

Post-Purchase Evaluation in the Smartphone Market: An Investigation into
Cognitive Dissonance among iPhone and Other Smartphone Brand Owners

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I would like to thank my supervisor, John Greene, for the support and advice when writing this dissertation. It would not have been possible to write this dissertation without his valuable feedback and guidance. I would also like to thank my friends for responding promptly to my questionnaire and their willingness to be part of the questionnaire pre-testing group. Finally, I would like to thank my family, especially my mother, Kristina Kraappa, for great support and for boosting my morale throughout the process.

2 ABSTRACTS

Title: Post-Purchase Evaluation in the Smartphone Market: An Investigation into Cognitive Dissonance among iPhone and Other Smartphone Brand Owners

Purpose

The main objective was to investigate whether iPhone owners experienced less cognitive post-purchase dissonance than other brand owners and was this due to the marketing communications efforts of Apple Inc., from hereon called Apple. Finally, the influence of Web 2.0 in the process of post-purchase evaluation was examined. Web 2.0 is a version of the Internet and it encourages towards user engagement on websites such as Facebook.

Methodology

A critical review of the literature on cognitive dissonance was carried out and an online questionnaire was sent out to three hundred and five people. Sixty-eight responses were received. Of the respondents, forty-nine had a smartphone, of which twelve had an iPhone and thirty seven had other brand phone. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied, but the emphasis was on quantitative.

Findings

In many instances iPhone owners were more satisfied with their choice than the other brand owners. However, there were no particular indicators of the other brand owners being distinctively more dissonant than iPhone owners. There was no particular difference in the recall rate of traditional marketing communications efforts of Apple between iPhone and the other brand owners, but iPhone owners were significantly more present in Web 2.0 and recalled encountering iPhone more.

Research Limitations/Implications

The survey was carried out in the smartphone market with a small sample so caution needs to be taken when generalising the results. It would be interesting to study all brands as separate groups and compare the level of dissonance between them.

Practical Implications

The main conclusion was that more effort should be put on marketing communications in Web 2.0 when aiming to decrease dissonance.

Originality/Value

As there is little published literature or research on the Web 2.0 and cognitive dissonance in the smartphone market, this study provides valuable insight on smartphone owners' post-purchase evaluation and behaviour online.

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Tämän lopputyön tarkoituksena oli tutkia kokevatko iPhone käyttäjät vähemmän kognitiivista dissonanssia ostotapahtuman jälkeen kuin muiden tuotemerkkien käyttäjät. Tämä lopputyö selvitti myös Applen markkinointiviestinnän roolia kognitiivisessa dissonanssissa. Lisäksi tarkasteltiin Web 2.0:n vaikutusta prosessiin. Web 2.0 on Internetin käyttäjävetoinen versio, joka kannustaa käyttäjiä osallistumaan sisällöntuottamiseen sivustoille, esimerkiksi Facebookiin.

Tässä tutkimuksessa sovellettiin sekä määrällisiä että laadullisia tutkimusmenetelmiä. Painopiste oli kuitenkin määrällisessä tutkimusmenetelmässä. Kysely tutki käyttäjien tyytyväisyyttä älypuhelimien valintaan ja heidän käyttäytymistään online-ympäristössä. Kysely lähetettiin kolmelle sadalle viidelle henkilölle, joista kuusikymmentäkahdeksan vastasi kyselyyn. Neljäkymmentäyhdeksän vastaajaa ilmoitti omistavansa älypuhelimien ja näistä kaksitoista oli iPhone omistaja ja kolmekymmentäseitsemän muiden tuotemerkkien älypuhelimien omistaja.

Tulokset osoittivat, että monissa tapauksissa iPhone käyttäjät olivat tyytyväisempiä valintaansa kuin muiden tuotemerkkien käyttäjät. Tutkimuksessa ei kuitenkaan ilmennyt merkittävää kognitiivista dissonanssia muissa käyttäjissä. Perinteisen markkinointiviestinnän muistaminen oli samansuuntainen sekä iPhone että muiden tuotemerkkien käyttäjillä. iPhone käyttäjät olivat kuitenkin merkittävästi aktiivisempia Web 2.0 ympäristössä ja muistivat kohdanneensa iPhone tässä ympäristössä enemmän kuin muiden tuotemerkkien käyttäjät.

iPhone käyttäjät vaikuttivat tyytyväisemmiltä valintaansa ja kokeneen vähemmän kognitiivista dissonanssia kuin muiden tuotemerkkien käyttäjät. iPhone käyttäjät myös todennäköisemmin osallistuivat keskusteluun online-ympäristössä ja käyttivät suusta suuhun-markkinointia suosittelemalla älypuhelimiaan muille. Johtopäätöksenä voidaan pitää, että enemmän resursseja tulisi kohdistaa markkinointiviestintään Web 2.0-ympäristössä kun päämääränä on vähentää kognitiivista dissonanssia. Web 2.0 mahdollistaa suuren yleisön tavoittamisen viestin uskottavuutta vähentämättä.

Avainsanat: ostokäyttäytyminen, kognitiivinen dissonanssi, markkinointiviestintä, Web 2.0, älypuhelin, iPhone

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
2	ABSTRACTS	3
3	LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	6
4	INTRODUCTION	8
5	LITERATURE REVIEW	9
5.1	Consumer Decision Making Process and Buyer Behaviour	9
5.2	Cognitive Dissonance Theory.....	11
5.3	The Extent of Dissonance	13
5.4	Cognitive Dissonance as a Marketing Theory and Its Implications to Marketing Communications.....	14
5.5	The Role of Marketing Communications in Reducing Cognitive Dissonance	15
5.6	Implications of Web 2.0 on Marketing Communications	17
5.7	Research of Cognitive Dissonance in a Marketing Context.....	20
6	METHODOLOGY.....	24
6.1	Objectives.....	24
6.2	Research Approach.....	24
6.3	Research Method	25
6.4	Data Collection	25
6.5	Sampling	26
6.6	Limitations	28
6.7	Timing	29
6.8	Ethical Considerations.....	29
7	FINDINGS.....	31
7.1	Respondent Profile.....	31
7.2	The Level of Cognitive Dissonance.....	35
7.3	Marketing Communications.....	42
7.4	Web 2.0.....	45
7.5	iPhone Launch	49
8	ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	51
9	CONCLUSIONS	56
10	REFERENCES	59
11	BIBLIOGRAPHY	62

APPENDIX 1:	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
APPENDIX 2:	A QUESTIONNAIRE ON SMARTPHONE OWNERS' BEHAVIOUR ON SOCIAL MEDIA
APPENDIX 3:	ETHICAL APPROVAL FORM

3 LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1	Simple Buying Model	9
Figure 2	Effectiveness of marketing communications tools	16
Figure 3	Timeline of Web 2.0	19
Figure 4	Smartphone ownership	31
Figure 5	Gender	32
Figure 6	Age	32
Figure 7	Salary bands	33
Figure 8	Country of residence	33
Figure 9	On contract	34
Figure 10	Distribution of brands	34
Figure 11	Best perceived brand	35
Figure 12	Satisfaction versus time	36
Figure 13	Satisfaction with the choice	37
Figure 14	Number of alternatives reviewed	38
Figure 15	Similarity of alternatives	39
Figure 16	Positive features	39
Figure 17	Negative features	40
Figure 18	Dealing with dissonance, actions sought	41
Figure 19	Repurchase rate	42
Figure 20	Number of friends having same brand phone	42
Figure 21	Number of recommendations received	43

Figure 22	Number of recommendations given	43
Figure 23	Recall rate of marketing communications efforts	44
Figure 24	Membership in online communities	45
Figure 25	Recall rate of iPhone in online communities	46
Figure 26	Engagement on online communities regarding iPhone	47
Figure 27	Engagement on social media	48
Figure 28	Other Apple products ownership	50

4 INTRODUCTION

Cognitive dissonance is a social psychology theory meaning mental discomfort which occurs after decision making. When behaviour and attitudes or opinions are in conflict with each other, the feeling of mental discomfort will occur.

The opportunity cost of making a choice is, in essence, the reason for dissonance to develop. This theory has implications to marketers as it can be used to explain consumer behaviour post-purchase. More importantly, marketers can use the theory to plan their campaigns to provide relevant information. In the marketing context, marketing communications is generally perceived beneficial in decreasing the tension and discomfort which is desired to lead to repurchase and loyalty. Different brand building tools, such as advertising and public relations are seen, in theory, highly efficient in reducing dissonance.

In general, advertising tends to attract bigger budgets than public relations when trying to influence the post-purchase behaviour. However, it would be interesting to know whether the situation needed to change, i.e. should more emphasis be put on to using public relations and word of mouth when trying to influence post-purchase behaviour and reduce dissonance and whether this should be done online.

The Internet and easy access to information has changed the operational environment and increased the number of channels of communication. Web 2.0 and social media are relatively new to marketing and it is important to understand what kind of influence these have on buying behaviour. However, Web 2.0 can be a complicated mix of channels and marketers need to know the most influential ways to reach the consumer and how consumers engage on Web 2.0 platforms.

The purpose of this dissertation is to look at the implications of cognitive dissonance theory on marketing communications, especially in the context of public relations, word of mouth and the online environment. The more specific focus will be on Apple's iPhones and whether or not iPhone owners experience less cognitive dissonance than other smartphone owners due to the marketing communications efforts that Apple uses and what is the influence of Web 2.0 in the process of post-purchase evaluation.

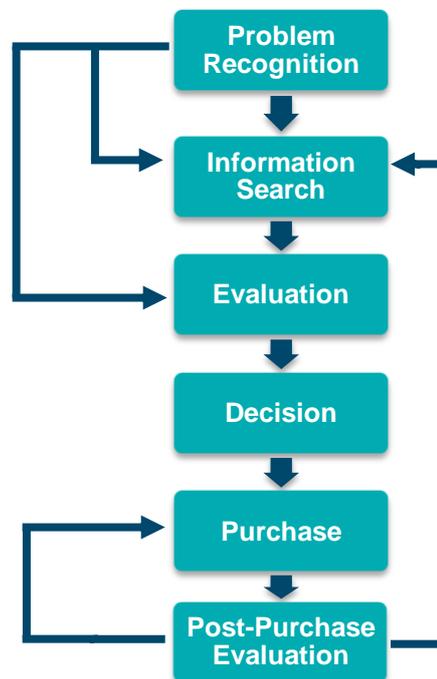
5 LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer behaviour, marketing communications and Web 2.0 will be discussed in the following chapters. To understand cognitive dissonance and post-purchase evaluation process, it is important to examine the existing literature and research on the topic.

5.1 Consumer Decision Making Process and Buyer Behaviour

Understanding what makes consumers to buy a product or service is paramount in marketing. Consumer decision making is influenced by attitudes, perception, learning and motivation and they all contribute to a buying decision (Egan, 2007, p.53). A “Simple buying model” is commonly accepted in the literature to describe the stages a consumer goes through when making a buying decision to explain the perceived rational, cognitive, process (Egan, 2007, p.54).

Figure 1
Simple Buying Model (Adapted from Egan, 2007, p.53)



The six stages illustrated above explain the decision making process (Egan, 2007, p.53).

1. The **problem recognition** stage acts as a trigger for the process and can be caused either by a personal need of an individual or by an external trigger, such as new information.
2. The first stage may lead to the second stage, **information search**, in which the consumer collects information on a range of products and services.
3. This information aids in the third stage, **evaluation**, in which the consumer evaluates the alternatives in the light of the information he possesses.
4. The fourth stage is about **decision** which may lead to a purchase, but this cannot be taken for granted.
5. The fifth stage is the **purchase**.
6. The final stage is **post-purchase evaluation** which may lead to a repeat purchase or to further information search.

Marketers need to use this model with care understanding that it is only a model and in reality redundancy can, and does, occur at every stage (Egan, 2007, p.54). It assumes that consumers have perfect knowledge which is not true in real life. The model can be used as a basic model to understand consumer decision making, but the aforesaid limitations need to be acknowledged.

Examining the level of involvement the consumer is prepared to undertake when making a decision can also aid in understanding buyer behaviour. There are three different levels of involvement: routine (low involvement), limited (medium involvement) and extensive (high involvement) problem solving (Egan, 2007, p.55). The majority of purchase decisions fall into these categories.

Closely associated with extensive decision making and high involvement is the concept of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance is a social psychology theory that has been used in marketing to explain post-purchase behaviour. It relates to mental discomfort after a decision has been made and even though it exists in all stages as the positives of not chosen alternatives emphasise, it is most relevant in the end stage of the buying model. The key concept related to the post-purchase evaluation is cognitive dissonance. The following chapters will examine cognitive dissonance theory and its implications to marketing and marketing communications.

5.2 Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Developed by Leon Festinger in 1957, it is based on the assumption that each individual strives towards consistency in his opinions, attitudes and values and, in addition, towards consistency in psychological attributes and the behaviour resulting from them (Festinger, 1957). The theory suggests that if an individual possesses two conflicting views, he will experience mental discomfort and will seek to reduce this by changing one or the other viewpoint, or by introducing a third viewpoint that will reduce the discomfort.(Egan, 2007, p.56).

Dissonance can exist between two different sets of cognition. The discomfort may arise if there is a conflict between a person's behavioural or environmental cognitive structure or if there is a conflict between behavioural and environmental cognitions (Markin, 1974, p144). Arguably, if dissonance occurs between a behavioural and an environmental cognitive element, a person may either attempt to change his behaviour to be more in consistency with his attitudes and opinions or he may attempt to change his opinions and attitudes to be more inconsistent with his behaviour (Markin, 1974, p.144). If dissonance occurs between attitudes and opinions, the only change can be in environmental cognition. However, this is considerably more difficult than changing one's behaviour and, thus, most of the changes occur because of dissonance is in a person's behavioural elements (Festinger, 1957, p.20).

Cognitive dissonance is characterised by being a post-decision feeling, taking place after a decision has been made between two or more alternatives (Markin, 1974, p.144). The psychology behind the feeling of discomfort relates to the act of choosing specific alternatives. All positive characteristics of the not chosen alternative are dissonant with the fact that this alternative has not been chosen. It is also believed that the more attractive the alternatives are, the greater the dissonance (Festinger, 1957, p. 217).

Another situation where dissonance can occur is when an external force tries to change a person's behaviour which can be in disagreement with the person's beliefs. Offering a financial reward for stating something that the person feels is not correct (Markin, 1974, p.145) is a good example of this. In addition, forced or accidental exposure to new information may create dissonance. The new cognitive

elements that result from obtaining new information may be in conflict with existing cognitions creating mental discomfort (Markin, 1974, p.145).

However, this can work the other way around too. External force, such as marketing communications, can be a powerful way to influence the post-purchase evaluation in a person. This is when the message conveyed is in agreement with the person's beliefs and the new cognitive elements that result from gaining new information are not in conflict, but consistent with existing cognitions, creating the feeling of satisfaction in the person.

It is generally thought that people expose themselves to information that they find to be in accordance with their existing attitudes. The theory, thus, implies that people try to avoid situations and information that would introduce new conflicting elements (Festinger, 1957, p.217). Dissonance can also occur when making a decision in a group and when there is an open disagreement (Markin, 1974, p.145). An individual with an opposite view is uncomfortable to another individual, causing the feeling of discomfort (Markin, 1974, p.145). Festinger (1957, p.217) notes that it is hypothesised that the existing dissonance will lead to the person to seek social support for his belief. This can lead to deterioration of the group and make the conflicting individuals to seek alternative groups of people (Markin, 1974, p.145).

