



LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

The Online Consumer Decision Journey in the Cosmetic Industry

by

Anna Hagander

&

Margret Elisa Runarsdottir

May 2016

Master's Programme in International Marketing and Brand
Management

Supervisor: Ulf Johansson
Examiner: Christian Koch

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to everyone that has helped us during the thesis. To start with, we would like to thank our supervisor Ulf Johansson for guiding us throughout the research. Moreover, we would like to thank the participants involved in the research for their kindness and effort in providing us with data. Last but not least we thank our families for being so supportive and helpful in the process.

Lund, May 24, 2013

Anna Hagander

Margret Elisa Runarsdottir

Abstract

Title:	The Online Consumer Decision Journey in the Cosmetic Industry
Date of the seminar:	May 31, 2016
Course:	Master Thesis in MSc <i>International Marketing and Brand Management & Globalisation, Brands & Consumption</i>
Authors:	Anna Hagander & Margret Elisa Runarsdottir
Advisor:	Ulf Johansson
Keywords:	Consumer decision Journey, EKB model, Culture, Community, Reference Group, Opinion leader, User Generated Content, Word of Mouth, Vlogging, Consumer Involvement, YouTube
Thesis purpose:	The Purpose of this research is to get a better understanding of the online consumer decision journey in the cosmetic industry and the role of online communities, interaction between consumers and how user generated content, can reassure and influence consumers to buy products online they have not tried before.
Methodology:	A qualitative and abductive research design was chosen to this study and data was collected through netnography observations and complemented with a structured observation.
Theoretical perspective:	The research builds upon the consumer decision journey and consumer behaviour theories that help building an understanding of what influences the consumer behaviour throughout his journey.
Empirical data:	The data was collected through non-participant online observation (netnography) of a Facebook community, centred around Beauty products and of two Swedish YouTube beauty channels. Additionally, data was collected through structured observations, where participants were observed buying a cosmetic product online.
Conclusion:	The results show how engaged the consumer is in the decision journey in the cosmetic industry. The post purchase stage showed to be very important especially in the information and evaluation stage. Providing the customer with correct information about purchased products could easily provide much more satisfied customers. When searching for information and evaluating alternatives the consumer moves frequently between the two stages.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures	1
1 Introduction	2
1.1 Problem Background	2
1.2 Problem statement.....	3
1.3 Purpose	4
1.4 Research Question	4
2 Methodology	5
2.1 Research Design.....	5
2.1.1 Qualitative and exploratory research design	5
2.2 Abductive research approach.....	6
2.3 Research Method	6
2.3.1 Data collection.....	6
2.3.2 Qualitative structured Observation.....	7
2.3.3 Netnography Observation.....	9
2.4 Sample selection.....	10
2.4.1 Qualitative Structured Observation sample.....	10
2.5 Ethical considerations	12
2.6 Validity and Reliability of the research	12
2.7 Chapter summary.....	13
3 Theoretical Framework.....	15
3.1 Consumer Decision Models.....	16
3.2 The EKB consumer decision journey	18
3.2.1 Need Recognition	18
3.2.2 Information search.....	18
3.2.3 Evaluation of alternatives	19
3.2.4 Purchase.....	20
3.2.5 Post Purchase behaviour.....	21
3.3 How is consumer behaviour influenced in the decision journey?	21
3.3.1 Introduction to section.....	21
3.3.2 Culture	22
3.3.3 Reference Groups & Opinion Leaders	23
3.3.4 Communities.....	24
3.3.5 User generated content	25
3.3.6 Word of mouth.....	26
3.3.7 Consumer involvement.....	27
3.4 Chapter Summary	28
4 Empirical Results, Analysis and Discussion	30
4.1 Netnography.....	30
4.1.1 Skönhetstips.....	30
4.1.2 YouTube	40
4.2 Structured observations	46
4.3 Discussion	48

5	Conclusion.....	51
5.1	Conclusion	51
5.2	Theoretical and Practical contribution.....	52
5.3	Limitations and recommendations for further research	53
6	Reference list.....	55
7.	Appendix.....	59

Table of Figures

FIGURE 1: OBSERVATION NOTES	8
FIGURE 2: CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR	15
FIGURE 3: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE	47
FIGURE 4: ONLINE CONSUMER DECISION MODEL	52

1 Introduction

The introduction chapter discusses how the retail environment has changed with the adept of the internet. The problem background discusses the importance of being present in all channels and how the use of online channels has changed the consumer decision journey. The discourse of the problem statement is the consumer's reluctance to buy products without trying them before, making it the purpose of this study to get a better understanding of how the consumer is influenced in the online decision journey, focusing on the cosmetic industry. Based on that, the two research questions are presented.

Problem Background

New technologies along with the internet have changed the way we shop (Edelman & Signer, 2015A) and retailers face new opportunities to expand their market by selling products online (Frambach et al., 2007). Opening up a new store used to be the normal way for companies to grow, a new store would provide new customers and increase sales (Herring et al., 2014). Companies that used to focus only on traditional offline channels are increasingly concentrating on online channels (Frambach et al., 2007). Today, more than 50 percent of consumers do research online before making a purchase and rarely make an in-store purchase decision on the spot (Herring et al., 2014). Shopping has moved from offline to online and it is evident that stores are closing down. In 2013, Gap closed over 250 physical stores and new Walmart stores are built much smaller than they used to. That being said, a physical store is not something of the past, but it has a different role than it used to (Herring et al., 2014).

As the internet becomes a bigger part of everyone's lives and with the development of technologies that have been happening in the last few years, the power balance has shifted from organizations to the consumer. Consumer decision journey is a series of interactions that the consumer does to complete a goal (Puccinelli et al., 2009). It reaches from the problem recognition step to the actual purchase and the post-purchase stage (Engel et al., 1968; Ashman et al., 2015). The original process of consumer decision making has changed as consumers now have the ability to compare prices, find the best deals and read consumer reviews of the desired product on the internet (Edelman & Singer, 2015B; Pantano & Viassone, 2015). The new journey encourages shoppers to evaluate products and services and add and remove choices more frequently, which Edelman & Singer call the "feedback loop". They suggest that in the feedback loop customers keep evaluating the product throughout their journey and even after the purchase, demanding a better experience from the product or the brand on an ongoing basis (Court et al., 2009; Edelman & Singer, 2015B). Customers nowadays expect the same price across channels and the same goes with returning purchased items (Herring et al., 2014).

According to PostNord (2015) there is still an increase in e-commerce purchases in Sweden, as online shopping has increased by 16 percent in 2015, from the same period last year. This fact opens up possibilities for Swedish retailers but at the same time increases the competition from foreign stores. More than one out of every fifth product that consumers in Sweden purchase

online is from stores outside Sweden (PostNord, 2015). Consumers move between channels and retailers are faced with new challenges to compete in this new and fast moving environment and to be present in all channels (Pantano & Viassone, 2015). It is getting more difficult to determine where the process starts and where it ends but retailers have much to gain from being present in all channels, as customers who use different channels usually spend more money (Kwon & Lennon, 2009). By being present in all of them companies can both create a stronger brand and gain customer loyalty (PostNord, 2015).

Retailers are becoming better at understanding the journey and adjusting the experience throughout different touch points. Until now, companies have mainly been reactive, adjusting and improving their strategy to the customer journey, but Edelman & Singer (2015A) state that a shift is happening and some companies are becoming aggressively proactive. That means that companies are designing journeys to attract customers and creating a customised experience to keep them and by doing so, ideally making sure that it is to customer's own benefit to stay by creating value for them (Edelman & Singer, 2015A).

Problem statement

For the Swedish consumer the main reasons for buying online are that it is convenient and simple, that products often are cheaper online or simply that the product was not available in a nearby store. The most common reason for not shopping online is the need to “try-before-you-buy”, which means that consumers want to test, touch, feel and see the product before you actually buy it, which is possible in a physical store. One out every five persons asked stated that this was the reason for buying offline instead of making the purchase online (PostNord, 2015). Furthermore, many customers are reluctant to buy products that they have not tried, especially in some industries. As a response to this problem, companies in the fashion industry have started offering customers to test products at home by providing free delivery, both when you order the product and if you want to return it (Moth, 2014). In addition, other brands have created software where customers can upload their image and try products like sunglasses, different hair colours and even apply makeup, to address this need (Edelman & Singer, 2015; Utroske, 2015).

The cosmetic industry, which includes products related to skin care, hair care, makeup or perfume, is especially known for struggling with entering the e-commerce revolution. The industry is one of the so called “try before buy” industries as it is hampered by the consumer's need to experience the product in store by touching, feeling and smelling it. This means that the cosmetic industry has a high level of involvement, as the buyer puts a lot of time and effort into information search, evaluation and the whole purchase decision (Hsu & Lee, 2003) Other industries with the same problem are for example the personal care industry and the car industry (Ben-Shabat & Gada, 2012; Hsu & Lee, 2003). Researchers are now forecasting a shift from offline to online purchase in the cosmetic industry (Reuters, 2015), which can already be seen in Sweden by looking at the increasing numbers of online cosmetic purchases in the last years (PostNord, 2015).

Online communities are growing fast and user generated content (e. UCG) and word-of-mouth (e. WOM) are very influential. The digital consumer actively searches for unbiased information, opinion and feedback from online sources like consumer opinion sites, search engines, blogs and vlogs (Lamb et al., 2011). The influence of user generated content is only expected to increase and understanding how and why it affects the consumer allows marketers to create more effective response at the right time and in a relevant environment (Bughin et al., 2010).

Therefore, the practical contribution of this study is to help marketers understand what motivates and/or influences consumers to complete an online purchase. This would be of help to retailers in the cosmetic industry as well as other high involvement industries to take control of the consumer decision journey. At the same time, they would ideally create a better experience for the customer and meet his needs across all channels. The review of existing literature indicates that past researches of the decision journey is focused on both the offline and online journey, but not exclusively on the online journey. Additionally, there is lack of research focusing on high involvement industries decision journey and what really influences the decision. Further research is therefore needed to fill this theoretical gap.

Therefore, it would be both practically and theoretically relevant to study the online consumer decision journey in high involvement industries, with a specific focus on the cosmetic industry. This channel will likely have a significant impact on the cosmetic purchases in the near future.

Purpose

The aim of this study is to develop a better understanding of what online consumer decision journey looks like in the cosmetic industry, and the role of online communities, interaction between consumers and how user generated content, can reassure and influence consumers to buy products online they have not tried before.

Research Question

The research questions for this study are following:

- 1. What does the online consumer decision journey look like in the cosmetic industry?*
- 2. What influences consumers to buy cosmetic products online, despite the risk of buying before trying?*

2 Methodology

In the following chapter we will present and motivate our choice of research design and method. We begin with describing the research strategy and the approach between data and theory. Moreover, the method of how to collect data and sampling method is described as well as the method of analysing the data. Finally, the ethical considerations, validity and reliability as well as the methodological limitations are presented.

Research Design

Qualitative and exploratory research design

Ontology and epistemology are philosophies about assumptions of reality and theory of knowledge. Depending on which ontological and epistemological view the researcher has, this will influence the decisions and assumptions made in the methodology and method, which are the visible parts of a project (Easterby-Smith, 2012). Researchers argue that the different views of the philosophies create two paradigms; quantitative and qualitative research methods, which have opposite views of knowledge and reality. The qualitative method is based on an interpretivist and constructivist view of knowledge and reality, which mean that reality is subjective and socially constructed by individuals rather than by external factors. The quantitative perspective on the other hand, has an objectivistic and positivistic philosophical view of reality and knowledge, which means that reality, is objective and knowledge can only be created through empirical data that can be measured and tested through hypothesis. We choose the interpretivist and constructivist view of knowledge creation and reality, since our study aims to understand rather than explain social behaviour.

A *qualitative approach* is selected due to our philosophical view and that our research aims to detect patterns in individual's behaviour and to understand them as mentioned above. A qualitative method can provide us with that knowledge better than a quantitative, since it is used when trying to understand, interpret and look for patterns by individuals rather than making objective conclusions from numbers, relationships and correlations as the quantitative suggests (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, one has to be aware of that the qualitative approach has been given criticism for its difficulties in replication. This means it is impossible to conduct an exact replica of the research since the researcher him/herself is the instrument of data collection. In addition, there is a problem with generalizing the findings since they are often restricted to a small number of individuals in a specific place/organization (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Despite the risk of not being able to generalize the results, a qualitative approach is chosen as it better suits our study.

Since our research aims to explore knowledge in a subject that has not been investigated sufficiently, an exploratory research design is chosen. This is due to that our research focuses on understanding the problem and generate new insights and contributions to the field and therefore

our research design is naturally exploratory which also can be seen by the choice of qualitative approach (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Abductive research approach

The research approach determines the relation between theory and research. There are three types of approaches a researcher can take; deductive, inductive and abductive.

The inductive approach is commonly associated with the qualitative approach, since it has its starting point in the empiricism. The inductive approach starts with collecting data commonly from field or case studies, then analysing the data by looking for patterns and lastly tries to develop a theory, which explains the patterns. (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The quantitative approach is often connected with a deductive approach in the relation between theory and research. This means that the researcher begins with studying and analysing theories written by previous researchers and then tests hypotheses that are based from these theories with the data collected (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Creswell (2003) on the other hand, means that one should rather think of them as tendencies than paradigms and other researchers also means that it is hard to draw such strict lines between the two approaches (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this study we choose the abductive method, which is a mix between induction and deduction. The researcher then “*starts from an empirical basis, just like induction, but does not reject theoretical preconceptions and is in that respect closer to deduction*” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009:4). Due to the existence of useful literature about the consumer decision journey we will not collect data in a totally unknown field with no presumptions, which is the common reason for choosing an inductive approach. But we do not test existing literature with hypothesis either, as the deductive approach suggests. Therefore, we found it suitable to mix both approaches and thereby take an abductive approach to the relation between theory and data.

Research Method

Data collection

When selecting data collection method, it is important to understand what type of data the researchers need to collect. Here comes an overview of how we have motivated our choice of methods to collect data, which are *qualitative structured observations, and netnography observations*.

When studying people’s behaviour, observation is the most recommended form of data collection to use in comparison to other types of methods. Observations measure behaviour directly, while instruments such as questionnaires and surveys, measures behaviour indirectly. This means that there is a risk with using indirect instruments as there is often inconsistency between attitude and

actual behavior (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore, we chose to conduct observations to be able to understand the online behaviour in the best possible way

There are several forms of observations in qualitative method and we chose netnography as our first observation type. Netnography is described as “*a marketing research method that investigates computer-mediated communications in connection with market-related topics*” (Bryman & Bell, 2011:654) as well as an authentic, raw, natural and unforced way of observing behaviour. Although ethnography also is described as an unforced and authentic observation type, netnography suits our study better due to that netnography is ethnography, but adapted to internet and the social world that comes with it (Kozinets, 2002).

Kozinets (2002) means that online communities are contexts where discussions among consumers happen about products and brands, to influence and inform other consumers. In addition, netnography is perfect to use when one wants to discover cultural- and consumer insights in specific contexts at a deeper level. Since we want to understand what influences consumers online-decision journey, we believe netnography is a perfect way of acquiring that data. Moreover, comparing netnography to interviews, focus groups and surveys, it is much less obtrusive and the context is not fabricated by the researcher. (Kozinets, 2002). However, we realised that we did not quite capture the full decision making with only netnography observations.

Netnography provides a lot of relevant data on *understanding* the decision making, but it does not capture *how* it is actually done. Therefore, we choose to complement the netnography with a structured observation. Normally, structured observation is described as “*a technique in which the researcher employs explicitly formulated rules for the observation and recording of behaviour*” (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 272) and is as well quantitative. (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since we are not interested in getting quantitative data on behaviour, we modified the structured observation to get out qualitative data instead; this is explained in the “Qualitative structured Observation part”. Structured observation is chosen instead of, for example diaries, where one can detect patterns in decision behaviour, as there is a risk that the participants would not buy any cosmetic products during that time.

Qualitative structured Observation

In a normal structured observation, the researcher starts with devising an observation schedule to record the observation. This is made by creating pre-decided categories of behaviour that the researcher then will put a mark in every time the behaviour is appearing. In this way, the behaviour can be quantified and measured in a quantitative way (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

We on the other hand chose to structure our observation in a more qualitative way. Every participant was given the task of pretending to buy a cosmetic product online, in this case a bronzer that they had never tried before. By this, we would be able to follow their decision process online,

on a product they had never tested before. During their time on the computer, we took notes on their behaviour by writing down which types of sites they entered and existed, and what they searched for in chronological order. An example of a participant note can be seen below. More information about the analysis of the collected data can be found in the “Data Analysis Method”.

Participen observation 1, Notes

- Went in on Google searching for “best in test bronzers”
- Clicks in on a website of print magazine (Veckorevyn.se) were different bronzers are tested and evaluated
- Chooses three products of the shown bronzers by clicking on the suggested link for each product, which leads them to thee different online web shops that sell the product (Kicks.se, Lyko.se and eleven.se)
- Exits all three online web shops sites and goes back to Google and search for “best in test bronzers” again
- Clicks in on a new website of print magazine (Damernasvärld.se) were different bronzers are tested and evaluated
- Uses search engine to search for two specific bronzers from the print magazine and enters to two different online web shops (kicks.se and eleven.se) that sell the products.
- Opens a new window and search on Google for “price comparison” for both products - Goes into a website (prisjakt.nu) that compares prices on the bronzers in different websites, and customer reviews evaluating every website can be found
- Decides to “buy” one of the bronzers at the online web shop “eleven.se”

Figure 1: Observation Notes

We realise that there are drawbacks with giving a pre-decided task and expose ourselves as researchers to the participant when doing the observation. The participants may not act in the way they would act if they were alone, not knowing that they are being watched. In addition, we cannot capture the full consumer decision journey since we were creating the “need” for the participants and cannot follow them after their purchase. On the other hand, we thought these behaviours might be covered in the netnography part. Due to the complexity of collecting data on behaviour online, we believe this was the best possible way compared to other forms of observations that are less structured, such as diaries and ethnography as mentioned before. Therefore, we will still call the observation structured, since it is structured due to the pre-decided task, but the observation will not generate quantitative data.

Netnography Observation

As mentioned before, netnography “*is a marketing research method that investigates computer-mediated communications in connection with market-related topics*” (Bryman & Bell, 2011:654). When suitable online communities have been found Kozinets (2006) has four recommendations to use to make the right choice. In general, online communities should be chosen that “*(1) relate to your research question (2) have more traffic of different message and posters (3) offer more detailed or descriptively rich data and (4) offer more social interactions*” (Kozinets, 2006:131). The Swedish Facebook cosmetic group called “*Skönhetstips*” was chosen with 16 287 members, along with two Swedish YouTube beauty vloggers *Therese Lindgren*” with 363 728 subscribers and “*Helene Torsgården*” with 143 090 subscribers.

Skönhetstips was chosen as an online community with the topic of discussing beauty products. It was by far the biggest online Swedish community we could find that was related to beauty topic discussions and thereby to our research questions. It was easy to access, with relatively many members, frequent posts and active discussions. Therefore, it suited our research criteria perfectly. When starting to research the cosmetic industry, we soon got the feeling that YouTube also has a big role in influencing and informing consumers. Beauty industry consumers are looking at YouTube for product recommendations, tutorials and social interaction. In addition it gives the consumer more information about the quality of the product, how it should be used, how it looks and if it would fit the consumer (Pixability, 2014) . The two beauty channels *Therese Lindgren* and *Helene Torsgården* were chosen due to the numbers of subscribers/members and the frequency of posts on the vlogs. Since the channels are large and popular, they also offer more social interactions than smaller channels as well as more descriptive, rich data.

