greenchoice through One for One, the social enterprise ToughStuff is sponsored. ToughStuff develops solar energy packages for people in Africa living of less than € 4 per day (One for One, 6-2012).

On Facebook, One for One is very active in trying to get their fans involved by informing them about the work that One for One does. They for instance ask them to think about what kind of new products they should develop. Apart from this, they also share a lot of general informative messages and pictures about sustainable development. Often their worry about the current state of our environment is depicted through these messages,

for instance about the use of bottled mineral water or the mess that is left behind on the beach after a sunny day. Often, these messages get many Likes, Comments and even Shares.

Eco Fashion World

Eco Fashion World (EFW) wants to promote eco fashion companies, by informing consumers about their options and linking them to where they can find sustainable products. On their website they provide an eco-fashion guide where people can look up sustainable fashion labels. They can do so by searching for brand, store, category, country or eco criteria such as vegan, fair-trade or recycled (EFW, 1-2012). Companies need to pay a small amount if they want to be mentioned in EFW's eco-fashion guide. Their main aim is to: *"build this eco fashion community – together!"* (EFW, 2-2012).

EFW uses Facebook for two main purposes; to inform their fans about new eco fashion labels and products and to find more labels that can join their eco-fashion guide. Also they sometimes post a 'Share and Win' action to win a product from one of the eco labels and give news updates on sustainable fashion.

Good for All

Good for All (GfA) *"is a Dutch fairtrade & eco-friendly design brand that wants to create fair jobs where it is needed the most"* (Goodforall, 1-2012). Good for All currently sells three products; My Paper Bag, Patch8 (e.g. Iphone covers and wallets) and Allpure (organic and Fairtrade bed linen). Good for All says it wants to do business in a way which makes all stakeholders proud and happy. They want to get people all over the world involved and excited about their products which are all produced with natural, environmentally friendly materials in a 100 % transparent process. Every product they sell should have the possibility to be 100 % certified for fair-trade and environmentally friendly production. At this moment their products are certified up to 90 %. Because Good for All wants to get people involved they ask people on their website to *"join the initiative"* by either purchasing their products, send them an e-mail with suggestions or by Liking them on Facebook and Twitter to tell friends about Good for All.

There is a lot of action on their Facebook Page; promotion of My Paper Bag is prominently present and there are also stories shared about the background of their products and the production process. Also, 'Share and Win' actions are published to win Good for All products and stories are shared about other sustainable initiatives such as We Beat The Mountain or news items. Next to this, Good for All often posts a general quote or picture which do not directly relate to their label but serves as an outreach to their fans, for instance wishing them good night or good luck.

Kuyichi

The idea to start an organic denim brand was initiated by the NGO Solidaridad in 2000. Solidaridad wanted to introduce organic cotton in the clothing industry but none of the existing denim industry wanted to take this on. Therefore, the NGO started its own organic denim label in response: Kuyichi was established in 2001.

On its Facebook Page Kuyichi says: *‘We continue to be at the forefront of sustainability, with organic and recycled fabrics dominating our collections’* (Kuyichi, 2013). Updates on Kuyichi’s Facebook Page are very divers, examples are: ‘Share and Win’ actions, product displays, general or more personal inspirational updates by the Kuyichi team, magazine publications, pictures of celebrities wearing Kuyichi’s fashion and store location and event information. Overall, Kuyichi’s Facebook updates generate many Likes, up to around 60 per post. Most popular updates are the ‘Share and Win’ actions and product information; less popular is information on magazine publications.

1.4.3 Timeframe

The online space is highly changeable and unpredictable. Therefore a timeframe was set within which the research is conducted. This thesis was written between May 2012 and February 2013. The literature research was mainly conducted between May 2012 and July 2012. Participant observation was done from May 2012 until September 2012. And the data for the online survey was collected between August 1, 2012 and September 7, 2012. After October 2012, no substantial new information was added to the research.

1.5 Methodology

This research uses the World Wide Web both as an object of analysis and as a medium to collect data from individuals. Scientific literature, such as scholarly articles and books, will be the basis for the conceptual framework and will be used to support the research.

1.5.1 Literature research

For the main part, this research is based on the works of Collins (2004) and Spaargaren (2011) that inspired the research to begin with. The theory of interaction rituals and the social practices model form the backbone of the conceptual framework. Also, literature on sustainable behavior from other disciplines has not been left unattended. In addition, literature on social media is used.

1.5.2 Participant-observational netnography

Before conducting online surveys, we examined ten specific Facebook pages concerning sustainable clothing or sustainable consumer products. The method of ethnography was used to study the interaction on social networking websites about this consumption domain. Ethnography refers to the method of participant observation as well as the product of a research in a specific place. It is usually the outcome of spending considerable time around the community (Green and Thorogood, 2009). According to Hine (2002) in: Bryman (2004), it is however possible to use a particular spot on the World Wide Web as a site of study; *“conceiving of the Internet as a place – a cyberspace – has been one strategy for an ethnographic study of the Internet and from this it is just a short journey to the examination of communities in the form of online communities or virtual communities.”* As Hine argues, it is possible to consider a specific Facebook page as a ‘place’, a place where

people interact with each other. This kind of ethnography was also dubbed *netnography* by Kozinets (2002a in: Seraj, 2012).

A participant-observational netnography has 4 stages; *entrée*, data collection, analysis and supplying ethical standards (Seraj, 2012; 211). For the *entrée* it is important to choose the right community to study. Kozinets (2002a, 2010 in: Seraj, 2012) says communities with high traffic and interaction are needed to ensure that netnography extracts enriched and detailed data.

The participant observation in this research is based on an already existing network on Facebook and additionally, is focused on pages which are all concerned with sustainable fashion or sustainable consumer products. The pages were selected in terms of total amount of Likes, visible interaction among participants, and they all, promote sustainable fashion or consumer products. Only One for One's Facebook Page does not concern clothing. Their main item is a sustainable water bottle aside to a few other products.

Data collection in netnography is about observing the chosen Pages closely and downloading information such as conversations and pictures. This way, it is possible to get an idea about what kind of information is posted, how many people are actively involved and how the people interact with each other. For the purpose of this thesis, every Comment thread or other online content used is saved digitally; this is not included in the appendixes because of practical reasons. Aside to participant observation, an online survey is conducted.

Participant observation is used to determine if the ingredients and outcomes of the Interaction Ritual model are visible in online social networks. By analyzing the Pages and the remarks people make, it is possible to find out if people are excited about the products and if there is room for feedback on the Page. Also it might be possible to identify symbols and forms of solidarity. In the subsection on operationalization – paragraph 1.6 - , this will be explained more thoroughly.

Comments made by fans on the particular Pages are used namelessly in this thesis to ensure fans' privacy. But, as these Comments are available online, anyone interested can look up the names of the person in question or view the context in which the Comment was posted.

1.5.3 Online survey

Aside to a participant-observational netnography, an online survey is conducted. This survey was needed to identify more profound feelings and emotions that fans encounter while interacting online. Also, a survey is a medium to ask participants directly about their feelings and actions that they experience outside of the online group.

The online survey is conducted in the form of a web based survey. For this, it was important to ask the moderator of the specific Facebook Pages beforehand if they would agree to post a link towards the online survey on their

Wall¹. If this is done, people who would regularly check the particular Page would get a change to fill out the survey. Also, the link to the survey would then be visible on most News Feeds of the fans who Like the Page. The questions that were asked are based on the Interactional Ritual Chains theory by Collins.

This online survey is used to analyze why and how people interact in online groups and how this might affect offline sustainable consumer behavior.

Bias

The methods used to spread this survey might have led to bias within the results; this has at least three reasons. First, not everyone willing to fill out the survey has gotten the change to see the link, because some people might not have seen the link due to absence or the settings of their FB account (see section 4.1.2). Secondly, only the more active and enthusiastic Fans of the Pages might be willing to participate in a survey². This might have led to more positive or energetic answers than would otherwise have been the case. And finally, not every Facebook Page or Label was willing to post the link to the survey on their Wall.

Spreading the survey

Before spreading the survey online, thirteen sustainable clothing companies³ were approached through Facebook. The labels' owning the Pages, were asked whether they wanted to participate in spreading the link to the survey through their FB Walls. Six labels responded, they were all quite excited about the survey. They agreed it was possible to post the survey on their Walls and most of the labels also asked me if they could use my results.

First, the link to the online survey was posted on the Wall of *Toms* with my personal Facebook account. The Page by *Toms* had over one and a half million Likes and very much traffic and interaction. Unfortunately, It was not accounted



Figure 1.6 One for One Survey Post

¹ The capital W indicates a product of Facebook. Wall, News Feed, Comment, Page and Like are all written with a capital to indicate to the respondent that I refer to either an item in Facebook or an action people can take when taking part in a 'Facebook Session'. This way, the distinction between Like (an action in Facebook) and like (a word to indicate appreciation) is made.

² In the initial survey results it was already clear that many people who worked for the Page's company took part in the survey.

³ Requests have been sent to: One for One ♡, Toms ♡, Good for All ♡, Kuyichi ♡, Charlie + Mary ♡, Eco Fashion World ♡, Hemp Hoodlamp, Alternative Apparel, Amour Vert Eco-apparel, Hearts.com, Little Green Dress, Yes to Carrots and Nudie Jeans Co (Reply received = ♡)

for that a company with this many fans on Facebook received many Comments during the day and therefore the personal Wall post containing the link to the survey did not receive much attention. Only three people started filling out the survey, and neither one of them completed the survey. It was also tried to post the survey to a smaller labels' Page, *Charlie + Mary*, with about 700 Likes on Facebook. Although this time, the link to the survey was visible for a longer time, only two people started (and did not complete) the survey.

Hence, a new approach was needed; realizing that the label itself had to post the link to the survey on their Wall. This way, it would be more visible (literally a bigger post) and most importantly; posts by the company itself, also become visible on the News Feed of people who Like (follow) the Page. This meant that not only the people who actually visit the company's Page get to see the post, but also the more passive fans of the company will see it appear on their own News Feed.

A person's own News Feed is their personal Facebook homepage, where they see every recent post made by their Friends and the Pages they Like. This is why it was not pursued to post the survey on the Pages autonomously. Instead the participating labels were asked if they were willing to post this thesis' survey on their Wall from their account; One for One, Toms, Good for All, Kuyichi, Charlie + Mary and Eco Fashion World. Although the benefits of the Pages posting the survey, instead of me, were evident for this thesis, it wasn't easy to convince the moderators from the different Facebook Pages of this fact.

Unfortunately, most companies have very strict social media strategies and therefore were not willing to post a link to the survey on their Wall. Because of this, Toms, Kuyichi and Charlie + Mary could not be included in the research. One for One, Good for All and Eco Fashion World however were excited to publish my survey. They even used the survey to gain participation among their fans, and they made clear to them that they were interested in how their fans thought about their brand and Facebook Page. In figure 1.6 an example of such a survey post is shown.

Response

The survey did not generate as much response as was hoped for at the beginning stage of the research. The link to the survey was reposted on the different Walls; Good for All posted the link 3 times (31 July, 8 August and 20 August) and EFW posted 2 times (2 August and 7 August). However, just 60 responses were received of which about 38 respondents totally completed the survey; 30 20 from Good for All, 23 15 of One for One, 6 4 of Eco Fashion World and 1 from Kuyichi.

Because the survey had to appeal to fans from the different Facebook Pages, the surveys were tailored to the Page it was posted on; referring to the name of the label and also including the profile picture of the label in order to ask the respondents what this picture meant to them. For the actual study I combined these responses into one dataset.

1.6 Outline of the rest of the report

Chapter 2 of this thesis gives a detailed description of the theoretical framework. The Interaction Ritual Chains theory by Collins (2004) is explained in more detail as well as the social practices approach as described in Spaargaren (2011). Also, a conceptual model is set out in section 2.4 and the operationalization of the concepts used in this thesis is described in section 2.5. Chapter 3 aims to set the stage on social networking websites within which context this research is conducted. Chapter 4 forms the empirical basis for this study. This chapter is based on the online survey and other observations and examines whether evidence is found for successful online interaction rituals with regard to sustainable consumptions practices. Chapter 5 provides the discussion and conclusions to this thesis starting with a summary of the section results and leading op to a final result. Also, methodological limitations and suggestions for further research are given as well as a final conclusion.

2 Theoretical Framework

In this section the theoretical framework for this research will be described. Before turning to the Interaction Ritual Theory, the Social Practices Approach will be explained in more detail.

2.1 The Social Practices Approach

The Social Practices Approach was introduced by Spaargaren and Van Vliet in 2000. This approach is a way to study consumption practices, such as shopping for clothing, in the light of environmental sociology. This thesis uses the approach to understand sustainable behavior in a broader manner, hereby not solely focusing on environmental behavior but also on behavior which influences social inequalities.

Where economic models of behavior tend to leave out the motives and preferences for certain behavior, (social) psychological models tend to analyze behavior and peoples motives in a 'social vacuum' (Spaargaren and Van Vliet, 2000; 52-53). The Social Practices Approach is a reaction to these models. In their 'model for studying consumption practices' where the central point of analysis is not the individual but the practice itself, the authors introduce two important notions (Spaargaren and Van Vliet, 2000; 53):

1. "Individual behaviour and its underlying reasons, interests and motives, is studied in the context of social practices situated in time and space and shared with others."
2. "The (relative) 'power' of the actor to change the course of action is specific for a certain context too, depending on the resources that are implied in the reproduction of social practices."

In understanding sustainable lifestyles it is thus important to realize that practices are undertaken by (groups of) individuals in a certain context of time and place, and that these individuals have the power to change their actions based on the availability of resources and provisions. Interaction with other individuals and the availability of sustainable products and provisions are therefore important concepts in analyzing sustainable consumer behavior.

Spaargaren in 2011 gives an interesting outline of the Social Practices Approach against the backdrop of the wider agency-structure debate. Since the 1970s, two main paradigms have been dominant within the field of governance of environmental change; the individualist and the systemic paradigm. The social psychological and economic approaches are viewed upon as belonging to the individualist paradigm. The systemic or structural paradigm, which focuses on actors such as companies and organizations rather than individuals, is more or less a reaction to this individualist paradigm (Spaargaren, 2011; 814).

2.1.1 The individualist paradigm

The individualist paradigm places the individuals and their attitudes at the center of analysis with regard to environmental change. It says that behavioral change of individuals is of key importance in order to achieve environmental change. Because consumers decide which products they buy and use, the individualist paradigm

focusses on raising awareness on environmental issues among the general public. Many environmental organizations and policymakers have acted from this way of thinking. Unfortunately, “*awareness turns out to be only a weak predictor for actually performed environmental behaviors*” (Spaargaren, 2011; 814). This is one of the reasons why many European governments have followed the systemic paradigm in policymaking (Spaargaren, 2011).

2.1.2 The systemic paradigm

Within the systemic paradigm it is not the individual and their ideas that matter most. Technology, infrastructures and products are of main importance in coming towards environmental change. The actors (companies and organizations) that provide these matters are the main target of government regulations in the greening of consumption. From this perspective, the assumption is made that individuals in the end will have no choice but to act more sustainable because the infrastructures and products provided to them are subjected to strict regulations. This way, “*environmental change can be said to be organized more or less ‘behind the back of the ordinary citizen-consumers’*” (Spaargaren, 2011; 814).

2.1.3 Criticism

According to Spaargaren and other critics, the above mentioned paradigms are not suited to explain the more complex characteristics of sustainable consumer behavior. The systemic paradigm underestimates the influence of human actors when it comes to the choices they make with respect to the provided products and infrastructures. Spaargaren cites Schot (2001) and Heiskanen *et al.* (2005) saying that it is very difficult to realize the environmental benefits of eco-designed products, technologies and infrastructures when they are produced with no consideration of the way in which they will be used in society and when they are put in place without educating people about them (Spaargaren, 2011). A similar argument can be made for integrating social sustainability in product design.

It could be said that the systemic paradigm is criticized for not considering the human aspect. The individualist paradigm receives the almost exact opposite critique; Spaargaren argues that “*too much responsibility for change is put on the plate of the individual citizen-consumer*” (Spaargaren, 2011; 814). It is important to note that individuals do not form ideas and practices (the way they do or consume things) by themselves; instead, people are influenced by other people, by products available and by other situational factors. It is the ‘context of their behaviors’ which is not taken into consideration within the individualist paradigm.

2.1.4 A third path

Spaargaren argues that there is need for ‘a more balanced approach’. He draws from Bourdieu (1977, 1979) and Giddens (1984) by saying that social life should be understood as “*a series of recursive practices reproduced by knowledgeable and capable agents who are drawing upon sets of virtual rules and resources which are*

connected to situated social practices” (Spaargaren, 2011; 815). Most important in this approach is that it is not the individual or the system of provision which are at the centre of analysis in this approach.

Social life is organized around practices (shared behavioural routines). These practices should therefore be at the centre of analysis when studying environmental consumer behaviour. It is also argued by Collins that practices (or situations) shape individuals and their values and not the other way around (Collins, 2004; 5). This does not mean however that agency is discarded; people are seen to have capabilities and power to make changes. Also, it is recognized that the systems of provision co-shape the way in which practices are reproduced.

From an environmental sociological viewpoint it is interesting to study how the reproduction of practices is changed towards more sustainability. For instance, how citizen-consumers move to shopping for more sustainable clothing. This is said not to be an individual choice based on value change only. The practice approach argues that the context in which this choice is made is decisive for the reproduction of the practice. The way people do things (practices) is depended on many different factors such as their surroundings (place and time), social environment, financial situation, habits and of course the resources available. A small change in the context in which the practice takes place, could change the outcome of the practice for example; organic cotton is more and more available (provisions side) or one person buys more sustainable clothing which might influence another individual (actor/agent side). An illustration of the Social Practices Approach can be found in figure 2.1.

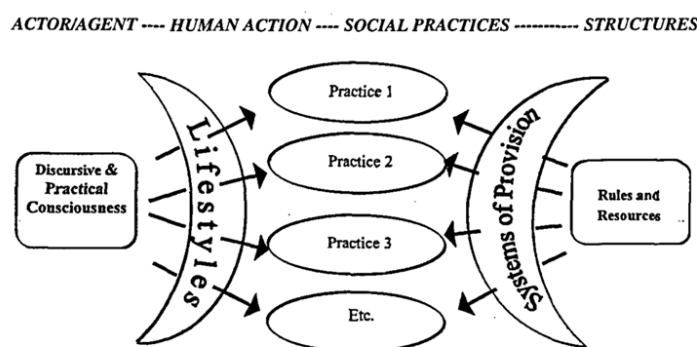


Figure 2.1 A conceptual model for studying consumption practices (Spaargaren en Van Vliet, 2000; 53)

2.1.5 A more positive approach

Bearing in mind the conceptual model for studying consumption practices, Spaargaren argues that the ecological modernization of the systems of provision (products, services and technologies) for a growing number of domains of social life has made it easier to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle. However, more sustainable consumption patterns are not yet widespread. This is why Spaargaren (2011) examines the lifestyle or cultural side of the model, in order to find out what makes people participate in more sustainable consumption patterns. He argues that there is a need for a more positive approach (Spaargaren, 2011).

Spaargaren argues that it is important to understand how people come towards a more sustainable lifestyle. In order to do so, he says it is best to take a look from the lifestyle side in the Social Practices model; a more cultural approach. This cultural side to the equation has been rather under-theorized according to Spaargaren, perhaps because other authors wanted to stay away from the more value-based individual approach. Spaargaren however, does not favor an individual approach. Next to a more cultural perspective, the practices approach should be taken at heart to examine the role of ‘objects and symbols’ within the reproduction of practices. Also, a more positive attitude should be taken on. Instead of focusing on the negative narrative of much of today’s environmental marketing; e.g. do not drive a car or do not eat meat, we should be focusing on the ‘*positive experiences and elements of sustainable consumption*’ (Spaargaren, 2011; 818). Ways to address sustainable consumption in a more positive way could be to promote an electrical car or a healthy vegetarian eating pattern.

Collins’ theory of Interaction Ritual Chains could be used to analyse the cultural dimension of sustainable consumer behaviour; this theory is quite compatible with the theory of practices according to Spaargaren. The next section will explain the elements of this theory and the meaning for this thesis.

