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Innovative Services.

Building Engagement with students on social media

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

BACHELOR OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

at the

HANZE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCE
Groningen, The Netherlands

June 2014

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dear client,

It is a great pleasure to present the outcomes of my graduation project that incorporates the recommendations for the Opening Up project. The aim of the graduation project was to research the engagement of students of Groningen with businesses on social media and to learn how social media can contribute to the innovative service delivery oriented on the target group (students of Groningen). The innovative service delivery implies higher engagement of clients (students) in the service delivery processes and direct feedback that can be used for business improvements and innovation. By exploiting social media communication technologies, businesses can create contact and build relationships with their customers in a more effective way that leads to better satisfaction of customers' needs and wishes. The research is aimed at the solution of a practical problem of the Opening Up project that is concerned with the lack of information and knowledge about social media's role in the innovative service delivery, especially

- the engagement of students of Groningen with business on social media and
- exploitation of social media technologies for a better services delivery through building engagement with clients and benefiting from their input.

In order to develop respective recommendations on how businesses can exploit social media opportunities, the research has been designed in order to examine the factors that influence the engagement of students of Groningen:

- The degree of engagement of students of Groningen with businesses on social media
- Types of social media platforms used for different levels of engagement
- The motives for the social media engagement

The research has been conducted by implementing a complex research framework in order to properly answer the research questions and to provide credible recommendations. The research combined several data collection techniques: desk research of the literature and web resources, a questionnaire completed by 250 students, a focus group interview and consultation with a field expert regarding the outcomes of the research and recommendations. The interplay of different methods applied to the research guarantees the validity and reliability of the provided information.

The poll questionnaire derived from the conceptual model was applied to examine the research variables. It studied the frequency of different activities performed on social media such as posting to forums, commenting on blogs, rating a post review, writing a review of a product or

service, chat in chat rooms, publish/edit a personal page, expressing opinions on-line, post to journals, publishing/maintaining a blog, using micro blogs (Twitter), sharing via social networks information, post to Wikis, creating/sharing media files and purchasing. By studying this phenomenon, it is possible to track which activities are the most common and how active and engaging students of Groningen are. The most commonly used social media sites – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs and Journals, Forums and Crowdsourcing platforms, have been examined in terms of different degrees of engagement – consumption of information, participation/curation, cooperation and collaboration. These social media platforms were selected for the research as they represent different types of social media sites and allow online users to demonstrate their participation on the different levels of engagement. The motives for the social media engagement were examined through the poll questionnaire by offering a multiple-choice question with a list of motivations statements for online engagement. The results of the survey were underpinned by the discussion with the focus group that contributed to drawing solid conclusions. Consequently, the conclusions of the research findings served groundwork for developing recommendations.

Additional desk research on innovative social technologies was conducted as well as consultation with a field expert took place during the process of recommendations development. The Recommendation comprises two sections: Building Engagement and Designing Social media Engagement Plan.

The Building Engagement section performs a role of a guideline for businesses on delivering innovative service through better engagement with clients. It provides recommendations on building engagement with students of Groningen on different levels - consumption, participation, cooperation and collaboration, by referring to social technologies that are used by marketers and considering the motivations of students for online engagement.

The Designing Social media Engagement Plan recommends on seven key points that have to be considered for the innovative service delivery:

1. Defining clear objectives
2. Conducting sentimental analysis
3. Adjusting response system with customers
4. Managing social media presence
5. Searching for advocates and building relationships with them
6. Driving collaboration by implementing social media technologies on companies' website
7. Measuring impact and results

2. PROJECT CONTEXT

This document presents a report of a research project, which is a graduation assignment of a 4th year student, Svitlana Holota, for the Bachelor's program of International Communication at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen, The Netherlands. The research project has been designed for the Opening Up project, which is a collaboration between communities in Northern Europe, two Universities and a private company.

The Opening Up project has been initiated in order to promote innovative service delivery through the integration of social media technologies by governments and businesses. The project examines two main challenges for local governments (OpeningUp.eu):

1. To use social media channels by governments in their own communications;
2. To organize governments' processes to be able to listen to what citizens, businesses and organizations, using the same social media, are saying about the municipal service delivery.

The aim of the Opening Up project is to provide information that will lead to new ways of adopting and using ICT applications in the North Sea Region by governments and businesses. It will stimulate a shift towards open government and adoption of social media in government-citizen, government-business and government-government relations.

2.1 Innovative service delivery

The idea of innovative service delivery underlines better interaction between businesses, governments and citizens: higher participation of clients in the service delivery, collaboration on finding solutions, better satisfaction of customer needs and wishes, direct feedback and its utilization for business innovations. These improvements can be derived from the effective exploitation of social media opportunities for the engagement with clients. The main task of the research is to provide information and knowledge on how social media can contribute to the development of the innovative service delivery.

2.2 Problem definition

The Opening Up project wants to research the effects of social media on engagement of students with businesses in the city of Groningen. A practical problem within the project can be identified as the lack of information and knowledge about the factors that contribute to the engagement of students of Groningen with businesses on social media and how the engagement of students can be exploited for the innovative service delivery. By collecting empirical information about the engagement of students of Groningen with business on social media as well as conducting a desk research about building engagement with clients on social media for better service delivery, then

analyzing and evaluating findings, the research provides recommendations that solves the practical problem and contributes to the aim of the Opening Up project.

2.3 Target group

Students

The scope of the research has been narrowed down to the location of Groningen in order to make the research feasible. Due to the limited resources, (time and input) the research will focus on one sample among citizens of Groningen. Considering the fact that Groningen is a student city and has a number of developed educational facilities, students of Groningen were selected as a target group to study their engagement on social media.

 Businesses

The Opening Up project aims at the improvement of service delivery among businesses and other organizations by using social media. The service delivery of both manufacturing companies and service companies in business-to-customer environment is meant by *businesses*. This research will provide recommendations on how service delivery can be innovated due to the effective use of social media technologies.

3. PROJECT ORGANIZATION

3.1 The Opening Up project

The Opening Up project is a cooperation between five municipalities from different countries:

- Kristiansand in Norway
- Sweden Karlstad in Sweden
- Hoeje-Taastrup in Denmark
- Groningen in the Netherlands, and
- Kortrijk in Belgium

Also two universities are involved: Hanze University of Applied Science (Groningen, The Netherlands) and Thomas More (Mechelen, Belgium); and one company - Porism UK, a software company that develops database systems for the Web (opening-up.eu).

3.2 Distribution of work

The work is distributed among the partners and divided into six work packages:
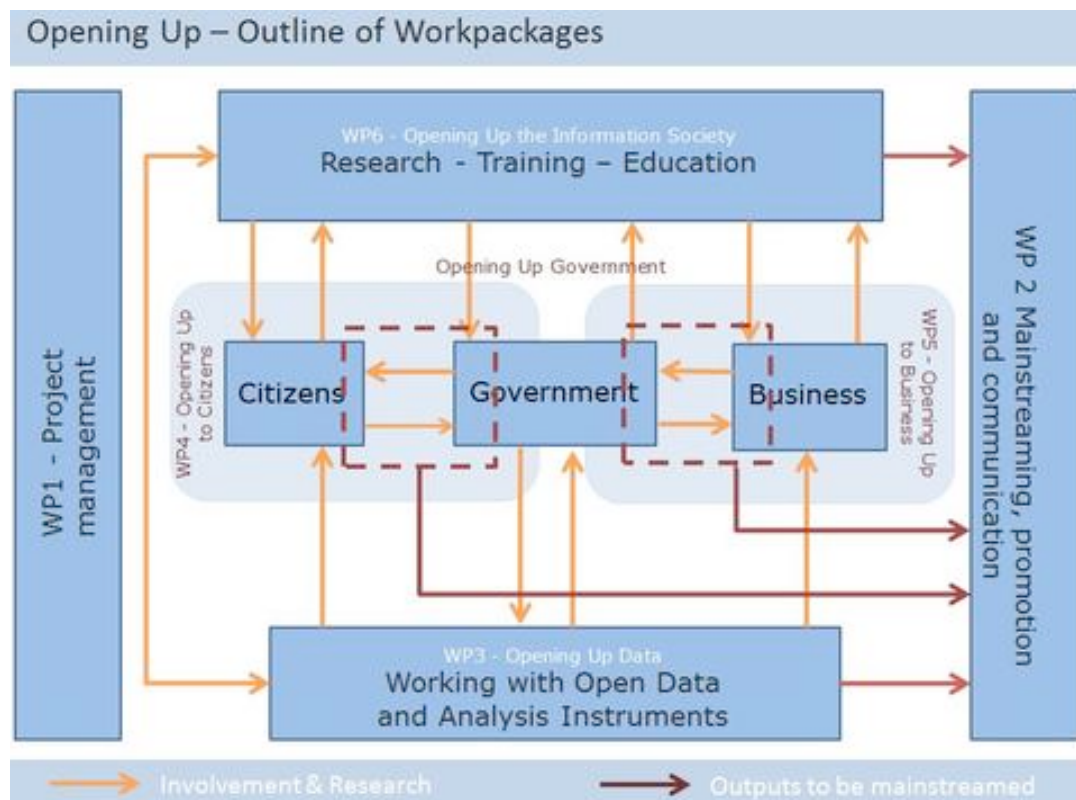
The first work package includes the overall coordination, supervision and management of the Opening Up project. The second work package collects the results, which are research reports, guides, toolkits and pilots that are generated during the project. The red arrows in the diagram stand for the outputs of the Opening Up project.

The rest of the work packages present different research fields that the project incorporates and yellow arrows stress the interrelation between the work packages.

The third work package encourages businesses to open up their datasets and to be more transparent in order to share knowledge and increase citizen participation.

The fourth work package researches how modern governments can be more transparent and create new citizen-led-services with the help of social media.

This research contributes to the work package number five, which stands for opening up opportunities of open data and social media to businesses. It focuses on the participative aspect, user involvement and co-creation and crowdsourcing. Business can exploit social media opportunities in order to communicate more openly with their clients, respond to feedback quickly and change their businesses accordingly to the clients' needs and demands.

The sixth work package includes organization of trainings, academies, conference and workshops to disseminate and discuss project findings.

There are three main target groups for the Opening Up project, which are citizens, governments and business. The interaction between these three groups is visualized in the diagram, marked with red dotted lines. The research focuses on the interaction between citizens (students) and businesses.

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The research is determined as a background analysis to the problem at the diagnostic stage of the intervention cycle. The Opening Up project recognizes the problem, which is the lack of knowledge and information on the effects of social media on engagement of clients with businesses. The diagnostic research studies the factors that influence this interaction and provides recommendations that contribute to the development of innovative services. The research objective summarizes the purpose of the research and how it is conducted.

A) The research objective is to provide recommendations to the Opening Up project on how social media can be effectively exploited for the development of innovative services delivery in Groningen,
B) by giving an overview of the factors that influence the engagement of students of Groningen with businesses using social media.

5. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The research framework shows the interrelations between the theoretical part, research perspective, research object and recommendations.

The theoretical framework presents theories that have been studied for the formulation of the research perspective (see section 9. The Conceptual Model), which is a conceptual model that is used for the analysis of the research object – engagement of students of Groningen with businesses via social media. The results of this analysis are essential for achieving the research objective – providing recommendations. These parts are visualized in the research framework in parts A), B), C) and D) correspondently.

A) A study on online word of mouth, social engagement and Customer Relations Management supported by studies on social media marketing, derived from the relevant literature,

B) yields the analysis criteria (conceptual model),

C) by means of which the engagement of students of Groningen with businesses using social media will be analyzed. The results of analysis will be discussed with the focus group in order to make solid conclusions. The field specialists will be consulted for the evaluation of the results and providing recommendations.

D) The results of the research yield the overview of the factors that influence the engagement of students of Groningen online, which in turn concludes recommendations on how social media can be effectively exploited for the development of innovative service delivery in Groningen.

