The consumer decision process model applied to websites



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# Preface

This dissertation is submitted as a completion of the four-year study program in European Studies at The Hague University of Applied Sciences. The paper is written in the interest of marketers, for educational purposes and any other parties who are interested in the online selection and purchase process of the consumer. With this, the consumer decision process model is critically analysed on the basis of social developments such as the development of the Internet, and is applied through an analysis of websites.

Firstly I would like thank my supervisor Mr. Veldman for giving me the idea and inspiration to write this dissertation. It has been of great value for me. I am very indebted to my mother for her valuable guiding through this process and for always being there for me when I needed help. Also I am very thankful to Melissa McCurrdie who has helped me with revising my English language use.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my family and boyfriend for their unconditional support, love and encouragement during this process.

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# Executive summary

For this examination, qualitative research has been carried out into which extent the Internet has influenced the traditional consumer decision process (CDP) model (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006) and how the stages of this model are visible on websites. It is examined because the emergence of the Internet has changed dramatically the way in which consumers orientate themselves, search for information and do their purchases. This study is intended to give marketers a clear description on the influence of the Internet on the consumer decision process model and to show how websites give meaning to this model. The question at the centre of this research is: *"In what way is the consumer decision process model (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006) applied on websites and in which way can those stages be recognized on the websites of three different industries?"*

The research has been framed by a theoretical and empirical framework and is based on the research model of Verschuren and Doorewaard (2007). The theoretical framework is concerned with a literature study on the rise of the Internet and how it has influenced consumer behaviour and the consumer decision process model of Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2006). For the empirical research, the literature research has been used as the basis for a comparative case study that exists out of an analysis on websites from three different industries, namely: the fashion industry, the furniture industry and the book industry. These websites have been analysed by using labels defined by the research strategy of Verschuren & Doorewaard (2007).

The stages of the consumer decision process model that have come out to be most visible within all analysed websites are the stage of need recognition and the information search. Additionally, it has become evident that within the book industry all stages that belong to the consumer decision process model are visible on the websites. Strikingly for IKEA there could be seen it is the only website that serves as information tool as individuals can only buy products in its chain stores.

Based on the examination, the following recommendations can be given. The first recommendation that can be commonly applied for the three industries is that interviews with marketers should give the researcher more insights into how they apply certain aspects of the consumer decision process model by means of their websites. Also it has become evident it is hard to measure the use of pop-ups by websites. By interviewing marketers it should become evident how marketers give meaning towards the use of pop-ups. These interviews should also bring forward how websites intend to support the stage of result as this has not come forward during the analysis.

Also, further research is advised to identify how successful the analyzed websites are. This information should contribute to find out how effectively the analysed websites make use of the consumer decision process model.

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# 1. Introduction

With over 2.3 billion people online currently, the Internet has revolutionized the way in which we find and share information. The online world is moving at a rapid tempo and does not seem to slow down. Having a website because everyone has one, has become an outdated thought. The Internet is currently fully integrated into the lives of people and has become a standard tool that is used during the purchasing process of consumers. Especially for the information search the Internet seems to be very important as Google for instance has a market share of 93 percent already over 2011. Currently companies should realize the influence the Internet has and how important it is to have a website. The Internet has completely changed the way in which companies can communicate with customers. A website allows companies to build their brand and to create awareness as never before. Besides, it also has changed the way in which consumers orientate, search for information and do their purchases. Therefore, it is very important to have knowledge on how the Internet has influenced the current consumer behaviour. A business should take in advance the consumer decision process (CDP) model and should have knowledge on the needs and wants of consumers that use the online medium during their search. To get an insight on how websites give meaning to the CDP model the following question will be at the centre of this research: *"In what way is the consumer decision process model (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006) applied on websites and in which way can those stages be recognized on the websites of three different industries?"*

1.1 Problem statement   
The emergence of the Internet as a communication medium has changed dramatically the way in which consumers orientate themselves, search for information and do their purchases. Consequently, the rise of the Internet also has had influence on the traditional CDP model of Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2006). Marketers should anticipate differently on the purchase process a consumer goes through taking in mind the possibilities the Internet offers them. Therefore, this study is intended to give the marketers a clear description on the influence the Internet has on the CDP model and to show how websites give meaning to this model. For this purpose, a description of this original model is necessary and will be reanalysed by taking in account the online consumer behaviour.

1.2 Objective and justifying research   
The objective of this problem enlightening research is to get insight into in which way the consumer decision process model is applied by analyzing websites from three different industries using the CDP and comparing the approaches from the three different industries.

1.3 Research questions   
The research is divided into three central questions which are further divided into a theoretical and practical part and is based on the theory and research model of Verschuren and Doorewaard (2007). The first central question is concerned with the theoretical framework. The second central question is concerned with the practical aspect. Here, on the basis of websites, it must be examined to which extent the marketers make the different phases of the decision model visible in their website. The third central question should offer an answer to the conclusions and recommendations that can be given on the basis of the theoretical and empirical framework.

1. Theoretical framework:   
On which way has the Internet influenced the consumer decision process model of Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2006):

* How has the Internet developed?
* Which impact has the growth of the Internet had on marketing?

What is the contribution of E-marketing towards ‘traditional’ marketing:

* What is E-marketing?
* What is E-marketing versus traditional marketing?

How do consumers make purchase decisions following the consumer decision process model:

* What is consumer behaviour?
* What does the ‘traditional’ consumer decision process model contain?

How has the consumer decision process changed by the advent of the Internet:

* How has the digitization been of influence on the CDP model?
* What new aspects and/or needs have occurred?
* Has the consumer decision process changed?

2. Empirical research:   
II. In which way do marketers from the three different industries meet the different stages of the consumer decision process model in their website?

* How do marketers meet the need recognition of consumers on their websites?
* How do marketers provide consumers from information?
* How do marketers provide tools to enable the consumer to evaluate their alternatives?
* How do marketers support the consumer in the phase of purchasing?
* What support do they offer to provide the consumer the service they need for the stage of result?

3. Conclusions and recommendations

III. In what way is the traditional consumer decision process model (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006) applied on websites and in which way can those stages be recognized on the websites of three different industries?

# 1.4 Research model

Fashion industry

Labels

Analyse results

Book industry

Consumer behaviour and the decision process model

Consumer decision process model online

Digitization and its influence on marketing

The rise of Internet

Analyse results

Analyse results

Furniture industry

Conclusions and recommendations

Pre research

Figure 1: Research model (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007)

1.5 Research methods   
Firstly, for the theoretical framework there has been made use of desk research. With this, books, academic papers, existing examinations and articles have been mainly consulted. Especially books and academic papers have been from high value for this research. This examination has been designed on the basis of the research framework from Verschuren and Doorewaard (2007).

Secondly, qualitative research is applied for the empirical framework where a comparative case study is used to give meaning towards the way marketers from three different sectors give interpretation to the consumer decision process by means of their website. It is a descriptive research that aims to give a meaning on the problem analysis by using the Blackwell, Miniard and Engel model applied within websites. These websites have been analysed based on labels defined by the research strategy of Verschuren and Doorewaard (2007). Additionally, chapter three will extensively discuss the method and strategy that is applied for this examination.

1.6 Structure paper   
The structure of the paper is as follows. Chapter one is devoted to the research proposal and the plan of action. In chapter two, the conceptual model is displayed and the theoretical framework is put forward on the basis of the research. Chapter three outlines the methodology for the empirical research where chapter four contains the analysis and comparison of the empirical research. Lastly, chapter five gives room for discussion and recommendations that are based on this research.

2. Theoretical framework   
Within this chapter, a theoretical framework will be formed. It will discuss the influence the Internet has had on the changing marketing communications and to which extent the Internet has influenced the consumer decision process model (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006).

2.1 The rise of the Internet   
In this section, the rise of the Internet is briefly discussed as it has been of great influence on the field of marketing, consumer behaviour and the development of websites. First, the rise and development of internet is explained after which the definition of E-marketing is given. At last, the relationship between e-marketing and traditional marketing is concisely discussed.   
  
The Internet is defined as a vast public web of computer networks that connects users of all types around the world to each other and an amazingly large information repository (Armstrong & Kotler, 2012). It is a relatively new medium that makes it possible to maintain direct communication to reach customers. The basis of direct communication is direct marketing. According to Molenaar (2012), in direct marketing the message is directly aligned to one identifiable individual customer or potential customer and happens mostly through direct mail, telephone, email and Internet (p. 133). By the rise of the Internet, a new channel in the purchasing process is added allowing the consumer to both go online and offline during the purchase process. This online channel has been, and still is, of immense influence on organizations, its marketing and consumer behaviour. Without spending a lot of money, any individual can start a web page on the Internet. In this way, almost any business can reach a very large market, directly, quickly and economically, no matter the size or location of the business. Moreover, blogging has consolidated the social media and people all over the world are sharing their ideas and opinions like never before.   
From research results of Miniwatts Marketing group (2012), a recognized marketing research company, it becomes evident that the Internet has gone through a strong growth and has become increasingly popular. This can be seen in figure 2, which gives a clear overview on the strong growth of the Internet. Here it can be seen that merely 10 years ago, in December 2000, only 5.8 percent made use of the Internet worldwide, while in 2012 this percentage is estimated at a staggering 34.8 percent.

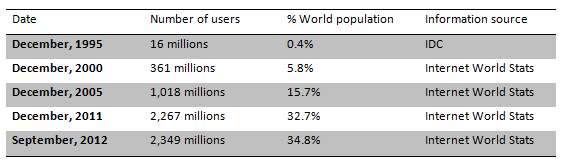


Figure 2: Growth of the Internet (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2013)

The rapid growth of the Internet has made the application of it gone through a real evolution as well. Therefore, the developments the Internet has gone through will be briefly discussed. The description on the development of the Web is linked to the increasing use of websites by companies. There have been three different phases when it comes to development of the Web: Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0.

Within Web 1.0, the Internet was only applied to provide the potential customer from information resulting into the consumer being very passive. Web 2.0 is the subsequent of web 1.0, in which marketing became more customer oriented and the consumer became part of the information provision. The customers became active participants as they started to put information on the Web and began to set up and conduct conversations with friends, other consumers and providers. Participation and interaction is at the heart of Web 2.0 and the emphasis lies more on communication tools such as: social networks, giving an opinion, working together, bundling websites, communicating and videos. Consequently, the power shifted more into the hands of the consumer, demanding a different role of marketing. Lastly, web 3.0 builds further on the developments arising in web 2.0 and is still evolving. Both customers and companies are increasingly going digital where social contacts, complaints, or compliments but also threats come through via many different channels (ABN Amro, 2012, p. 22). Online marketing has become a very important supplementary tool on marketing and marketers have to be more alert and quick thinking than ever before in this constantly changing digital world. Participation and interaction is more at the centre of marketing than ever before and brings the users to the central point of all marketers.

2.1.1 Influence of the Internet on marketing   
As emerged in the previous section, the strong growth of the Internet has had an important influence on, consumers and the way in which marketing is exercised by companies. For this part, the influence on marketing is discussed as it has had great influence on the shift from offline to online media tools and the shift into E-marketing.

The Internet has mainly affected the way in which communication takes place, information is provided, products and services are offered and the place in which the products are sold. It allows the customer to go both online and offline during the purchasing process they go through. Besides, the communication possibilities that the Internet brings has been of great influence on marketing: customers can now be contacted directly and vice versa. Also the Internet has radically changed the access to information regarding companies, products and services. Through the Internet customers are now aware of what is for sale and at what price. This makes it very easy for the customer to compare different providers without even having to leave the house. Likewise, the Internet has contributed to an incredibly high level of competition. Companies today really have to perform their marketing in a strategic way and implement it on the wishes of customers in order to attract the attention of a (potential) customer. This is because customers these days have a very high bargaining position as a result of the Internet giving them access to loads of information. This results in providers realizing that the price must be appealing from the viewing point of the buyer. Moreover, the focus of a company is no longer on the offer, but on the demands and behaviour of the (potential) customer. A retailer now must adapt to the buying behaviour of their customer if they want to hold their attention and want to be able to compete within this highly competitive market. It is no longer the supplier that decides on the price and offer but the customer that decides where to buy, what to buy and for which price to buy it. These days, marketing is about the interaction with clients, to bind them, to entertain them and to motivate them. All of this has led to a whole new way in which marketing is exercised and is described as E-marketing.

