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Master-Thesis

Customer Returns in E-Commerce & Consumer Interaction via Social Media

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Customer Returns in E-Commerce & Consumer Interaction via Social Media

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Abstract

How can a company decrease their return rates? And can be this conducted by integrating more with the customer via social media? These two main research questions are the core of this Master-Thesis and are related on the mail-order company BON'A PARTE. The focus on the target markets is Denmark, Germany, and Sweden.

Fitting problems, different expectations of the order, and inadequate price-performance ratio are the most return reasons for BON'A PARTE customers. In the fashion industry it is very important to satisfy the customer, especially meeting their demands. Due to the straightforwardness of the Internet it is difficult for mail-order companies to build customer loyalty since Internet users can change via one click to the competitors.

In order to reach the study purpose, research question related to e-commerce, returns management, and consumer interaction via social media were focused on.

The used methodology during the work was literature, a survey, and a case study. For the theory part literature was used and the survey gave an important overview of the return reasons within the company. By ordering garments from the company a qualitative analysis could be developed which reflected the customers' expectations.

By minimizing the gaps between the customers and the company, which involves keeping the company's promise the return rate can be decrease and BON'A PARTE can build up a personal relationship to their customers. Social media, like the networks Facebook and Twitter are good possibilities to reach new customers and keep their loyal ones. Through interacting with blogs BON'A PARTE can communicate in a better way with their consumers.

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1 Introduction

In this chapter it will be briefly discuss the background followed by the problem discussion in order to provide the reader with an insight to the research area. Further the explanation of the overall purpose of the study, state the specific research questions and end with limitations.

1.1 Background

During the last years there has been a globalization of trade, especially within the fashion industry. Due to the development of more complex information and communication technology the boundaries and the physical distance have been smeared out between companies, countries, as well as between customers. Today the consumer has more access to product information and is more aware and demanding, which follows by a change in consumer and behaviour patterns. Through the increased knowledge the consumer requires more of the product and also from the company. As a result company focus has changed from price to the ability to quick respond on new trends and customers' demands; offering more tailored and customized products. The fashion market is complex and unpredictable where trends and demands are frequently shifting. Therefore it is crucial to manage an efficient supply and demand chain in order to fulfil the requirement on having the right product, in right quality, right quantity at the right time. (Christopher et al, 2004)

Nowadays the Internet is a central medium for exchanging every kind of information; starts with the exchange of simple text messages, like email and going to the recovery of information, like datas from the World Wide Web and as well multimedia interpersonal communication, like chats and blogs. Additionally selling and buying products or services over electronic systems like the web is defined as Electronic Commerce. (teialehrbuch.de)

The number of at the Internet connected PCs are redoubling every year and thus the value of the Internet is increasing for all users. More information (company performance, etc...) and services (e-commerce, blogs, etc...) are available and it is easy to contact more people in a personal way. (teialehrbuch.de)

Today the Swedish distance trade has a turnover of 28 billion SEK. The biggest section of customers is within the years of 15-29. This can be explained by the fact that companies are getting more efficient in using social media and also targeting the right customers online. The leading purchase channel is Internet meanwhile catalogue-orderings are decreasing, even among the elderly consumers. (habit.se)

Mail-order trade in Germany is increasing since the year 2006. (computerwoche.de) But the e-commerce business has a high return rate, which includes costs and work. Companies lose money on returns and the additional work involved the whole process of a return, like the inspection, validation and repacking of the returned items. (Martinez, 2010)

In the fast fashion business the market is more a demanding market rather than a supply one. Because of this an interaction with the customer is very important to keep the loyal relationship and create new ones. The competition between the companies is big and therefore they have to be more special and stand out from their competitors, especially within the Internet where the customers are able to switch easily to the competitors via one click. Due to the hard competition it is crucial to attract the customers and therefore consumer

interaction is a necessary tool for understanding the customers and their wishes and desires. From a customer perspective consumer interaction is a more personalized way of marketing. (seobook.com)

Facebook is the biggest social Internet network in the world. The company has more than 400 million users in several ages and assets. A statistic says that more than 10 million users are getting every day fan of fan pages. Facebook is an important marketing tool for companies to reach customers. The users trust more other user's opinion than a traditional advertisement. (viermalvier.at)

Customer-centricity is imperative in the new business economy: shifting from marketing products to building lasting customer relationships. It can build customer loyalty, a customer response characteristic which leads to higher profitability. (customer-relations.suite101.com)

1.2 Problem Discussion

A problem for the most e-commerce retailers is the high returns rate. Especially in the country Germany it is enormous. The returns are free of shipping costs in this country and the customer has only to pay the shipping charges. Therefore lays the possibility for the customers to order more and unnecessarily than they actually need, like for example more than one size. The customers want to have a successful order and that the order is worthwhile. They want to keep at least one product and do not want to go away empty-handed. (shopbetreiber-blog.de)

The returns rate in the fashion business via Internet is higher than in other segments. The average returns quota in general is around 4%, in the electronics and computer industry 10-15% and in the apparel branch even up to 40-50%. (unternehmer.de)

It is a hard challenge to reduce the returns rate but it is necessary to save money and resources. The layout of the webpage is an important tool for making the customer satisfied as well as the entire purchase experience. (shopbetreiber-blog.de)

In order to decrease the returns rate for online retailers the companies need to understand the reasons behind the returns process. Through consumer interaction the company can communicate with the customer and also survey the different consumer behaviour, patterns and demands. Using social media can also increase sales and attract more customers. Creating consumer interaction is a good possibility to reach new customer although it has as well some risks. Non-customers can harm the company via blogs and influence through this other potential consumers, since the company cannot control all customers' statements in the Internet. (directnews.co.uk)

As mentioned before the topic consumer interaction via social media is a good opportunity for companies to communicate with their current and potential customers. It can be helpful to create a company profile on Facebook or Twitter and reach new fans and followers for spreading out the company's philosophy and value.

1.3 Overall Research

Considering the discussion above, the aim of this study is to provide a better understanding of how the e-commerce retailer BON'A PARTE can reduce the returns rates and also if this could be done by interacting more with the customer via social media.

In order to fulfil this purpose the following research questions (RQ) are stated:

RQ 1: How can BON'A PARTE decrease their returns rates?

RQ 2: Can this be conducted by integrating more with the customer via social media?

1.4 Limitations

The focus in this thesis will be, as mentioned before, on the both issues: reduce the returns rate of BON'A PARTE and integrate social media for the communication with the consumers. The market view will be on the three different ones: Sweden, Denmark and Germany. Sweden was chosen because of the low returns rate, although the customers do not use the given size guides. Denmark was selected since BON'A PARTE is Danish. The German market is very interesting considering to the e-commerce business. The returns rate is extremely high because of the free return costs.

2 Methodology

This chapter is discussing the research method and purpose followed by the research approach and strategy. Then a review of the data collection, sample selection, and at the end the quality criteria.

2.1 Research Design

Research can be conducted in different ways and should be defined depending on the research problem before the study is started. Research can be classified into three different categories: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. (Yin, 1989) The research purpose and aim for this thesis signify that this study is more exploratory and descriptive and little explanatory. We have an exploratory approach since we need to explore how BON'A PARTE's website design and applications are being used to affect the online shopping experience and returns rates. Since we are given a data survey from BON'A PARTE and there are some related studies in this area, our intention is to explore new findings by describing the area of research and try to start to explain the collected data in order to find out the similarities and differences.

In our research design we are using case study since the method is "*focusing on holistic situations in real life settings, and tend to have set boundaries of interest, such as organization, a particular industry, or a particular type of operation*" (Ellram, 1996). The decision to use a case study method was made since the research purpose is to examine how BON'A PARTE can reduce their returns rate and additionally why they are so high in order to propose improvements. The aim is to obtain a depth of understanding within this issue rather than a breadth. (Ellram, 1996)

We will use a frame of references with the aim to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon by first analyzing data statistically, which are secondary data captured by Klas Hjort, and then analyzing our case study, which we collected by observing websites and order clothes from BON'A PARTE. Quantitative approach will therefore be mostly suitable for this thesis as a starting point, followed by a qualitative approach for the case study.

2.2 Chosen Methods

For this thesis three different methods were chosen:

- Literature search
- A given quantitative survey by BON'A PARTE about their customers
- Qualitative data collection
 - Case study; participating observation and direct observation

The thesis starts with an inductive approach, since we were supported with quantitative data from BON'A PARTE. Due to our approach of combining empirical evidence with theory throughout our study turns towards an abductive direction.

Based on our research questions we started from a platform of theory from which we built the assumption which we later tested against our empirical findings. Our empirical study was the foundation for the thesis's conclusion but also enhanced and reconnected to the theory.

2.2.1 Literature Research

It is central to have a good conceptual grounding in the existing literature based on the topics we are discussing and analyzing in this thesis. The literature research is focusing on the topics regarding returns management, consumer interaction, and social media. These topics were chosen since our aim is to reduce the return rate of the BON'A PARTE, and also how this could be done by interacting more with the customers through social media.

From a marketing perspective the homepage of BON'A PARTE will be viewed in several different ways. The main effort is to establish an overall examination focusing on how to navigate on the website; considering the layout, site ease etc. These reviews will be presented in a describing way. In order to broaden our knowledge and practice the company from a customer perspective we decided to use two different methods mentioned as case studies; first by sign up for the newsletter from BON'A PARTE and secondly also order products from this company as ordinary customers.

Other Internet retailers' websites will be review and analyzed in order to estimate different applications correctly being used on the market which can help the customer to facilitate a better purchase decision online. Further several applications such as size guides, showrooms, product information, and recommendations will be evaluated.

2.2.2 Survey

The quantitative survey, which captures secondary data, from BON'A PARTE was conducted by Klas Hjort in the six different target markets Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom. The process was done via email and was sent to 5994 customers.

As mentioned before in chapter 1.4 the focus of this thesis is on the three countries: Denmark, Germany and, Sweden. Therefore 2999 customers were asked and 635 answers were received. This is a participation of 21.17% and the following data percentage in this report is based on this result.

2.2.3 Qualitative Method

With the purpose of answering our research questions we needed to use a method which required subjectivity in order to gain a better understanding among people's situations. Therefore a qualitative method is suitable for our study with the intention of understand how the company and customers experience themselves and their surroundings. Overall the qualitative method can be distinguished as flexible, focused on depth, unique, singular and divergent information, unsystematic and unstructured observations, interviews or questionnaires without fixed questions or answers, and description and understanding. The researcher affects the result with his/her presence since there is a personal relation between the researcher and the respondent. (Holme & Solvang, 1997)

Additionally Holme & Solvang (1997) describe qualitative methods as five techniques within the concept for procedures:

- Informant interviews
- Respondent interviews
- Direct observation
- Participating observation
- Analysis of sources

2.2.4 Research Strategy: Case Study

Case study can be described as a strategy for doing research and may have different approaches depending of the type of research questions posted. Further it contains an empirical investigation of a particular phenomenon with its real life contexts using multiple sources of evidence. In order to gain an understanding of the context of the research and process being enacted this strategy is a very suitable method to utilize. Additionally it helps to answer the questions why, what, and how and further explores the existing theory. (Saunders et al, 2003) According to Sekeran (2000) case study is a problem solving technique which involves an in-depth analysis of the situations and is mostly suitable where the nature of problem seems to be the same. Further Ellram (1996) claims that *“case studies are excellent for theory building, for providing detailed explanations of “best practice”, and providing more understanding of data gathered”*.

As the purpose of this study is to reduce the returns rates of BON'A PARTE and also interact more with the customer via social media, the strategy chosen will be a case study.

The case study will incorporate an analysis of BON'A PARTE's present website. This can be established as a qualitative direct observation. The analysis of the homepage is carried out by navigating through the website in a systemic approach, presented in an English version. The survey will be done by two female textile students who both practice English as a foreign language.

2.2.5 Qualitative Participating Observation

The examination about the online shopping experience will be done by applying qualitative participating observation since we are acting like real customers and not only observers. The ordering method will enclose how the company facilitates the entire ordering process online; including ordering, purchasing, and returning. The ordering products will be selected based on the quantitative survey from the company; categorizing products with most returns rates. Each person will order four products from four specific problem sections for women: trousers, shirts, dresses, and bikini or bra. The right size for each product will be selected by first measuring the order persons' bodies and then combine it with the company's size guide suggestion; even though it will differ from sizes they regularly wear/buy.

The ordering experience from BON'A PARTE is supposed to answer two main questions:

- Does BON'A PARTE's website fulfill all requirements which an Internet retailer should maintain in order to support the online shopping and therefore have satisfied customers regarding site ease, size guide, product data information, return policy, and clear information about prices and delivery?
- Were our expectations about the entire process met in the end?

2.3 Sample Selection

Saunders et al (2003) describes sampling as a kind of technique which provides several ways to markedly reduce the amount of data and further enhance the need to only collect data from a subgroup rather than all possible cases or elements. According to Sekeran (2000) it further means that it is a process of selecting from a sufficient number of elements from the population and also understands the properties or characteristics of the similar subjects.

For our sample selection we have chosen the area of Internet retailing companies with BON'A PARTE as our case.

Further we used both secondary and primary data collection methods. There was a lot of information on past research regarding our chosen topic, which gave us a wide range of secondary data that we used as background for our theory.

By using the secondary data we gained a pre-understanding on past research and the current situation. In order to get a deeper understanding of our research problem we supplemented our research with primary data carried out by case study. One primary decision is whether the data collection should consist of a single case study or multiple case studies and this decision must be made before the data collection as a part of research design. However each case study is not a single observation of an experiment, instead each case study is in and of itself a self-contained experiment with unique context that is part of the experiment. In our sampling we used a single case study since we wanted to know how the context of the phenomenon of interest affects the outcome and considered it to be a unique case. (Ellram, 1996)

The primary data which we collected ourselves were combined and compared with the secondary data. The information was gathered within the aim of our research questions and required to respond to the purpose of our thesis. (Christensen et al. 1998)

2.4 Research Quality Criteria

We are aware of the importance of reliable and trustworthy information and therefore books, articles and homepages in the subject of the thesis were studied before the case studies were carried out in order to increase the reliability of the studies. The case studies and their aims were planned in advance. In order to validate the results, every process was documented with written words or by pictures.

3 Literature Review

In the previous chapter, an introduction and background to the research area of this study was presented as well as overall purpose and research questions. In this chapter a review of literature relating to each of the two stated research questions will be presented.

3.1 E-Commerce

E-commerce is short for Electronic Commerce and is distinguished by selling and buying products or services over electronic system like the Internet, replacing physical business transactions with electronic business transactions. In addition it provides the opportunity to put store owners and customers into a virtual contact with one another despite boundaries such as time and geography. (mariosalexandrou.com)

E-commerce is changing the business market and shifts the power from the buyer to the customer. From a customer's point of view e-commerce offers convenience, a bigger selection and variety, cost and time saving, and anonymity. On the other hand, from the retailer's point of view e-commerce facilitates the possibility to fulfill demand for products, services and information of each customer individually. On the contrary to the traditional boundaries for a retailer, e-commerce provides an opportunity to connect to its customers, vendors, suppliers and employees all over the world. Consequently the company can reach new potential markets and enable the business to reach an enormous number of customers over the Internet. (epsit.net)

In Sweden e-commerce is growing rapidly and from the last years from 2006 to 2009, the e-commerce turnover/sales have increased by 75%, from 790 billion SEK to 13 888 billion SEK. (Hammarberg, 2010) The following diagram (figure 3.1) from Forrester Research (Green, 2009) shows the developing and forecasting prognoses for e-commerce within the Swedish apparel market.

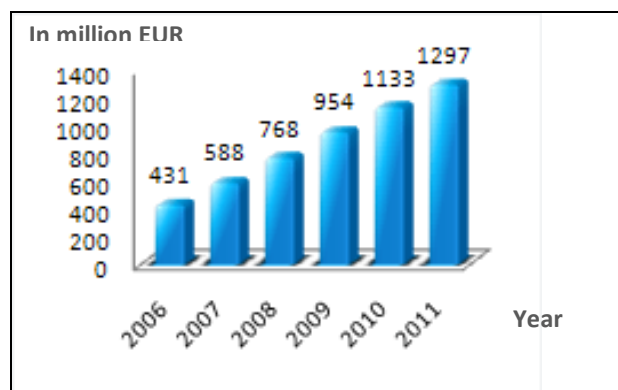


Figure 3.1: The developing of e-commerce, apparel market in Sweden, 2006-2011, million EUR (e-mind.se)

Forecasts for the US e-commerce made by Forrester Research (Green, 2009) estimates that e-commerce will continue to take more marketshare in the near future. Consequently, the National Retail Foundations predict that traditional retail sales will drop and consumer will

shift their retail dollars to channels like mass merchants, warehouse clubs and Internet retailers (see figure 3.2).

