TAGS AND AD LINKS
A NEW AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

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Swedish title: Taggar och länkar - en ny era av marknadsföring på sociala medier

English title: Tags and ad links - a new age of social media marketing

Year of puplication: 2016

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Abstract

The constant presence and continuous growth of social media has resulted in new challenges and opportunities for brands and entire industries. Today, Instagram and blogs are among the most popular and frequently used social media platforms where users, consumers, marketers, influencers, and brands communicate and can join forces to create synergies and expand their presence and widen their targeted audience.

The purpose of this study is to establish in which ways marketers can use the new marketing techniques of tags and ad links on Instagram and blogs that affect Swedish consumers in their online purchasing processes. The study was conducted through the distribution of an online self-completion questionnaire to a snowball sample of 300 respondents. The results that have been reached are that trustworthiness connected to the source plays a big role in how consumers decide to act online, and which advertising messages they are likely to seek out and accept. It has also been noted that the occurrence of tags and ad links does not necessarily have to result in a purchase, but that tags and ad links are important intermediaries that catches consumers attention and serves as a gateway. Once the tags and ad links have been noticed there is a great chance that the consumer will follow the link to the specifically linked product and make a purchase, or browse to through other products as a time passing activity, or due to a curiosity or interest in the product.

The results of this study are presented in English and will most likely not serve as a representation of the entire Swedish population but more likely as a reflection of the attitudes existing within the concerned sampling frame.

Keywords: social media, Instagram, blogs, tags, ad links, eWOM, trustworthiness

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Utgivningsår: 2016

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Sammanfattning

Den konstanta närvaron och fortsatta tillväxten av sociala medier har resulterat i en mängd utmaningar och desslika möjligheter för företag och hela industrier. Idag är Instagram och bloggar två av de mest framstående sociala medierna där användare, konsumenter, marknadsförare, påverkare och organisationer kan skapa synergier för att utöka både närvaro och bredda sin målgrupp.

Syftet med denna studie är att befästa hur marknadsförare kan dra nytta av nya marknadsföringstekniker såsom taggar och länkar som påverkar svenska konsumenter i deras köpprocesser online. Studien genomfördes med hjälp av en online-baserad enkät distribuerad till 300 respondenter identifierade genom ett snöbollsurval. Resultaten som har framkommit indikerar att trovärdighet är en viktig komponent i hur konsumenter agerar på nätet och vilka reklambudskap de är benägna att lägga märke till och acceptera. Det har också noterats att taggar och länkar inte nödvändigtvis leder till ett köp, men att taggar och länkar fungerar som mellanhänder som väcker ett intresse bland konsumenterna. Vidare har det fastställts att de konsumenter som faktiskt klickar på en tagg eller länk efter att ha sett dem i större utsträckning faktiskt fullföljer med att göra ett köp, alternativt använder taggen eller länken som en inkörsport för att visa andra produkter på samma webbsida. Slutligen har det framkommit att den största motivationen bakom ett klick på en tagg eller länk är för att fördriva samt ett intresse eller en nyfikenhet kring produkten.

Resultaten från denna studie presenteras på engelska och kommer inte agera som en representation av hela Sverige utan snarare som en spegling av existerande attityder inom det berörda urvalet.

Nyckelord: sociala medier, Instagram, blogg, taggar, länkar, eWOM, trovärdighet

Acknowledgements

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1 Introduction

In this chapter an introduction will be presented which will serve as the foundation for the whole research, in terms of why this research is relevant, and for what reasons it should be conducted. First there will be a background to the area of research, thereafter a problem discussion which will disclose and result in a purpose and research question.

1.1 Background

It is becoming increasingly common for consumers to purchase products online using Internet supported devices, and the industry of electronic commerce in Sweden is currently experiencing a growth from 2015 with 19 percent (Hui Research Årsrapport, 2015). Eventually, this means that the need for additional retail space will decrease, as the conversation transmitted between customer and supplier will not be restricted by time and place, as a result of shifting physical stores into digital. Above all, the biggest turnover that comes with the rapid technological development will affect the consumer behavior in relation to the retail trade (Hui Research Årsrapport, 2015).

Lately, brand managers and companies have been subjected to a messy media surrounding, as an implication of an expeditious advertising development (Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015). Thus, marketers find it crucial to identify new routes to transmit their marketing messages to the consumers. Consequently, various social medias have been targeted by companies for advertisements, concentrating on social media users on platforms such as Instagram and blogs to broadcast their marketing messages either for free or in exchange for money (Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015).

As new technologies are developed, new business opportunities occur, resulting in a steadily increasing number of online shopping websites (Al-Debei, Akroush & Ashouri, 2015). As a frontrunner, social media is one of the main facilitators behind the recent years spike in online shopping, as it allows individuals to engage with brands, influencers, and other consumer all over the world regardless of their own location (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Palmer and Koenig-Lewis (2009) state that the main reason behind the frequent use of social media is the communicative benefits that are offered. Social media provides users with the possibility to integrate, build relationships, and engage, with both acquaintances and strangers, providing endless advertising opportunities (Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2009).

Aside from business aspects, social media serves as an entertainment portal which can be customized to follow the interests of specific individuals or organizations. It is estimated that approximately 40 million pictures are posted on Instagram each day, providing companies with a huge potential reach for new businesses (Gernsbacher, 2014). As a result, Heinonen (2011) means that the role of the consumer has changed, as consumers have gone from being passive recipients of advertising messages to being the ones who actively generate and disseminate the information they wish to be exposed to.

Fu and Chen (2012) explain that advertising on social media, and especially on blogs, tends to be very successful as over 40% of blog readers trust a blog-based advertisement to the extent that they make a purchase. According to Ferguson (2008) brands' abilities to adapt to social

media is not only a cost saving strategy but also a way of elevating brand awareness and access to new timely marketing strategies. Further, Internet driven communication is becoming increasingly important if companies wish to market themselves in a way which is easily susceptible for customers (Lusch, 2007). Therefore, Palmer and Keonig-Lewis (2009) emphasize that it is crucial for companies to grasp the importance of the new types of marketing channels that are created from social media and to understand the drivers and motivation behind the individual consumers' online purchasing processes.

1.2 Problem discussion

Wright, Khanfar, Harrington, and Kizer (2010) state that it is inefficient and uneconomical for marketers to solely focus on traditional advertising methods as customers tend to bypass these. Instead, the focal point of advertising should be directed towards current social media trends (Wright et al. 2010). Messages that goes out to the customers must to be tailored and personalized as the behavior of the consumer has changed over time, into them being more in charge of how and when they want to be exposed of advertising (Wright et al., 2010).

Bernhardt, Mays and Hall (2012) elaborate by explaining that there is a difference between traditional media and new media, such as social media and blogs, regarding the drive behind consumers' acceptance of advertising. New media is driven by the consumer, meaning that they are the ones who are in control of what is being created and shared between and among them. Furthermore, a fundamental advantage of new media is trustworthiness as consumers themselves regard the information that stem through these channels to be more honest (Bernhardt, Mays & Hall, 2012).

Wen, Prybutok, Blankson, and Fang (2014) explain that the most prominent benefits presented by an online-based advertising strategy are namely that customers are reachable around round the clock, as opposed to traditional offline methods. It is also stated that e-commerce businesses can be both cost-cutting and time efficient with reduced production and purchasing cycles (Wen et al., 2014). These new technological developments have led to a change in how marketing departments should work and have thereby resulted in a need for newly generated and adaptive strategies which incorporates a multitude of viral marketing techniques such as product placement and electronic word of mouth (Rust & Espinoza, 2006; Day, 2011).

Tags and ad links are frequently used by both private users and brands for different purposes, either as a strict advertising function or as an electronic word-of-mouth source where the main premise is to generate recommendations to other users. As a result of the recent years growth of e-commerce services there is a lack of research regarding the customer's decision-making process in an online setting (Wen et al., (2014). By putting this in the context of social media, and in this case tags and ad links, the gap of available literature is even wider. The possibilities that lie within this marketing field are rapidly developing and expanding, yet, there is little to non-existent literature devoted to this area; hence it needs to be further researched.

By conducting a research venture where this relevant combination is investigated marketers and advertisers can understand the underlying motivations and drivers behind consumers' online habits as a result of social media functions. As previously stated, the consumer is now

in charge of the content presented to them on social media and by collaborating with social media profiles there is a tremendous potential reach for brands and influencers.

1.3 Research question

This study is guided by a research question which has been formulated as follows:

To what extent can tags and ad links be used by marketers to reach Swedish online consumers?

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate how marketers can use the new social media functions of tags and ad links as a tool to reach Swedish online consumers. Further, the purpose is to see which impact tags and ad links have in the individual consumer's online shopping experience.

1.5 Limitations

This study will solely focus on tags and ad links found on Instagram and blogs, which will represent and reflect social media in this study. Whether the advertising messages are sponsored by brands or not will not be a main concern, though it will be discussed as it offers interesting marketing opportunities. A further limitation is made by the perceived recognition of social media source and therefore there will be no distinction between anonymous or famous social media profiles. Conclusively, this study will solely focus on online shopping in regards to products.

1.6 Target audience

The results of this study will foremost provide knowledge to researchers within the field of marketing and advertising. As marketing on social media is developing at a rapid pace it is crucial for researchers to identify from which channels this type of marketing goes and the underlying reasons for it. Furthermore, the knowledge derived from this study will also be of use to marketing divisions, marketers, and organizations, who will get an increased sense of understanding of their customers and their specific preferences.

1.7 Definition of key concepts

Social media
Social media represent websites and mobile applications where users can interact with other users in social networks, thus, the users are able to contribute with their own content transmitted to peers. Social media includes blogs, video blogs, forums, social networking services, podcast etc.

Instagram

Instagram is a free mobile application allowing users to share photos and videos to a social network. The application allows the user to take a photo instantly or upload a photo from the phone's photo library, add filters, and post it to their own page. Additionally, the user can share the photo or video to other networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

Blogs

A blog is an abbreviation from the term web diary, and allows the user to write text entries and share pictures or videos on a website, where the posts are periodically published. Every blog post usually treats a certain topic and blog visitors are for the most part able to leave comments under the blog post.

Tags

A tag is a function that the users on social media can apply to categorize their posts, furthermore, clicking on a tag on a photo will refer the user to a certain account. On Instagram, a user can tag another user's account by tagging the user's name in the photo (see appendix 3).

Ad links

Ad links, or just links, is a function used mostly on blogs by bloggers. The function is that a link refers the user who clicks on the link to another website. For example a blog post could contain text and pictures of certain clothing items with a link matching that item, clicking on the link could refer the user to the website selling that specific clothing item (see appendix 4).

2 Theoretical framework

This chapter presents all relevant theory for the research which starts off with a wider presentation of theory to be narrowed down and more focused towards the end of the chapter. Hypotheses are formed and presented in the theory that follows.

2.1 Social media

Web 3.0 is now the newest social media in use and it is growing tremendously fast (Bruck & Rao, 2013; Eslinger, 2014; Kaplan, 2012). According to Polat and Akgün (2015) Web 3.0 has not only developed the information and communication technology in individuals' everyday life, it has also changed many other areas, such as marketing for organizations. Social media is changing customer's behavior, attitudes, and expectations towards products, services, and brand awareness, and it is thereby important for organizations to focus on new marketing capabilities to better understand their consumers and the potential markets (Polat & Akgün, 2015). Web 3.0 represents a new social media era where technologies such as cloud computing, big data, Internet, social networking platforms, security, and other features that exist in Web 2.0, are all integrated into one small hand-held device (Newman, Chang, Walters & Wills, 2016).

The term social media is a collective of online communication channels and it is today popular among Internet users from all over the world (Fuchs, 2014; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012). Social media offers a broad range of collaborative applications such as networking platforms, video sharing sites, blogs, microblogs, Google, Wikipedia, virtual game worlds, virtual social worlds and more (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012; Leigert, 2013; Allen, 2012; Scholz, 2008). However, since these new technologies has recently become popular, whereas the level of social media users has increased as well, social media is still seen as a fairly new phenomenon among many people (Fuchs, 2014). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) divide social media into six different categories depending on the specific characteristics and functions of each application. These are collaborative projects (Wikipedia), blogs, content communities (Youtube, Flickr), social networking platforms (Facebook), virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

One service Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) did not include in the categories of social media is mobile social media application. However, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) did mention that the technical evolution of mobile social media applications is quickly moving forward and will soon replace the traditional social media on desktop computers and laptops.

