Effect of eWOM on consumers purchasing decision making process

Mohamad Alkhalil

Supervisor: Besma Glaa
English title:
Effect of eWOM on consumers purchasing decision making process

Authors:
Mohamad Alkhalil

Advisor:
Besma Glaa

Publication type:
Master’s Thesis in Business Administration
Strategy and Management in International Organizations
Advanced level, 30 credits
Spring semester 2019
ISRN-number: LIU-IEI-FIL-A--19/03199--SE

Linköping University
Department of Management and Engineering (IEI)
www.liu.se
Abstract

People in the past were trying to get information through libraries, magazines or marketing agencies that were created specifically to attract consumers. In the age of the Internet people have been able to communicate with each other around the world after it was one-way communication in the pre-Internet age. Two-way communication has led to the creation of a product purchase website that encourages people to share and publish their views. Today, people looking for the best and most satisfying purchase option that makes multiple alternatives available. Online reviews can increase or decrease the life of these alternatives in the decision-making process. Due to the importance of online reviews in a person's decision, this study aims to investigate and evaluate how and whether online reviews affect the person's decision-making process. The problem is mainly about people's opinion of online reviews, and why they use them, the impact of the electronic word of mouth versus the word of mouth, to what extent online reviews are used to make potential decisions for consumers. In order to obtain the results of the study, focus group were conducted with four of semi-structured interviews. In order to obtain the results of the study, interviews were conducted with the focus group as well as a number of semi-structured interviews. The results showed the dominance of online reviews of a person's decision. Study participants believe that it is good to rely on online reviews to obtain information, while at the same time believing that these reviews do not affect the final outcome but can affect the details of the product or service to be purchased.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, decision-making process, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), word of mouth, social media, Prisjakt.nu, online reviews.
# Table of Contents

1. **Introduction** ................................................................. 1  
   1.1. Background ........................................................................ 1  
   1.2. Research Problem ............................................................ 3  
   1.3. Research Purpose and Questions ....................................... 5  

2. **Literature Review** ............................................................ 6  
   2.1. Traditional Communication Theories .................................. 6  
   2.2. Referral Marketing ............................................................ 7  
   2.3. Social Media .................................................................... 8  
   2.4. WOM vs. eWOM .............................................................. 12  
     2.4.1. WOM ........................................................................ 12  
     2.4.2. eWOM ..................................................................... 13  
   2.5. Online Reviews ................................................................. 14  
   2.6. Motives for Reading eWOM .............................................. 14  
   2.7. Consumer Decision-Making Process ................................. 16  

3. **Methodology** ..................................................................... 19  
   3.1. Choice of Methodology .................................................. 19  
     3.1.1. Quantitative Methods ................................................ 19  
     3.1.2 Qualitative Methods .................................................... 20  
   3.2. Research Method ............................................................ 20  
   3.3. Data collection Tools ...................................................... 21  
     3.3.1. Semi-structured interviews ......................................... 21  
     3.3.2. Focused groups ......................................................... 22  
   3.4. Sampling .......................................................................... 24  
   3.5. Validity and Reliability ................................................... 25  
   3.6. Conducting of data collecting tools ................................... 26  

4. **Empirical Finding** ............................................................. 29  

5. **Discussion** ....................................................................... 35  

6. **Conclusion and Future Research** ....................................... 40  

7. **References** ....................................................................... 41  

8. **Appendix** ......................................................................... 47
List of Figure

**Figure 1** Illustrates Interaction between Communication Elements ..................................................7

**Figure 2** Illustrates a Typology of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) Channels .................................8

**Figure 3** Illustrate eWOM Activities ..................................................................................................16

**Figure 4** Internet Allows More Information to Be Collected ..................................................................33

**Figure 5** Conceptual Framework of Determinants of e-WOM Influence .............................................36
1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The invention of the Internet was a revolution in itself, a revolution that was a radical shift from the stereotyped way people used to shop. Today, the consumer no longer has to adhere to specific working hours or locations, as he can buy products and services anytime, anywhere. The Internet is today the latest means of exchanging information and communication that has become a reality in our daily lives. The increasing number of Internet users is terrifying, which inevitably means an increase in purchases through it (Joines, et al., 2003). This rapid increase is defined by the growth in the use of technology in addition to changes in consumer behavior (Oppenheim & Ward, 2006). When consumers decide to shop online they have to do a process of online shopping, where the Internet has evolved into a new distribution channel these days (Hollensen, 2004), and the development of this channel or what is known today as (e-commerce) is the most important contribution to the information revolution according to Smith and Rupp (2003).

Shopping online and what it involves from a searching for products and information about them is one of the main reasons for using the Internet (Joines, et al., 2003). Smith and Rob (2003) also stated that consumers did not achieve access to many suppliers and opinions about products/services, which made the Internet evolve into a competitive market where competition is fierce over the consumer. Constantinides (2004) explained that the first step to maintaining and influencing consumers in a competitive market is to identify aspects that can affect online purchasing. Word of mouth (WOM) plays a significant role in shaping the consumers’ attitudes and behaviors and is also known as referral marketing (Brown & Reingen, 1987).

Studies conducted during the 1960s and early 1970s have shown that personal influence is characterized by its continuing importance, and television in that period was the only way to appear. There is not much knowledge about WOM (also known as informal marketing communication) as we know about formal marketing communication, thus many marketers rely on these informal channels (Reingen & Kernan, 1986). WOM is considered as a recommendation by a second party and also part of the advertising promotion mix. It is also a term that reflects important dialogues between consumers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The
sender is considered to be independent of the market and is a marketing communication channel under the control of the consumer (Brown, et al., 2007).

The new phenomenon (social media) has significantly changed the tools and strategies of communicating with customers, introducing a variety of new sources of information over the Internet with a focus on educating others about products, brands, services, personalities and problems (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). For many years, the influence of the WOM has been confessed on people's behavior, feelings and knowledge. WOM which is supported by researchers are the most influential in behavior compared to other sources (Buttle, 1998). Because of the new way of communicating through social networking sites and its great speed in spreading personal messages, WOM has acquired a new distinction, even though it is an old tradition (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2013).

Tie strength (the intensity of a social relation between similar consumers) and homophile (communication between similar consumers) are popular factors among earlier researchers. This tie strength aims to promote understanding of WOM's behavior because these concepts address the assets of social relations that are the origin of WOM's behavior. The assets of social relations may play an important role in WOM's behavior in both micro and macro analysis (Brown & Reingen, 1987). Because they are dynamic new ways of communication and very little is known about them, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and social media have not had traditional marketing models. The eWOM's two-way many to-many communication system enables users to connect, create, produce, and share media content like never before. Social media have transformed consumers from mere observers into active and active participants. Social media and eWOM have transformed consumers from mere observers into active and vivid participants.

WOM is also one of the most important marketing components, with high credibility, less biased information and reliable valuations by consumers (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2013). The last few years, the popularity of social networking sites has increased, and sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn have become as wild as wildfire, which changed the way WOM's effects were taken into account. This in turn has made marketers benefit from social media in the process of creating awareness and purchasing products (Coulter & Roggeveen,
A social media generally involves a collection of user profiles where they can share information with others.

Users can choose between creating new content and using content created by other users. In most social networking sites, users can add other users to their contacts. Normally one user initiates the invitation, and the other user accepts or rejects the invitation. If the invitation is being accepted, the two profiles become linked, and is referred to as a “Friend-Network” (Coulter & Roggeveen, 2012). The study in this new field of WOM and its impact on the consumer’s purchasing decision is something that has been absent from studies related to this area. The need for this study stems from the need to gain a greater understanding of what affects the consumers and how to rely on this understanding in the growth of companies and give them greater value. In this thesis, the author are looking at the eWOM process from a customer’s perspective. The author have chosen this perspective due to the correspondent to our study and our problem.

1.2. Research Problem

During 1960s and 1970s, a number of models (such as Engel, Kollat and Blackwell, 1968; Howard and Sheth, 1969; Nicosia, 1976) were developed to illustrate consumers’ decision making behavior and factors affecting it. In the following decades, these models remained the main reference source. Changes in consumer behavior, though, as a result of the increased use of the Internet channel and adaptation of the new environment decision making (Xia & Sudharshan, 2002), have recently raised the need to develop new realization for this particular context.

