Hochschule für
Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin
Berlin School of Economics and Law

Bachelor's Thesis

International Business Administration Exchange

The Influence of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Buying Decisions on the Internet

Nina Baudis

First Supervisor:	Prof. Dr. Andrea Rumler
Second Supervisor:	Prof. Dr. Udo Bomnüter

Number of Words:	13 247
Date of Submission:	August 05, 2016

Content

List of Figures

List of Tables

1 Introduction

Word-of-mouth activities have long been a major influential factor in consumer purchasing decisions. (Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2004, p. 39) After the virtual landscape was significantly altered by the Web 2.0, new possibilities of spreading and receiving product-related information emerged. The ease and speed of distributing information via the internet led to an empowerment of the customer (Edelman & Singer, 2015, p. 90) and resulted in the formation of electronic word-of-mouth. (Kreis & Gottschalk, 2015, p. 406) Customers that are empowered by the possibilities of Web 2.0 applications have not only changed marketers' tools and strategies for communication (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 357), they have altered the consumer decision-making process altogether. This paper examines the influence of electronic word-of-mouth on the online consumer decision-making process under consideration of the shift from traditional to modern consumption behavior. An investigation of electronic word-of-mouth, its different shapes, consumers' motivations to engage in expressing it and the effects electronic word-of-mouth has on consumers and businesses forms the basis of this paper. In order to better understand the matter, electronic word-of-mouth is linked to modern consumption theories like the customer journey and the zero moment of truth in the second part of this paper. A consideration of special characteristics of e-commerce, an examination of the perceived risk in online shopping and the risk-reducing potential of electronic word-of-mouth concludes this paper's theoretical section.

The topic of this Bachelor's thesis was chosen due to its timeliness and its potential of providing various valuable implications for marketing activities. An empirical investigation of how electronic word-of-mouth influences online buying behavior was conducted in order to make a connection between theory and practice. Although previous research has examined the effects of electronic word-of-mouth on purchasing behavior satisfactorily (Chu & Kim, 2011; Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2004; Meuter, et al., 2013; Weisfeld-Spolter, et al., 2014; Yang, 2013), matters such as a distinction between qualitative and quantitative electronic word-of-mouth or its divergent influence on high and

low involvement products has not yet been explored. The empirical investigation of this paper aims at filling this gap in research. Further research questions gave attention to the correlation between the willingness of providing and the trust in electronic word-of-mouth as well as different impacts of positive and negative electronic word-of-mouth. The empirical research was conducted using a sample of 120 students of the Berlin School of Economics and Law. The research questions were examined using a questionnaire that consisted of questions concerning the participants' online shopping behavior and product pairs equipped with differently shaped product reviews and ratings as well as alternating prices. The results of the empirical investigation further underpin the significance of electronic word-of-mouth in today's online buying behavior and shed light on influential factors that have not yet been examined by prior research.

2 Electronic Word-of-Mouth

2.1 Basics of the Web 2.0

In order for this thesis to satisfactorily examine the online consumer behavior in the context of electronic word-of-mouth, the basics of the Web 2.0 must be explained. The term Web 2.0 was coined in 2004 by Tim O'Reilly, founder of the media company "O'Reilly Media". It was first used on a conference about future developments of the internet. (Domma, 2011, p. 20; Eilers, 2014, p. 33) In an attempt to further specify the term Web 2.0, O'Reilly (2005) consolidated a meme map of different practices and principles describing characteristics of the emerging Web 2.0. The core of these practices and principles is the strategic positioning of the web as a platform, the positioning of users controlling their own data and six core competencies of successful internet institutions:

- services instead of packaged software
- an architecture of participation
- a cost-effective scalability

- remixable data source and data transformations
- software above the level of a single device
- harnessing collective intelligence

Acting on the assumption of this Web 2.0 core, Musser and O'Reilly (2007, p. 5) devised a distinct definition of the Web 2.0 as "a set of economic, social, and technology trends that collectively form the basis for the next generation of the internet - a more mature, distinctive medium characterized by user participation, openness, and network effects."

Since then many publications have based their attempts of defining the Web 2.0 on the participative approach of Musser and O'Reilly. The user is described as the center of the Web 2.0. Web applications enable the user to participate in development processes, the generation of content and the interaction with other internet users. (Adomeit, 2008, p. 7) Laudon and Guercio Traver (2015, p. 56) describe the Web 2.0 as a "set of applications and technologies that allows users to create, edit and distribute content, share preferences, bookmarks and online personas, participate in virtual lives and build online communities." The evolution of the internet has built a virtual landscape that largely consists of user-generated content. The authorship of content has changed from unilateral publishing to bilateral participation. (Domma, 2011, p. 20)

This shift in the generation of content has altered the consumer behavior in the virtual environment of the internet. Online consumers are profoundly interconnected resulting in the emergence of new means of communication within a changed landscape of content, information and media. This possibility for internet users to communicate differently online fostered the formation of electronic word-of-mouth as a means of assisting consumer buying decisions that have more and more relocated into the online environment.

2.2 Definition

In literature electronic word-of-mouth is predominantly described as the evolvement of traditional word-of-mouth. (Domma, 2011, pp. 53-57; Eilers, 2014, p. 45; Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2004, p. 39; Lis & Korchmar, 2013, p. 11)

It can be considered a form of social influence. Social influence, a process where attitudes, feelings or behavior of individuals are changed through social interaction (Amblee & Bui, 2012, pp. 92-93), has been subject to many changes due to the evolution of new technologies and the heightened use of Web 2.0 applications. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004, p. 39) provide a distinct definition of electronic word-of-mouth as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet." Thus, the use of the internet as the communication channel is the main difference between traditional offline word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth. Besides that, electronic word-of-mouth and traditional word-of-mouth share a conceptual closeness that allows for inferences between the two concepts. (Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2004, p. 40) Word-of-mouth has played a major role in influencing consumer behavior in the past. Nevertheless, its significance is likely to be exceeded by the importance of electronic word-of-mouth in an increasingly interconnected digital society where social media and other web applications are the basis for networking between firms and consumers. (Meuter, et al., 2013, p. 241) In contrast to traditional word-of-mouth, electronic word-of-mouth stands out for its infinite durability. Content on the internet rarely vanishes from the web applications it has been published on. Once word-of-mouth is articulated on an online communication channel, it is visible for a large quantity of users for an unlimited time frame. (Yang, et al., 2012, p. 371) An important characteristic of word-of-mouth on the internet is that it is predominantly driven by user-generated content as opposed to firm-generated content. This contributes to electronic word-of mouth being more trustworthy and relevant for consumers than other communication methods. (Alhidari, et al., 2015, p. 111)

2.3 Classification

Classifying electronic word-of-mouth within different means of communication is necessary in order to fully comprehend the term. Kotler & Keller (2016, p. 32) describe three different types of media respectively means

of communication with unambiguous characteristics: paid, owned and earned media. Paid media are traditional media that companies pay a fee for in order to use them. TV, display ads or sponsorships are examples for paid media. Owned media, on the other hand, are communication channels that are in the possession of the company itself, such as blogs, websites or social media accounts. The third type of media that is being described is earned media. As the name suggests, in earned media the focus of communicating is not with the company but with other stakeholders such as the press or consumers who communicate proactively and freely about brands and products. Earned media include communication methods such as (electronic) word-of-mouth.

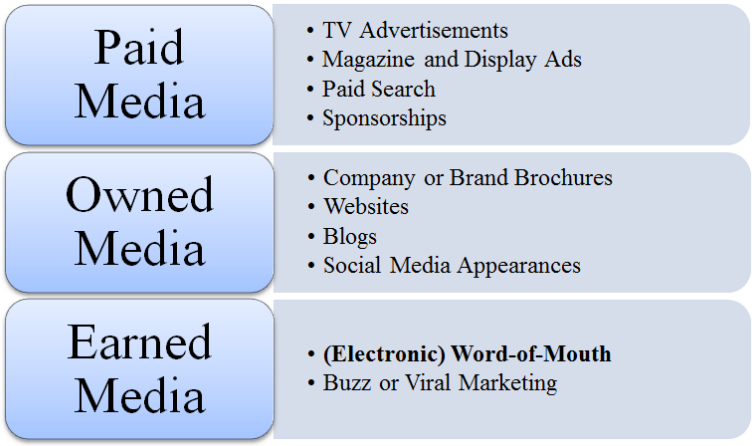


Figure 1: Paid, Owned and Earned Media, Source: Own Illustration. Based on Kotler, P. & Keller, K.: Marketing Management, 2016

2.4 Forms

In many traditional offline communication forms there was often a need for consumers to be at the same place at the same time in order to share experiences or give recommendations. These temporal and local dependencies have lost their relevance, since the main precondition for participating in electronic word-of-mouth is having access to the internet. (Lis & Korchmar, 2013, pp. 11-12) Due to the development of new digital technologies and the increasing significance of the internet in influencing consumer decisions, there are various forms of social interaction via electronic word-of-mouth.

2.4.1 Recommendations

One of the new forms of word-of-mouth the internet offers are product recommendations. Product recommendations can be articulated by consumers in text form (qualitatively), or in a numeric way by using ranking systems (quantitative). (Domma, 2011, p. 47) Their purpose is to provide information about products or services in order to assist consumers in making online buying decisions. (Knotzer, 2008, p. 7)

Procuring information from the internet and checking product reviews online has become an almost obligatory part of consumer behavior. Consumers feel the need to reduce information deficits that might influence their buying decisions negatively. Thus, online reviews and recommendations have become an important instrument for merchants operating on the internet. (Grabs & Sudhoff, 2014, pp. 186-188) The effectiveness and increased use of recommendation systems is based on social proof. Social proof can be described as a concept, "whereby consumers rely on the collaboratively shared information and experiences of others to infer a course of action." (Amblee & Bui, 2012, p. 91)

In a business context, the term "recommendation" can be described as a forward-looking positive advice or advocacy regarding a product or service. (Fink, 2008, p. 25) Though "recommendation" and "reference" are often used synonymously, it is important to distinguish between the two terms. References are often linked to a specific vendor or rather the services offered by a vendor. Recommendations, on the other hand, are a form of communication between a group of customers and are likely to be independent of a certain vendor. (Domma, 2011, p. 43) Nevertheless, there are company-owned websites offering product recommendations. This creates a problem of authenticity for the user. The majority of users looking for recommendations online aims at finding content that was published by other users. (Grabs & Sudhoff, 2014, pp. 186-188) Company-owned recommendations bear the risk of not being trustworthy. Customers often suspect the operator of such a website, in this case a company trying to generate sales, to hold back negative information. Independent recommendation platforms aim at reducing the risk for customers

of getting an incomplete portion of information regarding certain products and services. (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, pp. 161-162) Unilaterally spreading information towards their customers is becoming less and less successful for companies. As a consequence of an increased peer-to-peer communication on the Web 2.0 the emphasis of online marketing has withdrawn from marketers and moved towards customers, who are enabled to be more selective between different sources of information. (Burton & Khammash, 2010, p. 230)

2.4.2 Blogs

Another way of creating and spreading word-of-mouth online is using blogs. A blog was originally called "weblog", a term consisting of the words "web" and "log", describing a web protocol or, in other words, an online diary. (Alby, 2007, p. 22; Ebersbach, et al., 2011, p. 61; Laudon & Guercio Traver, 2015, p. 152) Kotler & Keller (2016, p. 643) define blogs as "regularly updated online journals or diaries [that] have become an important outlet for word of mouth." The entries or articles of a blog are usually shown in a chronological order, newest to oldest, and contain a variety of links to relevant external webpages. (Laudon & Guercio Traver, 2015, pp. 152-153) Cosenza et al. (2015, p. 71) classify blogs as a form of social media and user-generated content.

There are various characteristics distinguishing blogs from other forms of electronic word-of-mouth. One characteristic different weblogs share is that they are comprised of personalized and regularly updated content. Although weblogs primarily used to be a communication channel for private authors, they now also depict a growing significance for corporate communication. (Bauer, et al., 2008, p. 236) Bächle & Lehmann (2010, p. 162) specify four main characteristics of blogs. Blogs possess a high degree of subjectivity and personal reference by authentically reflecting the personal opinion of the author and offering the possibility for the readers to comment on the published contents. In addition, blogs feature an archival character. By allocating a specific URL, uniform resource locator, to every blog entry, a blog's contents remain accessible via the internet. Another characteristic of a blog is the high level of timeliness and frequency. Typically, blog articles are posted in a regular manner. They are being endowed with an entry date and thus bear a

temporal reference. The last characteristic that is being described by Bächle & Lehmann (2010, p. 162) is the possibility of subscribing to a blog. If users follow a blog via a newsfeed they receive updates automatically. Ebersbach et al. (2011, p. 62) give additional characteristics of blogs, namely a reverse chronological order, short texts, easy usability and a rapid distribution through networking. One fact that has led to the inflationary increase in the number of blogs is that they are easy to operate. There are various blogging services providing software that requires no knowledge of programming languages. Hence, a great number of different internet users can participate in blogging. (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, p. 177; Laudon & Guercio Traver, 2015, p. 153) A vital characteristic of blogs that is often stressed in literature is the commenting feature, underlining the conversational character of blogs. (Alby, 2007, p. 22; Domma, 2011, p. 30; Ebersbach, et al., 2011, p. 62) Blogs offering the option for users to comment creates an overlap with product recommendations. The wide range of topics that can be discussed makes it possible for blogs to play a major role in the diffusion of electronic word-of-mouth. Thus, travel, fashion or music blogs depict a valuable source of information for customers. The emergence of social media further facilitated the significance of blogs. By linking social media contents to blog articles, weblogs have become an increasingly important collection point for information. (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, p. 175)

2.4.3 Social Network Sites

Electronic word-of-mouth has gained enormously in significance by the predominance of social network sites on the internet. Due to the considerable alterations in online media, "the tools and strategies for communicating with customers have changed significantly with the emergence of the phenomenon known as social media." (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 357) Although "social media" and "social network sites" are often used synonymously in literature, it is important to differentiate clearly between the terms. Kotler & Keller (2016, pp. 642-644) do this by stating that social media consist of three different types of platforms: social networks, online communities and forums and blogs. All three allow customers to share product-related information with each other as

well as with companies. This section will focus on social network sites as an integral part of social media.

Boyd & Ellison (2008, p. 211) offer a definition of social network sites being "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system." Hinchcliffe & Kim (2012, pp. 17-18) describe social networks as a phenomenon starting in the year 2007 and representing "a collective form of online participation that is not controlled by any person or organization." Social network sites have considerably altered marketplace dynamics. The empowerment of the customer has not only changed the way of spreading electronic word-of-mouth as a form of information via the internet, is has also allowed for social network sites such as Facebook or Twitter to become advertising media vehicles of major importance. (Alhidari, et al., 2015, p. 108) The current significance of social networks is expected to further increase. In 2015 2.04 billion people worldwide were using social network sites. This number is expected to rise to 2.72 billion users worldwide in 2019 (eMarketer, 2016)

One distinctive feature of electronic word-of-mouth in social networks is the interaction with familiar people as opposed to participating in, for example, the exchange of product recommendations with unacquainted users. Users engaging with each other in social network sites are in many cases part of networks that existed before entering the social network. Preexisting contacts are perceived more trustworthy, thus word-of-mouth in social networks possesses a higher credibility compared to other online media. (Chu & Kim, 2011, p. 50) Social network sites also contribute to making the diffusion of online information quicker and easier. (Lis & Korchmar, 2013, p. 15)

Social aspects are a main component of social network sites. Early forms of internet platforms mainly focused on the exchange of information regarding common interests. With the establishment of social networks there has been a shift from an informational focus to social facets. Sharing opinions, designing individual user profiles and expressing personal preferences play a central role

in social networks. Indirect contact between users is another distinct feature of social network sites. Publicly shared information replaces the exchange of explicit interpersonal messages. (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, pp. 265-266) Openly publishing information to numerous people at once further fosters the distribution of electronic word-of-mouth that contains product-related or brand-related information.