	Actual	Forecast →				
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total US online sales (\$ billions)	\$141.3	\$156.1	\$176.9	\$194.4	\$211.7	\$229.1
Growth	13%	11%	13%	10%	9%	8%

Figure 3.2: Forecast growth within US ecommerce (Green, 2009)

3.2 Supply Chain Management

According to The Global Supply Chain Forum (Vitasek, 2009) returns management is one of eight key business processes in supply chain management. The council of Supply Chain Management Professionals defines supply chain management as:

“Supply Chain Management encompasses the planning and management of all activities involved in sourcing and procurement, conversion, and all logistics management activities. Importantly, it also includes coordination and collaboration with channel partners, which can be suppliers, intermediaries, third-party service providers, and customers. In essence, supply chain management integrates supply and demand management within major business functions and business processes within and across companies into a cohesive and high performing business model. It includes all of the logistics management activities noted above, as well as manufacturing operations, and it drives coordination of processes and activities with and across marketing, sales, product design, finance and information technology.” (Vitasek, 2009)

3.2.1 Returns Management

As online shopping is increasing each year a growing problem for Internet retailers are the returns rates. Not only is it a loss of profitability but also highly inefficient for them. In addition returns require more process handlings from resources such as distribution, warehouse operations, customer service, finance and even sales and marketing. It involves the material flow but also the information flow from the company towards the customer regarding return policy, shipment disposition, credit status and reship information. (Martinez, 2010)

Returns management is the part of supply chain management that includes returns, reverse logistic, gatekeeping and return avoidance (Lambert & Cooper, 2000, see figure 3.3).

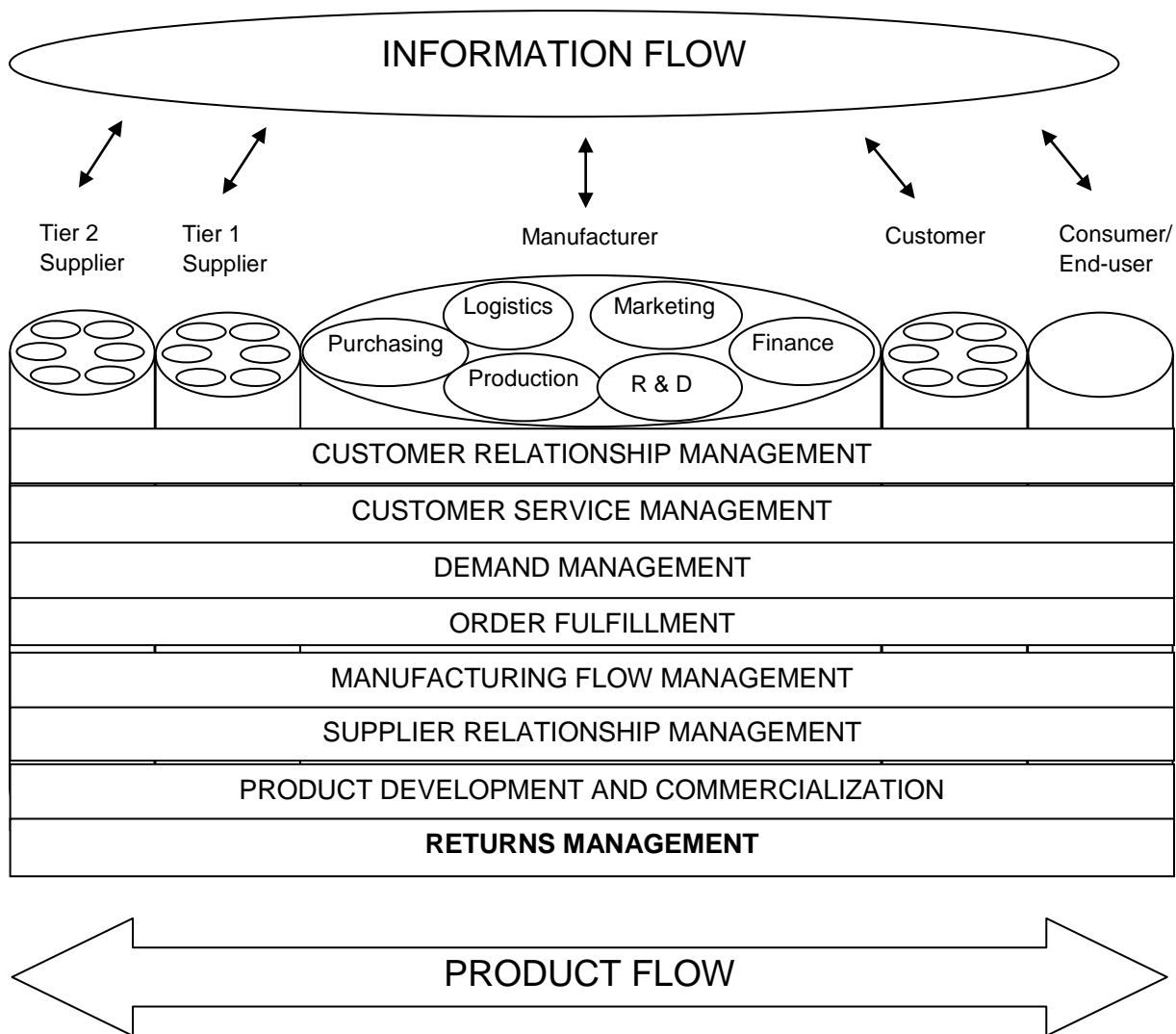


Figure 3.3: Supply chain management: integrating and managing business processes across the supply chain. (Lambert & Cooper, 2000, adapted from Klas Hjort's presentation: Research area is returns management)

According to Bob Martinez 46% of the companies lose money on returns. Furthermore a new survey stated that approximately a quarter break even and only 8% declare to make money on returns. (Martinez, 2010)

Since the cost of processing returns and sheer volume returns management present one of the biggest operational challenges in the world of Internet retailing. (Diane et al, 2007) However, returns also correspond to a frequently-missed opportunity to manage customer relationship and gain more customer loyalty to the company. Even though many companies lose money on returns more than a quarter from the survey claimed that they do not have a strategy to reduce them.

3.2.2 Reasons for Customer Returns

In order to be a successful online retailer it is central to recognize the key drivers of return satisfaction and value perception as well as understand the broader implications of returns for customer loyalty. (Boyer et al, 2007) The prime competition for an online retail store is the

physical retail store and further the major difference between them is the separation of Internet retailer from their customers; both in space and time. Consequently it enlarges the importance of operational service excellent fulfilment including the returns services. (Boyer et al, 2007)

Moreover a superior start to manage returns rates is to know the motivations behind them. The following reasons are contributing to why customers are returning purchased items:

1. Changed mind/buyer's remorse
2. Wrong size/colour
3. Item looked different in catalogue or on website
4. Purchases item in multiple sizes or colours; returned what did not want
5. Order type (Internet, phone, email, etc.)
6. Defect/damaged item
7. Delivery issues (arrived late, etc.)
8. Took too long to receive/leadtime (inventory not available/backordered)
9. Assembly challenge
10. Competition
11. Years on market
12. Culture

The first reasons are factors which are mostly unavoidable for the company. Sometimes the customer changes his/her mind about the purchase by the time the delivery is received. The size/colour could be wrong or the item may appear different from how it was perceived on the website or catalogue. Usually some customers will habitually order different colours and sizes in order to be satisfied with one and return the other. Although many of these factors can be controlled and avoid by the company such as a defect/damaged item, misships, delivery problems and inventory issues. (Martinez, 2010)

Also factors like competition and years on the market are influencing elements. Usually companies that are new on the market have a higher returns rate than companies that have been on the market for a matter of time. New market entrance means new customers which are not familiar with the companies offering of clothes, quality and sizes. By time customers are getting experience from the company services which generally decrease the returns rates. Culture is also a revealing factor due to that countries and cultures shape customers to have different consumer behaviour and therefore can perform and react differently depending on the circumstances and environment.¹

3.2.3 Gaps between Customers and Company

Today there is a lack of research handling different factors that influence a consumer's online shopping experience. In general most research on electronic service quality has focused on the website itself; including the ease of use or usefulness of the information presented combined with other transaction- specific factors. (Boyer et al, 2007) According to Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Malhotra (2002) there is a fulfilment gap which detains the inconsistency between a customer's requirement and subsequent experiences. This gap consists of multiple dimensions. Firstly a communication gap arises when marketing promises do not

¹ Lecture from consumer behaviour course, University of Borås, Klas Hjort, 2010-02-16

exceed what is being offered on the websites. Secondly, a design gap occurs due to insufficiencies in the customer interface that makes it harder for the customer to complete the purchase.

From a logistic and presumed consumer insight perspective one more gap can be determined as a service gap. It is described as a gap between what the company thinks the consumer wants, and what the consumer really wants. The main objective for the company is the actually perceived service. (Harrison & van Hoek, 2001, see figure 3.4)

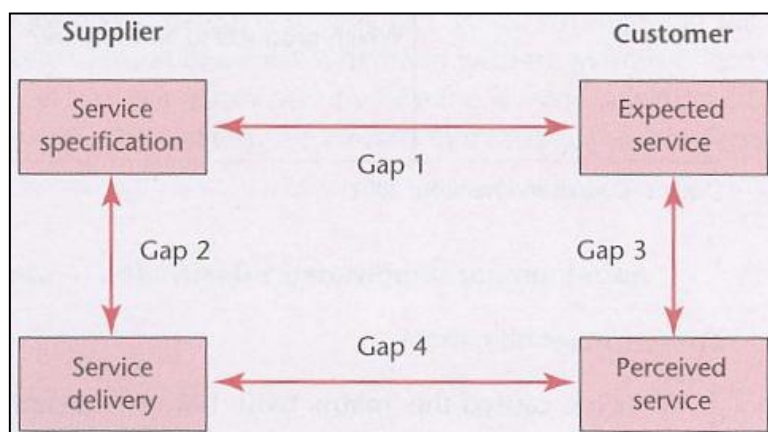


Figure 3.4: Picture illustrating the four gaps associated with service (Harrison & van Hoek 2001)

One of the biggest challenges for an online retailer is to replace the physical customer service and product showcase with an efficient substitute for the customer. The advantage with a physical retail store is that the customer can explore the fitting, size, colour, feel the fabric with its fingers and also try it on if it is necessary. In order to achieve these advantages an online retailer need to offer different technologies and functions for the consumer on the website.

3.2.4 Customer Loyalty

According to a study (Martinez, 2010) there is a direct correlation between flexible returns practices and future customer orders. If the returns processes were not convenient, 85% of the online shoppers stated that they would not buy again from the company. On the contrary, if the returns process was convenient, 95% reported they would buy again. The Internet retailer should prospect all returns made by a customer as a service recovery opportunity. Gronroos (1988) uses the definition of service recovery as pertaining to activities in which a firm engaged to address a customer complaint regarding a perceived service failure. Although it can also be seen with a broader view, claiming that any returns present a service recovery opportunity, even if the Internet retailer perfectly delivers the requested item as promised but still the customer is not satisfied with the initial purchase experience. Regardless of the returns reason it provides an opportunity for the Internet retailer to rectify the dissatisfaction, and the ongoing service the customer receives during the purchase experience will be evaluated from a consumer perspective. (Boyer et al., 2007)

In today's competitive business environment customer loyalty ranks above satisfaction as a strategic goal (Oliver, 1997, 1999) and service recovery evidently affects customer loyalty.

(Andreassen, 2000) For that reason it is crucial for Internet retailers to understand how customers evaluate the returns experience in order to gain loyal customers.

Boyer et al (2007) explain that there are three variables which directly and positively convince loyalty intentions (figure 3.5): Perceived value of the returns offering, returns satisfaction, and previous service experience. *Perceived value of the returns offering* consists of the customer's perception of the entire returns management system, and the apparent policy and process issues from the company. The *returns satisfaction* focuses more on a specific returns transaction and the customer's experience of the process. Whether or not a return was involved, *previous service experience* contains of the customer's view of past service interaction with the company. *Site ease* influences perceived value of the returns offering and returns satisfaction by the ease of the returns-specific section of the website. The variables are also affected by *customer effort* which involves the process of physically completing the returns; such as packing and shipping. *Service recovery quality* includes the customer's observation of recovery responsiveness, compensation, and contact.

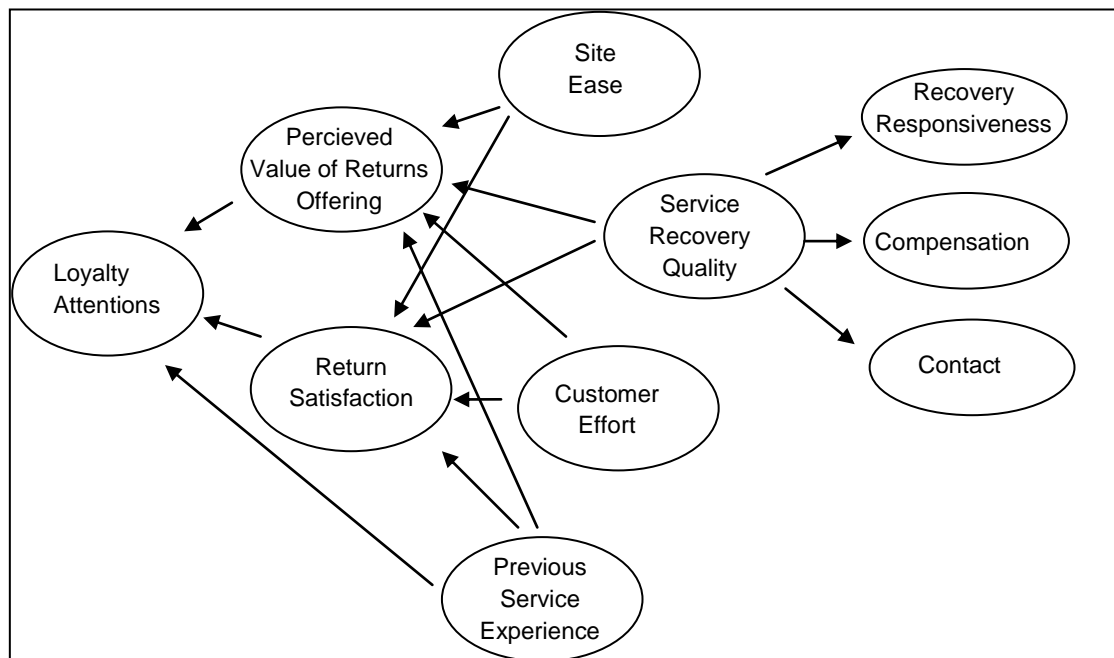


Figure 3.5: Impact of the returns management system on loyalty intentions in Internet retailing (Boyer et al, 2007)

3.2.5 Visual Marketing

Visual merchandising is a strategy which aim is to gain attention and increase sales. The product display is a helpful tool when to launch a new product, fashion trend or idea. It can also fulfil the purpose of showing the customer how to wear the product and give suggestions of different product combinations. By a shop window retailers can express and communicate the store image and attract customers to attend the store. Working with product display in a physical retail store includes elements such as colour, texture, background environment, lighting, and accessorize. In order to show clothes in a three-dimensional way mannequins are the most common and effective tool to use. The mannequin is one of the store's most valuable resources since it clearly communicates the message to customers like a quiet salesperson. (Pegler, 2006)

3.2.6 Applications of a Webshop

The physical store is the prime competitor for an Internet retailer since the customer can experience the product's fitting, size, colour, and if necessary also try it on. To be competitive in this area there are several methods for a webshop to use. Khakimdjanoval & Park (2005) describe different techniques which can be used in various ways for a webshop. Firstly the main presentation of the product can appear differently by using human model, mannequin, hanger, or flat on the ground. Secondly, the chosen technique can be two-dimensional, three-dimensional, rotates, enlarges, and etc. Also cross-presentation by showing all colours being offered and suggestion how it can be combinative with other clothes. Fourthly, presentation-aesthetics including the choice for the customer to choose different backgrounds, number of different model positions, and amount of picture for each product.

The article (Khakimdjanoval & Park 2005) compiles some attributes that can facilitate the purchase experience on the Internet. Usually customers prefer to see the product on human beings compared to mannequins. Using three-dimensional pictures will give the customer the closest experience to how it performs in real life. Additionally, some techniques also allow the customer to create its own virtual model based on the measures and body type of the customer. In order to have a successful website there are some factors to consider and follow:

Information of the product

Good data product quality is one of the most important factors on the webshop in order to gain satisfied customers. It is essential that the company provides the right information needed for the customer so the right product choice will be made. (Ögren, 2009) Information should consist of product material and wash care. Furthermore other features should be provided such as shrinking percentage. Sometimes also a care guide will be presented in order to make sure the product stays durable. (Ahn, 2004)

The information should also present in which colour the product is being offered. Additionally a fancy description of how to wear the item and when, can provide the customer with a better picture of the items' characteristics by given examples. (Corcoran, 2007)

Size guide

Finding the right size is always a tricky challenge and therefore the company needs to help the customer to find the right size and fit for each product in a clear and efficient way. By giving a size guide and how to measure applications the customer can find the correct size. Another helpful application is customer review on a products size and fit which can provide the customer to do a more accurately decision.