Social media has changed the assumptions about the purchase process, as they have emerged as a modern and sophisticated vision of how consumers deal with brands (Hudson & Thal, 2013). The researchers confirmed that WOM is more effective at nine times more than advertising in converting negative or neutral attitudes to positive approaches (Buttle, 1998). However, there have still been many unanswered questions while a steady investigation into the impact of eWOM on online sales has been conducted in recent years.

Research has shown that eWOM for decision-making and social benefits are read and written by the customer and this undoubtedly impacts the purchase decisions (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh,
Little information is known as to the effect and extent to be affected by certain types of eWOM, such as online text reviews, or numerical ratings, on the four stages of the decision-making. The main challenges are the nature of online reviews, and why consumers use them, the impact of the electronic word of mouth versus the word of mouth, to what extent online reviews are used to make potential decisions for consumers. To fully understand these issues the author first had to investigate the stages of the decision making process of consumers.

The process of consumer decision-making goes through four stages: • Consideration • Evaluation • Buy • Enjoy advocate and bond

At the “consider” stage: Visits to the company's sites are attracted by social media campaigns. These campaigns invite the followers of different companies to participate and compete by sharing the content of the different participating companies (Hudson & Thal, 2013).

At the “evaluation” stage: Consumers will often communicate with marketers and other sources in order to build more secure options than the marketer's efforts to convince consumers, Because of social networking sites and WOM, companies are no longer brand and product experts (Hudson & Thal, 2013). Online brand communities can also have an impact at the evaluation stage. Online brand communities can be defined as non-geographically specialized communities based on a number of social relationships organized among brand fans (Hudson & Thal, 2013). According to Kotler and Keller (2012), even if consumers make up a brand valuation, two common factors can interfere with the intention to purchase and make the purchase decision.

The first factor is Attitudes of others. Two things decide what influences another person’s attitude: 1. Negative attitude of other person. The consumer will adjust his or her intention to buy more if that person is closer to him or is more passive. The same is valid regarding the other person’s positivism (Kotler & Keller, 2012). According to Kotler and Keller (2012), consumer reports linked to others' attitudes provide unbiased reviews of all types of products and services. This external assessment inevitably affects consumers.

The second factor is unforeseen circumstances. Purchasing behavior does not depend entirely on predictions such as preferences and purchase intentions. Potential risks are likely to have a significant impact on the consumer's decision to modify, avoid or delay the purchase decision.
Therefore, consumers typically take certain measures to reduce these risks, such as avoiding listening to friends (Kotler & Keller, 2012). To gain a greater understanding in this field of research and how eWOM affect consumer-purchasing decision the author will do a more thorough analysis of the already existing literature in the following chapter.

As for the third stage "Buy", when consumers are ready to buy a product, marketers must provide a streamlined conversion route for easy purchases. Advertisers should consider ad placement, tonalities, device optimization and promotions so that their messages are in alignment with intent users. Ultimately, it provides a high-quality user experience.

These phases of consumer decision making process take place after purchase and support brands in their long term marketing activities. Consumers use the service or the product and provide feedback via digital reviews or word of mouth during experiences and advocacy stages. Positive and negative feedback impacts other consumers during the assessment and provides marketers with valuable information for future marketing strategies. This final phase is dependent on the success of the marketing initiatives of the brand and the subjective opinion of the consumer. If consumers identify with the brand positively, they are going into the bonding stage and are more likely to buy the product again. Marketers in a full circle are striving to reach this stage by influencing their target audience on key points: consideration, evaluation, experience, advocacy and bond in order to retain loyal customers.

1.3. Research Purpose and Questions

This study aims to achieve the following objective: To achieve a better understanding of how eWOM influence the customer's decision to purchase. This research aims to explore how social media impacts the decision making process, in order to improve understanding of the role and influence of eWOM on consumer behavior.

To achieve the objective of this study, the following study question must be answered:

How does the Electronic Word of Mouth affect the consumer decision to purchase?
2. Literature Review

Social media have received attention globally as electronic tools in the business domain which transform the traditional marketing and advertising landscape (Sigala, et al., 2012) and provide practitioners with a way to interact and share audio and visual content in order to enrich and facilitate online conversations (Community Futures, 2012). Social media have generally been depicted as an important information exchange and interaction platform among companies and consumers and between users, as well as broader mediators, supervisors and Non-Profit stakeholders (Xiang and Gretzel 2010).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Research has shown that eWOM for decision-making and social benefits are read and written by the customer and this undoubtedly impacts the purchase decisions. The research gap is obvious through the fact that there is little information known about the effect and extent to be affected by certain types of eWOM, such as online text reviews. Lack of empirical evidence on online purchase decision-making process and lack of understanding of the individual characteristics’ influence on the process are other significant issues. This chapter presents relevant scientific studies and theories previously made in the area of the research problem "eWOM impact on the customer's purchase decision-making process". This literature review will achieve a broader understanding of the topic area.

2.1. Traditional Communication Theories

According to traditional theories of communication, social communication includes four major elements: communicator (sender), stimulus (message), receiver (audience), and response (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). The person who transmits the communication is the communicator. The stimulus is the message the communicator transmits. The recipient is the person who responses to the communication. The response is a reaction to the receiver's communication. Thus eWOM is a new form of communication between a communicator and a receiver. In the process of social communication, understanding of interactions between the four elements mentioned above is important. (Figure 1)
In general, consumers find it so important to hear other’s opinions before or during purchase decisions with the engagement of interpersonal communication. Consequently, receivers are most likely affected by their decision-making because they interact and communicate. Previous studies studied the same interpersonal influence process in the traditional context which included reference groups (Bearden, et al., 1989) and WOM effects (Bearden, et al., 1989; Herr et al., 1991). This paper therefore assumes that the effect of eWOM "is the effect of eWOM on the decision-making of consumers."

2.2. Referral Marketing

Buttle (1998) stated that there are two widely split referral types groups: customer referrals and non-customer referrals. Customer-initiated referrals originate from existing or former customers who have been satisfied or delighted with their experiences. They are acting as advocates who are not paid. Several companies are trying to do this by giving customers incentives to refer their friends and family to harness the power of word of mouth (WOM). In addition to customer referrals, companies can benefit from many other referral sources (Buttle, 1998).
Reciprocal referrals occur when two or more organizations agree to cross-refer clients to each other. This is common in professional marketing services, and some of the referral activities may be unidirectional, as a doctor may recommend a consultant. Internal referrals can be abundant within an organization (Buttle, 1998).

Reingen and Kernan (1986) suggest that referral networks can be usefully studied. For example, an analysis that focuses on the degree and extent of a node (i.e., the number of arrows coming in and out, respectively) provides a direct examination of opinion leaders that are traditionally evaluated only based on self-designated data. Industry evidence shows that social media has introduced referral marketing to a new level of opportunity. Due to the phenomenon of social media, the way of communication has changed.

2.3. Social Media

The communications landscape was significantly altered by the revolution in social media and had an impact on marketing communication. Various types of electronic media affect individuals' relationships. Each has a variety of features. Some are synchronous like instant messaging; others, like email and blogs, are asynchronous. Certain communications interconnect one consumer with another, such as e-mail, while others connect one consumer with many others (web pages). Others flow into a new marketing paradigm, the Internet chat rooms 'many-to-many communication'. (Figure 2)

**Figure 2** Illustrates a typology of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) channels
The influence of applications such as Facebook, Twitter, and others on the lives of consumers and the communication habits of consumers has increased tremendously. Consumers are spending on social media more time, and within these new social network environments, there is a growing share of communication. As a result, the emerging communication setup has transformed consumers from passive marketing participants to active creators and influencers and has shifted some power directly to consumers over brands (Hutter, et al., 2013). Hutter et al. (2013) stated that new marketing communication, influenced by social media interactions, poses unique challenges and opportunities for companies. People rely on their social networks more than ever to make purchase decisions. As a growing part of this network is located within the social media space and a large part of the network communication occurs in this space, social media platforms play an essential role in consumer decision-making (Hutter, et al., 2013).

