MSc in Marketing

Consumer Complaint Behaviour on Facebook and Twitter brand pages

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Declaration of Research Work Integrity

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently being submitted in candidature for any degree. This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged with explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

By signing the present document, I confirm and agree that I have read RU’s ethics code of conduct and fully understand the consequences of violating these rules in connection with my thesis.

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Date and Place                      ID No.                        Signature
Acknowledgement

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to find out what customers are trying to communicate to companies through social media brand pages. Companies have more presence and dedicate an ever-growing part of their marketing budget to social media. It is therefore important for companies to understand how consumers are using social media and what channels they are using to complain or ask questions. The research was conducted to understand the negativity on Icelandic social media brand pages. Little research has been done on online complaints from actual circumstances. The purpose of this study is to observe comments on brand pages on Facebook and Twitter, and to find out what kind of comments are left on social media brand pages. What kind of complaints, what their objectives are and if there is a difference between the complaints on Facebook and Twitter.

The ideal methodology to complete this study is to use observational netnography, which is an online version of ethnography and is an interpretive research method (Kozinets, 2010). In total, 522 comments on brand pages were collected on both Twitter and Facebook during a three-month period in 2016. The results of the study indicate that consumers are complaining and asking questions on company brand pages on Facebook. On Twitter, users were complaining but also praising. The objectives of the complaints on Facebook were found to be seeking advice and venting, whereas on Twitter, however, there was a higher percentage of venting than seeking advice. This research contributes to the literature on online complaints with netnography, and how to observe comments on social media brand pages. Based on the observations made, this thesis attempts to guide marketing managers on how to have a successful communication on brand pages. The research will also serve as an important reminder to managers that the power of social media is immense and it needs to be carefully monitored.

Keywords: Consumer complaint behaviour, social media, netnography, Facebook, Twitter, online complaints, retail, restaurants, and telecommunications.
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1 Introduction

Social media is a public channel where users can view interactions between consumers and companies. This allows for consumers to state their opinions or raise questions towards brands. It is therefore important for companies to understand how consumers use social media, what channels they use to complain or ask questions, and to answer any questions they may receive. It is essential to monitor negative comments that are being made about the brand. A company that manages their communication channels has the opportunity to gain a competitive advantage by understanding the conversation that is happening on social media, and act on that information (Geierhos, 2011).

When it comes to consumer complaint behaviour, it has been examined from several of points of view: consumer attitudes, reasons for dissatisfaction, action types, and how to handle and respond to consumers. Previous studies (Landon & Day, 1977; Alicke et al., 2002; Robertson & Shaw, 2012; Hirschman, 1970; Singh, 1988; Crié, 2003) suggest that the reason for complaining depends on the level of dissatisfaction, the importance of the purchase, or the benefit of complaining. Other literature (Robertson, 2012; Stríeský & Stranská, 2015) on online consumer complaint behaviour fails to address the issue regarding the types of complaints on social media, how the complainers communicate, and through which social media channels. Sweeney et al. (2012) also suggest that the subject of the complaining messages should also be taken into consideration.

In this thesis, the author is going to focus on analysing public comments on corporate brand pages on Facebook and Twitter, to understand what kind of comments are left on brand pages. Seven companies were analysed and accepted as candidates for this study, and they were divided into three industries: retail, restaurants, and telecommunications. Having three different industries was considered to be ideal to get a good overview of consumer complaint behaviour.

The objective of this thesis is to analyse the types of comments on corporate brand pages. Comments include complaints, praise, questions and suggestions. Furthermore, the aim is to show if users are effectively using these mediums such as Facebook and Twitter as channels for complaints and if there is a difference between these channels.

Seven Icelandic corporate pages on both Facebook and Twitter were analysed with the netnography method of observation. The information and interactions by the
users are public and available, which makes it ideal to use a qualitative research method to observe, document and categorise these comments. Qualitative research can provide better answers and more understanding of consumer behaviour, rather than large sample surveys and responses to staged scenario questions (Srınka, 2007). As this thesis is based on online interactions, an online version of ethnography (netnography) is best suited for this study (Kozinets, 2010). With netnography there is an actual observation on the online complaints on different social media platforms, that gives the research a more natural and an unobtrusive setting (Kosinets, 2002).

The results indicate that there is a difference in how social media platforms are being used. Users’ comments on brand pages are mostly complaints and questions. They are seeking information and venting their anger. The ease of complaining online makes it easy for consumers to share their opinion with friends, family and the brand. Twitter users vent their anger and joke about their experience when buying a pizza, for example. This research contributes to the literature on online complaints by using netnography and analysing what kind of complaints are on social media. In practice, marketing managers at these seven companies can use this information for their marketing strategy. They can see what kind of information their customers are seeking or if there are certain issues that need to be resolved. The research will also serve as an important reminder to managers that the power of social media is immense and it needs to be carefully monitored. This will give stakeholders an important insight into their social media channels so that they can adapt and develop a policy on how to handle public complaints and to limit the negative word of mouth online.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What kind of comments are on social media brand pages?
2. What kind of complaints are on social media brand pages?
3. What are the objectives of the social media complaints?
4. Are social media complaints different between Facebook and Twitter?

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter two defines and analyses the features of Facebook and Twitter, as a social media tool for companies, and presents what industries and companies will be covered. The aim of this chapter is to highlight the importance of Facebook and Twitter and how companies are using this marketing tool. Furthermore, it aims to understand how the consumers complaining actions can be
analysed. Chapter three contains a review of the literature on consumer complaining behaviour and online complaining. The aim is to understand what has been researched and understood. This chapter provides an understanding of the definition of consumer complaining behaviour, the objectives of consumers and the many ways to complain. Chapter four outlines the research and explores the method that is used, netnography. The data collection is described in detail and is followed by how the complaints will be identified. Discussions on ethical considerations and methodological limitations will also be stated at the end of the chapter. The fifth chapter introduces the research findings and covers the collected data on complaints. The sixth and closing chapter presents the results of the observation, a discussion on the results, and implications. This is followed by the conclusions that have been drawn on the research questions, limitations, and future research.
2 Social Media as a Marketing Tool

When the Internet started, users were limited to only viewing content that was published by the website creator. Web 2.0 revolutionised how users of the Internet interacted online. User-generated content defines the various form of online content created and distributed on the Internet by the users rather than professionals (Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2008). The defining features of social networking sites are that they contain different profiles. Then each social networking site has its own characteristics and they are in a state of development. Social media networking sites are increasing in popularity every year. Facebook has 1.23 billion active users that visit their site on a daily basis (Statistic, n.d.). Twitter has 319 million monthly active users (Statistic, n.d.-b). Companies see an opportunity to be closer to the consumer and consumers are on social media. Social media can be used as an extension of the brand voice to the customer. This gives the companies an opportunity to promote their website, product, or service to a larger community that were maybe not accessible via traditional advertising channels (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). For example, companies are directly communicating with their followers with a status update, as opposed to advertising in a newspaper. The reach that they can get is more direct and is at a lower price than traditional marketing (“Digital Marketing Vs. Traditional Marketing,” n.d.). Now social media is becoming even more important, because reading status updates and social media posts from trusted sources, e.g., from friends, family or influencers, is essentially word of mouth recommendations, by which consumers are making their purchasing decisions (Hansson, Wrangmo & Soilen, 2013).