Recommendation and review

A common consumer behaviour is to shop with a friend or another person to benefit suggestions and recommendations from each other, which will influence the decision making process. On the other hand this behaviour is not suitable in a webshop and usually the customer sits by itself in front of the computer. In order to fill this gap Internet retailer can offer customers who have purchased an item or have the intention to precede it to write a statement about the product as a "recommendation". Additionally this information and reviews will be present on the webpage as a substitute for the "advice" from a customer's shopping friend. (Wahlström, 2007) The reviews can be presented in different forms such as

text or grading programs with numbers and given “stars”. Although these reviews should be valued with a critical eye since they can be subjective or corrupted from the company or competitors. (konzept-welt.de)

Cross-selling and up-selling

A benefit from a physical retailer perspective is that a salesperson can give suggestions of similar products to the customer and practice cross-selling. This can also be done for online retailer by having an application that offers alternative models or accessories that go with the product that a shopper is looking at. This is not only an opportunity to display related items but also a chance to promote popular products and target high margin products throughout the store. Consequently the online retailer can wider range of the variety of desired options and trigger impulsive purchase additionally to the original selection. The cross-selling applications should be displayed on both the product pages and in the customer shopping cart, for obtaining the best result. Cross-selling will influence increased order completion and also increase the average sale. (gtp-icommerce.com)

Another technique linked to sales is up-selling and can be described as offering a better and more expensive product for the customer. By letting the customer know that for a little more amount of money they can get a better product, could actually increase the customer experience. Online retailer can show the customer the better product after they have added one to their shopping cart and let them make the decision. (gtp-icommerce.com)

Payment options

Frankel (2007) mentions that payment options are an important key element for online shopping and it is not unusual that customers feel unsecure before the purchasing moment. Fraud and false pretences are a nightmare illusion, both for customer as well as for companies. Today there are several different alternatives on the market to choose from in order to get more secure, both for the customer and company. Although it is up to the customer to choose which payment method it wants to use. Furthermore it is also important that the charge for delivery is easily read and understandable for the customer in order to precede the purchase.

Delivery

Information about delivery time and policy should be easily perceived on the webpage and also if the company has the item in stock. (Ekberg, 2002) Today customers expect the delivery to be really quick, often within two to seven days, but overall an accepted timeframe are two weeks. The customer should also be informed if the delivery is delayed in order to still satisfy the purchasing experience. If the promised delivery time was five days but the customer does not receive the item until one week later, the trust and reliance will be negative effected. Subsequently the customer will never buy from them again and prefers to buy from a company that maybe offers a longer delivery time but still holds it. (Hansen, 2005)

Returns policy/Refund

Today customers can return any item within 14 days of receipt for a refund or to exchange it for a different colour or size due to the Distance Selling Regulation. Although in order to decrease a company's returns rate they should offer a returns policy consisting of 60 days. Having a longer returns period will make the customer safer and the decision of keeping the

item is not as stressful. Consequently it will influence the consumer behaviour by eliminating the decision anxiety. (Ekberg, 2002)

Customer service

It is essential that the company encourages the customer to contact them if they have any questions or other considerations. The contact information should easily be seen on the webpage like email address and telephone number. Ekberg (2002) claims that when a company is superior regarding responding email fast it will positively influence the attitude of the customer and also the chances to be a potential customer. Additionally the company should also write opening hours for telephone calls and approximately how long it will take them to answer email, in order to avoid unsatisfied customers. Another way to facilitate the purchasing process is to have a *frequently asked questions* table on the website, which will save both time and resources for the company. (Ekberg, 2002) By subscribing the newsletter the customer is getting information and news about the company at regular intervals. (konzept-welt.de)

To analyze the dimensions of quality factors on a retailer's webshop five main elements can be determined, as shown in the chart below (figure 3.6): System quality, information quality, service quality, product quality, and delivery service. (Ahn, 2004)

System quality	Design	(The web site) has an appropriate style of design for business type
	Navigation	(The web site) has an easy navigation to information
	Response time	(The web site) has fast response and transaction processing
	System security	(The web site) keeps transactions secure from exposure
	System availability	I can use (the web site) when I want to use it
	Functionality	(The web site) has a good functionality relevant to site type
	Error free transaction	(The web site) keeps error-free transactions
	Multimedia	(The web site) provides an appropriate video-audio presentation
	Personal travel ^a	(The web site) supports personal travel in navigation
Information quality	Contents variety	(The web site) has sufficient contents which I expect to find
	Complete information	(The web site) provides complete information
	Detail information	(The web site) provides detailed information
	Accurate information	(The web site) provides accurate information
	Timely information	(The web site) provides timely information
	Reliable information	(The web site) provides reliable information
	Appropriate format	(The web site) communicates information in an appropriate format
	Better purchase choice ^a	(The web site) provides selective information for purchase choice
Comparison shopping ^a	(The web site) provides comparative information between products	
Service quality	Responsiveness	(The web site) anticipates and responds promptly to user request
	Reliability	(The web site) can be depended on to provide whatever is promised
	Confidence	(The web site) instills confidence in users and reduces uncertainty
	Empathy	(The web site) understands and adapts to the user's specific needs
	Follow-up service	(The web site) provides follow-up service to users
	Competence	(The web site) gives a professional and competence image
Product quality	Product quality	(The web site) deals products with high quality
	Product variety	(The web site) deals various products
	Product availability	(The web site) supports high product availability
Delivery service	Reliable delivery	(The web site) delivers the right product which was ordered
	Package safety	(The web site) delivers products with safely packaged
	Timely delivery	(The web site) delivers products at promised time
	Return easiness ^a	It is easy to return the product delivered

Figure 3.6: Quality constructs and measurements items of Internet retailer (Ahn, 2004)

3.3 Consumer Interaction

Consumer interaction is an important tool for companies to keep loyal customer, and also engage and interact with potential ones via social media. Especially in the Internet the customers are able to switch easily to the competitors via one click. Because of this it is necessary to attract the customers.

For interact with the customers via social media there are several possibilities, which the consumer can chose. Websites like Facebook and Twitter are nowadays very popular. Beyond that blogs are as well a good opportunity to engage customers. (directnews.co.uk)

3.3.1 Social Media

Bradley (2010) defines social media as following below:

“At its foundation, social media is a set of technologies and channels targeted at forming and enabling a potentially massive community of participants to productively collaborate. IT tools to support collaboration have existed for decades. But social-media technologies, such as social networking, wikis and blogs, enable collaboration on a much grander scale and support tapping the power of the collective in ways previously unachievable.”

Additionally, Bradley (2010) describes six characteristics that point social media apart from other forms of communication and collaboration; participation, collectivism, transparency, independence, persistence, and emergence.

A survey made by the Swedish Mediaakademin (2009) estimated that 49% of the Swedish people are using social media every day or at least several times a week. (socialamedier.com) Another collaborative study by Nielsen and Facebook with over 800 000 surveyed Facebook users consider the object *understanding the value of a social media impression* showed an increase in ad recall, brand awareness, and purchase intent when users see friends who have become fans of the brand in the ad. Thus this survey backs up the main principle that social ads perform better since they are more a personal, useful, and trusted form of advertising. (Smillie, 2010)

The research also determined that social ads can have a high impact because of the combination with paid media and earned media. For instance when ads drive users to become Facebook fans and subsequently trigger their friends to become fans, this type of campaign can have positive effects even months after the campaign is over. (Smillie, 2010)

Although the social advertising should not only be limited to social networking site since there are benefits beyond social ads on Facebook. As well as users can take actions on a social network like share, like, rate, comment, and consume they can also be interpreted to take the same actions in social ads, by creating a more attractive social experience. A key element is that people want to share, since the more people share the more credibility he/she will gain in the social sphere. (Smillie, 2010) Besides Facebook, other familiar social medias are Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, wikis, and blogs. (365socialmediacases.se)

In future social ads will have an essential importance especially online. Neal Mohan (VP, Product Management at Google) claimed that *“every display campaign must be social”* in the future of advertising online. Mohan backed up his statement by mention that social ads are

the solution towards the today problem within that consumer has learned to ignore all the banner ads they see on the Internet each day. (Smillie, 2010)

Social media is commitment rather than a campaign. Beyond advertising from a marketing point of view, there is a large opportunity on social networking sites to engage customers and build loyalty. Other features communities on social networking sites have are better distribution, feel more personal, and make it easier to reach new customers. (Shih, 2009)

Further online social networking can also help product managers convert customers into true participants-partners. Especially within the Facebook era, customers are able to achieve a new level of conversation that is bidirectional and extends across product development, sales, marketing, and customer support. (Shih, 2009)

3.3.1.1 Facebook and Twitter

“Facebook advertising doesn’t feel like advertising because it comes from your friends”.

Tim Kendall, Director of Monetization at Facebook. (Shih, 2009)

By using Facebook and Twitter as a communication tool for customers there have to be followed some preparations and precautions.

The number of customers which are intergrated on social networking sites are increasing. Today there are 3 million Swedish members on Facebook (socialamedier.com) and 160 Swedish companies on Twitter. (socialmedia.wikidot.com)

On Facebook companies can for free create a page that users can be a “fan” or “like” the page and can therefore interact with the consumer through applications such news feeds, widgets, targeted ads, giveaways and contest, as well as RSVPs (“répondez, s’il vous plait”, which means “please reply”, people.howstuffworks.com) and comments. By this companies can also reach more potential customers. Facebook argues that for every 10 000 fans a brand has it will subsequently reach 1.5 million people, because every Facebook user has an average of about 150 friends and all actions are automatically distributes across all friends. According to ad agencies, some fashion companies are getting 10% or more of their site traffic from Facebook, for example the fashion brand Topshop was getting 20% of its traffic from Facebook in 2009. (Corocan, 2009)

Customers are looking for companies and want to learn about the products, want to ask others for advice and want to share their experiences. It is an efficient and cost-effective way to improve customer’s satisfaction and a word-to-mouth marketing on the company’s behalf. Twitter will be inserting in the area of customer service whereas Facebook is more informing and presenting the users news, special offers, and the company. On Twitter the customer is in the centre and not promotional contents. The pages on both networks are company driven which allow having a direct dialogue with the consumers and give the company a personality, transparency and customer-friendliness. (klauseck.typepad.com)

The fan page for example on Facebook and Twitter has to be updated with pictures of new products, videos, surveys. Otherwise the customers are getting boring and the site is losing its dynamic and the company their consumers. (Shih, 2009)

3.3.1.2 Blogs

The term blog is short for weblog or web log. A blog can be defined as a journal that is available on the web with a person's thoughts and ideas about a particular subject, which items are posted frequently and displayed in reverse chronological order. Furthermore the activity of updating a blog is "blogging" and someone who has a blog is a "blogger". (marketingterms.com)

Many blogs are personal diaries detailing someone's experiences but it can also be for business purpose. Blogs can be used internally, to improve the communication and cultures in a company or externally, for marketing, branding or public relations. A blog is not a monologue but a conversation tool since followers can write comments and leaves feedback directly on the blog. All blogs on the Internet can be perceived as interconnected and social networked, through comments, blogrolls, linkbacks, and backlinks. Today interest-specific blogging platforms are available as well as online communities which connect people to blogs and also bloggers to other bloggers. In Sweden *Bloggportalen* is one of the biggest community page for bloggers with 87 146 registered members (2010-05-24). 20 338 of them are blogging about fashion and design. (bloggportalen.se)

A survey published by WII (World Internet Institute) stated that there are approximately 400 000 active Swedish bloggers today. The survey also showed that one of ten web users read blogs. (socialamedier.com) Another study made by the Swedish Mediaakademin (2009) demonstrated that 22% of the people read a blog on daily basis or several times a week and 42% claims that they read a blog at least once in a week. (socialamedier.com)

The survey (wii.se) also underlined that women between 16-25 years are in lead of blogging, supported by that 39% of them are blogging or have been writing on someone else blog and 69% are reading blogs. On the contrary for man between 16-25 years showed that 20% are blogging or have been writing on other blogs and 51% are following blogs.

According to Wahlström (2007) there are two main reasons why blogs are so successful and influential today. Firstly, trackbacks and pingbacks are applications which make it possible for bloggers to link to each other. As a result, news and comments are easily being spread across the Internet. Secondly, other media such as newspaper, radio, and television are constantly supervising these powerful blogs in order to be updated about new influences. Since these media are also reporting about what is being said from blogger sites the messages are secondary being distributed by them.

Today many companies are aware of this powerful communication tool and employees such as merchandisers or CEO's are becoming bloggers, combining their work experiences with a company blog. Through a blog they can update their customers about new products arrivals, as well as reporting from a fashion week or other interesting journeys. Frankel (2007) mentions that by using a blog the company can be more personal, and therefore also gain more trust among customers. In this way blogs can be included in a company customer service, since the customers can have a direct communication with the company and does not have to use the process of emailing back and forward anymore.

4 Data Presentation

In this chapter there will be presented the empirical data and information, which were collected from selected websites, as well as the given survey, regarding the research questions. The order of the presentation will first be presented with an overview of BON'A PARTE followed by returns management, social media and the case study.

4.1 Presentation of BON'A PARTE

The following section presents the company BON'A PARTE, its history, products, price range and website. The sources for this information are from the company's homepage: bonaparte.co.uk.

4.1.1 History

The mail-order BON'A PARTE was formed in 1987 by Lise and Steen Sønderborg in Denmark and sells clothes for women, men and children, accessories, jewellery, footwear and as well bed linen. The company offers a special design for their customers.

The company is representing besides Denmark in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom, where they offer their products via e-commerce and catalogue. In April 2010 they opened two stores in Denmark, where the customers are able to shop the styles from the current collection.

For BON'A PARTE "*quality is all-important*". Their slogan of the English webpage is: "*At BON'A PARTE, you'll enjoy stylish, top quality designer fashion along with remarkable value*". (bonaparte.co.uk)

4.1.2 Products and Price Range

The broad product range includes clothes for women, men and children. For women the company offers besides outerwear, like trousers, jackets and blouses as well underwear, like for example dessous, swimwear, pyjamas and nightdresses. These clothes are available from S – 2XL or 36 – 52.

For men there is outerwear available. The sizes are varying according to the model for trousers from 31 – 42 and from S – 3XL for other products. As well for children the sizes are varying according to the model. The clothes are available from 80 – 160.

BON'A PARTE has an organic collection. They offer basic clothes, which are available for women, men and children.

The price sector in which BON'A PARTE takes place is the middle to high price category. For the summer collection 2010 the dresses price range for instance is between 259,00 SEK and 649,00 SEK. The prices for trousers are between 349,00 SEK and 479,00 SEK and for bras between 189,00 SEK and 319,00 SEK.

4.1.3 Website

BON'A PARTE has a website, which is usable in the countries which are mentioned above and is available in the current languages. The webpage allows the customer to order the products online and give a look at the broad collection of BON'A PARTE.

By entering the homepage of BON'A PARTE there is shown the current collection with few examples of the new styles which are wearing by models (see figure 4.1). On the top are the six different product segments: women, men, girls, boys, lingerie and outlet. By clicking on one of this section the customer is able to find several product groups, like trousers, shirts, cardigans, and etc.



Figure 4.1: Homepage of BON'A PARTE (bonaparte.co.uk)

After choosing an outfit the company gives suggestions via pictures with other products which the customer can combine the chosen one. There is as well the possibility to order all products that the model is wearing. A good feature for the customer is the zoom view and the catwalk option. The consumer can have a closer look on the garment and see how it appears when it is wearing. A short description about the product, like the material, washing instructions, and the style is given. Further on this site the customer finds the size guide which allows her/him to find the right size. Customers can give comments for this product and they are available for everybody.

After adding the item in the shoppingbasket the customer gets several new outfits, which he/she can order as well. These suggestions are given by the company (see figure 4.2).


1. Basket 2. Address 3. Delivery 4. Payment method 5. Send order

Items in your basket

Description	Item no.	Size	Status	Price	Quantity		Total price	
Tunic	17210F	S	Available	43.00	1	Update	43.00	Delete
Jersey skirt	20024W	L	later available	47.00	1	Update	47.00	Delete
							GBP 90.00	


[NEXT STEP →](#)

Have you seen?