Integrated marketing communications seek to coordinate and control the various elements of the promotional mix—Publicity, public relations, advertising, direct marketing, personal selling, and sales promotion—to produce a unified customer-focused message and thus achieve different organizational goals. Also, Social media is referred to as consumer-generated media; on the contrary, communicating with customers has changed tools and strategies (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Mangold and Faulds (2009) have mentioned that a wide range of online, word-of-mouth (WOM) forums including blogs, internet discussion boards and forums, consumer-to-consumer e-mails, consumer product or service ratings websites and forums, and social networking websites is what social media consists of. Social media has two interrelated promotional roles on the marketplace according to Mangold and Faulds (2009). First, social media allows companies to communicate with their customers, and second, it will enable customers to communicate with each other. Besides, social media also allows clients to interact with companies.

Examples of Social Media
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social networking sites</td>
<td>MySpace, Facebook, Twitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity works sharing sites</td>
<td>YouTube, Flickr, Jamendo.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User-sponsored blogs</td>
<td>The Unofficial Apple Weblog, Cnet.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company-sponsored websites/blogs</td>
<td>Apple.com, P&amp;G’s Vocal point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company-sponsored cause/help sites</td>
<td>Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty, click2quit.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitation-only social networks</td>
<td>ASmallWorld.net</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business networking sites</td>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative websites</td>
<td>Wikipedia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual world</td>
<td>Second Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce communities</td>
<td>eBay, Amazon.com, Craig’s List, iStockphoto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podcasts</td>
<td>For Immediate Release: The Hobson and Holtz Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News delivery sites</td>
<td>Current TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational materials sharing</td>
<td>MIT Open Courseware, MERLOT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Open Source Software communities  | Mozilla’s spreadfirefox.com, Linux.org
Social bookmarking sites allowing users to recommend online  | Digg, del.icio.us, News vine, Mixx it, Reddit

**Source:** Social Media: The new Hybrid Element of the Promotion Mix (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Mangold and Faulds (2009) discussed that social media is a hybrid aspect of the promotion mix as it combines traditional attributes of integrated marketing tools (client-speaking companies) with a strongly enhanced form of word of mouth (customers speaking to each other) whereby marketing managers cannot control such information content and occurrence. It is also a hybrid because it is derived from mixed techniques and media origins that allow immediate, real-time communication and utilizes multimedia formats and many delivery platforms that have global reach capacity. (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

According to Mangold and Faulds (2009), the second promotional role, the possibility for customers to communicate is unique in social media. Not all social media are, however, the same (as shown in table 2.1). The platforms differ from a technological perspective, and therefore the rules of use and functionality are defined (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). There is also some variation, as indicated by Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011), in how people use these platforms and/or related applications. The old rule of an unhappy customer tells ten people, is outdated with the help of social media. In the new era, social media provides the customer with tools for virtually overnight reaching ten million consumers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Besides, the ability of the consumer to communicate with each other limits the number of companies in charge of the dissemination of content and information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In the age of social media, consumers are in control, with uncountable access to information and better control over media use than ever (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The effective use of social media can significantly benefit the company as Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011) have pointed out.
2.4. WOM vs. eWOM

2.4.1. WOM

Buttle (1998) defined 'Word of mouth' as oral interaction between a recipient and a communicator (person-to-person), and it can also be informal marketing communication (Reingen & Kernan, 1986). Concerning brand, product or service, the communicator is considered by the recipient to be non-commercial (Buttle, 1998). Kimmel and Kitchen (2013) stated that WOM is the action of a consumer that produces and/or distributes marketing-related data to another consumer.

WOM results in the intention to engage in social interaction to satisfy self-needs. The motivation for positive WOM is mainly self-improvement, and negative WOM is primarily driven by self-affirmation (Alexandrov, et al., 2013). Kimmel and Kitchen (2013) are also justified in referring to self-improvement as the reason for spreading the WOM, just as the opportunity for spreading WOMs.

WOM has been demonstrated to affect a range of circumstances including awareness, perception, attitudes, behavior, behavioral intentions and expectation (Buttle, 1998). Besides, several findings show several reasons why people are involved in WOM. Satisfaction, commitment, quality, confidence, loyalty, and perceived value are the key elements of WOM (Alexandrov, et al., 2013).

WOM positively or negatively influences decisions, and it would appear that the negative WOM is more potent than the positive WOM (Buttle, 1998). Studies also show that when negative WOMs (NWOMs) are high, positive WOM (PWOM) also tends to be high (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2013). Besides, studies show PWOM is more memorable than NWOM (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2013). Emotions affect WOM and usually express performance, confirmation and therapeutic feelings (Alexandrov, et al., 2013). Another conviction about NWOM is that if it comes from unhappy clients, it has a higher effect on the recipients than PWOM has. It can be presumed that because of the infrequency, NWOM attracts more attention and makes NWOM more surprising (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2013).
2.4.2. eWOM

During the IT revolution, the conventional WOM evolved into an electronic mouth word (eWOM), a new form of communication. eWOM is very different from traditional WOM (Cheung & Lee, 2012). According to Gupta and Harris (2010), Consumers may be subject to eWOM through web sites, blogs, chatrooms, and e-mail and the absence of social information within eWOM force consumers to evaluate the eWOM's persuasively based only on content (Zhang, et al., 2010). Unlike traditional WOM eWOM has extraordinary speed and scalability (Cheung & Lee, 2012), and generally, there is no familiarity between senders and receivers (Gupta & Harris, 2010). In eWOM communications, multi-way information exchanges take place. In contrast with the traditional WOM, eWOM is more assiduous and manageable (Cheung & Lee, 2012).

Moreover, conventional WOMs are less measurable than eWOMs. The presentation quantity, format, and persistence of eWOM are more measurable and observable for eWOM. eWOM reduces the receiver's ability to measure the sender and its message in many settings by factors such as credibility (Cheung & Lee, 2012). eWOM has received considerable theoretical and management attention in recent years. Moreover, eWOM is an essential factor in shaping consumer behavior because, due to consumer opinions, information is more influential among consumers.

Some studies show that consumers generally perceive negative messages to be more persuasive than positive messages. On the contrary, further studies find the opposite. Zhang et al. (2010) study results show significant, simple effects when assessing product associated with promotional consumer goals, and that the participants consider the positive product review as more persuasive than the negative product review. In contrast, when examining a product related to prevention consumption targets, participants perceive the negative review to be more influential than the positive review. Consumers, therefore, have positive prejudices for products linked to promotional consumption goals and negative prevention targets for products (Zhang, et al., 2010).

The overall results of Zhang et al. study (2010) show that consumers do not correspond with positive and negative weight product reviews. Consumer consumption objectives for the product under review trigger consumer evaluations positively and negatively for product
evaluations (Zhang, et al., 2010). Gupta & Harris (2010) results suggest that eWOM recommendations have an impact on consideration and decision-making. Furthermore, its findings indicate that eWOM will likely lead to more extended time analysis of information in general and a more extensive examination of the product recommended by consumers for whom the data has been processed (Gupta & Harris, 2010). Moreover, according to the conclusions of Gupta and Harris (2010), evidence that even limited amounts of eWOM can lead to suboptimal decisions and influence choice also raises an interesting ethical issue.

2.5. Online Reviews

The broadest available and most extensive kind of eWOM is online reviews or online buyer review (Chatterjee, 2001). Customer opinions and encounters based on a specific brand, product or administration are online reviews (Lee, et al., 2008). It is necessary to know that eWOM substance manufacturers could be potential, genuine, former customers who comment on items/management or brand; however, the content of online reviews consists of buyers who purchased the item and experienced it. Online buyer reviews serve two specific jobs, including providing and submitting information as suggestions on items and administrations (Park, et al., 2007). Online reviews are sent to retailers, but autonomous third-party administrators frequently facilitate them (Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2004).

According to Opinion Research, around two-thirds of participants read web reviews in detail to illuminate another purchase. Online reviews prove to be essential if customers are not prepared to decide on an individual item or administration. They tend to rely on this type of eWOM to moderate risks regarding product quality and organizational reliability. Besides, 70% of the client base has received trust evaluations posted on the Web in the Nielsion Global Online Consumer Survey (Cerecwich, 2009). Yayli and Bayram (2009) found that the reliability of the purchasers depends on the consistent quality and prominence of the locally supportive review. Consequently, the website managers or facilitators work to enhance the consistent quality of their online review sources.

2.6. Motives for Reading eWOM

The effect of online reviews on potentially exploring people isn't surprising; however, why are consumers willing to rely on the findings of externals when they want to take a decision to
purchase? Influenced by shoppers in their online, in administrators have been tremendously regarded (Kim, et al., 2015). Chu & Kim, (2011) proposed in their study that purchasers should search for online reviews for three fundamental purposes.