Previous research on social media platforms has pointed out mobile social media to be a main driver behind the recent technological evolution (Bruck & Rao, 2013; Eslinger, 2014; Kaplan, 2012). Kaplan (2012) states that mobile devices have become an essential part in our everyday life, and almost everyone is using a smartphone nowadays, that is, a hand-held computer with several functions. Since the Internet has evolved to incorporate mobile devices, it is now easier for people to search for information, to be connected in different types of applications with other people, and to network (Parkes & Walton, 2010; Newman et al., 2016). Thus, people are today living in the mobile age and it is therefore important for individuals to understand how social media is changing the social trend and how this can affect people's everyday behavior (Eslinger, 2014; Newman et al., 2016).

2.1.1 Instagram

Instagram is an application that allows users to share moments of their everyday life to a feed of followers through filter justified pictures or videos taken either by a mobile phone camera as they happen in real time, or professionally taken photos, in a self-promotion purpose (Eslinger, 2014; Ridgway & Clayton, 2016). Instagram is an application quite similar to the Internet website Flickr, which belongs to the category of content community and where the main idea is to share photos (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Instagram is mainly an application built for mobile devices but the service can also be accessed through a desktop computer (Eslinger, 2014). Users on Instagram can follow other users to see their uploaded pictures and through the pictures one can leave comments or 'like' a photo or video (Ridgway & Clayton, 2016). According to Ridgway and Clayton (2016) Instagram is now one of the most popular social media platforms that allow users to share media content between each other. Instagram has become one of the most widely used Web 3.0 platforms for businesses who are using content communities as a channel to reach out to potential customers and shareholders, and perform brand marketing (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Along with uploading pictures and videos on Instagram, users can add descriptive captions and tag other accounts in the uploaded picture or video (Ridgway & Clayton, 2016). Tags on social media, also referred to as social tagging, is a way for users to share bookmarks, photographs, links, referrals, or other contents between and among users and accounts (Golder & Huberman, 2006; Marinho, 2012; Nam & Kannan, 2014). Tagging on Instagram, or leaving a 'tag', means that a user can share pictures or videos to other users by mentioning the other user's account name either on the picture itself, in the comment section, or by sharing a keyword. The user who got tagged would then receive a notification and can in that way interact with other users through the tag on the picture or video (Ridgway & Clayton, 2016).

Users can share tags by mentioning and creating keywords relevant to the specific content, whereas these tags can be used to perform searches or organize content more easily (Nam & Kannan, 2014). Tagging is a form of communication which users can apply to connect, collaborate, share knowledge, and to construct user-networks, resource-networks, or bipartite networks (Lee & Ge, 2010). Lee and Ge (2010) further explain the function of user-network, resource-network, and bipartite network as users who have tagged similar sources, sources which have been tagged by the same users, or a combination of the both to create an association between each other.

According to Marinho (2012) tagging is an effective tool for users, but it is also very efficient for organizations since it helps both parts to filter their searches and by using right keywords overload information will be reduced. Golder and Huberman (2006) discuss how social tagging has grown in popularity with the use of Internet, and how it can be used as a new marketing tool for organizations. Tags can give rich associative information of a product or a brand and it can provide new opportunities for marketers to reach out to potential customers (Nam & Kannan, 2014).

2.1.2 Blogs

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) blogs represent the first form of social media which has grown out of the function of a weblog, where users would write diary entries. The content of the blogs have traditionally been in a text based form, although the new mainstream of social media have taken blogs to a more complex multimedia level with richer and varying

media features such as pictures, videos, audios, and third-party incorporations (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Thus, the traditional weblogs have transformed, leading to what is now considered a blog where the communication takes place in a many-to-many manner as users can add comments on each other's blog posts or share the post on other social media platforms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Thomsett-Scott, 2014; Walker Rettberg, 2014).

Blogs can be divided into different categories; personal blogs, collaborative blogs, micro blogs, corporate blogs, aggregated blogs, media blogs, web forum blogs, type of genre blogs, or type of device blogs (Newson, Houghton & Patten, 2009). The purpose of blogging can therefore be different, where some would blog for internal communication and knowledge sharing purposes while certain organizations use blogs for marketing, customer relations, and external public relations (Newson, Houghton & Patten, 2009). Thus, blogs do not only contain personal stories of one's life but can also incorporate other areas of interest such as politics, shopping, and social trends (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Walker Rettberg, 2014). Conclusively, blogs have become an important tool and part of the online world, where individuals use blogging to influence people in their surrounding environments, and organization's blog to update employees, customers, and shareholders on current events. (Walker Rettberg, 2014).

Bloggers' main premise is to share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions with others through a reversed chronological order so that readers can read the most recent blog post first (Newson, Houghton & Patten, 2009) Moreover, bloggers frequently share links that they find interesting to other websites, blogs, or readers to their followers (Zafiropoulos & Vrana, 2011). These links are often referred to as hyperlinks, which allows readers to click on the link to directly access the content, usually transferring the reader to another website, picture, text, or video (Zafiropoulos & Vrana, 2011). Sharing links on blogs is a type of social behavior was it helps groups to discuss certain topics (Hsu & Park, 2011). Since many people are using blogs to share information and collaborate with others, many blogging platforms have therefore implemented new interactive functions for bloggers to use (Lu, Lin, Hsiao & Cheng, 2010).

According to Lu et al. (2010) and as a result of the increasing number of blog readers, bloggers who share and create valuable information may attract more visitors and members. A potential marketing strategy for organizations is therefore to use these bloggers to market their brands and create brand awareness (Lu et al., 2010). Dellarocas, Katona and Rand (2013) discuss how links is an effective tool for third-party users, bloggers, as a complement to their own content and information sharing. Even for the content owner of the link, free sharing and visibility of their content is an effective way to attract more customers or users (Dellarocas, Katona & Rand, 2013). There are several benefits for both content creators, consumers, and link owners when bloggers shares hyperlinks as a complementation to their content sharing, although there are also some drawbacks regarding legitimacy and costs that can occur when sharing illicit links (Dellarocas, Katona & Rand, 2013).

2.2 Consumer behavior

2.2.1 Online purchasing behavior

Niu (2013) states that young adults are the dominant user group on the Internet, and that online shopping is the currently flourishing trend. Niu (2013) clarifies that it is ultimately

good business for brands to extend from traditional physical stores to online stores. Online retailing in Sweden is a growing force, in 2015 internet sales had a turnover of 50 billion SEK (Hui Research Årsrapport, 2015). Due to this, it is essential to discern the impact that online information has on consumers shopping behavior since it will affect their shopping needs. Moreover, it is crucial to understand that young adults' purchasing decisions are affected by several external factors such as fashion trends, peers, and distinctive consumption characteristics (Niu, 2013; Mosteller, Donthu & Eroglu, 2014).

Due to the increasing e-commerce growth, it is now easier for consumers to shop online and do the traditional brick and mortar activities electronically, and in an instance, with the aid of information technologies (Niu, 2013). Thus, Niu (2913) express that online purchases have affected the consumers purchasing behavior. Schiffman and Kanuk (2010) mention that consumer behavior is characterized by searching, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services with the aim to satisfy needs and wants.

37.2% of users are likely to express their experience of a product or service with friends on social media (Yan et al., 2016). Jiang, Yang and Jun (2013) implicates that convenience is one of the dominant motivations behind customers engagement in online shopping. Social media and the accessibility of websites have been a largely contributing factor affecting the shopping convenience for customers (Jiang, Yang & Jun, 2013), which results in the first hypothesis.

> **H1.** *Individual customer's online shopping has increased as a result of social media*

2.2.2 Purchasing process

A consumer goes through several steps in a decision making process. Schifferman and Kanuk (2010) present three different, yet intertwined stages: the input stage, the process stage, and the output stage. In the initial input stage the consumer is influenced by two external influences; the company's marketing intentions such as the actual product, price, promotions, and channels of distribution. Likewise, the consumers are influenced by their immediate peers such as friends and family, and also reference groups and membership groups within the culture and subculture (Schifferman & Kanuk, 2010). The external influences will affect the process stage in terms of how a consumer makes their decision. The second stage involves psychological factors such as motivations, perceptions, learnings, personalities, and attitudes, which are the driving forces for a consumer's need of recognition, pre-purchase search, and evaluation of alternatives. This is then tied up by an experience of the evaluated alternatives which consequently will affect the physiological aspects of the consumer (Schifferman & Kanuk, 2010). The third, and last stage, is the output stage and is comprised by two post-decision behavior activities. The first activity, purchase behavior, for instance of a cheaper product, a coupon could have been the underlying motivation for a purchase and would most likely serve as a trial purchase for the consumer. The second activity within the trial purchase involves an evaluation from the instant use and the consumer may buy the same product again if satisfaction was reached (Schifferman & Kanuk, 2010).

Today, consumer behavior is influenced and affected by the Internet era that people are immersed in and there appears to be a continuous inclination to the use of digital means (Solomon, Bamossy & Askegaard, 2013). Moreover, information technology does not restrict businesses selling solely business to consumer, it has opened up and expanded towards

consumer to consumer, and has thereby formed virtual brand communities (Solomon, Bamossy & Askegaard, 2013).

Social media has impact on people's mood, for instance most platforms allow emotions to be expressed in forms of emoticons (Solomon, Bamossy & Askegaard, 2013). These emotions are also used as reactions towards products or services, which can be expressed in posts of words or symbols. Solomon, Bamossy and Askegaard (2013) mention that 60% of consumers will use Google or similar generic search engines for their information search before committing to an online purchase. Furthermore, 40% of consumers extend their search of information to social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs. This information search enables the consumers to understand other people's opinions regarding a certain product, thus they are able to dismiss the brands that have received bad reviews and move forward with better rated alternatives (Solomon, Bamossy & Askegaard, 2013).

2.2.3 Impulsive buying

Repeated Internet usage has an effect on customers' actions as it gives the users a sense of control in regards to online purchasing (Hernández, Jiménez & Martín, 2010). This behavior often makes the customer blunter when it comes to e-purchases, as they automatically disregard certain important characteristics connected to the early stage of the purchasing process (Hernández, Jiménez & Martin, 2010). Hernández, Jiménez and Martín (2010) mention the task-technology fit model which encompass that experience that stem from technological use will make it easier to acquire information. As a result, this experience will alter the users' automatic behavior tendencies (Hernández, Jiménez & Martín, 2010).

Wu, Chen and Chiu (2016) express that impulsive shopping is the state of buying something that was not initially planned for, which is correlated to the feelings of excitement, pleasure, and strong desires. It is stated that 40% of consumers who shop online refer to themselves as impulsive shoppers (Wu, Chen & Chiu, 2016). Xian, Zheng, Lee, and Zhao (2016) elaborate and point out that 40% of money spent online are a result of impulse purchases.

Social media has a large impact on consumers online shopping behavior thus making it a significant marketing tool (Jiang, Yang & Jun, 2013; Yan, Wu, P., Wu, S., Wang, Chen & Wei, 2016). As social media enables users to interact with and establish relationships between social media users recommendations that stem from friends on social media result in that 43.1% of users will shop on impulse (Yan et al., 2016). Thus, loyalty towards celebrities and experts is increased, as recommendation from these sources may seem more trustworthy and thereby engage users and customers to purchase products endorsed by others (Xian et al., 2016). The aforementioned reasoning provides this study with a second hypothesis.

H2. People who are more active on social media are more likely to be impulsive online purchasers

2.2.4 Online shopping cart abandonment

The phenomenon of online shopping cart abandonment is presented by Close and Kukar-Kinney (2010). Online shopping sites usually incorporate a virtual shopping cart where the customers are able to store products that they intend to buy (Close & Kukar-Kinney, 2010).

However, the virtual shopping carts are occasionally deserted due to the fact that consumers may use the cart as an online window-shopping tool or just to browse between products. Moreover, the virtual carts may not fulfill the purpose that was intended as customers do not always hold on to the products in the cart to the very last step of making a purchase (Close & Kukar-Kinney, 2010). Close and Kukar-Kinney (2010) add by expressing that the underlying reason for a consumer's behavior could be the result of boredom, meaning that the consumer browse products on online shopping sites to make time pass or as an activity for entertainment.