2.5 Motivations for Participating in Electronic Word-of-Mouth

Given the increased use and grand variety of electronic word-of-mouth in different Web 2.0 applications, the query for motivations driving consumers to participate in word-of-mouth activities on the internet becomes important. This section will examine consumers' motives for expressing electronic word-of-mouth.

Three main motivations for consumers to articulate themselves on the internet were identified by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004, pp. 38-51). Gaining social benefits was the strongest motivation their research showed. Virtual communities have given consumers the opportunity for frequent and easily accessible social exchange. Community membership and social exchange in online consumer-opinion platforms create social benefits for the users, namely identification and social integration. The second motive driving consumers to spread electronic word-of-mouth according to Hennig-Thurau et al. is extraversion and positive self-enhancement. This motive focuses on the psychological benefits resulting from increased appreciation and enhanced self-worth that are gained by spreading electronic word-of-mouth. Economic incentives were also found to play a major role for engaging in electronic word-of-mouth. Consumers taking part in information exchange may earn rewards for providing valuable information. Thus, receiving remuneration from the consumer-opinion platform operator is one of the main drivers of providing electronic word-of-mouth. Although these motives resemble egoistic motives, there is also a strong altruistic motive facilitating online word-of-mouth. Concern for other consumers and the willingness to assist them in making

better purchase decisions were in large part responsible for consumers' articulation of electronic word-of-mouth.

Electronic word-of-mouth that is spread by consumers can either be positive or negative, depending on the level of post-purchase satisfaction. In their study examining consumers' motives for engaging in electronic word-of-mouth, Cheung & Lee (2012, pp. 218-225) focused on the expression of positive online word-of-mouth. The results show conformity with the findings of Henning-Thurau et al. (2004). Egoism, collectivism and altruism were identified as main motives for spreading positive electronic word-of-mouth. The egoistic motive refers to the consumers aiming at increasing their own welfare by expressing word-of-mouth. Social exchange on consumer-opinion platforms is expected to generate returns such as increased reputation, appreciation and informal recognition. Collectivistic and altruistic motives are a consequence of emotional involvement towards the online community and the enjoyment of helping. Positive contributions made to the group by providing information are considered fulfilling the needs of the group, thus fostering a strong sense of belonging. (Cheung & Lee, 2012, pp. 219-221)

Other studies examining the motives for engaging in electronic word-of-mouth largely coincide with the findings of Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) and Cheung & Lee (2012). Yang et al. (2012, pp. 372-373) describe maintaining social relationships, showing expertise and receiving valuable information in return for shared knowledge and commitment to the community as motivations for contributing word-of-mouth online. A high level of satisfaction with the purchased product or service can also facilitate the articulation of electronic word-of-mouth. (Sun & Chen, 2014, p. 66) The enjoyment of helping, that has been identified as a main motive for spreading electronic word-of-mouth (Cheung & Lee, 2012, pp. 219-224; Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2004, pp. 40-49), does not only refer to helping other consumers in their decision-making processes. Helping the company that provides certain goods or services is also a motivation for engaging in electronic word-of-mouth. (Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2004, pp. 45-48; Yang, 2013, p. 9)

2.6 Effects for Businesses and Consumers

The fact that the internet has given consumers the opportunity to create, share and receive product-related information within seconds has had a major impact on the way companies engage in business transactions online. In order for companies to be successful, they must adjust their communication tools and strategies to this dynamic and participative environment. (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 357) The changes in the business environment due to electronic word-of-mouth have major effects on the online marketplace conversations, the importance of opinion leaders, brand management and the ability of companies to exercise control over reputation and company-related communication.

Social media advertising spending growing constantly (Chu & Kim, 2011, p. 50) is a sign for the increased importance of monitoring and reacting to electronic word-of-mouth. Modern web applications allow for customers to freely create and share information. One of the main characteristics of social media, especially of social network sites, is the interconnectedness of personal real-life friends, family or acquaintances. It has not only become easier and faster for consumers to connect with one another. Companies are also affected by network effects, since the personal ties in social media bear the opportunity to efficiently connect a wide range of potential customers. (Lis & Korchmar, 2013, p. 15; Knotzer, 2008, p. 37) Electronic word-of-mouth is enabling marketplace conversations that were, in this form, unknown before the emergence of the Web 2.0. (Booth & Matic, 2011, p. 186; Mangold & Faulds, 2009, pp. 358-360)

2.6.1 Online Marketplace Conversations and Opinion Leaders

Another aspect of electronic word-of-mouth affecting both customers and companies is the identification and use of influencers. Influencers are those users that are perceived as opinion leaders in their network. Usually, influencers are characterized by a large number of friends within various Web 2.0 applications and a high degree of expertise. (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, p. 140) Identifying influential consumers, enthusing them of a product and equipping them with a certain brand message can help a company to actively

shape the image that is being perceived by its customers (Kinter & Ott, 2014, pp. 20-21) and to "effectively incorporate social media as an integral part of IMC [integrated marketing communications]." (Chu & Kim, 2011, p. 49) Yang et al. (2012, p. 384) imply that seeding brand messages among influencers "may work better than a general buzz marketing strategy targeted towards a general audience."

2.6.2 Brand Management

Mangold & Faulds (2009, pp. 357-360) argue that social media have become a hybrid element of the promotion mix, since they enable the use of traditional marketing communications, companies connecting with customers, whilst providing the opportunity for electronic word-of-mouth, customers connecting with customers. This new form of marketing communication is not only cost-effective, (Chu & Kim, 2011, p. 67; Yang, 2013, p. 156) information shared by other customers is also perceived as more trustworthy. (Grabs & Bannour, 2012, pp. 161-162; Knotzer, 2008, p. 12; Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 360)

Electronic word-of-mouth as the new hybrid element of a company's integrated marketing communications depicts an important issue for brand management. It can be used to establish an intense consumer-brand relationship and to increase brand engagement. (Chu & Kim, 2011, pp. 47-69; Mangold & Faulds, 2009, pp. 358-359) In the past years, consumers have embraced the opportunity to freely create and spread information. This freedom does not only cater for the demand of customers to engage in conversations with one another, it also enables companies to get valuable insights into their consumers' opinions, behavior and preferences. Consumers who engage in online interactions like sharing electronic word-of-mouth "voluntarily display their brand preference along with their persona (e.g name and picture)." (Chu & Kim, 2011, p. 49) Brand ownership is no longer with the company, it is more and more being shared by the company and its consumers, who actively take part in the dispersion of brand messages. In the social and interactive environment of the internet, consumers have become "the new brand ambassadors." (Booth & Matic, 2011, p. 185)

2.6.3 Reputation

It is no longer possible for companies to merely talk at customers using unilateral communication tools. In fact, it is required of them to talk to customers in an interactive manner. Customers engage in product-related conversations in social networking sites, blogs, forum or other online applications regardless of the support or input of companies. Nonetheless, a company's reputation is dependent on the electronic word-of-mouth that is exchanged in marketplace conversations. To gain an advantage using these customer-to-customer conversations, companies must consider content, dialog, empathy and trust the most important aspects when communicating with or reacting to online consumers. (Kinter & Ott, 2014, p. 17) The all-encompassing ability of consumers to talk to one another results in a severe loss of control over the dissemination and substance of information. (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 359) "Control is an illusion. Companies cannot control the conversations with social media, but they can influence them." (Booth & Matic, 2011, p. 186)

3 Online Consumer Behavior

The internet has not only made possible the establishment of new means of communication, it has also altered the shape and character of trading goods and services. Shopping has become one of the most favored activities on the internet. The sales volume in e-commerce worldwide is predicted to more than double from $1.336 billion in 2014 to $3.015 billion in 2020. (eMarketer, 2015) The same development can be found in Germany. Referring to GlobalWebIndex (2015), Germany ranked second with online shoppers making up for 72 % of all internet users, only being exceeded by China (75 %). The German sales volume in e-commerce amounted to €27 billion in 2013, it is forecasted to rise to €77 billion in 2020. While turnovers in e-commerce are mounting constantly, sales in stationary trade in Germany are expected to decline from €448 billion in 2013 to €405 billion in 2020. (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 2014) With a sales volume of €10.016 million in 2015 the clothing industry was the branch with the highest turnover in German e-

commerce. Electronics and telecommunications accounted for the second-highest sales volume (€7.554 million) followed by books and e-books (€3.613 million). (bevh, 2016) The increased sales volumes in German e-commerce were also reflected in growing advertising expenses. While they amounted to €1.125,8 million in 2013 and €1.461,1 million in 2014, advertising expenses in German e-commerce have increased to €1.724,6 million in 2015, (Axel Springer, 2016) making e-commerce one of the most important fields in modern marketing practices.

3.1 Online Consumer Profile

"Know thy customer" is one of the most essential principles in marketing. (Laudon & Guercio Traver, 2015, p. 370) Thus, before examining online consumer behavior, a profile of consumers buying online must be pointed out.

Besides some exceptions, online consumer behavior is rather similar to offline consumer behavior. (Laudon & Guercio Traver, 2015, p. 374; Roth & Schrott, 2006, p. 166) The prospect of lower prices is one important consideration motivating consumers to shop online rather than offline. (Croome, et al., 2010, pp. 6-8; Laudon & Guercio Traver, 2015, pp. 374-375) From the consumers' perspective, benefitting from lower prices on the internet is, for the most part, possible because of the large number of product choices and the unlimited access to information. On the internet, crucial information is quickly and easily attained. In addition, there is a variety of possibilities for comparing product-related information, for example by using electronic word-of-mouth before making buying decisions. (Huber, et al., 2013, p. 12) Online shopping is, beyond that, valued by customers for saving time compared to traditional offline purchasing. (Laudon & Guercio Traver, 2015, p. 374) The time-saving aspect is closely linked to issues of convenience. Consumers can engage in online shopping regardless of time or opening hours. (Laudon & Guercio Traver, 2015, p. 374; Roth & Schrott, 2006, p. 165) Another advantage of online shopping perceived by customers is independence of geographic boundaries and thus the possibility of purchasing products that are not accessible by using offline channels. (Huber, et al., 2013, p. 11)

Although engaging in online shopping has become relatively accustomed, purchasing products and services using online channels is not yet as common as traditional offline purchasing. In literature, there are some approaches on describing online shopping motivations. A positive attitude towards online shopping (Croome, et al., 2010, p. 4; Roth & Schrott, 2006, p. 165) as well as a positive attitude towards technology (Singh & Singh, 2014, p. 23) are considered to increase a customer's likelihood of engaging in online shopping. In addition, the individually perceived behavioral control is another facet influencing consumers to engage in online shopping. (Croome, et al., 2010, p. 4) Online skills and knowledge as well as influence of the consumer's social networks are also drivers of online shopping motivation. (Singh & Singh, 2014, p. 23) Lastly, internet purchase experience is another important antecedent of online buying behavior. (Croome, et al., 2010, p. 4; Roth & Schrott, 2006, p. 165; Singh & Singh, 2014, p. 23)

3.2 The Evolution of Consumer Buying Behavior

3.2.1 The Traditional Decision-making Process in Contrast to Modern Consumption Theories

The internet is an increasingly integral part of all stages of the whole consumer decision-making process. Customers no longer use it for mere closing-the-deal purposes due to lower prices or convenience; they also rely on the mass of information available online for considering their purchasing choices and making well-informed buying decisions. This is resulting in modern purchasing processes being more complex and more difficult to comprehend. (Plennert & Robra-Bissantz, 2014, p. 1) During the traditional decision-making process from a trading perspective, the customer made a pre-purchase decision for a certain retailer. When entering the point of sale, the consumer could choose from a variety of different products, which they gradually reduced until the final purchasing decision was made. Point of sale and point of decision coincided. (Heinemann, 2015, pp. 45-46) Traditional decision-making processes concerning brand preferences used to follow the same linear procedure, as shown in Figure 2. Equipped with certain needs, customers were

confronted with a multitude of brands that could be considered suitable for fulfilling those needs. Intrinsic characteristics and concrete marketing actions reduced the possible choices, until the customer made a decision in favor of a certain brand. (Court, et al., 2009; Plennert & Robra-Bissantz, 2014, p. 2) Due to an ever more complex customer consumption behavior and technological advantages leading to an increased importance of e-commerce applications, this funnel-shaped model of the consumer decision-making process has lost its significance.

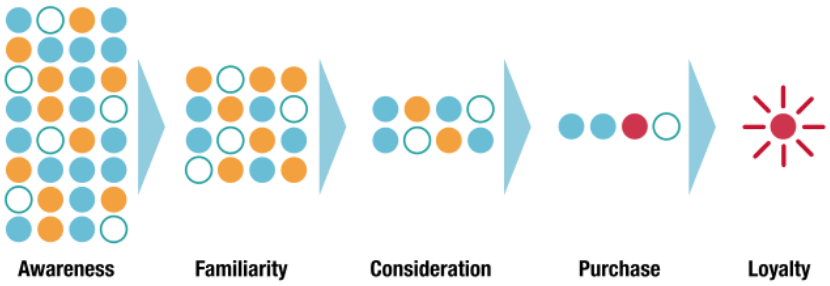


Figure 2: Traditional Brand Choice Reduction, Source: Court, D. et al.: The Consumer Decision Journey, 2009

Customers are constantly connected with one another via, for example, e-mail or social media. This leads to buying decisions not only being more complex, also their social relevance has increased. Like the internet as a whole consumer behavior has become more collaborative through the shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. (Möbert, 2015, p. 191) As opposed to traditional purchasing theories, modern consumption theories pay a greater attention to the emotions and social needs of consumers. (de Jong & Weber, 2014, p. 1) In addition to providing the opportunity for customers to make well-informed purchasing decisions, the internet offers an adequate environment for consumers' social needs. Within their online peer-groups, consumers can find reliable information that assists them making purchasing decisions. Consumers attach more and more importance to information that is an indicator for social acceptance and popularity of a product, instead of the mere rational or functional purposes of product-related information. (Heinemann, 2015, pp. 46-47)

3.2.2 The Customer Journey

The presupposition of consumption behavior being a purely linear process between a starting point (need recognition) and an end point (purchase of a product or service) is no longer applicable. Internet applications, increased interconnectedness, a wider range of consumption choices and the grown importance of online shopping have facilitated the alteration of linear consumer decision-making processes towards multi-directional and widespread purchasing decisions. One important concept aiming at examining the changes in consumer behavior is the customer journey.