2.2 Interaction Ritual Chains

Randall Collins wrote his book on Interaction Ritual Chains in 2004. Especially his view on agency and the role of symbols is what makes Interaction Ritual theory meaningful in the analysis of the cultural dimension of consumption (Spaargaren, 2011; 118). Before turning to explaining how the IR model works and how it could be of use for this thesis, first a little bit more about the background of the model is explained. In the operationalization, section 2.6, the ritual ingredients and outcomes are explained in more detail.

2.2.1 It all starts with situations

Collins starts off by saying that Interaction Ritual (IR) theory is “*above all a theory of situations*” (Collins, 2004; 3). He borrows from Goffman by saying that if we would study the dynamics of situations; we would be able to learn almost everything there is to know about individuals. Collins says that we should regard individuals as “*an ingredient, not the determinant*” of situations, whereby individuals move across situation, being the precipitate (outcome or result) of past situations and an ingredient for every new situation (Collins, 2004; 5). Interaction Ritual theory is therefore “*... a theory of situations themselves, showing how they have their own local structures and dynamics*” (Collins, 2004; 32).

Instead of the individual making the situation, it is the situation that forms the individual; Collins for example says that it is the game that makes a sports hero, and not the other way around (Collins, 2004). With the Olympic Games of 2012 still fresh in mind, this is an interesting example. Gold medalist Marianne Vos won the 140-kilometre women’s road race. This situation was thus not made by Vos herself; it is the situation which made Vos the winner. Marianne Vos won because other contestants did not react to the situation (e.g. interaction and whether condition) the way Vos did. Vos is of course an ingredient of this situation, her physique and training

(past situations) is part of the equation, but it is not all. This is a very valid perspective, albeit not an easy one. Collins himself also argues that ‘thinking in situations’ requires some training (Collins, 2004; 5).

Collins quite consciously moves away from the agency-structure debate. He rather thinks of micro and macro level. According to Collins, thinking in agency and structure terminology is not right in analysis of micro and macro level situations; it “...*confuses the distinction of micro / macro, which is the local here-and-now vis-à-vis the interconnections among local situations into a larger swath of time and place*” (Collins, 2004; 5). Collins wants to study how micro situations become manifested in macro patterns, from local to inter-local connections. Because structuration theory uses the term structure both on micro and macro level, it does not offer the right terminology.

Also Collins would rather use emotions and emotional energy than agency. Some interaction rituals (situations) lead to higher levels of emotional energy within an individual than other. This is the most important aspect of Collins’ theory; the level of emotional energy derived from a micro interaction situation will determine in what way this energy will be manifested in a macro pattern. In more concrete terms one could say that an individual is formed by situated interaction rituals with others and this is where he or she gains emotional energy. This emotional energy will in itself determine whether this person wants to have a similar encounter again. Also, other people might experience this emotional energy and might also want to act on it.

2.2.2 Rituals

Collins uses the term rituals to refer to interactional situations or encounters. It are these rituals that form the structure of social life. Successful interaction rituals have the possibility of creating symbols of group membership and may lead to high levels of emotional energy within the individual. Collins defines a ritual as: “*a mechanism of mutually focused emotion and attention producing a momentary shared reality, which thereby generates solidarity and symbols of group membership*” (Collins, 2004; 7). Collins hereby adheres to earlier sociologists such as Emile Durkheim and Erving Goffman. Collins’ definition of ritual is much less restricted than the way the term ritual is used outside of the field of sociology; usually people would think of the term ritual in the sense of *formality* or *ceremony* (Collins, 2004; 7). Collins however argues that rituals can be as small as a giving a nod to a passenger in the street, and as visible as people watching a football match.

Spaargaren argues that interaction rituals and practices could be used as two interchangeable concepts. Although he does note that it isn’t easy to determine if daily practices show enough mutual focused emotion to be labeled a ritual, Spaargaren argues that most consumption practices contain elements of ritualization (Spaargaren, 2011; 819).

In IR theory, it is important to study rituals because interaction rituals form individuals. Collins says that in everyday life, we move from situation to situation seeking emotional energy. One situation or interaction ritual might provide more emotional energy than the next because the ingredients for the ritual are present to a higher degree. Ingredients for successful interaction rituals are; group assembly, barriers to outsiders, mutual focus of attention and shared mood. This is shown in figure 2.2.1. Collins describes this as such:

“The central mechanism of interaction ritual theory is that occasions that combine a high degree of mutual focus of attention, that is, a high degree of intersubjectivity, together with a high degree of emotional entrainment—through bodily synchronization, mutual stimulation / arousal of participants’ nervous systems—result in feelings of membership that are attached to cognitive symbols; and result also in the emotional energy of individual participants, giving them feelings of confidence, enthusiasm, and desire for action in what they consider a morally proper path.” (Collins, 2011; 42)

If there is more mutual focus of attention and a shared mood, this will lead to a higher level of collective effervescence and this mutually enforced sentiment will consequently result into more group solidarity, emotional energy and standards of morality. Also, symbols of social relationship will come about. These symbols get charged with emotional energy and they can be internalized by individuals if this energy is renewed by new interaction rituals. IR theory is therefore, as Collins puts it, *“a theory of moment-to-moment motivation, situation by situation”* (Collins, 2004; 45).

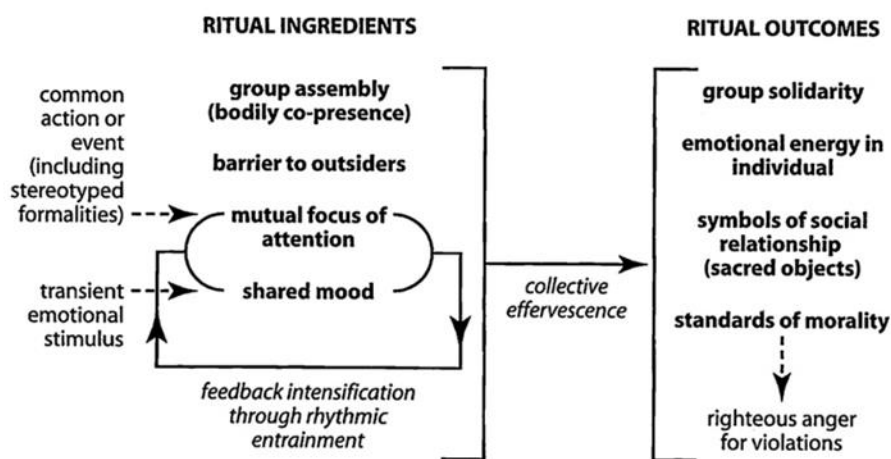


Figure 2.2.1 The conceptual model of IR-theory (Collins, 2004; 48)

2.2.3 Symbols

It are these symbols that are particular important in the light of sustainable consumer behavior. Collins (2004) argues that emotional energy (EE) gets stored in bodies, symbols and objects; *“ritual creates cultural symbols”* (Collins, 2004; 32). Interaction rituals with high levels of collective effervescence can create or charge symbols with EE. Because symbols can store EE, it is interesting to find out how these symbols of social interaction move from one interaction ritual to another.

According to Spaargaren the practice (or ritual) of consumption is determined by how people feel about the symbols and objects which are a part of this practice. If people get excited about a certain product through social

interaction, they might want to keep using this product. And the other way around, if emotional energy in an object fades or an individual gets bored with it, they might not want to incorporate this product in their daily lives any more, unless this emotional energy is revived through another interaction ritual. Spaargaren claims that *“it is thus emotional energy from (green) symbols, objects, technologies and infrastructures that drives environmental changes in everyday practices”* (Spaargaren, 2011; 819).

To use the example of sustainable clothing; when friends get together and they talk about a nice sustainable sweater worn by a girl in the group, this conversation might be energizing enough to place a symbolic value on this sweater. The girl wearing the sweater might be very excited about the fact that her sweater was produced with care for working conditions and the environment and her friends might be influenced by this excitement. The sweater could become a symbol of their excitement, and even store this emotional energy.

When the girl would wear this sweater again to another meet-up, she and her friends could be reminded of that previous conversation and start talking about sustainable clothing again, because this sweater still contained some of that initial EE. Also, it could be the case that a friend of this girl is that much excited about the sweater that she decides to buy it herself. While doing so, she again feels the EE which is stored in the sweater when she thinks about what her friends would say when they would find out that she owns a sustainable sweater as well.

Collins refers to above mentioned situations as circulations of symbols. The first circulation is the situation where the symbol attains its value through the interaction ritual and stores EE. The second circulation of the symbol is the girl buying the sweater to show her friends; it is not so much about the object as it is about the idea and emotional energy this sweater represents. This sweater now represents the positive interaction ritual, and when the participants see this symbol, they get reminded of this social relationship. There is also a third circulation of symbols; this is the situation where an individual is alone with the symbol and this is *“the most intimate level of circulation”* (Collins, 2004; 99). Spaargaren gives an example of this; *“A person talking to her or his refrigerator, bicycle or computer serves as an exemplary case of such a ‘third-order circulation’ of symbols and objects”* (Spaargaren, 2011; 820).

2.2.4 IR theory in an online setting

In earlier sections, the Interaction Ritual theory of Collins was explained in its original form. However, in the introduction, this thesis argued that while Collins argues that bodily co-presence is a fundamental item of IR theory (Collins, 2004; 48), it could also be useful in studying *online* social interaction.

Collins says that humans' nervous systems react to each other when they are in the same space. Therefore, human bodies who are in the same place set off the interaction ritual; *“There is a buzz, an excitement, or at least a wariness when human bodies are near to each other”* (Collins, 2004; 53). Collins gives an example of a political election or a sports celebration; when people celebrate victory together, they get more excited about it when they notice (unconsciously) that other people are also excited. Collins argues that people in this state of excitement need to be among others to experience high levels of emotional energy; *“At peak moments of victory,*

or suspense followed by dramatic success, the excited viewer reaches out to touch, hug or kiss someone” (Collins, 2004; 56).

Interaction rituals with bodily co-presence can imaginably lead to high levels of emotional energy; having joined the Olympic Games of London 2012 myself, I experienced how great it is to share such an event with others. However, more and more of our social life takes place online. Not many people have the opportunity to watch a soccer match in the arena, they might not even be able to watch it with friends. But when people are happy or disappointed about the results, while having watched the game alone, it is very common for many to update their Facebook Status about how they feel about it. Friends who share his feelings might then respond to this Status with a Like or a Comment. Indeed, this is not the same as a hug or a kiss but it might be as valuable to the person in this situation.

Collins says that the electronic revolution will undoubtedly lead to an increase in distance communications but that people will never feel the need to substitute this kind of digital communication for offline, or bodily presence. He puts it as such:

“people will still prefer to assemble for little social gatherings with intimates, for parties with friends; entrainment and sports events will still be considered most satisfying through attendance at live performance; political gatherings will generate more enthusiasm than their remote images” (Collins, 2004; 63).

Also, when Scott Campbell (University of Michigan) had a chance to ask Collins about whether successful interaction rituals can occur in a mediated context, Collins *“asserted ‘no’ because it wouldn’t support the sense of togetherness, timing, and rhythm we get in face-to-face interaction”* (Scott Campbell in: Baym *et al.*, 2012; 262). Campbell however also remarks that later on, Collins gave a very positive review on the book *New Tech New Ties* by Rich Ling (2008). In this book Ling *challenges Collins’s position on the need for face-to-face with the notion of “mediated ritual interaction chains,” using insights into texting as evidence to back up his claim*” (Scott Campbell in: Baym *et al.*, 2012; 262).

This positive review by Collins seems to open up the debate on whether or not face-to-face contact is needed in successful online interaction rituals. This thesis does not challenge the idea that human beings will never stop to want to be together, especially at certain occasions such as weddings, sports games or dinner. However, a growing part of our social life takes place online, and the argument above does not mean that emotional energy could not be derived from online interaction rituals. Looking at what happens on Facebook, a lot of social interaction is taking place online. People share with others what they are doing, where they are and how they feel. Facebook was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg (Denti *et al.*, 2012), the same year Collins wrote his book on *Interaction Rituals Chains*. Perhaps at the time, Collins could not have imagined the great impact social media would have on our daily practices.

This thesis does not provide a moral argument on the importance or dangers of social media. Although there are many who do worry about the growing importance of social media in our daily lives. Sherry Turkle in her TED conference ‘Connected, but alone?’ argues that social media is a separate reality, which in some ways is connected to the real world but nevertheless keeps us from truly interacting with one and other. She for example says that social media gives us “*the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship*” (Turkle, 2012). This observation is worth thought because indeed, people tend to only post about the good things in their lives instead of also sharing the normal or bad things, also, when posting something on Facebook, it is not certain that other people will ‘listen’ to you.

Still, it seems culturally relevant, to make an effort in understanding online interaction rituals. Because people are defined by their social interaction rituals, and more and more social interaction today, takes place in an online setting. In the online realm, people not only have the chance of communicating with their nearby friends, there is room to more closely connect with people who share their interests, even from abroad. Also, companies and organizations have found their way to social media which makes them easily accessible for their public. These organizations try to connect to the public not by one-way commercials or promotion, but by interacting with people who are interested in doing so.

Especially in the field of sustainable consumption, this is interesting. There are many initiatives on, for example, Facebook who make an effort in informing people about their sustainable products or initiatives by seeking interaction with the public. This is another argument to study whether online interaction rituals play a role in making consumption practices more sustainable. This thesis focuses mostly on the fun part of sustainable consumption. It is not about what not to do, but about things an individual can do. It is about the small interaction rituals (such as participating on a specific Facebook page) which can help shape someone’s view on sustainability and might change their consumption practices. Therefore this thesis makes an effort in using IR theory in an online setting.

2.3 Hypotheses of this study

H1 The ingredients for successful Interaction Rituals are present on subject specific Facebook Pages

H2 Interaction on subject specific Facebook Pages can lead to high levels of emotional energy

H3 Buying is part of the Ritual Chain

H4 Promoters feel group solidarity

2.4 Conceptual model

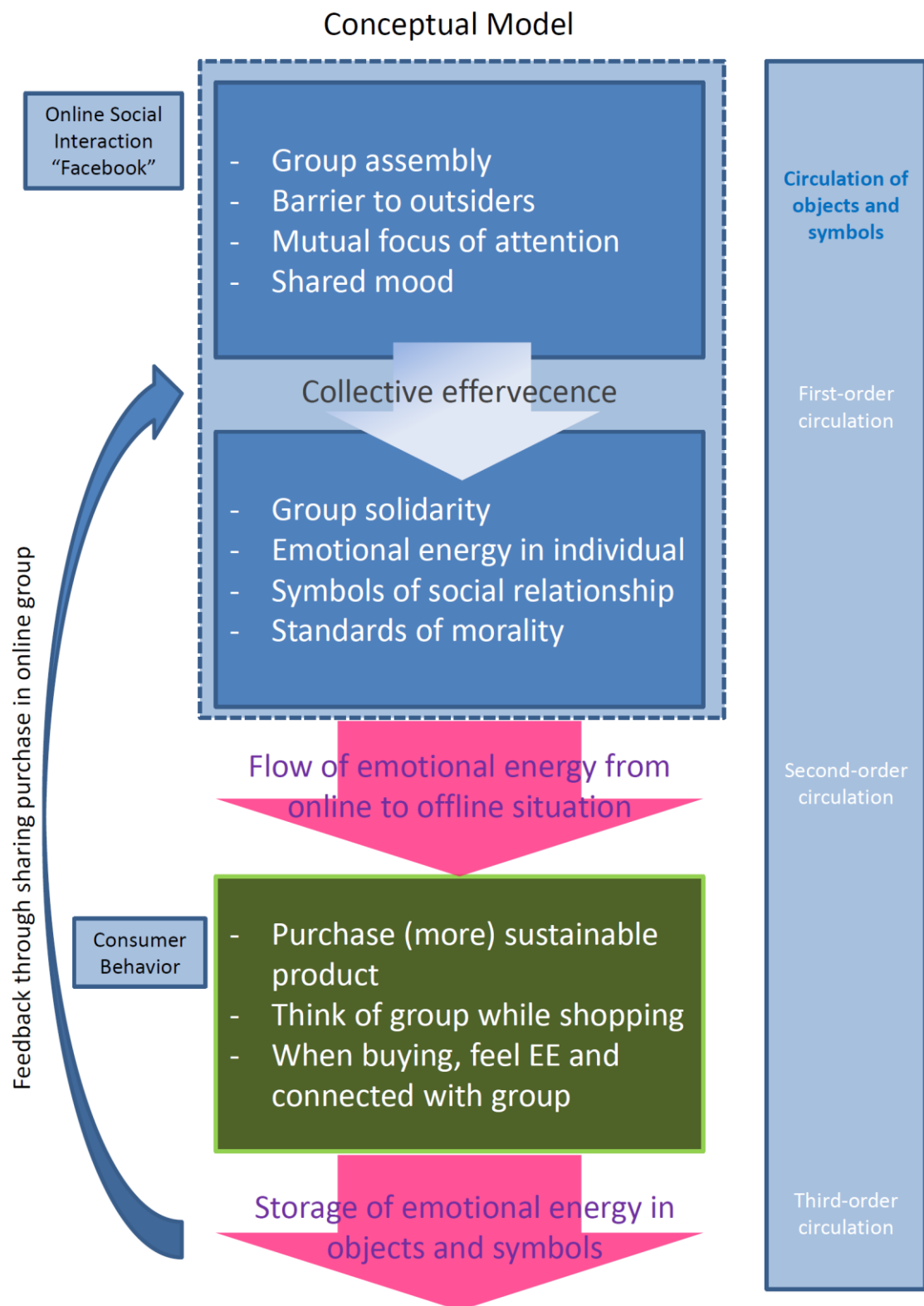


Figure 2.3 Conceptual Model based on the Interaction Ritual Model by Collins (Collins, 2004; 48).

2.5 Operationalization

In order to be able to determine if Collins' IR theory is applicable in an online space, it is needed to examine if the ingredients and outcomes of Collins model are visible, in this case, on Facebook. It is not an easy task to observe emotions and concepts such as emotional energy, morality and solidarity in an online place. Therefore, operationalization of the concepts within this theory is the first step. In this section all the important ingredients and outcomes are elaborated upon in the definition of Collins and given meaning in the online setting. This operationalization is vital in continuing the participant observation and web surveys.

2.5.1 Rituals

An interaction ritual does not have to be formal or a stereotyped formality according to Collins; the starting point for an interaction ritual can also be a common action or event which is illustrated in figure 2.2.1 by the dashed arrow pointing towards mutual focus of attention. Not formality, but mutual focus of attention is crucial for a common action or event to turn into a successful interaction ritual (Collins, 2004; 50). Collins refers to these non-formal rituals as natural rituals. This is the type of ritual we see taking place on Facebook. Mutual attention on Facebook mostly comes about spontaneously and people do not explicitly notice that this is happening. Sometimes however, natural rituals become *"crystalized and prolonged in symbols, which thereby makes subsequent IRs more formal"* (Collins, 2004; 50). This is what happens when we are able to recognize recurring patterns within the interaction rituals. It is for instance very common for people to share their purchase with others because this might encourage their friends to also buy sustainable products. Or perhaps the fact that people hardly ever post something on the Wall of the organizations' page out of their own initiative, could be seen as a 'rule' within interaction on Facebook, making the IR more formal. Hereby it is important to note that not every organization lets people post on their wall, most pages do not offer this option and only accept comments made in reaction to the organizations' own wall posts, also known as status updates. It is interesting to see if we can detect more typical rituals like this.



Figure 2.4.1 Group assembly in a conversion within the page of ONE for ONE (One for One, 2012-2)

2.5.2 Ritual Ingredients

Group assembly

Collins defines group assembly as follows “*Two or more people are physically assembled in the same place, so that they affect each other by their bodily co-presence, whether it is in the foreground of their conscious attention or not*” (Collins, 2004; 48). On Facebook, people are not physically assembled in the same place. However, participants are virtually assembled in the same online place. You become a member of the group by Liking the Facebook page or by participating in a conversation within the specific page; this is shown in figure 2.4.1, the Facebook page of ONE for ONE is used as an example. People who are a member of the same group can see who else is participating, and they can react directly to them and even take a look at the other participants’ online profile, including pictures, Likes and Friends. There is group assembly, especially within internal conversations, because people react to each other, and because of their visible online profile, participants can form an idea about the other person.