2.1.2 E-marketing   
*The rise of the Internet has propelled commerce into an electronic age, changing almost every aspect of daily lives, from how consumers communicate and learn about product offerings, to how they shop and buy products and services (Kim & Lennon, 2008).*

Since the Internet has been widely accepted by businesses and individuals, it has taken an increasingly important role within the field of marketing. As a result, E-marketing has been created as a new aspect of the marketing profession because the traditional marketing tools could not fully anticipate to the rapid changes and new techniques that the Internet has brought forth. De Nijs and Heling (2007) define E-marketing as a collective term for the use of electronic (digital) channels, such as email, Internet and SMS for the promotion of an organization, business or institution (p. 2). "With the Internet, electronic marketing resources such as online customer research, e-mail, websites, intelligent shopping agents, self-identifying online surveys, and online customer service among other electronic tools are being integrated into traditional marketing" (Reedy et al., 2000, p. 4). E-marketing is also referred to as internet marketing, digital marketing and online marketing. It is the fastest-growing form of direct marketing today and plays a very important role within the field of marketing (Armstrong & Kotler, 2012, p. 460).

2.1.3 E-marketing versus traditional marketing   
To give an insight in how marketing has changed this part is concerned on the difference between traditional marketing and E-marketing.   
  
Where for traditional media mass communication was very commonly used, presently tailored communication or direct marketing has become the most frequently used within marketing. That E-marketing becomes increasingly important is refuted by a Research from Synovate (2009). It says that (As cited in Visser & Sikkenga, 2012, p. 11) Dutch marketers expect that before 2014 half of the marketing budget already goes to online activities. Besides, it proves that the Internet is now an integrated part of the marketing operation as 84 percent of surveyed marketers is engaged in both traditional and online communication. However, the Internet is not a substitute for traditional marketing but serves as a supplementing tool (Chaffey, 2012). Visser and Sikkenga (2012) state that the Internet makes marketing more effective (if used in a sensible way): and marketing goals can be achieved more efficient by means of this tool (p. 11). For example, it makes it possible to gain knowledge on new potential customers and to be able to satisfy them more simply by providing as much information as required in order to make a purchase decision. Besides this, the Internet makes it possible to have interaction with customers to a great extent. It has accelerated the transition from mass marketing towards individual marketing. Individual marketing is there to fully tailor products or marketing efforts for an individual customer (Visser et al., 2012, p. 13).

2.2 Consumer behaviour   
In order to be able to research to which extent the consumer behaviour has changed, it is first important to describe the different phases a consumer goes through before actually proceeding to a purchase. To support this, the definition of consumer behaviour will first be described as this is an important basis for the CDP model. Here after, the CDP model (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006) is briefly explained as it will form the basis for the empirical research.

# 2.2.1 Definition

Consumers make many purchasing decisions every day: they decide on what to buy, how much to buy, when to buy and why to buy. These decisions and actions they undertake can be defined as consumer behaviour. According to Blackwell, et al. (2006), consumer behaviour is the activity people undertake when obtaining, consuming, and disposing of products and services (p. 4)*.* Solomon (2006) takes a similar approach and defines consumer behaviour as "the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires" (p. 157). As seen in both definitions, the three primary activities of consumer behaviour are; obtaining, consuming/using and disposing. Obtaining refers to the activities leading up to and including the purchase or receipt of a product (Blackwell et al., 2006, p. 5). This might for instance include the search for information, evaluation of alternatives products or brands, and purchasing. The process of consuming describes how, where, when, and under what circumstances consumers use products. Last but not least, disposing refers to how consumers get rid of products and packaging. Consumer behaviour is central to the marketing concept and is described as the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006, p. 5). When analyzing the three core definitions of consumer behaviour it can be seen that the first two definitions actually contain the stages a consumer goes through before buying a product. This CDP model will be now outlined.

# 2.2.2 The traditional CDP model

Before the practical research can take place, it is highly important to first see how consumers actually make purchase decisions. This will be done by using the CDP model of Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (2006) that describe the stages a customer goes through when making a purchase decision. There should be noted that the CDP model contains seven steps but for this research five steps of the model will be highlighted because these are the steps that are expected to be visible steps on a website.

The CDP model of Engel, Blackwell and Miniard is a dominant model that displays the decision process of consumers. It is a common applied model on academic papers and books (Kotler, 2003; Blackwell, Miniard & Engell, 2006; Solomon, 2008). The model (figure 3) makes a distinction between five different phases of the consumer decision process.

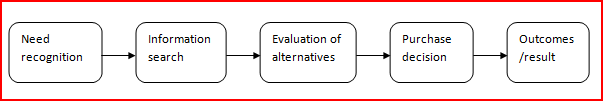


Figure 3: traditional CDP model (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006)

Blackwell’s study (1990) on consumer behaviour (as cited in Basisboek Online Marketing, 2012) shows that who buys a product goes through the following stages (figure 3): (1) need recognition, (2) information search, (3) evaluation of alternatives, (4) purchase and (5) result. The basics of the different stages are discussed as it will be used to measure the changes in consumer behaviour where after it will be applied on the empirical research.

1. Need recognition   
The consumer decision process starts with need recognition, the consumer becomes conscious that his/her current situation could be improved by buying a product or service. Marketers must know consumers’ needs; if they know where consumers "itch", they have a better idea of where to "scratch" with new and improved products, more effective communication programs, and more user-friendly distribution channels (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006, p. 73). It means that marketers should keep on working on their product innovation to develop and promote new products or services if they want to create this consumer awareness. However it should be noted that recognition often occurs outside the control of the company. The challenge of the marketer here is to anticipate that in an intelligent way. A primary way to generate recognition among consumers need is to change the desired state, to offers them something to which they would go crazy for.

2. Information search   
Once need awareness has occurred, consumers start to search for information and solutions to satisfy these unmet needs. However, only if they think it is necessary. When the consumer’s drive is strong and a satisfying product is near, he or she is more likely to buy it then (Armstrong & Kotler, 2012, p. 176). According to Blackwell et al. (2006), "the search may be internal, retrieving knowledge from memory or perhaps genetic tendencies, or may be external, by collecting information from peers, family and the market place" (p. 74). This phase within the model is very important for the marketer as they can practice a lot of influence here. For this it is crucial for the marketer to provide the customer with enough information and to advertise in a smart way.

3. Evaluation of alternatives   
Once the consumer has enough information, they will consider a number of alternatives that were identified during the information search. During this phase, consumers compare what they know about certain products and brands with what they find important. In order to make a decision, several evaluative criteria are assessed. Evaluative criteria are features that are used when judging qualities of competing brands and influence the nature of the decision.

4. Purchase   
Once the alternatives are evaluated, the actual search is translated into a purchase. In this phase the consumer decides on the product and supplier. However, there is still no guarantee that the customer will buy the product. Here it is crucial for a marketer to make the purchase as convenient as possible. Reasons for not buying the product in the end might be a product that is out of stuck or the payment possibilities do not suit the customer.   
  
5. Result   
The last stage within the purchasing model is the result of the purchase. In this stage of the consumer decision process, post-consumption evaluation takes place, in which the consumer can either be satisfied or dissatisfied. The experience of consumption is very important as consumers store their evaluations in memories and will base their future purchases on previous experiences. Also the consumer shares experiences with their environment and spread the word about their experiences. As such, this phase is very important for companies. Here, customer service plays a very crucial role.

2.3 The digitization   
*‘’With consumer online access and engagement hitting the levels we see today, almost all components of our lives have become digitized in some shape or form’’ (TNS, 2011, p. 21).*

After assessing the development of the Internet, the consequences it has had and the traditional CDP model of Blackwell et al. (2006) that is used for this research, it is now important to explain the impact of the digitization on the current marketing communication. This is an important chapter as it will form a critical basis for the case studies performed during this research.

2.3.1 Changing marketing communications   
In this section, the most important applications of E-marketing will be described. It will show how the communication with customers across the purchase cycle from generating awareness to relationship marketing has changed by the digitization. This will be done by exploring the key differences between digital media and traditional media as of the former differs significantly from those of the latter. The focus will remain on digital media s this will be needed for the practical research.

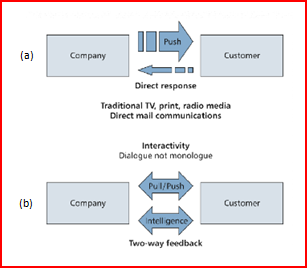
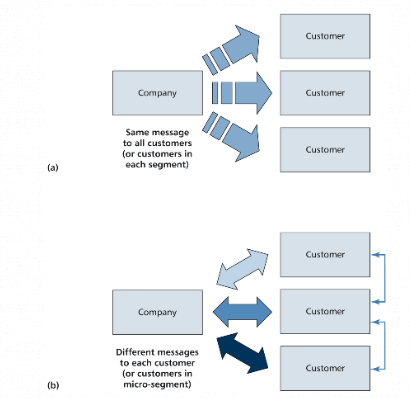
**From push media towards pull media**Figure 4 clearly shows the true shift that has taken place from push communication towards pull communication. Van der Mark (2011) points out that within pull communication it is essential that; the message is to be found and the message directly suits to the query of the reader (p. 33). The image shows how (a) traditional media are predominantly push media where the message is brought from company to customer resulting into limited interaction whilst within (b) digital media interactivity is at the heart of the marketing activities. Hoffman and Novak (1997) believe that digital media have caused such a shift in the model of communication that it is a essentially new model or paradigm for marketing communications. These days, it is not only the company that approaches the customer but also the customer seeks information on the company’s website and initiates contact. One of the final major changes is that it is not only the company that creates content but also the customer who is very proactive and spreads information over the Internet.

Figure 4: The shift from push to pull media (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012)

**From mass media towards personalisation**Another important shift that has taken place within marketing communications is the shift from mass media to individual media. In the figure on the side (figure 5) this major shift within communication directions can clearly be seen.

Additionally, where in the past one standard message was sent to all customers, the message is now tailored to the specific needs and wants that are measured of a customer (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012, p. 37). The needs and wants of a customer can be measured by collecting information about a site visitor and store this in a database. Subsequently, this will be used to target and personalise communication towards customers. This is also described as a sense and responds communication. A very strong example of this personalization is Amazon. It is the most widely known example where the customer is greeted by name on the website and receives recommendations during their visit on the website as well as e-mails based on previous purchases. Lastly, another important change is the mutual interaction between customers. Customers now attach high value to opinions of third parties and communicate via various kinds of media about their experiences with both products and services.

Figure 5: From mass media towards  
personalization (Chaffey et al., 2012)

2.3.2 The changing customer journey   
From the first orientation to the actual purchase and loyalty programs, not one part of the customer journey remains untouched by digitalization anymore. Customer journey refers to the sequence of online and offline touch points a customer takes during a buying process (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012, p. 11). According to a study of TNS (2011), a marketing specialist, "more than 20 percent of consumers making in-store purchases are being influenced at some point prior to the purchase by digital touch points – be that category research, product research or more transactional research such as sourcing coupons" (p.22). Figure 6 illustrates that consumers use the digital touch point mostly for three different actions: (1) to become aware of the offers that exist, (2) to choose a product and (3) to determine where to buy. In the figure there can be seen that the online touch point is getting very close to the offline touch point. This shows more clearly how important the online world has become.

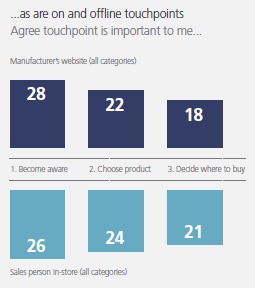
According to the research of TNS (2011), "73 percent of the Dutch population uses the Internet to do research for brands, where fifty six percent actually also make purchases online. This amount seems to be a lot but there is still enough for brands to win in the online buying process" (Emerce, 2012, "the online buying process", ¶2). However, this percentage of users that actually search for information on the Internet remains very high. This shows how important the online touch point has become within the search for information. With the emergence of the Internet, the focus to make the consumer decision process more user friendly and clear is now more important, and yet at the same time, more complex than ever before. In order to get a clear understanding of how marketers can influence customers online, three different key online media types will be outlined.

