



Perception of trust when purchasing products and services online

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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>This research is based on the consumer trust when purchasing products or service online. The aim is to create an understanding to what motivates trust and how companies present it to the consumers in order for there to be some form of transaction between the two parties. The research is focusing on low cost websites, aiming to find results in consumer behaviour for millennials.</p> <p>The data is collected through in-depth interviews with seven respondents and one in depth interview with a Marketing professional in order to get a broader understanding over how the trust is built between the consumer and retailer. The theoretical framework is based on pre-existing research and different theories on trust, consumer behaviour and marketing strategies. Trust can be defined in multiple ways, which is why this research looks at trust from both a theoretical stand point as well as a phycological stand point. The consumer has several factors that motivates them to finalize a purchase, which is where marketing and presenting the consumer with relevant and valuable information that gains trust. The result of this research proves the importance of information and knowledge so that the consumer can base their final purchasing decision on.</p>	
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EXAMENSARBETE	
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<p>Sammandrag:</p> <p>Den här undersökningen handlar om att förstå konsumentens perspektiv på tillit och säkerhet samt hur konsumenten beter sig då hen köper produkter eller tjänster på nätet. Syftet med den här undersökningen är att hitta orsaker som motiverar konsumentens tillit och hur försäljare bygger upp tillit och förtroende hos konsumenterna. Undersökningen fokuserar på företag med produkter med låg kostnad och konsumenter som är i åldern 20-30 år.</p> <p>Den teoretiska delen av arbetet baserar sig på tidskrifter, artiklar och tidigare undersökningar om konsumentbeteende, tillit, marknadsföringsstrategier och marknadsföringskommunikation på nätet.</p> <p>Tillit kan definieras på flera olika sätt, vilket är varför den här undersökningen tittar på tillit både från en teoretisk synvinkel och en psykologisk synvinkel. Att kunna motivera en konsument att slutföra ett köp är en utmaning i dagens läge, då all produktinformation är så lätt tillgänglig. Detta gör marknadsföringen och sättet man presenterar sin produkt eller tjänst på otroligt viktigt för att fånga både konsumentens uppmärksamhet samt tillit.</p> <p>Undersökningen utförs kvalitativt och både konsumenter och en företagare som jobbar inom marknadsföring intervjuas, för att få ett bredare perspektiv på tillit inom handel. Resultaten av undersökningen framställer hur viktigt det är att få konsumenten att lita på försäljaren för att hen skall slutföra ett köp. Ett annat märkbart resultat är att källan konsumenten får sin information från också spelar en stor roll för konsumentens inställning till en tjänst, produkt eller ett företag.</p>	
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CONTENTS

1	Introduction	6
1.1	Research aim and questions	6
1.2	Focus and Limitations	6
1.3	Structure of the study	7
2	Theoretical framework	7
2.1	Consumer buying behaviour	7
2.1.1	<i>Evaluation of alternatives</i>	8
2.1.2	<i>Purchase decision</i>	9
2.1.3	<i>Purchase</i>	10
2.1.4	<i>Post-purchase behaviour</i>	10
2.1.5	<i>Purchasing Motives</i>	11
2.1.6	<i>Attitude</i>	12
2.1.7	<i>Online purchasing behaviour</i>	12
2.2	Marketing communication online	13
2.2.1	<i>Marketing mix</i>	14
2.2.2	<i>Marketing communication online</i>	16
2.3	Trust	17
2.3.1	<i>Consumer trust</i>	17
2.3.2	<i>Trust in sociology</i>	18
2.3.3	<i>Trust in psychology</i>	18
2.3.4	<i>Legitimacy</i>	19
2.3.5	<i>Online customer experience</i>	20
2.3.6	<i>General Data Protection Regulation</i>	21
3	Methodology	22
3.1	Qualitative research	22
3.1.1	<i>Individual in-depth interviews</i>	22
3.1.2	<i>Interview guide</i>	22
3.1.3	<i>Sample Selection</i>	23
3.1.4	<i>Data Collection & Analysis</i>	23
3.1.5	<i>Data interpretation</i>	24
3.1.6	<i>Validity and limitations</i>	24
4	Results	25
4.1	Interview results	25
4.2	Trust & safety perception	25
4.3	Source	26
4.4	Purchasing behaviour.....	27
5	Discussion	28
5.1	Consumer buying behaviour	28
5.2	Online marketing communication	30
5.3	Trust	31
5.4	Further research.....	32
5.5	Final words	32
	References	33
	Appendix 1 - Questions for mutiple respondents	39
	Appendix 2 – Single Interview	40

Figures

Figure 1. The consumer buying process.....	8
Figure 2 Kotler et al.,(2012) Steps between Evaluation of Alternatives and a Purchase Decision p.171	12
Figure 3 Marketing mix by Kotler et al. (2005)	14
Figure 4 Percentage of marketing-based purchasing based on marketing channels	20

Tables

Table 1 Respondent sampling.....	25
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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is intended to introduce the reader to the background of the study, the structure as well as the aim and research problem.

With companies competing for their customers on a daily basis, some companies try to push their boundaries especially when it comes to honesty. The World Wide Web is a constantly growing virtual space, and statistics from 1995 up to today show that the internet usage has grown from 0.4% to around 50% of the current world population (Internet World Stats. 2017). The research surrounding this thesis is conducted towards the millennial aged consumer who spends a lot of time surfing the World Wide Web. Online retailers that are appealing to the younger consumer either due to the cheap products they supply or the marketing tricks they use are growing at a significant pace, but why is that? The convenience of online shopping nowadays is one of the major factors that prompts consumers to access online retailers' websites (Ahmad, 2002; Jayawardhena et al., 2007) which makes more companies move their businesses into the virtual world.

1.1 Research aim and questions

The main aim of this bachelor's thesis is to explore the consumer's perception and behaviour when purchasing products online despite the possibility of the product not being the same as it is portrayed on the website. Therefore, this thesis tries to understand the decision-making process from the consumer's perspective when purchasing from these types of sources. The research also examines the consumer's post-purchasing behaviour. The three research questions that are posed in this thesis are the following:

Question 1: What is the consumer buying process online?

Question 2: Despite the websites potentially being untrustworthy, what appeals to the consumer?

Question 3: What is the perception of trust when purchasing online?

1.2 Focus and Limitations

The focus of this study is to pinpoint what makes a consumer purchase product from potentially untrustworthy sources. The study is done from a consumer's perspective in online web shops, as there are limitations such as getting in contact with the retailers. The points that are emphasized and discussed further are post purchase behaviour.

1.3 Structure of the study

This study is divided into four sections, introduction, theoretical framework, empirical study and the conclusion. The theoretical framework presents general information, previous studies and theories surrounding consumer behaviour, marketing communication and consumer trust.

The empirical study consists of research conducted in regard to purchasing online from the consumers' perspective. Moreover, the consumers' thought process related to the post purchase evaluation and actions are also taken into account. The empirical study presents the results as well as an analysis based on the conducted research.

The last section of the study is the discussion which presents thoughts on whether the study was successful and the conclusion. This section also suggests some possible topics for future studies in relation to the topic.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the theoretical framework section there are a few different aspects brought forth about consumer behaviour from a purchasing perspective in a step by step explanation of the stages one goes through. With regard to the research question there is also information provided on marketing communication with a chapter about online marketing communication. The final section of the theoretical framework looks at consumer trust, how it is perceived and what it actually means from a corporate and marketing perspective.