Barrier to outsiders

Collins argues that the second ingredient for an interaction ritual is that “*There are boundaries to outsiders so that participants have a clear sense of who is taking part and who is not*” (Collins, 2004; 48). In online interaction these boundaries are somewhat harder to define. There are two kinds of barriers. First, a person has to like the page in order to become a member of the group. This Like ensures this participant of receiving updates shared by this page, on his or hers own News Feed. Also, the Like can be a way of showing your Facebook friends that you are interested in this group; as a way of personal profiling or to promote the initiative. Furthermore, when a person Likes the Page, this Like is counted (figure 2.4.2). It is important for a page to have as many Likes as possible; to ensure as many followers as possible. The second barrier is on a smaller scale within separate conversations on the Facebook page. When we take a look at figure 2.4.1 we see that people show their interest in a particular item by Sharing, Liking or Commenting on the particular update. With these actions it is possible for an outsider to see who is in, and who is not.



Figure 2.4.2 Total amount of Likes of ONE for ONE on 2 July 2012 (One for One, 2012-1)

There are important differences if you compare offline interaction rituals with online interaction rituals when it comes to barriers. Collins does not focus on the exclusivity of the group, but online interaction rituals are more easily accessible for everyone who is interested than an offline IR is. People can for example react to an update while they actually are on the other side of the world. And also, time is of less importance, people can even join an interaction ritual, months later; when this person belatedly reacts to the conversation, all the previous participants are notified and the conversation could be revived.

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One additional point worth mentioning is that within online interaction it is not always visible who is passively following the updates from others, because this action is not registered. These people are not participating or interacting, however, lack of privacy might cause individuals to interact differently than in an offline situation.

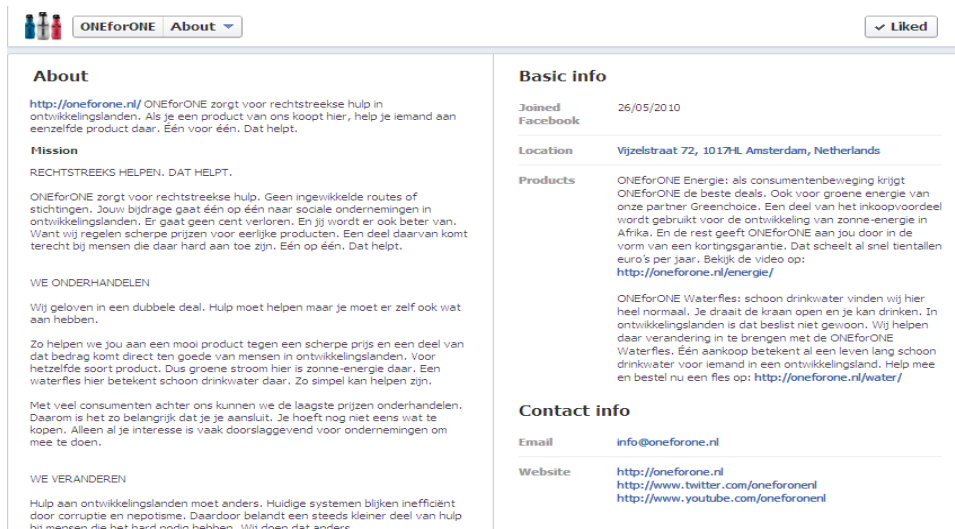


Figure 2.4.3 The About section of ONE for ONE (One for One 2012-3)

Mutual focus of attention

“People focus their attention upon a common object or activity, and by communicating this focus to each other become mutually aware of each other’s focus of attention” (Collins, 2004; 48). Collins argues that this mutual focus of attention is an important ingredient in an interaction ritual, if there is no mutual focus of attention, the interaction ritual might not work, usually, mutual focus occurs subconsciously and spontaneously (Collins, 2004). This mutual focus of attention is quite visible on Facebook. Here as well, there are at least two levels on which it is possible to identify mutual focus of attention. First, people, with their Like, show that they like or support the effort and the starting point from which the initiative, label or shop operates. Most organizations write a short paragraph about what they stand for in the ‘about’ section (figure 2.4.3). Secondly, people who have Liked the Page will be notified about new updates through their own News Feed, this ensures that people, who are interested in the information, go to the page and read the remarks made by others and possible join the conversation in which participants often display a mutual focus of attention; this is also seen in figure 2.4.4.

Shared mood

Collins says that a shared mood is one of the key ingredients to create emotional energy; *“They share a common mood or emotional experience”* (Collins, 2004; 48). This particular ingredient is very hard to determine through observation. However, sometimes it can be seen in particular conversations, an example is shown in figure 2.4.4 where ONE for ONE posted a picture on its Wall with the title ‘Just because you can’t see it, doesn’t mean it isn’t there!’. All people participating in this comment thread are agreeing with each other, and reinforcing this by giving a Like to other most appealing comments. Obviously, this kind of shared mood is not found in every thread on Facebook; figure 2.4.1 is a good example of a situation in which people tend to not only disagree with the update by ONE for ONE, but also with each other. In this case, this could mean that not all the ingredients for a successful Interaction Ritual are present.

2.5.3 Feedback intensification between mutual focus and shared mood

All of the above mentioned ingredients reinforce each other and especially the third and fourth do. Collins says the following about it : *“As the persons become more tightly focused on their common activity, more aware of what each other is doing and feeling, and more aware each other’s awareness, they experience their shared emotion more intensely, as it come to dominate their awareness”* (Collins, 2004; 48). What Collins means by this, is that people get influenced by each other’s emotion when they interact and that this could lead to an even stronger feeling of emotional energy. He also says the following; *“The key process is participants’ mutual entrainment of emotion and attention, producing shared emotional / cognitive experience”* (page 48).

Especially the use of the word entrainment is important in this respect. Entrainment could be explained as *“the synchronization of organisms to an external rhythm”*; a term which is used in the field of psychology and biology. This process of mutual entrainment is only possible through bodily co-presence according to Collins; *“At the centre of an interaction ritual in the process in which participants develop a mutual focus of attention and become entrained in each other’s bodily micro-rhythms and emotions”* (Collins, 2004; 47). This kind of entrainment might be impossible to achieve in an online setting because of its mere definition. However, we do see this feedback intensification between mutual focus and shared mood.

In figure 2.4.4 for example, we see people giving each other positive feedback and by the use of the Like button, people let each other know that they appreciate their comment. There is a difference with offline interaction rituals; the rhythm by which this feedback intensification takes place is more unpredictable and often there are time laps in between comments because they are dependent on when the individuals from around the world are online. For this thesis it is important to study whether these online interaction rituals can still provide emotional energy even though the participants are not completely in sync (communicating at the same time). And a follow up question is; do these online interaction rituals exist without personal contact as well?

Scott Campbell underlines the importance of online interaction as he introduces his thought on synchronization. He says that online interaction is used when persons do not have the possibility to meet in person *“to fill in the gaps between face-to-face meet ups”* and that there are two levels of synchronizing within new media (Scott Campbell in: Baym et al., 2012; 261). Participating on Facebook, just like texting in the example Campbell gives, is essentially an asynchronous form of communication. But Campbell argues that this asynchronous interaction could result in greater “social synchronicity”. He says the following; *“I think asynchronous mediated contact can “add up” to making people feel more like they are carrying out their relationships more synchronously when they establish rhythmic flows with their interactions”* (Scott Campbell in: Baym et al., 2012; 261). Thus, according to Campbell, online interaction is a way of organizing and taking care of offline relationships. This thesis will examine the role of offline relationships in online interaction rituals on Facebook Pages and vice versa.



Figure 2.4.4 Shared mood in a comment thread in reaction to a posted picture by ONE for ONE on 26 January 2012 (ONE for ONE, 2012-4)

2.5.4 Collective Effervescence

Earlier, collective effervescence was shortly explained as a sort of mutually enforced sentiment. When all the ingredients are present in an interaction ritual, collective effervescence might occur among its participants, resulting in the outcomes of the ritual such as group solidarity. High levels of collective effervescence function as a motivator, people would want to be in this kind of ritual again to achieve this feeling of collective effervescence. If a ritual leads to low levels of collective effervescence, the ritual could be seen as a failed ritual (Collins, 2004; 51).

Also on Facebook we see interaction rituals with higher and lower levels of collective effervescence. A Facebook update with hardly any Likes and 1 or less comments showing no emotions could be seen as a failed ritual with very low levels of collective effervescence. Often, there is a medium level of collective effervescence; with many Likes, a couple of Shares and also a few comments. Every once in a while however, a Facebook update appears to have the ability to create high levels of collective effervescence among its participants. These

interaction rituals are mostly characterized by many comments and even more Likes, also people show strong emotions and react directly to each other. One could say that there is a high level of feedback intensification; time laps between comments are smaller, people Comment not only on the initial update but also on other participants' Comments, and they show their emotions vividly through the use of words, punctuation and symbols. In such a comment thread, to some extent, mutual entrainment becomes visible, resulting in high levels of collective effervescence.

2.5.5 Ritual Outcomes

Group solidarity

Group solidarity is explained by Collins as *"a feeling of membership"* (Collins, 2004; 49). As with most of the aspects on the 'outcome' side of the IR model, this feeling of belonging is best studied by conducting an interview or in the case of this research, a web survey. However, group solidarity could also be shown by participants through their interaction behavior, for instance with a Like or a Share (seen in figure 2.4.4 in the upper right corner just above the first comment). Especially when someone shares a particular post on the Facebook page that they are interested in; with this they demonstrate their solidarity towards the group.

Also, more directed towards the practice of shopping, when people buy the sustainable products that are promoted by the initiative or organization, they also show solidarity to the group. This is sometimes displayed by posting a picture or post about their purchase on Facebook. Brown (2011) introduces a new idea on feelings of membership. He argues that not everyone feels connected to the same extent. He identified three types of consumers in his study on socially responsible products; *promoters, conscientious consumers and purchasers*, based on the consumption practice of the participants. He found out that only the promoters, the people who are at the center of the fair-trade movement, who buy consciously and also recommend fair-trade products to other consumers, feel as if they are a member of the larger fair-trade community. The other two groups did not feel this. This typology that Brown makes could be interesting for this study as well; it might be possible to distinguish different types of participants.

Emotional energy in individual

Emotional energy [EE] in the individual is one of the key outcomes of the IR model. It is explained as *"a feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action"* (Collins, 2004; 49). Brown (2011), one of the few scholars applying IR theory in their empirical sustainability studies, uses IR theory to explain the mobilization of conscientious consumers with respect to fair-trade products. He says the following about the importance of emotions within IR theory: *"Emotions are the lynchpin holding Collins' theory of IR chains together"* (Brown, 2011; 124).

EE is obviously difficult to measure; we will definitely need the input of the web survey to determine whether or not people experience EE through online interaction. We will for example need to ask them about what they feel when someone else places a Like on their comment. However, people also display their emotions online, with

words, Emoticons, writing style and punctuation showing their enthusiasm. In figure 2.4.4 for example, many people use an exclamation mark which could be explained as a way of showing their emotions. It is also possible to find comments made by participants that really show their emotions because they express themselves quite explicit, this is for example seen in figure 2.4.4 in the seventh comment made (yellow); this participant tells us that he is really touched by the picture posted by ONE for ONE and the message that it brings.

Symbols of social relationship

Symbols of social relationship are very important in IR theory. Symbols have the power to represent the connection between the participants of the interaction ritual. Another trait of symbols is that they can prolong the feeling of emotional energy because EE could be stored in symbols. Collins describes symbols as follows:

“Symbols that represent the group: emblems or other representations (visual icons, words, gestures) that, members feel are associated with themselves collectively; these are Durkheim’s “sacred objects.” Persons pumped up with feelings of group

solidarity treat symbols with great respect and defend them against the disrespect of outsiders, and even more, of renegade insiders” (Collins, 2004; 49).



Figure 2.4.5 The Facebook profile picture of ONE for ONE (One for One, 2012-5)

Symbols of social relationships can be seen on the different Facebook Pages a lot. Often the clothing label or organization emblem itself becomes a symbol. A specific product can also become a symbol for sustainability and the label it belongs to. This can be seen in the profile picture of ONE for ONE for example in figure 2.4.5. These water bottles are just one of the products that ONE for ONE sells on a buy one, give one basis. It is however the product which is put forward most, and therefore given a special status. This is probably one of the most recognizable products by ONE for ONE, and people probably think of the good things ONE for ONE does, when they see a water bottle like this. A product like this has the potential of storing emotional energy. When a person buys this product because they were inspired by the social interaction on Facebook, they might experience the same emotional energy they received from the interaction ritual while using the product. Symbols are very important for interaction rituals, and interaction rituals are important to symbols, because it is the interaction that gives meaning to an otherwise empty symbol (Spaargaren, 2011). In examining the different Facebook pages, we searched for recognizable symbols like this one.

Standards of morality

Collins describes feelings of morality as follows: “the sense of rightness in adhering to the group, respecting its symbols, and defending both against transgressors. Along with this goes the sense of moral evil or impropriety in violating the group’s solidarity and its symbolic representations” (Collins, 2004; 49). This sense of morality is shown by the participants on most of the Facebook pages in this research. The items posted on these pages, mostly posted by the operators themselves, do not always concerns the sustainable clothing line directly, in fact, they often place societal or environmental problems at the center of attention. Most of the time, these posts earn a great deal of respect and participants show this by liking the post, sharing or commenting on it. Collins also

says that this sense of morality is illustrated by people who act against those who do not respect the symbols of the group; these are the renegade insiders Collins speaks of (Collins, 2004; 49). If we place this within the context of Facebook, we might see this in the comments made. Unfortunately, these actions are rare. In figure 2.4.6 we see a post places by Hemp Hoodlamp on the hostage of the captain of the Sea Shepard. We see that many people like the post (which means they agree), and even two people shared the post. However, shortly after the placement of the post, the second commentator writes the following: “Terrorists deserve to be in jail. Keep him there to rot”. This comment could explain that this participant has no feelings of solidarity. There is however no one who shows their group solidarity; no one commenting on the post after this. This could mean that the interaction ritual failed to fulfill its promise. Unfortunately we are not able to see what the participants thought and felt when they saw this renegade insiders’ comment; perhaps people thought that this comment wasn’t worth their time.

Brown (2011) also has an enlightening view on morality within the sphere of IR theory. He says: *“This sense of morality can be examined through the relationship between an individual’s words and actions”* (Brown, 2011; 125). Collins (2004) also speaks of actions; a participant feels he is doing the right thing when he acts in compliance with the ideas – or energy – of the group. Therefore it seems important to ask people about their consumption behavior; do they actually buy sustainable fashion?

This is however not the most important question. The question if participants’ opinions of right and wrong are influenced by IR is much more interesting e.g., do participants feel that they would do the right thing if they would buy sustainable clothing? This would be a more appropriate question to ask when it comes to feelings of morality.



Figure 2.4.6 Criticism on Wall post (Hemp Hoodlamp, 2012-1)

3. Social Networking Websites

Bruns and Bahnisch (2009) provide a fitting definition of social media. While they use this definition to describe social media in a broad manner, this definition fits the idea of social networking websites (SNWs) best. Social networking websites are: *“Websites which build on Web 2.0 technologies to provide space for in-depth social interaction, community formation, and the tackling of collaborative projects”* (Bruns and Bahnisch, 2009; 7).

Especially interesting in the light of this thesis, is the way the relation between consumer and company has changed since the introduction of social media. Social media has provided for a two-way communication between companies and their customers. Now, consumers have the possibility to spread their opinion fairly easily with social media such as Twitter, You Tube videos and Facebook. Also, companies and organizations have the ability to communicate directly to their consumers (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

3.1 Facebook

In the introduction to this thesis it was explained why this thesis chooses to focus on Facebook in this empirical study. Facebook is the largest social networking website (SNW) worldwide. As was said before, Facebook in The Netherlands alone has almost 6.5 million users and worldwide there are more than 845 million active users (Marketingfacts-1, 2012 and Denti *et al.*, 2012).

Facebook was originally meant to be an online student catalogue through which students of American universities could expand their network (Denti *et al.*, 2012). Facebook nowadays is available to anyone over the age of thirteen and it is still a place where people largely maintain their pre-existing social network (Ellison, *et al.*, 2007). However, there is also room for connecting with companies, organizations, interest groups and other people based on shared interests.

Facebook has a number of features available to its users, its mission is *“to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected”* (Facebook, 2004). An individual can register and personalize his or hers personal profile by adding a profile picture and things they Like to their personal profile such as, movies, books, music and organizations or companies. With Facebook, people can keep up with friends, upload photo's or update their status to let their friends know about their life and also keep up with organizations, companies and others Facebook Pages by Liking their Page.

Pempek *et al.* (2009) acknowledge the importance of Facebook in the personal lives of especially teens and students; Facebook provides a way to easily connect with peers and gather feedback. Facebook is considered to encourage development of identity and relationships, from friendship to romantic relationship (Pempek, 2009; 228).

Also, while the company was publically criticized for the Beacon scandal (Perez, 2007 in Keenan and Shiri, 2009), Facebook is known for its privacy policy. People can change their privacy settings, making it only

possible for friends to see their profiles (Keenan and Shiri, 2009). This could be one of the reasons that people are not afraid to share personal information; *“Facebook encourages sociability by creating a comfortable, private and familiar social environment”* (Keenan and Shiri, 2009; 443). This is for example encouraged by the use of legal names instead of alias screen name. *“To summarize, Facebook encourages sociability by representing your existing ‘real world’ social connections in a virtual space”* (Keenan and Shiri, 2009; 444).

3.1.1 How often do people use Facebook?

Results of a Facebook study among students indicate that students use Facebook about 30 min throughout the day as part of their daily routine (Pempek, 2009). Denti *et al.* revealed different figures in their research about Swedish Facebook usage; *“on average Swedish women spend 81 minutes per day on Facebook, whereas Swedish men are logged on to the site about 64 minutes per day”* (Denti *et al.*, 2012; 6). From this study as well as the study by Pempek (2009) it becomes clear that for a large majority of the people, Facebook is part of their daily routine. Denti *et al.* (2012) found that more than 80% use Facebook daily.

The study by Denti *et al.* (2012) furthermore shows that women and younger Facebook users are more active on Facebook. Also, for women and younger people Facebook usage is more *habitual* than for men and older people. Almost 50% of the female respondents said to log on to Facebook when they intended to do something else and about 45% of the females sometimes log on without thinking about it. Also, 33.7% of the women versus 21.8% of the men often log on to Facebook subconsciously and 30.0% of the women versus 17.3% of the men would feel ill at ease if they did not log on to Facebook for a long time (Denti *et al.*, 2012; 16).

To investigate online social interaction rituals, more information is needed on how people use Facebook and with whom. The importance of network ties when studying new media such as Facebook is argued by Scott Campbell; *“in today’s new media environment, it is important to account not only for how much one uses a given medium and how they use it, but also whom with.”* (Scott Campbell in: Baym *et al.*, 2012; 257). The next section will shed light on this subject.

3.1.2 How and with whom do people use Facebook?

Facebook as a social networking website is one of the most widely used platforms of new media. Typical for new media is that people can choose to either send private messages or spread messages to all users, or in the case of Facebook, all Friends. Campbell makes the following remark about new media; *“one of the key technological affordances of new media is that they tend to be hybrid in nature, offering platforms for both mass and interpersonal communication”* (Scott Campbell in: Baym *et al.*, 2012; 257).

Most of the time, the students in the study by Pempek (2009) used Facebook to observe content posted by others. Posting content themselves is done less often. When students post an update online, they do so using a “one-to-many style” in which they produce personal content for many of their friends to read at once (Pempek, 2009;

235). Private messages are less common than posts on someone's Wall, Pempek (2009) therefore argues that Facebook is mostly about public communication.

