

Master Thesis Communication Studies

Marketing Communication

University of Twente

My personal experience matters

The effect of source characteristics and argument diversity
in beauty product blog reviews on consumer responses

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Utrecht, 22th of August 2016

Abstract

Blogs posts are important User-Generated-Content (UGC) that can inform consumers about products. Because of the personal perspective, the persuasive impact of online reviews on blogs has a strong influence on consumers' responses. Brand marketers are searching for new ways to use blogs in marketing strategies in order to capitalize this blogger-consumer dynamic. The primary objective of this study was to gain better understanding of the blog characteristics that makes consumer responses towards blog product reviews more positive.

To this end, an online experiment was conducted to test the hypotheses. A 2 (source characteristics: blogger vs. company) x 2 (argument diversity: one-sided vs. two-sided) between subject design was employed among 171 female participants for a product review on beauty blog Misslipgloss.nl about make-up product 'blusher' from brand 'Bourjois'. Hereafter, the consumer responses trust, authenticity, skepticism, competence and purchase intention were measured. Possible moderator involvement in beauty products, involvement with blogs and self-congruity with the blogger were also taken into account. Results indicated that the blogger source characteristics had a more positive effect on consumer responses authenticity, skepticism, trust and purchase intention. An opposite effect for the two-sided arguments (positive and negative) was found for purchase intention. Higher levels of involvement with beauty products and self-congruity with the blogger are related to higher consumer responses. Findings form a theoretical and practical basis for recommendations about blog product review usage as a marketing tool for both brand marketers and bloggers. Suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: User-Generated-Content (UGC), Personal Blogs, Source Characteristics, Argument Diversity, Trust, Authenticity, Skepticism, Competence, Purchase Intention

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1. Introduction

In the last couple of years the growth of Internet users and the potential of the online platform are growing exponentially. The Internet can serve as a more powerful advertising medium than traditional media because it is changing the way consumers participate in the communication process, in particular with social media. User Generated Content (UGC) is an extension of social media and is defined as “consumers creating content that: is made available through publicly, accessible transmission media such as the Internet, reflects some degree of creative effort, and is created for free outside professional routines and practices” (Christodoulides, Jevons, & Blackshaw, 2011, p.1). Blogs are a specific type of social media where user-generated content is published.

UGC represents the future of marketing. It provides the ability to develop brand relationships via social experiences and the means to deliver persuasive messages to consumer who experience or create UGC (Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2010). With the emergence of these user-generated platforms, product information has migrated to the online world. Product information is often articulated in the form of online consumer reviews (Willemsen, Neijens, Bronner & Ridder, 2011). These types of messages can provide a strong influence on consumers’ responses, even more so than information generated by marketers (Cheong & Morrisson, 2008; Park & Kim, 2008; Willemsen et al., 2011). The persuasive effect of user-generated messages is often attributed to the perceived non-commercial nature of their authors, with consumer usage to minimize the advertising noise and confusion to gain an honest peer evaluation. Consumers are more likely to use information provided by fellow consumers to evaluate products or services before they make a purchase (Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014).

Bloggers are perceived as more ‘real’ and have a more positive effect in influencing than companies. A few Dutch beauty bloggers have been able to turn this recognition into a popular business. Beauty blogs are gaining more importance as a source for consumers to inform themselves about beauty product. Beauty blogs Beautygloss.nl, Beautylab.nl, Misslipgloss, Veracamilla.nl and Beautyscene.nl are the 5 biggest Dutch beauty bloggers. All of the founders nowadays make a living of the blog using sponsoring and advertising. Companies can provide compensation for bloggers in exchange for posting a consumer review (Lu et al., 2014). For example: Max Factor’s new eyeshadow product review on beauty blog Beautylab.nl as displayed in Figure 1.1. For this type of product review messages the concern of consumers derives that bloggers may not provide truly unbiased reviews (Ghazisaeedi et al., 2012). This study responds to the need to gain more insight into the value of product reviews on personal blogs.

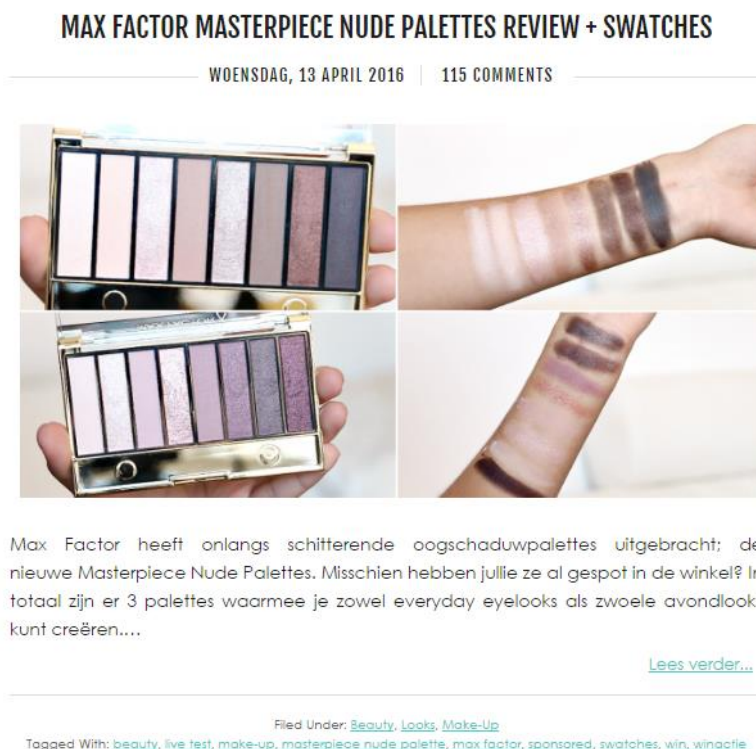


Figure 1.1.
Example of Beautylab.nl product review “Max Factor Masterpiece Nude Palettes”

Marketers have yet realized that blogs provide a powerful source of information for consumers and enable them to customize content to particular needs of a specific target group in a cost-efficient manner (Chu & Kamal, 2008). The development of an understanding around what aspects of product reviews influence consumer decision making, is becoming increasingly important given the benefits for organizations in developing improved marketing approaches (Robinson, Goh & Zhang, 2012). Previous research mainly focuses on the blogger, what are the reasons for blogging and the use of UGC (Daugherty et al., 2010) leaving the field of blog product reviews characteristics underexposed.

To investigate the influence of blogs, it is required to focus on blog product reviews and readers and therefor this study explores consumer responses. The study investigates the impact of two key factors that may influence consumer responses towards the personal character of beauty product reviews: source characteristics and argument diversity. Findings can have practical implications for effectively use product reviews on blogs to engage consumers and can give new information within the UGC-field. Based on previous information, the following research question is formulated:

“What are the effects of source characteristics (blogger/company) and argument diversity (one-sided/two-sided) of beauty blog reviews on consumer responses?”

This report is divided in four chapters. The following Chapter 2 contains the theoretical framework with literature research and proposed hypotheses for this study. The methodology for testing these hypotheses is explained in Chapter 3 and in Chapter 4 the results will be presented. The conclusion in Chapter 5 offers a summary of the results and presents the discussion, followed by limitations, further research suggestions and managerial implications to practice and contribution.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter the constructs and hypotheses for the study will be explained. First a review of the development of blog theory and practices is presented. After this, the two main concepts of the blog appearance will be discussed: source characteristics and argument diversity. Thereafter relationship between the concepts and consumer responses are discussed. Finally, moderating effects and a hypothesized research model of all debated constructs is provided.

2.1 Blogs as specific type of User-Generated-Content

Blogs are online journals where the ‘blogger’ continually posts one’s own opinions, Internet links and other elements on one’s own “web log” (Chu & Kamal, 2008). Information that is brand-related appears on blogs in the form of bloggers’ description of their personal experience, blog sponsoring or brand advertising (Chu & Kamal, 2008; Lu et al., 2014). In the early days UGC was not welcome as it potentially would have resulted in the construction of a unique brand meaning and uncontrolled by the legal owners of the brand (Christodoulides et al. 2011). “I know bloggers and podcasters who are earning a living in our new media, the greatest benefit of the open ad marketplace I propose is that it will support an even greater explosion of citizens’ media and choice for advertisers” (Jarvis, 2006, p.42). The effects of product reviews on personal blogs on consumer responses toward these sponsored company recommendations is relatively new and have rarely been examined.

2.2 Blog Appearance

Content characteristics are pertinent to the persuasive character of the impact of the message (Willemsen et al., 2011). As UGC is an extension of social media, the visual and the textual cues are important factor for the blog post. Blog content can vary in style, design and format. Focus for this study is the content of beauty blogs' post. This content can include beauty and make-up product reviews, make-up tutorials and further experiences within the beauty field. Blogs can enable advertisers to customize their content to the particular needs of a specific market (Chu & Kamalm 2008). To avoid non-disclosure problems, product reviews on personal blogs must be labelled in the blog article (Lu et al., 2014; Stichting Reclame Code Commissie, 2016). These types of posts appear editorial at first sight, but an advertising characteristic in the form of a label 'advertisement' or 'sponsored' is mandatory by European law (Stichting Reclame Code Commissie, 2016). Investigating these types of posts could improve the effectiveness of product reviews on blogs rather than focusing solely on the topic of product reviews in general (Lu et al., 2006).

Understanding how these types of messages influence consumer responses appears to be crucial in understanding the processes of online reviews by the consumer bloggers. (Lu et al., 2014). Therefore, the current study focuses on two important topics of product reviews on blogs appearance: source characteristics and argument diversity. These two variables were chosen because it is believed that they may be more important relevance criteria than other criteria identified in previous studies, especially in uncontrolled environments such as online blogs.