Quality is the key factors, such as finding the best offers and cash incentives. Secondly, looking for social comfort and being informed about what happens on the market. Thirdly, risk should be lowered, in light of the varied nature of the product and all available data (Chu & Kim, 2011). It is also suggested that people do not have such convincing factors in web surveys, as women are bound to scan eWOM reviews and to detect a risk reduction and to find the best incentive for cash (Chu & Kim, 2011). Potential customers regard online access to data based on numerous reviews. Dependent on different measures, online reviews could be broken down.

Hennig-Thurau et al., (2004) points out that there are two types of behavior in eWOM correspondence that are typical to be recognized concerning customer commitment: eWOM transmission and exposure behavior. The latter shows factors that identify why buyers are open to eWOM. Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003) investigated the eight unique intentions in the e-WOM process and organized them into five different factors: social guidance through information, membership of the community, the collection of purchasing-related information, payment and the way a product is consumed.

The principal factor is thinking processes including time and risk reduction. Currently, there is an extensive collection of goods available on the Web and off - the Web, and the seller gives regularly long and tedious data and details. EWOM helps shoppers collect information that they need to make a quick and reasonable choice for shoppers. At a time where buyers are faced with decisions that show moderate to high risk, they are more and more persuaded to search for information. The second factor is the guarantee of social position and reduction of dissonance (Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2004).

This includes evaluating the advantages of eminence or reducing subjective inconsistencies that can arise if the information on alternative offerings and from a variety of sources conflict. The third factor indicates which components are connected to a virtual network and which products are new in the shopping center. Remuneration is the fourth factor that refers to circumstances in which customer financial motives are provided to review and evaluate customer service or
commodity surveys. As indicated by Park et al. (2007), customers depend more on eWOM as good's attributes turn out to be progressively perplexing and specialized.

### 2.7. Consumer Decision-Making Process

The true features of a product bought on the Internet cannot always be experienced by customers; there are challenges in making the correct purchasing decision. A series of studies have been carried out on the efficacy of eWOM. These can be categorized into two types of research: market level and individual level, where the difference between these two aspects is how the information is viewed. EWOM research is the result of complex customer activities in the eWOM system. In many previous studies, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has been one of the most significant sources of information when shopping on the Internet (Cheung, Luo, Sian and Chen 2009; Park and Kim 2008; Liu et al. 2015).

Cheung and Thadani (2012) concluded that 91% of users wished to refer, before purchasing new products or services, to online reviews, blogs and other forms of Users' generated content (UGC), while 46% indicated that this content affected their choices. As the Web 2.0 develops rapidly, online user reviews are presented in many forms. Examinations may be done locally (on a particular product, Web site or platform) distributed (on a Facebook page of a company), or in comparison service (platforms that provide general consumer evaluations exclusively on goods and services such as TripAdvisor or Yelp) (Pettersen, 2017).

In the explanation of eWOM activities, three main parts are required (Figure 2). This model used the previous efforts of eWOM research to: 1) identify the product information process by regarding eWOM as a cumulative customer opinion and its relationship with other market level signals (Market Level); or 2) identify the decision-making process of a customer, by considering eWOM as information-based (individual level);

*Figure 3* Illustrate eWOM activities
The consumer decision-making process, as reported by Hutter et al. (2013), includes the various steps taken by consumers when making a buying decision. This involves all stages from the recognition of the need to finding information on possible ways to satisfy the need before purchase, evaluating alternative options for the actual purchase and the post-purchase process, including product experience and assessment (Hutter, et al., 2013).

According to Hutter et al. (2013), consumers must take daily due to numerous decision-making processes, and consumer overloads have developed certain customs and heuristics. These habits are shortcuts and thumb rules that can be used to manage mental overload. In research on consumer behavior, particular attention has been paid to the product attitude, brand, company, practice, and advertising, etc. The Internet, which is specific to the electronic market, contains new constructions such as a website attitude (Castañeda, et al., 2009).

Brands are the most common rule and make many buying decisions easier. Besides, they offer reassuring links to experience, satisfaction, and knowledge with current and future decisions. As a result, brands play an essential role in the decision-making of consumers and guide consumers through a purchase decision. (Hutter, et al., 2013). We should be able to forecast behaviors according to Casteñada et al. (2009) if we know which attitudes are relevant to certain stimuli. The concept of attitude is historically commonly defined in terms which underline its predictive relationship to behavior.

The advent of the Internet has exacerbated the consumer effect of eWOM. Khammash (2008) examined quantitatively one eWOM form, the consumer reviews online, and why consumers rely on product reviews before concluding whether to order or buy a product online. He pointed
out that there are differentiations in levels of effect on various aspects of consumer behavior among drivers seeking other opinions in online consumer reviews (Product information abstract). Online consumer reviews were used as an information-search basis and have an impact on their purchasing behavior. Online consumer reviews provide decision support, feedback mechanisms for consumers and a recommendation system for an online platform for shopping. (Khammash, 2008)

Emotions and, in particular, anger can be important determinants of consumer behavior, according to Heyes and Kapur (2012). Anger is an antipathy emotion aimed at the cause of discontent and associated with an urge to punish the wrongdoer. One reason why consumers are irritated is if they feel mistreated. The Internet has made the sharing of bad experiences more typical and also more widespread (Heyes & Kapur, 2012). He & Wu (2009) developed a phrase-weight classification score index algorithm to classify all phrases in consumer reviews in either the pros or cons list, and summarize them in both cases. This summary list is helpful to make decisions before purchase for online consumers.

eWOM is a fundamental factor in shaping consumer buying behavior (Cheung & Lee, 2012). The information on the Internet is now more influential among consumers because of consumer opinion sites (Cheung & Lee, 2012). Furthermore, attitude may be seen as one of the essential concepts in the study of consumer behavior because it is the direct driver of this literary behavior (Castañeda, et al., 2009). Various studies were carried out on consumers’ perception of eWOM value, for example the perceived usefulness discussed in (Xia and Bechwati 2008) and credibility as discussed in (Racherla and Friske 2012), where the eWOM is provideds through e-commerce websites or social media. Earlier studies have also found that eWOM has an significant influence on consumer purchasing decisions (Amblee et al., 2017).
3. Methodology

This chapter presents and describes the research methods used in the study by researcher. These methods consist of: choice of methodology, research method, data collection tools, sampling selection, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and validity and reliability. Qualitative approach was applied in order to achieve the objectives of this research (section 1.3). Various methods and data sources were used to explain the complex phenomenon of online purchase behavior. The qualitative method approach comprising both at the micro- (individual) and macro- (market) levels was chosen to analyze the situation from different perspectives and provide a better insight. The choice of methodology was based according to the following described aspects.

3.1. Choice of Methodology

3.1.1. Quantitative Methods

Quantitative methods provide data that is consistent, reliable and measurable through statistical studies usually conducted by means of questionnaire or survey. The researcher starts with a hypothesis based on theory and then tests the hypothesis and its relation to reality and then reaches the result in the end (Bryman, 2015). The quantitative method is applied based on positivism philosophy and on the rules of the natural scientific model. One of the most important problems of quantitative research is that it is designed to generalize the opinions of individuals in the research sample, which may cause various problems, and raises a debate about the accuracy of the researcher in the definitions and to the extent that the study should expand to include specific reliability. The researcher begins the analysis process with a hypothesis based on a theory, and then tests this hypothesis until the results are finally reached (Bryman, 2015).

There are many criticisms of quantitative methods because of their weakness in the distinction between nature and social sciences, forcing some researchers to resort to some artificial measures, such that the survey has already set alternative answers without any opportunity for other answers (Bryman, 2015). Quantitative research has many problems because it is a strategy that seeks to generalize the conclusions of individuals. It is also possible to test the extent to which a specialist is critical with definitions and to what extent the test can be extended to reach certain reliability. Further analyzes have been added to quantitative strategies due to the lack of reasonable qualifications for these strategies in nature and sociology, Some scientists have met
countermeasures, where the review has previously identified optional answers without a place for different opportunities (Bryman, 2015).

