

THE MODERATING EFFECT OF BRAND LIFE ON THE IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH VALENCE ON BRAND LOVE

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valence on brand love

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Abstract

As new brands emerge while consumers increasingly turn away from traditional marketing efforts by the organization, this paper aims to investigate the effects of valenced electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on feelings of brand love towards emerging versus existing brands. For this purpose a quantitative 2 (emerging vs. existing brands) x 3 (e-WOM valence: positive vs. negative vs. an equal ratio) experimental study is initiated.

A total of 402 people have participated, each of them is exposed to one of eighteen different scenarios. Data is collected by an online questionnaire.

For both emerging and existing brands the results show that feelings of brand love increase because of positive e-WOM messages. However, they diminish as a result of negative e-WOM. Though, an interaction effect is not significantly supported, the data do show a tendency that emerging brands are more susceptible to valenced e-WOM messages than existing brands.

This study provides valuable insight in the effects that valenced e-WOM elicits on feelings of brand love for both emerging and existing brands. This combination of variables contributes to existing literature on e-WOM, brand life and brand love.

Though e-WOM communication cannot be directly directed by marketers, the present research reconfirms that organizations should draw attention on the generation of positive e-WOM messages in order to arouse greater feelings of brand love, and prevent negative e-WOM messages in order to avoid diminished feelings of brand love. These effects concern all brands, but a tendency is observed that emerging brands are more susceptible.

Keywords: e-WOM valence, stages of brand life, brand love

Acknowledgments

After seven years of satisfying profession as Manager International Trade it was clear to me that time for a new challenge had come. On the one hand, I had gained much practical experience because of my profession. On the other hand I encountered a fragile scholarly foundation. A strong desire to enhance the latter arose. At that moment the master study Communication Science at the University Twente came on screen. A 180° turnabout came into my life that brought me to where I am at this very moment. During these eighteen months of interesting courses taught by competent lecturers, and the last year in which I have invested a lot of my time, knowledge and energy to conduct this research I have evolved into a marketing communication professional.

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Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgments	4
Contents	5
1. Introduction	6
2. Literature review and conceptual framework	9
2.1. From customer brand relation to brand love	9
2.2. Electronic word-of-mouth valence	10
2.3. Brand love: the impact of valenced e-WOM messages	12
2.4. Brand life	13
2.5. Conceptual framework	17
3. Methodology	18
3.1. Procedure	18
3.2. Participants	20
3.3. Instruments	20
3.4. Manipulation check	21
4. Results	23
4.1. Main effect	23
4.2. Interaction effect	24
5. Discussion	26
5.1. Findings and conclusions	26
5.2. Theoretical implications	28
5.3. Managerial implications	29
5.4. Limitations and suggestions for future research	30
References	32
Appendices	37
Appendix I: Scales	37
Appendix II: Stimulus materials	39
Appendix III: Questionnaire	46

1. Introduction

Particularly since the start of the new millennium, new brands emerge at a high pace (Kohli, Harich, & Leuthesser, 2005), as there are various reasons, i.e., mergers, take-overs, and globalization. The majority of brands aim to build a strong customer-brand relationship (CBR), or more specifically develop greater feelings of brand love among their patronage, which is a central construct in CBR (Rageh Ismail, & Spinelli, 2012). Consumers with strong feelings of brand love can be of benefit to the organization as they show greater loyalty, resistance to negative information, and engagement in positive word-of-mouth (WOM) towards the brand (Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012).

Despite that marketers collect relevant data and test the brand concept, the product, and the market performance, it remains difficult and perilous to develop a new brand (Ehrenberg, 2002). On the one hand, high costs involved with the introduction of a new brand compel organizations to spend increasing amounts of money on advertising every year (Taube, 2015), with the objective to communicate with their patronage and create awareness for the brand. Relatively, most advertising money is spent during the introduction stage, making this proportionally the most expensive phase of brand life in respect to marketing efforts (Liebermann, 1986). On the other hand, the predominantly traditional marketing tools to increase the success of products and brands are not as effective as they once used to be, as consumers turn away from them (Blakley, 2013; Burmann & Arnhold, 2008; Christodoulides, Michaelidou, & Argyriou, 2012).

In order to make evaluations about products and brands, consumers rather consult more modern marketing channels such as online reviews, also referred to as electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), since such supposedly objective judgements are being perceived as more credible (Allsop, Bassett, & Hoskins, 2007; Blakley, 2013). Scholars have provided proof that (e-)WOM is more effective in dispersing a message than, e.g., newspaper ads, direct sales, radio commercials (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955), and advertising (Day, 1971; Morin, as cited by Swanson & Kelley, 2001), and can play a powerful part in consumers' decision making process. Previous studies unveil that positive (e-)WOM (PWOM) frequently accounts for more purchases than advertising (Day, 1971; Morin, as cited by Swanson & Kelley, 2001;

Zhu & Zhang, 2006). Therefore, various organizations try to employ PWOM communication as part of their communication towards customers (Grace & O'Cass, 2005). However, Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) suggest that negative (e-)WOM (NWOM) is more influential on consumers' attitudes than PWOM. In addition, consumers tend to trust e-WOM communication more if the review valence points in the same direction rather than ambiguous e-WOM (Doh & Hwang, 2009).

The present study contributes to contemporary research on e-WOM valence and brand love. First, since consumers tend to turn away from traditional marketing activities which are primarily initialized from inside the company and rather trust third party communication about a brand (e.g., Blakley, 2013; Burmann & Arnhold, 2008; Christodoulides et al., 2012), it is relevant to unveil the effects of valenced e-WOM on brand love. Nowadays, e-WOM exposure to consumers is growing, as many online shops offer their patronage the possibility to post online reviews about the product or brand. In the online environment, e-WOM can be found directly on organizations' websites (e.g., amazon.com, bol.com), external websites (e.g., facebook.com, google.com and twitter.com), and on third-party websites (e.g., opinions.com, kiyoh.nl), where consumers can post reviews about products and brands. Second, this study adds value to the knowledge of emerging brands, by demonstrating the influence that valenced e-WOM messages can exert on consumers' feelings of brand love at the introduction stage of brand life. These findings can help advise emerging brands on the significance of valenced e-WOM generation. Third, the number of brand developments has shown a rapid growth over the last decades, though many have not proven to be successful (Kohli et al., 2005). Therefore, it can be of managerial relevance to examine the effect of valenced e-WOM communication on feelings of brand love during different stages of brand life, i.e., the introduction stage will be compared with post-introduction stages.

The author wants to gain understanding and provide relevant insights to marketing practitioners and academics by analyzing how valenced e-WOM messages affect consumers' feelings of love towards the brand at different stages of brand life. To find answers to the research questions, this study focuses on the relationship between valenced e-WOM messages and brand love, while measuring the moderating effect of two different stages of a brand life. Engagement in PWOM is linked to greater feelings of brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), though the effect of

exposure to differently valenced e-WOM communication on feelings of brand love has not been studied till date. Therefore, the following research question is formulated:

RQ1: What is the influence of e-WOM valence on brand love?

Various scholars distinguish different stages during brand life. Most scholars agree on the characteristics of the introduction phase, but have diverse conceptualizations for all post-introduction stages (e.g., Bivainiene, 2010; Grantham, 1997; Mootee, 2007; Park, Jaworski & MacInnis, 1986). As familiarity with the brand moderates the impact of WOM on brand evaluations (Sundaram & Webster, 1999), the author assumes to uncover analogous for the influence of valenced e-WOM on the intensity of brand love among consumers also varies during different stages of brand life. Especially, as brands generally face high marketing costs during the introduction phase (Taube, 2015), yet many fail during this stage (Ambler & Styles, 1996), it will be interesting to uncover if there is a difference in effect of e-WOM valence on brand love during a brand's introduction stage compared to the post-introduction phase. These findings can provide valuable information to marketers whether or not to focus on generating valenced e-WOM messages during the various stages of brand life and in turn save cost and effort for organizations. Moreover, research on consumers' different feelings of brand love that are exerted by valenced e-WOM for emerging brands as opposed to existing is not existent. Therefore, the second research question reads as follows:

RQ2: How does valenced e-WOM influence brand love during different stages of brand life?

2. Literature review and conceptual framework

This section analyzes preceding research that has been conducted on the main topics of this study. Earlier findings will be employed and linked to form hypotheses for this study. Conceptualizations of customer brand relations, e-WOM valence, and brand life will be outlined.

2.1. From customer brand relation to brand love

Customer satisfaction has been the foundation of marketing for decades and constitutes the core of numerous studies however a sole focus on customer satisfaction is not sufficient for organizations to be successful and competitive (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Consumer-brand-relationships (CBR) go beyond the stage of satisfaction (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Diverse distinctions are made in bonds between consumers and brands, ranging in intensity and continuation.