5.1 Visualization of the Research framework
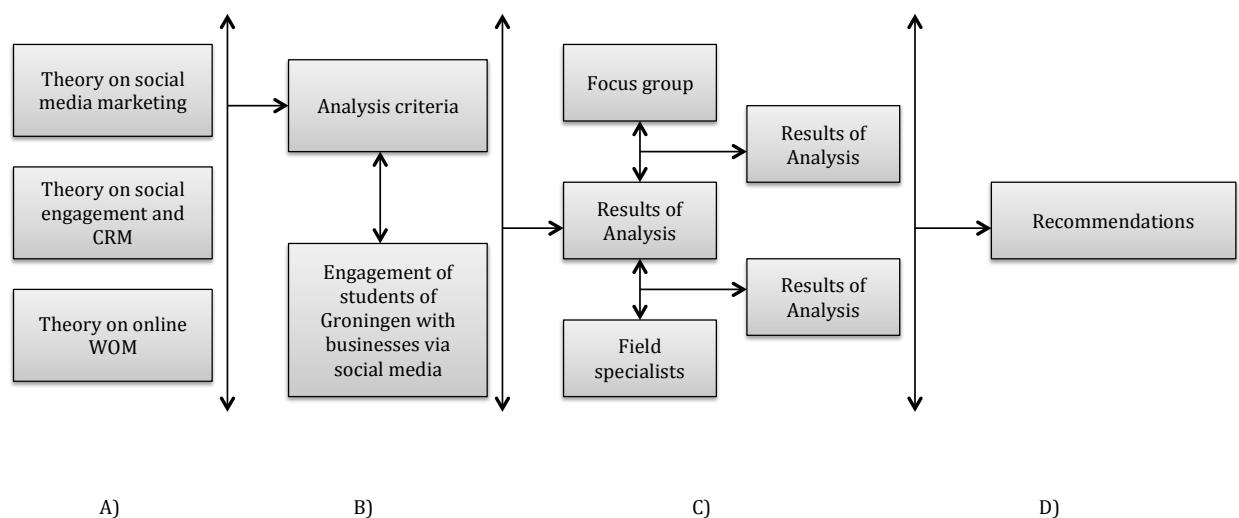
5.2 Research objects

The main object that is researched during this project is the engagement of students of Groningen with businesses using social media platforms. The purpose is to study the factors that influence people to provide direct feedback online or be involved in social conversations and discussions about certain products and services on social media or make contributions to the services of companies. Also, factors that contribute to the formation of the engagement - the degree of the engagement and preferences regarding social media platforms, will be studied among students of Groningen. Additionally, existing social technologies used for online marketing communications will be researched.

6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework presents a list of academic literature that generates the conceptual model of the research, which is used for the collection of information, analysis, evaluation of the findings, drawing conclusions and developing recommendations.

The first central research question formulates the conceptual model of the research - **What theories are relevant for analyzing the engagement of students of Groningen with businesses on social media?** (See section 9. The Conceptual Model). The conceptual model includes the most important factors and phenomena that are needed for the proper analysis of the research object – the engagement of students of Groningen with business on social media. Diverse academic literature has been selected to study the variables of the conceptual model:

1. **Variable:** The degree of engagement of students of Groningen with businesses on social media.

    "Social media marketing. The next generation of business engagement" by Dave Evans and Jake McKee, (2010);

    "Segmenting the web 2.0 market: behavioral and usage patterns of social web consumers" by Lorenzo-Romero, C., Constantinides, E., Alarcon-del-Amo, M. (2010) -

    "Characterizing Web Users' Degree of Web 2.0-ness", Chiang (2009);

    "Word of Mouth on the Web: The Impact of Web 2.0 on Consumer Purchase Decisions" by Riegner, C. (2007).

The first academic source selected to study the degree of engagement of students provides a fundamental understanding of how the engagement is build. The second academic article presents a research on behavioral patterns of online users that is based on the building engagement concept presented in the first academic source. The correlation of these academic sources gives a consistent theoretical background to study the degree of engagement of students. The third article contributes to the study by providing information on the Web 2.0 features that is necessary for understanding the social context and behavioral patterns. The fourth article discusses different Web 2.0 activities that influence other online participants; this information is used to study which engagement activities of students are the most common online.

2. **Variable:** Types of social media platforms used for different levels of engagement.

The academic literature used to study the degree of engagement of students of Groningen provides groundwork to study which social media platforms are the most suitable for each level of engagement. Though, this phenomenon is examined by conducting an empirical research through the poll questionnaire (Appendix 2).

3. **Variable:** The motives for the social media engagement.

"What drives consumers to spread electronic word of mouth in online consumer-opinion platforms", Cheunga C., Lee M. (2012);

"Electronic word of mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: what motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet", T. Henning-Thurau, K.P. Gwinner, G. Walsh, D.D. Gremler, (2004).

These two academic articles present lists of psychological motives for online users to exchange information on social media platforms. Both studies are based on rich theoretical frameworks that include interconnected concepts and theories. The articles suggest different psychological motives that in combination with each other present a complete overview of the factors that may influence online behavior. The concepts of these theories are applied to the research through the poll questionnaire (Appendix 2).

The second central research question - **What are the factors influencing the engagement of students of Groningen with businesses on social media?** is answered with the help of the poll questionnaire based on the conceptual model derived from the theoretical framework. The conclusions are underpinned by the focus group discussion (see section 8. The Research Strategy and Methodology).

The third central research question - **What can be learnt form the results of analysis in order to make recommendations for the development of innovative service delivery in Groningen?** presents the recommendations that are based on the research findings provided by the second central research question. Additionally, theories and concepts from the "Social media marketing. The next generation of business engagement" by Dave Evans and Jake McKee are used to support the recommendations.

7. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

C1: What theories are relevant for analyzing the engagement of students of Groningen with businesses on social media?

S1: What analysis criteria can be derived from theories on social engagement and social media marketing?

S2: What analysis criteria can be derived from theories on online WOM?

C2: What are the factors influencing the engagement of students of Groningen with businesses on social media?

S1: What are the preferences of students regarding social media platforms for the engagement with businesses?

S2: What are the motives for students to get engaged with businesses on social media platforms?

C3: What can be learnt form the results of analysis in order to make recommendations for the development of innovative service delivery in Groningen?

S1: How can social media technologies facilitate the process of engagement considering?

S2: How can engagement on social media platforms be effectively exploited for different business objectives?

8. RESEARCH STRATEGY & METHODOLOGY

The research methodology presents an overview of the data gathering techniques and data processing methods that have been used during the research. It gives a coherent explanation on how the information has been collected and interpreted. The quantitative and qualitative information processing methods have been applied to the analysis of the data. Both empirical and desk researches have been implemented. The research has been conducted by using data sources and knowledge sources. The data sources provided secondary data that was generated by the desk research, while knowledge sources were used while retrieving empirical data by carrying out survey research, focus group and consultation interview. As a result of triangulation of different research techniques and methods, the research successfully attained breadth and depth of the input and successfully met the research objective.

What theories are relevant for analyzing the engagement of students of Groningen with businesses on social media?

For the first central research question desk research has been used for collecting secondary qualitative data that is derived from the relevant theories (see section 9. The Conceptual Model). The existing literature materials have been studied and certain theoretical concepts were selected in order to formulate the analysis criteria by means of which the research object was analyzed. The questions for the poll questionnaire have been derived from the conceptual model (see Appendix 2). The data was collected using secondary research, thus, the qualitative processing of information was applied.

What are the factors influencing the engagement of students of Groningen with businesses on social media?

The second central research question has been answered with the help of empirical data that was collected by using survey research. The survey research was selected due to the extensive data and breadths of the research. The poll questionnaire derived from the theoretical framework has been conducted among 250 students of Groningen. The aim of the questionnaire was to provide information regarding the rate of engagement of students at different social media platforms and to study the motives of students to online communication. Additionally, students' activities on social media were examined in order to provide background information concerning the most common behavioral patterns. The analysis of the results is presented in 10. Research Findings section.

Sample for the poll questionnaire

The number of students in Groningen accounts nearly 50 000 (hanze.nl). The sample size included 250 participants from the Zernike Campus and other university facilities. The margin of error, which is 6, has been calculated using confidence level 95% and population size of 50 000 students of Groningen (surveysystem.com). The sample size is characterized by higher education and relatively young age, 18-30 years old.

Pilot poll questionnaire

A pilot survey was conducted in order to study the relevance and comprehensiveness of the questions. The initial poll questionnaire included a variety of social media platforms offered in the questions: social networks, blogs/journals, customer opinion platforms, products review websites, micro blogging, file exchange portals, vide/image sharing portals, podcasts, shopping sites. After conducting a pilot questionnaire and interviewing participants regarding the relevance and comprehensiveness, the decision to narrow down the list of social media platforms offered in the questions has been made. In cooperation with pilot survey participants, the final questions included the following possible answers: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blog and Journals, Forums, Crowdsourcing/Ideation platforms (see Appendix 2).

The Focus Group

Subsequently, a focus group interview with the target group has been conducted in order to discuss the results of the survey questionnaire and ideas on how social media contributes to the interaction and engagement between clients and companies. The focus group interview generated qualitative information on opinions and elaborations of students on the survey outcomes. This knowledge was used for drawing final conclusions about the engagement of students of Groningen with business on social media.

Agenda for the Focus Group Interview

The purpose of the interview is discuss the outcomes of the questionnaire in order to make more solid conclusions and perhaps to get to know more about the reasons for such outcomes. The discussion is conducted with students, who previously participated in the poll questionnaire and expressed their interests in further participation in the research.

Topics for the discussion:

- Participants may explain and elaborate on their own choices in the questionnaire. Also, they may share their reasons for not performing certain activities online, or using particular social media platforms. What would make them feel comfortable to start doing so?

- According to the outcomes of the questionnaire, Twitter appears to be the least popular social network tool. What do they use twitter for? (if they have used it) What are the reasons towards Facebook preference? Have they experienced communication about products/services on LinkedIn and Instagram? (These social networks were mentioned on the questionnaire forms) Do they recognize any opportunities for engagement with businesses on these social media? In what form?

- Are they familiar with crowdsourcing or similar platforms? If yes, what do they think about these communication methods?

- The roles of forums, blogs and journals in communication about products and services.

- How would they prioritize the motives for sharing information online? What are the main reasons? Why do they think other online members would do so?

- Have they been active on social media pages of companies? Why? Making social media a central way for communication and service delivery?

What can be learnt form the results of analysis in order to make recommendations for the development of innovative service delivery in Groningen?

The information provided by the second research question serves the basis for answering the third research question. In order to provide better answers additional data was collected by using qualitative methods. A desk research has been conducted regarding various social technologies that are used by marketers for social media analytics and communication management. Also, a consultation meeting with a specialist in marketing communication – Antonia Hein (Senior Lecturer at Hanzehogeschool Groningen) has been conducted in order to receive a professional view and feedback on the studied phenomena and recommendations for the Opening Up project. The collected information was qualitative processes and considered while answering the third research question.

Limitations

The limitations and biases are often present in research in many disciplines. The main limitation for this research is the sample size that is used for conducting the poll questionnaire. This sample represents a particular demographic group of citizens of Groningen - students. The recommendations that are provided in the end of the research report concern only the student population of Groningen. In order to cover population with more diverse demographic characteristics (citizens of Groningen), additional research and resources are required.

A significant amount of retrieved data has been collected and analyzed using qualitative methods. Personal opinions and knowledge of the interviewed focus group and a field expert contributed to the conclusions and recommendations.

The poll questionnaire did not distinguish female and male students among the target group of the survey research. Thus, any conclusions regarding differences in online activity and social media preferences between two genders cannot be made. Additional research is required to study this matter.

Also, students of Groningen come from various countries and hold diverse cultural backgrounds. This demographic feature was not considered while conducting the research due to the lack of information available on this matter. However, it is known that cultural background influences communication of individuals in terms of reception and interpretation of information.

In case of application of the information provided by the results of this research, it is advised to consider the limitations.

9. THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The concepts presented in the conceptual model serve the analysis criteria by means of which the engagement of students of Groningen with businesses on social media is research and analyzed. The aim of this section is to provide the answers to the first central research question and sub-questions:

C1: What theories are relevant for analyzing engagement of students of Groningen with businesses in social media?

S1: What analysis criteria can be derived from theories on social engagement and social media marketing?

S2: What analysis criteria can be derived from theories on online WOM?

The conceptual model section includes a background description of the Web 2.0 features and its application in the marketing field, theoretical concepts on engagement on social media and motives that are used for studying the research variables:

* The degree of engagement of students of Groningen (section 9.2)
* Types of social media platforms used for different levels of engagement
* Motives for social media engagement (section 9.3)

The theories explained in the conceptual model serve the basis for the poll questionnaire (see Appendix 2).