### 3.1.2 Qualitative Methods

The qualitative logic differs from its quantitative counterpart. The qualitative is not biased towards a specific party, but considers that theoretical ideas and concepts are based on interpretations derived from empirical materials or what is known as the inductive method or the generating hypotheses (Bell, et al., 2003). Qualitative studies seek to gain a better understanding of certain factors, such as social research, which aims to assimilate the world and generate knowledge (Yilmaz, 2013). One of the most important criticisms by researchers for qualitative research is the difficulty of rearranging the study, which means that it is difficult to subject the study to examination. The rapprochement that may occur may also create firm expectations that the researcher must know. Add to that as well, the lack of transparency in qualitative research, which means the inability to know how the research was conducted (Bryman, 2015).

In order to avoid errors caused by sampling, the study is often conducted on the basis of a large sample, but in the case of this study, the error resulting from non-sampling is more accurate because of the use of the minimum number of participants even if it is difficult to correct or estimate it in case of error. Errors resulting from non-sampling are due to poorly formulated questions, false data, bias in interviews, and deceptive answers. The most important ways to reduce the error of non-sampling are careful care of all aspects of the interview, care of questionnaire design, data entry and encryption (Bryman, 2015). Flexibility is an important thing that must be taken into account during the care we mentioned earlier, because access to information and knowledge related to phenomena is more important than building a general structure of the case studied (Flick, 2010).

### 3.2. Research Method

Qualitative methods were followed to achieve specific goals and not to generalize the research (as in case of quantitative methods), since what is most interesting to us as a researcher who
seeks to understand the views of others and their opinions and ideas on a specific topic is to analyze what people feel and interact with. This method is the most useful because it enables participants to share their experiences and perspectives and not just answer a questionnaire based on numbers they may not like. The answers will then be expanded and analyzed through in-profound, semi-structured interviews to identify individual differences and the process outputs (appendix 1).

The rationale for the use of two similar qualitative methods is the desire to gain a deep understanding of the phenomena of online purchase in this study, which confirms the previous information provided by the focus group, making future research possible. It is noticeable when reviewing the analysis of interviews that the depth is clear from the focus group, to the semi-structural interviews that led to a rich understanding of the reviews that are effective and influential.

3.3. Data collection Tools

3.3.1. Semi-structured interviews

The purpose of these interviews is to monitor the topics discussed in each interview and to link information and research questions (Flick, et al., 2004). The name (in-depth semi-structured interview) can be called when the interviewer makes the interview more personal and interactive in its own way. May says that this type of interview makes the interviewee answer the questions on the terms of the interviewer more than during the regular interviews, so that the interviewer can look more comfortably on wider answers and clarifications. It is true that modifications may occur during the interview, but this type of interview provides more room for comparison (May, 2001).

Fowler believes that the interviewer has an impact on the quality of the data collected through three main steps: First: to provide a suitable place and environment for cooperation; second: to encourage and guide the interviewee through the questionnaire; and thirdly, to ask questions in a clear and concise manner (Fowler, 1993). In-depth interviews can also provide valuable information about certain phenomena, such as the true meaning of online shopping experience, thus providing more accurate details and deeper understanding of respondent responses. Semi-structured interviews enable us to hear personal opinions and make opening up to the
interviewee easier, which makes it more likely to add more answers to the question. The disadvantage of this type of interview is the researcher's focus on some answers more than others as they are more appropriate to the questions of research, which may cause the loss of the study objectivity. Interviews can be conducted anywhere, via the Internet or even at home, making it easier for the participant to join the interview (Flick, et al., 2004).

The details of the discussions in the focus group were the only way to reach individual experiences in semi-structured interviews. The purpose of using two interview methods is to be able to produce knowledge and find solutions to the problems associated with them. Thus, the two ways are complementary (Smith, 2010). By analyzing the content, it is possible to copy the material, which gives the study preliminary data. This data is valuable because it has not been copied before. Strauss and Corbin (1990) approach will be used to encode and analyze data. From their point of view, the researcher must have sufficient knowledge of the topic he is/she studying and be able to facilitate and simplify it through the personal information received by communicating with the person interviewed, and in conjunction with the data from the focus group can explain how the online review sites plays an important role in the decision-making process.

3.3.2. Focused groups

The focus group is concerned with collecting abstract data, attracting a small number of people to answer specific and focused questions and issues, resulting in clear and profound information and explanations about what that person means (May, 2001). Conducting an interview with the whole group gives divergent views on the same issue. From Smith's point of view, focus groups are used to identify issues, topics or concerns about certain topics by monitoring and listening to group interactions. The data collected by the focus group plays an important role in understanding social situations rather than generalizing them. If you want to get results on the number of people who have certain views, you should use another method, so there will be an opportunity to discover people's views, attitudes, desires, interests and experiences.

The use of the focus group is flexible and diverse. It is possible to show creativity and brainstorming and to discuss with others about the information that is important for the outcome to be achieved. Some interviewees prefer to talk about their opinions by sharing with others rather than being individually asked, as in semi-structured interviews. One of the weaknesses
of this method is that an error can occur if the interviewer does not give sufficient attention to the dialogue, which may lead to the deviation of the discussion from its specific course, as well as the quality of the information collected and how to judge the final result. In addition, the focus group is often arranged in a particular place, which makes people lose the desire to cooperate because they have to move to another place where the group is. What needs to be taken into an account when implementing the focus group are the disadvantages and merits of ethical issues.

In arranging the group, it is necessary for the researcher to think about the topic to be discussed, in order to know how to encourage or discourage interviewees. The use of interviewees with the same background, features and culture, the work of the group will become easier (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). The focus group is highly qualified because its concepts are easy to understand and their results are sensible. Using this method allows the interviewees to respond and interact, adding or supporting a person's point of view or presenting their own point of view. In Kitzinger and Barbour's view, interviewees are explicitly encouraged to talk to one another. The value of the personal data provided by the focus group may only be shown if there is someone else to discuss with (Smith, 2010). The focus group is a qualitative method that allows the interviewer to see different and similar evaluations of participants on one subject at the same time.

The focus group is a qualitative method that allows the interviewer to see different and similar assessments of interviewees on one subject at the same time, which is not true for semi-structured interviews where only one person speaks. The focus group was a group of participants who were sampled, which made research easier because participants were very knowledgeable about the subject. The objective of the focus group study is to explore the impact of comments on customer choice during their decision while purchasing. The focus group has developed specific keywords on how the review can be read by participants and how it can be mentioned to affect as much as possible in a positive or negative way. These valuable factors are asked in semi-structured interviews. Therefore, relying on the answers of one person in the interview may increase or decrease the credibility of the focus group and / or create new perspectives that can be combined with previous answers in a comprehensive analysis.
3.4. Sampling

Sampling means choosing different people to participate in the study. These people may be familiar or unfamiliar with the nature of the study, with different or similar backgrounds, and with a variety of populations. The appropriate number of participants is determined based on: First: research questions, second: time and resources available, and third: the methods used in the study (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). Sampling standards may be very important, so it is necessary to follow a specific sampling strategy when searching for a particular topic.

The sample consisted of 17 participants who were recruited for the experiment. This data collection type is extremely intensive and generates enormous amounts of data. It creates a wide range of behavioural instances. 7 Simi stricter interviews were conducted as well as 2 focus groups each 5 Participants. participants respectively were recruited in similar studies which investigated the behavior of participants through monitoring and gathering their verbal protocols for purchase, search, and website interaction. In order to keep the discussion significant, the random sampling is not relevant and the sample was chosen purposefully (Byrne et al., 1999).

This study looked for people with specific experiences who have been used in an in-depth semi-structured interview, so a convenience approach is used. Convenience sampling means the use of persons who are accessible and available for interviews. Participants were selected based on their previous experience of online shopping in order to be able to represent the potential consumers who would research on the internet and purchase. All Participants had experience of online shopping over the last month, between one to seven times.

In this study, participants who make up the study sample will be grouped together because they share the interest in purchasing online and using the Prisjakt.nu to obtain information about any item they would like to buy. This makes it easy to use their previous experiences to increase knowledge about the subject and questions to be asked in interviews; however, Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) consider that there is a problem in allowing people who know each other to be in the same focus group.

Thus, the focus group consisted of strangers to avoid negative impact on existing relationships according to market research texts, although social science researchers say that it is better to
work with people who already know each other, either through lifestyle or through the work because in this range they can discuss the issue raised by the focus group. The researcher must be aware of the importance of making the environment as natural as possible. The use of people who form the sample in the focus group and interviews together may give a very similarity to the information that comes from their answers. The dynamic and the flexibility make the interview informative, but if the participants are similar, there will be no important keywords to evaluate from the data collected (Smith S., 2010).