Figure 6: Online and offline touch points (TNS, 2011)

2.3.3 Online media types   
To reach and influence potential customers online, three main types of media channels that marketers need to consider will be referred to. Through the digitization, a more competitive buying environment exists than ever before, with customer journeys involving many different forms of online presence (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012, p. 11).

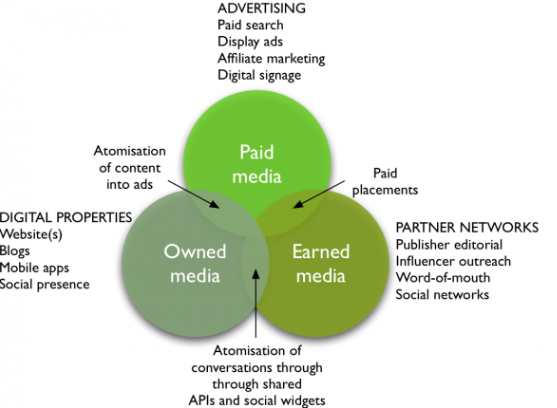
During the consumer decision process, various online touch points are now used by consumers. Those can be divided into three categories: (1) paid media, (2) earned media and (3) owned media. It should be noted that owned media is the most important type to consider as this type of media is used by means of a website and will be used to analyse the websites in the practical research. First, paid media is bought media where direct payment occurs to a site owner or an ad network when they serve an advertisement, a sponsorship or pay for a click, lead or sale generated. Second, earned media includes word-of-mouth that can be stimulated through viral and social media marketing, conversations in social networks, blogs and other communities. It is the communication about a brand that cannot be managed by a marketer. It also includes different forms of conversations between consumer and businesses that occurs both online and offline (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012, p. 11). Finally, owned media includes online platforms that are fully owned by brands. On these platforms, they have great control on how they present their brand. These online platforms include a company’s website, blogs, e-mail list, mobile apps or their social presence for instance on Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012, p. 11). As can be seen in the figure below, owned media has a very important share within the customer journey. At least 85 percent of the consumers consults the website of a company during the consumer decision process. This is a very interesting fact and shows how important the website of a company remains to succesfully influence customers during their consumer decision process. Earned media also seems to have a huge impact. It can be seen that consumers specifically consult price comparison sites, consumer reviews and expert reviews.

Figure 7: Paid media, earned media and owned media (Chaffey, 2012)

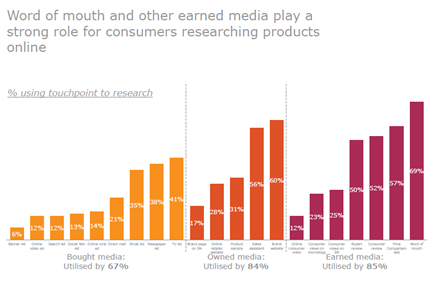
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Figure 8: roles of different media (TNS Nipo, 2012)

2.3.4 Digital media channels   
It is now important to go through the key types of digital media channels that exist. This is essential because these tools also form an important part of a company’s marketing strategy. These various tools are currently of immense influence on consumer behaviour.

*Figure 3: Zoom in on owned and earned media (TNS Nipo, 2012)*

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012) identify six main groups within online marketing tools (p. 29). These are as follow: (1) search engine marketing, (2) online PR, (3) online partnerships, (4) display advertising, (5) opt-in-e-mail marketing and (6) social media marketing. However, for this research only social media marketing will be highlighted as it is an important category of digital marketing that involves encouraging customer communications on a company’s own site, or social media tools such as Facebook or twitter, blogs and forums.

Considering there are so many types of tools what we refer to as ‘social media’, figure 9 lists eight forms of online social presence. However, only the tools that are relevant for this research are outlined. The radar below is a very good tool to have a clear overview on the social media landscape. It focuses on the sites that are generally agreed on to be the most important tools. As can be seen, all tools that belong to the social media marketing radar are related in some way to the company its websites. Below the relevant tools will be discussed:

1. Social networks; indicated to be the core social platforms in most countries. As can be seen in the radar, people interact through social networks such as Facebook (for consumer audiences), LinkedIn (for business audiences), Google+ and Twitter (suitable for both audiences).   
2. Social publishing and news; formed by nearly all newspapers and magazines. With the emergence of online sections these sources now have an online presence where the option exists to participate through the comments on the publications and news.   
3. Social blogging; the blogging of companies. A company blog can form the centre of a company’s social media strategy. When companies make actively use of blogging, it can also contribute to a more favourable place within the search engine results.   
4. Social customer services; these are customer support forums that have become increasingly more important for responding to a customer its complaint. As an example, consumers are using social media more and more to get in touch with the customer service. More organizations therefore ensure that these are also accessible on Twitter and Facebook for instance.   
5. Social knowledge; this includes reference social networks such as Yahoo! Answers and Wikipedia. It is a new way to find and share information with each other. On these pages, questions can be asked on any topic; people can get answers from real people and can share their insights on different topics. There should be noted that companies do not have influence on these networks.   
6. Social search; currently social media functions are integrated in the results pages of search engines. These social media are becoming increasingly important for the user. Here, a company should determine what terms consumers use when they talk about the brand and respond to this by using these terms to on the website and in the communication with the consumers.

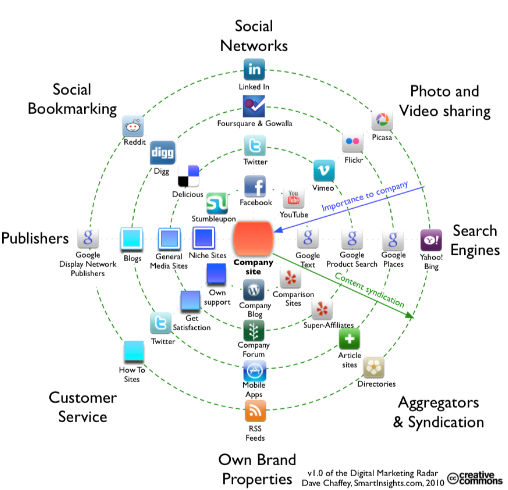


Figure 9: Social Media Marketing Radar (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, Smartinsight.com, 2012)

The Digital Marketing radar shows there are many tools that exist within E-marketing. However, for the empirical research the focus will be mainly on the websites of companies (own brand properties/media). Here the focus relies on the findability of websites within search engines, integration of social media on the website, blogging, communities as well as the customer service. Before displaying the extent to which the stages of the CDP model has changed, it is first important to discuss how a company its website contributes to this process.

# 2.3.5 Goals of a website

The Internet is a specific channel where customers are looking for information about products, people and businesses. It is a pull medium: customers seek information while in most other media companies look for the customer. This different approach makes it necessary to develop a good strategy on the use of the Internet, based on the expected needs of the customers. One of these strategies, and one of the most important, remains the way in which a company makes use of their website. As such, this section will have its full focus on the use of websites and how it can influence customers through the use of different tools that exist.

On a website, the objectives that a company has to reach the (potential) customer, clearly returns. Companies can have different goals by means of their website, however the most frequent goals of a website (in relation to the consumer decision process) are: to inform visitors on the organisation, to communicate with customers, to inform visitors on the products, to come in contact with them, encourage the purchase (or online sales) and to offer after sales service (Molenaar, 2012; Mark van der, 2011). For web shops, the main goal is to sell as much as possible. It has its focus on providing the customer of a lot of product information and is very active on web 2.0 sites (e.g. blogs, chats, Twitter and social media tools). This product and purchase information concerns information on products, delivery conditions, and payment possibilities. Within the search for information it is important to have diverse blogs, guest blogs and an FAQ section to support the buying process on a website and to make it as convenient as possible. Besides that, the provision of information remains a very important presence on a company’s website. It is also essential to build trust through a website. Van der mark (2011) points out a few important factors; a clear design, a good look, an easy navigation, a fast buying process, different payment opportunities (where post pay is very appreciated), conducting a home shopping guarantee mark and clear delivery conditions.

2.3.5.1 Visibility of a website   
search engines, whether or not used in combination with ads that are linked to keywords, are the main suppliers of web visitors. Van der Mark (2011) points out a top four sources for website visitors which are; search engines, clicks through e-mailings, directly typing the web address (URL) and via links or banners on another website. Search engines however, deliver two distinctive search results; organic search results and sponsored links. Organic results are the results that show up on the left site that a search engine delivers. Here, the search engine links to the word(s) the consumers searched on to a text from a website and ranks them in relevance. Sponsored links are the results of paid word- and content ads that show up on the right side or upper side of the search engine with a light-coloured background. It should be noted that the higher a company is listed in a search engine, the faster the customer will click the link. This will be further explained within the next part.

2.3.5.2 Search engine ranking   
These days it remains essential for a company its website to end up within the first page of the Search Engine as less likely to fifty percent of the searchers pick out a website within only four seconds. Besides, consumers seem not to continue to the next page of the Search Engine and instead type a new search term to find the desired results. Figure 10 is a representation of the places to be seen in the first few seconds by someone looking for information in Google. Here, there clearly can be seen that the orientation of the searcher is especially on the first three words on top of the search results.

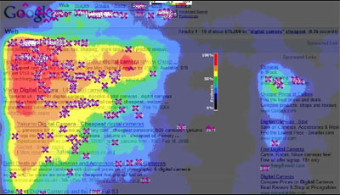


Figure 10: Search behaviour at search results (Netmarketing.nl, 2011)

The figure clearly shows that it is essential for a company to end up within the top ten lists. However, as can be seen in the figure above, it is ideal to end up within the first three results as consumers click considerably more on those links. Moreover, for many companies it remains infeasible to receive a high ranking position by using links to general search terms. Their focus should be on the specific feature of the company in order to reach their target group. Furthermore, it should be noted that while a company might not end up high in the Search Engine by the use of general search terms, it does not mean that it cannot have a good ranking position once the search terms are more specified during a further stage of the search process (Van der Mark, 2011, p. 71).

2.4 CDP model online   
With support of the literature research on the influence the Internet has had on marketing, the CDP model will be again discussed taking in advent the changes that have occurred within marketing and consumer behaviour. These changes within the model are of great importance as they will be used during the analysis of the websites of the different industries.

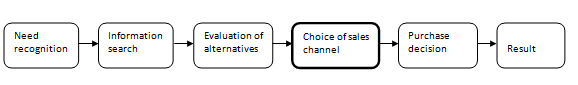
By the rise of the Internet, consumers now have the opportunity to go both online or offline within the purchase process. Therefore, Visser and Sikkenga (2012) have added another channel in the process which is the choice of the sales channel. This channel has been added as the consumer now has the opportunity to switch from online to offline channels and vice versa.

Figure 11: CDP model online (Visser & Sikkenga., 2012)

1. Need recognition   
Presently, with the emergence of E-marketing; consumers can be influenced in many more ways than within traditional media. For instance, they now can be made aware of needs either via offline and online media. Online media tools that can influence the customer are prominently paid media, earned media and owned media. For this research the focus is on owned media as the website belongs to this type of media.

On the Internet, the consumer is confronted with a much greater choice of buying options than within offline shopping (Visser & Sikkenga, 2012, p. 91). As a result of this, the impulse in online shopping is far greater because the consumer is overloaded with information and choices. Especially when consumers enjoy visiting a website; the need recognition and temptation to do impulse purchases are high. Visser and Sikkenga (2012) explain that marketers can anticipate to this online behaviour and make consumers aware of their needs by using pop-ups, newsletters, promotional actions and ranking lists of the most bought or viewed products (p. 91). They assume that consumers become more frequent aware of a need on the Internet. On the contrary, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012) add that "generating need recognition is mainly to be achieved through mass media or traditional media that is used in offline advertising and complements that the Internet is to be used as a supplement to offline awareness-building" (p. 11). So actually what Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick say here is that need awareness is not only to be achieved by online media while Visser describes there are certainly tools that can achieve this. Additionally, van der Mark (2011) points out that with support of push media, such as e-mail, direct mail and telemarketing, marketers can accelerate and stimulate the desire of a consumer.