2.3 eWOM

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is defined as social communication regarding products and services transmitted between consumers (Lee & Youn, 2009). As mentioned earlier, tags and links are functions on social media used for communication between users when sharing knowledge and information regarding something specific (Lee & Ge, 2010; Hsu & park, 2011; Zafiropoulos & Vrana, 2011). Furthermore, Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler (2004) state that WOM has a vital role in relation to the customer's buying decision. Lee and Youn (2009) extend on the same track by expressing that WOM is a significant marketing tool when used the proper way, considering that consumers usually trust other consumers to a greater extent than advertisers or marketers. Consumers comprehend that information originated from peers is separated from marketers selling purpose, hence they regard the messages to be of a more trustworthy and credible nature (Lee & Youn, 2009).

The traditional WOM, also referred to as offline word-of-mouth, has evolved to word-of-mouth taking place online (Lee & Youn, 2009; Henning-Thurau et al., 2004). Today, it may be difficult to distinguish between online and offline WOM, as the communication travels through many channels, and at times there is a combination of both WOM strategies (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Steffes and Burgee (2009) clarify that the focal point of the two methods relies within the specific communication measures. A consumer's experience from using a product or service is verbally or virally communicated to others and has resulted in a meaningful contribution to the service-marketing field (Steffes & Burgee, 2009).

There are three distinct differences between online and offline WOM presented by Steffes and Burgee (2009). Firstly, electronic WOM (eWOM) communication does not occur at the same time between the sender and the receiver, in contrast to offline WOM where the communication is transmitted without liabilities of time and space (Steffes & Burgee, 2009). The second distinction is that eWOM allows information to be shared to and among a significantly larger audience. Lastly, the transmitted information from a WOM source is regarded as more credible due to the fact that the sender is known by the receiver (Steffes & Burgee, 2009).

As WOM has moved from solely being offline to being available on the internet, the benefits have grown into many forms, such as rating a product or a service online, leaving comments, and recommendation agents (Steffes & Burgee, 2009). Kotler and Keller (2016) elaborate that with the support from eWOM it is possible to measure the effects from communication efforts. This is done through marketers who track information from cookies when users operate tools on social media such as updating a profile, blogging, commenting, sharing, liking, uploading, or streaming. For instance, advertisers can track information regarding their area, such as movie advertisements using a specific segment of gender, age, and word-of-

mouth tools (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Therefore, it is crucial for both marketers and brands to master the power of eWOM (Steffes & Burgee, 2009). Kotler and Keller (2016) clarify that eWOM has emerged into a robust marketing tool to the degree that some brands have built its awareness entirely by word of mouth. eWOM and social media are connected and can create great synergies for companies to take advantage of and spreading their messages across multiple channels (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011).

As a continuation of the implications of eWOM Gillin (2007) claims that trustworthiness, as a type of eWOM, is often elevated if a message is read on social media rather than in traditional media outlets, and that there is a tendency for users to consider peers rather than brands and organizations as more trustworthy.

Indicators reveal that consumers are more likely to trust information that stem from similar peers rather than from companies (Al-Debei, Akroush & Ashouri, 2015; Lee & Youn, 2009). Recommendations and opinions regarding products or services are perceived by the users to hold a higher level of trustworthiness and credibility, and when users online are able to share and communicate information among them; they are also able to search information about a product and their own interests (Al-Debei, Akroush & Ashouri, 2015). This online communication has shown to impact internet users as it reduces risk and uncertainty when shopping online (Al-Debei, Akroush & Ashouri, 2015). López and Sicilia (2014) state that the majority of social media users seek opinions from other users regarding products, at least once a month. Thus, consumers who often seek opinions of others on the internet are more likely to assess source trustworthiness (López & Sicilia, 2014). Ultimately Yan et al. (2016) express those consumers who seek out trustworthiness of users recommendations are inclined to make purchases affected by it. This provides the study with the third hypothesis.

H3. People are more likely to purchase products online if the customer considers the source to be trustworthy.

2.4 Advertising

2.4.1 Advertising on social media

Social media has not only transformed the way in which people interact and communicate with each other, it has also changed organizations way of working both internally and externally to achieve their business goals (Fuchs, 2014). Organizations are present on social media platforms to improve their business strategies by using tools and specific features offered by many platforms. Since many customers are communicating online rather than using traditional ways of interacting with others, businesses must apply viral marketing techniques to reach out to potential customers and shareholders (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). According to Leigert (2013) social media does not replace the traditional marketing channels, although companies should use a combination of the traditional and social media marketing strategies to achieve the best results for the organizations. Communication is the most important tool to get people's attention, and it is therefore important to follow the techniques that exist today to be able to be successful (Leigert, 2013). Jobs and Gilfoil (2014) also argue about the importance for organizations to use social media activities in advertising. Using social media in advertising to reach out to a bigger audience will help the organization to gain

competitive advantages by combining traditional techniques with social media techniques to be more cost-effective and efficient (Jobs & Gilfoil, 2014).

Carlson and Lee (2015) agree on how important social media has become and the great role in now plays in a company's success. They further discuss the failures that may appear if organizations do not use advertising tools wisely. That is, all businesses must embrace the future of social media, since the amount of social media users are growing (Jobs & Gilfoil, 2014; Carlson & Lee, 2015). Individuals are searching for information worldwide and social media offer platforms that help them to search and interact in a more effective way (Thomsett-Scott, 2014).

New technologies are improving individuals knowledge sharing and communication processes in many different ways, hence the platforms have become the driving force of a social evolution (Geyskens, Gielens & Dekimpe, 2002). It is important to combine the traditional advertising tools with new advertising that exist in social media (Polat & Akgün, 2015). According to Carlson and Lee (2015) word-of-mouth, click, or 'like' is the most effective advertising tool on social media today. Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) describe social media as a metaphor in terms of a pandemic. A pandemic disease tends to spread rapidly in societies and beyond, which in this context can be exemplified by a 30-second YouTube video from Procter & Gamble which gained 23 million views in 36 hours supporting that the power of viral marketing messages should not be underestimated (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011).

There are many different advertising tools that exist in today's marketing strategies when using social media. The differences between advertisements on Instagram and blogs are that bloggers tend to use links to share advertisements and Instagram users are interested in tags to share advertisements, or photo or video content (Thomsett-Scott, 2014; Nam & Kannan, 2014). According to Polat and Akgün (2015) social media functions has now become some of the primary marketing tools, and it is thereby important for organizations to keep up and adapt to the new marketing and advertising strategies. Two functions of blogs and Instagram are tags and links, also referred to as ad links. These functions do not have to be sponsored by a brand or organization; however, they can be of sponsored nature (Thomsett-Scott, 2014; Nam & Kannan, 2014). Bloggers and Instagram users share tags and ad links to readers or followers if they want to share their own reflections, suggestions or share information of a product or service (Polat & Akgün, 2015; Thomsett-Scott, 2014). This provides the study with the fourth hypothesis.

H4. Tags and ad links catches the customer's attention regarding a specific product

Latif, Shah, Syed, Halepoto and Nazar (2012) discuss how marketers should seek for better advertising strategies, since advertisements today can influence consumers purchasing decisions. Advertising can have effective purchasing influence on consumers, but some advertisements can also have ineffective purchasing influence (Latif et al., 2012). As stated earlier, some consumers seek for trustworthiness of other consumers recommendations, and the advertisement will therefore be ineffective (Latif et al., 2012; Yan et al., 2016). Hence, according to Latif et al. (2012) brand advertising usually has positive impacts on consumers purchasing decisions.

2.4.2 Advertising on Instagram

Successful brand loyalty is built from the users on Instagram and other social media platforms and these social media profiles have a strong influence on consumers when it comes to brand

awareness (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016). Many organizations and top global brands have therefore begun to utilize this platform in their marketing and advertising strategies to create better relationships with customers. Other than communication and interaction with others, users nowadays use Instagram to create fan movements (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016). Statistics of brand awareness on Instagram from 2014 showed that organizations advertisement recall has increased with 32% when sharing photos or videos on Instagram, and approximately 10% of brand awareness has increased because of eWOM among users (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016).

Thus, using Instagram for advertising purposes to share products or services, building brand images, increasing relationships with potential customers, and more has led to increased consumption and global brand awareness (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016). Instagram also offers companies the opportunity to buy selected amounts of advertisements, which can be shared randomly to Instagram accounts where some users on Instagram can see advertisements on their feed even though they are not following that specific company (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016). Other organizations marketing strategies are to use individuals on Instagram, for example sport entities, to share advertisements on their feed to build brand awareness by offering these individuals sponsorship opportunities (Karg & Lock, 2014). Geurin-Eagleman and Burch (2016) state that these account holders are the ones who can influence other consumers to become a more loyal brand customer, because loyal consumers are then able to create an aura of authenticity towards the product or service.

2.4.3 Advertising on blogs

Thomsett-Scott (2014) state that advertisements are sold at blogs by letting bloggers share and post hyperlinks, such as affiliate links. When bloggers share an affiliate link in their post, they make revenue from how many individuals who click on that specific hyperlink from the blog. The blogger will then get promoted or get rewarded with discounts or free product or services (Thomsett-Scott, 2014; Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015). Affiliate links have been mostly used by e-commerce businesses and this marketing strategy has been very successful. The affiliate links help companies to track the traffic of sales and offer opportunities, and the affiliate, which is when the blogger gets compensated whether the link will get clicked on by a consumer, pay per click; if the consumer views additional products or services on the website, pay per lead; or if the consumer purchase anything from the website when clicking on the affiliate link, pay per sale. Other blog sites also offer third-parties to share advertisement icons on the blog (Thomsett-Scott, 2014).

Blogs are one of the most widely established social media platforms that have been used by marketers (Thomsett-Scott, 2014). When companies are using blogs in advertising purposes they are trying to reach an audience in a blogosphere making the messages easily accessible (Thomsett-Scott, 2014). Depending on what kind of product or service the organization wants to advertise, the advertising will be aimed to reach a specific target group (Fu, & Chen, 2012). There are many different advertising tools to use on blogs; one of the most effective tools is when companies use bloggers to promote advertisements. Many businesses search for small influential group of bloggers to share advertisements on their blogs (Johnson, 2007). Bloggers get promoted with products or services to use or get paid for reviewing, promoting, or selling these products for the companies. These bloggers are usually individuals who have the power to influence a specific audience with adjacent interests (Fu & Chen, 2012).

According to Fu and Chen (2012) organizations use blogs for advertising as it is one of the most effective ways of communicating with customers and a mean to create high levels of

interaction and loyalty. Fu and Chen (2012) further discuss how bloggers can impact other consumers in their purchasing process from how to search for information, evaluate the product, and then to make the final purchases depending of the attitude towards the product (Fu & Chen, 2012). Negative responses usually have greater influence on consumers purchasing process than positive responses do, it is therefore important for marketers to choose and match the right blogger with the right product when advertising (Wang, Wang & Farn, 2009). Otherwise if the product or service is not similar to the bloggers interest and desires, the audience will feel the same as the blogger and negative attitudes towards the products will affect the consumer's choice of purchasing it (Wang, K., Wang, E., & Farn, 2009).

One key concern within advertising on Instagram and blogs is the perception of objectivity and credibility from the social media source. Colliander and Erlandsson (2015) state that the revelation that a social media profile is sponsored by a third party will result in a more negative attitude towards the message sender among the individual user and consumer. This is prominent in the majority of messages sent out in the social media sphere in terms of product placement, recommendations, and referral to third party websites (Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015). The sections above present the study with the fifth and final hypothesis.

H5. People are more likely to click on a tag or ad link if it is not obviously advertised

Swedish consumers rate the importance of different sources which affect their motivation to shop online, 16 percent of the consumers think ads on social media is important to them, on the opposing side 63 percent value recommendations from their peers to be more important (Hui Research Årsrapport, 2015).

2.5 Hypotheses

H1. Individual customer's online shopping has increased as a result of social media

H2. People who are more active on social media are more likely to be impulsive online purchasers

H3. People are more likely to purchase through tags and ad links if the customer considers the source to be trustworthy

H4. Tags and ad links catches the customer's attention regarding a specific product

H5. People are more likely to click on a tag or ad link if it is not obviously advertised.

3 Research method

In this section the research methodologies used throughout the study will be presented along with motivations as to why they were chosen. This study followed a deductive approach presented in a quantitative manner through an online self-completion questionnaire distributed to a snowball sampling frame.