With this easier access to the users of social media, the access to the companies also opens up. A report from Hedges (2012) states that 65% of consumers believes social media is a better way to communicate with companies, than calling call centres.

2.1 Facebook and Twitter

2.1.1 Facebook

Facebook is the largest social media networking site and is the third most visited website in the world and the daily time spent on the site is on average around 14 minutes a day (“Alexa Top 500 Global Sites,” n.d.). The site was created in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and was first exclusive for the students of Harvard University before it was extended to other universities. In 2006, the network was opened up to the public. The site is free to join, however, it features targeted ads that
create revenue (Gaurdian, 2007). Six years later, over 1 billion users have signed up and around 220,000 Icelanders (“Hvaða áhrif hefur Facebook haft á samskipti fólks?” n.d.). Around nine out of ten Icelanders older than eighteen years old are using Facebook several times a day (“Gallup á Íslandi,” n.d.).

When opening Facebook, the first visible thing is the newsfeed, which features the newest and most relevant content being shared with the user. This content is in the form of posts and can vary from images, videos, hyperlinks, advertisements and information from pages and groups that the user follows or has commented on. The newsfeed is the most important page because that is where the targeted advertisements are placed in order for the user to view them. The algorithm that is used for the newsfeed is called EdgeRank, the rank determines whether the connection between the users is close enough to display status updates and activities to another user. Facebook only displays the top-ranked updates for each user (“EdgeRank,” n.d.). For an example, if two users are connected as friends, and they have liked each other’s pictures and status updates, their relationship will receive a higher EdgeRank.

2.1.2 Facebook Brand Pages

Facebook launched brand pages or fan pages in 2007 and now businesses are using them for their organisation, products, brands or specific marketing activities. These sites are completely public and are open to browse freely. The consumer can contribute if the company allows posts from users. If the company does not allow visitor posts, then they are in charge of the content but consumers can nonetheless freely communicate and comment on the company’s post. Users can also create a page or group and control them on their own; they can be public, private or semi-private, therefore Facebook can be considered both a public and private channel. The main functions of the pages are similar to personal profiles; the brands can post statuses, upload photos or videos, create events and add apps to the brand page. The brand pages may seem similar to personal profiles, however, they offer various tools for businesses, such as detailed insights into the site analytics (Hof, 2007).

2.1.3 Twitter

Twitter was founded in 2006 and was especially for New York University students, but a few months later it was launched for the public. The difference between Twitter and Facebook is that Twitter is a microblog and limits the allowed published content to 140 characters per update while Facebook has no such restrictions. As the
content and users change, they now allow the micro blog posts, called “tweets”, to also be in the form of pictures, videos, hyperlinks, auto-play videos and advertisements (Kumar, 2015). The popularity of Twitter is enormous, as it has 317 million active users as of the beginning of 2016 (“Twitter,” n.d.). Twitter is an important platform for brands. Twitter users can be loyal customers and many of them follow brands on Twitter. Of those who do so, 67% indicate that they are willing to purchase from the brand that they follow on Twitter (Malhotra, Malhotra, & See, 2012). Companies like Starbucks and Amazon.com use Twitter to see if their customers are thinking about their products and adapt their marketing accordingly (Miller, 2009).

The popularity of Twitter in Iceland is not the same as with Facebook. The market research company Gallup made a social media research and out of 836 responses (N=836), 22% use Twitter daily. When looking at gender preferences, 40% of young men use Twitter and 25% of females (“Gallup á Íslandi,” n.d.).

2.1.4 Brand Pages on Twitter

Twitter followed Facebook’s example in 2011 when they launched Twitter Pages, made especially for companies. These pages are brand profiles of the companies’ tweets and retweets. When a brand has followers, the tweets that are posted by the brand will reach the follower’s newsfeed. Retweets mean that people are sharing tweets with their followers. This feature is like an electronic word of mouth.

2.2 Retail, Restaurants and Telecommunications Industries in Iceland

When it comes to the media mix, most companies use a variation of radio, cinema, environment, newspaper and digital marketing. In Iceland, TV adverts are still the largest marketing expense and it is also the top variable in the success of the campaign. The advertising agencies have not come up with the best practice media mix nonetheless, using all media is known to be successful (Hvíta húsið, n.d.).

These industries all have products or services that they are promoting on social media. Most of these companies have traditional marketing, but they also want to be present where the consumers are present. Most Icelandic companies today are on Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat.

Seven companies were chosen from these three industries. Companies in the retail industry, a grocery store, a clothing store and an online store, were chosen. The restaurant category has two fast food chains and one new restaurant. One telecommunications company was chosen, as they offer a range of services, phones,
internet and TV channels. These seven companies are Hagkaup, Lindex, Nola.is, Subway, Domino’s, Siminn and Sæta Svíníð. These companies were chosen by their rich data on their respective brand pages and in order to have a variation of brands and industries. These companies are active on Facebook and there are some discussions about their brands on Twitter.

**Hagkaup**

Hagkaup was founded in 1959 and started as a mail ordering company. They opened their first retail store in 1967. Now they have 11 supermarkets and an online store. Hagkaup offers a wide selection of products and wants to offer their customers the best shopping experience in their stores (“Um fyrirtækið,” n.d.). A pricing situation came up when a consumer noticed a big price difference between a Lego box in Tesco in the UK and Hagkaup in Iceland, as the Hagkaup price was four times as expensive as the price in Tesco. This was shared on Facebook and got media attention. Hagkaup answered that this product was no longer available and they were going to talk with their supplier (“20.000 króna munur á Hagkaup og Tesco,” n.d.).

At the point of this research, Hagkaup has 35,173 likes on Facebook and posted 81 posts over a three-month period and they do not have a Twitter account. Hagkaup shares new products and offers that they have in the store, both for the offline and online store. Hagkaup keeps its social media stream active and on average they post an update every third day.