2.1 Consumer buying behaviour

As the number of products, brands and shops are increasing in the market place, it becomes more confusing for the consumer to decide where to purchase and what product to purchase (Khan 2006). Price wars between shops may impact consumers' purchasing decision as lower prices may be more appealing, therefore according to Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg (2010) marketers may find it more useful to categorize consumers into different groups, e.g. by demographics or psychographics. Demographics refers to age, gender, income or occupation, whilst psychographics focuses on personality

and lifestyle. Marketers need to form strategies to get their product viewed and bought by their target customer, which is why organizations study and get to know their consumers. By studying their consumers, organizations have the opportunity to understand issues such as; “How consumer motivation and decision strategies differ between products that differ in their level of importance or interest that they entail for the consumer” Perner (2017). Should the marketing companies adjust in their campaigns and strategies as well as in accordance to consumers think?

The Consumer Buying Process



www.shanepatrickjones.com

Figure 1. The consumer buying process

Note that in Figure 1 there are six stages in the consumer buying process. In this research the main objectives are the final four stages i.e. evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, purchase and post-purchase evaluation.

2.1.1 Evaluation of alternatives

As shown in Fig. 1, once a consumer has gone through the first two stages of the purchasing decision process: problem recognition and information search, the next stage is the

evaluation of alternatives. Evaluation of alternatives alternately means doing a cross comparison of a product or a service, in this case to move on to a purchase decision. The evaluation process may occur throughout the decision-making process. “A consumer engaged in extended problem-solving may carefully evaluate several brands, whereas someone making a habitual decision may not consider any alternatives to their normal brand” (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg. (2010). The evaluation process can in some cases take a longer time depending on the consumer’s prior knowledge or emotions towards e.g. a product or a brand (Kumra, 2006).

Nowadays online retailers have added features to their websites in order to help the consumer evaluate different products without committing to any single one. There are description fields providing information on the products, suggestions on similar products as well as product evaluations by customers themselves. All of these features are there to persuade the consumer to evaluate their product without having to seek information or similar products from other websites.

2.1.2 Purchase decision

The fourth stage of the decision process is where the profits are either made or lost, as the customer can still easily decide against going through with a purchase decision. At this point consumer may use a set of decision rules to determine whether to or whether not to proceed with the purchase. According to Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg (2006), one can divide the decisions into two categories, compensatory and non-compensatory.

Compensatory rule means that the product has a chance to prove itself despite lacking some feature(s). For this rule the positive attributes try to outweigh the shortcomings, this is known as the simple additive rule. Furthermore, there is a more complex version which goes by the name weighted additive rule. According to Solomon et al. (2006) p. 291, “the consumer also takes into account the relative importance of positively rated attributes, essentially multiplying brand ratings by importance weights”.

Non-compensatory rules are decisions that can be made fairly easily. This type of decision is split into a further three groups: The Lexicographic rule, the Elimination-by-Aspects rule and the Conjunctive rule. The Lexicographic rule chooses the brand that has the most important attribute. If there is more than one brand of the same value to the consumer the consumer moves on to another attribute to compare the two brands. Thus, the comparing process continues until one of the brands is classified as the better one

(Kumra 2006). The name is quite self-explanatory in the Elimination-by-Aspects rule. If a feature that is highly ranked or sought after by the consumer is not available in a product, it is eliminated as being a suitable option (Solomon et al. 2006).

The final group of the non-compensatory rule is the Conjunctive rule. In comparison to the two previous rules, the conjunctive rule focuses on the brand rather than the attributes. This rule works in the same way as the elimination-by-aspects rule in the sense that any brand that doesn't meet the predetermined cut-off level, will be rejected (Kumra 2006).

In an online setting organization push and persuade the consumers purchasing decision stage by the use of different techniques in order for the purchase to be finalized. Promotions such as “10% discount on you next purchase” or “free shipping” due to the products in the shopping basket have exceeded a certain amount. If a consumer leaves the shopping basket full but exits from the website whilst logged-in to their account, a marketing tactic is to send email reminders to the customer.

2.1.3 Purchase

The penultimate stage of the decision process is finalizing the purchase. By this stage the consumer has reviewed the information of the product, looked at pros and cons and finally decided what to buy. However, once again it is still an option for the consumer to walk away from a purchase which is why marketing is just as important at this stage of the purchasing process (Kumra 2006). In an online scenario, making the final purchase phase as simple and quick as possible is ideal to keep the customer.

2.1.4 Post-purchase behaviour

Once the purchasing transaction is finalized, the consumer can put the product or service to use in their daily consumption activities, which leads us into the final stage of the consumer purchasing process, post-purchase behaviour. Now it will be determined whether the consumer is satisfied or dissatisfied, but how can this be measured? The level of satisfaction is a highly individual process as it is a result of expectations, quality perception and pre-conceived ideas about the product as well as prior knowledge (Kumra 2006; Solomon et al. 2006).

According to the Oxford dictionary, the meaning of quality is as follows: “The standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence

of something.” As quality perception can be highly individual there have been made rules by a Geneva- based organization, with the intention to create a general standard for quality of products and service, known as the ISO standards (International Standards Organization). The rated quality is not to be ignored as it provides the retailer with key information on how the products can be improved or enhanced to have a more prominent advantage on the market. If the consumer is dissatisfied with a product, they are more willing to forgive and forget if the company’s actions and response is done truthfully and without further inconvenience to the customer. Khan (2006) explains that “post-purchase dissonance occurs when the product is not up to one’s expectations and does not match the need. This arouses anxiety and dissatisfaction with the product “.

A consumer has different ways of taking action if dissatisfied with a service or product. According to Solomon et al. (2006) there are at least three possible actions a consumer can take:

Vocal response, the consumer contacts the retailer directly to address the dissatisfaction. The company may respond by replacing the product or giving a discount on the following purchase.

Private response, not taking action by contacting the retailer. Articulates to family and friends about their dissatisfaction, more commonly known as word-of-mouth.

Third-party response, this refers to possibly taking legal action against the retailer or uttering one’s complaints in a newspaper or online on social media.

2.1.5 Purchasing Motives

According to the Business Dictionary, the definition for purchasing motives is as follows “The combination of facts and the emotional state of a person that generates a feeling within them that they need to purchase an item, as well as the factors that influence their eventual choice of a particular product.” The definition is further presented in Bettman’s (1979) hypothesis about how choices are made in order to accomplish purposes or goals. As choices are a part of consumers everyday lives, not only does the motivation have an effect on the direction i.e. affecting one behaviour over another as well as the intensity of behaviour on a particular activity.