2. Information search   
As already explained in chapter 1.1, many changes have occurred within the search process of a consumer. The shift from push media towards pull media has been from immense importance to this change resulting into consumers making use customer reviews, blogs and Social Media tools during their information search. These tools take a very important position within the search and serve the central platforms for consumers to exchange opinions and experiences. Consumers now specifically consult price comparison sites, consumer reviews and expert reviews to gather information that is relevant for their purchasing decision. The phenomenon of consumer reviews has rapidly developed into an important source of information for the seeking consumer (van der Mark, 2012, p. 42). Where some marketers seen this phenomena as a threat, other marketers see this as an opportunity. For example, bol.com makes very active use of customer reviews by working with a star system. The company even encourages customers to write a review and link this to win actions. Even negative customer reviews do not automatically lead to a negative influence on a customer’s decision. In fact, it makes the other reviews and therewith the product even more credible.

Remaining a very important factor during the information search is the level of involvement. Namely, the extent to which people are motivated to actually start the search on detailed information and how in-depth they search is related to the degree of involvement within the purchase decision (Visser & Sikkenga., 2012, p. 92). Mittal (1989) defines this level of involvement (as cited in Basisboek Online Marketing, 2012) as "the level of interest and importance that a customer attaches to a careful purchasing decision". Vroomen (2006) points out that consumers decide on an information source based on the following indicated factors: the information provided, the convenience, the presented product range, perceived risks and the pleasure in the use of the channel. Customers now expect to receive a quick answer on their questions as the new technologies make this possible. If an answer is not forthcoming, the search will go on and the consumer will buy elsewhere. As such the provision of customer service tools on a website must be present.

According to a research of InSites (as cited in Basisboek voor Marketing, 2012), "consumers are very sparing in the time they spend on their search" (p.93). According to MD Info (2009), "even forty percent of the online shoppers do not look further than the first ten search engine results" (Visser & Sikkenga, 2012, p. 93). As already explained in paragraph 2.4.5.2 it is still very important for online retailers these days to appeal within the first pages of a Search Engine. Customers searching for information make quick decisions and would rather search on new term than going further than the first page. CBS (2011) underpins this importance by showing with their research that at least 85 percent of Dutch people uses a search engine. It is obvious that this tool plays a very important role within the search for information. It is therefore very important for marketers to keep track of the search behaviour of the online consumer.

3. Evaluation of alternatives   
The stage of evaluation has evolved greatly by having many options to gather opinions and experiences from other consumers (e.g. blogs, reviews, social media and so on). According to Visser and Sikkenga (2012), "consumers are now being inspired by both online and offline information sources such as product descriptions, tests, blogs, opinions on forums and so on" (p. 93). There are different tools for marketers to help consumers on deciding their evaluation criteria and evaluating their alternatives. Examples of these are the decision-support systems on their website, placing positive customer reviews on the website and having independent test on their products or services. Although the website of a provider plays an important role within the search process, consumers tend to attach even more value to the opinion of independent thirds. According to ABN Amro (2012), "especially product reviews will be making the difference during the upcoming time" (p. 7). During their research on the future of online shopping, it comes forward that currently about 31 percent of the consumers weights the opinion of other customers when making a decision for a product (p. 7). As a result of this, websites with reviews, blogs and other social media play a very important role both within the information search as in the process of evaluating alternatives. Marketers can anticipate this by, for example,placing customer reviews or independent tests on the website that illustrate the experience on a certain product of customer.

4. Choice of sales channel   
This channel has been added to illustrate the different channels (online and offline) the customer can go through currently. The consumer can now orient itself on the Internet for instance, but decide to buy the product either in an online shop, a physical shop or another channel (e.g. by telephone). Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012) describe the switch between online and offline channels as the mixed mode buying process, by which a customer changes between online and offline channels during the buying process (p. 39). This model is briefly discussed as it is from influence on the changing consumer behaviour. Additionally, according to a research of ABN Amro (2011), this mixed mode buying behaviour will only increase in the upcoming years. Retailers who do not respond to this development, will lose the connection with their customers within few years. The research has brought forward that 85 percent of the respondents makes use of the online channel, of which 56.3 percent indicates to use a cross-channel approach.

*Mixed mode buying*   
The mixed mode model (figure 12) clearly outlines the switch a consumer can make during the decision making process. Strategies for mixed-mode buying, or alternating online and offline channels to purchase, currently forms an important aspect of the development of E-marketing since the customer must be accompanied through every channel switch. Below an example is outlined to visualise this channel switch:

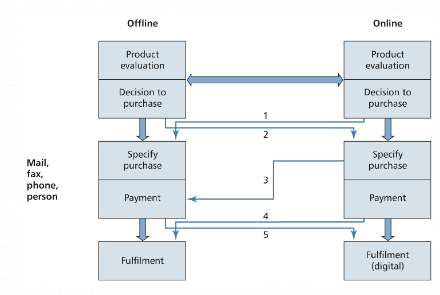
A consumer wants to buy a computer. He or she may see a TV advertisement for a certain brand which raises awareness of the brand and then sees an advert in print media that directs him to the website for further information. However the customer does not want to buy online, prefers the phone, but the site allows for this by prompting with a telephone number at the right time. In this case, all the different communications channels, both online and offline, are mutually supporting each other. This example shows how important it is to integrate both online as offline possibilities on the website. The customer should be properly guided within the switches between the both channels by receiving enough information on the possibilities.

Figure 12: Mixed-mode buying (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012)

5. Purchase   
As already explained in the previous section (choice of sales channel), the final purchase can now be done both online and offline. Therefore, this part will explain the most important changes that have occurred by the rise of the online channel.

Strikingly within the online channel it is not always likely that the intended purchase is translated into an actual purchase (Visser & Sikkenga, 2012, p. 95). For example it may be that a product is not in stock, the potential customer is not satisfied with the terms and conditions of the website or he does not find the possible payment methods safe enough. In the Netherlands, especially iDeal and credit card are commonly used payment methods.

According to the research of Close, Kukar-Kinney and Benusa (2010), it turns out that even the inclusion of items in the online shopping cart does not automatically lead to purchases (p. 2). Reasons for this might be that customers use it as a storage place or to find out the actual price. It might also occur that a customer has the intention to purchase a product but encounters problems by finishing the purchase and thus will cancel the purchase. Therefore, it is likely that companies will have an efficient order and payment procedure available, to have separate wish lists and to make it possible to hold products in a shopping basket for a longer amount of time. In this stage, the company would not want to lose the customer. As such, the website should enable standard credit-card payment options and the possibility to place the order by phone or mail should exist (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2012, p. 87). It should make the payment option as easy as possible. It is also very important to have security guarantees, delivery choices and free delivery offers to support the increase of conversion rates.

6. Result   
In this stage of the online buying process, the evaluation phase takes place in which the customer weights the pros and cons of the purchase that has taken place via the website. Firstly, it is very important for the after sales service to offer good customer support in order to keep the customer satisfied. This phase has become very important as there are a lot of factors a website should contain in order to gather E-loyalty (customers that are likely to come back to the website). Srinivasan, Anderson and Ponnavolu (2002) have researched and indicated eight factors (As cited in Visser et al., 2012) that can influence this E-loyalty: (1) customization, (2) contact interactivity, (3) cultivation, (4) care, (5) community, (6) choice, (7) convenience and (8) character. However, these factors will not be discussed in depth as those are experiences from the customers and thus cannot be measured within this analysis.

# 3. Methodology

In this chapter, the applied research strategy, the data sources used and associated methods of analysing are being described.

# 3.1 Research strategy

For this examination there is made use of a qualitative research in which meaning has been given to the use of the CDP model (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006) by the analysis of different websites. The research strategy that has been decided on is the use of a comparing case study and is based on the research strategy of Verschuren and Doorewaard (2007). A case study is "a study in which the researcher is trying to get insight in one or more spatio-temporal limited objects or processes" (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007, p. 183). This comparative case study is concerned with three websites per industry and will be performed by using the stages that belong to the CDP model (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006).

The use of case studies is the appropriate research strategy for this examination because the investigation is done on a small number of websites per industry. Concerning the case study, selective, or strategic, sampling has been used: there is the matter of strategic sampling during the investigation because there has been worked within a small field and a limited number of websites. Here, there is made use of an in-depth investigation that examines the way in which the CDP model is visible on websites. There is matter of a comparative case study because the outcomes per different industry will be compared. The study has its focus more in-depth than broad by the use of nine case studies which will be looked at broad during the examination.

For the empirical research it will be analysed in which way companies from three different sectors make use of the CDP model (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006) by means of their websites. These websites have been studied in detail on the basis of labels that flow from the theoretical framework. The labels that are being used for this examination have been selected very consciously. They are visible and concrete concepts that have been derived from the five phases that belong to the CDP model. To give an example, within the theoretical framework it has come forward that companies can encourage need recognition by making use of newsletters. So for the stage of need recognition, a look will be given whether a website makes actively use of this tool or not. Additionally, these labels have come into being by creating tree diagrams (Appendix I). Within those tree diagrams, abstract core concepts are being translated into dimension whereupon those dimensions have been translated into labels (Appendix II). The labels that came out of the tree diagrams will finally be applied for the empirical research. Within the field research, three different industries are being analysed. Per industry, there are three different websites that have been analysed in-depth.

The focus for the analysis is on product oriented industries: the book industry, the furniture industry and the fashion industry. The decision has been made to select websites that offer products where the decision making process can be applied very well. The chosen industries offer consumer products for everyday use and durable items that consumers do not buy every day as those are secondary necessities. Here it is assumed that one is more likely to go through the buying process as there is a cash limitation for such purchases. Likewise, within this sector, consumers are more conscious about their purchase decision because it is not an ever day purchase or necessity.

A critical point for the internal validity of this research however is that only one method has been used for the research; namely a content analysis on the different selected websites. Hence, to ensure a triangulation method, it is desirable that interviews with marketers will be conducted in order to retrieve information on the way in which marketers give meaning to influencing their customers on the websites researched. To ensure the external validity for the content and form of this research there has been made use of critical friends. This means that on the basis of this investigation the examination should be repeatable and the results that will come out should be exactly the same.

# 3.2 Data sources

* Documents: the available research-related project documentations on consumer behaviour and the changing consumer decision process via the Internet
* Literature: the relevant scientific literature found in the literature is used during the study
* Books: the relevant written books on the development of the Internet and its influence on the CDP model have been consulted. Additionally, books on the development from traditional marketing towards E-marketing have been consulted to gather background information on this topic.
* Discussions have taken place with experts on the field of research and marketing.

4. Empirical framework   
As previously explained within the methodology, this chapter is concerned with the analysis of websites from three different industries. The analysis is done based on the five stages of the CDP model (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006) First, the websites will be individually analysed on the basis of the labels that have been derived from the literature research. Next, the company websites that operate within the same industries are compared. This comparison indicates to the differences and similarities of the tools that are used for their websites. After the three industries are analysed independently of one another, this will form the basis of the conclusion. Finally, this information should lead to a final answers on the central question of the research that aims to determine on how the companies from these different industries make use of their website to successfully influence the consumer decision process of buyers and users.

4.1 Fashion industry   
Regarding to the fashion industry, the analysis has been performed on H&M, Zara and GAP.

4.1.1 Analysis H&M   
Hennes & Mauritz AB (H&M) designs and sells fashion clothing for women, men, teenagers and children at a very competitive price. The company sells a variety of modern, sporty and classic garments in addition to accessories such as jewellery, bags, scarves and cosmetics. H&M operates its own stores in many countries all over the world and has both its focus on offline and online sales.

1. Need recognition   
H&M makes active use of weekly newsletters which contain information on exclusive offers, price reductions, new products and styling tips. If customers subscribe to this newsletter, H&M has a promotional action by offering a reduction of 25 percent on the next product they purchase. The icon to subscribe for the newsletter is very prominently visible and can be found on the home page as well as on the top of the page in each window the customer visits. Another promotional action that H&M currently offers are reductions on certain products and a standard sale tab where clothes are reduced. It also has a special tab that is fully dedicated to blogs on H&M updates. Lastly, it remains very hard to measure the use of pop-ups by the H&M website because the analysis has shown that these tools are used beyond the website and are tailored to the search behaviour of customers.