Though, many studies have been conducted on CBR, research on brand love is relatively new and remains in its infancy, leaving questions open about its antecedents and consequences. Scholars have studied CBR and brand love constructs from different viewpoints, resulting in different conceptualizations and definitions. Shimp and Madden (1988), are pioneers when it comes to the brand love construct. They were first to explore the love bond between consumers and an object or brand, a study that embroiders on Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of interpersonal love. Shimp and Madden (1988) apply the three psychological processes of Sternberg's (1986) study on CBR, i.e., liking, yearning, and decision/commitment. To qualify as a love oriented CBR, or brand love, the presence of a strong positive yearning and a long-term commitment for the object is required (Shimp & Madden, 1988). However, Fetscherin and Conway (2012), argue that brand love should be conceptualized from the perspective of parasocial love, rather than interpersonal love. Parasocial love can be explained as a one-sided interpersonal love relationship in which one party has great knowledge about another, though the other does not reciprocate this knowledge (Horton & Wohl, as cited in Fetscherin & Conway, 2012), e.g., a love relationship between a fan and a celebrity.

Fournier (1998), unveils the importance of feelings of love towards the brand in order to build a long-term CBR. Further, a differentiation is made between brand love and satisfaction (Fournier & Mick, 1999). Brand love has a strong affective focus over a longer period of time, whereas satisfaction relates to a cognitive process and is considered as a transaction-specific consequence (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Brand love emphasizes on the passionate emotional connection that a fulfilled customer senses for a certain brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

Various studies underline the importance of brand love in the field of marketing (Batra et al., 2012). Although, most scholars acknowledge similarities between brand love and interpersonal love (e.g., Ahuvia, 2005; Albert & Valette-Florence, 2010; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Whang, Allen, Sahoury, & Zhang, 2004), there is little agreement on the definition, underlying dimensions, and ways to measure this construct.

It is argued that brand love has positive effects for organizations. One benefit is that brand love can generate engagement in PWOM (e.g., Albert & Merunka, 2013; Batra et al., 2012; Sarkar, 2011; Thomson, MacInnis, Park, 2005); if a consumer has feelings of love towards a brand, then it can be expected that this consumer spreads positive things to others about this brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Another way in which brand love positively influences the organization is that brand love elicits loyalty towards a brand. Many academics (e.g., Albert, Merunka, Valette-Florence, 2008b; Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Sarkar, 2011; Thomson et al. 2005), agree that once a feeling of love between a consumer and a brand has been established, it is expected that these consumers will repeatedly purchase the brand and disregard competing brands. Moreover, consumers who feel greater brand love are tend to question negative information about a product (Batra et al., 2012).

2.2. Electronic word-of-mouth valence

Studies on e-WOM can be roughly classified in three groups: review quantity, review valence, and review attribute. This study focuses on valence, which is a popular research topic in respect to consumers' online reviews. Valence refers to the directionality of reviews' contents, which can positive or negative (Buttle, 1998; Lee,

Rodgers, & Kim, 2009), but it can also be a mix of both, ranging along a continuum from positive to negative (Goyette, Ricard, Bergeron, & Marticotte, 2010). PWOM communications mostly emphasize the product's or brand's benefits and advantages, and relate to pleasant or novel experiences with the product, leading to recommendations to others (Anderson, 1998; Buttle, 1998; Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Contrary, NWOM messages underline the weaknesses of a product or brand and mostly advise against the acquisition (Anderson, 1998; Buttle, 1998; Cheung & Thadani, 2012). The author wants to study the effects of three levels of e-WOM valence: PWOM, NWOM, and an equal mix of both positive and negative e-WOM messages (MWOM).

Findings on the consequences of e-WOM valence are not univocal (Lee & Koo, 2012). Various scholars have demonstrated the positive effects exerted by PWOM. Many studies have uncovered that positive consumer ratings have a direct effect on sales increase (Berger, Sorensen & Rasmussen, 2010; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Zhu & Zhang, 2006). For example, an increase of one point in consumer ratings has led to a 4% sales increase (Zhu & Zhang, 2006). Furthermore, PWOM messages indirectly affect sales, as it can increase revenue by generating a greater buzz (Duan, Gu, & Whinston, 2008), and it can predict future revenues (Dellarocas, Awad, & Zhang, 2004). Not only sales, but also attitude towards the brand is affected by PWOM messages. Lee et al. (2009), have uncovered that extremely positive reviews improve consumers' attitudes toward the brand.

Contradicting findings on the effects of negative reviews have also been reported. NWOM messages can lead to sales increase in certain cases, as it attracts attention to a product that would otherwise would have remained unknown (Berger et al., 2010).

Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006), state that increasingly positive reviews have a weaker effect on sales growth, than increasingly negative reviews have on sales decrease. This suggests that NWOM has a stronger effect on consumers' attitudes and behaviors than PWOM. Kellermann (1984), calls it the negativity effect, when discussing consumers giving disproportionate weight to negative judgements. Consumers' negative experiences with a brand can get influential and widespread, and wield greater power than positive information or emotions of the same class (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). Further, NWOM, even if moderate, damages attitude

towards the brand (Lee et al., 2009), and corporate reputation (Williams, Buttle, & Biggemann, 2012)

Most of the e-WOM communication is mixed with positively and negatively valenced messages. Unanimity of e-WOM valence plays an important role in consumers' responses. Doh and Hwang (2009), state that consumers are more likely to trust e-WOM messages if their valence points in the same direction. A higher consensus in valence of e-WOM messages leads to higher persuasiveness, which in turn affects consumers' trust in these reviews (Doh & Hwang, 2009). Moreover, a mix of e-WOM pointing in both directions confuses receivers and stimulates them to focus more on the content of an e-WOM message (Duan, Gu, & Whinston, 2008).

2.3. Brand love: the impact of valenced e-WOM messages

On the one side, consumers tend to turn away from traditional marketing communications exerted by the organization behind a brand, and rather use e-WOM to help evaluate the alternatives in their decision making process (Allsop et al., 2007; Blakley, 2013). On the other side, organizations want to build strong CBR by creating greater feelings of brand love among their patronage (Rageh Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). Therefore, it is interesting to see if an effect exists between valenced e-WOM messages and brand love. Contemporary research does not provide data about the direct effects of e-WOM messages on brand love. Various scholars have unveiled that PWOM messages lead to increased sales (Berger et al., 2010; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Zhu & Zhang, 2006), and improves consumers' attitudes toward the brand (Lee et al., 2009), in contrast to NWOM messages, that lead to decreased sales (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006), damage attitude towards the brand (Lee et al., 2009), and corporate reputation (Williams et al., 2012).

Consistent with these earlier findings on the effects of e-WOM valence, the assumption is made that e-WOM valence also holds a positive relationship with feelings brand love. Therefore, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H_{1a}: PWOM messages have a more positive effect on brand love than NWOM messages.

H_{1b}: PWOM messages have a more positive effect on brand love than MWOM messages.

H_{1c}: MWOM messages have a more positive effect on brand love than NWOM messages.

2.4. Brand life

Various scholars have conducted research on how consumers evaluate brands during brand life. Franzen (1999), states that loyalty towards emerging brands arises slowly overtime, i.e., emerging brands do not acquire instant loyalty from consumers. Further, brand trust is higher among consumers of existing brands, in contrast to newly introduced brands (McCarthy, Heath, & Milberg, 2001). Moreover, Sundaram and Webster (1999), demonstrate that familiarity with the brand moderates the impact of WOM on brand evaluations.

2.4.1. Life span versus life cycle

Scholars have dissenting views on the phases and duration of brand life. Simon (1979), defines the brand life cycle (BLC) as the "time series ... of quantities sold of a particular brand" (p. 439), but makes a clear distinction between a brand and a product. Others state that the stages of the BLC correspond to those of a product (Bivainiene, 2010; Suttle, 2015). Apart from the innovation and development phase, this lifecycle comprises four different stages: introduction, growth, maturity, and decline (Bivainiene, 2010). Further, Mootee (2007), emphasizes the increase in brand power when discussing brand life.

In contrast, it is argued that brands follow life cycles like products and have unveiled that brands do not adhere to a smooth life cycle, as some brands move from the maturity phase back to a stage of growth (Dhalla & Yuseph, 1976). Kapferer (2012), emphasizes that brands are not products. Apart from brands that are attached to a single product, brand life can be extended and renewed by extending or innovating the brand covering products. In such way brands reach a phase of decline at a much later stage, if at all (Kapferer, 2012).

As this study aims to unveil the effects of valanced e-WOM messages on brand love for emerging brands as opposed to existing brands, this study will focus on brands in the introduction stage on the one side, compared to brands in a post-introduction stage on the other side.

2.4.2. Introduction stage

The definition of the brand introduction stage differs among scholars. Most of them agree that the introduction stage is the phase where the brand gets in first contact with the marketplace (e.g. Bivainiene, 2010; Dhalla & Yuseph, 1976; Park et al., 1986). However, the conceptualization of this stage and the actions to be taken by marketers vary among academics. Park et al., (1986), emphasize that communication of the brand image and positioning in the marketplace is the first step to be taken. Thereafter, transactional barriers need to be removed by ensuring that the brand is approachable both timely and geographically (Park et al., 1986). It is important that brand awareness is increasing during the introduction stage of the BLC (Bivainiene, 2010). Further, organizations should advertise their brands in order to create familiarity to the brand and brand awareness (Suttle, 2015), and early adopters are likely to try the brand and spread the word to other consumers (Bivainiene, 2010).