There is also a counter theory to cognitive dissonance in the literature. The main counter theory to dissonance is the self-perception theory developed by Bem (1967, cited in East, 1997, p.180). The self-perception theory suggests that people behave the way they like to behave and, thus, arousal may not be necessary to change behaviour. Bem argues that providing new information may not be necessary for attitude change and that this may be unrelated to any dissonance reduction effects (East, 1997, p.181). This theory claims that behaviour determines the way the person feels and, thus, cannot be influenced by external information. However, this study will concentrate on the cognitive dissonance theory as it is more relevant.

5.3 The Extent of Dissonance

As stated, it is generally thought that the more attractive the alternatives are with each other, the greater the dissonance will be. The number of choices influences the amount of dissonance too. The more great alternatives there are, the more discomfort the decision will produce. The personal importance related to the decision influences the level of dissonance as well. However, it can be difficult to measure this kind of dissonance as a great deal of a person's cognitive structure and style needs to be known before attempting to measure the level of dissonance (Markin, 1974, p.146).

Another factor influencing the amount of dissonance is the number of negative characteristics in the chosen option. The more negative characteristics are associated with the alternative, the more discomfort a person will feel (Markin, 1974, p.146). Also, the amount of cognitive overlap between alternatives available influences the extent (Festinger, 1957, p.41). Cognitive overlap means "the degree to which one alternative is similar to another" (Festinger, 1957, p.41). If two alternatives are quite similar, the degree of cognitive overlap will be great which leads to less dissonance than if the alternatives were far apart as the cognitive elements are not in conflict (Festinger, 1957, p.41).

Festinger (1957) argues that cognitive overlap will influence dissonance. However, what needs to be taken into account is the definition of similar. A product may have similar features and benefits, but these may have different meanings to different people. One person may, for example, use his smartphone for browsing the Internet whereas the other person is more concerned with the possibilities to listen to music. Thus, even though cognitive overlap would seemingly be great, it can be that these two persons evaluate the alternatives to be very different with each other, depending on the features they seek.

Time and strongly held cognitions also influence the extent of dissonance a person experiences. The more recent the decision is between alternatives, the greater the level of dissonance. This is due to the phenomenon of forgetting, Markin (1974, p.147) argues that it is logical that individuals attempt to reduce tension through selective forgetting, i.e. people quickly forget the decision that caused dissonance. Strongly held cognitions influence the level of dissonance experienced because

some attitudes are stronger than others. One theory in regard to what leads a person to decide against a strongly held attitude is that the person may not be aware of the violated cognition until after the decision has been made (Markin, 1974, p.147).

Fill (1995, p.92) applies the idea of cognitive dissonance theory further. He states that individuals use information that has been generated by external and internal sources. This information is processed into meanings and is combined to form judgements about behaviour. This idea is based on Belk's journal article from 1975 and consequently, makes the assumption that the consumer can be seen as being adaptive to problem solving as well as using various processes in reasoning and acquiring knowledge (Fill, 1995, p.92).

Marketers can influence the individual via the information gained from external sources. This new information forms the basis for the judgement on whether or not the behaviour and decision was satisfying. Cognitive dissonance explains and helps to understand consumer behaviour in the last stage of buying behaviour model. It aids in understanding the post-purchase evaluation and the process the consumer goes through at this stage. This is also why it has value to marketers.

5.4 Cognitive Dissonance as a Marketing Theory and Its Implications to Marketing Communications

Several authors discuss cognitive dissonance in the marketing communications context (Smith & Taylor, 2004 and Fill, 1995 and Rossiter and Bellman, 2005 and Burnett, 1993 and Egan, 2007) and the mutual idea shared between these authors is that post-purchase discomfort will occur especially when the buying decision involves high involvement decision making i.e. when there is a great need for information and high costs are present. This is why it is important that marketers recognise the phenomenon. Cognitive dissonance is most likely to occur after the purchase because any purchase involves some form of justification, especially when it involves high costs, making the cognitions dissonant (Egan, 2007, p.57).

Markin (1974, p.151) states that in order to analyse cognitive dissonance in buying environment, different dissonance causing buying situations need to be more carefully examined. Markin (1974, p.151) has based his analysis on Holloway's (1967, cited in Markin, 1974, p.151) notion that:

One factor may be dissonance producing and two others may not be. Subsequently, the aroused dissonance may be reduced in a variety of ways. The buyer may change his evaluations, select supporting information, ignore conflicting information, distort his perceptions or even return the item to the seller.

It is important to understand that several factors can cause cognitive dissonance. The product, individual and the buying situation all contribute towards cognitive dissonance (Markin, 1974, p.130).

5.5 The Role of Marketing Communications in Reducing Cognitive Dissonance

Festinger (1957, p.18) argues that the reduction of dissonance happens as follows:

The presence of dissonance leads to action to reduce it, just as the presence of hunger leads to action to reduce hunger...also, the greater the dissonance, the greater will be the intensity of the action to reduce dissonance and the greater the avoidance of situations that would increase dissonance.

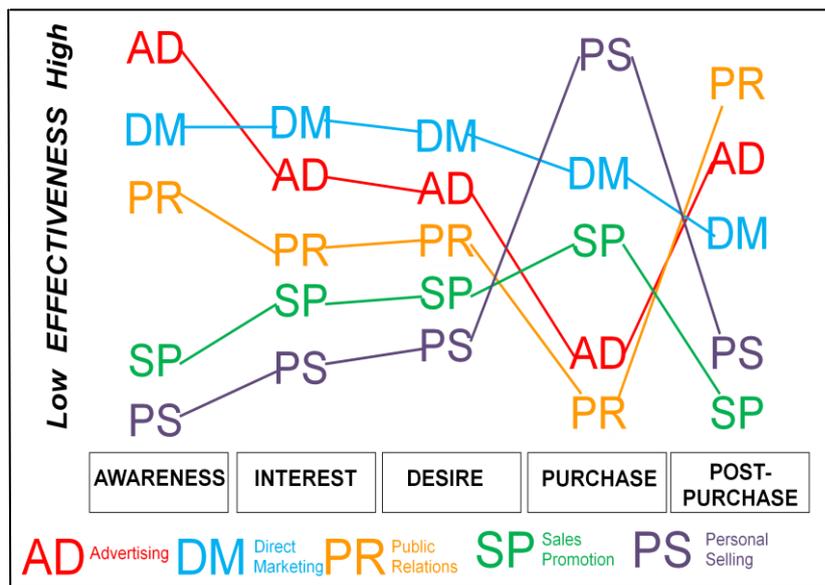
Following Festinger's theory, the authors agree that marketing communications can play an important role in reducing post-purchase dissonance:

Marketing communications, at this stage, should be aimed at reinforcing decisions by stressing the positive features of the product (Fill, 1995, p118).

It is suggested in the literature that brand building marketing communications tools are particularly suitable for reinforcing the customer and his views on that he has made the right decision (Egan, 2007, p.57).

As discussed, dissonance will most likely occur when high costs or extensive information need are associated with the purchase. Figure 2 is adapted from Egan's book Marketing Communications (2007, p.339) and Evans (2010) where they point out the effectiveness of different marketing communications tools with different stages/objectives of the simple buying model. The chart demonstrates which brand building tool is most appropriate with each objective.

Figure 2
Effectiveness of marketing communications tools



Advertising, public relations and word of mouth are in particular suitable marketing communications tools to reduce dissonance. A consumer's feelings and evaluation can influence repeat purchase rate and what the consumer tells others about the product or brand (Burnett, 1993, p.183). Thus, the message that marketing communications should convey has to do with reinforcing and providing information that is consistent with the individual's existing cognitions. Adapted from Festinger's theory, Blythe (2000, cited in Egan, 2007, p.57) suggests that there are four approaches an individual can do to reduce the tension. These are ignoring the dissonant information, distorting the dissonant information, playing down the importance of the issue at stake and changing the behaviour or situation. Burnett (1993, p.183) suggests that stressing positive attributes, personalised reinforcement and publicity materials can also all alleviate dissonance.

Rossiter and Bellman (2005, p.92) present the idea of importance of display, recommendation and word of mouth in decreasing post-purchase discomfort. All these can be prompted by marketing communications. It can be that some of the elements, for example display, can have more influence on car than smartphone buyers, for example. However, it would be logical that smartphone owners would be prompted to recommend and use word of mouth. Smartphones are perhaps more likely to be bought online where it is not possible to feel the physical product. This is where the recommendation and word of mouth become the tools to influence the consumer. This is also why smartphone owners should be encouraged to recommend their choice to other people which will lead not only to the original customer being satisfied, but also possibly aids in gaining new customers.

5.6 Implications of Web 2.0 on Marketing Communications

Public relations (including word of mouth) and advertising are the most appropriate tools in influencing the consumer in the post-purchase evaluation phase. However, the environment these tools need to be used in is no longer the same as it was twenty or ten years ago. The following chapters will concentrate on the changes in communication due to new technologies, Web 2.0 as a channel of communication and its implications to brand building marketing communications tools.

The World Wide Web first came into being among public in the early 1990s when the first browsers were introduced following the first international networks of computers (Brown, 2009). Back then, the Internet was a platform that did not include much personal interaction and was mainly flat, one dimensional system where content remained static and did not adapt to the user (A Marqui Whitepaper, 2011, p.6). Midway through the 1990s emails, discussion groups and other user generated platforms that enabled conversations emerged among early adopters which can be seen as an early form of Web 2.0 (A Marqui Whitepaper, 2011). In the late 1990s Dot com Bubble did bring the technology developments within the online environment down for a while, but did not stop the development of Web 2.0.

The term Web 2.0 was first used in a seminar by the Vice President of O'Reilly Media Dale Dougherty in 2004. It was used to describe the technologies that had

roots in the dot com era, but that raised post the bubble burst. These technology developments shaped the web towards a more user interaction platform, a place where conversation among people takes place just as it used to take place in a cafe or a at bus stop (A Marqui Whitepaper, 2011).

Web 2.0 is characterised by user participation in different online services. It is an experience where the user contributes by generating content in real time, being a part of an online community (A Marqui Whitepaper, 2011). Whereas the Internet has previously been seen as an information delivery channel, it is now seen as “a platform that leverages collective intelligence” (A Marqui Whitepaper, 2011) providing the tools for participation, content sharing and joining in the “conversation”. A simple definition of Web 2.0 is:

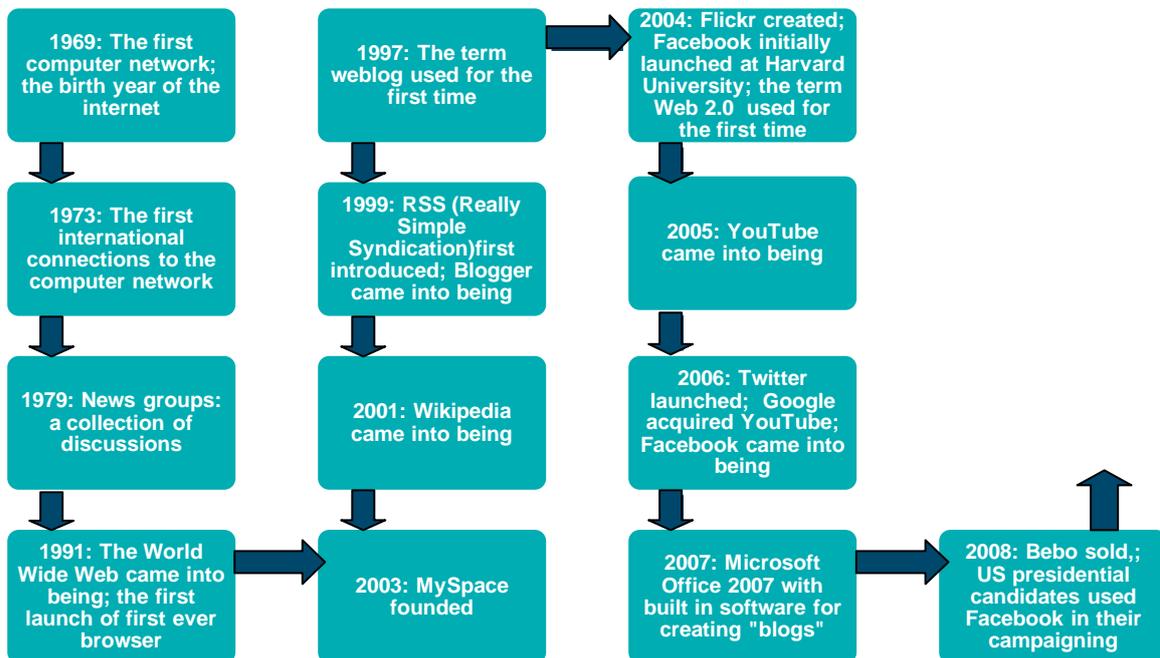
The version of web that is open to ordinary users and where they can add content in the form of words, pictures, sounds and video via a platform that is open to many (Brown, 2009, p.1.).

Every aspect of communication is undergoing a radical change due to technology advancements. It is essential that marketing professionals understand the control and influence of the changed nature of media if they are going to adapt to and survive in this ever developing environment (Brown, 2009).

The Internet has changed the way marketers need to think and plan their campaigns. The trend of “social networking” and “conversation” needs to be recognised. These trends mean that there are online communities in which people interact and engage. These are a part of Web 2.0 and are, particularly, in the interest of marketers as the users have high level of engagement (Brown, 2009, p.50). Rapid development is peculiar to Web 2.0, as can be seen in Figure 3. The terms appearing in the timeline are described in Appendix 1, Glossary of Terms, in which other research related terms are also described.

Figure 3

Timeline of Web 2.0 (adapted from Brown, 2009, p.8)



Executing the marketing function has become more complex because of the large number of platforms available in the online environment, but at the same time there are considerable advantages in the new routes and channels of communication. The Internet allows targeting narrow audiences efficiently making the message available to those who are interested (Brown, 2009, p.11). The Internet can also be viewed as another network to support traditional media. It is not necessarily an entirely new medium, but it can provide remarkable opportunities when integrated with traditional media (Brown, 2009, p.25). Integrating communications channels brings information accessible to more people and potentially, makes the user engagement high.

Web 2.0 is an opportunity not to be overlooked or seen as a fad that will pass over time. It has changed the way people behave (A Marqui Whitepaper, 2011) and it is based on user generated content. Both satisfied and unsatisfied consumers will be present and be able to share their views on a business to a potentially wide audience. This is a valuable notion regarding cognitive dissonance as social support is one of the most powerful means to decrease the mental discomfort.

5.7 Research of Cognitive Dissonance in a Marketing Context

As advertising, PR and word of mouth are seen to be capable to reinforce and make existing cognitions stronger, they are suitable tools in affecting post-purchase behaviour. However, little literature exists on using these marketing communications tools in influencing post-purchase behaviour and tension in online environment. Nevertheless, there are other researches done within the marketing context and the following chapters will examine some of the already existing research surrounding the topic.

Engel (1968, cited in Markin, 1974, p.151) suggested in his survey “Are Automobile Purchasers Dissonant Consumers?” that marketing provided little knowledge on post-purchase behaviour. Engel stated that the dissonant consumer turned into advertising to reinforce his purchase decision (Markin, 1974, p.151). Engel tested his assumptions by surveying new car owners by looking at the recall rate of an advertisement and noticed that many people did not turn into advertising to make their discomfort to go away, but were more worried about whether they had paid a competitive price (Markin, 1974, p.151).