9.1 Web 2.0

At first, it is important to determine the Web 2.0 concept and understand the differences between traditional Web and Web 2.0. The Web 2.0 concept represents "all internet service and tools which are based on a database which Internet users can modify, whether in term of content (adding, deleting, editing information or relating information with existing information), its representation or both" (Lorenzo-Romero, 2010, p.62). The main difference between traditional Web and Web 2.0 is the one-way and two-way communication models. The Web 2.0 technologies do not only disseminate information like traditional Internet, but provide tools and applications that enable online audience to contribute to the creation of information, disseminate it, share it and collaborate on the content. Online users became active participants, who create online word-of-moth. These communication activities provide direct feedback to businesses, governmental and non-for profit organizations and give opportunities for improvement and better engagement with target audience.

Social media play an important role in the definition of Web 2.0 concept, as it is an integral part of Web 2.0. It facilitates peer-to-peer interaction and information exchange. In order to better understand what social media stands for, Chiang (2009) outlined the most representative Web 2.0 features that provide platforms for user interactions and content creation (p. 1351) (see Appendix 1).

Viral marketing

The Web 2.0 technologies opened up new opportunities and tools for marketers. Social media became a very effective tool for promotions, due to the fast speed of information spreading. Different types of information (videos, flash games, images, internet memes, text messages etc.) are spread among relevant target groups with little effort and low costs involved thankfully to the digital word of mouth. Besides promotional activities, social media provides web platforms that enhance interaction and sharing between consumers and organizations. New social business models implement social platforms for a better service delivery, as diverse business objectives can benefit from collaborative customer engagement. The opportunities offered by social media are used for feedback, customer support, customization of products and services or ideation (e.g. crowdsourcing).

The engagement of students of Groningen needs to be studied in order to get to know the target audience better. This knowledge will help businesses to increase collaborative engagement with their customers and will enable them to satisfy customers' needs better through improved service delivery systems.

9.2 Engagement on social media sites

People use Web 2.0 sites and applications that provide them with new ways of interaction and information exchange. Lorenzo-Romero (2010) distinguishes four types of interaction of online users: passive, participative, cooperative and collaborative. Evans and McKee (2010) recognize similar social interactions online and call them the fundamental building blocks of engagement: consumption, curation, creation and collaboration. Both concepts represent a scale of social engagement of customers online, where the collaboration stage appears to be the most desired. Evans and McKee (2010) believe that client engagement is derived from the collaboration and a shared interest. The main task for businesses is to guide online audience through the ladder of engagement to the collaboration stage by building trust and creating positive online experience. The Figure 1 (p.18) illustrates the ladder of social engagement online and shows the similarity of these two concepts.

Figure 1
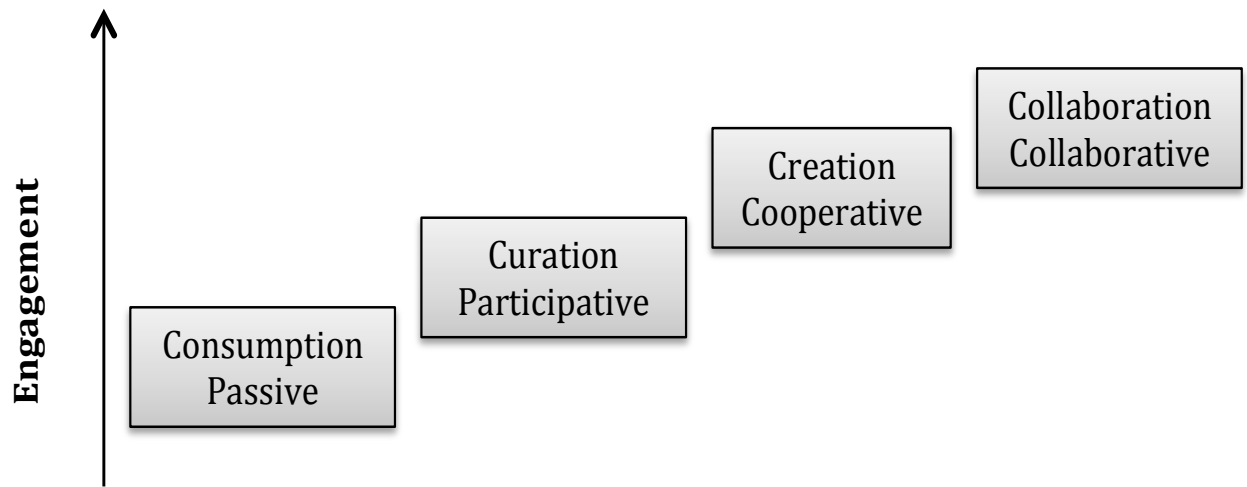
The *consumption* block stands for one-way communication and passive consumption of information similar to the traditional Web. In order to increase engagement, online users need to be encouraged to participate though different tools and applications.

The *curation* filters information on social media platforms and makes it useful and relevant to others. It includes "rating, reviewing, commenting and tagging" (Evans, McKee, 2010). This type of engagement does not involve co-creation yet, but already shows some signs of participation on social media. This type of participation enables consumers to select relevant to them information and make better choices that leads to a better online experience. Evans and McKee (2010) believe that curation encourages users to participate in "small, low-risk steps" that appears to be a starting point for cooperative engagement online (p.17).

The next step in the engagement process is *creation* – contributing a piece of information to the online content. It is important to provide online audience with tools, support, guidance, samples etc., in order to make the process of creation as simple and easy as possible. The less work online members need to do the better (Evans and McKee, 2010).

The final stage of the engagement ladder is *collaboration* – "taking direct input from a customer and using it in the design of a product" (Evans & McKee, 2010). It provides immediate feedback from customers and opportunity to improve products and services that meets customers' needs better. Many businesses create crowdsourcing platforms that facilitate discussions and collaboration with customers. As an example, Adobe initiated a crowd source challenge to search for ideas on how to enhance Acrobat.com's products (BrightIdeas.com).

There are different online activities that correspond to the different levels of the engagement ladder: editing web content, finding new products, sharing experiences, make online purchases,

rating and comparing products/articles, writing reviews, rating reviews, liking, sharing, recommending, collecting and transferring media files, posting comments on forums and blogs, having personal website/blogs, participating in online contests (sharing business ideas for instance) etc. The poll questionnaire will include questions regarding different levels of engagement among students of Groningen. Also, the most common social media activities will be researched as well as the preferences regarding social media platforms for different degrees of engagement.

There are various typologies of online users can be related to the four building blocks of engagement outlined above (Reigner, 2007; Li, 2007). Reigner (2007) defines five typologies of Web 2.0 users, where (whence) online insiders are the most collaborative in content-creation while fast trackers are rather passive consumers.

Online insiders	This type of online users tends to participate in content creation the most among other segments. They often participate in discussions on forums, comment, write reviews and opinions, and appear to be the most influential.
Social clickers	The main purpose for social clickers to use social media is to engage with other people and to maintain relationships with friends and families. They get involved in content creation activities in order to connect with others.
Content kings	The content kings spend most of their time online entertaining themselves: P2P file transfer, personal pages on social media platforms, discussions in chat rooms.
Everyday pros	Every day pros are involved in practical activities on the web like banking, purchase or review and do not communicate on blogs or personal pages.
Fast trackers	Fast trackers can be described as passive consumers of Web 2.0 content. The primary purpose is to check news and get the latest information, but not being involved in content creation.

Another example of classifying online users is by their online activities (Li, 2007):

Creators	Publish Web page, publish or maintain a blog, upload video on sites like YouTube
Critics	Comment on blogs, post ratings and reviews

Collectors	Use RSS, tag web pages
Joiners	Use social networking sites
Spectators	Read blogs, watch peer-generated video, listen to podcasts
Inactives	None of theses activities

Inasmuch the engagement of online users can be determined according to the social media activities they performs and which social media platforms they use, it is important to address these phenomena in the poll questionnaire. In order to examine the levels of engagement of students of Groningen and types of social media platforms used for that, the questions about most common social media activities and social media preferences for the four levels of engagement - Passive, participative, cooperative, collaborative, with businesses will be included in the poll questionnaire (See Appendix 2, 1-5th questions).

9.3 Motives

The main implication of Web 2.0 is electronic word-of-mouth that became an influential factor in consumer purchase behavior, for instance 46% of US online buyers require 4-6 reviews in order to make a purchase (eMarketer). Customers' opinions have a positive impact on purchase decisions and appear to be a trustworthy source of information (Cheung and Lee 2010). Also, information exchange between customers may provide a better user experience with products or service. Some companies provide brand forums where their customers may exchange experience and find solutions or give advices to someone. This type of user interaction platforms saves customer support expenses and capacities. Cheung and Lee (2010) studied the intentions of online users to share information online and to create content on consumer-opinion platforms. Six main incentives were determined:

- Reputation
- Reciprocity
- Sense of Belonging
- Enjoyment of helping
- Moral obligations
- Knowledge Self-efficacy

Web-based consumer opinion platforms are important tools for sharing experience, which also provide feedback to the producers of goods and services (Henning-Thurau, 2004). The study on

motives of consumer's online articulation by Henning-Thurau (2004) resulted in the similar stimuli, which are

- Desire for social interaction
- Self-enhancement
- Social benefit
- Concerns for others
- Helping the company
- Venting negative/positive feelings
- Advice seeking.

These two studies interrelated and to some extend complement each other in the determination of the psychological motives for the online engagement. Based on the theories provided by scholars, the following psychological incentives are included in the poll questionnaire (Appendix 2, 6th question):

- Knowledge self-efficacy
- Moral obligations
- Consumption (advice seeking)
- Providing feedback (helping to improve)
- Enjoyment of helping (companies to improve)
- Concerns for others
- Social interaction
- Spreading the word about a product/service
- Self-enhancement
- Receiving benefits
- Reciprocity
- Reputation
- Expressing negative feelings

10. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The Research Findings section provides the answer to the second research question and sub-questions:

What are the factors influencing engagement of students of Groningen with businesses on social media?

S1: What are the preferences of students regarding social media platforms for the engagement with businesses?

S2: What are the motives for students to get engaged with businesses on social media platforms?

The research results include information on the three research variables that have been researched with the help of the poll questionnaire and the focus group interview (see section 8. Research Strategy & Methodology) - the degree of engagement of students of Groningen and types of social media platforms used for different levels of engagement (section 10.1 & 10.2), motives for social media engagement (section 10.3). The poll questionnaire can be found in the Appendix of the report (Appendix 2).

10.1 Social media activities

By studying relevant literature, the decision to examine different behavioral patterns of students of Groningen on social media has been made in order to retrieve knowledge of how active students of Groningen are on social media. The poll questionnaire included different activities that are usually performed online and four choices of frequency use.

Figure 2 (p.27) shows which social media activities among students of Groningen tend to be the most common and how often they are performed. 'Sharing information via social networks' stands out on the figure as it has the greatest activity rate in comparison to other activities. Only 43 students responded that they use social networks *a few times a year or never*, while all other social media activities collected more than 100 responses of this frequency choice. The second most popular activity is shopping. 103 students make purchases on-line *once or twice a month*, which is the largest number within this frequency choice among other activities. The least active activities among students of Groningen are 'posting to Wikis' and 'publishing or maintaining a blog'; both activities received 218 responses of *a few times a year or never*. Nearly 200 students out of 250 perform the following two activities – 'writing a review of a product/service' and 'posting to journals', *a few times a year or never*. The rest of the activities in the figure get more positive responses. The participative activities such as 'sharing media files', 'editing personal pages', 'rating posts and comments' tend to be more common rather than more cooperative

activities like 'posting to forums' and 'commenting on blogs and journals'. A decline of frequency use and preference of activities can be clearly seen, as activities get more active and collaborative. An exception can be made only to the social networks that appear to be the most popular and commonly used social media platform by students of Groningen.