Facebook is used most often for social interaction, primarily with friends with whom the students had a pre-established relationship offline (Pempek, 2009). This was also shown in the study by Denti *et al.* where the majority of the respondents maintain contact with people “one does not meet so often (88.1%), as well as to maintain one's contacts in general (82.5%)” (Denti *et al.* 2012; 16). About 60 to 70 % of the respondents also use Facebook to show others encouragement or show others that they care about them.

The study about Sweden's Facebook usage also shows that Facebook largely relies on people maintaining their pre-existing network; “getting to know more people (32.5%), and visit profiles of people one does not know (19.6%), were also less important to a majority of respondents” (Denti *et al.*, 2012; 17). However, Denti *et al.* also found that older people do tend to view Facebook as a means to meet new people. Figure 3.1 gives an overview of the different uses of Facebook among Swedish respondents.

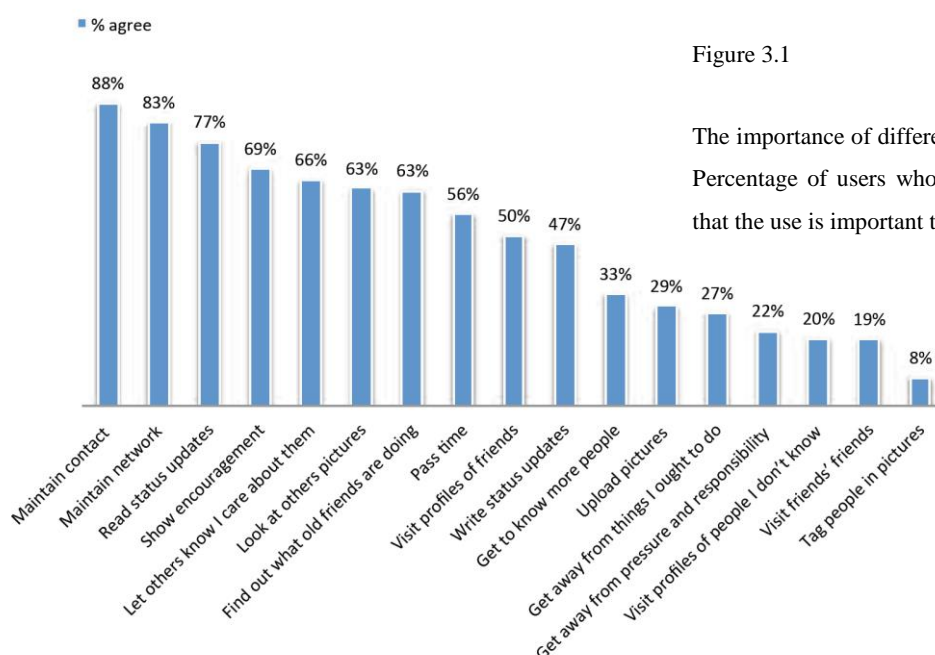


Figure 3.1

The importance of different uses of Facebook. Percentage of users who agree (vs. disagree) that the use is important to them.

Figure 3.1 shows in what ways people interact on Facebook in the Swedish study. Remarkably, this study does not pay attention to what happens on Facebook Pages by companies and organizations. Logically Pages are a subject for many marketing specialists, but also from a sociological viewpoint, Pages are interesting. On these Pages, people can interact with other fans of the Page and gather new ideas about subjects they are interested in. This thesis focusses on the use of Pages about sustainable clothing by individuals.

3.2 Sustainable change through SNWs

Spaargaren (2011) says that the majority of people today do not yet know how the incorporation of sustainable symbols and products into their daily practices could lead to higher levels of emotional energy. Facebook could

be a medium through which people can learn to experience these higher levels of emotional energy. Jan Jonkers, professor Sustainable Entrepreneurship at the Radboud University Nijmegen, also acknowledges this. He says that social media has a large advantage because it has the ability to make tangible the empty word of sustainability (Bal, 2012).

On Facebook in particular, the focus is on individuals and their collective identity. An individual Facebook user can show other people their identity by joining niche interest groups and participate in communities within Facebook (Keenan and Shiri, 2009). Although Facebook is an extension of pre-existing offline social relationships, it also provides people with the opportunity to connect with other people who are for instance also interested in sustainable clothing. When someone Likes a Page on Facebook by a sustainable company, he or she is able to see who else is active in this niche interest group.

Also, through these subject-specific Facebook Pages, fans can get information about sustainable clothing, and other people who Like the Page. By participating actively on a sustainable clothing label's Page, fans can communicate with each other and discuss various topics. This way, an online group can be formed leading to online interaction rituals. Fans who participate in these online interaction rituals might experience positive feelings about belonging to a certain group and feel solidarity towards the group's ideas and symbols (emotional energy). These feelings could in turn result in more awareness about sustainable products and this emotional energy might even lead the participants to incorporate these feelings into their daily practice of shopping for consumer products.

4. Finding IR on subject specific Facebook Pages

This thesis assumes to find social interaction conform Collins' IR theory on Facebook. Therefore, using Collins' theoretical model and the operationalization as proposed in section 2.4, this study analyzes social interaction on Facebook in line with the ritual ingredients and ritual outcomes.

4.1 Four SNWs with regard to sustainable products

In order to examine what happens on sustainable clothing label specific Pages; this thesis has examined four particular Facebook Pages; One for One, Eco Fashion World, Good for All and Kuyichi. These Pages are subject specific and give their fans the opportunity to Like them and connect with other likeminded people. A short description of these pages, has been given in section 1.4.2. This chapter provides an analysis of the empirical findings using both participant observation and an online survey.

28-09-2012	One for One	Good for All	Eco Fashion World	Kuyichi (06-03-2013)
Number of Likes	7390	1386	5151	3584
Completed surveys	14	20	6	1
Completed surveys as percentage of Likes	0.2%	1.4%	0.1%	Survey not published on Facebook
What	Social enterprise 'Buy one give one'	A social conscious and ecological design label	Promote eco fashion companies	A social conscious and ecological design label
Location	Amsterdam, The Netherlands	Naarden, The Netherlands	Vancouver, Canada	Haarlem, The Netherlands

Table 1 Four pages in this study and the number of Likes and respondents on 28 September 2012

4.1.1 Response

The survey contains 38 questions, of which the first 4 are non-validated introduction questions and the last two are non-validated questions with room for the respondent to comment on the SNW in question and leave their email-address for more information about the results. In total, there were 40 surveys completed by the respondents. Because 2 of these surveys were not closed properly, these surveys were labelled uncompleted, however, these surveys were included in the study because all the validated questions were answered by the respondent. There were 60 people who started the survey, 5 of them stopped the survey before the first question and 15 people stopped before answering question 21. Because of practical reasons it was decided to remove the

uncompleted surveys from the study. The survey on the Facebook Pages of One for One, Good for All and Eco Fashion World generated respectively, 15, 20 and 4 completed responses. Also, 1 response from Kuyichi's Facebook Page was included. This response was generated because Kuyichi's marketing manager offered to spread the survey among friends and family who Likes their Facebook Page. Because we were not able to spread the survey via Kuyichi's Facebook Page, no data

4.1.2 Visibility

The relatively low response to the survey could be explained by multiple reasons. One of the reasons is that not every fan of the Page might have seen the invitation to the survey. If the survey is posted from the account of the particular Page, the invite appears at every fan's personal News Feed. It is quite possible that many fans were not online at that particular moment, or they do not keep track of all the past posts. Also, it is important to note that the function News Feed is automatically set to show only the most important news or 'top stories'. A person can choose to set their News Feed to 'most recent' in order to show every single post in chronological order, this option is however not often used (Marketingfacts, 2011). It is however not possible within this study to determine how many fans have set their News Feed to 'most recent' or 'top stories'.

Also, within this study it is not possible to determine whether the update containing the survey was ranked high enough to reach the individual News Feeds of the fans as a 'top story'. Facebook uses EdgeRank to determine whether or not a status update is a 'top story'. EdgeRank uses an algorithm based on 3 factors; affinity, weight and time. The affinity score between the viewing user (fan) and the edge or update creator is calculated, from the amount of mutual friends and the amount of times that both users Like each other's Comments and view each other's profile, among other factors. The affinity score makes sure the user receives stories in their News Feed from people who they often interact with. The weight factor determines with edge is ranked higher; a Comment on an update will have more weight in the equation than a Like. The third factor, time, will give a higher rank to a newer edge (Marketingfacts, 2011). In sum, it is plausible that the number of people who were presented with the survey was lower than the number of likes; how much lower depended on factors not sufficiently known

4.2 General overview

Most respondents visit the Facebook Page of the label (One for One, Good for All or EFW) a few times a month. This section will give a general overview of how the fans of these four Pages use these Facebook Pages.

4.2.1 Participation

To give an idea about the number of fans, of the four specific Pages, that have completed the survey, a percentage is depicted in table 1. The respondents were asked about the way in which they participate on the labels' Facebook Page. The results are shown in table 2 (n=40).

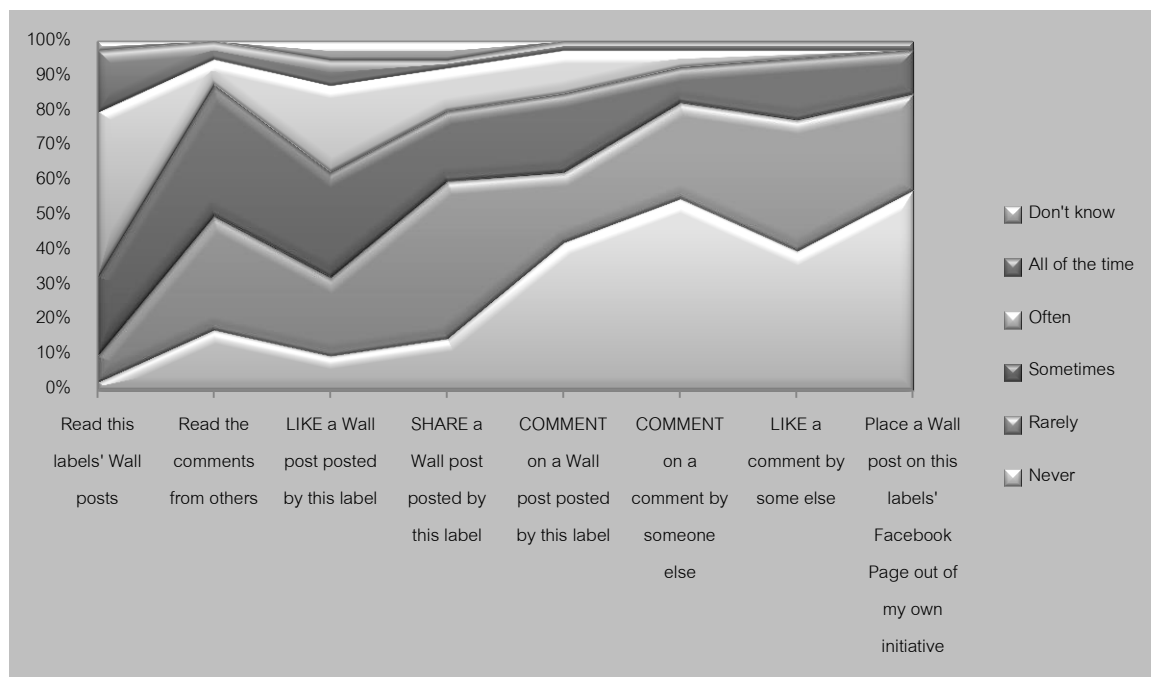


Table 2 How often do people participate through the indicated actions on the studied Facebook Pages in percentages (n=40)

Although it is daily practice for many people to visit Facebook (Pempek *et al.*, 2009), the result of the survey show that people are not always actively involved in the Facebook Page they were asked about. About 70% of the respondents said that they sometimes or often read the Wall posts by either OfO, GfA, Kuyichi or EFW. Liking a post by the subject specific Page is done sometimes or often by 50% of the respondents and Sharing a post is only done sometimes or often by 30% of the respondents. More than 60% never or rarely Comments on a post by the specific Page and more than 90% never or rarely posts something out of their own initiative on the Page by OfO, GfA, Kuyichi or EFW. The results of the survey suggest a coherent pattern; the more effort the action involves, the less respondents undertake this action.

4.2.2 Interest in other fans

The results of the survey show that the respondents are not overly interested in the other people who also Like the Page in question, this is seen in table 2. About 50% never or rarely reads Comments by others and 40% does so sometimes, only 10% says they read the Comments by others often or all the time. Liking a Comment from someone else or Commenting on it is even less likely for most respondents. This outcome is consistent with the answers to question 16 of the survey, depicted in table 3. Asking the respondents if they are interested in other persons who LIKE this labels' Facebook Page, only 18% of the respondents said they were interested.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Not at all	<div style="width: 33%;"></div>	13	33%
2	A bit	<div style="width: 40%;"></div>	16	40%
3	Yes I am	<div style="width: 18%;"></div>	7	18%
4	Totally!	<div style="width: 3%;"></div>	1	3%
5	Don't know	<div style="width: 8%;"></div>	3	8%
	Total		40	

Table 3 Percentage of respondents who are interested in other persons who LIKE this labels' Facebook Page (n=40)

4.2.3 What are the fans looking for?

In order to get more insight into what it is that appeals to the fans of the Pages by OfO, GfA, Kuyichi or EFW, an open question was included into the survey and this question was formulated rather casual to promote response: “Almost there! Could you tell me what would make you more interested in this labels' Facebook Page? All tips are welcome!”. This question was not validated and therefore people did not need to answer in order to finish the survey, there were 20 respondents to this question, of which 8 people said they did not know what could be added to the Page or thought it was good as it is.

One main item to make people more interested in the Pages could be derived from the results; people would like more information on products (e.g. where to buy, product overview, ordering page). Zooming in on the answers per specific Page, it becomes clear that fans of both One for One and Good for All would like them to make more different products. One fan of Eco Fashion World however vowed for a different approach;

“It would be nice to see the page focus less on consumerism, instead focusing on the core practices that drive sustainable innovation such as the replacement of products for services, and doing more with LESS product”

On the Page by EFW stories are shared about what it means to buy sustainable clothing, however, more energy is vested in depicting images and stories about sustainable fashion labels, designers and promotions. Perhaps people would be more interested to participate when more background stories would be presented about what kind of positive change sustainable fashion can bring to for example textile workers with regard to their often poor working conditions or their environment. Taking a look at the Pages by Good for All and One for One, it is seen that they present more background stories in order to connect their brand to the positive change it can bring. Examples are: interviews with the producers of GfA products and pictures of the factories where their products are produced, and OfO often posts stories about the progress they make with their water and healthcare projects.

4.3 Ritual Ingredients

This section outlines the ritual ingredients as indicated in section 2.5. Supported by empirical data retrieved from the online survey and participatory observation, we investigated interaction rituals found on SNWs.

4.3.1 Group Assembly

By Liking a subject specific Facebook Page, such as the Pages by, GfA, Kuyichi or EFW, a person shows their interest in this Page. A group of people is formed by the fans of these Pages depicted by the number of Likes a Page has obtained. While these fans are not physically in the same place, they do maneuver in the same online place when they visit this Page, creating group assembly.

In response to the survey question “How often do you visit this labels' Facebook Page?” a little more than 20% of the respondents reported to visit the Page on a daily or weekly basis, this is seen in table 4. The person who

visits the Page on a daily basis is someone who either works at the Page's organization, or knows someone that works there.


#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Every day		1	3%
2	A few times a week		8	20%
3	A few times a month		12	30%
4	A few times a year		10	25%
5	Less than a few times a year		5	13%
6	Don't know		4	10%
	Total		40	

Table 4 How often do the respondents visit the specific Facebook Page? (n=40)

However, there is group assembly on a higher level within the subject specific Pages; this takes place when an update by the Page is shared with its fans. When a Page posts a picture, video or text on its Wall, this update is seen by all the fans on their own personal News Feed. People can choose to read or watch (often a post will contain a picture) the post or ignore it and scroll down.

When a person decides to read the post, they might also want to Like, Comment or Share, this is when group assembly on a higher level occurs with room for direct interaction. As is shown in table 2, it is not common for most respondents to do more than read or Like the posts they come across on their News Feed. But when the fans read the posts, which about 70% does sometimes or often, they are in the same online space together with other participants.

The online space as a place for study was explained shortly in section 1.5.2. The fans read the same Comments and see the same picture. Obviously, not every participant sees the posts on exactly the same time; also, people from all over the world can join the same group. The online space is therefore different from on offline space; it is not dependent on geographical place or time. However, similar to an offline interaction ritual, the online ritual is about people connecting with one and other. The various Facebook updates have the potential of bringing together likeminded people by means of a picture or statement. This togetherness is therefore largely based on a mutual focus of attention and perhaps even a shared mood.

Being in the same online space does not mean that group assembly will occur. Group assembly on the level of personal interaction can only occur when people who read the post, also take action upon this by Liking, Sharing or giving a Comment, because only then, participants can see who else is participating. When a certain post generates Comments, people can see who the other commentators are. It is also possible to see the profiles of the persons who Like and Share the post. However, it is not always possible to see the full profile of the participants; a profile picture and name is always shown but sometimes people's privacy settings are set in a way that other people cannot see their activities and pictures for example.

There are people who do read the Comments, but are not interested in making a reply themselves, as we have seen from the survey results in table 2. These people are not participating in the interaction ritual, but they might be influenced by the comments made, and the other way around, as they are in the same online space.

Why do fans not participate?

People might be less likely to post anything, because they know that more people are able to see what they write. However, survey results, depicted in table 5, suggest that privacy is not the main reason for the respondents to not participate. The survey, asking the respondents what would be a reason for them to not use the Like, Comment or Share button on the specific Page, pointed out that privacy issues were only a consideration in 20% of the replies.





#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Privacy issues		8	20%
2	Not interested		15	38%
3	Takes too much time		6	15%
4	Other		12	30%

Table 5 reasons for fans not to use the LIKE, COMMENT or SHARE button on the specific Facebook Page (n=40)

For most respondents, time was also not a big issue as is seen in table 5. Most people said the main reason for not taking part in a conversation online is not being interested in the topic of the conversation. Of the fourteen people who responded ‘other’ to this question, five people were not interested in sharing their opinion. Two examples are:

“it's just info, doesn't trigger response”

“I don't feel it necessary/don't feel strongly enough about anything I have come across yet to like, post or share”.

Two respondents were not – yet – acquainted enough with Facebook, they said they were inexperienced or not used to it. One person did not like social media and one other person said he or she does use the reaction buttons a lot. Furthermore, two persons said they used Facebook as a professional tool. Also, two persons noted that they do not want to react to every post they come across, they said the following:

“I'm trying to stick to an info-diet... And help others dieting on info as well”

“I dont want to like everything”

From the survey results it is possible to argue that people have very differing motivations not to participate in an online interaction ritual; these reasons are not straight forward and they are personal. The main reason for people not to participate is however that they are not interested in the topic of the

4.3.2 Barrier to Outsiders

According to Collins it is important for people participating in the interaction ritual that they have a clear idea about who is participating in the ritual and who is not, as explained in section 2.5.2. In the previous section it was explained that group assembly exists on two levels. First, someone had to Like the Page and second, in order to participate actively in the interaction ritual, this person has to Like, Comment or Share an update. These barriers will tell others who are participating and who are not.

However, these barriers are not designed to exclude others. On the contrary, SNWs are designed to be very inclusive, making it easy for others to join. These barriers could therefore be seen more as a distinction between who is in and who is out. Because most interaction on Facebook Pages takes place on the companies Wall, all conversations are public and people are invited to join.

4.3.3 Mutual Focus of Attention and Shared Mood

The two levels of mutual focus of attention, as explained in section 2.4.2, are visible in each of the four subject specific Pages. The numbers of Likes per Page show how many people were at one moment drawn to the Page, enough to Like it. Survey results (n=40) explain that most people Like the Page because they appreciate the cause the label stands for (78%), and because they like the products that are sold (53%).