3.2.2.1 Definition

Although the concept of the customer journey is relatively new in terms of being reviewed in marketing literature, many researchers offer distinct definitions. Kojo et al. (2014, p. 263) describe the customer journey as including "all activities and events related to the delivery of the service from the customer's perspective. It is an emotional and physical journey that the customer experiences." According to Norton & Pine II (2013, p. 12) "customer journey, in essence, means the sequence of events – whether designed or not – that customers go through to learn about, purchase and interact with company offerings – including commodities, goods, services or experiences." In their definition, Edelman & Singer (2015, p. 91) put an additional emphasis on consumers' perception of brands: "The term [customer journey] broadly describes how people move from initially considering a product or service to purchasing it and then bonding with the brand." Böcker (2015, p. 167) focuses on the relevance of information search. His definition pictures the customer journey as a process starting with the first impulse of buying a product and ending with the actual purchase. The information search the customer engages in during this process aims at satisfying their need for information. Consumers' demands for information before completing the decision-making process differ greatly and are thus to be considered from an individual level. This results in customer journeys being difficult to predict and comprehend. Contributing to these difficulties is the possibility of customer journeys stretching across online and offline channels, since customer journeys are existent "whenever a

customer “touches” a service and can occur across multiple channels and at various points in time.” (Kojo, et al., 2014, p. 263) Due to the variety of possible touchpoints, contacts between customer and product, for example print media, online advertising or television commercials, the process of the customer journey can wear on for months, depending on industrial sector and product category. (Flocke & Holland, 2014, p. 214)

3.2.2.2 Customer Journey Mapping

To be successful in the future, marketers need to focus on promoting and managing customer journeys as they would manage products or services. The experience a customer undertakes during their consumption process has become as relevant for the customer as the product itself. (Edelman & Singer, 2015, p. 91) Placing emphasis on the user experience during the customer journey can represent a competitive advantage, since “a focus on the user experience and the user-centric perspective are considered to be essential in today’s development processes, whether discussing products, services or places.” (Kojo, et al., 2014, p. 261) Laudon & Guercio Traver (2015, p. 383) define the user or customer experience as “the totality of experiences that a customer has with a firm, including the search informing, purchase, consumption and after-sales support for its products, services and various retail channels.” The user experience includes three elements: the product or service, the user and the context of using. (Kojo, et al., 2014, p. 264) Because of the increased importance and the implications for marketing practices, examining and displaying consumer experience by using customer journey maps represents an invaluable opportunity for companies.

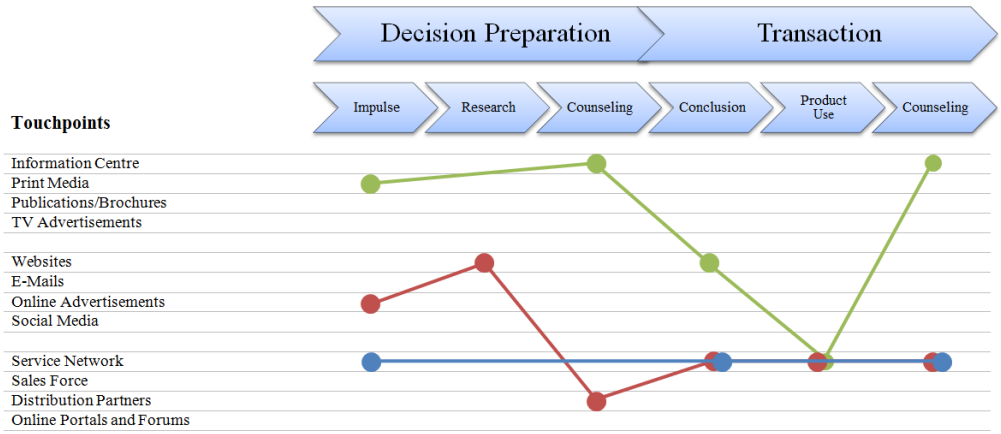


Figure 3: The Customer Journey, Source: Böcker, J.: Die Customer Journey – Chance für mehr Kundennähe, 2015

Customer journey mapping aims at precisely reproducing the paths consumers use during their customer journey. It is a "visual representation of the user journey […] in order to highlight and understand the various stages, steps and touchpoints a user must pass through […]." (Marquez, et al., 2015, p. 136) In their definition, Kojo, et al. (2014, p. 264) add a psychological perspective to customer journey mapping: "Customer journey mapping is used to understand a customer's behavior, feelings, motivations and attitudes while using a service." By mapping the customer journey marketers can analyze how many and which touchpoints customers encounter until they make their final purchasing decision. (Flocke & Holland, 2014, p. 215) It also allows for tracking the length of various steps within the customer journey. In addition, it is a flexible tool that can be used to comprehend consumer behavior across different channels. (Marquez, et al., 2015, p. 139)

Monitoring and mapping customer experiences by using, for example, diary studies, has long been a frequently used method for better understanding consumer behavior. Technological developments have made it possible to further advance those methods by using digital self-reporting tools. It is expected to map customer journeys, now and in the future, in an ever more detailed manner by using mobile devices. (Kojo, et al., 2014, pp. 263-265) As technological know-how increases, so do business opportunities. Customer journey mapping depicts a wide variety of advantages for businesses. It helps in allocating the advertising media that are used in purchasing decisions made by customers, thus allowing for measuring the success of particular activities

and organizing the marketing budget accordingly. (Flocke & Holland, 2014, p. 215) Furthermore, customer journey mapping can assist in detecting opportunities, shortcomings and possible calls to action. Since the customer journey stretches across various different touchpoints, mapping it can foster inter-departmental communications and cooperations that can improve the way consumers perceive their individual customer journeys. (Marquez, et al., 2015, p. 149)

Technological advancements and the increased use of digital tools have led to an empowerment of the customer. The individual customer journey is to a lesser extent capable of being influenced by companies. Customers are largely independent in researching product-related information and making purchasing decisions. Companies must "proactively lead rather than follow customers on their digital journeys. […] Superior journeys feature automation, personalization, context-based interaction and ongoing innovation." (Edelman & Singer, 2015, p. 91)

3.2.3 Zero Moment of Truth

In his publication "Winning the zero moment of truth" (2011) Jim Lecinski, managing director U.S. Sales & Service for Google, introduced a change in the marketing rulebook: the zero moment of truth. The concept is describing alterations of the traditional three step mental model of marketing. The classic model states that after customers are exposed to a certain stimulus, for example a TV commercial, they resort to a point of sale or "shelf" (first moment of truth) where they purchase a product. After purchasing the product, the phase of experiencing the product (second moment of truth) concludes the three step mental model.

Figure 4: The Traditional 3-step Mental Model, Source: Lecinski, J.: Winning the Zero Moment of Truth, 2011

The altered mental model of marketing Jim Lecinski is proposing contains an additional moment of truth that is occurring in between the stimulus and the first moment of truth: the zero moment of truth. According to Lecinski, the zero moment of truth is a rule-altering moment where consumers search for information and make choices. The zero moment of truth changes the buying decision journey. It represents a valuable addition for consumers and marketers to the traditional three-step mental model of marketing consisting of stimulus, shelf and experience.

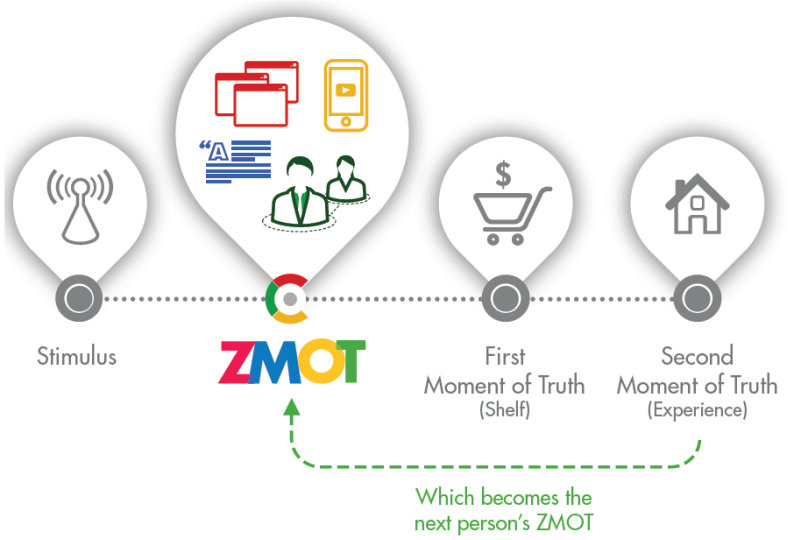


Figure 5: The New Mental Model, Source: Lecinski, J.: Winning the Zero Moment of Truth, 2011

Lecinski's research paper names five examples, in order to better elucidate the introduced concept of the zero moment of truth:

“A zero moment of truth is:

- a busy mom in a minivan, looking up decongestants on her mobile phone as she waits to pick up her son at school.
- an office manager at her desk, comparing laser printer prices and ink cartridge costs before heading to the office supply store.
- a student in a cafe, scanning user ratings and reviews while looking for a cheap hotel in Barcelona.
- a winter sports fan in a skistore, pulling out a mobile phone to look at video reviews of the latest snowboards.
- a young woman in her condo, searching the web for juicy details about a new guy before a blind date.” (Lecinski, 2011, p. 10)

This new concept of getting in touch with a product or service before actually encountering or purchasing it at a (online or offline) store, is particularly underpinned by the increased use of mobile devices such as tablets or smartphones. Constantly being connected to the vast informational scope of the internet has made it possible to get product-related information irrespective of time or place. Increasingly using mobile devices for information search and product purchasing leads to a convergence of zero, first and second moment of truth. This is further fueling the need for modern and dynamic marketing perspectives. (Lecinski, 2011, p. 12)

Although the occurrence of a zero moment of truth is not dependent on product appearance, category or price, there are several characteristics that are clearly distinguishing the zero moment of truth. The first characteristic describes the zero moment of truth as an entirely digital phenomenon. It typically occurs when consumers are using search engines such as Google, Bing or Yahoo. The second characteristic that is being described refers to the time frame. A zero moment of truth happens in real time, it is independent of date and time. In addition, zero moments of truth are increasingly happening en route with consumers constantly using smartphones in their daily lives. A shift from pushing to pulling is the third relevant characteristic of a zero moment of truth. When engaging in it, consumers are not involuntarily confronted with information. They are rather deliberately looking for valuable information that

can support their purchasing decisions. This pulling effect is resulting in the fourth characteristic: zero moments of truth are emotional. When there is a need a consumer wants to fulfill, they are, to a certain degree, emotionally involved in the process. A multi-way conversational direction is the fifth and last characteristic of a zero moment of truth. Similar to electronic word-of-mouth, a zero moment of truth is not merely communicated or transported from a company towards a customer. It is rather exchanged by various different parties: consumers, marketers, consumers' friends or family, online or offline opinion leaders and so forth. (Lecinski, 2011, p. 23)

Three years after initiating the new concept of the zero moment of truth, Jim Lecinski published another paper, explaining why the zero moment of truth has even increased in significance. In addition, the paper contains guidelines for companies on how to efficiently use the zero moment of truth. The first measure marketers must undertake in order to benefit from the positive effects of zero moments of truth is unravelling and comprehending what their consumers are searching for online. Identifying the products and moments that matter for their consumers can help companies improving and adjusting their marketing mix. Lecinski's second suggestion is being present in the customer's information search. Especially the increased use of smartphones has fostered the use of search engines. Companies must undertake search engine optimizing measures so their web presence can easily and quickly be found by customers. The third suggestion given by Lewinski is putting a large emphasis on content. It is not enough for companies to create traffic on their internet presence: Consumers must benefit from additional values. Marketers cannot merely answer their consumers' questions in some way; they have to focus on giving the right answers. Additional value can also be created by embedding social networking sites like Facebook or providing links to video platforms such as YouTube. The last action companies are advised to undertake is measuring the impact of their efforts in winning their customers' zero moment of truth. Improved KPI's (key performance indicators) like purchase intent or awareness must be visible and measurable in order for companies to gain a long-term competitive advantage. (Lecinski, 2014, pp. 1-4)

3.3 The Relevance of Perceived Risk in Online Shopping

E-commerce is a deeply rooted channel in today's consumer behavior. Shopping online can no longer be considered a niche. The willingness of consumers to engage in online shopping has fostered the enormous success of online retailing giants like eBay, Alibaba or Amazon. Online shopping is, nonetheless, still perceived more risky than traditional in-store retailing. (Akin & Secilmis, 2015, pp. 2-3; Bezes, 2016, p. 294)

Pires (2004, p. 120) defines the overall perceived risk of purchasing decisions as "the likelihood that purchase of the item will result in general dissatisfaction of the consumer." Perceived risk is a main factor determining purchasing decisions in online transactions. (Egner-Duppich, 2008, p. 54) When examining the matter, it is important to clearly differentiate between perceived risk in online shopping and trust in online shopping. Trust can be described "as an expectation that others will not behave opportunistically and that the vendor will provide what has been promised." (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015, p. 1359) Köksal & Penez (2015, pp. 30-33) identified four factors influencing overall web trust: web security, consumer reviews of the website, availability and experiences. It can be assumed that trust has a strong direct influence on online consumer buying behavior (Roth & Schrott, 2006, p. 160) by lowering the perceived risk of the transaction. (Egner-Duppich, 2008, p. 55) Although trust is an important factor influencing online buying decisions, a focus on the impact of perceived risk on purchasing decisions rather than on trust might enable researchers to more efficiently identify tools and measures that improve the customers' attitude towards online shopping. (Gefen, et al., 2008, p. 278)

3.3.1 E-Commerce Characteristics and Their Influences on Perceived Risk

3.3.1.1 Information Asymmetry

The role perceived risk plays in online shopping is not to be neglected, since "perceived risk is a key concept to understand consumer behavior." (Bezes, 2016, p. 287) There are various specifics of online shopping that are

influencing perceived risk. Information asymmetry is one important factor. When the distribution of information between customer and vendor is unbalanced, the perceived risk for the customer increases. (Gräfe & Maaß, 2015, p. 169) Without having the possibility to touch or look at products and thus not being able to evaluate relevant product attributes, customers with a high level of perceived risk tend to assume an opportunistic behavior of the vendor. They sense the seller has full and sole access to information, whereas the customers must rely heavily on the information the seller chooses to share. (Yildirim, et al., 2016, pp. 43-44) On grounds of information asymmetries the consumer experiences uncertainty as to how the transaction will be executed and which consequences are to expect. (Egner-Duppich, 2008, p. 55) Another important aspect is the quality of information. Due to the large amount and occasionally confusing nature of information that can be found online, consumers might mistrust product-related information rather than being aided in their decision-making process. The perceived likelihood of information being manipulated by the vendor can further foster mistrust in the quality of information. (Gräfe & Maaß, 2015, p. 170)

Besides information asymmetry and lack of high quality information that is available on the internet, Bezes (2016, p. 286) describes uncertain delivery, product return policies and fluctuating internet prices as influential factors regarding perceived risk in online shopping. Egner-Duppich (2008, pp. 41-42) identifies the time span between purchase and delivery as well as unlimited access of market actors as criteria that are increasing consumers' perceived levels of risk. The open system approach of online shopping applications with no or little entrance limitations results in consumers facing more and more business counterparts they are not familiar with.

3.3.1.2 Haptics

One of the main characteristics of online shopping is the impossibility for pre-purchase touching and experiencing of the product. This makes it difficult if not impossible for customers to "evaluate the quality of the product directly due to the unobservability. […] This can be shown as another factor that increases the risk perception." (Yildirim, et al., 2016, pp. 43-44) Not being able

to try out and inspect products in online shopping environments is an especially profound disadvantage in comparison to traditional in-store purchasing. (Akin & Secilmis, 2015, p. 6) Instead of tasting, touching and smelling a product, consumers must settle for visualization alone when engaging in online shopping. (Bezes, 2016, p. 285) Egner-Duppich (2008, p. 42) calls this lack of haptics, smell and taste "channel reduction" that is generated by a limited information transfer. Those limitations in transferring information towards the consumer result in both an uncertainty of quality, regarding attributes of products and performances, and an uncertainty of behavior, regarding the trustworthiness of the vendor. The intangibility of products that are purchased online leads to an overweight of product attributes the consumer is not able to evaluate before making a purchase decision. Touching is, however, an important factor for consumers when forming attitudes towards products and brands. Color, design, texture and weight are product attributes that are difficult to display using an online retailing channel. (Huber, et al., 2013, p. 19) Furthermore, in e-commerce consumers are not able to interact with sales personnel or look at sales rooms. (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015, p. 1359; Bezes, 2016, p. 286) Facial expressions and gestures as well as the design of sales rooms are influential factors aiding in-store purchasing decisions that are missing in e-commerce, thus increasing the perceived risk. (Egner-Duppich, 2008, p. 42)

3.3.1.3 Security and Privacy Protection

Security and privacy protection are two main factors influencing the perceived risk in online shopping. (Huber, et al., 2013, p. 16; Köksal & Penez, 2015, p. 29) The misuse of private data can have legal consequences and alienate consumers. An example for misusing consumer data is the dissemination of data records for the purposes of promotion, commercials or direct mailing. (Huber, et al., 2013, p. 17) However, security and privacy issues do not only bear risks for companies. A careful handling of customer information can lower the perceived risk and strengthen customer loyalty. (Köksal & Penez, 2015, p. 29) The topic of privacy protection is increasingly important, since customers are getting more and more conscious of their personal data

(Heinemann, 2015, p. 231) and of the possibility of web tools tracking actions online and collecting enormous amounts of data. (Köksal & Penez, 2015, p. 2) Although tracking mechanisms represent a great potential for companies, this potential can only be beneficial if the consumers do not perceive their data as being deceitfully used.