Figure 2. Social media activities and frequency of their performance among students of Groningen.
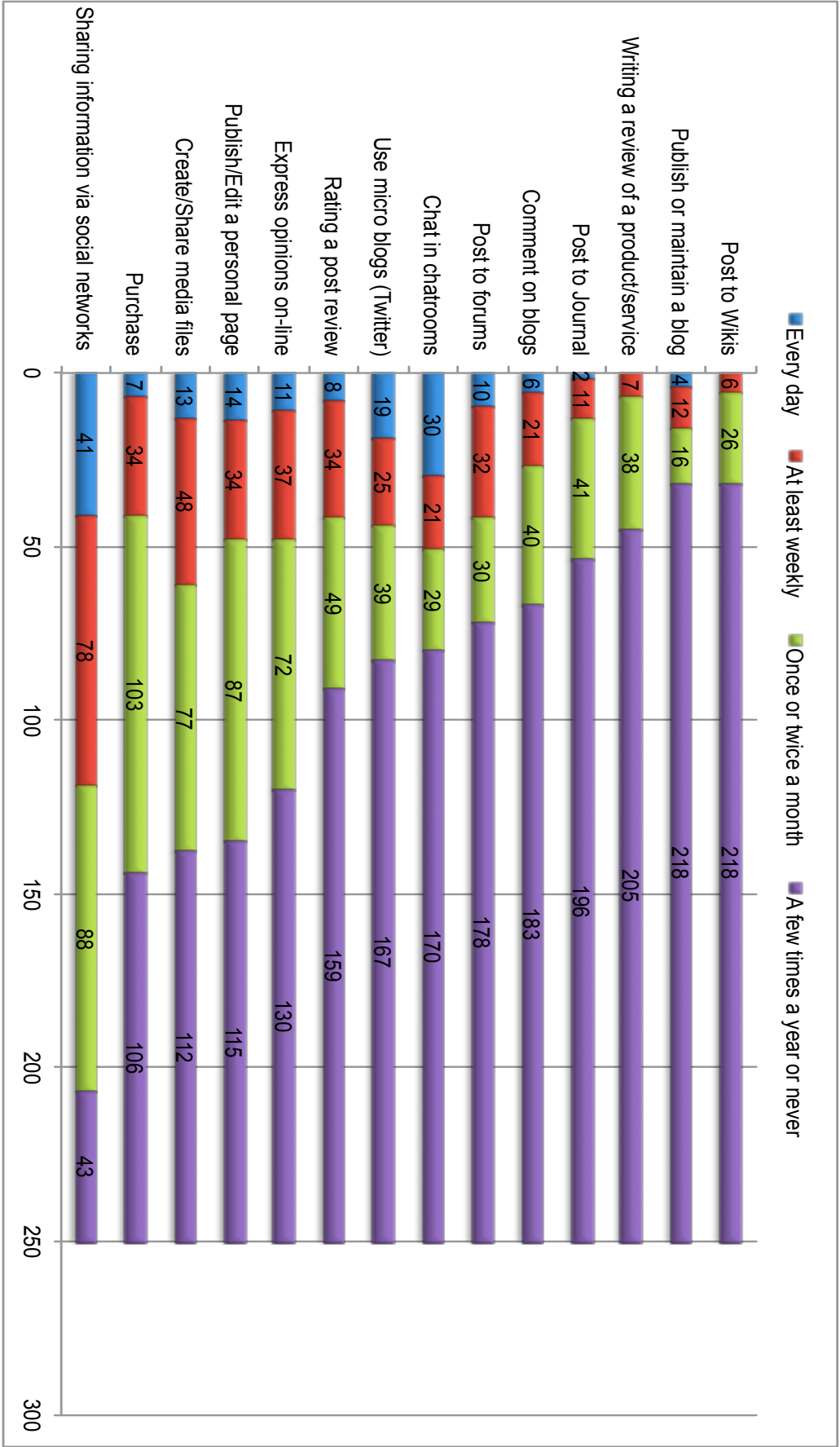
10.2 Engagement on social media

The engagement of students of Groningen has been examined according to the four building blocks of engagement (Figure 1, p. 21) discussed in The Conceptual Model. The questionnaire included four underlying questions that correspond to the passive, participative, cooperative and collaborative types of on-line behavior in regards to the different social media platforms. After conducting a pilot questionnaire, the choice for social media platforms has been narrowed down to the six alternative options, which are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs and Journals, Forums and crowdsourcing/ideation platforms. These social media platforms provide a wide range of activities that cover the four fundamental blocks of the engagement scale and can be performed by any online user.

Consumption

The first fundamental block of social engagement concerns consumption of information and news about products and services of companies. The task was to examine which of the social media platforms are the most common for retrieving information about products and services.
Facebook has been mentioned most of the times and appears to be the most preferred social media platform for reading information about products and services among students of Groningen. YouTube is on the second position after Facebook with 147 responses. Blogs and Journals and Forums have got nearly the same number of mentions. Twitter and crowdsourcing platforms collected the least responses than other social media platforms, 40 and 37 responses respectively.

Figure 3
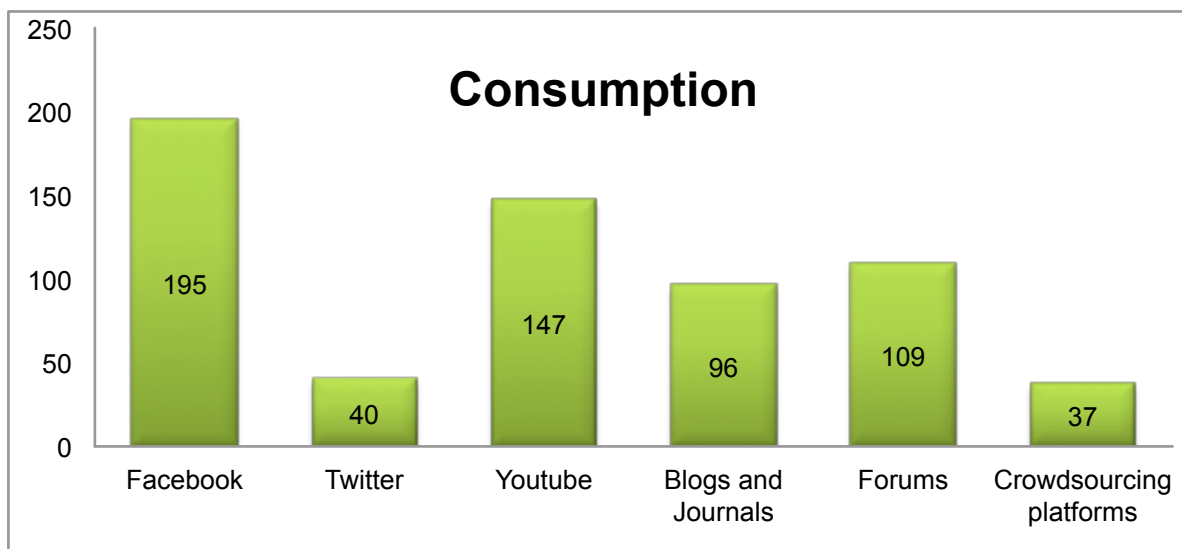
Participation

The second fundamental block of social engagement means filtering information by tagging, like, rate comments or reviews and/or share links about products/services of companies. These actions do not involve content-creation yet, but demonstrate low-scale participation. Students were asked which platforms they tend to use more often for this type of participation. The most responses were granted to Facebook again, while the rest of the platforms have received way less mentions.

Figure 4
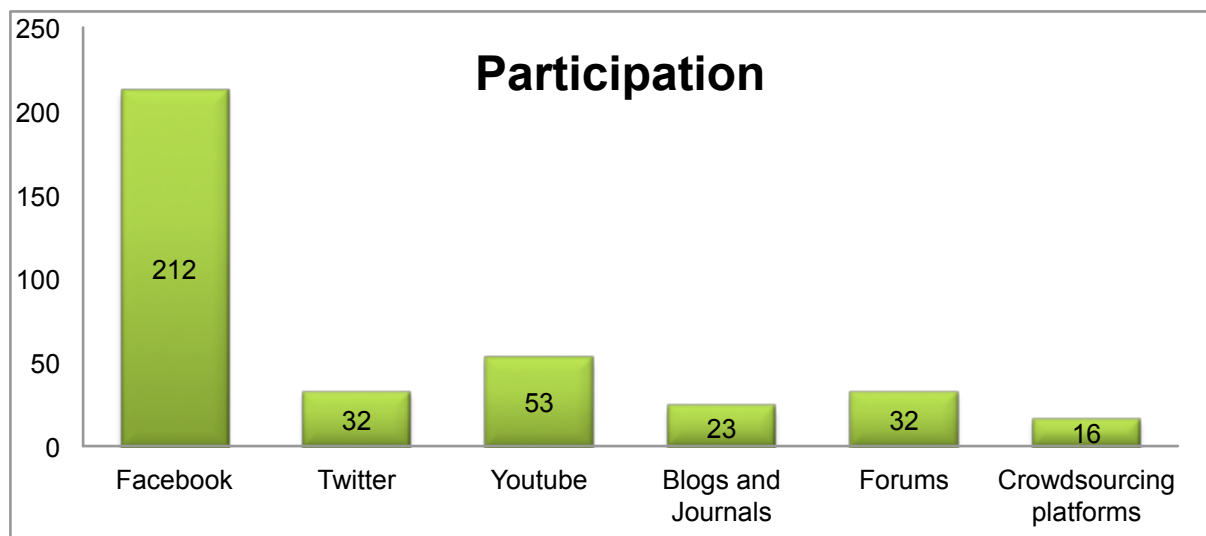
Cooperation

The cooperation behavior stands for commenting and posting information about product and services of companies. This type of online participation involves content creation. Students were asked which social media platforms they tend to use for posting and commenting on information about products and services of companies. Blogs and Forums have received slightly higher number of mentions this time rather than for the 'participation' question. However, Facebook is still leading the list.

Figure 5

Cooperation

Facebook	171
Twitter	20
Youtube	42
Blogs and Journals	34
Forums	42
Crowdsourcing platforms	12
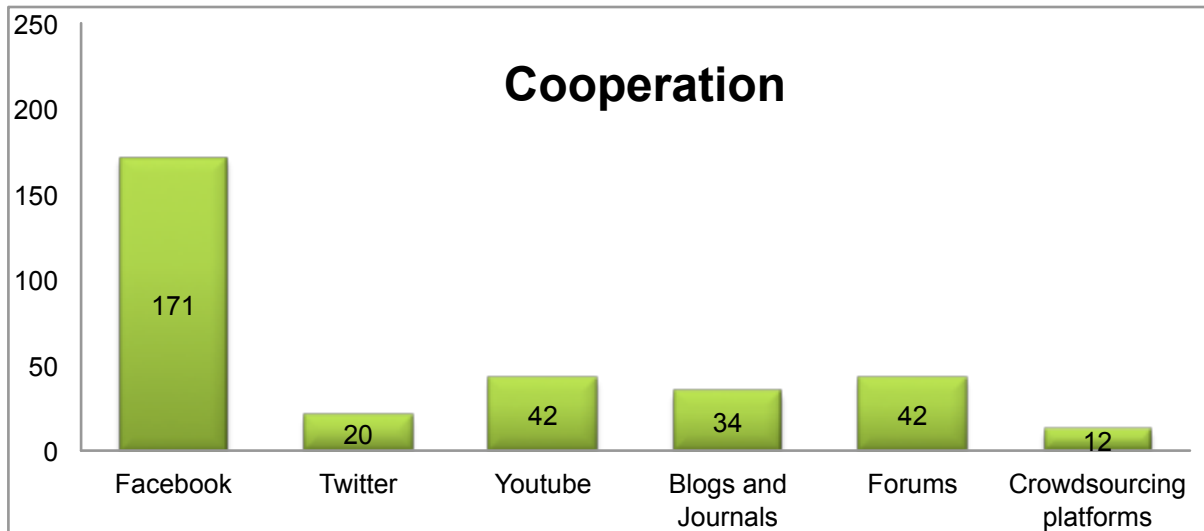
Collaboration

The final stage of social engagement demonstrates the collaborative participation by online users. During this stage, online consumers are actively engaged in conversations regarding products/services of companies, tend to have their own blogs, participate in online contests (crowdsourcing), provide feedback and share opinions about products and services. This question has been answered if applicable. Facebook keeps its leading position among all other platforms. Blogs and journals and forums tend to be the most suitable social media platforms for this type of participation and they have received almost the same number of responses, 35 and 36 respectively. Only 8 students have mentioned crowdsourcing platforms as the one they use for the collaborative participation.