2.4.3. Post-Introduction stages

Academics differ in thinking when it comes to the phases after the brand introduction stage. First, Park et al. (1986), explain that a stage of elaboration comes into existence, as the competitive market is becoming more complex. The aim of this stage is to enhance the value of brand image over its competitors and is followed by the final stage: fortification (Park et al., 1986). During this last phase of brand life, it is aim to link other products to the elaborated brand image, so the individual products under the same brand can reinforce one another (Park et al., 1986). Second, Dhalla and Yuseph (1976), question a predefined order of post-introduction life cycle stages for brands. They state that numerous brands have gone from maturity back to rapid growth. Third, Simon (1979) follows the stages of a product's life cycle, though clearly distinguishes brands from products. Finally, Bivainiene (2010), and Suttle (2015), have adopted stages of the product life cycle, meaning that a phase of growth sets in after the introduction stage. However, duration of the different BLC stages depend on the type of industry and market (Hiam, as cited by Grantham,

1997). Especially, the existence of the final stage of BLC, the decline, is doubted by scholars (e.g., Dhalla & Yuseph, 1976; Grantham, 1997), as brands may be renewed or expanded (Kapferer, 2012).

2.4.4. The moderating role of brand life

The rationale for this research is to uncover the influence of valenced e-WOM messages on brand love during brand life, a relationship that has only received little attention in marketing literature. Therefore, the effect will be examined for emerging brands, i.e. brands in the introduction phase, and existing brands, i.e. brands in the post-introduction phase.

Various studies have been conducted on the influence of valenced (e-)WOM messages on consumers' attitudes and behavior. Research by Herr, Kardes and Kim (1991) on the effects of WOM and product attribute information on persuasion unveiled that the impact of WOM is reduced by preceding knowledge of brand attributes. This effect is assigned to an existent impression about the brand available in memory (Herr et al., 1991). Moreover, WOM is used to diminish uncertainty about unfamiliar sources, i.e., brands (Olshavsky & Granbois, 1979)

Chatterjee (2001), has tested the effects of NWOM on purchase intention. The results unveil that NWOM negatively affects consumers' purchase intention and retailer reliability. The effects are stronger for unfamiliar retailers than for familiar ones, implying that familiarity with the retailer or brand mitigates the effect of NWOM as opposed to an unfamiliar retailer or brand. Following this study, the author assumes that NWOM has a stronger detrimental effect on feelings of brand love, when about — less familiar — emerging brands, as opposed to — more familiar — existing brands, which leads to the following hypothesis:

H_{2a}: Consumers exposed to NWOM messages show weaker feelings of brand love, when concerning brands in the introduction stage, as opposed to brand in the post-introduction stage.

Contrarily, research on the effects of PWOM and familiarity have shown that unfamiliar brands can benefit more from PWOM than familiar brands (Sundaram &

Webster, 1999). A possible explanation is that PWOM diminishes risk perception, resulting in a more favorable brand attitude and purchase intention towards the brand, as a result of PWOM (Sundaram & Webster, 1999). Sweeney, Soutar and Mazzarol (2014) support this with similar findings, as they have uncovered that earlier involvement with a service provider decreases the influence of a PWOM message.

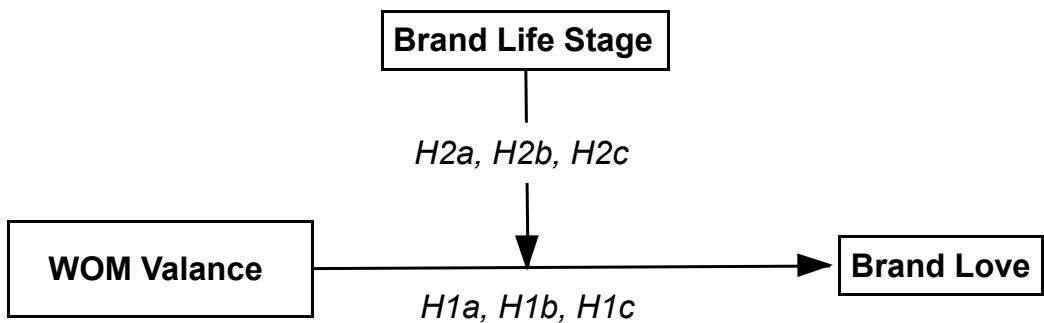
Following these studies, the author anticipates that PWOM messages about existing brands have less effect on feelings of brand love, as familiarity with these brands is assumed to be higher. In comparison, the effects that PWOM messages exert on feelings of brand love among emerging brands are expected to be relatively higher. Therefore, the following hypothesis has been derived:

H_{2b}: Consumers exposed to PWOM messages show greater feelings of brand love, when concerning brands in the introduction stage, as opposed to brands in the post-introduction stage.

Finally, WOM communication that points equally in both directions (MWOM), exerts diminished trust among consumers, as opposed to unambiguous PWOM or NWOM (Doh & Hwang, 2009). This is caused by a reduced consensus in valence, which in turn leads to weaker persuasiveness (Doh & Hwang, 2009). The role of prior knowledge about the brand declines, as the ratio between positive and negative valence becomes more balanced (Doh & Hwang, 2009). As the MWOM scenario is operationalized by an equal ratio of positive and negative messages, it is expected that:

H_{2c}: Consumers exposed to MWOM show no significant difference in feelings of brand love, when it concerns brands at the introduction stage of brand life, as opposed to brands in post-introduction stage.

2.5. Conceptual framework



3. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to reveal the impact of valenced e-WOM messages and the introduction versus the post-introduction stage of brand life on brand love. A quantitative study demonstrates to be the most suitable method to find answers to the research question and test the hypotheses. For this purpose a 3 (PWOM vs. MWOM vs. NWOM messages) x 2 (emerging vs. existing brands) experimental design is set up. The stimulus materials are created by combining real and fictitious online reviews from different websites. The credibility and persuasiveness of information of these e-WOM messages, as well as the difference in valence, has been tested first. These results are discussed in chapter 3.3.

3.1. Procedure

Data has been collected by the means of an anonymous, self-administered, cross-sectional survey. First, respondents are asked to answer questions regarding their demographical characteristics. Thereafter, participants need to select one of three different product categories that most appeal to them, i.e., electronics, fashion or food. The author has selected these product categories, as they strongly associate with feelings of love (Albert et al., 2008b). Subsequently, half of the respondents are randomly assigned to one of three groups of existing brands and are asked to enter their most loved brand, the other half are assigned to one of three groups of emerging brands and are introduced to a fictitious brand. Finally, groups are exposed to the different stimulus materials, i.e., positive, negative, or an equal mix of e-WOM messages about the brand, see Appendix II. This results in eighteen groups exposed to different manipulated independent variables, as shown in table 1.

	PWOM		MWOM		NWOM		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Existing brands								
Electronics	Group 1a	18	4.5	Group 2a	18	4.5	Group 3a	16
Fashion	Group 1b	32	8	Group 2b	29	7.2	Group 3b	30
Foodstuff	Group 1c	21	5.2	Group 2c	19	4.7	Group 3c	19
	71	17.7		66	16.4		65	16.2
							202	50.2
Emerging brands								
Electronics	Group 1d	18	4.5	Group 2d	18	4.5	Group 3d	15
Fashion	Group 1e	31	7.7	Group 2e	32	8	Group 3e	25
Foodstuff	Group 1f	20	5	Group 2f	17	4.2	Group 3f	24
	69	17.2		67	16.7		64	15.9
							200	49.8
Total	140	34.8		133	33.1		129	32.1
							402	

Tabel 1: Distribution of the different scenarios

Groups 1a-f are shown different positive consumer reviews. Groups 2a-f are exposed to an equal ratio of positive and negative consumer reviews, whereas groups 3a-f to negative ones. Thereafter, all respondents are asked to evaluate valence, credibility, and persuasiveness of information of the stimulus materials. These items are assessed by a semantic differential scale. Finally, the dependent variable, brand love, has been tested.

Data have been collected between February 10 and March 27, 2015. Qualtrics software is used to create and distribute the survey, as well to collect and store data. The sample represents the Dutch adult population. The survey is therefore administered in the dutch language. Respondents are recruited through online social media platforms, forums, and SONA sample pool which is supplied by the University of Twente. Appendix III provides an overview of the questions that are asked in this survey.

3.2. Participants

In total 520 participants have started the survey, of which 118 participants dropped out after being exposed to the stimulus materials or have not completed the full questionnaire. This brings the total sample size to 402 unique participants of which are 31.1% male and 68.9% female. The average age of the respondents is 28.22 (SD = 9.07, Min = 15, Max = 69). The majority of the respondents possess a university degree (42%), followed by a college degree (32.6%), and further middle and lower education (25.4%). See table 2.