- Sunglasses 20.00
- Denim waistcoat 47.00
- BASIC top 12.00
- Leather belt 37.00
- Bracelet 21.00
- Jersey skirt
- In the shopping basket**
- Leather sandals 34.00

Also see



- Knitted cardigan 47.00
- Jersey skirt
- In the shopping basket**
- Leather belt 29.00
- Leather sandals 34.00

Also see



- Sunglasses 20.00
- Leather belt 37.00
- Jersey skirt
- In the shopping basket**

→ Please read our terms and conditions.

Figure 4.2: Outfit proposals (bonaparte.co.uk)

In general the customer can find terms and conditions of the ordering process (see figure 4.3), which includes delivery, payment, and return policy.

- [Online shopping](#)
- [Terms and conditions](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Security](#)
- [Contact information](#)

Delivery
Any day or period given for delivery is indicative only, and is subject to the item being in stock. We aim to dispatch all goods quickly, but please allow up to 28 days for delivery. Any product not available at the time of your order will be sent to you as soon as possible when received from our suppliers, and we will not charge you additional P&P for this. We cannot be held responsible for delays in the delivery caused by our suppliers, or any other third party.

Postage and packing charges per order will be added to the prices shown in the catalogue, as follows:
When the free P&P offer is not running, the delivery cost is as follows:
Postage for delivery per parcel in UK: £ 4
Delivery is only possible within the UK excluding the Channel Islands.

Payment
We accept payment by MasterCard, Visa and Switch/Maestro (please note that it is only possible to pay with Switch/Maestro at our web shop). All prices in the catalogues are shown in pounds sterling (£) and include V.A.T. at the current rate. Prices are exclusive of postage.

Postage for delivery per parcel in UK: £ 4
Delivery is only possible within the UK excluding the Channel Islands.

Returns
You are entitled to return goods for refund or exchange within 14 days of delivery of those goods. Please fill out the returns form enclosed in the original parcel to let us know whether you would like an exchange or a refund. Credit card refunds will be credited to the card used for the original transaction.

Returns address:

BON'A PARTE Fashion Ltd.
C/O DSV Road Ltd.
Eastfield Road
South Killingholme
North Lincolnshire
DN40 3DR
England

VAT registration number: GB 941 9674 87

Figure 4.3: Terms and conditions of BON'A PARTE (bonaparte.co.uk)

Beyond that the customers can find the contact information of BON'A PARTE on their webpage, also opening hours for the customer service is available. If the customers have questions or requests there is the possibility to complete a contact form.

4.2 Empirical Data

According to our research questions a deeper insight within returns rate and social media will be presented as well as the case study.

4.2.1 Returns Rate of BON'A PARTE

The returns rate of BON'A PARTE in the period of time from 14 months was 2 066 693 from the total ordered 4 794 620 products. This is a percentage of 43.1% which is high considering the time.

The focus of the given survey from BON'A PARTE was on the three markets Denmark, Germany and Sweden and on the questions which are related to the topic returns management. Beyond that this survey filtered the result that the main target group of BON'A PARTE is in the age between 30 and 50 years old. The average age of the customers is around 45 years.

In general BON'A PARTE fulfils their consumer's demands and service. The expectations of delivering products and service are satisfied.

The majority of the Swedish (77.5%) and Danish (84.6%) customers do not plan to make a return when they are ordering. Around 3% of the Swedes and Danes are thinking about it before they order. The German customers of BON'A PARTE are different because 49.2% mentioned that they do not know in advance if they will return something of their delivery. Around 13% are saying that they are thinking before the ordering process of a return and 35.6% mentioned that they think about it sometimes.

The answer "*I always return something of the things I order*" was chosen by around 35% of the German interviewees. 4% of the Swedes have chosen this statement and 5.5% of the Danes. The majority of the Swedes (66.2%) and Danes (59.2%) have chosen the statement "*I seldom return something of the things I order*". 38.7% of the German customers have mentioned this opinion. Therefore the return rate in these countries is less high than in Germany. It is very interesting that nobody of the German interviewees has mentioned the answer "*I never return something of the things I order*".

By connecting the relative low returns rate in Sweden with the answer if they are using a size guide before they order it is visible in the survey that the Swedish customers are not using size guides (48.5%). Some consumers have ordered as well the same products in several sizes for making sure that they can keep at least one product which fits. Because of that they have to return at least one item.

The most returns reasons are fitting problems, unadequate quality and too high expectations of the products from the customers' side.

4.2.2 Social Media

As mentioned in chapter 3.3.1 social media is a good opportunity to reach new and current customers. Especially the community network Facebook can be useful for making a business more successful. As well blogs can help to contact new consumers.

After a research of BON'A PARTE on Facebook it shows that they have only 222 (2010-05-04) fans and have their profile since September 2008. In comparison to the Swedish e-commerce company nelly.com which has 38 886 (2010-05-10) fans and the German mail-order trade Otto GmbH which has 7 627 (2010-05-10) fans. A leading company within this area is H&M with 1 966 723 members (2010-05-10). (facebook.com)

On Twitter the company is not available; nelly.com has 641 (2010-05-10) followers, Otto GmbH 11 656 (2010-05-10) and H&M has 36 021 (2010-05-18) followers. (twitter.com)

BON'A PARTE has no blog available where the consumers can share their opinions and experiences with others. In the given survey some interviewees (21.7%) are mentioned that it would be helpful for them to find the right size with the support via blogs. The employees of BON'A PARTE can use blogs to verify and communicate size and fit deviations.

In comparison the German mail-order company Otto GmbH for instance has an own blog. On this style blog two women, Mahret and Kathrin, are writing about fashion for people who have the pleasure for new ideas, perspective and inspirations. The bloggers are showing as well clothes from the company and how the consumer can combine it and for which event it is wearable. The customers will get passed on to the company's homepage by clicking on the item and have the possibility to buy this product. (twoforfashion.otto.de/)

4.2.3 Case Study of the Order Process from BON'A PARTE

The case study is organized by first describing the layout of overall ordering process and the chosen products, followed by the structure and required procedure.

4.2.3.1 Select Products and Sizes

Two students entered the webpage and click on the women segment. Based on the data on most return products of BON'A PARTE nine products were chosen to be included in the survey: two pair of trousers, two shirts, two dresses, one bra, and one bikini set (bra and brief). In this following section the process of explaining the ordering producer will only be focusing in detail on one product, a pair of jeans, in order to avoiding repeaters (see figures 4.4 and 4.5).

In the figures 4.4 and 4.5 is shown the layout of BON'A PARTE's webpage after choosing one product; in this case the pair of jeans. Combination suggestions are given, as well as the size guide and care instruction.

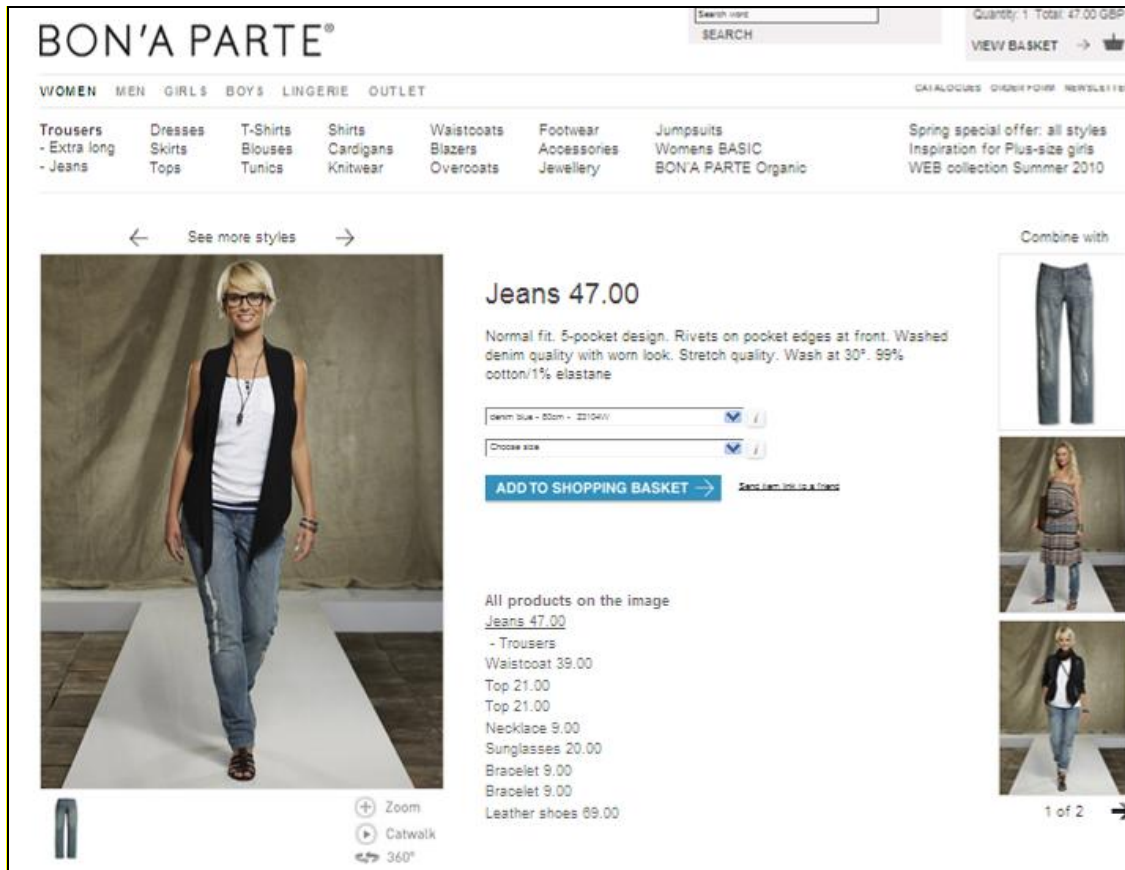


Figure 4.4: Product depiction of the ordered jeans from BON'A PARTE (Part 1, bonaparte.co.uk)



Figure 4.5: Product depiction of the ordered jeans from BON'A PARTE (Part 2, bonaparte.co.uk)

Overall the webpage has a nice outlook with pictures, sketches, information, and also the site is easy to navigate. It is helpful to imagine the fitting and form of the jeans by viewing the catwalk function, zoom, and ability to turn the item 360 degrees (see figures 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8).



Figure 4.6: Zoom (bonaparte.co.uk)



Figure 4.7: Catwalk (bonaparte.co.uk)



Figure 4.8: 360° view (bonaparte.co.uk)

It is vital to order the right size in order to keep the received product and by using the “find size using your measurements” application the customer can minimize the risk of receiving the wrong size and fit. Therefore the ordering persons measured themselves before proceeding the process.

The size guide of BON'A PARTE is logical and clear but written in small letters/format which hassle the process (see figure 4.9). The guidance how to measure is easy to understand with pictures followed by a written explanation. Additionally the customer can also view a chart with length of the jeans depending on which size it is.

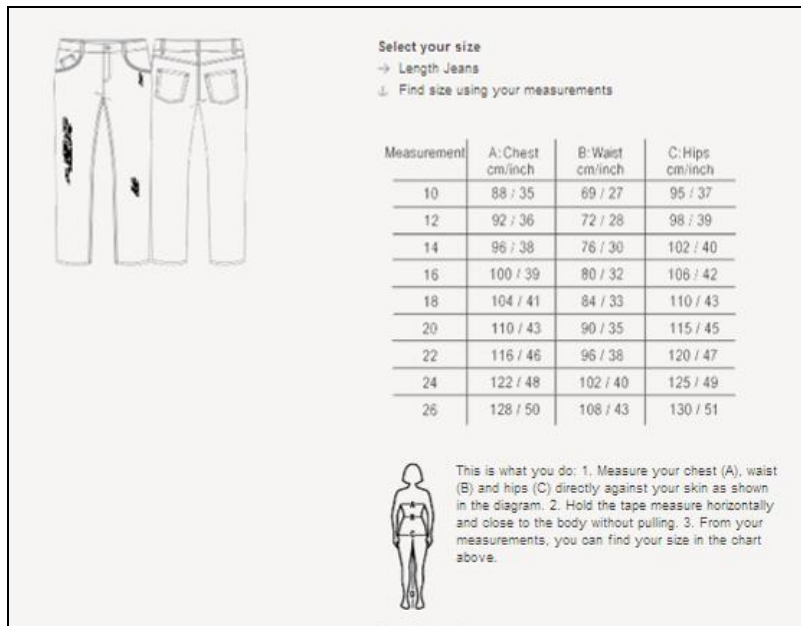


Figure 4.9: Size guide for trousers (bonaparte.co.uk)

Depending on the product category different products displays and size guides are being utilized on the webpage. The following chart (4.1) will summarize the situation among the rest of the products involved in the survey.

Product group	Product display	Size guide
Trousers	Sketches, zoom, catwalk, 360°	Figure 4.9
Dresses	Sketches, zoom	Figure 4.11
Shirts	Sketches, zoom	Figure 4.11
Bikini	Sketches, zoom	Figure 4.10
Bra	Sketches, zoom	Figure 4.10

Table 4.1: Display of the ordered products

The following figures (4.10 and 4.11) are showing the size guides for how to find the right measurement for bra and dresses/shirts.

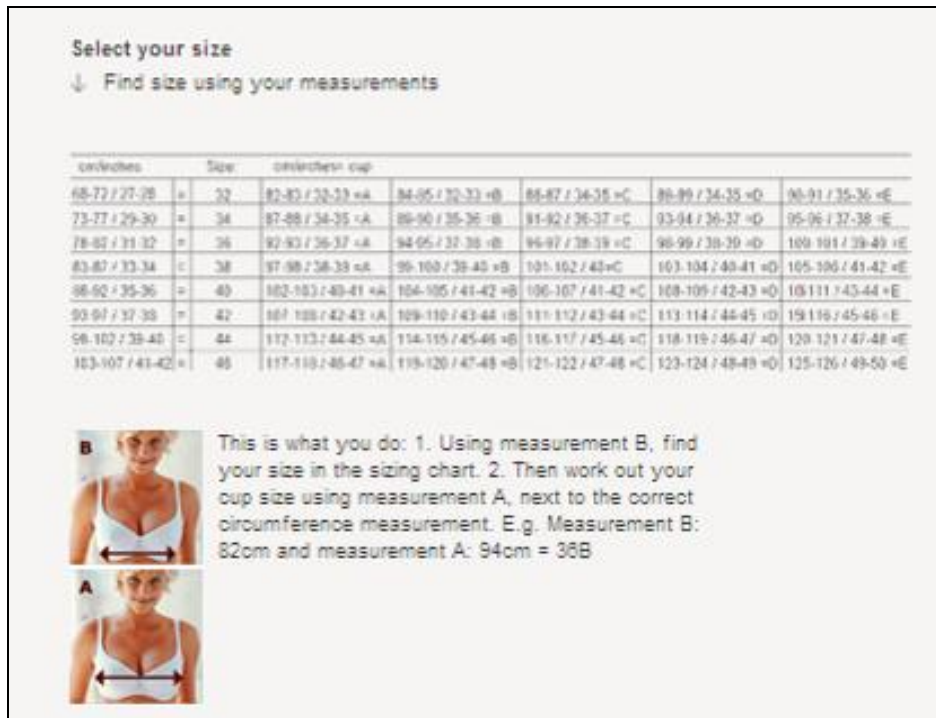


Figure 4.10: Size guide for bikini and bra (bonaparte.co.uk)

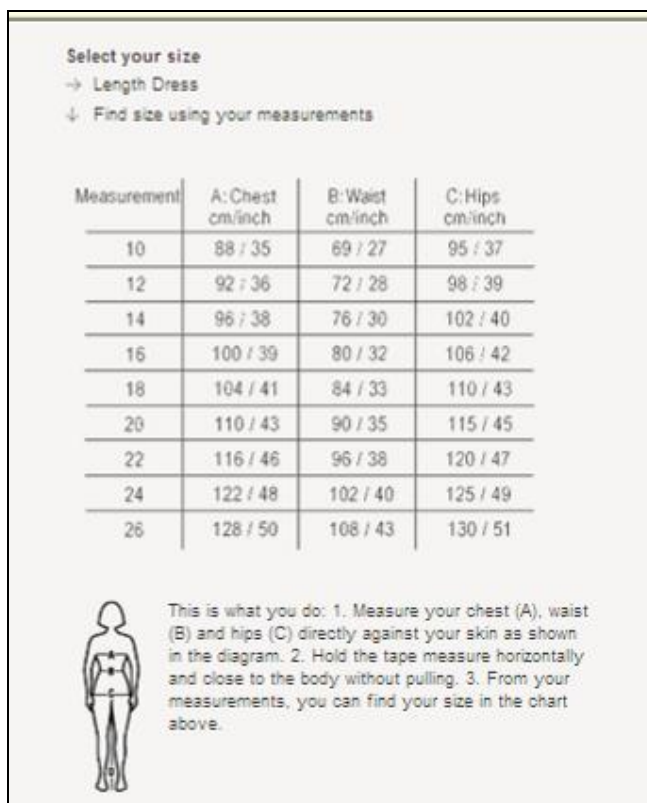


Figure 4.11: Size guide for dress, shirt (bonaparte.co.uk)

As mentioned in chapter 3.2.6 cross-selling is a method used to increase sales and order completion. BON'A PARTE is practicing this application on the product page as well as in the customer shoppingbasket.