When doing Netnography observations there are two elements of the data collection; (1) a lot of data is copied from the computer-mediated communications of online community members directly by the researcher (2) “*the data that the researcher inscribes regarding his/her observations of the community, its members, interactions and meanings*” (Kozinets, 2002:5). The netnographer is often overloaded with information in this environment, and the netnographer should therefore be guided by his/her research question when choosing data to save and pursue (Kozinets, 2002). In addition, data collection should only continue as long as new knowledge is added to the topic. We simply followed Kozinets recommendations here as well, and chose the data that were relevant for our research question. Non-participant observation was conducted instead of an participant observation, in order to observe natural conversations and interactions in the group and channels (Kozinets, 2006).

Sample selection

Qualitative Structured Observation sample

When choosing method to process and analyse the collected data, the research design has to be taken into account. Some methods are more helpful when analysing netnography and others are better to use when analysing structured observations (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Regarding data analysis methods for netnography, researchers have different opinions. Some researchers mean that content analysis, grounded theory or hermeneutics are the best methods to use since those are the most established techniques when studying communications, while others believe that multiple analytical techniques are better to use than only one. Kozinets (2006) means that the analysis method should be chosen depending on the research question and the type of observation, if the researcher is a participant in the observation online or not. Researchers should mainly select methods that take advantage of the context (Kozinets, 2006). Hermeneutics has been chosen as a method to analyse our netnography observations. The central idea behind hermeneutics is that the researcher should try to analyse and interpret texts, documents, social actions or other non documentary phenomena, with emphasis on the individual's viewpoint. Hermeneutics is sensitive to the context where the text/social action was produced and thereby advocates an understanding for the whole (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since we are observing social actions and interactions on the Internet, it is important to take the online-context into account to be able to interpret individual's behaviour online correctly. The interpretations are theory driven in order to interpret the data, and it is therefore important to be aware of how it affects the research, as the researcher has preconceptions (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1999). The theories were carefully selected in order to understand and interpret the individual's behaviour as much as possible. This way to analyse data is also in line with using abductive approach.

We observed *Skönhetstips* for a week, from 24th of April and until the 31st of April and read all comments, that were around 100 – 150 posts a day on average. One video from each vloggers *Therese Lindgren* and *Helene Torsgård* were chosen, both videos had around 280-1000 comments. Due to the large amount of posts, we realised that we had to categorize them in order to get an overview of the data and thereby be able to interpret it in a better way in the analysis part. During the observations in the communities, both of us had already started to see obvious themes among the posts and discussed how they should be categorized before the actual collection. Then we started to categorize the data while collecting it, into the labelled themes. Sometimes we realised that we needed to add one or two categories or adjust the title, but otherwise the categorization went smooth. The discussions were divided into eight groups in *Skönhetstips* and six groups among the vloggers and are further described in the empirical and analysis chapter.

When it comes to the analysis of the structured observations, hermeneutics does not fit, since it is focused on the interpretation and social actions in texts rather than the notes from the researcher. Therefore, we believe grounded theory will fit the structured observations better. However, the

abductive approach does not work smoothly with the foundation of grounded theory. The strictest form of grounded theory advocates that the research should be conducted with no previous knowledge (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since we decided to do a structured observation as a complement to our netnography with specific data, our research is mainly based on hermeneutics and therefore grounded theory works more like a complement to our study, since we need the grounded theory's ability to capture the complexity of online behaviour. The theory was also chosen as it offers the opportunity to structure and code the data. Since we decided to merge the empirical results with the analysis chapter, theories will be used when interpreting the data. We are aware that this might be criticised, but we still believe this is the best way to analyse such a complex behaviour and adds value to the bigger picture.

Grounded theory consists of several tools, which is used to guide the researcher through the collected data process; coding, theoretical sampling, constant comparison and empirical saturation. The outcome of using grounded theory is different concepts, categories and theories. The grounded theory process starts with coding the collected data, which means that the transcripts/field notes are divided into different components that are named by the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2011). During the whole analysis, the researcher is categorizing and comparing data until empirical saturation is reached. This means that the coding and collection of data should continue until observing another respondent or interviewing another person, will not add anything new to the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

During the structured observations, notes were taken while observing the participants as shown in the data collection part. After ten observations we found we had reached empirical saturation, which means that another observation would not add any new knowledge to the research/observation (Kozinets, 2006).

When we started to go through our observation notes, we could immediately see some clear themes among the notes. We labelled them as: *general information search*, *information search*, *expert reviews (print magazines)*, *opinion leader sites (blogs, YouTube)*, *customer review sites (Prisjakt, Kicks, Lyko)* *evaluation of products*, *specific price comparison Pprisjakt*, *Purchase*.

We quickly realised that it was wrong to mix all the notes into the different categories, since one website can both be used to search for information or evaluate the product depending on how the specific participant have chosen to use the website. Therefore, we used the themes in every note instead, since we had to look at the whole behaviour from the beginning to the end and observe what purpose the customer used the website for, to be able to interpret the data easier in the analysis. The notes were then interpreted with the help from the literature, to be able to map the behaviour and a schedule was created for each note, that showed the movements of the consumer between the different steps of the decision journey. An example of the schedule is shown in the empirical result and analysis part of the structured observation. Schedule of all respondents can be found in the appendix.

Ethical considerations

When conducting research ethical considerations are significant. When discussing ethics there are four main principles; whether there is harm to participants, whether there is a lack of informed consent, whether there is an invasion of privacy and whether deception is involved (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Harm to participants includes physical harm, stress, harm to career or participant and self-esteem. Lack of informed consent means that the participant should be given information about the study choose if want to participate in the study or not. Invasion of privacy concerns the principles about the anonymity and confidentiality. Finally deception concerns when “researchers represent their research as something other than what it is” (Bryman & Bell, 2011:136).

These principles are more or less important in this study depending on which observation one are looking at, the netnography or the structured observation. Kozinets (2006) means that it s most important to take into account; what is considered as public or private information and what concerns the informed consent. Kozinets (2006) means that there are still no guidelines for what can be seen as private or public, concerning online communities. However, according Bryman & Bell (2011) the more public a community is, less actions need to be done for securing anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent.

Regarding the netnography, the data has been collected through a closed Facebook group, which means that one has to be accepted from the administrator to get access to the conversations. Since the group has over 16 000 members and there is no requirements for being accepted, we consider this as pretty public material. However, anonymity has still been taken into great consideration and no names are shown in the research. Informed consent has not been obtained, as it would have been hard to ask hundreds of members if they would like to participate, and not necessary in this case. Concerning the structured observation, all participants in the observation were asked if they wanted to participate, and anonymity of the participants was taken into consideration and therefore no names are used.

Validity and Reliability of the research

Validity and Reliability are well-discussed topics within qualitative study. Validity and reliability appear to be mainly adapted to the quantitative research rather than qualitative, since they are mostly concerned with the adequacy of measures (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore, some researchers have tried to modify these concepts and adapt them to fit the qualitative research better. LeCompte & Goetz (1982) made their interpretation of the concepts, which we will use when looking at validity and reliability.

Reliability in qualitative research is concerned with “the degree to which a study can be replicated” (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This is usually difficult to obtain in qualitative research, since social settings or circumstances can never be an exact replica of each other. Therefore, LeCompte & Goetz (1982) mean that if for example a researcher wants to replicate an ethnographic research

he/she has to take the same social role as the previous researcher did (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Our study consists of netnography observation and qualitative structured observation, which can be replicated to a certain degree. Netnography observation can be done under similar circumstances, using the same type of reference frame and conducting the research online, the same applies to the structured observation.

Moreover, qualitative methods such as observations often get critique concerning the subjectiveness and interpretations made by the researchers, due to their influences from previous knowledge and experiences. This affects the replication of the study, hence it is impossible to conduct an exact replica of the research since the researcher is the instrument of data collection (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This is a limitation to our study that has been taken into account since it affects the results. Although exact replication cannot be obtained, we believe that our study can be replicated to some extent.

Validity in qualitative studies, determines “whether or not there is a good match between researchers’ observations and the theoretical ideas they develop” (Bryman & Bell, 2011:395) and the generalizability of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since we are observing behaviours online directly through netnography and structured observations, we would consider that we have a high congruence between our concept and observation. Qualitative approaches, as mentioned before, have difficulties in generalizing the findings since they are often restricted to a small number of individuals in a specific place/organization (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Our study aims to develop a better understanding of an online behaviour and not to generalize the results of the study. Thereof our findings will rather work as an indication of the observed behaviour than a fact.

Chapter summary

To begin with, a *interpretivistic and constructivistic* view of knowledge creation and reality was chosen, since our study aims to understand rather than explain social behaviour.

A *qualitative research design* was thereby a natural choice. Moreover, an *abductive research approach* between theory and data was chosen since neither an inductive or a deductive method was appropriate, but a mix of them. The data collection method is focused on observations, since observations measure behaviour directly, while instruments such as questionnaires and surveys, measures behaviour indirectly. The observations chosen were netnography and qualitative structured observations. *Netnography* is perfect to use when one wants to discover consumer and cultural insights in specific contexts at a deeper level (Kozinets, 2006). We chose to study the Swedish Facebook cosmetic group called “Skönhetstips” and two Swedish popular beauty vloggers Therese Lindgren” and “Helene Torsgården. We realised that we would get a lot of relevant data on understanding the decision-making, but not really see how it was actually done. Therefore, we complimented our netnography observation with a *qualitative structured observation*. The *sample selection* for the netnography observation was built from data by Dagens Handel. Therefore, our sample is built on women between the age of 18-29 years. A

hermeneutics data analysis method was chosen since it is sensitive to the context where the text/social action was produced and thereby advocates an understanding for the whole (Bryman & Bell, 2011). *Grounded theory* was needed to conduct the structured observations, and therefore added as a complement to the hermeneutics method. Since we are observing social actions and interactions on the internet, it is important to take the online-context into account to be able to interpret individual's behaviour online correctly.

3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter examines the relevant literature and theories, starting with an overview of consumer decision models with a focus on the EKB model. To get a better grasp of what influences the consumer behaviour in his decision journey, a literature review of relevant literature is conducted.

The aim of this research is to get a better view of the consumer decision journey and understand the consumer behaviour and how the consumer is influenced throughout the journey. The research questions that we seek to answer are:

- 1. What does the online consumer decision journey look like in the cosmetic industry?*
- 2. What influences consumers to buy cosmetic products online, despite the risk of buying before trying?*

To answer these questions, we start with examining the consumer decision journey and consumer decision models. The five steps of the EKB model are described in more detail before discussing how consumer behaviour is influenced in the decision journey, with a focus on culture, reference groups and opinion leaders. Followed by a closer look at online communities, user generated content and word of mouth. Those factors are examined, due to their relation to consumer behaviour in the cosmetic industry. The culture of young adults and members of online communities, affects how those individuals behave and consume. At last, consumer involvement is defined with the intent to explain how level of involvement affects how consumers behave in their consumer decision journey.

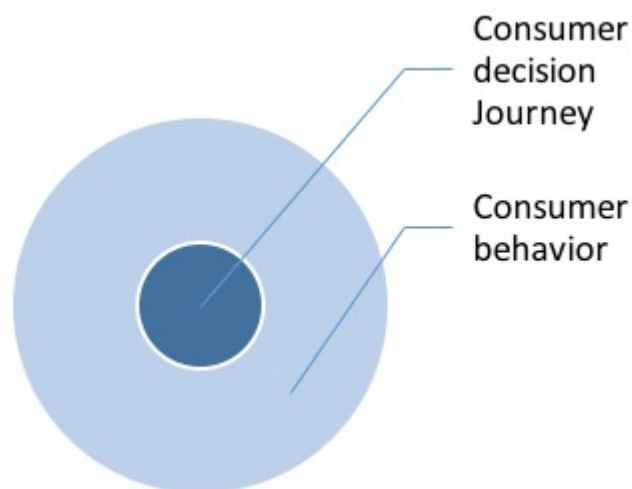


Figure 2: Consumer Behaviour

Consumer Decision Models

Models explaining the consumer decision journey have existed and been developing for a long time (Engel et al., 1968; Vázquez et al., 2014). Today consumer behaviour is better researched and understood than when the first models were created (Milner & Rosenstreich, 2013) and the journey has become more complex with a changed and more dynamic environment. A short review of consumer decision models that are noticeable in previous literature and most relevant to this research, will be discussed in more detail (Vázquez et al., 2014; Edelman, 2010; Frambach et al., 2007; Engel et al., 1968)

Elmo Lewis introduced a purchase funnel model in 1903 that consists of four stages; *awareness*, *evaluation*, *purchase stage* and *post purchase stage*. This structure has been the basic theoretical framework for other purchase funnel models, using the same basic stages (Vázquez et al., 2014; De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008). Some McKinsey reports (Edelman, 2010; Edelman & Singer, 2015A) use the same framework to describe their proposed consumer decision journey model with the addition of the loyalty loop (Court et al., 2009; Edelman, 2010; Edelman & Singer, 2015A) and suggest that the journey is today more iterative instead of reductive (Edelman, 2010). The first stage, *awareness*, describes the first contact that the consumer has with a product or a brand before entering the evaluation stage. In the *evaluation stage*, the consumer searches for information through various sources about the product and compares it with alternatives. This can lead to the *purchase stage*, where the consumer chooses a product to buy. In the *post purchase stage* the consumer has tried the product and might criticize or recommend it, all based on his satisfaction (Vázquez et al., 2014; Edelman, 2010; Lamb et al., 2011). Recent versions of the purchase funnel, include influences that the internet and social media have on consumer behaviour throughout the consumer decision journey (Vázquez et al., 2014; Edelman, 2010; De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008).

Frambach et al. (2007) describe the buying process in three stages; *pre-purchase*, *purchase* and *post-purchase*. In the first stage consumers gather information and choose between alternatives before moving to the next stage where a purchase decision is made and payment completed. In the purchase stage the consumer goes from searching for attributes as he does in the pre-purchase stage and searches for alternatives with a less focus on gathering information and compares alternatives he has already decided to consider. In the last stage, post-purchase, the consumer is more likely to maintain a relationship with the company where he made the purchase and engage in a repeat purchase (Frambach et al., 2007). This is however, all dependent on the communication and service the consumer experiences from the company and if communication happens at the right time and when an interest for renewing the product or purchasing some addition to the product exists (Frambach et al., 2007).

Engel, Kollatt and Blackwell (1968) wrote a book named *Consumer Behaviour* almost 50 years ago where they introduced a decision-making model for consumer behaviour, often named the EKB model. It has for a long time, just like Lewis's purchase funnel model, been the core theory

for consumer behaviour (Ashman et al., 2015; Liang & Lai, 2002). The EKB model divides consumer decision process into five stages instead of four; *need/problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and post purchase* (Ashman et al., 2015; Liang & Lai, 2002; Engel et al., 1968). When consumer recognizes a need or a problem, a demand for a product occurs that can solve or fulfil that need. The consumer starts searching for information and evaluates alternatives. Once he has chosen one alternative, he will likely purchase the product, evaluate the outcome of his purchase and memorize the experience (Engel et al., 1968; Liang & Lai, 2002; Lamb et al., 2011). Liang & Lai (2002) suggest a sixth stage of online shopping as the *online transaction stage* that happens after the consumer has selected a product and includes filling out information about the order.

The EKB model has in addition to Lewis's purchase funnel and Frambach et al. (2007) buying process, added the need/problem recognition stage. The need stage is found to be relevant in understanding the consumer behaviour, how the consumer learns about new products and how he is influenced to try and by products he has not purchased before, and must not to be overlooked. However, recent studies regarding the purchase funnel (Edelman, 2010; Vázquez, 2014) discuss the loyalty loop that is missing from the EKB model, and will be kept in mind throughout this research. Frambrach et al. (2007) only discuss three stages, that is in a way a simpler explanation of the EKB model, without the need stage. Other models, such as Hierarchy of effects and the AIDA model were also examined, but due to their focus on the effect of advertisements, they are not described further in this research (Sinh, 2013).

Therefore, we find that the EKB model is more detailed, and all five stages of the model are relevant to our research. It is a commonly used consumer decision model and the foundation for similar versions of the model (Karimi et al., 2015; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Lamb et al., 2011; Ashman et al., 2015; Liang & Lai, 2002). Furthermore, we feel that the EKB model covers everything that the other models do, which we believe have the same content, but with a different emphasize. However, the linear look of the EKB model has been criticized, as the stages do not necessarily happen in that order (Milner & Rosenstreich, 2013). Even though the consumer does not go from one stage to another, all stages are important part of understanding the decision journey and not least when looking at consumer behaviour and the factors that influence it.

Each step of the EKB model will now be described in more detail, with the intent to get a better understanding of the consumer decision journey.

The EKB consumer decision journey

Need Recognition

A problem or need recognition is the first stage in the consumer decision-making process (Ashman et al. 2015; Lamb et al. 2011). Consumer recognizes a problem when there is a sufficient difference between his desired state and his actual state that triggers the consumer decision-making process (Engel et al., 1968; Lamb et al. 2011).

A desired state can be influenced by different factors (Engel et al., 1968; Lamb et al., 2011). The consumer has an underlying motive, often more than one, that affects the desired state and is triggered by internal or external stimulus (Lamb et al., 2011). Attitudes, values and response traits can all influence the desired state (Engel et al., 1968) and act as *internal stimuli*, but family, social class or other reference groups can also affect consumer motives and the desired state (Engel et al. 1968) and act as *external stimuli* (Lamb et al., 2011).

A marketing effort also influences our desired states, like advertisements or a salesperson (Engel et al., 1968). Marketers try to arouse problem recognition and create wants and needs the consumer has not recognized yet (Ashman et al., 2015). It is to a marketer's advantage to understand the ways problem recognition occurs and to be able to create strategies that simulate problem recognition (Engel et al., 1968). Consumers recognize this need in different ways, for example if the product they are using isn't performing well or they become aware of a new product that is better than the one they have (Lamb et al., 2011). How the consumer is exposed to new products that he has to require has changed over the years (Ashman et al., 2015). In the past, a consumer noticed a new product and recognized a need for it when window shopping or browsing through a magazine (Ashman et al., 2015). Today exposures to new products happen online and with online social interactions and are even more likely to be triggered by another shopper than by marketers (Ashman et al., 2015).

Information search

When the consumer has recognized a problem he will search for information internally and externally, looking for a way to satisfy his need (Engel et al. 1968). What affects the extent of information consumer is willing to conduct is dependent on his perceived risk, knowledge, prior experience and the level of interest he has for the product (Lamb et al., 2011). The more knowledge the consumer has about the product, the less time and effort he needs to conduct the search. However, the more interest he has in the product, the more time he will spend searching for information (Lamb et al., 2011).

Internal search is what the consumer has stored in his memory from previous experiences with a product (Engel et al., 1968; Lamb et al., 2011; Ashman et al., 2015). *External search* obtains

information from the outside environment (Lamb et al., 2011) and may include mass media, personal sources, public sources or sources controlled by marketers like advertisements (Engel et al., 1968; Lamb et al., 2011). However, external search is not always conducted, as the consumer may be satisfied with a past solution to the problem that is stored in his memory (Engel et al., 1968). Furthermore, a so called “halt” can occur and disrupt the process, as the search result may change the difference between the actual state and the desired state (Engel et al., 1968). When the consumer does external information search, he senses it, perceives it and compares it with the information that is stored in his memory (Engel et al., 1968). Today, consumers use digital devices and applications to compare and evaluate products and find new alternatives (Ashman et al., 2015).