Demographics		N	%
<i>Gender:</i>			
	Male	125	31.1
	Female	277	68.9
<i>Age:</i>			
	11 thru 20	66	16.4
	21 thru 30	211	52.5
	31 thru 40	86	21.4
	41 thru 50	27	6.7
	51 thru 60	8	2.0
	61 thru 70	4	1.0
<i>Highest Education:</i>			
	University	169	42.0
	HBO	131	32.6
	MBO	84	20.9
	LBO	11	2.7
	Primary/Secondary	7	1.7

Table 2: Respondent characteristics

3.3. Instruments

The various constructs are measured by the use of proven scales. The brand love construct is measured by the means of a multiple-factor 6 items scale by Bagozzi, Batra, and Ahuvia (2014). Though, the original scale consists of 56 items (Batra et al., 2012), the author has decided to use a reduced version of this scale in

which the wording is revised to allow respondents to read faster, resulting in a scale with 6-items (Bagozzi et al., 2014). Respondents are tested on 6 different dimensions which are antecedent to brand love. Agreement with the first 5 items is to be answered on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from “not at all” to “very much,” with “moderately” as mid-point. Agreement with item 6 can be expressed by attributing a number between 1 (not at all) and 10 (very much). Further, the credibility or trustworthiness of the stimulus materials is measured by using a 5-items scale by Till and Busler (2000). Finally, a 6-items scale by Gürhan-Canli and Maheswaran (2000), is used to measure the quality of argument of the stimulus materials. A 7-point semantic differential scale is used to measure these items. All scales can be consulted in Appendix I.

The internal consistency of the deployed scales is analyzed by the use of a reliability analysis. Reliability for each of the multi-item scales is assessed by using Cronbach's alpha (α), as shown in table 3. Reliability of the constructs measured in this study are all above 0.8. As scores above 0.8 are considered as good (Pallant, 2005), it may be concluded that the used scales show a good internal consistency.

Scales	Items	α
WOM Credibility	5	.90
WOM Persuasiveness of information	6	.93
Brand Love	6	.89

Table 3: Reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alphas)

3.4. Manipulation check

To test the quality of the stimulus materials for the final survey, a pre-test with 17 participants has been performed. This manipulation check is carried out to guarantee significant differences between e-WOM valence, and tests if the credibility, and persuasiveness of argument are the same for all the stimulus materials. First, an ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) analysis is performed to analyze differences between PWOM, MWOM, and NWOM messages. This result indicates the presence of a main effect of e-WOM valance ($F (2,48) = 245.16, p < .001$).

Respondents exposed to the PWOM condition ($M = 6.52$, $SD = 0.62$) perceive valance as significantly more positive than the respondents exposed to the MWOM condition ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.49$), in turn respondents in the NWOM condition perceive the valance significantly more negative ($M = 1.65$, $SD = 0.79$), than respondent to the MWOM condition. It may be concluded that the manipulation has succeeded, as a main effect is observed in all three scenarios.

Secondly, credibility of the stimulus materials is tested within each group. An ANOVA analysis is conducted and no main effects are uncovered ($F(2,48) = 0.63$, $p = .54$). The level of credibility between the PWOM ($M = 5.46$, $SD = 1.13$), MWOM ($M = 5.53$, $SD = 1.02$), and NWOM ($M = 5.15$, $SD = 0.94$), shows no significant differences.

The third construct that is measured during the pretest is persuasiveness of argument regarding the e-WOM messages. ANOVA analysis shows that no main effects between groups are existent ($F(2,48) = 0.03$, $p = .97$). The level of persuasiveness of argument between PWOM ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 1.35$), the MWOM ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.13$), and NWOM ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.23$), show no significant differences.

4. Results

4.1. Main effect

To test the hypotheses H_{1a} , H_{1b} , and H_{1c} , the author has performed a one-way between subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) test, followed by a post-hoc Bonferroni test. The independent variables consist of three conditions (positive, negative and mixed), which are significantly different, as revealed in the manipulation check.

The results of the one-way ANOVA indicate that the difference in means between PWOM ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.47$), and MWOM ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.53$), and NWOM ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.49$), are statistically significant ($F(2,396) = 3.057$, $p = .048$). Bonferroni tests indicate that the PWOM group scores significantly higher on brand love than the NWOM group. Nevertheless, the MWOM group does not show a significant difference to both the PWOM and NWOM groups. Table 5 gives an overview of the differences in means between the groups.

	PWOM			MWOM			NWOM		
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N
Existing brands									
Electronics	4.17	1.41	18	4.03	1.33	18	3.76	1.37	16
Fashion	3.85	1.16	32	3.81	1.18	29	3.82	1.07	30
Foodstuff	3.99	1.00	21	3.94	1.25	19	4.03	0.91	19
	3.97	1.17	71	3.91	1.23	66	3.87	1.10	65
Emerging brands									
Electronics	2.35	1.19	18	2.24	1.43	18	1.67	0.93	15
Fashion	2.69	1.28	31	1.64	0.76	32	1.80	1.06	25
Foodstuff	1.42	0.58	20	2.01	1.02	17	1.52	0.75	24
	2.23	1.21	69	1.89	1.06	67	1.67	0.91	64
Total	3.11	1.47	140	2.89	1.53	133	2.78	1.49	129

Table 5: Means and standard deviations of brand love for each scenario

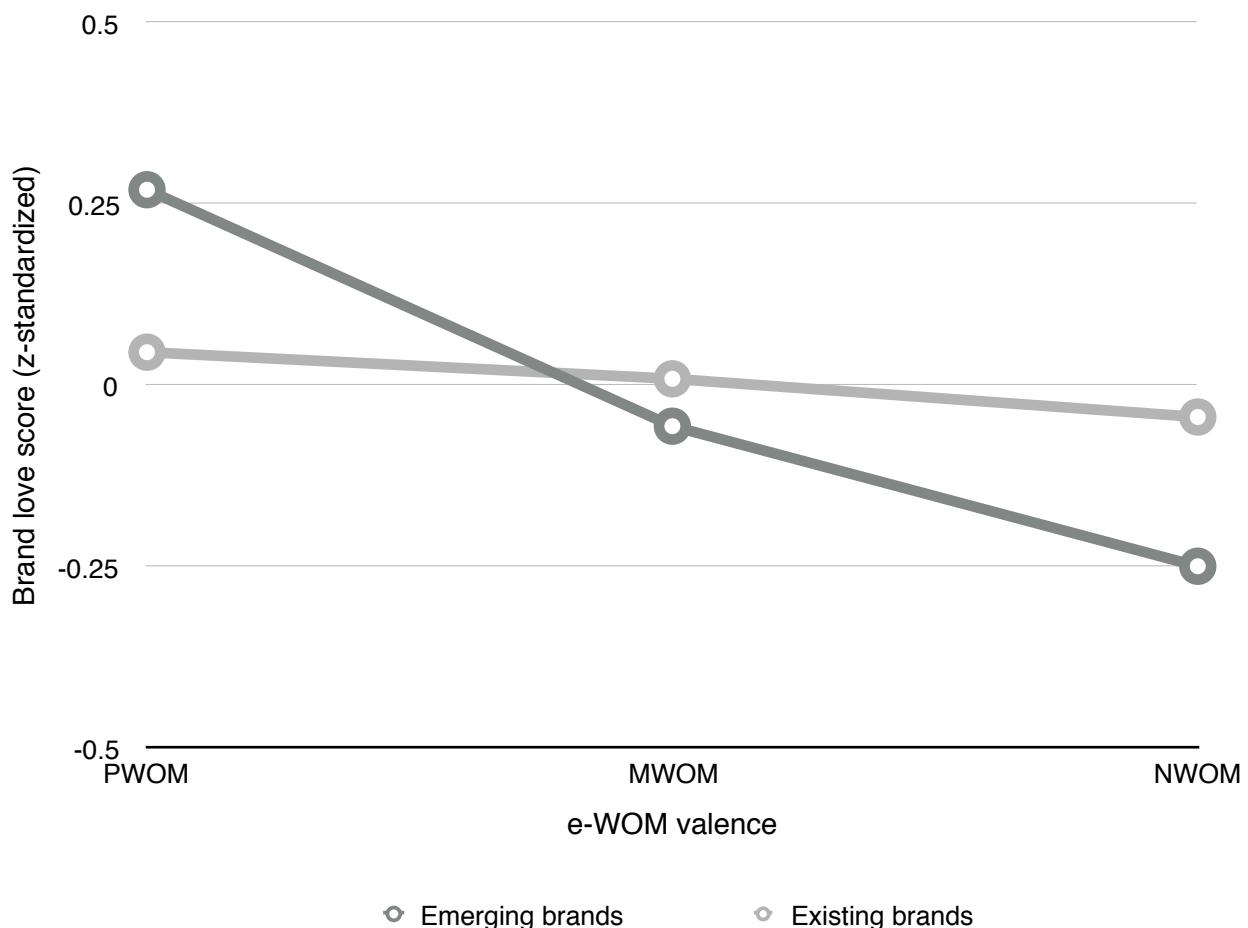
Taken together, these results show that e-WOM messages do have an effect on feelings of brand love among consumers. PWOM messages enforce feelings of brand love, whereas NWOM messages cease feelings of brand love among consumers. The results show a significant main effect for e-WOM valence on

feelings of brand love. The effect is found between PWOM and NWOM, which supports hypothesis H_{1a} . No significant difference is uncovered between PWOM and MWOM, nor between NWOM and MWOM, therefore hypotheses H_{1b} and H_{1c} are rejected.