**Lindex**

Lindex was founded in Sweden in 1950. Today they are a leading fast fashion company and is operated in 11 countries and eight franchise stores (Lindex, n.d.). The Icelandic store is one of the franchise stores, and it was opened in 2011 by Albert and Lóa who wanted to offer Icelanders affordable fashion (“Vísir - Lindex opnar á Íslandi,” n.d.). Lindex in Iceland has four stores and every week they post pictures of clothes to their Facebook pages, and the customer can buy clothes directly from the brand page (“LINDEX Iceland - About,” n.d.). At the time of this research, Lindex has 54,696 likes and 61 posts were posted over the three-month research period. They are not on Twitter. Lindex’s mission with their Facebook brand page is to share fashion tips, offers, and events that are happening in their stores. Lindex recently lowered their prices due to
better deals with their suppliers and a better exchange rate ("Visir - Lindex á Íslandi lækkar verð um allt að 22 prósent," n.d.).

**Nola.is**

Nola.is is an online shop, wholesaler and a small boutique where customers can pick up their orders. Nola.is opened in March 2014 and started as an online store. Nola is a cosmetics store that offers products that are outstanding in the field of cosmetics, and Nola.is wants to offer an excellent service to their customers. The store uses social media to combine information, promotion and sponsored posts from bloggers and influencers. At the time of this research, Nola.is has 11,882 likes and created 45 posts during the three-month research period. The store has 99 followers on Twitter and 87 tweets in total. They post on Facebook almost every day and they are active on other social media channels. However, they do not offer consumers or users to send them a direct message on their brand page.

**Subway**

Subway in Iceland opened in 1994 and is a part of the international Subway chain. Subway has 23 restaurants in Iceland. It offers sandwiches and salads, and their objective is to be the healthier option when it comes to fast food ("Subway - Um Subway," n.d.). At the time of this research, Subway in Iceland has 17,980 likes and posted 17 times during the three-month research period. Subway on Twitter has 38 followers and has tweeted three times in total. Subway posts content about their sandwiches and offers of the day.

**Sæta Svínið**

Sæta Svínið opened in March 2016. It is a gastro pub and is open all day, offers excellent food and a relaxed environment ("Sæta svínið - About," n.d.). The owners also operate a few other popular restaurants in Iceland, such as Tapasbarinn, Sushi Social and Apotek ("Sæta svínið – Nýr Íslenskur Gastropub,” 2015). Sæta Svínið is new and therefore they are using social media to get attention. As of the time of this research, they have 9,565 likes on Facebook and posted 76 posts during the three-month research period. They are not on Twitter.
Domino’s

Domino’s opened in Iceland in 1993. The operation has been successful since then and they currently have 22 branches. Domino’s in Iceland has it as a mission to be the leader in the fast food market. Their main goal is that the image, service, and quality contribute to customer satisfaction (“Um Domino’s,” n.d.). At the time of this research, Domino’s has 29,201 and posted 29 posts during the three-month research period. On Twitter, they have 2,875 followers and have made in total 3,113 tweets. Domino’s are active on social media and share offers and make entertaining content that is engaging, and in return they get a lot of comments. According to Meniga, Domino’s is the most popular restaurant in Iceland when looking at sold food for the year 2015, as 81% of the prepared food sales were from Domino’s (“Íslendingarnir fá þrjá og hálfan milljarð fyrir hlut í Domino’s,” 2016).

Síminn

Síminn is an Icelandic telecommunications company and was state owned when it was established in the year 1906. It was later privatised, in 2005,. It is a leading telecommunications company in Iceland with 48% market share in mobile phones (“Mannauður | Árssýrsla Símans 2015,” n.d.). Síminn at the point of this research had the most likes on Facebook of the companies that were researched, 87,916 likes and during the three-month research period they made 35 posts. On Twitter, they had 3,506 followers and 6,721 tweets. Síminn uses social media to share new advertisements, promotions and TV programmes released on their channels.

The table below summarises the Facebook and Twitter presence for these seven companies analysed in this thesis. It is important look at these numbers, as they show how the company has performed in the past and what their potential customer reach is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Likes on Facebook</th>
<th>Posts on Facebook</th>
<th>Followers on Twitter</th>
<th>Tweets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Hagkaup</td>
<td>35,173</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Not on Twitter</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery Store</td>
<td>Lindex</td>
<td>54,696</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Not on Twitter</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Nola.is</td>
<td>11,882</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing Store</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Subway</td>
<td>17,980</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online store</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Sæta</td>
<td>9,565</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Not on Twitter</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
A list of industries and companies that are going to be analysed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Followers</th>
<th>Replies</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
<th>Complaints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fast food</td>
<td>Svínid</td>
<td>29,201</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2,875</td>
<td>3,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Domino’s</td>
<td>8,916</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3,506</td>
<td>6,721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>Siminn</td>
<td>8,916</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3,506</td>
<td>6,721</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 Literature Review

This literature review examines what has been researched on consumer complaint behaviour and complaints on social media. To conduct this literature review, the database from EBSCO host and ProQuest was used, focusing on the following keywords: consumer complaint behaviour, complaints, online complaints, netnography, and complaints with netnography method. The second part introduces a taxonomy of complaints specifically for social media. Finally, at the end of this chapter is a summarised research gap and the research questions are stated.

3.1 Consumer Complaint Behaviour

The literature on consumer complaining behaviour draws a contribution from research such as consumer behaviour and attitudes, consumer satisfaction, dissatisfaction and complaints handling. In this research, the aim is to focus on the complaints themselves, their objectives, and if the complaints are different between platforms.

Consumer complaining behaviour has been researched since the mid-1960s. An early definition of consumer complaint behaviour is by Jacoby and Jaccard (1981) as “an action taken by an individual which involves communicating something negative regarding a product or service to the firm which is manufacturing or marketing that product or service, or to some third party organisations entity.” This definition is missing a few actions, such as boycotting the company and spreading a negative word of mouth. There are three most common dimensions of consumer complaint behaviour definitions that are best suited for the aim of this study: dissatisfaction, sources of dissatisfaction, and action type.

Dissatisfaction

After a purchase, the consumer consumption experience is not over. The next step in the process is the post-purchase process; the evaluation of a product or service and the overall consumption experience is also considered as a consumer activity. This stage can lead the consumers to either satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Bearden and Teel (1980) researched the relationship between expectations and complaining behaviour by using Oliver’s (1980) confirmation/disconfirmation model. In this case, they show that expectations and disconfirmations are possible determinants of satisfactions (Bearden & Teel, 1983). As long as the consumption experience is on the same level as the
expectations, consumers should therefore be satisfied, but if their expectations are not met by the actual experience, they feel dissatisfied, which can lead to a complaint (Bearden and Teel, 1983; Blodgett et al., 1993).

It is also worth noting that not all dissatisfied consumers take action (Day et al., 1981). Therefore, it is well noted that no behaviour towards something is not an indication of consumer satisfaction.