The consumer decides if he should engage in external search, and to what extent based on how he perceives the value of the results and what the costs involved in engaging in the search are (Engel et al., 1968). A consumer who has little confidence in his own decision-making ability will spend more time searching for information, making sure he makes the right decision (Lamb et al., 2011). Search cost can be the time used, travel distance, parking cost and even physical frustration (Engel et al. 1968). If the consumer has a prior positive experience buying a specific product, he will use less time on his information search and is likely to limit his search to items or brands he relates to a positive experience (Lamb et al., 2011). Searching for information includes learning about the product characteristics, how it can be financed and what other consumers think about the product (Engel et al., 1968).

The digital world and online culture has changed the way we search for information and shifted the attention from marketed information to non-professional and non marketing-controlled online sources like consumer opinion sites, search engines, blogs and vlogs (video blogs), and other user generated content sites (Lamb et al., 2011; Ashman et al., 2015). Searching for information online has become a part of shaping the customer experience and the consumer decision journey (Ashman et al., 2015). Information about almost every product is accessible online and steers consumers away from products they might else have considered (Ashman et al., 2015).

Evaluation of alternatives

After recognizing a problem and perhaps engaging in external search, the consumer analyzes and evaluates different solutions to the problem (Engel et al., 1968). This includes evaluation of different products or different brands and their characteristics (Engel et al., 1968), which helps narrowing down possible choices to a “choice-set” (Lamb et al., 2011; Ashman et al., 2015).

What affects alternative evaluation originates from values, attitude, personality, the consumer’s family and other reference group influences (Engel et al., 1968). The consumer evaluates for example; price, style, quality, appearance and operating cost of the product (Engel et al., 1968). A way for the consumer to narrow down the number of choices is to choose a *product attribute* and exclude all products that do not contain that attribute (Lamb et al., 2011). Another way is to use

cut-offs, and cut off all options that are for example, above a maximum level of price or below minimum level of ratings (Lamb et al., 2011). *Ranking the attributes* of the products under consideration, and listing what is most valuable about the product to the consumer can also be used in evaluation (Lamb et al., 2011). The internet has also changed our way of evaluating alternatives (Ashman et al., 2015) and the consumer has number of tools he can use in this process to narrow his choices like reading product reviews, comparison websites and blogs or even asking for others opinion and approval in online forums (Ashman et al., 2015). Consumers now actively seek feedback from other consumers and rate the products that they have bought (Ashman et al., 2015). Feedback from others has always been important to the consumer and is now easily accessible through social networks in forms of hearts, likes and comments for example (Ashman et al., 2015)

Purchase

Ultimately, after evaluation of alternatives, the consumer selects a product to buy or decides not to buy any product (Lamb et al., 2011). As an outcome of the purchasing process, a purchase will happen when the consumer has found a solution to his problem or the consumer may “halt”, meaning that he has not found any alternatives to satisfy his desired state or something in the process changes the relation between the actual state and the desired state (Engel et al., 1968). In the purchasing stage, the consumer faces number of decisions on *whether to buy, when to buy, what to buy, where to buy* and *how to pay* (Lamb et al., 2011).

The purchasing process is initiated either by the previously discussed problem recognition or by another factor like wanting to get out of the house or by a desire to do something entertaining; like visiting a retail store (Engel et al., 1968). It is dependent on the cost and complexity of the product how much planning and information search has been done before making a purchase (Lamb et al., 2011). The shopping experience is very important at this stage and can create perception of value and reassure or discourage the customer of his choice (Ashman et al., 2015). Purchase can be fully planned, partially planned or unplanned (Lamb et al., 2011). An unplanned purchase happens when people buy on impulse.

When at the store, different factors can affect the interaction of purchase intentions, from the store environment to the consumer motives (Engel et al., 1968). Today the shopping environment can both mean a physical store and the online shopping environment (Ashman et al., 2015). The outcome will be stored in the consumer’s memory, meaning, that if the results are positive and satisfying, a similar process is likely to occur again (Engel et al., 1968).

Post Purchase behaviour

What happens after the purchase has been made, will affect the consumer's memory and later actions (Engel et al., 1968) The consumer expects a certain outcome (Lamb et al., 2011) and it can depend on how the product is assembled, how easy it is to use, how long the product will last, how it is used to the best extend and if the needed instructions are provided with the product (Engel et al., 1968). How well the product and purchase experience meet these expectations will affect and determine whether the consumer is satisfied or not (Lamb et al., 2011). If the product exceeds his expectations the consumer will be highly satisfied and vice versa (Lamb et al., 2011; Ashman et al., 2015). Additionally, opinions and feedback from others affect the satisfaction of the shopping experience (Ashman et al., 2015). Some consumers document their purchase experiences and blog or vlog about the result of their purchase and how satisfied they are with the outcome (Ashman et al., 1968).

This phase is not less important than others in the consumer decision process, but does not always receive the attention of marketers (Engel et al., 1968). A positive experience of the product can generate positive word-of-mouth and recommendations from engaged consumers (Engel et al., 1968). Consumers who share their newly purchased item on social networks do important promotion for the brand, free of charge (Ashman et al., 2015). If the consumer is on the other hand not satisfied in the post purchase stage, he can do some negative word of mouth communication that will cause damage to the product and even to the brand (Engel et al., 1968). The newly purchased product can also evoke the consumer's interest in another related product (Engel et al., 1968) and that should also be the focus of marketers.

How is consumer behaviour influenced in the decision journey?

Introduction to section

The consumer decision journey is not something that just happens to every person but is influenced by different factors that influence the whole process and the consumer behaviour (Lamb et al., 2011). As has been mentioned earlier, the cosmetic industry has been slow to change from offline to online purchases (Whitehouse, 2015). The purpose of this research is to understand the consumer decision process, what influences the decision and why cosmetic consumers are reluctant to buy online and what influences them to take that step. We believe that it is partly because of the consumer high demand, to "try-before-you-buy" when it comes to cosmetics (Whitehouse, 2015) and that cosmetic products have high level of involvement that influences the buying decision. However, a shift is happening and more people are shopping cosmetic products online and online shopping is forecasted to increase even more in the next few years (Reuters, 2015). The amount of user generated content in online communities has also increased tremendously; both written reviews and vlogs (video blogs) are being shared in

communities and help consumers make purchase decisions (Daugherty et al., 2013). According to Google report from 2010, (Google, 2010) 63 % of consumers used Google to search for information about beauty and care products and 12% used YouTube to research for products and get instructions on how to use them (Google, 2010).

How people behave and what influences them to be part of a community, create and share content and search for and observe information will now be discussed in more detail. The level of product involvement will also be discussed and how it affects the time and effort we use to inform ourselves and evaluate products before making a purchase decision.

Culture

As the world is getting smaller and more companies are operating on international basis, it is very important that they understand the culture they are entering (Ashman et al., 2015). Culture is built up by values, languages, myths, customs, rituals and laws that all affect behaviour and is what distinguishes one social group from another (Lamb et al., 2011). Culture affects who we are and what we do in our daily routine, unaware that our behaviour has been learned through our culture (Lamb et al., 2011). Some describe consumer culture from social relations like gender, social class, race, sexuality and ability while others focus on how we engage with the material world (Jackson, 2004). Consumer culture theory studies the way consumers modify and transform symbolic meanings encrypted in advertisements, brands, store settings and the products they buy to identify who they are and what their lifestyle goals are (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

Every culture has its own values and unwritten or sometimes written rules about how to behave and communicate (Lamb et al., 2011). We are not born knowing these rules, but it is something that we learn from the people around us and the environment changes and culture adapts to it (Lamb et al., 2011). New technologies and the internet have changed how we communicate and created new values, customs and rituals for us and the next generations (Lamb et al., 2011). Ashman et al. (2015) discuss what they call *participatory culture*, where with the rise of the internet and the World Wide Web, everyone can produce, influence and/or consume information. Ashman et al. (2015) further describe participatory culture with low entry barriers where people share information, express their artistic site and engage in conversations on social networks. This easy way to consume and share information, has resulted in a cultural shift and the consumer now holds more power and information than organizations and affects consumer shopping behaviour (Ashman et al., 2015). Internet users can easily enter online networks with like-minded people where they share their knowledge and opinion and discuss topics of a common interest (Ashman et al., 2015).

Values that are shared within a society are the most essential elements of culture and greatly affect consumer behaviour (Lamb et al., 2011). People from the same culture, sharing the same values respond in a similar way to prices and other marketing-related material and often share

similar consumption patterns (Lamb et al., 2011). It is valuable for marketers to understand how culture and its values influence their buying behaviour (Lamb et al., 2011).

Reference Groups & Opinion Leaders

Consumers often look for guidance and approval from others before making a purchase decision (Flynn et al., 1996). Getting opinion from others will reduce the amount of search and evaluation and the uncertainty. Consumers interact socially with a reference group and are influenced by opinion leaders or family members before making a purchase decision (Lamb et al., 2011).

Reference groups are all formal and informal groups that the consumer belongs to and affect the consumer buying behaviour (Lamb et al., 2011). Products and brands that are used, are determinants in what reference group people belong to. Consumers use reference groups to interact with other members and seek for opinions and experience from others about a product or a service as well as feedback and approval (Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2014; Lamb et al., 2011; Liang & Lai, 2002). Reference groups often have individuals who are more experienced within the market, and influence other members (Lamb et al., 2011) who rely on opinion leader's expert knowledge to help them with their purchase decision (Brown et al., 2007).

Opinion leader is someone who is more aware and knowledgeable about a market and its products than others and often the first one to try new products (Lamb et al., 2011; Brown et al., 2007). Valente & Pumpuang (2007:1) describe opinion leaders with this simple definition:

“Opinion leaders are people who influence the opinions, attitudes, beliefs, motivations, and behaviours of others.”

Credibility of the source is important if the consumer is to trust his opinion and that he is unbiased (Brown et al., 2007). Opinion leaders are often more interconnected, hold a higher social standing (Li & Du, 2011) and can be more likely to explore and try out new things (Lamb et al., 2011). Opinion leaders can work as a “pinball” as they can effectively influence other consumers (Henning-Thurau et al., 2013) and help change social norms and consumer behaviour (Valente & Pumpuang, 2007). Opinion leaders often possess qualities, such as special values and traits, a competence or expert knowledge and a special social position. Opinion leaders can influence behaviour by raising awareness, persuade others, establish or reinforce norms and leverage resources (Lamb et al., 2011). Within a social network, the role of opinion leader is important, do to their ability to influence the behaviour of others (Li & Du, 2011). In the online communities, bloggers are often recognized as opinion leaders and have a big amount of followers (Lamb et al., 2011).

Consumers actively seek opinion from opinion leaders, to make purchase decisions that satisfy their needs in a better way and reduce risk (Flynn et al., 1996). Consumers have a desire to be group members and they seek for the leader's opinion about products (Flynn et al., 1996). A platform for two-way communication delivers opinion from the leader to the audience and allows the audience to give feedback on the opinion. The feedback that is created through this platform can be very influential as well (Li & Du, 2011) and the consumer can also work as opinion leader. According to Lamb et al. (2011) a blog service discovered that over 50% of teens don't mind sharing their feelings on social networks and are no longer observing from far what interests them, but are actively following and interacting with those who they admire through social media.

Communities

Community is a shared emotional connection between a group of people who share the feeling of belonging to a community (Malinen, 2015). Online community consists of individuals who interact in a social manner and share a purpose or an interest that is the centre of the discussion (Malinen, 2015). With time, member's participation creates culture, customs and norms of the community. Rotman & Preece (2010:320) define community as:

“an online community is a group (or various subgroups) of people, brought together by a shared interest, using a virtual platform, to interact and create user-generated content that is accessible to all community members, while cultivating communal culture and adhering to specific norms.”

Sense of community can be experienced online as offline (Malinen, 2015) and the internet makes it possible to exchange knowledge in a new way and without ever meeting other members face-to-face (Hsu et al., 2006). Members of communities need to participate in discussions and activities, for an online platform to be a community (Malinen, 2015). It's getting very common that people participate in online communities and turn to them for information or to resolve a problem (Hsu et al., 2006). Companies who provide online brand communities and encourage consumers to communicate with each other, can monitor the discussion and understand their customers better, which can help gain customer loyalty (Adje et al., 2010).

Participating in online communities can be divided into two categories; *passive participation*, where you only view content and *active participation* where you post content (Malinen, 2015). Passive members of a community are still important as they generate traffic and increase hits, even though they do not create content like active members. Members who participate are however, crucial for communities to exist (Malinen, 2015). How successful a community is, can be measured by the volume of contributions and the level of relationship between members (Malinen, 2014). A main challenge in hosting an online community is to make members motivated and willing to share content and the success is dependent on the extent of interaction

between members (Lin et al., 2015). It is especially important when members seek support, that others are willing to contribute (Lin et al., 2015). If questions and requests for help are ignored by other members, they will eventually stop asking for feedback and the community will not survive (Lin et al., 2015). Adjei et al. (2010) research about customer-to-customer (e.C2C) communication showed that it was effective in influencing sales, both company-owned communities as well as independently owned (Adjei et al., 2010). Adjei et al (2010) found that positive information had stronger influence on purchase behaviour than shared negative information.

YouTube as a community

YouTube is a video sharing platform that allows users to share videos and interact in the comment section, through response videos and ratings (Rotman & Preece, 2010). YouTube members create a profile where they list their interests and often post a short personal introduction. YouTube members interact with each other through different platforms and create their own unique culture, that has its own linguistic terms and signals. Members experience a sense of belonging to the YouTube community, but more to a subgroup related to specific subject, rather than to all YouTube channels (Rotman & Preece, 2010).

Pixability (2014) carried out a comprehensive study in 2014 named “Beauty on YouTube: How YouTube is radically transforming the Beauty Industry and What That Means for Brands”. According to the study, beauty related videos had 14.9 billion views on YouTube. Pixability (2014) found that teenage girls, producing content in their own bedrooms, controlled 97% of conversations that regard beauty products and brands. These videos were mostly watched in the morning and in the afternoon, as women prepare for the day and in the evening, before going out. The study showed that “television mentality” does not work on YouTube, as their content is not in line with the digital audience. Beauty brand channels account for only 3 percent of total views and top 25 beauty vloggers gained 2600% more comments than beauty brand channels.

User generated content

When regular people decide to create and provide information in some form that is available to others, it is called *user-generated content* (Krumm et al., 2008). The introduction of Web 2.0 provided the platform and made it easy for everyone to create content and share it on the World Wide Web (Daugherty et al., 2013).

The amount of digital user-generated content has increased rapidly in recent years, mainly because it is easy and inexpensive to access, and influences and affects consumers shopping behaviour (Daugherty et al., 2013; Vázquez et al., 2014). People now communicate through social networks and microblogs and discuss their shopping experiences both with friends and total strangers (Vázquez et al., 2014). Information created by users can be accessed at anytime

and anywhere (Vázquez et al., 2014). Consumer in need for information and feedback about a product can look up product reviews, read blogs related to the product (Vázquez et al., 2014) and ask strangers for advice and opinion (Daugherty et al., 2013). According to Nilesen's global trust in advertising report (2015), 83% trust recommendations from people they know and 66% trust consumer opinions posted online. However, paid traditional advertisements still have a pretty high trust rate as 63% of respondents do trust TV ads (Nielsen, 2015).

User generated content is not only accessible for consumers, but also for marketers who can monitor consumer conversations and have an easy access to consumer mind-set and preferences (Vázquez et al., 2014). Marketers have the ability to be present in these conversations, understand what consumers are saying and influence social media conversations (Vázquez et al., 2014; Daugherty et al., 2013). That includes understanding in which step of the consumer decision journey they are located and to react accordingly. As the power has shifted from marketers to the consumer, it is more important to understand the why and how behind media consumption and why individuals decide to create the content (Daugherty et al., 2013).

The creation, consumption and distribution of content created by users continues to advance and the technology adapts and makes it easier to create, manage and consume this content (Daugherty et al., 2013). What motivates people to create and share content is something researchers continue to ask (Daugherty et al., 2013). Attitudes serve numerous motivations, depending on the purpose of the behaviour. The need to understand their own experience motivates users to create content and share with others (Daugherty et al., 2013). Creating content and being a member of an online community also increases user's self-esteem (Daugherty et al., 2013). Creating and sharing content can feel rewarding for the supplier and he receives recognition for his contribution (Krumm et al., 2008). Consumers are also actively looking for information and even entertainment as well as authentic data about the product, not influenced by marketers (Krumm et al., 2008). User generated content can be found in the form of product reviews, price comparison websites, blogs, vlogs and in other online communities (Krumm et al., 2008) and are today available to us at anytime through mobile devices (PostNord, 2015).

Word of mouth

“All informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage or characteristics of particular goods and services of their sellers”

This is how Henning-Thurau & Walsh (2014; 1) define word of mouth. Moreover, word of mouth is marketing communication, dominated by the consumer and independent of the market (Brown et al, 2007). As it is independent, it is perceived more reliable and credible by consumers. Word

of mouth, offline and online, is considered to have powerful influence on consumer behaviour, especially those in the stage of information search and evaluation (Brown et al., 2007).

New technologies and the advent of the internet have changed the function of word of mouth (Yoo et al., 2015). Consumers can now get information about a desired product, not only from friends and acquaintances, but also from strangers on the internet that have experience with the product that they choose to share with others (Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2014). Consumers use the internet to create their own content about products and read content others create (Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2014). Consumers use tools such as; blogs, search engines, online communities, social media, review and compare sides to gather information and evaluate attributes, and this is called electronic word of mouth (e. EWOM) (Yoo et al., 2015).

Customer reviews are a part of the EWOM where customers post their evaluation and experience of their product in comments, make video reviews or respond to other customer comments or questions in online communities (Yoo et al., 2015). It is therefore easy for consumers to both search for other customer reviews and share their own (Yoo et al., 2015).

Researchers have tried to understand what motivates consumers to look for information, created by other consumers, and read it (Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2014). Understanding what motivates consumers to seek information, will give a clearer picture of consumer behaviour and why they feel the need to read other people's reviews and experience with a product (Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2014). Some consumers seek information from opinion leaders; others are motivated by risk reduction or time reduction. Reading other customers reviews about a product can be a way of eliminating huge amount of alternatives and make the decision easier (Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2014). Some experience what is called *cognitive incongruence* when a consumer recognizes an inconsistency between behaviour and values, and feels the need to reassure himself of the purchase (Lamb et al., 2011). This feeling can be reduced by reading unbiased information that reassures the consumer of having made the correct purchase choice (Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2014).

Consumer involvement

Hsu & Lee (2003:1) define involvement as:

“the amount of time and effort a buyer invests in the search, evaluation and decision processes of consumer behaviour”.

Understanding consumer behaviour helps us understand why consumers choose different products and the concept of high and low involvement is important part of consumer behaviour

(Hsu & Lee, 2003). There is an evident difference in consumer behaviour in relation to high or low involvement products (Hsu & Lee, 2003) and the level of involvement has been found to influence decision behaviour and communication behaviour (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2008). The level of involvement affects how engaged the consumer is in the information search and decision process (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). For products with low-involvement, the consumer is often not aware of his need until he is in the store and therefore in-store promotions can be effective (Hsu & Lee, 2003).

Purchase decision involvement concerns how much consumers care about the product they are purchasing and how strong the desire to make the right decision is (Michalidou & Dipp, 2008). The purchase involvement is then affected by the purchase situation, as if the purchase is a part of a routine, bought in a spare or as a gift for someone else. Furthermore, the purchase situation influences how motivated the consumer is to make the right choice (Michalidou & Dipp, 2008). According to Lamb et al. (2011) the level of involvement is influenced by five factors; (1) *Previous experience*, as when the consumer has previous experience with a product the level of involvement usually decreases. (2) *Interest*, as the level of involvement is directly related to the interest the consumer has in a product. The higher the interest is, the higher the level of involvement. (3) *Perceived risk of negative consequences*, as social risk, financial risk or psychological risk. The higher the risk is, more involved the consumer is. (4) *Situation*, as the circumstances of a purchase also influences the level of involvement. (5) *Social visibility* increases the level of involvement, as the more social visibility the product has, the higher level of involvement it requires of the consumer (Lamb et al., 2011).