2. Information search   
All of the search terms that have been applied for the case study on the fashion industry led to H&M its web page (see appendix IV). The website appeared mostly within the first three search results or at least within the first page of the search engine. H&M has integrated a blog on which it updates (potential) customers on the latest trends, tips and latest happenings around the company. A special tab has been dedicated for this blog and it is easy to find as it can be found on top of the home page and all other windows. Furthermore, the website provides the consumer with information primarily by showing many pictures from different point of views. It also shows alternative products under the viewed product that might suit that certain product. Supporting tools for mixed mode buying can be seen as well. Orders can be placed on the website, using the H&M app or by computer. If a customer has seen an item in the print catalogue, they can just enter the article number in “Order from catalogue”. The customer can also decide to let the product be delivered to one of the closest chain stores and do not have to pay shipping costs. Lastly, the ranking lists are not used by this website.   
  
3. Evaluation of alternatives   
H&M does not make use of customer reviews to illustrate the experiences of current customers. In addition, they do provide the customer of brief product descriptions that contain information about the look of the product and the composition of the product. Also, they suggest other clothes that might suit to the product the customer is currently looking at. The website also makes extensive use of pictures from different views in order to give the customer a clear view on the product. However, no independent product tests on the products of H&M are available. Another feature H&M makes use of is a virtual dressing room in which the customer can combine all products to form one look.

4. Purchase   
H&M offers the customer a delivery time of three to five working days and handles delivery costs. Customers can pay on delivery, through a monthly invoice, on an H&M account, credit card, cash on delivery and by gift card. The payment system has a security guarantee as an SSL security is integrated within the website. In addition, they offer the option to add products to a wish list so that the customer can gather the products he or she likes the most.

5. Result   
H&M offers customer support with help of an FAQ that gives an answer on the most frequently asked questions and it offers help via the telephone. They are available by phone every day of the week as well as during the weekend.

4.1.2 Analysis Zara   
Zara is a Spanish clothing chain that mainly sells women's clothing. They also sell shoes, belts, bags and their own brand of perfumes. The focus group of Zara is on men and woman from 15 to 50 years old. They sell trendy and chic clothes all over the world at a reasonable price. Zara has not had a web shop for that long yet; having only just launched its web shop in 2010. The shop has its focus on both online and offline sales. However, the company states in its strategy that its main focus is still on offline sales.

1. Need recognition   
Zara does not make use of integrated blogs within its website. It uses a weekly digital newsletter to update customers on the latest trends and new collections that have come in. However, the option to subscribe for this newsletter is not prominently visible by an icon on the starting page. Zara makes does not make extensive use of promotional actions and only offers free delivery if the customer decides to pick up the product at one of Zara its chain stores. The website does not work with ranking lists. Lastly, it is very hard to analyse the use of pop ups as this way of attracting attention is used outside the website.

2. Information search   
It remained hard to find Zara within the search engine in combination with the search terms that were applied for the fashion industry (see appendix IV). The company did not turn up on the first page in combination with the search terms that were used. The website has not integrated a blog or customer reviews. The website is set up virtually as it shows many pictures of models wearing the clothes. The information on the product contains the composition of the clothing and the payment/shipping conditions. It can be seen that the website serves as a tool to show the latest trends in the field of fashion. They do this by placing many pictures of models wearing the new clothes from Zara, making a look book in which different trends are shown, having a section of ‘people’ in which the customer is inspired by the trends of the month and having a tab that shows a different outfit from Zara for each new day. Supporting tools for mixed-mode buying cannot really be seen within this website.

3. Evaluation of alternatives   
Zara makes use of very short product descriptions that only contain information on the composition of the product. Furthermore, it does not make use of consumer blogs or customer reviews and it does not make use of a live chat to help customers making their decisions. It also does not make use of independent product test to show the quality of their products. No advice or help is given by live online supporting tools.   
  
4. Purchase   
The delivery time of Zara products is estimated at three to five working days. They offer the customer free delivery when the product is delivered at one of the Zara stores. However, a wish list is not integrated on the website. Payment options include Visa, Visa Electron, MasterCard, American Express, PayPal and gift card. It has not integrated an icon that ensures the payment is safe.

5. Result   
The website only features a contact form and telephone service for questions after the purchase. They are available from Monday to Saturday by phone. Furthermore, the website does not have a virtual community. There is no high level of interactivity with customers in term of guiding them trough the website with customer support tools.

4.1.3 Analysis GAP   
Gap Inc. is a leading global specialty retailer offering clothing, accessories, and personal care products for men, women, children, and babies. It is a very large corporation with over 3300 stores worldwide. The company has its focus on both online and offline sales.

1. Need recognition   
GAP does not make use of an integrated blog on the website. However, customers can subscribe for a digital newsletter with updates on new arrivals and offers. The option to receive the newsletter has been clearly brought forward on the website by showing a pictogram on the home page as well as on the bottom of each window on the web page. Furthermore, GAP makes use of promotional action by offering free shipping and free returns of the products. It also gives customers that subscribe for a newsletter 25 percent off on their next purchase. Lastly, it remained very hard to measure the use of pop ups by GAP as this tool seemed to be applied beyond the website.

2. Information search   
In combination with the search terms that are used, it is hard to find GAP within the first pages of the search engine (see appendix IV). Furthermore, the website provides the customer with a lot of information and pictures to visualise the product. In addition, it also contains a real time chat in which customer can ask all their frequent questions on the products.

3. Evaluation of alternatives   
The website makes use of a star rating system that is based on the reaction of customers and has integrated customer reviews within the website. The customer reviews are very extensive and contain third party opinions on the quality of the product and the truthfulness of the information that is written on the website. The figure on the left is an example on how GAP makes use of customer ratings and opinions of the website. The website has also an integrated live chat in which the customer can ask all questions they have during their information search or purchase intention. There can be seen that GAP pays attention to the mixed-mode buying behaviour as it has integrated tools for offline purposes as well. As an example, GAP provides a ‘FIND IN STORE’ feature on every product page that provides the customer information about the availability in the chain stores on certain styles, sizes and colours a customer wants.

Figure 13: ranking system GAP (GAP, 2013)

4. Purchase   
The delivery time of the products can be two to three working days and shipping costs are charged. However, sometimes it is not possible to order a product because it cannot be delivered in certain countries. Shipping costs are not charged once a customer has an order above $50. It can be paid solely with a credit card or gift card. The payment system is secured by an SSL system and MasterCard secure code. Also, there is no option to gather the products at a wish list.

5. Result   
GAP is available by live chat, e-mail and phone and also offers a real time chat where customers can ask questions on the purchase.

4.1.4 Comparison   
It has been shown that all three websites make use of digital newsletters to encourage the need recognition. The website of H&M remains the most easily to be found within the search engine. The company seems to be very active and aware on its findability within search engines. For GAP, it can be seen that, in regards to the Netherlands, the company remains hard to find within the search engine. For none of the websites was it easy to measure the use of pop ups as those are used beyond the website. All three websites serve as an information tool for the products, availability and details about chain stores. H&M and GAP show clearly the mixed-mode integration in their website by having many options to switch from online to offline and vice versa. H&M does this by allowing the customer to place an order from the print catalogue; they can simply enter the article number in “Order from catalogue”. GAP also does this by using the ‘FIND IN STORE’ feature on every product page where customers can see if the style, size and colour a customer wants is available in a certain store. What can be seen at Zara is that the website especially serves as a tool to show the latest trends in the field of fashion. It uses a lot of tools to visualize the clothes it has and to raise need recognition by inspiring the customer with its new outfits. It can also be seen that the websites from Zara and H&M have a wide range of paying methods while GAP only offers the possibility to pay by Credit Card or gift card. GAP and H&M have integrated a wish list in contrast to Zara who does not have this. The delivery time for Zara and H&M is three to five working days. GAP could not be estimated because the products have to come from outside the Netherlands. Additionally, GAP is the only website that makes use of reactions from independent third parties by means of integrated customer reviews and ranking tools within their website. Also, it can be seen that all three websites support the stage of purchasing on the website as they all have integrated supporting tools during the purchasing process such as FAQ’s, service by mail and by phone. Furthermore, GAP is the only website that has integrated a real time chat for customers with questions. Lastly, taking into account the findings above, it can be concluded that GAP has adopted the most features of the analysed labels.

# 4.2 Furniture industry

In terms of the furniture industry, the companies selected for the analysis are IKEA, Leen Bakker and Woon Express. The decision has been made on those companies as they are well known in the Netherlands and are more or less on the same level in the kind of products they offer.

# 4.2.1 Analysis IKEA

IKEA is from Swedish origin and is a market leader within the furniture industry in the Netherlands. It focuses on offering affordable furniture and home furnishings that has to be partially constructed by the customer itself. The concept consists of offering quality products at a low price.

1. Need recognition   
IKEA has no blog integrated within the website. It does have weekly digital newsletters customers can receive once they have subscribed. The option to subscribe for the newsletter is not easily found on the website. A special icon to illustrate the newsletter is not used and instead they call it “IKEA FAMILY”. Promotional actions of IKEA contain reductions on furniture. Those actions can be found very easily and are all shown on the homepage of the website. Furthermore, the website does not make use of a product ranking list. Lastly, it remained very hard to measure the use of pop ups as this is used outside of the company’s website.

2. Information search   
For the information search it is striking that IKEA is found very easily within the search engine. The website turned up in combination with each search term that has been used on the furniture industry (see appendix IV). The website mostly turned up within the first three results on the first page. IKEA does not make use of a blog. The information provided is very detailed. The company also shows a lot of products below the viewed product that matches the current product. A virtual assistant is available to answer the questions a customer has during the information search and evaluation. It can be seen that the website is very focussed on providing the customer with information on the offline shopping possibilities. This is done by providing the (potential) customer information on opening times by showing which products are still available in what chain store and showing all the services the customer can make use of when it has purchased a product offline. These options are integrated in each window on top of the website page and very easy to find. In addition, the website is updated every one and a half hour to update the availability of the products in stores. Another thing that shows the focus on offline shopping is the use of electronic brochures. The customer can download all types of brochures. Also a chain store can be selected on the home page where after the website will focus on all actualities and offers on the selected chain store. It is obvious that this is a very informative website.

3. Evaluation of alternatives   
The website does either not make use of consumer blogs nor customer reviews. The options to gather information on products and inspiration are very broad by showing all products that are for sale and offering the customer to have a look in the electronic brochures. IKEA makes use of independent product tests. As an example, it recently won a test from the Dutch consumers’ association and won the title of the best seller for batteries.

4. Purchase   
Individuals cannot order on the website and should buy their products ‘offline’ at an IKEA chain store. The consumer cannot pay online and has to pay in the store. However, they do offer the option to pay the amount due in phases. For each product, it can be seen if the product is still available in a chain store at the choice of the customer. However, for business clients with a business account it is possible to order online. The website shows that it relies on mixed mode buying behaviour because it offers the visitor a lot of information on the offline buying options. They do this by showing the opening times of the chain stores, the locations of the stores and by providing the customer with contact possibilities in each window on top of the page. For the online service, the virtual assistant ‘Anna’ is there to answer questions all day and night.

5. Result   
IKEA makes use of an online chat service to support the after sales service, an FAQ section, online assistant and information line by telephone. They are available from Monday to Sunday and have a virtual assistant ‘Anna’ available who is able to assist the customer with questions all day and night.

4.2.2 Analysis Leen Bakker   
Leen Bakker is a furniture company from Dutch origin. It has over 100 stores in the Netherlands, nearly 60 stores in Belgium and also has recently expanded to Luxemburg. It stands for quality and a wide range of products. The branches are located mostly on the outskirts of cities where the larger properties are established. Sometimes they are located on a residential boulevard.