Participants performed the task online, and then take part in the interview of approximately 20 minutes. The experiment was conducted, taking approximately one and a half hours in total for each individual. At the same time, these answers can make it difficult to find common features if the answers were very different. There is a fine line between the results of the focus group and interviews, between useful and duplicate information where the results are comparable but not homogeneous, making the task of finding answers to the study questions easier.

3.5. Validity and Reliability

Securing search value is the primary objective of reliability and validity. The method used in the study must be verifiable, and it can also be said that the method measures what it aims to measure. For qualitative research, reliability and validity are closely related to actual design. For qualitative research, reliability and validity are closely related to actual design. The result is usually a final product of surveillance, which can be asked if the result is reliable. There is a great emphasis on the validity of qualitative investigations because of the great convergence with the object studied (Holme, et al., 2006). There is a change in the distance between theory and operational variables from question to question, where it will be difficult to activate the theory if it is far from the phenomena studied. There is no direct comparison between operating and other analyzes, theories and other studies.

Research will show many different things. It would be nice if the investigation yielded results related to the purpose of the study. The following question must be asked during the planning and investigation process: Have there been any random errors or bias in the development of the case or during the collection of information? Asking questions about the appropriateness and reliability of the information collected ensures reliability and validity. Only continuous auditing can ensure access to an efficient level of reliability and validity. The study can be considered to
be highly reliable if different independent measurements of the same phenomena show identical or similar results. But the reliability data are insufficient, they must be equivalent to the validity, that is, the theoretical variables must be as far as possible compatible with the operational variable. Validity means that the study measures only what is to be measured, and questions ask about the purpose of the study and thus the results are reliable (Holme, et al., 2006).

3.6. Conducting of data collecting tools

The desire to understand and document the comprehension of others requires a qualitative interview because it is a means of exploring the perspectives of research topics, in addition to giving these views a realistic and culturally bright view (May, 2001). For this study, focus group and semi-structured interviews will be conducted. The use of two primary data collection methods provides access to a broader and richer set of data. Some may say that generalization from the sample to the population as a whole is not necessary but (as appropriate for purpose) as a criterion is also important so a non-probabilistic sample was chosen to select the easiest people for this study.

Participants, regardless of their age, race, nationality, or criteria of participation, must have read the online reviews on a website Prisjakt.nu before purchasing a product. The recordings were accepted, and observations were recorded. Questions raised in the interviews evolved and became the main factors. The same questions were used to conduct all the interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants of different nationalities at different times in April 2019. Questions that are sufficiently clear where the interviews were quiet and gave precise answers and a sense of freedom to speak with all serenity. This was not the first time we met participants, which could have advantages and disadvantages as previously mentioned in the focus group. The focus group members also know each other, but the participants said their presence was caused by a desire to share ideas and thoughts. Their answers were more reliable because they had the courage to express their feelings, as well as their previous knowledge of management and marketing concepts that made it easy for them to understand the topic. Opinions, attitudes, thoughts and perspective are studied in the interviews about influential online reviews.
The interview questions can be viewed in (8.1 Appendix) Interview questions to focus group and semi-structured interviews. The role of the researcher, whether in the focus group or in semi-structured interviews, is to ask questions without intervening or trying to influence the participants in order to force them to answer in a certain way. Open dialogue was the most important for the focus group, by nodding a (OK or carry on talking) to show interest on the one hand and not to prevent them from talking about other topics on the other. The participant in the focus group, who is assigned to discuss and talk to others when necessary, for example, when the discussion is about to end, the participant intervenes to make it continue by asking another question.

The role of the leader was different during the semi-structured interviews, the idea was to increase the size of interaction with the participant in a way that makes him feel at home, which gives him safety so that he can speak with all leisure and freedom. Since it is difficult for participants to explain their feelings, so as an interviewer I have to stay focused. The researcher is considered as a subject and subjects are considered as objects, but not so in the social sciences which are considered the researcher is the subject and the object together. Our study of social life means at the same time studying ourselves, so we must rely on daily experience to find a way to evaluate evidence (Smith, 1998). Which makes it possible to choose between rejecting the daily experience unrelated to the subject of study or the adoption of its counterparts depending on the capabilities of the self and then using it in reaching new concepts of life may have been to remain unnoticed.

The main objective of the focus group is to collect data on the attitudes, beliefs, opinions and perceptions of participants about a product or service mentioned in an online review site, so the questions were based on interesting oral key words: online reviews, social media, trustfulness, time changing, responding attitude and virtual data versus real life. Based on these key words, other key words were found outside the focus group interview: trust, regular reviewer, critical view, and reference group, and empowered people, timeline for reviews, responding action and changing the decision. The researcher's idea was successful in reaching the questions that investigated and developed the objectives of the study. The participants' reactions became more personal after the online reviews from Prisjakt.nu were shown to them. Which shifted their focus from the debate in the review to the review as a whole? The focus group noted that
participants had used online reviews as "top information" and as a source of decision-making, but participants gave conflicting answers at the end of the interview.

For people who have an open search, they prefer to read a lot about the product or service without making a purchase decision. For those who want to buy something specific, the search for them is limited and not interested in comparing brands.
4. Empirical Finding

The findings are shown in this chapter. This analysis investigates online consumers’ macro-compatibility. Moreover, the result identifies certain aspects of behavior, not only of which no other method can be used but also some of the basic reasons for the individual behavior discussed in the following chapter. This analysis uses data on the real behavior of consumers in the market, as explained in the previous chapter. The purpose of this study is to have better understanding how eWOM affects the customer’s purchasing decision from a related view of consumer-web interactions of eWOM communication on online review websites. This influence was examined through looking at the concept of on-line social networks with the Website and the interactions of consumers were examined by this influence.

Precisely, the aim of the research was to propose and test interrelationships among social network structures, credibility of the source of information, consumer attitude towards eWOM and eWOM effectiveness. The results section is organized as follows. We have first validated the scales used in the study checking their validity and reliability. Once we have confirmed the measurements are suitable, we develop a regression analysis to answer the research question that was presented in the first chapter.

Online reviews effects on the purchase decision making

The empirical finding expresses the most important part of the interviews that were formed and provides answers to the research questions. Semi-structured interviews intersect with focus group to make it readable. At the beginning of each interview, participant was asked about purchasing, why they are buying and what make them develop their interest in buying online. The answers were all based on honesty and sincerity and reviews were written by regular people (not specialists or journalists), which makes online reviews reliable. Belonging to a group where someone has written an online review or reading critically is considered more credible than a written review by anyone else. The time that passed since the review was written, the manner in which people responded to the review, and how the review is able to change opinion are necessary data to understand their interest in online purchasing, what they think is important, and how online reviews can affect them.
When a person decides to Purchase a service or product or at least has several options to choose from, he uses Prisjakt.nu instead of someone else's personal thoughts and opinions. One of the participant pointed out that people use the family and friends for advice and web sites to get specific reviews for confirmation. All these different methods are important to choose the most appropriate alternatives when purchasing a product or service. How the online reviews was written, and its argument, with a few words, whether positive or negative, is the most interesting aspect of reading these reviews. Whether the review is positive, negative or mixed, it is necessary to write in a serious tone.

According to participants in the semi-structured interview, it was negative reviews that attract attention before anything else because of their importance. One participant said you are interested in knowing what is going on before you search for a product. At first everything is great for the consumer about the product and his ideas are positive and then everything can collapse. One participant said that both positive and negative reviews about the product consumers want to read about were trustworthy. No matter how many online reviews, as long as it is about the agreement between a large numbers of people on a particular topic. One participant believed that moderate reviews are the best because they provide useful information. They explain the product with its positive and negative qualities. If the review is very good or very bad, it is often incomplete presentation of the real picture. All participants have agreed that if there is a conflict of emotions about a product, it is better to communicate with anyone outside the Internet world.

The impact of online reviews depends on several factors: First: trust in reviews depends on the time side, written for a long time people consider it personal, but participants, more than a year is not acceptable. One participant said that if the product is new, previous user reviews will not interest him because the company did not take the time to create a reputation. It is absolutely essential in this infinite world of acceleration that products and services are marketed with their companies via online reviews. Consumers today are so demanding that they search for as much information as possible until they reach the point where they can decide their decisions, a participant states.