The channel consumers choose to shop from is affected by the level of involvement and the channel choice is likely to affect their brand choice (Michalidou & Dipp, 2008). Consumer who chooses to shop online has a broader variety of products and brands to choose from and evaluate (Michalidou & Dipp, 2008). Research has suggested that consumers decide on a shopping channel before they decide which product they want to purchase (Michalidou & Dipp, 2008; citing Darden; 1980) indicating that choice of channel can influence decision involvement (Michalidou & Dipp, 2008).

Chapter Summary

After evaluating some of the main consumer decision models, the EKB model was chosen as the basic theory model for this research. The EKB model divides the decision journey into five stages; *problem recognition*, *information search*, *evaluation of alternatives*, *purchase* and *post purchase*. The model was chosen as the most useful theory to our research, due to its relevance in understanding consumer behaviour, and the relevance of the *problem recognition stage*. With the intent of understanding the decision process and how consumers are influenced to buy online, following theories were reviewed:

Culture affects who we are and how we behave. Every culture has its own values and rules about how to behave and communicate. New technologies have changed the environment and culture adapts to it (Lamb et al., 2011). Participatory culture, where people share information and engage in conversations on social networks is discussed and its effects on consumer behaviour (Ashman et al., 2015).

Reference group are all formal and informal groups that consumer belongs to and affect his behaviour (Lamb et al., 2011). Consumers use reference groups to seek opinion, feedback and approval (Liang & Lai, 2002) and often contain *opinion leaders* who are more experienced about the market. Consumers rely on opinion leader's knowledge and seek their opinion to help with a purchase decision (Brown et al., 2007). They can influence behaviour by raising awareness, persuasion, establishing norms and leveraging resources (Lamb et al., 2011).

Online communities consist of individuals who interact socially and share an interest that is the centre of the discussion (Malinen, 2015). Member's active participation is vital for the community to exist (Lin et al., 2015) and communication is important in influencing behaviour. YouTube communities have transformed the beauty industry and content created by teenage girls controlled 97% of conversations related to beauty products (Pixability, 2014).

User generated content is created when regular people provide information, available to others (Krumm et al., 2008). The amount of digital UCG has increased rapidly in recent years and affects shopping behaviour (Daugherty et al., 2013). Consumers search for authentic information, not influenced by marketers and can be found in the form of reviews, price comparison websites, blogs, vlogs and in other online communities (Krumm et al., 2008).

Word of mouth is marketing communication, dominated by the consumer and independent of the market and is therefore perceived more reliable. It is considered to have powerful influence on consumer behaviour, especially in stages of information search and evaluation.

The level of *consumer involvement* influences how engaged the consumer is in the decision and communication behaviour (Michalidou & Dibb, 2008). Involvement concerns how much consumers care about the product they are purchasing and the desire to make the right decision.

4 Empirical Results, Analysis and Discussion

The chapter introduces the empirical data and analyses the findings in relation to the theoretical framework. The data is categorized into structured observation and netnography observation and the netnography consists of two separate observations. The chapter ends with discussing the results.

Netnography

Skönhetstips

Skönhetstips is a Facebook online community that is centred on discussing beauty and beauty products, sharing information and asking others for feedback, opinion and information. Most members are women, with some exceptions. The group has rules on how to behave within the community, written at the top of the page and listed here:

- All advertisements are forbidden in the group. Ads for available job positions are allowed, but only if approved by admins.
- Links promoting your own blogs or homepages are also forbidden. However, if someone is asking for tips and a solution to a problem, it is okay to share a blog that is related to the topic.
- If you share a selfie (“today's make-up”) you should be asking for advice and tips about your makeup or sharing the cosmetic products, you are using.
- If you share your last bought product, price and store should be mentioned.
- Think about your attitude towards others. No question is a stupid question.
- Mean comments are not allowed in the group and so are personal attacks and bullying.

We observed Skönhetstips for a week, from 24th of April and until the 31st of April. When we had collected the data we started to analyse it by looking for frequent posts and conversations. The discussions were categorized into eight groups further described below:

Recommendations for a product: This is by far the most popular topic posted, where members state that they need a new mascara etc., and ask others to recommend a brand or a product that they have good experience with. It can also be asking for a store that sells a product they are looking for.

Recommendations for a problem: It is pretty common to see members asking for a solution to a problem, for example something to help dry skin (hands or face), some irritations or allergic reactions.

How to use a product: If the product doesn't look or function like the member wants it to, she asks other members if she can do something differently and gets tips from other members on how it's possible to get a better result.

Opinion about appearance (makeup/hairstyle): It is pretty common that members post selfies in the group and ask other members about a makeup tip, what foundation would fit them, what hair colour would look good on them or what product would help their hair get a better colour.

Evaluation of Products: Community members do post products they are considering purchasing, and ask other members to help them make a purchase decision. They are evaluating between two or more products and ask others to share their experience and opinions on what to buy.

Inspiration: Inspiration posts can be a picture or a video related to beauty tips, that is not a promotion but something most members relate to. Sometimes a member is looking to try something new (like new nails or new hairstyle) and asks other members to post pictures of their look to get inspired. Examples of this category are not listed in results as their relevance was not very high.

Feedback: negative: Members post negative feedback about products, share their experience and sometimes ask members if they can recommend a better product.

Feedback: positive: Satisfied consumers do also share positive feedback about products they have bought. Feedback is shared if they are happy with prices, service and quality of products etc.

Analysis of Results

The communication in the community is noticeable positive. Members who share pictures of themselves always get positive feedback about their appearance and sometimes feedback about what they can do to improve their makeup, but always in a positive way. Even members who are asking about foundation, get comments complementing their eyes or some other feature.

Example:

Poster says: "I'm going to a ball and I want to find a nice make-up style for the ball. It looks like this (she posts two pictures). I am not used to wearing a lot of makeup, so I'm

not sure if it looks okay. Please give me inspiration and suggestions about what I can do better. Please!”

Member responds (among many others): “I think it looks super nice! But I think you could definitely use a little more highlighter”

Some members are obviously more *active participants* (Malinen, 2015) and frequently comment and post in the community, but creating content and being a member of an online community can increase user’s self-esteem (Daugherty et al., 2013). The ones we don’t notice are *passive participants* and harder to identify (Malinen 2015). However, when someone asks a question other members often seem interested in the same question, and either follow the discussion or take part in it. Beauty products, especially makeup products, do have a high level of consumer involvement, meaning that the consumer puts a lot of time and effort in information search and evaluation before making a purchase decision (Hsu & Lee, 2003) and takes the time to share his experience and ask for and read about what others have experienced.

Recommendations for a product

Members are more motivated to ask others about products and information than they are sharing feedback about a product. Some posts get a lot of responses, but others have none. Consumers who are in the need for information or want feedback about a product have the ability to ask other consumers for advice and opinion (Daugherty et al., 2013) and they are more likely to trust information they receive from other consumers than from marketers (Nielsen, 2015). Reading reviews from other customers can be a way for the consumer to eliminate huge amount of alternatives and make the decision easier (Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2014). Clearly members look to other consumers in the decision journey and when experiencing *cognitive incongruence* and a need to reassure themselves of their purchase decision, they look for unbiased information (Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2014).

Examples:

Member asks question about balsam that is supposed to make your hair less yellow and receives different responses, for example:

Poster: Has someone tested this product (a picture is posted)? Did it work?

Member responds: “I tried it in my lighter locks, but I felt like the results were not so good. Maybe a little bit.”

Member 2 responds: “useless”

Member 3: “Bad at removing yellow colour, but very good as a conditioner for my hair.”

The member who posts the question asks other members to give feedback about the product and gets three responses from not so satisfied customers. The consumer gets help in his evaluation

process and the ones who responded to his question have contributed to his decision journey (Krumm et al., 2008). Getting opinion from others will reduce the amount of search, evaluation and the uncertainty (Lamb et al., 2011).

Another member asks about the quality of the brand NYX:

Poster: "Is the brand NYX good or bad?"

Member 1 responds: "Just tried it for the first time and I feel salvaged"

Poster responds to her comment: "Okay, what product did you buy? I am thinking about matt lip-gloss. I don't want crispy lips or to reapply every hour."

Member 1 responds again and posts a picture of herself wearing a lip-gloss: "I put this on three hours ago, and I have been drinking a lot of water to see if it will stick, and it still sits perfectly. The colour is called Copenhagen."

Poster responds again: "Looks very nice, thanks again."

Member 2: "I would say some NYX products are good, and other aren't"

Member 3: "Good!"

Member 4: "Love NYX!"

Member 5: "I have a lip plumper and soft matte cream. My lips look a little dry after the Matt cream, but the colour holds pretty well. I had to reapply after 2 hours after I had been drinking and the colour was gone from the lower lip. Lip plumper is a little sticky and disappears pretty fast, with no great results"

Member 6: "very good for the price"

Member 7: "I am very choosy when it comes to low cost cosmetics, but the new NYX products are among the best I have tried. But I don't really like their other products to be honest. But try their matte lip-gloss and butter gloss, and then you will be satisfied."

In this conversation the brand gets a lot of positive and honest feedback. The members responding recommend some products of the brand, while they are not satisfied with others. That can reassure the member asking for help, that she is provided with an honest answer and reduce the risk of buying the wrong product (Henning-Thurau & Walsh) and reassure her that she is making the correct purchase choice (Lamb et al., 2011).

Recommendations for a problem

The group is also used to get help with skin problems or similar problems related to beauty products. These subjects are often sensitive, but members seem comfortable discussing them within the group. What influences that behaviour is interesting but hard to determine, if it is the fact that most members are female or because of the positive communication culture that is so dominant in the community.

Example 1:

One member asks about a foundation that will fit her skin problems:

Poster: "If you have an uneven skin (dimples and holes) what products are good to use to get a more even and smooth finish?"

Member 1: "A primer who fills in, like a pore less primer."

Member 2 asks member 1: "where do you get that kind of product?"

Member 1 responds: "I know the brand Benefit has one. And I think most of the brands do, just go into KICKS and look you should find it there. There is one sold at H&M that is called baby skin!"

Member 2 asks again: "Benefit? Is there a website?"

Member 1: "Benefit is a brand! I have bought it at Sephora that is a cosmetic store. Just try to google, I only know about physical stores, I'm sorry."

In the conversation we can see that this post obviously catches the attention of other members as well, that might not have the courage to ask questions but are obviously searching for the same information. Another reason could be that she is not aware that there exists a product that is helpful to her problem and she recognizes a need from the conversation (Ashman et al., 2015).

Example 2:

Another member states that she has never plucked her eyebrows, but that she feels the need to start now. She finds it so painful so she is asking other members if there are ways to make it less painful.

Poster: "I have almost never plucked my eyebrows, but since I don't have bangs any more, they have started to irritate me. But It hurts like hell and I get tears in my eyes. Is there something I just have to tolerate or is there something I can do to make it less painful?"

Member 1: "I use an eyebrow knife"

Poster responds: "How does that work?"

Member 2 responds: "I use it as well, you just cut the hair instead of drawing it out."

Member 3: "you just get used to it. I thought it hurt much in the beginning but now my skin is used to it. And now I can do it without any pain."

Member 4: "I pluck my eyebrows after shower, as the pores open up after a warm shower and it hurts less."

Poster responds: "I will try that!"

Member 5: "Use ice to cool down the area first"

Member 6: "As a professional I would say that you should stretch the skin exactly where you are going to pluck. Take two fingers on each side and pull the hair. Then you should always pull the hair in the same direction as it is. It will be easier with time. Then the redness will be less. But be careful to not pluck too much, so you will have some hairs left when you get older."

Poster: "I plucked them today directly after showering, stretched the skin as much as I could and pulled in the same direction as the hair was growing. It went very well, thanks for all the tips!"

This post got number of comments and all had some advice to give the member. Some followed the post, obviously searching for the same information. One member starts with saying: "as a professional...", implying that her comments are very trustworthy, but according to Brown et al. (2007) the credibility of the source is important for the consumer to trust his opinion. At the end, the one who created the thread informs the others that she has tried their tricks and that they really helped her out.

How to use a product?

Some members seem not to be sure how to use some products and ask other members for help. Knowing how to use the product in the right way, can make customers more satisfied (Lamb et al., 2011) and it can evoke the interest to buy an additional product (Engel et al., 1968).

Example:

Poster: "My foundation never sticks on my nose under under my eyes. What can I do to get it to stick?"

Member 1 and 2: "use primer"

Member 3: "I have the same problem; which primer is the best?"

In this case a primer that is used on the skin before applying foundation (an additional product) could make the foundation stick and the skin look better and the customer more satisfied with both products. The importance of the post-purchase stage is evident here. The consumer satisfaction is dependent on knowing how to use the product (Engel et al., 1968) and the retailer can increase the likelihood of satisfied customer by providing her with the right instructions and information about the product. Satisfied customer is more likely to generate positive word-of-mouth and more likely to buy the product again (Engel et al., 1968). In the example above, a need for purchasing a new product is created (Engel et al., 1968), as a primer would solve the problem presented. This has obviously caught the attention of another member who is asking for recommendations about a good primer.

Opinion about appearance/makeup

Many of the posts observed are about what hair colour will fit someone best, or how other members like the new hair colour. Others ask what they can do to improve their makeup and what will fit the person asking, along with a picture or pictures of the person. Members are actively seeking opinion and approval from others (Liang & Lai, 2002)

Example:

Poster: "What can I do to improve my everyday makeup?"

Member 1: "You can always have a colourful lipstick that will freshen you up, if you want to do something different."

Member 2: "You could add some mascara to your lashes below your eyes."

Member 3: "You look very nice! I would have added some rouge; it always makes you look fresher."

As stated earlier, we can almost always see positive comments with some helpful tips. In this category, it seems like members are rather looking for interaction with others and self assurance about their look, then help with a purchase or a decision. Sometimes they are looking for tips and tricks about what they can improve, from those who maybe have more knowledge and experience about makeup (Lamb et al., 2011). Motivating community members to share content can be a challenge and the success of the community is dependent on the extent of interaction and therefore it's important when members seek support, that others are willing to contribute (Lin et al., 2015).

Evaluation of products

Members commonly ask others for help in their evaluation stage, when they are trying to choose between products. They often get useful help from others, and when couple of members recommend one product, it reassures the consumer of his decision (Lamb et al., 2011) and that can clearly be seen throughout the observation.

Example 1:

Poster: Lumene or Urban Decay as an eye primer?

Members 1, 2, 3 & 4: Urban Decay

Member 5s: Lumene

Poster responds: Thanks! Now I have ordered Urban Decay!

In this case, four members recommended one product and one recommended the other. This made the choice easier for the consumer, who was influenced to order one product.

Example 2:

Poster: "I need your help girls! I am thinking about buying either Sleek cream contour kit or NYX wonder stick contour pen. Which one do you recommend and which one is the best?"

Member 1: "Not NYX Wonderstick. I think it is too light, it is not really contouring, more like a bronzer and you can't really see the highlights."

Member 2 responds: "Fuck, I ordered one yesterday."

Member 1 responds: "I mean it's not useless, but not something I would buy again. See what you think!"

Poster: "Yes, I have also heard that it has a bad pigment. Maybe I should try Sleek instead as it looks fairly pigmented."

Member 1: "Yes, I love sleek, their highlighter is perfect".

Member 3: "Before I bought makeup revolution I used Wonderstick. It worked great!"

The member uses the group in her evaluation stage and asks other members to help her choose between two products. Members, who have the experience with the product, provide feedback about the products and even affect others in a similar situation, making one member doubt her previously made choice. One member recommends the product and reassures the one who posted the question that she is making the right decision, but at the same time mentions another product that might put the poster back in the information search stage (Engel et al., 1968).

Positive and negative feedback

It's much more common that members post positive feedback rather than negative feedback. Often if the feedback is negative, they say; "I tried this product but it did not work for me at all, can you please recommend a product that is better and maybe fits me better". Feedback, both positive and negative, can have powerful influence on consumer behaviour, especially those who are in the information and evaluation stages of the consumer decision journey (Brown et al., 2007).

Example of positive feedback 1:

Poster: "I have to recommend this nice lipstick colour! Lolita from Kat Von D is easily the most beautiful ever (and she posts a picture)."

Member 1: "I have it and I was inspired to buy it after seeing it on other girls. But it looks so bad on me!! But you own it, it looks great on you!"

Member 2 responds: "I doubt it looks bad on you!"

Member 3: "Where did you buy it?"

Poster responds: "Sephora!"

Member 4: "It's similar to Mac's pen, Morning Coffee"

Member 5: "You look so nice; the colour is flawless on you. But now I'm wondering how your eyebrows got so perfect?"

Poster responds: "Thanks. Anastasia's Dipbrow pomade. Then I fix it with a concealer around the eyebrow."

Member 5 responds: "I have that dipbrow but I never get it looking as nice as you do..."

Member 6: "Do you have the lipstick or the lip liquid? Looks very nice on you at least?"

Poster responds: "Liquid! Thank you so much!"

The first member responding to the post, had obviously been inspired by this product before and bought it without trying it, but isn't satisfied in her post purchase stage and that is likely to affect her future purchase behaviour (Engel et al., 1968). Other members are affected by this thread and interested in the product and do ask where she bought the product. Another member points out a similar product that can be bought at a different store, offering alternatives to those who are interested. One member asks about what product the poster uses for her eyebrows, opening up the discussion for another problem and identifying a need for her and possible for other consumers as well (Lamb et al., 2011).

Example of positive feedback 2:

Another member recommends an eyebrow shadow

Poster: "Now I have to inform you about a really good eyebrow shadow from RUSTA, for only 59 SEK with three colours and one highlighter and three brushes to from your brows. Pictures of the colours in the comments below."

Member 1 & 2: "I also have it, I love it! So fresh"

Member 3: "I have to go to RUSTA to buy it, I have always wanted to fix my eyebrows who are terrible as I have a scar in one of them. And when I pluck to make them even they always get super short."

Member 3, three hours later: "Does someone know if you can buy it somewhere else than at RUSTA, like at City Gross or something? I was just at RUSTA in Hässleholm and it was finished."

Member 4 responds: "I have only seen it at RUSTA here in Hässleholm, not in any other store, I'm sorry! But they should get it soon again."

Member 5: "I have to go to RUSTA"

Member 6: "I also went there, and I couldn't find it."

Member 7: "You can buy it from Fyndiq for 95 SEK."

Members are clearly affected by the discussion and interested in the product. Two participants even drive to the store right away to buy the product, but it seems to be sold out. This shows how positive feedback from someone else's post-purchase stage influences others to try and buy a product they were not aware of before. Word of mouth, is considered to have powerful influence on consumer behaviour, especially those in the stage of information search and evaluation (Brown et al., 2007) but the observation indicates that it also creates a need or awareness about a brand or a product, and is therefore not less influential in the problem recognition stage.

Example of negative feedback:

Poster: "Smashbox X-Rated Mascara. It has been praised and recommended by different beauty experts. So I thought I should try it as well, so my eyelashes would also be VaVa Voom. So I put it on, layer on layer and a bit more. But my lashes are shorter than ever! And naturally they aren't that short. But with this mascara they look tiny. What do you think, those of you who have it? (Than she posts a picture of her and the mascara)."

Member 1: "I also got a test from kicks and it was no good for me either! I had heard so good things about it, and it didn't work at all."