To a lesser extent people Like the Page from a professional point of view (20%). It seems that most fans consciously searched for the Page in question. Only one person (3%) said he or she Likes the Page because a friend also Likes it. However, another question about where the respondents learned about the Page for the first time, indicates that 35% learned about the Page through an online friend (n=40). This might mean that these persons indeed learned about the Page through friends, but they Liked the Page because of their own preferences. Furthermore, 23% said they Like the Page because they had bought a product first and about 25% said they were searching for sustainable products or more specifically, this label. Also, people learned about the Page through other media or offline family and friends. And, 15% said they learned about the Page because they or anyone they know, work at the particular label.

Overall it is plausible to argue that most fans have attention for the general message that the Pages spread and the products that they sell, or in the case of EFW promote. The kind of mutual focus of attention that is particularly valuable, in the light of this thesis, exists however within the smaller level of the specific Page; the conversation threads. Certain threads which are appealing to the fans of the Page are able to take hold of the attention of their fans. It is important that posts by the Page's moderator itself are interesting for the fans, as it are these posts that are most read by them, probably because they appear on the fan's personal News Feed.

From section 4.2 it becomes clear that a shared mood as part of the ingredients for the online interaction ritual is less straightforward than predicted. The survey results indicate that overall, people are not often interested in reactions from other fans of the specific Page. However, the Interaction Ritual theory says that it is important for

people to have a common focus; they do not necessarily have to be interested in the other persons' life or be friends. Collins in his book *Interaction Ritual Chains* (2004) gives a few examples of interaction rituals with possible high levels of collective effervescence. The people in these examples, a football match or a political election, are not friends, they are sharing a moment of mutual focus and a shared mood.

4.3.4 Feedback intensification in failed and successful online IR

For a successful interaction ritual, feedback intensification between mutual focus and shared mood is vital. When there is no feedback intensification between shared mood and mutual focus, people are together, but they do not react on each other. Situations without this intensification are seen widely on the selected pages. This is for example demonstrated by the post by Good for All in case 1. In section 4.4 two cases are described where this feedback intensification is present.

Case 1

This update features a contest; if a fan can guess how many Easter eggs the vase contains, he or she wins a mini My Paper Bag. These kind of contests or 'Share and Win' actions are a very popular tool on Facebook in order to get a lot attention for a brand. As is seen in figure 4.1, many fans have Liked the post (55) and Commented on it (116) in order to compete. The amount of Shares is also very high (34) seen as many people do not tend to use the Share button frequently (see table 1). Each Share means that the fans shows their Friends on Facebook that he or she has entered this contest, their Friends might in turn also enter the contest and perhaps even get familiar with the Page itself. This seems a very good marketing strategy, but it remains to see whether a label is actually able to create more social interaction on their Page.

The argument that a post such as figure 4.1 would not be able to create social interaction with and among GfA's fans is also supported by the lack of feedback intensification within this conversation thread. There are 116 Comments made, which is a large amount, but as these Comments only contain estimations of how many Easter eggs are in the vase, there is no sign of true interaction because people do not react to each other. In this post, it seems that all the ingredients for a successful online interaction ritual are at place; group assembly, barrier to outsiders, mutual focus of attention and a shared mood; every commentator wants to win this bag. However, the lack of feedback intensification between shared mood and mutual focus of attention provides for a failed interaction ritual as Collins would call it.

In the following sections the outcomes of the Interaction Rituals model are indicated. The survey results are analyzed in order to determine whether the fans themselves feel the emotional energy that this thesis assumes when they participate in successful Interaction Rituals.

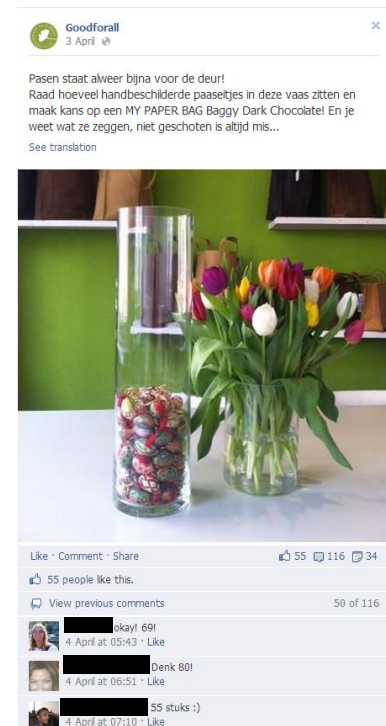


Figure 4.1 Update by Good for All on April 3 2012 (Good for All, 2012-4)

4.4 Ritual Outcomes: Collective effervescence

Previous sections indicate that it is not easy for a successful Interaction Ritual to emerge on the specific Facebook Pages. However, successful Interaction Rituals do emerge on these four Pages, when all previously described ingredients are at place, and especially, feedback intensification between shared mood and mutual focus is present.

A successful Interaction Ritual produces collective effervescence among its participants as explained in section 2.5.4. This mutually enforced sentiment is determined by the level of feedback intensification between mutual focus of attention and shared mood. If there is more feedback intensification; this will result in a higher level of collective effervescence. A high level of collective effervescence will in turn result in the outcomes of the IR model; group solidarity, emotional energy, symbols of social relationship and standards of morality.

First, two cases will be described, illustrating the diversity of online interaction rituals. The posts in figure 4.2 and 4.3 illustrate online interaction rituals whereby all four ingredients for a successful online interaction ritual are present. In both instances, people are assembled in an online space, they are to a certain extent able to see who takes part and who does not, there is a mutual focus of attention, namely subject of the post, and we see a shared mood among the participants. Also, the posts show feedback intensification between mutual focus and shared mood, we see that people react to each other, releasing emotions towards each other.

Case 2

In figure 4.2, the girl that posted the picture of herself with her new bag, received a great compliment of another fan; “...you look far closer to “stylish 20-something fashion model” here than “30-something Mom!””. The girl in question replied with “that compliment will keep



Figure 4.2 Status update by Good for All on March 30 (Good for All, 2013-3)

me smiling for at least the weekend- !!!” which could be interpreted as an increase in her personal emotional energy. This Interaction Ritual might be a reason for this girl to participate in another Interaction Ritual similar to this one, because she might want to experience this kind of emotional energy again.

However, we do see that this rather successful Interaction Ritual is not entirely based on online interaction. It becomes clear from the fifth Comment in this thread, that the girl knows the person making a compliment in person; *“Aaron – U crack me up! When are you coming to see me? You can borrow my handbag...”*. Section 4.5 will continue on the issue of face-to-face contact.

Case 3

In figure 4.3 we see an online Interaction Ritual with a lot of Likes (41,446), Shares (2,787) and Comments (3,253).

One for One updated its status with a picture of Scheveningen beach after a sunny summer day. The picture

shows a lot of rubbish left by people who have spent their day at the beach. Different from the update in figure 4.1, the people who reacted to this update do interact with each other; resulting in feedback intensification between mutual focus and shared mood.

There is a lot going on in this Comment thread. Most people agree with the text accompanying the picture. They show this by saying so, Liking the post or Sharing the post. Also, apart from people Liking the update itself, some do also Like other people’s Comments or react to them in a Comment. An example of a Comment which received 4 Likes from others is the following: *“Wat een gezeik over volle vuilnisbakken. Wanneer je vuilnisbak thuis vol is gooi je het er toch ook niet naast. Opruimen van vuil is je eigen verantwoording.”* (One for One, 2012-7) Translated to English this Comment says the following: *“What are people fussing about full trash cans. When your trash can at home is full, you wouldn’t throw your trash on the floor either. Cleaning up dirt is your own responsibility.”* Most Comment receiving Likes from others are Comments with more than one sentence which spread a real message. What we do not see often however, is that people return to the comment thread after having liked or commented on another person’s Comment.

There are many different opinions giving on this update. Most people agree with the fact that there should not be this much garbage left on the beach. But while many people say that people should bring the garbage home with them when the garbage cans are full, others say that the municipal authority is to blame because they should arranged larger garbage cans or empty them more often. This divide in opinions results in the majority of interaction between people.



Figure 4.3 Update by One for One on September 26 (One for One, 2012-7)

Group solidarity

Group solidarity is found within this online space. For example, one person, first name Nigel, made the following Comment: *“ze moeten godverdomme die vuilnisbakken wat vaker legen!! zitten altijd overvol, vind je het gek dat mensen het dan maar neergooien?? kutgemeente!”* (One for One, 2012-7). This Comment shows sympathy for the people throwing away their trash at the beach because the municipal authority should have taken care of emptying out the trash cans more often. The person writing this Comment uses bad language and insults directed towards the municipal authority. Showing group solidarity, another person, first name Chris-Jan, reacted to this Comment by saying the following: *“he nigel waar slaat jou reactie op neem het gewoon mee naar huis als vuilnisbak vol zit jij bent”* (One for One, 2012-7). Chris-Jan Comments on Nigel directly and asks him what he was thinking by reacting in that way. Also, he directs Nigel to just take his garbage home when the garbage cans are full. In addition, it looks as if this person is inviting Nigel to Comment again by saying ‘jij bent’ or in English ‘your turn’. This invite is however not responded to by Nigel. This particular situation could be seen as an act of group solidarity by Chris-Jan because he represents the meaning of the majority of the group and defends this thought by Commenting on the post by Nigel, the renegade insider.

Emotional energy

Where the update in figure 4.2 for the most part brings about a positive feeling and positive emotions, the update in figure 4.3 seems have the opposite effect. Especially looking at the words that express negative feelings versus positive feelings we find that sad (verdrietig), angry (boos) and especially incomprehensible (onbegrijpelijk) appear far more often in the Comments than happy (gelukkig), glad (blij) or like (leuke). Also, when the positive words are used, this is mostly done in a sarcastic way.

Next to the use of negative words, people tend to also be quite honest or direct in their Comment. For instance in the Comment by Hilde, she says that she always feels really sad after seeing such images and she questions civilization; *“Ik word altijd triest van zulke beelden. Dan denk ik altijd, moeten we daarvoor zover gekomen zijn in onze beschaving?”*. These kinds of Comments show explicitly what kind of emotions the person in question is experiencing. Also, because this fan explicitly calls upon civilization, this Comment could be seen as a way to show her moral standard, which she shares with the majority of the participants in this ritual.

For these two short case studies, two completely different kinds of Status updates are used, generating either positive or negative emotional connotations. However, this may not mean that the people participating in this interaction ritual, all feel like Hilde, the participant from the paragraph above. As explained in section 2.4.5, emotional energy is also a feeling of confidence or strength and initiative in taking action. From reading the Comment made to both Status updates we are unable to predict if such feelings are felt by the participants. It could be argued though, that possibly more people want to buy a bag similar to the one in case two or for case three, more people want to be more thoughtful about their waste. Notwithstanding the overall negative emotional connotations in case three, the fact that participants connect with likeminded people in this comment thread, could mean a burst of confidence and strengthen their ideas, perhaps even resulting in taking action.

Key points collective effervescence

- Feedback intensification between shared mood and mutual focus are vital in successful online interaction rituals;
- The majority of interaction in Comment threads results from differing opinions among fans;
- Individual renegade insiders are reacted against in successful online IR.

4.5 Ritual Outcomes: Group Solidarity

As described in section 2.4.5; group solidarity boils down to a feeling of membership. In many of the online interaction rituals where all the ingredients are present, many Likes and Shares are spotted. These could be signs of group solidarity, resulting in the feeling of belonging to a group when confronted with them. The online survey provides insights as to what extent people, who filled out the survey, feel part of a particular group by Liking the specific Page in general. Through cross tabulation it is possible to determine whether fans of the Page who participate more in interaction rituals than others, have a stronger feeling of belonging.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	No		15	38%
2	A little		20	50%
3	A Lot		4	10%
4	Don't know		1	3%
	Total		40	

Table 5 Percentage of respondents who feel they belong to a certain group by Liking the specific Facebook Page (n=40)

4.5.1 Group feeling

In the online survey we've asked the respondents whether they felt they belong to a certain group by Liking the specific Facebook Page. The results are shown in table 5; which tells us that more than half of the respondents feel like they belong to a certain group and one in ten respondents feels a lot like belonging to a certain group. Because it is important to know whether people feel more like belonging to a group when they interact more in online interaction rituals we need to do cross tabulations with others questions from the survey.

		How often do you visit this labels' Facebook Page?						Total
		Every day	A few times a week	A few times a month	A few times a year	Less than a few times a year	Don't know	
Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?	No	0	3	4	4	2	2	15
	A little	1	3	6	5	3	2	20
	A Lot	0	2	1	1	0	0	4
	Don't know	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Total	1	8	12	10	5	4	40

		How often do you visit this labels' Facebook Page?
Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?	Chi Square	6.64*
	Degrees of Freedom	15
	p-value	0.97

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

Table 6 Cross Tabulation of question 13 and question 9 (Note: results are an indication because of small sample size)

In table 6 a cross tabulation between question 13 'Do you feel that by Liking this label's Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?' and question 9 'How often do you visit this label's Facebook Page?' is depicted. Because this thesis hypothesizes that online interaction rituals can result in a feeling of group membership, more visits to a specific Facebook Page could lead to more feelings of belonging. This however is not supported by the results of the survey; the p-value of 0.97 shows that there is no relation between more visits and more feelings of belonging. The survey suggests that fans, who often visit the specific Facebook Pages in this survey, do not feel more feelings of group membership than others.

When one fan visits a Page more often than another it could mean that this fan also interacts more with the other fans of the Page, but this is not true for every form of interaction. That is why the following questions were also cross tabulated with question 13 on feelings of group membership:

Could you tell me how often you participate on *this labels'* Facebook Page through the following actions:

- Comment on a Wall post posted by this label (table 7)
- Read the Comments from others (table 8)
- Like a Comment by someone else (table 9)
- Like a Wall post posted by this label (table 10)

Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - COMMENT on a Wall post posted by this label		
Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?	Chi Square	19.95*
	Degrees of Freedom	15
	p-value	0.17

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

Table 7 Cross Tabulation of question 13 and question 10 (Comment on a Wall post posted by this label) (Note: results are an indication because of small sample size)

Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - Read the comments from others		
Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?	Chi Square	21.05*
	Degrees of Freedom	15
	p-value	0.14

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

Table 8 Cross Tabulation of question 13 and question 10 (Read the Comments from others) (Note: results are an indication because of small sample size)

These cross tabulations suggest that even though there might be more group feeling among the fans who do interact more with others and with the Page itself, the results show p-values between 0.23 and 0.09 indicating a weak relationship at most.

Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - LIKE a comment by some else		
Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?	Chi Square	22.94*
	Degrees of Freedom	15
	p-value	0.09

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

Table 9 Cross Tabulation of question 13 and question 10 (Like a Comment by someone else) (Note: results are an indication because of small sample size)

Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - LIKE a Wall post posted by this label		
Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?	Chi Square	18.62*
	Degrees of Freedom	15
	p-value	0.23

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

Table 10 Cross Tabulation of question 13 and question 10 (Like a Wall post posted by this label) (Note: results are an indication because of small sample size)

4.5.2 Feelings of membership influencing offline consumption practices

Group solidarity can also be detected through the way fans act in offline situations, because emotional energy might flow from an online to an offline situation. This is why the respondents were asked about their purchasing behavior; assuming that people who are more active in online interaction rituals on the specific Facebook Pages, would gain more emotional energy leading to the practice of buying the products from this brand. Buying these products could be a way to show their solidarity with the group. This question is important because this way, online interaction rituals could influence more sustainable consumption practices.

The respondents were therefore asked whether they already owned a product by the specific label, and if not, if they wanted to buy such a product. The results are shown in table 11 and 12.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Yes		21	53%
2	No		16	40%
3	Don't know		3	8%
	Total		40	

Table 11 Do you own a product by this label? (n=40)

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Yes		13	68%
2	No		3	16%
3	Don't know		3	16%
	Total		19	

Table 12 If you don't own a product by this label; would you like to purchase one of *this label's* products? (n=19)

Table 11 shows that more than half of the respondents already own a product by the specific label. In table 12 the fans who do not already own a product by the label were asked whether they would like to purchase a product. Of the nineteen fans who did not own a product yet, 68% would like to purchase a product. Unfortunately the results of the survey are not suited to do any cross tabulations with these results, because the question in table 12 was not asked at the total amount of respondents.

In order to be able to say anything about the influence of online interaction rituals on offline consumption practices, we have asked the fans who do own a product by the label of the specific Page, if they were influenced by a conversation or Wall post on the specific Page, to buy the product. These results are shown in table 13.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	A Lot		1	5%
2	Some		1	5%
3	Little		3	14%
4	No		12	57%
5	It was a gift		2	10%
6	I only LIKED this labels' Facebook Page after I got the product		6	29%
7	Don't know		1	5%

Table 13 Would you say you were influenced by a conversation or Wall post *on this labels'* Facebook Page to buy this product? (n=21)

The results in table 13 show that more than half of the respondents feel that they were not influenced by an interaction ritual on the specific Page to buy the product. The respondents were able to give more than one answer to this question. Reasons for not being influenced by an online interaction ritual could be that they either started Liking the Page after they purchased the product, or that the product was a gift. Worth mentioning is the fact that only 5 out of 21 respondents answered that they were a little, somewhat or a lot influenced by a conversation on the specific Pages. This result suggests that online interaction rituals do not have a strong influence on offline consumer behavior. But since this question was only asked at persons who did already own a product, it does not provide a valid inside. In section 4.6 the item of emotional energy in the individual is elaborated upon, which will shed more light upon the issue of group solidarity as well. As group solidarity is fuelled by emotional energy.

4.5.3 Promoters

In section 2.4.5 it was noted that Brown (2011) in his research, has found that people who stand at the middle of the fair-trade movement, who Brown dubbed *promoters*, have more feelings of membership to the larger fair-trade community than other consumers. Brown uses the theory by Collins (2004) when he says that these feelings are stimulated by face-to-face interaction rituals (Brown, 2011; 130).

Promoters can also be found in the online space; on the Facebook Pages used in this study. These people are more active than others and participate more in online interaction rituals through Likes, Shares and Comments. For this thesis a cross tabulation of question 13 (*Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?*) and 11 (*Do you ever promote this labels' Facebook Page on-line (Facebook) or off-line (e.g. family or colleagues)?*) was done to compare feelings of group membership to the level up to which the fans are promoters of the Page or product it stands for. The results are shown in table 14.

		Do you ever promote this labels' Facebook Page on-line (Facebook) or off-line (e.g. family or collea...					
		Yes, on-line and off-line	Only on-line	Only off-line	No	Don't know	Total
Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?	No	5	2	1	7	0	15
	A little	3	4	3	9	1	20
	A Lot	3	0	0	1	0	4
	Don't know	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Total	11	6	5	17	1	40

		Do you ever promote this labels' Facebook Page on-line (Facebook) or off-line (e.g. family or collea...
Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?	Chi Square	14.93*
	Degrees of Freedom	12
	p-value	0.25

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

Table 14 Cross Tabulation of question 13 and question 11 (n=40) (Note: results are an indication because of small sample size)

There is a clear distinction between fans who do (on- or offline or both) promote the label's Facebook Page (56%) and who do not promote the Page or product (43%). However, the cross tabulation in table 14 does not seem to support the idea that these promoters feel more like belonging to a group than other fans. A p-value of 0.25 is too high to be able conclude that there is a relation between being a promoter of the Facebook Page and feelings of group membership.

		Have you ever recommended a product or Wall post by this label to your friends in an off-line situat...				Total
		Never	Occasionally	Very Often	Don't know	
Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?	No	5	10	0	0	15
	A little	7	8	2	3	20
	A Lot	0	1	3	0	4
	Don't know	1	0	0	0	1
	Total	13	19	5	3	40

		Have you ever recommended a product or Wall post by this label to your friends in an off-line situat...
Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?	Chi Square	22.64*
	Degrees of Freedom	9
	p-value	0.01

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

Table 15 Cross Tabulation of question 13 and question 20 (n=40) (Note: results are an indication because of small sample size)

While there might be no reason to say that promoters of the Facebook Pages in this research have more feelings of group membership, there is a relation between *offline* promoters of *the product* which the Facebook Page stands for, and feelings of group membership. In table 15, question 13 (*Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?*) and question 20 (*Have you ever recommended a product or Wall post by this label to your friends in an off-line situation?*) were cross tabulated.