2.2.1 Source Characteristics: Generator

This study attempts to understand the role of product reviews source characteristics on how consumers perceive and process the information. A major finding in the study of Cheong and Morrisson (2008) was that participants had more trust in product information created by other consumers than in information generated by marketers. Sponsored blog posts can be ‘marketer-generated’ (by brands and companies) and user-generated (by bloggers) (Willemsen et al., 2011, Jonas, 2012). Credibility of the source has a positive effect on the personal character of the blogs and being written by real, normal people (Johnson & Kaye, 2004). Because of the peer suggestion, user-generated content on blogs have a strong influence on consumer’s responses, even more so than market-generated information (Willemsen et al., 2011). To judge the quality of the provided information, the source characteristics are important (Rieh, 2002). A key question in perceiving a product review blog is to what extent blog readers perceive the message as a truly source (Ghazisaeedi et al., 2012). To understand the role of blogger characteristics and to measure consumer responses towards the product review is highly revealing.

More research is needed for better understanding how consumers process blog information to develop effective communication strategies (Chu & Kamal, 2010). The communicator’s independence from the market, user-generated information is more reliable and credible than marketer-provided information (Lim & Van der Heide, 2015). In this study the source characteristics of the blog post are manipulated, suggesting that the positive effect of blogger characteristics has a positive impact on consumer responses over the company characteristics. Based on this information, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1 Source characteristics of the blogger will lead to more positive consumer responses, as compared to company source characteristics

2.2.2 Argument Diversity

Product reviews on personal blogs typically have a more positive attitude toward the product or service because the posts are motivated by the compensation the blogger is receiving from the company (Lu et al., 2014). But UGC is created by consumers to communicate with others in an honest ways (Cristodoulides et al. 2011). Common sense may encourage marketers to use positive arguments regarding their products but successful advertising may embody more than a simple abundance of positive mentions. If negative information is included, credibility could be enhanced (Kozinets et al., 2010; Eisend, 2007). Some people are more likely to align their responses with the content of a message after reading the positive and negative arguments (i.e. two-sided argument diversity) than after reading the positive arguments alone (i.e. one-sided argumentation). Blog readers expect bloggers to be honest about their relationships with brands and write only about those that they truly prefer (Colliander & Dahlén, 2010).

Theories reveal the suggestion that why someone is sharing information influences the consumer responses. The inclusion of negative information along with positive information serves as a validation cue that the text derives from a consumer who has authentic first-hand experience, and not from a commercial endorser who has an interest in recommending a product (Willemsen et al, 2011). Based on this information, it is suggested that the positive effect of two-sided arguments in reviews has a more positive effect on consumer responses over the one-sided arguments of the blog post review. The following hypothesis is formulated:

H2 Argument diversity with two-sided arguments will lead to more positive consumer responses, as compared to one-sided arguments

Based on previous literature research, an interaction effect of source characteristics and argument diversity is expected. Following the line of reasoning source characteristics in favor of the blogger and argument diversity with two-sided argumentation, it is hypothesized that reviews are perceived as more positive towards consumer responses if they rely on positive and negative arguments (Willemsen et al., 2011). Previous research showed that two-sided arguments are important as the overall valence of a review in predicting the usefulness (Willemsen et al., 2011). Because a review with consideration of both positive and negative points of a product is not expected from companies with an advertising character, the effect of argument diversity is expected to be stronger. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3 The effect of argument diversity on consumer responses is stronger for the company than for blogger source characteristics.

In this study it is expected that the use of blog post reviews will have impact on five consumer responses: trust, authenticity, skepticism, competence and purchase intention.

2.3 Consumer Responses towards blogs

2.3.1 Trust

Trustworthiness can be seen as an important variable in the process of online product information. Consumer response towards trust refers to ‘the degree of confidence that a source is motivated to communicate valid assertions’ (Willemsen et al., 2011, p. 17). Writers of blogs, i.e. bloggers and companies, may be perceived as experts but can have little trustworthiness.

Consumers who will read a product review on blogs judge on trustworthiness and base this on the causal inferences they make regarding the motivation to endorse a product (Willemsen et al.,

2011). The lack of human touch on websites may constitute a barrier for consumers to trust online merchants (Riegelsberger & Sassem 2002). Because bloggers are as other consumers and not as manufacturers, trust in product information can be perceived higher when it is generated by the blogger (Cheong & Morrison, 2008). Bloggers convey more honest opinions than just positive information about products. Based on this information, the following hypotheses are tested in this study:

- H1A Source characteristics of the blogger lead to more positive trust towards the blog than company source characteristics**
- H2A Two-sided argument diversity lead to more positive trust response towards the blog than one-sided argument diversity**
- H3A The effect of argument diversity on perceived trust is stronger for the company than for blogger source characteristics**

2.3.2 Authenticity

The inclusion of negative information along with positive information serves as a validation that the text derives from a consumer who has authentic experience, not from a commercial endorser (Willemsen et al., 2011). Authenticity is also a core component of success because it forms part of a unique identity (Beverland, Lindgreen & Vink 2008). Consumers are seeking out for authenticity in brands and experiences (Beverland et al., 2008) and this consumer response is relevant for product information on blogs. It is the quality of being true in substance (Molleda 2009). ‘The quest for authenticity stands as an appeal to one’s potentiality for self-cultivation, self-direction, creativity, identity and individuality whereby the individual is able to find meaning in life, creativity, playfulness, sensuality and morality’ (Chalmers & Price 2009). Participants in the study of Cheong & Morrisson (2008) think that other consumers like the

owner of the personal blog who is also a consumer, convey more than just positive information about the products and therefore are more authentic. Authenticity is based on the evaluations of individuals, rather than being solely related to the inherent attributes of the brand (Bruhn et al., 2012). Brand authenticity does not involve a motivational aspect and consumers may perceive them to be authentic without linking it to themselves in any way (Bruhn et al., 2012, Zaichkowsky, 1985). Messages from companies can be easily disguised as unbiased reviews given the lack of social cues in online environments (Willemsen et al., 2012). The product review can be prone to manipulation and can make consumers wary of their authenticity. It is expected that source characteristics of the blogger and two-sided argument diversity positively affect perceived authenticity of the blog post. The following hypotheses are established for this research:

- H1B Source characteristics of the blogger lead to more positive authenticity towards the blog than company source characteristics**
- H2B Two-sided argument diversity lead to more positive authenticity response towards the blog than one-sided argument diversity**
- H3B The effect of argument diversity on perceived authenticity is stronger for the company than for blogger source characteristics**

2.3.3 Skepticism

Skepticism is one of the most interesting and intriguing individual psychological traits (Okasha, 2003). Obermiller & Spangenberg (1998) indicate that advertising is a general sense of paid non-personal commercial communication tool. Consumer skepticism toward the advertisement is a tendency toward disbelief regarding the claim that is made in the advertising (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998; Lu et al., 2014). The concept of skepticism has a strong relation with the

source credibility that is perceived towards the blog post. When consumers read advertisements or blog product reviews characteristics can reduce their skeptical feeling towards it (Wang & Chien, 2012). Consumer skepticism toward advertising in general has been the focus of significant research interest (Forehand & Grier, 2003; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 2005; Vanhamme & Grobben, 2009). Results indicate that consumers are not convinced that the product information will live up to its promised performance and therefore it will be perceived more skeptical. This relationship can be negatively related to purchase intention (Hardesty, Carlson & Bearden, 2002). More knowledge about skepticism towards blogs as product reviews would contribute to the understanding of the benefits for using this communication tool. For this research the following hypotheses towards skepticism is stated:

- H1C Source characteristics of the blogger lead to less skepticism towards the blog than company source characteristics**
- H2C Two-sided argument diversity lead to less negative skepticism response towards the blog than one-sided argument diversity**
- H3C The effect of argument diversity on perceived skepticism is stronger for the company than for blogger source characteristics**

2.3.4 Competence

Competence plays a critical role in persuading consumers and influencing their responses. The degree to which a source is considered as an expert, and therefore trustworthy, is determined by evaluating the knowledge and competence that the source holds regarding the topic (Willemssen et al., 2011). Competence is considered to be a fundamental dimension of the description of persons and groups (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007) and is a universal dimension of human social cognition (Fiske, Cuddy & Glick, 2006). The concept of competence interacts with the ability of

the blogger to enact certain intentions (Fiske et al., 2006) and making valid assertions (Lim & Van der Heide, 2015). ‘Competence reflects traits that are related to perceived ability, including intelligence, skill, creativity and efficacy’ (Fiske et al., 2006, p. 1). Self-proclaimed expertise creates the impression that the generator of the information want to present himself favorably and potentially with the intention to persuade others (Willemsen, Neijens & Bronner, 2012). These concerns are legitimate in the sponsored product reviews on blogs. The perceived motives from the blogger can contribute to the perception of the perceived competence. It is highly related to questions as ‘Does the other person or group intend to harm or help me?’ and ‘Does the person have the ability to enact those intentions’ (Fiske et al., 2006).

Competence is one of the most common dimensions of source credibility and also refers to the perceived ability of the source to make valid assertions (Chu & Kamal, 2008). The communicator, in this study the blogger or the company, need to be qualified to provide valid and accurate information. When a blog reader is uncertain about whether a company will provide accurate information because of the companies motives towards advertisement of the product, that reader may consider this source as less competent. In contrast, when a blog reader is confident that the blogger or company can provide accurate information because of the personal character of the information, competence can be perceived as high.

Two-sided arguments can have a greater impact in the blog readers’ responses when the company is the source. This perspective suggests that the positive and negative arguments in product reviews from the company source, will most likely be more honest and blog readers can ascertain the message as more valid. The study finds that the two-sided argumentation has a greater impact on consumer responses when the source of the product review is the company then when it is the blogger.