Figure 6

Collaboration

Facebook	91
Twitter	17
Youtube	21
Blogs and Journals	35
Forums	36
Crowdsourcing platforms	8

30
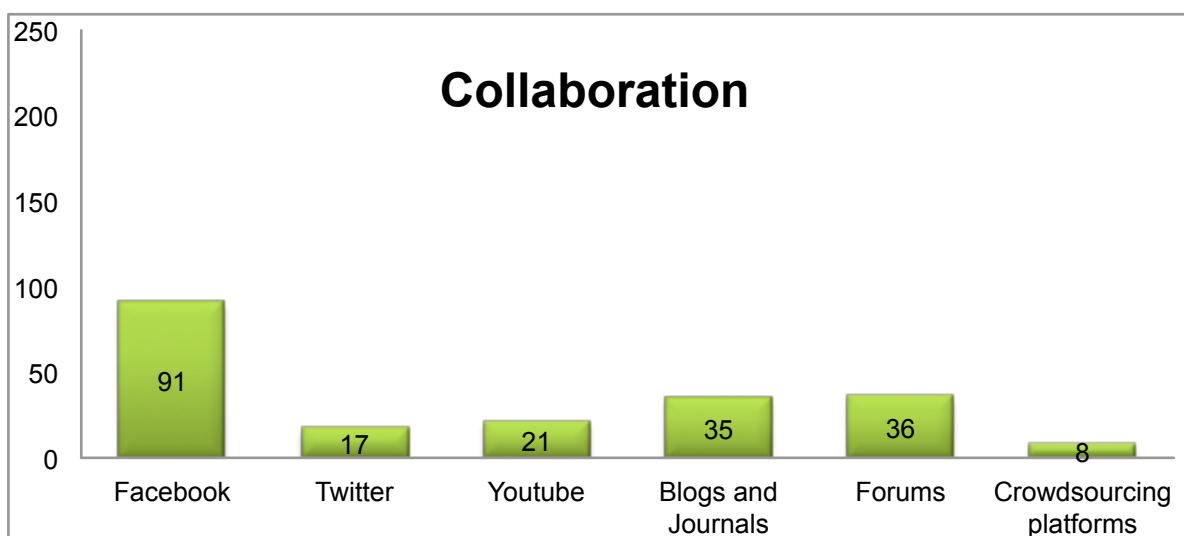
10.3 Motives

In order to study the main reasons for students of Groningen to share information, experiences and opinions about products and services online, a question with 13 different motivation statements was included in the questionnaire. Each statement represents a particular psychological motive discussed in the theoretical framework. The Figure 7 presents an order of motives from the most opted to the least mentioned.

Figure 7

The biggest number of mentions has been granted to the first motivation statement, which is *I believe I have knowledge that can solve someone's issue or would be interested for others*. This statement represents a knowledge self-efficacy of online users, in other words it is a personal evaluation of an online user of his/her capabilities to make a positive contribution to the online community. This is an important psychological factor that influences all other motivations of a person to get engaged in conversations online. The survey showed that nearly 34% of students believe that their knowledge is capable of solving someone's issues and would be beneficial for other online members.

The following most mentioned motivation statements have collected 57 responses each, which are *I share information because I am seeking for an advice* and *I share information online with others, because I think helping others is the right thing to do*. Whereas these statements have collected the same number of responses, they represent two contrary psychological motives. The first statement stands for the consumption utility (Henning-Thurau, 2004) that implies using information from the contributions made by other members. The other statement stands for principlistic motivation (Cheung and Lee, 2010); people feel moral obligation to share their knowledge with the online community if it requires any help. The moral obligation is also influenced by the sense of belonging to the community and the desire for social interaction. However, only 47 students have collectivistic intentions for sharing information online and mentioned that they *share knowledge because it can generate good/friendly relationships with online members*.

The flowing three motivation statements focus on providing feedback to a company that helps to improve its services and products etc.:

- *I share my opinions and experience in order to provide feedback*
- *I believe providing feedback online to companies (products, service), can help them to improve*
- *I express my satisfaction with certain products/services because I believe they deserve a positive buzz online.*

Students are willing to help companies to improve as well as to assist them in creating positive attitudes and spreading the word about their products and services. These motives occupy relatively high positions in the list and might be the most substantial for companies, because students are motivated to provide information that companies can benefit from and they experience enjoyment of helping.

The next statement implies not only feedback, but also concern for other users and it is driven by an altruistic motivation to help other people (for instance to avoid negative experience): *I post*

negative comments about product, services, companies, brand, because I had a bad experience or I was not satisfied.

The next statement - *I like when people listen to my advices and comments*, stands for the reputation incentive and has been mentioned 44 times. Cheung and Lee (2010) determine reputation incentive as an egoistic motive that concerns personal welfare and possible tangible or intangible returns in the future. However, another self-enhancement statement - *I share information online because I want people to have a positive view about me*, has received only 27 responses. Both statements represent the same psychological incentive, but the second statement presents it more explicitly, whereas the first one is discreet.

The same motive applies to the reciprocity incentive, which is covered by the next two motivation statements in the question:

- *I share information with other people on-line because of the benefits I may receive*
- *I share my knowledge with other people on-line because I might need their help in the future.*

The least number of mentions has been given to - *I complain about products/services online, because I could not reach the right person at the company.*

10.4 Conclusions

The information provided by the poll questionnaire and the focus group interview (Appendix 3) provides the answer to the second central research question - What are the factors influencing the engagement of students of Groningen with businesses on social media?

The 'Social media activities' sub-section concludes the answer to the first sub-question - What are the preferences of students regarding social media platforms for the engagement with businesses? The 'Motives' sub-section answers the second sub-question - What are the motives for students to get engaged with businesses on social media platforms? The 'Focus Group discussion' finalizes the conclusion section.

Social media activities

The most noticeable trend of social engagement of students online is the deterioration of participative rate along the four fundamental blocks of engagement. The 'consumption' question has received way higher number of responses than the other three questions for each social media platform. The decline of responses can be observed in the following three questions. Though, Blogs and Journals and Forums managed to get more mentions for the 'cooperation' and 'collaboration' questions than for the 'participative' one and maintained roughly stable response rates for the last two.

Another remarkable trend is that social networks appear to be the most popular and common means of communication. However, Twitter has shown a quite low rate of positive responses, while Facebook appears to be a leading social networking platform for the engagement with businesses among students of Groningen. Twitter appeared to be nearly the least popular social media tool for the engagement with companies among students of Groningen, as it received a quite low number of responses for all four questions. Also, only 83 students mentioned that they use Twitter for overall communication, while the study showed that sharing information via social networks is the most common activity and it received 207 positive responses. Reasons for such a low rate of involvement and positioning of Twitter in students' minds in comparison to other social networks need to be examined in order to make trustworthy conclusions in regards to this matter.

The same goes for crowdsourcing platforms; the response rate for this type of social media platforms is the lowest. However, the general familiarity with crowdsourcing and ideation platforms among students of Groningen is not known. Low level of awareness and familiarity with this type of social media could cause a low rate of involvement among students. Additionally, personal social media literacy, lifestyle, personal characteristics and interest in a certain product, service or company influence one's decision to demonstrate participation on crowdsourcing platforms.

According to the questionnaire, YouTube is the second most popular social media platform for receiving information about products and services. Also, it has got a higher number of mentions for the 'consumption" and 'participative' questions than other social media platforms (except Facebook) and the same number of mentions as Forums– 42, for the 'cooperation' question.

Motives

Figure 8 presents a list of motives that are covered by motivation statements included in the questionnaire, ranked from the most common to the least mentioned.

Figure 8
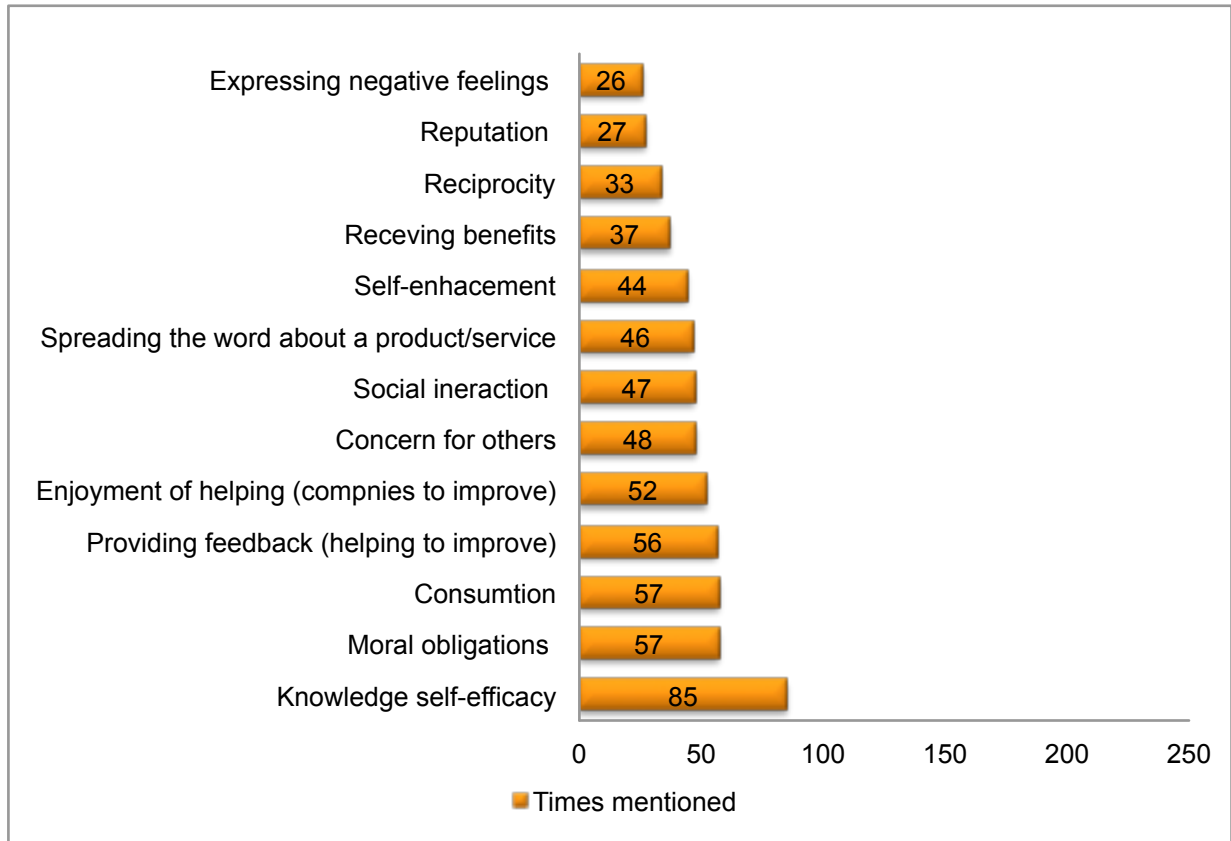
Focus Group Discussion

In order to study the outcomes of the poll questionnaire in more depth and to explore the reasons for such results the focus group interview has been conducted with two students of Groningen (Appendix 3).

The students were asked to elaborate on their own performance during the questionnaire and to share any comments concerning the answers they provided. They have admitted that opinions and experiences provided by other people online on forums or in a form of a product review are very important sources of information and considered to be more reliable than information provided by companies on their official social media pages. These types of information have a big influence on the decision making process of the potential customer and an image of a company and its perception among students. Students consider such contribution to be trustworthy and peer-to-peer interaction - very useful. Most of the time they refer to forums and blogs when it concerns some technology products or services. YouTube appears to be the most relevant social media source, when searching for information about application features of

products. The results of the survey showed that sharing media files is a fairly common activity performed by students and it was also confirmed by the focus group interview.

Facebook was granted the biggest number of responses that proves it to be an ordinary communication means with friends, relatives and acquaintances. The focus group admitted that it is a part of students' daily interaction with people, because it offers a wide range of social actions. A unique feature of Facebook is low barriers for getting engaged in communication and low or no effort. This social media platform successfully facilitates different types of social interaction and guides people in sharing information. However, students would follow Facebook pages of companies (products or services) only in case it is relevant for them to receive updates or special offers. Personal interest in a product or service plays a big role in social engagement with businesses.

Students were asked to share their view about Twitter and its implication in social communication, as it received a quite low number of responses in the poll questionnaire. They have admitted that Twitter is more applicable to public communication (by a public figure for instance) rather than for social communication. This social media tool is more informative rather than communicative. It is very useful to receive up to date information from primary sources, as you can follow many official pages of organizations and people that are being updated several times a day. The content is more valued than social interaction on Twitter. Instagram, in opposite, is a socially oriented platform. According to the discussion of the focus group, Instagram can be used by public figures of organizations in order to enhance corporate's image and to increase social communication with the target group. However, it is not regarded as an effective tool for business communication. The same applies to LinkedIn; it is convenient to get in touch with a company, but it is not suitable for business-customer communication.