**Sources of dissatisfaction**

As has been previously mentioned, dissatisfaction can be driven by a negative feeling towards the company or particular attributes of the experience itself. There are other sources for the dissatisfaction that can concern the manufacturer, retailer, sales person, delivery or even the advertiser (Day & Landon, 1977). Consumers can even complain although they have not made any purchases. Research from Diamond et al. (1967) showed that not all consumer complaints to the company hotline were regarding the products themselves; sometimes it was about pricing or advertisements. Hence, the main source of consumer complaint behaviour is a complex function of different variables together with service or product failure (Jacoby & Jaccard, 1981).

**Action types**

Researchers in the field of consumer complaining behaviour have been focusing on the final complaining actions that consumers take, negative word of mouth or complaining to third party organisations (Day et al., 1981; Bearden and Teel, 1983; Richins, 1987; Halstead & Dröge, 1991). The variety of options has led to different typologies that explain the final complaining action. Most consumers complain online to warn others about their dissatisfaction, therefore other people can share this knowledge and warn even more people. In this scenario, we have consumers and non-consumers and how they take action when dissatisfaction occurs (Complaining behaviour in social media).

The final definition of what consumer complaining behaviour in this observation is defined as a reaction to the consumer dissatisfaction to any part of the consumption experience that may contain behaviour or non-behaviour reaction. The process of complaining can take place a single time or continuously.
3.1.1 Objectives of Complaint Behaviour

There are various objectives that people have for complaining. Stauss and Seidel (2004) researched direct complaints towards companies, and their main findings on the objectives are: (1) informing the company about this problem, (2) asking for compensation, and/or (3) making a change when there is a problem. Wetzer et al. (2007) studied the negative word of mouth and social sharing, and they identified eight basic goals for negative word of mouth communications: comfort search, venting, advice search, bonding, entertaining, self-presentation, warning others, and revenge (Wetzer et al., 2007). These two studies show different objectives when consumers complain. This suggests that the consumers might have the same objectives but express it differently, or have different objectives with different types of complaining.

Importance of consumer complaint behaviour

Complaints are very important, as they are a part of the consumer experience. They are in a way an opportunity for a second chance for the company. With the help of the consumers, they can receive a positive or negative feedback, which they can use to improve their quality (Hart et al., 1990; Tax et al., 1998; Bodey & Grace, 2006). To maintain the same reputation for a business it is important to have a complaint handling strategy to secure the reputation of a business and create a positive word of mouth (Shield, 2006).

3.1.2 Models on Consumer Complaint Behaviour

Table 2 on next page presents the four main types of research in the field of consumer complaining behaviour. These researches have used different taxonomy to research and organise these responses in order to theorise. There are two typologies of consumer complaining actions that are commonly used for classifying consumer complaining behaviour and that are the Day and Landon’s (1977) theory of dichotomy and Singh’s (1988) theory of taxonomy (Fox, 2008; de Matos et al., 2011). There are other three types of research that are very well established; Hirschman’s (1970) theory of exit, voice, and loyalty; Day’s et al. (1981) conceptualisation; and Crié’s (2003) diachronic.
Table 2
Research on consumer complaining behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Main Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day &amp; Landon</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Dichotomy</td>
<td>The reason for complaining is because of a relationship between the dissatisfaction level, the importance of the purchase, the benefit from complaining and the person itself. First, they have to choose to take an action or no action. Later, that changes to private actions and public actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hirschman</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Theory of exit, voice, and loyalty</td>
<td>Consumers can exit, or boycott, the company or product, or voice their feeling to the company. Loyalty is made to balance the voice and exit and refers to the passive and silent action from the consumers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crié</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Diachronic approach</td>
<td>Another suggestion to implement Day and Landon’s theory. Crié adopted the model because in his results, consumer took more than one action when complaining. Adopted the action and no action as the initial reaction for dissatisfaction and the final action public and private.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Existing models on consumer complaining behaviour may seem different from each other, but in fact they are very similar. Day and Landon (1977) and Singh (1988) looked at the complaint from different perspectives; Day and Landon’s (1977) model analyses the visibility of the complaint to the company as public or private actions, while Singh (1988) looked at the objectives of the complaints. The similar part of the four models is that when analysing them, they define some of the same actions with different names, e.g., exit, leaving and personally boycott. As these researches are all based on observation, how some actions are classified is questionable, e.g., when a customer decides not to complain because of a previous interaction with the business. Hirschman (1970) would classify that as loyalty, and Day and Landon (1977) would define it as a no-action. There were some errors in the Singh model regarding the classification of some examples (1988). Under the private response category, Singh added the intention to not re-purchase, but it could also be in a voice response. Maute and Forrester (1993) criticised Singh’s theory because of this problem. They stated that Singh did not consider the action but only the characteristics of the objective itself. Crié’s theory is valid but this approach suffers from a lack of practical validation and a clear outline of classification for the responses. Day and Landon (1977) talked about the
importance of the purchase playing a big role on the complaining behaviour, they therefore found it interesting to see if necessity of the product played a role. Hirschman’s theory can be criticised for categorising non-exit and non-voicing as loyalty. It was added to give the model a balance but it is also possible to exclude it.

Consumers have been engaging in more actions when it comes to complaining. The reason for complaining offline has not changed and is still to vent their anger and frustration (Alicke et al., 2002, Robertson & Shaw 2009).

3.2 Taxonomy of Consumer Complaint Behaviour

The literature on consumer complaint behaviour has differentiated three types of customer responses towards dissatisfactory services: private complaints, direct complaints, and third-party public complaints (Day at al., 1981; Singh, 1988; Bofling, 1989; Cornwell & Bligh, 1991). However, social media complaints do not fit in this taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour. Facebook wall post are always public in some ways and therefore do not fit any of the criteria.

A new taxonomy of complaints was designed by Hogreve, Eller and Firmhofer (2013) with complaints on social media especially in mind, and the changes in consumer complaint behaviour on social media. This taxonomy categorises consumer complaints behaviour into four segments of public or private, voiced or hidden. See further information in Figure 1. Private complaints are between the customer and the service provider alone, but sometimes also involving the customer’s close friend or family member. Public complaints are public and therefore accessible to anybody, both friends and family of the complainer and large groups. Voiced complaints are interactions between the customer and the company, while hidden complaints are primarily by third parties (media or consumer organisation) who only represent the consumer and are not involved in the service failure. Therefore, these four types of consumer complaint behaviour can be explained as such:

1) *Privately voiced complaints* are direct complaints via face-to-face interactions, postal mail, e-mail or phone.

2) *Privately hidden complaints* are not directly for the service provider and are publicly accessible, e.g., negative word of mouth and boycotting behaviour.

3) *Publicly hidden complaints* refer to complaints to consumer organisations, media or reviews on websites. Not meant for the service provider to see.
4) **Publicly voiced complaints** refer to complaining on social media through the company brand page.