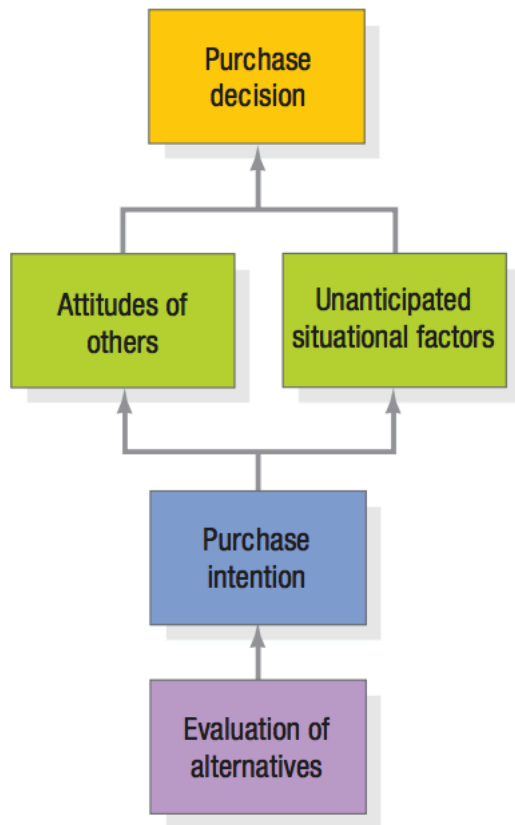


Figure 2 Kotler et al.,(2012) Steps between Evaluation of Alternatives and a Purchase Decision p.171

2.1.6 Attitude

Kotler explains there as two aspects that affect the final purchasing decision; attitudes of other and unanticipated situational factors. It's common to search for opinions when making a purchasing decision. The consumer's attitude can be influenced by (1) the other person's negative attitude towards the decision both when comparing between options as well as for a single option. The second influential aspect is the decision makers motivation to comply with the other person's wishes. Depending on the relation to the other person the attitude towards the decision has a stronger impact on the consumer.

2.1.7 Online purchasing behaviour

In the 1960s - 1970s there were a few models developed on consumer behaviour, one of them is by Howard and Sheth (1969). However, what differentiates us now in the 21st century is that we have the internet, Shun and Yunjie (2006) conducted a study where they researched online consumer behaviour where it is argued that the online and the offline consumer are significantly different, consequently the consumer behaviour models maybe more beneficial if they were to be altered.

Whilst offline consumers tend do have hedonic motivations, such as the purchasing environment and how the product makes the consumer feel (Solomon et al. 2006). However, for online consumers they do not enter a shop physically which motivates the theory Shun and Yunjie (2006) discuss, namely two types of consumer value when purchasing online. The two types of value referred to in this case are shopping value and product value. Product value can be applicable to both offline and online shopping as it is the perception of the end product that is the main focus. Whereas shopping value refers to the online experience, such as tangible attributes in regard to product and price comparisons, even

navigating the webpage can be counted as shopping value. The motivational factors in shopping value can be categorized as utilitarian factors (Solomon et al. 2006).

Despite the point of online retailers is for people to purchase from their websites, a lot of consumers use the websites or other things that aren't favourable to the retailers. Some consumers use the online sources to gather information on product in order to go and purchase the product elsewhere. A study from 1997 by Lewis and Lewis identified up to five types of consumers on the internet that can also be applicable in the consumers' behaviour today:

- **Undirected Information-seekers** tend to be more open to clicking on advertisement displayed on the screen. Usually completely new customers.
- **Directed Information-seekers** people who are exclusively trying to find information, very unlikely for them to turn into an actual purchasing customer.
- **Directed Buyers** have already decided on what type of product or service they intend on purchasing.
- **Bargain Hunters** are the price-sensitive users who are more likely to find products to purchase from the sales section. Discounts and promotions are a good way to attract this type of consumer.
- **Entertainment Seekers** are the online consumers that basically seek to entertain themselves, they look for the fun factor.

Moe and Fader (2004) argue that by investigating and tracking the consumers click patterns one can analyse and make assumptions for online consumer behaviour.

2.2 Marketing communication online

Marketing communication refers to tools and promoting messages through different channels such as social media, personal selling, print advertisement, television, direct mail etc. (Wiefels, 2002). The traditional way of looking at marketing communication is through the marketing mix which initially consists of the four P's: product, price, promotion and place. With marketing communication evolving and adapting to newer trends, so has the marketing mix. Therefore, it is now common to use a marketing mix made up of seven P's: product, price, promotion, place people, physical evidence and process, hence, this is used for companies selling mostly services as well as goods. However, this model is applicable to other businesses as well (Kotler et al. 2005). This considers different aspects

from a consumer perspective, but in order to do so we shall take a look at what aspects of marketing plans can impact the consumer's habits.

2.2.1 Marketing mix



Figure 3 Marketing mix by Kotler et al. (2005)

The marketing concept of the four P's was originally created in the 1960's by a marketing expert called E. Jerome McCarthy. The marketing mix's objective is to help put together marketing strategies to target a particular market (Fill, 2005). Later on, more P's were added to the mix to accommodate the service sector.

Product - A product can be an object or an intangible one such as a service or idea. Products are developed to satisfy a need. In order to develop the ideal product that will satisfy the need, extensive research in particular on the product's potential life cycle. Each product goes through a number of phases such as the growth phase, the maturity phase and the decline in sales phase (Acutt, 2015). For a company to reach the ideal target market, making the right marketing mix is crucial, by expanding and diversifying the product line companies will have a higher chance of reaching their targeted market.

Price – The price is what a consumer pays to receive the product. Product have a set value which the retailer tends to increase so that a profit is made. A marketing strategy commonly used is high demand equals higher prices, low demand equals lower prices (Kotler et al. 2005). However, this may vary depending on competitors and product quality. In a consumer's mind pricing always helps shape the image of a product, having a lower price

to attract the consumer is not always a good feature as it may translate as poor quality in the consumers' eyes (Acutt, 2015).

Place – Research is key when it comes to placement and distribution of a product. If presented to the wrong buyers, the product will not reach its highest potential. In Figure 2 located above the main elements are pointed out: channels, coverage, assortments, locations, inventory and transport, all of which are part of the supply chain flow (Kotler et al. 2005).

Promotion – the promotional aspect of a product is also known as marketing communication. The concept of promotion is to persuade the targeted group to purchase the product (Kotler et al. 2005). Marketing the product is intended to boost brand recognition and sales. Several companies hire marketing firms that to help create advertisements on different communication platforms. “Prior to the recession in 2008, the nod of a discount or the wink of a mass-appeal reward purchase used to be enough to provoke a sale” (Sever, 2012). Today the promotion is moving from an offline focus to an online focus in particular social media, which means that new promotional strategies must be applied. Word-of-mouth can also be considered a form of promotion, but it is very difficult to measure its efficiency (Acutt, 2005 and Fill 2005).

Kotler et al. (2012) take into account how marketing is evolving and consider the modern marketing management's four P's stand for people, processes, programs and performance. **People** refers in part to the internal marketing and the employees' effect on the success of a product or service from a marketing perspective.

Processes also reflects on the internal aspect of a company. The process entails creativity, discipline, and structure brought to marketing management.

Programs reflects activities that are directed and affected by the consumers. It encompasses the old four Ps as well as a range of other marketing activities that don't merge with the older more traditional marketing models. Kotler mentions that programs “whether they are online or offline, traditional or non-traditional, these activities must be integrated such that their whole is greater than the sum of their parts and they accomplish multiple objectives for the firm”.

Kotler et al. (2012) p. explain the final P – “**performance** as in holistic marketing, to capture the range of possible outcome measures that have financial and nonfinancial implications (profitability as well as brand and customer equity), and implications beyond the company itself (social responsibility, legal, ethical, and community related).”