4.2. Interaction effect

The presence of an interaction effect is tested by a 3 (e-WOM Valence) \times 2 (Brand Life Stage) ANOVA on the scores of brand love. Both WOM Valence ($F(2,396) = 3.057, p = .048$), and Brand Life Stage ($F(2,396) = 314.375, p < .0005$), have a statistically significant effect on Brand Love. However, no significant interaction effect ($F(2,396) = 1.456, p = .235$) is observed. As a result of this, hypotheses H_{2a} , H_{2b} , and H_{2c} are not supported.

Figure 1: Interaction effect (non-significant) of brand life stage and e-WOM on brand love



Although, there is no significant interaction effect, figure 1 shows a graph with z-standardized values of e-WOM valence, for both stages of brand life. There seems to be a modest tendency that the combination of e-WOM valence and brand life stages have dissimilar effects on feelings of brand love.

5. Discussion

The aim of this experimental study is to broaden the view on the influence of valenced e-WOM messages on feelings of brand love among consumers and to analyze possible differences during brand life. Six hypotheses have been formulated to find answers to the research questions. In this study consumers are exposed to either PWOM, MWOM, or NWOM messages about emerging or existing brands, after which the feelings of brand love towards these brands have been tested. In case of the expected main effect of e-WOM valence, hypothesis **H_{1a}** is confirmed, whereas **H_{1b}** and **H_{1c}** are rejected. In the event of an anticipated interaction effect between brand life stage on e-WOM valence, hypotheses **H_{2a}, H_{2b}, and H_{2c}** are rejected.

5.1. Findings and conclusions

Valenced e-WOM communication turns out to be a predictor for the dependent variable brand love. The results of this study provide support to the author's assumption that consumers who are exposed to PWOM messages have greater feelings of brand love, as opposed to consumers exposed to NWOM messages who show reduced feelings of love towards the brand.

This finding supports the author's expectation and explains that consumers positively adjust their feelings of brand love as an effect of PWOM. The latter reconfirms related findings that have demonstrated the positive effects of PWOM communication on increased sales (Berger et al., 2010; Zhu & Zhang, 2006), and an improved attitude towards the brand (Lee et al., 2009), which in turn is a prerequisite for brand love (Batra et al., 2012). Furthermore, the result validates the author's hypothesis that consumers feelings of brand love are negatively altered as a result of NWOM. This explains that NWOM communication elicits negative feelings among consumers and corresponds with other theories on the negative effects of NWOM messages, as they lead to reduced sales (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006), decreased attitude towards the brand (Lee et al., 2009), and damaged corporate reputation (Williams et al., 2012).

The tendency that PWOM messages have a more positive effect on feelings of brand love than MWOM messages, and NWOM messages have a more negative effect on feelings of love towards the brand than MWOM, is in both cases non-significant. A possible explanation for this finding could be that credibility of e-WOM messages is reduced if its valence points solely in one direction (Doh & Hwang, 2009), and therefore diminishes the difference in effect on brand love as opposed to MWOM, in which case the valence points in both directions. Concluding, valenced e-WOM communication is an important predictor for feelings of brand love, though not quite as hypothesized.

The main goal of this study is to uncover if different stages of brand life lead to different levels of brand love as an effect of valenced e-WOM messages. Although the outcome of this study does not lend support for a significant interaction effect, a non-significant tendency can be observed in which existing brands react differently on valenced e-WOM messages, as opposed to emerging brands. The author cannot uncover a clear explanation why no significant interaction effect occurs, but speculates that product type and involvement with the product category could be of influence. If one takes a closer look at the results it can be observed that the tendency of an interaction effect is much stronger for the product category fashion than it is for foodstuff. It seems likely to the author that consumers are, generally spoken, more involved with fashion than with foodstuff. Further research is advised for this aspect, by analyzing the moderating effect of a larger number of product categories on feelings of brand love as an effect of valenced e-WOM.

Nevertheless, the author judges it as conspicuous that especially consumers of existing brands possess greater feelings of brand love, no matter if they are exposed to PWOM, MWOM, or NWOM. Whereas feelings of brand love towards emerging brands benefit more from PWOM, brand love decreases in reaction to NWOM. The author suspects the effects to occur because consumers of emerging brands are less familiar with the brand and therefore have little to no preceding knowledge, which in turn reinforces the effect of valenced e-WOM messages on the overall brand evaluations. In case of the present study this explains why consumers' feelings of love towards emerging brands react more positively on PWOM messages and more negatively on NWOM messages. A further explanation can be that the lack of a long-term commitment by its customers, which is a prerequisite to qualify as a

love relationship according to Shimp and Madden (1988), prevents feelings of brand love.

Contrarily, existing brands show much less difference in feelings of brand love as a reaction on PWOM, MWOM, and NWOM. A plausible explanation for these findings could be that the effects of valenced e-WOM messages are reduced by preceding knowledge about the brand. The author considers it plausible that consumers have formed certain beliefs and attitudes towards an existing brand that are inherent. Valenced e-WOM communication will only give the consumers a random indication of the existing brand and does not seem powerful enough to instantly dissipate the previously built up beliefs and attitudes, or in this case brand love. A similar effect is also unveiled by Herr et al. (1991), who assign this to an existent impression about the brand in memory.

These non-significant results correspond with analogous significant findings that are reported by e.g., Sundaram and Webster (1999), and Chatterjee (2001). Unfamiliar brands, as opposed to familiar brands, benefit more from PWOM messages when it comes to brand evaluations, whereas NWOM messages elicit a stronger decline in evaluating the unfamiliar brand (Sundaram & Webster, 1999). Furthermore, NWOM has a stronger negative effect on purchase intention and reliability if the retailer is unfamiliar, as opposed to familiar (Chatterjee, 2001). This leads one to suspect that familiarity with the brand also plays a role in the effect that valenced e-WOM messages exert on feelings of brand love.

5.2. Theoretical implications

Although many studies on e-WOM valence exist, there is still abundant left to be uncovered on this topic. Many studies solely focus on the effects of either positive or negative e-WOM valence. However, the effects of a combined set of differently valenced e-WOM messages that are either positive, negative or an equal mix of both positive and negative is not ubiquitous in literature. The present study seizes on adding this mix of valenced e-WOM messages and unveils an existent relationship between e-WOM valence and brand love.

This study shows a tendency that in the event of established brands there is less deviation in the effect of valenced e-WOM messages on brand love, as opposed to emerging brands. This indicates that established brands are less responsive to e-WOM communication, as opposed to emerging brands, and supporting the prerequisite that a love relationship between a consumer and a brand involves a strong affective focus over a longer period of time (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

As there is still plenty to be uncovered on the antecedents and consequences of brand love, the present research adds to the understanding of this relatively recent construct and how it is affected by valenced e-WOM. As opposed to many scholars that study more concrete outcomes such as consumers' attitudes or purchase intention, this study adds to the knowledge of brand love, a more long-term and abstract topic.

5.3. Managerial implications

As consumers tend to turn away from the more traditional marketing activities that are initiated by the company and rather evaluate brands by third party judgements such as e-WOM (e.g., Blakley, 2013; Burmann & Arnhold, 2008; Christodoulides et al., 2012), it is of managerial relevance to discuss how the results of this study can provide practical guidelines to managers to better understand how valenced e-WOM messages affect brand love among consumers, and advise organizations how to deal with this.

Though, e-WOM communication cannot be directly manipulated by marketers, it is less costly than advertisement initiated by the organization. The results of this study contribute to the understanding of managers as emerging brands seem to benefit more from the effects of PWOM communication on brand love, than do existing brands. Contrarily, the effects of NWOM communication show a stronger negative effect on feelings of brand love towards emerging brands, as opposed to existing brands. In turn, earlier studies demonstrate that greater feelings of brand love among consumers may lead to several benefits for the organization, e.g., higher brand repurchase intention, engagement in positive WOM, and the willingness to pay a higher price (Batra et al., 2012).

Although not new, the results of this study uphold that organizations should attempt to direct e-WOM generation, by preventing the distribution of NWOM and stimulate consumers to engage in PWOM messages, in order to create greater feelings of brand love among their consumers in the competitive environment. This direction of e-WOM is more important to emerging brands as they are more susceptible to the effects of e-WOM communication on brand love. If this strategy is successfully controlled, especially emerging brands may benefit from a cost reduction in comparison to more traditional marketing techniques. As organizations do not have direct control over e-WOM messages, they should attempt to motivate satisfied customers to engage in PWOM, and to diminish reasons for dissatisfied customers to engage in NWOM.