One participant considered that the small details of the negative review of a particular product (e.g. Mobile iPhone7) can make him change his decision to buy it, but not his decision to buy
iPhone Mobile in general. Another participant said that eye-catching information can, to a certain extent, affect people's expectations and perceptions about the product. The degree of use of online reviews ranges from high when it includes external elements and low when it comes to making a final purchase decision. A participant said the role of online review is to support as much as a conversation but close to a decision. When the final decision is made, the traditional dialogue is stronger and more trustworthy. One participant recalled how he and his friend changed their decision to buy a new Huawei phone when they heard bad things about it.

The role of eWOM in the purchasing decision making process

Searching for reviews is useful and provides a different view of the product. Positive or negative reviews are likely to be important in the purchasing decision making process. The nature of the research determines the nature of the data provided by the information (private or public data). It is a way to facilitate the decision-making process of participants. One of the participants believed that the Prisjakt.nu site had enabled people to buy products they have not been sure of. Money is also a determining factor when making a purchase decision.

Online reviews are used by participants because they believe that most of them were written by regular people and not by hired people for this purpose. Reviews written by regular people give the impression that the written opinion is a personal opinion and not for the purpose of sharing with everyone, as in the case of ad reviews that aim to attract as many people as possible with different tastes. A participant considered that in order for the reviews on Prisjakt.nu site to be trustworthy, there must be good and bad discussions, and not just great discussions.

Another participant pointed out that this site made it possible to see other sites “reality and perspective”. If you're confused between sites that include promotional texts and sites that include online reviews, you may want to see a personal average between positive and negative comments. The importance of the text and the date in which it was written are useful when choosing the text to be trusted. It is impossible for reviews written by auditors or journalists to be honest and unbiased. It will push people to buy unwanted products, which will make them unsatisfied. Thus, the site of reviews can provide a greater assurance of validity than on the company's own site.
Another participant believed that focusing on group affiliation gave more reliable information, but another one believed it depends on what the person is looking for, such as searching for words that are interesting and similar to the things and activities that the person does. As long as the review is controversial, it means that the person who wrote the review should not feel the same way you do. It is good to read about a person's position and opinions and compare them with our positions and opinions. A participant said that the needs and desires of online reviews continued to attract his attention.

The effect on the actual purchasing decision for the consumer depends on several elements. First: the consumer's relationship with the source; Second: the opinions of consumer friends are more important than the views of industry experts; Third: knowledge of the source is very necessary in the reliability of information. This study considers that seeing the same product or company through social media continuously has an important role in influencing consumer decision. If a large number of friends agree to support a particular product, it will have a positive impact on consumer interest and vice versa if opinions are negative.

The data indicate that the majority of participants use social media to search for information, so e-WOM influence the purchasing decision. The underlying motivations behind the participants 'search for information are to reduce the risk of deception after purchase. Site exposure, such as Prisjakt.nu, should affect where customers will buy from it in the next few times. Thus, the permanent display and the image of the company on the social media are very important in shaping the position of the consumer from the company, either negatively or positively, which will affect his decision to buy.

Enabling consumers to make a decision and evaluate a product or service if it is bad or good does not mean that product or service needs attention. But additional marketing guarantees may be provided to the company if a staff member is appointed to respond to online reviews. In one of the participant’s opinion, every consumer needs a special way to feel satisfied, some want special staff to answer the review, while others simply express what they feel without a response. A participant has written reviews and is not waiting for an answer, but if he would be answered, this will exceed his expectations. This specific response is likely to give value to consumers when responding to their negative or positive reviews. Responding to reviews can also maintain reputation and make the consumer feel the company's interest.
From a participant's point of view, direct problems should be discussed at the moment rather than online later. It is important to hear what the others think because the Internet has become an important aspect of a person's life, for example what is good, bad, modern, old, true or false. Another participant adds that reading articles in magazines is better, but reading reviews online is more realistic. The idea of online reviews was to help potential consumers fill in the empty information gap that marketing avoids.

Online reviews vs WOM in affecting consumers decision-making

Word of mouth (WOM) and online reviews are two faces of a coin. According to one of the participants, there is a great similarity between the two modes of communication, and the difference is that the Internet allows more information to be collected and a broader picture of everyone. (Figure 4).

**Figure 4** Internet allows more information to be collected

![Diagram of WOM and E-WOM](image)

**Source**: M. López and M. Sicilia, 2013

A sample was taken from everything and then you were given more alternatives than those provided by your friend. Being affected by family or friends is greater than online reviews for some participants because your confidence in someone you know is higher than your confidence in an anonymous person online. Both methods are important in the search for information today, where the two methods combine to help each other give the consumer the most appropriate result. In the opinion of one participant, WOM and eWOM appeal to two different types of
people. If a person makes his decisions from his head, eWOM will be dominant. If he is a traditionalist, he will definitely ask the people around him.

According to one participant, the decision-making process may be shortened if the family or friends give a positive review of the product/service, and their negative review will prolong the decision-making process. The same participant says: Positive reviews do not have the same effect in shortening or prolonging the decision-making process, but may exclude an alternative in the event of much controversy about the same product. A participant says that in the end it is up to the person, not the family, friends or online reviews, who decide whether to buy or not.
5. Discussion

In this section the empirical findings will be analyzed along with the use of literature. By focusing on customer behavior, the present study aims to clarification researchers’ doubts about the effect of e-WOM on the decision-making of purchase. The result consists of the data from those who participated in the questionnaires. In order to facilitate the analysis process, the empirical findings will be linked to the theoretical section and to the research questions. In this paper the author show that the influence of e-WOM depends on perceived credibility of sources, perceived value, and perceived volume of e-WOM and Internet experience of consumers. the author also tried, using a subjective perspective, to complement previous results.

Participants use different starting points in the decision-making process according to personal qualifications that need to be in line with the decision. The theories used in this paper are based on the decision-making points of different authors, which were all used when the decision-making participants and this is demonstrated by the empirical findings. This study shows that people, who wish to purchase a product or service, use the Internet and social media as an effective influence in the decision-making process. These results were in correspondence with the results of Parker et al. (2007) who stated that online buyer reviews serve two specific jobs, including providing and submitting information as suggestions on items and administrations (Park, et al., 2007).

In addition, Gupta and Harris say that a person chooses from a large number of alternatives. Because of the large number of alternatives available to consumers today, the interviews showed that the rationality of choice is what gives you the feelings you desire. Gupta and Harris had predicted that the Internet would develop a lot and that he would become a WOM's world, where people today can express their views with the help of eWOM. This study shows that eWOM can stand against WOM in the decision-making process (Gupta and Harris, 1989).

Ensuring the credibility and quality of information is difficult, but participants take a critical look before using information. Participants compare products and then combine their goal with their expectations, making communication and knowledge an important component for them. This also applies to products and services that need positive communication and marketing to be selected. (Cheung & Lee, 2012) Previous research has shown that e-WOM is more important
than information generated by firms and therefore an increasing number of companies are actively engaged in stimulating and managing e-WOM activities. (Lim and Chung, 2011; Bickart and Schindler, 2001) Therefore, both academics and practitioners need to understand the way e-WOM works.

**Figure 5** Conceptual framework of determinants of e-WOM influence

For Chiu et al. (2012) the payment factor is important and has a very strong impact, it is possible for an interesting online review to make anyone buy this product or that service. Transparency on the Internet is an important factor that facilitates decision making. The study indicates that participants combine different sources of information. Since motivation is necessary to achieve satisfaction, participants must look for many alternatives that can make the attitude towards reviews positive and make them somewhat useful in decision-making, "our public attitudes, interests and our vision of life interfere in shaping our position on the product and what the author would like to find in that product". This makes people not only use life experience and references when gathering alternatives to make decisions.

Search engines are the first step you should use when looking for information to make a decision to buy a product or service. Online reviews are an interpersonal education and are intended for people who want to have control over their decisions. Consumers build and use social media to
share knowledge about services, products, etc., so they are an important part of the daily life of the participant. This was similar to what Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003) investigated. They stated that the five unique intentions factors are: social guidance through information, membership of the community, the collection of purchasing-related information, payment and the way a product is consumed.