2.2.2 Marketing communication online

Chaffey et al. (2012) explained how online e-marketing differentiates from traditional offline marketing as there is the potential to build small online communities that build into brands. Hagel and Armstrong (1997) also explained how organizations will quickly gain advantages the sooner they can adapt to the changing markets and virtual communities.

“The Internet, with an explosion of websites offering a seemingly endless source of information, opportunities to buy online and a form of global entertainment. The world of marketing communications is bright, exciting, sometimes unpredictable, yet always challenging and evolving” (Fill, 2005 p. 13). There are several more aspect to consider today as the internet serves as a tool to categorise everything. How has the marketing communication evolved in the digital era? Digital marketing communication has fundamentally the same principles as traditional marketing, the most significant difference is the adaptation to the online spectrum. The traditional marketing mix includes advertisement, sponsorship, personal selling, public relations, direct marketing and so on (Marketing Teacher, 2014).

Social media marketing refers to marketing on social networks e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc. “Social media is the term commonly given to Internet and mobile-based channels and tools that allow users to interact with each other and share opinions and content. As the name implies, social media involves the building of communities or networks and encouraging participation and engagement.” (CIPR, 2011). Chaffey et al. (2013) believes that this explanation by CIPR Social Media Panel lifts out the most important features related to social media, he even refers social media as digital media as this is one of the most prominent channels.

Social media marketing in itself has been used for a larger audience to be reached as well as companies achieving their marketing goals. Social media plays an important role according to Chaffey et al. (2013) as it presents both challenges and opportunities for both

the consumer and the marketer. New competitors are constantly entering the market which has to be reviewed. For a company the challenge is to surpass the other companies by products, service, pricing etc. Almost the same properties apply to the consumer although the goal is to find the best product to suit the needs that have been developed (Chaffey et al. 2013).

An article in The Guardian published in May 2017 states “Facebook and Google attracted one-fifth of global advertisement spending last year” (Kollewe, 2017). In 2016 Google is said to have earned almost \$80 billion in advertisement revenue with Facebook in second place with about \$27 billion in advertisement revenue. A reason for social media having such high revenue from ads is that they have the opportunity to market their ads on over 1 billion consumers.

2.3 Trust

Arnott and Wilson (2007) The definition of trust is presented in many different ways in literature. “Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions or behaviours of another” (Rousseau et al., 1998, p. 395). Trust is willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence (Moorman et al., 1993). Morgan and Hunt (1994) felt that trust exists when one party has confidence in an exchange partner’s reliability and integrity. According to Deutsch (1960), trust consists of two components: confidence in ability and intention.

2.3.1 Consumer trust

In the consumer’s mind trust and privacy are values that are highly emphasized. Precautions are considered prior to a consumer permitting their private details to be used by a website (Chaffey, 2013). As a result of consumers being cautious about giving away their private information, a survey conducted by Adestra (2006) revealed many consumers tend to fill in false information about themselves in online forms. Therefore, the basis of this chapter is to define how trust is important for a website. As this bachelor’s thesis is focusing on possibly untrustworthy websites the first step is to evaluate what is a trustworthy website and what is a non-trustworthy website, the legitimacy, customer experience, reviews etc. Riegelsberger et al. (2005) have outlined a basic interaction model between the trustor and trustee in technology-mediated interactions. The main element presented

is about how signals provided by the trustee (retailer) are assessed by the trustor (consumer) which in turn will give the trustor more insight as to whether the trustee is untrustworthy or not.

Consumers are spoiled for choice when it comes to choosing where they want to purchase products and other services from nowadays. In spite of this people are starting to consolidate their preferred choice of where they purchase products from. Therefore, the retailer has to build a relationship with the consumer, so they don't feel the need to look elsewhere (Chaffey et al. 2013).

Nielsen's et al. (2000) defines e-commerce related trust as "A user's willingness to risk time, money and personal data on a website". Jarvenpaa et al. (2000) strengthen Nielsen's et al. (2000) definition by stating that "the lower the transaction-related uncertainty appears to be to a consumer, the more likely they are to act in a way that renders them vulnerable to the behaviour of an online merchant". Furthermore, Servet (1995) and Gefen (2000) pointed out that if there is no information, trust is almost impossible to establish. However, if the information provided is assumed to be flawless, then there is no need for trust.

2.3.2 Trust in sociology

Society is based on a type of trust, according to Georg Simmel (1908) trust is very important. He explains how the society would be a mess without some form of trust and understanding amongst people. Trust can also be seen as some set of cultural rules, social etiquette and phenomenon. Lewis & Weigert (1985) believes there are three sociological bases of trust: cognitive, emotional and behavioural factors.

"Trust acts as a redactor of social complexity" is Luhmann's theory (1979) of a vital theoretical foundation and reference for later scholars to have a look at. Scholars with similar discussions deliberate the cost of trust in social subject, economic subject, and specifically in transaction subject. To conclude, most studies done on sociology have come to the same conclusion of trust's importance.

2.3.3 Trust in psychology

From a psychological view, trust stems from family and friends and gets converted to others along the way, another way to call it would be interpersonal trust. Rotter's (1980) interpretation of interpersonal trust is "a generalized expectancy held by an individual

that the word, promise, oral or written statement of another individual or group can be relied on". This means that an individual would trust another individual to let themselves be vulnerable or at risk based on their expectations of each other (Borum 2010).

To summarize, trust, is from a psychologist's perspective and conventional model of psychology a personal characteristic and an individual's behaviour. "Different personal characteristics create different dispositions to trust. Psychologists' studies on trust focus more on the impact of individual psychological traits on trust cognition and trust behaviour" (Leng et al. 2013).

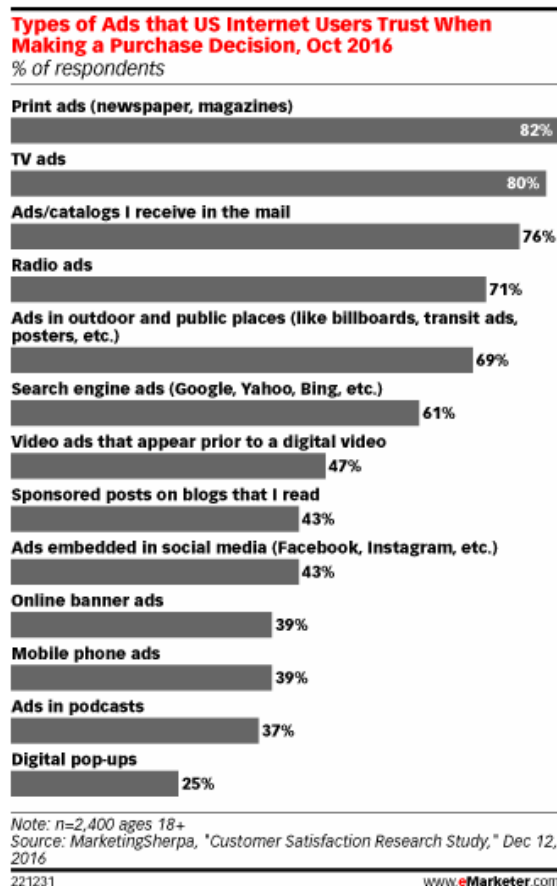
2.3.4 Legitimacy

Trust plays a crucial position inside the business world: people and organizations cooperate to acquire mutual advantages, and the achievement of business transactions relies upon on each parties' behaving in a collaborative manner. The wide success of e-commerce since the early 2000's, with an increase of internet use by 2.8 billion people in 2015 (Sanou, B., 2015) posed a prime challenge for retailer and consumers; How to attain a level of trust that would lead to a transaction between both parties, excluding the traditional trust development when purchasing in non-virtual stores – as in face-to-face interaction (Riegelsberger et al. 2005).