The p-value of 0.01 indicated a quite strong relationship between the variables in these questions; people who promote the products or Wall Posts by the Good for All, One for One, Kuyichi and Eco Fashion World in an offline situation, seem to have more feelings of belonging to a group than others. Put the other way around, we could argue that people who feel more feelings of belonging also feel more urge to promote the brand. This could mean that these people want to experience the emotional energy again by sharing their commitment.

Key points group solidarity

- the results from the online survey do not support the hypothesis that more participation in online interaction rituals lead to more feelings of belonging to a group;
- the results in this research suggests that participation in online interaction rituals do not have a strong influence on offline consumer behavior;
- there is however a positive relation between people who feel like belonging to a group, and promoting the brand or product offline.

4.6 Ritual Outcomes: Emotional Energy in Individual

Two questions are central to this section; do people feel good when participating on Facebook? And do they bring this positive emotional energy (EE) to new situations and encounters? Because EE is one of the main drivers of chains of interaction rituals, the item is interwoven with many of the other outcomes of the IR theory. Apart from these indirect observations of EE, we have asked the respondents about their feelings directly.

4.6.1 EE as a result from online interaction

Because the Like button is the most well-known way to show appreciation on Facebook, this thesis examined whether this Like button could be a source for the production of emotional energy. First, the following question was asked; *“In case you have ever posted a comment or picture on this labels' Facebook Page... Has anyone ever LIKED your post or reacted to it in a positive way?”*. The results from this question were a little disappointing because 60% of the respondents answered with *don't know*. Hence, the follow up question was not answered by the expected amount of respondents; as we only asked those people about their feelings, who did have experience with a Like on the specific Facebook Page. The results of this question are shown in table 16.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Not At All		11	28%
2	Occasionally		4	10%
3	Frequently		1	3%
4	Don't know		24	60%
	Total		40	

Table 16 In case you have ever posted a comment or picture on this labels' Facebook Page... Has anyone ever LIKED your post or reacted to it in a positive way? (n=40)

Table 16 suggests that not many people have experienced a positive reaction in the form of a Like while interacting on the FB pages in this study. This outcome should however be put in perspective because, as was shown in table 2 in section 4.2.1, not many respondents are actively participating on the specific FB pages in ways that could produce a personal Like. However, we did ask the respondents if they could indicate how it made them feel when someone Liked their Comment or Picture. These results are purely an indication, as only 5 respondents were asked this question. The results are seen in table 17.

The results indicate, in this case, that the majority of fans feel happy and good when someone Likes their contribution. Also people experience feelings of proudness and feel energized. All 5 respondents felt a little or a lot proud, happy and good. In this study, people did not feel annoyed when someone Liked their contribution. However, three out of five respondents also felt a little or a lot indifferent about the Like. These outcomes suggest that it is indeed possible for participants to develop feelings of EE when others Like their contribution.

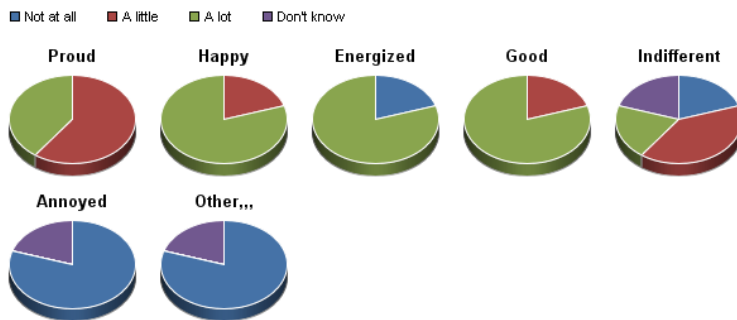


Table 17 Please indicate how it made you feel when someone LIKED your comment or picture! (n=5)

This thesis has argued that when there is more collective effervescence, a higher level of emotional energy will occur. This is why the respondents were asked if they thought their feelings about the Like would be greater when more people would Like their contribution. The results are shown in table 18. Again, this question could only be asked at the respondents who answered *occasionally* or *frequently* to the question in table 16, therefore only 5 respondents answered. Indeed, the fans think their feelings would be greater when more people would Like or Comment on their post.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Definitely yes	<div></div>	2	40%
2	Probably yes	<div></div>	3	60%
3	Probably not	<div></div>	0	0%
4	Definitely not	<div></div>	0	0%
5	Don't know	<div></div>	0	0%
	Total		5	

Table 18 Do you feel that above mentioned feelings would be stronger if more people would LIKE or COMMENT on your post? (n=5)

This section shows that, in this study, a Like is not a big indicator of emotional energy. However, this could be due to the lack of participation among the respondents. If the respondents would be more actively involved, they would probably have more experience with this sign of encouragement. Also, in this case, the survey question as shown in table 16 would have gotten more response from people who did experience a Like, making the results more usable.

4.6.2 EE in relation to group feeling

In order to know more about emotional energy, we have also asked the respondents who felt that they belonged to a certain group (either a little or a lot), if this group provided positive feelings for them. In this case, 24 out of 40 respondents (table 5) indicated that they felt they belonged to a certain group by Liking the specific Facebook Page. Table 19 shows how many of these people felt good when they think about this group and table 20 shows how many people feel proud to belong to this group.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	A lot	<div></div>	5	21%
2	A little	<div></div>	14	58%
3	Not at all	<div></div>	1	4%
10	Don't know	<div></div>	4	17%
	Total		24	

Table 19 When you think about this group, does it make you feel good? (n=24)

Table 19 illustrates that people who feel that they belong to a certain group also feel good about this group. The fact that 79% of the respondents (n=24) felt good (a little or a lot) might point towards the existence of emotional energy. The fact that the respondents were left the option to answer *a little* or *a lot* does pose another question; feeling good a little, would this imply feelings of emotional energy?

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	A lot		3	13%
2	A little		12	50%
3	Not at all		4	17%
4	Don't know		5	21%
	Total		24	

Table 20 Do you feel proud to be part of this group? (n=24)

To a lesser extent, but still more than half of the respondents felt somewhat proud to be part of this group. This could also be an indication of emotional energy; people experience interaction rituals online, and as a result they feel proud about themselves, indicating that those fans will take something from this ritual and absorb it. Feelings of group membership could therefore be an indication of a flow of emotional energy.

4.6.3 Flow from online to offline

The flow of emotional energy from the online towards the offline situation was touched upon in 4.5.3, where a positive relation was found between fans who feel group feeling, and offline promotion of the brand or product. In order to learn more about the flow of emotional energy into offline situations, the respondents were asked about their daily practices and if they relate to online interaction rituals while practicing different rituals, because if so, this may indicate the flow of emotional energy.

We asked the fans in the survey the following question: *"In which of the following situations do you sometimes think of this labels' Facebook page and the cause it stands for? More than one answer is possible!"*. The results are shown in table 21.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	While shopping		16	40%
2	At get-togethers with friends		7	18%
3	At work		17	43%
4	While getting dressed		3	8%
5	Watching TV/ reading news paper/radio		4	10%
6	Other daily activities...		6	15%
7	I never think of this label or its Facebook page		10	25%
Other daily activities...				
Only when I see the name of the brand in an ad or on tv				
When people comment on my nice (Gfa) bag!				
while i'm on facebook and see something they post on there page.				
while facebookking				

Table 21 In which of the following situations do you sometimes think of this labels' Facebook page and the cause it stands for? More than one answer is possible! (n=40)

It seems that about 25% of the respondents do not at all think about the specific Facebook Page and the cause it stands for. This means that about 75% does think about the online space in their daily practices, which could mean that the practice of interacting on Facebook (or ‘facebooking’ as it was dubbed by one of the respondents) could be connected to the offline daily practices. Especially while shopping, at work and during get-togethers the fans are likely to think about the Facebook Page and its cause. These situations could be explained by the fact the Pages concern sustainable clothing and shopping, and by the fact that many people who work at the labels (14% indicated that they or someone they know works for the label), filled out the survey, or are occupational involved with sustainable clothing or online marketing.

The fact that 40% of the respondents sometimes think of the Facebook Pages and the concern sustainability issues while shopping is quite interesting. This could mean that online interaction rituals could have an effect on the shopping behavior of ‘facebookers’.

Key points emotional energy

- Survey results suggest that most fans generate EE when others Like their contribution, although in this case not many people experienced a Like due to a lack of interaction;
- This study found an evidence that feelings of group membership indeed are a sign of emotional energy;
- 75% of the fans of the Facebook Pages in this study think about the Page or the cause the label stands for in their daily (offline) activities.

4.7 Ritual Outcomes: Symbols of Social Relationship

Symbols have the ability to store emotional energy. In section 2.5.5 it was explained that symbols represent the connection between the participants of the interaction ritual and that they can prolong the feeling of emotional energy. Examining symbols is therefore an important step in getting to know more about the flow of emotional energy; from the online ritual into the offline situation where real behavioral change towards more sustainability could take place.

4.7.1 Which symbols can be identified?

In this study it is possible to identify various symbols. For example, the Like button can be a symbol of social relationship. In this study however, the Like button did not prove to be a vast indicator of a social relationship. Therefore, it is more important to focus on the specific symbols for the FB Pages in this study. The most important and apparent symbols that were identified are the profile pictures of the Pages. These pictures represent either a logo or a product which is unique for their label. This picture appears is shown in the top-left of their Pages, and is also shown on a fan's News Feed every time a Status update by the Page reaches their News Feed. These are the different Profile pictures:



One for One decided to use three of their well-known water bottles, with their logo on it, in their picture. And Good for All and EFW decided to use a more standard logo, of which Good for All also outlines their mission in their logo. Kuyichi also make reference to their mission in their logo by stating the word 'pure' and the visualization of a cotton plant.

4.7.2 What do they mean for the fans?

The first question related to the content of this study that was asked at the respondents, concerned symbols. The respondents were asked to describe in a few words what the above presented pictures meant to them. The exact question was: *"Could you tell me what you think about when you see this picture? A few words are enough!"* It was decided to not let the respondents be able to skip the question, and to use all the response available, even the ones from the not completed surveys; therefore 49 responses were obtained.

From a question like this, it is quite difficult to determine whether or not the fans also see them as symbols. But analysing the answers does give an indication. The answers are very different from each other, which suggest that people give different meanings to the images.

For instance in the instance of the text responses for One for One; there are fans who think about the Dutch or French flag but also fans that think about sustainability issues while seeing this picture. Also, there are those fans who just think about water or thirst. One person thinks about her own water bottle and the daily practice of using it all the time, this is an indication that the online and offline place are connected by the image of this bottle.

Text Response One for One
one for one, water,
Water, waterproblemen
I have the pink bottle, and i use it all the time.
Sustainability
Nice water bottles
Nieuw duurzaam waterflesje?
is it plastic or metal
leuke flesjes
Water bottle developmentwork buy one bottle give one bottle
usefull water bottles made for longlasting personal use
Water. dutch/ french flag up side down
the first thing I think of is that these are the colors of our national flag
a good initiative
Water
Dorst
water bottles
Dutch flag, Sports, thirsty, fresh, hip
Water, simple, charity, clear
Three water bottles

The text responses from the fans of Good for All and EFW give a similar idea. However, the logo by Good for All seems to be a little more open to interpretation because the answers are more diverse. The response given by the fan of Kuyichi -“cool!”- depicts enthusiasm for the label. Overall, fans think about the cause the label stands for when they see the profile picture belonging to the page. This is also the aspect people think about most when they use the product (if they own one) by the specific label. This will be illustrated in the next section and table 22. The logo’s belonging to the labels do not seem to be a symbol for the online social relationship. For instance, not one respondent states that the logo reminds him of social interaction on Facebook or that the logo evokes feelings of group membership.

Text Response Eco Fashion World
it is about a website that deals with topics around fashion and sustainability, standards, ecological fashion brands ...
style, feminine, smart
I don't really think of anything and often forget what it means until I see the smaller print.
Eco marketing of fashion.
Ecology

Text Response Kuyichi
cool!

Text Response Good for All
Fairtrade, ecological, design, green, good for everyone, beautiful
Fairness
Nature
Green healthy nature leaf
ha, hier ook al
eco, groen, goodforall
milleuvriendelijk, maatschappelijk verantwoord
Green, natural, fair
nature, calmth
halve klavertje vier, groen,
fair, eco, earth
fair, good for all
My Photography
natuurlijk, fair trade, ecologisch
pure, cotton, eco friendly
sustainability, green, fair
Nou eigenlijk precies wat er staat, fairtrade, ecologische en daarnaast design
Ginkgo. Beautiful. Awareness. Care for the earth. Taking care of people too. Righteousness.
Good, fair, eco
If we all work like this we have no more problems in the world
Groen, eco, fair trade
Friendly simple so true
Environment, nature, green, dull.
ierse pub
green is fresh, young, good etc.

4.7.3 Other symbols

In the online survey the respondents were asked about the profile pictures of the specific Facebook Pages because these are the most apparent symbols specific for the online group. However, more symbols could be identified. These symbols, could have more symbolic meaning of social relation for the fans because they appear

more in online interaction rituals. An example is the My Paper Bag; a bag by GfA made of fair-trade (eco) leather. This bag is shaped like an old-fashioned paper bag, a symbol for its sustainable nature.

In figure 4.2 the bag the main feature in the Wall post posted on the Page by GfA, and it resulted in more than a usual amount of reactions. The fact that at least some of the respondents like these kind of posts is also illustrated by the comment below. This was a reaction to the question about what would make the respondent more interested in the label's Facebook Page:

"I think this page is already good! Diverse information and pictures are published. I am always interested in pictures from people who show their newly purchased Goodforall product. This provides a good insight in the target public and others can see how they can use the product." (translated by the author)

It is a challenge to determine whether or not this bag is a symbol of the social relationship between the fans of the FB Page. Survey results show that 4 out of 21 respondents (19%) owning a product by the label ever posted a picture or an update about their purchase either to their personal Wall or the Pages' Wall. Whether this number is high or low in comparison to other studies is uncertain. Denti *et al.* (2012) found that 29% of their respondents felt that uploading pictures was important to them. In this respect, 19% indicates that feedback through the use of photos is but of less than average importance for the fans of the Pages in this study.

This is why the respondents were asked about the products by these labels. Even when a fan does not own a product by the label, it could have symbolic value for him or her. In this case the respondents who do own a product were asked about their product in daily life. Do they think about the online interaction rituals they experienced on Facebook or not? The survey asked the fans owning a product, whether they ever think about the following things while wearing or using the product:

- The cause this label stands for
- A conversation that took place on this labels' Facebook Page
- The people who also LIKE this labels' page
- An off-line friend who also owns this product

The results are depicted in table 22. The question was asked at the fans owning a product, therefore 21 respondents answered. The option *don't know* was also included, but no one decided to use this option, only one answer was possible for each question.

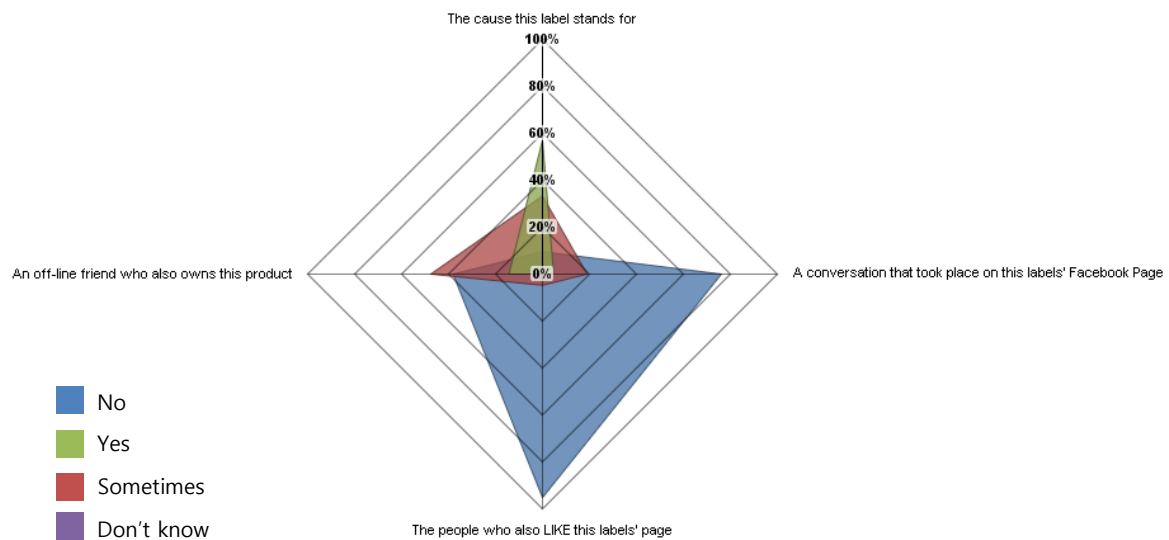


Table 22 When you wear or use *this labels'* product, do you think of the following things? (n=21)

Table 22 tells us that the respondents do not so much think of the online interaction rituals or other online fans. However, more than half of the respondents do think about the cause the label or product stands for in their daily practice. This outcome could have various reasons. But it could indicate that fans, instead of directly thinking about the interaction ritual they experienced online, are reminded about the cause the product or label stands for when they use the product. This symbolic meaning could have been created online but this is not necessarily so.

However, almost have of the respondents does think about an offline friend who also owns the same product. This could indicate that the product is a symbol of social relationship for many fans, but this relationship exists outside the online realm.

It seems that the products by these sustainable labels such as the One for One water bottle and the GfA bag do have symbolic value for more than half of the people owning them. Whether this symbolic value was created online is uncertain. In table 21 two persons answered that they are reminded about the labels' Facebook page and the cause it stands for in relation to the identified symbols. One thinks about the Page and its cause when he or she sees the name of the brand (logo) in an ad or on TV. And another person thinks about the Page and the cause it stands for when someone comments on her or his GfA bag.

Summing up, these findings suggest that the central images of the profile pictures - a logo, a product, and/or a brand name - are important symbols related to the labels. The *cause* the label stands for – sustainability - could well be an important binding factor between the fans. These symbols, together with the binding factor they refer to, could then be responsible for carrying emotional energy into other on- or offline situations. For example while shopping. We cannot determine from the findings to what extent the emotional loading of the symbols is generated online, by visiting Facebook.

Key points symbols of social relationship

- The logos of the labels in this study have diverse meanings for the fans, there is no shared symbolic value;
- No distinct symbols could be found for the social relationship between the fans of these Facebook Pages;
- The products offered by the labels are fuelled with symbolic value, they represent the cause the labels stand for more than half of the respondents;
- In this study the products (and their brands and logos) are a symbol for offline social relationships rather than online social relationship;
- Even when it seems that offline relationships are the main carrier of emotional energy, it still is possible that the emotional energy evoked by the symbols is strengthened by online interactions.

4.8 Ritual Outcomes: Standards of Morality

A successful interaction ritual would make participants want to defend the group and its symbols against others who violate group solidarity and its symbols. In the successful interaction ritual in figure 4.3 we saw this occurring. However, this kind of action against transgressors is not often displayed on the selected Facebook Pages in this study which is also seen in figure 4.4 where fans do not react on Comments which are not in line with the main argument. Also, there seems to be no overall standard of morality on the issue of tap water among the participants in this Comment thread; fans defend their personal opinion. This rest of this section focuses on the outcomes of the survey; is there a common standard of morality? And do people feel the need to act against transgressors in order to defend this standard and its symbols?

4.8.1 Does online interaction increase the standard of morality?

Before going into the subject of defending the standard of morality, it is important to know what this moral standard is and whether this standard is formed or influenced by online interaction rituals. In this study FB Pages are selected regarding sustainable fashion and consumer products. The pages by GfA, Kuyichi and EFW focus on sustainable fashion. The Page by OfO concerns other products such as a water bottle and health insurance. The overarching theme of these labels is sustainability, relating to concepts such as reducing inequality, the use of organic fabrics and recycling.

Following the results of the survey, 93% of the 40 respondents answered that they thought that it is morally right for a company to take sustainability issues into consideration. Also, 95% answered yes to the question about whether they feel they should buy (more) sustainable clothing. Although there are understandably many different perspectives on sustainability issues, it is safe to say that buying or doing things that are considered sustainable, is the moral standard on these Facebook Pages.