3.1 Research approach

Research is often dictated by two different research approaches; the inductive strategy in which accumulated data leads to the realization of theories, and the deductive strategy, where hypotheses and theories are found in pre-existing theoretical frameworks before being exposed to experimental testing (Patel & Davidson, 2011; Walliman & Baiche, 2001). Bryman and Bell (2015) state that a study following a deductive approach is guided by the theory which already exists and this approach is therefore more commonly applied in quantitative research ventures.

Patel and Davidson (2011) explain that a study is more likely to remain objective by following a deductive research approach as theory serves as the foundation and dictates what information should be collected, the way of interpreting said information, and lastly how to relate the results of the study to the existing knowledge base of relevant theories. Additionally, in order for a hypothesis to be deduced it is necessary to specifically state the way in which data can be collected and related to relevant concepts (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The research question steering this study was formulated with the complement of five chosen hypotheses derived from theory, which served as an aid in finding an answer to the research question after being put to test. The purpose of the study along with the reasoning above indicates that a deductive research approach was the most suitable choice to provide an answer to the research question.

3.2 Research strategy

Research strategies are traditionally divided into being either qualitative or quantitative where the primary difference is located in different scientific and philosophical logics (Walliman & Baiche, 2000; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Recker (2013) suggests that the choice of research strategy should depend on the specific characteristics of the research question along with the related and compatible data collection and analysis methods. While qualitative research is more aimed towards contextual and holistic factors related to interpreting human behavior, quantitative research is more likely to result in measurable, quantifiable, and generalizable data which is put to test through experimentation, and displayed as graphs and statistics (Dybå, Prikladnicki, Rönkkö, Seaman & Sillito, 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Walliman (2001) explains that in quantitative studies researchers are more likely to remain objective, as it relies on hard and dependable data, which after analysis results in concepts and hypotheses being either supported, rejected, or revised. This indicates that quantitative studies are more prone to embrace a positivistic scientific perspective which limits the view of humans as separated from feelings and values (Walliman & Baiche, 2001).

As the purpose of this study is to investigate how marketers can use new social media functions of tags and ad links as a tool to reach Swedish online consumers, a quantitative research methodology was considered suitable and mirrored by the chosen research question. Based on the benefits provided by the quantitative method and the purpose it was thought that this strategy would generate understanding of the pre-determined assumptions regarding a new marketing method based on tags and ad links on social media.

3.3 Research design

Bryman and Bell (2015) explain that a research design serves as a template through which a study proceeds. The typical features of a cross-sectional design are a combination of numerous cases, simultaneous collection of data, interrelationships between concepts, and measurable data which is frequently applied in quantitative studies (Kumar, 2014; Davies & Hughes, 2014). The aim of the cross-sectional design is therefore to investigate the frequency of a certain phenomenon by evaluating a smaller sample of the total population (Kumar, 2014). Robson (2011) states that a cross-sectional design is compatible with a survey method; hence it can be used to detect causality or patterns of association between predetermined variables related to the research question. The chosen research design will impact numerous aspects of a research process. For instance, the design can have implications in the form of external validity issues and reduce the ability to establish causal relationships to the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Literature review

Patel and Davidson (2011) explain that there are two kinds of main data sources which can be of use during the data collection phase, and where the choice of data collection method should be reliant on the resources and time available in order to provide an answer to the research question. Secondary sources are most often collected by other researchers, with a different research purpose, and are often presented in scientific publications or journals (Walliman & Baiche, 2000). Robson (2011) recommends researchers to perform a well-rounded and extensive literature review in order to establish a steady foundation and ensure the accuracy and quality of a study's data. In this study this resulted in the theoretical framework (see chapter two) where the current state of the research is presented. The secondary data was collected from journals available through the collective database Summon offered by the University of Borås, along with relevant published books and course literature. Together, these actions are equivalent to Whiteside, Mills and Mccalmans' (2012) recommendation of using sources from well-documented studies in order to elevate the chance of generalizability and transferability.

On the other side of the spectrum, primary data sources are often gathered by the researchers themselves and presented as observations or surveys (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In this research primary data was collected through the distribution of an online self-completion questionnaire with the aim of providing an answer to the research question and to facilitate in the support, revision, or rejection of the five hypotheses.

3.4.2 Sampling

Robson (2011) states that sampling is a crucial task within a research project where the main premise is to identify a representative subset of a larger population from which general inferences can be made. The chosen sampling technique will have implications connected to validity and generalizability, where the chances of achieving both measures will increase exponentially if a larger sample size is favored (Robson, 2011).

A non-probability sample is separated from a probability sample due to that not all individuals within a population have the same chance of being selected to participate in a study (Kumar, 2014; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Oates (2006) further suggests that non-probability sampling is beneficial when the researchers are unfamiliar with the specific characteristics of the sampling frame. However, Bryman and Bell (2015) explain that there are three potential biases that will reduce the ability of the sample to represent a larger population. Hence, the researchers must maintain objectivity throughout the study and separate themselves from their own judgments, to have a comprehensive sampling frame, and to be aware of non-response as it will decrease the quality of the data (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Kumar (2014) presents four types of non-probability samples; quota, accidental, purposive, and snowball sampling. Snowball sampling refers to researchers using their own existing networks relevant to the research topic as a stepping-stone to reach individuals outside their own context (Kumar, 2014). Moreover, snowball sampling is suitable when it is impossible to carry out a study with purposive sampling measures and when the main data collection method is a small-scale survey (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Robson, 2011). In this study the snowball effect became evident as the researchers' own online networks were used to reach suitable respondents, who then acted as an intermediary to reach further respondents in their own respective networks.

Bryman and Bell (2015) state that it is difficult to determine an appropriate sample size within a research context. In case there are a low number of responses, it may be necessary to have an available strategy to increase the number of responses (Recker, 2013). At the outset of this study and with considerations to the existing time and resource restrictions the minimum acceptable sample size was set to 100 responses, where anything exceeding this number would increase the possibility to generalize the results. Ultimately, the survey reached 300 responses through a variety of channels during the one week where the survey was accepting answers. The channels that were used for the survey and data collection were the social networking platform Facebook, and the University of Borås educational platform targeting students within the business and IT department. The choice of channels seemed suitable since the snowball sampling technique was chosen, meaning that the study gathered responses within the researcher's own network.

3.4.3 Questionnaire Design

Patel and Davidson (2011) state that surveys are a method that builds upon asking questions to a selected population, which has been identified through a sampling method. Oates (2006) emphasizes that surveys are common in quantitative and fixed research ventures. Recker (2013) explains that the typical task of the survey is to collect information such as opinions, attitudes, actions, and perceptions from a large population connected to a certain topic, in this case the research question. Sue and Ritter (2007) exemplify that a survey is initiated by

establishing clear objectives, continues with data analysis, and ends with a presentation of the results by following an outline of predetermined steps. Recker (2013) suggests that surveys can be beneficial when the aim is to define relationships and values between different variables. According to the display of theoretical frameworks it is evident that surveys have previously been successfully embraced in different quantitative research purposes similar to this one.

Surveys are often performed through the use of self-completion questionnaires (Oates, 2006). This allows the respondent to answer the questions thoroughly without the interference or presence of a researcher, which may lead to a display of biased views (Oates, 2006; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Sue and Ritter (2007) elaborate on potential advantages of an self-completion questionnaires by emphasizing time and resource effectiveness, a wide span of geographical coverage, and direct data entry, both from the respondents' perspective, and the researchers' point of view. Additionally, Robson (2006) adds that self-completion questionnaires allows for respondents' anonymity, which is likely to increase sincerity among the answers, and efficiency in collecting extensive data within a limited time frame.

In order to collect relevant data and uncover an answer the research question and accept or reject hypotheses presented in chapter two, an online self-completion questionnaire was discovered to be the most suitable data collection method. The questionnaire was created with the intent of measuring the relevancy of the five hypotheses identified in the theoretical chapter. This was done to either test pre-existing theories, deduce new theories, or to provide an answer to the research question.

The survey was created through the easily accessible Google Forms software, which provided all the desired functions and range of measurements. As opposed to SUNET Survey and Report, which was the initial choice of software, the online service provided by Google was easy to maneuver and allowed the survey to incorporate images to exemplify certain questions. Due to faulty functionality in the SUNET Survey and Report software this options was not available and the strategy had to be reconsidered, whereas Google Forms was a viable option.

The construction of the questionnaire followed the recommendation of Oates (2006) who mean that a self-completion questionnaire should be as straightforward as possible. In the survey this was evident as all questions were closed-ended, directly relevant to the study's purpose, and did not require excessive time or effort to complete the survey. Some of the questions in the survey were designed using a five-point Likert scale to measure attitudes among the respondents, while others simply required a yes or no answer. Additionally, some questions were asked in the format of checkboxes where respondents were asked to select all applicable options. The purpose of having different types of questions in the questionnaire was intentional in order to gain as much understanding as possible behind consumers thinking when it comes to social media and online shopping. Different types of questions presented the opportunity to correlate the data in different ways to test the hypotheses accordingly, as a mean to answer the research question.

However, some of the disadvantages presented with a self-completion questionnaire are that the study is completely dependent on both survey- and statistical software, that the characteristics of the respondents may remain unknown, and risk of a respondent abandoning the survey before it has been completed (Sue & Ritter, 2007). These are all aspects that must

be kept in mind as flaws within these areas may impact the quality of the data and indirectly be a determinant in the final success of a research project.

3.4.3.1 Pilot test of questionnaire

Oates (2006) recommends that the content of a questionnaire should be presented to a selected group of individuals who are relevant to the chosen field of study before the final questionnaire is sent out in order to reduce the likelihood or error or to sort out any ambiguity in the survey. As a result a pilot study was carried out where a selection of five respondents was presented with a draft of the survey. The comments and concerns of the sought out respondents both in terms of design, instructions, sequencing of questions, and range of answers were then incorporated in the final version of the survey to clarify any obscurities.

3.5 Hypotheses development

In order to arrive at an answer to the research question a decision was made to derive a number of hypotheses with examples from previously established theoretical frameworks. This resulted in a number of hypotheses which were then ranked before a final selection was made. This ensured that no potential hypothesis of interest was overlooked and that the final five hypotheses were directly relevant to the purpose of the study and the research question. To improve readability all five hypotheses were presented in the section of the theoretical framework in which they were derived from. Additionally, all hypotheses chosen were thought to be of relevance to the research.

3.6 Data Analysis

To derive any meaning from the data accumulated in the questionnaire a suitable data analysis method was needed. Walliman (2001) claims that the chosen statistical and analytical methods should be selected based on the characteristics of the collected data. This data is then divided into two segments of either being relational, where the aim is to detect correlations and the potential strength of the relationships, or predictive studies, where there is a pre-existing correlation that can be used to predict future occurrences (Walliman, 2001). Oates (2006) states that a typicality of the analysis of quantitative data is to portray data in a clear and structured way through graphs, charts, and tables in order to detect apparent patterns. Robson (2006) adds that analysis of data is often performed exploratory to seek out what the data says on its own, and confirmatory to see how the reached results match the deduced hypotheses.

The analysis was performed with the aid of IBM SPSS to which the raw data from the questionnaire created in Google Forms was imported after being coded in Microsoft Excel. The data analysis was divided into two different segments of descriptive statistics and hypotheses testing. In the descriptive statistics basic demographic tables and figures were created to display different characteristics and features of the respondents. Most often these were presented in frequency tables or simple descriptions. Recker (2013) adds that the chosen statistical measures should be presented in the most simplistic way possible.

The majority of the statistical tests in the hypotheses testing section were performed with the use of cross tabulations, correlations, and regression analyses. According to Sue and Ritter (2007) cross tabulations is a test to investigate two variables simultaneously. Meaning that it is possible to examine the result of two questions and putting them in a relation presented in a table, where the result of the question is bestowed in a column, thus the other is bestowed in a row. With this type of test it is possible to get further information by crossing the result from one question with another (Sue & Ritter, 2007).