![Figure 1: Taxonomy of complaints (Hogreve, Eller, & Firmhofer, 2013)](image)

Social media complaints are under publicly voiced complaints, although some complaints on groups on Facebook would be categorised as publicly hidden complaints. Most research on consumer complaint behaviour have been focusing on privately voiced and privately hidden complaints (Crié, 2003; Strauss & Hill 2001). Then there are only a few studies on consumer complaint behaviour on social media, despite its popularity and power. Those who study consumer complaint behaviour usually study complaints on Facebook brand pages to see if they are positive or negative (Istanbulluoğlu, 2014).

### 3.3 Online Complaining Behaviour

The theory on online complaining behaviour has not yet been fully formulated. Tripp and Gregoire (2011) define it as the customers’ online public complaining activities. This is why the definition for this study is going to be consumer online complaining behaviour. Existing studies about online complaining behaviour have examined complaining regarding online shopping (Ho & Wu, 1999; Cho et al., 2002) or as a form of online negative word of mouth (e.g., Gelb & Sundaram, 2002; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Jansen et al., 2009; Lee & Youn, 2009). An early study from 2002
stated that word of mouth on the Internet was only between strangers and those who interacted in the conversations were usually experts in the field (Gelb & Sundaram, 2002). Today users can identify themselves and users who are engaging in the conversation do not need to be experts. Hence, when it comes to online complaining behaviour, it is important to consider the date of the research, due to the rapid changes on the Internet and social media.

Complaining or negative word of mouth can now be shared publicly by different communicational channels (Pitt et al., 2002; Hong & Lee, 2005). Since the publication of these studies in 2002-2005, new communication channels have been added to the field. The difference between traditional complaining and online complaining is that the online complaining can be stated on multiple channels and forms (e.g., video, picture and text) (Tripp & Gregoire, 2011). These activities can vary between posts on corporate pages, posts on discussion boards, created websites or public pictures or videos.

3.3.1 Factors Influencing Online Complaining Behaviour

There several factors that influence online complaining behaviour, such as organisational factors and company failures.

Organisational factors

The responsiveness of online companies has been found to have an impact on actions towards complaining online (Wu, 2012). When consumers know that they are going to be answered online, they seek to complain there instead of elsewhere. On the other hand, when the business is only online, they may be complaining online only because they are unfamiliar with other complaint channels. Market-related factors are found to have an influence on consumers’ online complaining behaviour. Dekay’s (2012) research examined how companies deal with negative Facebook posts, and the main findings suggest that there are differences between industries regarding how they answer negative posts. In the research the main differences were between retail companies and companies in the software and service industry; retail had 87.5% response rate and the software and service industry had 33% (Dekay, 2012). If consumers are aware of these differences they may be behaving differently towards complaining online when it comes to different industries.

Consumers who complain offline are likely to have the objective to redress, but the opposite is true when consumers complain online. Research from 2013 suggests that
there was a negative correlation between the attitude towards redress seeking and complaining online (Andreassen & Streukens, 2013). It is possible that these consumers do not think online complaining is a direct way of complaining. When they expect a positive outcome of redress they are more probable to complain offline than online.

**Company failures – complaint category**

The problems that the customers faced and lead to online complaining are related to core services such as pricing, product issues, advertisement, delivery and website information (Nasir, 2004). Nasir’s (2004) research was on themes of complaints in online shopping and the main findings were that the most complaints were regarding delivery, customer relations and product problems. Another research done in 2012 found that a marketing campaign was the main reason for negative posts on corporate Facebook pages. Corporate posts that do not contain specific marketing or promotion material, but are rather informational or fun, do not generate as much negative feedback (Dekay, 2012). Although Dekay’s research was extensive it ran only for one month. Dekay researched corporate responses in four industries (banking, retail, software and services and household and personal products) and therefore difficult to generalise that all industries behave the same. Furthermore, consumer behaviour can radically change on a monthly basis. When consumers experience double deviation, e.g., when product failure leads to a complaint and the complaint is insufficiently handled, the customer has been disappointed twice (Tripp & Gregoire, 2011). Tripp and Gregoire’s (2011) findings suggest that a double deviation is a significant trigger for online complaints.

3.4 **Complaints on Social Media**

The conclusions of the existing academic research concerning complaints on social media show that online consumers are different from offline consumers. They want an immediate answer to their complaints. Complaining on social media is increasing and some dissatisfied customers often consider social media as their last opportunity to draw the attention to the complaint issue (Harrison-Walker 2001; Gréoire et al., 2009). Table 3 summarises the academic research concerning complaints on social media at the end of this section.

Managers should look at complaints as a do-over, and Grégoire (2009) claims that customers who complaint publicly often bear strong feelings of anger and betrayal towards the service provider. Furthermore, Cho et al. found that if the seller resolves the
complaint, it could have a positive effect and even spark a repeat purchase intention (Cho et al., 2002).

The researchers Robertson and Nichola (2012) sought to understand what motivates consumers to complain online, and their main findings suggest that the greater degree of convenience is a key factor when it comes to complaining online. However, their research was limited in that people were asked to imagine themselves in a situation, instead of drawing conclusions from actual circumstances (Robertson, 2012).

Another study was conducted by looking at Mexican telecommunications companies and analysing 2,000 posts from brands and followers (Ureña, Murillo, Murillo & Garza, 2015). The main findings of the study suggest that telecommunications companies in Mexico use Facebook for public relations, advertising and promotion purposes, while the users primarily use that platform to report a problem or to make a complaint. The limitation in this study is that it was only conducted on Facebook and via public complaints, and it may not have been entirely accurate, since some wall posts had been deleted (Ureña, Murillo, Murillo & Garza, 2015).

A study that looked at a large amount of complaints on the web about hotels, was conducted on Trip Advisor to analyse what kind of complaints are being made about luxury hotels in Malaysia. The main findings in the research by Ekiz, Khoo-Lattimore and Memarzadeh (2012) suggest that most of the complaints were regarding rooms and staff behaviour. The findings highlighted some important messages to the hotel that they could use as a guideline to do better in the future (Ekiz, Khoo-Lattimore & Memarzadeh, 2012).

Stříteský & Stránská (2015) studied Czech Internet users and interviewed experts in marketing, and found that consumers are fully aware that complaining publicly can create serious trouble for companies, and they want to use that to their advantage. Experts, however, agree that answering quickly and to stay on topic is very important for effective communication between the company and their Facebook followers. The limitation of their study is that it only researched Czech Internet users on Facebook (Stříteský & Stránská, 2015).