The role of forums, blogs and journals for communication concerning products and services was emphasized during the focus group interview. Whereas social networks create more exposure to communication about products and services, forums and blogs provide more detailed information. Students tend to use forums, blogs and journals for a certain communication purpose, while Facebook or Twitter is more for social interaction. Also, information retrieved from forums is perceived differently than from social networks. The reasons to communicate on forums depend on the topic and context. Most likely, one would refer to a forum when searching for an advice, solution to a problem or opinion concerning a product or a service. The focus group stated that social networks put a product in a spotlight, but students tend to use other sources like forums, to check more information about it and to create content (leave comment, review etc.).

Students of Groningen are relatively unfamiliar with crowdsourcing platforms. Nevertheless, students presume participation in a crowdsourcing initiative, but it depends on the way a company would engage them and the idea behind it. The focus group admitted that students would participate in such social media activity if it is in their own interests and beneficial to them.

The focus group emphasized the most important motives for engaging in communication online. One of them is providing feedback to companies that may help to improve services or create some positive WOM on social media. Students said that they must be really satisfied with a product or service in order to write a product review or to share their opinions with others. Also, sharing negative feelings concerning a product or service may prevent other people of having the same negative experience. In this way, students show concern for other consumers. Besides feedback, students may consider communication with companies (about their products or services) in case they receive some benefits. But this scenario would only be applicable if a student is very interested in a product.

The discussion of the focus group concluded that social media provide low barrier communication and facilitate the process of engagement with companies. The issue is that companies have been using social media as a promotional means of communication for commercial purposes only. Fortunately, due to the convenience and a wide range of communicative opportunities of social media platforms, students believe social media may become a central channel of communication between businesses and customers, but such practice has not been observed yet. The focus group noted that awareness of positive experience of such practice would increase customer engagement with businesses on social media.

11. RECOMMENDATION

The recommendations section meets the external goal of the research - *providing recommendations to the Opening Up project on how social media can be effectively exploited for the development of innovative services delivery in Groningen*. The research has studied three main variables - the degree of engagement of students of Groningen, types of social media platforms used for different levels of engagement and motives for social media engagement, which represent the *factors that influence engagement of students of Groningen with businesses on social media*. The recommendations section provides detailed information on the research variables that also answers the third central research question and sub-questions:

What can be learnt form the results of analysis in order to make recommendation for the development of innovative service delivery in Groningen?

S1: How social media technologies can facilitate the process of engagement considering the results of the research?

S2: How engagement on social media platforms can be effectively exploited for different business objectives?

The recommendations section is divided into two parts: Building Engagement and Designing Social Engagement Plan. The Building Engagement explains how social media technologies can be used for building engagement with students and is based on the research findings. The Designing Social Engagement Plan section recommends 7 main steps that have to be considered by companies if they intend to exploit social media for innovative service delivery.

11.1 Building Engagement

Consumption

The poll questionnaire showed that social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube are the most common for receiving information about products and services. Also, the focus group noted that social networks create the most of the exposure for promotional messages. Forums, blogs and journals have collected most of the responses for the question regarding the reception of information about products and services (Figure 3, p.28). The focus group discussion concluded that these social media platforms are regarded as trustworthy and reliable and appear to be the key sources of information for students. As mentioned in the 'Conclusions' section in the previous chapter, opinions provided online have a big impact on how people perceive a brand and its products/services after reading such information. Additionally, it shapes the image of a product (company) in a society. It is essential to make a proper assessment of the product's

(company's) position in consumers' minds and to analyses the causes of such perception. A relevant solution would be to listen to the consumers' opinions, feelings and attitudes towards the products, services or brand, considering the fact that 'expressing opinions online' is a fairly common behavioral pattern among students of Groningen (Figure 2, p. 27). The attention must be paid to the most mentioned social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, forums, blogs). This will lead to a better understanding of company's image and customers' view about products and services. It will be possible to study customer's attitudes towards the brand and understand customers' needs better. There are several software services such as social media analytic tools that enable businesses to study these phenomena among relevant target groups (see Appendix 5). The knowledge provided by the social media analytic tools assist companies in improving their marketing communication online and promote innovative service delivery.

Responding

The conversations analyzed by the social media analytics are the reflection of something that has already happened. It is important to react on conversations that happen on the web in order to encourage visible interaction between businesses and consumers. Through the adoption of social technology in business, businesses are able to address process issues that are driving negative buzz online, but also implement suggested improvements and engage customers even more by responding to the conversations online. The social media analytic software programs included in the Appendix 5 offer tools for tracking real-time conversations and responding to them. Google Alert can be effectively used to track mentions regarding your brand or product/service. Also, Oracle RightNow, Social CRM Service Cloud and Lithium's social media management tool provide real-time communication with customers on different platforms of social media. For Example, KLM, Dutch Airline Company, manages its communication with customers via Facebook and Twitter with 50 min and 106 min expected response time on each platform respectively (KLM.com). However, it is essential to understand to which conversations it is best to reply and which ones it is better to omit. Jeremiah Owyang (2008) presented a diagram that is being used by the Air Force, it shows the decision process whether to respond to a blog post or a conversation on social media or not (see Appendix 4). The interaction with customers on social media platforms is an innovative way to deliver customer service, by responding to customer's requests on different social sites, wherever they communicate. The idea of innovative customer service is that businesses adjust their means of communication with clients by shifting it to a more social and innovative way of service delivery.

Participation (Curation)

The participation type of engagement online demonstrates low-scale participation in a form of tagging, liking, rating, sharing links or commenting. Facebook takes the leading position for this behavioral pattern among other social media platforms. Participative behavior helps to filter information and to select the most relevant. Online users make decisions which product review to read according to a rate it has received or conclude whether an article or post would be relevant according to the tag words. Sharing a link, retweet or like a piece of content are essential in social media context, because it creates more coverage and exposure to a message through low-involvement. Low-risk participation behavior is easier to generate, as consumers do not have to put much effort. Figure 2 (p.7) demonstrates that *rating a post review*, *share media files* and *information via social networks* are the most frequently performed activities. Businesses can utilize social media opportunities to create participative engagement with their target audience. It is an easy way to extract input from customers by asking them questions with possible answers, to which it is easy to reply by just one click. Encouraging customers to share links or posts on their social media pages in return for benefits like discounts or prizes works best among interested individuals in a product.

Hashtag is commonly used on Twitter and Facebook; it creates more visibility and exposure to a brand name or a product. Online users hashtag their posts with an aim to be retweeted, favourited, liked or shared by the company's official account pages. Somehow, this small-scale engagement creates a positive communication experience and strengthens the link between customers and businesses. With the help of a social media analytics tool, it would be possible to track which tag words are used the most among students of Groningen; businesses may use the same tag words to help their customers select relevant information. Moreover, rating reviews and posts or liking someone's comment enables not only customers to filter information, but also businesses to monitor public's opinions. By engaging students in participative behavior online, a company builds basis for further interaction and collaboration.

Cooperation

The cooperative behavioral pattern involves content creation on social media through commenting, responding, discussion and even publishing articles, adding blog posts and maintaining a blog. The research findings concluded that blogs and journals and forums are more suitable for content creation activities and appear to be trustworthy information sources among student of Groningen. Although the poll questionnaire showed a decline in responses for each social media platforms through the four building engagement questions, blogs and journals and forums managed to score more mentions for cooperative type of behavior than for the previous question regarding the curative participation on social media. Despite the fact that cooperative behavior requires more effort and input, students still tend to demonstrate their participation in a form of content creation on these Web 2.0 platforms. As it was mentioned by the focus group, information obtained on blogs and forums that was provided by other customers is more reliable. It gives a clearer image about a product and it is usually very influential. Customers are engaged with businesses or organizations when they collaborate on their ideas and experience and share this information with other participants. In order to stimulate positive buzz online and create collaborative engagement with students, it is advised to establish connections with content creators and make them business advocates. Students (customers) are the ones who spread beneficial word of mouth; they recommend products and services to their peers, which strengthen the competitive advantage of a company on the market (Lee, 2010). By deploying social technologies (see Appendix 6), it became easier to track active online users and to make them business advocates. Businesses must focus on building relationships with prospects and advocates and support them by implementing social technologies. Business advocates will drive collaboration between other customers; which in turn will become a valuable source of feedback and innovation.

Collaboration

Facebook, blogs and journals and forums received the biggest number of mentions for the collaborative question in the poll questionnaire. It was noted by the focus group interview, the collaborative participation in online discussions among students of Groningen would succeed if businesses target their existing customers, who are interested in a product or service. Fields of personal interests and lifestyle is of great importance, as students have to share an idea or view regarding a certain issue that requires resolution through collaboration. According to the results of the research, Facebook is the most effective tool to put a collaborative initiative in the spotlight, but more collaborative platforms like forums or blogs are needed. Yet, the best option

would be to develop a brand-based website for driving collaboration and engagement. Collaboration is an ultimate goal of the engagement process with customers. Businesses need to equip their websites with tools that make engagement fast and easy. With the help of social technologies, businesses have to guide their customers in the collaborative process of generating and sharing ideas, solving problems and creating innovations. Social technologies that drive collaboration processes are presented in the Appendix 7.

The integration of collaborative tools on companies' websites makes them new social media platforms especially designed for the companies and their customers. It guides consumers towards consumption of information, curation, cooperation and finally engagement with businesses on a collaborative basis. It allows companies to utilize social media technologies for social marketing (creating word-of-mouth), creation of social customer support (saving costs) and crowdsourcing ideas that innovate business operations. A couple of great examples:

- My Starbucks Idea (powered by Sales Force) – online users share their ideas concerning coffee, beverages and food products, merchandising, technologies, services and special offers (sales campaigns).

- Dell Support Forum – Customers interact with each other through sharing experience, problem solutions, advices etc. The forum includes discussion groups concerning desktop, cloud services, disk drivers, networks, mobile devices, laptops, software etc. Dell empowers customers to find and provide solutions to device and software related issues; in the same time Dell minimizes the customer support service costs and provides a more effective and innovative service delivery.

- Unilever's Open Innovation Submission Portal – Unilever came up with a list of challenges and wants that need solutions. Most of the challenges are related to the production and nutrition issues. Unilever encourages customers and specialists to participate in the process of generating business solutions, which in turn drives innovation.

Motives orientation

The research concluded that the main motives for students to share information online is to help others, provide feedback that a company can use for improvement, and consumption of information. Furthermore, the majority of students of Groningen has strong knowledge self-efficacy and believes their knowledge can be beneficial and helpful for others. While designing a social media engagement plan it is important to address these psychological motives as they reflect the needs of the target group – students. An online social platform of a company has to facilitate the processes of sharing information between customers and the company such as asking questions, providing answers, providing feedback and searching and selecting relevant information. Social engagement with customers is based on feedback and constructive use of it (Evans and McKee, 2010). It is important to not only provide customers with relevant social media tools to guide them towards collaboration, but also to consider and reflect on their input.

A relevant social engagement initiative for the target group of students of Groningen would be to involve them in customer support service by letting them help themselves and sharing their experiences with their peers. The Dell Support Forum is an example of such initiative. By introducing customer-based support service (like forum), a company would stimulate students to share information to help others, when they ask for an advice or search for a problem solution. This will create a company-based social information source platform. Moreover, a company would be able to see what information students look for the most, which business aspects need clarification and improvement, in other words make use of the feedback students provide.

11.2 Designing social media engagement plan

1. Defining clear objectives

A company must clarify what are the main reasons and challenges for improving social engagement with clients. Business objectives are directly linked to the decisions regarding implementation of different communication tools and strategies. A company must decide whether it wants to improve existing social media engagement with clients, build relationships and create more business advocates, save costs on customer support, improve service communication or generate new business solutions. Based on these objectives, a company must decide which social technologies it will implement into its social media marketing strategies.

The objective of the research is to provide recommendations on how social media can be effectively exploited for the innovative service delivery in Groningen, which means higher participation of clients in the service delivery, collaboration on finding solutions, better satisfaction of customers' needs and wishes and direct feedback. The following steps explained

in his section will concern the innovative service delivery.