According to the researchers, the experience of the source and the tie-strength greatly affect both WOM and eWOM (Coulter & Roggeveen, 2012). This is confirmed by the data coming from the focus group. Participants believe that trustworthiness is very important and appreciated, but their views differ little with regard to advice on social media. According to the data, the knowledge or experience of the source is very necessary for people who trust the information on the social media, and this confirms what Coulter and Roggeveen (2012) said. Cerecwich also has shown that 70% of the client base has received trust evaluations posted on the Web in the Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey (Cerecwich, 2009). This was in correspondence with Yayli and Bayram (2009) who found that the reliability of the purchasers depends on the consistent quality and prominence of the locally supportive review.

The power of tie-strength also plays an important role in influencing the consumer, and this is also a confirmation of Coulter and Roggeveen's (2012) theory. The data also showed a strong correlation between the tie-strength and the impact of information on the consumer. One participant previously purchased a laptop based on a recommendation from one of his friends. The decision was based on the strength of their relationship and their common view, not based on prior knowledge of the source.

Coulter & Roggeveen (2012) point out that the online communication hierarchy affects the review process, because social media allow members to monitor products supported by other members. If a consumer notices that a large number of his friends are in the network of a product, the probability of joining the network will be very high. By doing so, it becomes possible for him to endorse the product and not just investigate it (Coulter & Roggeveen 2012). The data from the focus group shows that membership of a friend in a particular network makes it easier to join that network. The author reiterate: The tie-strength and the experience of the friend who is a member of the network play an important role in the possibility of joining the product network and supporting it.
Hutter et al (2013) consider that social media activities have a direct impact on the purchase decision making process. WOM provides information about product performance and the consequences of purchasing it, which makes WOM the source of consumer information in the purchase decision making process. Other studies have confirmed the same results on investigated consumers’ perception of eWOM value, for example the perceived credibility where the eWOM is provided through e-commerce websites or social media (Xu, 2014; Racherla and Friske 2012). Hutter et al (2013) explain that information from WOM is more reliable and trustworthy because consumers know their source, so WOM's influence on consumer's decision-making processes is greater than that of other marketing methods (Hutter et al 2013).

The data from the interviews support the theoretical section in its various aspects with few exceptions. When it comes to talking about products, all participants are influenced by social media. The more social media activity is to address a particular product, the stronger the impact. This was in correspondence with several studies that showed that eWOM has an significant impact on consumer purchasing decisions (Amblee et al., 2017; Liu et al. 2015; Bronner and de Hoog 2014; He, Zhang, and Akula2018; Jin and Phua 2014; Berger, Sorensen, and Rasmussen 2010; Park and Kim 2008)

Most participants have confirmed that the information they bring from friends is the most credible and reliable, when compared to the ads that companies make. Some participants were at odds with the theory, believing that their friends are inexperienced, making the information they provide unreliable. It would have been better for them to search for information of product suits their needs on their own. Despite the disagreement between the participants about the credibility of friends, but everyone stressed that the more the number of friends interested in a particular product the more their attention to that product rose. This is in comparison with what Lim and Chung (2011) have shown, they stated that e-WOM is more important than information generated by firms and therefore an increasing number of companies are actively engaged in stimulating and managing e-WOM activities.

The study data show the participants' consensus is that their opinions about the company are influenced if they follow it on social media, and that their attitude towards the company varies between negative and positive according to the company's way of presenting itself. Data also
indicate that participants prefer not to follow Prisjakt.nu on social media after the purchase because of the lack of interest in receiving daily information about products that may not interest them. Zhang et al. (2010) study results show significant, simple effects when assessing product associated with promotional consumer goals, and that consumers have positive prejudices for products linked to promotional consumption goals and negative prevention targets for products (Zhang, et al., 2010).

The data showed that all participants have at least one friend who uses social media to share their experience of purchasing a product. Participants agreed that it is common for people to publish images of their purchase of products on social media. They believe that boasting or promoting a social situation are the reasons that drive people to spread their purchasing experiences. In the view of some participants, people prefer to publish on social media only when the event is good for them. Cheung & Lee, (2012) say previous studies have shown that the likelihood of a positive eWOM is more likely than the likelihood of a negative eWOM.
6. Conclusion and Future Research

The theoretical implications are shown in this chapter along with ideas for future research as well as implications for practitioners.

A new and comprehensive approach was introduced in this research to the study of online consumers' behavior, exploring this complex phenomenon from various angles. The understanding of consumer macro-compliance provided a broader picture. The extent, purpose and attributes of the Internet use in a market and in various retailers were illustrated. The detailed behavioral patterns and the reason for their changes were shown in intense analysis of individuals. It depicted the complexity of decision-making process in online purchasing and demonstrated their reliance on individual market characteristics and differences.

The virtual interactions between consumers allow their word of mouths to reach broader audiences through the spread of web-centered social media i.e. eWOM. Nobody can, however, assure and control such social participation in order to make use of the eWOM for the good, and there is also no right way or model for both consumers and companies to engage in eWOM activities. The author found that the the availability of product reviews of other consumers have enhanced the consumer search and purchase behavior for experience than for search attributes of the products. In addition, effects of positive eReviews were more significant and more likely than the effects of negative reviews to influence purchase choices. However, Negative eReviews are more thoroughly read rather than positive eReviews and are also more credible.

The author recognize the need for further research. For example, our study raises numerous questions which are interesting to explore and worthy of further investigation. Some may be more personal than standard, and should be investigated further. Furthermore, it should be explored how far technology will have an impact on future use of eWOM, especially when use-friendly applications are available. Additional research on application understanding would be beneficial. In the consumer buying decision-making process, user-generated images increasingly play a prominent role in making them more accessible.
7. References


Daugherty, T. & Hoffman, E., 2013. eWOM and the importance of capturing consumer attention within social media. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 20(1-2), pp. 82-102.


López, M. & Sicilia, M., u.d. BOCA A BOCA TRADICIONAL vs. ELECTRÓNICO. LA PARTICIPACIÓN COMO FACTOR EXPLICATIVO DE LA INFLUENCIA DEL BOCA A


[Använd 24 May 2019].


9. Appendix

8.1. Appendix Interview Questions

• Where do you collect information about products or services?

• Do you use social media to get that information?

• Do you know someone who uses social media to talk about a product they bought? Why does he do that?

• Do you think that people usually share buying experiences (positive or negative) on social media? Why? Why not?

• Do you believe people’s opinions about products and services on social media?

• If you hear about a product on social media and become interested in it, what do you do?

• Do you follow Prisjakt.nu on social media? Why? Why not?

• Have you bought a product based on someone's recommendation for social media? Why? Why not?

• Have you ever shared your opinion about a product you bought on social media? Why? Why not?

• What do you think of the review sites?

• What experiences have you gained from review sites?

• Do review sites affect your decision to buy?

• How are reviews useful to you?

• Why do you read the comments?

• Do you trust reviews? Explain how you feel when you read it?

• Due to the rapid changes in the world, what do you think of the old and new reviews?

• Which is the most important for you, the latest comment or the oldest?

• What is most important to you in the review sites? (Frequent members, constant update etc.).
8.2. Appendix 2 Online reviews

“Bought one for the wife when she had a pixel 2 XL but is old Iphone nerd. But my goodbye to any phone. The camera is far below her pixel and my Huawei. Looks no battery up in the corner. Battery life is like that. It is heavy and small. Trying to unlock it without face id hardly works for swipers you don't always happen as you want. Quick start of the camera that all mobiles have, it doesn't. There is more but cannot bear. Not even she is happy and she hated her pixel, except the camera. Now, new iPhone has lost it unfortunately.”

“Ip67, 1m water for 30 min? Avoid it. My 1 month old X died after 10 seconds under water. Leaked at the speaker at the front camera”

”As many others have already pointed out, the European version of this mobile with the inferior processor (exynos 9820) comes instead of what is promised (snapdragon 855). The difference is considerable and makes the phone much worse than it really should be. Do not recommend this phone as it is turned on fraud.”

“One of the best phones I had. First phone where battery lasts all day.”

“The battery lasts more than the whole day after the upgrade to EMUI 9 / Android 9 😊 The camera is great but it is hard to keep it absolutely quiet in order to get razor-sharp images but once it has succeeded - what nice pictures it gets and which cool colors 😎 Huawei P20 Pro is a perfect tool for me who is amateur and content with good performance and good images 📸 Recommend this cell phone warmly and give it 9½ stars 🌟”