Riegelsberger et al. (2005) have identified two types of trustworthiness signals for the trustees to emit: symbols and symptoms. Symptoms, refers to a combination of ambiance, looks, setting, pricing etc. everything that provides the consumer with information and properties about the website that can translate to the consumer whether it is an untrustworthy website. Servet (1995) in Gefen (2000) strengthen Riegelsberger's theory by further pointing how it is impossible to establish trust if no information is available or even exists. Symbols are badges placed on the website to portray its trustworthiness to the potential consumer. An example of this is a trust seal.

A trust seal is a label or icon provided on a website that has received permission to display it for the consumer, an example of this is the PayPal, credit card companies' logos as well as seals stating, "Satisfaction Guaranteed".

A study conducted by Appleseed (2016) re-affirmed the same results as in study conducted in 2013 where the question "Which badge gives you the best sense of trust when paying online?" The results showed that the respondents to the survey perceived the Norton badge as most dominant in the sense of trust within e-commerce.



based on marketing channels

Figure 3, shows results from a survey that was conducted by Marketing Sherpa in 2016. The figure explains how the respondents viewed ads depending on where they had been placed e.g. video ads, TV ads, print ads etc. The greatest percentage of respondents perceived print ads as being the most trustworthy advertisements, with digital pop-ups proving to be the least trusted type of advertisement.

Figure 4 Percentage of marketing-based purchasing

2.3.5 Online customer experience

For companies to achieve successful performance outcomes they ought to use efficient management strategies within retail to create the complete customer experience (Gentile et al. 2007; Grewal et al.2009). As the online purchasing platform has become a part of peoples' daily lives some retailers only conduct business online, also known as "pure players". Shoppers' behaviours change in terms of complexity which is mainly due to the multi-channel context. However, a multichannel context does provide more opportunity for a company to reach greater audience, therefore leading to a potential increase in sales (Konus et al. 2008; Balasubramanian et al. 2005; Rose, S., 2012).

Writing reviews on products or services first arose by futurist Alvub Toffler in the 1980's. The word used at that time was "prosumer" which was a combination of the words "pro-

ducer” and “consumer”. Rizer and Jurgenson (2010) refer “prosumers” as being individuals creating content and value for a company without receiving any compensations for it.

e-WOM, standing for e-word of mouth refers to “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former consumers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (Henning-Thrurau et al. 2004). According to Chatterjee (2001) ratings and reviews are the primary and most convenient as well as common form of e-WOM.

Online Customer Reviews (OCRs), to make the online consumer experience more multi-dimensional, companies have added features to their websites such as product description and customer reviews. One could consider customer reviews as the online word of mouth, hence referring to information generated by the users on websites (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Online consumer reviews have come to be a number one source of product information. As an effect of this OCRs have gained significant importance when shopping online. However, according to Elwalda (2016), research conducted on the topic have mainly focused on the virtual attributes of OCRs, for example, valance, volume, and variance. Moe and Trusov (2011) suggest that OCRs re directly influenced in their sales depending on the valance.

Illegitimate Review is a review that is untrustworthy. Studies have showed that companies pay individuals to write reviews for services or products in order to increase sales and attract new customers (Vasquez, 2014).

2.3.6 General Data Protection Regulation

General Data Protection Regulation, shortened to GDPR, is the European Union’s rules and guidelines for companies on how they may process, and use collected consumer data and personal information. The GDPR rules apply to any and every company that deals with EU citizens. During in May 2018, the European Union updated its General Data Protection Regulation rules and guidelines.

giving the consumer the knowledge and safety of their personal information and data within the EU.

3 METHODOLOGY

The aim of this chapter is to set out the methodological approach undertaken to discover an individual's personal experience and thoughts on trust, when purchasing online. The chapter will research aim and the methodological approach adopted. The chapter will also explain how the data was collected, the choice of subjects used for the study as well as how the data is analysed.

3.1 Qualitative research

A qualitative approach was chosen as the research method for this study. By using a qualitative research method, one is able to get a broader and deeper understanding in how the respondent thinks around the mater. The qualitative study method according to Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 19), helps to “differ in the degree of emphasis on culture, in the choice of arena or boundaries of the study, and in the specific forms of information that are sought”.

3.1.1 Individual in-depth interviews

A qualitative approach was considered more relevant to undertake this research as the topic at hand can be an extremely personal experience for each individual. Therefore, the researcher has chosen to do private interviews with each participant. The interview was semi structure, giving the respondents guidance and assistance in order to steer around the topic and questions presented. However, the amount and significance of data collected through in-depth interviews relies upon the interviewer's management of the event (Aaker, Kumar & Day, 2004).

3.1.2 Interview guide

Two separate interviews were conducted for the research. One interview was very structured where the researcher asked seven participants the same questions during individual face-to-face interviews. The research questions are based on the theoretical framework

and divided into the following sections; the respondents general shopping habits, information source, trust perception followed by consumer behaviour. The research questions and structure can be found in Appendix 1.

The second interview is semi-structured and with questions related to the theoretical framework as well. However, this is from a corporate perspective or more precisely a marketer's perspective. The structure of the questions dives directly into trust perceptions, delivering trust to the consumer, consumer purchasing behaviour. These interview questions can be found in Appendix 2.

3.1.3 Sample Selection

The respondents were chosen based on convenience sampling between the ages 23-30 with a requirement of that the respondents purchase products and services online. An interview was also conducted with a Marketing Specialist to get a professional's perspective on the matter of online trust. Furthermore, the age restriction aims to provide a more coherent group, which makes analysis between the subjects more applicable.

3.1.4 Data Collection & Analysis

The data was collected by interviewing a total of seven respondent, both male and female. The interviews were conducted per telephone as well as in person in the researcher's home. The interviews were recorded and successful transcribed. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing there to be some follow up questions that weren't applied to every interview. The respondents answered a series of questions presented by the researcher. The questions were mainly open-ended questions with a small number of closed questions relating to information such as age and the amount of times they purchased products or services online. By using a greater amount of open-ended questions, the respondent was given the opportunity to express themselves more freely and offer more detail on the subject as they saw fit (Sarantakos, 1988). The only information the respondents received about the study prior to the interview was that the topic was related to shopping online. The interviews lasted between 15 to 25 minutes.

Once the interviews were transcribed (see appendix one), the researcher analysed and categorised the data. The next stage involved interpreting the data. Though finding any reoccurring themes throughout and highlighting any similarities and differences in the data.

3.1.5 Data interpretation

The data is interpreted alongside the theoretical framework to pinpoint recurring patterns, significant variations and comparisons in the findings. The Discussion section will dive deeper into the findings.