This study performed both Pearson's correlation with nominal scale variables and Spearman's correlation with ordinal scale variables. Sue and Ritter (2007) disclose that a correlation is a measurement to determine a linear relationship among two variables. A linear relationship can be of high degree and is either positive or negative, indicating the strength of the relationship. The aim of a correlation is to get a straight line out of one of this variable in order to conclude the other. Hence, correlations are done in order to see how strong a relationship is between two variables, and to see if the measurement of one variable is increasing could predict that the other variable would be increasing as well (Sue & Ritter, 2007). A regression analysis is used to explain the average association of two or more variables (Cleff, 2014). The linear regression is perfect if the points of the variables lie close to the line; usually the correlation coefficient is either closer to positive 1 or negative 1. If the points of the variables are scattered far from the regression line, the correlation coefficient will usually be closer to zero and that indicates a much weaker relationship (Cleff, 2014).

3.7 Evaluation method

3.7.1 Reliability

Bryman and Bell (2015) explain that reliability is highly present in quantitative research and is concerned with how well the study can be replicated by other researchers and the ability of them to attain the same results as were reached the initial research. Kumar (2014) adds that reliability is equivalent to accuracy and replicability. Typically, surveys reduce the ability to judge reliability of a research venture as they often take place in settings where respondents are not supervised directly by the researcher (Patel & Davidson, 2011). Therefore it is crucial that the respondents are provided with both adequate instructions and suitable sequencing of questions to elevate the possibility of understanding the survey in the way it was intended (Patel & Davidson, 2011).

In this study the issues surrounding reliability was handled through providing the questionnaire with proper instruction to reduce the possibility of perceiving it in a way different than intended. Moreover, the overall descriptions of how the study was conducted will enhance the possibility of other researchers to conduct a similar study.

3.7.2 Validity

Validity is concerned with establishing to which degree a study has examined what was initially intended (Patel & Davidson, 2011; Kumar, 2014). Recker (2013) explains different types of validity that requires attention from the researcher. These are face validity, content validity, and construct validity. Kumar (2014) presents face validity as a clearly recognizable

link between the objectives of the study and the questions asked to find an answer to the research question. Content validity is concerned with how well the content providing statements and questions are measuring the issue at hand (Kumar, 2014). Construct validity is according to Recker (2013) explained as each individual variables impact and contribution to the total variance, in this case, the research question. This is often measured through statistical procedures, where it becomes evident if the scales of the questionnaire measures the intended measurements (Kumar, 2014). Robson (2011) means that validity can be translated to the accuracy of the results, while Creswell (2014) emphasizes the necessity of detecting causality between relevant variables separated from external factors. Conclusively, Kumar (2014) stresses that the entire research process should be pervaded by validity and conducted in an appropriate manner.

In this study validity was approached by relying on a solid theoretical framework from which the questionnaire was developed, which is believed to ensure face validity. Construct validity is evident in the chosen statistical analyses that were based on the specific measurements of scale for the given variables at hand. Content validity may not be entirely assured as the possible ranges of answers and scales were created by the researchers themselves separated from input from experts within this field.

3.7.3 Generalizability

Bryman and Bell (2015) explain that one of the key drivers behind a quantitative research usually lies within the want of achieving generalizability (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Patel and Davidson (2011) elaborately state that the results from a study should be as general as possible. Oates (2006) informs that the ability to generalize results will be decreased if sampling is poorly conducted; whilst Robson (2011) state that a larger sample is more likely to be generalizable without major errors. However, Bryman and Bell (2015) propose that a non-purposive sample may not be the best sampling option if generalizability is a key concern as it may result in a depiction of biased views of a selected population as it is not likely that questionnaire can be sent out to the whole population of a country or even an organization. Conclusively, the respondents chosen for a research should be considered a representation to such a degree that the results derived from the study are applicable to a similar frame, and must not thereby be generalizable for every study or population (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

In this study generalizability is difficult to achieve as a non-probability purposive sampling strategy was used along with the added implications of approaching all respondents through Internet based sources. Therefore the material can be viewed as less generalizable.

4 Results & analysis

This chapter will present the results from the online survey in the shape of tables and figures to help illustrate the findings. Results will begin by presenting basic demographic statistics before moving on to providing answers to all five hypotheses.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

Out of the 300 respondents of the questionnaire, females contributed to 78.7%, or 236 respondents. 21%, or 63 respondents consisted of male respondents, while one person did not identify with being either female or male. The respondents were divided into different age groups (see table 1). The full range of respondents varied from 12 years to 56 years of age, while the largest age group was found in the 22-26 year division with 47% of all respondents, followed by 17-21 years olds, and 27-31 years olds. The respondents were also asked to provide their occupation. 75.7% were students, 17% were working fulltime, 4.3% were working part time, while 3% listed other as their main occupation.

Age distribution	Frequency	Percent %	Cumulative %
12 - 16	10	3,3	3,3
17 - 21	60	19,9	23,3
22 - 26	141	47	70,3
27 - 31	37	12,2	82,7
32 - 36	18	6	88,7
37 - 41	13	4,2	93
42 - 46	13	4,3	97,3
47 - 51	5	1,6	99
52 - 56	3	1	100
Total range: 44	300	100%	100%

Table 1: Frequency table of age distribution among respondents

99.7% stated that they use some kind of social media. Out of these, 86% of the respondents use Instagram. The frequency of blog readers showed to be slightly less extensive, where 56.3% admitted that they read blogs. As shown in table 2, the majority at 39,7%, check their Instagram feed a few times per day. This is followed by users who check their Instagram feed every hour, or at least once a day. In the blog column, users tend to read blogs more occasionally, with 38,3% not reading blogs at all, followed by respondents who read blogs once a day or a few times per week.

Q9 & Q10	Instagram		Blogs	
Usage	Frequency	Percent %	Frequency	Percent %
Every hour	40	13,3	0	0
Few times per day	116	39,7	22	7,3
Once a day	46	15,3	47	15,7
Few times per week	26	8,7	49	16,3
Few times per month	4	1,3	27	9
Once a month	9	3	19	6,3
Less frequently	14	4,7	21	7
I do not use any of these	42	14	115	38,3
Total	300	100	300	100

Table 2: Frequency table over of regular checks of social media

The most followed Instagram account belongs to friends with 84,4% followed by mainly family and acquaintances with approximately 69% each (see figure 1). Among the respondents who occasionally read blogs the mostly read blogs are inspirational at 34,3%, followed by social media profiles at 28,7%.
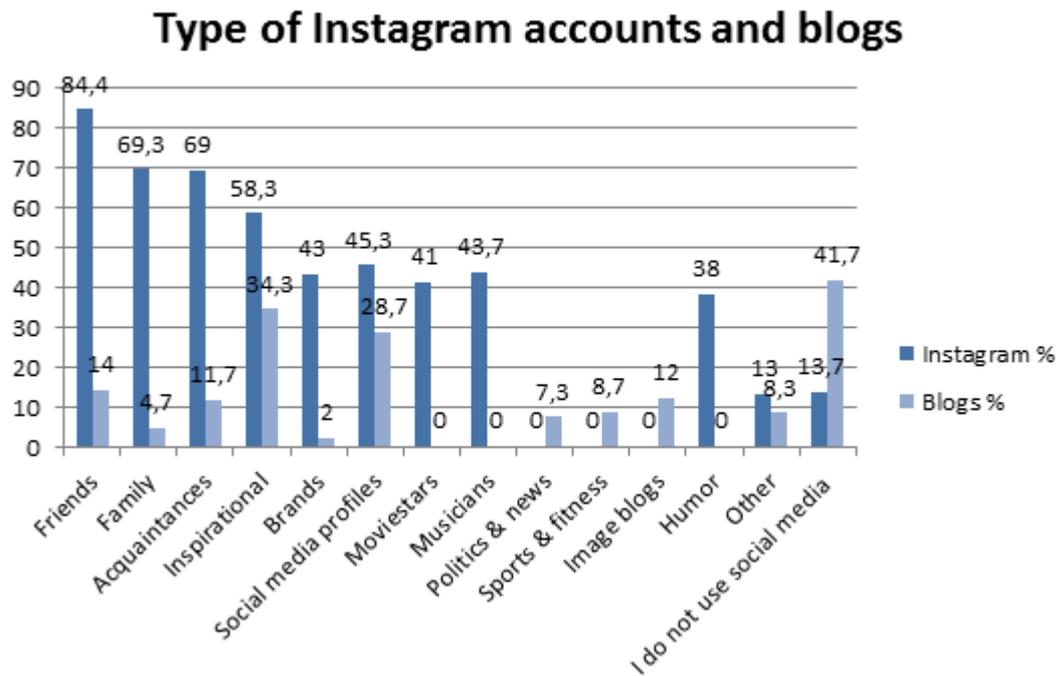
Figure 1: Bar chart over most often followed or read social medias

39,3% stated that they shop products online approximately once a month closely followed by respondents who purchase goods online a few times per year at 38,7%. The more frequent online shoppers contributed to a smaller portion of the overall percentage of online shoppers. 0,7% of the respondents claimed that they do not purchase any products online.

Out of the 298 respondents who purchase products online, 62,7% stated that impulsive online shopping is an occurrence in their lives. Though, 34,5% of respondents mentioned that the majority of their online purchases are planned, while 2,7% stated that the majority of their online purchases are impulsive (see figure 2). 29,3% of respondents state that they have purchased a product after seeing it on Instagram. The equivalence of purchasing a product after reading about it on a blog is slightly higher at 33,3% of total responses who read blogs.

Majority of purchases are impulsive
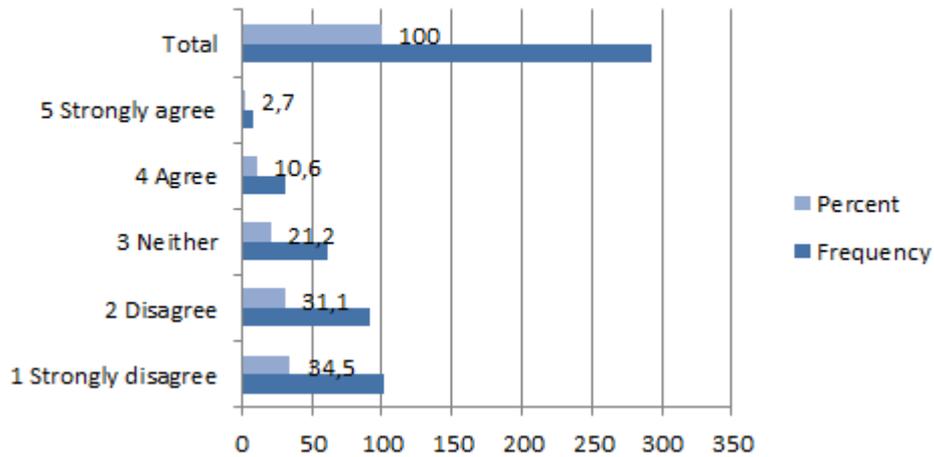
Figure 2: Bar chart over respondents' tendency for the majority of online purchases to be impulsive

Figure 3 investigating the motivation behind a consumers click on a tag or ad link indicates that the primary drivers behind a click is curiosity and interest regarding the displayed product at 69,7%, and an offer or campaign, at 35,5%. Trustworthiness is on the lower scale with 14% of total replies.

Q30. Motivation behind click
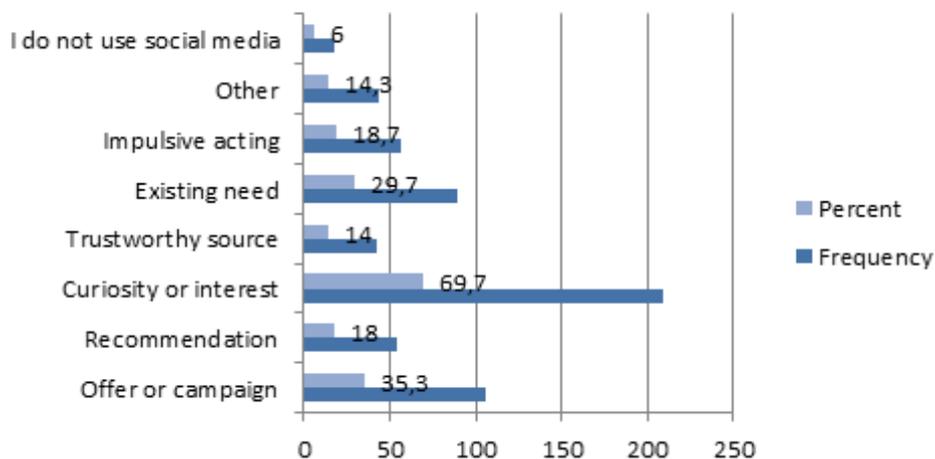
Figure 3: Bar chart over respondents' motivation behind click

4.2 Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis 1 *Individual customer's online shopping has increased as a result of social media*

In Q12 *How often do you purchase products online* there were 298 valid responses out of 300. In *Q29 I tend to purchase more products online as a result of social media* there were 292 respondents. In order to establish a relationship between the ordinal and the nominal variables a linear regression was performed (see table 3). This resulted in an unstandardized coefficient (β) of -0,041 followed by a Sigma of 0,314, which means that the coefficient can not be statistically separated from zero and does thereby not indicate that there is a relationship between the dependent and independent variable.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3,170	,078		40,389	,000
	Q29. I tend to purchase more products online as a result of tags and ad links on social media	-,041	,041	-,059	-1,008	,314

a. Dependent Variable: Q12. How often do you purchase products online?