3.3.2 Measures for Reducing Perceived Risk

The number of consumers making purchasing decisions in a day-to-day context without using the internet has severely declined. Although the perceived risk is existentially higher in online shopping than in conventional in-store retailing, consumers continue to make online purchasing decisions. As consumers got more comfortable with Web 2.0 applications, the perceived risk towards technology in general decreased and so did the perceived risk towards e-commerce. (Köksal & Penez, 2015, p. 29) Nevertheless, companies cannot presuppose this process of consumers' levels of perceived risk decreasing will keep on going on infinitely. Measures must be undertaken to ensure consumer confidence.

One important factor that can lower the consumer's perceived risk is the display of positive post-purchase feedback by other customers. Electronic word-of-mouth can be an effective measure for companies by "enhancing their reputation and effectively communicating their benefits and relative advantages over traditional retailers." (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015, p. 1369) Therefore, online reviews and experiences of other customers can help to dismantle initial mistrust and skepticism of consumers towards an unfamiliar online vendor. (Huber, et al., 2013, p. 16)

Another important indication consumers' perceived risk depends on is website quality. Companies "have much to gain from examining their website and stores in light of perceived risk, with a view to better anticipate, prevent or encourage customer switchover from one channel to the other." (Bezes, 2016, p. 285) Quality factors regarding security, privacy, usability and functionality are particularly influential on the level of perceived risk. (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015, p. 1369) Providing as much relevant product-related information as

possible and stressing the careful and legal use of personal data can further help companies to gain their consumers' confidence. (Huber, et al., 2013, pp. 18-20) In addition, defining clear and unambiguous general terms and conditions can lower the consumers' perceived risk. (Heinemann, 2015, p. 234)

Guaranteeing realistic delivery times also decreases the perceived risk towards an online vendor. In order to hold up to their competitors, many e-commerce retailers promise unrealistic delivery times. If those delivery times are not met, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty decrease. By optimizing logistic processes, companies can counteract on high levels of perceived risk. (Bezes, 2016, p. 297) By doing this online vendors can also improve their image. According to Akroush & Al-Debei (2015, pp. 1367-1369) the image of a vendor and their website is one of the main determinants of perceived risk in online shopping.

Security of payment is another relevant factor influencing perceived risk. By offering purchase on account or using online payment services like PayPal online retailers can motivate their customers to shop online by lowering the risk of paying for a product without receiving it. (Heinemann, 2015, pp. 229-230)

Promoting their relative advantage is crucial for an online vendor's success. They must effectively communicate the advantages consumers can benefit from when resorting to online shopping. In order to do so, online vendors must "stress on time/effort savings, lower transaction cost, convenience value, lower switching cost, ease of order, and ease of comparisons among multiple retailers as relative advantages and benefits over traditional retailers." (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015, p. 1370)

4 Empirical Research: The Influence of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Buying Decisions on the Internet

4.1 Purpose of the Study and Research Hypotheses

This paper includes an empirical investigation aiming at examining how electronic word-of-mouth influences buying decisions on the internet. Four hypotheses are being investigated that cover the following aspects: quantitative and qualitative electronic word-of-mouth, positive and negative electronic word-of-mouth, the willingness of providing word-of-mouth online and low and high involvement products. The hypotheses are as follows:

Quantitative and qualitative electronic word-of-mouth

Electronic word-of-mouth in the form of product reviews can be categorized into two main groups: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative electronic word-of-mouth consists of numeric evaluations of a product or service, for example a rating of 3.7 points out of a total of 5 points. Qualitative electronic word-of-mouth consists of verbal statements or reviews. Due to an presumably higher degree of objectivity in quantitative electronic word-of-mouth this study proposes that:

> *H1: Quantitative electronic word-of-mouth is more influential on online buying decisions than qualitative electronic word-of-mouth.*

Positive and negative electronic word-of-mouth

One hypothesis the empirical investigation of this paper examines is the degree of influence of electronic word-of-mouth, depending on its positive or negative character. Previous studies proposed that negative encounters have a greater impact on consumer choice than positive ones. (Abdellaoui, et al., 2005, pp. 1391-1399; Tversky & Kahneman, 1991, pp. 1041-1060) Therefore it is assumed that:

> *H2: Negative electronic word-of-mouth has a greater impact on online purchasing decisions than positive electronic word-of-mouth.*

Willingness of providing electronic word-of-mouth

Furthermore it is proposed that customers who like to give feedback online to other customers rely more heavily on electronic word-of-mouth:

> *H3: The willingness of providing electronic word-of-mouth and the trust in feedback given by other customers are positively correlated.*

Low and high involvement products

Another hypothesis this study examines is the higher importance of electronic word-of-mouth in high involvement products compared to low involvement products. Involvement is the degree to which a customer considers a product to be important or outstanding. It describes the emotional participation of a customer when purchasing a product. Not all purchasing processes are equal. High involvement products require a large amount of time, information and pre-purchase consideration. Low involvement products, on the other hand, are more likely to be purchased quickly and impulsively. Since it is an essential function of electronic word-of-mouth to assist customers in making purchasing decisions, it is proposed that:

> *H4: Electronic word-of-mouth is more influential in high involvement products than in low involvement products.*
>
> *H4a: The percentage of customers purchasing the product equipped with positive electronic word-of-mouth is higher for high involvement products than for low involvement products.*
>
> *H4b: The percentage of customers purchasing the product equipped with negative electronic word-of-mouth is lower for high involvement products than for low involvement products.*

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 Questionnaire

For the purposes of conducting the empirical study of this paper a questionnaire was constructed. It consists of two parts: questions concerning different product choices and follow-up questions concerning the online shopping behavior of the participants.

The first part of the questionnaire contained 18 questions. The participants were asked to choose between two products of the same type. In order to be able to examine H4, H4a and H4b the participants were presented two different product types: kettles and smartphones. A smartphone resembles a high involvement product, since the decision-making process when purchasing a smartphone can be considered lengthy and complex. A kettle, on the other hand, can be seen as a low involvement product that requires a low amount of pre-purchase consideration. The two products were equipped with three different attributes each. The kettle's product attributes were time span to heat water, capacity and material. The smartphone's attributes were operating system, battery life and storage space. Beyond that, the variables price and rating were added to the three product attributes. Since this study only aims at examining the influence of electronic word-of-mouth on the online decision-making process and not the influence the different product attributes have, said attributes were the same for both products that were presented to the participants. The product attributes have not been altered throughout the interview. In addition, no brand names or pictures of the product were shown so the choices of the participants were not influenced by their personal preferences regarding brands or looks. Not using brand names was especially important for the questions regarding smartphone purchase, since in the smartphone industry there is a particularly high relevance of brand preferences.

Price and electronic word-of-mouth were altered throughout the interview. The price was raised and lowered, so the questionnaire would appear more realistic to the participants. Furthermore, the product pairs that were shown to the participants offered two different kinds of electronic word-of-mouth:

quantitative and qualitative. Ratings, for example 2.4 or 4.6 out of 5 possible points, exemplified quantitative electronic word-of-mouth. Written comments or reviews were used in order to imitate qualitative electronic word-of-mouth.

Figure 6: Example of Qualitative and Quantitative Electronic Word-of-Mouth Used in the Questionnaire

The order of the questions was randomly chosen in order for the participants not to entirely comprehend the purpose of this study. For all of the 18 product pairs the participants were asked to answer the following question: "Which one of the two products would you purchase when shopping online?" It was not possible for the participants to choose both or neither of the products. It was also not possible for them to get access to additional information about the products.

After the first 18 questions, in which the participants were asked to choose between two products of the same type, five statements followed that examined their online shopping behavior:

- "I shop online on a regular basis."
- "I am an impulsive buyer when shopping online."
- "I am price sensitive when shopping online."

- “After purchasing a product I like to give (positive or negative) feedback online for other customers.”
- “I trust in post-purchase feedback given by other customers.”

The participants were asked to state their agreement or disagreement to the statements using a 5-point Likert skale ranging from “1 – strongly disagree” to “5 – strongly agree”.

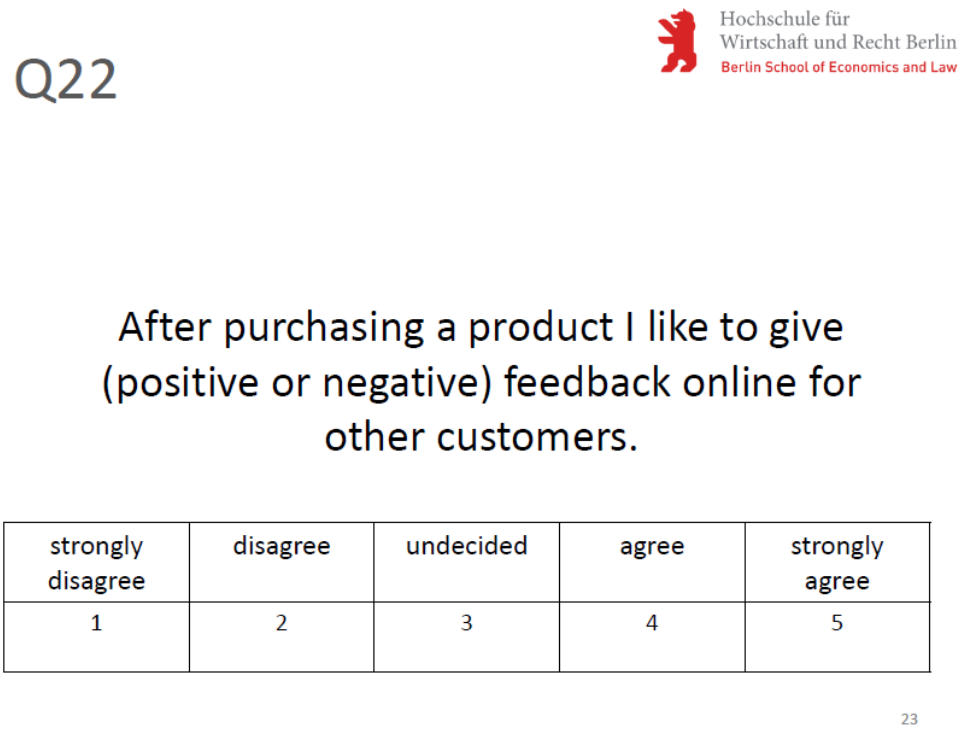


Figure 7: Example of a Question Regarding Online Shopping Behavior Using a 5-point Likert Scale

4.2.2 Sample and Measurement

The sample of this paper’s study consisted of 120 participants. All 120 participants were students at the Berlin School of Economics and Law at the time of the survey. Since not all students of the school participated in the survey, a partial census is at hand. The sampling of the participants was carried out in an arbitrary manner, since, depending on day and time of the survey, not all students of the school had the same likelihood of being chosen for participation.

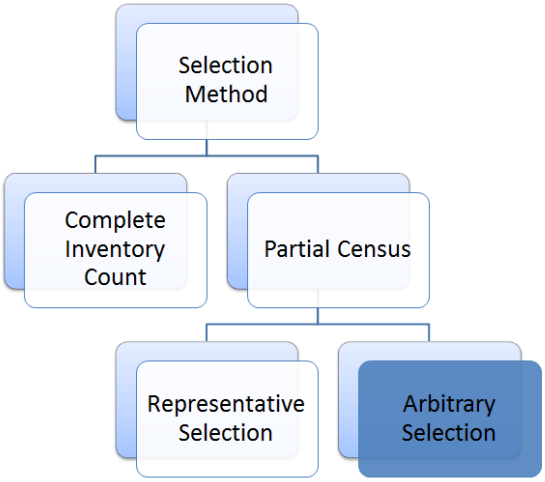


Figure 8: Basic Forms of Selection Methods (Excerpt), Source: Berekoven, L. et al.: Marktkforschung – Methodische Grundlagen und praktische Anwendung, 2009

The average age of the participants was 24.25 years. 53.3 percent of the participants where female; 46.7 percent were male.

Before starting the survey, a pretest was administered. A pretest is a widely used method of verifying the design of a survey. Pretesting aims at identifying potential lacks of clarity, errors and misunderstandings of a survey. It can also give information about the estimated duration of a survey. (Kuß, 2012, p. 117) The pretest of this study was conducted with 12 participants. Since pretesting is most effective when imitating the actual circumstances and environment of the study, it was conducted on university grounds. All participants of the pretest were students of the Berlin School of Economics and Law and thus represented the sample that later was used for the survey. The results of the pretest were satisfying. They indicated that the questionnaire was comprehendible and accomplishable within a reasonable time frame. No alterations to the questionnaire were made.

The survey was conducted using a tablet. The average duration of participating in the survey was 5 to 7 minutes. Surveys that take too much time to answer bear the risk of both boring and overwhelming the participants. This might alter and falsify the results. A time period of 5 to 7 minutes was assumed to be an acceptable time frame for this survey. The survey was conducted on different weekdays at different times in order to prevent external factors from interfering with the results.

4.3 Data Analysis and Results

4.3.1 General Findings

In order to be able to better describe and characterize the sample, the questionnaire contained 5 follow-up questions dealing with the online shopping behavior of the participants. The first question aimed at finding out the participants' frequency of engaging in online shopping. The smallest group consisted of those participants who strongly disagreed with the statement "I shop online on a regular basis" with a total amount of 4.17 percent. 27.50 percent stated to disagree with the statement, 15.83 percent were undecided. Those participants who claimed to be regular online shoppers accounted for 40.00 percent, while 12.50 percent stated to be very regular online shoppers. Summing up, more than half of the participants, 52.50 percent, were shopping online on a regular or very regular basis, while less than a third, 31.7 percent, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement of being regular online shoppers.