3.1.6 Validity and limitations

Due to the research being in-person interviews the amount of participants weren't that many. Therefore, it one has to be cautious in generalizing the key findings in the data collected.

As the most significant aspect to the data collected is the choice of respondents and the valid data provided used for the study. As there may not be a directory or target respondents, it may indicate a further study within the topic could be conducted to strengthen the validity of data collected (Marshall, 2016).

Quantitative research which involves a greater number or respondents which may provide the research with a more far reaching and reliable data results. Whereas the qualitative approach may prove to be more difficult to present valid results if the researcher aims to generalize the results with a smaller amount of responses.

Another limitation is researcher bias which is always a risk in any type of research study, more so, the less structured the data collection is. Although it is impossible to eliminate research bias, the researcher is confident to have achieved valid findings that can be applied to larger populations.

4 RESULTS

This chapter will take a look into the results the interviews have provided. The researcher will determine the categories outcomes that the data has answered.

4.1 Interview results

The respondents were chosen based on convenience sampling between the ages 23-30 with a requirement of that the respondents purchase products and services online. An interview was also conducted with a Marketing Specialist to get a professional's perspective on the matter of online trust. Furthermore, the age restriction aims to provide a more coherent group, which makes analysis between the subjects more applicable.

Table 1 Respondent sampling

Respondents	Gender	Age	Frequency of shopping online per month
1	Female	24	1
2	Female	24	1
3	Female	23	3
4	Male	27	2
5	Female	26	1
6	Female	27	3-4
7	Male	24	2

4.2 Trust & safety perception

Factors contributing to trust and safety within e-commerce are very much base on each individual's personal perception on the matter. However, visual aspects are what catch the consumers eye and therefore the respondents found the design of websites to have a significant impact on their purchasing decision.

Through optimizing website content, the weight of items such as pictures, buttons and text, simply even choosing the right font will impact the speed of a website which leads a business to either loose its potential buyers or finalize a sale. Consumers expect the

speed as well as navigation of a site to run seamlessly in order for them not to question the site's trustworthiness and reliability.

The research also showed how popups are insignificant to the consumer, due to lack of reading which can make the consumer agree to Terms and Conditions on pages without even reading a line. The lack of reading the popups was explained as annoying, non-relevant content that prevents the consumer from accessing the website quickly and effortlessly.

There are studies conducted on how the colour of an object such a button or banner impacts the consumer and can make the website look less reliable. This is also applicable to content on websites. If the pictures are poor quality and the products in the pictures are presented in a scruffy way, the legitimacy of the site is automatically questioned.

The respondents brought up the topic on how badges and certificates are signs they look for on website prior to making a purchase. A simple badge such as the VISA icon gives the consumer the feeling of legitimacy and safety.

Through giving up one's personal information, the consumer is putting their trust into a business. The way new companies that aren't yet an established brand is through being open and honest. Multiple respondents answered how they look into the information company to solidify their purchasing decision. The importance of a business's information was strengthened in the interview with the Marketing Specialist.

4.3 Source

The information source of a website or product also has an impact on the consumer behaviour. With the consumer having access to all the information they need on the internet, convincing them to click the button to make the final purchase is an even greater challenge. Therefore, marketing is not only used to draw traffic to a website, but also see the customer through to the final stage of purchasing.

To capture the consumers attention different channels are used; email, Facebook. paid advertising, Google Ads, social media advertising, influencers as well as content marketing. The research showed that most of the respondents found websites and products through Instagram, both on ads as well as though people they follow. By using authority figures, brands don't have to establish trust in the same way as in doing a normal advert

just a picture of a product. Why? Examples of authority figure can be Influencers and bloggers. The people following them, follow them for a reason and tend to feel more connected to them. This relieves the brands from the need to create trust as the influencers or bloggers have already established it for them.

4.4 Purchasing behaviour

The respondents were asked a series of questions referring to their behaviour on unfamiliar websites. The responses had a significant number of recurring patterns.

The amount of money the consumer is prepared to spend on unfamiliar websites was a maximum of 100€ and the most common payment option is with credit card or invoice which give the consumer a feeling that their money is protected. However, despite being uncertain the respondents are still willing to invest in products or services.

The price of the products for example if everything would be very cheap it can through the customer off. The respondents explained how they would start to question the quality and legitimacy of the products.

At this point as well as just prior to making a purchase, the respondents would start having a closer look at product descriptions, customer reviews about the service and the products. After looking into this information, the respondents would make their final decision on whether to purchase from the website.

Six out of seven of the respondents claimed to have purchased from a site they were uncertain about of which two received the wrong products. When asking all the respondents on how they respond if they the product is faulty or not to their liking, the most general answer was that they wouldn't return the product. Why? Responses such as lack of knowledge on how to return a product, too much hassle and simply not being bothered enough to return an item were the most common responses. Furthermore, if the products bought are of a smaller monetary value, the likelihood of returning the products isn't considered worth the effort.

As a follow-up question the researcher asked if they are likely to write reviews both positive or negative ones, or re-purchase from such a sight again.

For the reviews the answer was yes to bot positive as well as negative. However, the reviews are only written if it easy to submit the review, and from the emotional aspect if the consumer feels that it is important to do so.

5 DISCUSSION

The aim of research is to investigate the following research questions:

- What is the consumer buying process online?
- Despite the websites potentially being untrustworthy, what appeals to the consumer?
- What is the perception of trust when purchasing online?

Through doing in depth interviews with respondents from the consumers' side as well as marketer's side, the author has gained better data for answering the research questions as it gives the researcher the opportunity to look into consumer trust from a broader perspective. This chapter aims answer and discuss the results from the qualitative research and the theoretical framework.

5.1 Consumer buying behaviour

In the interview the marketing professional, it was explained how consumer behaviour has shifted over the year. Consumers have better access to make their own decisions when making a purchase both when it comes to the knowledge of the product as well as knowledge about the company, they choose to purchase from. When asking the question "Where do you find the website you purchase from?" four of the respondents who were asked the same question replied, Google. Thus, the consumer is given free access to multiple websites where a product or service can be purchased from. Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg (2006) divided the consumer purchasing decision in two rules, the compensatory rule and the non-compensatory rule. By giving the consumer the opportunity to read reviews, learn in depth information about products and even in some cases pay first once you receive the product or service, the consumer is exposed to the compensatory rule. The compensatory rule provides the customer with pros and cons. This implies that the consumer has the chance to outweigh the pros to the cons with all the information they have access to, and then make the final decision on whether to keep or finalize a purchase. When asking the respondents on payment preferences, a common answer was

to choose the invoice in voice option when making a more expensive purchase. This in turn gives them more time to outweigh to pros and cons. The respondents were also asked a question of, what the first thing is they look at on a website prior to making a purchase. Respondent 7 answered:

“I check reviews, and then Google to see if there might be a place that has it cheaper.”

From this one can draw the conclusion that customers are more aware of different options in the marketplace and thus the compensatory rule is applied to the purchase.

Kumra (2006) explained how prior knowledge can affect the consumers purchasing behaviour when it comes to speed and evaluation. With the information the consumers have at their fingertips, prior knowledge of a website according to this research cannot be connected to the websites, but rather to the actual products. An example of this is how respondents 3,5 and 7 prefer to purchase from websites they know but will research the products prior to making a purchase. Whereas if they know of the product prior to making a purchase, they are less likely to look into the source they purchase it from.