Regarding the theoretical information and combination with the two independent variables, two hypotheses were formulated:

- H1D Source characteristics of the blogger lead to more positive competence towards the blog than company source characteristics**
- H2D Two-sided argument diversity lead to more positive competence response towards the blogger than one-sided argument diversity**
- H3D The effect of argument diversity on perceived competence is stronger for the company than for blogger source characteristics**

2.3.5 Purchase Intention

Purchase intentions are “an individual’s conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand” (Spears & Singh, 2004, p.56). Purchase intention is used in various advertising domains and is also relevant for the product review on blogs towards the product and brand that are used. The hypotheses for this research within the field of purchase intention therefore are:

- H1E Source characteristics of the blogger lead to higher purchase intention of the reviewed product than company source characteristics**
- H2E Two-sided argument diversity lead to higher purchase intention of the reviewed product than one-sided argument diversity**
- H3E The effect of argument diversity on purchase intention of the reviewed product will be stronger for the company than for blogger source characteristics**

2.4 Moderating variables

Moderating variables can affect the relationship from the source characteristics and argument diversity on the consumer responses. For the purpose of this study, the moderating variables involvement with beauty, involvement with blogs and self-congruity with the blogger are taken

into account. The involvement constructs are motivational and can influence individuals' needs, values and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985). The self-congruity with the blogger can raise the blogger's informational influence (Sirgy & Su, 2000).

Involvement is defined as the perceived relevance of a product based on an individual's needs, values and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Involvement with advertisements, products and purchase decisions can lead to different responses (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Given the fact that this study contains two main constructs of the blog context, a division in involvement for the construct for beauty and blogs are relevant. Highly involved consumers are easily persuaded by advertisements, since they are more concerned about the content (Wang & Chien, 2012).

Congruity is the degree of discrepancy between the valence of the perceived object and the valence of a referent state (Sirgy & Su, 2000). "Self-congruity links the psychological construct of an individual's self-concept with the symbolic value of goods purchased in the market place" (Quester, Karunaratna & Goh, 2000, p.1). For example, a beauty blogger is evaluated in comparison to the ideal standard or the conception of the consumer. It reflects a match between the user (the blogger) and the consumer's self-concept (Sirgy & Su, 2000). Self-congruity with the blogger can influence the attitude towards the consumer responses: the greater the self-congruity with the beauty blogger, the more positive the responses towards it. The following hypotheses for the moderators in this study are formulated:

- H4A The effect of source characteristics and argument diversity on consumer responses is moderated by involvement with make-up**
- H4B The effect of source characteristics and argument diversity on consumer responses is moderated by involvement with blogs**
- H4C The effect of source characteristics and argument diversity on consumer responses is moderated by self-congruity with the blogger**

2.5 Conceptual Research Model

The research model Figure 2.1. is conducted to give a visual overview of the research study.

The independent variables are manipulated as blog appearance: source characteristics (blogger vs. company) and argument diversity (one sided vs. two sided). The dependent variables as consumer responses are: authenticity, skepticism, consumer trust, competence and purchase intention. An experiment is conducted to determine which factors positively influence consumer purchase intention.

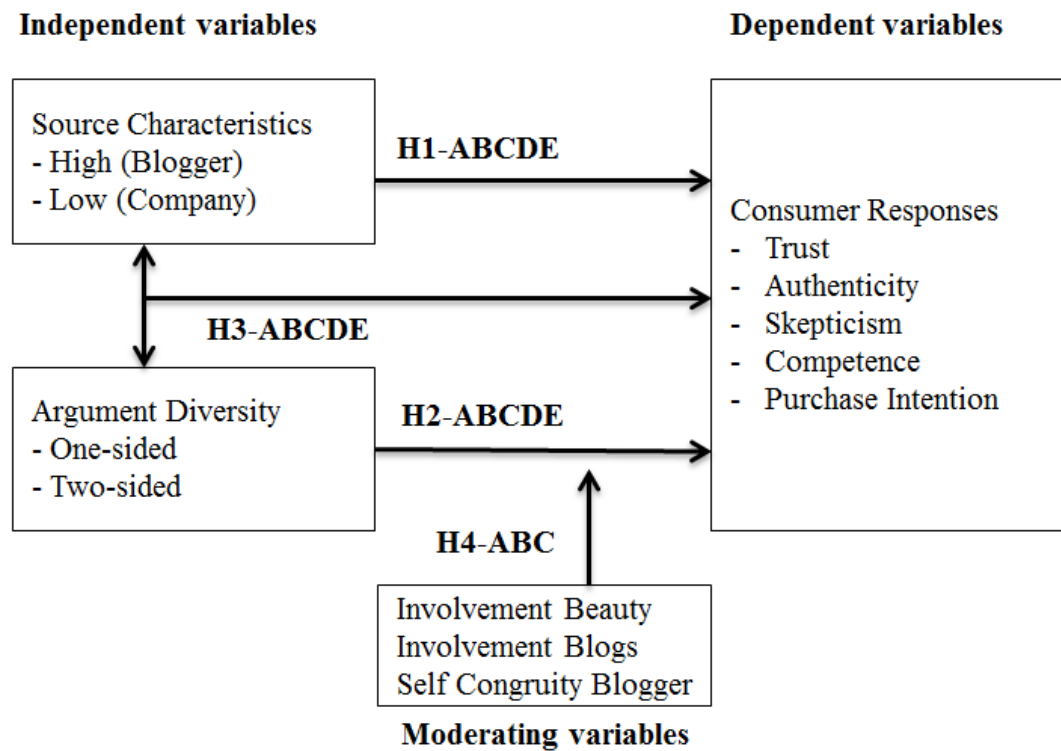


Figure 2.1.
Hypothesized Research Model

3. Methodology

In this chapter the methods to test the hypotheses will be described. First, the experimental design to measure the effects of source characteristics and argument diversity on consumer responses is presented. Thereafter, the gained insights from a pre-test which was performed to design the stimuli and the development of the stimuli for the main research are discussed. Furthermore, a description of the respondents and data collection is given followed by the measurements for each variable in the hypothesized research model. Last, the study procedure is discussed.

3.1 Experimental Design

The aim of this study was to find out whether there are differences in impact of source characteristics and argument diversity on consumer responses. Consumer responses were measured by trust, authenticity, skepticism, competence towards the blog and purchase intention towards the reviewed product. Whether consumer characteristics (involvement beauty, involvement blogs, self-congruity with the blogger) were added as potential moderators. To answer the research questions, an experimental design was used. For this, a 2 (Source Characteristics: high (blogger) vs. low (company)) x 2 (Argument Diversity: one-sided vs. two-sided between-subjects experiment was conducted (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1.

The 2x2 between-subjects design of the study

		Source Characteristics	
Argument Diversity		High (Blogger)	Low (Company)
	One-sided	Condition 1	Condition 3
	Two-sided	Condition 2	Condition 4

3.2 Stimulus Material

Blog product reviews can vary in style, design and format. To determine the content characteristics for the stimuli, a pre-test was conducted to obtain information and insights before the main study was executed. Firstly, the pre-test questionnaire was employed in order to select which beauty product and brand would, visual and textual, represent the blog review. Secondly, the independent variables source characteristics and argument diversity were tested to make the manipulations understandable and effective. The results were used to select the treatment of the beauty product review for the main research. The pre-test was conducted with Qualtrics Survey Software and data of 43 female respondents in total were collected (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2.

Pre-test respondents demographics

		<i>N</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Age	18-25	6	14.0
	26-35	29	67.4
	36-45	5	11.6
	46-55	2	4.7
	56-65	1	2.3
	Total	43	100.0
Highest Education	MBO	8	18.6
	HBO	17	39.5
	University	18	41.9
	Total	43	100.0

In the next three subparagraphs the three main results of the pre-test are discussed. In order: content of the review (brand, product and price), manipulation of source characteristics and manipulation of argument diversity. See Appendix A for the complete pre-test questionnaire.

3.2.1 Determination Brand, Product and Price

In the pre-test questionnaire the familiarity and preference with beauty brands and products were tested in order to select which brand and product would represent the content for the main stimuli. Ten well-known beauty brands and seven beauty products, low and high end, were chosen. Respondents indicated familiarity with the brands and products on a 7-point Likert scale. The ten selected beauty brands were: Lancôme, Rimmel London, Essence, Dior, L'Oréal, Bourjois, Catrice, Chanel, Maybelline and Max Factor. The seven selected beauty products were: foundation, blusher, eyeshadow, mascara, eyeliner, lipstick and lip balm. Subsequently, respondents indicated whether they used the individually selected beauty brands and the beauty products (yes or no), after which they arranged the selected items from most to least commonly used.

Because of the normally distributed samples, the mean scores were used to represent the average product and brand for the main research. Beauty product “blusher” ($M = 3.37$) and make-up brand “Bourjois” ($M = 2.47$) were selected for implementation in the blog post review for the main research. Tables 3.3. and 3.4. provide more information.

Table 3.3.

Descriptive Statistics “Beauty product”

Measured on a personal rank order scale (1 = most commonly used product)

	N	M	SD
Mascara	41	1.51	.81
Foundation	27	2.41	1.31
Eyeliners	32	2.88	1.21
Blusher	27	3.37	1.28
Lip Balm	28	3.71	1.58
Eyeshadow	19	4.16	1.61
Lipstick	21	4.95	1.56

Table 3.4.