Thus, for brands that have developed a love relationship with their customers it seems less important to direct valenced e-WOM messages, as PWOM messages do not greatly enlarge feelings of love toward the brand, nor do NWOM greatly diminish brand love.

5.4. Limitations and suggestions for future research

First, the stimulus materials of each product category are rated as credible. However, the author recognizes that a single focus on different product categories weakens the effects of e-WOM valence on brand love. A focus on a single product group might contribute to an unambiguous outcome. The present study does not support a significant interaction effect, but it is seems probable that certain product categories stir up greater feelings of brand love among consumers, than others. Therefore, it is assumed that specific product categories are more affected than others, when it comes to the effect that valenced e-WOM messages elicit on feelings of brand love between emerging versus existing brand. As a difference in outcome between different product groups seems apt, the author advises future scholars to put a focus on the moderating effect of product categories on e-WOM valence on brand love.

Secondly, based on the results of this study one suspects that familiarity with the brand plays a part in the effects that valenced e-WOM messages exert on

feelings of brand love. Inclusion of brand familiarity in future research could provide interesting insights on this topic.

Third, many studies solely focus on the effects of PWOM or NWOM, this study also focuses on an equal balance of PWOM and NWOM, i.e., MWOM. However, valence is not a static construct and e-WOM communication is seldom an exact balance of PWOM and NWOM. Moreover, the PWOM and NWOM messages in this study are rather extreme. In reality, valenced e-WOM messages are more likely to be a combination of extreme and moderate messages. Future studies can contribute to literature by measuring the effects that reviews elicit, along a valence continuum and include both moderate and extreme messages. Implementation of different ratios and extremities of both positive and negative e-WOM messages in the scenarios could result in a more factual picture. Additionally, the order of the positive and negative messages in the MWOM scenario has not been taken into account. In some scenarios participants are first exposed to positive messages, followed by negative ones and vice versa. The order of the valenced messages could possibly have affected the outcomes in the MWOM scenarios. Researchers are advised to take this into account when implementing scenarios with mixed valenced e-WOM.

Finally, the respondents in this study are mostly gathered through social media and student forums. Therefore, participants in this study are predominantly female, between 21 and 30 years of age, and are in possession of a university degree. This sample does not represent the real population and might accordingly be biased. To avoid this, future academics are advised to compile a more representative sample.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Scales

Scale for measuring 'valance' of the stimulus materials

There were three valance categories in online consumer reviews; positive, an equal ratio of both positive and negative, and negative valance. Respondents were asked to state the valance of the online consumer reviews by 1 item. This item was measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "extremely negative" to "extremely positive," with "an equal ratio of positive and negative" as mid-point.

Scale for measuring 'credibility' of the stimulus materials

The credibility or trustworthiness of the stimulus materials was measured by using a 5-items scale by Till and Busler (2000):

1. insincere / sincere
2. dishonest / honest
3. not dependable / dependable
4. not trustworthy / trustworthy
5. unreliable / reliable

A 7-point semantic differential scale is used to measure each item. Till and Busler (2000), report a reliability of .95.

Scale for measuring 'quality of argument' of the stimulus materials

A 6-items scale by Gürhan-Canli and Maheswaran (2000), is used to measure the quality of argument of the stimulus materials:

1. very weak / very strong
2. not very convincing / very convincing
3. not very powerful / very powerful
4. not very persuasive / very persuasive
5. not compelling / compelling
6. not at all conclusive / very conclusive

A 7-point semantic differential scale is used to measure each item. In their studies Gürhan-Canli and Maheswaran (2000), report reliabilities of .85 and .83.

Scale for measuring 'brand love'

The *brand love short scale*, a 6-items scale, is used for the measurement of the brand love construct by Bagozzi, Batra, and Ahuvia (2014):

1. Says something true and deep about who you are as a person (Self-brand integration)
2. Feel myself desiring it (Passion-driven behaviors)
3. Emotionally connected (Positive emotional connection)
4. Will be using for a long time (Long-term relationship)
5. Suppose (brand) were to go out of existence, to what extent would you feel anxiety (Anticipated separation distress)
6. Please express your overall feelings and evaluations towards (brand): Positive/negative (Attitude valance)

Agreement with statements 1-5 are to be answered on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "not at all" to "very much," with "moderately" as mid-point. Agreement with statement 6 can be expressed by attributing a number between 1 (not at all) and 10 (very much).

Appendix II: Stimulus materials

Below you will find a copy of the scenarios to which the respondents have been exposed. The brands that are used to operationalize the 3 emerging brands scenarios are PineTree (electronics), S-Style (fashion), and Delix (foodstuff). For the existing brands, respondents were asked to enter a brand in the assigned category. The respective brand names were then shown in the scenarios below.

PWOM Electronics

Renee86 uit Utrecht schreef op 11 december:

Vorige week m'n eerste <enter brand> gekocht. Ik ben echt supertevreden! Het apparaat is simpel in gebruik en de bediening is logisch en gemakkelijk. Bovendien is het design fraai en de hardware robuust. Echte <enter brand>-kwaliteit!

J.A. van den Hoorn uit Laren schreef op 5 december:

Sinds een paar dagen een <enter brand> in huis. Het was even lastig om er aan te komen, maar het is wel het wachten waard geweest. Tot nu toe heel tevreden en zou niet meer terug willen naar de concurrent.

Tonnie uit Den Haag schreef op 23 november:

Wat ben ik blij met mijn nieuwe <enter brand>! Ik had eerst wat twijfels, maar dacht 'kom ik ga het maar proberen.' Geen seconde spijt gehad! Een mooi en stijlvol design en het apparaat straalt kwaliteit uit. Bovendien erg makkelijk in gebruik.

S. ter Haar uit Stadskanaal schreef op 8 november:

Die <enter brand> moest ik gewoon hebben! Erg blij mee. De eerste ingebruikname ging snel en gemakkelijk. Je doorloopt een aantal stappen die intuïtief te volgen zijn. Ook voor mensen die geen ervaring hebben met een <enter brand>-product wijst alles voor zich.

Hputnl uit Apeldoorn schreef op 8 november:

Top <enter brand>!

Een erg fijn apparaat. Deze <enter brand> doet precies wat ie moet doen. De menu's zijn overzichtelijk en de bediening erg gebruiksvriendelijk. Het apparaat heeft een degelijke behuizing en de materialen stralen kwaliteit uit. Ik ben zeer blij met deze soepel werkende <enter brand>. Je voelt aan alles dat je een goed product in handen hebt. Wel voor een relatief hoge prijs, maar als hij blijft werken zoals hij nu doet is hij dat ook echt waard!

JitsW uit Enschede schreef op 23 oktober:

Deze <enter brand> voldoet volledig aan mijn verwachtingen. Ik heb hem nu een aantal maanden en ben nog geen dingen tegengekomen waar ik me aan stoor. Goede prijs/kwaliteit verhouding.

MWOM Electronics

Renee86 uit Utrecht schreef op 11 december:

Vorige week m'n eerste <enter brand> gekocht. Ik ben echt supertevreden! Het apparaat is simpel in gebruik en de bediening is logisch en gemakkelijk. Bovendien is het design fraai en de hardware robuust. Echte <enter brand>-kwaliteit!

J.A. van den Hoorn uit Laren schreef op 5 december:

Sinds een paar dagen een <enter brand> in huis. Het was even lastig om er aan te komen, maar het is wel het wachten waard geweest. Tot nu toe heel tevreden en zou niet meer terug willen naar de concurrent.

Tonnie uit Den Haag schreef op 23 november:

Ik ben ontevreden met m'n nieuwe <enter brand>. Sinds een week merk ik dat het apparaat erg warm wordt bij langer gebruik. Zo warm dat ik m'n vingers bijna verbrand als ik hem aanraak. Dit lijkt me niet normaal, maar het apparaat werkt nog wel steeds naar behoren. Komt dit probleem vaker voor?

S. ter Haar uit Stadskanaal schreef op 8 november:

De <enter brand> is gebruiksvriendelijk en op gebied van duurzaamheid zijn er nog vele verbeterpunten. M'n vorige ging binnen het jaar al kapot.

Hpuitnl uit Apeldoorn schreef op 8 november:

Top <enter brand>!

Een erg fijn apparaat. Deze <enter brand> doet precies wat ie moet doen. De menu's zijn overzichtelijk en de bediening erg gebruiksvriendelijk. Het apparaat heeft een degelijke behuizing en de materialen stralen kwaliteit uit. Ik ben zeer blij met deze soepel werkende <enter brand>. Je voelt aan alles dat je een goed product in handen hebt. Wel voor een relatief hoge prijs, maar als hij blijft werken zoals hij nu doet is hij dat ook echt waard!

JitsW uit Enschede schreef op 23 oktober:

Sinds een paar maanden in het bezit van een <enter brand>. In de eerste instantie was ik wel tevreden. Echter ik merk dat naarmate het product langer gebruikt is er flinke slijtage sporen ontstaan. Bij een product in deze prijsklasse mag je toch verwachten dat het langer meegaat dan 2 maanden. Ik ben er toch ook best zuinig op. Ik twijfel heel erg of mijn volgende apparaat weer een <enter brand> gaat worden.