All but one respondent considered themselves good and making purchasing decisions. However, when it is a question of larger investments, they tend to look for information and opinions from people they know and trust. Depending on the feedback and the relation between the consumer the purchasing decision can alter. This in turn would prove that Kotler’s et al. (2012) model of the consumer attitude is correct can be directly related to the consumers behaviour online.

Post- purchasing behaviour is highly individual and depends on whether the consumer is satisfied with the purchase or dissatisfied that is related to any preconceived ideas and expectations of products or service (Kumra 2006; Solomon et al. 2006). When asking the respondent how often and likely they are to writing reviews on a product or service either negative or positive the most common answers were; yes. The easier it is to provide feedback and the more satisfies the consumer is the more likely some form of written feedback would be given. “How often do you return a product?”, was a follow-up question about the respondents’ post purchasing behaviour. All of the respondents answered; never or once, despite having been dissatisfied with the purchase. Therefore, one can draw the

conclusion that the respondents tend to purchase from familiar sites and are willing to forgive and forget if the company's actions and response is done truthfully and without further inconvenience, thus the company gains the consumer's trust. This conclusion is strengthened in the interview with the Marketer, where the consumer's trust is thought to be gained through being as open, relatable and honest with the consumer.

5.2 Online marketing communication

In the theoretical framework the marketing mix was presented, with the basic four P's; product, price, promotion and place, which was later expanded by Kottler et al. (2012) though adding people, process, programs and performance to the mix.

“They (the consumers) are more aware of their rights and require more personalised service. So, it is increasingly difficult to surprise them with a good service or personalised stuff because that's what they expect. They are also expecting very fast delivery, they should have it tomorrow. Americans have it on the same day even!” – Marketing professional

Kottler et al. (2012), shift the marketing mix to a more internal perspective, e.g. as explained in the theoretical framework “People, refers in part to the internal marketing and the employees' effect on the success of a product or service from a marketing perspective.” Because of this the researcher draws the conclusion that through delivering a customized service to the consumers it offers companies a competitive advantage to gain the consumers trust. How to communicate the message is through the original four P's. Through using the write tools to promote a product or service the consumer feels more comfortable. The respondents answered that they found websites to purchase from mostly through Google or adverts on Instagram and Facebook as well as through Influencers they look up to.

The source of information of a product can be of great advantage to both the consumer and retailer. As according to Kotler et al. (2005) the concept of promotion is to persuade the targeted group to purchase the product. By using social media and especially an authority figure, retailers are able to promote their product while gaining the consumer's trust without them even knowing it. A clear example of this is that for of respondents

answered that they discover the websites they purchase from mainly through Instagram content and ads.

With reviews and a pre-formed attitude towards a product or service, consumer trust is built on how the marketing message is communicated to the consumer, be it through adverts, pictures, descriptions or even customer service. By being open and personal the consumer feels it is safer to make a transaction, i.e. data or monetary.

The source of information and discovery of a site or products can also be connected to trust which will be discussed in the next section.

5.3 Trust

Chaffey (2013) explained how precautions are taken in order for a person to give up personal information which is why trust is so important through every step of a transaction. When asking the question, “How would you define trust within e-commerce?” the response of the marketing professional was:

“Well just simply, if they feel comfortable with giving me their data. Be that personal data or banking data and paying me online then that is trust.”

Furthermore, the perception of trust comes down to one party making some form of transaction with another party. What makes the consumer trust the retailer to allow a transaction to happen? The seven respondents were asked what the most important information for them on a website in order for them to be comfortable to purchase from it.

The most common responses were these; product description, customer reviews, product prices, shipping and payment policies and prices. The respondents confirmed that they would not purchase from a site if it was lacking any of this information. Thus, the responses strengthen Riegelsberger’s et al. (2005) theory of signals for the trustees to emit: symbols and symptoms. The symptoms, refers to a combination of ambiance, looks, setting, pricing etc. everything that provides the consumer with information and properties about the website that can translate to the consumer whether it is an untrustworthy website. With multiple similar responses, a conclusion can be drawn that the look of a website plays a key role in the perception of trust on the website.

“It can’t look super easy and “home-made”, there has to be good flow navigation, page loading time has to be quick.” – Respondent 7

The marketing professional explains further how even a simple URL that looks abnormal can question the website’s legitimacy. A lot of companies tend to buy certificates, trust seals or badges that make the consumer feel some form of safety in spite of it not have any direct effect on the actual purchase. An example of this is the study conducted by Appleseed (2016) where the Norton security badge proved to be the most relatable badge for consumers to feel safe.

5.4 Further research

This research suggests there is room for further research on consumer trust. The data collected is not possible to generalize due to the number of participants.

However, despite the number of participants being rather small, conclusions about consumer behaviour on untrustworthy websites as well as the perception of trust was possible.

5.5 Final words

This bachelor thesis has been a very long bit interesting and challenging process. It has taken roughly one year to write. Once having finished the theoretical framework I took a break in writing. For me the greatest challenge with this thesis was getting started. Once I started reading further into the topic which has interested me for a long time the text started to flow better, and my knowledge has grown throughout the process.

I believe that this this thesis has given me a thorough understand of the topic of trust and consumer behavior which will serve me well in my future line of work.

The empirical framework was to start with a bit shallow to my mind as I only had information from the consumer perspective. Thus, I decided to do another interview with a professional that works within the field of marketing.

I’m proud of my results and am happy to have written about a topic that is very interesting for me.

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APPENDIX 1 - QUESTIONS FOR MULTIPLE RESPONDENTS

Interview with 7 respondents, all of which were asked the exact same questions, October & November 2018, at the researcher's home.

Interviewer: Sophie Bannatyne

1. How often do you purchase products or services online?
2. How would you describe yourself as a shopper? (Safe, adventurous, impulsive/spontaneous, a thinker)
3. How much do you spend online per month?
4. Is it from one single shop or divided between multiple stores?
5. Where do you find the website you purchase from?
6. Have you recently been influenced by someone to purchase something on a whim?
7. Do you ask for advice/information from the people around you?
8. Are you good at making your own decisions when making a purchase?
9. What type of products/ services do you get off the internet?
10. Where do you find these websites?
11. Do you always purchase from the same website, or do you buy from new platforms?
12. Does the price of all website products affect decision e.g. If all products are very cheap?
13. Does the look/design of the website affect your decision to purchase something?
14. Do you investigate into the website/company prior to making a purchase?
15. What is important information for you to know on a website?
16. If a website doesn't have one of these items, do you purchase from it?
17. What are the first things you check on a website prior to making a purchase?
18. During which phase of the purchase would you look for this information?
19. Does the login option give you the feeling of being safe?
20. Do you often give up your personal information on websites?
21. Do you prefer to pay with credit card/ direct bank transfer or invoice?
22. Does payment choice ever depend on what you buy?
23. Do you always read the popups?
24. Do you know what happens to your data?
25. Have you purchased from a site you aren't certain about?
Why?

26. Would you buy from a site despite being uncertain about it?

If so, how much would you spend on such a site?