Descriptive Statistics “Make-up brand”

Measured on a personal rank order scale (1 = most commonly used product)

	N	M	SD
Dior	6	2.00	1.27
L’oréal	22	2.14	1.25
Lancôme	7	2.29	.95
Max Factor	21	2.29	1.55
Bourjois	11	2.47	.96
Chanel	7	2.57	1.51
Maybelline	15	2.60	.74
Rimmel London	19	2.64	1.63
Essence	7	3.86	1.77
Catrice	3	4.33	2.52

The price perception of a beauty product was also measured by means of a product detail image and caption obtained from the web shop bol.com (“L’oréal Paris Color Riche Lipstick”, 2016). Respondents answered one question that indicated, when imagining that they would buy the lipstick, how much money (in euro’s) they would spend on the make-up item. Respondents scored above the average retail price of €12,95 ($m = 13,42$) so the original price of the used beauty product was implemented in the blog post for the main research.

3.2.2 Manipulation of Source Characteristics

The independent variable source characteristics were also tested by using visual stimuli. The manipulation of the source characteristics consisted of the title of the product review: ‘Review Max Factor Nude Palette’ in the blogger condition and ‘Review by Max Factor: Nude Palette’ in the company condition. One of the two conditions, source blogger or source company, was presented. Hereafter, respondents were asked who the source of the product review was and the level of confidence of the given answer. The manipulation of the source characteristics failed and the correct source was not recognized. In the blogger condition (N = 26) the selected source 52.4% of the respondents recognized the source correctly, whereas 47.6% failed. Also in the company condition (N = 17), the source was often not recognized: only 31,8% of the respondents were correct. See Table 3.5. for the total distribution.

Table 3.5.
Distribution of condition x selected source pre-test

	Selected source		
	Blogger Misslipgloss	Company Max Factor	Total
	N (Percent)	N (Percent)	N (Percent)
Blogger Misslipgloss	11 (52.4%)	10 (47.6%)	21 (48.8%)
Company Max Factor	15 (68.2%)	7 (31.8%)	22 (51.2%)
Total	26 (60.5%)	17 (39.5%)	43 (100%)

With this disunity in recognizing the correct source, the stimuli for the main research was highly improved. In both conditions (blogger and company condition), the writer of the review was added at the beginning of the blog post: ‘Cynthia, founder of the blog Misslipgloss’ or ‘Lisa Vermeer, Brand Manager at Bourjois’. In the blogger condition, the signature of Misslipgloss was added at the bottom of the blog post. In this condition, also an extra remark regarding the advertorial was mentioned at the bottom of the blog post. Also, the narrative perspective was

different in both conditions. The blogger version was written in the first-person narrative (Cynthia, founder of the beauty blog Misslipgloss) and the company version was written from the second-person narrative (Lisa Vermeer, Brand Manager at Bourjois).

3.2.3 Manipulation of Argument Diversity

For the development of arguments for the content of the blog post a selection of characteristics from beauty products was made. The characteristics were extracted from arguments in messages which were posted by customers on Facebook accounts of make-up brands. Arguments varied from ‘product not available in every store’ to ‘color on skin matches color on the packaging’. In total fourteen overall characteristics were selected, which were applicable to all beauty products. Respondent were asked how they perceived the beauty product characteristics and rated the arguments on a 5-point bipolar scale from very negative to very positive (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6.
Descriptive statistics “characteristics make-up products”
Measured on a 5 point bipolar scale (1 = negative and 5 = positive)

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Made for everyday use	42	4.07	.64
2. Easy to take along	42	4.02	.75
3. Multiple formats available	42	3.12	.80
4. Lasts as long as promised	42	4.31	.81
5. Good pigmentation	42	3.95	.82
6. Protective packaging	42	3.81	.94
7. Available in multiple colors	42	3.67	.95
8. Permanent in assortment	42	2.81	.97
9. Not tested on animals	42	4.29	1.02
10. Suitable for all skin types	42	3.12	1.09
11. In all stores available	42	3.76	1.10
12. Covers in one coat	42	3.81	1.13
13. Gluten free product	42	2.57	1.13
14. Color on the skin matches the color on the packaging	42	3.81	1.17

Subsequently, ten characteristics were selected for the main research product review. To this end, the four items with the highest standard deviations (11, 12, 13 and 14) were eliminated because the perceived argument score here is spread the most and therefore less reliable to use. In the one-sided argument diversity condition, all ten arguments were formulated positively in favor of the product. In the two-sided argument diversity condition, half of the arguments were positively formulated (1 – ‘Bourjois heeft de blush gemaakt voor dagelijks gebruik’, 2 – ‘Je kan de blush makkelijk meenemen’, 4 – ‘Het blijft echt 24uur zitten op m’n wangen, zoals ze beloven op de verpakking’, 8 – ‘De blush zit vast in het assortiment’, 9 – ‘Bourjois test haar producten niet op dieren’) and half were negatively formulated (3 – ‘Er is maar één formaat beschikbaar’, 5 – ‘De kleur is niet sterk gepigmenteerd’, 6 – ‘De verpakking is niet heel beschermend’, 7 – ‘De blush is beschikbaar in één kleur’, 10 – ‘Helaas niet geschikt voor alle huidtypes’). See Appendix D for the conditions of the argument diversity.

The overall manipulation of the stimuli for the independent variable argument diversity was successful in the pre-test. Respondents in one-sided and two-sided argument conditions were asked to indicate whether the product review was negative or positive. The question was asked on a 7-points Likert scale, in which 1 was negative and 7 was positive. Respondents in the one-sided argument condition, with only positive arguments about the product, answered the question more positive ($M = 5.56$) in comparison to the two-sided condition ($M = 3.94$), see Table 3.7. An Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test showed that the difference between the two conditions was significant ($p = <.001$). These results implicated that the difference between the one-sided and two-sided conditions was clear.

Table 3.7.

Descriptive statistics “content of the arguments”
Measured on a 7 points Likert scale (1 = negative and 7 = positive)

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
One-sided	25	5.56	1.39
Two-sided	18	3.94	1.35

A second item for measuring differences between the argument diversity conditions was the persuasiveness of the arguments. The question was also asked on a 7 points Likert scale, in which 1 was not persuasive and 7 was persuasive. Respondents in the one-sided argument condition had a less positive answer ($M = 4.04$) than the respondents in the two-sided condition ($M = 4.83$). An Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test showed that the difference between the conditions was significant ($p = .031$). See Table 3.8. The two-sided condition, with positive and negative arguments, was considered more convincing than only positive arguments. These results proved the relevance for implementation in the main research in favor of the two-sided argument diversity: the product review with negative arguments was perceived as more persuasive.

Table 3.8.

Descriptive statistics “persuasiveness of the arguments”
Measured on a 7 points Likert scale (1 = not persuasive and 7 = persuasive)

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
One-sided	25	4.04	1.17
Two-sided	18	4.83	1.20

Last, a third item for comparing the two argument diversity conditions measured how realistic the blog post was. The item was asked on a 7 points Likert scale with 1 being unrealistic and 7 being realistic. Respondents in the one-sided argument condition found the arguments less realistic ($M = 4.08$) in comparison to the two-sided argument condition ($M = 4.94$). See Table 3.9. In an Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test the difference between the scores was

found significant ($p = .020$). These results showed that the respondents evaluated the two-sided argument version, with the addition of negative arguments, more realistic. This outcome was expected since blog readers want bloggers to be honest and therefore more realistic about the product.

Table 3.9. Descriptive statistics “reality of the blog post”
Measured on a 7 points Likert scale (1 = unrealistic and 7 = realistic)

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
One-sided	25	4.08	1.22
Two-sided	18	4.94	1.26

3.2.4 Stimuli Main Research


Based on the results of the pre-test, the final stimulus was designed. Four different blog post reviews were developed for this study. All four contained content about the same beauty product (blusher) and the same brand (Bourjois). The online beauty blog that was used for presentation of the stimuli was Misslipgloss. Beauty blog Misslipgloss.nl was established by Cynthia Schultz and has an average of approximately 40.000 to 50.000 daily unique visitors (Beauty blog Misslipgloss, 2016). It is the third most popular Dutch beauty blog after Beautygloss.nl (110.000 daily visitors) and Beautylab.nl (56.000 daily visitors). After Misslipgloss.nl number four and five of largest Dutch beauty blogs are Veracamilla.nl (30.000 daily visitors) and Beautyscene.nl (25.000 daily visitors).

To ensure that differences found in consumer responses could not be based on the intent of the message, all conditions were visibly labeled as ‘advertorial’. Moreover, this label is mandatory by European Law to underline the promotional character of the blog post (Stichting Reclame Code Commissie, 2016). Advertisement through personal UGC, such as blogs, need to be identifiable as such. The relationship between the advertiser (company Bourjois) and the

spreader (blogger Misslipgloss) needs to be mentioned in the blog post if the advertiser gives any form of advantage (money or products). There are several ways to process this in the blog post, for example with the use of a hashtag with the word #advertorial or #sponsored.

The mobile share for participation was more than 60% in the pre-test. Because the image option in the content management system of Qualtrics Survey is not suitable for mobile phones, a zoomed in version of the blog post was added. In this version the blog post review was zoomed in, leaving the template of Misslipgloss.nl out, but making the text suitable for mobile phones. The blog post was presented in the online questionnaire, but was identical to the webpage of Misslipgloss.nl, so participants would have a similar experience to reading an actual blog post online (see Appendix C).

Figures 3.1. and 3.2. present two of the four developed blog post reviews. The blog post was placed in the actual beauty blog template of Misslipgloss.nl (“Beauty blog Misslipgloss template”, 2016) to ensure the realistic character of the blog post. Figure 3.1. present the stimulus for the condition blogger and one-sided arguments (only positive arguments). Figure 3.2. represent the condition company and two-sided arguments (positive and negative arguments). See Appendix D for an overview of all four conditions of the main research.



BLOG

♥


OVER MIJ

REVIEW BOURJOIS: BLUSH

Advertorial

22 JUNI 2016

GEZICHT, MAKE-UP, REVIEW



Door Cynthia, oprichtster van beautyblog Misslipgloss.nl. Vorige week kreeg ik van make-up merk Bourjois hun nieuwe blush opgestuurd om te reviewen. De blush is beschikbaar in meerdere kleuren en geschikt voor alle huidtypes. Bourjois heeft de blush gemaakt voor dagelijks gebruik, dat vind ik handig!