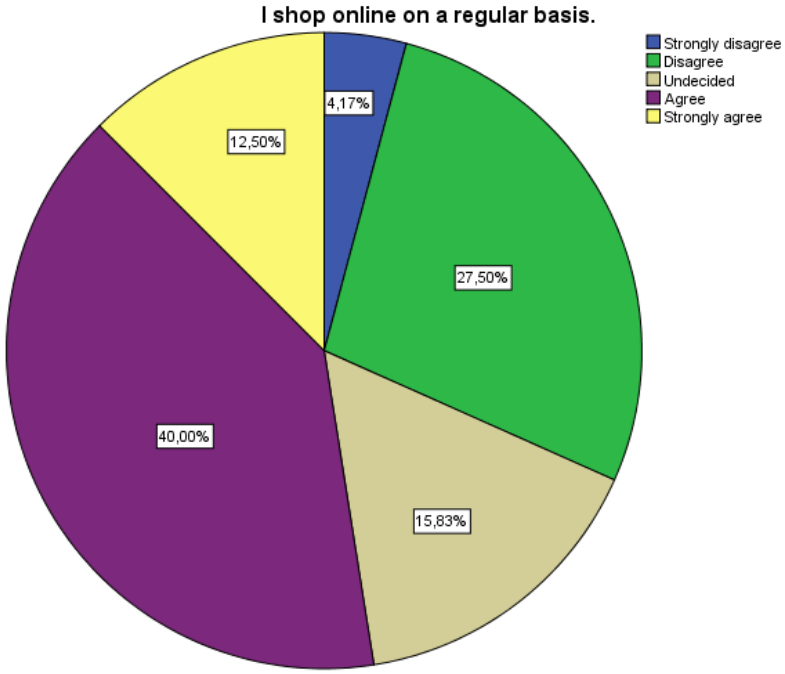


Figure 9: Regularity in Online Shopping

The second question aimed at finding out about the impulsiveness of the participants while shopping online. The participants were asked to express their agreement to the statement "I am an impulsive buyer when shopping online."

25.00 percent strongly disagreed to the statement, 40.00 percent disagreed and 16.67 percent of the participants were undecided. 18.33 percent agreed to being an impulsive online shopper while none of the participants strongly agreed.

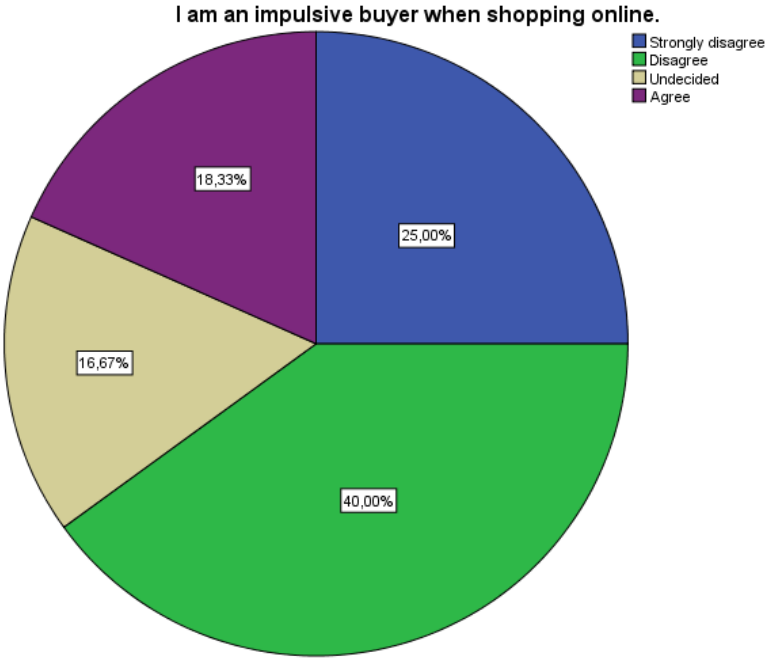


Figure 10: Impulsiveness in Online Shopping

Price sensitivity was another characteristic of the participants that was being examined in this study. While none of the participants strongly disagreed to the statement "I am price sensitive when shopping online.", 11.67 percent disagreed and 16.67 percent were undecided. More than half of the participants, 53.33 percent, stated they were price sensitive when shopping online. With 18.33 percent the second largest group stated to be very price sensitive when engaging in online shopping, adding up to a total of 71.66 percent that were either average price sensitive or very price sensitive.

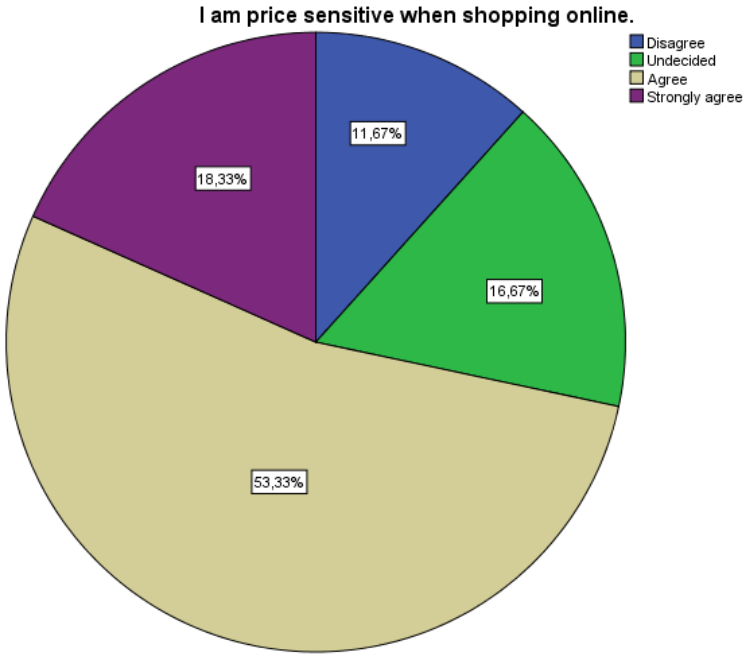


Figure 11: Price Sensitivity in Online Shopping

After examining price sensitivity, the participants were asked to express their agreement to the statement "After purchasing a product I like to give (positive or negative) feedback online for other customers." The vast majority of participants answered in the negative, with 33.33 percent strongly disagreeing and 40.00 percent disagreeing. Only 13.33 stated they were willing to share product-related word-of-mouth online, while 1.67 percent strongly agreed. 11.67 percent were undecided.

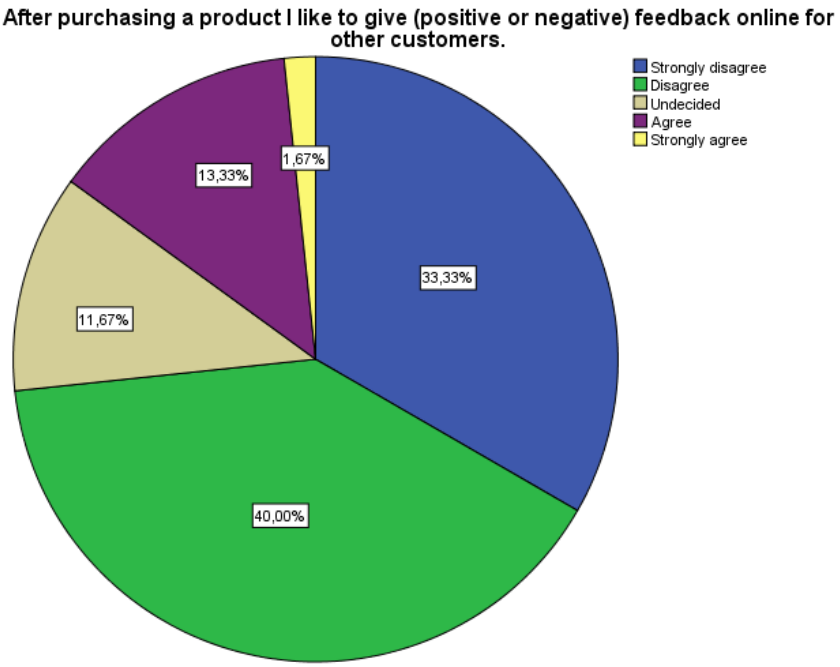


Figure 12: Willingness to Give Feedback Online

While a total of 73.33 percent of the participants stated they were not willing to give feedback online, the vast majority trusts in electronic word-of-mouth given by other customers. With 54.17 percent more than half of the participants agreed to the statement "I trust in post-purchase feedback given by other customers." Strong agreement was expressed by 17.50 percent, while 19.17 percent were undecided. In total only 9.17 percent of the participants stated they do not trust in feedback of other customers, with 6.67 percent disagreeing and 2.50 percent strongly disagreeing.

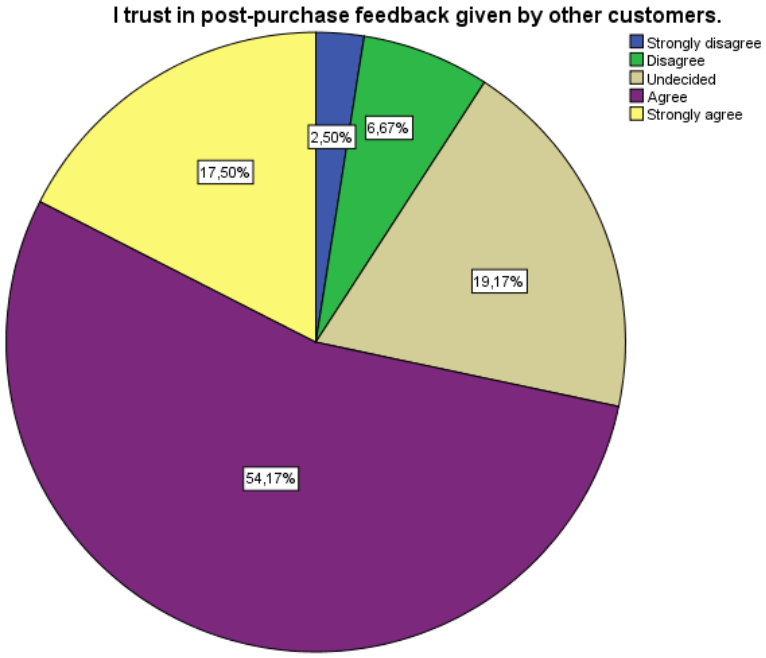


Figure 13: Trust in Online Feedback

4.3.2 Quantitative and Qualitative Electronic Word-of-Mouth

The first hypothesis of this paper assumed quantitative electronic word-of-mouth to have a greater impact on online buying decisions than qualitative electronic word-of-mouth. This was proposed due to the higher degree of objectivity that quantitative electronic word-of-mouth in the form of numeric ratings contains. The relatively high degree of subjectivity of qualitative electronic word-of-mouth that is available in text form as opposed to numeric ratings was expected to lower the perceived credibility. However, H1 was not supported by this study.

Presumably, the higher influence of qualitative electronic word-of-mouth results from the larger perceived difficulty of manipulating detailed product reviews. The participants and, transferring the results, consumers might attach more risk to trusting quantitative electronic word-of-mouth since it is easier to fake. Falsifying product recommendations by altering the rating numbers might appear easier to customers than publishing a great number of false highly detailed text-form product reviews.

In Q2 the participants were asked to choose either kettle 1 that was equipped with quantitative electronic word-of-mouth (a rating of 4.6 out of 5, 95 ratings in total) or kettle 2 that featured qualitative electronic word-of-mouth (a total of

87 positive product reviews). Out of the 120 participants two thirds favored the second kettle with positive word-of-mouth in text form, while 40 participants chose the first kettle that was equipped with a numeric rating.

Q2

Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin
Berlin School of Economics and Law

Attribute	Kettle 1	Kettle 2
Time span to heat water (1 liter)	3 minutes	3 minutes
Capacity	1,7 liter	1,7 liter
Material	glass	glass
Price	34,99 €	34,99 €
Rating	4.6/5 (out of 95 ratings)	Abstract: (87 reviews) "Heats water quickly and looks good in any kitchen. I'm very happy having done this purchase." "Thumbs up, I would buy this kettle again anytime!" "Having used it for a couple of months, I strongly recommend this product to you." ...

3

Figure 14: Q2 - Which One of the Two Kettles Would You Purchase?

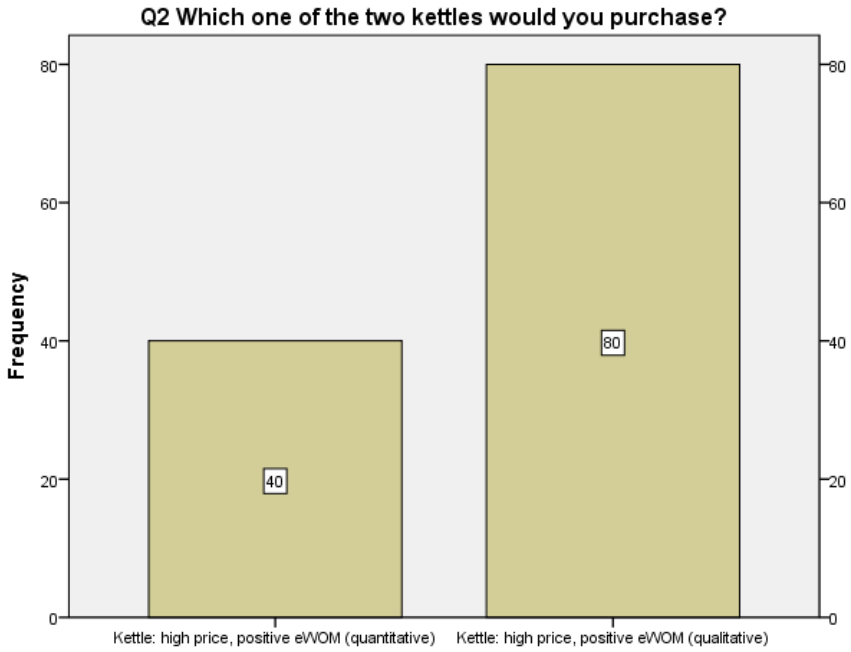


Figure 15: Results of Q2. Qualitative eWOM Was More Influential Than Quantitative eWOM

The larger influence of qualitative electronic word-of-mouth on the participants‘ choices has become even more evident in Q9. Offering the choice

between smartphone 1 with very positive qualitative feedback and smartphone 2 with a numeric rating that was on the same positive level, 88 out of 120 participants chose smartphone 1. Quantitative electronic word-of-mouth did not have the same impact on the participants' purchasing decisions; only 32 out of 120 chose smartphone 2.

Q9

Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin
Berlin School of Economics and Law

Attribute	Smartphone 1	Smartphone 2
Operating System	Android	Android
Battery Life	20 hours	20 hours
Storage Space	32GB	32GB
Price	649 €	649 €
Rating	Abstract: (87 reviews) "Great smartphone, I love it!" "Access to millions of apps, camera shoots brilliant photos and the surf speed is amazing. Best smartphone I ever had." "I couldn't be more satisfied. Definitely made the right choice buying this smartphone." ...	4.6/5 (out of 95 ratings)

10

Figure 16: Q9 - Which One of the Two Smartphones Would You Purchase?