1. Need recognition   
Leen Bakker makes use of a blog that provides the customer of information on current trends, action and news. These actions are also predominantly shown on the home page of the website. It also makes use of digital newsletters that contains information on current actions and new collections that come in. The newsletter is highlighted on the website by making use of a coloured button that strikes direct attention. This button is also constantly shown in each window at the bottom of the web page. It makes use of promotional action by organizing win actions, having weekly offers and free delivery on certain selected products. The weekly action is immediately seen at a first glance on the right side of the starting page. In addition, the website also has an outlet in which certain products are reduced. The website does not make use of product ranking lists.

2. Information search   
Leen Bakker turns up in combination of almost all search terms that are used (see appendix IV). If and when Leen Bakker shows up in the search results, it is seen within the first page of the search engine. Also, each product a visitor has a look at, other products show up below the product description that would suit to the visited product. As with the other websites, it was not easy to measure the use of pop-ups. The information that is given contains details such as the colour, material and size of the product. They also show the service they offer for this product and the guarantee conditions. On the bottom of the website the chain stores can be found with additional information on the opening times. This example can be seen in the figure on the side (Note: the language is Dutch as it is a Dutch company). In this way they make use of the mixed-mode buying channels. Also E-brochures can be browsed on the website. Finally, they do not make use of a virtual assistant.

Figure 14: Overview chain stores (Leen Bakker, 2013)

3. Evaluation of alternatives   
Leen Bakker does not make use of customer reviews. It does however have a very detailed description on the products that are offered online. The company is currently nominated for the best folder awards. It is also participating within the competition for the best retail shop of 2013 and promotes this on the website.

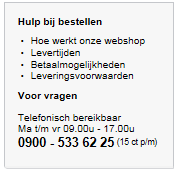
4. Purchase   
The delivery time for smaller products is three to five days whereas the delivery of larger product can take up to a few weeks. For the returning conditions there are some products that cannot be returned such as seats and sofas. A customer can pay with iDeal, MasterCard and Visa and Giro is not accepted. Furthermore, the website has a home shopping guarantee and is a member of thuiswinkel.org, a hallmark for reliable shopping online. For each product it is shown whether the product is still in stock online as well as in the chain store. Also, the website makes it possible to collect items in a wish list. In addition, it supports the customer within the purchase process by integrating offline tools. They do this by providing the customer with information on the conditions of ordering the product on the website. This can be seen in the figure (figure 15), it says ‘Support with order’ and provides the customer with all information on the order conditions. It also integrates offline tools by obviously displaying the telephone number the customer can call if they have questions about a (potential) purchase. Also, the website features an FAQ section and contact form for further questions.

Figure 15: Purchase assistance   
 (Leen Bakker, 2013)

5. Result   
The website features an FAQ section, contact form and contact details for customer service by phone. The telephone service is available on working days. Leen Bakker has no virtual community to support the customer on questions they have after the purchase.

4.2.3 Analysis Woonexpress   
Woonexpress is a Dutch furniture company that is located in all big cities over the Netherlands. It has eight big chain stores in the Netherlands and stand for low prices on all different kinds of styles. Besides inside furniture they also offer an assortment of garden furniture.

1. Need recognition   
Woonexpress does not make use of an integrated blog on their website. For need recognition, they use a digital newsletter that contains information on the latest design trends, living tips and new deals on furniture. There is great attention paid to the findability of the newsletter as it can be directly be seen at a first glance on the starting page. It is a coloured button that is integrated in each window on the bottom of the website. For promotional actions, the company makes use of a daily offer in which there is a reduction on a certain product. The daily action can be seen at a first glance on the starting page. Further promotional actions include free delivery actions on several products and benefit deals on certain selected items. The website does not make use of a product ranking list. Pop-ups remained hard to measure for Woonexpress as well.   
  
2. Information search   
Woonexpress does not turn up in combination with any of the search terms used (see appendix IV). For the information on the products it shows the composition of the product, the size of the product and also it shows the delivery costs for the specific product. The information provided on the products gives information on the size and composition of the products. The website makes use of mixed-mode buying tools providing the customer with information on the locations of chain stores and the openings times. It also enables the customer to have a look at the E-brochures.

3. Evaluation of alternatives   
For the evaluation of alternatives, Woonexpress does not make use of a live chat support to advise the customer. Also, it does not make use of independent product tests. No customer reviews or independent product tests are integrated on the website.

4. Purchase   
The website does not give clear information on the delivery time of the products, and delivery fees are charged. When a customer has their order delivered at a chain store there are no costs for the shipping. It does not give extensive information on the returning conditions. The level of availability is high. Payment can be done with iDeal and so the security aspect is guaranteed as well as it is a widely known payment method. Last, the website does not give the option to make a wish list.

5. Result   
For the after purchase phase, Woonexpress makes use of an FAQ section, contact form and telephone service. They are available only on working days and do not make use of a virtual community.

4.2.4 Comparison   
It can be seen that all three companies make use of a digital newsletters and are clearly reflecting this within the website. Leen Bakker and Woonexpress make use of daily or week offers which can be found on the right side on the starting page of both websites. IKEA does not make use of this but gives meaning to promotional actions by having reductions on selected products. These promotional actions can also be seen directly on the starting page of the website. Surprisingly, none of the websites made it possible to measure the use of pop ups as those are used beyond of the website. IKEA and Leen Bakker are the most easy to find within the search engine whereas Woonexpress remained harder to find. It can be seen that IKEA has a high focus on information search as they have no online sales and focus on providing the customer with information on stores, its assortment and allowing the customer to view Electronic brochures. Also Leen Bakker and Woonexpress offer many options to go both offline or online. For the products all three companies make extensive use of pictures, details and combinations that can be made with the product the customer is currently looking at. For the evaluation and information search, none of the websites make use of star ranking system or customer reviews. The website of IKEA shows that the company effectively supports mixed mode buying behaviour (As referred to in chapter 2.5) by integrating tools on the website. None of the products can be bought online but the company does show the availability of the products per chain store. The customer can even decide to view the website based on a chain store of their choice when they visit the homepage of the website. Furthermore all three websites support the switch to the offline channel by offering Electronic brochures and very detailed information on the chain stores of the company. For IKEA, it was clear that its website predominantly serves as a tool to create need recognition and to support information search. Also Leen Bakker integrates offline tools by showing the phone number of the company for questions and orders and offering the customer the possibility to search for chain stores that are nearby. Woonexpress also shows the locations chain stores with information on the opening hours. Strikingly for the customer service aspect is that IKEA is the only website makes use of a virtual assistant. Other tools that are frequently used by all three the websites are FAQS and contact by e-mail and by phone. Compared to IKEA and Leen Bakker, Woonexpress has a very basic website in terms of information provision. The delivery time was not easy to found on all websites and IKEA does not provide this as the products must be bought at the chain stores. However, for Leen Bakker it takes three to five days.

4.3 Book industry   
For the analysis of the book industry the companies Bol.com, managementboek and ECI have been selected. The decision has been made on those companies as they are all well known, large and successful companies in the Netherlands. Therefore it is interesting to see whether they make use of the same tools and how they differ from each other.

4.3.1 Bol.com   
Bol.com is a shop that is fully focused on online sales, it does not have any visual shop. It was founded in 1999 and is the largest media shop in the Netherlands that currently provides over two million articles. Bol.com is the leader in the online sales of books, entertainment, electrical appliances and toys and it is also the largest (web) shop in the Netherlands and Belgium.

1. Need recognition   
Bol.com makes very extensive use of blogs. These blogs are about entertainment, current win actions, reductions, inspiration and top products. Bol.com provides the customer with different digital newsletters that can be about daily deals, discounts and benefits, personal tips and recommendations based on the previous purchases of the customer, review newsletters, new articles, business newsletters and win promotions. It can be seen that all different newsletters suit to different interests. Promotional actions contain a 24 hours delivery time, daily offers and reduction on certain different products. Furthermore, it makes use of product ranking lists by showing the visitor the most sold products per category and giving the customer recommendations that suit to the previous purchases of the customer. It also shows the most recently visited products by other visitors and shows a list at the starting page with the best ongoing actions.

2. Information search   
Bol.com turns up in combination with all search terms that are used and generally turns up within the three first search results on the first page of the search engine (see appendix IV). The website provides very extensive information on books by providing the customer with a summary of the book. Also the customer has the option to have a look at the digital version of the book to get an idea on the type of book. It has a very wide assortment books available in all different genres and languages. Customers can read the reviews of other customers below the product to see how they have experienced the product.

3. Evaluation of alternatives   
Bol.com makes active use of customer reviews and there can be seen that they really encourage this as many products are provided from opinions from independent thirds and are provided from customer ranking stars. For each product there can be seen what how the average customer experiences the product by ranking it. They do this by customer reviews and using a star system that shows how satisfied the average customer has been with a certain purchase. There can be seen that Bol.com has a high focus on this as many products are provided from customer reviews. Besides, the website pays attention on the anticipation on independent product tests. In 2010, the company won a home shopping award on books and magazines. In addition, bol.com won the award for the Best Online Store and before in 2009 bol.com won three homes hopping awards as well. This year, the website won the audience price in the categories of books, films, games and music. They have integrated this icon within the website and it can be clearly seen on the starting page (figure 16).

Figure 16: winner public price   
 (Bol.com, 2013)

4. Purchase   
Bol.com has recently changed their delivery service and has made it possible for the customer can order until 11 pm and have it delivered the next day (free) at home, at an alternative address or to an Albert Heijn store. The delivery is free on purchases over 20 Euro’s. Also the returning conditions are very clearly outlined. The customer can pay by giro, iDeal and credit card. The website is secured by SSL security. All products that are on the website are available and customers have the option to use a wish list.

5. Result   
Last, they do not make use of a virtual community in which customers can discuss their experiences with other customers.

4.3.2 Managementboek.nl   
Managementboek.nl wants to distinguish itself from general Internet bookstores by specializing on the field of management. It offers a wide range of books and has over 10.000 books in stock. It is a digital store and fully focuses on online sales. The assortment of the online shop includes books, e-books, games and events. There can be found over 18,000 products at Managementboek.nl. Besides the traditional book, managementboek.nl offers e-books, audio books, games, concerts, seminars and our magazine.

1. Need recognition   
Managementboek.nl makes very real use of a blog. This blog contains reviews, an actual top five on books, information on most wanted books and news on managementboek.nl. It has an opinion blog on management and books that is written by external writers. Managementboek.nl also makes extensive use of independent expert reviews on books. Recommendations are provided that suit to the last viewed or bought products by the customer (see figure 17). Also they make use of weekly digital news letters to inform the customer on new products and services and to provide special offers. Promotional actions are free delivery from €20 and reduction promotions on books. Furthermore, managementboek.nl makes use of product ranking lists by showing a bestseller top 100 list, a most wanted list and a top five list on the blog. They have also implemented a list that shows all the products that are currently being purchased on the web shop. The image below shows how they use the recommendations and the bestseller list.



Figure 17: Personalization and bestseller list (Managementboek.nl, 2013)

2. Information search   
Managementboek.nl turns up in combination with some of the search terms that are used. However given this, the website turns up within the results on the first page (see appendix IV). As already seen in need recognition, it also makes extensive use of blogs that provides customers with relevant information on products. Also, independent expert reviewers write reviews and other readers help customers with creating an image on the product. The information provided is extensive as each book contains a summary on the content also it provides information on the chapters the book contains. The website has over 18,000 products in stock.

3. Evaluation of alternatives   
For the evaluation process, Managementboek makes use of expert blogs and reviews that contains information on different books. Recently uploaded customer reviews show up on the left side of the starting page. The product description is very detailed and supported by the customer reviews that are written by independent third parties. It cannot be found whether they make use of independent product tests. The website does not make use of a live chat to support the customer with their decision. However, they do emphasize on their website that they are very open to giving personal assistance by phone.

4. Purchase   
When the customer places the order before nine PM, the product will be delivered the following day. No delivery costs are charged for purchases over €20. The returning conditions are very clear and easy to find on the bottom of the web page, for returning a product no there are no charges. The customer can pay via giro, iDeal, Credit card and a gift card. The payment is secured via home shopping certificate. All products that can be found on the website are guaranteed in stock and the products can be collected in a wish list. Customers can reach the customer service by mail or by phone and the customer service is available on working days.