De kleur is goed gepigmenteerd zie ik. Je kan de blush makkelijk meenemen, want er zitten een klein spiegeltje en een kwastje bij om deze onderweg aan te brengen. De verpakking is beschermend dus ik stop 'm zo los in mijn tas.

Fijn om te weten: Bourjois test haar producten niet op dieren. De blush zit vast in het assortiment en het formaat dat ik review kost €10,95. Er zijn verschillende formaten beschikbaar. Ik vind het een goede prijs aangezien het ook echt 24uur bleef zitten op m'n wangen, zoals ze beloven op de verpakking.

Deze review bevat producten die naar mij zijn opgestuurd door een merk of bedrijf. Lees mijn [disclaimer](#).

XXX Cynthia


Pin it

1

Vind ik leuk

1

Tweeten



Hoi! MissLipgloss.nl is mijn persoonlijke blog over beauty en lifestyle (eten, reizen en alles wat ik zoal meemaak). Veel plezier! Liefs Cynthia

YouTube

999+

View on Instagram

@misslipgloss volgen

MEER OVER MIJ

Vul hier je zoekterm in...

ZOEK

ARCHIEF

Maand selecteren

IN DE MEDIA





Figure 3.1.

Example of the blog post review on Misslipgloss.nl

Condition 1: source characteristics blogger, argument diversity one-sided



BLOG

♥


OVER MIJ

REVIEW DOOR BOURJOIS: BLUSH

22 JUNI 2016

Advertorial

GEZICHT, MAKE-UP, REVIEW



Door Lisa Vermeer, Brand Manager bij Bourjois.

Vorige week is bij ons de nieuwe blush uitgekomen en deze reviewen we graag voor je. De blush is beschikbaar in één kleur en helaas niet geschikt voor alle huidtypes. We hebben de blush gemaakt voor dagelijks gebruik, handig!

De kleur is niet erg sterk gepigmenteerd. Je kan de blush makkelijk meenemen, want er zitten een klein spiegeltje en een kwastje bij om deze onderweg aan te brengen. De verpakking is niet heel beschermend dus stop 'm niet los in je tas.

Fijn om te weten: we testen onze producten niet op dieren. De blush zit vast in ons assortiment en het formaat dat we reviewen kost €10,95. We hebben maar één formaat beschikbaar. Een goede prijs aangezien het ook echt 24uur blijft zitten op je wangen, zoals we beloven op de verpakking.


Pin it

1

Vind ik leuk

1

Tweeten



Hoi! MissLipgloss.nl is mijn persoonlijke blog over beauty en lifestyle (eten, reizen en alles wat ik zoal meemaak). Veel plezier! Liefs Cynthia

YouTube

999+

View on Instagram

@misslipgloss volgen

MEER OVER MIJ

Vul hier je zoekterm in...

ZOEK

ARCHIEF

Maand selecteren

IN DE MEDIA




Figure 3.2.

Example of the blog post review on Misslipgloss.nl

Condition 4: source characteristics company, argument diversity two-sided

3.3 Respondents and data collection

In total 271 participants started the online questionnaire, but only 171 participants successfully completed the questionnaire. Only the data from completed questionnaires were used for analysis. Since the beauty blog was aimed at women, only females were allowed to participate and the age ranged from 17 to 65 years old. With 62% the overall mobile share for participation was very high. The distribution of demographic characteristics per condition is displayed in Table 3.10. There were no significant differences between the four conditions regarding age, education, used device.

Table 3.10.

Demographics per condition

Age in years, Education: S = Secondary School, M = MBO, H = HBO, U = University

Device: C = computer, L = laptop, T = tablet, M = mobile phone

	Blogger	Company
One-sided	N = 48	N = 42
	Age: M = 35,44 SD = 12,94	Age: M = 32,88 SD = 9,76
	Education:	Education:
	S 4,2% M 31,3% H 33,3% U 31,3%	S 0% M 26,2% H 38,1% U 35,7%
	Device:	Device:
	C 10,4% L 18,8% T 10,4% M 60,4%	C 9,5% L 23,8% T 4,8% M 61,9%
Two-sided	N = 37	N = 44
	Age: M = 32,57 SD = 9,94	Age: M = 31,00 SD = 8,91
	Education:	Education:
	S 0% M 24,3% H 37,8% U 37,8%	S 4,5% M 15,9% H 31,8% U 47,7%
	Device:	Device:
	C 10,8% L 10,8% T 8,1% M 70,3%	C 25,0% L 11,4% T 6,8% M 56,8%

Respondents were recruited by convenience sampling, which means that subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility. Because of the online character of the experiment, the invitation to participate was sent via e-mail and social media, i.e. Facebook. An internal e-mail at the company where the researcher is employed was also sent to approximately sixty females. The

social media post resulted in twenty-one shared posts. A giveaway of 3 perfumery Douglas gift cards from €25,- was used to stimulate participation.

The recruitment duration was 7 days before the amount of 271 respondents was accomplished. After discarding incomplete questionnaire a total of 171 respondents remained. The 4 conditions (1 = source blogger and one-sided argument diversity, 2 = source blogger and two-sided argument diversity, 3 = source company and one-sided argument diversity, 4 = source company and two-sided argument diversity) contained 48, 37, 42 and 44 respondents, respectively.

3.4 Measures

The questionnaire contained different constructs in accordance with the research question and hypotheses formulated in Chapter 2. The used measurement constructs for the dependent variables in this study were based on a mix of items from several other studies. Dependent variables were trust, authenticity, skepticism, competence and purchase intention. Also the measures of the moderating variables involvement make-up, involvement blogs and self-congruity with the blogger are adopted from other studies. Therefore, it is necessary to validate the measures before further analysis of data. This section discusses Principal Components Analysis (PCA) and reliability analysis to explain the theoretical underpinning of the structure of the measurement constructs. In the first paragraph the dependent variables are discussed, secondly the moderating variables are discussed. The complete measurement of the variables and the study questionnaire are enclosed in Appendix B and Appendix C.

3.4.1 Dependent Variables

To measure the dependent variables correctly, a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was performed in order to test the validity of the items for each construct. With this test the dimensionality of the scales was investigated, in addition to computing the Alpha coefficient of reliability. In Table 3.11. the results of the PCA are shown (N = 171). Since the measurements were largely based on a mix of items adopted from other studies, validation was necessary.

A total of 27 items were tested by using Principal Component analysis (PC) with orthogonal rotation method (Varimax). The variable purchase intention was excluded from the PCA because it contained only one item, which was: ‘How likely is it that you will buy the blush of Bourjois the next time you need this make-up product’ on a 7 point Likert scale (Spears & Singh, 2004).

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) indicated that the sample was factorable (.93). Four valid constructs consisting of 27 items were extracted with eigenvalues greater than 1: trust, authenticity, skepticism and competence (see table 3.11). Three items of the construct authenticity loaded the trust component more and these items were added to the trust construct. Together with the purchase intention variable these constructs represent the consumer responses.

Table 3.11.

Principle component analysis of the dependent variables with Varimax Rotation

	Rotated component matrix*			
	1	2	3	4
Trust				
Deze blog komt betrouwbaar op mij over	.78			
Ik denk dat Misslipgloss.nl haar beloften en verplichtingen nakomt	.72			
Ik vertrouw deze blog omdat ze het beste met mij voorhebben	.74			
Ook zonder te controleren, zou ik er op vertrouwen dat deze blog juist handelt	.73			
Ik vind de blog Mislipgloss.nl eerlijk en oprecht	.72			
Ik heb het gevoel dat de blog oprecht probeert de lezer van dienst te zijn	.77			
De blog is geïnteresseerd in mij, niet in mijn geld	.55			
Authenticity				
Ik vind Misslipgloss.nl anders dan alle andere beauty blogs		.82		
De blog valt op ten zichte van andere blogs		.85		
Ik vind de blog van Misslipgloss.nl uniek		.86		
De blog van Misslipgloss.nl onderscheidt zich duidelijk van andere blogs		.85		
Skepticism				
We kunnen erop vertrouwen dat de meeste advertorials de waarheid			.70	
Het doel van een advertorial is het informeren van de consument			.83	
Ik vind advertorials informatief			.71	
Advertorials berusten over het algemeen op de waarheid			.59	
Advertorials zijn een betrouwbare bron van informatie over de kwaliteit en prestaties van producten			.83	
Advertorials zijn de waarheid mooi gebracht			.80	
In het algemeen geven advertorials een waarheidsgetrouw beeld van het geadverteerde product			.77	
Ik voel me goed geïnformeerd na het zien van de meeste advertorials			.81	
De meeste advertorials voorzien consumenten van noodzakelijke informatie			.80	
Competence				
Efficiënt				.58
Actief				.79
Geschikt				.76
Energiek				.82
Competent				.82
Bekwaam				.79
Intelligent				.70
Cronbach's Alpha	.93	.95	.94	.93
Explained Variance	.50	.10	.08	.06
*Factor loadings >.40				

Trust (7 items)

The construct of trust was initially operationalized by using four existing items used in McKnight et al. (2002), Pavlou (2003) and Gefen & Straub (2004). An example of an item is ‘I think Misslipgloss.nl fulfills its promises and obligations’. After the PCA also three items from the construct ‘Authenticity’ were added. These three items derived from Wessel (2010): ‘I think the blog Misslipgloss is honest and sincere’, ‘I have a feeling that the blog is sincerely trying to service the reader’ and ‘The blog is interested in me, not in money’. The items were rated on a 7 points Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Cronbach’s alpha of the 7 items was high ($\alpha = .93$).