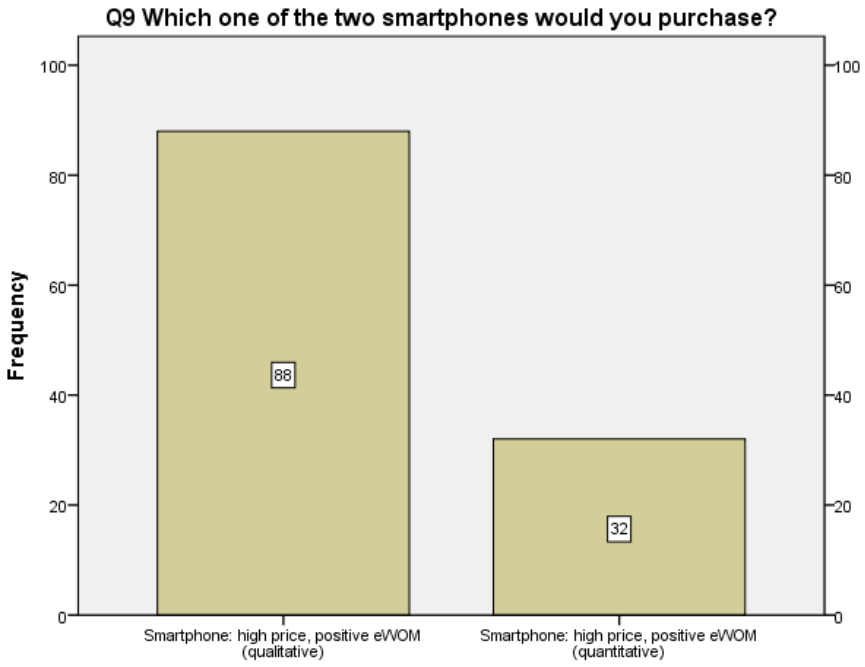


Figure 17: Results of Q9. Qualitative eWOM Was More Influential Than Quantitative eWOM

4.3.3 Positive and Negative Electronic Word-of-Mouth

H2 assumed that negative electronic word-of-mouth has a greater impact on buying decisions than positive electronic word-of-mouth. A case summary of the collected data showed that the participants were more reluctant in buying a product equipped with negative electronic word-of-mouth than they were willing to buy a product that had positive ratings or reviews. This is evident in the arithmetic means of the data.

positive electronic word-of-mouth		negative electronic word-of-mouth	
no eWOM	pos. eWOM	no eWOM	neg. eWOM
$\bar{x}$=39.06 %	$\bar{x}$=60.94 %	$\bar{x}$=75.8 %	$\bar{x}$=24.2 %

Table 1: Arithmetic Means of the Product Choices

The data can be interpreted as follows: When the participants had the choice between no electronic word-of-mouth and positive electronic word-of-mouth, an average of 39.06 percent chose the product without rating or recommendation, while an average of 60.94 percent chose the product that was equipped with positive feedback. This can be interpreted as positive feedback having some influence, but not having a major impact on the participants' product choice. Negative electronic word-of-mouth, on the other hand, seemed to have a larger influence on the participants, with an average of only 24.2 percent choosing the product with negative feedback and a mean of 75.8 percent resorting to the product that had no rating or review at all. It can be concluded from the results that the discouragement that negative electronic word-of-mouth generated succeeds the encouragement to buy a product that originates from positive electronic word-of-mouth. Thus, H2 is supported by this study.

4.3.4 Willingness of Providing Electronic Word-of-Mouth

For the purposes of confirming H3 (The willingness of providing electronic word-of-mouth and the trust in feedback given by other customers are positively correlated.), the correlation between Q22 and Q23 was examined. In

Q22 the participants were asked to answer the statement “After purchasing a product I like to give (positive or negative) feedback online for other customers.” “I trust in post-purchase feedback given by other customers.” was the statement from Q23.

The Pearson correlation from Table 2 is to be neglected, since it is only valid for data that can be treated as interval scaled. Since the data that was being examined is ordinal scaled, only the Spearman correlation has explanatory power. With ρ=0,099 a slightly positive correlation between the willingness to express electronic word-of-mouth and the trust in product-related feedback given by other customers was verified. However, with α=0,309 this finding possesses no statistical significance. Thus, H3 was not supported.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	,094	,110	1,021	,309[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	,099	,097	1,076	,284[c]
N of Valid Cases		120			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis for Willingness to Provide eWOM and Trust in eWOM Given by Other Customers

In addition, a Chi-Square Test was conducted to further examine the relationship between willingness to express word-of-mouth online and trust in such statements made by other customers. Like the correlation analysis, the Chi-Square Test did not provide conclusive results. Although with α=0,007 the test results would be statistically significant, the value of the χ=32,963 is not applicable due to 17 cells (68,00 percent) having an expected count less than 5. This indicated that the Chi-Square Test is not eligible to giving evidence regarding the correlation between Q22 and Q23.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	32,963[a]	16	,007
Likelihood Ratio	23,243	16	,107
Linear-by-Linear Association	1,043	1	,307
N of Valid Cases	120		

a. 17 cells (68,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,05.

Table 3: Chi-Square Tests for Willingness to Provide eWOM and Trust in eWOM

4.3.5 Low and High Involvement Products

H4, stating that electronic word-of-mouth has a stronger influence on the purchase of high involvement products than on the purchase of low involvement products, was supported by this analysis. In 6 out of 8 corresponding product pairs regarding price level and nature of electronic word-of-mouth (availability, positive or negative, quantitative or qualitative) the participants purchased the smartphone more often than the kettle when electronic word-of-mouth was positive for both products while purchasing it less often when electronic word-of-mouth was negative for both products. Since the price levels of the corresponding product pairs consisting of kettle and smartphone were equivalent, expectedly price did not influence the results.

H4b was confirmed, since in 4 out of 4 corresponding product pairs the consumers purchased the high involvement product (smartphone) to a lesser extent than the low involvement product when electronic word-of-mouth was negative. This is particularly apparent in the corresponding product pairs of Q1 and Q14 (medium price kettle without rating/low price kettle with negative rating and medium price smartphone without rating/low price smartphone with negative rating). More than two thirds, 69.17 percent, of the participants said they would purchase the low price kettle even though it had a negative rating:

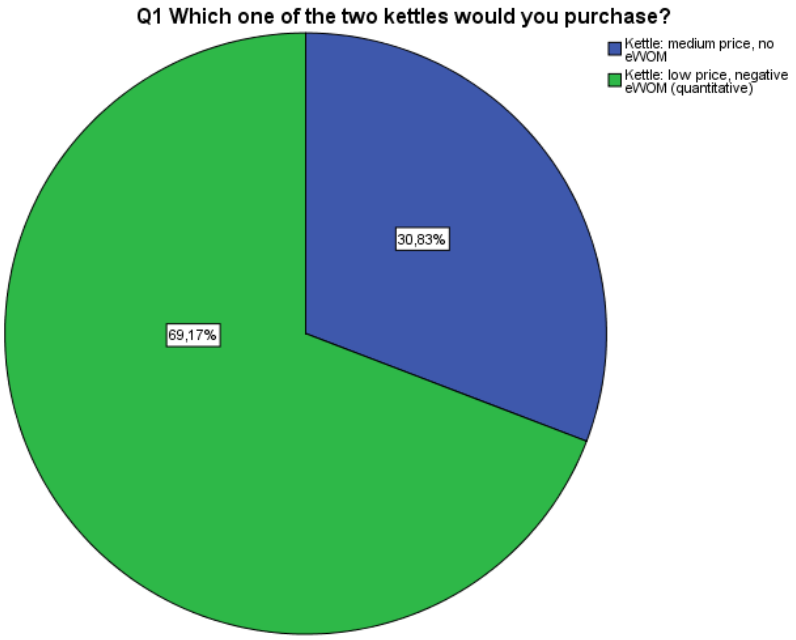


Figure 18: Results of Q1. Choosing Between Two Low Involvement Products (Medium Price, No eWOM/Low Price, Negative eWOM)

Less than a fourth of the participants, 21.67 percent, said they would buy the smartphone that was equipped with negative electronic word-of-mouth. This indicates that negative feedback given by other customers is more influential in high involvement products than in low involvement products.

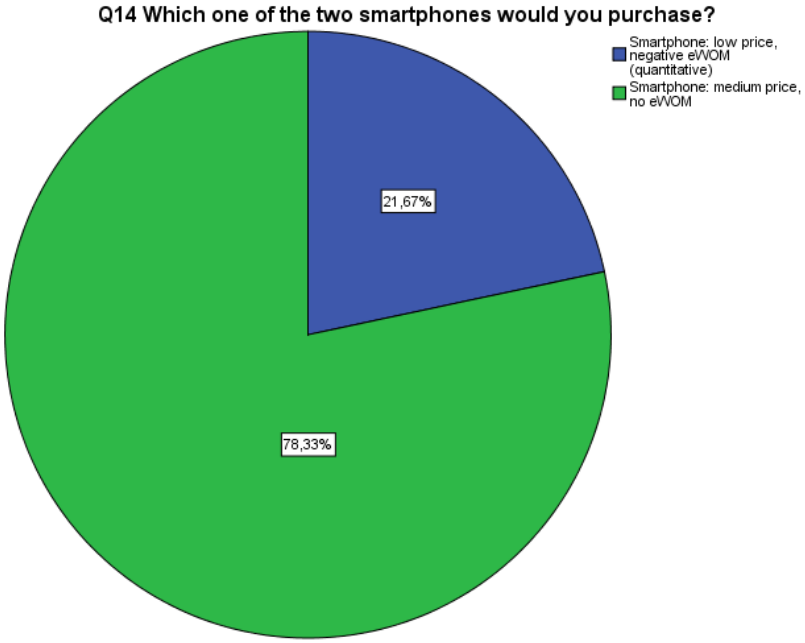


Figure 19: Results of Q14. Choosing Between Two High Involvement Products (Medium Price, No eWOM/Low Price, Negative eWOM)

According to H4a, if positive electronic word-of-mouth is available for both product types, consumers purchase high involvement products more frequently

than low involvement products. H4a was not confirmed by this study, since in 2 out of 4 product pairs the low involvement product (kettle) was purchased more frequently than the high involvement product, although there was positive electronic word-of-mouth available for both product types. Nevertheless, considering that H4b was confirmed while H4a was not, H2 is further supported, indicating that negative electronic word-of-mouth has a greater impact on purchasing decisions than positive electronic word-of-mouth.

4.4 Limitations and Future Research

There are limitations associated with this study. Firstly, the sample was rather small with 120 participants. Thus, the results of this study cannot be considered being representative; they can rather function as a loose basis for recommendations and guidelines. Furthermore, in a follow-up research the sample would have to consist of participants other than merely students. Also gender differences and the income of the participants were not considered being influential factors. Another shortcoming of this study was the limited use of advanced market research techniques. A thorough knowledge of market research specifications would have improved the design and evaluation of the questionnaire. Also, profound market research competencies would have led to a more professional data analysis, since the sophisticated market research software SPSS was used. Within the framework of this bachelor's thesis it was also difficult to imitate a real shopping situation. There were no pictures of the products available in the survey and the product attributes remained the same throughout the questionnaire. It was also not possible to choose neither of the products. In a more advanced study a real shopping situation could be imitated by conducting a conjoint analysis. Lastly, considering electronic word-of-mouth only in the form of ratings and product reviews, while neglecting other forms like blogs or videos, was another limitation of this study. Furthermore, qualitative and quantitative electronic word-of-mouth were only used separately in this study. Outcomes might differ when a combination of the two forms were used.

This study focused on one distinct issue concerning electronic word-of-mouth: the influence of product recommendations and ratings on one high involvement product, smartphone, and one low involvement product, kettle. There are various other research areas that were not covered. The influence of electronic word-of-mouth on purchasing services online such as travels could be examined in future research. Another interesting field of research is the influence of electronic word-of-mouth on brand preference. Valuable indications for marketing might also be discovered by identifying specific characteristics of product-related electronic word-of-mouth that can lower the consumers' perceived risk in online shopping. Examining the influence of product pictures provided by customers as a form of visual electronic word-of-mouth would be another possible area of research. Another area of research this paper did not cover is the influence of electronic word-of-mouth in mobile commerce. Also, pre-purchase information search via the internet is one major aspect of modern buying behavior that was not considered by this study. Electronic word-of-mouth influences consumers in all stages of the buying process, even after a purchase, when consumers might seek advice of other customers regarding the proper handling of a product. Examining the role of electronic word-of-mouth in the customer journey and identifying areas of improvement can represent major benefits for marketers.

5 Implications and Outlook

The empirical investigation of this paper offers several implications for marketing. H1 (Quantitative electronic word-of-mouth is more influential on online buying decisions than qualitative electronic word-of-mouth.) was not supported, indicating that qualitative electronic word-of-mouth in the form of text-form product reviews has a greater impact on purchasing decisions than quantitative electronic word-of-mouth. Therefore, marketers as well as online vendors can benefit from making available authentic, positive and detailed product reviews for their customers instead of providing mere numeric ratings. Offering a combination of both reviews in text form and numeric ratings could also increase the credibility of word-of-mouth that is expressed online. Remuneration systems for consumers that frequently share their opinion online

could be an effective measure for ensuring both quantity and quality of product-related electronic word-of-mouth. This study also indicated that negative electronic word-of-mouth is more influential than positive feedback. Marketers should concentrate on encouraging satisfied customers to share their positive experiences and then undertake measures to facilitate the diffusion of this positive feedback. If there is negative feedback available online, counteracting is key by using positive electronic word-of-mouth. A great amount of electronic word-of-mouth is expressed in social media. It is becoming more and more important for marketing to scan blogs, social network sites, video platforms and other websites where electronic word-of-mouth can be expressed and respond adequately as well as honestly. Taking customer opinions seriously can improve customer satisfaction levels and foster customer-brand relationship building. Implementing trust mechanisms, like the consumer opinion-based seals of quality the German company eKomi is offering, is another measure to use electronic word-of-mouth effectively. Marketers should increasingly emphasize the positive network effects that can be achieved by using electronic word-of-mouth efficiently. A satisfied customer expressing their satisfaction bears the potential of generating more revenue for a company than numerous costly marketing activities.

The topic of electronic word-of-mouth will continue to play a major role for marketing practices in the future. The increased importance of mobile commerce is likely to affect the handling of consumer feedback. While in 2013 39.5 percent of German customers engaged in mobile shopping, their number had grown to 68.6 percent in 2016. (Boniversum, 2016) The majority of German consumers purchase products and services online by using a mobile end device. It will be essential for marketing to implement electronic word-of-mouth as effectively in mobile commerce as it was implemented in regular online shopping; one exemplary issue that could emerge in the future is finding innovative solutions for displaying customer feedback on smartphones and tablets.

From a marketing perspective it is important for companies to continuously pay attention to the topic of critique expressed online by customers. Especially in times of customers not being familiar with a magnitude of newly founded

startups and the like, it can be an authentic trust-building measure to, for example, promote videos or interviews starring real customers by using social media. Thus, customer experiences can be distributed and lead to increased awareness and improved image. Lastly, in the future it is probable for the customer journey to further gain in significance. The individual customer experience is largely dependent on the word-of-mouth other customers share online. Allocating resources to efficiently using electronic word-of-mouth and thus improving the customer journey can result in a considerable competitive advantage.