26.1. Have you always received the correct product from these websites?

27. Have you since, purchased from a site that you have been uncertain about?

28. Would you give public feedback/reviews on a purchase (both good or bad)?

29. Does your decision change or is it affected by any of these things:

- Shipping cost

- Return policy?

30. How often do you return a product?

APPENDIX 2 – SINGLE INTERVIEW

Interview with Anna-Riitta Vuorenmaa,(Partner and owner of Boxie Oy) on November 16th, 2018.

Interviewer: Sophie Bannatyne

Me: So, what is your area of expertise?

Anna: My area of expertise is digital marketing and community building. Well digital marketing and everything that is included in that which means tactical advertising, conversion optimisation. Conversion optimization, marketing optimization and depending on different channels I have to be able to know how to use all the channels you can sell through in the digital sphere.

Me: as you run everything digitally do you run a business that sells products or services online?

Anna: All of the above

Me: How would you define trust within e-commerce?

Anna: From the consumers perspective or business perspective?

Me: Let start off with the business perspective.

Anna: So, if I'm able to win either just a lot of clients and they come back to me, to buy from me. Then I would say I've won their trust.

Me: How about from the consumer's perspective?

Anna: Well just simply, if they feel comfortable with giving me their data. Be that personal data or banking data and paying me online then that is trust.

Me: Have you found a way to differentiate yourself from other companies within trust?

Anna: I hope so!

Me: Have you used any that you have used that would help you?

Anna: As in something tactical?

Me: Exactly!

Anna: Well, trust is a funny thing, there are so many levels on which you can gain trust. For example, from my previous job I was able to work with a very trusted brand which is Sanoma/Helsingin Sanomat/Ilta Sanomat and then the brand was trusted. So even if I didn't do anything worthy of trust, then I already had it. So, when you start from scratch you have to build it yourself. The tactics I use is being fairly open and honest. And then maybe depending on the business you have to create some authority figures.

Me: How would you present trust to the consumer?

Anna: By being open, relatable and honest. But then there are really technical issues with for example what kind of language you use, so choosing your words carefully and also the visual part. Depending on your ads it might say a lot about trust. I haven't studied this, maybe someone has but specific colours are less trustworthy, or they communicate something a little shady. Like yellow and red are maybe not that trustworthy colours, so there are a lot of visual things to it and then there is a lot of copywriting. Also, as everything is online it is very technical stuff, if something shady happens or even the URL structure looks funny then that kills your trust.

Me: As you said with the visual aspect. Do you feel that the look of a website can impact the consumers decision?

Anna: It does. It does both ways. If it looks bad and weird with strange language and errors. But then there are big companies that sell stamps or certificates, don't exactly remember what they are called. A company might pay another company for using a certificate and it might say something like "very safe web shop" or something like that which ads trust in another aspect. But also, culturally depending on what your footer information is, if you're in Finland the for e.g. an Estonian company unfortunately is not a good trust. However, if a company is run in Finland and there are foreign names that isn't good.

Me: Foreign names of for example?

Anna: Owners

Me: Okay! What do you consider to be the most important information for the customer?

Anna: Depends on what they're there to do.

Me: So, if they are there to purchase a product or a service.

Anna: What it costs, and how you pay in that case.

Me: Do you have anything you like to apply to websites that makes the consumer feel safer? You mentioned badges or certificates, is that something you absolutely would put on a website?

Anna: I have used them, it depends on if the domain is very shady or where the website is working. For instance, having a silly logo in the footer "verified by VISA", which really doesn't mean anything. Anyone can have that logo, but for the consumer it might mean that the site is somehow official. What I would like is contact information of who we are, especially when building a new business, the "who are we" and "why". So those aspects if I would have to generalise.

Me: How often would you ask a consumer to give up personal information?

Anna: Only when need and only the pieces of information that you really really need, so nothing extra.

Me: What do you do with the information you are given?

Anna: Only things that I'm legally allowed to do?

Me: So, in that case have the new GDPR rule affected your relationship between you and the consumer.

Anna: Yes, it has a little.

Me: In what way

Anna: Well it's also a usability thing. When someone buys something online you don't want to ask too many questions or too much data point, because that just adds conversion rates. But at the same time if you're really optimising your business, you don't want to ask too many questions. Then again there are marketer that are really greedy with data so that they can resell and stuff like this so in that case they might want more information and that's where GDPR comes in that they aren't allowed to do that anymore. They are only allowed to ask the things they really need. Some marketers tend to keep their lists and use those even like really old lists so that's not allowed anymore. So hopefully that has changed a lot everywhere, but it was very common to use emails from five years even though they weren't relevant anymore for the consumer.

Me: Do you clearly present to a consumer with their rights to personal data so they can clearly read it somewhere.

Anna: Yes, they can find it, yes. So, they can see how we use the data. How they can extract their own data is not automatic, so they need to email us.

Me: Do you offer the customers of giving feedback or reviews?

Anna: Yes.

Me: In what channels?

Anna: Email, Facebook and WhatsApp.

Me: How often does a customer give feedback? Both good or bad.

Anna: We really emphasise this, so I'd say 50% does it each time we ask.

Me: Do the reviews help your business?

Anna: Yes. Both on Facebook and email. I think in email people write more so they give us a little bit deeper understanding.

Me: Do you feel that consumer behaviour has shifted dramatically in the last few years?

Anna: Yes, they are more willing to shop online. They are more aware of their rights and require more personalised service. So, it is increasingly difficult to surprise them with a good service or personalised stuff because that's what they expect. They are also expecting very fast delivery, they should have it tomorrow. Americans have it on the same day even! They also compare prices more of course because it is available.

Me: How have you adapted to this change? Or have you shifted and made the consumers follow.

Anna: I have adapted because I have built a service that is fully based on this.

Me: What marketing channels do you use?

Anna: all the relevant ones but mainly email, Facebook. paid advertising, google ads, social media advertising, influencers of course and some content marketing.

Me: Have you noticed a stronger/better reaction to any channel in particular?

Anna: Email works, there is a small group of clients that buy lots. So, email doesn't work for the mass. But funnelling becomes very important, very tactical. Social media and influencers work sometimes. But it is very difficult to generalise as it depends on what you are selling and who you choose as the medium. With influencers there are different way of doing it for instance, Instagram stories, blog posts vs Instagram picture vs YouTube and the all work differently for different services and products. For social media advertising is getting more and more difficult and google SEM work well if they already are searching for it.

Me: Currently the influencer marketing has become a huge part of marketing for companies. Do has the influencer marketing made companies or products more appealing to the consumer? E.g. easier decision making as it is an oral review. Has it had a stronger impact on the consumer, so they feel that it is a better or more trustworthy product?

Anna: I'm sure it has. If you're comparing channels and let's say there is an authority figure presenting it then yes, you trust it more.

Me: as Influencers are getting paid large sums for doing a collaboration. Do the consumers feel like the influencers I paid to say they like a product or does the influencer appeal as genuinely like the product?

Anna: No, it depends on how good they are with their sponsorship so depending on what the influencer says you have to be really good with matching your product with the influencer so that it would actually make sense that the influencer might like it. The

audience I think now knows very well that they are getting paid but then it comes down to the matching with matching product and influencer.

Me: What is the strongest and most trustworthy marketing tool? E.g. word of mouth, online, pamphlets

Anna: Word of mouth