Authenticity (4 items)

Originally, the conceptualization of authenticity was based on Wessel (2010) and Bruhn, Schoenmüller, Scgäfer & Heinrich (2012) and was implemented with a scale of seven items: three items from Wessel (2010) and four items from Bruhn et al. (2012). The items derived from the scale of Wessel were found to be more related to the component trust, according to the Principal Components Analysis. An example from Bruhn et al. (2012) is: “The blog stands out in comparison to other blogs”. Authenticity towards the blog contains four items ($\alpha = .95$). The statements were measured with a 7-point Likert scale.

Skepticism (9 items)

To measure skepticism towards the blog, the scale constructed by Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998) was used. Their ‘SKEP-scale’ consists of 9 items and measures the attitude towards advertisement. For the purpose of this study and to match the character of a blog post

‘advertisement’ was translated into ‘advertorial’. The statements were measured with a 7-point Likert scale. High scores on the questions were in favor of the non-skeptical character of the items, since all items were formulated in positive form. The statements were for example “The purpose of the advertorial is to inform the consumer” and “Advertorials are a reliable source of information on the quality and performance of the products”. Cronbach’s alpha was high ($\alpha = .94$).

Competence (7 items)

For this variable participants indicated their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Items were derived from Abele and Wojcizke (2007) and Aaker (1997). The scale that was used for measuring competence of the blogger contained 7 items. The selected items included: “efficient – active – suitable – energetic – competent – capable – intelligent”. The statements were measured with a 7-point Likert scale. Reliability analysis showed that the items have relatively high internal consistency ($\alpha = .93$).

Purchase Intention (1 item)

Purchase intention was measured with one item: “How likely is it that you will buy the blush of Bourjois the next time you need this make-up product”. This item was based on the research from Spears and Singh (2004) Gefen & Straub (2004). The item was measured on a 7-points Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

3.4.2 Moderating Variables

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was also conducted for the items measuring the moderating variables involvement beauty, involvement blogs and self-congruity with the blogger. An orthogonal rotation method (Varimax) for 9 items was used and KMO indicated that the sample was factorable (.83). The analysis categorized 9 items into 2 valid constructs with eigenvalues greater than 1: involvement beauty and self-congruity with the blogger (see Table 3.12). A total of 6 items showed high loadings on 1 component; 3 items of the construct ‘involvement beauty blogs’ loaded high on the ‘self-congruity with blogger’ component.

Table 3.12.

Principal Component Analysis of the moderating variables with Varimax Rotation

	Rotated component matrix*	
	1	2
Involvement make-up		
<i>Wat vind jij van of hoe sta jij tegenover beauty (make-up producten) in het algemeen?</i>		
Onbelangrijk – Belangrijk	.92	
Ongeïnteresseerd – Geïnteresseerd	.93	
Onaantrekkelijk - Aantrekkelijk	.92	
Self-congruity with blogger		
<i>Wat vind jij van of hoe sta jij tegenover beauty blogs in het algemeen?</i>		
Onbelangrijk – Belangrijk		.74
Ongeïnteresseerd – Geïnteresseerd		.72
Onaantrekkelijk - Aantrekkelijk		.68
Misslipgloss.nl komt overeen met hoe ik mezelf zie		.90
Ik ben vrij hetzelfde als de persoonlijkheid van Misslipgloss.nl		.92
De persoonlijkheid van Misslipgloss.nl is vergelijkend met hoe ik mezelf zie		.90
Cronbach's Alpha	.96	.93
Explained Variance	.60	.22
*Factor loadings .40		

Involvement make-up (3 items)

Involvement with make-up was operationalized by using existing items from Zaichkowsky (1985). The 3 items were unimportant/important, disinterested/interested and

unattractive/attractive. Participants indicated their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale. Internal consistency was high ($\alpha = .96$).

Self-congruity with blogger (6 items)

The measurements construct of self-congruity with the blogger was initially operationalized with 3 items by using existing items from Sirgy and Su (2000) and Zaichkowsky (1985). After the Principal Components Analysis 3 items from the construct ‘involvement with blogger’ were added to the self-congruity with blogger construct. In total 6 items were used for the construct of self-congruity with the blogger, an example is “Misslipgloss reflects on how I see myself” ($\alpha = .93$).

In addition to the measurements of the dependent and moderating variables, demographical items were added at the beginning and manipulation check items for the source characteristic and argument diversity were added at the end of the questionnaire.

3.5 Procedure

The questionnaire was constructed with Qualtrix Survey Software. Participants used the web link and were given a brief introduction text about the study. The survey started with 3 demographic questions about age, education level and used device. After that participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions: source blogger or company and either one-sided arguments or two-sided arguments. Before showing the visual stimuli, participants were told that they were going to read a blog post on beauty blog Misslipgloss.nl, which appeared on the 22th of June. Followed by this, one of the four conditions of the blog appeared in the zoomed out version (see Appendix C). Subsequently, the 20 items measuring trust, authenticity and

skepticism were asked. Regarding the skepticism questions a short explanation of the advertorial was given: ‘The blog post is characterized as an advertorial. The blogger Misslipgloss.nl receives payment (money or products) for this type of content from the company or brand that is mentioned’.

After answering the first part of the questionnaire, the visual stimulus was shown again in the zoomed in (see Appendix D) version. The decision to add this extra visual treatment was made after results of the pre-test showed that the mobile share of participation was very high (more than 60%). Because Qualtrics Survey Software does not provide images suitable with mobile phones, the images cannot be zoomed in, and therefore the zoomed in version of the blog post was needed. After viewing the stimuli, participants were asked to answer 20 items regarding competence, purchase intention, manipulation checks of the stimuli and moderating variables. At the end, the closing text was presented and participants were thanked. Finally, to win 1 of the 3 gift cards from Douglas of €25,-, participant were asked to fill in their e-mail address.

4. Results

In this chapter the results of the cross-sectional online experiment are presented. Firstly, the manipulation checks which were used to confirm stimulus validity are discussed. After that, statistical analyses regarding the main and interaction effects for supporting the hypotheses are discussed. Furthermore, the role of the moderating variables is explained in the last paragraph of this chapter.

4.1 Manipulation Checks

In the pre-test, the independent variables manipulated by the stimulus material were partly validated. For the main study the visual stimuli was considerably adapted and in this section the manipulation checks will be elaborated.

Source Characteristics

The 171 observations were used in a between subject manipulation check to determine if there was a significant difference between the source of the blog post: blogger or company. This check was important since the participants did not all recognize the correct source in the pre-test.

Unfortunately, only 41% participants in the source characteristics condition blogger recognized the correct source. In the source condition company, 93% of participants recognized the correct source. Since recognition was a nominal variable (wrong or right), a Fisher's Exact Test showed that the difference between the blogger and company condition was significant ($p < .001$).

These results indicated that in the condition with source characteristics of the company, the correct source was more often recognized than in the condition with source characteristics of the blogger.

Despite the adjustments to the stimuli material, the source of the conditions was not equally recognizable to the participants in the two conditions. The questionnaire also contained an item about how confident participants were of their given answer. Between subjects analysis of the two conditions by using an independent samples t-test determined that there was a significant difference between the levels of confidence in answering the question who the source of the blog post was. As expected, participants in the blogger condition were significantly less confident of their answer ($m = 4.51$, $SD = 1.66$), compared to the company condition ($m = 5.16$, $SD = 1.70$; $t(169) = -2.56$, $p = .01$). In addition, the level of confidence only for the participants with the right recognized source of the blog post was not significantly different ($t(169) = 1.40$, $p = .16$).

Argument Diversity

The argument diversity manipulation succeeded. An independent samples t-test was used to conclude there was a significant difference between the conditions. As expected, the participants in the one-sided (only positive arguments) group rated the arguments as being more positive ($m = 5.66$, $SD = 1.57$) than the participants in the two-sided (positive and negative arguments) condition ($m = 4.40$, $SD = 1.29$; $t(169) = 5.69$, $p < .001$).

In addition, respondents rated the degree of realism of the arguments. This was important, since the participants had to recognize and determine whether the blog post in the version of the company met the expectations of a realistic blog post review. An independent samples t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the two argument diversity conditions. Participants in the one-sided argument diversity group did not find the blog post review more realistic ($m = 4.09$, $SD = 1.50$) compared to the two-sided group ($m = 4.22$, $SD = 1.39$; $t(169) = -0.60$, $p = .55$). These results indicated that the difference in argument diversity between the two

conditions was recognized, but that participants did not perceive one condition or the other as being more realistic.

To summarize the manipulation checks, in total 41 of 171 participants did not recognize the correct source, with a total share of 85.4% in the source characteristics blogger group. For the purpose of this study, it was decided that only respondents with the correct recognized source are used for further analysis ($N = 130$). Subsequently, in the discussion (Chapter 5) there will be a further reflection of this analysis.

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

In this subchapter the results of the hypotheses formulated in Chapter 1 will be given. Before further analysis, the assumption of normality of the distribution was tested for all variables. All of the dependent and moderating variables proved to have a normal distribution (Skewness and Kurtosis). Consumer responses were measured by trust, authenticity, skepticism, competence and purchase intention. First, the main and interaction effects of the four conditions on the dependent variables will be discussed. After that, the moderating effects regarding involvement with beauty and self-congruity with the blogger will be discussed.

Table 4.1 presents the mean and total scores of the dependent variables for the four conditions ($N = 130$).

Table 4.1.