Member 2: "I love it. I learned from a YouTube that you should start at the end of your lashes, and then apply from the roots in a zik-zak way, and then the results were very good."

Poster responds: okay, I will try that. Thanks!"

Member 3: "it's crappy. I don't understand the hype. If you want va va voom you should buy L'Oreal telescopic carbon Black. And if you are willing to spend a bit more, than Two Faces has better than sex. My favourite is the one from L'Oreal. And then she posts a picture."

Member 4: "I like love it. I got a test from kicks when I ordered something else. My lashes look very nice with it on. But we have different eyelashes and the same products don't fit everyone."

This conversation is very interesting as some members agree about the negative feedback, while others disagree and even provide some information about how the product should be used. This shows yet again how important the post-purchase stage is, and the importance of providing the consumer with the right information about products. The literature does discuss that marketers should pay better attention to the post-purchase stage (Engel et al., 1968; Lamb et al., 2011) and it is obvious that by providing customers with the right information would increase number of satisfied customers.

Characteristics of Skönhetstips

The community is centred on the shared interest (Malinen, 2015) of makeup and beauty products. Members share tips and tricks, their opinion and experience and ask for help from other members. The level of involvement when making a purchase, has been found to influence decision behaviour and communication behaviour (Michalidou & Dibb, 2008) and involvement is influenced by *previous experience, interest, perceived risk of negative consequences, situation and social visibility* (Lamb et al., 2011). Cosmetic products are used by most women every day, and affect their self-esteem and how they look. How interested and how important we find cosmetic products can of course vary between individuals, but in most cases we can make the assumption that cosmetic products have high involvement. Observing the Skönhetstips community strengthens that assumption as members seem very engaged in their decision journey. They show a great interest and follow trends and share their experience with others, both positive and negative. The risk of buying the wrong product can be that the colour that is chosen does not fit your skin tone or your skin type. We believe that this is one of the main reasons for consumers being reluctant to shop beauty products online, as the risk of buying the wrong product is to high (Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2014.) Asking others for help and sharing images to get better information to make the right decision is a very big and important part of the community Skönhetstips.

YouTube

A netnography observation on YouTube was carried out to compliment our observation of the Facebook community Skönhetstips. Two Swedish beauty vloggers were chosen due to the content of their vlogs and the amount of subscribers they have. Therese Lindgren, with 367.303 subscribers, is a 28-year-old woman from Stockholm with an interest in makeup. Therese posts new video blogs every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The other vlogger is Helen Torsgård, with 146.081 subscribers a 28-year-old and a professional makeup artist and blogger for the Swedish fashion magazine Veckorevyn. She posts videos every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. One video from each blogger was chosen and analysed, with a focus on the discussion in the comments below. The content of the two videos is now described, before analysing the discussion in the comment section below the video.

Helene Torsgården: Nya chokladpaletten! (in collaboration with brallis.se):

Helen starts with introducing the product and telling the audience that she is working with brallis.se, a Swedish website that sells cosmetic products and provided her the products she is reviewing. She applies makeup using the products and below the video she describes more detailed information about the products and posts links to her other social networks. Helen responds to most comments under the video blog.

Therese Lindgren: Therese testar: Ovala sminkborstar (in collaboration with fyndiq.se):

Therese starts with introducing 6 different sizes of oval makeup brushes and tells the audience she is doing this video in collaboration with fyndiq.se, but states that her opinion is honest despite the collaboration. She tests the brushes, both applying foundation, powder and eyeshadow. Below the video she sums her review up in a text and describes what she likes and what she doesn't. Than she provides link to her own web shop, her Instagram, Twitter and her blog.

The credibility of the source is important so the consumer is able to trust his opinion (Brown et al., 2007) and the overall expression of these video blogs is that they are very honest. The vloggers usually start the videos without any makeup, even though their skin is not at all flawless. Even though many videos are done in collaboration with stores and brands, the vloggers both claim and seem to be honest in their reviews. The videos are both a review of products and tutorials of how to use the products and apply them.

Following the collection of the data, we analysed the comment section below the videos, looking for frequent comments. We categorized the comments in to six different groups, described in more detail below.

Complementing the vlogger; the vlogger is an opinion leader and someone the subscribers hold a trust towards. Those who comment often complement the vlogger, and express caring feelings towards her. The vlogger even holds a celebrity status among the subscribers.

Asking about products price, brand or place to buy: The videos create interest in the products and members often ask about more details regarding the products, about the price, what brand is being used and where to buy the products.

Asking the vlogger to create certain kinds of videos/tutorials: Members often ask if the vlogger can create a video about a certain product or a certain kind of makeup style that they are interested in.

Criticising: Members sometimes criticise the products that are used in the videos and seem to demand social responsibility of the vlogger.

Stating a desire to buy the product: Members commonly comment and state that they want to buy the product, that they have to have it or that they have bought it after watching the video.

Feedback about other products, or about the products being reviewed: In many comments, members express their own opinion and share their experience about the product being reviewed in the video, or recommend a similar product that might be of a better quality or available at a better price.

Analysis of Results

Complementing the vlogger

Creating and sharing content can feel rewarding for the supplier and she receives recognition for her contribution (Krumm et al., 2008). It is very common that followers/subscribers are complimenting and expressing some kind of affection towards the vlogger. The vloggers hold an opinion leader position and has become social network celebrities (Lamb et al., 2011) and are even selling their own products.

Examples:

Helen:

Subscriber writes: "God you became so beautiful!!"

Vlogger responds: "Thank you"

Subscriber writes: "Very good video!! I loved how you had one picture where you were putting on makeup and one video of you talking! You are so talented!"

Vlogger responds: "Thank you, how nice!"

Subscriber writes: "Really cool how you cut and edited this video!"

Vlogger responds: "Thank you so much! It took some time... So I'm happy you and many others liked it!"

Therese:

Subscriber writes: "Love you Therese, when I am sad or mad, it always makes me happy to see you... I am so glad you said those are good because I want to buy them"

Subscriber writes: "You are the best!!! And a very good role model!! I'm sick today and it is the best to watch you when you are sick!!!! Love you and your videos!!! Love for you!!!"

Subscriber writes: "I love that you really say your real opinion and don't just like because you are sponsored. Keep it up, love ya "

Subscriber writes: "Thank you so much I have been looking for a brush like this omg!!! Thank you, you are the best! Hugs!"

Subscriber writes: "Oh my god, I have been looking for brushes like this for sooooo long but never found them. But now you are showing them and god, thank you!!"

In online communities, bloggers and vloggers often have big amount of followers and are recognized as opinion leaders (Lamb et al., 2011). They are obviously knowledgeable about beauty products, aware of the newest trends (Lamb et al., 2011) and have made it a profession to try out new products (Brown et al., 2007). Subscribers clearly hold admiration towards the vlogger and are influenced by the video review.

Asking about the products, price, brand or place to buy

Subscribers are obviously interested in the products reviewed in the videos and ask more detailed questions. It varies if the vlogger responds to the comments and sometimes other members respond with relevant information. The video blog creates a need for some of the members who watch the video and state an interest (Ashman et al., 2015) and are looking for more detailed information. In one of the video, the vlogger puts an effort into responding to most of the comments but in the other one there is never a response from the vlogger. However, other members respond to questions if they have the answer to it. According to Adjei et al. (2010), customer-to-customer communication is effective in influencing sales.

Helen:

Subscriber writes: "How much did the chocolate palette cost?? Love your channel!"

Subscriber writes: "I love your eyelashes!! What mascara do you use?"

Subscriber writes: "What Eyeliner do you use? Hugs to you"

Vlogger responds: "'ga-de" you can find it at cocopanda.se"

Subscriber writes: "Is the palette from makeup revolution?"

Vlogger responds: "Yes it is? "

Subscriber writes: "When are you launching your brushes?"

Vlogger responds: "Within two weeks I hope"

Subscriber responds: "Okay, it will be so cool to try them."

Therese:

Subscriber writes: "Where did you buy your couture pallet?? Love you!!"

Another subscriber responds: "It is from BeautyUK and I think you can buy it at cocopanda.se"

Subscriber writes: "I have been thinking about starting to use transparent powder, which one do you use? Do you recommend it? Ps I love your channel."

Subscriber writes: "I'm very interested in the mascara, was it easy to remove? I love mascaras that stick like a rock, do you have any tips?"

Subscriber writes: "What foundation did Therese use in the video?"

A platform for two-way communication not only delivers a message from the opinion leader to the consumer, but also allows for other members to give feedback on the opinion (Li & Du,

2011). Those who comment on the video blogs can therefore also work as opinion leaders and be very influential (Li & Du, 2011). The reason for contributing in the discussion can be motivated just by wanting to help others or by a feeling of Self-enhancement (Li & Du, 2011).

Asking the vlogger to create certain kinds of videos/tutorials:

Comments where subscribers ask the vlogger to create a specific video or a tutorial are pretty common, and according to Brown et al. (2007), group members often rely on the opinion leader's expert knowledge to help with a purchase decision. Members seem to look up to the vloggers and are depending on them for creating the information they need.

Helen:

Subscriber writes: "Can you buy the white chocolate palette, I have seen it and I would love to see a makeup with it."

Another subscriber responds: "It is awesome! I have it and I love it!"

Vlogger responds: Maybe :)"

Subscriber writes: "Can you do a funeral makeup? Please, a simple one that a Child could do"

Another subscriber: "yess!"

Subscriber writes: "Can you do graduation makeup in the next video? Love you!"

Vlogger responds: It's coming"

Therese:

Subscriber writes: "Can you please do your own brush collection? And your own cosmetic brand like Rebecca Ställa has done? Love you!!"

Consumers seek for the leader's opinion about products (Flynn et al., 1996) and are asking the vlogger to create more content that they are interested in. They seek opinion from the opinion leader as it will help with a purchase decision and satisfy their need in a better way and reduce risk (Flynn et al., 1996). In this case the opinion leader holds a strong position, knowing what the audience is looking for and can satisfy their need and influence their behaviour (Lamb et al., 2011).

Criticising

Mainly all comments were positive. However, if they all are positive or if the vlogger decides to delete the negative ones is hard to say. One of the videos observed had many comments criticising makeup brushes that many believed were made of animal hairs. That was clearly a big issue for many, but the blogger always responded that the brushes were made out of synthetic hair, else she would not have used them.

Helen:

Subscriber writes: Poor animals who were needed to make these brushes!

Vlogger responds: Those are supposed to be synthetic, sigma fibre.

Subscriber writes: Hope that they really are synthetic.

Vlogger responds: They are, else I would not have used them.

Even though the vlogger is admired by the audience and holds the status of opinion leader, members demand social responsibility from the vlogger. The culture of the community obviously has its own values (Lamb et al., 2011). Consumers identify who they are through the products they use (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) and the welfare of animals seems to be a common value that they share. Values that are shared within a society are essential part of the culture and can greatly affect consumer behaviour (Lamb et al., 2011).

Stating a desire to buy the product:

Many state an interest in buying the products that are reviewed on YouTube and are obviously influenced by the opinion leaders before making a purchase decision (Lamb et al., 2011).

Helen:

Subscriber writes: "I would die for the new chocolate pallet"

Subscriber writes: "I need it!!"

Subscriber writes: "I have to buy that pallet, so I can try it!"

Subscriber writes: "I have to try it"

Therese:

Subscriber writes: "I ordered home a six-pack"

Subscriber writes: "I was thinking about ordering the one for contouring! Which one did you use for contouring? How many CM?"

Subscriber writes: "I'm so happy I bought these a week ago but I didn't dare to try them, but now it feels so much better"

Subscriber writes: I'm going to order one for foundation

Subscriber writes: I have to buy it when I get paid

Opinion leaders can hold influential roles in marketing strategies and shape consumer decision (Flynn et al., 1996). Consumers are obviously influenced by the video to buy products. Many state that they have bought the product, that they want to buy the product or that they will buy the product. Collaboration with vloggers is therefore very effective, even though they give their honest opinion about the products. The existence of brands and products are presented to consumers who often recognize a need and a consumer decision journey is triggered (Engel et al., 1968).

Recommending other products, or stating their opinion about the products being reviewed

In the comments, subscribers often state their opinion about the products that the vlogger is reviewing and sometimes recommend other products that are similar. When commenting, members are creating content as members of the online-community (Daugherty et al., 2013).

Helen:

Subscriber writes: "I recently did a very nice look with this eye shadow pallet, the results were very nice and I really love it!!"

Therese:

Subscriber writes: "Beautiful as always. Those from Sleek are really good. They become matte right away and they are even sold in some H&M stores."

Subscriber writes: "Now I want to order some more. I have one from before, and omg it is so good. I use it for my foundation, both powder and cream products and it is sooo good."

Subscriber writes: "It really is good. I love that you do this kind of videos"

Subscriber writes: "Work perfectly! Really worth the money"

Members comment and state their opinion about the product. In all cases their feedback was positive, no one doubted the vloggers opinion but some recommended other products as well. The YouTube channel, providing a platform for two-way communication, allows for the audience to give feedback on the opinion (Li & Du, 2011). Therefore, the consumer also works as an opinion leader and can influence other consumers' decision journey (Li & Du, 2011).

Characteristics of the YouTube channels

The vloggers, Helen and Therese hold opinion leader status and influence their audience. Even though the videos are done in collaboration with retailers, the information seems authentic and honest, but the credibility is important for the consumer to be able to trust their opinion (Brown et al., 2007). The audience looks to the channel both for reviews and tips about products but also for tutorials on how to use and apply the products. Those who choose to subscribe to the channel want to keep up with new trends and learn about new products. Most comments are subscribers expressing their affection and gratitude towards the vlogger, but creating and sharing content can feel rewarding for the vlogger, receiving recognition for his contribution (Krumm et al., 2008). Helen responds to most comments but Therese does not. By responding to the comments, Helen provides the subscriber with the information he is looking for, and if she was the one selling the products, this part would be very important. Often other subscribers respond to questions posted and by that they become opinion leaders, influencing others in their decision journey (Li & Du, 2011). The audience is obviously influenced by opinion leaders (Lamb et al., 2011) and are interested in the products, asking about more details and requesting the vlogger to create other tutorials. According to Brown et al., (2007), group members often rely on the opinion leader's expert knowledge to help them with a purchase decision. Members comment and state their opinion about the product. All feedback is positive and no one doubts the vloggers opinion or credibility. Members agree with the vlogger, making her review even more credible and sometimes tip about other similar products. Even though almost all comments are positive, members criticise one of the vloggers and accuse her of using makeup brushes with animal hair. They demand social responsibility of the vlogger as animal welfare seems to be a common value that the members of the community share. Collaboration with vloggers is obviously effective even though they give their honest opinions.

Structured observations

We present the results from the empirical data collection and follow up with the analysis of the data. Many respondents started out using a search engine to search for either “bronzer”, “best in test bronzers”, “top ten bronzers” and some went into an online shop directly. The Swedish beauty online shop “Kicks” was most commonly used. Secondly almost everyone went into a website of an online print magazine such as “Veckoevyn or Damernas Värld” where several bronzers were tested with reviews and rated on the scale from 1-5 by experts from the magazine. After this, the respondents often chose 2-3 products that were reviewed in the magazine, which they clicked on so were directed into an online web shop or a specific brand’s website. There they were able to collect more information about the product and reviews from customers that were shown under the products, like comments or ratings.

After this, several participants actually went back to a search engine and started searching for “best bronzers” again and then went into new online magazines websites and web shops to evaluate or find more information about bronzers. Some respondents on the other hand, started to collect more reviews on the selected products, for example on customer review sites or blogs/YouTube channels that reviewed the product. This behaviour continues back and forth among different sources of information about the products, until one or two products were chosen. Thereafter, many of the respondents went into price comparison websites and customer reviews websites to then end up with “buying” the product in an online web shop, in this case “Kicks” was the most popular choice.

Our notes and themes where then interpreted with help from the literature, to be able to map the behaviour and a schedule was created for each note, that shows the movements of the consumer between the different steps of the decision journey. Here is an example of a schedule that we created from the notes, the rest can be seen in the appendix.

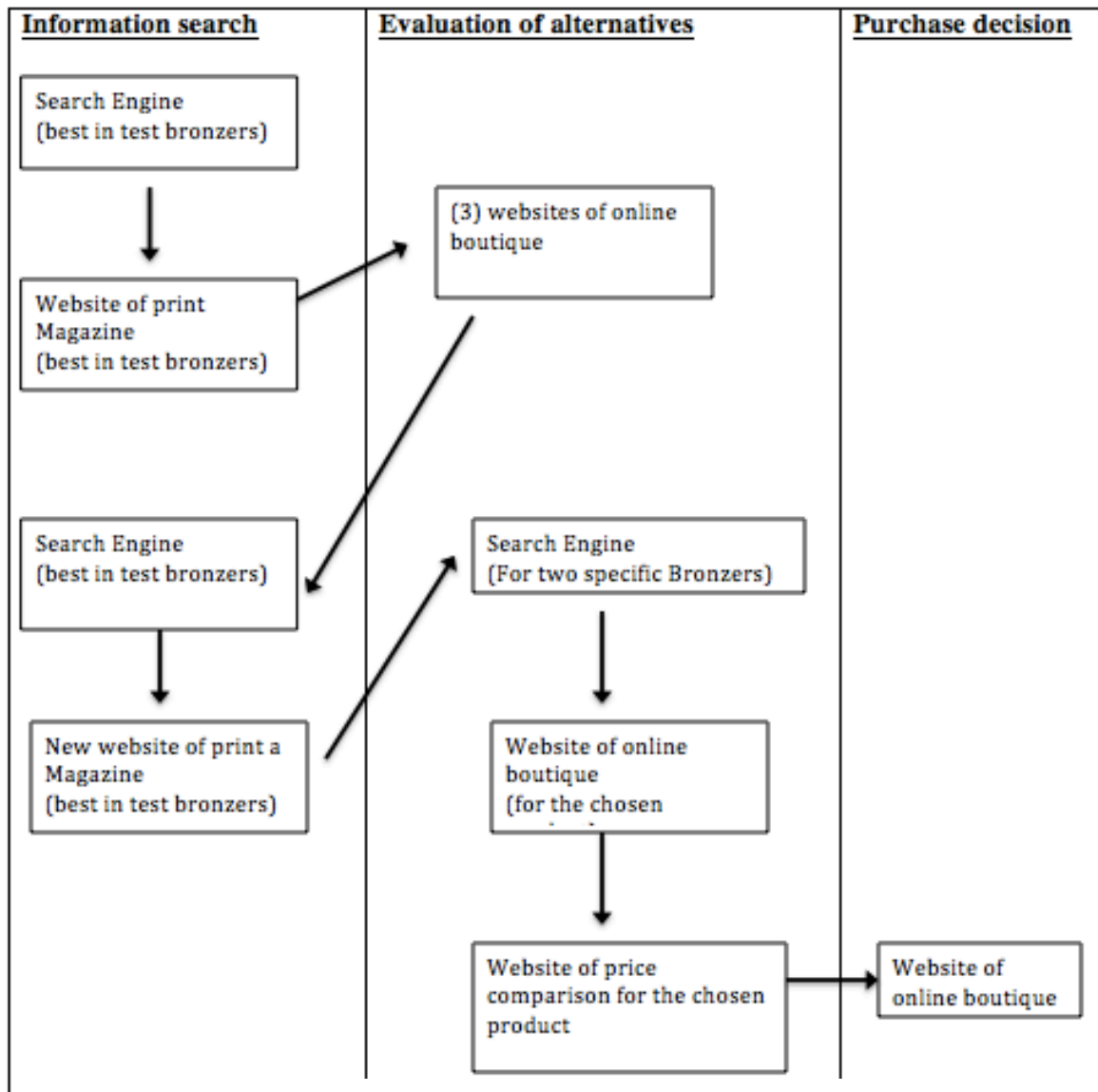


Figure 3: Observation Schedule

When studying the schedules, we detected that respondents consistently use expert reviews from magazines, consumer reviews in online web shops, blogs, consumer review sites or YouTube channels in both stages before their decisions. This kind of behaviour Henning-Thurau & Walsh (2014) mean can be a way of eliminating huge amount of alternatives in the evaluation stage and thereby make the decision easier. Lamb et al, (2011) also mean that consumers often look for guidance and approval from others before making purchase decision, and by using opinion leaders this will reduce the amount of search and evaluation as well as the uncertainty.