Engel wanted to test his hypothesis further. He developed a set of statements that highlighted the good and bad characteristics of two different cars. He presumed that people who had recently bought either one of the cars, would agree on the statements alleging the car that they had bought was better than the other car and that this would be a sign of dissonance. He added that the car owners would disagree with the statements or not offer an opinion on the ones that highlighted the other car. Both new car owners and non-purchasers were surveyed, but no relevant distinction was seen in the results. Consequently, Engel concluded:

It seems unlikely that owners were misperceiving the statements as a result of post-purchase dissonance (Engel, 1968, cited in Markin, 1974, p.155).

The conclusion was that maybe car buying was more of a routine decision unlike previously thought (Markin, 1974, p.155). However, as Markin (1974, p.155) states, Engel’s study overlooked the fact that the other car was a clear market

leader which can decrease dissonance. Social support is a way to decrease the level of dissonance and could have been the case in Engel's study.

Engel's research tested the theory in practice, but lacked to take the social status of the other car into account. In addition, the test was done in the late 1960s when television was presumably watched more than nowadays and the Internet had not yet developed. However, the study gives implications on using advertising, or any marketing communications, in reinforcing the consumer. It would be logical, drawing from the theory, that dissonant consumers would recall certain advertisements more by turning to marketing communications to gain reinforcements for their cognitions.

Another interesting research that relates cognitive dissonance and marketing was conducted by Kassarian and Cohen (1956, cited in Markin, 1974, p.155). The research dealt with Surgeon General's report on smoking and health. The study was conducted in order to analyse the behavioural and informative process of individuals who had been subjected to dissonance arousing information. Smokers' reactions to dissonant information, such as illnesses and cancer caused by cigarette smoking, was researched. It was hypothesised that smokers would reduce dissonance by quitting smoking, denying the facts and refusing to learn new information, minimising impact or seeking alternative information that would back up their views. The first two hypotheses proved to be incorrect, as none of the smokers acted that way. However, the third and fourth hypotheses, minimising the issue and seeking alternative information, seemed to be correct. Smokers highlighted in their answers how people lived long lives despite smoking and that there were many other hazards in life that can lead to death. The participants were making the information more consonant with their cognitions and tried this way to reduce dissonance. Kassarian and Cohen concluded that:

Dissonance theory clearly opens up avenues for understanding why the consumer, or any individual, behaves the way he does (Kassarian and Cohen, 1965, cited in Markin, 1974, p.157).

The Kassarian and Cohen research provides valuable insight on the theory, but as Markin (1974, p.157) notes, the results cannot be seen universal, it can be that cognitions relating to health can be more strongly held than cognitions related to

brands, for example. In addition, product information and price can be factors making dissonance to decrease before it can be detected (Markin, 1974, p.157).

A study was conducted by Anderson et al (1966, cited in Markin, 1974, p.158) in order to find out whether the number of alternatives influenced the level of dissonance. The research was based on a hypothesis that the greater the number of choices available, the greater the dissonance caused. Additionally, it was hypothesised that the more similar the choices were, the greater the dissonance and the more pressure to reevaluate the chosen and rejected alternatives was present (Anderson et al, 1966, cited in Markin, 1974, p.158). The participants were researched on experimental basis by asking them to rate a set of sixteen products on a separate rating scale for each product and following the ratings, they were presented two to four desirable choice situations. They were told that they would get the product for the work they had done and were then asked to come up with benefits for the other products that could be highlighted in advertising campaigns. After this, the participants were asked to reevaluate all sixteen products on a same scale resulting participants grading the other alternatives better than the initially chosen alternative. The results were that the greater the number of choices and the more attractive the choices were, the greater the dissonance.

The pressure to reevaluate alternatives is one of the most important implications of cognitive dissonance to marketing communications. As satisfaction and little dissonance experienced after purchase may lead to repurchase, which would be ideal from the marketer's point of view, it is important to note that influencing the individual by strengthening existing cognitions is essential and ,thus, marketing communications can arguably have a significant role in reducing dissonance.

As Markin (1974, p.161) states, in the light of these research examples, it can be concluded that dissonance does occur in post-purchase period. According to the theory, the more alternatives available (and the more attractive these are) the greater the dissonance. This leads into a hypothesis that there should be great dissonance apparent among all smartphone users as there are lots of other attractive (with similar features and benefits) smartphones available. The influence of cognitive overlap on this will also be taken into account. However, the theory also suggests that when there is great social support present, there should be very

little dissonance, thus, another hypothesis is that iPhone owners will experience less dissonance than other smartphone owners due to Apple's brand identity.

Other element of the theory suggests that people may turn to different sources of information to gain reinforcement to their views, marketing communications playing a vital role in this. This dissertation will examine whether iPhone owners turn to Web 2.0 platforms and online communities more than other smartphone owners in order to reduce the cognitive dissonance and what is the influence of marketing communications in this as the theory also suggests that consumers seek information that makes their cognitions stronger.

Following from the literature review, the research questions and hypotheses will be presented in the methodology section.

6 METHODOLOGY

6.1 Objectives

After critically reviewing the literature on cognitive dissonance, primary research needed to be conducted in order to find out whether iPhone owners experienced less cognitive dissonance than other brand smartphone owners as well as what was the influence of Web 2.0 in the process. Secondary data were used to aid in explaining the results gained via primary research and to give more insight on Apple's social support status and smartphone market.

Research question 1: Do iPhone owners experience less cognitive dissonance than other smartphone owners and if so, is this due to the PR and marketing communications practices that Apple uses?

Hypothesis 1: They experience less cognitive dissonance as there is great social support present (which is presumably due to the marketing communications efforts of Apple) and the cognition related to the brand is presumably stronger than that related to other brands.

Research question 2: Are iPhone owners more present in Web 2.0 than other smartphone users and perhaps engage in conversation regarding iPhones and Apple more, thus, again contributing to the social support?

Hypothesis 2: The social support is based on a network of similarly thinking people and iPhone owners are more likely to engage on Web 2.0 regarding Apple and iPhone.

6.2 Research Approach

Deductive research approach was used. It involves testing a hypothesis that is derived from a theory and can be used to explain casual relationships between variables (Saunders et al, 2000). This approach moves theory to data, can be generalised and is characterised by a quantitative data collection. It is a very structured approach and easy to replicate which is an important issue regarding data reliability (Saunders et al, 2000, p.88). Another approach is an inductive approach. This is more concerned with meanings humans attach to events

(Saunders et al, 2000) and cannot be generalised as much and, thus, was not used in this dissertation.

There was a variety of ways gaining the primary data needed. Observation, semi-structured and in-depth interviews and questionnaires were all valid ways of gaining primary data (Saunders et al, 2000). Observation is more concerned on what people do by watching them to do the action (Saunders et al, 2000) and was not suitable for the information needs of this particular research. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews would have possibly allowed more insight on the smartphone owners' perceptions of iPhone and behaviour online, but as only certain amount of resources (time, skills and money) was available, interviews were not used in this research.

6.3 Research Method

The emphasis of this research was on quantitative data collection methods. Qualitative data were collected alongside quantitative questions in order to give a wider understanding of the level of dissonance. The quantitative data analysis was done with the aid of SPSS, a computer program for statistical analysis. This allowed making cross tabulations and running frequencies of occurrence of different variables.

6.4 Data Collection

A questionnaire designed to measure both quantitative and qualitative data were used. Quantitative questions were such as did iPhone owners feel discomfort and did they use web 2.0 in post-purchase evaluation and qualitative questions were such as how they have behaved regarding to post-purchase information search and what reasons they listed behind being either satisfied/unsatisfied with their purchase. Questions measuring quantitative attributes were used to be able to test and verify the theory, i.e. hypothetical-deductive in which the focus is on testing the theory, and to be able to generalise by population membership (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2002, p.86). Qualitative questions were used to gain further understanding of iPhone owners' post-purchase behaviour by focusing on respondent's point of view (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2002, p.86).

As this research aimed to develop an understanding of opinions, attitudes and cause-and-effect relationships (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2002, p.93), a questionnaire, which is presented in the Appendix 2, was used in collecting primary data. The questionnaire allowed a large amount of data to be collected which was important, as the results needed to be generalised.

The main advantage of using a self-administered online questionnaire was that it allowed a large number of data to be collected with low cost (Saunders et al, 2000, p.279). In addition, it was possible to collect the data over a relatively short period of time and the interview bias was absent (Proctor, 2005, p.140).

The questions were designed carefully taking into account the type, wording and order of the questions. Some questions were adopted from previous studies, e.g. Engel's study on automotive buyers and recall rate of an advertisement (1968, cited in Markin, 1974, p.151). Other questions were based on theory, e.g. how many would buy their smartphone again and by asking how satisfied the owners were with their purchase.

The order and flow of the questions was made logical to make sense to the respondent. Demographics were asked in the end of the questionnaire to maximise the response rate and the relationship was established before asking sensitive, such as age and salary, questions.

The layout of the questionnaire was made clear by using a computer aided questionnaire programme E-Iomake (Eduix E-Iomake, 2011). Another important consideration was that the questionnaire was pre-tested before sending it out to respondents.

6.5 Sampling

Non-probability sampling technique was used in this research. It is common among business studies when it is not necessarily possible to specify the probability that any case will be included in the sample (Saunders et al, 2000, p.170). In addition, limited resources and inability to obtain an optimum sampling frame (Saunders et al, 2000, p.170) were reasons for using non-probability sampling. It would have been ideal to use probability sampling and have a

database for all (including different brands) smartphone purchasers in the past 12 months, but this was not possible.

There were several non-probability sampling techniques available. The objective was to see whether iPhone users experienced less cognitive dissonance as well as what was the influence of online communities and Apple's social support status in this. The factors determining the non-probability sampling technique were based on the information need and the most useful and credible technique was chosen, taking into account the resources (time, skills and money) available.

Self-selection sampling technique was used in this research. A case, the researcher's Facebook friend, was allowed to identify their desire to do the survey. The link for the questionnaire was published online via a Facebook Events page that asked any willing individual, a Facebook friend, to do survey. In addition, the data were collected from those who responded. These two steps are peculiar to self-selection sampling. The relative costs are very low with this type of sampling, but so is the control over sample contents (Saunders et al., 2000, p.171). Self-selection gave a relatively easy access to the respondents leading to possibly high response rate.

A minimum of 30 cases is kept as the smallest possible sample to be able to analyse the results statistically (The Economist 1997, The Economist cited in Saunders et al., 2000, p.155) and a sample based on probability technique needs to have over 50 cases to be able to have a representative sample (Henry, 1990, cited in Saunders et al, 2000, p.153). The sample size exceeded this number, giving more valid data.

A constraint was that not everyone in the sample had a smartphone. This was taken into account in the sample size and self-sampling technique was applied. It would have been ideal to use systematic sampling technique based on probability sampling as it suits all sample sizes and has low relative cost (Saunders et al, 2000, p.160). However, in order to maximise the response rate and gain access to respondents, self-sampling technique was used.

The sample size was 305. However, as the link to the questionnaire was public, there was no control over the possibility that someone might have forwarded the link, potentially making the actual sample size larger.

6.6 Limitations

There were limitations to this research.

Using self-administered questionnaire lacked face to face contact and, thus, removed the possibility to reveal any personal habits and feelings.

The likelihood of the sample being representative was potentially low as the cases were self-selected. However, the majority of respondents represent the most dominant age group in smartphone users which is 18-34 years (The Nielsen Company, 2011) making the sample quite representative.

In addition, the questionnaire was self-administered online questionnaire distributed through Facebook and hence a variety of difficulties had to be overcome, such as:

The validity and reliability of the data you collect and the response rate depend, to a large extent, on the design of your questions, the structure of your questionnaire and the rigour of your pilot testing (Saunders et al, 2000, p.288).

To increase the validity of the questionnaire in this research all the above were taken into account and incorporated to the questionnaire design.

In addition, the questionnaire was pilot tested. Pre-testing was carried out by asking people to fill in the questionnaire and comment on how they understood the questions, if the alternatives made sense to them and if the order of questions was logical. This feedback was then incorporated to the questionnaire design and only then, the questionnaire was sent out to the sample.

The nature and size of the sample impacted the validity of the data. The nature of the sample was based on pre-known qualities. The majority of the sample lived in Europe. This is an important notion as the mother tongue of respondents' was not necessarily English, in which the survey was conducted. This may have influenced

the validity of data as, depending on the language skills, respondents may have perceived and interpreted words and meanings of questions differently.

The size of the sample is relatively small compared with the possible sampling frame (which would include all smartphone purchasers within the past 12 months). It still gave insight on the smartphone owners' cognitive dissonance, especially on iPhone owners' dissonance levels and behaviour online, but the data gained was not as comprehensive as it could have been.

As the cases were researcher's Facebook friends, it may have been that they were more willing to fill in the questionnaire and possibly gave information they thought the researcher wanted to find. However, the researcher presented all data objectively.

6.7 Timing

The link to the questionnaire was distributed through Facebook Events page that allows the researcher to invite her friends to fill in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was open for a week, and the sample was given a reminder of the questionnaire once the time period was about to expire.

6.8 Ethical Considerations

Considering the ethics of this research throughout the process was important as the questionnaire respondents became a subject of research. The factors that needed to be taken into account were the privacy of participants, right to withdraw partially or completely from the process, consent deception of participants, maintenance of confidentiality and data provided anonymously, the reactions of participants to the way the data are collected, the effects of participants of the way the data are used and analysed and reported as well as the behaviour and objectivity of the researcher (Saunders et al, 2000, p.132).

Every effort was made to minimise the potential issues of this research which could have been privacy, maintenance of confidentiality and objectivity of the researcher.

The Facebook Event detailed the purposes of the questionnaire, including an introduction of the researcher, and how the data were going to be used. The

information was presented in a neutral way and participants were not pressurised to take part in the survey. Participants had the right not to take part in the survey, they were not asked to tell in any way whether they had participated or not and their privacy remained anonymous while responding. No data that could have been linked to a specific person were collected.

As the data were collected via pre-tested questionnaire, the objectivity should have remained high hence the researcher was not able to exercise selectivity in what was being recorded (Saunders et al, 2000, p.135).

Demographics were asked for statistical purposes and did not detail names or locations apart from a country of residence. In addition, objectivity was maintained in the reporting stage, the data were presented truthfully and analysed without selecting the data subjectively.

An ethical approval form for this research is presented in Appendix 3.

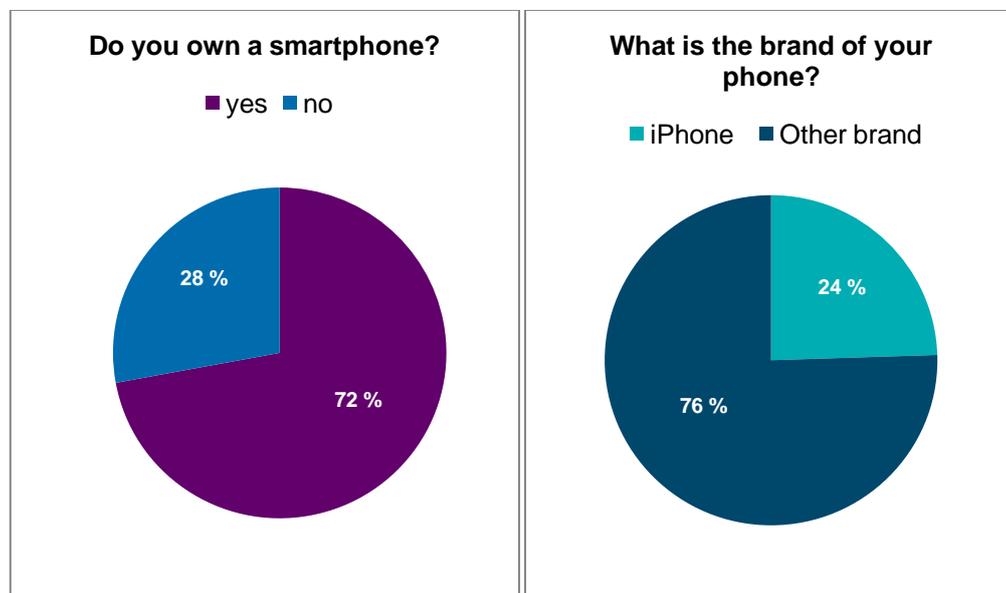
7 FINDINGS

The main aim of this research was to find out whether iPhone owners experienced less cognitive dissonance and whether this was because of marketing communications efforts of Apple. Based on the literature reviewed, it was hypothesised that due to social support iPhone owners did not possibly feel as much cognitive dissonance as other brand smartphone owners. In addition, the influence and the level of engagement on Web 2.0 of iPhone owners was believed to be higher because of Apple's marketing communications and word of mouth efforts that further enhance the social status of Apple.

The questionnaire was sent out to 305 people and 68 responses were received. The response rate was 23%. Even though the response rate was relatively low, the number of responses received was sufficient to make generalisations.

7.1 Respondent Profile

Figure 4
Smartphone ownership



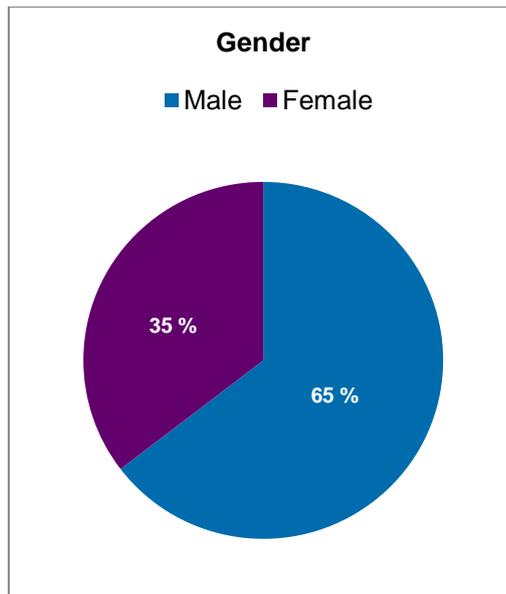
Base 68, missing values 0

Base 49, missing values 0

The majority of the respondents had a smartphone. The respondents were asked to state whether or not they had a smartphone and if they did not have a smartphone, they were asked to discontinue with the questionnaire and only

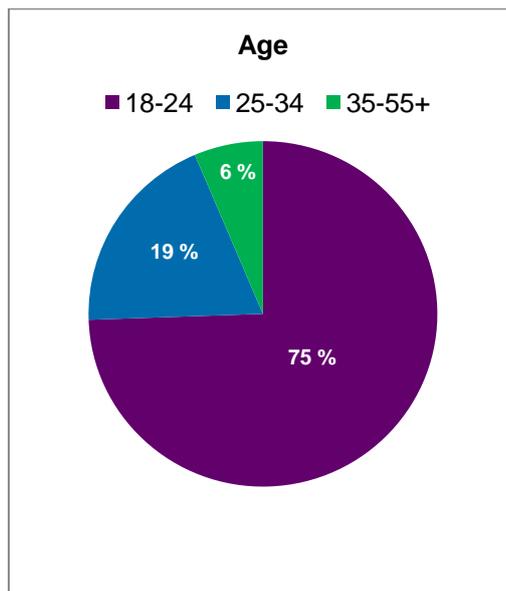
submit the information that they did not own a smartphone. Hence the base is 49 in questions that concerned all smartphone owners. In comparison, the base is 12 with iPhone owners and 37 with other brand owners. All figures are in presented percentages unless otherwise stated.

Figure 5
Gender



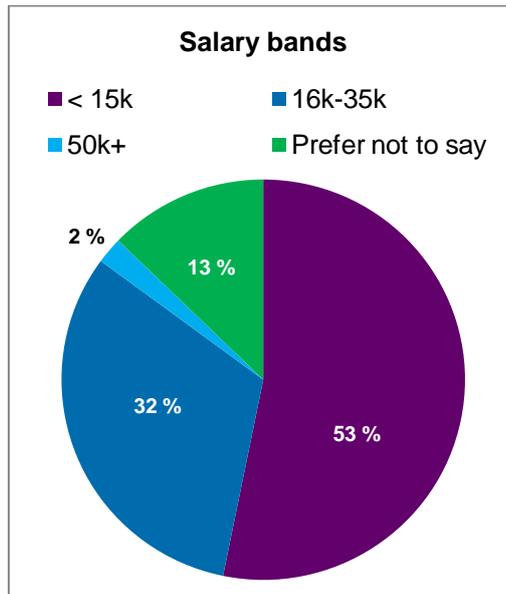
Base 49, missing 1

Figure 6
Age



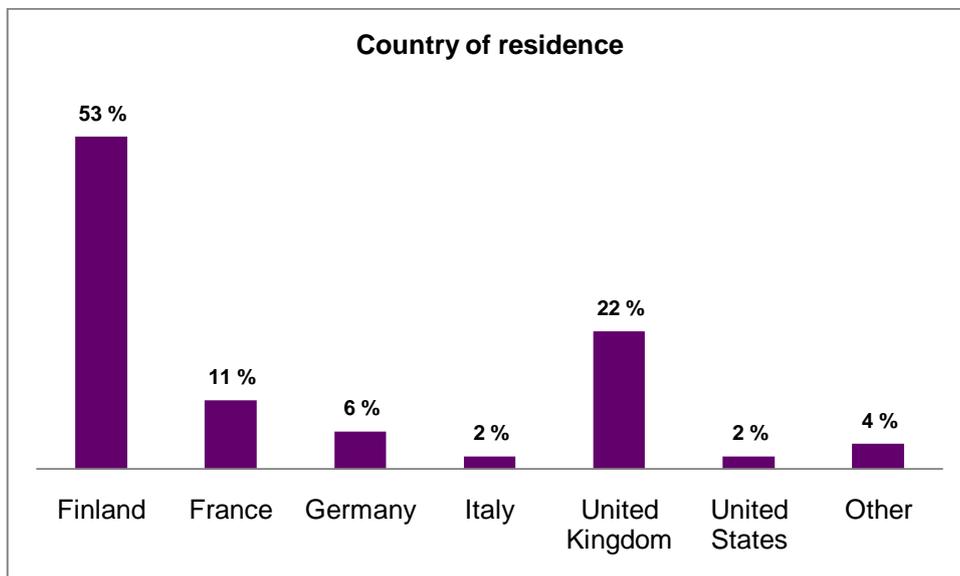
Base 49, missing 2

Figure 7
Salary bands



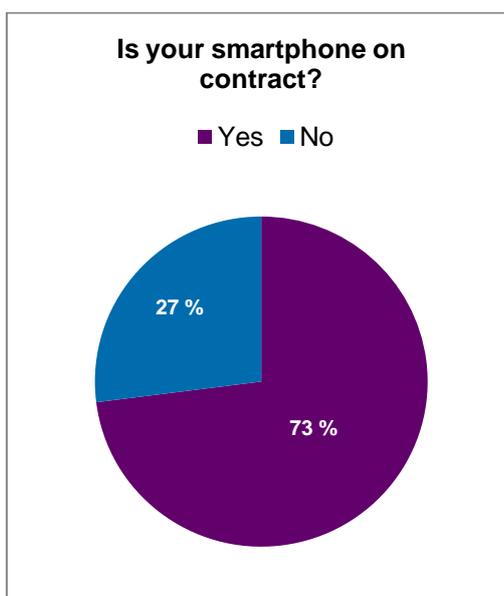
Base 49, missing 2

Figure 8
Country of residence



Base 49, missing 2

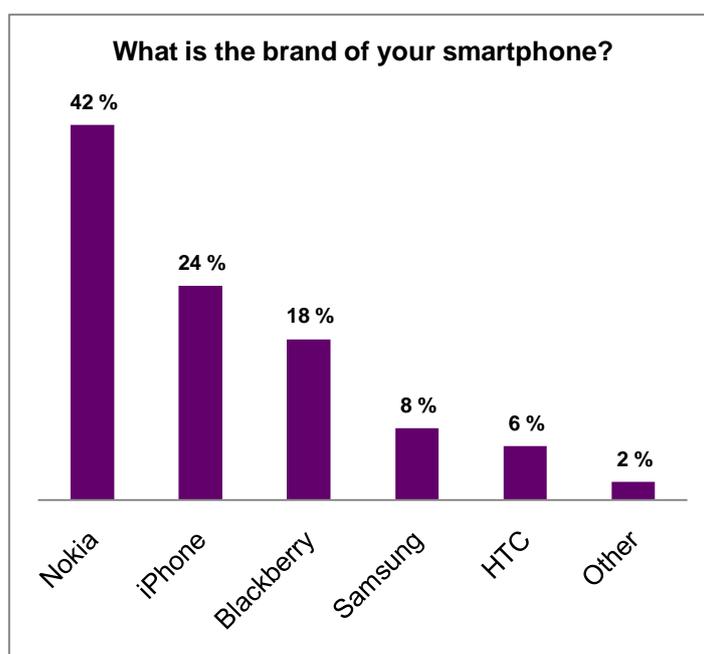
Figure 9
On contract



Base 49, missing 0

36 of the smartphones were on contract. This is a valuable notion as the factor that a phone is either only available or available with a better deal on contract, can limit the number of alternatives and, thus, influence the level of dissonance.

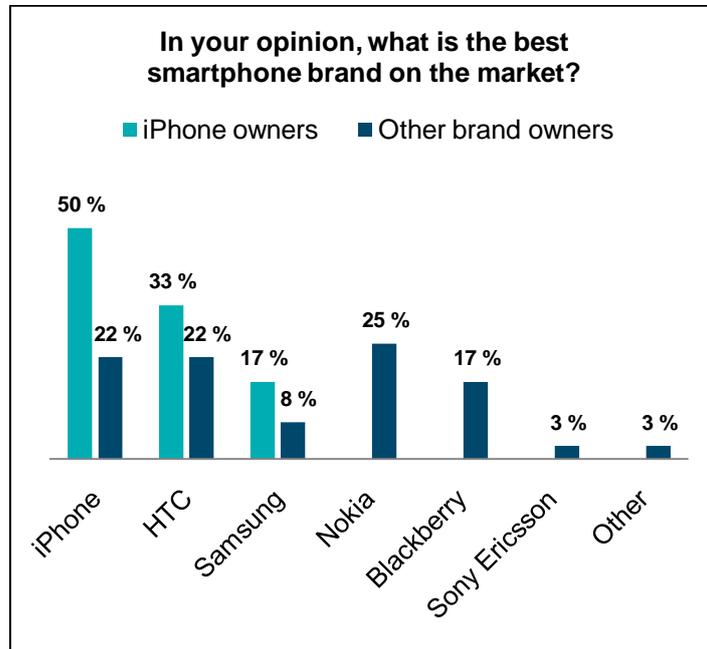
Figure 10
Distribution of brands



Base 49, missing 1

7.2 The Level of Cognitive Dissonance

Figure 11
Best perceived brand

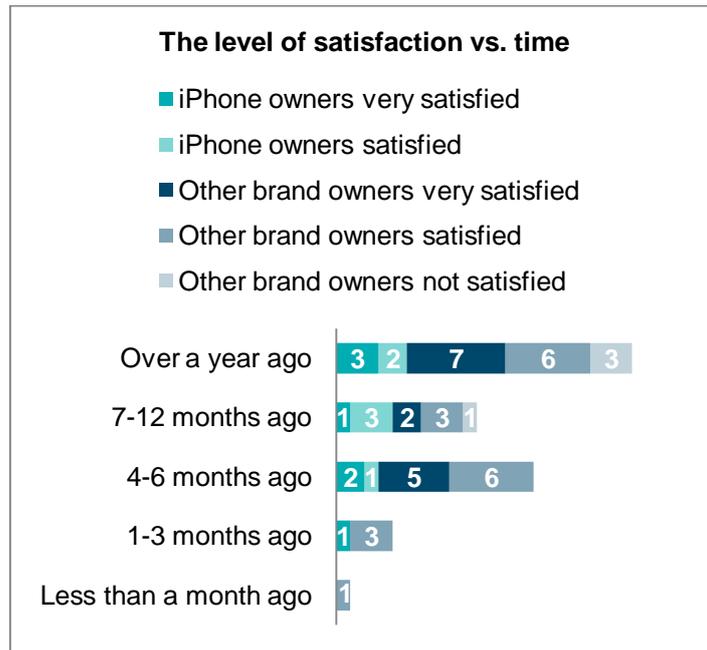


Base 49, missing 0

The majority (42 percent) of respondents had Nokia and 24 percent had an iPhone. Among iPhone owners, the best perceived brand was iPhone with 50 percent support, which implies a high level of satisfaction. However, HTC and Samsung were also mentioned among iPhone owners. Thus, iPhone owners were not entirely loyal to their own brand. However, even though the majority of respondents owned Nokia, it only attracted 25 percent support in being the best brand on the market.

In the third quarter of 2010 in Western Europe, Nokia was the market leader with a 34 percent market share. This figure was calculated based on frequency of different operating systems used in smartphones. In the same quarter, Apple came second with a 24 percent market share. There was a growth of 102 percent in Apple's market share in smartphone market compared with the third quarter of 2009 (IDC, 2011).

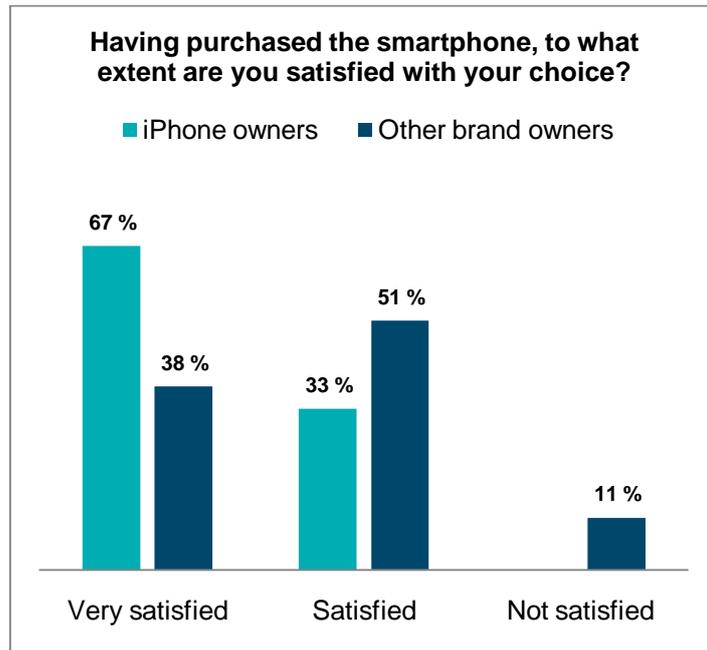
Figure 12
Satisfaction versus time



Base 49, missing 1

None of the iPhone owners said that they were unsatisfied with their choice, despite the time that had passed. The theory claims that people tend to forget bad qualities over time. However, in the other brand group, 4 respondents said that they were not satisfied with their choice even though, a relatively long time had passed.

Figure 13
Satisfaction with the choice



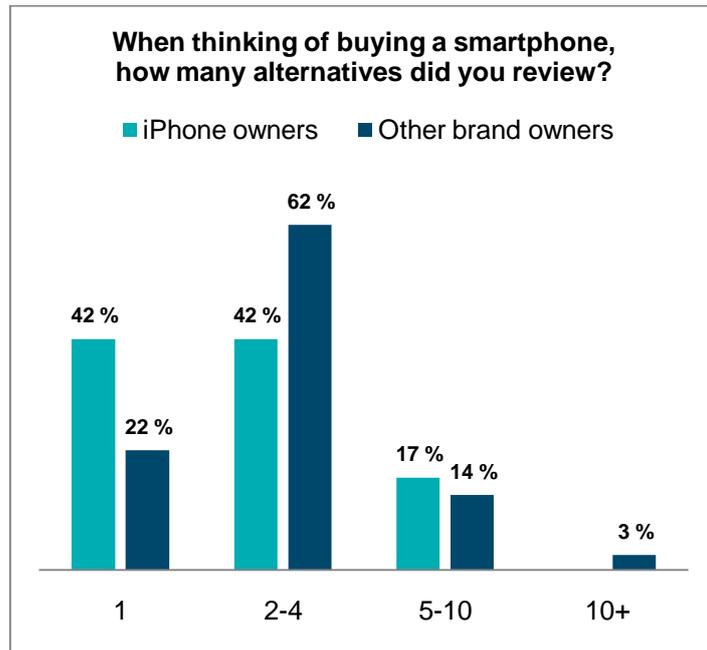
Base 49, missing 0

None of the iPhone owners said that they were unsatisfied with their choice in general. Over 60 percent were very satisfied whereas with the other group, the majority were not very satisfied, but satisfied with their choice.

According to a survey by JD Power & Associates (J.D. Power and Associates, 2011), iPhone owners are most satisfied customers within the smartphone owners. In an annual study, Apple ranked the best for the fourth time in customer satisfaction in 2010. Motorola and HTC's customers were the second and third most satisfied whereas Nokia's customers ranked seventh, being the least satisfied customers (J.D. Power and Associates, 2011).

Figure 14

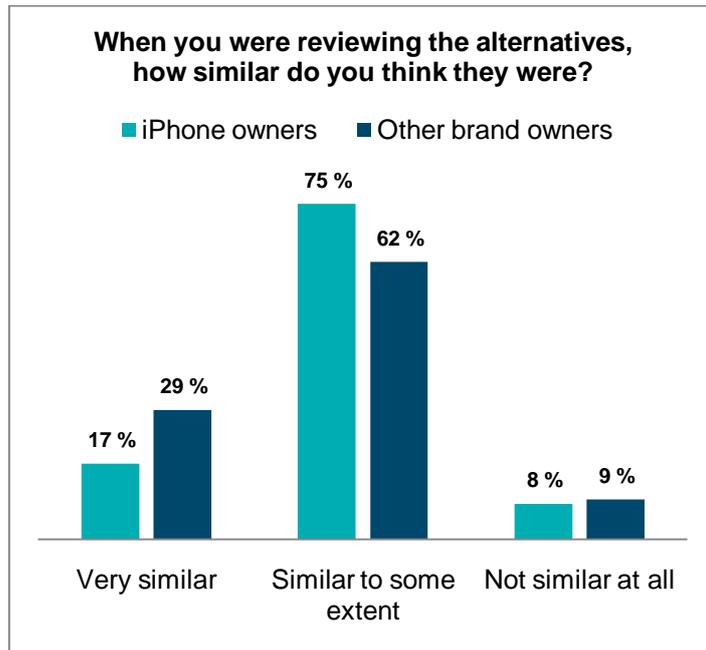
Number of alternatives reviewed



Base 49, missing 3

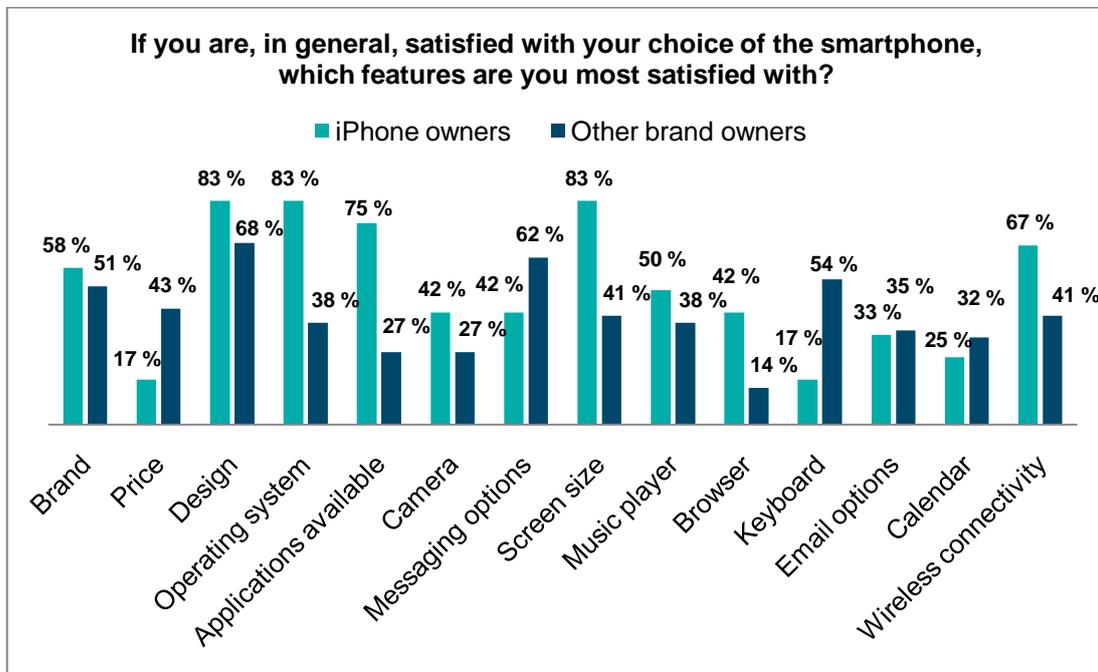
The majority of both groups reviewed 2 to 4 alternatives when making the buying decision. A little over 40 percent of the other brand group had reviewed only 1 option, whereas in the iPhone group this figure was remarkably less, a little over 20 percent.

Figure 15
Similarity of alternatives



Base 49, missing 0

Figure 16
Positive features

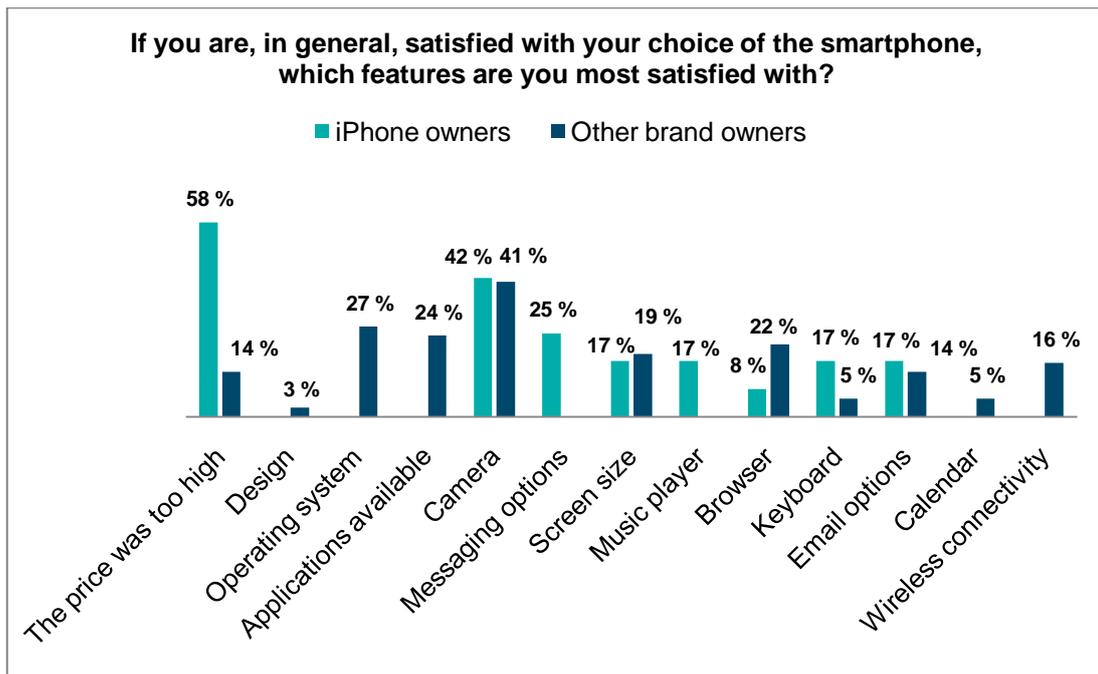


Base 49, missing 0

In the majority of prompted features listed, iPhone owners listed more positive features in their choice than the other brand owners. Only keyboard, messaging

options and price gained distinctively more votes within the other brand group. When asking positives without prompting the alternatives, easy data synchronisation and ability to buy applications easily were listed as positive features among iPhone owners. The other brand owners listed GPS, Microsoft Office tools and size and weight as additional positive features.

Figure 17
Negative features



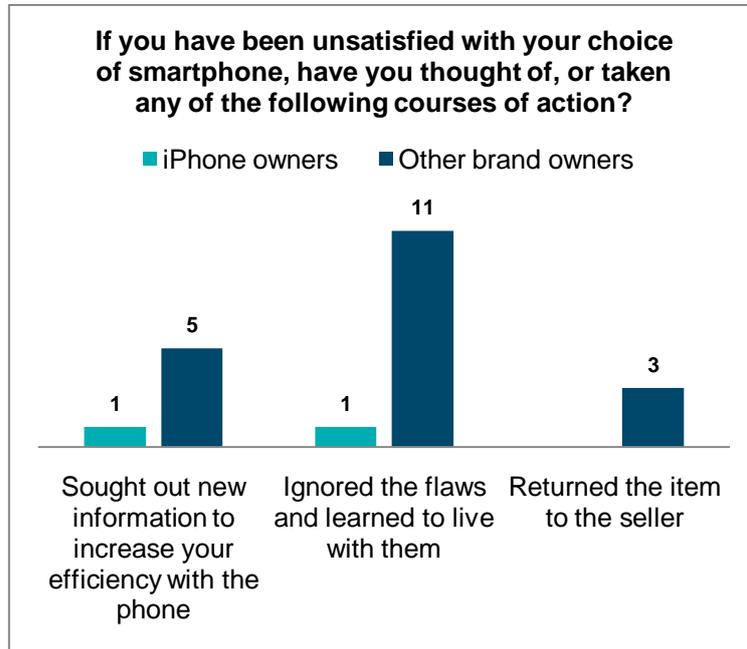
Base 49, missing 0

The major concern among iPhone owners was the price. This was a negative only for 10 percent of respondents in the other brand group. Generally, iPhone owners listed less negative features than the other brand group. Whereas the other brand group generated responses to almost all the features, iPhone owners only said that minority of the features were a negative.

iPhone is the most expensive alternative in the market with the price starting from €499 sim free (Teemu, 2008) ,whereas the market leader Nokia's smartphone prices start from €156 sim free (Semkina, 2011).

Figure 18

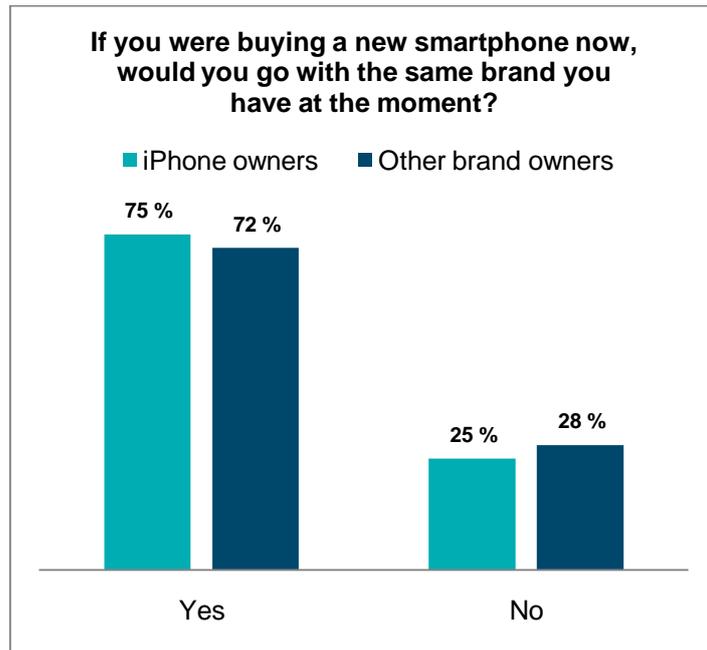
Dealing with dissonance, actions sought



Base 49, missing 28

Only 2 iPhone owners replied to this question, compared with 19 other brand owners. Neither of the iPhone owners had thought of returning or returned the item to the seller, whereas in the other brand group, 3 respondents had either thought of or done this. The majority of the other brand group had ignored the flaws and learned to live with them.

Figure 19
Repurchase rate

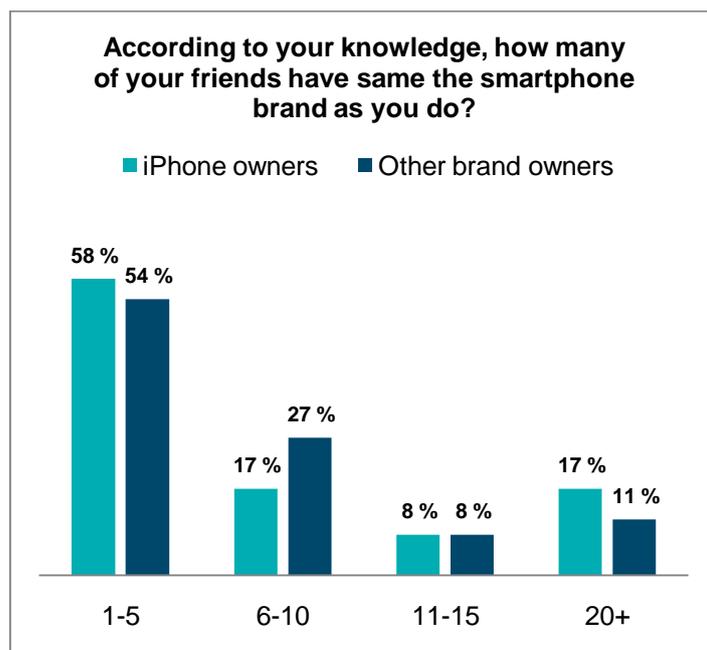


Base 49, missing 5

The majority of both groups would buy the same brand phone again.

7.3 Marketing Communications

Figure 20
Number of friends having same brand phone

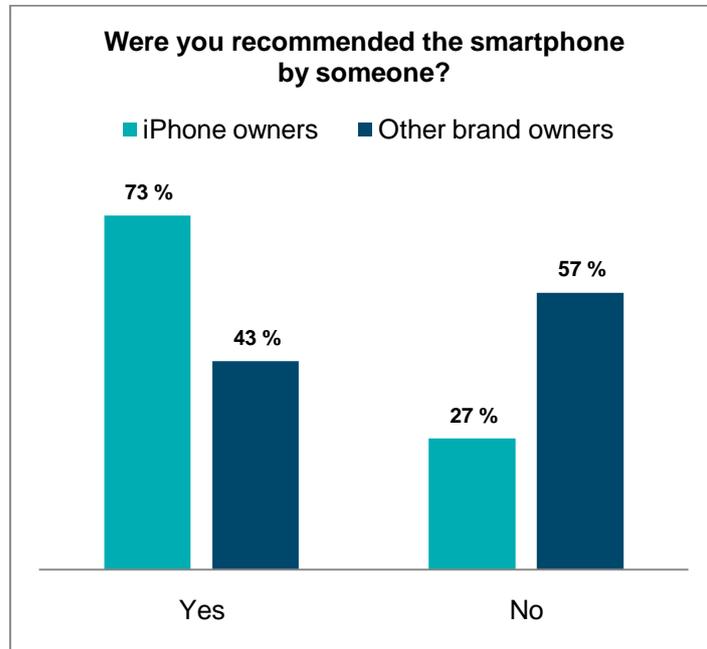


Base 49, missing 0

The number of friends having the same brand was similar in both groups. The most common number of friends having the same phone was 1 to 5.

Figure 21

Number of recommendations received

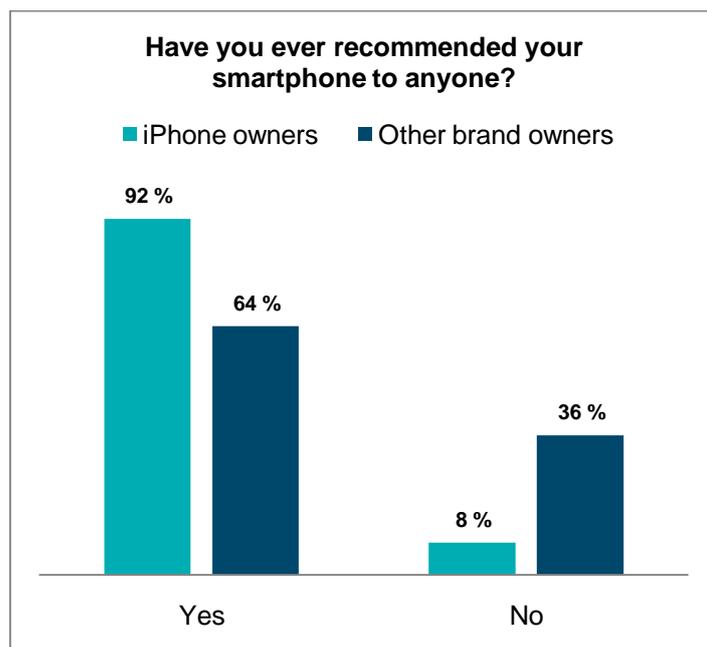


Base 49, missing 3

iPhone owners had received more recommendations than the other brand owners.

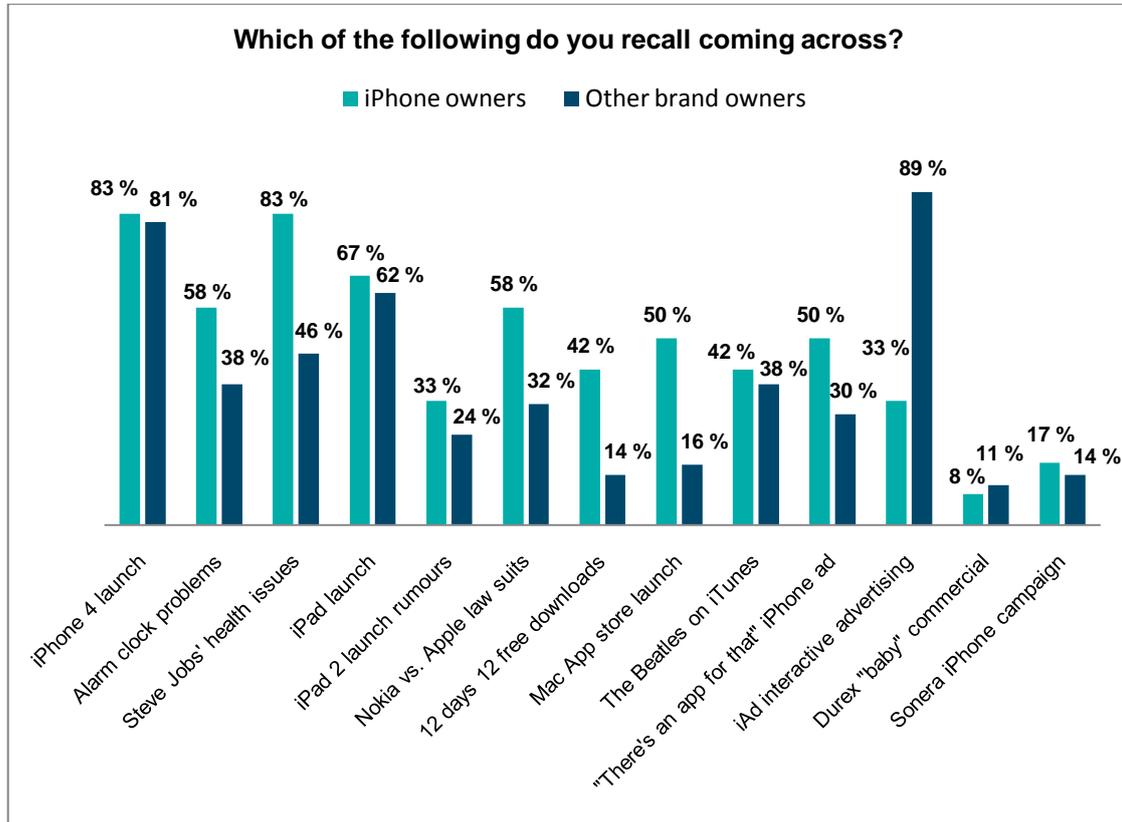
Figure 22

Number of recommendations given



iPhone owners were also more likely to have recommended their phone to someone.

Figure 23
Recall rate of marketing communications efforts



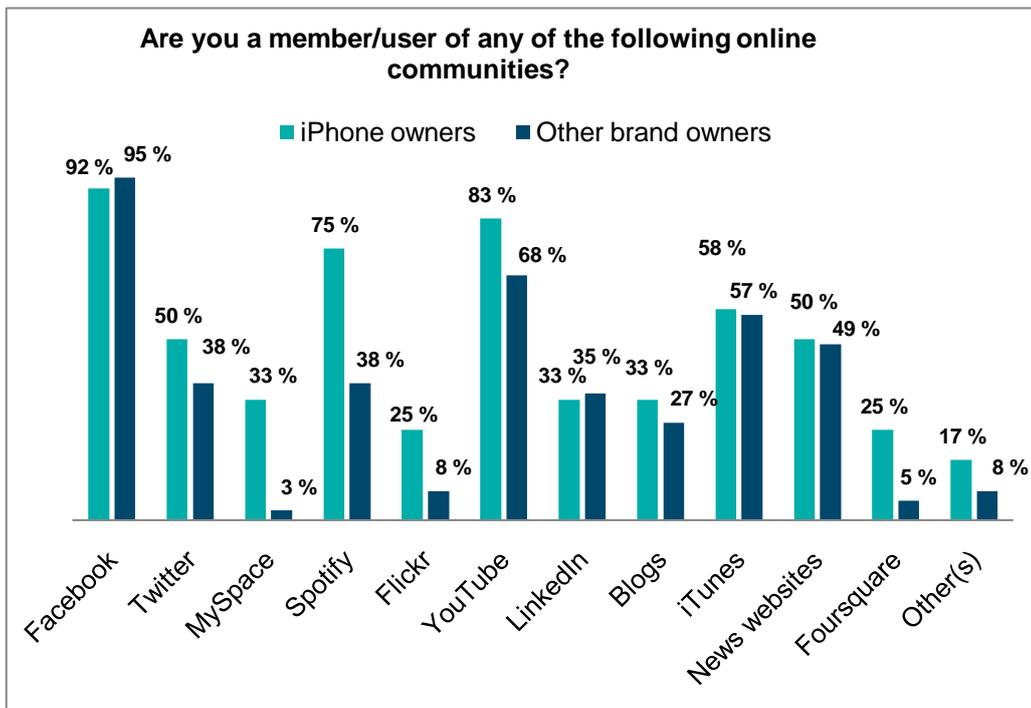
There were a few significant differences in the recall rate of different events, and in general, both groups recalled different events to the same extent. Steve Jobs' health issues, Nokia vs. Apple law suits and Mac App Store launch were more recalled among iPhone owners. iAd interactive advertising was remarkably more recalled by the other group in almost all respondents saying that they recalled it versus a little over 30 percent of iPhone owners recalling it.

It is interesting to note that advertising efforts of Apple were quite well recalled in both groups. Advertising usually attracts bigger budgets than public relations (Bussey, 2011). However, the majority of prompted alternatives had to do with unpaid media coverage. It is valuable to note that public relations efforts, in some

instances, may be more powerful in gaining people’s attention than advertising efforts.

7.4 Web 2.0

Figure 24
Membership in online communities

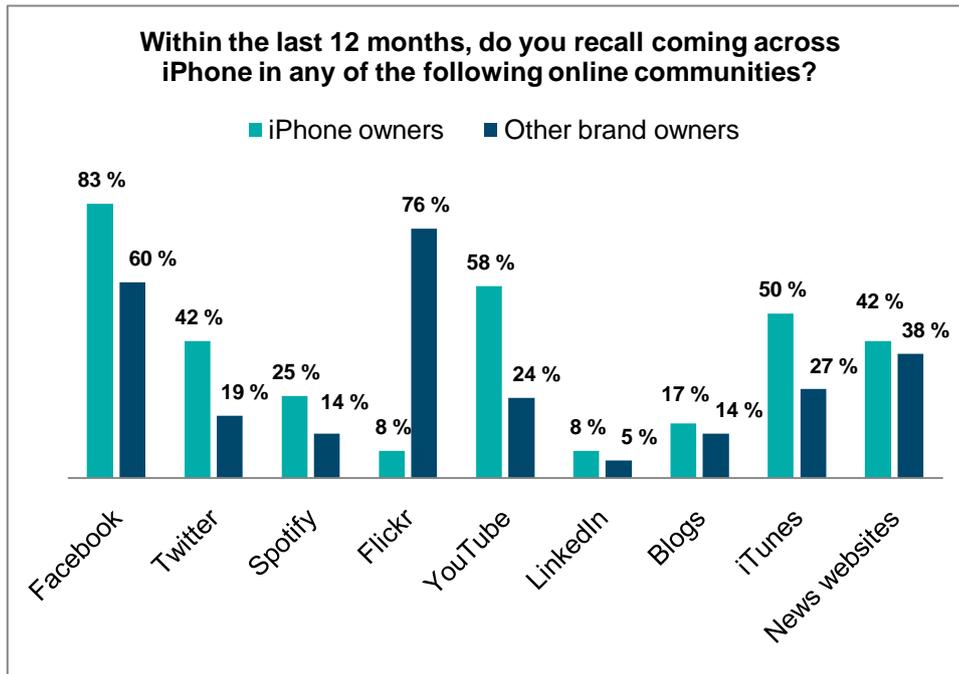


Base 49, missing 0

iPhone owners were members of more online communities than the other group. Whereas almost everyone was a member of Facebook, only 50 percent of iPhone owners and 38 percent of the other group were members of Twitter. Less than 10 percent used Foursquare among the other brand owners and little under 30 percent of iPhone owners said that they were members of Foursquare.

Figure 25

Recall rate of iPhone in online communities



Base 49, missing 0

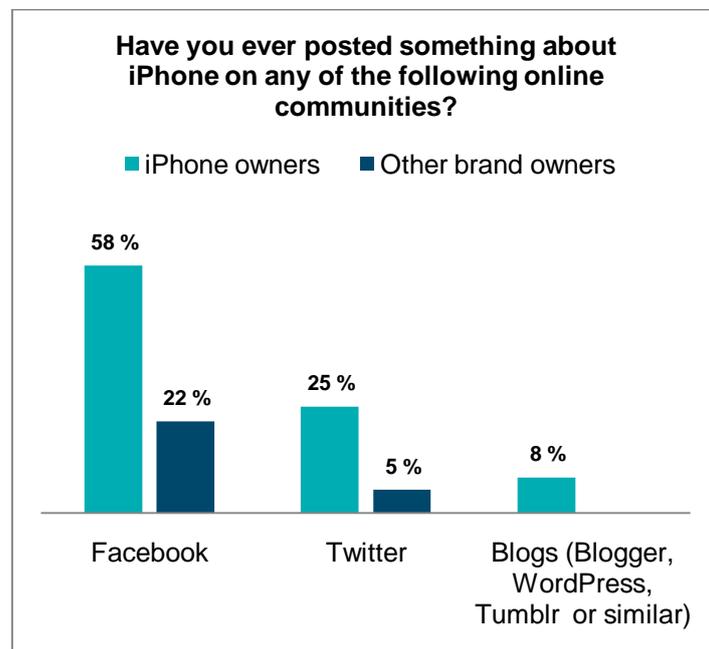
iPhone owners were more likely to recall encountering iPhone in online communities. Remarkable difference was between the recall rate of iPhone in Flickr, a photo sharing website, where the majority of the other brand owners recalled encountering iPhone whereas less than 10 percent recalled the brand in Flickr. One does not need to be a member of Flickr to access the photos and, thus, it can be that the other brand owners have encountered iPhone in Flickr alongside their regular Internet surfing. This is a little misleading as less than 10 percent said that they were members of Flickr. This can imply that a person does not need to be a member of a community as such, but can still view the content and recall it.

It is interesting to see how many people recalled iPhone related topics even though Apple is known for its hiding and closed nature. Apple bases its actions on giving out minimum information sustaining a mystic image of the company (Partanen, 2010). It also launches usually only one product per year and, thus, keeps its followers on toes. This enables long developing processes and using rumours as public relations and word of mouth. Anything that Apple does or

implies to do in the future, will gain media attention and the message has potential to spread quickly in online environment (Partanen, 2010).

Apple is “a silent drum” who never gives out teasers of their new products or talk to media before a product is out (Ulanoff, 2007). It seems as if Apple almost based its public relations to rumours. As the product launches usually take place in Mac themed shows, the closer the date gets, the more coverage will Apple receive in the media, even if they would not have issued a single release (Ulanoff, 2007).

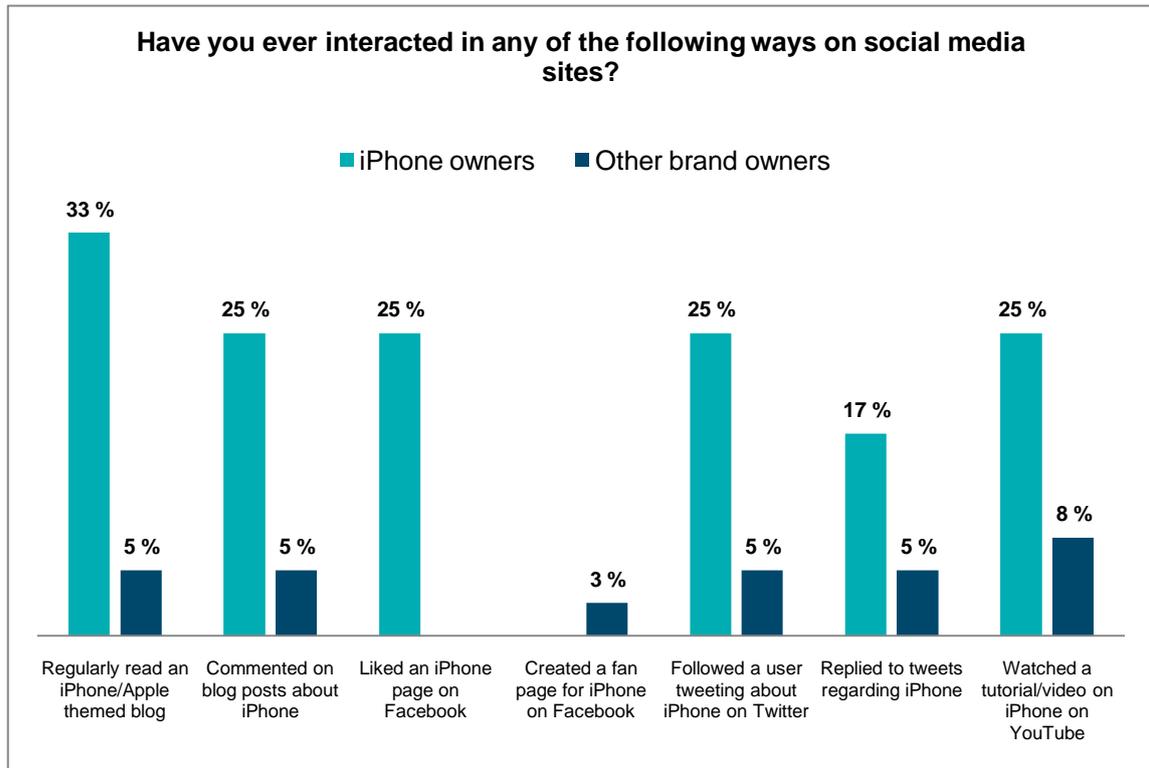
Figure 26
Engagement on online communities regarding iPhone



Base 49, missing 0

iPhone owners were significantly more likely to have posted something to online communities regarding iPhone. Facebook was the most popular platform, but Twitter and blogs also gained votes. Few respondents from the other group had posted something on iPhone too.

Figure 27
Engagement on social media



Base 49, missing 0

Both groups engaged on social media sites. iPhone owners were more active with the majority of respondents engaging in different sites. Most popular type of engagement was to read a blog (or follow a user on Twitter) or like a page on Facebook. Commenting on posts and replying to tweets was also common among iPhone owners. A minority of other brand group had commented on a blog post, and excluding this, those who said that they engaged on social media regarding iPhone only did passive engagement by following different sources, but not necessarily taking part in the conversation.

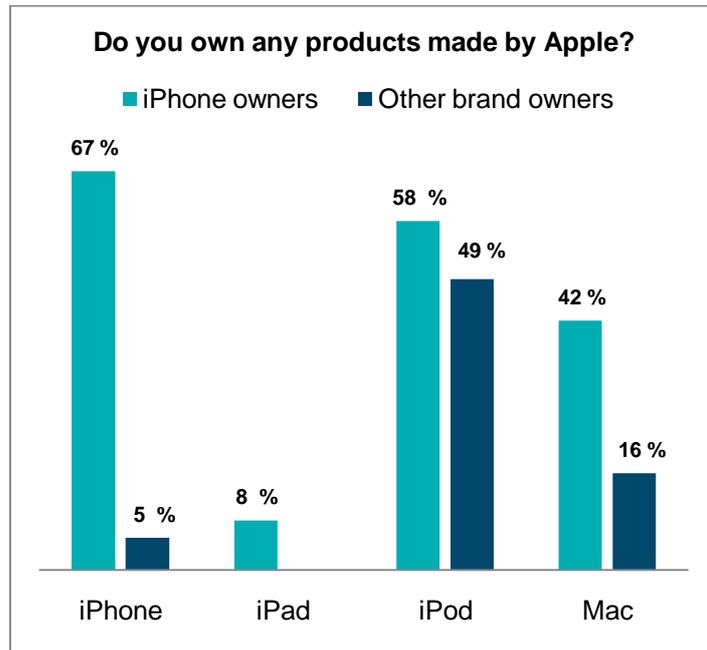
Apple executes very little open public relations. They do not have an official Facebook page or Twitter account, their only official interaction in social media is iTunes related Facebook and Twitter accounts (Aol Inc, 2011). However, ever since the first model of iPhone became available in 2007, it has caught the attention of bloggers and online communities (Campbell and La Pastina, 2010). iPhone enjoys popularity among technology blogs and inserting terms “iPhone and blog” to the Google search engine brings up 702,000,000 results (Google, 2011).

7.5 iPhone Launch

As stated, Apple talks to media very little and bases its public relations efforts on secrecy and keeping its followers and consumers on toes regarding new products. When iPhone was launched, Apple was able to gain remarkable media attention without providing product samples of any kind. The product launch was announced in a Mac conference in 2007 by Steve Jobs, the CEO of Apple. Apple supported the launch with TV, web based and print advertising. All advertisements dealt with showing how the phone was used by concentrating on disappearing and reappearing touch keypad, the same feature that Jobs presented when he announced the product launch. Using this integrated approach lead to significant media attention. Apple aired nine iPhone advertisements between 23 June and 18 August 2007. The week iPhone was launched, on 29 June 2007, iPhone was mentioned over 1,547 times in the media (Mickalowski et al, 2009) compared with 206 in mid August. Apple uses traditional advertising to direct the consumers to participate and engage online (Dahlen et al, 2010, p.460)

The media coverage and publicity leads to more people being aware of the brand and also shapes attitudes. In addition, it can contribute to brand loyalty. It has been said that even though technology brands tend to have loyal follower groups, Apple is an exception with the most powerful follower group. Apple has the biggest tribe of followers who are known for being very devoted to Apple related matters (Manjoo, 2008, p.160). They are Apple ambassadors who spread the message of Apple's superiority. They are willing to spend nights queuing for a new product and once they get it, they go online and start posting about the product in different communities (Michal Sobiegra, 2008) spreading the message. This results in more demand, more sales and the feel of scarcity which eventually leads into more people turning to Apple followers. In this research, it should also be noted that iPhone owners were more likely to have another product made by Apple too.

Figure 28
Other Apple products ownership



Base 49, missing 0

The majority of iPhone owners also owned other product(s) manufactured by Apple. 5 percent of the respondents who said that they had the other brand smartphone owned also an iPhone.

8 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The cognitive dissonance theory claims that certain behaviour is an indication of the person experiencing dissonance. Examining different situations gives valuable data on the actual level of smartphone owners' dissonance.

Judging by the iPhone owners responses to the questionnaire, it seems that they have experienced very little dissonant feelings. The majority of them were either very satisfied or satisfied with their choice and no one stated to having been unsatisfied. Very few had experienced any kind of dissatisfaction with their choice. iPhone owners also listed remarkably more positives regarding their phone compared with the other brand owners. In general, it seems that iPhone owners were more satisfied with their choice. This is backed up by the fact that iPhone owners have been the most satisfied customers many years in a row compared with other smartphone owners.

In the other brand group, a few people said that they were unsatisfied with their choice. In addition, a remarkably larger proportion of the respondents stated negative features regarding their phone and also would not recommend their phone to someone. Furthermore, they had not been recommended their phone by someone as much as iPhone owners had been. However, in general the other brand owners were satisfied too, but not to the same extent as iPhone owners.

Examining the number of negative features in the chosen option revealed a significant difference in the level of dissonance between the two groups. It is noted in the literature that the more negative features associated with the chosen option, the greater the discomfort the person will feel. Whereas iPhone owners were mainly concerned with the price and the keyboard, in the other group all the prompted negatives received responses. This is an interesting contradiction since cognitive dissonance is usually present when high costs are involved and the iPhone is the most expensive alternative in the market.

When discussing the level of dissonance among smartphone owners, it is important to note that the cognitive overlap is great and by theory, results in less dissonance. The alternatives seem quite similar and this leads to the cognitive elements not being in conflict. However, as there are certain courses of action the

person can take to decrease the emerged dissonance, the influence of these regarding smartphones need to be examined.

Festinger suggested that the consumer may change his evaluations, select supporting information, ignore conflicting information or even return the item to the seller in order to decrease the feeling of discomfort. This is where marketing communications starts making the difference. The goal of marketing communications in post-purchase evaluation is to provide the consumer with reinforcing and supporting information which is desired to shape attitudes and opinions. It was interesting to note that none of the iPhone owners had thought of returning the item, whereas in the other brand owner group there was a small number who had thought of this. In addition, only 2 iPhone owners responded to the question, and again, the figure was higher in the other group indicating that iPhone owners were more satisfied and, thus, experienced less cognitive dissonance.

The fact that iPhone owners were members of a remarkably larger number of online communities can have implications on dissonance too. According to the research, iPhone owners were significantly more present in online communities, engaged on social media more and the level of passive engagement (not necessarily contributing to the conversation, but following it actively) was also distinctively higher.

Whereas the majority of respondents were members of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, iPhone owners were more present in other online communities such as MySpace, Spotify and Foursquare. Significant differences among the two groups arise when discussing the level of engagement on social media sites regarding iPhone.

iPhone owners recalled encountering iPhone on social media sites significantly more than other users. This can be because they are members of more communities. Only 60 percent of other brand phone owners recalled encountering iPhone on Facebook whereas the figure among iPhone owners was 84 percent. This relates strongly to the presumption that iPhone owners are more present in Web 2.0 and perhaps also contribute to the conversation more. However, it can

also be that iPhone owners more actively seek information on iPhone and, thus, encounter the topics more.

Over a half of iPhone owners had posted something on iPhone on Facebook and a third had done the same to Twitter. 8 percent of the respondents also said to have posted a blog post(s) on iPhone. The levels of passive engagement were also quite high among iPhone owners. Whereas hardly anyone followed iPhone online in the other brand group, almost a third of iPhone owners did follow iPhone online in several forms. It is somewhat logical that non iPhone owners did not follow iPhone, but it seems that the majority of iPhone owners spent a remarkable proportion of their time online. As the majority of all respondents were members of a large number of online communities, it seems that this is where the majority of smartphone users interact.

Drawing from the research results and literature, it seems that marketing communications should interact online too. According to the literature, marketing communications should be used to reinforce dissonant consumers by providing supporting information in the post-purchase period. Engel's study on whether dissonant consumers turn to advertising to gain reinforcement for their purchase, implied that this was not the case. According to this research conducted, as regards to smartphones, there was no relevant significance in the recall rate of the majority of marketing communications efforts of Apple and iPhone related matters either. However, the recall rate of "Mac App Store launch" and "12 days 12 free downloads" campaigns was significantly higher among iPhone owners. Both are very iPhone specific campaigns and imply that iPhone owners either seek or expose themselves to information that is in accordance with their views and allows them to use their smartphones more efficiently, perhaps reinforcing their existing cognitions.

Engel also used highlighting superiority of the person's choice as an indicator of the person being dissonant. In this research, there was no significant distinction between responses to an open ended question of asking the positives of the respondent's choice between the two groups. It seems that both groups were relatively satisfied with their choice, but as discussed previously, there was some distinction in the level of dissonance between the two groups.

Word of mouth seems to be important among iPhone owners. Drawing from the literature, a consumer's feelings and evaluation can influence the repeat purchase rate and what the consumer tells others about the product or brand. Public relations and word of mouth and advertising can be seen as powerful tools in shaping this behaviour. The amount of word of mouth among iPhone owners versus the other brand owners was remarkably higher. iPhone owners were more likely to recommend and having been recommended their smartphone to someone. Interestingly, all smartphone owners were almost as likely to continue with their brand, even though they would not recommend it to their friend.

In a study by Anderson et al the pressure to reevaluate the chosen and rejected alternatives was tested, giving implications on the repurchase rate. In this research, the repurchase rate was the same between the two groups and the majority of respondents were willing to continue with the brand they had, implying that there actually was not a significant dissonance among smartphone owners. The recommendation rate of iPhone owners can relate to them being more present in Web 2.0 that allows information to spread quickly to a potentially large audience. Even though the other brand owners were not as keen to recommend their choice, there was no distinctive difference in the repurchase rate.

As the majority of iPhone owners were satisfied with their choice and as there was no distinction between the recall rate of traditional marketing communications efforts between the two groups, it seems that Web 2.0 can also be capable to provide relevant information leading to more satisfied and loyal customers. iPhone owners were more likely to be present in online communities both passively and more actively. It is important to note, however, that strongly held cognitions influence the level of dissonance too.

All iPhone owners owned other products made by Apple too. This can be a sign of brand loyalty which can have implications on the level of dissonance, even meaning that dissonance disappears even before it can be detected. In addition, Apple constantly being talked about with very few official online communities is a valuable example of Web 2.0 working for public relations and word of mouth. Social support is one of the most influential factors in the process of dissonance development. It can be that the online communities provide such a large social

support that iPhone owners do not feel disappointment with their choice as there is a large community to back up the positive and satisfied features.

However, it is not necessarily so that iPhone owners would turn to Web 2.0 to decrease possible dissonant feelings. It seems more like they do not experience dissonant feelings because of the Web 2.0 where they interact. It can be that they look for reinforcing information more actively than the other brand owners and also come across this sort of information more.

9 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this dissertation was to find out whether iPhone owners experienced less cognitive dissonance than the other brand owners because of the marketing communications efforts that Apple uses and what is the influence of Web 2.0 in the process. The results gathered from the research conducted indicate that in many instances iPhone owners seemed less dissonant and more satisfied with their choice. However, there were no particular indicators of the other brand owners being distinctively more dissonant, but iPhone owners were more satisfied with their choice and more likely to recommend their choice to someone. There was no particular difference in the recall rate of traditional marketing communications efforts of Apple between iPhone and the other brand owners, but iPhone owners were significantly more present in Web 2.0 and also recalled encountering iPhone in these more.

This research is valuable as it gives an image on smartphone owners' levels of satisfaction with their choice and presence in online communities. It also demonstrates how iPhone owners use social media and how a company can have a wide online presence and high level of user engagement with few official efforts.

As the majority of all smartphone owners surveyed were relatively satisfied with their choice and happy to continue with the same brand, it can be that the personal importance related to the decision can have an influence on the level of dissonance. According to the research, it can be that smartphone purchase is not seen as so high involvement and important decision. It can be that because of the number and similarity of alternatives, people see smartphone purchase as more of a routine purchase, even though relatively high costs are present. It can be that smartphones have become more common and the line between a regular mobile phone and a smartphone has become more blurred. This may have resulted in the decision to buy a smartphone becoming more of a routine (low involvement) decision. The influence of the phone being on contract should also be acknowledged as a small monthly fee may not be associated with the high relative cost.

Another factor that may influence iPhone owners being less dissonant can be that strongly the cognition held regarding Apple is stronger than the other brand owners' cognition of their brand. Quite a few iPhone owners also owned something else manufactured by Apple, indicating that the cognition related to Apple brand is high and, thus, being unsatisfied with the choice is more unlikely. It can also be that they have come across positive information more and may even actively seek reinforcement information reducing dissonance.