The difference in results of these studies may be due to the fact that different research methods were used, both in regards to their samples and their statistical methods. The sample size of each research is also different.
Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Research Method</th>
<th>Main Findings</th>
<th>Limitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-service technology complaint channel choice: Exploring consumer motives</td>
<td>Robertsson</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Survey, opened-ended questions</td>
<td>Consumer motives for complaining online arise from the convenience and media richness. It is important how the company decides to resolve the complaints and what channels they choose.</td>
<td>This research was based on a scenario on what channels the complainer would use, not an actual channel used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air the anger: Investigating online complaints on luxury hotels</td>
<td>Ekiz, Lattimore and Memarza deh</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Thematic analysis on hotel reviews on TripAdvisor</td>
<td>The complaints are all because of service failure regarding interactions with the staff. Companies’ weakness shines through on TripAdvisor.</td>
<td>Complaints were posted anonymously on TripAdvisor and there is a possibility that some of the complaints came from competing companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of communication between companies and their Facebook followers</td>
<td>Valerio, Herrera, Herrera and Martinez</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Qualitative approach, Analysis on 1000 posts from telecommunication and 1000 posts from followers.</td>
<td>Findings suggest that companies and users use Facebook differently. Company uses the medium for public relation, ads and promotions. Users for complaining and requesting information.</td>
<td>This study only examined a single telecommunication company and not over a fixed period of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complainig behaviour in Social Media</td>
<td>Striteský and Stranská</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Survey and interviews</td>
<td>Result of the survey is that Facebook users are fully aware of the power that the consumers has when complaining online. Interview with the experts agreed that a quick response to the post and carefully considering deleting negative comments was risky.</td>
<td>Focused on the Czech market and the findings are solely for Facebook. Users of other platforms could behave differently when it comes to complaints.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the studies cited in table 3 were conducted on Facebook and TripAdvisor. Thus, there is still an existing research gap on complaint objectives on Twitter. There is also an existing research gap in the field of retail, restaurants and telecommunications on Facebook and Twitter. Other researchers, such as Sweeney et al. (2012), have also
suggested that examining the content of the complaints messages should be taken into account. Furthermore, a research method that studies actual behaviour could be better suited to understand consumer complaint behaviour rather than surveys and coding methods, which were the methods of choice in the researches mentioned in table 2. This leaves a methodological gap in the literature, since netnography has not been used.
4 Method

4.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research can be conducted via interviews, observations or inspections of documents (Aaker, Kumar, Leone, & Day, 2013). The reason to do qualitative research is to discover what is in a consumer’s mind. Qualitative research tends to start with “How”, “Why”, and “What” questions, and the questions are examined in the context of everyday life (Draper, 2004). Researchers do not begin the process with a theory in mind; they start with studying a phenomenon and allowing the theory to develop from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grouping together incidents, events, or communication related to a specific theme is called the Grounded theory. It involves the construction of theory through the analysis of the data. It helps the researcher to recognise patterns in the data and put them in context with relevant literature (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Using the grounded theory, the emphasis is placed on choosing the method of data collection that align research questions and then collecting the data. Therefore, an observation netnography is best suited for this research as it is a relatively new qualitative research methodology that adapts techniques from ethnography to study the cultures and communities that are merging through online communities (Kozinets, 2002).

4.2 Netnography

Kozinets (2002, 2010) is the developer of netnography in the fields of marketing and consumer behaviour, and the definition of netnography is an Internet-based ethnography. With netnography, the researcher can observe actual online behaviour, for example, online posts or comments, and subsequent reactions in an unobtrusive, naturalistic setting. Netnography adopts ethnographic research techniques to study the cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications (Kozinets, 2002a, p.62). This is ideal for this research, as the aim is to understand how consumers complain on brand pages online.

Observational netnography requires an analysis of the texts of complaints and comments. In this research, the aim will be on restaurants, retail and telecommunication companies. Following Kozinets’ guide to netnography, these six steps were taken: search planning, entrée, data collection, interpretation, ensuring ethical standards and research representation (Kozinets, 2010:61). In this study, the researcher involvement
was limited to reading posts regularly and following links and replies from other users. The following subcategories present the methodological issues around observations, including sampling, pilot study and methods of data collection.

4.2.1 Sampling

The next two subcategories explain the process of the sample selection for public and profile pages.

4.2.2 Sampling for Public Pages

The data gathering needs to not be random, as the interpretative research the researcher seeks to get as much insight into the research as possible. Therefore a purposive sampling method was chosen instead of probability sampling. Purposive sampling is based on information, not statistics, and the purpose is to maximise information. It is useful when the sampling is not focused on generalisation but to detail the many versions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Spiggle (1994) suggests identifying the categories, constructs and conceptual linkages through preliminary analysis, and then determining sample elements in order to control the differences. These also ensure that the sample elements are relevant to the study, but not randomised or representative (Mason, 2002). Therefore, the researcher should justify the selection criteria of the sampling.

Since this study is about consumer complaining behaviour on Facebook and Twitter, it was necessary to identify the pages/groups with relevant discussions as the sample elements. The first step was to identify what industries to study.

A study about complaining in Iceland was recently conducted and it found that most complaints were regarding restaurants, telecommunication and retail companies. (“Kvartanir_islenskra_neytenda_á_smasolumarkadi.pdf,” n.d.). This research is therefore going to focus on social media usage within restaurants, retail and telecommunication companies in Iceland.

Retail. This research focused on retail, and in that category was a grocery store, a clothing store and an online store. Hagkaup was chosen for the grocery sector as they had few complaints regarding pricing. Lindex was selected as the clothing store due to its popularity in Iceland (“Eyða 20 þúsund krónum á mánuði í föt,” 2016). Nola.is is an online beauty store that started on social media and then built up trust and earned loyal customers.
**Restaurants.** The research focused on fast food chains in this category. A survey was conducted to find out which restaurants were popular at the time of conducting the research, and the three fast food restaurants and gastropubs that were mentioned most often were Domino’s, KFC, Sæta Svinið and Subway (Maria Rosario Blöndal, 2016). It was therefore decided to focus on Domino’s, Sæta Svinið and Subway to sample the restaurant market for the purpose of this research.

**Telecommunications.** This category focused on the Icelandic telecommunications company Síminn. They have an active Facebook and Twitter account and they used to be the market leader but have now been replaced by Nova (“Nova orðið størst á farsímamarkaði og gagnamagn fjórfaldaðist á tveimur árum,” 2016).

In order to select pages suitable for the observational netnographic study, Kozinets’ (2010) guidelines for site choice were used. The selected pages should be relevant, active, interactive, substantial, heterogeneous and data rich (Kozinets, 2010:89).

Relevant: Facebook’s search engine was used to find relevant pages and groups. Icelandic pages were identified with “á Íslandi” and through links on the company’s websites.

Active: Companies have the option to allow users to post on their wall or not. Pages that allow posts and have an active discussions section were included in this sample. KFC and Nova do not allow users to post on their official Facebook pages, and were therefore excluded from the research sample.