NWOM Electronics

Renee86 uit Utrecht schreef op 11 december:

Het apparaat werkt niet! Ik heb alles geïnstalleerd volgens het instructieboekje, maar niets hoor... Voor mij nooit een <enter brand> meer!

J.A. van den Hoorn uit Laren schreef op 5 december:

Ik heb al jaren meerdere apparaten van <enter brand>, maar de laatste twee ervaringen waren erg teleurstellend. De eerste ging na ruim een maand al kapot en moest vervolgens 3 maanden wachten op een vervangend product. Bij <enter brand> vertelden ze me dat dit waarschijnlijk aan mijn manier van gebruik lag, ja daag.

Tonnie uit Den Haag schreef op 23 november:

Ik ben ontevreden met m'n nieuwe <enter brand>. Sinds een week merk ik dat het apparaat erg warm wordt bij langer gebruik. Zo warm dat ik m'n vingers bijna verbrand als ik hem aanraak. Dit lijkt me niet normaal, maar het apparaat werkt nog wel steeds naar behoren. Komt dit probleem vaker voor?

S. ter Haar uit Stadskanaal schreef op 8 november:

De <enter brand> is gebruiksvriendelijk en op gebied van duurzaamheid zijn er nog vele verbeterpunten. M'n vorige ging binnen het jaar al kapot.

Hpuitnl uit Apeldoorn schreef op 8 november:

Ik vind het menu van m'n <enter brand> soms erg ingewikkeld. Ook de accutijd stelt teleur. Had anders verwacht na gebruikservaringen van vrienden...

JitsW uit Enschede schreef op 23 oktober:

Sinds een paar maanden in het bezit van een <enter brand>. In de eerste instantie was ik wel tevreden. Echter ik merk dat naarmate het product langer gebruikt is er flinke slijtage sporen ontstaan. Bij een product in deze prijsklasse mag je toch verwachten dat het langer meegaat dan 2 maanden. Ik ben er toch ook best zuinig op. Ik twijfel heel erg of mijn volgende apparaat weer een <enter brand> gaat worden.

PWOM Fashion

Renee86 uit Utrecht schreef op 11 december:

Ik koop regelmatig <enter brand> items. De pasvorm is voor mij een belangrijk aspect en dit is bij <enter brand> altijd super! Het is niet het goedkoopste merk, maar is de prijs zeker waard.

J.A. van den Hoorn uit Laren schreef op 5 december:

De kwaliteit van <enter brand> is voor mij doorslaggevend. Ik heb in mijn leven al heel wat merken geprobeerd, maar aan de kwaliteit van <enter brand> valt niet te tippen. Voor mij geen ander merk meer!

Tonnie uit Den Haag schreef op 23 november:

<enter brand> heeft fijne basis items waarmee ik goed kan combineren. Daarnaast heeft <enter brand> een hoog draagcomfort. Bovendien spreken de modieuze designs mij erg aan.

S. ter Haar uit Stadskanaal schreef op 8 november:

<enter brand> heeft prettige mode. Ik vind de ontwerpen mooi, lekker sportief en makkelijk draagbaar. Ook heeft <enter brand> leuke kleuren en fijne materialen wat de pasvorm en draagbaarheid ten goede komt.

Hpuitnl uit Apeldoorn schreef op 8 november:

Wauwie!!

Geweldige mode die slanker maakt en op allerlei manieren te dragen is! Netjes of stoer. Model is wel wat lager maar dat vind ik mooier omdat mijn bovenlichaam zo langer lijkt. Prijs goed te doen voor een <enter brand>! De kleding zit heerlijk! Niet te strak en niet te wijd! Mooie kleuren! Écht een aanrader!

JitsW. uit Enschede schreef op 23 oktober:

Ik ben sowieso gek op <enter brand>. Kwalitatief goed merk.

Ook nu weer een fijne broek van <enter brand>. Maat en lengte zijn goed. Zit goed, draagt lekker, staat goed! En een prima prijs/kwaliteit verhouding.

MWOM Fashion

Renee86 uit Utrecht schreef op 11 december:

Tot mijn stomme verbazing gaan bij al mijn shirts van <enter brand> de naden onder de oksels kapot. Recht langs de naden, alsof er een mes doorgetrokken is. En niet bij één, nee bij allemaal. En even voor de duidelijkheid, ze zitten niet te strak.

J.A. van den Hoorn uit Laren schreef op 5 december:

De kwaliteit van <enter brand> is voor mij doorslaggevend. Ik heb in mijn leven al heel wat merken geprobeerd, maar aan de kwaliteit van <enter brand> valt niet te tippen. Voor mij geen ander merk meer!

Tonnie uit Den Haag schreef op 23 november:

Ik ben niet tevreden met de kwaliteit en pasvorm van <enter brand> kleding. Ik ben vrij lang, dus probeer altijd op te letten dat de kleding lang genoeg valt. Echter na een keer wassen loopt met name bovenkleding zo in dat het te kort is om te dragen. En ik houd me toch echt aan de wasvoorschriften.

S. ter Haar uit Stadskanaal schreef op 8 november:

<enter brand> heeft prettige mode. Ik vind de ontwerpen mooi, lekker sportief en makkelijk draagbaar. Ook heeft <enter brand> leuke kleuren en fijne materialen wat de pasvorm en draagbaarheid ten goede komt.

Hpuitnl uit Apeldoorn schreef op 8 november:

Na twee keer wassen ziet mijn kleding van <enter brand> er al niet meer uit! Ik heb me toch echt aan de wasvoorschriften gehouden, maar kleuren zijn vervaagd en aan de stof hangen een soort pluisjes. Voor dit geld had ik toch verwacht dat het langer mee zou gaan...

JitsW. uit Enschede schreef op 23 oktober:

Ik ben sowieso gek op <enter brand>. Kwalitatief goed merk. Ook nu weer een fijne broek van <enter brand>. Maat en lengte zijn goed. Zit goed, draagt lekker, staat goed! En een prima prijs/kwaliteit verhouding.

NWOM Fashion

Renee86 uit Utrecht schreef op 11 december:

Tot mijn stomme verbazing gaan bij al mijn shirts van <enter brand> de naden onder de oksels kapot. Recht langs de naden, alsof er een mes doorgetrokken is. En niet bij één, nee bij allemaal. En even voor de duidelijkheid, ze zitten niet te strak.

J.A. van den Hoorn uit Laren schreef op 5 december:

Sinds een aantal jaren koop ik kleding van <enter brand>. Hierover was ik tot voor kort eigenlijk altijd tevreden over, maar de kwaliteit is de laatste tijd hard achteruit gegaan. Heb al drie verschillende items gehad waar binnen een maand naden losgaan of knopen afvallen. Bij een discount merk kan je dit verwachten, maar toch niet bij <enter brand>.

Tonnie uit Den Haag schreef op 23 november:

Ik ben niet tevreden met de kwaliteit en pasvorm van <enter brand> kleding. Ik ben vrij lang, dus probeer altijd op te letten dat de kleding lang genoeg valt. Echter na een keer wassen loopt met name bovenkleding zo in dat het te kort is om te dragen. En ik houd me toch echt aan de wasvoorschriften.

S. ter Haar uit Stadskanaal schreef op 8 november:

Een erg rare maatvoering. Ik heb laatst twee <enter brand>-shirtjes in maat M besteld. De ene zat me veel te ruim en de ander strak. Hoe kan dit, <enter brand>?

Hpuitnl uit Apeldoorn schreef op 8 november:

Na twee keer wassen ziet mijn kleding van <enter brand> er al niet meer uit! Ik heb me toch echt aan de wasvoorschriften gehouden, maar kleuren zijn vervaagd en aan de stof hangen een soort pluisjes. Voor dit geld had ik toch verwacht dat het langer mee zou gaan...

JitsW uit Enschede schreef op 23 oktober:

De pasvorm van m'n <enter brand> shirts is niet prettig. Bovenaan zitten ze heel strak, terwijl ze aan de onderkant uitgehangen lijken. Ik heb een gemiddeld en normaal figuur en heb dit probleem bij andere merken nog nooit gehad, dus dat kan de oorzaak ook niet zijn. De volgende keer toch maar weer terug naar m'n oude vertrouwde merk.

PWOM Foodstuff

Renee86 uit Utrecht schreef op 11 december:

<enter brand> is de lekkerste! Ik wil nooit meer een andere! Geur is net als de smaak prima. Niet te sterk, maar het is wel aanwezig.

J.A. van den Hoorn uit Laren schreef op 5 december:

De smaak van <enter brand> is uniek en consistent. Dat is voor mij de voornaamste reden om toch steeds weer terug te keren naar <enter brand>.

Tonnie uit Den Haag schreef op 23 november:

Andere merken lukt het niet om qua smaak en kwaliteit in de buurt te komen. Als ik blind proef, proef ik het verschil en pik direct de echte <enter brand> er uit. Voor mij dus niets anders meer dan <enter brand>!