Appendix

1. Original Questionnaire

Q1: Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

Attribute	Kettle 1	Kettle 2
Time span to heat water (1 liter)	3 minutes	3 minutes
Capacity	1.7 liter	1.7 liter
Material	glass	glass
Price	€ 26.99	€ 16.99
Rating	-	2.4/5 (out of 127 ratings)

Q2: Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

Attribute	Kettle 1	Kettle 2
Time span to heat water (1 liter)	3 minutes	3 minutes
Capacity	1.7 liter	1.7 liter
Material	glass	glass
Price	€ 34.99	€ 34.99
Rating	4.6/5 (out of 95 ratings)	Abstract: (87 reviews) "Heats water quickly and looks good in any kitchen. I'm very happy having done this purchase." "Thumbs up, I would buy this kettle again anytime!" "Having used it for a couple of months, I strongly recommend this product to you." …

Q3: Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

Attribute	Smartphone 1	Smartphone 2
Operating System	Android	Android
Battery Life	20 hours	20 hours
Storage Space	32GB	32GB
Price	€ 579	€ 649
Rating	-	4.6/5 (out of 131 ratings)

Q4: Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

Attribute	Kettle 1	Kettle 2
Time span to heat water (1 liter)	3 minutes	3 minutes
Capacity	1.7 liter	1.7 liter
Material	glass	glass
Price	€ 30.99	€ 26.99
Rating	4.6/5 (out of 131 ratings)	

Q5: Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

Attribute	Kettle 1	Kettle 2
Time span to heat water (1 liter)	3 minutes	3 minutes
Capacity	1.7 liter	1.7 liter
Material	glass	glass
Price	€ 26.99	€ 16.99
Rating	-	Abstract: (69 reviews) "I bought it two weeks ago and there still is a funny smell when I use it, although there is hardly any plastic." "Caution: spills when pouring water out." "Although you don't taste it in the water, there still is a strange smell when the kettle is heating up water." …

Q6: Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

Attribute	Smartphone 1	Smartphone 2
Operating System	Android	Android
Battery Life	20 hours	20 hours
Storage Space	32GB	32GB
Price	€ 579	€ 599
Rating	-	Abstract: (70 reviews) "Nothing to complain about. I got what I ordered. Excellent smartphone." "Love it. Worth every penny." "Costs quite a lot. But for that price you get a good phone with many brilliant features." …

Q7: Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

Attribute	Kettle 1	Kettle 2
Time span to heat water (1 liter)	3 minutes	3 minutes
Capacity	1.7 liter	1.7 liter
Material	glass	glass
Price	€ 26.99	€ 30.99
Rating	-	Abstract: (70 reviews) "Fast, clean and good-looking." "Fits perfectly into my kitchen. The exterior doesn't get hot when boiling, so kids can use the kettle as well. I am very satisfied." "I bought it about a month ago and use it every day. The kettle is still clean and it works perfectly well." …

Q8: Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

Attribute	Smartphone 1	Smartphone 2
Operating System	Android	Android
Battery Life	20 hours	20 hours
Storage Space	32GB	32GB
Price	449 €	579 €
Rating	Abstract: (69 reviews) "Phone broke down after one week of using it. I got a new one. Maybe this one will last longer." "I had some trouble with this smartphone. It is definitely not the best one available, but it's affordable." "Battery hardly lasts for one day and surf speed is rather slow (except for WIFI), but the camera is quite good and the screen is huge." …	-

Q9: Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

Attribute	Smartphone 1	€Smartphone 2
Operating System	Android	Android
Battery Life	20 hours	20 hours
Storage Space	32GB	32GB

Price	€ 649	€ 649
Rating	Abstract: (87 reviews) “Great smartphone, I love it!” “Access to millions of apps, camera shoots brilliant photos and the surf speed is amazing. Best smartphone I ever had.” “I couldn’t be more satisfied. Definitely made the right choice buying this smartphone.” …	4.6/5 (out of 95 ratings)

Q10: Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

Attribute	Smartphone 1	Smartphone 2
Operating System	Android	Android
Battery Life	20 hours	20 hours
Storage Space	32GB	32GB
Price	€ 649	€ 579
Rating	Abstract: (70 reviews) “Nothing to complain about. I got what I ordered. Excellent smartphone.” “Love it. Worth every penny.” “Costs quite a lot. But for that price you a good phone with many brilliant features.” …	-

Q11: Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

Attribute	Smartphone 1	Smartphone 2
Operating System	Android	Android
Battery Life	20 hours	20 hours
Storage Space	32GB	32GB
Price	€ 579	€ 599
Rating	-	4.6/5 (out of 131 ratings)

Q12: Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

Attribute	Kettle 1	Kettle 2
Time span to heat water (1 liter)	3 minutes	3 minutes
Capacity	1.7 liter	1.7 liter
Material	glass	glass
Price	€ 26.99	€ 19.99
Rating	-	Abstract: (69 reviews) “I bought it two weeks ago and there still is a

		funny smell when I use it, although there is hardly any plastic." "Caution: spills when pouring water out." "Although you don't taste it in the water, there still is a strange smell when the kettle is heating up water." …

Q13: Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

Attribute	Kettle 1	Kettle 2
Time span to heat water (1 liter)	3 minutes	3 minutes
Capacity	1.7 liter	1.7 liter
Material	glass	glass
Price	€ 26.99	€ 34.99
Rating	-	4.6/5 (out of 131 ratings)

Q14: Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

Attribute	Smartphone 1	Smartphone 2
Operating System	Android	Android
Battery Life	20 hours	20 hours
Storage Space	32GB	32GB
Price	449 €	579 €
Rating	2,4/5 (out of 127 ratings)	-

Q15: Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

Attribute	Smartphone 1	Smartphone 2
Operating System	Android	Android
Battery Life	20 hours	20 hours
Storage Space	32GB	32GB
Price	€ 579	€ 499
Rating	-	2.4/5 (out of 127 ratings)

Q16: Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

Attribute	Kettle 1	Kettle 2
Time span to heat water (1 liter)	3 minutes	3 minutes
Capacity	1.7 liter	1.7 liter
Material	glass	glass
Price	€ 26.99	€ 19.99
Rating	-	2.4/5 (out of 127 ratings)

Q17: Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

Attribute	Smartphone 1	Smartphone 2
Operating System	Android	Android
Battery Life	20 hours	20 hours
Storage Space	32GB	32GB
Price	€ 499	€ 579
Rating	Abstract: (69 reviews) "Phone broke down after one week of using it. I got a new one. Maybe this one will last longer." "I had some trouble with this smartphone. It is definitely not the best one available, but it's affordable." "Battery hardly lasts for one day and surf speed is rather slow (except for WIFI), but the camera is quite good and the screen is huge." …	-

Q18: Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

Attribute	Kettle 1	Kettle 2
Time span to heat water (1 liter)	3 minutes	3 minutes
Capacity	1.7 liter	1.7 liter
Material	glass	glass
Price	€ 34.99	€ 26.99
Rating	Abstract: (70 reviews) "Fast, clean and good-looking." "Fits perfectly into my kitchen. The exterior doesn't get hot when boiling, so kids can use the kettle as well. I am very satisfied." "I bought it about a month ago and use it every day. The kettle is still clean and it works perfectly well." …	-

Q19: I shop online on a regular basis.

strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

Q20: I am an impulsive buyer when shopping online.

strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

Q21: I am price sensitive when shopping online.

strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

Q22: After purchasing a product I like to give (positive or negative) feedback online for other customers.

strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

Q23: I trust in post-purchase feedback given by other customers.

strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. Results of the Questionnaire

2.1 General Findings

I shop online on a regular basis.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	4,2	4,2	4,2

	Disagree	33	27,5	27,5	31,7
	Undecided	19	15,8	15,8	47,5
	Agree	48	40,0	40,0	87,5
	Strongly agree	15	12,5	12,5	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

I am an impulsive buyer when shopping online.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	30	25,0	25,0	25,0
	Disagree	48	40,0	40,0	65,0
	Undecided	20	16,7	16,7	81,7
	Agree	22	18,3	18,3	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

I am price sensitive when shopping online.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	14	11,7	11,7	11,7
	Undecided	20	16,7	16,7	28,3
	Agree	64	53,3	53,3	81,7
	Strongly agree	22	18,3	18,3	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

After purchasing a product I like to give (positive or negative) feedback online for other customers.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	40	33,3	33,3	33,3
	Disagree	48	40,0	40,0	73,3
	Undecided	14	11,7	11,7	85,0
	Agree	16	13,3	13,3	98,3
	Strongly agree	2	1,7	1,7	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

I trust in post-purchase feedback given by other customers.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	3	2,5	2,5	2,5
	Disagree	8	6,7	6,7	9,2
	Undecided	23	19,2	19,2	28,3
	Agree	65	54,2	54,2	82,5
	Strongly agree	21	17,5	17,5	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

2.2 Hypothesis 1

Q2 Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Kettle: high price, positive eWOM (quantitative)	40	33,3	33,3	33,3
	Kettle: high price, positive eWOM (qualitative)	80	66,7	66,7	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q9 Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Smartphone: high price, positive eWOM (qualitative)	88	73,3	73,3	73,3
	Smartphone: high price, positive eWOM (quantitative)	32	26,7	26,7	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

2.3 Hypothesis 2

Statistics

		no eWOM	positive eWOM	no eWOM	negative eWOM
N	Valid	8	8	8	8
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		39,0625	60,9375	75,8250	24,1750

Case Summary[a]

				no eWOM	positive eWOM
Questions	Q03	1		58,30	41,70
		Total	N	1	1
	Q04	1		59,20	40,80
		Total	N	1	1
	Q06	1		16,70	83,30
		Total	N	1	1
	Q07	1		28,30	71,70
		Total	N	1	1
	Q10	1		40,00	60,00
		Total	N	1	1
	Q11	1		25,80	74,20
		Total	N	1	1
	Q13	1		49,20	50,80
		Total	N	1	1
	Q18	1		35,00	65,00
		Total	N	1	1
	Total	N		8	8

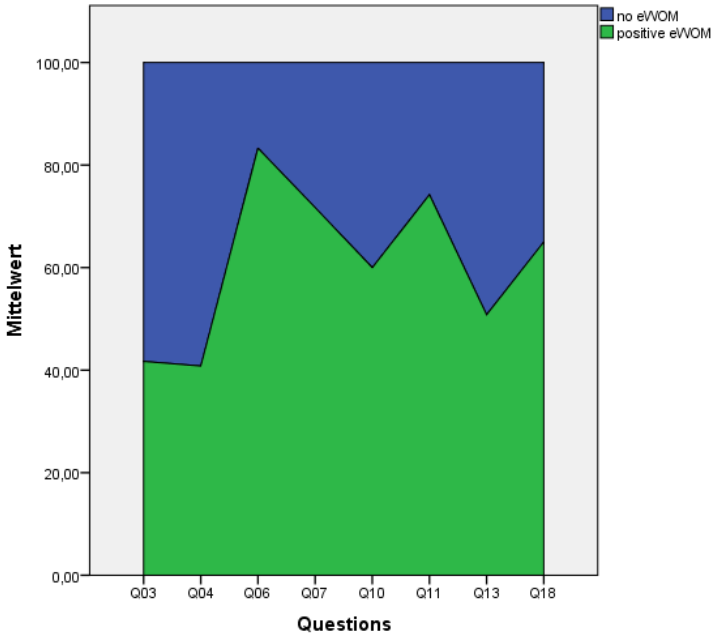
a. Limited to first 100 cases.

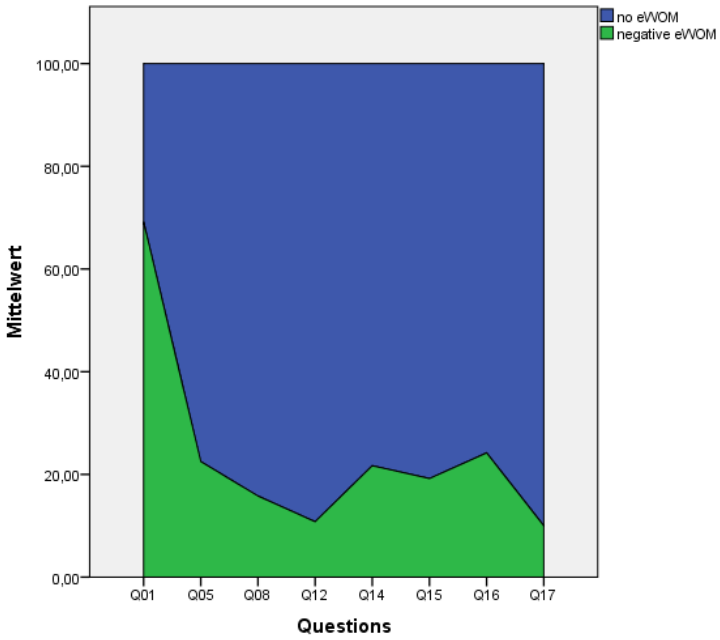
Case Summary[a]

				no eWOM	negative eWOM
Questions	Q01	1		30,80	69,20
		Total	N	1	1
	Q05	1		77,50	22,50
		Total	N	1	1
	Q08	1		84,20	15,80
		Total	N	1	1
	Q12	1		89,20	10,80

		Total	N	1	1
	Q14	1		78,30	21,70
		Total	N	1	1
	Q15	1		80,80	19,20
		Total	N	1	1
	Q16	1		75,80	24,20
		Total	N	1	1
	Q17	1		90,00	10,00
		Total	N	1	1
	Total	N		8	8

a. Limited to first 100 cases.





After purchasing a product I like to give (positive or negative) feedback online for other customers. * I trust in post-purchase feedback given by other customers. Crosstabulation

			I trust in post-purchase feedback given by other customers.					
			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
After purchasing a product I like to give (positive or negative) feedback online for other customers.	Strongly disagree	Count	2	4	8	18	8	40
		Std. Residual	1,0	,8	,1	-,8	,4	
	Disagree	Count	0	4	8	31	5	48
		Std. Residual	-1,1	,4	-,4	1,0	-1,2	
	Undecided	Count	0	0	5	5	4	14
		Std. Residual	-,6	-1,0	1,4	-,9	1,0	
	Agree	Count	0	0	2	10	4	16
		Std. Residual	-,6	-1,0	-,6	,5	,7	
	Strongly agree	Count	1	0	0	1	0	2
		Std. Residual	4,2	-,4	-,6	-,1	-,6	
Total		Count	3	8	23	65	21	120

2.5 Hypothesis 4

Q1 Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Kettle: medium price, no eWOM	37	30,8	30,8	30,8
	Kettle: low price, negative eWOM (quantitative)	83	69,2	69,2	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q14 Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Smartphone: low price, negative eWOM (quantitative)	26	21,7	21,7	21,7
	Smartphone: medium price, no eWOM	94	78,3	78,3	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q3 Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Smartphone: medium price, no eWOM	70	58,3	58,3	58,3
	Smartphone: high price, positive eWOM (quantitative)	50	41,7	41,7	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q13 Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Kettle: medium price, no eWOM	59	49,2	49,2	49,2

	Kettle: high price, positive eWOM (quantitative)	61	50,8	50,8	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q4 Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Kettle: medium-high price, positive eWOM (quantitative)	71	59,2	59,2	59,2
	Kettle: medium price, no eWOM	49	40,8	40,8	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q11 Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Smartphone: medium price, no eWOM	31	25,8	25,8	25,8
	Smartphone: medium-high price, positive eWOM (quantitative)	89	74,2	74,2	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q5 Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Kettle: medium price, no eWOM	93	77,5	77,5	77,5
	Kettle: low price, negative eWOM (qualitative)	27	22,5	22,5	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q8 Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Smartphone: low price, negative eWOM (qualitative)	19	15,8	15,8	15,8
	Smartphone: medium price, no eWOM	101	84,2	84,2	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q6 Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Smartphone: medium price, no eWOM	20	16,7	16,7	16,7
	Smartphone: medium-high price, positive eWOM (qualitative)	100	83,3	83,3	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q7 Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Kettle: medium price, no eWOM	34	28,3	28,3	28,3
	Kettle: medium-high price, positive eWOM (qualitative)	86	71,7	71,7	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q10 Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Smartphone: high price, positive eWOM (qualitative)	72	60,0	60,0	60,0

	Smartphone: medium price, no eWOM	48	40,0	40,0	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q18 Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Kettle: high price, positive eWOM (qualitative)	78	65,0	65,0	65,0
	Kettle: medium price, no eWOM	42	35,0	35,0	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q12 Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Kettle: medium price, no eWOM	107	89,2	89,2	89,2
	Kettle: medium-low price, negative eWOM	13	10,8	10,8	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q17 Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Smartphone: medium-low price, negative eWOM (qualitative)	12	10,0	10,0	10,0
	Smartphone: medium price, no eWOM	108	90,0	90,0	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q15 Which one of the two smartphones would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Smartphone: medium price, no eWOM	97	80,8	80,8	80,8
	Smartphone: medium-low price, negative eWOM (quantitative)	23	19,2	19,2	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

Q16 Which one of the two kettles would you purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Kettle: medium price, no eWOM	91	75,8	75,8	75,8
	Kettle: medium-low price, negative eWOM (quantitative)	29	24,2	24,2	100,0
	Total	120	100,0	100,0	

References

Abdellaoui, M., Vossmann, F. & Weber, M., 2005. Choice-Based Elicitation and Decomposition of Decision Weights for Gains and Losses Under Uncertainty. *Management Science*, 51(9), pp. 1384-1399.