Interactive: To examine the interaction between users and pages that fit all other criteria, the pages were observed for a period of one month. Only those pages were used where there was a flow of communication between users and pages.

Substantial: In some instances there were fan pages on Facebook for different products within the brand. For example “Snyrtivara - Hagkaup” is the beauty
department in Hagkaup. The page with most followers was added to the sample to ensure the most communication.

Heterogeneous: Only pages with more than 500 members were included in the sample to ensure a sufficient number of participants and diverse content.

Data rich: Data richness was not considered alone as that might not have given the right picture, since the aim of this study is to explore the characteristics of consumer behaviour online.

To summarise, first a sector was chosen that would best fit the research objectives and then companies were chosen. The next step was to take a look at unofficial pages and groups on Facebook, but there were too few groups that were specifically meant for boycotting or harming a company. A few groups were made to challenge a company to bring a certain product back into their range, but those kinds of groups and pages were not very active. Facebook also deletes pages that are fake and not made by the officials of the company in question. Hence the focus being fixed on brand pages on Facebook and Twitter.

4.2.3 Pilot Study/Entrée

The first step of netnography is to explore and familiarise oneself with the online community that the researcher is planning to study. This is to obtain information about how to shape the research in line with the behaviour in those communities.

The pages were observed for three months for the purpose of this research, and that time was used to confirm that the selected pages were appropriate. It was also used to become familiar with the NVivo Qualitative data analysis programme and to consider data collection strategies.

4.3 Data Collection

The data collection was conducted from September 1st, 2016, and until November 27th of the same year. In total, seven brands were observed both on Facebook and Twitter. Facebook giveaway games and users who commented only to tag friends were excluded when looking at comments.

There are three ways to collect data in netnography: archival data, which are existing information in the community; elicited data, which are the data co-created by
the research through its interactions with other members; and field note data, which are
the researcher’s own notes about the observations (Kozinets, 2010).

In this study it was used archival data and field note data. Archival data involves
collecting the posts and communications from followers regularly. Each brand page was
visited and comments were observed and recorded. All posts were observed,
specifically all negative posts (comments, remarks, notes and photos). Field notes were
taken during the observations to pattern the behaviour, community activities and the
researcher’s reflections. A total of 522 posts were saved in SPSS and NVivo. The
original posts were copied and pasted into NVivo minus personal information regarding
the user. Additionally, field notes were noted directly into NVivo simultaneously with
the observation. SPSS was used for data analysis and a statistical overview.

4.4 Analysis of Qualitative Data

This study used a qualitative content analysis method based on interpretive
approaches. It is a systematic and analytical method, but at the same time it not so rigid
in terms of coding procedures. The codes were developed with the literature and
research findings in mind. With a qualitative content analysis, questions asking
“What?” can be answered directly (Given, 2008). The analysis started after the
observation, and the comments were transcribed and documented into the database.
Some comments were reviewed several times while others were straight forward. The
researcher looked for certain key words, attitudes, exclamation points or emoticons
when determining the objectives and types of comments. All comments were made
anonymous within the database, however, the location of the comment and for what
company it was intended was considered as important information for the observation.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration is one of the six steps of netnographic research, but the
aim is to ensure that ethical procedures are followed. Kozinets (2010:140) identifies the
major areas to address while conducting an ethical netnography study as:

1. Identifying the researcher and informing relevant constituents about the research
2. Asking for appropriate permissions
3. Gaining consent where needed, and
4. Properly citing and crediting culture members.
Identifying and explaining: It is important to maintain the honesty and trust that has been created within a community and Kozinets explains that researchers need to respect that trust and to protect participants from online harm (Kozinets, 2010). This research, however, only observes public comments and therefore an explanation or introduction to the community is not necessary before collecting comments from these brand pages.

Permissions: Since Facebook and Twitter are commercial websites, the ethical implications of using them for research purposes was considered during the planning of this study (Bryman, 2008; Kozinets, 2010). All comments were noted anonymously and permission from Facebook or Twitter was only needed if further information was required.

Informed consent: A netnographic observation was conducted on content from Facebook and Twitter that is in a public domain. No harm was done on users of Facebook or Twitter. No names or personal information was gathered, although gender information was collected. All comments that were chosen as examples were chosen specifically to not include sensitive information.

Citing and crediting: Every research project needs to make sure that confidentiality and anonymity of the participant is valid. This study does not need the collection of any personal information. However, there is always a risk of tracing online quotations back to the source by using search engines, although identifying exactly who wrote what comment could be difficult, as some comments were stated more than once, by different users.

4.6 Identifying Complaints

To identify the complaints the researcher filed every comment, user-generated wall posts and comments on the company’s wall posts to identify if it was a complaint. Complaining posts varied between posts that included only one sentence and posts with long paragraphs. Users expressed their feelings, experiences and their opinions about the company. Some users posted pictures, but those were not especially noted, as it was often emphasised with a text in some points. During the analysis, quite a lot of humour was identified in the complaining messages. Users used emoticons (smiley faces) to sarcastically praise the company’s performances when obvious errors occurred.
The comments were categorised into six different groups: complaints, issues, jokes, praises, questions and suggestions.

Complaints were identified when obvious dissatisfactions occurred. This is an example of complaint where a customer vents about a long waiting time and several errors during a service at Domino’s:

“Hvernig er hægt að klúðra 3 sinnum sömu pizzuni. Búin að bíða í klukkutima eftir 1 pizzu.
Domino’s þið þurfið að laga þetta... (angry face)” (At Domino’s brand page on Facebook)

When an issue arose, there was an obvious dissatisfaction with a specific problem and customer may have been seeking advice for that problem. This example shows that the customer is letting the telecommunications company know about missing subtitles for specific shows:

“Það er enginn texti við Óce upon a time fjórðu þáttaröð. Það vantar líka texta á mikið af How I met your mother. “ (At Siminn’s brand page on Facebook)

The jokes category is for comments that were meant specifically to be amusing. This example shows that Domino’s is used in a joke when the Icelandic government was trying to reach an agreement at parliament:

“ég vil að @DPISL fái stjórmarmyndunarumboðið” (At Domino’s, Twitter brand page)

Praises are when customers express gratitude towards the brand. Sometimes they are in the form a joke, but other users were more direct with their praise.