S. ter Haar uit Stadskanaal schreef op 8 november:

<enter brand>, omdat dit gewoon de lekkerste is! Ik heb andere merken geprobeerd maar die kunnen hier niet aan tippen en zal ook geen ander merk meer kopen.

<enter brand> heeft een goede, betrouwbare kwaliteit.

Hputnl uit Apeldoorn schreef op 8 november:

Ik kan me geen leven zonder <enter brand> voorstellen. Als het niet in de winkel ligt koop ik niets en hoop dat het een paar dagen later weer op voorraad is.

JitsW. uit Enschede schreef op 23 oktober:

<enter brand>: In één woord heerlijk! Ik zou het zelf niet beter kunnen maken, kortom een échte aanrader!

MWOM Foodstuff

Renee86 uit Utrecht schreef op 11 december:

<enter brand> is echt een mengelmoesje. De smaak overtuigt niet. Van <enter brand> verwacht ik toch echt meer, vooral ook gezien de prijs! Ik ben zoekende naar een goed alternatief.

J.A. van den Hoorn uit Laren schreef op 5 december:

De smaak van <enter brand> is uniek en consistent. Dat is voor mij de voornaamste reden om toch steeds weer terug te keren naar <enter brand>.

Tonnie uit Den Haag schreef op 23 november:

Koop al jaren <enter brand>. De laatste keer had het een beetje een rare nasmaak. Uit navraag blijkt dat de receptuur veranderd is. Erg jammer, voor mij geen <enter brand> meer...

S. ter Haar uit Stadskanaal schreef op 8 november:

<enter brand>, omdat dit gewoon de lekkerste is! Ik heb andere merken geprobeerd maar die kunnen hier niet aan tippen en zal ook geen ander merk meer kopen.

<enter brand> heeft een goede, betrouwbare kwaliteit.

Hpuitnl uit Apeldoorn schreef op 8 november:

Ik kan me geen leven zonder <enter brand> voorstellen. Als het niet in de winkel ligt koop ik niets en hoop dat het een paar dagen later weer op voorraad is.

JitsW uit Enschede schreef op 23 oktober:

Wat is er mis met de houdbaarheid van <enter brand>? Heb het product 3 dagen voor de THT datum gebruikt, maar het was niet te genieten. Heb het product volgens de instructies bewaard en de verpakking was ook gesloten. Erg teleurstellend, vooral aangezien de relatief hoge prijs die je betaald voor <enter brand>.

NWOM Foodstuff

Renee86 uit Utrecht schreef op 11 december:

<enter brand> is echt een mengelmoesje. De smaak overtuigt niet. Van <enter brand> verwacht ik toch echt meer, vooral ook gezien de prijs! Ik ben zoekende naar een goed alternatief.

J.A. van den Hoorn uit Laren schreef op 5 december:

Echt vies!! Alhoewel <enter brand> toch echt wel bekend staat als een kwalitatief hoogwaardig merk, is mijn ervaring hiermee bijzonder slecht. Vlakte smaak en betreurenswaardige kwaliteit. Ik ken hier dan huismerken die wat mij betreft een stuk beter scoren!

Tonnie uit Den Haag schreef op 23 november:

Koop al jaren <enter brand>. De laatste keer had het een beetje een rare nasmaak. Uit navraag blijkt dat de receptuur veranderd is. Erg jammer, voor mij geen <enter brand> meer...

S. ter Haar uit Stadskanaal schreef op 8 november:

De geur van <enter brand> is in orde, maar de smaak is niet erg overtuigend. Hij proeft wat muf. Wat mij betreft geen aanrader.

Hpuitnl uit Apeldoorn schreef op 8 november:

Bah, geen <enter brand> meer voor mij. Twee keer achter elkaar meegemaakt dat de smaak heel kunstmatig is en ook de consistentie vond ik vreemd. Ben nu bezig om de huismerken van verschillende supermarkten te testen.

JitsW uit Enschede schreef op 23 oktober:

Wat is er mis met de houdbaarheid van <enter brand>? Heb het product 3 dagen voor de THT datum gebruikt, maar het was niet te genieten. Heb het product volgens de instructies bewaard en de verpakking was ook gesloten. Erg teleurstellend, vooral aangezien de relatief hoge prijs die je betaald voor <enter brand>.

Appendix III: Questionnaire

Below you will find a copy of the survey as it was shown to the participants. The questions in this survey are entirely stated in the Dutch language.

Introduction

Beste deelnemer,

hartelijk dank voor je deelname aan dit onderzoek! Het betreft hier een onderzoek naar de relatie tussen online consumenten recensies en merkliefde.

Iedereen kan vrijwillig deelnemen. Je dient echter 18 jaar of ouder te zijn. Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden, ik ben vooral geïnteresseerd in jullie houdingen, gevoelens en meningen met betrekking tot bepaalde aspecten.

Het invullen van de vragenlijst zal ongeveer 5 minuten van je tijd in beslag nemen. De resultaten van deze vragenlijst zijn niet tot een persoon of individu herleidbaar. Alle gegevens worden vertrouwelijk behandeld en zijn uitsluitend bedoeld voor onderzoeksdoeleinden.

Heb je zelf vragen naar aanleiding van deze vragenlijst, dan kun je contact met mij opnemen via h.c.polinder@student.utwente.nl

Bedankt voor je medewerking! Met vriendelijke groeten, Hendrik

Demographics

Q1: Ben je vrouw of man?

Vrouw

Man

Q2: Wat is je leeftijd?

Enter Age

Q3: Wat is je hoogst genoten opleidingsniveau?

Basis/voortgezet onderwijs

Lager beroepsonderwijs

Middelbaar beroepsonderwijs

Hoger beroepsonderwijs

Universitaire studie

Choose category

Q4: Voor dit onderzoek zijn er 3 verschillende productgroepen geselecteerd. Kies nu jouw favoriete productgroep.

Electronica

Mode

Voedingsmiddelen

Participants are now randomly assigned to one of two groups: emerging (fictitious) vs. existing (real) brand

Group 1: brand entry (real brand)

Q5a: Wat is jou meestgeliefde merk voor elektrische apparaten?

Enter favorite brand name

Group 2: brand introduction (fictitious brand). This group is randomly assigned to one of three groups: electronics, fashion, or foodstuff

Q5b: PineTree is een elektronicamerk dat een breed scala aan apparaten produceert. Op de volgende pagina worden een aantal consumenten recensies over PineTree getoond. Naderhand zal je gevraagd worden de recensies te evalueren. Lees de recensies daarom aandachtig door.

Q5c: S-Style is een modemerken dat een breed scala aan kleding en fashion produceert. Op de volgende pagina worden een aantal consumenten recensies over S-Style getoond. Naderhand zal je gevraagd worden de recensies te evalueren. Lees de recensies daarom aandachtig door.

Q5d: Delix is een voedingsmiddelenmerk dat een breed scala aan levensmiddelen produceert. Op de volgende pagina worden een aantal consumenten recensies over Delix getoond. Naderhand zal je gevraagd worden de recensies te evalueren. Lees de recensies daarom aandachtig door.

Participants are now exposed to the respective stimulus materials, as they can be consulted in Appendix II

Hieronder worden een aantal consumenten recensies over \${q://QID31/ChoiceTextEntryValue}* getoond. Naderhand zal je gevraagd worden de recensies te evalueren. Lees de recensies daarom aandachtig door.

Measurement of credibility and persuasiveness of information

Q6 and Q7:

Geef nu aan in hoeverre je het eens bent met de volgende stellingen:

De recensies die je op de vorige pagina hebt gelezen zijn:

Beschrijf nu jouw beeld van de gebruikte argumenten in de recensies op de vorige pagina.

Vanuit jouw perspectief zijn de argumenten:

Measurement of *brand love*

Q8:

De volgende stellingen hebben betrekking op het merk \${q://QID31/ChoiceTextEntryValue}.

Geef aan in hoeverre je het eens bent met deze stellingen.

	(1) helemaal niet	(2)	(3)	(4) middelmatig	(5)	(6)	(7) heel erg
\${q://QID31/ChoiceTextEntryValue} zegt iets wat heel diep en waar is over wie ik ben als mens.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik verlang hevig naar \${q://QID31/ChoiceTextEntryValue}.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik voel me emotioneel met \${q://QID31/ChoiceTextEntryValue} verbonden verbonden.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik zal \${q://QID31/ChoiceTextEntryValue} nog heel lang gebruiken.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik word bang van de gedachte dat \${q://QID31/ChoiceTextEntryValue} ooit zou kunnen verdwijnen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Geef alsjeblieft met een cijfer van 1 (helemaal niet) tot 10 (heel erg) hoe tevreden je bent
met \${q://QID31/ChoiceTextEntryValue}.



* \${q://QID31/ChoiceTextEntryValue} is automatically replaced by either the entered brand name, or one of the three fictitious brands, depending on the assigned group.