An overall view of the products involved in the survey (bonaparte.co.uk, see figures 4.12 till 4.20):



Figure 4.12: Shirt 1



Figure 4.13: Shirt 2



Figure 4.14: Jeans



Figure 4.15: Chinos



Figure 4.16: Dress 1



Figure 4.17: Dress 2



Figure 4.18: Bikini bra



Figure 4.19: Bikini brief



Figure 4.20: Bra

The total price for these nine products was 3 071,00 SEK.

In the following table 4.2 are shown the prices for every ordered item:

Product	Price in SEK
Shirt 1	349,00
Shirt 2	329,00
Jeans	479,00
Chinos	399,00
Dress 1	479,00
Dress 2	449,00
Bra	229,00
Bikini bra	219,00
Bikini brief	139,00

Table 4.2: Prices of ordered products

4.2.3.2 Order Structure and Procedure

The structure of the website during the ordering process is easy to understand and navigate. Because of the headings the customer can follow the procedure step by step and avoid hassle situations.

BON'A PARTE®

Search word SEARCH Quantity: 1 Total: 47.00 GBP
VIEW BASKET →

WOMEN MEN GIRLS BOYS LINGERIE OUTLET CATALOGUES ORDER FORM NEWSLETTER

1. **Basket** 2. Address 3. Delivery 4. Payment method 5. Send order

Items in your basket

Description	Item no.	Size	Status	Price	Quantity	Total price
Jeans	23104W	10	Available	47.00	1 Update	47.00 Delete
						GBP 47.00

[NEXT STEP →](#)

Figure 4.21: Extract from the webpage of BON'A PARTE: Items in the basket (bonaparte.co.uk)

Basket

Clear structure and the customer can see all important information about the decided product like description, size, status, quantity, and price (see figure 4.21).

Address

Simply structure where the customer is required to fill in all necessary information in a secure way.

Delivery

There are no given options about delivery time; however the customer can choose where the items should be send; place of delivery. Also the customer is required to leave a cell phone number in order to get a message when the delivery is arrived.

Payment method

The customer can choose from three different payment options and also see how much the fee is for every option:

- Cash on delivery, 78 SEK
- Bill, 58 SEK
- Credit card, 39 SEK

Send order

Here the customer conforms and completes the ordering process. Subsequently the buyer receives a conformation letter by email.

Further comments about the ordering experience:

- It is beneficial that the customers have the ability to order bikini-bra and bikini- brief sizes separately, since the body sizes can differ depending on the customer and different fitting problems.
- The delivery lead time was estimated 1-2 weeks; however this could only be determined in the ending of the ordering process.
- 39 SEK for returns.

5 Data Analysis

In this chapter the case studies will be analyzed and evaluated according to the experience and theory, followed by the two main research questions.

5.1 Case Study: Product Arrival

The products arrived exactly after two weeks which was the promise delivery from the company.

In order to analyze the delivery quality a selected part from the figure 3.6 in chapter 3.2.6 will be a helpful tool.

Reliable delivery	Delivers the right products which was ordered	Yes
Package delivery	Delivers products with safely packaged	Yes
Timely delivery	Delivers products at promised time	Yes, exactly 2 weeks
Return easiness	It is easy to returns the products delivered	Yes

Table 5.1: Delivery quality

Even if the order arrived at the right promised time, two weeks are a further too long delivery lead-time since the products are in stock and available. As mentioned in chapter 3.2.6 customers require the delivery to be quick. Having a long lead-time for delivery could also increase the risks where the customer might change its mind or regret the purchase before they even have received the items. In order to minimize this risk BON'A PARTE should look over the entire lead-time within the supply chain and analyze which parts are value-adding and which ones are not. As a result they may shorten their lead-time by remove non-value adding parts such as waiting time in the stockroom, packaging, and shipping.

5.1.1 Analysis of the Received Products

After receiving the order, all clothes were tried on by the ordering persons. Further the products were evaluated and graded by expectations, fitting, material, and packaging.

The following evaluation is objective and was created by the ordering persons:

- 1=very good
- 2=good
- 3=neutral
- 4=bad
- 5=very bad

The following table shows the evaluation of the delivered products:

	Chinos	Jeans	Shirt 1	Shirt 2	Dress 1	Dress 2	Bra	Bikini top	Bikini brief
Expectations	4	1	5	5	5	5	4	1	1
Fitting	5	1	1	5	2	1	5	1	1
Material	1	1	2	3	3	1	5	1	1
Packaging	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3

Table 5.2: Evaluation of the delivered items

In general it is to say that the expactions on the part of the ordered person were disappointed. The pictures did not promise the look of the products especially the patterns did not match with the expectations. For instance dress 2 did not fulfil the demand, because of a different expectation of the pattern and material (see figure 5.1). In a subjective opinion the picture of dress 2 showed high quality material and delivered was a 100% cotton dress in less quality. The material and the pattern together were conveyed an old-fashioned picture.



Figure 5.1: Dress 2 (bonaparte.co.uk)

The fitting of the most ordered products was as well not satisfying. The analysis will be shown in the following section.

The products were tried on and afterwards measured with the purpose of comparing the measurement figures with the company size guide on the webpage in order to estimate its accurateness. The following tables are showing the measurement differences and describing the fitting.

Chinos size 16:

Measurement	Size guide	Difference
20 cm down from waist, 108 cm	Hips 106 cm	2 cm
30 cm down from waist, 120 cm	Hips 106 cm	14 cm

Table 5.3: Measurements Chinos



The chinos were too big for the test person and do not fit (see figure 5.2), especially in waist and hips. The size guide did not justify the right size for this product. In total a difference from 14 cm is too much and not acceptable.

Figure 5.2: Chinos

Stretch Jeans, size 10

Measurement	Size guide	Difference
20 cm down from waist, 90 cm	Hips 95 cm	-5 cm
30 cm down from waist, 102 cm	Hips 95 cm	7 cm

Table 5.4: Measurements Stretch Jeans

The Jeans was fitting good and very comfortable.

Shirt 1, classic design with stripes, size 12:

Measurement	Size guide	Difference
Chest, 98 cm	92 cm	6 cm
Waist, 84 cm	72 cm	12 cm

Table 5.5: Measurements shirt 1

The shirt was appropriate in size and fitting for the order person, even the difference of the measurement was high at the waist.

Shirt 2, classic design with checked, size 10:

Measurement	Size guide	Difference
Chest, 100 cm	88 cm	12 cm
Waist, 88 cm	69 cm	19 cm

Table 5.6: Measurements shirt 2



As demonstrating in the chart (figure 5.3) the shirt was too big for the ordering person as well as compared to the size guide. Since the product information includes that the item is of classic design the product should not be an oversize shirt.

Figure 5.3: Shirt 2

Dress 1, lightly tailored fit, size 12

Measurement	Size guide	Difference
Chest, 96 cm	92 cm	4 cm
Waist, 78 cm	72 cm	6 cm

Table 5.7: Measurements dress 1

Dress 1 was a little too big in the waist for the order person, especially since the dress had a stretch band attached in this area. A size 10 instead of 12 would be a more appropriate size.

Dress 2, lightly tailored fit, size 10

Measurement	Size guide	Difference
Chest, 86 cm	88 cm	-2cm
Waist, 74 cm	69 cm	5 cm

Table 5.8: Measurements dress 2

Dress 2 was a correct size for the order person with a good fit.

Bra, size 75B

Measurement	Size guide	Difference
Chest, 60 cm	68-72 cm	-8-12 cm

Table 5.9: Measurements bra

The bra was too small for the order person; both in the chest measure as well as in cup size. The garment was scratchy and very uncomfortable. The bra-straps were too short for the order person and cut in the shoulders.

Bikini bra size 75B, and brief size 16

Measurement	Size guide	Difference
Chest, 64 cm	68-72 cm	-4-8 cm
10 cm down from waist, 90 cm	Hips 106	-16 cm

Table 5.10: Measurements bikini bra and brief

The bikini bra and brief were the right sizes for the test person even the difference of the bikini brief is high. It appropriates because of the ability to choose size separately.

The products were sent in nice decent package and additionally the bra was folded in a textile bag. The order bill was as well placed in a textile bag which increased the sense of high quality and luxury.

However, an element regarding the products which can negatively affect the customer experience is that there were a lot of threads hanging out from several clothes (see figure 5.4). The unfinished process from the production part can be associated with bad quality and is not adding any value to the company. Even if the package with textile bags could be associated with quality the present threads gave a mixed message and decreased the product quality.



Figure 5.4: Quality gaps

5.1.2 Analysis of the Return Codes

The return codes which are required by the customer to fill in before returning is an important tool for the company to use in order to analyze the reason behind the return. Therefore it is vital for the company to have an impressive returns codes sheet in order to gain high quality information from the customer, which enables to decrease returns rate. The list below is the returns codes by BON'A PARTE:

0. Took too long to receive item/arrived late
1. Material/production defect – please describe
2. Fitting
3. Shrinking or other issues after washing the item – please describe
4. Too big size
5. Did not fulfill the expectations
6. Wrong item in the bag
7. Wrong item delivered
8. Too small size
9. Other reason...

The returns codes are not in a logical order and do not include all potential reasons and meanings behind a return. For instance the customer may not know the difference between *wrong item in the bag* and *wrong item delivered* since the meaning for them could be the same. A more enhanced codes sheet could be as showing below:

0. Took to long to receive item/arrived late
1. Wrong item in the bag/delivered
2. Did not fulfill the expectations- please chose further reason
 - a) silhouette
 - b) colour
 - c) material
 - d) item looked different in catalogue or website
3. Material/production defect – please describe
4. Shrinking or other issues after washing the item – please describe
5. Fitting – please describe
6. Too big size
7. Too small size
8. Other reason – please describe

Now the reasons are arranged in a more logical way; starting with delivery (0,1), product features (2,3,4), fitting and size (5,6,7), and ending with an opportunity for the customer to fill in reasons which are not mentioned before. Additionally reason 2 *did not fulfill the expectations* can embrace several motives which can be hard to differentiate for the company. Therefore the ability to choose further description such as silhouette, colour, material, and item looked different in catalogue or website would be of high value for the company to do further analysis.

5.1.3 Customer Effort for Returning

As mentioned in chapter 3.2.4 another important key part which could positively or negatively influence the ordering process is the customer effort. Customer effort includes the process of physically complete the return with attempts such as packing and shipping. BON'A PARTE enhance this process by attach a pre-prepared folder which the customer is obliged to use in order to send back the products. The customer can use the same package and bag for shipping. Although the customer needs to visit the post office and pay 39 SEK before the package can be send back which can be determined as the biggest effort and hesitation in the process. However this is a common procedure within online buying which the customer is familiar with.

In the end the overall experience due to the purpose of the ordering process was that the website of BON'A PARTE contains all different requirements such as site ease, size guide, product data information, return policy, and information about prices and delivery. However the expectations were not met in the end since the pictures on the website promised something more and different regarding the products from what was finally being delivered.

5.2 Analysis of Research Question one: Returns Management

After analyzing the given survey it comes out that the most returns reasons are the different expectations in general of the products and fitting problems from the customers. As mentioned in chapter 3.2.3 this can be explained by two gaps; firstly a communication gap when marketing promises do not exceed what is being offered on the websites, and secondly a design gap due to insufficiencies in the customer interface that makes it harder for the customer to complete the purchase.

Additionally, during the ordering process the consumers have another understanding of the delivery. One reason for this can be the webpage of BON'A PARTE which shows the customers for instance inadequate product pictures or a complicated size guide.

In this section some proposals are given for the website of BON'A PARTE which could help to reduce the returns rate because of a better explanation/description of the products. The suggestions based on other mail-order companies, which are German, Swedish, and British firms. They are good examples regarding site ease, size guides, pictures, customer feedback, and delivery times.

5.2.1 Suggestions for the Site Ease and Layout

The layout of a webpage should be clear and interesting for the customers as mentioned already in chapter 3.2.6. It is necessary to attract customers and keep them on the website. BON'A PARTE has a good and simply structure of their webpage, which is easy to follow. However, there are some distinguished elements which can be improved.

As mentioned in chapter 5.1.3 the effort made by a customer can affect the total ordering process. Today BON'A PARTE does not have so many headlines on the front page which force the customer to "click" more in order to find the right information they are seeking (see figure 5.5).

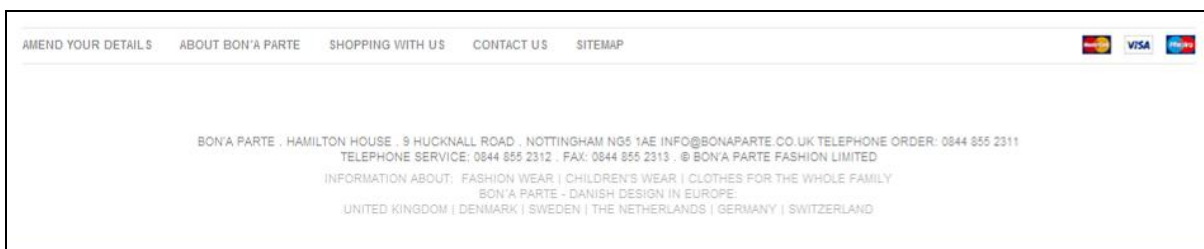


Figure 5.5: Information on the front page of BON'A PARTE (bonaparte.co.uk)

Asos.com for instance has a well designed structure of several main topics in the end of the front page (see figure 5.6). This can support the customer to find the right information by only one click. BON'A PARTE must not have as many topics as given below, if their aim is to have a simply homepage; however it can positively effect the customer to improve some of them. One proposal is to place headlines such as return policy, delivery, security, and frequently asked questions. Today BON'A PARTE has not a frequently asked questions table, where the customer may find answers to common questions without any further effort for contact. As mentioned in chapter 3.2.6 frequently asked question can in this way save both time and resources for the company. As a result more questions can be answered

faster and the customer can perceive more trust by eliminating concerns they may have in the beginning of an ordering process. This is as well desired by 12.6% of the interviewees in the survey.

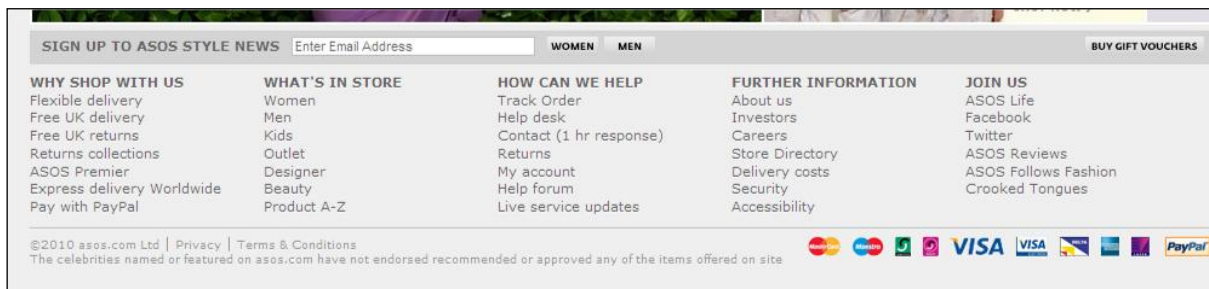


Figure 5.6: Suggestion for information on the front page (asos.com)

By viewing the webpage of BON'A PARTE it is visible that the font size is very small and the colour grey is as well not a good choice. Especially by choosing the size and the colour of the garment the font size is small and the face is thin (see figures 5.7 and 5.8). The average customer age of BON'A PARTE is 45 years old and it is difficult to read the written part. This makes the order more hamper and complicated.