Table 3: Linear regression Q29 and Q12

In Q9 *How active are you on Instagram* 258 out of 300 respondents answered that they use Instagram with different periodicity. *In Q15 Have you purchased a product after seeing it on Instagram* there were 263 valid respondents (see figure 4). The linear regression showed that the unstandardized coefficient (β) was 1,035 and Sigma arrived at 0,000, which means that the coefficient in fact can be separated from zero. The Sigma presented along with the unstandardized coefficient statistically states that there is a positive relationship between the two variables.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1,000	,155		6,472	,000
	Q15. Have you purchased a product online after seeing it on Instagram?	1,035	,190	,322	5,439	,000

a. Dependent Variable: Q9. How active are you on Instagram?

Table 4: Linear regression Q15 and Q9

In Q10 *How often do you read blogs* there were 185 respondents who stated that they read blogs at varying frequency. *In Q16 Have you purchased a product after reading about it on a blog* there were 240 valid responses (see table 5). The performed linear regression displayed that Sigma was 0,000 meaning that the chance of randomness is insignificant and that the

coefficient can be statistically separated from zero. The unstandardized coefficient (β) was 1,330 indicating a strong positive relationship between the two variables.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2,505	,140		17,835	,000
	Q16. Have you purchased a product online after reading about it on a blog?	1,330	,199	,446	6,693	,000

a. Dependent Variable: Q10. How often do you read blogs?

Table 5: Linear regression Q16 and Q10

The majority of linear regressions from this hypothesis indicate that there is a weak relationship between increased online shopping as a result of social media hence the hypothesis can not be confirmed at this stage without further investigation.

Hypothesis 2 *People who are more active on social media are more likely to be impulsive online purchasers*

In Q13 *Have you purchased products online impulsively* there were 298 respondents who stated that they have. *In Q9 How active are you on Instagram* there were 258 valid responses (see table 6). A linear regression showed that Sigma was 0,021 while the unstandardized coefficient (β) was 0,045. This Sigma equals a statistically established relationship though the unstandardized coefficient presents a weak positive relationship.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	,277	,044		6,300	,000
	Q9. How active are you on Instagram?	,045	,019	,143	2,315	,021

a. Dependent Variable: Q13. Have you purchased products online impulsively?

Table 6: Linear regression Q9 and Q13

In Q13 *Have you purchased products online impulsively* there were 298 respondents who stated that they have. In *Q10 How often do you read blogs* there were 185 valid responses (see table 7). The linear regression depicted a Sigma of 0,492 while the unstandardized coefficient (β) was 0,016. The high Sigma indicates that the coefficient can not be statistically separated from zero and that any similarity of a relationship may be a result of randomness. It is thereby not possible to state that there is an existing relationship.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	,314	,084		3,757	,000
	Q10. How often do you read blogs?	,016	,024	,051	,689	,492

a. Dependent Variable: Q13. Have you purchased products online impulsively?

Table 7: Linear regression Q10 and Q13

A correlation was performed between *Q14 The majority of my online purchases are impulsive* and *Q12 How often do you purchase products online.* In the following tests for hypothesis two all variables were of ordinal measure and therefore Spearman's rho was used, which resulted in a negative correlation coefficient of -0,297 and a two-tailed Sigma of 0,000 (see table 8). This provides the study with the ground of a negative relationship, which can be statistically separated from zero and thereby discard any random results.

Correlations

			Q12. How often do you purchase products online?	Q14. The majority of my online purchases are impulsive
Spearman's rho	Q12. How often do you purchase products online?	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	-,297[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
		N	298	291
	Q14. The majority of my online purchases are impulsive	Correlation Coefficient	-,297[**]	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	.
		N	291	293

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8: Spearman's correlation between Q12 and Q14

For questions *Q9 How active are you on Instagram* and *Q14 The majority of my online purchases are impulsive* the Spearman's rho resulted in a weak negative correlation coefficient of -0,148 and Sigma 0,019. The Sigma is within desired parameters to depict a statistical negative relationship (see table 9).

Correlations

			Q9. How active are you on Instagram?	Q14. The majority of my online purchases are impulsive
Spearman's rho	Q9. How active are you on Instagram?	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	-,148[*]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,019
		N	258	253
	Q14. The majority of my online purchases are impulsive	Correlation Coefficient	-,148[*]	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,019	.
		N	253	293

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 9: Spearman's correlation between Q9 and Q14

In Spearman's correlation between *Q10 How often do you read blogs* and *Q14 The majority of my online purchases are impulsive* there was a weak positive correlation coefficient at 0,041 and a Sigma of 0,580 (see table 10). It is thereby not possible to conclude any statistical assurance of a potential relationship between the two variables from this test.

Correlations

			Q10. How often do you read blogs?	Q14. The majority of my online purchases are impulsive
Spearman's rho	Q10. How often do you read blogs?	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,041
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,580
		N	185	181
	Q14. The majority of my online purchases are impulsive	Correlation Coefficient	,041	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,580	.
		N	181	293

Table 10: Spearman's correlation between Q10 and Q14

In the correlation performed between variables Q12 and Q9 Spearman's rho suggested a positive coefficient of 0,229 and Sigma of 0,000 (see table 11). It is therefore possible to infer a causal relationship between the two variables.

Correlations

			Q12. How often do you purchase products online?	Q9. How active are you on Instagram?
Spearman's rho	Q12. How often do you purchase products online?	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,229**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
		N	298	256
	Q9. How active are you on Instagram?	Correlation Coefficient	,229**	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	.
		N	256	258

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 11: Spearman's correlation between Q12 and Q9

According to Spearman's rho for variable Q12 and Q10 there was a weak positive relationship with a positive correlation coefficient of 0,173 and a Sigma arriving at 0,019. The Sigma is within the targeted level and can therefore be considered significant and a relationship is evident (see table 12).

Correlations

			Q12. How often do you purchase products online?	Q10. How often do you read blogs?
Spearman's rho	Q12. How often do you purchase products online?	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,173*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,019
		N	298	184
	Q10. How often do you read blogs?	Correlation Coefficient	,173*	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,019	.
		N	184	185

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 12: Spearman's correlation between Q12 and Q10

Based on the performed statistical analyses resulting in fairly weak correlations and inconclusive results, it is not possible to confirm the second hypothesis of higher activeness on social media leading to increased impulsive online shopping.

Hypothesis 3 *People are more likely to purchase through tags and ad links if the customer considers the source to be trustworthy*

To answer this hypothesis the respondents were asked to rate their attitude in relation to Q27 *I am more likely to purchase a product seen on social media if I consider the source to be trustworthy,* where a five indicated that the respondents agree completely, while a one represents complete disagreement. Figure 4 depicts that trustworthiness is important to the majority of the respondents where 31,8% of respondents stated that they agree, shortly followed by neither and completely agree. For this hypothesis the majority of the respondents showed a tendency to agree, which was further supported by a mean average of 3,46. The standard deviation among the answers to this question was 1,247.
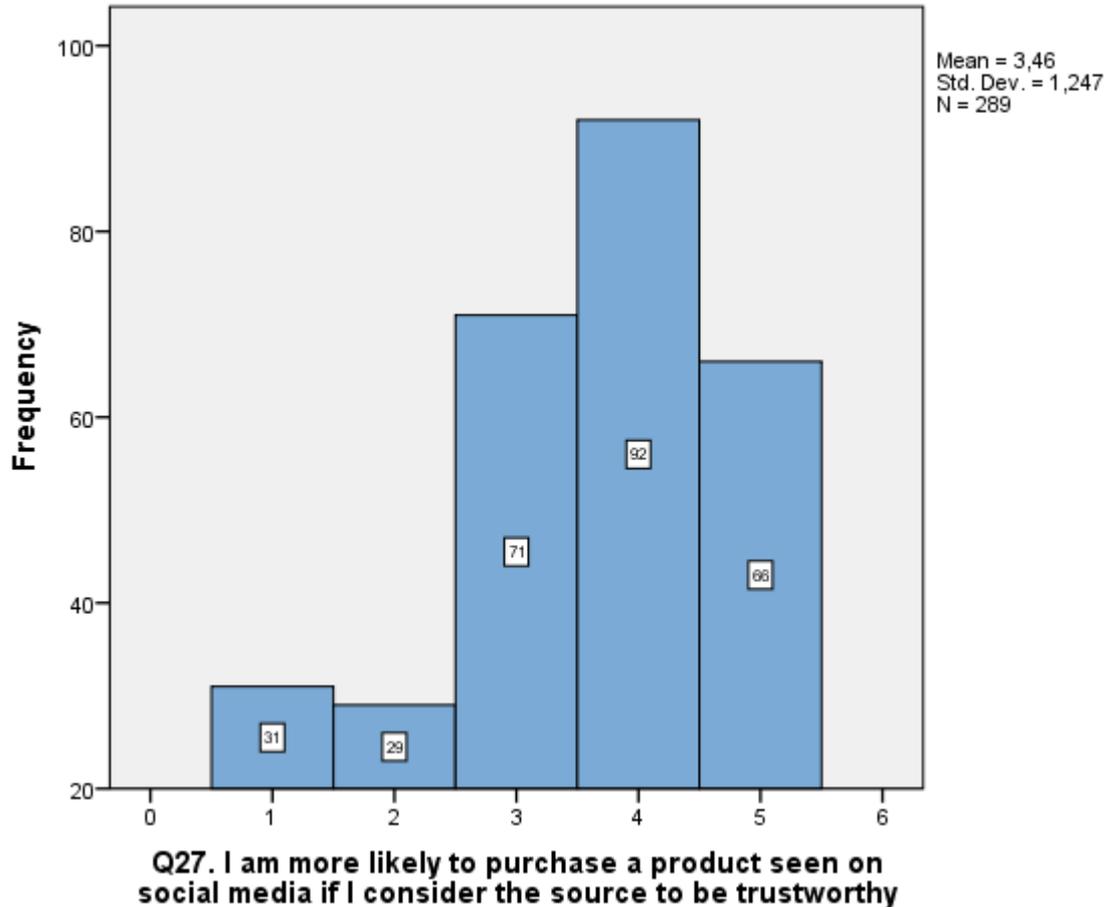
Figure 4: Histogram over respondents' attitude towards trustworthiness

To answer this hypothesis the respondents were asked to rate how likely they are to purchase a product if the source presenting the product is considered to be trustworthy. The abovementioned histogram clearly depicts that the respondents have positive attitudes towards making a purchase as a result of trustworthiness and it is thereby possible to support the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4 *Tags and ad links catches the customer's attention regarding a specific product*

The variables in hypothesis 4 were all of nominal scale character which resulted in the use of Pearson's correlation (see table 13). For the variables found in Q17 and Q19 it became evident that there is a fairly strong positive correlation coefficient of 0,451 and Sigma of 0.000 indicating a positive relationship between the variables.

Correlations

		Q17. Have you noticed "tags" on Instagram?	Q19. Have you clicked on a tag for a product that you have seen on Instagram?
Q17. Have you noticed "tags" on Instagram?	Pearson Correlation	1	,451**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	263	258
Q19. Have you clicked on a tag for a product that you have seen on Instagram?	Pearson Correlation	,451**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	258	259

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 13: Pearson's correlation between Q17 and Q19

Between Q18 and Q20 Pearson's correlation coefficient was positive at 0,533 and Sigma was 0,000. This provides the study with an established relationship as the coefficient can be statistically separated from zero (see table 14).