5. Result   
A virtual community is not integrated within the website. The website has however integrated offline tools by bringing the phone number of the company to the foreground on every window the customer visits.

4.3.3 Eci.nl   
Eci.nl is an open book club from Dutch origin that is located in Netherlands and Belgium. It offers books, e-books, music, films, games and toys. More than 40 years ago Eci.nl started as a shop and today the focus is entirely on online sales. The online store offers more than 600,000 different articles.

1. Need recognition   
Eci.nl also has a blog integrated within the website. Here they publish interviews and reviews on books. Eci.nl makes use of digital newsletter in which it informs the customer of current deals and offers. The button to subscribe is constantly at the bottom of the page and has a red colour. For promotional action the web shop always offers a reduction up to forty percent on selected products. It also offers a reduction on bulk orders; however this reduction starts from offers over the hundred products. Is uses a ranking list by showing the actual best sellers on the web shop. Eci.nl makes use of promotional actions by giving reductions on selected products.

2. Information search   
The website of Eci.nl is not so easy to find in combination with the search terms (See appendix IV) that are used for the analysis. The information provided is extensive and each book contains a summary on the content and information on the chapters the book contains. Additionally, the website makes extensive use of opinions from independent third parties to provide more information on the books.

3. Evaluation of alternatives   
This website illustrates a very good example of the integration of positive customer reviews (figure 18). This review is shown very predominantly on the starting page of the website. As can be seen, Eci.nl makes both use of a star ranking system and customer reviews.

4. Purchase   
If the customer orders before nine PM, the products is delivered the day after. No costs are charged for the delivery if the value of an order is over €35. Customers can pay via giro, iDeal, Credit card or gift card and the website has integrated icons that prove the shopping on this website is safe. All products that are online are in stock.

Figure 18: Ranking system (Eci.nl, 2013)

5. Result   
Customers can reach the customer service by Twitter, a contact form or phone. Frequent questions can be found on the FAQ section of the website.

4.3.4 Comparison   
The first thing that attracts direct attention is the fact that all three websites are fully virtualized. They only have sales via the online channel. Moreover, all three industries make use of a digital newsletter that updates customers on products. Striking for this industry is that all three websites make extensive use of reviews from third parties by integrating customer reviews and a customer ranking system on the website. Furthermore, they all offer very fast delivery by making it possible to have the product at home in only one day. Bol.com makes the delivery even more convenient by offering the customer the option to pick up the delivery at Albert Heijn. After the analysis it can be confirmed that bol.com shows it is the largest website as well. It has integrated a lot of tools to support the customer during the decision making process and makes extensive use of meanings from independent third parties and product reviews. At bol.com it can be seen that very extensive use of customer reviews has been used as many products are provided from opinions from third parties. For each product it is shown how the average customer experiences the product by ranking it. After this analysis, it comes forward that all labels analysed can be found back on the websites of the book industry. It can be seen that on all three websites the stage from need recognition to the purchase stage is obvious. Impressively, all three companies offer fast delivery by handing a delivery time of only 24 hours.

# 5. Conclusion

The aim of this research has been to provide an answer to the following question: *"In what way is the consumer decision process model (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006) applied on websites and in which way can those stages be recognized on the websites of three different industries?"* The conclusion is drawn up on the basis of literature research which forms the basis for the analysis of the websites that are analysed on the basis of labels (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007).

Firstly, after the analysis it can be concluded that the stage of need recognition could be recognized on the nine websites in the same manner as the literature has substantiated this stage. During the literature research it has come forward that with support of push media, such as e-mail, marketers can stimulate the desires of a consumer (Van der Mark, 2011). This type of approach was clearly seen on all analysed websites as they all make use of weekly digital newsletters. Additionally, Visser & Sikkenga (2012) have explained that marketers can anticipate need awareness by using pop-ups, newsletters, promotional actions and ranking lists of the most bought or viewed products. After the analysis it becomes evident that it remains difficult to measure the use of pop-ups by websites as the pop-ups are used beyond the websites. On the contrary, the use of promotional actions was applied by each website and was very visible. However, the way in which the websites give meaning to promotional offers differs from daily offers to free shipping for instance. Moreover, it came forward that only the book industry makes use of ranking lists (see page 48). The websites of the book industry give meaning to product ranking by showing best seller lists and the most favourite products.

Secondly, it clearly came forward that websites support the stage of information search. This was visible as each website served as an information tool on the assortment and service of the company. All websites make use of product descriptions to visualize the product. Strikingly, it came forward that in each industry there was one website that stands out within the search engine. For the fashion industry this was H&M, for the furniture industry this was IKEA and for the book industry this was Bol.com. However, not all websites make use of customer reviews to support the information search. Especially the book industry made extensive use of this.

Thirdly, for the evaluation of alternatives it came forward that not all website have implemented customer reviews while the literature study shows that the phenomenon consumer reviews have rapidly developed into an important source of information for the seeking consumer (van der Mark, 2012). Only GAP (from the fashion industry) and the websites from the book industry give meaning to customer reviews. Additionally, the book industry came out to be most active in implementing these tools on their website as all three websites have implemented customer reviews. Solely the book industry and furniture industry make active use of independent product tests. Within the website out of the fashion industry this could not be found back.

In addition, it has become evident that many labels could be applied to both the information search stage and the evaluation stage. Examples for this include the use of independent third parties that were integrated under the product descriptions and the way in which the websites provide the customers from information on the products. This could be used to both compare products or to gather more information.

Another striking conclusion that can be derived from the analysis is that the book industry predominantly focuses the entire process from need recognition to the purchase stage. To give a clear overview on this, it is outlined within the figure below. It can be seen that all stages can be recognized within the three websites from the book industry.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Need recognition | Newsletters, promotional actions, ranking lists, recommendations |
| Information search | Extensive product descriptions integrated with meanings of thirds |
| Evaluation | Customer reviews, customer star ranking systems, telephone number very actively provided |
| Purchase | Delivery within 24 hours, many tools for customer service, many payment options |
| Result | Use of virtual assistant (bol.com), mail support, FAQ and phone service |

Figure 19: overview on all stages book industry

The stage of purchase could be recognized within all websites with exemption of the website from IKEA. This is because IKEA does not enable the customer yet to purchase online and the products have to be bought in IKEA its chain stores. All websites (with exemption of IKEA) provided information on the delivery times, the delivery costs and purchase conditions. Also, most websites offered a wide range of paying options. Especially the book industry provided the customer from many different options. However, it has come forward that the stage of purchase remains hard to analyse as this stage is also in line with the experience of the customer on the certain website. Here it was hard to measure the availability of the products as this can be an experience of the customer as well as the payment convenience.

Furthermore, the stage of result remained hard to analyse as the result of a purchase is mainly attached to the experience on the website. This stage was determined to be more linked to how satisfied a customer is with the experience on the website and therefore this should be measured in a different way.

# 6. Recommendations

For the recommendations, advice will be given per industry that most likely can be applied to all active companies on the Internet within the three different industries. Recommendations are given on what features of the steps that belong to the consumer decision process model need to be used more effectively with respect to the analysed websites. Hereafter, advice is given that can be commonly applied to the overall analysis. Based on the analysis of the nine websites from three different industries, the following recommendations are given:

**Fashion industry**

* **Conduct interviews:** conduct interviews with marketers from this industry to find out why, with exemption of GAP, they do not make extensive use of customer reviews and how they give meaning to the online consumer decision process.
* **Increase visibility:** for Zara and GAP it is advised to focus on the visibility of the website within the search engine as they remained harder to find that the website of H&M.
* **Integrate mixed-mode buying:** it is important to take into consideration the increasing importance of mixed-mode buying integration. The literature research has brought forward that the mixed use of online and offline tools will only increase in the future. It is from high importance to provide the customer with enough information and tools to switch from the online to the offline channel and vice versa.
* **Integrate customer reviews:** it is important to note the increasing importance of customer reviews and customer ranking systems on websites. Here, GAP, Bol.com, Eci.nl and Managementboek.nl are good examples. They make very extensive use of customer reviews including a ranking system.
* **Use ranking lists:** the analysis on the three different industries has indicated that for the need recognition, the fashion industry does not make use of ranking list. Here the book industry is a very good example as it makes active use of product ranking lists by, for instance, showing the most sold books. The fashion industry does not make us of this and therefore it is advised to consider this as it is also a tool that can support the aware of need recognition.
* **Independent product tests:** after the analysis it has come to light that the fashion industry does not make use of independent product tests. It is advised to consider this as it is a supporting tool for the information search of the consumer.

**Furniture industry**

* **Conduct interviews:** interviews should be conducted to find out how the websites from the furniture industry give meaning to the consumer decision process model online.
* **Increase visibility:** especially for Woonexpress it is recommended to increase the visibility of the website within the search engine as the website remained hard to find in comparison to IKEA and Leen Bakker.
* **Integrate customer reviews:** for the furniture industry it has become evident that none of the analysed websites apply customer reviews or a ranking system. It is advised to implement this as the literature research has brought forward this is an increasingly important tool during the consumer decision process.
* **Use ranking lists:** also for the furniture industry it has come forward that it does not make use of ranking lists by for instance showing the best sold products. During the analysis it was seen that the websites from the book industry make very active use of this. It is advised to implement this in order to stimulate the need recognition.
* **Integrate mixed-mode buying:** it is important to take into consideration the increasing application of both online and offline channels by consumers during the purchasing process. It is important to support this behaviour as a website. It is recommended to offer the online customer enough possibilities to switch from online and offline channels and vice versa.

**Book industry**

* **Conduct interviews:** to find out to which extent they give meaning to the consumer decision process model.
* **Increase visibility:** especially for Eci.nl it is advised to focus on its visibility within the search engine as the website remained hard to find in addition to bol.com and managementboek.nl. Those websites are to be found very easily.

A recommendation that can be offered for all three industries is that interviews with marketers should give the researcher more insights into how they apply certain aspects of the consumer decision process model by means of their websites. Also it has become evident it is hard to measure the use of pop-ups by websites. By interviewing marketers it should become evident how marketers give meaning towards the use of pop-ups. These interviews should also bring forward how websites intend to support the stage of result as this has not come forward during the analysis.

Also, further research is advised to identify how successful the analyzed websites are. This information should contribute to find out how effectively the analysed websites make use of the consumer decision process model.

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# Appendices

# I. Key words

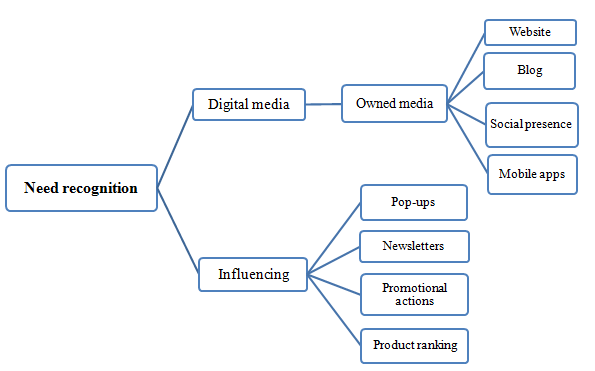
E-marketing: online marketing by means of a company its website   
Direct marketing: marketing that is exercised via the Internet by means of digital   
 newsletters   
Customer journey: the decision making process the consumer goes through   
Decision making process: the stages a customer goes through, especially online, when   
 purchasing a product   
Customers: consumers who already have bought a product on a company its   
 website   
Consumers: consumer that go through the consumer decision process model   
 and have not yet bought at the company concerned   
Traditional marketing: marketing that is exercised with support of offline tools  
Website: The tool that influences the Decision Making Process of a   
 consumer  
Visibility: The ease in which a company is to be found within the search   
 engine

# II. Abbreviations

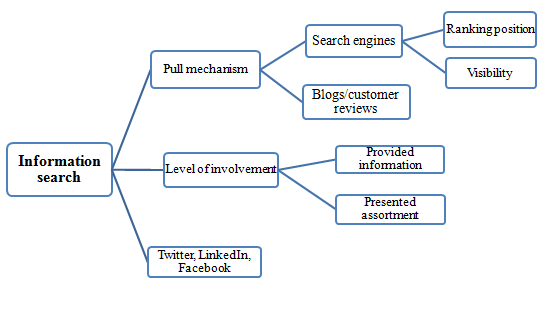
Ads: Advertisements  
CDP: Consumer decision process model   
H&M: Hennes & Mauritz   
SSL security: Secure Sockets Layer   
URL: Web address from a company its website