This is something that is clearly shown in both stages and not only in the evaluation stage. As Ashman et al, (2015) mention when talking about the Information step in the EKB model, the digital world and online culture has changed the way we search for information and shifted the attention from marketed information to non-professional and non marketing-controlled online sources like

consumer opinion sites, search engines, blogs and vlogs and other user generated content sites, which explain the usage of different expert reviews already in the information step.

The usage of new evaluation tools and changes in information search that Ashman et al., (2015) mention, we clearly see in the decision process of our respondents. But a new change is detected, concerning the movements in the journey between the two steps, which is not completely in line with the EKB model and is a bit more complicated than described, since it suggests that one first searches for information about the product and then evaluates the alternatives chosen (Engel et al., 1968). Instead, participants were highly engaged in their decision journey and moved back and forth between the information search and evaluation, actively seeking feedback from consumers and using others post purchase stage in their journey, before finally making a purchase decision.

Discussion

The aim of this study is to develop a better understanding of what young women's online consumer decision journey looks like in the cosmetic industry, and the role of online communities, interaction between consumers and user generated content in reassuring and influencing consumers to buy products online they have not tried before.

This study has shown that the development of the Internet has not only changed the way consumers search for information or evaluate alternatives, it has also changed the movement between these two stages. Respondents, who had searched for products and selected 2-3 products to evaluate, suddenly went back to the search engine to search for a new online print magazine or blog that tested new bronzers and then started evaluating alternatives again. Looking at existing literature, the EKB model suggests that the consumer first searches for information about the product and then evaluates alternatives, chosen by reading consumer reviews, feedback vlogs or blogs. These patterns were clear in both the information and the evaluation step, but the movements between the steps are much more complicated than thought before and described in the EKB model. Participants were engaged in their decision journey and went back and forth in their information search and evaluation before making a purchase decision. What is interesting is that they actively searched for information and feedback from other consumers, making full use of others post-purchase stage in their journey.

The study detected honest behaviour and communication in all communities. Members seem to have no need to pretend and are willing to discuss sensitive matters, despite not knowing other members personally and despite the fact that the information is visible to all members. This is particularly true in relation to the Facebook community, but video bloggers also appear in their videos without makeup and discuss their flaws openly. For the vloggers, this creates credibility and trustworthiness, and encourages more honest discussions in the Facebook community and shapes the culture, inspiring the values and rituals, where everyone can comfortably share. Receiving comments can create incentive for people to create posts (Lin et al., 2015). Negative feedback (towards other members) is forbidden in Skönhetstips and the communication is impressively positive.

Communities have both active and passive participants (Malinen, 2015) and in the Facebook community we soon detected that certain members posted again and again and were more active in the discussions than others. However, we could not identify any clear opinion leader in the Facebook community, but the two video bloggers, Helen and Therese are a great example of opinion leaders. On the other hand, according to Li & Du (2011) other members who give their feedback in the comment section can work as opinion leaders and influence others in the decision making journey. In the Facebook community some members try to establish a credibility and trustworthiness by starting with comments like “As a professional...” and implying that they are experts in the area.

The vloggers are opinion leaders and clearly influence the audience. In the comment section members express their affection and gratitude towards the vloggers who hold a celebrity status and are considered experts in makeup and cosmetic products. Feedback is generally positive and no one doubts the credibility or honesty of the vlogger. The audience is obviously interested in the products reviewed by the vloggers and ask for more detailed information about the products and request videos about certain products, brands and special occasions. Members rely on opinion leaders’ expert knowledge to help them in their decision journey (Brown et al., 2007).

This study showed that the high level of involvement for cosmetics affects how engaged the consumer is in different stages of the decision journey and that she is constantly seeking information, feedback and opinion from others. These results are broadly consistent with literature that discusses the relationship between high involvement and a more extensive decision journey (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985) and are, according to our study, one of the main reasons for consumer’s reluctance to shop online. They perceive a high risk in buying the wrong product and conduct an extensive research before making a purchase decision (Lamb et al., 2011; Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2014). Most posts in Skönhetstips consist of members asking for others opinion and feedback about products, looking for help in their evaluation process (Krumm et al., 2008), seeking to reduce uncertainty and reassure themselves that they are making the right decision (Lamb et al., 2011).

Members that share positive and negative feedback in specific posts are not as common, but they are willing to provide it when asked. Creating a post about positive experience was much more common than sharing a negative experience, and often stimulated interest of others who asked more detailed questions about price or where the relevant product could be purchased. Members are often influenced by the discussion of others and follow or engage in the conversation. Those members recognise a need that they were not aware of or find a solution for a problem they did not know existed. Some point out similar product available at a better price. Sometimes the products were sold out after a positive feedback or a video blog, but it is hard to evaluate if it was due to the post in the community.

Some members ask for help and tips about how to use their products. This part is important as the retailer can create a much more satisfied customer by providing the correct information on how to use the product the right way (Lamb et al., 2011). Here the YouTube channels can be very helpful, as the videos teach the consumer how to use and apply products properly. It is obvious from the

conversations examined that the consumer is maybe not using the products in the right way and therefore does not get the right results and is not satisfied.

5 Conclusion

The final chapter presents the conclusion and outlines theoretical contributions and practical implications. Finally, the study's limitations will be highlighted and possible future researches proposed.

Conclusion

Online communities are clearly very influential in shaping the consumer decision journey and user generated content in the form of shared information, opinion, reviews and, last but not least, video reviews and tutorials reduce uncertainty about products and help consumers to make online purchase decisions. Turning to others for opinion, experience and feedback reduces the purchase risk and the amount of uncertainty. Even though customers do not create and share a direct word-of-mouth about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a certain product, they will provide others with feedback when asked

Consumers are reluctant to buy products they have not tried before and actively search for information that helps with the decision and reduces the risk. YouTube videos containing tutorials can be very useful to reassure consumers of their decision. The extensive importance of the post purchase stage should therefore not be overlooked and should be the focus of marketers. A part of the high level of involvement with cosmetics in particular, is the uncertainty and risk that a cosmetics product will not fit the skin type or give the desired results. With the easy access to user-generated content that customers trust, they can make more informed decisions and easily find tutorials on how to use products.

Our structured observation also showed that consumers looked for reviews in their information search and evaluation and observed YouTube videos to see how products looked when it had been applied. When conducting the structured observation, we noticed that the most commonly used website during the process, offers customer reviews of products, which are available to the consumer who does therefore not need to go to other sites to look for that information, and the retailer is more likely to be present in all stages of the decision journey.

The structured observation also indicates that participants move back and fourth between the information search and evaluation stage, actively seeking feedback from consumers in both stages, and using others post purchase stage in their journey. This implies that the consumer does not move from one stage to the next, but can be influenced to change her mind and move back to information search.

Theoretical and Practical contribution

When comparing the existing literature with our data we realised that the literature could not cover all parts of our findings that the literature. The EKB model suggests that the consumer first searches for information about the product and then evaluates the alternatives chosen by reading consumer reviews, feedback vlogs or blogs. These patterns were clear in both the information and the evaluation step, but the movements between the steps are much more complicated than we thought and described in the EKB model. Furthermore, our findings show that the literature does not put enough emphasise on the importance of user generated content in relation to high involvement products when buying online. Our findings show that shared post purchase experiences of others are used frequently in all steps of the consumer decision journey, not only in the information and the evaluation step as the theory suggests. It actually influences the look of the online consumer decision journey too and is therefore a very important factor to consider. On the basis of our findings we have created a model created, with the intent to map the online consumer decision journey, which emphasises the importance of the post-purchase stage.

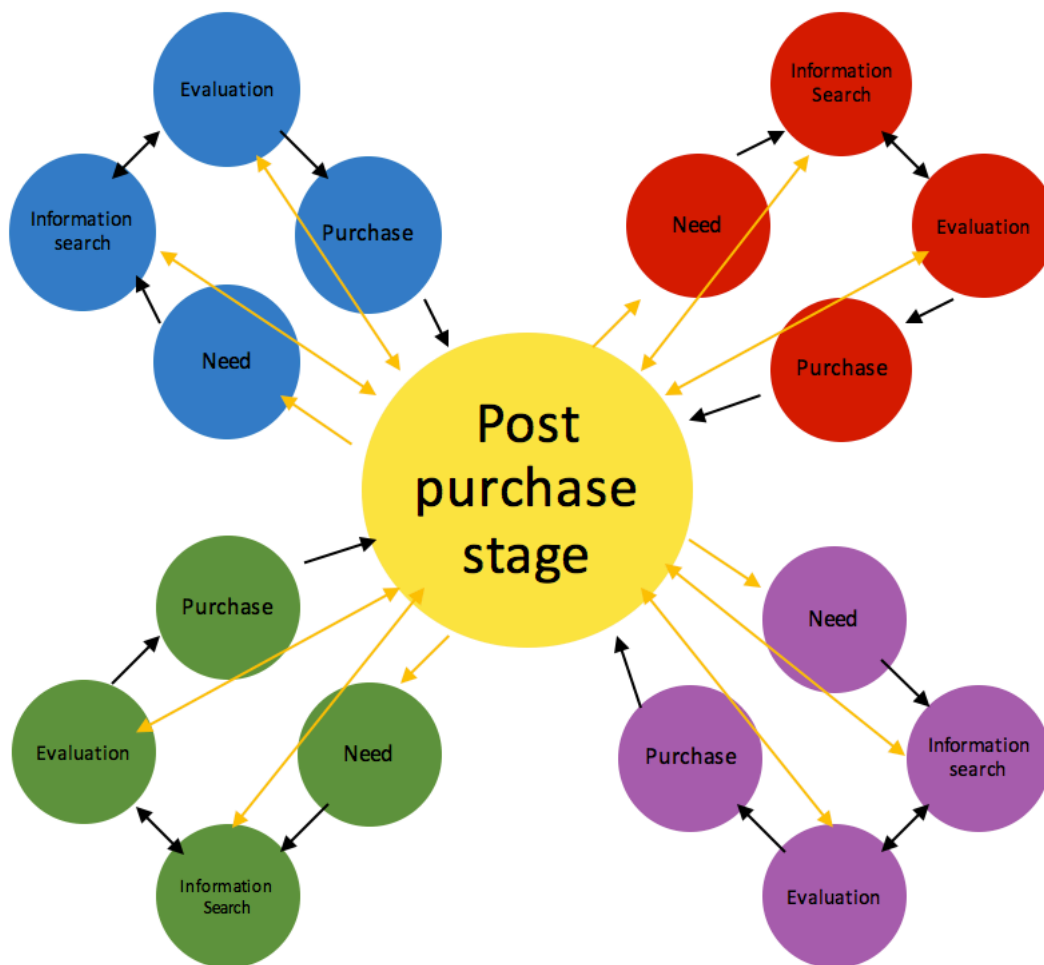


Figure 4: Online Consumer Decision Model

The model shows the decision journey of four different consumers. The post purchase stage is in the middle emphasizing the importance of it and how the post purchase stage of others influences the consumer in her journey. Post purchase stages of others create both need for consumers and influences them in their information search and evaluation, but the consumer also actively seeks information from others post-purchase stages and that is why the yellow arrows going to the information search and evaluation, are two-way. The model also has two-way arrows between the information search and evaluation stage, as the consumer often moves between those two stages throughout his decision journey.

The results are of direct practical relevance as it helps marketers understand what motivates and influences consumers to complete an online purchase. Moreover, we find that marketers should pay more attention to the post-purchase stage of the decision journey and make an effort to inform and educate their customers on how to use the purchased products to get the best results. That can lead to much higher satisfaction among customers who are then more likely to give positive feedback about the product and the brand and influence others.

A way to help consumers in their post purchase stage could be to create video tutorials and/or collaborating with established vloggers. It is essential that the content is authentic and honest to be trustworthy and interesting for the consumer. By doing so, marketers can help consumers reduce the risk of buying the wrong product and the need to try products before buying them.

Another way to motivate consumers to buy products online they have not tried before, is providing them with unbiased user generated content such as product reviews and ratings on retailer websites. In that way the consumer is less likely to go to another website in search for the information and the retailer is more likely to be present in all stages of the decision journey. The results should help retailers in high involvement industries to be more proactive and take more control of the consumer decision journey.

Limitations and recommendations for further research

The study has a couple of limitations. Looking at the structured observations we chose to do a qualitative study to observe the behaviour of several respondents online. Due to this we cannot generalize the results to the whole population, only get an indication of how the behaviour might look like. Therefore, we suggest that further research can conduct a quantitative observation instead, in order to secure the significance of the results. Another data collection method that would be interesting to use that is less structured than structured observations are diaries, in order to capture the whole online consumer decision journey in a more natural way. This method requires a bit more time and carries the risk that the participants do not buy any cosmetics during the research period. Nevertheless, we believe it would generate and add interesting information to research on the online decision journey and deepen the understanding on what influences individuals to take the risk to buy products online they have not tried before.

The study is limited to women between the age of 18-29 years, which excludes men and other age groups. It would be interesting to conduct a research that includes a broader range of age groups and men, since this would lead to an overall bigger picture of the decision behaviour. As our study also shows the significance of the post purchase step in combination with online communities it would be of interest to obtain an even deeper understanding of online communities and their influence on the consumer decision journey by conducting in-depth interviews with members of the community. This would add knowledge on why and how individuals use online communities in their journey. In addition, it would be worthwhile to do further research on online behaviour in another country than Sweden, to compare cultural differences in behaviour. Number of consumers still choose to shop offline and/or go through a multichannel decision journey. This study only focuses on the online environment and mainly the influence of user generated content. To get a view of the whole consumer decision process in the cosmetic industry a more extensive research would have to be conducted or a different approach applied, to complement this research.

6 Reference list

- Adjei, M.T., Noble, S.M. and Noble, C.H., 2010. The influence of C2C communications in online brand communities on customer purchase behavior. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38(5), pp.634-653.
- Ashman, R., Solomon, M.R. and Wolny, J., 2015. An old model for a new age: Consumer decision making in participatory digital culture. *Journal of Customer Behaviour*, 14(2), pp.127-146.
- Ben-Shabat, H. and Gada, K., 2012. Beauty and the e-commerce beast. *AT Kearny*.
- Bughin, J., Doogan, J. and Vetvik, O.J., 2010. A new way to measure word-of-mouth marketing. *McKinsey Quarterly*, 2, pp.113-116.
- Bryman, A.; Bell, E. (2011): Business research methods. 3rd ed. Cambridge, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Court, D., Elzinga, D., Mulder, S. and Vetvik, O.J., 2009. The consumer decision journey. *McKinsey Quarterly*, 3, pp.96-107.
- Darden, W.R., 1980. *A patronage model of consumer behavior*.
- Daugherty, T., Eastin, M.S. and Bright, L., 2008. Exploring consumer motivations for creating user-generated content. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 8(2), pp.16-25.
- De Bruyn, A. and Lilien, G.L., 2008. A multi-stage model of word-of-mouth influence through viral marketing. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 25(3), pp.151-163.
- Dholakia, U.M., Bagozzi, R.P. and Pearo, L.K., 2004. A social influence model of consumer participation in network-and small-group-based virtual communities. *International journal of research in marketing*, 21(3), pp.241-263.
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. (2012). *Management Research* (4th ed.). London: Sage.
- Edelman, D.C., 2010. Branding in the digital age. *Harvard business review*, 88(12), pp.62-69.
- Edelman, D. C., & Singer, M. (2015A). Competing on Customer Journeys. *Harvard Business Review*, 88-100.
- Edelman, D. & Singer, M. (2015B). The new consumer decision journey. *Mckinsey digital*. Retrieved from:
- Engel, J.F., Kollat, D.T. and Blackwell, R.D., 1968. *Consumer Behavior*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Inc. *Engel2Consumer Behavior1973*.

- Flynn, L.R., Goldsmith, R.E. and Eastman, J.K., 1996. Opinion leaders and opinion seekers: Two new measurement scales. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 24(2), pp.137-147.
- Frambach, R.T., Roest, H.C. and Krishnan, T.V., 2007. The impact of consumer internet experience on channel preference and usage intentions across the different stages of the buying process. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 21(2), pp.26-41.
- Google, 2010. Understanding the consumer purchase process: Beauty. Available at: <http://www.slideshare.net/mitchomd/beauty-understanding-the-consumer-purchase-process-france> [Accessed 3 May 2016]
- Hennig-Thurau, T., Walsh, G. and Walsh, G., 2003. Electronic word-of-mouth: Motives for and consequences of reading customer articulations on the Internet. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 8(2), pp.51-74.
- Herring, L., Wachinger, T. & Wigley, C. (2014). Making stores matter in a multichannel world. *McKinsey&Company*. Retrieved from:
- Hsu, T.H. and Lee, M., 2003. The refinement of measuring consumer involvement-an empirical study. *Competitiveness Review: An International Business Journal*, 13(1), pp.56-65.
- Hsu, M.H., Ju, T.L., Yen, C.H. and Chang, C.M., 2007. Knowledge sharing behavior in virtual communities: The relationship between trust, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations. *International journal of human-computer studies*, 65(2), pp.153-169.
- Jackson, P., 2004. Local consumption cultures in a globalizing world. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 29(2), pp.165-178.
- Karimi, S., Papamichail, K.N. and Holland, C.P., 2015. The effect of prior knowledge and decision-making style on the online purchase decision-making process: a typology of consumer shopping behaviour. *Decision Support Systems*, 77, pp.137-147.
- Kozinets, Robert V. "Click to connect: netnography and tribal advertising." *Journal of advertising research* 46.3 (2006): 279-288.
- Kozinets, Robert V. "The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities." *Journal of marketing research* 39.1 (2002): 61-72.
- Krumm, J., Davies, N. and Narayanaswami, C., 2008. User-generated content. *IEEE Pervasive Computing*, (4), pp.10-11.
- Lamb, C., Hair, J. and McDaniel, C., 2011 *Marketing*. Cengage Learning.
- Laurent, G. and Kapferer, J.N., 1985. Measuring consumer involvement profiles. *Journal of marketing research*, pp.41-53.

LeCompte, M. D., and Goetz, J. P. (1982). 'Problems of Reliability and Validity in Ethnographic Research', *Review of Educational Research*, 52: 31–60.

Lundahl, U. & Skärvad, P. (1999). *Utredningsmetodik för samhällsvetare och ekonomer*. 3.

uppl. Lund: Studentlitteratur

Li, F. and Du, T.C., 2011. Who is talking? An ontology-based opinion leader identification framework for word-of-mouth marketing in online social blogs. *Decision Support Systems*, 51(1), pp.190-197.

Liang, T.P. and Lai, H.J., 2002. Effect of store design on consumer purchases: an empirical study of on-line bookstores. *Information & Management*, 39(6), pp.431-444.

Lin, T.C., Hsu, J.S.C., Cheng, H.L. and Chiu, C.M., 2015. Exploring the relationship between receiving and offering online social support: a dual social support model. *Information & Management*, 52(3), pp.371-383.