Descriptive Statistics – Dependent Variables “Recognized source condition”
Measured on 7-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree / 7= strongly agree)

		Blogger		Company		Total	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
One-sided	Trust:	4.61	1.22	3.77	1.34	4.12	1.35
	Authenticity:	3.63	1.52	3.09	1.23	3.31	1.37
	Skepticism:	3.48	1.41	3.10	1.28	3.26	1.33
	Competence:	4.53	1.42	4.00	1.21	4.22	1.32
	Purchase intention:	3.89	1.67	2.74	1.52	3.22	1.67
Two-sided	Trust:	4.46	0.89	3.63	1.21	3.92	1.17
	Authenticity:	3.43	1.30	2.96	1.48	3.13	1.41
	Skepticism:	3.56	1.12	2.78	1.16	3.05	1.20
	Competence:	3.93	1.17	3.80	1.30	3.84	1.24
	Purchase intention:	2.43	1.47	2.33	1.41	2.37	1.42
Total	Trust:	4.54	1.08	3.70	1.27		
	Authenticity:	3.54	1.41	3.02	1.35		
	Skepticism:	3.51	1.27	2.93	1.22		
	Competence:	4.25	1.33	3.89	1.25		
	Purchase intention:	3.22	1.73	2.53	1.47		

Blogger x One-sided (N=27), Blogger x Two-sided (N=23)

Company x One-sided (N=38), Company x Two-sided (N=42)

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (Wilks' Lambda) was performed to determine if there was a significant effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The main and interaction effects of source characteristics and argument diversity on the consumer responses trust, authenticity, skepticism, competence and purchase intention are discussed. The test showed that there are significant main effects of source characteristics and argument diversity on the dependent variables. No interaction effect between the two independent variables was found (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2.

Multivariate Tests (Wilks' Lambda)

Grouping variable source characteristics: correct source recognized

Effect	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	η^2
Source Characteristics: blogger / company	3.65	.004	.130
Argument Diversity: one-sided / two – sided	2.80	.020	.103
Source Characteristics * Argument Diversity	1.84	.111	.070

A significant main effect on source characteristics ($p = .004$) and on argument diversity ($p = .020$) was found and Multivariate Tests were performed. In Table 4.3. the statistics of the test are illustrated. There was no interaction effect of source characteristics and argument diversity found.

Table 4.3.

Multivariate Tests (Test of Between-Subjects Effects)

Grouping variable source characteristics: correct source recognized

Effect		<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	η^2
Source Characteristics: blogger / company	Trust	14.72	.000	.105
	Authenticity	4.18	.043	.032
	Skepticism	6.62	.011	.050
	Competence	2.08	.152	.040
	Purchase Intention	5.28	.023	.016
Argument Diversity: one-sided / two – sided	Trust	0.47	.495	.004
	Authenticity	0.42	.520	.003
	Skepticism	0.29	.592	.002
	Competence	3.02	.085	.023
	Purchase Intention	11.60	.001	.084
Source Characteristics * Argument Diversity	Trust	0.00	1.00	.000
	Authenticity	0.02	.892	.000
	Skepticism	0.79	.377	.006
	Competence	0.73	.396	.006
	Purchase Intention	3.71	.056	.029

The results of the analysis indicate that, consumer responses are more related to differences in the content of the blog regarding the source characteristics. There were significant effects for trust ($F(1,126)=14.72, p < .000$), authenticity ($F(1,126)=4.18, p = .043$), skepticism ($F(1,126)=6.62, p = .011$) and purchase intention ($F(1,126)=5.28, p = .023$). As Table 4.1. with the descriptive statistics displays, all differences were in favor of the blogger characteristics.

Also a significant effect of the argument diversity was also found for the consumer response towards the purchase intention ($F(1,126)=11.60, p < .000$). The one-sided argument diversity, with only positive arguments, lead to more positive purchase intention towards the reviewed product (Table 4.1.). There were no interaction effects for source characteristics and argument diversity.

4.3 Moderating Effects

To perform analysis for the moderating effects, it was decided to continue to perform tests with respondents with grouping variable ‘recognized source’ ($N = 130$) for the purpose of the study. The possible moderators ‘involvement with make-up’ and ‘self-congruity with the blogger’ were investigated to test if these had an effect on the relation between the independent variables and the dependent variables. Both moderating variables correlated significantly with the five dependent variables (see Table 4.4.). With this evidence of correlations, a Multivariate Test (Wilks’ Lambda) with the moderating variables as covariates was interpreted (see Table 4.5.).

Table 4.4.

Correlations

*Grouping variable source characteristics: correct source recognized**T = Trust / A = Authenticity / S = Skepticism / C = Competence / PI = Purchase Intention**IVM = Involvement Make-up / SCB = Self-congruity Blogger*

	T	A	S	C	PI	IVM	SCB
Trust	1						
Authenticity	.58*	1					
Skepticism	.67*	.49*	1				
Competence	.64*	.48*	.60*	1			
Purchase Intention	.43*	.45*	.52*	.56*	1		
Involvement Make-up	.17*	.20*	.16*	.17*	.18*	1	
Self-congruity blogger	.51*	.54*	.58*	.43*	.59*	.47*	1

*Correlation significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.5.

Multivariate Tests (Wilks' Lambda)

Effect	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	η^2
<i>Involvement Beauty (Make-up)</i>			
Source Characteristics: blogger / company	3.36	.007	.12
Argument Diversity: one-sided / two – sided	2.56	.031	.10
Source Characteristics * Argument Diversity	1.87	.104	.07
<i>Self-congruity with blogger</i>			
Source Characteristics: blogger / company	3.02	.013	.11
Argument Diversity: one-sided / two – sided	2.05	.076	.08
Source Characteristics * Argument Diversity	2.08	.073	.08

Significant effects for both moderating variables were found. For the moderating variable 'involvement with beauty' there was an effect on the independent variable source characteristics ($p = .007$) and for the independent variable argument diversity ($p = .031$). For the moderator 'self-congruity with blogger' an effect was found on the independent variable source characteristics ($p = .013$). No interaction effects were found. With these results Multivariate Tests (Between-Subjects Effects) was further analyzed (Table 4.6). Only the significant independent variables were interpreted.

Table 4.6.

Multivariate Tests (Test of Between-Subjects Effects)

Grouping variable source characteristics: correct source recognized

Effect		<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	η^2
Involvement Beauty: Source Characteristics	Trust	13.24	.000	.10
	Authenticity	3.24	.074	.03
	Skepticism	5.72	.018	.04
	Competence	1.53	.22	.01
	Purchase Intention	4.40	.04	.03
Involvement Beauty: Argument Diveristy	Trust	0.24	.63	.00
	Authenticity	0.15	.70	.00
	Skepticism	0.13	.72	.00
	Competence	2.31	.13	.02
	Purchase Intention	10.18	.002	.08
Self-congruity blogger: Source Characteristics	Trust	11.14	.001	.08
	Authenticity	1.63	.204	.01
	Skepticism	3.47	.065	.03
	Competence	0.59	.444	.01
	Purchase Intention	2.32	.130	.02

The results of the test showed that involvement with beauty, within the source characteristics, have a significant effect on the variable trust ($F(1,125)=13.24$, $p = .000$), skepticism ($F(1,125)=5.72$, $p = .018$) and on purchase intention ($F(1,125)=4.40$, $p = .04$) (Table 4.6). Source characteristics have a statistic effect on trust, skepticism and purchase intention when we control the involvement with beauty. The effect becomes less significant, leaving the difference between source characteristics blogger and source characteristics company on the dependent variables smaller. There was also an effect found for source characteristics on purchase intention with the moderator involvement with beauty ($F(1,25)=10.18$, $p = .002$) (Table 4.6.). The effect becomes less significant, so the difference between one-sided and two-sided argument diversity on purchase intention becomes smaller.

The moderator self-congruity with the blogger had a significant effect within the source characteristics on trust ($F(1,125)=11.14$, $p = .001$) (Table 4.6). The effect becomes less significant, that means the difference between source characteristics blogger and company on responses towards trust becomes smaller with the effect of the moderating variable self-congruity with the blogger.

A summary is provided in Table 4.7. for the supported and unsupported hypotheses based on the results.

Table 4.7.
Supported and unsupported hypotheses

Hypothesis	Supported
H1 Source characteristics of the blogger will lead to more positive consumer responses, as compared to company source characteristics	Partly
H2 Argument diversity with two-sided arguments will lead to more positive consumer responses, as compared to one-sided arguments	No
H3 The effect of argument diversity on consumer responses is stronger for the company than for blogger source characteristics	No
Trust	
H1A Source characteristics of the blogger lead to more positive trust towards the blog than company source characteristics	Yes
H2A Two-sided argument diversity lead to more positive trust response towards the blog than one-sided argument diversity	No
H3A The effect of argument diversity on perceived trust is stronger for the company than for blogger source characteristics	No
Authenticity	
H1B Source characteristics of the blogger lead to more positive authenticity towards the blog than company source characteristics	Yes
H2B Two-sided argument diversity lead to more positive authenticity response towards the blog than one-sided argument diversity	No
H3B The effect of argument diversity on perceived authenticity is stronger for the company than for blogger source characteristics	No
Skepticism	
H1C Source characteristics of the blogger lead to less skepticism towards the blog than company source characteristics	Yes

H2C	Two-sided argument diversity lead to less negative skepticism response towards the blog than one-sided argument diversity	No
H3C	The effect of argument diversity on perceived skepticism is stronger for the company than for blogger source characteristics	No
Competence		
H1D	Source characteristics of the blogger lead to more positive competence towards the blog than company source characteristics	No
H2D	Two-sided argument diversity lead to more positive competence response towards the blogger than one-sided argument diversity	No
H3D	The effect of argument diversity on perceived competence is stronger for the company than for blogger source characteristics	No
Purchase Intention		
H1E	Source characteristics of the blogger lead to higher purchase intention of the reviewed product than company source characteristics	Yes
H2E	Two-sided argument diversity lead to higher purchase intention of the reviewed product than one-sided argument diversity	No, opposite effect found
H3E	The effect of argument diversity on purchase intention of the reviewed product will be stronger for the company than for blogger source characteristics	No
Moderator involvement make-up		
H4A	The effect of source characteristics and argument diversity on consumer responses is moderated by involvement with make-up	Yes
Moderator self-congruity with blogger		
H4B /H4C	The effect of source characteristics and argument diversity on consumer responses is moderated by self-congruity with the blogger	Partly, source characteristics

5. Conclusion

Firstly, this chapter provides an overview of the main findings from the experimental study.