Adomeit, S., 2008. *Kundenbindung im Web 2.0: Chancen im Business-to-Consumer-Bereich*, Hamburg: Diplomica Verlag GmbH.

Akin, Z. & Secilmis, I. E., 2015. Risk Behavior, Risk Perception and Online Shopping: An Experimental Approach. *IPEK Working Papers*, Issue 1507.

Akroush, M. N. & Al-Debei, M. M., 2015. An integrated model of factors affecting consumer attitudes towards online shopping. *Business Process Management Journal*, 21(6), pp. 1353-1376.

Alby, T., 2007. *Web 2.0: Konzepte, Anwendungen, Technologien.* München: Carl Hanser Verlag.

Alhidari, A., Iyer, P. & Paswan, A., 2015. Personal level antecedents of eWOM and purchase intention, on social networking sites. *Journal of Customer Behaviour*, 14(2), pp. 107-125.

Amblee, N. & Bui, T., 2012. Harnessing the Influence of Social Proof in Online Shopping: The Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Sales of Digital Microproducts. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 16(2), pp. 91-113.

Axel Springer, 2016. *Werbeausgaben im E-Commerce in Deutschland in den Jahren 2000 bis 2015 (in Millionen Euro).* [Online] Available at: http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/196993/umfrage/werbeausgaben-im-e-commerce-in-deutschland-seit-2000/
[Accessed 22 June 2016].

Bächle, M. & Lehmann, F. R., 2010. *E-Business: Grundlagen elektronischer Geschäftsprozesse im Web 2.0.* München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag GmbH.

Bauer, H. H., Große-Leege, D. & Rösger, J., 2008. *Interactive Marketing im Web 2.0: Konzepte und Anwendungen für ein erfolgreiches Marketingmanagement im Internet.* 2nd ed. München: Franz Vahlen GmbH.

Berekoven, L., Eckert, W. & Ellenrieder, P., 2009. *Marktforschung: Methodische Grundlagen und praktische Anwendung.* 12th ed. Wiesbaden: GWV Fachverlage.

bevh, 2016. *Top-10 Warengruppen im Online-Handel nach dem Umsatz in Deutschland in den Jahren 2014 und 2015 (in Millionen Euro).* [Online] Available at: http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/253188/umfrage/umsatzstarke-warengruppen-im-online-handel-in-deutschland/
[Accessed 22 June 2016].

Bezes, C., 2016. Comparing online and in-store risks in multichannel shopping. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 44(3), pp. 284-300.

Böcker, J., 2015. Die Customer Journey: Chance für mehr Kundennähe. In: D. D. V. e.V., ed. *Dialogmarketing Perspektiven 2014/2015: Tagungsband 9. wissenschaftlicher interdisziplinärer Kongress für Dialogmarketing.* Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, pp. 165-178.

Boniversum, 2016. *Anteil mobiler Einkäufer nach dem Alter und Geschlecht in Deutschland in den Jahren 2013 bis 2016.* [Online] Available at: http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/207390/umfrage/verteilung-von-alter-und-geschlecht-bei-mobilen-einkaeufern/
[Accessed 17 July 2016].

Booth, N. & Matic, J. A., 2011. Mapping and Leveraging Influencers in Social Media to Shape Corporate Perceptions. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, Volume 3, pp. 184-191.

Boyd, D. M. & Ellison, N. B., 2008. Social Network Sites: Definition, History and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Band 13, pp. 210-230.

Burton, J. & Khammash, M., 2010. Why do people read reviews posted on consumer-opinion portals?. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 26(3-4), pp. 230-255.

Cheung, C. M. K. & Lee, M. K. O., 2012. What drives consumers to spread electronic word of mouth in online consumer-opinion platforms. *Decision Support Systems*, Issue 53, pp. 218-225.

Chu, S.-C. & Kim, Y., 2011. Determinants of consumer engagement in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social networking sites. *International Journal of Advertising*, 30(1), pp. 47-75.

Cosenza, T. R., Solomon, M. R. & Kwon, W.-S., 2015. Credibility in the blogosphere: A study of measurement and influence of wine blogs as an information source. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, Volume 14, pp. 71-91.

Court, D., Elzinga, D., Mulder, S. & Vetvik, O. J., 2009. *McKinsey & Company: The consumer decision journey.* [Online] Available at: http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/the-consumer-decision-journey
[Accessed 12 June 2016].

Croome, R., Lawley, M. & Sharma, B., 2010. Antecedents of Purchase in the Online Buying Process. *Journal of Internet Business*, Issue 8, pp. 2-40.

de Jong, M. & Weber, M., 2014. *Creating Customer Loyalty in the Business Consumer Journey.* Novi Sad, s.n.

Domma, P., 2011. *Der Einfluss des Web 2.0 auf das Konsumentenverhalten im E-Commerce.* Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač.

Ebersbach, A., Glaser, M. & Heigl, R., 2011. *Social Web.* 2nd ed. Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft mbH.

Edelman, D. C. & Singer, M., 2015. Competing on customer journeys: You have to create new value at every step.. *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 88-100.

Egner-Duppich, C., 2008. *Vertrauen beim Online-Kauf: Entstehung und Wirkung von Vertrauen in konsumentenbezogenen Online-Kaufprozessen.* Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač.

Eilers, D., 2014. *Wirkung von Social Media auf Marken: Eine ganzheitliche Abbildung der Markenführung in Social Media.* Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien.

eMarketer, 2015. *E-Commerce-Umsatz im Einzelhandel weltweit in den Jahren 2012 bis 2014 sowie eine Prognose bis 2018 (in Milliarden US-Dollar).* [Online]
Available at: http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/244110/umfrage/globaler-umsatz-von-e-commerce/
[Accessed 22 June 2016].

eMarketer, 2016. *Anzahl der Nutzer sozialer Netzwerke weltweit in den Jahren 2010 bis 2015 sowie eine Prognose bis 2019 (in Milliarden).* [Online]
Available at: http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/219903/umfrage/prognose-zur-anzahl-der-weltweiten-nutzer-sozialer-netzwerke/
[Accessed 29 April 2016].

Flocke, L. & Holland, H., 2014. Die Customer Journey Analyse im Online Marketing. In: D. D. V. e.V., Hrsg. *Dialogmarketing Perspektiven 2013/2014: Tagungsband 8. wissenschaftlicher interdisziplinärer Kongress für Dialogmarketing.* Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, pp. 213-242.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 2014. *Umsatz im stationären Handel und im Online-Handel in Deutschland im Jahr 2013 und Prognose für 2020 (in Milliarden Euro).* [Online]
Available at: http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/295622/umfrage/umsatzprognose-im-stationaeren-handel-vs-online-handel-in-deutschland/
[Accessed 22 June 2016].

Gefen, D., Benbasat, I. & Pavlou, P. A., 2008. A Research Agenda for Trust in Online Environments. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 24(4), pp. 275-286.

GlobalWebIndex, 2015. *Ranking der Länder mit dem höchsten Anteil an Online-Käufern an allen Internetnutzern in ausgewählten Ländern weltweit im 1. Quartal 2015.* [Online] Available at: http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/482490/umfrage/anteil-der-online-kaeufer-nach-ausgewaehlten-laendern-weltweit/ [Accessed 22 June 2016].

Grabs, A. & Bannour, K.-P., 2012. *Follow me!: Erfolgreiches Social Media Marketing mit Facebook, Twitter und Co.*. 2nd ed. Bonn: Galileo Press.

Grabs, A. & Sudhoff, J., 2014. *Empfehlungsmarketing im Social Web: Kunden gewinnen und Kunden binden.* Bonn: Galileo Press.

Gräfe, G. & Maaß, C., 2015. Bedeutung der Informationsqualität bei Kaufentscheidungen im Internet. In: K. H. e. al., ed. *Daten- und Informationsqualität.* Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, pp. 169-191.

Heinemann, G., 2015. *Der neue Online-Handel: Geschäftsmodell und Kanalexzellenz im Digital Commerce.* 6th ed. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien.

Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G. & Gremler, D. D., 2004. Electronic Word-of-Mouth via Consumer-opinion Platforms: What Motivates Consumers to Articulate Themselves on the Internet?. *International Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(1), pp. 38-52.

Hinchcliffe, D. & Kim, P., 2012. *Social Business by Design: Transformative Social Media Strategies for the Connected Company.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Huber, F., Lenzen, M., Schönrock, B. & Stein, K., 2013. *Online-Shopping bei Konsumgütern: Ein empirischer Branchenvergleich zur Erklärung von Kaufabsicht und Aufpreisbereitschaft.* Köln: Josef Eul Verlag.

Kinter, A. & Ott, U., 2014. *Risikofaktor Social Web: Reputationsrisiken und -chancen managen.* Köln: Bank-Verlag GmbH.

Knotzer, N., 2008. *Product Recommendations in E-Commerce: Retailing Applications.* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Kojo, I., Heiskala, M. & Virtanen, J.-P., 2014. *Customer Journey Mapping of an Experience-Centric Service by Mobile Self-Reporting: Testing the Qualiwall Tool.* Heraklion, Springer International Publishing, pp. 261-272.

Köksal, Y. & Penez, S., 2015. An Investigation of the Important Factors Influence Web Trust in Online Shopping. *Journal of Marketing and Management*, 6(1), pp. 28-40.

Kotler, P. & Keller, K. L., 2016. *Marketing Management.* 15th Hrsg. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Kreis, H. & Gottschalk, S. A., 2015. Relating eWOM Motives to eWOM Channel Choice - Why Do We Post Where We do?. *Schmalenbach Business Review*, Volume 67, pp. 406-429.

Kuß, A., 2012. *Martkforschung: Grundlagen der Datenerhebung und Datenanalyse.* 4th ed. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien.

Laudon, K. C. & Guercio Traver, C., 2015. *E-commerce 2015: business.technology.society.* 11th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Lecinski, J., 2011. *Winning the zero moment of truth.* s.l.:Google Inc.

Lecinski, J., 2014. *ZMOT: Why It Matters Now More Than Ever.* [Online] Available at: https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/articles/zmot-why-it-matters-now-more-than-ever.html
[Accessed 23 June 2016].

Lis, B. & Korchmar, S., 2013. *Digitales Empfehlungsmarketing: Konzeption, Theorien und Determinanten zur Glaubwürdigkeit des Electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWOM),* Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien.

Mangold, W. G. & Faulds, D. J., 2009. Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons,* Volume 52, pp. 357-365.

Marquez, J. J., Downey, A. & Clement, R., 2015. Walking a Mile in the User's Shoes: Customer Journey Mapping as a Method to Understanding the User Experience. *Internet Reference Services Quarterly*, Issue 20, pp. 135-150.

Meuter, M. L., Brown McCabe, D. & Curran, J. M., 2013. Electronic Word-of-Mouth Versus Interpersonal Word-of-Mouth: Are All Forms of Word-of-Mouth Equally Influential?. *Services Marketing Quartlery*, Band 34, pp. 240-256.

Möbert, P., 2015. Chancen und Grenzen des "Social Business". In: C. Linnhoff-Popien, M. Zaddach & A. Grahl, eds. *Marktplätze im Umbruch: Digitale Strategien für Services im Mobilen Internet.* Berlin: Springer Verlag, pp. 191-202.

Musser, J. & O'Reilly, T., 2007. *Web 2.0 Principles and Best Practices*, Sebastopol: O'Reilly Media, Inc..

Norton, D. W. & Pine II, B. J., 2013. Using the customer journey to road test and refine the business model. *Strategy & Leadership*, Issue 41, pp. 12-17.

O'Reilly, T., 2005. *What Is Web 2.0?: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software.* [Online] Available at: http://www.oreilly.de/artikel/web20.html [Zugriff am 08 April 2016].

Pires, G., Stanton, J. & Eckford, A., 2004. Influences on the perceived risk of purchasing online. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 4(2), pp. 118-131.

Plennert, S. & Robra-Bissantz, S., 2014. *Ein Serious Game als neue qualitative Erhebungsmethode für die Customer Journey beim Automobilkauf.* Bonn, Gesellschaft für Informativ e.V..

Roth, A. & Schrott, P. R., 2006. Online- und traditioneller Käufer im Vergleich: Eine empirische Analyse. *der markt*, 45(3), pp. 157-167.

Singh, S. & Singh, B., 2014. A cross sectional study of online shopping behavior trends of electronics in UEA: A case of Ajman. *Middle East Journal of Business*, 9(3), pp. 22-30.

Sun, S.-Y. & Chen, L.-S., 2014. Exploring the Servicing Effectiveness of Social Media in Consumers' Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). *International Journal of Organizational Innovation*, 6(3), pp. 63-67.

Tversky, A. & Kahneman, D., 1991. Loss Aversion in Riskless Choice: A Reference-dependent Model. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, November, pp. 1039-1061.

Weisfeld-Spolter, S., Sussan, F. & Gould, S., 2014. An integrative approach to eWOM and marketing communications. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 19(3), pp. 260-274.

Yang, H., 2013. Market Mavens in Social Media: Examining Young Chinese Consumers' Viral Marketing Attitude, eWOM Motive, and Behavior. *Journal of Asia-Pacific Business*, Issue 14, pp. 154-178.

Yang, J., Mai, E. S. & Ben-Ur, J., 2012. Did you tell me the truth?: The influence of online community on eWOM. *International Journal of Market Research*, 54(3), pp. 369-389.

Yildirim, E., Arslan, Y. & Barutcu, M. T., 2016. The Role of Uncertainty Avoidance and Indulgence as Cultural Dimensions on Online Shopping Expenditure. *Eurasian Business & Economics Journal*, Volume 4, pp. 42-51.

Affidavit / Eidesstattliche Erklärung

I declare that I wrote this thesis independently and on my own. I clearly marked any language or ideas borrowed from other sources as not my own and documented their sources. The thesis does not contain any work that I have handed in or have had graded as a Prüfungsleistung earlier on.

I am aware that any failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's thoughts or words as if they were my own—even if I summarize, paraphrase, condense, cut, rearrange, or otherwise alter them. I am aware of the consequences and sanctions plagiarism entails. Among others, consequences may include nullification of the thesis, exclusion from the BA program without a degree, and legal consequences for lying under oath. These consequences also apply retrospectively, i.e. if plagiarism is discovered after the thesis has been accepted and graded.

Ich erkläre hiermit, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbständig verfasst und nur die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Wörtlich oder dem Sinn nach aus anderen Werken entnommene Stellen sind unter Angabe der Quelle als Entlehnung kenntlich gemacht. Die Arbeit enthält kein Material, das ich bereits zu einem früheren Zeitpunkt als Prüfungsleistung eingereicht habe.

Mir ist bewusst, dass die ungekennzeichnete Übernahme fremder Texte oder fremder Ideen als Plagiat gilt, selbst wenn diese zusammengefasst, umschrieben, gekürzt, oderanderweitig verändert wurden. Die Konsequenzen eines Plagiats sind mir bekannt. Die möglichen Konsequenzen umfassen, unter anderem, ein Nichtbestehen der Bachelorarbeit, den Ausschluss von weiteren Prüfungsleistungen im Studiengang, oderzivilrechtliche Konsequenzen, die mit dieser eidesstattlichen Erklärung verbunden sind. Diese Konsequenzen können auch nachträglich zur Anwendung kommen, also nachdem die Arbeit angenommen und korrigiert wurde.

My name: Nina Baudis

Title of my thesis: The Influence of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Buying Decisions on the Internet

Date:

Signature: