

GOING VIRAL

— THE ROLE OF BRAND-INCONGRUENT COMMUNICATION, SENDER AND BRAND CONNECTION IN THE SPREADING OF COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA —

Social media is increasingly used for marketing activities and marketers are counting on consumers to spread their communication online. However, research in terms of what makes a campaign a viral success is limited. Through looking at three different dimensions: brand-schema incongruity of the message, sender of the message, and consumers' connection to the brand or the category, this thesis aims at investigating what makes communication spread in social media. Through an online survey with users of social network sites (SNSs) it is identified that the level of incongruity has an impact on sharing and showing the advertisement. In addition, a survey with opinion leaders within social media and marketing communication shows that these experts are also more willing to spread incongruent communication than congruent. Furthermore, this study identifies that SNS users are more inclined to comment on an ad posted by a close friend compared to a brand, but not to share, like or show it to a larger extent. Lastly, it is found that a connection to the brand and the category affect the spreading intentions. The findings suggest that not only the message but also targeting is important for the communication of a brand to go viral.

Key Words: Viral Marketing, Social Media,
Brand-Incongruent Communication, Sender, Brand connection

Authors:

Alexandra Drissner 40191

Sofia Kjellström 21186

Tutor:

Sara Rosengren

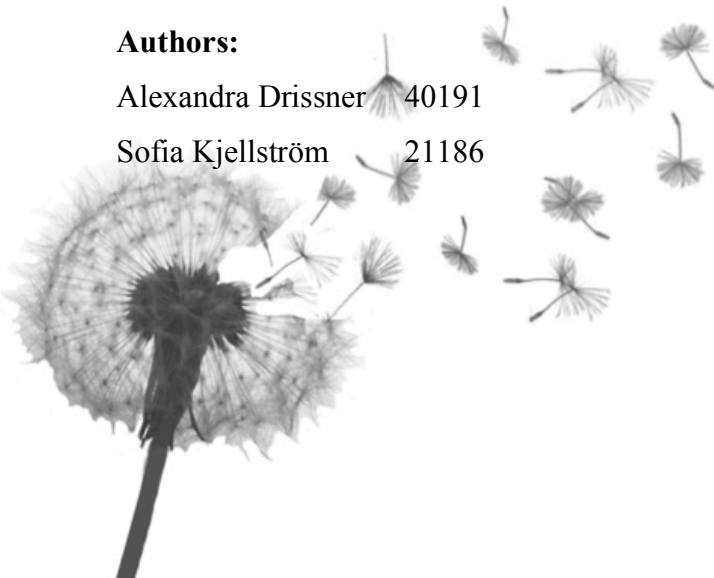
Discussants:

Aline Rauh Müller 40206

Lukas Rose 40200

Examiner:

Micael Dahlén



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MANY THANKS TO...

Sara Rosengren and Fredrik Törn for your input and guidance.

Gustav Holmström and Peter Holmberg from Grayling for your support in getting in touch with opinion leaders within marketing communication and social media.

Robert Dysell and Anton Waern (Gyro Stockholm), Per Ekvall (Identity Works), Arvid Svanvik (Scholz & Friends Stockholm) and Fanny Hellsing (Berghs School of Communication) for sharing your point of view on viral marketing.

The experts within digital media, social media and marketing communication for your participation in our survey and contribution to the results.

The students at Stockholm School of Economics, The Royal Institute of Technology and Stockholm University for your willingness to take part in the survey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA	1
1.2 PROBLEM AREA	4
1.3 PURPOSE	7
1.4 DELIMITATIONS	7
1.5 EXPECTED KNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTION.....	8
1.6 WORDS TO KNOW.....	9
1.7 DISPOSITION	11
2. THEORY	12
2.1 VIRAL SPREADING MODEL.....	12
2.2 MESSAGE	13
2.2.1 ENTERTAINMENT AND EMOTIONS IN MESSAGES.....	13
2.2.2 INTRODUCTION TO INCONGRUITY.....	14
2.2.3 INCONGRUITY IN VIRAL MARKETING	15
2.3 CONNECTION	20
2.4 SENDER	22
2.5 SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES	24
3. METHODOLOGY	26
3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN	26
3.2 MANIPULATIONS	26
3.2.1 BRAND CHOICE AND MANIPULATION OF ADS.....	26
3.2.2 SOCIAL MEDIA CHOICE AND SENDER MANIPULATION	29
3.3 PREPARATORY WORK	30
3.3.1 PRE-STUDY 1	31
3.3.2 PRE-STUDY 2	32
3.4 SURVEY DESIGN	35
3.4.1 MAIN SURVEY 1 – SNS USERS.....	35
3.4.2 MAIN SURVEY 2 - OPINION LEADERS.....	39
3.5 DATA COLLECTION	40
3.5.1 SAMPLE MAIN SURVEY 1 – CONSUMER.....	40
3.5.2 COLLECTION PROCESS MAIN SURVEY 1 – CONSUMER.....	42
3.5.3 SAMPLE MAIN SURVEY 2 – OPINION LEADERS.....	43
3.5.4 COLLECTION PROCESS MAIN SURVEY 2 – OPINION LEADERS.....	44
3.6 METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS OF ANALYSIS	45
3.7 DATA QUALITY	46
3.7.1 RELIABILITY	46
3.7.2 VALIDITY	47

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	49
4.1 MESSAGE.....	49
4.2 CONNECTION.....	53
4.3 SENDER.....	55
4.4 SUMMARY OF MAIN RESULTS	56
5. DISCUSSION	59
5.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS.....	59
5.1.1 MESSAGE.....	59
5.1.2 CONNECTION.....	62
5.1.3 SENDER.....	63
5.1.4 OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS.....	64
5.2 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS	65
5.3 CRITIQUE OF THE STUDY	66
5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	68
6. REFERENCES.....	70
7. APPENDIX.....	81
APPENDIX 1: ADVERTISEMENTS	81
APPENDIX 1.1: OLW Ad CONGRUENT	81
APPENDIX 1.2: OLW Ad INCONGRUENT	82
APPENDIX 1.3: PRIPPS BLÅ Ad CONGRUENT.....	83
APPENDIX 1.4: PRIPPS BLÅ Ad INCONGRUENT.....	84
APPENDIX 2: PRE-STUDY 1	85
APPENDIX 3: EXAMPLE OF PRE-STUDY 2	86
APPENDIX 4: AD PICTURES VARYING LEVELS OF CONGRUITY	87
APPENDIX 4.1: OLW 1.....	87
APPENDIX 4.2: OLW 2.....	87
APPENDIX 4.3: OLW 3.....	88
APPENDIX 4.4: OLW 4.....	88
APPENDIX 4.5: OLW 5.....	89
APPENDIX 4.6: PRIPPS BLÅ 1	90
APPENDIX 4.7: PRIPPS BLÅ 2.....	91
APPENDIX 4.8: PRIPPS BLÅ 3.....	92
APPENDIX 4.9: PRIPPS BLÅ 4.....	92
APPENDIX 4.10: PRIPPS BLÅ 5	93
APPENDIX 5: MAIN SURVEY 1 – SNS USERS (EXAMPLE PRIPPS BLÅ INCONGRUENT).....	94
APPENDIX 6: MAIN SURVEY 2 – OPINION LEADERS.....	99
APPENDIX 7: EXAMPLE COMMENTS OPINION LEADERS	100

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: THE VIRAL SPREADING MODEL.....	12
FIGURE 2: HYPOTHESIZED VIRAL SPREADING MODEL – DIMENSIONS AFFECTING THE SPREADING OF COMMUNICATION	24
FIGURE 3: CONGRUENT (LEFT) AND INCONGRUENT (RIGHT) ADVERTISEMENTS OLW .	28
FIGURE 4: CONGRUENT (LEFT) AND INCONGRUENT ADVERTISEMENTS PRIPPS BLÅ....	28
FIGURE 5: OLW PICTURES RATED ACCORDING TO WORDS DESCRIBING OLW RESP. THE OPPOSITE OF IT	34
FIGURE 6: PRIPPS BLÅ PICTURES RATED ACCORDING TO WORDS DESCRIBING PRIPPS BLÅ RESP. THE OPPOSITE OF IT	35
FIGURE 7: AGE DISTRIBUTION	42
FIGURE 8: FACEBOOK VISITS.....	42
FIGURE 9: VIRAL SPREADING MODEL RESULT– DIMENSIONS AFFECTING THE VIRAL SPREADING OF COMMUNICATION	58

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES	25
TABLE 2: ASSOCIATIONS TO OLW AND PRIPPS BLÅ.....	32
TABLE 3: MEANS FOR OWL AND PRIPPS BLÅ PICTURES WITH VARYING LEVELS OF CONGRUITY.....	33
TABLE 4: DIFFERENCE IN BRAND FIT BETWEEN SELECTED ADS	33
TABLE 5: INDICES FOR THE SPREADING OF COMMUNICATION ON FACEBOOK.....	38
TABLE 6: COMPARING MEANS SPREADING AND (IN)CONGRUITY	50
TABLE 7: COMPARING MEANS SPREADING AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS SHARING ON SNSs.....	50
TABLE 8: COMPARING MEANS SPREADING AND (IN)CONGRUITY GIVEN A HIGH ATTITUDE TO SHARING ON SNSs.....	51
TABLE 9: CORRELATIONS BRAND LOYALTY AND IN/CONGRUITY	52
TABLE 10: CORRELATION OF BRAND/CATEGORY CONNECTION AND SPREADING.....	55
TABLE 11: COMPARING MEANS SPREADING AND SENDER.....	56
TABLE 12: SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES RESULTS.....	57

1. INTRODUCTION

“Eight years ago Facebook was born. Do you even remember life before it?”

(Murphy 2012)

1.1 THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2009 Evian launched the Evian Roller Babies¹, a campaign including a video clip where babies roller-skate to rap music. The commercial was exclusively posted on YouTube, first by the brand itself and then by viewers across the globe. The campaign was more successful than anyone could imagine and was featured in the Guinness Book of Records for being the most viewed online advertisement² with more than 45 million views (Whitehead 2009). But what was it that made the campaign a success, and why did people spread the commercial online?

The success of Evian is something many marketers can only dream about. In today’s cluttered environment advertisers and brands are constantly striving to find new ways of standing out (e.g. Eckler and Bolls 2011; van der Lans et al. 2010), but far from everyone succeeds. A popular way to try escaping the clutter is using the Internet for marketing purposes in the hope of getting consumers to spread the messages and communication online, especially through social media (e.g. Chu and Kim 2011; Gil-Or 2010). In 2010, 71 % of the top-500 companies used Facebook, 59 % Twitter, and 50 % blogging to promote their brands, products and services through social media campaigns (eMarketer 2011). In 2010, companies spent about \$ 2.1 billion on social media advertising, a number that is predicted to grow to nearly \$ 8 billion in 2015 (Farhad 2011). Also, in a benchmark study on the use of social media 74.5 % of the 1500 interviewed marketers plan to increase their investments in social media in 2012 compared to the previous year (Wredin 2012). These figures are high but not surprising as there are obvious advantages to social media, and social network sites (SNSs) in particular. SNSs such as Facebook constitute an ideal tool for electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) since consumers can easily generate and distribute brand-related information among their established social network of friends and acquaintances (Chu and Kim 2011). Members of the SNS Facebook for instance can actively engage and associate themselves with brands by becoming its fan and interacting on the brand’s page. For example The Body Shop Sverige is according to Socialbakers (2012a) the brand in Sweden with the highest level of

¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQcVIIWpwGs>

² Advertisement and ad will in the following be used interchangeably.

engagement among its fans on Facebook. Each fan that comments, likes or shares a message of The Body Shop Sverige endorses the brand and volunteers to spread its message to the members of his/her own social network, i.e. to his/her on average 245 Facebook friends (Buck 2012), which will see The Body Shop Sverige's message on their news feed. Thus, the appeal of social media campaigns is based on peer-to-peer communication and a successful viral campaign "can reach thousands or millions of otherwise indifferent consumers and motivate them to endorse or interact with a brand" (Eckler and Bolls 2011, p.1). It is seen as a powerful new marketing communication tool that can potentially achieve a large reach and a fast spread among the target audience in a short time (van der Lans et al. 2010). In addition, these campaigns are often rather inexpensive because the message is spread by the consumers themselves and no expensive media exposure needs to be bought (van der Lans et al. 2010). Currently, marketers use social media as a tool to create engagement (37 %) and as support for other channels in a campaign (46 %) (Wredin 2012). Thus, making use of viral marketing is not a question of using online campaigns *or* offline campaigns, rather in most cases it is the use of both. A commercial message that is offline could be brought online by consumers, or the other way round, as shown in the example of Evian Roller Babies, which was first posted on YouTube and afterwards used as TV commercial.

Obviously, social media has a great potential for brands; however, currently there is often a lack of effectiveness. Not all viral marketing campaigns are successful (van der Lans et al. 2010), and van Noort et al. (2012) argue that the knowledge about the critical effectiveness factors is scarce and research on SNS campaigns still in its infancy. Indeed, effective marketing within SNSs is very challenging (Gil-Or 2010) and stunningly, one third of the marketers interviewed in the Social Media Benchmark (2011) consider their Facebook activities as ineffective. One reason might be that their fans don't engage with their brand, that they don't like or comment on the communication from the brand and don't share it with their network. According to Anders Ericson, CEO of Sveriges Annonsörer, both advertisers and agencies still have a lot to learn about consumers' behaviour in social media. For example, is a devotion to the brand a prerequisite for consumers to engage with its communication? And as people engage with both brands and individuals online, does it matter who sends the communication?

As the popularity of the media increases effective communication on social media will become even harder, as the brand has to break through the clutter, which is already emerging

online. To reach out, a differentiating message that stands out from the crowd is essential (Carlehäll 2011); and indeed, it is quite challenging to design communication that spreads. While for example provocative or shocking messages are likely to be forwarded (e.g. Salzman et al. 2003 p. 131; Brown et al. 2010) such a message is not in line with the desired positioning of the majority of the well-known brands. Besides, surprise has been found to be an important emotion in order for a message to be passed on (Dobele et al. 2007), but how surprising is the communication of most of the well-established brands within the consumer goods sector that are heavily advertised on all channels? Partly because of its novel and surprising character, brand-incongruent communication is a concept potentially useful for well-established brands, which has been researched in the last years (e.g. Sjödin and Törn 2006; Dahlén et al. 2005). Brand-incongruent communication is communication that does not match with the brand's image that is established in consumers' minds (Sjödin and Törn 2006), and therefore is unexpected and surprising. This concept contradicts the recommendations of traditional brand management literature (e.g. Percy and Elliot 2009, p. 322 ff.; Keller et al. 2008, p. 277 ff., 653 f.) by postulating positive effects of designing communication that is not in line with the brands' image. Conversely, brand management literature rather highlights the risks of such an approach, which could according to Keller et al. (2008) decrease brand equity (p. 766). Thus, marketers do not apply brand-incongruent communication to a large extent and some companies even see it as failure to use communication that is not in-line with the brand image. On the other hand, due to its novelty and unexpectedness, brand-incongruent communication has the potential to be talked about, as shown for example by some cases within marketing practice daring enough to apply it such as Dressman's use of The Rolling Stones as celebrity endorsers (e.g. Fremin 2011; Rost 2011), Mads Mikkelsen for Fritidsresor (e.g. Schori 2010; Svanvik 2012), Scarlett Johansson for Reebok (e.g. Heritage 2006; Oatts 2006), Bob Dylan for Victoria Secrets (Howard 2004) and so on. But let's look at the Evian Roller Babies again; even though there might be a fit to the brand's slogan "live young" (Evian 2012), the babies skate to rap music in the middle of a city and there is no clear connection to the Alps and the pure and clean water the brand stands for. The latter are associations the brand built up with its previous communication and thus are held by several consumers. Therefore these consumers might perceive the Roller Babies campaign as incongruent to the Evian brand. Considering that this campaign is a viral success, the question arises: is incongruent communication suitable to be used in social media; does it achieve the desired spread?

1.2 PROBLEM AREA

Viral marketing and word-of-mouth (WOM) respectively eWOM are often not clearly distinguished and definitions of eWOM, buzz marketing, and viral marketing are overlapping (Vilpponen et al. 2006). In the definition used in this thesis, viral marketing, as a “process of encouraging honest communication among consumer networks” (Phelps et al. 2004, p. 334), contains the notion of WOM communication among peers in a network. Thus, articles regarding viral communication in SNSs (e.g. van Noort et al. 2012; Gil-Or 2010; Eckler and Bolls 2011) are to a large extent based on literature on WOM, eWOM and pass-along emails (e.g. Chu and Kim 2011; Huang et al. 2009; Phelps et al. 2004).

Previous research on spreading has looked at what motivates people to engage in eWOM or pass along emails and motives such as self-status seeking, being perceived as knowledgeable and skilled, or to be helpful have been identified (e.g. Chu 2011; Subramani and Rajagopalan 2003; Phelps et al. 2004). Furthermore, the needs for social interaction and identification (Hsu and Lin 2008) as well as social enhancement (i.e. social benefits such as social support, friendship and intimacy) (Okazaki 2009) are factors influencing the participation in eWOM. However, even though it is important to understand what motivates people to spread, it is also essential to understand *why* some campaigns spread while others do not. The effectiveness of viral campaigns is often measured according to the campaign’s reach (e.g. van der Lans et al. 2010; Dobele et al. 2007, Brown et al. 2010). For example, van der Lans et al. (2010) argue that “it is also important that marketers [are] able to predict the returns on their expenditures and thus how many customers they will reach.” (p. 348). Consequently, several researchers have tried to find out what makes a campaign spread. This research includes what types of messages are likely to be spread, what personal characteristics the people who spread these messages possess or how receptive they are to the product/brand advertised in the campaign, and which effect the sender of the message has on spreading.

First, authors have tried to determine what a *message* should contain in order to be spread (e.g. Phelps et al. 2004; Eckler and Bolls 2011; Dobele et al. 2007; Brown et al. 2010). However, this research has been focused on emails or forwarding of links respectively video ads and not specifically taken into account the specific functions of social media, such as sharing, commenting or liking. Several authors have found that effective communication needs to elicit some kind of emotion to be passed on such as joy, humour or fear (e.g. Dobele et al. 2007; Brown et al. 2010). Furthermore, a key to reach successful spread is to include an

element that surprises the viewer (e.g. Dobele et al. 2007; Salzman et al. 2003, p. 131). Brand-incongruent communication has been proven to have a surprising effect since it contradicts existing knowledge structures (e.g. Dahlén et al. 2005). Moreover, incongruity can contribute to humour (Brown et al. 2010) and, by challenging existing brand schemas, has the potential to increase the imagination and curiosity of consumers (Dahlén et al. 2005). This is of interest for the forwarding of communication since, as acknowledged by Dobele et al. (2007), apart from surprise and emotion a message needs to capture the recipients' imagination. Even though brand-incongruent communication possesses all these elements that are likely to contribute to its likelihood to be passed on, there is no research investigating if incongruent communication is spread more compared to congruent. This leads to the following research question:

Research Question 1: Has brand-incongruent communication the potential to be spread on social media?

As important as designing a message that spreads is sending it to those people that are willing and likely to forward it to their own network. In social media, where users contribute with own content (e.g. Facebook, blogs, or Wikipedia), it is typical that only 1 % of the users are heavy contributors that account for 90 % of the posts (Nielsen 2006). The next 9 % post occasionally, but the vast majority of users actually only read and observe but do not contribute themselves (ibid.). Hence, it is important for viral marketing campaigns to identify the users posting frequently, as they are the ones potentially sharing and discussing the campaign with their network. Previous research thus investigated if people that participate in eWOM typically possess certain *personality traits* and *characteristics*. Characteristics that have been found to influence the spreading are for example the willingness to disclose information about oneself, being outgoing and open, and being a novelty seeker (e.g. Chu 2011; Chiu et al. 2007; Okazaki 2009). Further, acceptance of, and attitudes towards technology have a proven effect on passing-on behaviors (Huang et al. 2009; Hsu and Lin 2008). Also the attitudes towards advertising in social media and advertising in general moderate the spreading of communication online (Chu 2011). Therefore, a common recommendation is to send the message to people that hold these characteristics. One such group could be opinion leaders, which are more innovative and socially connected, and assumed to participate in eWOM to a larger extent than regular consumers (Okazaki 2009). They have been found to seek creativity, have a larger network, and a higher ability to influence others (e.g. Huang et al. 2009; Li and Du 2011). Opinion leaders are likely to be

part of the 1 % of heavy contributors (Nielsen 2006), however, there is limited research on the type of messages that particularly appeal to them. Previous research has not yet linked the findings on messages that spread to opinion leadership and has not particularly investigated what opinion leaders are most likely to pass on, i.e. which messages are opinion leaders likely to forward to their network and/or write about? Thus, in order to assess whether brand-incongruent communication is a message that is spread through both regular consumers and opinion leaders the following research question is asked:

Research Question 2: Is brand-incongruent communication more likely to be spread through opinion leaders compared to congruent communication?

Further, one could assume that the receiver of a campaign should have a *connection* to the brand and its advertised products or services, based on Dobele et al.'s (2007) recommendation that companies should target cleverly. The author believes that sending the message to a group that is "receptive to a brand, product, or service offers a better chance of success than simply emailing to the world at large" (p. 303). Also, Huang et al. (2009) mention that emails are more likely to be forwarded when the advertised product arouses the receivers' interest. However, these authors look only at emails and do not investigate if a person has to be receptive to the brand, its offering, or the category in order to engage in viral marketing on a SNS, which differs in its usage situation and functionality from emails (e.g. in that SNSs enable users to connect and interact with others to a much higher extent than it is possible through emails). Yeh and Choi (2011), who investigated particularly online communities, identify that brand loyalty leads to a higher intention to engage in eWOM in favour of the brand. But these authors look at brand enthusiasts that participate in online brand communities; thus, the question arises whether a weaker tie to a brand, in particular an interest in the brand or even only in the category, is enough to increase the intention to forward communication of a brand. This results in the research question:

Research Question 3: Does a connection to the category or brand (i.e. brand/category interest or purchase intention) influence the spreading of communication on social media?

Finally, previous research investigated *sender characteristics* and their impact on the passing on of a message. According to several authors (e.g. van Noort et al. 2012; Chiu et al. 2007) messages from strong social connections (such as close friends or family) are rather forwarded than those from loose ties (e.g. unfamiliar personal senders or commercial sources).

Also, in general, messages from advertisers are often perceived as less trustworthy and credible than from personal connections in SNSs (Chu and Kim 2011). However, certain SNSs such as Facebook are special in that consumer can “like” and thus follow brand pages on Facebook, which could indicate a stronger social connection, higher relevance and higher credibility of the message compared to a regular commercial source or even some shallow contacts. One could even argue that consumers, by liking a brand’s page, opt to become part of the brand’s community, which in turn increases their willingness to participate in eWOM for the brand (Yeh and Choi 2011). Hence, an active endorsement with a brand on a SNS could influence the intentions to forward viral campaigns, which leads to the following research question:

Research Question 4: Which type of sender (brand vs. friend) is more effective in order to reach spreading of communication on social media?

1.3 PURPOSE

The main purpose of this thesis is to contribute to literature on viral marketing in social media by investigating three dimensions and their influence on the spreading of communication in social media. The first dimension is the message and this study intends to contribute by looking at if brand-incongruent communication has the potential to be spread online through both consumers and opinion leaders. Second, this study aims to identify if a connection to the category and/or brand affects if a messages goes viral, and thirdly if the type of sender has an impact on spreading.

1.4 DELIMITATIONS

Due to the extent of this thesis a couple of delimitations had to be made. Firstly, this study only investigates two types of brands in two different categories but with comparable levels of involvement (i.e. low involvement) and a similar purchase motivation (i.e. transformational). If the same effects of incongruent communication would occur for other categories/brands with a different involvement level and motivation is thus unexplored. Furthermore, due to time limitations only one type of communication, i.e. print media, was investigated. Thus, the results may be less applicable to other forms of communication such as videos, which are widely used in viral marketing, too.

In addition, this study focuses on social media, investigating in particular the SNS Facebook and to a smaller extent on blogs and twitter. The measurements used were specifically developed to these media, and although there are similarities between different types of social media (e.g. people can retweet on Twitter, repost on Facebook as well as on Google+, and repin on Pinterest) each of them is unique in its use and functionality. Therefore, replicating this study on other types of social media might lead to different results.

Another limitation of this study is the focus on two types of homogenous target groups, i.e. students at universities in Stockholm and opinion leaders within digital media, social media and marketing communication in Sweden. Each group shares characteristics that are relevant in the respective survey, such as the age and educational level of the students that indicates a high usage of SNSs, or the genuine interest in social media/communication, and connectedness of the opinion leaders in the second study. Still, replicating the study for example with non-Swedes, older age groups or a less educated target group could lead to different results.

1.5 EXPECTED KNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTION

There is a lack of research on social media and SNSs in particular. Even though already heavily used by companies for their marketing activities, the academic world is lagging behind in analysing consumer behaviour in SNSs. Thus, this thesis aims to contribute to research on viral marketing in social media. By testing three different dimensions, i.e. message, sender and connection, this thesis generates new knowledge regarding the factors that make communication go viral. In addition, two different groups, young and educated SNS users as well as opinion leaders within social media and marketing communication are investigated regarding their intention to spread brand-incongruent respectively -congruent messages. No studies have yet been conducted to identify the potential of incongruity in viral marketing, and more general, which type of message opinion leaders are willing to spread. Hence, this thesis also contributes to the research field of incongruity by investigating the eWOM intentions associated with an incongruent message and its potential use in social media campaigns.

The measurements used in the studies have been adjusted to suit the specific media investigated and the functions available for the users. As previous studies have focused on the passing on of emails or the general intention to forward, this thesis can contribute with an

investigation of potential differences of the specific functions available to spread communication on social media, and provide measures that could be used for future research.

For practitioners this thesis is valuable in that it proposes which type of communication (brand-incongruent vs. congruent) is most suitable for viral marketing. It thus further elaborates on the advantages of using incongruity as a marketing tool for well-established brands. Also it helps marketers to understand which messages are likely forwarded by a typical target group for viral campaigns (young students that are frequent users of social media). Further, they come to realize which type of communication makes opinion leaders blog/tweet/write about it, which is valuable for marketers, as opinion leaders would increase the spread of the campaign due to their large networks. Finally, it provides insights for practitioners regarding who should receive the message, (i.e. people that are interested in the category or the brand, or aim to purchase it, versus everyone) and by whom (i.e. the brand itself or a close friend).

1.6 WORDS TO KNOW

In the following terms that are relevant for this study are defined. These definitions appear in a thematic order.

Word-of-Mouth (WOM) is “oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, regarding a brand, product, or service” (Arndt 1967).

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) is the online version of WOM. It can be defined as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, p. 39). EWOM can take place through all kinds of social media, such as blogs, SNSs, consumer review websites and forums as well as through emails (Chu and Kim 2011).

Viral Marketing is in this thesis defined, based on Phelps et al.’s (2004) perspective, as a “process of encouraging honest communication among consumer networks” (p. 334). This definition thus contains WOM communication among peers in a network. Customers are

stimulated to forward a message to members within their social network, which subsequently forward the message to their contacts and so on (van der Lans et al. 2010). The message does not have to have its origin online, but could come from an offline campaign that has been brought on the Internet, by the brand or by consumers.

Social Media encompasses a number of online information-sharing formats including social network sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn, creativity works-sharing sites like YouTube and Flickr, collaborative websites (e.g. Wikipedia), blogs, and microblogging sites like Twitter (Chu and Kim 2011).

Social Network Sites (SNSs) are “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd and Ellison 2008, p. 211). SNSs aim at “building and maintaining social networks” (van Noort et al. 2012, p. 40).

Facebook, founded in 2004, is a SNS with the mission to “give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected” (Facebook 2012a). The company helps people to stay connected with friends and upload, share and express what matters to them (Facebook 2012b).

Blogs are “personal journals on the internet arranged in reverse chronological sequence that facilitate interactive computer mediated communication through text, images, and audio/video objects” (Huang et al. 2007, p. 473).

Twitter, is a real-time information network that enables users to send and read text-based posts with a maximum of 140 characters, called Tweets (Twitter, 2012). It is often referred to as a microblogging site (Chu and Kim 2011).

Spreading is a word used in this thesis for all types of passing-along actions of a message including, but not limited to, commenting on, showing, sharing, liking, and talking, blogging or tweeting about the message. *Liking* refers to using the like-function on Facebook, i.e. to click the “thumb-up”. *Commenting* is another function linked to a Facebook post and allows the user to write a comment attached to the post. *Sharing* is a function on Facebook that

allows the user repost the post i.e. the post is spread to the user's network with a reference to the original post. *Showing* means to actually show a Facebook post in real life, i.e. to sit next to someone and look at the Facebook post together. *Talking, blogging* or *tweeting* means referring to the communication or discussing it on blogs, through Twitter or traditional word-of-mouth.

Brand-incongruent communication (also in the following referred to as incongruent communication) can be defined as a mismatch between a stimulus element (e.g. endorser, music or any executional element in an ad) and the existing schema that one holds about the advertising brand (Lee and Schumann 2004). Schemas, in general, are knowledge structures that are used to form beliefs or judgments (Mandler 1982; Lee and Schumann 2004). When processing ad information, consumers use two different schemas: the *brand schema* and the *ad schema*. A brand schema consists of knowledge about the brand's characteristics and positioning, while the ad schema contains knowledge about advertising in a product category (Loef 2002). This thesis particularly focuses on *brand schema* incongruity. An example for such a brand schema incongruity is a brand that uses a celebrity endorser, which does not match the existing expectations, knowledge and/or associations people individually held about the brand.

1.7 DISPOSITION

This thesis is divided into five main chapters – introduction, theory, methodology, analysis and results, and discussion. Following this introduction, which presented the current background to the topic as well as an overview on previous research and the rationale why this area needs further exploration, the second chapter is an in-depth examination of the theoretical background. Three dimensions influencing the spreading of communication, in particular the message, sender, and connection, are discussed and hypotheses are developed throughout the chapter. Chapter three explains the method used in this thesis including the research approach, the pre-studies, the design of the two main surveys and the collection as well as methods of analysis of the data. It also discusses the quality of the data. The fourth chapter addresses the analysis of the data and results from the testing of hypotheses. Finally, chapter five discusses the results, draws conclusions for marketing theory and practice, and presents potential areas for future research.

2. THEORY

This thesis aims at investigating three dimensions – message, connection and sender – and their impact on the spreading of viral campaigns. These dimensions have been chosen based on the literature review but also with regards to the specifics of the investigated social media. In the following chapter, based on an in-depth literature review hypotheses will be developed that propose in which way each dimension affects the spreading of viral campaigns.

2.1 VIRAL SPREADING MODEL

The three independent variables tested in this study are *message* (i.e. congruent vs. incongruent communication), *connection* to the brand respectively category (i.e. brand/category interest and brand/category purchase intention), and *sender* of the message (i.e. brand or close friend as sender) (figure 1). Each variable will be described in more detail in the following sections of this chapter.

The dependent variable is the spreading of communication, which is used as a term describing peoples' intention to engage in a viral marketing campaign. Thus, the term spreading entails a notion of WOM as well as eWOM, as people who engage in viral marketing might talk about the campaign in the real world as well as forward it via the Internet respectively social media. In the hypotheses developed in this chapter, spreading is operationalized with regards to the specifics of the respective social media investigated. Thus, in most of the hypotheses it refers to functions typically available in a SNS such as Facebook, which are *liking* a post, *commenting* on it, *sharing/reposting* it or *showing* the post to a person in real life. When a user engages in these activities he/she actively spreads the message to his/her network.

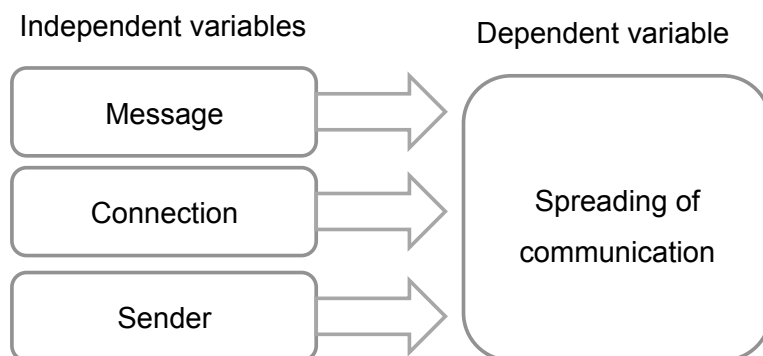


Figure 1: The Viral Spreading Model

2.2 MESSAGE

The message of viral marketing is regarded as the content of the campaign. A message could state rational selling points and features of a product. However, the message could also communicate the brand instead of its specific products and evoke emotions with the viewer. Some of these will be described below.

2.2.1 ENTERTAINMENT AND EMOTIONS IN MESSAGES

To assess the potential of brand-incongruent communication to spread on social media, it is necessary to understand why a message goes viral. According to Phelps et al. (2004) the main motivation for people to pass on emails is related to enjoyment and entertainment, and people tend to forward messages that they themselves perceive as funny and enjoyable. Already Dichter (1966) identifies that advertisement can have an entertainment value that motivates people to talk about it. Thus, in order to be forwarded, a message should be entertaining. This is supported by Yang and Zhou (2011), who looked at American youth's behaviour for viral marketing in mobile phones and found that educating and entertaining messages were often forwarded. In line with this, a content analysis of Phelps et al. (2004) showed that the most common pass-along emails contained good deeds, naked pictures or jokes.

Salzman et al. (2003) state in their book that shock tactics should be used together with traditional advertising in order to create buzz. According to the authors shock tactics work because they are memorable, they can create psychological reactions, and they can break through the clutter (p. 131). They argued that shock tactics could elicit emotional responses (e.g. anger or delight), which can make the brand come to life for the customer (p. 131). Similarly, Dobeles et al. (2007) found that a viral marketing campaign needs to evoke emotions with the receiver in order to be passed on. This is due to the "phenomenon of social sharing of emotions" (Dobeles et al. 2007, p. 293), which means that people initiate communication processes to share their everyday emotional experiences. Through looking at existing successful viral campaigns, Dobeles et al. (2007) determine that several emotions such as fear or joy affect the passing on behaviour. However, all success cases included the emotion of surprise. Therefore the authors draw the conclusion that a successful viral marketing campaign should evoke a strong emotional response in addition to surprise. This is supported by Richardson et al. (2010), however, these authors state that besides humour, creativity is also necessary to increase spreading (p. 67).

In summary, a message should be attention grabbing in order to break through the clutter and elicit emotional reactions, especially surprise. Also humour/entertainment and creativity seem to be important factors. As brand-incongruent advertising is per definition something that is not typical for, or expected from the brand (Törn 2009), it can be argued that this type of communication might be suitable for viral campaigns. Before discussing how incongruity will affect the spreading, the concept of incongruity will be explained more in depth below.

2.2.2 INTRODUCTION TO INCONGRUITY

Authors have throughout the years stated the importance of consistency in marketing communication and that a lack of it might lead to brand dilution and confuse the consumer (Percy and Elliot 2009, p. 322). However, recent research has shown that, for well-established brands, doing something incongruent on occasion can have some advantages as well (e.g. Dahlén et al. 2005; Sjödin and Törn 2006). Incongruity is, according to Heckler and Childers (1992), a construct with two dimensions – relevancy and expectancy. Relevancy refers to how well a piece of information contributes to the identification of the primary message communicated by the ad, while expectancy refers to the degree to which a piece of information falls into a previously established structure evoked by an ad. However, in contrast to the work from Heckler and Childers (1992) this thesis does not focus on *ad schema* incongruity (i.e. mismatch to knowledge about advertising in a product category) but on a mismatch to the *brand schema*, which consists of knowledge about the brand's characteristics and positioning (Loef 2002). Hence, based on Heckler and Childers (1992) conceptualization, relevancy is interpreted as the extent to which the information contributes to the identification of the primary message communicated by the brand. Expectancy on the other hand, concerns the degree to which the information falls into the previously established structure evoked by the brand. Brand-incongruent information is not necessarily relevant to the brands' established image, whereas by definition, it is unexpected. It differs from the brand schema that is established in the mind of the person processing the information. This implies that a precondition for being incongruent to an existing brand schema is that a brand schema actually exists, i.e. that the brand is well-established and familiar. Lange and Dahlén (2003) identify the familiarity of a brand as an important moderator for positive effects of incongruent ads to take place. Interestingly, this form of communication does not challenge the brands' positioning but rather enhance it by strengthening the existing associations (Dahlén et al. 2008). Incongruent ads for a well-established brand that is heavily advertised, can cause the emotional reaction of surprise (Dahlén et al. 2005), they can “boost interest and

curiosity” (Lee and Thorson 2008, p. 446), and “make the brand a little less boring” (Dahlén et al. 2005, p. 3). As argued by Machleit et al. (1993), advertising of familiar brands should aim at reducing the boredom consumers experience with the heavily advertised brand and incongruent communication has the potential to actually do so. Dahlén et al. (2008) and Törn (2009) demonstrate a higher brand interest for incongruent communication than for congruent. In line with this goes a higher intention for positive WOM for incongruity (Törn 2009). Being confronted with incongruity, consumers experience an uncomfortable tension, which increases their motivation to process it in greater detail and results in a desire to relieve the tension by solving the incongruity (Goodstein 1993; Lee and Schumann 2004). This can lead to affective effects resulting from a sense of accomplishment that consumers experience when solving the incongruity, which in turn can positively change the ad and brand evaluations (Dahlén et al. 2005). Dahlén et al. (2005) show in their study that brand attitude is higher for incongruent than for congruent ads, while there are different findings with regards to ad attitude. On the one hand, Lee and Mason (1999) and Lee (2000) identify that unexpected information produces more favourable attitudes towards the ad than expected information. Also, several authors states that ad attitudes would increase as long as consumers are able to resolve the incongruity (Törn and Dahlén 2008; Sjödin and Törn 2006), while on the other hand, Dahlén et al. (2005) found negative effects on ad attitudes. This might be because consumers’ brand associations stored in the brand schema are personal, and conflicting information might thus be perceived as disturbing, which results in negative evaluations.

2.2.3 INCONGRUITY IN VIRAL MARKETING

Alden et al. (2000) state that even though surprise and incongruity might not be perfectly correlated, surprise is still a natural feeling evoked by an incongruent ad, as it does not correlate with the existing brand associations. Naturally, all ads can be surprising (e.g. by using new colours or celebrities that normally don’t participate in advertising), but incongruity is by definition unexpected with regards to the brand’s typical communication. As surprise has been found to increase the amount of spreading of a viral marketing campaign (Dobele 2007), an incongruent ad should be spread more than a congruent ad, especially when considering that consumers should be more interested in discussing the use of an incongruent ad (which is perceived as unexpected, or even weird) compared to congruent ads. Furthermore, the surprising element of incongruent ads might even be strong enough to regard the incongruent ads as a shock tactic. Since these are likely to increase the forwarding intention (Salzman et al. 2003, p. 131), the idea that incongruent advertising is spread more is

further supported. Sjödin and Törn (2006) suggest that the surprising element of incongruity would not only lead to a short emotional effect on its own, but also strengthen other emotional responses such as joy or anger, which according to Dobele et al. (2007) increase the spreading of a campaign.

Incongruity is one of several theories explaining humour, which in case of incongruity “derives from the recognition that something is irrational or improper” (Brown et al. 2010, p. 50). Hence, incongruent communication is often seen as more humorous (Törn 2009). As viral marketing campaigns are often forwarded to entertain others (Brown et al. 2010; Phelps et al. 2004), it can be expected that incongruent advertising should be spread more than congruent advertising. Furthermore, Richardson et al. (2010) suggest that creativity is one element needed to create buzz (p. 128). Novelty is seen as one of the corner stones of creativity (Smith et al. 2008) and, according to Goodstein (1993), incongruent advertising is often seen as novel. This indicates that incongruent advertising would receive more buzz, and hence be spread more than congruent advertising.

The attitude towards the incongruent communication is likely to be positive (negative) depending on if the incongruity is solved (or not) (Lee and Schumann 2004). This is strengthened by Sjödin and Törn (2006), who suggest when solving incongruity the solver feels satisfaction, and Lee and Thorson (2008), who state that solving incongruity was rewarding. One reason to participate in viral marketing is to show skills or improve one’s image (Subramani and Rajagopalan 2003; Huang et al. 2009). As people feel rewarded when solving incongruity in an ad, it is possible that they are proud of it and might want to show it to others in order to improve their image, or broadcast their skills. This even more indicates that people would spread incongruent advertising more than congruent advertising. Finally, incongruent ads can stand out of the clutter, which is a precondition for being forwarded. They possess attention-getting properties (such as humour or surprise) and people spend more attention on those ads as well as process them in more detail compared to congruent information (Brown et al. 2010; Goodstein 1993). Due to the reasoning above it is hypothesized that:

H1: Incongruent communication is

a) liked,

b) commented,

c) reposted/shared, and/or

d) shown more on social media than congruent communication.

Previous research reveals that the acceptance of technology, and the attitude towards advertising in social media and user-generated content affect people's viral behavior (e.g. Yang and Zhou 2011; Hsu and Lin 2008; Phelps et al. 2004; Daughtery et al. 2008). One additional factor that could moderate people's willingness to spread communication is the attitude toward sharing on SNSs in general. In line with Yang and Zhou's (2011) argumentation, it can be assumed that the acceptance of technology (i.e. the perceived usefulness and ease of use of sharing on the SNS) leads to a positive attitude towards sharing on SNSs in general, and predicts forwarding intention as well as behavior. Consequently, if people don't perceive sharing links to their friends as useful or easy, they are unlikely to do so. In addition, when sharing links on SNSs the user automatically discloses information about him-/herself (Chu 2011), which some people want to avoid. Consequently, there is a risk that people with negative attitudes towards sharing on SNSs in general might never do it regardless of if the message is funny, surprising, shocking, congruent or incongruent. Therefore, it could be possible that the spreading of incongruent communication is only evident among people with positive attitudes towards sharing on SNSs and thus necessary, to exclude the remaining cases from the study. Consequently, it is hypothesized that:

H2: Given that the attitude towards sharing on SNSs in general is positive, incongruent communication is

- a) liked,**
- b) commented,**
- c) reposted/shared, and/or**
- d) shown more on social media than congruent communication.**

As stated above, congruent communication does not live up to the same amount of surprise, novelty, and interest as incongruent advertising, thus there must be other reasons why people spread congruent advertisements. One such reason could be brand loyalty. Dichter (1966) states that people that are extremely satisfied with a product or service want to recommend it and share the gratifying experience. Similarly, Dick and Basu (1994) developed a conceptual framework for brand loyalty, stating that brand loyalty increases WOM due to consumers' emotional experience that underlies their high attitude towards the brand. For SNSs in particular, this was strengthened by Yeh and Choi (2011), who found that online brand community members' brand loyalty is positively related to their intentions to pass on information to people outside of the community. Those brand loyalists are also more willing to gather information about the brand. Thus, as congruent ads are rather expected and typical for the brand, loyalty and a long-term commitment to the brand, and consequently the intention to

engage in eWOM in favour of the brand (Yeh and Choi 2011), play an important role to achieve the spreading of congruent communication online. These customers are willing to forward congruent ads because they connect with the brand and it is important for them; thus, they might want to share this experience with their network, too (Yeh and Choi 2011). Also, they might perceive the information relevant for their network and share it to help others (Phelps et al. 2004). Incongruent ads on the other hand contain several dimensions such as surprise (Alden et al. 2000), or can be used to show off skills (as hypothesized above) that motivate a person to pass them on regardless of his/her relationship to the brand. This indicates that incongruent advertising does not need brand loyalty to the same extent as congruent advertising to be spread. Therefore it is hypothesized that:

H3: Brand loyalty is more important for congruent ads to be

a) liked

b) commented

c) reposted/shared, and/or

d) shown on social media than for incongruent ads.

When people participate in WOM they tend to listen to opinion leaders, as these are perceived as being experts within the area and possess the necessary skills to provide valuable information (Dichter 1966). In addition, opinion leaders hold certain characteristics, such as being a novelty seeker, which (as described in section 1.2) increases their intention to participate in eWOM (Okazaki 2009). Thus, they are an important target group for marketers (Li and Du 2011; Huang et al. 2007; van Eck et al. 2011). Yet, previous research has not particularly identified which type of message opinion leaders within social media and marketing communication are likely to write about. It can be assumed that such a message has in general similar features as a message that is discussed by “regular” consumers, i.e. it is humorous, novel, creative etc. (e.g. Phelps et al. 2004; Dobeles et al. 2007; Richardson et al. 2010, p. 67). However, as opinion leaders are more innovative than their followers and search for creativity and novelty (Okazaki 2009), their threshold level to talk or write about communication is likely to be higher. Congruent communication has the risk of being perceived as expected or even boring; hence, opinion leaders might not consider it as interesting or novel enough to talk about it, while as explained above incongruent communication could fulfil these requirements as it is conceptualized as being unexpected. Thus, based on a similar reasoning as in H1 opinion leaders should be more inclined to spread incongruent ads than congruent ads.

In addition, opinion leaders generally tend to be novelty and sensation seeking (Okazaki 2009) and are thus likely to be attracted by incongruent communication, as it is high in sensation value (Lee and Schumann 2004). Many opinion leaders like to express their opinions, discuss and comment on various topics (Huang et al. 2007). Brand-incongruent communication is a topic that these experts could enjoy to discuss publicly due to its sensation value. Further, the opinion leaders investigated in this thesis most likely have a positive attitude towards advertising and can be expected to enjoy the entertainment value of the ads. As suggested by Dichter (1966) entertaining ads stimulate WOM.

Besides, opinion leaders are more motivated to process incongruity compared to people with low novelty- and sensation-seeking tendencies, which is a condition for solving the incongruity (Lee and Schumann 2004). Due to their positive attitude towards advertising in general, they are more likely to elaborate on the incongruity and to solve it (Törn 2009). As communicating marketing messages to others is often associated with altruism and helpfulness (Phelps et al. 2004; Kozinets et al. 2010), opinion leaders might share and “translate” the communication in order to help others solve the incongruity. Alternatively, they might feel proud that they solved the incongruity (Lee and Thorson 2008) and thus share the incongruent ad in order to display their skills or improve their image (Subramani and Rajagopalan 2003; Huang et al. 2009).

Finally, due to their experience and expertise in the field of branding and marketing communication, opinion leaders are likely to process incongruent communication in more detail and are more sensitive to incongruity, which makes them detect the incongruity in the first place (Törn 2009; Lee and Schumann 2004). In contrast, a novice may not even possess a brand schema to mismatch the incongruity with, or has a higher threshold level at which detailed processing is triggered; thus, she/he might just ignore the incongruity as an irrelevant distraction up to this level (ibid.). After detecting it, the opinion leaders might want to share their knowledge, again either in order to demonstrate their skills, or to help others understand the communication. In summary, due to the reasoning above it is hypothesized:

H4: Opinion leaders spread incongruent communication more than congruent communication.

2.3 CONNECTION

Classical WOM literature declares product involvement to be one of the foundations for WOM (e.g. Dichter 1966; Lampert and Rosenberg 1975). Consumers who actively seek information before buying a product often turn to WOM for advice and recommendation (Dichter 1966). As the Internet is growing, eWOM has become increasingly important, and engaging in eWOM is a new way for consumers to easily get advice (Henning-Thurau et al. 2004). The Internet enables consumers to compare so many alternatives that the evaluation process can be very time consuming. By listening to other consumers and participate in eWOM this search time for alternatives could be reduced (Henning-Thurau et al. 2004). Thus, if consumers think about purchasing in a product category, they are likely to engage in eWOM in order to evaluate which of the products offered by the brands competing in the category they should buy (Dichter 1966). This suggests that both category purchase intention and brand purchase intention increase eWOM. In a SNS (for example by commenting on ads or reposting ads) consumers are able to discuss the brands and their offering, thus using this platform to receive input from their friends and family and getting help in making their final purchase decision. Hence, it is hypothesized that purchase intention on a brand or category level will increase consumers' willingness to spread a brand's advertisement on a SNS.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, one reason why people engage in viral marketing and forward messages is to be helpful (Phelps et al. 2004). Phelps et al. (2004) identify among the group of so-called "Viral Mavens" (i.e. people that pass on and receive a large amount of emails) that a condition for forwarding emails is that the message is important or contains something the sender thinks the receiver will like. The same is likely to be true for spreading advertisements on SNSs. A person posting ads on SNSs would only share ads that he/she believes to be relevant or helpful for his/her network. People can get irritated if they receive irrelevant messages (Phelps et al. 2004); consequently, they will not "spam" their network with this type of messages either. Consumers that see or receive messages from brands that they are not interested in (on a brand or category level), are likely to perceive the ad as unimportant for them and their network and thus would not forward it. On the other hand, a relevant message is likely to be about a brand that the consumer considers buying and would recommend his network to buy, too, or from a brand that s/he likes and believes his/her network would like, too. This is supported by Huang et al. (2009) that name "message involvement" as control variable that could trigger pass-along intentions for emails (p. 168). According to the authors, messages in which the product arouses the receivers' interest or

makes him or her feel connected are more likely to be forwarded. Potential buyers are for example such a group with high message involvement. Even though Huang et al. (2009) refer to an interest in, or intention to buy on a product level, the same might be true on a brand level. This is supported by Dobeles et al. (2007), who describe a viral campaign of Motorola, which was successful due to clever targeting. The company sent the campaign to a database comprising people that previously registered at Motorola's website; thus, they were interested in the brand and hence more likely to forward the message to their network. In summary, it is hypothesized that brand interest and brand purchase intention will increase the spreading of the brands' advertisements on social media.

Often WOM or viral marketing is not about recommending specific products or brands but about sharing an entertaining ad (e.g. Phelps et al. 2004; Richardson et al. 2004, p. 67). However, a precondition for forwarding or sharing an ad is that the consumer actually saw and processed the ad. Burke and Srull (1988) argue that consumers that intend to make a purchase in a category are more motivated to process the ads of brands competing in that category. On the other hand, if consumers are not interested in the category they might not pay attention to the ads (which is why brands try to gain attention e.g. by using shock tactics), or avoid the ads altogether (Rosengren 2008). In the case of emails, this can take the form of deleting the email without even opening it, which is often the case for emails sent for marketing purposes (Phelps et al. 2004). Even though the message might be entertaining, consumers would not even see it. Thus, both brand and category purchase intention as well as brand and category interest increase the attention and processing of ads, which in turn is essential for spreading. In summary, the reasoning above leads to the following hypotheses:

H5: Brand purchase intention increases

- a) liking,
- b) commenting on,
- c) reposting/sharing, and/or
- d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.

H6: Category purchase intention increases

- a) liking,
 - b) commenting on,
 - c) reposting/sharing, and/or
 - d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.
-

H7: Brand interest increases

- a) liking,
- b) commenting on,
- c) reposting/sharing, and/or
- d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.

H8: Category interest increases

- a) liking,
 - b) commenting on,
 - c) reposting/sharing, and/or
 - d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.
-

2.4 SENDER

The effects on the receiver of a message vary depending on who actually tells that message. The power of WOM in general lies in that it is seen as pure information, in contrast to regular advertisement, which is perceived as aiming to sell something (Dichter 1966). Previous research emphasizes the role of the credibility of a sender in WOM. For example Lee and Youn (2009) find that people are more willing to spread information online that they received from a brand website or an independent review site, compared to information they received from personal blogs. According to the authors, this is a result of the perceived lower credibility of the blogger compared to the other sources, as bloggers express their personal opinions on the blogs. In contrast to this, Colliander and Dahlén (2011) argue that blog followers build a relationship with the blogger and might even consider him or her as a friend, which in turn makes brand publicity on blogs more powerful compared to traditional publicity in online magazines. However, the information has to be unbiased (Colliander and Dahlén 2011) and originate from “people like me” (Allsop et al. 2007, p. 398). In line with this argument, the credibility of a close friend in the social network should be higher compared to a brand, and a consumer is therefore more willing to spread information posted by a close friend than posted by a brand. This is supported by van Noort et al. (2012), who investigate how the source of a campaign affects the spreading in SNSs. Through an experiment on a Dutch SNS the authors find that people who received a campaign from a strong social tie are more inclined to forward it compared to those that received it from a weaker tie. On the one hand this is due to the credibility of the sender, as a close friend is more trusted than an acquaintance; on the other hand, van Noort et al. (2012) reason that stronger ties are built between people with similar interests and values. Hence, the message might also be more relevant coming from a close friend. As the social tie to a friend should be stronger than to a

brand this supports the belief that people would comment, like, or share information to a higher extent when it comes from a close friend, as it is more relevant. However, if a consumer follows a brand's page on the SNS (e.g. through "liking" the brand's page on Facebook) one might argue that the customer is interested in or even loyal to the brand. And, if a consumer is a brand loyal, the communication from that brand could be regarded as being relevant for him or her, which then arguably affects his/her forwarding intentions. Further, identification with the brand or a commitment to it is positively related to the consumer's intention to engage in eWOM in favour of the brand (Yeh and Choi 2011). In spite of that, the tie strength to a brand is still weak; it is still a commercial sender, which in turn results in that the campaign is probably associated with a commercial intent and is thus less forwarded (van Noort et al. 2012; Chiu et al. 2007). Furthermore, as explained above (see section 1.2), one reason for participation in eWOM is the need for social interaction, identification and building of a social status (e.g. Chiu et al. 2007; Hsu and Lin 2008). This need for interaction and approval from peers should be more satisfied when interacting with close friends, rather than a brand.

Finally, posts from brands might be seen as advertising, which in turn is often ignored by consumers (Kelly et al. 2010). Phelps et al. (2004) identify that people are often irritated by emails they receive from companies and delete them without opening, whereas emails *about* a company that they receive from someone they know are not considered as junk. Seeing and processing the ad is obviously a condition for forwarding and discussing it. Besides, it is likely that consumers spend more attention on the post of a close friend, as they would assume the person passed on the information for a good reason (Phelps et al. 2004), while a post of a brand is still associated with the objective of "selling something" or advertising the brand. Due to the reasoning above it is hypothesized that:

H9: People

a) like,

b) comment on,

c) repost/share, and/or

d) show communication on social media to a higher extent if the sender is a close friend compared to if the sender is a brand.

2.5 SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES

In summary, based on the in-depth literature review the following ten hypotheses (see figure 2 respectively figure 2) have been developed to investigate how the spreading of communication is affected by an (in)congruent message, a connection to the brand or the category, and a close friend respectively brand as sender.

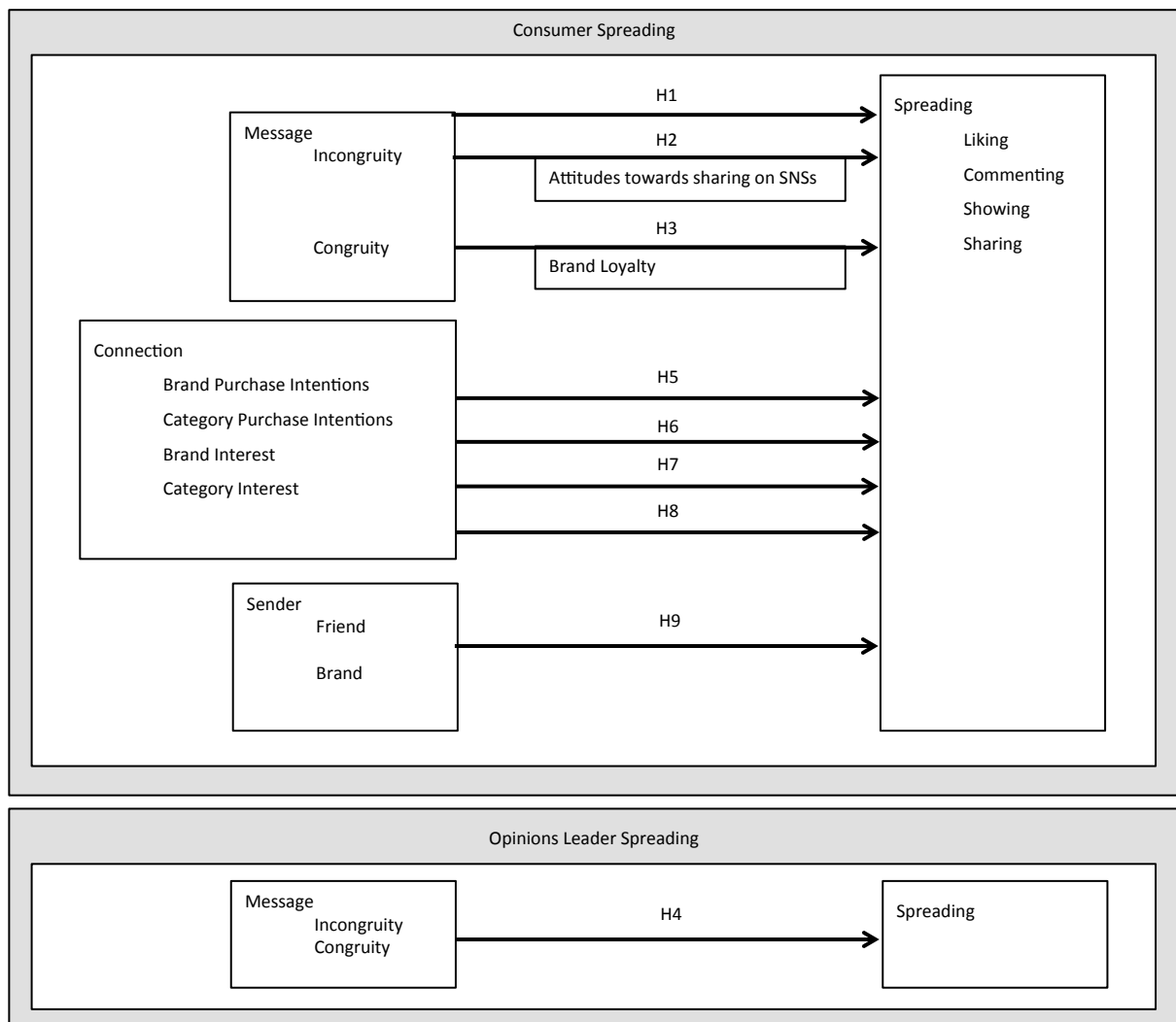


Figure 2: Hypothesized Viral Spreading Model – Dimensions Affecting the Spreading of Communication

H1: Incongruent communication is

- a) liked,
- b) commented,
- c) reposted/shared, and/or
- d) shown on social more than congruent communication.

H2: Given that the attitude towards sharing on SNSs in general is positive, incongruent communication is

- a) liked,
- b) commented,
- c) reposted/shared, and/or
- d) shown more on social media than congruent communication.

H3: Brand loyalty is more important for congruent ads to be

- a) liked,
- b) commented,
- c) reposted/shared, and/or
- d) shown on social media than for incongruent ads.

H4: Opinion leaders spread incongruent communication more than congruent communication.

H5: Brand purchase intention increases

- a) liking,
- b) commenting on,
- c) reposting/sharing, and/or
- d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.

H6: Category purchase intention increases

- a) liking,
- b) commenting on,
- c) reposting/sharing, and/or
- d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.

H7: Brand interest increases

- a) liking,
- b) commenting on,
- c) reposting/sharing, and/or
- d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.

H8: Category interest increases

- a) liking,
- b) commenting on,
- c) reposting/sharing, and/or
- d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.

H9: People

- a) like,
- b) comment on,
- c) repost/share, and/or
- d) show communication on social media to a higher extent if the sender is a close friend compared to if the sender is a brand.

Table 1: Summary of Hypotheses

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the method used to be able to analyse the hypotheses. It includes an explanation of the research design and the survey designs, as well as the data collection process and the sampling. The tools for analyses are described and finally, the chapter includes a discussion of the reliability and validity of this thesis.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The area of concern in this thesis is to understand how the viral spreading of communication is affected by the sender (brand versus close friend), the type of message (congruent versus incongruent) as well as the viewers' connection to the brand and/or category. The overall research design has a deductive approach, as hypotheses have been developed based on existing theory and knowledge to be tested empirically (Bryman and Bell 2007, p. 11). Furthermore, the design is conclusive, as it tests these specific hypotheses and examines relationships between the variables such as brand connection and spreading on social media. The research aims to investigate cause-and-effect relationships through manipulating the independent variables (i.e. message, connection, sender) and measuring how this affects the dependent variable spreading (e.g. liking, sharing, showing). Hence, a causal research method was practiced (Malhotra 2010, p. 113). A quantitative research design was chosen in order to be able to analyse the data statistically and generalise the results (Malhotra 2010, p. 171). An online questionnaire was distributed to effectively receive a high enough number of respondents in order to reach the purpose of this thesis.

3.2 MANIPULATIONS

The three independent variables tested in terms of their effects on the spreading of communication are message, connection and sender. To analyse this cause-and-effect relationships, brands had to be decided upon, incongruent and congruent advertisements had to be developed, the type of social media selected, and the communication had to be manipulated to reflect different senders. The approach used to do this will be explained in the following.

3.2.1 BRAND CHOICE AND MANIPULATION OF ADS

To be able to study the effects of incongruity, well-known brands should be used (Dahlén et al. 2005). The brands chosen for the study were Pripps Blå and OLW. Both are well-known,

i.e. they scored a high mean of brand familiarity in the pre-study (5.5 and 6 respectively on a seven-point scale; see section 3.3.1). The brands should also hold a clear position on the market and have used similar communication for a long time (Dahlén et al. 2005), which is the case for the selected brands. Pripps was introduced already in 1828 and launched the name Pripps Blå in 1975 (Pripps 2012); OLW was introduced as a brand in 1967 (OLW 2012). Both brands are regularly advertised in the Swedish market. After discussions with the tutor of this thesis, brands from different product categories were chosen to eliminate category-specific effects, as well as brand-specific effects. Previous research, which postulated the effects of incongruity, has used categories of low involvement with a transformational motivation (e.g. Dahlén et al. 2005; Törn and Dahlén 2008). In addition, Lee and Thorson (2008) suggest that the advantage of moderate incongruent communication “is most beneficial for low risk and inexpensive product categories (e.g. candy bars) that otherwise would possess little novelty or point of difference” (p. 446). For these reasons products of low involvement categories and transformational motivation were chosen: beer and chips (Percy and Elliot 2009, p. 211 ff.). The aim was to use products from two categories with a similar involvement level and motivations since incongruity might have different effects on different types of products (Geiger Haeggström and Johansson 2009).

In terms of the type of communication non-moving advertising was selected. This makes it possible for the receiver to look at the stimulus for as long time as needed to process the advertisement, which is recommended for incongruent advertising, as the required information processing time is longer (Törn and Dahlén 2008). Furthermore, non-moving advertisement will be posted by close friends or brands on the SNS Facebook as a picture and (depending on the account settings) will show up on the user’s news feed; hence the user will see the advertisement without taking any action. If it would be e.g. a movie or a link the user would have to make an action (e.g. a click) to actually see the communication.

New advertisements were developed for each brand to control for prior exposure to the ads (Törn and Dahlén 2008). Each advertisement consisted of a picture and the brand logo that was positioned in the lower right corner together with the brand slogan, similar to the advertisement used by Dahlén et al. (2005). Additionally, the ad entailed a one-sentence long advertisement claim, namely “oemotståndligt goda” for OLW and “en klassiker” for Pripps Blå. Both were written at the centre of each advertisement and the text was chosen from each brand’s web page to make sure that they were in accordance with the overall brand position.

The language of the advertisement was Swedish as this was in line with the brands communication within the market generally. The advertisements for OLW and Pripps Blå are shown in figure 3 respectively figure 4 below as well as exhibited in full-size in Appendix 1.

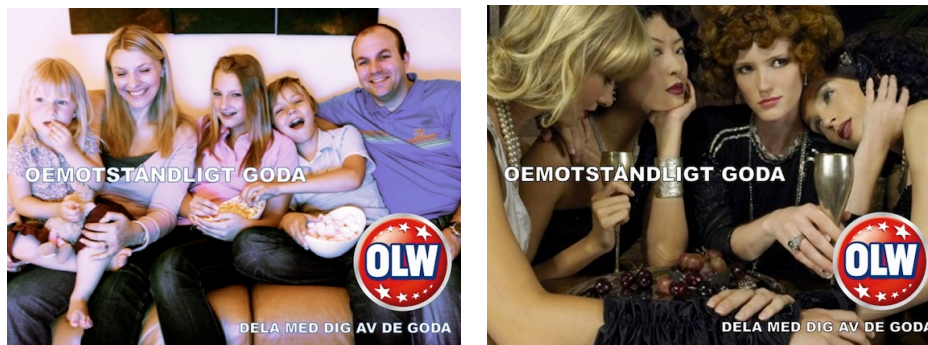


Figure 3: Congruent (left) and Incongruent (right) Advertisements OLW



Figure 4: Congruent (left) and Incongruent Advertisements Pripps Blå

The pictures for the ads were chosen after thorough research of the brands usual graphic expression to ensure that the pictures were in harmony with the brand image. The pictures' fit with the brand was tested in a pre-study that will be described in detail in section 3.3.2 in this chapter. The goal was to determine one picture for each of the brands that would be perceived as being congruent with the existing brand associations and one picture that would be perceived as moderately incongruent. *Moderate* incongruity was chosen because significantly higher attitude ratings and more favourable evaluations of the brand are expected for moderately incongruent communication compared to extremely incongruent communication (e.g. Jagre et al. 2001; Lee and Thorson 2008). This is due to the cognitive efforts required to solve the incongruity. Given that consumers are *motivated* and *able* to process the incongruity, they will depending on the level of incongruity (slight to severe) employ one of the following three types of internal processes to relieve the tension caused by the incongruity: assimilation,

alternative schema or accommodation (Lee and Schumann 2004; Mandler 1982). Assimilation or alternative schema means that the incongruent information is solved by utilizing *existing* schemas, which is most likely for slight incongruity. Accommodation refers to the generation of a *new* schema, which might be required in case of severe incongruity (if neither assimilation nor alternative schema can resolve it). The cognitive effort required solving incongruity with the help of assimilation or alternative schema is rather low, whereas accommodation demands great efforts (Lee and Schumann 2004). As a moderate level of incongruity can be addressed by assimilation or accommodation to prior knowledge structure, Lee and Thorson (2008) state that resolving moderate incongruity could be perceived as more rewarding than extreme incongruity. Furthermore, even though someone might be willing to spend the cognitive and emotional efforts required to solve an extreme incongruity, one is likely to fail, which in turn leads to negative attitudes (Lee and Schumann 2004). Therefore, the stimuli in this study were chosen to be moderately incongruent and therefore a similar approach to Jagre et al.'s (2001) study on sponsorships as well as Lee and Thorson's (2008) research on celebrity endorsement was followed.

3.2.2 SOCIAL MEDIA CHOICE AND SENDER MANIPULATION

In order to conduct main survey 1 a specific media was selected and the SNS Facebook was decided upon. Firstly, with its 4.5 million Swedish members (Littorin 2012) Facebook is the largest SNS in Sweden (Basemedia 2012), and even the largest in the world with 845 million members worldwide (Facebook 2012b). Thus, nearly half of the Swedish population can be assumed to be aware of how the site works. Secondly, Facebook is a platform where consumers interact with other consumers as well as where brands and consumers interact (Socialbakers 2012b). Due to its popularity among consumers, Facebook has also become an important platform for companies' viral marketing activities (Gil-Or 2010) and companies are investing heavily to engage their target group on Facebook (van Noort 2012). As this study among others investigates potential differences in spreading caused by a modification of the sender, the presence of both brands and consumers and their interaction is important. Facebook facilitates this interaction by offering a variety of functions, of which two, i.e. spreading functions and brand pages, are particularly relevant. *Spreading functions* are situated below each post on Facebook and offer the user several options on how to react to the post (in case he/she intends to react on it), depending on the type of post. For example in case of a post including a picture, the functions offered are "like", "comment", and "share". Further the user can obviously "show" the picture to a friend in the real world. By using an

action such as liking or commenting on a picture on Facebook the user actively spreads it to his/her network because the picture will (depending on the account settings) appear on the news feed of the users' friends, who in turn can then decide to comment on, like, or share the picture. *Facebook Brand Pages* are specific pages that organizations/brands can set up on Facebook in order to interact with and inform customers. A page enables the brand to analyse data such as the brands' maximum reach (i.e. number of people who see content associated with the brand's page), or the engagement (i.e. number of people that talk about the brand including liking, commenting on, or sharing content from the brand's page) (Taylor 2012). Users can follow a brand and get updates on his/her news feed by "liking" the brand's page.

In order to manipulate the sender of the post, a screen shot of a Facebook page was made, and thereafter manipulated to appear as a post from the different senders (brand or close friend). The post included the advertisement concerned as well as a short message from the sender. The message was either: "Our new advertisement, what do you think?" (brand as sender) or "[Brand's] new advertisement, what do you think?" (close friend as sender). The text was decided to be neutral in order to not impact the attitude of the receiver towards the ad. However, the text still encouraged participation and interaction to make the post believable. Below the post, the user saw the typical Facebook functions available for spreading (as describe above), and could thus react to the post by making use of one or several of them. In particular these are to like the post/picture, comment on it, repost it and/or show it to a friend or acquaintance in the real world. It is important to note that a Facebook user only sees posts by a brand on his/her news feed after liking (i.e. following) the brand's page. Hence, this survey assumes that the user liked the brand's page in advance.

3.3 PREPARATORY WORK

The work started with a literature overview including researching books, articles, dissertations and theses covering the subjects of incongruity, viral spreading, and WOM. To some extent variables influencing the viral spreading on social media have been tested before, however, for example the effect of incongruent communication on spreading is not yet investigated. In addition to the literature review, initial discussions were held with researchers and professionals from PR-, advertising-, strategy-, and design agencies. The interviews were conducted with Fredrik Törn, Senior Analyst at Coop Marknad AB, Post Doc researcher and teacher at Stockholm School of Economics; Robert Dysell and Anton Waern, both Strategic

Planner at Gyro Stockholm; Per Ekvall, Consultant at Identity Works; Arvid Svanvik, Creative Director and Co-Founder of Scholz & Friends Stockholm; Fanny Hellsing, student at Berghs School of Communication; and Gustav Holmström and Peter Holmberg, Consultants at Grayling Stockholm. The discussions served as input regarding the factors influencing peoples' motivation to spread communication on social media. Moreover, examples of real brands that used incongruent communication and the observed (WOM-) effects in these cases were discussed.

3.3.1 PRE-STUDY 1

The first pre-study (see Appendix 2) was carried out to ensure that the chosen brands are well known, and to determine the associations the brands are holding. The survey was developed with the Qualtrics Survey Software and distributed through email. The study was active for 24 hours and received 16 responses. The sample for the pre-study was a convenient sample of students at Stockholm School of Economics, which were a good representative of the target group for the main survey. However, the respondents from the pre-study were not allowed to participate in the main survey to reduce potential effects of previous exposures caused by the salience of the associations.

First the respondents' familiarity with the brands was assessed. Therefore, the respondents were asked, "How familiar are you with [brand]?" – a measurement used by Törn and Dahlén (2008). The question was rated on a seven-point scale with bipolar labels (not at all familiar, very familiar) with numerical equal distance, where the level of familiarity increased with the numbers as recommended by Söderlund (2005, p. 116). A seven-point scale was chosen to allow respondents to decide on a neutral position on the scale in the middle, and not force them within a lower or upper segment (Söderlund 2005, p. 121). The results showed a high familiarity for both brands – a mean of 5.5 for Pripps Blå, and a mean of 6 for OLW.

The next step of the same pre-study aimed at finding the associations consumers hold with the brand that could be used to create the incongruent and congruent advertisements. The respondents were asked to list five words that describe the brand, and five words that are the opposite of the brand, which is similar to Dahlén et al.'s (2005) approach. Hence, both structured questions and unstructured questions were used. According to Malhotra (2010, p. 344) structured questions are preferable in an online survey. However, as this survey intended to get first insights regarding the associations to the brands and unstructured

questions have less biasing influence than structured question, these short one-word open questions were suitable.

The associations stated by the respondents were sorted by most mentioned, and the three most mentioned associations, as summarized in table 2 below, were taken into consideration when creating the manipulated advertising.

Brand	Associations describing the brand	Associations describing the opposite of the brand
OLW	Fredagsmys	Healthy
	Chips	Exclusive/Expensive
	Greasy/Unhealthy	Vegetable
Pripps Blå	Summer	International
	Swedish	Dark
	Beer	Winter

Table 2: Associations to OLW and Pripps Blå

3.3.2 PRE-STUDY 2

A second pre-study (see Appendix 3) was conducted to determine the level of congruity for various pictures and consequently to select one congruent and one incongruent picture as advertisement for each brand. Five pictures for each brand were tested (see Appendix 4). The pictures were chosen based on the associations retrieved from pre-study 1. The survey was designed with the Qualtrics Survey Software and sent out by email. It was open for 24 hours and received 40 responses, of which 36 were complete. The sample for the pre-study was a convenient sample of students at Stockholm School of Economics, which were a good representative of the target group for the main survey. However, the respondents from the pre-study were not asked to participate in the main survey to reduce the effect of previous exposures to the pictures.

The survey consisted only of structured questions, which is appropriate for an online survey (Malhotra 2010, p. 344). First the respondents were asked to evaluate the brand fit for each of the five pictures for OLW and Pripps Blå. The brand fit of the picture was measured with the question “How well do the picture and [brand] fit together?” (Törn and Dahlén 2008). The question was measured on a seven-point scale with equal numerical distance, where 1 was labelled “not well at all” and 7 was labelled “very well”. The resulting five different means for each brand are presented in the table below (table 3). A one-way ANOVA test together with a Tukey HSD post hoc test showed a significant difference of the means of Picture O 1

(congruent picture OLW; see Appendix 4.1), and all the means of the other OLW pictures on a 1 % significance level. O 2 (extremely incongruent; see Appendix 4.2) was also proven to be significantly different from all the other pictures on a 1 % significance level. Picture O 2, O 3 (see Appendix 4.3), and O 4 (see Appendix 4.4) were significantly different to O 1 and O 5 (see Appendix 4.5), but there was no significant difference between the three. A similar one-way ANOVA together with a post hoc test was conducted for the Pripps Blå pictures. The test showed that all the pictures (see Appendices 4.6 to 4.10) were significantly different from each other on a 1 % level, except P 2 and P 3. As the study aims at investigating a moderate level of incongruity, the most incongruent picture for each brand was excluded, as extreme levels of incongruity can receive negative evaluations (Lee and Thorson 2008). Further, it was decided that the level of incongruity should be similar for both brands (i.e. moderately incongruent) to eliminate differences between the brands due to varying incongruity levels. Therefore picture O 4 for OLW, and respectively P 4 for Pripps Blå were chosen as incongruent ads, while picture O 1 and picture P 1 were selected as congruent ads. A one-way ANOVA together with a Tukey HSD post hoc test shows that there are no significant differences between P 4 and O 4 and neither between O 1 and P 1 (see table 4).

OLW	Pripps Blå
<i>Picture O 1: 5.74</i>	<i>Picture P 1: 6.09</i>
Picture O 2: 1.38	Picture P 2: 1.76
Picture O 3: 2.65	Picture P 3: 4.91
<i>Picture O 4: 2.66</i>	<i>Picture P 4: 3.21</i>
Picture O 5: 2.52	Picture P 5: 4.41

Table 3: Means for OWL and Pripps Blå pictures with varying levels of congruity

Pictures	Mean Difference	Significance
Between groups	100.312 (mean square)	.000
P 1/ O 1	.35294	.682
P 1/ P 4	2.87611	.000
P 1/ O 4	3.43199	.000
O 1/ O 4	3.07904	.000
O 1/ P 4	2.52317	.000
O 4/ P 4	.55587	.320

Table 4: Difference in brand fit between selected ads

Thereafter the three most common associations to the brand and the three most common words describing the opposite of the brand from pre-study 1 were listed. The respondents were asked “How well do the following words fit to the picture?”. The responses were again measured on a seven-point scale with numerical equal distance, where 1 was labelled “not well at all” and 7 was labelled “very well”. Figure 5 below presents the results for pictures O 1 and O 4, which were chosen as congruent respectively moderately incongruent pictures. The results show that the congruent picture fits well (means between 4.71 and 6.15) with the associations to OLW, while the means for the words describing the opposite of OLW are rather low (between 1.62 and 1.91). The moderately incongruent picture fits to the word “exclusive/expensive” (M = 5.22), which is a word describing the opposite of OLW and shows moderate means on all other words (means between 2.22 and 2.97). Through conducting an independent-samples t-test it is found that for all associations except vegetables ($p = 0.07$), the means differ for the two different ads on a 1 % significance level.

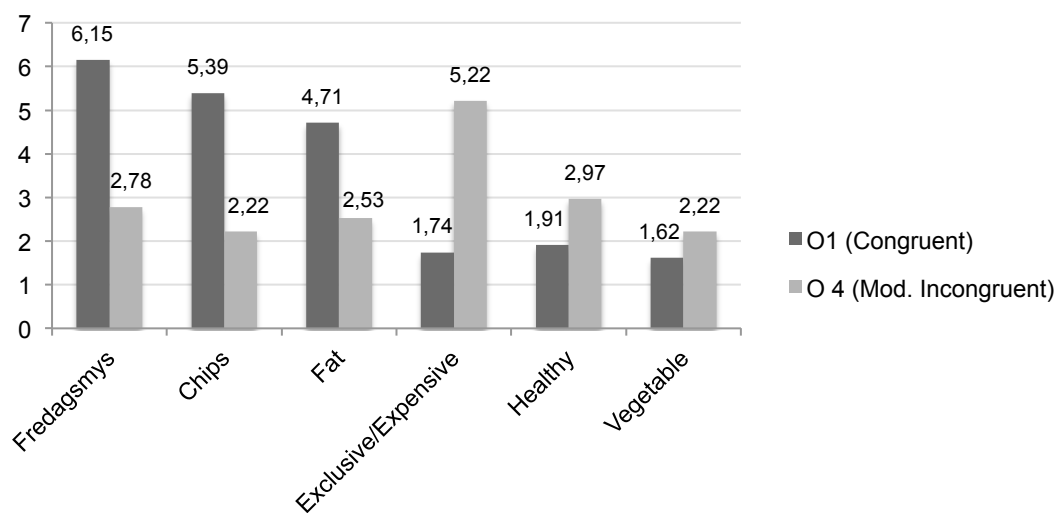


Figure 5: OLW pictures rated according to words describing OLW resp. the opposite of it

For Pripps Blå the analysis shows high means for the congruent Picture P 1 for the words associated with the brand (means between 5.48 and 6.73), as shown in figure 6. The moderately incongruent picture fits well with the word “international” (M = 5.88), which describes the opposite of the brand, and “summer” (M = 6.45), which is a strong association to Pripps Blå. An independent-samples t-test shows that for all associations except summer ($p = 0.25$) and winter ($p = 0.57$), the means differed for the two different ads on a 1 % significance level.

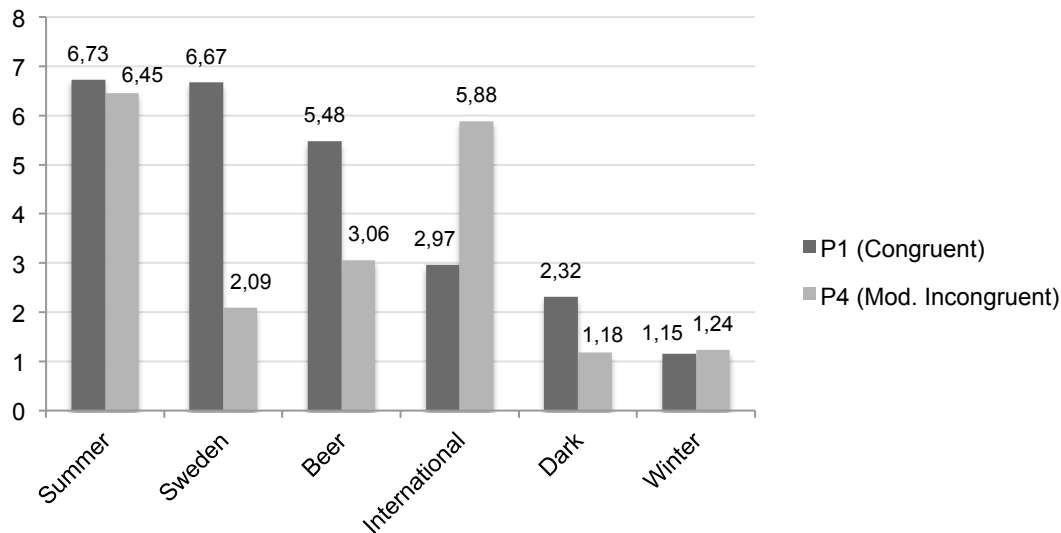


Figure 6: Pripps Blå pictures rated according to words describing Pripps Blå resp. the opposite of it

3.4 SURVEY DESIGN

After deciding on the research design, designing and pre-testing the manipulations, a suitable survey design was chosen. Two surveys were conducted, main survey 1, which was directed at SNS users and main survey 2, which aimed for opinion leaders within (social) media and communication.

3.4.1 MAIN SURVEY 1 – SNS USERS

To be able to investigate the effects of the independent variables (i.e. incongruity, sender and connection) on the dependent variable (i.e. viral spreading), an online survey was carried out, with a compare group design with four groups: beer congruent, beer incongruent, chips congruent, and chips incongruent. In order to facilitate distribution each questionnaire contained two cases concerning the sender (brand or close friend). Therefore every response resulted in two observations in the analysed data. The questionnaire (see Appendix 5) was developed with the Qualtrics Survey Software and sent by email. Responses were collected between 2012-02-28 and 2012-03-28. One of the main considerations was the length of the survey to avoid respondents' fatigue; thus, the survey was designed picture-heavy to maintain interest and motivation. Also, in order to motivate respondents to participate in the survey, they could take part in a drawing for a gift-card. The survey started with a simple and short instruction, including the announcement of the lottery of the gift-card. Next, the manipulated ad was shown and subsequently, questions regarding the brand fit, the respondents' interest in the brand and category as well as purchase intentions were asked. Afterwards, the respondents

were exposed to a new picture, which resembled the manipulated advertisement within a Facebook session and then asked questions regarding their intention to spread the ads. Thereafter a few demographic questions, namely gender and age, as well as questions about the respondent's use of Facebook and general attitude towards sharing on SNSs were asked. The survey finished off with a thank you-note and the possibility to leave an email address, in case the respondent wanted to participate in the lottery. With exception of the question regarding age, the survey consisted only of structured questions in order to facilitate the process for respondents, as these questions are generally quicker to complete and enhance the comparability of the answers (Bryman and Bell 2007, p. 261 f.). The survey was carried out in Swedish and the language was adapted to only use terminology that was suitable for the target group to avoid misconceptions and facilitate the process for the respondents (Söderlund 2005, p. 64). Before the survey was launched, three people (newly graduated business students as well as the tutor of this thesis) pre-tested the survey to ensure that the questionnaire was not too long and that the questions were understandable.

3.4.1.1 SCALES AND MEASUREMENTS

For all scale questions a seven-point scale with equal numerical distances was used to facilitate answering the survey by being consistent, but also to make it possible for the respondent to be neutral and to not force him/her into an upper or lower segment (Söderlund 2005, p. 121). The low numbers had a negative tone (e.g. "completely disagree"), whereas the highest number was the most positive on the scale (e.g. "fully agree"), as recommended by Söderlund (2005, p. 116).

Level of incongruity

The level of congruity of the picture and the brand was already measured in pre-study 2 (see section 3.3.2). However, to ensure that these results represent a correct assessment of the incongruity level the respondents of the main survey were also asked how well the advertisement fits with the brand (Törn and Dahlén 2008). This is necessary since brand associations are individual and therefore the perceived level of incongruity can vary between the respondents (Törn 2009). The fit was measured on a seven-point scale with equal numerical distance, where 1 represented "not well at all", and 7 represented "very well".

Brand Loyalty

Brand Loyalty was measured with three statements (Yoo and Donthu 2010):

- I consider myself to be loyal to [Brand].
- [Brand] would be my first choice.
- I will not buy other brands if [Brand] is available at the store.

Brand was replaced with OLW and Pripps Blå respectively and the respondent answered on a scale reaching from completely disagree (1) to fully agree (7). An index was created with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.775.

Brand purchase intentions

The brand purchase intentions were measured with the following three propositions (derived from Baker and Churchill 1977 in Hopkins et al. 2009):

- It is very likely that I will buy [Brand].
- I will purchase [Brand] within the next year.
- It would be fun to purchase [Brand].

For the different groups [Brand] was replaced with Pripps Blå or OLW respectively. The statements were measured from on scale reaching from completely disagree (1) to fully agree (7) and were indexed with a measured Cronbach's alpha of 0.830.

Category purchase intentions

After discussion with the tutor it was decided to assess the category purchase intentions with the same statements as the brand purchase intentions. [Brand] was thus changed to [Category]; replaced either with beer or chips. The statements were measured with the same scale as brand purchase intentions and the derived index had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.865.

Brand interest

The brand interest measurement was adapted from Machleit et al. (1993). Three statements were asked:

- I am intrigued by [Brand].
- I would like to know more about [Brand].
- I am interested in [Brand].

[Brand] was replaced with Pripps Blå or OLW depending on which brand's advertisement the respondent had been exposed to. These propositions were measured on a scale reaching from completely disagree (1) to fully agree (7) and used to create an index with a measured Cronbach's alpha of 0.995.

Category interest

After discussing with the tutor, it was decided that the same measures used for brand interest would be used for category interest, only exchanging the brand name with the category name. The questions were measured on the same scale as brand interest and for the analysis an index was created with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.956.

Viral spreading effects

To measure viral spreading effects, measurements were adapted from Chiu et al. (2007) that used the following two items with a measured Cronbach's alpha of 0.89:

- This message is worth sharing with others.
- I will recommend this message to others.

Chiu et al. (2007) investigate the forwarding of emails. However, as the focal study looks at SNSs in specific, the measures were adapted and extended to reflect the characteristic functions of the SNS Facebook, i.e. like, comment, share/repost and show. Thus, in total eight statements were asked. An advantage of extending the measurements is that it can now be determined if the spreading functions differ from each other. To assess if there are differences in the forwarding behaviour depending on the sender, the respondent was first exposed to a manipulated Facebook post by the manipulated brand, and asked to answer the eight statements regarding his/her intention to spread. Thereafter, the respondent was exposed to a Facebook post by a close friend containing the same advertisement and asked to answer to the statements again. Therefore all respondents were exposed to two cases, which consequently resulted in two observations. The propositions were measured on a seven-point scale (reaching from completely disagree to completely agree) and thereafter indices were created for each of the different functions. The Cronbach's alpha values for the indices are summarized in the table below (table 5).

Index	Cronbachs' Alpha	Number of items
Show	0.861	2
Share	0.859	2
Like	0.872	2
Comment	0.903	2

Table 5: Indices for the spreading of communication on Facebook

Facebook behaviour

A multiple-choice question was asked to determine the respondents' Facebook usage (i.e. "how often do you visit Facebook"). The scale was adapted from Strutton et al. (2011).

Attitude towards sharing on SNSs

Next, in order to evaluate the respondents' general attitude to viral spreading on SNSs, three statements were adapted from Yang and Zhou (2011). As Facebook was chosen as type of social media, the propositions were specifically adapted to reflect the respondents' attitude to sharing on this SNS. In their propositions, Yang and Zhou (2011) used the word "electronic messages". However, on Facebook, electronic messages could be misinterpreted to include personal messages that users send to each other. As the present study aims at measuring the spreading of content that is *not* produced by the respondents themselves, the word "links" was deemed more appropriate. Link indicates that the content is likely to be embedded in an external site and produced by a third party. Alternative words such as the word "picture" that could refer to personal photos or the word "content" that could include personal status updates and personal pictures were not considered suitable either. Consequently, the three final propositions were:

- My attitude toward sharing links on Facebook is positive.
- Generally, I think it is good to share links with friends or acquaintances on Facebook.
- I honestly don't like sharing links with friends or acquaintances on Facebook.

The responses were measured on a scale reaching from completely disagree (1) to fully agree (7). The statements were indexed with the third question on a reverse scale resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.847.

3.4.2 MAIN SURVEY 2 - OPINION LEADERS

The aim of the second survey was to investigate if the level of congruity (independent variable) affects the spreading of communication (dependent variable) through opinion leaders. Thus, it examines if opinion leaders have similar intentions to forward incongruent communication on social media as regular consumers. One of the most important issues was the length of the survey. To increase the likelihood that opinion leaders would respond to the survey, it had to be very short and simple, and was therefore limited to the length of a regular email (see Appendix 6). The survey was sent out by email and answers were collected between 2012-02-28 and 2012-03-28. The email consisted of a short introduction and three statements. As opposed to main survey 1, the questions and the instructions were written

directly in the email, with the manipulated advertisement as an attached file. This approach made it impossible for the respondents to answer anonymously but it was considered necessary in order to make the process for answering as simple as possible to increase the response rate. As the survey was sent to opinion leaders in Sweden, the questions were in Swedish to facilitate answering the survey for the respondents.

3.4.2.1 SCALE AND MEASUREMENTS

The three propositions used to investigate the intention to spread congruent resp. incongruent communication were:

- This ad is worth sharing with others.
- I will recommend this ad to others.
- I will write/tweet/blog about this ad.

These statements were adapted from the two-item scale used by Chiu et al. (2007). However the measures were adjusted to fit the target group and investigate intentions to engage in viral marketing campaigns; therefore a third item was added. The third question was adapted to “write/tweet/blog” as the respondents were bloggers or journalists as well as active tweeters. Also, the study aims at identifying their intention to spread the ads on social media thus the measure was adapted to reflect the social media that the respondents use (i.e. blogs and/or Twitter). The items were measured on a seven-point scale, reaching from completely disagree to fully agree, and for the analysis an index was created with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.849.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

In order to support or reject the hypotheses developed in the previous chapter, data was collected. As this thesis aim at answering the hypotheses with quantitative data, a large sample is recommended. The approach to sampling and the way the data was collected will be described in this section for the consumer survey as well as the survey for opinion leaders.

3.5.1 SAMPLE MAIN SURVEY 1 – CONSUMER

As main survey 1 aimed at comparing the results of two different groups, a high internal validity was important; thus, a homogeneous sample was preferred to avoid the risk of external factors impacting the differences between the groups and accepting a false hypothesis (Lynch 1999). Therefore, students in Stockholm were chosen as they share several similar characteristics that are relevant for the study and will be explained in the following.

The survey was sent out via email containing a link to the online questionnaire to students at Stockholm School of Economics, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, and Stockholm University enrolled in various programs but without a specialization in marketing. The marketing students were avoided, as they might have been participating in lectures on incongruent communication and would provide biased results based on their prior knowledge of the subject. This convenience sample was chosen due to restrictions in terms of time and costs. Students were targeted due to their demographic similarities, particularly their age and educational level, as the users of social media and SNSs in particular tend to be young and well educated (Chu 2011). According to Strutton et al. (2011) Generation Y (born between 1982 and 1995) is more engaged on social media than Generation X (born between 1965 and 1981). They also particularly identify a significantly higher usage of Facebook for Generation Y than for Generation X (ibid.). Further, the statistics of Facebook users in Sweden show that the age groups 18-24 and 25-34 are the two biggest, together accounting for 43 % of the Swedish Facebook users (Socialbakers 2012b). Also, young people are key targets for viral marketing campaigns and in general have favourable attitudes toward advertising communicated through social media (Chu 2011). Consequently, the intention was to specifically approach educated, young respondents, and students are therefore an appropriate target group for this study.

To be able to compare groups, a minimum of 30 respondents in each group is recommended to run credible statistical tests (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 218). In order to run the parametric tests used in this thesis a normal distribution needs to be assumed and therefore a large sample is recommended. After deleting all cases that did not complete the survey until the end, the survey received 84, 95, 96 and 98 responses in the four different groups beer congruent, beer incongruent, chips congruent, and chips incongruent respectively. This resulted in 180 respondents in the congruent group and 193 respondents in the incongruent group – a response rate of 30.2 %. According to Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 244ff.) a response rate above 50 % for postal questionnaires is desirable, however, the authors acknowledge that research published in academic journals often reports response rates below 50 % and a lower response rate is less of a concern if a convenience sample is used. Therefore this response rate was accepted for this thesis.

The gender distribution of the sample was 40.5 % male and 59.5 % female. The average age was 22.4 years, with a range of age between 18 and 37 years, as presented in figure 7 below.

The majority of respondents can thus be classified to be part of Generation Y (Strutton et al. 2011). In terms of their Facebook usage, 90.3 % of the respondents visit Facebook at least two times per week, while the majority of the respondents (56.9 %) actually visit Facebook several times per day (figure 8). Thus, the sample consisted of a homogenous group of young students active on the SNS Facebook.

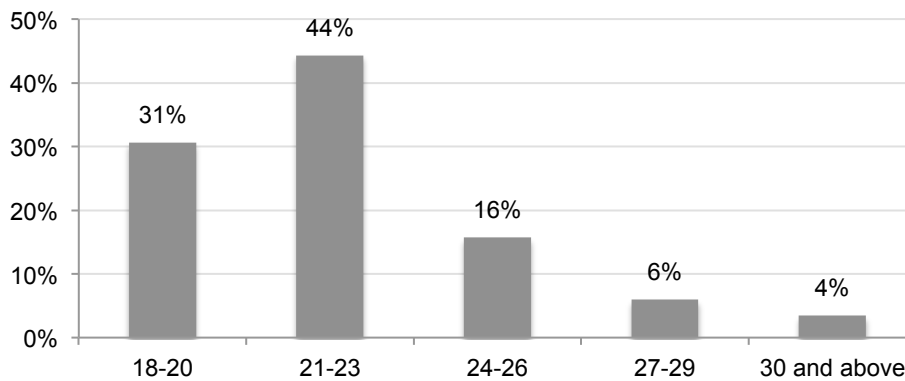


Figure 7: Age Distribution

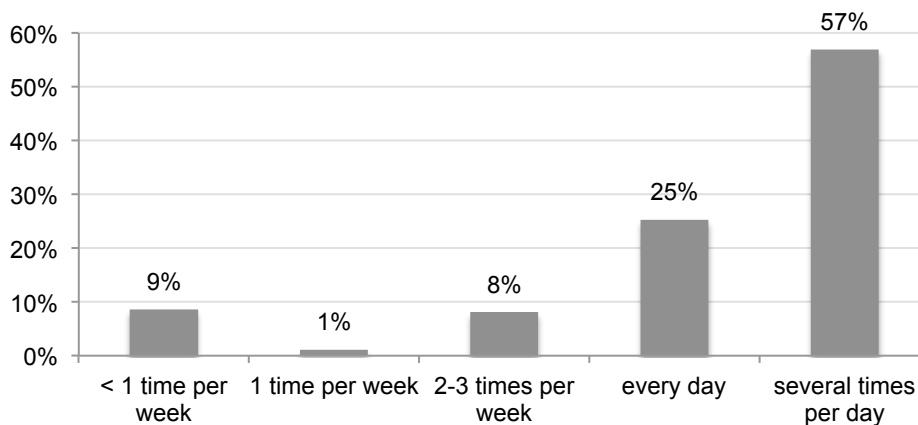


Figure 8: Facebook Visits

3.5.2 COLLECTION PROCESS MAIN SURVEY 1 – CONSUMER

The sample was randomly divided into four groups that were assigned to different manipulated advertisements (beer incongruent, beer congruent, chips incongruent, and chips congruent) as randomization provides a mean of controlling for other variables associated with the respondents such as gender or birth city (Robson 2007, p. 36). Emails were sent to the respondents with a link to the survey, a text with short instructions and the announcement of the lottery of a gift-card as reward. Seven days after the first email, one reminder was sent out per email, followed by a second one after another seven days. In spite of the two reminders, the response rate was still below 50 %, which is at least for postal surveys

classified as the lowest acceptable response rate (Bryman and Bell 2007, p.244). When email or Internet surveys are used the response rate is generally low and there is a greater risk of non-response bias (i.e. that the people not responding have different behaviors and opinions compared to the respondents) (Malhotra 2010, p. 225). Therefore a trend analysis between the early respondents (before first reminder) and late respondents (after second reminder) was conducted (Lethagen and Modig 2008). The result showed no significant difference between the two groups.

3.5.3 SAMPLE MAIN SURVEY 2 – OPINION LEADERS

For main survey 2 it was important to identify people that could be regarded as opinion leaders within the field of marketing communication and social media. According to Dichter (1966), there are several groups of people whose recommendation could influence consumers and for example celebrities are identified as one of them. Another group is called connoisseurs, which Dichter (1966) defines as people that have high knowledge about the products without a professional relationship to them. These have an even higher impact on the purchase than celebrities. A new type of influencers that has been increasing in number and potentially influence on consumers during the last couple of years is bloggers (Huang et al. 2007; Colliander and Dahlén 2011). Using Dichter's (1966) terminology, they could be declared as connoisseurs but many of them even reached the popularity and prominence of celebrities. There is a great variety of blogs, ranging from diary-like blogs that are used to document ones life, to political blogs that discuss public issues (Huang et al. 2007). For the purpose of this thesis blogs that concern digital media, social media and marketing communication are relevant. Writers of these blogs can be considered to be opinion leaders within this field, as they are innovative and knowledgeable as well as able to influence others (van Eck et al. 2011; Li and Du 2011), and likely to engage in discussions regarding advertising. Therefore, to qualify as an opinion leader in main survey 2 the participants had to write a blog or in an online magazine about topics concerning social media and marketing communication. To ensure that the right people were targeted the Stockholm-based PR agency Grayling was contacted, which compiled a list with names of opinion leaders and industry experts in Sweden. In addition, journalists writing for Resumé and Dagens Media were contacted. Dagensmedia.se has around 60-70 000 unique visitors a week and presents news within the media and advertising industry (Dagens Media 2012). Resume.se is also a page for news within the media and advertising industry. The site has around 100 000 unique visitors every week (Resumé 2012). Since this survey, as well as main survey 1, aimed at

comparing groups, a homogenous sample was used to achieve high internal validity (Lynch 1999). The respondents share an interest for the media and advertising industry, and are connected online; they blog among other things about social media, digital media, marketing and/or advertising, and are users of Twitter with a considerable number of followers. Moreover, it can be assumed that they possess certain characteristics (as discussed in section 1.2) that increase their intention to engage in eWOM, e.g. as they tweet or blog on a regular basis and automatically reveal personal information with every tweet/blog inlay, their willingness to disclose information about themselves can be considered high (Chu 2011). Consequently, they were assessed to have similarities that are relevant for the study.

The survey reached 16 responses in the group beer congruent, 14 responses for beer incongruent, and 12 responses for each chips congruent and chips incongruent. This equals 28 responses for the congruent ad and 26 for incongruent, thus a total of 54 responses. This is below the recommended number of respondents per group to run parametric tests and assume a normal distribution (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 218). However, the low amount was discussed with the tutor of the thesis and decided to be acceptable due to the small population. Descriptive statistics were analysed and consequently parametric tests were used in the analysis. The response rate was 56.8 %, which is acceptable (Bryman and Bell 2007, p. 244).

3.5.4 COLLECTION PROCESS MAIN SURVEY 2 – OPINION LEADERS

The sample was randomly divided into four groups, one group for each manipulated advertisement. Emails were sent to the respondents with a short introduction of the authors, and the survey questions written in the email text. After seven days, a personal email reminder was sent to the respondents that had not yet participated in the survey. The responses were continuously recorded in a Microsoft Excel sheet as soon as emails were received. To ensure that there was no non-response bias (Malhotra 2010, p. 225) a trend analysis was conducted between the late (after reminder) and the early responses (before reminder) (Lethagen and Modig 2008). The analysis showed no significant difference between the groups.

3.6 METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS OF ANALYSIS

The responses from main survey 1 were downloaded as a .sav file from Qualtrics Survey Software and analysed through the statistical program SPSS. The analysis of main survey 1 was based on a sample of 373 respondents, with 180 responses in the congruent group and 193 responses in the incongruent group. As every respondent was exposed to two cases (Facebook post by a close friend and by a brand) this had to be taken into consideration. Hence, the final data set therefore contained 746 observations, with 360 in the congruent group and 386 in the incongruent group. Descriptive statistics were looked at to ensure that no assumption made in the respective tests in the statistical analysis were violated. In case of several measures of the same variable the items were grouped. Regarding the internal consistency of these multi-item measures, an index with a Cronbach's alpha exceeding 0.7 was accepted. One item used to evaluate the general attitude towards sharing on SNSs was coded negatively, and thus reversed in order to be measured on a similar scale as the other two items regarding the attitude. Thereafter, the index Facebook attitude was created with all three items. As a next step it was examined if there is a potential interaction effect between congruity and category, for example if the effect of an incongruent ad on spreading depends on if the advertisement is for the category beer or if it is for chips. Therefore, a two-way ANOVA was conducted for all dependent variables/indices with the two independent variables category and congruity. The results show no significant interaction effect between these variables. Thereafter, one-sided independent-samples t-tests were used to compare the means of the two different groups (incongruent vs. congruent advertisements) for the various indices (like, show, comment etc.) in order to analyse H1 and H2. H9 was analysed in a similar way but with groups depending on the sender (brand vs. close friend). For hypothesis H2 (spreading of incongruent communication given a positive attitude towards sharing on SNSs in general), cases were selected based on the respondents' general SNS sharing attitude ("negative", "neutral", "positive") and the t-tests comparing the means for spreading and (in)congruity were conducted for the group with a positive attitude. H3 was analysed with a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient between brand loyalty and the spreading intention for each of the groups (incongruity vs. congruity). Finally, the relationships between spreading intention and connection to the brand respectively category (H5-H8) were investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients. A 5 % significance level was accepted throughout the thesis if not stated otherwise.

For main survey 2 after the data collection was completed the Excel file was imported into SPSS. The three statements were indexed and as measurement accepted with a Cronbach's Alpha exceeding 0.7. Two groups were formed for the incongruent and congruent ad. Next, a one-sided independent-samples t-test was conducted in order to compare the means between the two groups.

3.7 DATA QUALITY

All data can vary in quality. In this thesis, several actions have been taken in order to ensure a high data quality and minimize errors. Below, the reliability and validity of the study will be discussed.

3.7.1 RELIABILITY

The reliability of a study refers to that repeated measurements with the scale will produce consistent results (Malhotra 2010, p. 318). Hence, that if the study is made once more the measure should give the same results (Söderlund 2005, p. 134). To ensure that the reliability of the study is high, well-established measurements were used as often as possible. Main survey 1 was also pre-tested by three people, including the tutor of this thesis as well as newly graduated business students, to ensure that the measures were correctly understood. One way to ensure reliability is to use several items to measure the same variable (Söderlund 2005, p. 142). Measuring the internal consistency between the items (i.e. the degree to which the different items produce similar results) can be done with a Cronbach's alpha. According to Söderlund (2005, p. 145) a Cronbach's alpha of no less than 0.7 should be accepted, which is why this level has been used throughout the thesis. The Cronbach's alphas of the indices in this study had a range between 0.775 and 0.956, indicating a high internal consistency and therefore a strong reliability. According to Pallant (2007, p. 133) a large sample can result in very low correlations becoming significant. As every respondent resulted in two observations in the data set, this can lead to relations being significant that would not be significant in another study. This can impact the reliability of the study and is thus taken into special consideration throughout the thesis.

For the secondary sources peer-reviewed and well-cited journal articles were mainly used. However, due to the fact that the subject of concern is fairly new, several articles were written recently and therefore their authors and the articles are less well known.

3.7.2 VALIDITY

Validity refers to whether the study measures what it aims to measure (Söderlund 2005, p. 149). As this study aims at investigating cause-and-effect relationships, the validity is essential to investigate. There are two aspects of validity: internal and external. *Internal validity* is a measure of if the independent variables actually caused the effects on the dependent variables (Malhotra 2010, p. 254). The internal validity of the thesis is supported by the results of the pre-study and control question in the main survey, indicating that the congruent ads were perceived as more consistent with the brand image than the incongruent ads. To further increase the internal validity, all advertisements were designed in a similar way, e.g. with slogan and advertising claim positioned in the lower right corner, to reduce the impact of external factors on the evaluation of the ads, which were not investigated in this thesis. Secondly, the advertisements were all developed for the thesis, and the advertisement claims had not been used in previous advertisements by the brands. This is to ensure that the effects found were not due to previous exposure to the ads.

Another way to ensure the internal validity is to use established multi-item measurements that have previously been tested for validity (Bryman and Bell 2007, p. 274). Therefore, established measures have been used as often as possible in the surveys designed for this thesis. In case new measures were needed, these were adaptations of established measures in order to ensure reliability and minimize the risk of confusing the respondents. These measurements were also pre-tested by three people from a population similar to the sample (newly graduated business students but also the tutor of this thesis). Additionally, the new measurements consisted of several items that were tested for internal consistency to ensure that they measured the same variable. Finally, the internal validity was increased due to the selection of two homogenous groups, which shared characteristics that are considered to be important for the study, thus ensuring that the groups' answers did not differ due to external factors.

External validity refers to if the cause-and-effect relationships identified can be generalized (Malhotra 2010, p. 255). As this thesis aims at testing the effects of message, sender and connection on spreading, which have not all been tested before, and partly uses new variables, the generalization is limited. Therefore, future studies should aim at verifying the results with e.g. new target groups in order to increase the generalizability. Further, the homogeneous target groups could be seen as risk for the external validity (Malhotra 2010, p. 377); thus, the

effects should only be generalized for people with similar online behaviour as the investigated population. Consequently, it is reasonable to generalize the results to students respectively experts in marketing communication and social media within Sweden. In addition, the findings are generalizable to other low involvement categories with a transformational motivation since two different categories and brands were manipulated; thus, reducing category as well as brand effects.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In the following chapter the results from the hypotheses testing will be reported and analysed in order to identify if and how each of the dimensions message, connection, and sender affect the spreading of communication. The analysis will start with the dimension message to assess if incongruent communication goes viral and continue with the influence of category/brand interest and purchase intention on the spreading of ads. Finally, differences in spreading due to the sender will be examined.

4.1 MESSAGE

Before testing the hypotheses H1 to H4 concerning the message, it is important to check the manipulations to ensure that the advertisements are seen as having different levels of congruity i.e. that one of the advertisements is perceived as more congruent than the other. Therefore, the brand fit is verified in the main survey even though it was previously assessed in the pre-study. The congruent beer ad receives a significantly ($p < 0.01$) higher brand fit ($M = 5.17$; $SD = 1.51$) than the incongruent beer ad ($M = 2.68$; $SD = 1.57$). With regards to the chips category, the congruent ad, with a mean of 4.26 ($SD = 1.54$), has a higher brand fit than the incongruent chips ad ($M = 2.44$; $SD = 1.48$). This difference in means of 1.81 is statistically significant on a 1 % level.

Hypothesis H1 addresses the issue of whether incongruent advertisements spread more on social media than congruent advertisements. The results show that sharing/reposting has a higher mean for incongruent ads compared to congruent (mean difference = 0.07), which is significant on a 5 % level (see table 6). Similarly the mean for showing an incongruent ad compared to a congruent one is significantly higher (mean difference = 0.11, significant on a 5 % level). However, the difference in means is not significant for commenting on the ad. Also, in contrast to the hypothesis, the mean for liking a congruent ad is higher than the mean for liking an incongruent ad, although the difference is not significant. A possible explanation is presented in chapter 5. In summary, hypothesis H1 is partly supported.

Spreading	Advertisement	Mean (SD)	Difference	Significance	Acceptance
Like	Congruent	1.6714 (1.16)	-.07008	.207	✗
	Incongruent	1.6014 (1.14)			
Comment	Congruent	1.5387 (0.94)	.02331	.381	✗
	Incongruent	1.5620 (1.10)			
Share/Repost	Congruent	1.1852 (0.47)	.07019	.050	✓
	Incongruent	1.2554 (0.66)			
Show	Congruent	1.2671 (0.59)	.10551	.030	✓
	Incongruent	1.3727 (0.89)			

Table 6: Comparing Means Spreading and (In)Congruity

H1: Incongruent communication is

a) liked,

b) commented,

c) reposted/shared, and/or

d) shown more on social media than congruent communication.

PARTLY SUPPORTED

In order to test H2 the sample is divided into three groups depending on their attitude towards sharing on SNSs: “negative” (sharing attitude < 4), which equals 36.5 % of the sample; “neutral” ($4 \leq$ sharing attitude ≤ 5) and “positive” (sharing attitude > 5), which is equivalent to 35.4 % of the sample. The neutral group is excluded from the analysis in order to achieve greater discrimination (similar to Dahlén et al. (2005)). A t-test shows that there are significant ($p < 0.01$) differences in the intentions to spread the advertisements between the groups with a positive and negative attitude towards sharing in general (see table 7). Consequently, consumers’ attitude towards sharing on SNSs moderates their intention to engage in viral marketing campaigns.

Spreading	Sharing attitude	Mean (SD)	Difference	Significance	Acceptance
Like	Negative	1.3816 (0.82)	.50488	.000	✓
	Positive	1.8865 (1.35)			
Comment	Negative	1.3277 (0.78)	.49228	.000	✓
	Positive	1.8200 (1.23)			
Share/Repost	Negative	1.1049 (0.34)	.25284	.000	✓
	Positive	1.3577 (0.74)			
Show	Negative	1.1816 (0.55)	.27883	.000	✓
	Positive	1.4605 (0.87)			

Table 7: Comparing Means Spreading and Attitude towards Sharing on SNSs

Hypothesis H2 suggests that people with a positive attitude towards sharing on SNSs are more inclined to spread incongruent ads than congruent ads. The results show a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the means for showing incongruent ads ($M = 1.59$) and congruent ads ($M = 1.33$) with a mean difference of 0.26, as shown in table 8. A similar result is found for reposting/sharing incongruent ads versus congruent ads, with a difference in means of 0.18 that is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Thus, incongruent ads ($M = 1.43$) are shared/reposted significantly more than congruent ads ($M = 1.25$). The same tendency is found for commenting, with a higher mean for commenting on the incongruent ad than the congruent ad, however, the difference does not reach statistical significance ($0.05 < p < 0.1$).

Regarding liking there is no difference in means between the incongruent and the congruent ad. One explanation for this finding could be that liking an ad on Facebook is an expression of a positive attitude towards an ad, which will be discussed further in chapter 5.

Spreading	Advertisement	Mean (SD)	Difference	Significance	Acceptance
Like	Congruent	1.7704 (1.25)	.09993	.248	✗
	Incongruent	1.8704 (1.37)			
Comment	Congruent	1.6487 (0.97)	.19077	.071	✗
	Incongruent	1.8395 (1.31)			
Share/repost	Congruent	1.2531 (0.54)	.17980	.014	✓
	Incongruent	1.4329 (0.84)			
Show	Congruent	1.3270 (0.66)	.26442	.005	✓
	Incongruent	1.5915 (0.87)			

Table 8: Comparing Means Spreading and (In)Congruity Given a High Attitude to Sharing on SNSs

In summary, H2a and H2b are not supported, while H2c and H2d are supported, stating that incongruent communication is reposted/shared and shown to a higher extent than congruent communication given that the attitude towards sharing on SNSs in general is positive.

H2: Given that the attitude towards sharing on SNSs in general is positive, incongruent communication is

a) liked,

b) commented,

c) reposted/shared, and/or

d) shown more on social media than congruent communication.

PARTLY SUPPORTED

Hypothesis H3 tests the relationship between brand loyalty and the spreading of communication in SNSs. Analysing only the 340 respondents that saw a Facebook post of a congruent ad, there is a significant weak positive correlation ($r = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$) between brand loyalty and showing a congruent ad to friends or acquaintances on Facebook as well as sharing/reposting this ad ($r = 0.14$, $p < 0.05$) (see table 9). For liking and commenting, no significant correlation is found. With regards to incongruent communication, no significant correlations are found between brand loyalty and the spreading functions.

Advertisement			Show	Like	Share/ Repost	Comment
Brand Loyalty	Congruent	Pearson Correlation	.222	.082	.137	.047
		Significance	.000	.129	.011	.378
		Acceptance	✓	✗	✓	✗
Brand Loyalty	Incongruent	Pearson Correlation	.039	.099	.042	.132
		Significance	.458	.056	.418	.111
		Acceptance	✗	✗	✗	✗

Table 9: Correlations Brand Loyalty and In/Congruity

Regarding the direction of the relationship between brand loyalty and spreading, it can be assumed to be as hypothesized, i.e. that spreading is dependent on loyalty. This is due to the survey design; first the respondents were asked about their loyalty to the brand and only afterwards the Facebook post with the concerned ad was shown and questions regarding their willingness to spread the ad followed. Hence, being a loyal customer increases the likelihood of showing a congruent ad to a friend or reposting it.

In summary, hypothesis H3a, H3b are not supported. Nevertheless, H3c and H3d are supported and confirm that brand loyalty is more important for congruent ads to be reposted/shared and shown on Facebook than for incongruent ads.

H3: Brand loyalty is more important for congruent ads to be

a) liked,

b) commented,

c) reposted/shared, and/or

d) shown on social media than for incongruent ads.

PARTLY SUPPORTED

Hypothesis H4 assesses whether incongruent communication is spread more by opinion leaders and experts than congruent communication, and is tested with the help of the data

from main survey 2. The analysis shows a higher mean for spreading incongruent communication ($M = 1.69$) than for congruent communication ($M = 1.27$). This difference of 0.42 in means is significant with $p < 0.1$. Due to the small sample size of main survey 2, i.e. two groups with less than 30 responses in each group, a 10 % significance level was accepted in this case.

H4: Opinion Leaders spread incongruent communication more than congruent communication.

SUPPORTED

4.2 CONNECTION

Hypotheses H5 to H8 assess the role of a brand and/or category connection on the spreading of communication through looking at purchase intentions as well as brand and category interest.

Hypothesis H5 tests consumers' purchase intention of the brand and its relationship to their willingness to spread communication of the brand. The analysis gives significant support ($p < 0.01$) for a weak positive correlation between brand purchase intention and liking the brands' communication on Facebook ($r = 0.17$) as well as brand purchase intention and commenting on the ad ($r = 0.15$) (table 10). Furthermore, showing a brand's communication and brand purchase intention are very weakly correlated ($r = 0.079$) on a 5 % significance level. However, there is no correlation for sharing. In summary, H5c is not supported while H5a and H5b, and H5d are accepted.

H5: Brand purchase intention increases

a) liking,

b) commenting on,

c) reposting/sharing, and/or

d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.

PARTLY SUPPORTED

Hypothesis H6 builds on H5 and looks at the relationship between category purchase intention and the spreading of communication. Liking an ad respectively showing an ad and intentions to purchase within the category are weakly positively correlated ($r = 0.19$ resp. $r = 0.13$) on a significant level ($p < 0.01$). Further, there is a very weak positive correlation on a 5 % significance level between category purchase intention and commenting on an ad on social media ($r = 0.09$) as well as between category purchase intention and sharing/reposting

($r = 0.08$). The results are presented in table 10 below. In summary, the results support H6a, H6b, H6c and H6d and therefore H6 is accepted.

H6: Category purchase intention increases

- a) liking,
- b) commenting on,
- c) reposting/sharing, and/or
- d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.

SUPPORTED

Hypothesis H7 tests if a higher brand interest is associated with a higher willingness to spread communication. The results show a moderate positive correlation between brand interest and liking ($r = 0.47$) as well as a weak positive correlation between brand interest and commenting ($r = 0.25$), brand interest and reposting/sharing ($r = 0.24$) as well as brand interest and showing ($r = 0.25$) (see table 10). All correlations are significant on a 1 % level. Consequently, H7 is supported.

H7: Brand interest increases

- a) liking,
- b) commenting on,
- c) reposting/sharing, and/or
- d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.

SUPPORTED

Hypothesis H8 builds on the previous hypothesis and investigates if category interest and spreading are correlated. The results show a significant ($p < 0.01$) weak positive correlation between category interest and liking the ads on Facebook ($r = 0.30$) as well as category interest and commenting on the ads ($r = 0.17$). Further, category interest and showing the communication to others ($r = 0.18$), and finally, category interest and sharing/reposting ($r = 0.13$) are weakly positively correlated (see table 10). Consequently, H8 is supported.

H8: Category interest increases

- a) liking,
- b) commenting on,
- c) reposting/sharing, and/or
- d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.

SUPPORTED

		Like	Comment	Share/Repost	Show
Brand Interest	Pearson Correlation	.417	.247	.236	.253
	Significance	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Acceptance	✓	✓	✓	✓
Category Interest	Pearson Correlation	.297	.172	.125	.179
	Significance	.000	.000	.001	.000
	Acceptance	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brand Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	.171	.154	.043	.079
	Significance	.000	.000	.245	.035
	Acceptance	✓	✓	✗	✓
Category Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	.186	.094	.083	.133
	Significance	.000	.012	.026	.000
	Acceptance	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 10: Correlation of Brand/Category Connection and Spreading

4.3 SENDER

As a last dimension affecting the spreading of communication on social media the sender of the message is investigated. Hypothesis H9 suggests that the sender influences people's willingness to spread communication on SNSs in that they rather spread communication if the sender is a close friend than if it is a brand. The results show that the mean for commenting on a Facebook post of a close friend ($M = 1.66$) is higher than for a post by a brand ($M = 1.44$). This mean difference of 0.22 is significant on a 1 % level (see table 11). In addition, the means for liking, showing and sharing advertisements on social media are higher if the ad has been posted by a close friend rather than by a brand. However, these mean differences are not statistically significant. In summary, H9a, H9c and H9d are not supported while H9b is supported, verifying that people rather comment on a Facebook post by a close friend than by the brand itself.

Spreading	Sender	Mean (SD)	Difference	Significance	Acceptance
Like	Brand	1.2984 (1.30)	.04936	.200	✗
	Friend	1.3462 (0.77)			
Comment	Brand	1.4434 (0.86)	.22136	.002	✓
	Friend	1.6648 (1.17)			
Share	Brand	1.2030 (1.20)	.03778	.190	✗
	Friend	1.2407 (1.24)			
Show	Brand	1.6116 (1.61)	.04777	.283	✗
	Friend	1.6609 (1.66)			

Table 11: Comparing Means Spreading and Sender

H9: People

a) like,

b) comment on,

c) repost/share, and/or

d) show communication on social media to a higher extent if the sender is a close friend compared to if the sender is a brand.

PARTLY SUPPORTED

4.4 SUMMARY OF MAIN RESULTS

The results of the hypothesis testing are summarized in table 12 below. Figure 9 specifies the impact each of the tested dimensions (i.e. message, connection and sender) has on the spreading of viral campaigns.

Hypothesis	Main Result
H1: Incongruent communication is a) liked, b) commented, c) reposted/shared, and/or d) shown more on social media than congruent communication.	PARTLY SUPPORTED
H2: Given that the attitude towards sharing on SNSs in general is positive, incongruent communication is a) liked, b) commented, c) reposted/shared, and/or d) shown more on social media than congruent communication.	PARTLY SUPPORTED

H3: Brand loyalty is more important for congruent ads to be

- a) liked,
- b) commented,
- c) reposted/shared, and/or**
- d) shown on social media than for incongruent ads.**

PARTLY SUPPORTED

H4: Opinion Leaders spread incongruent communication more than congruent communication.

SUPPORTED

H5: Brand purchase intention increases

- a) liking,
- b) commenting on,**
- c) reposting/sharing, and/or
- d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.**

PARTLY SUPPORTED

H6: Category purchase intention increases

- a) liking,
- b) commenting on,**
- c) reposting/sharing, and/or
- d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.**

SUPPORTED

H7: Brand interest increases

- a) liking,
- b) commenting on,**
- c) reposting/sharing, and/or
- d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.**

SUPPORTED

H8: Category interest increases

- a) liking,
- b) commenting on,**
- c) reposting/sharing, and/or
- d) showing a brands' advertisement on social media.**

SUPPORTED

H9: People

- a) like,
- b) comment on,**
- c) repost/share, and/or
- d) show communication on social media to a higher extent if the sender is a close friend compared to if the sender is a brand.**

PARTLY SUPPORTED

Table 12: Summary of Hypotheses Results

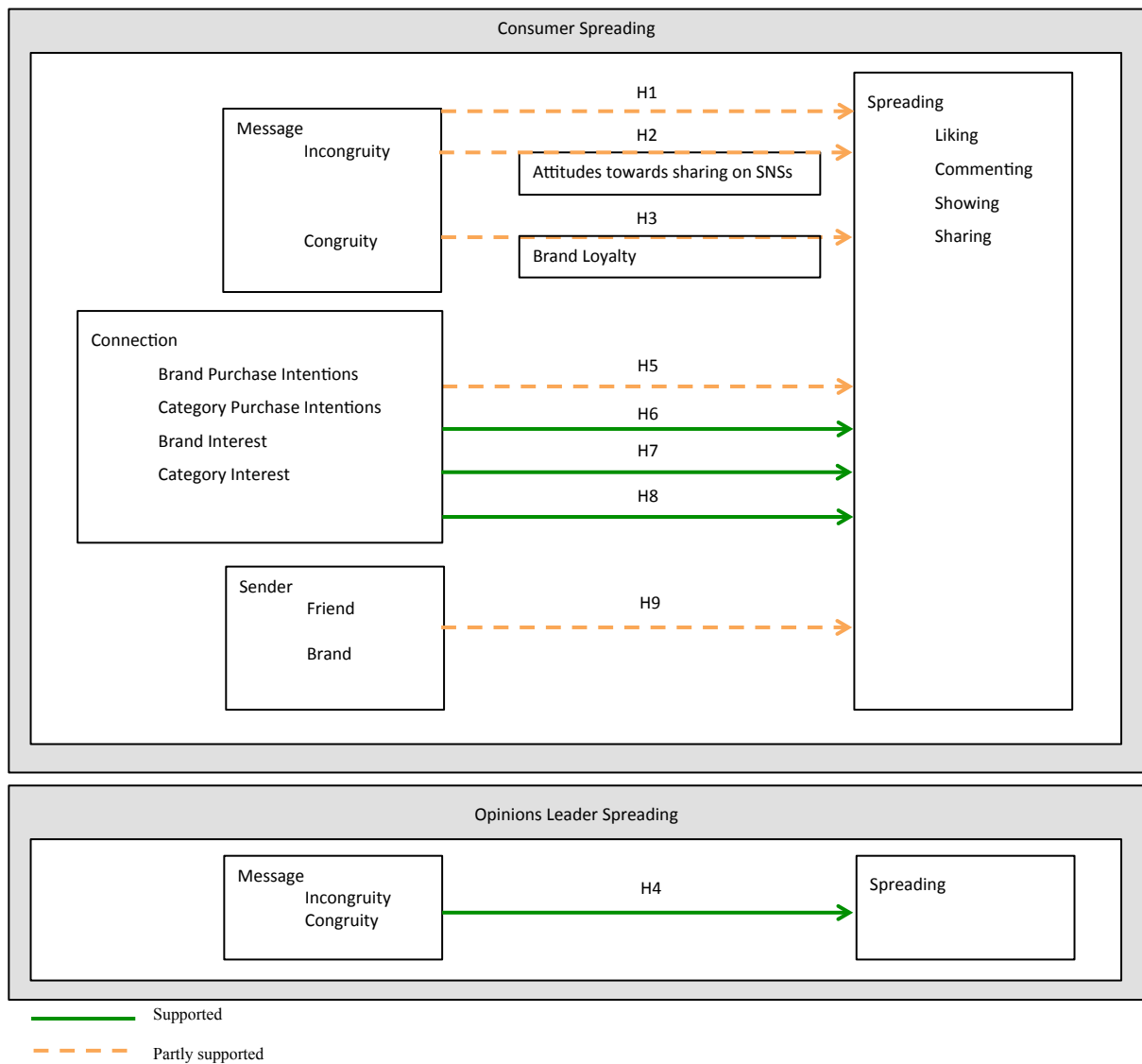


Figure 9: Viral Spreading Model Result– Dimensions Affecting the Viral Spreading of Communication

5. DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the theoretical implications of the study divided into the different dimensions investigated. Thereafter, managerial implications are drawn and finally, the critique of the study and suggestions for future research are considered.

5.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This thesis contributes to research on viral marketing on social media as well as to research on incongruity in several ways. First, by investigating amongst two different target groups if brand-incongruent communication has the potential to go viral. Second, by extending existing literature on the influence of a connection to the brand and/or category on the passing on behaviour. Third, by providing information on how the sender affects consumers' willingness to spread communication. And finally, the thesis contributes with adapted measurements that are suitable for determining the intention to engage in viral marketing on social media.

5.1.1 MESSAGE

Research Question 1: Has brand-incongruent communication the potential to be spread on social media? The results show that consumers are likely to share/repost and show incongruent communication more than congruent communication. Looking only at consumers with a positive attitude towards sharing on SNSs in general, the results are even more significant and receive higher differences in means. Furthermore, there are tendencies showing that an incongruent ad could be commented more on than a congruent ad by users with a positive attitude towards sharing on SNSs. However, the results of the consumers with a positive sharing attitude and the sample in general do not differ to the extent expected, after looking at previous research that declares for example attitudes towards social media and advertising to moderate consumers' online and pass on behaviour (Chu 2011). One reason for this could be the fact that the sample consists of young Facebook users that engage in the network. Thus, even though the group with a lower attitude towards sharing does not necessarily share third-party content today, they still might have a low threshold level to share content on SNSs in the future.

Interestingly, the data shows that "liking" differs from the other options that allow consumers to interact on SNSs – namely commenting, sharing/reposting and showing – for incongruent versus congruent messages. First of all, no difference between liking an incongruent ad or a

congruent ad is found for people with a positive attitude towards sharing in general. Second, looking at the whole sample (regardless of the attitude), although not significant, there is a tendency suggesting that congruent communication is liked more than incongruent. These findings and thus the special character of “liking” could potentially be explained with the attitude toward the advertising. Liking an ad on Facebook could be declared as an expression of a positive attitude towards the ad. In contrast to this, when commenting, sharing/reposting the ad on Facebook, or showing it to friends, one can discuss the ad and express a positive *or* negative attitude. For example, the viewer can react on a friend’s post of an incongruent ad by commenting that he/she does not think the ad is good, whereas “liking” it equals a positive evaluation of the ad. Previous research showed that the attitude towards incongruent ads can be negative, for example if consumers are unable or unwilling to solve the incongruity (e.g. Sjödin and Törn 2006) or if they perceive the information that is conflicting with their individual brand associations as disturbing (Dahlén et al. 2005). Consequently, incongruent ads could be less liked on Facebook due to a lower attitude towards the incongruent ad than the congruent.

Regarding the use of incongruent communication in viral campaigns the potential seems limited. Even though differences are found for showing and sharing/reposting the incongruent ads, no significant differences are found for liking and commenting. As described in the theory section, incongruity is conceptualized as a concept with the two dimensions relevancy and expectancy (Heckler and Childers 1992). Although the incongruent ads might be unexpected, they might not be perceived as relevant for the brand, and the benefits and emotions associated to it, which in turn would explain why the communication is not spread to a large extent. This indicates that ads for viral marketing campaigns might have to be novel *and* relevant, which are the dimensions for creativity (Smith et al. 2008), in order to be not only shared or shown but also liked and commented on. Thus, creativity might be a more suitable concept for social media than incongruity. Further, since the only significant differences between congruent and incongruent ads are found for sharing/reposting and showing them, but incongruent ads are not liked more, it might be that the incongruent message actually creates a negative buzz, i.e. that people would share it but with a remark that is unfavourable for the brand. Hence, incongruent communication might create new interest in the brand and might even become the talk of the town, but this raises the classical question, is all PR good PR? Van Noort et al. (2012) point out that advertisers fear the lack of control in viral campaigns and the possibility of negative buzz. Consequently, with a low probability to

be spread and a risk of creating negative WOM, brand-incongruent communication does not seem to be the right concept for viral marketing campaigns.

However, the results also show that congruent advertisements are not suitable for viral campaigns. These messages reach limited spread in SNSs compared to incongruent ones, even when directed at brand loyalists. Brand loyalty is only significantly related to showing the congruent message to friends or acquaintances and sharing/reposting the communication. However, neither liking nor commenting on the congruent ad is significantly correlated with brand loyalty. An explanation could be that even though a brand loyalist might perceive these ads as relevant, they might not fulfil the pass-along “etiquette” (Phelps et al. 2004, p. 344). They are for example not surprising, and thus not suitable to receive status or social benefits and/or to interact with peers, which are important drivers for engaging in eWOM (Chu 2011; Okazaki 2009; Hsu and Lin 2008). These results, however, could be of limited validity due to low levels of brand loyalty in this study, as will be further discussed in the limitations.

Research Question 2: Is brand-incongruent communication more likely to be spread through opinion leaders compared to congruent communication? The results from the second survey, which targeted experts within marketing communication and social media in Sweden show that they are more inclined to write about and share incongruent communication compared to congruent ads. Consequently, incongruent communication is novel and interesting enough to reach the opinion leaders’ threshold level to be talked about; hence, they are willing to discuss those ads for example on their blogs.

The fact that spreading effects are found for opinion leaders, while only partly supported for regular consumers, implies that this group holds certain characteristics that are important moderators of the incongruity effects. Previous research on incongruity suggests that for example novelty and sensation seeking, a positive attitude towards advertising, and expertise are potential moderators. The opinion leaders in this study are likely to possess these characteristics, which in turn leads to an attraction to incongruent communication, high motivation to process it, and more elaborated processing (Törn 2009; Lee and Schumann 2004). For example, their knowledge about brands and advertising make the opinion leaders in this study more sensitive to incongruity; thus, they are more likely to detect incongruity and process it in a detailed manner. Normal consumers, on the other hand, have a higher threshold level at which detailed processing is triggered; thus, it is possible that moderate

incongruent ads do not elicit detailed processing but are viewed as irrelevant distraction and ignored (Lee and Schumann 2004). This could be a reason for why normal consumers would not like or comment on incongruent communication more compared to congruent ads. Further, the differences in results for opinion leaders versus normal consumers indicate that the former might also hold certain characteristics that make them more inclined to engage in eWOM, for example they are willing to disclose information about themselves in blog inlays or tweets, and they are novelty seekers (Okazaki 2009; Chu 2011).

In summary, brand-incongruent communication is spread via opinion leaders, possibly because they possess characteristics moderating the eWOM intentions and the incongruity effects that make them among others more likely to pay attention incongruity and elaborate on it. However, it is not clear if these experts would write about the brand and the advertisement in a favourable way or not, and some of the comments received by the respondents in their response-email indicated that it would rather be unfavourable (see Appendix 7).

5.1.2 CONNECTION

Research Question 3: Does a connection to the category or brand (i.e. brand/category interest or purchase intention) influence the spreading of communication on social media? The analysis shows that connection to a product or category level significantly influences the intention to spread a message. Both an interest in the brand and in the category makes people more inclined to like, comment, repost, and show advertisements on social media. Furthermore, brand purchase intentions result in more likes and comments of the ad. Also, showing an ad is correlated to brand purchase intentions; however, this correlation is very weak – only 0,62 % of the variance of showing the advertisement is explained by the intention to purchase that brand. Also, it is only significant on a 5 % significance level. As stated by Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 371), the significance is more crucial for weak correlations and large samples can result in that weak correlations become significant (Pallant 2007, p. 133). As every respondent holds two observations in the dataset of this thesis, the sample size is doubled in the analysis, which might have impacted the significance of this weak correlations. Hence, one should be careful drawing any conclusions regarding the relation between brand purchase intentions and showing in particular. The same is true for category purchase intentions and commenting on respectively sharing/reposting ads, as these correlations are very weak and do not hold on a 1 % significance level. However, people that

consider buying chips or beer products are more willing to like and show an ad to others than people who would not buy products of these categories. Findings from previous research that focused on WOM (Dichter 1966) and passing along of emails (Huang et al. 2009) are thus replicated in this study for SNSs. Also, Doebele et al.'s (2007) call for clever targeting is reinforced, as the results stress the importance of relevance of the communication. Consumers are likely to engage in eWOM when they consider buying from a brand or in a category, or are at least interested in it. On the other hand, they tend to ignore or avoid ads from brands or categories they are not interested in, or they might perceive the message as irrelevant and thus would not forward it to their network.

5.1.3 SENDER

Research Question 4: Which type of sender (brand vs. close friend) is more effective in order to reach spreading of communication on social media? In contrast to the hypothesis, the analysis reveals that the sender of an advertisement does not necessary influence if the ad goes viral or not. Except for commenting, there are no significant differences between posts by a brand or by a close friend. Thus, people are more inclined to comment on posts by a close friend compared to posts from a brand, but the sender does not affect their willingness to like, repost or show the ad to others. There could be several explanations for this finding. First of all, the influence of relevance of the communication might be higher than expected. Van Noort et al. (2012) identifies that the strength of the tie increases the perceived relevance of the campaign. However, specifically on Facebook the perceived relevance might also be increased by liking the brand's page. When liking a brand's page the consumer follows the brand and thus expresses a strong interest in it; consequently, the communication posted by the brand can be considered highly relevant for the consumer. The relevance of the information might even be more important than the strength to the tie from which it was received. Second, the SNS Facebook is already perceived as a cluttered environment (O'Carroll 2011) and it might be that both brands and close friends are part of the same "noise", which means that the message is perceived as similar (e.g. in terms of relevance or credibility) regardless of who is the sender. In line with this David Shing, digital prophet for AOL argues that defriending and unfollowing will be the next big trend, as consumers understand that the increasing "noise" on their social network is counterproductive (O'Carroll 2011). Users only want to receive news on their feed which are actually interesting for them, thus they hide, unfriend or unfollow brand pages and friends that "spam" their feed with too much unnecessary information and in this respect do not distinguish if the sender of this spam

is commercial or a friend. Third, as mentioned before, people engage in eWOM to seek self-status or to be perceived as knowledgeable (Chu 2011; Subramani and Rajagopalan 2003). To achieve this consumer want to post information that is interesting/entertaining but also new. Reposting or showing ads posted by a close friend, however, does not necessarily fulfil this condition as the friend circles overlap and hence some friends have already seen the ad. On the other hand, it is more likely to be the first one among the network of friends when sharing information posted by the brand. Finally, the result could be due to the nature of the function itself. No significant differences between posts from a close friend versus from a brand are found for liking, showing, or sharing an ad, while a difference is found for commenting on it. The first three actions could arguably considered to be quite passive towards the sender, while commenting rather means to engage in a discussion with the sender, and often results in a response. Since a friendship per definition includes a two-way communication, the respondents might be more willing to comment on a friend's post, as they rather engage in discussions with their friends compared to brands.

5.1.4 OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

Although not a research question, this thesis further contributes with measurements that were specifically adapted to investigate the intentions to spread communication via social media, in particular via Facebook, blogs or Twitter. As mentioned in the methodology, the measurements for the survey among users of SNSs (main survey 1) were adapted from Chiu et al. (2007) and the indices created with the items received high Cronbach's alpha values (see table 5, chapter 3), indicating a strong internal consistency. Also, the pre-test of the survey revealed that the measurements were understood and the data gathered did not show any abnormalities. The measurements for the survey targeting opinion leaders were also adapted from Chiu et al. (2007) and the index that was created had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.849. This indicates that the different questions measured the same variable and that none of them was misunderstood, which would have resulted in higher differences in the results and a lower Cronbach's alpha. The respondents participated in the survey by replying to the email so in case of a lack of understanding of the measurements they would be able to ask or comment. However no comments regarding the measurements were received nor did the responses show abnormalities. Thus, one can conclude that the target group understood the measurements.

5.2 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This thesis has implications for brand managers, especially for those operating in the fast-moving consumer goods industry that want to exploit the power of viral marketing on social media, but also for advertising and digital marketing agencies.

Viral marketing campaigns have to be well targeted in order to reach spread instead of coming to a dead end. First, people with a positive attitude towards sharing on Facebook in general have to be identified, as they are more inclined to engage in viral marketing. Second, the target group should consist of people that are interested in the brand or the category, or that intend to purchase the brand or the category. This ensures that the message is noticed and perceived as relevant enough to be forwarded.

Further, for viral marketing campaigns to be successful in terms of reach it does hardly matter whether people see the ad posted by the brand or by one of their close friends. If the brand is meaningful for the consumer he/she likes and consequently follows it on Facebook, indicating a strong interest in the brand and a desire to receive information about it. This suggests that a message posted by the brand is relevant for the user. Relevancy of the information might thus be even more important than the nature of the social connection, i.e. the fact that a commercial source is considered a loose social connection, which is supposed to indicate that its information is less forwarded (van Noort et al. 2012). Especially when considering that Facebook is already cluttered (O'Carroll 2011), it might be that with all the "noise" and too much irrelevant information it is more important for users to receive information on their news feed which they actually perceive as relevant instead of who sends it.

Yet, one challenge for marketers is to stand out of this clutter and this thesis investigated the potential of brand-incongruent communication as a tool to do so. Marketers often face challenges when designing communication that spreads while being in-line with the established image of their brand without being perceived as boring. This thesis shows that it is hard to go viral with communication that is congruent with the brand schema of a familiar, heavily advertised brand, as it lacks for example a surprising element. On the other hand, incongruent ads are spread to a certain extent, especially by opinion leaders within marketing communication and social media that comprise an important target group for viral campaigns due to their connectedness and influence on other consumers. These ads are also shared/reposted and shown to friends by people on Facebook, however they are not liked or

commented on to a larger extent than congruent ads. Although incongruity seems to be novel and surprising enough to be talked about, it is not clarified if these dialogues are actually positive. For example, incongruent ads did not receive more likes on Facebook but were only shown or reposted more, which could indicate that the ads were rather discussed negatively instead of evaluated in a positive way. This could be due to the lack of relevance of the incongruent advertisement for the brand, as incongruity with its two dimensions expectancy and relevance, might be always surprising (unexpected) but not necessarily relevant. The same holds true for opinion leaders, some of the comments received with the response-emails revealed that it might as well be that the bloggers write about the ad in a way that is unfavourable for the brand. Thus, using incongruent communication might re-new the interest in the brand and surely reinforces the existing associations when people discuss the ads, but there is a risk that the created buzz is not a positive one. If one is not willing to take that risk it might be a better approach to design communication that is unexpected *and* relevant, i.e. that is creative.

5.3 CRITIQUE OF THE STUDY

Critique towards this study can be raised regarding the advertisements, survey design, choice of categories and the choice of dimensions.

Advertisements: As described in the methodology, the brand fit of the congruent pictures was assessed in a pre-study and achieved a high fit ($M_{OLW} = 5.74$; $M_{PrippsBlå} = 6.09$) on a scale from 1 to 7 (with 7 indicating a very good fit). However, in the main survey the brand fit of the congruent ads was rated much lower than in the pre-study ($M_{OLW} = 4.26$ and $M_{PrippsBlå} = 5.17$). Still, both congruent ads were significantly different from the respective incongruent ad. However, the medium levels of brand fit for the congruent ad of OLW indicate that some respondents might have perceived the congruent OLW ad as moderately incongruent.

Survey design: The way the survey was designed can be criticised in two ways. First, respondents were initially asked about their relationship to the brands and category, and only after that their intentions to spread were assessed. Thus, it is possible that this order called the respondents' attention to their relationship towards the brand or category and thus strengthened the effect and potentially increased their willingness to spread the

communication. Nevertheless, this was done in order to determine the direction of the relationship between the connection and spreading, i.e. to ensure that the category respectively brand connection affects the spreading and not the other way around. Second, no separate groups were created for the manipulation of the posts by a brand and a close friend. Instead, each respondent was first asked how he/she would react to the post if it was posted by the brand and then if it was posted by a close friend. Therefore, every respondent resulted in two observations. This approach was chosen to ensure a large size of the sample and to not increase the complexity of the questionnaire. As discussed earlier, there is a risk of very low correlations becoming significant when the dataset consists of a large number of observations. Furthermore, there is a risk that respondents did not realize the difference between the two questions and thus answered similar for the two different senders.

Choice of category: Literature on incongruity suggests that low-involvement categories are more suitable for the use of brand-incongruent communication than high-involvement categories, for example due to the perceived lower credibility of incongruent ads (e.g. Lee and Thorson 2008; Dahlén et al. 2005). On the other hand, the choice of low-involvement categories is associated with lower commitment and a lack of true brand loyalty (VonRiesen and Herndon 2011). This tendency was obvious in the present study, where the respondents reported low levels of loyalty to Pripps Blå and OLW; in fact, 75 % of the responses were lower than 2.33 on a seven-point scale. Consequently, the results from hypothesis H3 that investigated the importance of brand loyalty on the spreading of congruent ads might be of limited validity.

Choice of dimensions of viral marketing: This study investigated the impact of brand-schema incongruity, the sender, and a brand/category connection on the spreading of viral campaigns on social media. These dimensions were chosen based on an in-depth literature review and specifics of SNSs. Even though significant positive correlations were found between some of the variables (e.g. brand/category interest and spreading) the correlations were weak, and on some occasions even too weak to draw reliable conclusions. This indicates that there might be dimensions with a higher impact on the intention to forward a viral marketing campaign than the three dimensions selected.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study leaves opportunities for future research to explore other types of advertisements as well as other types of social media and target groups. Moreover, there is potential to delve deeper into the issues of sender, spreading functions, and other dimensions of viral marketing.

Type of advertisements: The ads used in this thesis were non-moving pictures. However, several of the viral campaigns today include videos, games, or competitions. Therefore, it could be interesting to see whether the results found in this thesis are valid for other types of communication. As an example people might be entertained by a game and then pass it on to friends and family, even though they are actually not interested in the brand that has the game as part of their communication. This would indicate that the connection to the category or brand would be less important for this type of communication compared to what was found in this thesis.

The sender: The results regarding the sender differed to some extent from previous research, for example on passing-along of emails (Phelps et al. 2004), by stating that except for commenting, a close friend's post is not spread to a higher extent than a brand's post. Thus, future research could validate the results with a survey, in which each respondent is only exposed to a post by one sender (instead of two different senders). Also, as Facebook is special in that it offers the option to follow brands, which could indicate that consumers perceive the brands' communication as relevant, while at the same time being already a rather cluttered SNS with a high number of posts from both brands and friends, it could be of interest to look more at the impact of relevance and noise in social media. In addition, previous research showed ambiguous results regarding the perceived credibility of bloggers (Colliander and Dahlén 2011; Youn 2009); while the focal study shows that bloggers are more inclined to talk, blog or tweet about incongruent ads compared to congruent ones, it is not looked at if regular consumers would perceive these bloggers as a friend or rather a commercial source. It would thus be interesting for future research to investigate if regular consumers would forward viral campaigns that were posted by opinion leaders to a larger extent than posts by a close friend or a commercial source.

Spreading functions: This study accounts for the different functions used to interact on Facebook or social media (i.e. liking, commenting, reposting/sharing, showing, recommending, blogging/tweeting) and differences regarding the use of each are found (e.g.

the liking function differs from reposting and commenting). However, it is not investigated if one of the functions is more valuable for companies than the other, for example if liking is worth more in financial terms than commenting, which would be interesting to explore. Also in this study no qualitative analysis of the comments, tweets or blog posts is conducted. Thus, the tone of voice of the buzz created by the use of incongruent communication is not clarified. It would be interesting for future research to identify both if the eWOM is favourable or unfavourable for the brand and what people say and write about brand-incongruent ads. In addition, this study only looks at forwarding intentions, which might not translate in actual forwarding behaviour. By combining this study with a real life experiment on the use of incongruent communication in a viral marketing campaign on social media and among opinion leaders, best practices could be derived based on actual behaviours.

Type of social media and target groups: This study focused on investigating students that use Facebook as well as experts that are connected via blogs and/or Twitter. It could be valuable for future research to replicate the results of main survey 1, which was conducted among students, with a different target group. Of particular interest would be an older target group, as they are becoming more and more prominent on social media. For example, the growth in number of users in the last three months of Facebook Sweden was highest for people in the age group of 45 to 54 year-olds (Socialbakers 2012b). In addition, future research could investigate other types of social media as services such as Pinterest or Google+ are emerging with new ways for marketers to promote their products and engage their consumers that are partially distinct from the possibilities on Facebook.

Dimensions of viral marketing: The dimensions and their impact on the spreading of communication on social media investigated in this study (i.e. brand-incongruent message, the sender, and a brand/category connection) are partly only very weakly correlated. This indicates that there could be numerous other factors that explain why some campaigns go viral while others do not. Therefore, it is suggested that future research investigates further factors that influence the spreading. Could for example the creativity, the colours, or the aesthetics of an ad affect if it becomes a viral success? Or does the type of category (low/high involvement; transformational/informational motivation) have an impact? There are many questions that could still be investigated and this thesis marks only the starting point towards a real understanding of successful viral marketing in social media.

6. REFERENCES

- Alden, D.L., Mukherjee, A., and Hoyer, W.D. (2000), "The Effects of Incongruity, Surprise and Positive Moderators on Perceived Humor in Television Advertising", *Journal of Advertising*, **29**(2), pp. 1-15.
- Allsop, D.T., Bassett, B.R., and Hoskins, J.A. (2007), "Word-of-Mouth Research: Principles and Applications", *Journal of Advertising Research*, **47**(4), pp. 398-411.
- Arndt, J. (1967), "The Role of Product-Related Conversations in the Diffusion of a New Product". *Journal of Marketing Research*, August, **4**(3), pp. 291–295.
- Baker, M.J. and Churchill, Jr. G.A. (1977), "The Impact of Physically Attractive Models on Advertising Evaluations", *Journal of Marketing Research*, **14**(4), pp. 538-555.
- Basemedia (2012), *Sociala Medier*. Available at [online] <http://www.basemedia.se/sociala-medier> (accessed 2012-03-01).
- Boyd, D.M. and Ellison, N.B. (2008), "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship" *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* **13**(1), pp. 210–230.
- Brown, M.R., Bhadury, K.R., and Pope, N.K. Ll. (2010), "The Impact of Comedic Violence on Viral Advertising Effectiveness", *Journal of Advertising*, **39**(2), pp. 49-65.
- Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2007), *Business Research Methods*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2nd edition.
- Buck, S. (2012), "The Internet is Ruining Your Brain [Infographic]" *ForensicPsychology.net*. Available at [online]: <http://mashable.com/2012/04/10/brain-internet-infographic/> (Accessed 2012-04-11).
- Burke, R.R. and Srull, R.K. (1988), "Competitive Interference and Consumer Memory for Advertising", *Journal of Consumer Research*, **15**(1), pp. 55-68.

Carlehäll, M. (2011), "Underbetyg för reklam i sociala medier", *Resumé*. Available at [online]: <http://www.resume.se/nyheter/reklam/2011/03/17/reklam-nar-inte-fram-i-soc/> (Accessed 2012-04-03).

Chiu, H-C., Hsieh, Y-C., Kao, Y-H, and Lee M. (2007), "The Determinants of Email Receivers' Disseminating Behaviors on the Internet", *Journal of Advertising Research*, **47**(4), pp. 524-534.

Chu, S-C. (2011), "Viral Advertising In Social Media: Participation In Facebook Groups and Responses Among College-Aged Students", *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, **12**(1), pp. 30-43.

Chu, S-C. and Kim, Y. (2011), "Determinants of Consumer Engagement in Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) in Social Networking Sites", *International Journal of Advertising*, **30**(1), pp. 47-75.

Colliander, J. and Dahlén, M. (2011), "Following the Fashionable Friend: The Power of Social Media. Weighing Publicity Effectiveness of Blogs versus Online Magazines", *Journal of Advertising Research*, **51**(1), pp. 313-320.

Dagens Media (2012), *Om Dagens Media*. Available at [online]: <http://www.dagensmedia.se/nyheter/kampanjer/article3422719.ece> (accessed 2012-03-06).

Dahlén, M., Lange, F., and Sjödin, H. (2005), "Effects of Ad-Brand Incongruency", *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, **27**(2), pp. 1-12.

Dahlén, M., Rosengren, S., Törn F., and Öhman, N. (2008), "Could Placing Ads Wrong be Right? Advertising Effects of Thematic Incongruence," *Journal of Advertising*, **37**(3), pp. 57-67.

Daughtery, T., Eastin, S.M., and Bright, L. (2008), "Exploring Consumer Motivations for Creating User-Generated Content", *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, **8**(2), pp. 1-24.

Dichter, E. (1966), "How Word-of-Mouth Advertising Works", *Harvard Business Review*, **44**(6), pp. 147-166.

Dick, A.S. and Basu, K. (1994), "Customer Loyalty: Toward an Integrated Conceptual Framework", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, **22**(2), pp. 99-113.

Dobele, A., Lindgreen, A., Beverland, M., Vanhamme, J., and van Wijk, R. (2007), "Why Pass on Viral Messages? Because They Connect Emotionally", *Business Horizons*, **50**(4), pp. 291-304.

Doh, S-J. and Hwang, J-S. (2009), "How Consumers Evaluate eWOM (Electronic Word-of-Mouth) Messages", *Cyberpsychology and Behavior*, **12**(2), pp. 193-197.

Eckler, P. and Bolls, P. (2011), "Spreading the Virus: Emotional Tone of Viral Advertising and its Effect on Forwarding Intentions and Attitudes", *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, **11**(2), pp. 1-11.

eMarketer (2011), "Where are Social Media Marketers Seeing the Most Success?". Available at [online]: <http://www.emarketer.com/Articles/Print.aspx?1008211> (Accessed 2012-04-05).

Evian (2012). *Home Page*. Available at [online]: http://www.evian.com/en_GB (Accessed 2012-04-26).

Facebook (2012a), *Product/Service*. Available at [online]: <http://www.facebook.com/facebook> (Accessed 2012-04-03).

Facebook (2012b), *Fact Sheet*, Available at [online]: <http://newsroom.fb.com/content/default.aspx?NewsAreaId=22> (Accessed 2012-04-03).

Farhad, M. (2011), "(Like)+(Retweet)=\$\$\$?", *Fast Company*, **157**(July-August), pp. 86-117

Fremin, L. (2011), "Rolling Stones + Dressmann = sant!", *Resume.se*. Available at [online]: <http://www.resume.se/nyheter/reklam/2011/01/14/rolling-stones-dressman-sa/> (Accessed 2012-04-26).

Geiger Haeggström, A. and Johansson, S. (2009), "Våga Vara Annorlunda", Examensuppsats, Stockholm School of Economics.

Gil-Or, O. (2010), "The Potential of Face Book in Creating Commercial Value for Service Companies", *Advances in Management*, **3**(2), pp. 20-25.

Goodstein, R.C. (1993), "Category-Based Applications and Extensions in Advertising: Motivating More Extensive Ad Processing", *Journal of Consumer Research*, **20**(1), pp. 87-99.

Heckler, S.E. and Childers, T.L (1992), "The Role of Expectancy and Relevancy in Memory for Verbal and Visual Information: What is Incongruity?", *Journal of Consumer Research*, **18**(4), pp. 475-492.

Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K.P., Walsh, G., and Gremler, D.D. (2004), "Electronic Word-of-Mouth via Consumer-Opinion Platforms: What Motivates Consumers to Articulate Themselves on the Internet?", *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, **18**(1), pp. 38-52.

Heritage, S. (2006), "Scarlett Johansson to be Face and Boobs of Reebok" *hecklerspray.com*. Available at [online]: <http://www.hecklerspray.com/scarlett-johansson-to-be-face-and-boobs-of-reebok/20064133.php> (Accessed 2012-04-26).

Hopkins, C.D., Jones, S.A., Picket, G., and Raymond, M.A. (2009), "The Influence of Brand Levels and Associations on Purchase Intent", *Journal of General Management*, **35**(1), pp. 19-34.

Howard, T. (2004), "Dylan Ad for Underwear Generates Lingering Buzz", *USAToday.com Advertising & Marketing*. Available at [online]: http://www.usatoday.com/money/advertising/adtrack/2004-05-16-victoria-secrets-dylan_x.htm (Accessed 2012-04-26).

Hsu, C-H., and Lin, J.C-C. (2008), "Acceptance of Blog Usage: the Roles of Technology Acceptance, Social Influence and Knowledge Sharing Motivation", *Information and Management*, **45**(1), pp. 65-74.

Huang, C-C., Lin, T-C., and Lin, K-J. (2009), “Factors Affecting Pass-Along Email Intentions (PAEIs): Integrating the Social Capital and Social Cognition Theories”, *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, **8**(3), pp. 160-169.

Huang, C-Y., Shen, Y-Z., Lin, H-X., and Chang, S-S. (2007), “Bloggers' Motivations and Behaviors: A Model”, *Journal of Advertising Research*, **47**(4), pp. 472-484.

Jagre, E., Watson, J.J., and Watson, J.G. (2001), “Sponsorship and Congruity Theory: A Theoretical Framework for Explaining Consumer Attitude and Recall of Event Sponsorship”, *Advances in Consumer Research*, **28**(1), pp. 439-445.

Keller, K. L., Apéria, T. and Georgson, M. (2008), *Strategic Brand Management: A European Perspective*, Essex: Pearson Education, 1st Edition.

Kelly, L., Kerr, G., and Drennan, J. (2010), “Avoidance of Advertising in Social Networking Sites: the Teenage Perspective”, *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, **10**(2), pp. 16-27.

Kozinets, R.V., de Valck, K., Wojnicki A.C., and Wilner, S.J.S. (2010), “Networked Narratives: Understanding Word-of-Mouth Marketing in Online Communities”, *Journal of Marketing*, **74**(2), pp. 71–89.

Lampert, S.I. and Rosenberg, L.J. (1975), “Word of Mouth Activity as Information Search: A Reappraisal”, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, **3**(4), pp. 337-354.

Lange, F. and Dahlén, M. 2003, “Let's be Strange: Brand Familiarity and Ad-Brand Incongruity”, *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, **12**(7), pp. 449-461.

Lee, Y.H., (2000), “Manipulating Ad Message Involvement through Information Expectancy: Effects on Attitude Evaluation and Confidence”, *Journal of Advertising*, **29**(2), pp. 29-43.

Lee, Y.H. and Mason, C. (1999), “Responses to Information Incongruity in Advertising: The Role of Expectancy, Relevancy, and Humor”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, **26**(2), pp. 156-169.

Lee, E.-J. and Schumann, D.W. (2004), "Explaining the Special Case of Incongruity in Advertising: Combining Classic Theoretical Approaches", *Marketing Theory*, **4**(1/2), pp. 59-90.

Lee, J.-G. and Thorson, E. (2008), "The Impact of Celebrity-Product Incongruence on the Effectiveness of Product Endorsement", *Journal of Advertising Research*, **48**(3), pp. 443-449.

Lee, M. and Youn, S. (2009), "Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM): How eWOM Platforms Influence Consumer Product Judgment", *International Journal of Advertising*, **28**(3), pp. 473-499

Lethagen, H. and Modig, E. (2008), "Unbundling Creativity", Master Thesis, Stockholm School of Economics.

Li, F. and Du, T.C. (2011), "Who is Talking? An Ontology-Based Opinion Leader Identification Framework for Word-of-Mouth Marketing in Online Social Blogs", *Decision Support Systems*, **51**(1), pp. 190-197.

Littorin, J. (2012), "Facebook sprider olycka", *Dagens Nyheter*, Available [online]: <http://www.dn.se/kultur-noje/facebook-sprider-olycka> (Accessed 2012-04-17)

Loef, J. (2002), "Incongruity between Ads and Consumer Expectation of Advertising", *Erasmus Research Institute of Management*, Dissertation Erasmus University of Rotterdam.

Lynch J.G. Jr. (1999), "Theory and External Validity", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, **27**(3), pp. 367-376.

Machleit, K.A., Allen, C.T., and Madden, J.T. (1993), "The Mature Brand and Brand Interest: An Alternative Consequence of Ad-Evoked Affect", *Journal of Marketing*, **57**(4), pp. 72-82.

Malhotra, N.K. (2010), *Marketing Research: An Applied Orientation*, Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, 6th edition.

Mandler, G. (1982), "The Structure of Value: Accounting for Taste", in Margaret, H., Clarke, S. and Fiske, S.T. (eds) *Affect and Cognition: The 17th Annual Carnegie Symposium on Cognition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 3–36.

Murphy, S. (2012), "Facebook to Celebrate 8th Birthday on Heels of IPO Announcement", *Mashable.com*, Available at [online]: <http://mashable.com/2012/01/31/facebook-anniversary/> (Accessed 2012-05-01).

Niederhoffer, K., Mooth, R., Wiesenfeld, D., and Gordon, J. (2007), "The Origin and Impact of CPG New-Product Buzz: Emerging Trends and Implications", *Journal of Advertising Research*, **47**(4), pp. 420-426.

Nielsen, J. (2006), "Participation Inequality: Encouraging More Users to Contribute", *useit.com*. Available at [online]: http://www.useit.com/alertbox/participation_inequality.html (Accessed 2012-05-11).

Oatts, J. (2006), "Reebok Turns Scarlett For New Female Range" *brandrepublic.com*. Available at [online]: <http://www.brandrepublic.com/bulletin/brandrepublicnewsbulletin/article/571488/reebok-turns-scarlett-new-female-range/> (Accessed 2012-04-26)

O'Carroll, L. (2011), "Time to cut the Facebook and Twitter clutter, says AOL's 'digital prophet'", *The Guardian (guardian.co.uk) PDA The Digital Content Blog*, Available at [online]: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2011/oct/27/facebook-twitter-clutter-aol> (Accessed 2012-04-16).

Okazaki, S. (2009), "Social Influence Model and Electronic Word of Mouth: PC Versus Mobile Internet", *International Journal of Advertising*, **28**(3), pp. 439-472.

OLW (2012), *Om OLW - Historia*. Available at [online]: <http://www.olw.se/#> (Accessed 2012-03-09).

Pallant, J. (2007), *SPSS Survival Manual: a Step by Step Guide to Data Analysis Using SPSS for Windows (Version 15)*, Maidenhead: Open University Press, 3rd Edition.

Percy, L. and Elliott, R., (2009), *Strategic Advertising Management*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd Edition.

Phelps, J.E., Lewis, R., Mobilio, L., Perry, D., and Raman, N. (2004), “Viral Marketing or Electronic Word-of-Mouth Advertising: Examining Consumer Responses and Motivations to Pass Along Email”, *Journal of Advertising Research*, **44**(4), pp. 333-348.

Pripps (2012), *Historia*. Available at [online]: <http://www.pripps.se/start.html> (Accessed 2012-03-09).

Resumé (2012), *Annonsera*. Available at [online]: <http://www.resume.se/annonsera/> (Accessed 2012-03-06)

Richardson, N., Gosnay, R., and Carroll, S. (2010), *A Quick Start Guide to Social Media Marketing: High-impact, Low-cost Marketing that Works*. [e-book] London, Philadelphia: Kogan Page Ltd.. Available through: Stockholm School of Economics Ebrary website: <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/hhss/home.action> [Accessed 2012-03-20].

Robson, C. (2007), *How to do a Research Project: A Guide for Undergraduate Students*, Malden: Blackwell Publications, 1st Edition.

Rosengren, S. (2008), *Facing Clutter: On Message Competition in Marketing Communications*, Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The Economic Research Institute, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm.

Rost, S.-L. (2011), “Rolling Stones + Dressmann, eh?”, *Twitter.com*. Available at [online]: <http://twitter.com/#!/SaraLeeRost/status/27842877258211328> (Accessed 2012-04-26).

Salzman, M., Matathia, I., and O'Reilly, A. (2003), *Buzz: Harness the Power of Influence and Create Demand*. [e-book] Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 1st Edition. Available through: Google Books: <http://books.google.se/books> [Accessed 2012-03-20].

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., and Thornhill, A. (2009), *Research Methods for Business Students*, Harlow: Pearson Education, 5th Edition.

Schori, M. (2010), "Mikkelsen lyfte Fritidsresor", *Dagensmedia.com*. Available at [online]: <http://www.dagensmedia.se/nyheter/kampanjer/article2462178.ece> (Accessed 2012-04-26).

Sjödin, H. and Törn, F. (2006), "When Communication Challenges Brand Associations: A Framework for Understanding Consumer Responses to Brand Image Incongruity", *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, **5**(1), pp. 32-42.

Smith, R.E., Chen, J., and Yang, X. (2008), "The Impact of Advertising Creativity on the Hierarchy of Effects", *Journal of Advertising*, **37**(4), pp. 47-61.

Social Media Benchmark (2011), *Wave One Autumn 2011*, The Chartered Institute of Marketing, Available at [online]: <http://www.smbenchmark.com/the-benchmark/results-wave-one/> (Accessed 2012-04-03).

Socialbakers (2012a), "Socialbakers Social Media Report of Facebook Pages in Sweden" *Socialbakers*, Available at [online]: <http://www.kullin.net/2012/01/socialbakers-facebook-sweden-jan-2012/> (Accessed 2012-04-03).

Socialbakers (2012b), "Sweden Facebook Statistics" *Socialbakers*, Available at [online]: <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/swedenb> (Accessed 2012-03-01).

Strutton, D., Taylor, D.G., and Thompson, K. (2011), "Investigating Generational Differences in E-WOM Behaviours: For Advertising Purposes, Does X = Y?", *International Journal of Advertising*, **30**(4), pp. 559-586.

Subramani, M.R., and Rajagopalan, B. (2003), "Knowledge-Sharing and Influence in Online Social Networks via Viral Marketing", *Communications of the ACM*, **46**(12), pp. 300-307.

Söderlund, M. (2005), *Mätningar och mått – i marknadsundersökarens värld*, Malmö: Liber, 1st Edition.

Svanvik, A. (2012), *Interview Scholz & Friends*, conducted by Sofia Kjellström and Alexandra Drissner on 2012-02-12, 11am.

Taylor, C. (2012), “3 Reasons Facebook Brand Pages Are Good for Businesses”, *Mashable.com*. Available at [online]: <http://mashable.com/2012/03/30/facebook-brand-pages-business/> (Accessed 2012-04-26).

Törn, F. (2009), *Challenging Consistency: Effects of Brand-Incongruent Communications*. Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The Economic Research Institute, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm.

Törn, F. and Dahlén, M. (2008), “Effects of Brand Incongruent Advertising in Competitive Settings” in Borghini, S., McGrath, M. A. and Otnes, C. C (Eds), *European Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 8, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, pp. 234-239.

Twitter (2012). *About*. Available at [online]: <http://twitter.com/about> (Accessed 2012-05-10).

Van der Lans, R., van Bruggen, G., Eliashberg, J., Wierenga, B. (2010), “A Viral Branching Model for Predicting the Spread of Electronic Word of Mouth”, *Marketing Science*, **29**(2), pp. 348-365.

Van Eck, P.S., Jager, W., and Leeflang, P.S.H. (2011), “Opinion Leaders’ Role in Innovation Diffusion: A Simulation Study”, *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, **28**(2), pp. 187-203.

Van Noort, G., Antheunis, M.L., and Van Reijmersdal, E.A. (2012), “Social Connections and the Persuasiveness of Viral Campaigns in Social Network Sites: Persuasive Intent as the Underlying Mechanism”, *Journal of Marketing Communications*, **18**(1), pp. 39-53.

VonRiesen, R. D. and Herndon, N. C. (2011), “Consumer Involvement With the Product and the Nature of Brand Loyalty”, *Journal of Marketing Channels*, **18**(4), pp. 327-352.

Vilpponen, A., Winter, S., and Sundqvist, S. (2006), “Electronic Word-of-Mouth in Online Environments: Exploring Referral Network Structure and Adoption Behavior”, *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, Spring. **6**(2), pp. 71-86.

Whitehead, J. (2009), "Evian Roller Babies Makes Guinness Book of Records with 45 Million Online Views" *Brandrepublic.com*. Available at [online]: <http://www.brandrepublic.com/news/967098/Evian-roller-babies-makes-Guinness-Book-Records-45-million-online-views/>, (Accessed 2012-04-09).

Wredin, S. (2012), "Värdet av sociala medier ifrågasätts i ny undersökning", *Sveriges Marknadsförbund*. Available at [online]: <http://svemarknad.se/2012/vardet-av-sociala-medier-ifragasatts-i-ny-undersokning/> (Accessed 2012-04-03).

Yang, H.C. and Zhou, L. (2011), "Extending TPB and TAM to Mobile Viral Marketing: An Exploratory Study on American Young Consumers' Mobile Viral Marketing Attitude, Intent and Behavior", *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, **19**(2), pp. 85-98.

Yeh, Y-H. and Choi, S.M. (2011) "MINI-lovers, Maxi-mouths: An Investigation of Antecedents to eWOM Intention Among Brand Community Members", *Journal of Marketing Communications*, **17**(3), pp. 145-162.

Yoo, B. and Donthu, N. (2001), "Developing and Validating a Multidimensional Consumer-Based Brand Equity Scale", *Journal of Business research*, **52**(1), pp. 1-14.

7. APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: ADVERTISEMENTS

APPENDIX 1.1: OLW AD CONGRUENT



APPENDIX 1.2: OLW Ad INCONGRUENT



APPENDIX 1.3: PRIPPS BLÅ AD CONGRUENT



APPENDIX 1.4: PRIPPS BLÅ AD INCONGRUENT



APPENDIX 2: PRE-STUDY 1

We are two students at Stockholm School of Economics that currently are writing our master thesis. Please help us by answering the following questions.

How familiar are you with Pripps blå?

1. Not familiar at all 2 3 4 5 6 7. Very familiar

How would you describe Pripps blå? (please use 5 words)

1

2

3

4

5

What is the opposite of Pripps blå? (please use 5 words)

1

2

3

4

5

How familiar are you with OLW?

1. Not familiar at all 2 3 4 5 6 7. Very familiar

How would you describe OLW? (please use 5 words)

1

2

3

4

5

What is the opposite of OLW? (please use 5 words)

1

2

3

4

5

Thank you!

APPENDIX 3: EXAMPLE OF PRE-STUDY 2

Tänk på varumärket Pripps Blå



Vänligen titta på följande bilder:

Hur väl passar bilden ihop med varumärket Pripps Blå?

1. Inte alls väl 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. Våldigt väl
-

Hur väl passar bilden ihop med följande ord?

	1. Inte alls väl	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Våldigt väl
Sommar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sverige	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Öl	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internationell	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mörk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vinter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX 4: AD PICTURES VARYING LEVELS OF CONGRUITY

APPENDIX 4.1: OLW 1



APPENDIX 4.2: OLW 2



APPENDIX 4.3: OLV 3



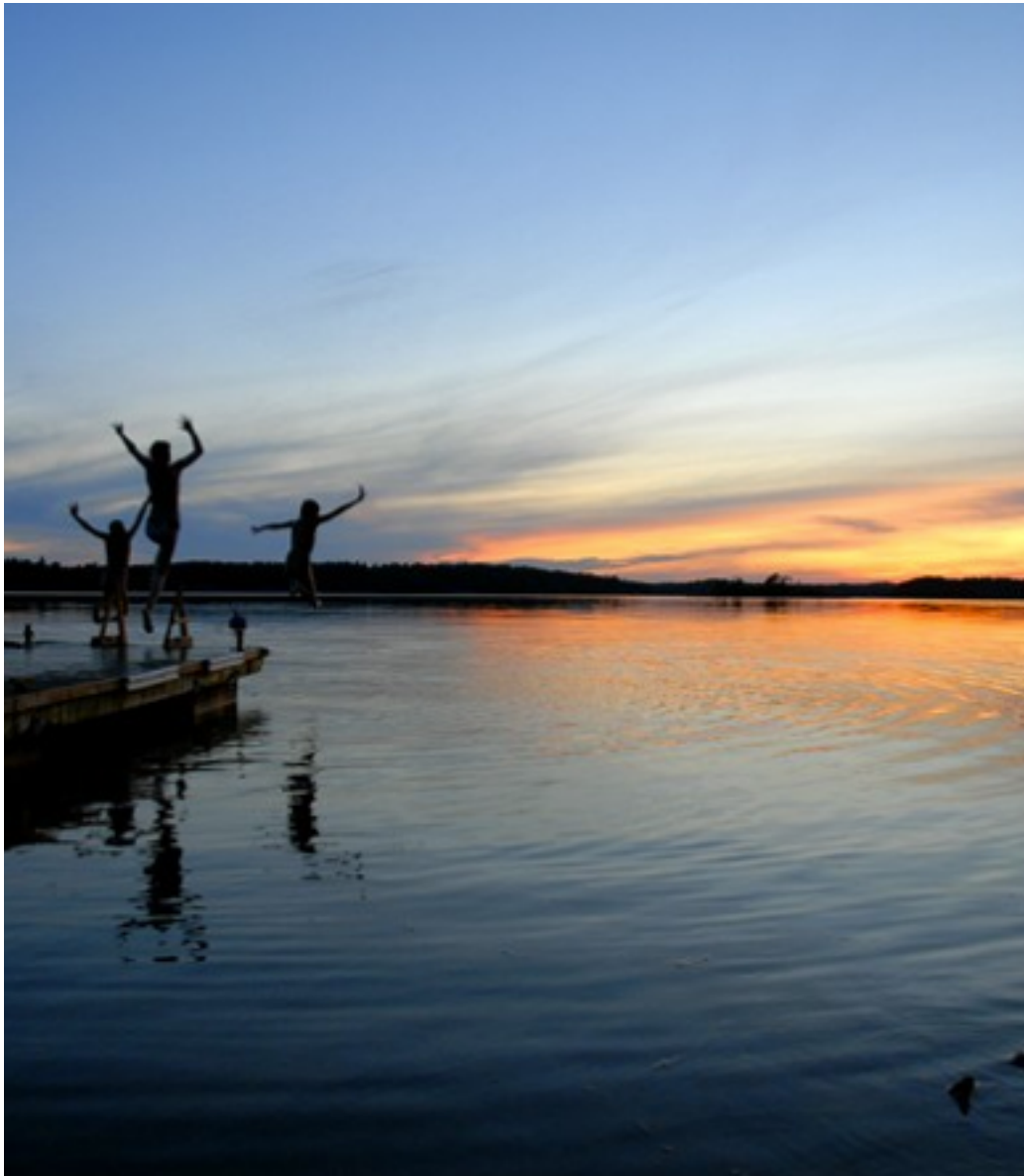
APPENDIX 4.4: OLV 4



APPENDIX 4.5: OLW 5



APPENDIX 4.6: PRIPPS BLÅ 1



APPENDIX 4.7: PRIPPS BLÅ 2



APPENDIX 4.8: PRIPPS BLÅ 3



APPENDIX 4.9: PRIPPS BLÅ 4



APPENDIX 4.10: PRIPPS BLÅ 5



APPENDIX 5: MAIN SURVEY 1 – SNS USERS (EXAMPLE PRIPPS BLÅ INCONGRUENT)

Hej!

Vi är två studenter som skriver vår masteruppsats i marknadsföring. Nu behöver vi din hjälp och hoppas att du kan ta dig tid att delta i vår undersökning. Alla svar är anonyma således du inte vill delta i utlotningen av presentkort från Paus med ett värde av 250SEK.

Vänligen titta på följande reklam, hur länge du vill. Fortsätt sedan till nästa sida. Svara på frågorna tills dess att undersökningen tar slut och lämna sedan e-postadress om du vill delta i utlotningen av presentkort.



Hur väl passar reklamen ihop med varumärket Pripps Blå?

1. Inte alls väl 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. Väldigt väl

Hur väl instämmer du med följande påståenden?

	1. Instämmer inte alls	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Instämmer helt
Jag anser mig lojal till Pripps Blå.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pripps Blå är mitt första val om jag köper öl.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag skulle inte köpa något annat varumärke om Pripps Blå fanns tillgängligt.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Hur väl instämmer du med följande påståenden?

	1. Instämmer inte alls	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Instämmer helt
Det är väldigt troligt att jag skulle köpa Pripps Blå.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag kommer att köpa Pripps Blå inom det närmsta året.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det är kul att köpa Pripps Blå.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Hur väl instämmer du med följande påståenden?

	1. Instämmer inte alls	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Instämmer helt
Det är väldigt troligt att jag skulle köpa öl.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag kommer att köpa öl inom det närmsta året.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det är kul att köpa öl.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Hur väl instämmer du med följande påståenden?

	1. Instämmer inte alls	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Instämmer helt
Jag är nyfiken på Pripps Blå.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag skulle vilja veta mer om Pripps Blå.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag är intresserad av Pripps Blå.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Hur väl instämmer du med följande påståenden?

	1. Instämmer inte alls	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Instämmer helt
Jag är nyfiken på öl.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag skulle vilja veta mer om öl.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag är intresserad av öl.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Vänligen titta på följande Facebook-inlägg från Pripps Blå



Hur väl instämmer du med följande påståenden?

	1. Instämmer inte alls	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Instämmer helt
Det är värt att visa det här inlägget för någon jag känner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag skulle visa det här inlägget för någon jag känner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det är värt att dela/kopiera inlägget.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag skulle dela/kopiera inlägget.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det är värt att "kommentera" inlägget.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag skulle "kommentera" inlägget.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det är värt att "gilla" inlägget.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag skulle "gilla" inlägget.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Vänligen titta på följande Facebook-inlägg från en nära vän.



Hur väl instämmer du med följande påståenden?

	1. Instämmer inte alls	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Instämmer helt
Det är värt att visa det här inlägget för någon jag känner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag skulle visa det här inlägget för någon jag känner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det är värt att dela/kopiera inlägget.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag skulle dela/kopiera inlägget.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det är värt att "kommentera" inlägget.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag skulle "kommentera" inlägget.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det är värt att "gilla" inlägget.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag skulle "gilla" inlägget.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Hur gammal är du? (Vänligen svara i hela år)

Är du man eller kvinna?

- man
 kvinna

Hur ofta besöker du Facebook?

- flera gånger per dag
 varje dag
 2-3 gånger per vecka
 1 gång per vecka
 < 1 gång per vecka

Hur väl instämmer du med följande påståenden?

	1. Instämmer inte alls	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Instämmer helt
Min attityd till att dela länkar på Facebook är positiv.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Generellt tycker jag att det är bra att dela länkar med vänner och bekanta på Facebook.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jag tycker inte alls om att dela länkar med vänner och bekanta på Facebook.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Tack så mycket för att du tog dig tid att svara på vår undersökning! Vill du delta i utlottningen av presentkort vänligen ange email-adress nedan.

APPENDIX 6: MAIN SURVEY 2 – OPINION LEADERS

Hej!

Vi är två studenter som studerar marknadsföring på Handelshögskolan. Efter att ha läst kursen MCXL under hösten skriver vi nu en uppsats inom kommunikation. Därför undrar vi om du har möjlighet att ta dig tid att svara på de tre frågorna nedan? Det borde inte ta mer än 4 minuter och skulle vara till stor hjälp för vår studie.

Tack så jättemycket för hjälpen, och hör gärna av dig om du har några frågor.

Med vänlig hälsning,
Sofia och Alexandra

Instruktioner:

Titta på den bifogade bilden. Svara sedan på de tre påståendena nedan med en siffra mellan 1. och 7. Där 1 är "*instämmer inte alls*", och 7 är "*instämmer helt*". Lättaste sättet är att svara på detta mail och skriva en siffra tillsammans med varje påstående, t.ex. Påstående 1. 5, Påstående 2. 6, Påstående 3. 4.

Påstående 1. Den här reklamen är värd att dela med andra. (svara med en siffra 1-7)

Påstående 2. Jag skulle rekommendera den här reklamen till andra. (svara med en siffra 1-7)

Påstående 3. Jag skulle skriva/twittra/blogga om den här reklamen. (svara med en siffra 1-7)

*Sofia Kjellström
MSc student in Business and Economics, specialization in Marketing and Media Management
21186@student.hhs.se | sofia@mcxl.se
+46 (0)73 976 13 29*

APPENDIX 7: EXAMPLE COMMENTS OPINION LEADERS

“Om annonsen var på riktigt så skulle jag kritisera eller indirekt kritisera/skämta om den.”

(Respondent main survey 2, 2012)

“‘WTF?!’ skulle vara bildtexten till delningen.” (Respondent main survey 2, 2012)

“Inte en annons alls i min smak.” (Respondent main survey 2, 2012)