Correlations

		Q18. Have you noticed "ad links" on blogs?	Q20. Have you clicked on an ad link for a product that you have read about on a blog?
Q18. Have you noticed "ad links" on blogs?	Pearson Correlation	1	,533**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	224	216
Q20. Have you clicked on an ad link for a product that you have read about on a blog?	Pearson Correlation	,533**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	216	223

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 14: Pearson's correlation between Q18 and Q20

The correlation between Q19 and Q21 is with 99% statistical probability weakly positive with a coefficient of 0,323 and Sigma of 0,000 (see table 15).

Correlations

		Q19. Have you clicked on a tag for a product that you have seen on Instagram?	Q21. Have you purchased a product after clicking on a tag on Instagram?
Q19. Have you clicked on a tag for a product that you have seen on Instagram?	Pearson Correlation	1	,323**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	260	257
Q21. Have you purchased a product after clicking on a tag on Instagram?	Pearson Correlation	,323**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	257	260

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 15: Pearson's correlation between Q19 and Q21

In the Pearson correlation between Q20 and Q22 there was a moderately positive correlation coefficient of 0,438 along with a Sigma of 0,000 (see table 16). This put the likelihood of randomness within minimal range and hence, a connection between the two variables can be made.

Correlations

		Q20. Have you clicked on an ad link for a product that you have read about on a blog?	Q22. Have you purchased a product after clicking on an ad link on a blog?
Q20. Have you clicked on an ad link for a product that you have read about on a blog?	Pearson Correlation	1	,438**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	223	214
Q22. Have you purchased a product after clicking on an ad link on a blog?	Pearson Correlation	,438**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	214	219

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 16: Pearson's correlation between Q20 and Q22

The abovementioned positive correlation suggests that the hypothesis of attention-catching tags and ad links can be supported within this sampling frame.

Hypothesis 5 *People are more likely to click on a tag or ad link if it is not obviously advertised.*

For question Q26 *I am more prone to click on a tag or ad link it is not clearly advertised* the respondents were asked to rank their attitude ranging from one 'completely disagree' to five 'completely agree' (see figure 5). The majority with 34,6% responses answered three 'neither'

followed by four 'agree'. The majority of respondents are prone to agree, which is further elevated by an average mean of 3,01 and a standard deviation equal to 1,238, which suggests that the answers are dispersed accordingly.
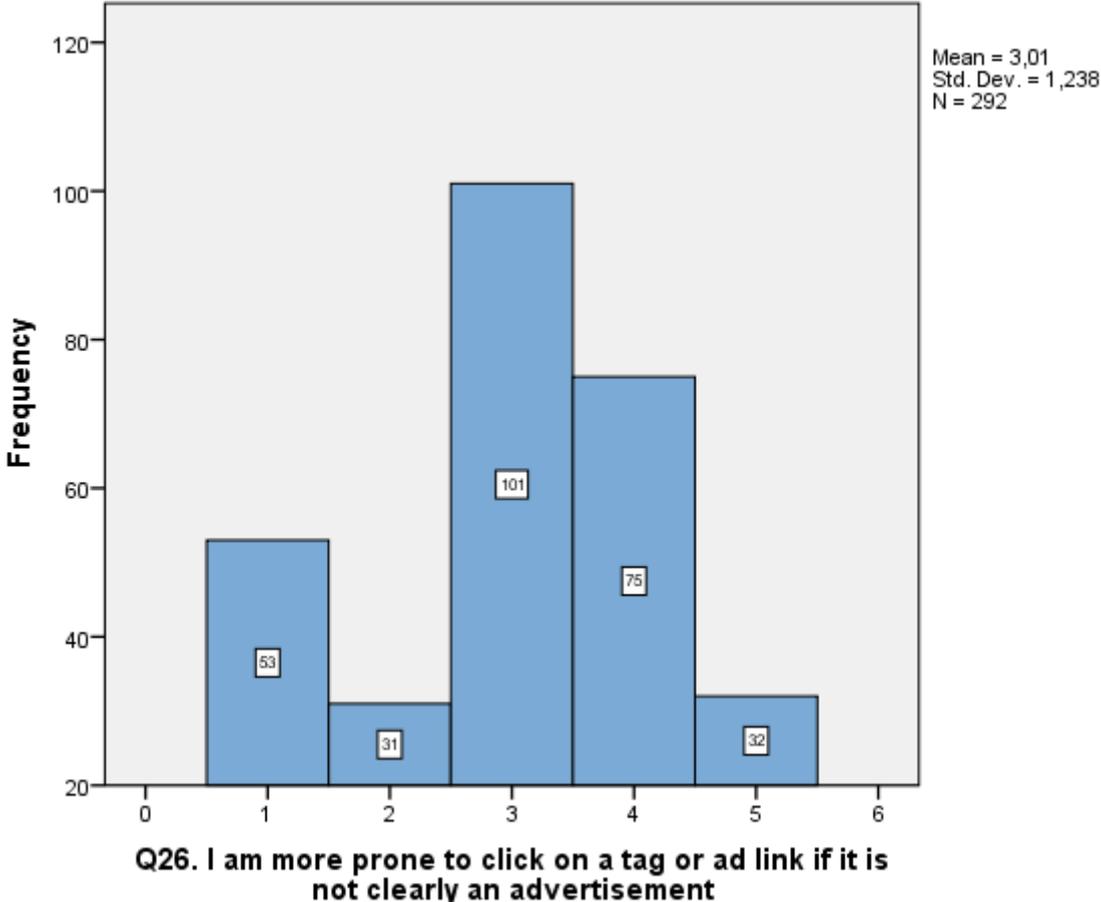
Figure 5: Histogram over respondents' attitude towards advertisements

To find an answer to this hypothesis the respondents were asked to state if they are more prone to click on a tag or ad link is the marketing message is not clearly advertised. The histogram above portrays that the respondents are slightly more positive towards clicking on a tag or ad link if it is not clearly advertised. This provides the study with support for the fifth hypothesis which can be accepted.

5 Discussion

This section will present a discussion regarding each individual hypothesis, along with a general discussion where the results of this study will present an answer to the research question and be aligned with the purpose.

5.1 Hypotheses discussion

Hypothesis 1 - *Individual customer's online shopping has increased as a result of social media*

The foundation of the first hypothesis is laid out by Jiang, Yang and Jun (2013) and Yan et al. (2016) who jointly state that social media has a large impact on online shopping behavior and that online shopping is growing. By taking the constantly increasing social media presence into consideration and the effect it has on individuals' everyday life it is not far-fetched to assume that the reduced effort involved in making a purchase in the online sphere is a key denominator in this growth. It can also be discussed whether this increase is the result of increased convenience and website accessibility provided by social media and various Web 3.0 applications.

The results and analysis of this hypothesis are inconclusive and does therefore not provide this study with enough assurance to completely support and accept the hypothesis that online shopping has increased as a result of social media. There are indications that users who view their choice of social media more frequently have a higher tendency to purchase products seen on the chosen social media platform and that a sense of familiarity or connection to the messenger behind the social media account will play an important role in the frequency of purchases. However, it is not possible to conclude that the presence of social media is the sole underlying reason behind individual consumers' rise in online shopping.

There are many potential reasons behind the disproving results reached in this study as opposed to the contradictory ones presented in theory. A reasoning behind this result could be due to the respondents age and the more connected and online based approach the younger crowd have towards consumption. A further reason can be that more brands are available both in the click-, brick- and mortar world with a wider range of products providing the consumers with more options which directly increases the accessibility and easiness of shopping online without the interference of social media outlets. However, social media has resulted in a considerable change in how people communicate, mediate, discuss, recommend, and provide other online consumers with information regarding products which may lead to a seemingly more active social media presence.

Hypothesis 2 - *People who are more active on social media are more likely to be impulsive online purchasers*

The second hypothesis is based on research conducted by Wu, Chen and Chiu (2016) who claim that a large portion of the overall public considers themselves to be impulsive online shoppers. Accordingly, Xian et al. (2016) state that social media serves as an intermediary between online shopping websites and impulsiveness, where the two variables appear to impact each other.

The results and the analysis lead to inconclusive and somewhat contradictory findings. Overall all a relationship between frequent social media checks and frequent online shopping has been uncovered in this particular non-probability sampling frame but the general perception of increased impulsive shopping as a result of social media seems to disprove this hypothesis.

Initially it was deemed probable that tags and ad links serve as a new age and modern source of eWOM which essentially can be summarized as a method of disseminating information and recommendations between parties and networks in an electronic environment. Fundamentally, theory depicts the idea that consumers are more susceptible to turn recommendations and marketing messages into actions if the message stems from a peer rather than a company. Hence it was expected that the users and consumers who are more active on the their choice of the two chosen social media platforms would be exposed to tags and ad links to a greater extent than non-frequent users, which in turn would lead to recurrent impulsive tendencies. This is in line with what Jiang, Yang and Jun (2013) and Yan et al., (2016) stated regarding the great impact an online recommendation can have in a purchasing process where just approximately close to 50% of social media users will make a purchase after hearing a recommendation on social media.

To conclude this hypothesis and the reasons behind the rejection of it there are many implicating factors to keep in mind. It is important to understand that the young online-savvy consumers mostly referred to in this study are affected by external factors such as current media and fashion trends, peer pressure, and the typical characteristics of each individual's consumption habits.

Hypothesis 3 - *People are more likely to purchase through tags and ad links if the customer considers the source to be trustworthy*

The third hypothesis is mainly dependent on research performed by Yan et al. (2016) and Al-Debei, Akroush and Ashouri (2015). In these studies various factors related to trustworthiness and the customer's inclination to make a purchase based on familiarity of the source is positively linked.

The analysis of this hypothesis suggests that the hypothesis can be accepted within this sampling frame. The result from these statistical tests must however be taken with some caution as they can not be generalized to the entire Swedish population, instead it should be viewed as a representative of the younger population of Sweden who is fairly active on both social media and online shopping.

The results of this study are in line with the aforementioned research. Elaborately, it is believed that the more familiar an individual user or consumer is with the person or organization behind a social media account, the more prone an individual is to consider the messages conveyed on the social media platform as relative to ones sent by their own peers and other influencers in their immediate surroundings and existing networks. Moreover, it is considered probable that level of activity on social media along with the duration of relationship between user and social media source are factors contributing to trustworthiness.

An possible explanation behind this is that there is a difference in the perceived credibility among bloggers and Instagram account holders. According to the results from this study it

appears that an individual user and consumer is more likely to trust a blogger as these tend to be more personal in their display of opinions and details regarding their lives, compared to an Instagram account holder who is more likely to share minor snippets of their lives separated from values and ideas. To summarize, an idea behind this is that blogs create a more personal bond, feelings, or relatability, which will impact how consumers act and change their behavior in an online world.

Hypothesis 4 - Tags and ad links catches the customer's attention regarding a specific product

The reasoning behind hypothesis four is provided by Leigert (2013), Thomsen-Scott (2014), Nam and Kannan (2014), and Polat and Akgün (2015) who mean that tagging, keywords or sharing links is a form of communication and lays out the groundwork for consumers to make associations between products and action-inducing behavior.

Based on the statistical analyses it is possible to accept the fourth hypothesis. Positive correlations reveal that the majority of customer who notice tags and ad links on social media also follow through with actively clicking on the tag or ad link as a result of curiosity or interest surrounding the product. If this finding is correlated back to theory there are also indications that following tags and ad links is a sort of time passing activity or purely for entertainment purposes (Close & Kukar-Kinney, 2010). Once the customer has gone to this extent it is not uncommon for the consumer to follow through with committing to a full purchase, which supports the hypothesis of tags and ad links as attention grabbing measures which can lure in and serve as a motivation behind online purchases.

An interesting finding is that the correlations appears to be stronger in cases where blogs are the main social media phenomenon where an individual or organization promote their own interests to an audience who is willing to accept the messages conveyed. A possible explanation for this is yet again trustworthiness, as more personal feelings can be felt towards a blogger who then serves as a transmitter of positive eWOM regarding a specific product. This new role that has grown out of social media depicts the account holder or user as an indirect advertiser, regardless if this person is compensated by a brand or organization or acting as an independent social media user.

Hypothesis 5 - *People are more likely to click on a tag or ad link if it is not obviously advertised.*

The fifth hypothesis is presented in research performed by Geurin-Eagleman and Burch (2016), Fu and Chen (2012), Wang, K., Wang, E., and Farn (2009) and Colliander and Erlandsson (2015) who discussed the attitude among consumers towards covert advertising in unexpected places and how shared information on Instagram and blogs can impact consumers purchasing process (. This type of advertising can come from both the traditional business-to-consumer, but nowadays also from consumer-to-consumer, which may be the reason as to why it can be difficult for consumers to seek out and separate advertising messages from regular eWOM from both independent social media users and company sponsored entities.