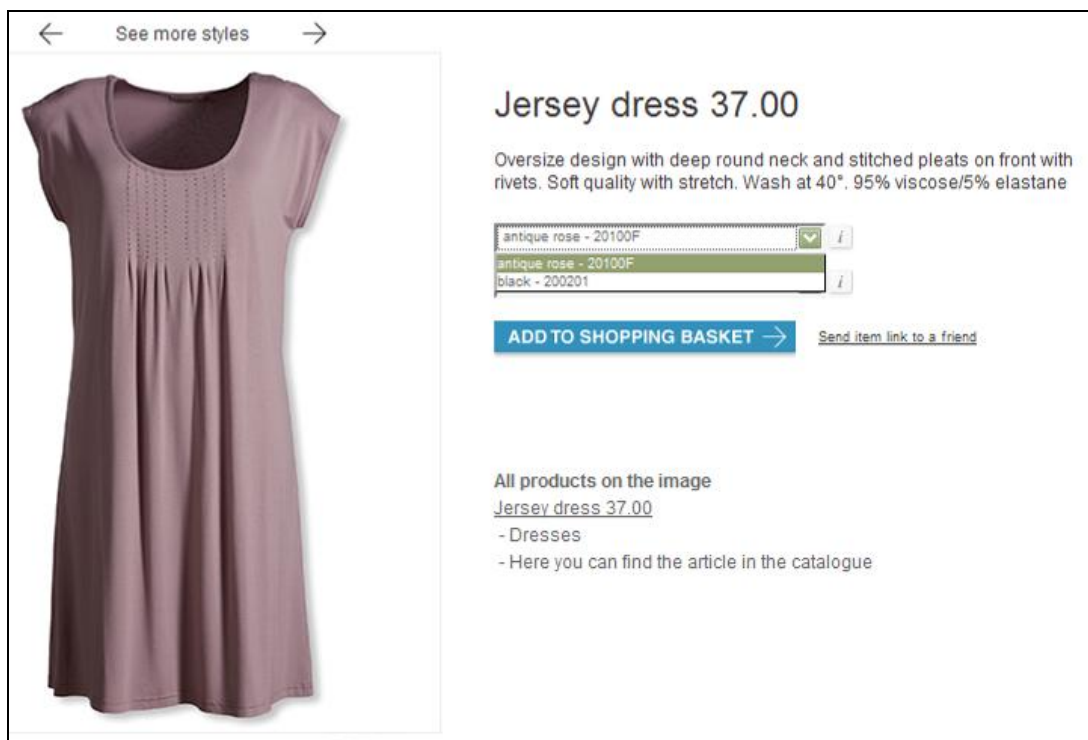


Figure 5.7: Small letters on homepage of BON'A PARTE (bonaparte.co.uk)

It would be better if the font size is bigger and have a blackface in a darker colour. This will be easier for the customer to order and it is not anymore strenuous.

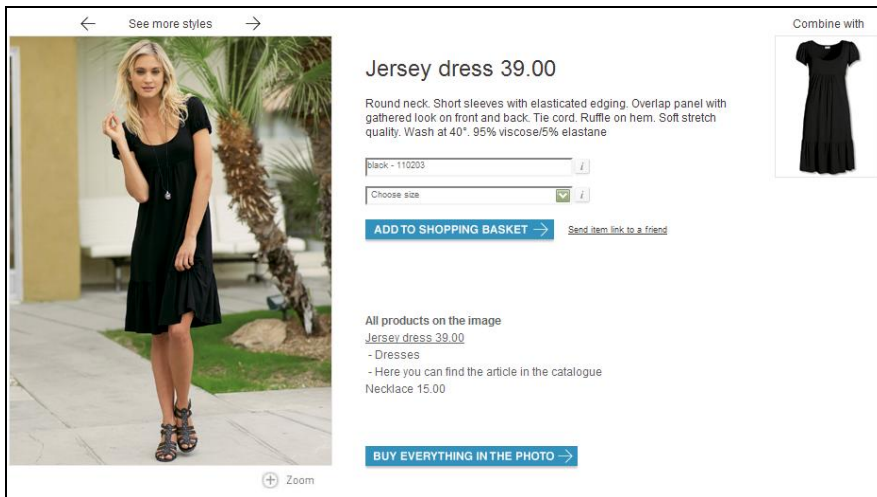


Figure 5.8: Layout of BON'A PARTE by choosing a product (bonaparte.co.uk)

For customers it can be helpful to see based on pictures the fall and fitting of a garment. The presentation of the descriptions for instance “slim fit” and “very slim fit” can be shown by mannequins or models which are wearing this type of clothing (see figure 5.9). The consumer will get a better impression of how the garment will look like and what he/she can expect. (otto.de) Even in the survey 41.7% of the questioned customers mentioned that they are missing symbols which are showing the fit of the garments.

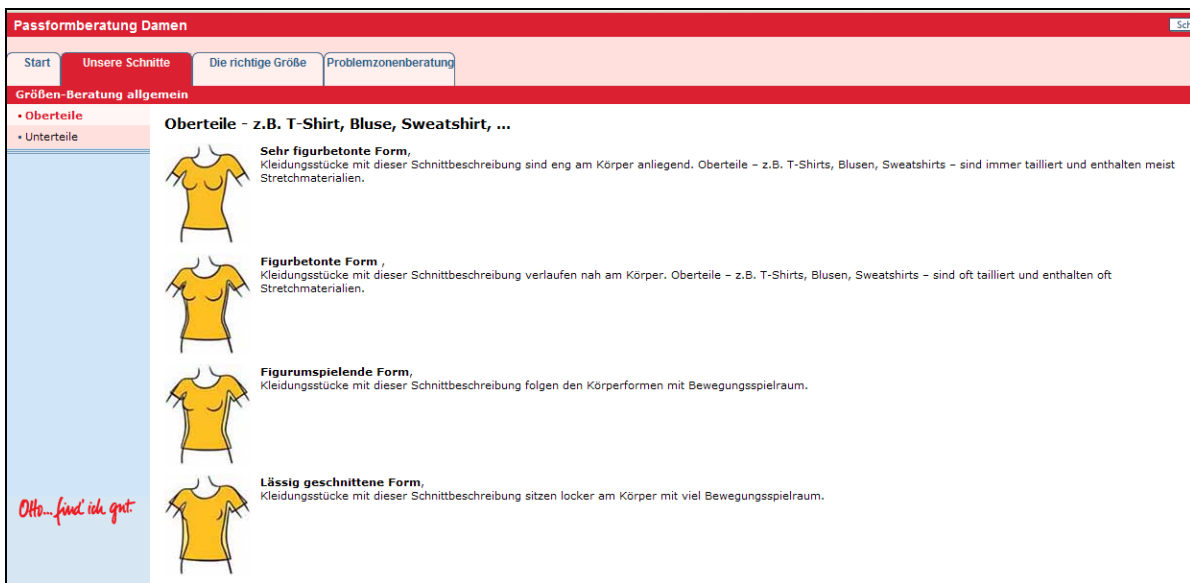


Figure 5.9: Illustrate explanation of fitting (otto.de)

A special feature can be that by choosing one fitting like “slim fit” the customer will be automatically passing on to the products which have this kind of shape. Figure 5.10 shows the results of the choice. There are all products represented which are related to the chosen desire.

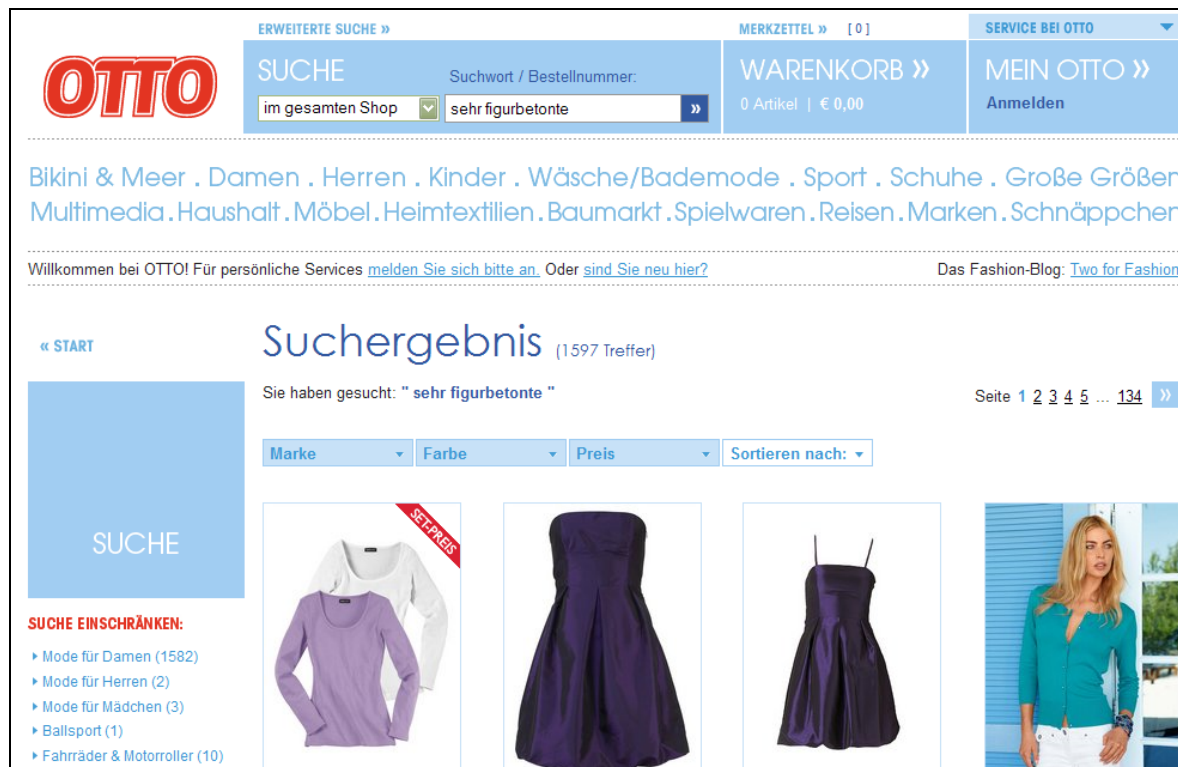


Figure 5.10: Result of fitting search (otto.de)

BON'A PARTE has already a specialty which allows the consumer to see the garment on the catwalk wearing by a mannequin. The customer will get a good impression of how the product will fall and look like during the wearing time. The idea of the material can be shown as well and the customer has the feeling that he/she is touching the garment.

The possibility of rotating the mannequin and the garment around 360° is available on the website of BON'A PARTE. This allows the customer to have an overall look on the garment.

After a detailed look on the webpage there are not all clothes available with these features. BON'A PARTE can animate and add these specialties for every product that the consumer can have an imagination of the product and will be not disappointed after delivering. These specialties are desired by 14.1% of the interviewees.

5.2.2 Suggestions for the Size Guide

The German mass screening "SizeGermany" was conducting with 13 000 test persons, which were measured all over Germany. The measured women, men and children were in the age between six and 87 years and the study was during the time from July 2007 till October 2008. The results were that the women are in average one centimeter taller than 19 years ago. As well the average bust measurement increased by 2,3 cm. The average male body height is increasing in the last 25 years by 3,2 cm. In general it is to say that the Germans are growing; in the length and the width. (sizegermany.de)

Therefore it is very important for the company to have a good and current size guide and it is necessary to look at the changes in the sizes. Especially in Europe the body height is


changing since the last years. (Bilger, 2004) Companies have to adjust their table of sizes to the customers' measurements for satisfy them.

In general it is vital that the customers know that apparel companies are using different size guides because of the variously table of sizes. Every company has their own pattern construction and therefore the clothes differentiate in their fitting. A solution can be that every apparel company should use data such as from "SizeGermany" to make sure, that the clothes have the same fitting. Some deviations are common because the companies have still different pattern constructions.

However it is very important and necessary for the company to have a good and elaborate size guide which shows the users exactly how to measure and finds particularly the right size. After building up this trust the customer can make sure to get every time the same and right size at one company. They can order "blind" without using the given size guide and the garments will fit. Beyond that the consumers do not have to order two different sizes which reduce incidentally the returns rate. 43.8% of the questioned customers mentioned that they know their size, but become disappointed when the arrived garment does not fit.

In this case and after analyzing the ordered clothes BON'A PARTE should improve their size guide based on the results like of "SizeGermany" for satisfying the customer regarding the fitting.


The given underwear size guide of BON'A PARTE can be improved on their webpage. The table of sizes is complicated to understand and the size of the letters is very small (see figure 5.11). The amount of the given measurements is high and the user gets confused. The explanation of how to measure is complicated and therefore the risk of choosing the wrong size is increasing. Especially the underwear has to fit very well and this is a big challenge for the company to fulfill this demand.




Select your size

↓ Find size using your measurements

cm/inches	Size	cm/inches= cup				
68-72 / 27-28	= 32	82-83 / 32-33 =A	84-85 / 32-33 =B	86-87 / 34-35 =C	88-89 / 34-35 =D	90-91 / 35-36 =E
73-77 / 29-30	= 34	87-88 / 34-35 =A	89-90 / 35-36 =B	91-92 / 36-37 =C	93-94 / 36-37 =D	95-96 / 37-38 =E
78-82 / 31-32	= 36	92-93 / 36-37 =A	94-95 / 37-38 =B	96-97 / 38-39 =C	98-99 / 38-39 =D	100-101 / 39-40 =E
83-87 / 33-34	= 38	97-98 / 38-39 =A	99-100 / 39-40 =B	101-102 / 40=C	103-104 / 40-41 =D	105-106 / 41-42 =E
88-92 / 35-36	= 40	102-103 / 40-41 =A	104-105 / 41-42 =B	106-107 / 41-42 =C	108-109 / 42-43 =D	108-111 / 43-44 =E
93-97 / 37-38	= 42	107-108 / 42-43 =A	109-110 / 43-44 =B	111-112 / 43-44 =C	113-114 / 44-45 =D	115-116 / 45-46 =E
98-102 / 39-40	= 44	112-113 / 44-45 =A	114-115 / 45-46 =B	116-117 / 45-46 =C	118-119 / 46-47 =D	120-121 / 47-48 =E
103-107 / 41-42	= 46	117-118 / 46-47 =A	119-120 / 47-48 =B	121-122 / 47-48 =C	123-124 / 48-49 =D	125-126 / 49-50 =E

B  This is what you do: 1. Using measurement B, find your size in the sizing chart. 2. Then work out your cup size using measurement A, next to the correct circumference measurement. E.g. Measurement B: 82cm and measurement A: 94cm = 36B

A 

Care instructions












Figure 5.11: Current underwear size guide of BON'A PARTE (bonaparte.co.uk)

Figure 5.12 shows an improved example of an underwear size guide. (heine.de) The font size is big enough for reading and the colour is as well suitable. The amount of numbers is limited therefore the customer can easily find the right size after measuring. The layout is more clear and understandable.

In the left column (2a) is the underbust measurement visible and in the middle column (2) is the bust measurement available with the different cup sizes. After measuring the consumer can figure out which cup size and bust measurement she has.

Büstenhalter und Korsetts					
2a Unterbrustumfang	2 Brustumfang				
	Cup A (klein)	Cup B (mittel)	Cup C (voll)	Cup D (groß)	
68-72	82-84	84-86	86-88	—	70
73-77	87-89	89-91	91-93	93-95	75
78-82	92-94	94-96	96-98	98-100	80
83-87	97-99	99-101	101-103	103-105	85

[Drucken →](#)

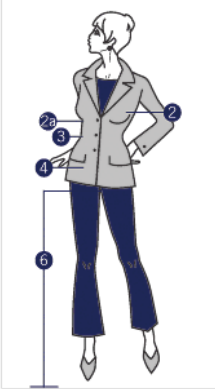
Figure 5.12: Suggestion for underwear size guide (heine.de)

An example for the size guide for women clothes is figure 5.13. It shows an easier measure way of the German mail-order company Heine. The six main measurements are shown by numbers and are explaining in a short and uncomplicated way how to measure oneself. (1= body height, 2= bust measurement, 2a= underbust measurement, 3= waist measurement, 4= hip measurement, 5= side length, 6= inseam)

Maße für Damenbekleidung

Maßnehmen ist wichtig! Und so leicht geht's:
 Stellen Sie sich ganz entspannt in Unterwäsche hin. Das Maßband sollte direkt am Körper anliegen, denn die Maße in der Tabelle sind reine Körpermaße. Der Bewegungsspielraum ist bereits, entsprechend der Passform, berücksichtigt. Liegen Ihre Maße zwischen zwei Größen, bestellen Sie einfach die größere.

Unser Tipp:
 Lassen Sie sich beim Messen helfen, dann wird es genauer.



- 1 Körperhöhe**
Ohne Schuhe vom Scheitel bis zur Sohle messen.
- 2 Brustumfang**
Waagrecht über die stärkste Stelle messen.
- 2a Unterbrustumfang**
Waagrecht am unteren Brustansatz messen.
- 3 Taillen-/Bundweite**
Ohne zu schnüren um die Taille messen.
- 4 Hüft-/Gesäßumfang**
An der stärksten Stelle über das Gesäß messen.
- 5 Seitenlänge**
Ohne Schuhe von der Taille bis zur Sohle messen.
- 6 Schrittlänge**
Innenseite vom Schritt bis zum Boden messen.

Figure 5.13: Suggestion 1 for measurement explanation (heine.de)

Suggestion 2 for the size guide is from the company's webpage otto.de (see figure 5.14). This company has for instance only two measurements for blouses, pullovers and knitwear products. The customer has to measure their body height and the chest measurement. In the table beside the model the user can easily see their needed size.