Whether this moral standard is intrinsically present within the fans of these Pages or indeed fuelled by online interaction rituals on the specific Pages is unsure. Even when this standard isn't formed in an online ritual on one of these Pages, it could be formed in an online situation elsewhere. Therefore, the respondents were asked



Figure 4.4 Criticism on Wall post (One for One, 2012-8)

whether they ever changed their opinion about sustainability issues because of an experience of the specific FB Page. The survey gave the fans the opportunity to explain their answers, which three of them did. The results are shown in table 23.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Yes		7	18%
2	No		30	75%
3	Yes, and I want to explain		2	5%
4	No, and I want to explain		1	3%
	Total		40	

Yes, and I want to explain	No, and I want to explain
bamboo textiles	A lot of what's publicised is "Greenwash": marketing the term 'sustainability'. I'm in the fashion industry myself and have spent an extreme amount of personal and professional time researching environmentally sustainable materials, practices, processes and products. I know the reality behind much of what allows a company to call themselves "sustainable" - and this information portrayed to customers is often exaggerated or missing some very crucial facts. There is a general lack of education within companies who use these practices and especially among consumers who do not question their credentials. Sustainability is a holistic and incremental process of self-evaluation and striving to become better in every way; simply using an organic fibre as a material for seasonal fashion products with planned obsolescence, or manufacturing locally, does not afford a company the luxury of labelling themselves as sustainable. In short, I'm confident that I can tell the difference between eco product and non-eco products, therefore reviews by others don't influence how I feel about a certain product.
I get inspired by the comments people give	

Table 23 Have you ever formed or changed your opinion about sustainability because of something you experienced on this labels' Facebook Page? (n=40)

The results of the survey in table 23, indicate that the fans of the FB Pages in this study have generally not been influenced in their opinions on sustainability issues by online experiences on the specific FB Pages studied. However, 9 out of 40 respondents did say their opinion was influenced. There are various ways of interpreting these results. In section 4.2.1 it was shown that not many fans in this study actively participate in Comment threads. This could be the reason why less than 25% of the fans are influenced in their thinking about sustainability issues, as Comment threads are the places where online interaction often takes place.

If online interaction rituals indeed lead to an increase in standards of morality, fans who participate more have a greater chance of being influenced by interaction rituals. Therefore a cross tabulation followed by a Chi-square test was done between three of the most apparent participation actions from question 10, and question 38 about a change in opinion as seen in table 23. The following questions were used in the cross tabs: Have you ever formed or changed your opinion about sustainability because of something you experienced on this labels' Facebook Page? Combined with: Could you tell me how often you participate on *this labels'* Facebook Page through the following actions:

- Like a Comment by someone else (Appendix 2a)
- Comment on a Comment by someone else (Appendix 2b)
- Share a Wall post by this label (Appendix 2c)

The Chi-square test did not show a significant relation and therefore there seems to be no reason to argue that more interaction on the particular FB Pages will lead to more thought about their opinion on sustainability issues by the fans. To check this outcome, a cross tab between questions 9 *How often do you visit this label's Facebook Page?* and question 38 was done. This is depicted in table 27.

		How often do you visit this labels' Facebook Page?					
Have you ever formed or changed your opinion about sustainability because of something you experienced on this labels' Facebook Page?	ACTUAL	Every day	A few times a week	A few times a month	A few times a year	Less than a few times a year	Total
	Yes	1	1	3	0	1	6
	No	0	7	9	10	4	30
	Total	1	8	12	10	5	36

		How often do you visit this labels' Facebook Page?					
Have you ever formed or changed your opinion about sustainability because of something you experienced on this labels' Facebook Page?	EXPECTED	Every day	A few times a week	A few times a month	A few times a year	Less than a few times a year	Total
	Yes	0,17	1,33	2	1,67	0,83	6
	No	0,83	6,67	10	8,33	4,17	30
	Total	1	8	12	10	5	36

p-value	0,10
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Tabel 27 Cross tabulation between question 9 and 38 (n=36)
(Note: results are an indication because of small sample size)

In table 27, n is 36 because it was decided to leave out the *don't know* option. Looking at the results, we see a p-value of 0,1 which is low enough to be able to suggest a weak relationship between how often fans visit the Facebook Page and their thought about their opinion on sustainability issues. It should be noted that the expected values are not all above 5, which makes the Chi-square test indicative only.

4.8.2 Do fans contend those who do not agree?

From the online survey it doesn't become clear whether or not the standard of morality is actually formed online or if it was intrinsically present within the fans. In the survey the fans of the particular FB Pages were asked about their willingness to act against fans who do not underline the main moral standard of the Page, or who do not act in line with their own opinion. Before questions were asked about this subject, the respondents were asked whether or not they feel free to speak their mind openly on the FB Pages, 70% *answered* yes, 13% *somewhat*, 8% *answered no* and 10% *don't know*. This gives an indication of how honest people can be online.

Starting the issue of acting against transgressors, the fans were asked if they ever read a Comment with which they did not agree. Remarkably, 53% *answered don't know* which could indicate that people forgot about it, that they do not read the Comments from others precisely or that they are not interested in other Comments.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Yes		7	18%
2	No		12	30%
3	Don't know		21	53%
	Total		40	

Table 28 Have you ever seen a comment on this labels' Wall that you did not agree with? (n=40)

As only seven respondents indicated that they ever saw a Comment with which they did not agree, the follow-up question was only answered by seven fans. The question being *did this make you feel angry or uncomfortable?* Four out of seven respondents answered *no* and three indicated that it made them feel *somewhat* angry or uncomfortable.

The fact that people do not really care about others opinions is also shown by the question depicted in table 3 section 4.2.2. Also, not being interested in others or having a discussion with them is a reason for the fans in this study to not react on a Comment with which they do not agree.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Yes		2	29%
2	No		4	57%
3	Don't remember		1	14%
	Total		7	

Table 29 If yes, Did you react to this comment? (n=7)

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Privacy issues		1	25%
2	He or she isn't worth my time		1	25%
3	I'm not interested in these kind of discussions		2	50%
4	Other		1	25%
Other				
Not having time to spend on it, not willing to engage in an online debate.				

Table 30 If no, Why did you not react? (More answers are possible) (n=4)

Table 29 shows that not many respondents tend to react to other's Comments when they do not agree, mostly because they are not interested in these kinds of discussions or online debate. The two respondents who did react to the Comment with which they did not agree, gave the following explanation as for why they did:

"share my opinion"

"Because I think my point of view is interesting too"

This could mean that people are not so much interested in protecting the standard of morality which is common to the FB Page. From these explanations for contending those who do not act in accordance with the standard of morality, it is not possible to derive any form of group solidarity. These respondents acted from their own perspective; they shared their own opinion instead of a shared moral standard.

4.8.3 Do fans act according to the standard of morality?

In section 2.4.5 the viewpoint of Brown of standards of morality was introduced. Both Collins (2004) and Brown (2011) speak of actions. They argue that people show their standard of morality when they act accordingly. Also, it was argued that the more important question, about the presence of standards of morality, was whether people feel they would do the right thing when they would act in line with the standard of morality. This is why the

survey asked if the respondents felt that they should buy (more) sustainable clothing. Even though 95% of the respondents gave a positive answer, this question does not cover the essence of adhering to the standard of morality. Also, in table 12 it was shown that 68% of the respondents want to buy a product by the labels from the FB Pages. But what does this tell us? Would these respondents actually buy the product when they had the opportunity?

Asking the fans about whether they were influenced by a conversation or Wall post on FB to buy a product also did not lead to any results on standards of morality. 57% said they were not influenced, and only five out of 21 respondents said they were influenced a lot, some of a little (table 13).

For a fan to act according to the standard of morality in the offline world, he has to take the emotional energy derived from the online ritual and use this in the next (offline) ritual, in this case when shopping of clothes. It is however very hard to examine whether this action is actually fuelled by the emotional energy and standard of morality from the online interaction ritual. Brown in 2011 also addresses this issue. He says the following:

“One of the difficulties in applying the interaction ritual chain approach is that it is very difficult to be present for all of the steps in the ritual “chain.” In other words, it is difficult to assess how the emotions from one interaction lead to participation in the next interaction ritual.” (Brown, 2011; 127).

The survey used in this thesis tried to ask the fans about these feelings. But it seems that it remains difficult to determine whether a standard of morality is formed by these online interaction rituals and whether this standard of morality is acted upon in follow-up rituals.

Key points standards of morality

- Buying sustainable products is the general standard of morality shared by the fans of these Pages;
- Fans in this study are generally not influenced by online interaction rituals in their opinion of sustainability issues;
- There are insufficient signs that fans of these Pages act against people who violate the standard of morality;
- Fans tend to share their own opinion instead of referring to an overall moral standard;
- It is not sure whether a standard of morality is formed on the Pages in this study.

4.9 Face-to-face contact

This thesis' aim is to examine whether online interaction rituals can lead to the production of emotional energy in the way that offline interaction rituals do. In the absence of bodily co-presence, online interaction rituals can in some cases be successful. Facebook is however a medium which is not completely disconnected from the offline world. Therefore it is important to determine what the meaning of face-to-face contact is in the context of online interaction rituals on Facebook.

4.9.1 Online vs. offline friends

While Facebook is an online social network, many people use this medium to maintain their offline social network. The online space which was investigated in this study however, is a space in which people can interact with companies and other like-minded people. These Pages are not designed to maintain pre-existing social networks, but to widen people's networks and get into contact with new communities, organizations, brands and companies.

How do fans learn about these Pages?

The online survey asked people about the way in which the fans learned about the specific FB Pages. Are these Pages found through online or offline friends? Or are there other ways in which fans found these Pages? The results are seen in table 31.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Through online Facebook friends		14	35%
2	Through off-line friends (e.g. family or colleagues)		4	10%
3	Because I bought a product		9	23%
4	Accidentally through other media		2	5%
5	I wanted to find this label on Facebook		6	15%
6	I was searching for sustainable products		4	10%
7	I, or someone I know, works at this label		6	15%
8	Don't know		2	5%
9	Other...		5	13%
Other...				
EcoFashion World website				
I am the founder of Goodforall				
Read about in Good for all e-newsletter				
Don't remember				
some gave a bottle to me, That's when i started following ONEforONE				

Table 31 How did you learn about this labels' Facebook Page? More answers are possible. (n=40)

As is shown in table 31, 35% of the respondents found out about the Page through online FB friends, 10% learned about the Page through offline friends, and many people started to follow the Page out of their own initiative, mostly because they bought or received a product by the label. The respondents were also asked if they would promote the FB Page to online or offline friends. Table 32 suggests that fans, who do promote the Page,

do so on- and offline. There is no great significance between the two, indicating that even though there is no actual face-to-face contact on Facebook, the medium does stand in connection with the offline world.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Yes, on-line and off-line		11	28%
2	Only on-line		6	15%
3	Only off-line		5	13%
4	No		17	43%
5	Don't know		1	3%
	Total		40	

Table 32 Do you ever promote this labels' Facebook Page on-line (Facebook) or off-line (e.g. family or colleagues)? (n=40)

Offline face-to-face contact

To find out if fans of the FB Pages in this study use these Pages in connection with their offline network or if they only interact online with the Page, two questions were asked. First, if they have offline face-to-face contact with other fans of the Page and secondly if they would like to get together in an off-line situation with other fans of the label. The results are shown in table 33 and 34.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	No		17	43%
2	Sometimes		8	20%
3	Regularly		9	23%
4	All the time		1	3%
5	Don't know		5	13%
	Total		40	

Table 33 Do you have off-line face to face contact with other people who LIKE this labels' Facebook page? (n=40)

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Not At All		18	45%
2	Occasionally		16	40%
3	Frequently		2	5%
4	Don't know		4	10%
	Total		40	

Table 34 Would you like to get together in an off-line situation (i.e face to face) with other people who LIKE this label? (n=40)

Table 33 indicates that 46% of the respondents meet other fans of the FB Pages in offline situations. This percentage might be lower in other studies, as in this study 20% of the respondents either work at the Page's company or know someone who does. Asking the fans if they would like to meet others it was found that 40% would like this occasionally and 5% frequently. It could well be that the fans who already have offline contact with each other, also gave a positive answer to whether they would like to get together in an offline situation. Therefore, a cross tab was done, seen in table 35.

		Do you have off-line face to face contact with other people who LIKE this labels' Facebook page?					
		No	Sometimes	Regularly	All the time	Don't know	Total
Would you like to get together in an off-line situation (i.e. face to face) with other people who LIK...	Not At All	8	2	6	0	2	18
	Occasionally	8	4	1	1	2	16
	Frequently	0	2	0	0	0	2
	Don't know	1	0	2	0	1	4
	Total	17	8	9	1	5	40

Table 35 Cross tab between table 33 and table 34 (n=40) (Note: results are an indication because of small sample size)

Remarkably, there seems to be a discrepancy between fans that already have offline face-to-face contact, and the fans that would like to meet in offline situations. Almost half of the respondents who never have offline contact, would like to meet face-to-face. And strangely, two third of the respondents who do have face-to-face contact with other fans on a regular basis, do not want to get together with other people who Like the Page in an offline setting.

It might be that the respondents interpreted the question in various ways. Perhaps, fans of the Page who know each other personally (and see each other regularly) do not have the desire to meet others because they do not feel that they belong to the larger group of fans. Or, perhaps they want to avoid some kind of perceived social 'overkill'. Because the question in table 34 states 'other people' and because it was asked directly after the question in table 33, respondents might have also interpreted 'other people' as people other than the ones they already meet offline. Thus, for people who already meet other fans in offline situations these Pages do not seem to be a way to meet more people. While people who do not meet others fans offline are more open to get together with others fans in an offline situation.

4.9.2 Feelings of belonging

Section 4.4.2 pointed out that Brown (2011) argues that more face-to-face interaction amongst *promoters* leads to more feelings of group membership. This thesis also found a positive relation between people who feel like belonging to a group, and promoting the brand or product offline (section 4.4.2). The question seems to be whether this feeling of group membership develops on- or offline. In the case that Brown describes, feelings of group membership are created through offline rituals. This thesis however found that fans who feel more like belonging to the online group, also bring their enthusiasm to the offline situation, thus the other way around. Therefore this section focuses on this question; might it be that more face-to-face contact leads to more feelings of group membership of the online community? Or the other way around?

Group feeling

Because this thesis could not find a positive relation between feelings of group membership and more active use of Facebook (comments etc.), there might be another reason for fans to participate more than others. Possibly, fans who interact with other fans in offline situations, do feel more feelings of group belonging. This is why a cross tabulation was done between the questions in table 5 (*Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?*) and table 33 (*Do you have off-line face-to-face contact with other people who Like this labels' Facebook Page?*). This cross tab is seen in table 36.

		Do you have off-line face to face contact with other people who LIKE this labels' Facebook page?				
Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?	ACTUAL	No	Sometimes	Regularly	All the time	Total
	No	5	2	4	1	12
	A little	11	3	4	0	18
	A Lot	0	3	1	0	4
	Total	16	8	9	1	34

		Do you have off-line face to face contact with other people who LIKE this labels' Facebook page?				
Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?	EXPECTED	No	Sometimes	Regularly	All the time	Total
	No	5,64706	2,823529412	3,17647059	0,352941176	12
	A little	8,47059	4,235294118	4,76470588	0,529411765	18
	A Lot	1,88235	0,941176471	1,05882353	0,117647059	4
	Total	16	8	9	1	34

P-VALUE	0,13
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Table 36 Cross tab between table 5 and table 33 (n=34, don't know option was left out) (Note: results are an indication because of small sample size)

In table 36, n is 34 because it was decided to leave out the *don't know* option. Looking at the results, we see a p-value of 0,13 which is too high to be able to say that there is a relationship between how often fans have off-line face to face contact with other fans and their feelings of group membership. If anything, the findings suggest a negative relationship between having much offline face-to-face contact and the feeling that by Liking one belongs to a certain group. This may indicate that Liking in itself is not a strong emotion-laden ritual, but further research is would be needed to substantiate this.

The desire to meet offline

There does not seem to be a heightened feeling of group membership amongst the fans that meet each other face-to-face, but perhaps the desire to meet offline is fueled by feelings of group membership that were created online. The survey therefore asked whether people would like to meet in an offline situation and a cross tab was done with the question on feelings of belonging to a group. This is seen in table 37.

		Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?				
		ACTUAL	No	A little	A Lot	Total
Would you like to get together in an off-line situation (i.e. face to face) with other people who LIKE this label?	Not At All	9	7	2	18	
	Occasionally	2	12	1	15	
	Frequently	1	0	1	2	
	Total	12	19	4	35	

		Do you feel that by LIKING this labels' Facebook Page, you belong to a certain group?				
		EXPECTED	No	A little	A Lot	Total
Would you like to get together in an off-line situation (i.e. face to face) with other people who who LIKE this label?	Not At All	6,17	9,77	2,06	18	
	Occasionally	5,14	8,14	1,71	15	
	Frequently	0,69	1,09	0,23	2	
	Total	12	19	4	35	

P-VALUE	0,04
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Table 37 Cross tab between table 5 and table 34 (n=35, *don't know was left out*) (Note: results are an indication because of small sample size)

In table 37, n is 35 because the *don't know* option was left out. Looking at the Chi square test, we see a p-value of 0,04 which is just below 0,05. These outcomes suggest that fans who get a lot of emotional energy from online interaction in the form of feelings of group membership, also feel the need to meet offline. Online contact solely might not be enough at one point, and fans will want to bring their emotional energy somewhere else, for example to offline friends or the physical shop of the label.

4.9.3 Do online interaction rituals stand alone?

There is still one question when it comes to the role of offline contact in connection with online interaction rituals. Might it be so that these online interaction rituals stand alone? Or does offline interaction with other fans make the online experience more emotional as argued by the Interaction Ritual Chains theory, and is the offline sphere part of the ritual?

Online participation and offline face-to-face contact

In order to examine whether people who have more offline face-to-face contact with other fans of the specific FB pages also participate more in online interaction rituals, a cross tabulation was done. The questions in table 1 about participation on Facebook were used, and the question in table 33 about having offline face-to-face contact with others fans of the FB Page.

These cross tabs are seen in appendix 1. The p-values all are higher than 0,05 which suggest that there is no relation between offline contact and more participation online. It seems that fans who more often see other fans offline, do tend to Like posts by the Label itself more often. However, also in this case the p-value is 0,08 which is not significant. There is thus no solid indication for a flow of emotional energy from the offline to the online situation in this study.

		Do you have off-line face to face contact with other people who LIKE this labels' Facebook page?
Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - LIKE a Wall post posted by this label	Chi Square	29.24*
	Degrees of Freedom	20
	p-value	0.08

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

Table 38 Chi-square test between table1 and 33 (n=40) (Note: results are an indication because of small sample size)

Online participation and the desire to meet offline

Although the previous section outlined that offline contact does not influence participation on Facebook in this study, it might be that fans who participate more online, also want to meet the other fans offline. This might point towards the flow of emotional energy from the online to the offline situation. The outcomes of the Chi-square tests are shown in table 39.

		Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - Read this labels' Wall posts	Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - Read the comments from others	Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - LIKE a Wall post posted by this label	Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - SHARE a Wall post posted by this label
Would you like to get together in an off-line situation (i.e face to face) with other people who LIK...	Chi Square	12.37*	13.19*	32.37*	12.39*
	Degrees of Freedom	15	15	15	15
	p-value	0.65	0.59	0.01	0.65

		Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - COMMENT on a Wall post posted by this label	Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - COMMENT on a comment by someone else	Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - LIKE a comment by some else	Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - Place a Wall post on this labels' Facebook Page out of my own initiative
Would you like to get together in an off-line situation (i.e face to face) with other people who LIK...	Chi Square	11.37*	12.63*	24.74*	5.70*
	Degrees of Freedom	15	15	15	15
	p-value	0.73	0.63	0.05	0.98

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

Table 39 Chi-square tests between table1 and 34 (n=40) (Note: results are an indication because of small sample size)

Table 39 shows two situations in which there is a positive relation between an action online and wanting to meet with other fans offline. If the respondents Like a Wall post by the specific label more often, they are more likely to want to meet others in an offline situation (p-value= 0,01). The same goes for Liking a Comment by someone else (p-value=0,05).