It is also interesting to note that even though iPhone owners were mostly concerned with price and as dissonance is usually present when high costs are involved, iPhone owners seem to have accepted having had to pay a premium for their smartphone and the high price does not result in them experiencing dissonance.

There are limitations to this research. The lack of resources did not allow examining all brands separately. Even though iPhone owners seem less dissonant and are remarkably more present in online communities and Web 2.0, it would be interesting to research the topic further by examining closely the other brand owners' cognitions regarding their brand and online behaviour and compare these with iPhone owners. It can be that iPhone owners are seemingly more present in Web 2.0, and it would be interesting to know whether the other brand owners contributed to the Web 2.0 conversation to the same extent as iPhone owners do.

The results of this research also indicate that putting more money to public relations and word of mouth can possibly add remarkably to unpaid media coverage increasing awareness and shaping attitudes. Even though Apple does little open public relations, they still execute this function. Executing public relations and word of mouth online can also contribute to the level of dissonance. Based on this research, online communities such as blogs, Facebook and Twitter are the most powerful platforms to reach smartphone owners and they also seem to attract high level of user engagement.

Even though there may be several reasons for iPhone owners seeming generally more satisfied than the other brand owners, the results of this research indicate that a brand's strong presence in online communities seems to generate more positive consumer experiences and feelings. The level iPhone owners contribute

to the conversation seems to keep them more satisfied than the other brand owners. It can also be that iPhone owners' presence in online communities means that they are exposed to both positive and negative information more and this enables them to make the information more consonant with their existing cognitions by taking part in the conversation.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Bebo

A social networking site with over 40 million users mainly in the United States, United Kingdom and Ireland. Users have personalised profiles that may include photos, video, music, quizzes, groups and blogs. Some features available on mobile (Brown, 2009).

Blog

A contradiction of the word weblog, meaning a post uploaded to the Internet into user's own blog site that can be seen by anyone on the Internet and that can be commented. Started as online diaries of people, nowadays popular blogs can be found almost on any subject area, some blogs are very influential and provide opportunities for marketers (Brown, 2009).

Blogger

A blogging platform nowadays owned by Google. Microsoft Office 2007 has a built in feature to support various blogging systems, also Blogger.

Browser

"A software program that allows the user to find and read encoded documents in a form suitable for display, esp. such a program for use on the World Wide Web."
(Dictionary.com)

Dot com Bubble

Internet companies became interesting investment opportunities for venture capitalists in the beginning of the 1990s as many new companies were started in this new form of making business. However, when the investors realised that the internet companies were not going to be worth investing in as majority of them had cash rolling in (as venture capital) before they had made any sales or profit, the investors started to back up resulting in "the bubble burst" and the collapse of many high tech companies in the late 1990s and the beginning of 2000 (BBC, 2010).

Facebook

A social networking site with 120 million users in 2009. The user connects with other people by adding them as friends which the user can then follow on their feed. Friends can post on an open space for message (a wall), send emails, upload photos and videos, create events, groups and fan pages and comment on the content. Less customisable than Bebo or MySpace and has been accused for privacy issues, most recently (January 2011) about giving a permission to third party developers to access user address and phone number information (Brown, 2009).

Flickr

An image sharing site where user creates a profile to share his images or images he has seen online. Ability to tag images with keywords, mark favourites and comment on other users images. Ability to create photostreams or slide shows of a specific collection of images (Brown, 2009).

Foursquare

“Foursquare is a location-based mobile platform. By “checking in” via a smartphone app or SMS, users share their location with friends while collecting points and virtual badges.” (Foursquare, 2011)

Google

The leading search engine service provider. Provides a variety of services from email accounts to analytics to follow web page traffic (Brown, 2009).

LinkedIn

Business orientated social network. Allows users to connect with other people who they know through business. More than 20 million users, profile page consists of an “interactive CV”, contact list and interests and discussion groups the user belongs to. Your profile page can be used for recruiting and some recruiters use LinkedIn to find suitable people (Brown, 2009).

MySpace

A social networking site, based on a profile listing interests and other details if the user wishes to enter them. Relatively popular among music practitioners as images, audio, video and other content can be embedded to the site and MP3 songs can be uploaded to be downloaded by other users. The user profile has a bulletin board, instant messaging and group features possibilities (Brown, 2009).

Newsreaders

Built into your browser or desktop sidebar that allows the user seeing the news feeds he has subscribed to all the time if needed. RSS feeds are used to manage the content of the feeds so that the user only gets information he is interested in by subscribing to RSS (see RSS) (Brown, 2009).

RSS

Really Simple Syndication. A web feed format used to publish content. By subscribing to a certain RSS feeds, a user will be kept up do date about any new content on a certain site without having to check each site separately. The RSS reader that is needed to be able to follow RSS feeds will update automatically and notify the user of any new content.

Smartphone

“A cellular telephone with built-in applications and Internet access. Smartphones provide digital voice service as well as text messaging, e-mail, Web browsing, still and video cameras, MP3 player and video and TV viewing. In addition to their built-in functions, smartphones can run myriad applications, turning the once single-minded cellphone into a mobile computer.” (PCMag.com)

Spotify

A web based streaming radio where the users can interact with each other by sending songs to their friends and share content to external websites.

Tumblr

A blogging platform that allows users to upload content such as audio, video and images. In addition, the platform allows user to post from other web sites to Tumblr, enabling fast blogging.

Twitter

A micro-blogging tool. The user “tweets” his thoughts in 140 characters, other users can reply or “retweet” the original tweet forward. Users follow each other making it a personal news wire. Stories have the ability to spread fast as it is unfiltered and the posts can be retweeted (Brown, 2009).

Wikipedia

A collaborative encyclopedia that any user can edit. Registered users can create new entries. The content is constantly changing. In 2007, UK Wikipedia had over 2 million articles. As the information can be edited by anyone, the reader should exercise common sense when reading the content and evaluate the reliability and validity of information with care (Brown, 2009).

WordPress

A blogging software that is very customisable due to its free open source code. Wordpress.com is an online platform for the same program, but it is not as flexible as the software itself. In 2007, there were 4 million downloads for WordPress software (Brown, 2009).

YouTube

Video sharing platform on the Internet. User can upload own videos and watch videos uploaded by others, comment or like the videos and subscribe to different users and feeds (Brown, 2009).

APPENDIX 2

A QUESTIONNAIRE ON SMARTPHONE OWNERS' BEHAVIOUR ON SOCIAL MEDIA

This questionnaire will be used as a part of finding out how smartphone users behave on social media. It is a part of Anna Kraappa's dissertation, a Marketing and Public Relations student at Metropolia Business School, Finland and the University of Lincoln, England. The data will be used anonymously and only for this particular research purpose. If you would like to have any additional information on how the data will be used or my dissertation, please contact me at anna.kraappa@students.lincoln.ac.uk
Many thanks for your help.

Ownership

1. Have you got a smartphone? If no please tick "no" and go to the last page and submit your answer.

- Yes
- No

A smartphone is "A cellular telephone with built-in applications and Internet access. Smartphones provide digital voice service as well as text messaging, e-mail, Web browsing, still and video cameras, MP3 player and video and TV viewing. In addition to their built-in functions, smartphones can run myriad applications, turning the once single-minded cellphone into a mobile computer." (PCMag.com)

2. Is your phone on contract?

- Yes
- No

3. In your opinion, what is the best brand for smartphones in the market?

- Apple iPhone
- HTC
- Samsung
- Nokia
- Blackberry
- Sony Ericsson
- Other

If other, please specify

4. What is the brand of your smartphone?

- iPhone
- HTC
- Samsung
- Nokia
- Blackberry
- Sony Ericsson
- Other

If other, please specify

5. When thinking of buying a smartphone, how many alternatives did you review?

- 1
- 2-4
- 5-10
- 10+

6. When you were reviewing the alternatives, how similar do you think they were?

- Very similar
- Similar to some extent
- Not similar at all

7. According to your knowledge, how many of your friends have the same brand smartphone as you do?

- 1-5
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 20+

8. Were you recommended the smartphone by someone?

- Yes
- No

9. Have you ever recommended your smartphone to anyone?

- Yes
- No

10. When did you buy your smartphone?

- Less than a month ago
- 1-3 months ago
- 4-6 months ago
- 7-12 months ago
- Over a year ago

11. Having purchased the smartphone, to what extent are you satisfied with your choice?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Not satisfied
- Very unsatisfied

12. If you are, in general, satisfied with your choice of smartphone, which features are you most satisfied with? Please tick all that apply. (If you are unsatisfied, please go to question 13)

- Brand
- Price
- Design
- Operating system
- Applications available
- Camera
- Messaging options (SMS and MMS)
- Screen size
- Music player
- Browser
- Keyboard
- Email options
- Calendar
- Wireless connectivity

12a. Are there any other features that you are happy with? Please list them

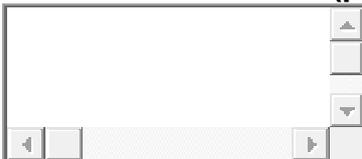


here (please separate answers by a dash)

13. If you think that something should be improved/changed on your smartphone, what would these features be?

- The price was too high
- Brand
- Design
- Operating system
- Applications available
- Camera
- Messaging options (SMS and MMS)
- Screen size
- Music player
- Browser
- Keyboard
- Email options
- Calendar
- Wireless connectivity

13a. Are there any other features that you would like to see improved? Please list them here (please separate answers by a dash)



14. If you have been unsatisfied with your choice of smartphone, have you thought of, or taken any of the following courses of action?

- Sought out new information to increase your efficiency with the phone
- Ignored the flaws and learned to live with them
- Returned the item to the seller

15. Within the past 12 months, do you recall seeing or hearing anything about the iPhone? Please list them here (please separate answers by a dash)

16. If you were buying a new smartphone now, would you go with the same brand you have at the moment?

- Yes
- No

Online behaviour

17. Which of the following do you recall coming across?

- iPhone 4 launch
- iPhone alarm clock problems
- Steve Jobs' health issues
- iPad launch
- iPad 2 launch rumours
- Nokia vs. Apple law suits in regards to violating patents
- 12 days 12 free downloads from iTunes Christmas campaign
- Mac App store launch
- The Beatles available on iTunes
- "There's an app for that" iPhone commercial
- iAd interactive advertising
- Durex "baby" commercial
- Sonera iPhone campaign

**18. Are you a member/user of any of the following online communities?
Please tick all that apply.**

- Facebook
- Twitter
- MySpace
- Spotify
- Flickr
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Blogs (Blogger, WordPress, Tumblr or similar)
- iTunes
- News websites (BBC, CNN, Helsingin Sanomat or similar)
- Foursquare
- Other(s)

If other(s), please specify (please separate answers by a dash)

19. Within the last 12 months, do you recall coming across iPhone in any of the following online communities?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Spotify
- Flickr
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Blogs (Blogger, WordPress, Tumblr or similar)
- iTunes
- News websites (BBC, CNN, Helsingin Sanomat or similar)
- Other(s)

If other(s), please specify (please separate answers by a dash)

20. Have you ever posted something about iPhone on any of the following online communities? Please tick all that apply.

- Facebook
- Twitter
- MySpace
- Flickr
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Blogs (Blogger, WordPress, Tumblr or similar)
- iTunes (developed an application)
- News websites' (BBC, CNN, Helsingin Sanomat or similar) discussion forums
- Other(s)

If other(s), please specify (please separate answers by a dash)

21. Have you ever interacted in any of the following ways on social media sites?

- Regularly read an iPhone/Apple themed blog
- Commented on blog posts about iPhone
- Liked an iPhone page on Facebook
- Created a fan page for iPhone on Facebook
- Followed a user tweeting about iPhone on Twitter (occasionally or more regularly)
- Replied to tweets regarding iPhone
- Watched a tutorial/video on iPhone on YouTube
- Uploaded a clip on iPhone on YouTube
- Other action

If other, please specify

22. Do you own any products made by Apple? Please tick all that apply.

- iPhone
- iPad
- iPod
- Mac
- Apple TV
- Other(s)
- I do not own any Apple products

If other(s), please specify (please separate answers by a dash)

Classification data

23. Gender

- Male
- Female

24. Age

- <13
- 13-17
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-55
- 55+

25. Income group (£/€ year)

- <15k
- 16k-25k
- 26k-35k
- 36k-50k
- 50k+
- Prefer not to answer

26. Country of residence

- Austria
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Italy
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Russia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- The Netherlands
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Other

If other, please specify

APPENDIX 3

Ethical Approval Form: Human Research Projects

This form must be completed for each piece of research activity whether conducted by academic staff, graduate students or undergraduates. The completed form must be approved by the designated authority within the Faculty/Institute.

Name of applicant	Anna Kraappa
University of Lincoln	Faculty: Business and Law
	Department: Marketing and Public Relations
Position in the University	Undergraduate student
Role in relation to research	The researcher

Project title

Tentative title: "An investigation into smartphone owners' post-purchase evaluation and the influence of marketing communications and web 2.0 in the process: a comparison between iPhone and other brand smartphone owners"

Brief description of project with approximate start and completion dates

A questionnaire sent out to approximately 300 people on 27 January 2011. The questionnaire will be open for a week and will be closed on 3 February 2011.

Principal investigator or supervisor, including phone number and e-mail address

Anna Kraappa

Mechelininkatu 12-14 C 74 00100 Helsinki Finland

Tel. +358 40 735 4839 email anna.kraappa@gmail.com

Other researchers or student investigators

na

Type/number of subjects involved and how de-briefing will be carried out

A questionnaire will be distributed through Facebook to approximately 300 researcher's Facebook friends. The participants will be asked to take part in the researcher's dissertation research by filling in a self administered online questionnaire. At no point will the participants be asked to inform the researcher on whether they have or have not taken part in the survey. The results will be analysed anonymously and only the researcher will be able to access the data.

Location(s) at which project is to be carried out

The questionnaire will be distributed online and thus, it is not tied to any geographical location. The majority of the sample will live in Europe.

The ethical issues involved and how they are to be addressed, including a risk assessment of the project based on the vulnerability of participants, the extent to which it is likely to be harmful and whether there will be significant discomfort.

The potential issues in this research include the privacy of participants, right to withdraw partially or completely from the process, consent deception of participants, maintenance of confidentiality and data provided anonymously, reactions of participants to the way the data is collected, effects of participants of the way the data is used, analysed and reported as well as the behaviour and objectivity of the researcher. These will be taken into account and acknowledged in the research design. The participants will be given freedom of choice on whether to take part in the survey or not, they will be informed on how the data will be used and will be assured that the data will be analysed anonymously.

Note: This will normally cover such issues as whether the risks/adverse effects associated with the project have been identified and dealt with, whether the benefits of the research outweigh the risks, whether the information and consent arrangements are adequate, and whether the level of any inducements to participate are appropriate.

Signature of applicant

I certify that I have read the University's ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH WITH HUMANS AND OTHER ANIMALS

Signed by the lead applicant (with date)

 10 January 2011

then print name

Anna Kraappa

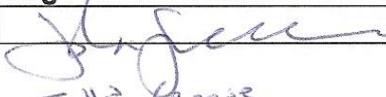
Approval

Does this research require the approval of an external body?

Yes/No
Yes

If so, which body?

Signed on behalf of the Faculty/Institute Research Committee (with date)

 10 January 2011
John Greese