2. *Conducting sentiment analysis*

Conducting a sentiment analysis among students of Groningen will provide information on students' attitude and feeling towards the service and company. The analysis must evaluate conversations on Facebook, YouTube, blogs and journals and Forums, as these platforms are the most popular for information consumption among students. Besides sentimental analysis, it is necessary to consider metrics data on different channels in order to know the trends of different social media platforms, its performance and effectiveness. The software programs like Exact Target Marketing Cloud, SDL SM, Nielsen Buzz Metrics and SAS Social Media Analytics (see Appendix 5) can be used for metrics and sentimental analysis. With the help of information provided, it would be possible to understand the needs and wishes of customers better by reflecting on feedback and addressing weak points in the service delivery systems.

3. *Adjusting response system with customers*

A lot of businesses improved their service delivery by implementing instant responding systems to customers' inquiries. The social media software programs presented above offer tools for real-time communication with customers via different social media channels. The ability to respond to customers' conversation instantly on various platforms (whatever suits customers best) is the most effective and innovative means of providing customer service. Oracle Right Now and Social CRM Service Cloud can also be effectively exploited for responding to the real-time conversation.

4. *Managing social media presence*

The evaluation and critical assessment of social media communication, its application and results will provide a clear image of strong and weak points of a company's website and social media pages. Businesses may use special tools - MarketingGrader.com analyses websites' and social media pages' performances and provides recommendations on how to improve and optimize communications.

It is recommended to use social media management dashboards that allow social media planning, provide metrics information, monitor and evaluate platforms, messages and campaign performance. Social media management software is relevant as students selected *sharing information via social networks* (Figure 2, p.24) as the most popular online activity, moreover, Facebook and YouTube showed greater number of mentions through the whole questionnaire. Companies may use tools such as HootSuite, CrowBooster, Social Flow, Bitly, SproutSocial (see

References). By using social media management tools, companies increase the chances of their messages to reach their target audience.

5. Searching for advocates and building relationships with them

Building relationships with key leads on social web is an effective way to stimulate content creation related to the company's services and products and drive collaboration among the target audience. Social media software programs such as BuzzStream and Socialgist (see Appendix 6) enables companies to track valuable connections, establish contacts and build relationships with websites, blogs, forums users and other online participants. Business advocates are the promoters of information about products and services and their experiences. They play an important role in information sharing as they are directly involved in interaction with other customers. Besides spreading positive word-of-mouth, business advocates contribute to the online customer communication by answering service or product related questions, giving advices and providing solutions. In this way, businesses are certain their customers can access necessary and relevant information on various social media sites.

6. Driving collaboration by implementing social media technologies on companies' website

Social engagement with customers is all about driving collaboration. Businesses need to guide their customers towards collaboration and provide them with all the necessary tools that facilitate the process of collaboration and make it as easy and fast as possible. Communication with customers is centralized on the official website of a company; an ultimate solution is to equip a company's website with social media tools that would empower online visitors to engage. Software programs like Lithium Technologies and Get Satisfaction can be easily integrated on companies' websites (see Appendix 7). Customers will be able to comment on blog articles, participate in forum discussions, share media files, rate comments, posts and reviews and own their social profiles. Customers will be able to access any information shared by other customers, solve their problems themselves, make better decisions and optimize their service and product experience to the fullest. On another side, businesses will be able to intervene in conversations when it is necessary, help their customers, listen to their experiences and wishes and innovate their service delivery by addressing customers' needs better.

Nevertheless, by implementing crowdsourcing techniques companies may use the knowledge and experiences of their customers to innovate business models and optimize business performance.

7. Measuring impact and results

Last but not least is the measurement of the results and outcomes. By integrating social technologies that have been advised in the previous points, it is possible to retrieve metrics information about campaign performances, promotional messages, interests of the public and websites (social media pages) performance. It is advised to evaluate and reflect on social media communications in order to illuminate strong and weak points of the social media communication strategies. Companies need to know which communication techniques and strategies work best on their target audience. Also, evaluation is an important aspect of innovation. Constant reflection on the communication performance creates more room for improvement and innovation.

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APPENDIX

1. Web 2.0 Features

Features	Definition given by Wikipedia	Examples
User reviews/evaluation	Content created by Web users on a Web site to share comments, recommendation, feedback, and/or criticism.	Amazon.com
Wiki	A wiki is a collection of Web pages designed to enable anyone who accesses it to contribute or modify content, using a simplified mark up language	Wikipedia
Blog	A blog (an abridgment of the term Web log) is a Web site, usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video.	http://boeingblogs.com/randy/
Video sharing	Video sharing refers to Web sites or software where a user can distribute video clips.	YouTube
Open source software	Open source is a development methodology, which offers practical accessibility to a product's source (goods and knowledge).	Mozilla Firefox
P2P or free download	A peer to peer (or "P2P") computer network uses diverse connectivity between participants in a network and the cumulative bandwidth of network participants rather than conventional centralized resources where a relatively low number of servers provide the core value to a service or application.	BitTorrent
RSS services	RSS is a family of Web feed formats used to publish frequently updated content such as blog entries, news headlines, and podcasts in a standardized format.	NewYork Times RSS
Mashup	A digital media file containing any or all of text, graphics, audio, video, and animation, which recombine and modify existing digital works to create a derivative work.	Google Map
Podcast	A podcast is a series of digital-media files, which are distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players and computers.	BBC podcast services
Tag cloud	A tag cloud (or weighted list in visual design) is a visual depiction of user-generated tags used typically to describe the content of Web sites.	last.fm
Social bookmarking	Social bookmarking is a method for Internet users to store, organize, search, and manage bookmarks of Web pages on the Internet with the help of meta-data.	CiteULike

2. The Poll Questionnaire

Q1 Which social media activity do you tend to perform online and how often?

	Every day	At least weekly	Once or twice a month	A few times a year or never
Post to forums	4.	5.	6.	7.
Comment on blogs	8.	9.	10.	11.
Rating a post review	12.	13.	14.	15.
Writing a review of a product or service	16.	17.	18.	19.
Chat in chat rooms	20.	21.	22.	23.
Publish/edit a personal page	24.	25.	26.	27.
Express opinions on-line	28.	29.	30.	31.
Post to journal	32.	33.	34.	35.
Publish or maintain a blog	36.	37.	38.	39.
Use micro blogs (Twitter)	40.	41.	42.	43.
Sharing via social networks information	44.	45.	46.	47.
Post to Wikis	48.	49.	50.	51.
Create/Share media files	52.	53.	54.	55.
Purchase	56.	57.	58.	59.

Q2 Which social media platforms do you tend to use for reading information, news about products, services of companies etc.? (Multiple answers possible)

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Blogs or Journals
- Forums
- Crowdsourcing, ideation platforms

Q3 Which social media platforms do you tend to use more for tagging, like, rate, share links about products, services, companies etc.? (Multiple answers possible)

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Blogs or Journals
- Forums
- Crowdsourcing, ideation platforms

Q4 On which social media platforms do you tend to be more active in terms of posting and commenting on information about products, services of companies etc.? (Multiple answers possible)

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Blogs or Journals
- Forums
- Crowdsourcing, ideation platforms

Q5 If applicable: Which social media platforms do you use for creating content like maintain a blog, writing product review or write feedback about product/service use, actively participate in discussions that concern product service of companies? (Multiple answers possible)

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Blogs or Journals
- Forums
- Crowdsourcing, ideation platforms

Q6 What are the main reasons for you to share information, experiences and opinions about products and service with others on social media platforms? (Multiple answers possible)

- I believe I have knowledge that can solve someone's issue or would be interested for others
- I like when people listen to my advises and comments
- I share information on-line because I want people to have a positive view about me
- I share my knowledge with other people on-line because I might need their help in the future
- I share information with other people on-line because of the benefits I may receive
- I share information because I am seeking for an advice
- I believe sharing knowledge can generate good/friendly relationships with on-line members
- I share information on-line with others because I think helping others is the right thing to do
- I express my satisfaction with certain products/services because I believe they deserve a positive buzz on-line
- I share my opinions and experience in order to provide feedback
- I believe providing feedback on-line to companies (products, service), can help them to improve
- I complain about products/services on-line, because I could not reach the right person at the company
- I post negative comments about product, services because I had bad experience or I was not satisfied

3. The Focus Group Interview Summary

Interviewer: Svitlana Holota

Interviewees: Camilla Garay Castro (Master's program in International Business communication at Hanzehogeschool) & Stanley Gadjri (Bachelor study program in International Communication at Hanzehogeschool)
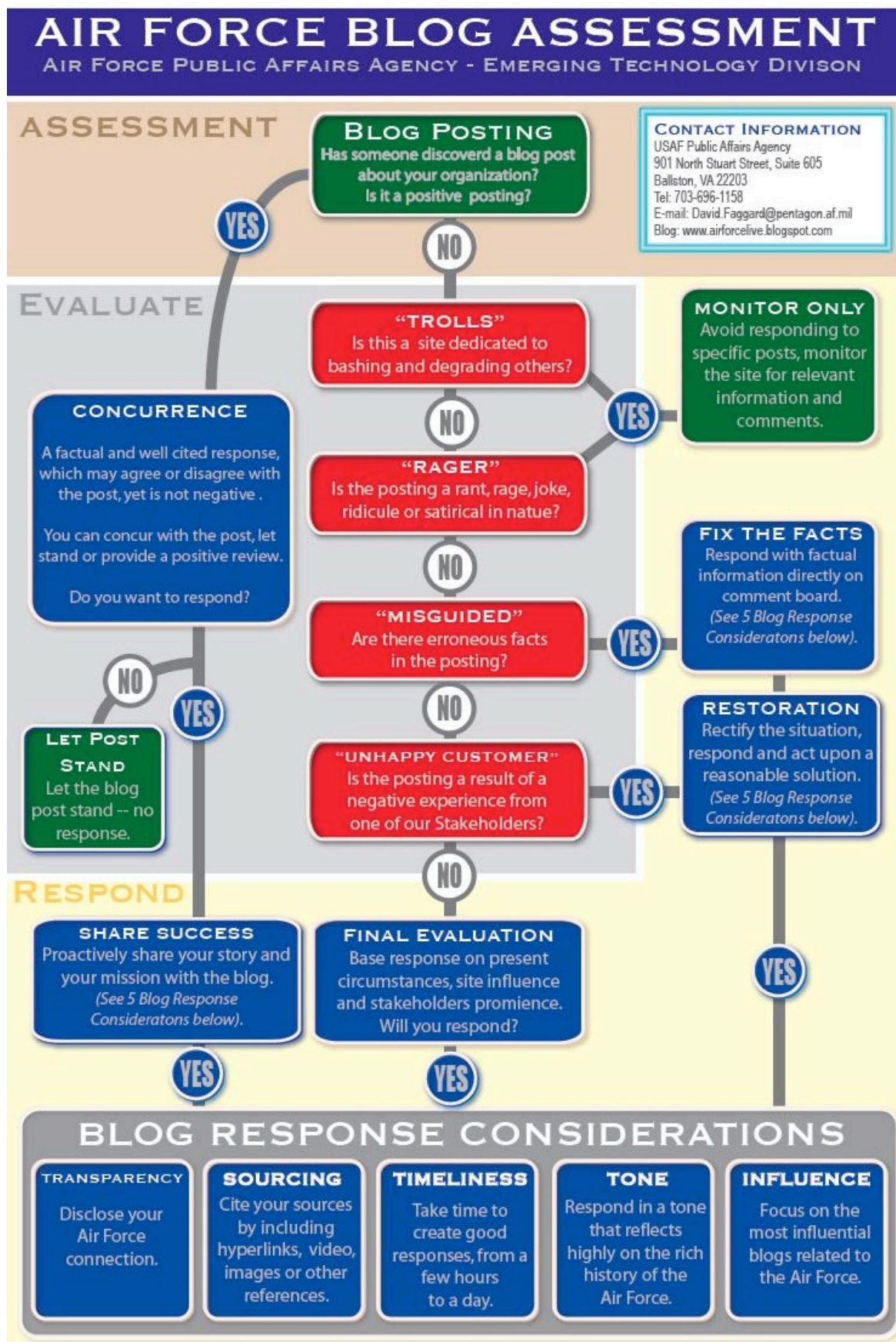
Date: 19.04.2014