Malinen, S., 2015. Understanding user participation in online communities: A systematic literature review of empirical studies. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 46, pp.228-238.

Michaelidou, N. and Dibb, S., 2008. Consumer involvement: a new perspective. *The Marketing Review*, 8(1), pp.83-99.

Milner, T. and Rosenstreich, D., 2013. A review of consumer decision-making models and development of a new model for financial services. *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*, 18(2), pp.106-120.

Moth, D. (2014). Four online retailers that offer try-before-you-buy fulfilment. Retrieved from: <https://econsultancy.com/blog/65655-four-online-retailers-that-offer-try-before-you-buy-fulfilment/>

Nielsen 2015. Global trust in advertising. Winning strategies for evolving media landscape. Accessed on April 25th. Available at: <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2015/global-trust-in-advertising-2015.html>

Nielsen, 2016. Global connected commerce. Is e-tail therapy the new retail therapy. Accessed on April 25th. Available at: <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2016/global-connected-commerce.html>

Pixability, 2014. Beauty on YouTube: How YouTube is radically transforming the Beauty Industry and What That Means for Brands: Available at: <http://www.pixability.com/recent-press-releases/study-beauty-industry-youtube-2014/>

Puccinelli, N.M., Goodstein, R.C., Grewal, D., Price, R., Raghubir, P. and Stewart, D., 2009. Customer experience management in retailing: understanding the buying process. *Journal of retailing*, 85(1), pp.15-30.

PostNord (2015). *E-barometern Q3*. Kvartalrapport 2015, Available online: <http://www.internetstatistik.se/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/e-barometern-q3-2015.pdf> [Accessed 23 Mars 2016]

Reuters (2015). *Research and Markets: Global Cosmetic Products Growth*. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/research-and-markets/idUSnBw275524a+100+BSW20150727> [Accessed 15 Mars 2016]

Rotman, D. and Preece, J., 2010. The 'WeTube' in YouTube-creating an online community through video sharing. *International Journal of Web Based Communities*, 6(3), pp.317-333.

Sinh, N.H., 2013. The Hierarchy model of advertising effects: A debate. *Tạp chí Phát triển và Hội nhập*, (8 (18)), pp.92-96.

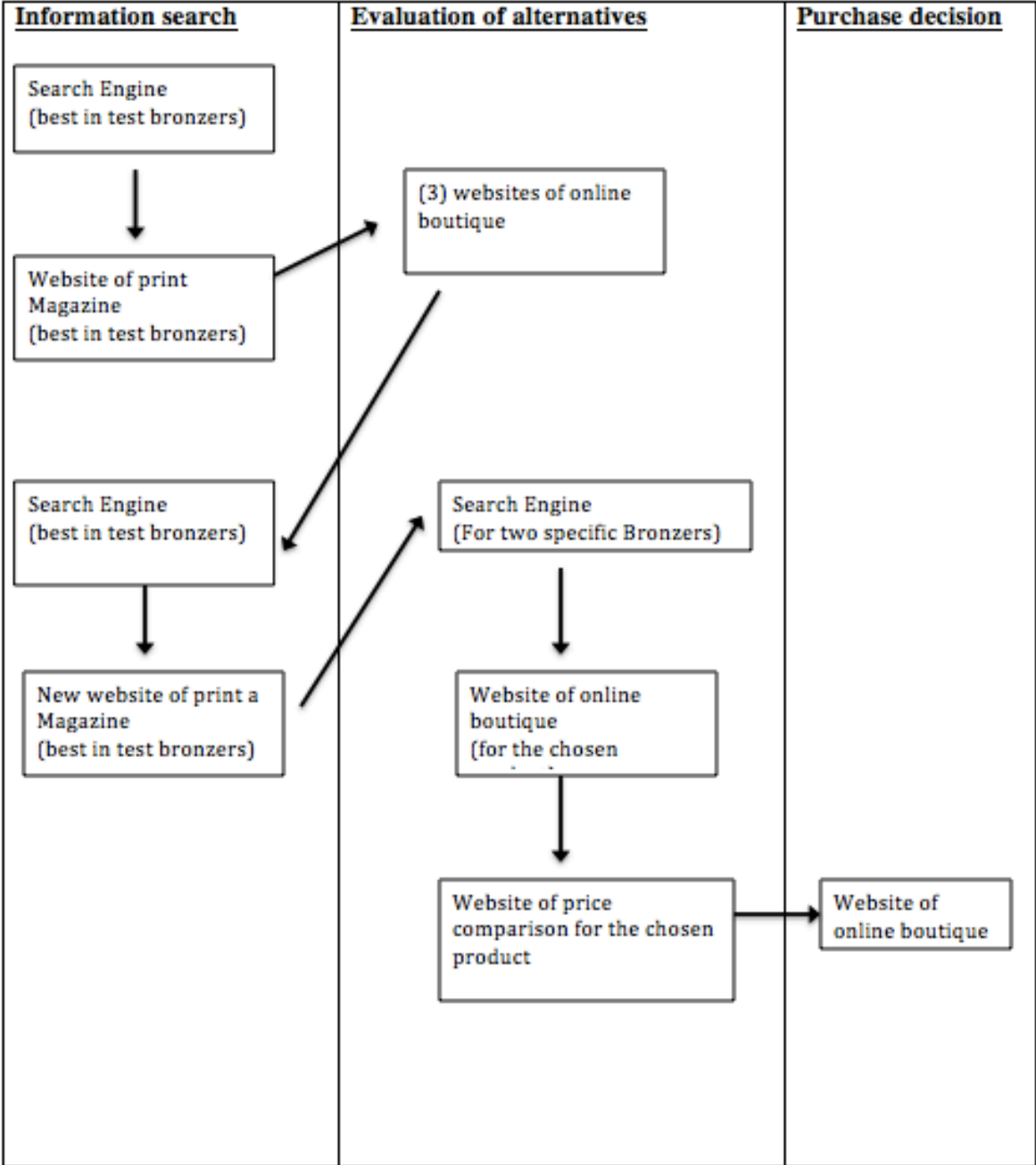
Valente, T.W. and Pumpuang, P., 2007. Identifying opinion leaders to promote behavior change. *Health Education & Behavior*.

Vázquez, S., Muñoz-García, Ó., Campanella, I., Poch, M., Fisas, B., Bel, N. and Andreu, G., 2014. A classification of user-generated content into consumer decision journey stages. *Neural Networks*, 58, pp.68-81.

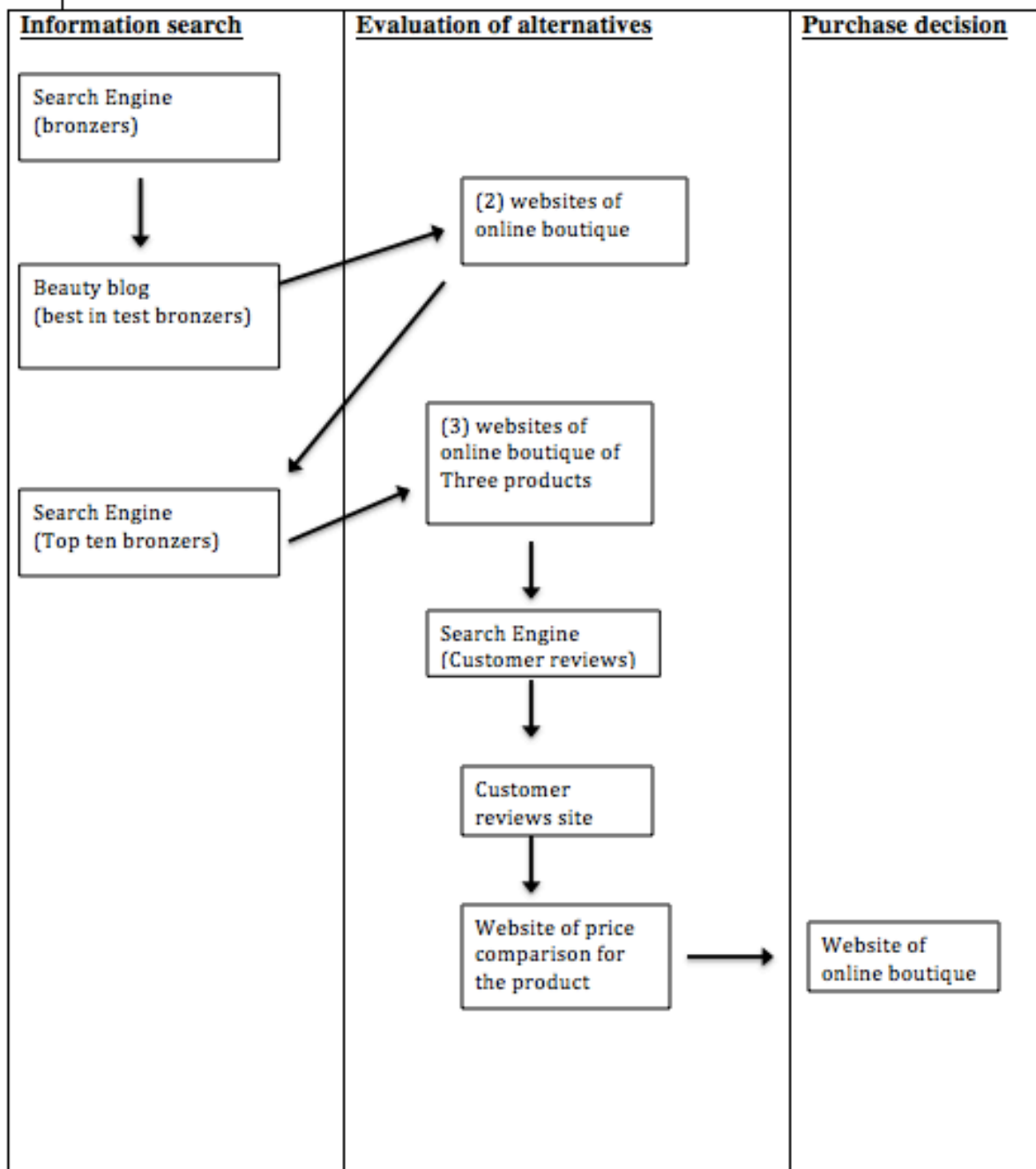
Yoo, C.W., Kim, Y.J. and Sanders, G.L., 2015. The impact of interactivity of electronic word of mouth systems and E-Quality on decision support in the context of the e-marketplace. *Information & Management*, 52(4), pp.496-505.