The abovementioned reasoning along with the results derived from the analysis provides this study with a possibility to accept this hypothesis within the sampling frame and state that consumers are more likely to follow through with a click if the tag or ad link is not clearly stated as an advertisement. A possible implicating factor behind this may be tied back to the

weight of eWOM recommendations from trustworthy sources, where independent actors *seem* to be separated from brands by the first glance if this is not explicitly stated.

These difficulties have resulted in the possibility for almost any social media user to become an indirect advertiser, regardless if the individual is sponsored by a brand, or if they simply wish to disperse their own independent thoughts and recommendations to their followers and readers. Based on this study there are inferences that the intention behind the tags and ad links may not always be fully disclosed and that it is difficult for individual users and consumers to distinguish between pure advertising messages and simple information spreading.

A further possible explanation behind the results reached in this hypothesis is that users and consumers are not used to reaming and being exposed to the more grey areas of advertising and marketing. In traditional and mainly offline media it is thought that it is easier and clearer for consumers to understand when a message is in fact an advertisement. On social media these distinguishing lines are more fluid; hence it can lead to increased insecurities among the customers.

5.2 General discussion

The aim of this study was to answer the research question *To what extent can tags and ad links be used by marketers to reach Swedish online consumers?*

As the use of various social media platforms and applications are becoming a frequent and permanent occurrence in the daily lives of consumers, it is of great importance for marketers to understand the new techniques, opportunities, and challenges that are presented within this context.

As opposed to traditional methods, the online based customers are now the ones in charge of how they wish to be exposed to advertising and marketing messages. This indicates that the marketer must present messages that are of use and falls into the interests of the customer. The challenge within this approach is to ensure that the messages are accepted regardless if the message is of the sponsored nature or if it is simply a eWOM message. The frequency to which social media users will click on a tag or ad link can be clearly correlated to the perceived credibility among the message sender. From a marketer's perspective, this creates a need to associate the right product, with the right source, and to disseminate this joint force to the right audience, who are willing to accept the messages.

The presence of tags and ad links serves as a gateway to reach both new and an already existing clientele. In this study it has been established that tags and ad links serve as attention grabbers, which eventually may not result in a purchase. However, the tags and ad links can raise an interest or curiosity among the customer, who will use these referral tools to browse for other products, whilst the companies themselves can gain attention and raised brand awareness which will be beneficial in the long run.

A clear marketing message through social media channels like Instagram and blogs is usually bypassed by the consumers, but a more hidden advertisement is more likely for the consumers to accept. This means that an advertisement which is presented as a genuine recommendation from peers is more likely to engage the consumers' interests and curiosity. For a successful advertising development using tags and ad links, the marketers must focus on the smaller

audience channels to get the big picture, implicating that Instagram account holders and bloggers who are known for reaching a larger clientele is of use to broadcast a company's marketing message. Consumers, who are exposed to these types of information, with the comprehension that it is sincere and credible, are more prone to accept the marketing messages. Tags and ad links are not solely clicked on by the customers with the intent of committing to a purchase. Another aspect is social media users who are seeking entertainment through online window shopping, and especially through tags and ad links.

Based on the results from this study it can be concluded that people in general consider information available on blogs to be more trustworthy than eWOM messages on Instagram. It is stated that positive recommendations from peers usually result in purchases, as bloggers can portray a feeling of familiarity and a sense of belonging. Trustworthiness plays an important role in terms of online shopping, if the user of social media get the sense that the recommendations that stems from tags and ad links are sincere by the sender, the receiver is more prone to believe it and take action. Thus, If the user is familiar with who the sender is the response from the user is more positive towards the message that they are receiving. Moreover, consumers are more prone to accept marketing messages from private sources on social media rather from the companies themselves. Consequently, consumers are more receptive of marketing messages if they are not clearly advertised. Once again this can be correlated back to trustworthiness.

Tags and ad links are paving the way for a new era of social media marketing where it is necessary for the marketer to be a frontrunner when new consumption and social media trends emerge.

6 Limitations & further research

This study was conducted through the allocation of a non-probability snowball sampling strategy and could therefore benefit from a randomly assigned sampling strategy to achieve a more generalizable result for a larger part of the Swedish population. Though, in this particular research context an employment of a different sampling method would have proven more difficult to work with in regards to the deadline.

The questionnaire was created using Google Forms and could have benefited from being created in SUNET survey software to simplify the analytical steps. Moreover, the use of five-point Likert-scales resulted in a fairly large amount of midrange answers, which did contribute to conclusions in the desired extent. Rather, a four-point or six-point Likert scale could have been favored to help ensure greater data reliability. The study could also have favored more questions of Likert-scale character to uncover underlying attitudes and values among the respondents instead of binary and multiple choice questions.

During the analysis it became evident that certain questions resulted in poor data quality within the collected data set as some respondents provided the study with inconsistent answers. This may have been the result of poor framing of questions or flawed instructions and the available answers but nonetheless it decreases the possibility to achieve generalizability.

Lastly, the result from this study and the statistical tests performed should be taken with some caution as they can not be generalized to the entire Swedish population. Due to the use of a non-probability sample the results of this study may not reflect the attitudes, opinions, and values of the Swedish population in grand.

Throughout this study many interesting topics have been encountered and which all could be examined in greater detail. The limited research surrounding trustworthiness in this particular study could greatly be expanded upon. A suggestion is to research the connection between trustworthiness and impulsive purchasing behavior in other social media contexts. A further suggestion is to investigate whether the concept of eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth) should be redefined to suit the new marketing strategies of tags and ad links rather than primarily focusing on online reviews and ratings. Moreover, it would be interesting to perform a similar study from a more male-oriented perspective to see how advertising on social media is both received and perceived, and the potential effects it has on online behavior.

7 Contribution to the field

The results achieved in this study can be considered as minor contributions to the field as the results are not purely generalizable for the grand Swedish population, but relevant as a representation for younger online-savvy consumers who regularly engage themselves in difference social media spheres. The lack of a random probability sample does require a tad of carefulness when examining collected data. However, it is possible to say that tags and ad links has to some extent a direct effect on Swedish consumers online shopping behavior and is of use for marketers that need to target new advertising trends.

The contribution of this is relevant in time and serves as a foundation in the field of marketing, relevant to both researchers in the area, marketers and firms engaging on social medial. Due to the rapid development of social media platforms and the lack of research in the area of tags and ad links a highly relevant area has gained a deeper understanding as a result of this research.

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Appendix 1 English questionnaire

Below the questionnaire which was used in the study and answered by 300 people is presented. The questionnaire was sent out in Swedish and has thereafter been carefully translated. Lastly, some of the questions had minor text- and image cues to try and reduce the possible ambiguity of those questions. These are however not features in the appendix below.

Questionnaire: Social media and online shopping

Q1. Age

Q2. Gender
- Female
- Male
- Do not identify with above

Q3. Occupation
- Student
- Work full time
- Work part time
- Other

Q4. Do you use any kind of social media?
- Yes
- No
- I do not know what social media is

Q5. Do you use Instagram?
- Yes
- No
- I do not know what Instagram is

Q6. What types of accounts do you follow on Instagram?
- Friends
- Family
- Acquaintances
- Brands
- Inspiration accounts
- Social media profiles
- Film and TV profiles
- Musicians
- Humor
- Other
- I do not use Instagram

Q7. Do you read blogs?
- Yes
- No
- I do not know what a blog is

Q8. What type of blogs do you read?
- Friends
- Family
- Acquaintances
- Inspiration blogs
- Social media profiles
- Politics and news

Sport and fitness
Brands
Image blogs
Other
I do not read blogs

Q9. How active are you on Instagram?
Every hour
Few times per day
Once a day
Few times per week
Few times per month
Once a month
Less frequently
I do not use Instagram

Q10. How often do you read blogs?
Every hour
Few times per day
Once a day
Few times per week
Few times per month
Once a month
Less frequently
I do not read blogs

Q11. Have you ever purchased a product online?
Yes
No

Q12. How often do you purchase products online?
Multiple times per week
Once a week
Few times per month
Once a month
Few times per year
I do not purchase products online

Q13. Have you purchased products online impulsively?
Yes
No
I do not purchase products online

Q14. The majority of my online purchases are impulsive
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither
Agree
Strongly agree

Q15. Have you purchased a product online after seeing it on Instagram?

Yes
No
I do not use Instagram
I do not buy products online

Q16. Have you purchased a product online after reading about it on a blog?

Yes
No
I do not read blogs
I do not buy products online

Q17. Have you noticed "tags" on Instagram? *(w. example image)*

Yes
No
I do not use Instagram

Q18. Have you noticed "ad links" on blogs? *(w. example image)*

Yes
No
I do not read blogs

Q19. Have you clicked on a tag for a product that you have seen on Instagram?

Yes
No
I do not use Instagram

Q20. Have you clicked on an ad link for a product that you have read about on a blog?

Yes
No
I do not read blogs

Q21. Have you purchased a product after clicking on a tag on Instagram?

Yes
No
I do not use Instagram
I do not purchase products online

Q22. Have you purchased a product after clicking on an ad link on a blog?

Yes
No
I do not read blogs
I do not purchase products online

Q23. I have clicked on a tag or ad link on Instagram or a blog without making a purchase

Yes
No
I do not use social media

Q24. I have clicked on a tag or ad link on Instagram or a blog and viewed other products on the website

Yes
No
I do not use social media

Q25. Do you think it is obvious when advertising exists on social media?
Yes
No
Not always
I do not use social media

Q26. I am more prone to click on a tag or ad link if it is not clearly an advertisement
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither
Agree
Strongly agree

Q27. I am more likely to purchase a product seen on social media if I consider the source to be trustworthy
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Neither
Agree
Strongly agree

Q28. Do you think the exposure of tags and ad links on social media affects your online purchasing decisions
Yes
No
I do not use social media

Q29. I tend to purchase more products online as a result of tags and ad links on social media
Yes
No
I do not use social media
I do not purchase products online
Not sure

Q30. What is the reason you click on tags and ad links on social media?
Offer or campaign
Recommendation
Curiosity or interest regarding the product
Trustworty source
A need for similar product
Impulsive acting
Other
I do not use social media

Appendix 2 Statistical data

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	12	1	,3	,3	,3
	14	1	,3	,3	,7
	15	3	1,0	1,0	1,7
	16	5	1,7	1,7	3,3
	17	8	2,7	2,7	6,0
	18	7	2,3	2,3	8,3
	19	10	3,3	3,3	11,7
	20	19	6,3	6,3	18,0
	21	16	5,3	5,3	23,3
	22	30	10,0	10,0	33,3
	23	40	13,3	13,3	46,7
	24	23	7,7	7,7	54,3
	25	27	9,0	9,0	63,3
	26	21	7,0	7,0	70,3
	27	12	4,0	4,0	74,3
	28	13	4,3	4,3	78,7
	29	7	2,3	2,3	81,0
	30	4	1,3	1,3	82,3
	31	1	,3	,3	82,7
	32	6	2,0	2,0	84,7
	33	3	1,0	1,0	85,7
	34	1	,3	,3	86,0
	35	5	1,7	1,7	87,7
	36	3	1,0	1,0	88,7
	37	1	,3	,3	89,0
	38	4	1,3	1,3	90,3
	39	1	,3	,3	90,7
	40	3	1,0	1,0	91,7
	41	4	1,3	1,3	93,0
	42	4	1,3	1,3	94,3
	43	2	,7	,7	95,0
	44	2	,7	,7	95,7
	45	1	,3	,3	96,0
	46	4	1,3	1,3	97,3
	49	1	,3	,3	97,7
	50	3	1,0	1,0	98,7
	51	1	,3	,3	99,0
	55	2	,7	,7	99,7
	56	1	,3	,3	100,0
	Total	300	100,0	100,0	

Table X: Full frequency table over age distribution

Appendix 3 Example of tags on Instagram

Example of tags found on Instagram

Appendix 4 Example of ad links found on blogs

Klänning – LÄNK // Skor – LÄNK // jacka – LÄNK // Väska – LÄNK // Örhängen – LÄNK // (adlinks)

Example of ad links found on blogs