# III. Tree diagrams

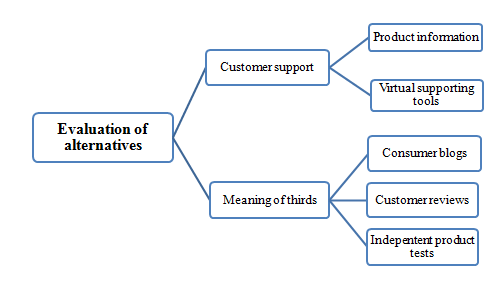
1. Need recognition



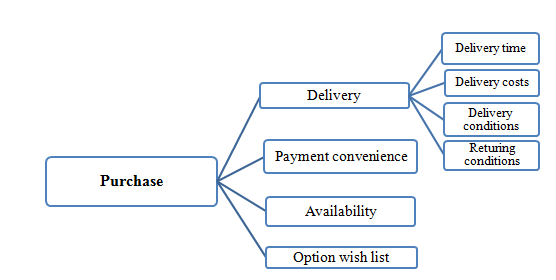
2. Information search

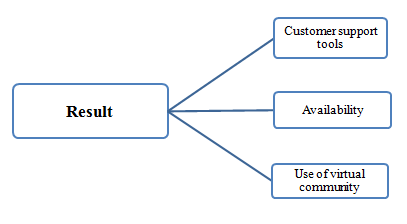


3. Evaluation of alternatives



4. Purchase



5. Result

# IV. Label template

**1. Label template Fashion industry**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Need recognition** | H&M | ZARA | GAP |
| Blog | Yes, H&M life | No | No |
| Pop-ups | Hard to measure | Hard to measure | Hard to measure |
| Newsletters | Digital newsletter with latest fashion news and newest offers | Digital newsletter and monthly E-magazine | Digital newsletter |
| Promotional actions | Become a member and get 25% off | Free delivery at stores | Yes, currently free shipping and free return and become a member and get 25% off |
| Product ranking list | No | No | No |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Information search** | H&M | ZARA | GAP |
| Findability search engine | Turns up in combination with all search terms used | Does not turn up within first pages that easy | Does not turn up within first pages that easy |
| Ranking position\* | Mostly turns up within first three search results | Does not turn up within first 3 pages | Does not turn up within first 3 pages |
| Blog | Yes, H&M life on trends, tips and happenings | No | Make use of Google+ |
| Customer reviews | No | No | No |
| Provided information | Brief descriptions, a lot of pictures to visualise the products, structured | Little information on products, many visualising pictures, structures | Loaded website |
| Presented assortment | Wide range | Wide range | Wide range |
| \*Search term; dresses, pants, woman clothes, fashion, man clothes | | |  |
| \*Search is based on Dutch search terms and so GAP is not to find that fast | | |  |
| \* Search has been done on Dutch market with Dutch search terms | | |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation of alternatives** | H&M | ZARA | GAP |
| Consumer blogs | No | No | Yes |
| Customer reviews | No | No | No |
| Product information | Yes, brief product descriptions about product and where it is made of. Also very visually illustrated | Very concise | Very extensive information including customer reviews and customer ranking |
| Independent product tests | No | No | No |
| Virtual supporting tools | no | no | Yes, live chat support |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purchase** | H&M | ZARA | GAP |
| Delivery time | 3-5 working days | 3-5 working days | 2-3 working days (against extra costs) |
| Delivery costs | Costs are 4.90 | Free delivery at nearest Zara store. Standard delivery is 3.95 | Free delivery over $50 |
| Returning conditions | Clear and very easy to find | Clear and convenient, home pick up | Clear and no costs |
| (Payment) convenience | Giro delivered, monthly invoice, H&M account, credit card, cash on delivery, gift card | PayPal, credit card, Zara gift card | Credit card, gift card |
| Security guarantee | Yes | No visible icon | It makes use of an SSL icon and MasterCard secure code |
| Availability of products | Most products online are in stock. However, not all sizes are available | High | Limited shipping to NL |
| Option wish list | Yes | No | No |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Result** | **H&M** | **ZARA** | **GAP** |
| **Customer support tools** | FAQ, telephone | Contact form, telephone | available by chat, e-mail and phone |
| **Availability** | Monday (8/21) to Sunday (9/17) | Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 7:30 pm Saturday from 10 am till 4 pm | Not written on the website |
| **Use of virtual community\*** | No | No | Yes, they offer real time chat |

**2. Label template furniture industry**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Need recognition** | IKEA | Leenbakker | Woonexpress |
| Blog | No | Yes, about current trends, actions and news | No |
| Pop-ups | Do not come forward on other websites | Hard to measure | Do not come forward on other websites |
| Newsletters | Digital newsletter | Digital newsletter with current actions | Digital newsletter with the latest design trends, the best living tips and best deals. The option is integrated in each page. Digital folder online. |
| Promotional actions | Reductions and temporary actions on furniture | Yes, win actions, weekly offers and free delivery on certain products | Daily offers in which there is a reduction on a certain product |
| Product ranking list | Not found on the web site | They show what other people have visited | No |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Information search** | IKEA | Leenbakker | Woonexpress |
| Findability search engine | Turns up in combination with all search terms used | Turns up in combination with almost all search terms used | Does not turn up with any of the search terms used |
| Ranking position\* | Mostly turns up within first three search results or at least on first page | Mostly turns up within first page | Does not turn up within first 3 pages |
| Blog | No | Yes, a whole page is dedicated to blogs and news on Leenbakker | No |
| Customer reviews | No | No | No |
| Provided information | Very detailed information about the products and the company. Product combinations are shown a lot as well | Very detailed information on the features of the product and how it should be treated | Only features of products |
| Presented assortment | Wide range and a lot of products in stock | Wide range | Wide range |
| \*Search terms: furniture, chairs, table, lamps, living room | | |  |
|  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation of alternatives** | Ikea | Leenbakker | Woonexpress |
| Consumer blogs | No | Yes | No |
| Customer reviews | No | No | No |
| Product information | Very detailed | Very detailed | Brief description on product features |
| Independent product tests | Independent tests by the 'consumentenbond' . Recently the batteries of IKEA are appointed to be the best | Currently nominated for best folder awards. Leen Bakker is a member of Thuiswinkel.org, the hallmark for reliable online | No |
| Virtual supporting tools | no | no | no |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purchase** | IKEA | Leenbakker | Woonexpress |
| Delivery time | Products should be bought 'offline' in the stores | Smaller products within 3-5 days, larger products a few weeks. | Not concrete |
| Delivery costs | Products cannot be ordered on the internet | From €4.99 to €45 | Between € 4,95 and € 39,50 No costs when delivery in a filial |
| Returning conditions | Not applicable for online sales | Seats and fauteuils cannot be returned. The rest within 14 days | Not so extensive |
| (Payment) convenience | Paying in phases, pay in a filial | iDeal, MasterCard, Visa   **No** accept giro | iDeal |
| Security guarantee | Not applicable | Home shopping guarantee | Yes, iDeal |
| Availability of products | For each product there is showed if the product is still available in the chain stores | For each product there is showed if the product is still available in the chain stores and online | The website gives a promise that all products available are in stock |
| Option wish list | Yes | Yes | No |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Result** | **IKEA** | **Leenbakker** | **Woonexpress** |
| **Customer support tools** | Online chat service, FAQ, online assistant, information line | FAQ, contact form, Telephone (15 cents per minute) | FAQ, contact form, Telephone |
| **Availability** | From Monday to Saturday from 8.00 till 20.00 . Virtual assistant 'Anna' 24/7 | Available on working days from 09.00 to 17.00 | Working days from 09.00 to 17.00 |
| **Use of virtual community** | IKEA makes use of a virtual assistant 'Anna'. | No | No |
| **Result** | Bol.com | Managementboek.nl | Eci.nl |
| **Customer support tools** | Day and night service by phone, the virtual assistant and by phone | By mail or phone | FAQ, Twitter, contact form, phone |
| **Availability** | both by phone and virtual available day and night 24/7 | Available on working days | Available on working days from 10 to 7 pm |
| **Use of virtual community** | Yes, Billy the virtual assistant | No | No |

**1.3 Label template book industry**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Need recognition** | Bol.com | Managementboek | ECI.nl |
| Blog | Yes a web log | Yes, Independent experts write reviews, an actual top 5, most wanted books, news on managementboek, an opinion blog on management and books that is written by external writers | No |
| Pop-ups | Yes, by showing which products you have recently visited. They make very active use of pop ups during surfing on the web | Yes, make use of pop ups on the website by giving product tips that suits to last viewed/bought products | Hard to measure |
| Newsletters | About daily deals, discounts and benefits, recommendations, review newsletters, new articles, business newsletters and play and win promotions. | Weekly update by mail on (new) products and services | A weekly digital news letter on deals and offers |
| Promotional actions | 1 day delivery time, free return. Furthermore the website always has some reduction on certain products. Also daily offer. They have a list on the start page that shows all top actions | Free delivery from €20, showing the customer top promotions on books and new products on the starting page | Always offering a reduction to 40% on selected products, reduction on bulk orders |
| Product ranking list | Best sold products per category and special selected products that suit to interests of the customer. It also shows recent visited articles | Yes, bestseller top 100 and by showing a list of most wanted and an actual top 5 list under the review section. And showing what just has been ordered | Actual bestsellers |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Information search** | Bol.com | Managementboek | ECI.nl |
| Findability search engine | Turns up in combination with all search terms used | Turns up in combination with only a few terms used (busines,management books) | Not that common, more search terms are needed in order to find ECI |
| Ranking position\* | Mostly turns up within first three search results or within first page | If it turns up, within first page. | Does not turn up |
| Blog | Yes about entertainment, action, reductions and top products | Yes | Yes, but no active use |
| Customer reviews | Yes , those are listed below the products | Yes , those are listed below the products | Yes, they have highlighted the postive review on the home page, star ranking and trust pilot . |
| Provided information | Very extensive, especially the product descriptions | Very extensive, especially the product descriptions | Very extensive, especially the product descriptions |
| Presented assortment | Wide range | Over 18.000 products in stock | Wide range |
| \* search terms; books, new books, business books, leisure books, management books | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation of alternatives** | Bol.com | Managementboek | Eci.nl |
| Consumer blogs | No | Yes expert blogs/reviews | No |
| Customer reviews | Yes | Yes, also outlined on the left side of the website | Yes, a lot of positive and negative reviews. Also they make use of a trust pilot |
| Product information | Yes, very extensive | Yes, very extensive | Yes |
| Independent product tests | BeCommerce; consumer electronics and multimedia 2009; three home shopping awards 2010; home shopping Award on books and magazines and award for best web shop | No | No |
| Virtual spporting tools | Yes, Billy the virtual assistant | No | No |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Purchase** | Bol.com | Managementboek | Eci.nl |
| Delivery time | Order before 11 pm and receive it tomorrow | Order before 9 pm and receive it the next day | 1 day, However only if it is a popular article |
| Delivery costs | Free delivery from €20 otherwise 1.99 | Free delivery from €20 | € 1.99 per online order and € 2.99 when ordering by mail or telephone orders. as a member it is free from 35 |
| Returning conditions | Easy to find on the bottom of the page, free to return new books | Easy to find on the bottom of the page, free to return | Very easy to find, no returning costs |
| (Payment) convenience | Accept giro, iDeal, Credit card. Not satisfied, receive money back | Accept giro, iDeal, Credit card, gift cheque | Accept giro, iDeal, Credit card, gift cheque |
| Security guarantee | Pay at bol.com is safe; via credit card, and a secure SSL procedure | Home shopping guarantee | Home shopping guarantee |
| Availability of products | All products online are in stock | All products online are in stock | All products online are in stock |
| Option wish list | Yes | Yes | Yes |