Secondly, the discussion examines the findings of the study and thereafter the limitations of the study and implications for further research are investigated. Furthermore, the chapter ends with the conclusion and implications.

5.1 Main Findings

It was expected that blogs with differences in source characteristics and in argument diversity would evoke differences in consumer responses. Four different blog post reviews were randomly assigned to participants and five variables were tested: trust, authenticity, skepticism, competence and purchase intention. Moderating variables involvement with beauty and self-congruity with the blogger were also measured. This section provides results and explanations with regard to the research question: “What are the effects of source characteristics (blogger/company) and argument diversity (one-sided/two-sided) of beauty blog reviews on consumer responses?”

Significant differences were found for source characteristics of the blog. Consumer responses were more positive for blogs with blogger characteristics compared to company characteristics regarding trust, authenticity, skepticism and purchase intention. This outcome was in line with expectations. For the variable competence there were no effects found. This could be explained due the fact that in online settings it is difficult to make an evaluation about competence given the limited availability of personal information (Cheung et al., 2008).

For the variables trust, skepticism and purchase intention a moderating effect of the involvement with beauty was found on blog characteristics. When corrected for moderating effects it becomes less significant, leaving the difference between source characteristics blogger and source characteristics company on the trust, skepticism and purchase intention smaller. This effect can be explained by the more professional and better informed character of these participants about beauty and make-up products. When the involvement with make-up is already high, females are less affected by the blog post review. This effect was not found for the variables competence and purchase intention, leaving these variables harder to influence when involvement with beauty is high.

Also an effect of the moderating variable self-congruity with the blogger on blog source characteristics was found. The effect of trust was less significant when taking the moderating variable into account. Self-congruity with the blogger links the psychological construct of an individual's self-concept with the blogger (Sirgy & Su, 2000). This moderating effect could be found because consumers, who feel more similarities with the blogger, are less distrusted with companies that are collaborated in the product review posted on the blog. Consumer judgements of website information credibility are more a function of the provider's credibility, in this study the blogger, than by the perceptions of the actual author or creator of the content (Jonas, 2010; Rieh, 2002). The website provider is more viewed as the source of information (Rieh, 2002) and this can explain the found difficulty in recognition of the source.

A significant main effect was also found for argument diversity for the consumer response purchase intention. However, the opposite effect was found of what was expected. The argument diversity condition with only positive arguments, led to higher purchase intention. Consumer

responses were not higher when also the negative arguments were explained in the product review. The results indicate that the variation of arguments is important in predicting consumers perceive (positive) responses. Type of arguments used in blog posts can be an important predictor of the consumer responses. In this study, mentioning negative aspects in blog post reviews was counterintuitive and was not found as a useful advertising technique (Eisend, 2007). The positive impact of argument diversity was not more persuasive and this could be explained because the negative information may have had a direct negative effect towards consumer responses (Eisend, 2007).

A significant effect was found for the moderating variables. The variable involvement with beauty on argument diversity decreases the level of purchase intention towards the product. The effect becomes less significant and the difference between one-sided and two-sided argument diversity becomes smaller. This indicates that for consumers with more involvement, and therefore knowledge about make-up, the effect of adding negative arguments not affect their level of purchase intention. For the moderator self-congruity with argument diversity, the effect of trust became less significant. This indicates that consumers who feel more similar to the blogger and were more familiar with the blog are less affected with adding the negative arguments in the product review.

There was no interaction effect of source characteristics and argument diversity found. The two independent variables did not interact: the effect did not differ depending on the level of the other variable.

5.2 Discussion

The aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of blog review appearance effects on consumer responses. Results showed that the effects of blog post reviews are not as straightforward as expected and suggested in literature.

As the pre-test also showed, it was very hard to manipulate the source characteristics well. After several adjustments, the main study did not meet expectations of the manipulation and the source was not recognized correctly for the source characteristics of the blogger. In order to obtain a good manipulation of the independent variable source characteristics, it was decided to remove participants who did not recognize the source correctly. The results indicate that simulation of an online situation is challenging. The difference in the source characteristics of the stimuli can be perceived as small and participants in the source blogger characteristics could have been aware of the expectations of the experiment and how they are expected to behave. Participants could have altered their responses, and therefore the outcome of the experiment. After filtering participants with the correct recognized source, the expectations of the effect of source characteristics on consumer responses were met.

Expectations of the effect of argument diversity were not met. Two-sided arguments, with positive and negative arguments, did not result in more positive evaluations for all consumer responses. As the pre-test indicated, blog posts with positive and negative arguments were rated as being significantly more realistic than blog posts with only positive arguments. This result could be interpreted that the arguments that were used had different values for consumers (Eisend, 2007.)

5.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The current study provides insights into the effects of blog post review appearances on consumer responses, but limitations should be taken into account when interpreting the finding.

First, there is a limitation regarding the product and brand presented in the blog reviews. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions and all product reviews contained the same product (blusher) and brand (Bourjois). Although results of the pre-test indicated the average character of the product, future research should examine whether similar findings will emerge in other blog post reviews with different products. Also gender differences could be taken into account, since this study only focused on females. Regarding higher perceived level of risk in online information for females (Bae & Lee, 2011), this was logically for the study, but further research is needed to determine if the findings are generalizable to males.

Second limitation relates to the relationship between measured consumer responses and perceived usefulness. Constructs were collected from previous research and together these constructs were taken as a measure for consumer responses towards blogs. The consumer responses in this study did not capture perceived usefulness of the information in the product review. Additional research is needed, for example quantitative research about the motives of consumers using product review information. With these insights, the conclusions of this study can be extended towards the usefulness of blog post reviews.

Thirdly, participants of this study were relatively old. Given the fact that blogs are mainly targeted to younger people, this could have influenced the results of the research. For the older target market, product reviews presented in traditional communication channels can be more effective and needs further research.

A final consideration for future research is related to the type of research. Qualitative research is required in order to develop deeper understanding of the effects of consumer responses.

Quantitative research as performed could be a limitation because of the many variables to control. For example, mobile participation share in this research was over 60%. The quality of the stimuli on devices is for instance different and was not controlled for. For future research the simulation of the reality of reading blogs need to be further investigated. It would also be valuable to extend the study into a longitudinal investigation to track consumers' perception on the blog over time. This limitation can lead to opportunities for further understanding of using blog post reviews as a type of marketing.

5.4 Conclusion & Implications

The current study offers several implications. The results of the study make a theoretical and practical contribution to the literature by showing the effects of blog appearance on consumer responses in a relatively new field: the product review on personal blogs.

The emergence of UGC offers new communication technologies in practice and brings challenges and opportunities (Christodoulides et al., 20110). Increasing numbers of consumers direct their attention away from traditional media and toward interactive media and this leads to the confrontation of marketers with integrating their offerings with those created by consumers themselves (Daughterty, Eastin, Bright, 2010). Using product reviews on blogs to influence consumer responses, which in turn improves purchase intention, is important for marketers (Lu et al., 2006) and also for bloggers who earn a living out of the collaborations with brands.

Understanding when and how variables of source and arguments influence consumer responses can increase understanding of the persuasiveness processes.

The potential of the personal character of the blog post reviews was partly supported. This study finds that consumers' responses are more positive towards trust, authenticity, skepticism and purchase intention in favor for the source characteristics of the blogger. Consumer responses towards product reviews are affected by the blogger characteristics of the product review.

Also the effects of the argument diversity were significant on purchase intention and can be implemented in strategies for using the product review as a marketing tool. Consumer responses towards only positive arguments in the product review were significant. Bloggers who are willing to write sponsored product reviews must select products that are fully supported by the type of the blog and personal characteristics of the blogger (Lu et al., 2006).

Depending on the business goals of companies, the results can provide valuable insights to brand marketers for implementing the blog review into their marketing communications. In UGC the consumers now may still consume, but also interact with, control, create, and distribute media content (Daugherty, Eastin, Bright, 2010). Blogs constitute a (semi) permanent archive of consumers' product information and therefore, managers can mine the conversations for consumer insights (Kozinets et al., 2010). Companies need to delineate which aspects of the blogs are user-generated versus marketer-generated and how this control ultimately influences consumer responses. Companies are interested to spend their advertising budgets on blogs, and they need to understand how consumers process blog information to develop effective communication strategies (Chu & Kamal, 2008). This study adds that in the blog characteristics of the product review, blogger generated content generate the most positive consumer responses.

Also, understanding the nature and antecedents of trust is a major issue for both Internet researchers and practitioners (McKnight et al. 2002). Studies investigating online persuasive communications and online information processing will become critical for developing

international promotion campaigns (Chu & Kamal 2008). This study can contribute in the development of these and give insights for future research about the deployment of the blog product review as a marketing tool. Additional, greater involvement with blog significantly increases the effect of customer experiences on purchase intention. This study provides evidence that high self-congruity with the blogger is high, consumer responses are higher. Advertisers can seek for blogs that are based on the audiences' demographics and retain their trust by remaining relevant in marketing environments which resonate brand and consumer values (Jarvis, 2006). Eliminating credible user-generated content is impossible for companies, gaining influence and control of product reviews is highly recommended for their effectiveness and values.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Pre-test

Appendix B: Measures of variables

Appendix C: Study Questionnaire

Appendix D: Questionnaire Stimulus