Time: 15:00

Duration: 1 hour

Topics for discussion	Summary of responses
Elaboration on participants' own choices in the questionnaire;	• Reviews and opinions online really influence the perception about companies. This type of information helps users to have a better idea of a product or service. People also search for information on how to use devices. In this case, YouTube is best option. Technology is the most common products to search information about on use social media. Peer-to-peer interaction is very useful, as people share their opinions and experiences with a products or services. Such information is considered to be reliable among students. Information provided by companies and organizations on social media is not really trustworthy. Sharing media files on social media is very common activity. • Following companies on Facebook only if you use their services, in order to get updates about special offer and services. Students would follow a company on social media only is they are really into a product of the company, or because of their lifestyle and personal interest.
Why Facebook is the most popular; what is Twitter more suitable for; communication with businesses via Instagram or LinkedIn;	• Facebook is a part of students' daily interaction with people. Students primarily use Facebook as a tool for social activity, because Facebook offers a wide range of social actions that can be performed. The barriers for getting engaged in communication on Facebook are the lowest, which also means low involvement. Facebook became an ordinary means of social communication with friends and relatives. • Twitter gives an opportunity to follow as many people as you want, but it is not easy to reach visibility among Twitter followers. Twitter is useful for public communication. It is used effectively by public figures. Twitter is more informative rather than communicative. When you use Twitter you communicate to the public rather than to social surrounding. • Instagram has been mentioned on the poll questionnaire forms; however, the focus group does not recognize Instagram as an effective tool for communication about products and service. Public persons may use Instagram with

	an aim to promote companies, image, products, and services. They can see it happening in such a ways, but they are not aware of companies who actively use it.
	• LinkedIn is useful for getting in touch with a company, but not really for a business-client communications.
What is the role of Forums Journals and blogs in communication about products and services	• Forums are more suitable for purpose communication and social network is more for social interaction. Also, the decision to use forums for communication depends on the context and what the communication concerns. Forums are more trustworthy. The information about products and services are perceived differently in this case. Forums are useful for problem solving matters and searching for advices.
	• Sharing links on YouTube, Facebook you create more exposure for products, but forums and blogs are for more detailed information.
	• Social network helps to put a product in a spotlight, but students tend to use other sources like forums to check more information about it and to create content.
Crowdsourcing	• Students could participate in a crowdsourcing initiative, but it depends on the way a company would engage them as clients. The idea behind the crowdsourcing initiative is very important and also company's problem. A company needs to convince that input from a client is beneficial and the benefits are mutual.
Main motives for sharing information with other people online	• Spreading a positive buzz due to satisfaction and providing other people with knowledge about the product in case of a bad experience. Concerns for others.
	• Feedback online helps companies to improve.
	• Participating in communication online with business if they provide some benefits.
	• People who are really satisfied with a product.
Activity on social media pages of companies; using social media for engagement with companies	• The barriers for communication on social media with companies are lower than use of traditional ways of communication. Positive experience will increase chances of client getting engaged in communication with companies online.

4. Jeremiah Owyang's diagram (2008)

AIR FORCE BLOG ASSESSMENT
AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY - EMERGING TECHNOLOGY DIVISON

ASSESSMENT

BLOG POSTING
Has someone discoverd a blog post about your organization? Is it a positive posting?

CONTACT INFORMATION
USAF Public Affairs Agency
901 North Stuart Street, Suite 605
Ballston, VA 22203
Tel: 703-696-1158
E-mail: David.Faggard@pentagon.af.mil
Blog: www.airforcelive.blogspot.com

YES / **NO**

EVALUATE

"TROLLS"
Is this a site dedicated to bashing and degrading others?

MONITOR ONLY
Avoid responding to specific posts, monitor the site for relevant information and comments.

CONCURRENCE
A factual and well cited response, which may agree or disagree with the post, yet is not negative.

You can concur with the post, let stand or provide a positive review.

Do you want to respond?

NO / **YES**

"RAGER"
Is the posting a rant, rage, joke, ridicule or satirical in natue?

NO

FIX THE FACTS
Respond with factual information directly on comment board.
(See 5 Blog Response Consideratons below).

"MISGUIDED"
Are there erroneous facts in the posting?

YES

NO

NO / **YES**

LET POST STAND
Let the blog post stand -- no response.

"UNHAPPY CUSTOMER"
Is the posting a result of a negative experience from one of our Stakeholders?

YES

RESTORATION
Rectify the situation, respond and act upon a reasonable solution.
(See 5 Blog Response Consideratons below).

NO

RESPOND

SHARE SUCCESS
Proactively share your story and your mission with the blog.
(See 5 Blog Response Consideratons below).

FINAL EVALUATION
Base response on present circumstances, site influence and stakeholders promience. Will you respond?

YES

YES / **YES**

BLOG RESPONSE CONSIDERATIONS

TRANSPARENCY	SOURCING	TIMELINESS	TONE	INFLUENCE
Disclose your Air Force connection.	Cite your sources by including hyperlinks, video, images or other references.	Take time to create good responses, from a few hours to a day.	Respond in a tone that reflects highly on the rich history of the Air Force.	Focus on the most influential blogs related to the Air Force.

5. Social Media Analytic Tools. Consumption

- SDL SM

SDL SM 2 is a social media monitoring software, that analysis social media not only according to the KPIs but provides data on customers' opinions and attitudes. It provides sentimental analysis of social media:

"Brand References: Analyses the words in the post that are referring to your search terms as positive and negative references.

Content Tone: Measures the circular tome of the complete content. This measures the amount of positive and negative emotion not just around a brand, but around the compete post.

Content emotion: Analyses the words that are being used and matches those typical words used when expressing the 16 standards human emotions." (SDL.com)

- Exact Target Marketing Cloud

Exact Target Marking Cloud analyses campaign performance across any social media channel, provides insight to what customers and prospects are saying in real time and allows immediate responses (Twitter). It also provides demographic data, on which channels people mention a company, product or industry more often. It enables to see how interested customers are in what being promoted, and identifies key leads. The software allows finding and resolving customer service issues faster, connecting with customers and improving relationships.

- Media Injection

Media Injection predicts the effectiveness of a post or tweet, by analyzing past performance of disseminated messages. It studies demographics, context analysis, sentimental analysis, conversations and leads from the social networks.

- Nielsen BuzzMetrics

Nielsen monitors brands' reputation by giving an overview of customer commentary and alerts of real-time negative responses that can be responded. It gives information on brand's health today, over time and in relation to competitors. The software facilitates intervention in customers' conversations for successful engagement. It shows information on what creates natural buzz, make brands succeed or fail. Businesses are able to measure the effectiveness of the communication campaigns, determine influential individuals, groups and publishers in a market.

- SAS Social Media Analytics

The SAS software enables to capture online conversation, analyses customers' review, identify influential blogs and authors, make sentimental analysis, classify topics of online conversations, identify tones of conversations, show how core business concepts are performing, compare

analysis reports over time to track the differences (improvements), show context behind positive or negative sentiment, tack progress across social media channels, real-time conversations (Twitter).

6. Business Advocates. Creation

- Buzz Stream

Buzz Stream is a social media software that enables communication professionals to search for relevant influencers and advocates on the web, analyze their metrics and provides information on how to contact them. Businesses can creating a database of prospects and systematically update it by adding new contacts. In case of launching a promotional campaign BuzzStream categorize the contact list by their activities and select the desired ones – people who write product reviews, writing for blogs and maintain their own blog, write content for forums, Tweet etc. BuzzStream service creates a history of all correspondence that took place with a particular contact on different social media platforms. The software gives opportunity to design and schedule promotional campaigns and track their performance over time.

- Socialgist

SocialGist searches for relevant conversations and content creators in several social media directions. It monitors topic communities on messages boards and forums and search for enthusiasts who actively participate in in-depth discussions. It also track brand-based community pages in order to get valuable information from company's most engaged customers and to get in touch with them. A unique feature of Socialgist is tracking video sources and their content. It also finds influential users on Twitter and Weibo (Chinese micro blogging sources). Socialgist tracks conventional media online (like news articles) and bloggers. Additionally, it searches for valuable contacts in friend and colleague networks among professionals through finding the conversations. The final direction is public reviews; Socialgist looks for people, who rite product review and also analyze the content of the messages.

- Rapleaf

Rapleaf tool classifies email addresses by demographic data, household data, interests and purchase data. It allows selecting relevant customer contacts for building relationships.

7. Social technologies driving collaboration

- Lithium Technologies

Lithium Technologies equip company's websites with various engagement tools like forums, crowdsourced ideas, Q&A, reviews, knowledge base, blogs photos &videos, contests, groups, integrate Twitter and Facebook.

- IBM's Idea Jam

It is a crowdsource software that can be integrated into company's website and customized to the company's needs. Participants can share their ideas on a certain topic, comment on ideas to develop further concepts, vote or demote ideas.

- Web Storm by Bright Idea

Web Storm is another example of social media technologies for crowdsourcing and driving collaboration with customers. It allows to listen to what customers say, engage in conversations and to interact.

- Get Satisfaction

Get Satisfaction is social media software for creating communities and guiding their conversations. It is easily integrated and customized to the company website's interface and requirements; the software can be integrated in different social media platforms used by a company: website, Facebook, Google etc. The main idea is to empower customers to solve their issues themselves by using information provided by other customers, curation (like, rate) and content creation.

8. Research planning & feasibility

Activity plan

a) Gathering material

- Research strategies: survey and desk research
- Answering first central research question
- Developing questionnaires
- Conducting poll survey

Working hours: 3weeks

b) Reporting and initial analysis

- Transcription and analysis of questionnaires
- Answering second research question

Working hours: 1 week

c) Feedback

- Feedback and guidance from Hanze supervisor

Working hours: ongoing

d) Development of material

- Studying the results of the research
- Conducting focus group interview and discussing findings with specialists
- Developing recommendations/ answering third research question
- Working on draft chapters of the report
- Gathering additional material if necessary

Working hours: 2 weeks

e) Draft versions

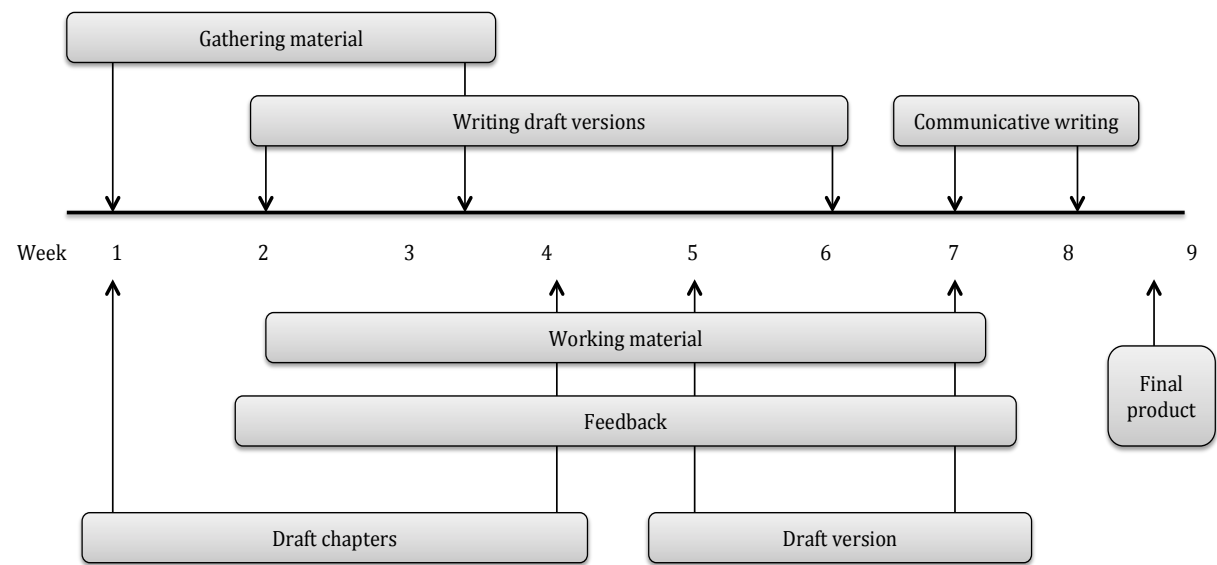- Working on draft version of the report
- Reviewed by Hanze supervisor

Working hours: 1 week

f) Final product

- Finishing the final report
- Layout and printing

Working hours: 1 week

Time axis of the research project

| | Gathering material | | | | | | | | |

| | | Writing draft versions | | | | Communicative writing | | |

Week   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9

		Working material			
		Feedback			
	Draft chapters		Draft version	
						Final product

Histogram of the research project

A
B
C
D
E
F

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8