The results above suggest that there is a positive relation between more online interaction and the desire to meet other fans in an offline setting. Also, section 4.5.3 already stated that fans who have more feelings of group membership, tend to promote the label or FB Page more often offline. Therefore, while it was not possible to find a positive relation between more online interaction and feelings of group membership, there is a reason to argue that online interaction rituals lead to the passing on of emotional energy into offline situations.

Key points face-to-face contact

- the results in this research suggests that feelings of group membership are formed online rather than offline;
- more face-to-face contact does not encourage feelings of group belonging;
- people who more often meet offline, are not more likely to participate on the specific FB Pages in any way;
- there is however a positive relation between specific actions on Facebook and the desire to meet offline

5. Discussion and conclusions

This thesis illustrated that Facebook use is part of many people's daily practice. The general assumption in this thesis is that through the use of Facebook people experience new ways of making their consumption practices more sustainable. By interacting with other people on specific Facebook Pages, individuals learn about sustainable clothing and the way other people experience these products. Especially sharing experiences with others in an online interaction ritual – a comment thread – would likely be a way of transferring emotional energy to others. This thesis assumed to find successful interaction rituals in this online setting. While Interaction Ritual Chains Theory argues that bodily co-presence is of key importance in successful interaction rituals, this thesis also examines the role of offline face-to-face contact in online interaction rituals and the chain of emotional energy.

The research objective of this thesis was twofold. First, by linking IR theory to the use of social networking websites it would give a new and potentially interesting application of this theory. And second, it aimed to provide insight into the ways in which, and to what extent online social interaction leads to more sustainable behavior practices. This chapter briefly summarizes the main findings of this research and will further discuss the meaning of online interaction rituals for sustainable behavior. Thereafter the methodological limitations of this study and possible implications of its results for further research will be elaborated upon.

5.1 Analysis of section results

Section 4.1 showed that survey response was minimal which could be the result of a low affinity score of the update in which the link to the survey was posted. However, section 4.2 sheds another light on this. Table 2 suggests that fans of the Pages by Good for All, One for One, Kuyichi and Eco Fashion World do not often go beyond the actions of reading the Page's status updates or Liking it. The research by Denti *et al.* (2012) also showed that people are overall quite passive users of Facebook and especially in the case of interaction with strangers. Even though respondents Like the subject-specific Pages in this study, this does not seem to increase their interest in other people which is underlined by the outcome of this survey where only 18% of the respondents said they are a lot interested in other persons who Like the Page. Also, while it is possible to assembly a group on a Facebook Page, people generally do not look at each other's profile.

Section 4.3 tried to find evidence of the four ritual ingredients being present within the FB Pages in the study. To some extent these ingredients could be found within these pages. First, since there is no bodily co-presence possible on Facebook, group assembly online takes on a different form. A group is formed when people actively participate in a public Comment thread. This way people from all over the world can join and see who is participating in the conversation. A private message thread could also assemble a group like this, but this thesis decided to mainly consider public interaction rituals. Although it is not often done, people can check each other's personal profiles to see who they are communicating with.

Barriers to outsiders are similarly not the same online as they are offline. Online interactional rituals are more open and less exclusive than offline interaction rituals; easy access makes it possible to keep in touch with more people than offline would be possible. Also the online ritual is not dependent on geographical place or time, which makes it possible for people to connect with people in a different time-zone and people have much more choice about in what kind of interaction ritual they want to participate.

Section 4.3 concludes by arguing that without feedback intensification between mutual focus of attention and shared mood the online rituals do not seem to be successful. This is in line with IR Theory. However, what is different from IR theory is that in online interaction rituals, people need to actively participate. A person's mere presence is not enough to let a ritual succeed. In an offline ritual, as Collins (2004) argues, people's nervous systems react to each other when they are in the same space, in online rituals this is not possible. Therefore, this feedback intensification is really important; people need to actively show that they are joining the ritual for this ritual to be successful.

This is why contests – see case 1 in section 4.3.4– do not seem to create emotional energy, there is no feedback intensification. This is also argued by Peter Minkjan, a Facebook Marketing Specialist and founder of Likeeconomics⁴; he says that it is important to create a tie between the label and the fan and that this goal is not reached by gaining more Likes (Marketingfacts-2, 2012). Thus, while the post in figure 4.1 might serve as a way to generate more attention towards GfA's Facebook Page, these kinds of posts should go together with other posts, focused on true interaction with their fans.

The ritual outcomes are examined in section 4.4 to 4.8. When all four ingredients are present and there is a fair amount of feedback intensification between participants, this could lead to higher levels of collective effervescence. Although these kind of online interaction rituals are not very common on the selected FB Pages, they do occur. Interaction rituals with a high level of collective effervescence are interesting for both participants and Page owners. Participants experience positive emotional energy related to the products by the label or the cause it stands for. This might lead them to want to experience this energy again. This kind of interaction is very positive for a FB Page, if there is a lot of successful interaction, emotional energy in the form of group solidarity and morality can give people the motivation to buy the products or support the cause the label stands for.

This thesis assumed that successful interaction rituals lead to more feelings of group membership. Whether this is the case could not be proven because of practical design of the survey. The survey results however do not support the hypothesis that more participation in interaction rituals lead to feelings of group membership. Solidarity to the group could also be measured by offline consumer behavior; do people who interact more on the specific FB Pages indeed buy more sustainable products? The survey design unfortunately could not provide for results which could say anything about the real purchasing behavior in relation with participation in online interaction. But, the results of the survey do suggest that that participation in online interaction rituals do not have a strong influence on offline consumer behavior among the respondents in this study.

⁴ <http://www.likeeconomics.nl>

Inspired by the work of Brown (2011) this thesis could distinguish between promoters of the FB Page and other fans. According to Brown these promoters would have more feelings of group membership because they have more face-to-face contact with other fans. This thesis also found a relation between *offline* promoters of the Page, and feelings of group membership. Whether offline interaction about the Page or product influences the feelings of belonging to a group or whether these group feelings influence the desire to promote the Page offline remains uncertain.

Section 4.6 reflected upon the results regarding emotional energy, one of the main items in IR theory. Emotional energy proved difficult to find on these Pages. The Like button is an indicator of emotional energy in this case, but not many respondents actually experienced a Like due to lack of interaction. However, it was found that feelings of group membership are a sign of the existence of emotional energy. Interestingly, 75% of the fans of the Facebook Pages in this study think about the Page or the cause the label stands for in their daily (offline) activities. This suggests that fans of these Pages bring their emotional energy derived from the online activities to offline situations. Also, this is an indication for online practices being interwoven with offline practices; theses might not be separate fields of interaction.

Symbols of online social relationship were not easy to find within the FB Pages in this study. This could be a reason to argue that there is in fact not a strong relationship between fans of the Pages. It was found that the products offered by these labels can be a symbol of offline relationships; almost half of the respondents said the products made them think about offline friends who also own the product.

Finding a shared standard of morality was equally difficult to do. Buying sustainable products is the general standard of morality shared by the fans of these Pages, but this standard of morality seems to be formed elsewhere, not on these FB Pages. Also, there are insufficient signs that fans of these Pages act against people who violate the standard of morality, fans tend to go into a conversation and share their own opinion instead of referring to an overall moral standard or the violating Comment is ignored altogether. Overall, it is not sure whether a standard of morality is formed on the Pages in this study.

Section 4.9 provides for an interesting subject; the meaning of face-to-face contact in the context of online interaction rituals on Facebook. Because the amount of evidence for successful online rituals was minimal, there could be another reason for feelings of group membership and the creation of emotional energy. However, the results of the survey suggest that feelings of group membership are formed online rather than offline and that more face-to-face contact does not encourage feelings of group belonging. Also, people who have more face-to-face contact with other fans are not more likely to participate on the specific FB Pages in any way. There is however a positive relation between specific actions on Facebook – Like a post by the label itself- and the desire to meet offline. It seems that feelings of belonging to a group, among participants who have no face-to-face contact already, can be formed online. And this group of fans might want to show this feeling by showing their encouragement in the form of a Like, and also tends to express a desire to meet offline. Respondents who already meet other fans offline do not express this desire.

5.2 Summing up

This research has shown that online interaction rituals are not an easy subject of analysis. Nevertheless, it has tried to provide an explanation for how online interaction rituals work. This was especially challenging because it investigated Facebook *Pages* and its users. Facebook is very popular among its users because they can keep in touch with friends whom they know from offline networks or situations, instead this research tried to find equally interesting online interaction on Pages where fans often do not know each other personally.

The four Pages in this study could all potentially host successful online interaction rituals. Fans however seem less enthusiastic from the results of the survey than they appear to be on the specific Pages. Although this thesis was set on finding ritual outcomes as outlined by IR theory on the selected FB Pages, this proved to be a challenge. Emotional energy is not a clear cut item. One of its forms of appearance, feelings of group membership, is however a relatively clear item to ask fans directly about. Results specify that 50% of the respondents felt they belong to a certain group by Liking the Page and 10% felt a lot like belonging to a group. Overall, these Pages thus show a kind of emotional energy, appearing in the form of group solidarity. However, there was no empirical evidence found that more interaction on or attendance of these FB Pages led to more feelings of group behavior.

Because IR theory argues that offline personal contact is a vital ingredient for successful interaction rituals, this thesis assumed that it might be the lack of personal contact that accounts for the overall low level of emotional energy on these Pages. Remarkably, this thesis found no evidence of this. People with more face to face contact did not have more feelings of belonging to a group. Therefore, group feelings could be created online. People with more feelings of group membership do have the desire to meet other fans in an offline situation. Also, this group tends to promote the FB page and its products in an offline situation more often.

Finally, this thesis could not find concluding evidence about whether shopping, for products, is part of the online ritual. Generally, respondents already owning a product proclaimed not to be influenced by online interaction to buy the product. However, 19% of these fans posted a photo of their purchase to their personal Wall or the Pages' Wall. Furthermore, table 21 illustrated that 40% of the respondents do sometimes think of the labels' FB Page and the cause it stands for while shopping. The online interaction rituals on these Pages therefore may have a limited impact on shopping behavior.

After considering these findings, the question remains whether Collins is right in emphasizing face-to-face interaction as indispensable to interaction ritual chains. This thesis cannot provide a conclusive answer to this question. Online interaction rituals can take place on various platforms. In this thesis Facebook Pages were examined, and although emotional energy levels did not seem to develop into high levels, there was no evidence found that a lack of offline interaction was the reason for this. Further research on more and different platforms such as subject specific blogs or forums could shed more light on this.

5.3 Methodological limitations and suggestions for further research

Methodological limitations

Interaction

The Facebook Pages in this study were selected because of their subject, its interaction with its fans and the amount of online traffic. Still, there proved to be less emotional relevant activity present as was expected at the start of this research. The participant netnography found some interesting online rituals which were quite successful at first sight. It was however needed to take the research a step further to explore a second layer of empirical analysis by conducting an online survey. With this online survey it was possible to ask the fans of the Pages directly about their willingness to participate, their feelings and opinions.

Response

It was a challenge to obtain enough response for this survey. This thesis was reliant on the willingness of the Pages to post a status update about the survey. In this case, the Pages had between 1386 and 7390 Likes, and between 0,1% and 1,4% of the fans filled out the survey. Because of this fairly low response, it is assumed that the persons who took the time to fill out the survey are the most actively involved with the particular Page.

This seems like a small amount. However, a survey posted on Facebook on 7 January 2013 by the Dutch WWF does put this in perspective. This Page⁵ has 71,854 Likes, and 450 people filled out the survey, which is about 0,6% of their total amount of fans. It is not sure how many fans filled out the survey eventually, but it seems that response to these kind of survey's is in terms of percentage very low.

As was explained in the introduction to this thesis, this low percentage of response could have significant implications for the results of the study with regards to bias. Arguably, respondents are fans who are more enthusiastic about the Page than others, spend more time online, or are connected to the Page in a professional way. This might exaggerate the results; however, these respondents might also give a clear picture about what the target group of this Page is.

Design

In the survey for this thesis often a follow-up question was used, making the survey more efficient as respondents could skip large parts of the survey. However, this survey design made data analysis more difficult. Because, when one question has more responses than another, it is not possible to make a proper cross tabulation in order to test a relationship. For instance, in table 13 respondents who already owned a product were asked whether or not they were influenced to buy this product by online interaction. This question could however also been asked at all the respondents when the desire to purchase a product was included in the question.

⁵ <http://www.facebook.com/wereldnatuurfonds>

One item which was not included in the survey is the feeling people get when they give away a Like. Do fans want to belong to a group by doing so? Or do they want to show encouragement? Perhaps giving away a Like could be a greater indication of emotional energy than receiving a Like in the case of this study.

The final and most essential limitation of this study is the fact that it did not just focus on successful online interaction rituals. This thesis did not ask fans about a specific successful online ritual, because it was not possible to filter out the participants who participated. Asking participants of a successful online interaction ritual could shed more light on the feelings and motivations of fans to participate in a tangible way.

Suggestions for further research

In order to examine what happens in successful online interaction rituals, a follow-up study could approach the people participating in a seemingly successful interaction ritual. Preferably this would be done in an in-depth interview and participants would specifically be asked about their feelings and motivations for participating. This could be done through a private Facebook message, by e-mail or by phone. Approaching those who are part of a comment thread with a large amount of collective effervescence, such as the comment threads in figure 4.2 and 4.3 would make it possible to determine if emotional energy is formed within the individuals taking part.

Also, various other online social platforms should be studied for online interaction rituals. Many Facebook Pages refer to websites or blogs. On these websites or blogs, people with mutual focus and a shared mood come together in a comment thread. These bloggers typically do not know each other from face-to-face situations, but usually people refer to each other's names and after a while they might get familiar with one and another's viewpoints. This would be a good online place to test IR theory in the future.

This thesis was unable to determine whether people are truly inspired by online interaction rituals in order to behave more sustainable. It was partly investigated whether people would buy the sustainable products offered or displayed by the four Pages in this study. This does give us some idea about offline behavior inspired by online experience. However, there is more empirical research needed on consumer behavior affected by online interaction rituals.

5.4 Conclusions

This thesis has examined whether Collins' Interaction Ritual Chains theory could be used for explaining online interaction on Facebook Pages and, whether online interaction rituals on Facebook with regard to sustainable consumption could lead to more sustainable offline consumption behavior.

First of all, it becomes clear from this study that IR theory could well be used to analyze online interaction rituals from a social practices perspective. The practice of 'facebooking' involves elements of ritualization and also, Facebook has become part of many peoples' daily routine. By analyzing online behavior from a practices approach, where the practice instead of the individual is the subject of analysis, it was possible to determine if and in what way online interaction rituals influenced the fans of the specific Facebook Pages.

Even though there is no true face-to-face interaction possible through Facebook, this thesis was able to operationalize the IR theory by Collins (2004) in a way which made it possible to use IR theory to examine *online* interaction rituals. The most important implication for IR theory in this respect is that in an online setting, people have to *actively* express that they are joining or willing to join the interaction ritual. Also, in line with IR Theory, without feedback intensification between mutual focus of attention and shared mood the online rituals do not provide high levels of emotional energy to the participants, and the interaction ritual is not likely to be successful.

This thesis is not conclusive on whether the online interaction rituals on these Facebook Pages produce enough emotional energy to influence offline consumer behavior. Very few fans said they were influenced to buy a product by the label through online interaction on one of the Facebook Pages. However, 75% of the fans of the Facebook Pages in this study do think about the Page or the cause the label stands for in their daily (offline) activities.

Emotional energy is produced among the fans of the Pages mostly in the form of feelings of belonging. This study found evidence that feelings of group membership are a sign of emotional energy and the study shows that offline - face-to-face - interaction does not increase the levels of emotional energy in online interaction. For example; more face-to-face contact does not encourage feelings of group belonging and people who more often meet offline, are not more likely to participate on the specific FB Pages in any way.

However, the results of this study do indicate that there is a positive relation between people who feel like belonging to a group, and promoting the brand or product offline. Also, fans with more feelings of belonging to a group have more desire to meet offline than others. Therefore, while there is no solid indication for a flow of emotional energy from the offline to the online situation in this study, there might be a slight indication for a flow of emotional energy from the online to the offline sphere.

This suggests that online interaction rituals do have the ability to be successful without the component of face-to-face contact and that they can potentially develop emotional energy within the individual which can be translated into more sustainable consumer behavior. While this study is not complete, and more research is needed on the questions of why and how, it suggests that people can be positively stimulated to take up more sustainable daily practices because of the interaction rituals they encounter on SNWs.

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Appendix 1 Online participation and offline face-to-face contact

		Do you have off-line face to face contact with other people who LIKE this labels' Facebook page?
Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - Read this labels' Wall posts	Chi Square	11.99*
	Degrees of Freedom	20
	p-value	0.92

**Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.*

		Do you have off-line face to face contact with other people who LIKE this labels' Facebook page?
Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - Read the comments from others	Chi Square	20.56*
	Degrees of Freedom	20
	p-value	0.42

**Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.*

		Do you have off-line face to face contact with other people who LIKE this labels' Facebook page?
Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - LIKE a Wall post posted by this label	Chi Square	29.24*
	Degrees of Freedom	20
	p-value	0.08

**Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.*

		Do you have off-line face to face contact with other people who LIKE this labels' Facebook page?
Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - SHARE a Wall post posted by this label	Chi Square	17.00*
	Degrees of Freedom	20
	p-value	0.65

**Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.*

		Do you have off-line face to face contact with other people who LIKE this labels' Facebook page?
Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - COMMENT on a Wall post posted by this label	Chi Square	14.88*
	Degrees of Freedom	20
	p-value	0.78

**Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.*

		Do you have off-line face to face contact with other people who LIKE this labels' Facebook page?
Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - COMMENT on a comment by someone else	Chi Square	10.24*
	Degrees of Freedom	20
	p-value	0.96

**Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.*

		Do you have off-line face to face contact with other people who LIKE this labels' Facebook page?
Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - LIKE a comment by some else	Chi Square	14.00*
	Degrees of Freedom	20
	p-value	0.83

**Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.*

		Do you have off-line face to face contact with other people who LIKE this labels' Facebook page?
Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page through the following act... - Place a Wall post on this labels' Facebook Page out of my own initiative	Chi Square	9.65*
	Degrees of Freedom	20
	p-value	0.97

**Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.*

Appendix 2

Have you ever formed or changed your opinion about sustainability because of something you experienced on this labels' Facebook Page?	Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page: COMMENT on a comment by someone else			
	actual	hardly read comment from others	read comments from others	total
	did not change opinion about sustainability	23	8	31
	changed opinion about sustainability	4,5	4,5	9
	total	27,5	12,5	40
	expected	hardly read comment from others	read comments from others	total
	did not change opinion about sustainability	21,3125	9,6875	31
	changed opinion about sustainability	6,1875	2,8125	9
	total	27,5	12,5	40
	p-value			
		0,168045498		

Tabel a Cross tabulation between question 10 and 38

Have you ever formed or changed your opinion about sustainability because of something you experienced on this labels' Facebook Page?	Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page: LIKE a comment by some else			
	actual	hardly ever Like comment by other fan	does Like comments by other fans	total
	did not change opinion about sustainability	28	3	31
	changed opinion about sustainability	6,5	2,5	9
	total	34,5	5,5	40
	expected	hardly ever Like comment by other fan	does Like comments by other fans	total
	did not change opinion about sustainability	26,7375	4,2625	31
	changed opinion about sustainability	7,7625	1,2375	9
	total	34,5	5,5	40
	p-value			
		0,165099176		

Tabel b Cross tabulation between question 10 and 38

Could you tell me how often you participate on this labels' Facebook Page: SHARE a Wall post posted by this label				
Have you ever formed or changed your opinion about sustainability because of something you experienced on this labels' Facebook Page?	actual	hardly share content	does share content	total
	did not change opinion about sustainability	23,5	7,5	31
	changed opinion about sustainability	5,5	3,5	9
	total	29	11	40
	expected	hardly share content	does share content	total
	did not change opinion about sustainability	21,3125	9,6875	31
	changed opinion about sustainability	6,1875	2,8125	9
	total	27,5	12,5	40
	p-value	0,326452402		

Tabel c Cross tabulation between question 10 and 38