Passformberatung Damen

Start | Unsere Schnitte | **Die richtige Größe** | Problemzonenberatung

Damenmode nach Maß

- Richtig messen
- Größenbezeichnungen
- Mäntel, Kleider, Jacken & Blazer
- Röcke
- Hosen & Jeans
- **Blusen, Pullis & Strick**
- Dessous & Mieder
- Schuhe
- Ringe
- Gürtel
- Handschuhe

Blusen, Pullis & Strick



- 1 Körperhöhe:** ohne Schuhe vom Scheitel bis zur Sohle messen. Am Türrahmen geht's am besten.
- 2 Brustumfang:** über der stärksten Stelle der Brust waagrecht um den Körper messen.

1	2
Brustumfang	Bestellgröße
74-77	32
78-81	34
82-85	36
86-89	38
90-93	40
94-97	42
98-102	44
103-107	46
108-113	48
114-119	50
120-125	52
126-131	54
132-137	56
138-143	58
144-149	60
150-155	62

Otto...find ich gut.

Alle Angebote im Shop

- > Bluse
- > Pullover
- > Shirts

nach oben

Figure 5.14: Suggestion 2 for measurement explanation (otto.de)

A further feature can be integrated which involves tips for body problems. BON'A PARTE can give suggestions to the customer when they want to buy for instance a bikini. By showing pictures of the different weight problems like wide hips, a small belly, a large or small bust the customer can see which kind of clothes is fitting best to her body and cover therefore the body problems. (otto.de)

The figure 5.15 below is an example for the product group bikini of Otto GmbH, which shows and explains the different body types via illustrations. The company gives proposals for how to cover for instance wide hips.



Figure 5.15: Tips for body problems (otto.de)

By wearing a pareo Otto GmbH says following statement on their webpage (otto.de):

“Ein Pareo oder ein trendiger Strandrock sehen nicht nur umwerfend gut aus, sondern umschmeicheln raffiniert unerwünschte Rundungen! Ideal sind attraktive Hingucker wie plakative Muster oder breite Gürtel, denn sie lenken gekonnt von den kleinen Problemzonen ab.“

(A pareo or a trendy beach skirt are looking not only fantastic but are flattering the undesirable curves in a sophisticated way. Striking patterns or wide belts are an attractive eye candy because they distract from the body problems.)

With the special presentation of the bikinis the customer can build up a summer feeling and a personal connection to the product. The consumer feels understood from the company's side by giving this kind of proposals. Therefore the company interacts more with their customers and build a relationship to them (see figure 5.16).

Kleiner Busen »
Sie möchten eine Extra-Portion weibliche Raffinesse? Aber gern:

Kleiner Bauch »
Zaubern Sie Ihr kleines Bauchlein doch einfach weg! So geht's:

Runde Hüften »
Sie träumen von schmalere Hüften? Nichts leichter als das:

Großer Busen »
Starke Frau, schöne Kurven – diese Bademode bringt Sie in Bestform:

Atemberaubende Dekolletés liegen im Trend! Wattierte Cups mit Push-up-Effekt sorgen dabei nicht nur für ein komfortables Trage-Gefühl, sondern auch für mehr Volumen und sexy Formen. Eine ausgefallene Kette zieht die Blicke zusätzlich magisch an!

Tankinis und Badeanzüge sind nicht nur voll im Trend, sondern lassen kleine Pölsterchen am Bauch im Handumdrehen optisch verschwinden – und unterstützen so auf raffinierte Weise eine natürlich schöne und

Ein Pareo oder ein trendiger Strandrock sehen nicht nur umwerfend gut aus, sondern umschmeicheln raffiniert unerwünschte Rundungen! Ideal sind attraktive Hingucker wie plakative Muster oder breite Gürtel, denn sie lenken gekonnt von den kleinen Problemzonen ab.

Ob Bikini oder Badeanzug: Breite Träger und Cups mit Formbügeln modellieren ein schönes Dekolleté und sorgen für maximalen Tragekomfort. So sehen Sie einfach hinreißend aus!

Figure 5.16: Bikini tips for body problems (otto.de)

As well an offer of short sizes and long sizes in trousers can help the customer to find the right length/size. This would reach a broader target group.

5.2.3 Suggestions for Customer Feedback

It can be helpful for customers to read feedback of other customers during the ordering process. Today (2010-05-05) BON'A PARTE has an application where the customer can report their experiences from the purchased product. Currently this method is lacking since almost no one is using it and therefore also not achieving its purpose (see figure 5.17).

For 30.9% of the interviewees it will be helpful that they can read reviews from other consumers that bought the same product.

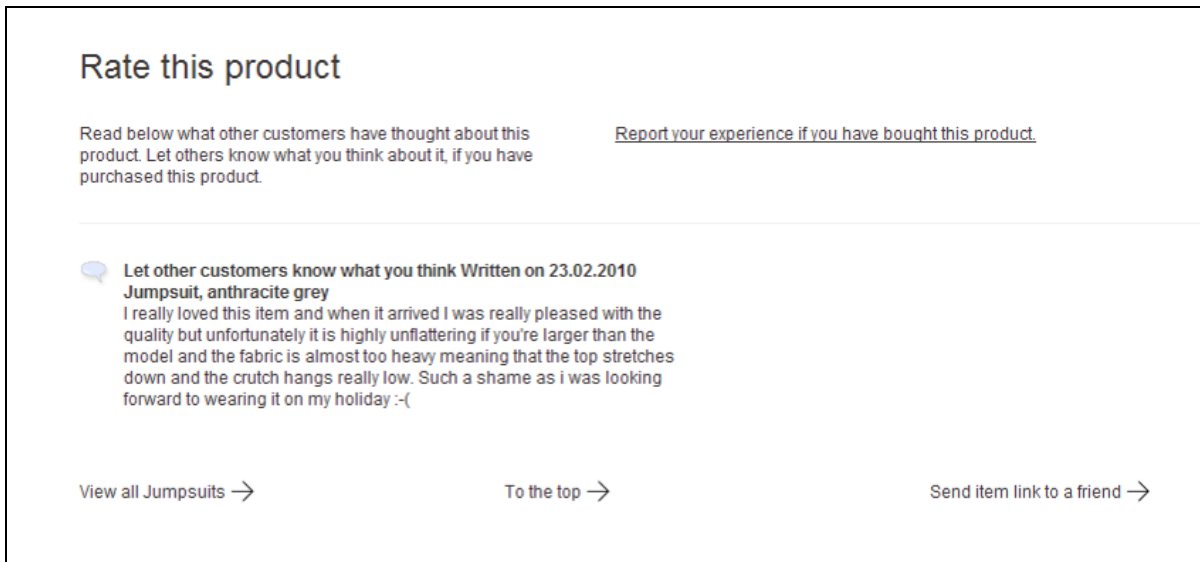


Figure 5.17: Example of feedback from one customer (bonaparte.co.uk)

There are several fundamentals which can be developed and there are some suggestions and examples on improvements. Site ease and a plain design are important in order for the customer to get a quick overview about the ratings and product attribution. This brings less effort for the customer to investigate about influences which could provoke the intention to buy. It takes more time and effort for a person to read a text than to look at symbols and grades. For make it more visible and easier for the consumer the company can use stars for the evaluation (see figure 5.18 and 5.19).

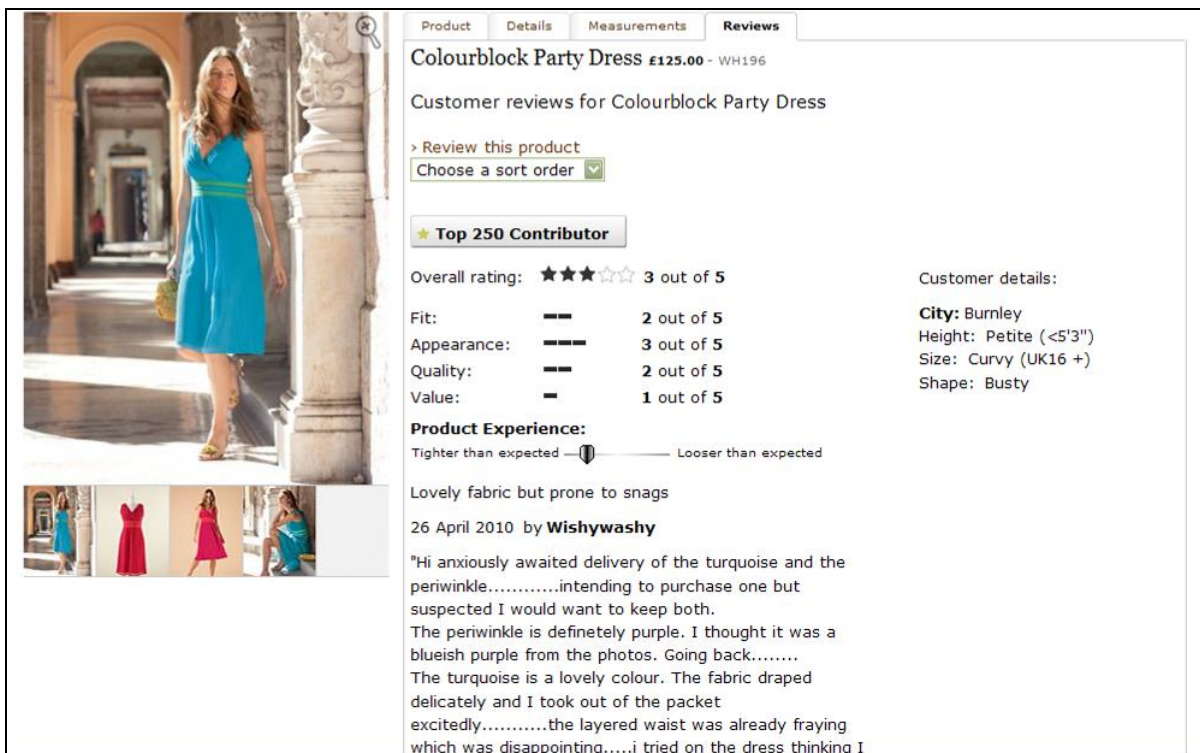


Figure 5.18: Suggestion 1 for customer feedback (boden.co.uk)

Betygsätt / Fråga

Användarnas betyg: ★★★★★

Antal betyg: 26 st

Antal frågor: 0 st

Har du köpt den här produkten? Betygsätt den och berätta för alla andra vad du tyckte om den! För att ställa en fråga måste du vara inloggad. Du kan även skapa ett alias, ett fiktivt namn (t.ex. "Ella"). Gör du inte det får du ett slumpmässigt nummer som alias. Logga in nedan. Ditt betyg/fråga kan komma att användas för marknadsföringsändamål.

Sortera på

0 av 0 tyckte detta inlägg var till hjälp

★★★★★ 2010-04-19, av 105321002

snygg men knäpp dragkedja

Jobbig att ta på i o med dragkedjan krånglade de blev att ropa på hjälp men det är ju inte alltid man kan det. Bh behövdes i mitt fall såg inte klok utan. ändå har jag inga hängda C. =) Jag gillade fallet på den och bakpartier är mkt snyggt .gäller nu att finna ett par snygga skor till

0 av 0 tyckte detta inlägg var till hjälp

★★★★★ 2010-04-09, av 106671011

Snygg!

Jag beställde en svart och tyckte den var fin men lite stor i ärmarna som fler av er redan kommenterat. Dragkedjan är trög men den fungerear bra om man ger den lite kärlek :) Bra köp i övrigt!

Figure 5.19: Suggestion 2 for customer feedback (ellos.se)

5.2.4 Suggestions for the Delivery Time

If a product is during the ordering process not available and there is no tip when it is in stock again, the customer will not buy this product. The consumer can not be sure, that the item will reach him/her when it is need.

On the webpage of BON'A PARTE there are three status of the delivery time: available, later available and sold out (see figure 5.20). BON'A PARTE explains the different kind of status on their webpage. "Available" means that the product will be arrived in the normal delivery time in 1-2 weeks and "sold out" means that this item cannot be ordered. By having the description "later available" the customer does not know in this moment when the item will be delivered.

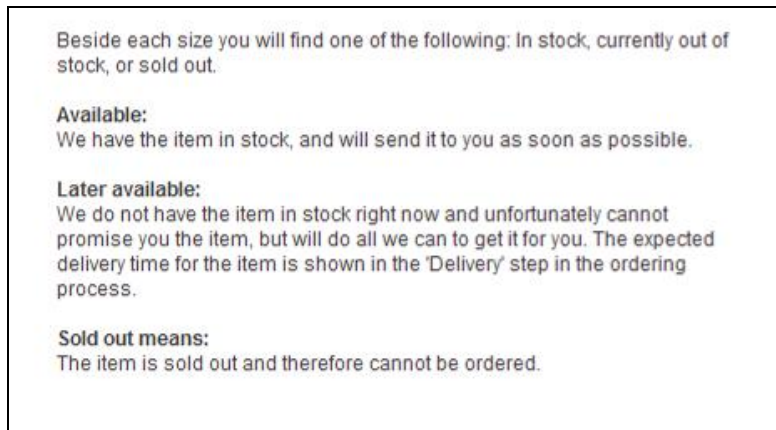


Figure 5.20: Three different delivery times of BON'A PARTE (bonaparte.co.uk)

Only after putting the item into the shoppingbasket, log in and fulfilling the address the user will get the information when the product is available (see figure 5.21).

For some customers it can be disappointed that the delivery time will be shown at the end of the delivery process. It can happen as well that the customers do not want to order the product anymore because the delivery time is too late and this was noticed too late in the ordering process.

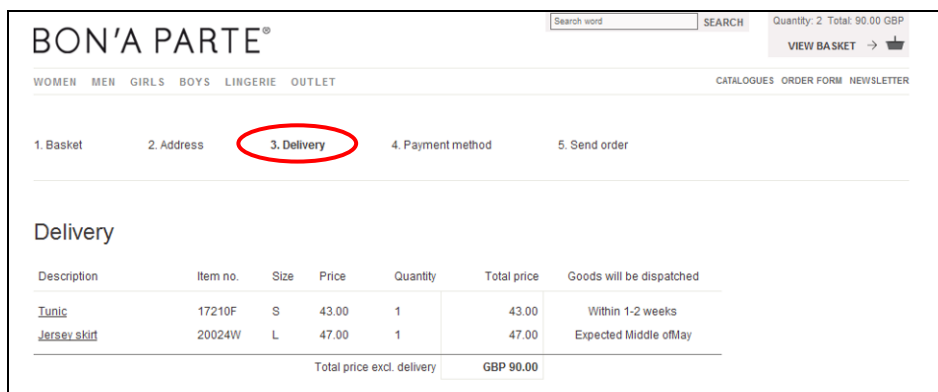


Figure 5.21: Showed delivery time after ordering process (bonaparte.co.uk)

A necessary feature for this problem can be a table where the consumer can find information about the delivery time of this item directly during the ordering process. If the product is not available in this moment the consumer should find information about when the item will be in stock again. Figure 5.22 below shows a good possibility for the customer to see the delivery time during the shopping process.