7. Appendix

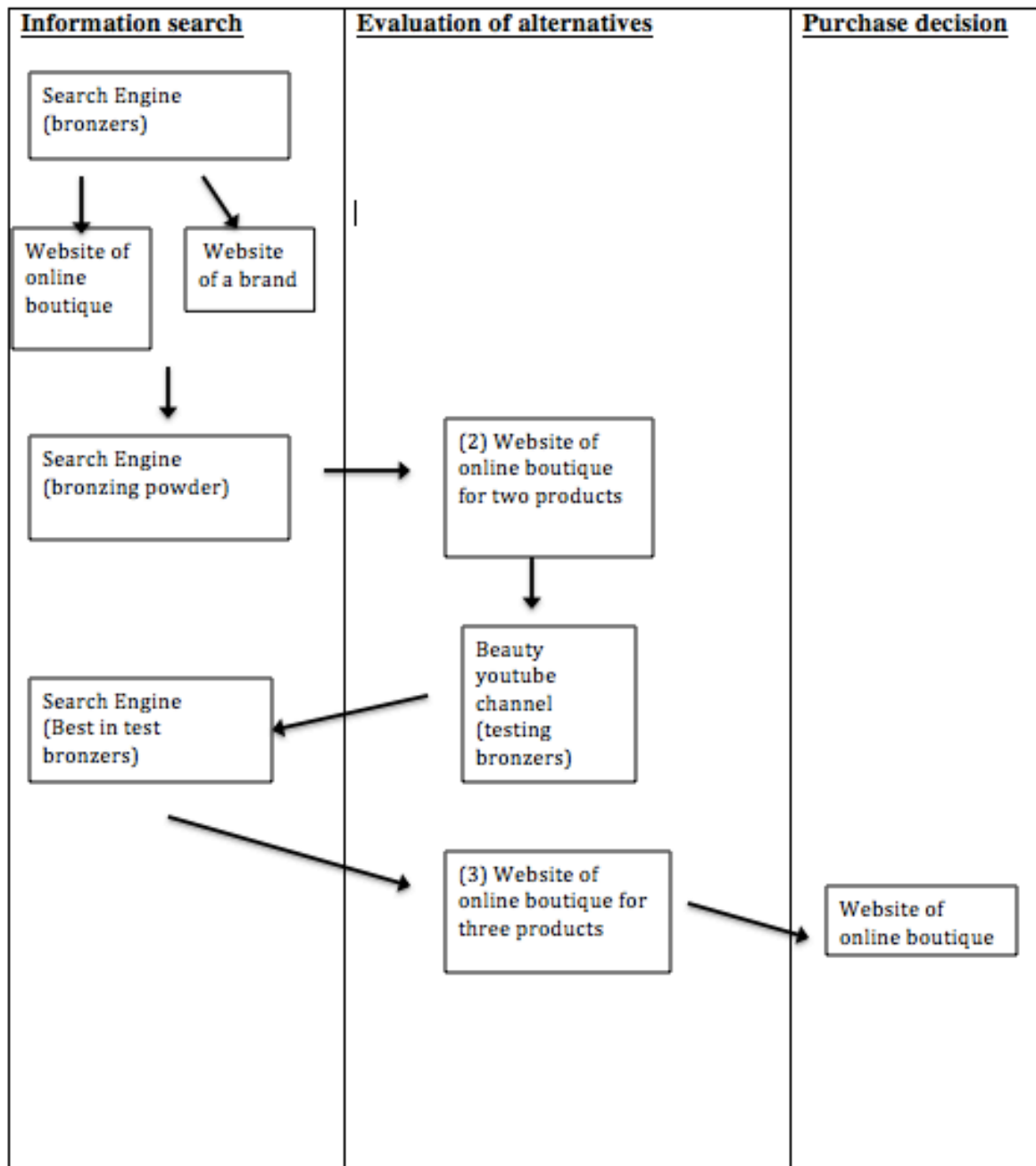
Appendix A



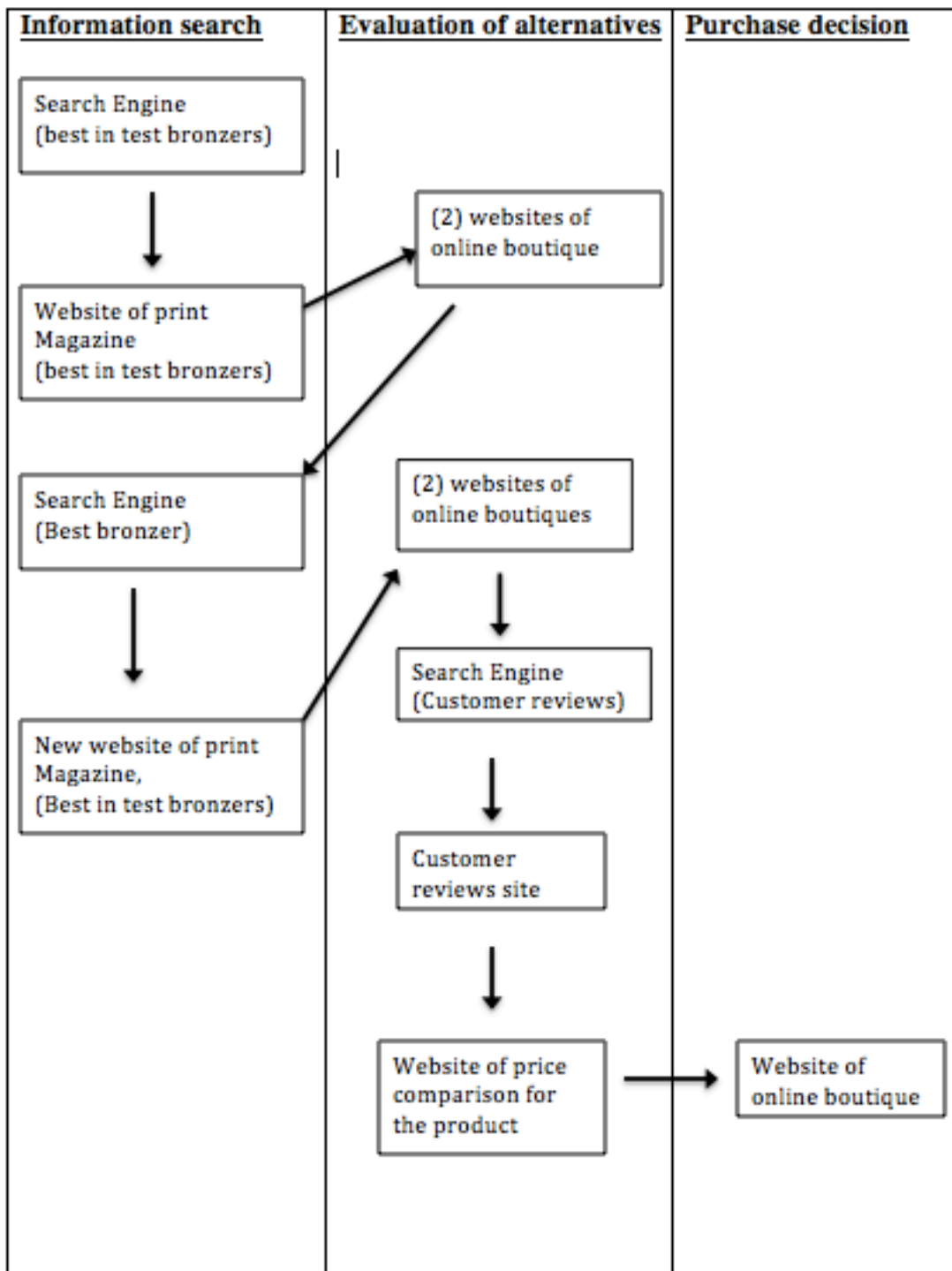
Appendix B



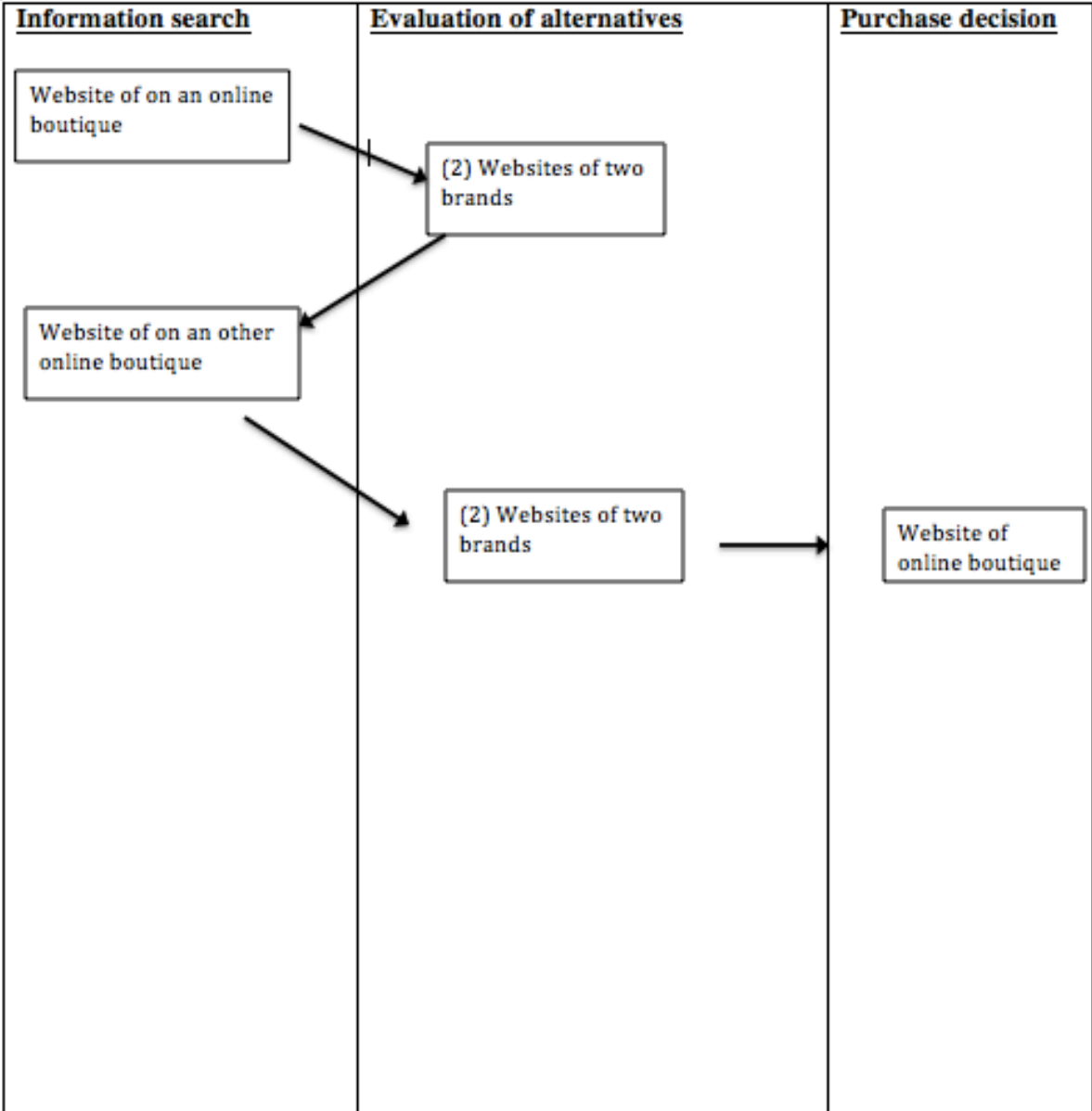
Appendix C



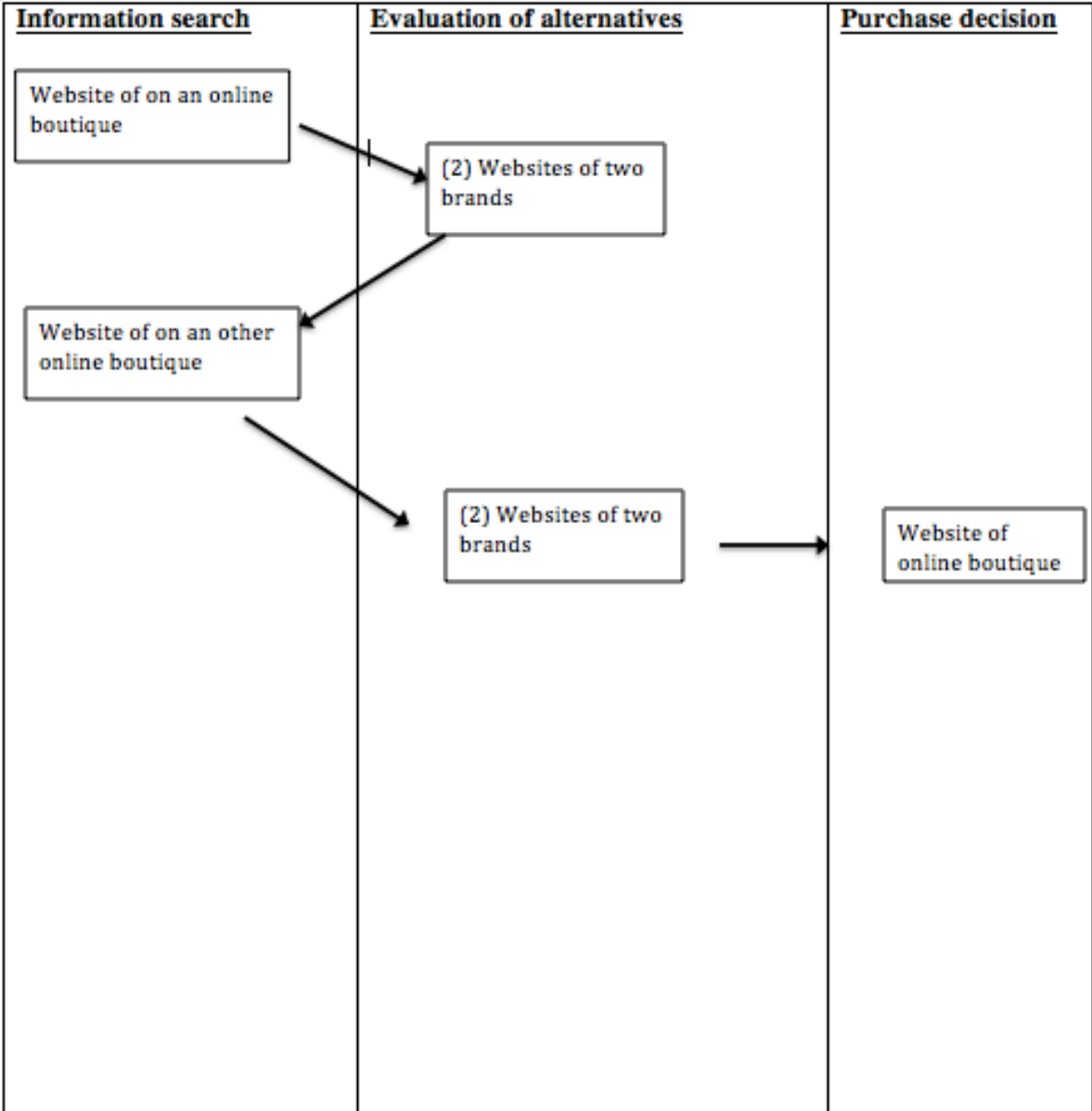
Appendix D



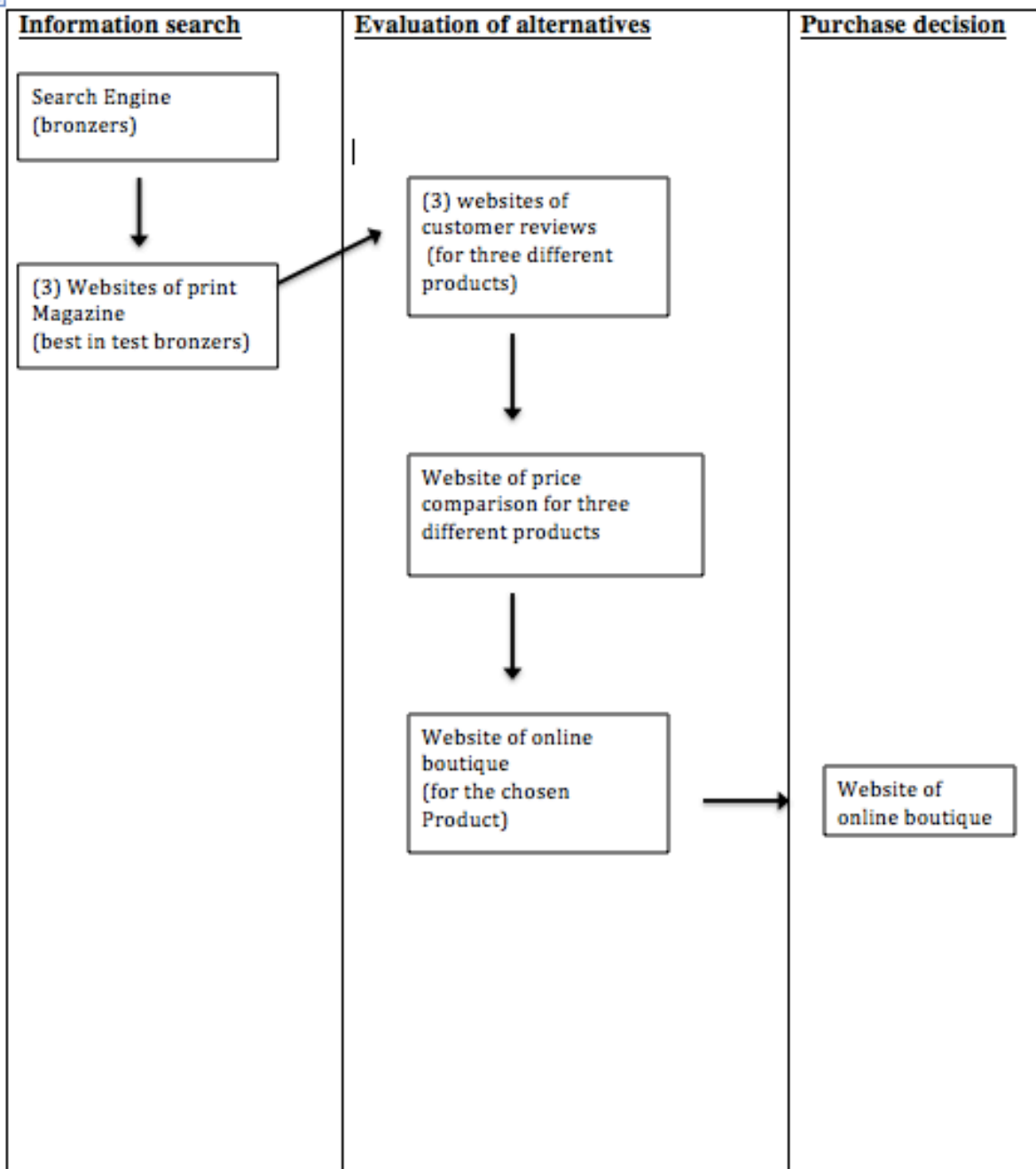
Appendix E



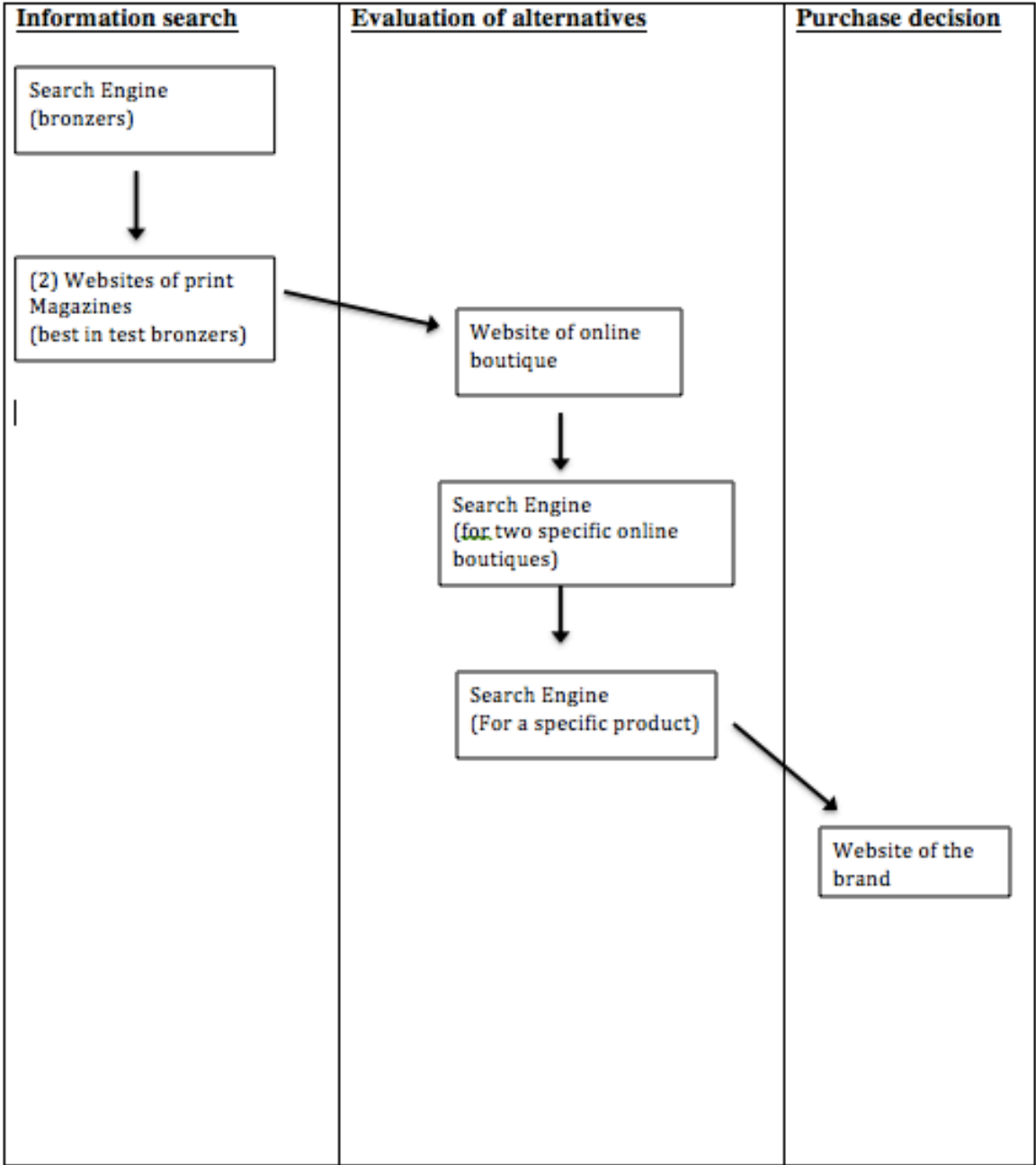
Appendix F



Appendix G



Appendix H



Appendix I

Participen observation 1, Notes

- Went in on Google searching for "best in test bronzers"
- Clicks in on a website of print magazine (Veckorevyn.se) where different bronzers are tested and evaluated
- Chooses three products of the shown bronzers by clicking on the suggested link for each product, which leads them to three different online web shops that sell the product (Kicks.se, Lyko.se and eleven.se)
- Exits all three online web shops sites and goes back to Google and search for "best in test bronzers" again
- Clicks in on a new website of print magazine (Damernasvärld.se) where different bronzers are tested and evaluated
- Uses search engine to search for two specific bronzers from the print magazine and enters to two different online web shops (kicks.se and eleven.se) that sell the products.
- Opens a new window and search on Google for "price comparison" for both products - Goes into a website (prisjakt.nu) that compares prices on the bronzers in different websites, and customer reviews evaluating every website can be found
- Decides to "buy" one of the bronzers at the online web shop "eleven.se"

Appendix J

Participant Observation 2, Notes

- Went in on Google searching for "bronzers"
- Clicks in on a beauty blog (Helene Torsgården) where different bronzers are tested and evaluated
- Chooses two products of the shown bronzers and clicked on them and goes into two different online web shops that sell the product (Makeupforever.com and Sephora.com)
- Exits the two online web shops sites and goes back to Google and search for "top ten bronzers" instead
- Opens three online boutiques with three different products (Kicks.se, Åhléns.se TooFaced.com)
- Uses the search engine to search for "customer reviews" for the two products and clicks in on a site where a person gives feedback on the products.
- Opens a new window and search on Google for "price comparison" for the chosen bronzer
- Goes into a website (prisjakt.nu) that compares prices on the bronzer in different websites, and customer reviews evaluating every website can be found
- Decides to "buy" one of the bronzers at the online web shop "Kicks.se"

Appendix K

Participen observation 3, Notes

- Went in on Google searching for "bronzers"
- Clicks in on an online web shops (Kicks.se) that sell and have customer reviews and a website of a specific brand for a bronzer (Chanel.com).
- Opens a new window and searches for "bronzing powder" instead
- Goes into two different online web shops that sell the product (Kicks.se and Lyko.se)
- Search for two specific products on Google and goes into a Beauty YouTube channel that evaluate bronzers.
- Exits the YouTube channels and goes back to Google and search for "best in test bronzers" instead.
- Goes in to one web shop (Kicks.se) that sell and review their products and clicks up three different products and evaluate between them.
- Decides to "buy" one of the bronzers at the online web shop kicks.se

Appendix L

Participant Observation 4, Notes

- Went in on Google searching for "best in test bronzers"
- Clicks in on a website of print magazine (Plazakvinna.se) where different bronzers are tested and evaluated
- Chooses two products of the shown bronzers and search for them in Google and goes in to two different online web shops that sell the product (Kicks.se and Debenhams.com)
- Exits all three online web shops sites and goes back to Google and search for "best bronzers" again
- Clicks in on a new website of print magazine (Damernasvärld.se) where different bronzers are tested and evaluated
- Uses search engine to search for two specific bronzers from the print magazine and enters to two different online web shops (kicks.se and deberhams.com) that sell the products
- Uses the search engine to search for "customer reviews" for the two products and clicks in on a site where a person gives feedback on the products.
- Opens a new window and search on Google for "price comparison" for the chosen bronzer
- Goes into a website (prisjakt.nu) that compares prices on the bronzer in different websites, and customer reviews evaluating every website can be found
- Decides to "buy" one of the bronzers at the online web shop "Kicks.se"

Appendix M

Participen observation 5, Notes

- Went in on a online web shop (Kicks.se)
- Reviews three products and evaluate between them.
- Exits the online web shop and went to the search engine and search for one specific product from kicks.se
- Goes into a beauty YouTube channel that is testing the chosen bronzer
- Goes back to the kicks.se
- Search in Google for two products reviewed at kicks.se
- Goes into a website for consumer reviews (prisjakt.se)
- Decides to "buy" one of the bronzers at the brands own website

Appendix N

Participen observation 6, Notes

- Went in on a online web shop (Kicks.se)
- Search in Google for two specific brands and goes into their own websites
- Goes into a new online web shop (Åhlens.se)
- Chooses two products from Åhléns and searches for them and goes into the brands websites
- Decides to "buy" one of the bronzers at the online web shop "Kicks.se"

Appendix O

Participen observation 7, Notes

- Went in on Google searching for "best in test bronzers"
- Clicks in on a website of print magazine (Metromode.se) were different bronzers are
- Chooses three products of the shown bronzers by clicking on the suggested link for each product, which leads them to thee different online web shops that sell the product (Kicks.se, Lyko.se and Rituals)
- Opens a window and search for the three products in Google
- Goes into one Beauty blog and One Beauty YouTube channel that tests the products
- Goes to Google and search for one of the three bronzers
- Decides to "buy" one of the bronzers at an online web shop (Lyko.se)

Appendix P

Participen observation 8, Notes

- Went in on Google searching for "bronzers"
- Clicks in on three website of print magazine (Veckorevyn.se, Damernasvärld.se and Metromode.se) where different bronzers are tested
- Chooses three products of the shown bronzers and goes into price a price comparing web site (prisjakt.se) for each and one.
- Searches in Google for the chosen product among the chosen alternatives and goes into Kicks.se
- Decides to "buy" one of the bronzers at an online web shop (Kicks.se)

Appendix Q

Participen observation 9, Notes

- Went in on Google searching for "bronzers"
- - Clicks in on two website of print magazine (Veckorevyn.se, Damernasvärld.se) where different bronzers are tested
- Chooses two products of the shown bronzers and goes into the same web shop (Mac.com)
- Searches in Google for one specific bronzer
- Decides to "buy" one of the bronzers at the website of the brand

Appendix R

Participen observation 10, Notes

- Went in on Google searching for "top ten bronzers"
- Clicks in on a beauty blog (Helene Torsgården) that reviews bronzers
- Chooses two products of the shown bronzers and goes into two online web shop
- Searches for two more online web shops and reviews two more products
- Decides to "buy" one of the bronzers at an online web shop (Kicks.se)