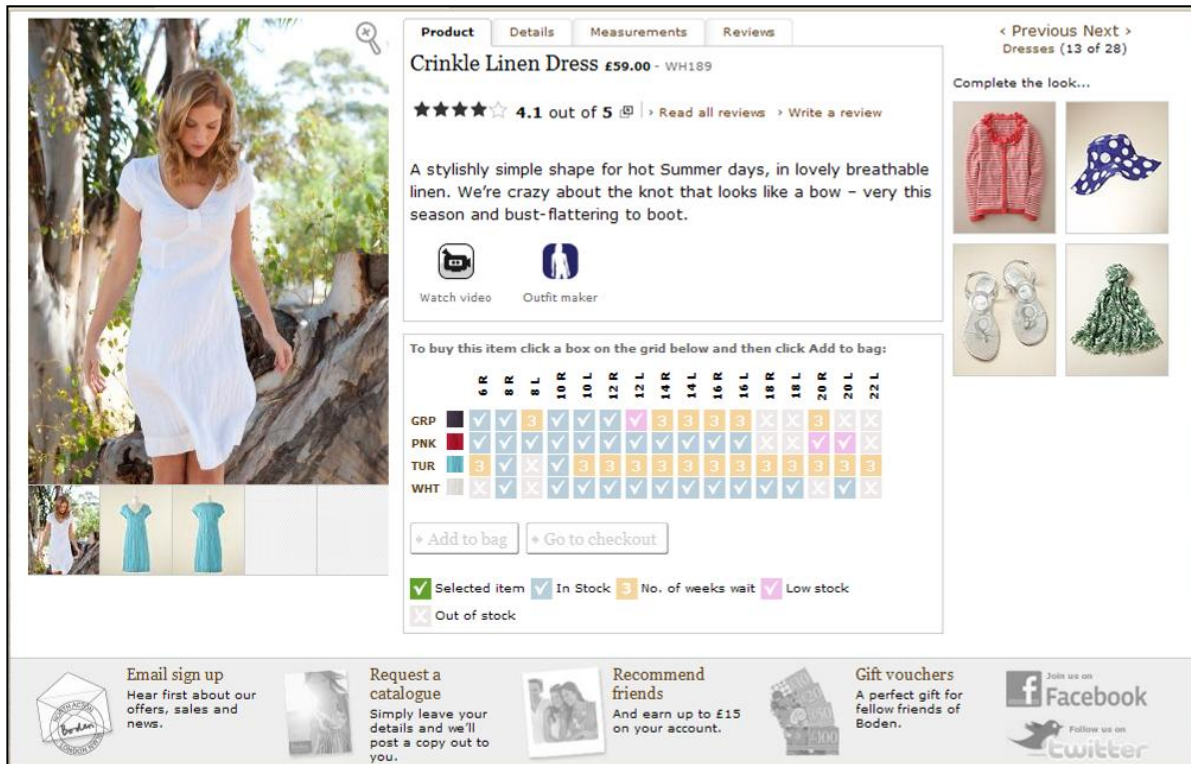


Figure 5.22: Suggestion for delivery time (boden.co.uk)

Another suggestion is to let the customer decide about the delivery time conditions, according to how much they are willing to pay and wait for the product. For instance asos.com has a clear chart displaying different delivery options which the customers can choose depending on their requirements (see figure 5.23). By this the delivery process is more tailored and customized by customer demands.

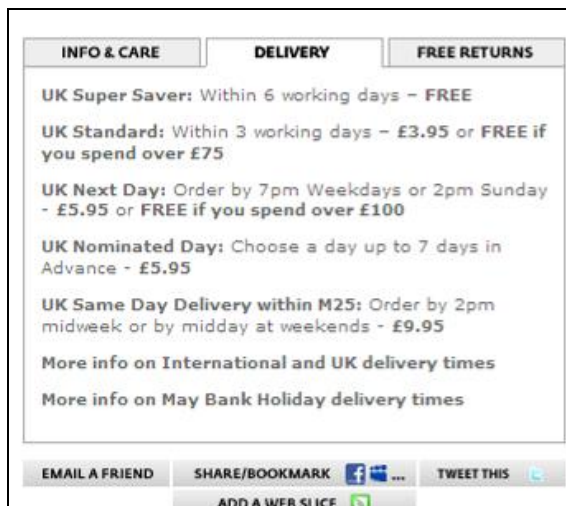


Figure 5.23: Delivery time conditions (asos.com)

Asos.com also provides an International delivery charge where the customer can choose to pay more if they want a shorter delivery time, regardless where the location is in the world (see figure 5.24).

International

International shipping is charged on a flat rate basis, regardless of the weight of your parcel.

Standard and Express delivery services are available for most of the countries that we ship to.

Shipping will be automatically calculated at the checkout page when both the delivery destination and service option is selected.

The summary of delivery timescales and cost are as follows:

AREA	STANDARD DELIVERY TIMES IN WORKING DAYS (Monday - Friday)	STANDARD COSTS	EXPRESS DELIVERY TIMES IN WORKING DAYS (Monday - Friday)	EXPRESS COSTS
Americas	From 7 days	From \$6.00	From 3 days	From \$12.00
Europe	From 5 days	From €6.00	From 2 days	From €12.00
Rest of the World	From 6 days	£10.50	From 3 days	£20.00

To find the exact timescales and cost for your country, [click here](#)

Figure 5.24: Delivery charge (asos.com)

5.3 Analysis of Research Question two: Consumer Interaction

As mentioned in chapter 3.2.3 one gap can be perceived between what the company thinks the consumer wants, and what the consumer really wants. By using social media as a communication tool a deeper understanding and consumer insight can be obtained which could minimize this gap. It is important to understand the real customer demand with the aim of meeting their expectations. By communicating via Facebook, Twitter, and blogs the real needs and demands can be explored as well as building loyal customers and personal relationships.

5.3.1 Via Facebook and Twitter

Today BON'A PARTE is not using Facebook or Twitter as an opportunity to interact with their customers on their webpage even though they have a "like" page on Facebook. The only application they are currently using on the homepage is a "send item link to a friend". Although the availability to share or recommend the product to a friend is a good marketing tool, a Facebook bookmark would certainly raise the members on their Facebook group and reach more customers by sharing. Today BON'A PARTE has only 222 (2010-05-04) members on Facebook which can be estimated to very few since they are positioned in several markets and have a huge range of customers.

By analyzing BON'A PARTE's Facebook "like" page several elements can be improved (see figure 5.25).



Figure 5.25: Current Facebook page of BON'A PARTE (facebook.com)

Foremost the information data on the first page can be further developed than just mentioning that it was founded in Denmark in 1987, since it does not give an overall and quick vision about the company such as in which business they are. Even though they may not want to include so much information; one suggestion is to place their homepage address there. Additionally as mentioned in chapter 3.3.1.1, this could also positively increase the customer trafficking to their homepage. Furthermore the homepage address is not posted on the first page which allows the customer to do an “extra click” to the information slide and from there find the link. This requires an extra effort from the viewer.

On the page there are also placed seven videos and 22 albums (2010-05-04) with pictures, but no further applications.

A suggestion is to add more features and applications in their head table:

- Discussion – in order to communicate more with the customer. Ask questions and make a dialogue about topics which could benefit the company and also gain a better customer insight.
- Reviews – let the customer share reviews about items they prefer to evaluate which also could gain a better consumer insight by evaluating their comments.
- Pool – here the company can manage different surveys such as a questionnaire and also get open answers by comments from customers. Additionally it is an easy way to get customer feedback on specific products, new ideas, and developments.

One suggestion is of H&M’s Facebook page (see figure 5.26). The customers can vote which style of jeans they want to stock up on. Through this the company is interacting more with its consumers and can deepen their consumer insight for product development.



Figure 5.26: Example from H&M's Facebook page (facebook.com)

By being creative companies can develop tables and applications such as this one from Forever21 where they post an item/look of the day which the customer can like/dislike as well as buy directly online if they want to. As a result Forever21 can evaluate and analyze products on a daily basis and also positively increase sales (see figure 5.27).

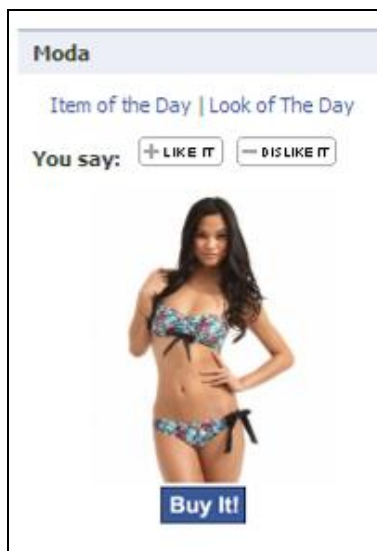


Figure 5.27: Example from Forever21's Facebook page (facebook.com)

Another example for being interactive with the customers via Facebook is the company Otto GmbH. On their Facebook page the company comments every user's remark which they are writing on Otto's wall and tries to answer the questions within few hours. Even criticism will be recognized and accepted by the company and pass on to the concerned department (see figure 5.28).



Figure 5.28: Example from Otto GmbH's Facebook page (facebook.com)

As mentioned before in chapter 4.2.2 BON'A PARTE is not represented on the Internet platform Twitter. Contrary to this Otto GmbH is using Twitter as a communication tool in a strong way (see figure 5.29). It is driven by four Otto employees who are helping the customers and answering questions. This network is usable for customer service since the company is in a direct dialogue with their consumers. The communication between the company and the users is relaxed and Otto is gaining sympathy.



Figure 5.29: Example from Otto GmbH's Twitter page (twitter.com)

5.3.2 Via Blogs

BON'A PARTE is not offering any blog on their homepage. As mentioned in chapter 3.3.1.2 a blog can make the company more personal and trustful. Also blogs can be included in a company customer service, since the customers can have a direct communication with the company and does not have to use the process of emailing anymore.

One suggestion is that BON'A PARTE could benefit a lot by setting up a blog on their homepage. The blog should be company driven and it is essential that BON'A PARTE practice a high-quality input with frequently new information. For instance they could write about new trends and products in a narrative and more story telling way in order to attract customer's attention. A further suggestion would be to post the new blog feeds on Facebook which would reach more people and traffic more users back to the homepage.

One blog example is the one from the mail-order company Otto GmbH, as mentioned in chapter 4.2.2. (twoforfashion.otto.de) This blog is company driven, but the bloggers are two women who combine the fashion from Otto GmbH with the one from lifestyle metropolis like New York and Berlin. By watching the blog the viewer will getting an insight behind the scenes of the company and Otto employees are creating guest contributions. (presseportal.de)

This emotional online-shopping and the integration of the user is strategic valuable, says Rainer Hillebrand, board member of Otto GmbH. The aim of this blog is that the users get excited and current insights into the fashion industry, the company itself and a lot of inspirations. Through this blog the customer can build up a relationship to the company and the firm can reach new consumers. (presseportal.de)

As mentioned in chapter 4.2.2, 21.7% of the interviewees would like to have a blog which support them to verify the right size. There is demand on the part of consumers which should be developed by the company.

5.3.3 Newsletter

The ordering persons were signed up for newsletter of BON'A PARTE the 1st of April 2010. Since then they have received eight letters, with an average on every 2-7 day (8/4, 13/4, 15/4, 20/4, 22/4, 27/4, 4/5, 19/5). The letters covered different main messages such as inspiration, new trends and colours, must haves, specially offers, campaigns and discounts. The newsletters include pictures and are not overload. However the newsletter could be more attractive and personal if they also included updates from the company blog.

6 Findings and Conclusion

In the final chapter we will answer the research questions and state our conclusions based on the data presented and analyzed in the previous chapter. Further we will end by giving suggestions for future research.

RQ 1: How can BON'A PARTE decrease their returns rates?

Based on our research and findings from the analyze chapter we can determine three main conclusions.

Firstly, from our experience by the case study and knowledge, we comprehend that there is a lack in the overall message which BON'A PARTE persuades to stand for. It is vital for a company's survival that they keep their overall promises to the customer and fulfil the expectations. One conclusion from the analysis about the case study is that BON'A PARTE is not fulfilling their promises as it is today, which can explain why customers are returning so much. The current situation of BON'A PARTE is that they stand for a "high price" range and the pictures from the website reflect high quality products since they are indicating a feeling of a nice Italy surrounding, which additionally raises the expectations. Furthermore, two weeks lead-time of delivery also points towards that these products are worth waiting for. However, after the delivery we were disappointed within the overall features of the products compared to the price range and lead-time. Thus, the reasons behind why a customer returns a product may differ; the overall reasons lay within that the expectations are not exceeded or met in the end. Beyond that the survey stated that the overall expectations within BON'A PARTE's ways of deliver products and services were good; the majority of all three countries choose "good" and not "very good" which confirms that this can be better and improved.

Secondly, BON'A PARTE needs to minimize the communication and service gaps between the customer and the company. Additionally they could gain advantage by realizing the discrepancy between the service they espouse, the service they deliver, and the service their customer perceive. We state that it is vital to know the driving forces behind the purchase such as quality, design, price, function, and etc. in order to have satisfied customers. Further, in order to achieve this BON'A PARTE needs to have a better consumer insight. They need to KNOW and not only believe what the customer wants, requires, and desires from them. With the intention of deliver value to the customer a company needs to know where the value should be added. Consequently, BON'A PARTE should add value to the product in consensus with the customer demand. However we claim that this is not the case today where for instance BON'A PARTE has the intention to add value to the products by placing the items in textile bags when they are delivered. However based on the ordering process, we argue that the value is added on the wrong place and instead contributes with a mixed message to the customer with a sense of high quality products contra the reality with fitting problems and quality issues. A better solution would be to add value to the products by having improved quality controls within the production and also better controls within the fitting, size, and pattern making. We claim that the expectations within the quality and right size are vital elements and the packaging does not enhance the major issues when it comes to the overall decision of keeping the products. As BON'A PARTE is stating on their webpage

“BON’A PARTE is something special” and that *“quality is all-important. Quality of design of course – but also quality of materials, cut and detailing.”* it is very important that they deliver what is promised and promoted.

Thirdly, BON’A PARTE could benefit enormously by having a better customer participation on their webpage than they have today. One main disadvantage within Internet retailer is that the customer cannot touch and try the clothes on as they are able to in a traditional store. Therefore services and applications are vital tools for helping the customer to find the right size and fit, as mentioned in the theory part. We argue that BON’A PARTE has a lot to gain by integrating the customer more to the website via a better recommendation and rating application. Consequently, it would help the customer to find the appropriate size and product by viewing other customers’ thoughts and experiences from the product, as it was desired in the survey. Even though the reviews can be subjective the overall message is more personal and truthful. Beyond having the greatest pictures, product information, and size guide; we claim that recommendations from previous customers will have a major impact on the decision. However, we strongly believe that if BON’A PARTE adds the “catwalk” application to all their products it would additionally help the customer to make a more accurate decision, since they can view the product better in material and fit.

RQ 2: Can this be conducted by integrating more with the customer via social media?

As following to the first research question we strongly argue for that BON’A PARTE can reduce their returns rates by consumer insight, interact and communicate more with their customers. Therefore we agree that BON’A PARTE can reduce their returns rates by using social media as an interacting tool. With social media BON’A PARTE can reach out to their customers and further explore their real needs, wants and expectations. As mentioned in the theory part there is a possibility on social media to engage customers and build up a consumer loyalty. Additionally, they can also reach non-customers and those who are not satisfied with the experience and products. Social media opens up boundaries and there are no limitations on how creative the company can be. For instance there is a group on Facebook which called “I hate Dell”. This group allows Dell customers to participate in all regulations among factors and elements from persons who are dissatisfied with their services. Further, through this forum Dell is getting the advantage and ability to improve and develop all current issues for the better, which they never may discover elsewhere.

Although BON’A PARTE is only on Facebook today (not Twitter and blogs), we further state that they are passive and not practicing it to its extension, as discussed in the analysis part. At the moment BON’A PARTE is only using Facebook as a marketing tool one way (monologue) and not as a communication tool (dialogue). Additionally, they need to start to communicate and discuss with the customer and not only post upcoming news and events. Even if BON’A PARTE does not have so many followers on Facebook the biggest challenge and success factor are not to have a huge audience. Instead the understanding of what the company wants out of social media followed by clear goals could indicate the biggest provider of achievement. Therefore BON’A PARTE should establish a strategy regarding elements they may consider to be major reasons for dissatisfying customers and investigate it further through Facebook. As a result they may find answers which could help them to

decrease their returns rates by improving their services and product tailored after the real customer demand. By practice consumer insight they can use the information as a base for improving their demand and supply chain as well in the future.

Further a company blog is another social media they could benefit from by interact more with customers in a personal way. Beyond BON'A PARTE's newsletters and regular email contact, a blog can provide a direct conversation, asking questions and read the answers openly on the same page which may save resources and time. In view of the development with increasing number of bloggers each day and the impact it has to the industry as a powerful communication tool it would further be good to consider it as a future strategy to enhance the market.

7 Future Research

In this chapter we want to give BON'A PARTE further future research ideas, within in the area returns management. These suggestions need a deeper research.

For reducing the high returns rate in Germany a possibility can be to charge for returns and not the dispatch, like it is now. A survey from 600 online shopper mentioned that 67% would pay for returns when the shipping charges are free. (shopbetreiber-blog.de) One assumption is that this would decrease the selection delivery because the order persons will think before ordering. However this may also decrease the overall sales and therefore a further investigation could be necessary for BON'A PARTE.

Desired by 30.9% of the BON'A PARTE interviewees mentioned that they would like to read more reviews of other customers which have ordered the same product. Helpful can be that consumers can mention if the fitting was satisfied and give suggestions to order this product in a bigger or smaller size. Today the consumer is not interacting a lot with the company and therefore BON'A PARTE has to study and analyze how they could attract the customers to participate more.

Additionally it is important that BON'A PARTE becomes conscious about what their customers perceives to be the core values and how they are positioned on the market. Hence it is central that BON'A PARTE and the customer has the same perceptive and receive the message in a right way. It is vital to send out the right message and if the customer perceives something else BON'A PARTE needs to change it or make it clearer. Otherwise they cannot reach their goals and need another strategy. For finding out BON'A PARTE's strengths and core values the company can do a research from what the customers perceives in order to study and analyze this issue. As a result they may understand their expectations better which additionally could decrease their returns rates.

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