“Vel gert Lindex! LINDEX Iceland” (At Lindex brand page on Facebook)

“Kókið af @DPISL er alltaf svo ískalt og gott. Elska það” (clap hands) (At Domino’s, Twitter brand page)

Users posted questions when seeking answers through social media. The advantage of posting a question publicly is that other customers can sometimes answer before the company. There were also cases when the answers from the company did not please the questioner and then it changed from a question to a complaint. The following example is a customer asking about the price of a new iPhone 7 and the conversation starts to go in a different direction, with the customer ending up complaining about the high price of the iPhone:

Og kostar? (At Siminn’s brand page on Facebook)

7 og 7+ hljóta að kosta það sama og 6s og 6s+ kosta núna. Eins og allstæðar í heiminum;) (At Siminn’s brand page on Facebook)
Suggestions are when users want to inform the companies about ideas that they have, and this section was rather interesting as many ideas were noted. The following example is when a customer who is asking the grocery store about products from a specific brand:

“Nú þegar styttist í hátiðarnar, er einhver möguleiki að þið komið með hátiðarmatinn frá Tofurkey? Sem er ekki bara bragðgóð og fullkomin fyrir kjötlusa hátið, heldur einnig ein vinsælasta vegan/grænmetisætu máltið um jólin í heiminum?” (At Hagkaup’s brand page on Facebook)
5 Research Findings: Online Observation

This chapter includes the results from the netnography study and descriptive statistics on analyses of the comments collected, which communication channels were used, causes of complaints and perceived underlying motives of social media complaints. The main features of the data will be analysed in terms of percentage or frequency, correlation and sample of comments from users.

5.1 Analysing the Comments

The incidents were collected on public pages on both Facebook and Twitter. A total number of 522 incidents were collected (N=522). Out of the total set, 83% (433) was collected from Facebook and 17% (89) from Twitter.

In table 4 below, the comments are categorised into groups, with examples of posts made by users and which medium was used. When the comments were observed, the following six categories were discovered: complaints, issues, jokes, praises, questions and suggestions. Complaints (35.6%) accounted for comments that were defined as being negative towards the brand. The Complaints category was the largest category. Praises (15.1%) were comments that were complimentary regarding products or the brand itself. Issues (5.75%) were comments that highlighted an experienced problem. Jokes (4%) where comments with comedic references about the brand or a product – or users just being funny. Questions (30.7%) were comments that included a question about the brand or its products. Suggestions (8.8%) included comments with helpful suggestions for the brand, or a suggestion for a new product. When observing the comments on Facebook and Twitter, there was a noticeable difference in the tone of the messages. The messages on Twitter often had a little bit more humour in them, or they were meant for the users’ friends. However, the tone of the comments on Facebook varied depending on where they were located on the company’s profile; for instance, when the user was trying to have a direct conversation with the brand, the tone of the message was more formal. When users were answering other users on the brand page the tone of the message was usually more casual and informal.
Table 4

Examples of comments on Facebook and Twitter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Comment</th>
<th>Facebook Example</th>
<th>Twitter Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complaint</td>
<td>Veruleg uppábaksita hjá ykkur núna!!! Átti að bíða í 75 mín og møtti eftir þann tíma og þið segið það sé 90 mín í viðbót í póntunina! (Domino’s)</td>
<td>búið að bíða eftir @DPISL pizzuni minni í 70 mín, ég elska dómi en ég er mjög svöng :( (Domino’s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>Ómótstæðilega ljúffengt :)</td>
<td>@biggodj @adalheidursn Sæta svinið er mjög gott, mæli með! (Sæta Svínin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestion</td>
<td>Heyr heyr, veganostur er liklega sterkast move sem thid getid þúllad þessa stundina (Domino’s)</td>
<td>Djöfull væri geðveikt ef appið frá @DPISL myndi nýta sér Siri tenginguna sem er komin á iOS10 stýrkerfið. #draumur #siri (Domino’s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Heimasíðan hrunin? (Hagkaup)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Er líka afsláttur í Kringlunni? (Lindex)</td>
<td>AFHERJU ER EKKI BILALÚGA Á @DPISL ?!?!? (Domino’s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joke</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Get lofað að það verður minna að gera hjá starfsmönnumum sem sjá um að skera pizzur hjá @DPISL í þessu þróðjudagstilboði #pizzurúlla (Domino’s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 on next page describes the percentages of comments on Facebook and Twitter, to map an overview of where of the split between the media platforms happens. Complaints on both Facebook and Twitter counted for the biggest part of comments, or 36.5% and 31.5%, respectively. Jokes accounted for 23.6% of comments on Twitter, but 0% on Facebook.

Using Pearson product-moment correlation method, it was concluded that there was no correlation between the two variables (social media and type of comment), r=-0.088, n=522, p<.001. This shows that there is no statistical correlation between the comment category and social media.
Table 5  
Percentages of comments on Facebook and Twitter brand pages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of comment</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complaints</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praises</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jokes</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Percentages of type of comments on brand pages**

The companies are in different sectors and provide different services. During the observation, the difference in comment type was noticeable between sectors. The restaurant companies Domino’s and Subway got more complaints regarding their products, while retail companies Hagkaup and Lindex got more questions regarding their products or store information.

Table 6 below depicts the distribution of the types of comments for each brand on both Facebook and Twitter. Domino’s interaction with users on Facebook and Twitter are mostly complaints (47%), followed by praises (17%). Hagkaup gets mostly questions (44%) or complaints (20%). The same goes for Lindex, but they get questions over half of the time (54%), followed by complaints (29%). Half of Nola.is’ interactions are praises and the other half is questions. Subway’s comments include 50% complaints and 28% praises. Sæta Svíníð receives mostly questions (43%) and praises (39%). Síminn is similar to Hagkaup and Lindex, with questions being the largest part, or 44%, followed by complaints 30%.

Table 6  
Percentages of comment types on company pages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Comment</th>
<th>Domino’s</th>
<th>Hagkaup</th>
<th>Lindex</th>
<th>Nola.is</th>
<th>Subway</th>
<th>Sæta Svíníð</th>
<th>Síminn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complaints</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praises</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jokes</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A noticeable finding from observing the brand pages was that some of the pages had multiple comments from the same people. It is possible that once users have received a response from the company, they are more likely to repeat the action. Domino’s and Siminn had a few regular users that were noticeable when during this research.

5.2 Communication Channel

When analysing the comments, the location of the comments were noted. In general, four different subtypes of comments were identified that contained criticism, questions or complaints:

- Comment on a corporate post: users’ comments on brand posts
- Comments on other users’ comments or complaints: users sharing their experience when another user is complaining
- Comments on corporate reactions to third-party users’ comments or complaints: users comment on the brand’s response on a media comment or complaint
- Comments on corporate reactions to a complainant’s prior social media complaint: users commenting to a brand response to a complaint.

Two other sections were added when reviewing the comments: comments on corporate brand pages and corporate brand pages tagged in posts. All of the comments were considered to be a publicly voiced complaint, as customers have choices where they choose to place their complaints, whether they do it publicly or privately.

The research showed that most comments were made on corporate posts (44.6%). Comments on corporate brand pages included users posting straight to the corporate wall (29.1%), corporate brand pages being tagged in posts (17.4%), and comments on other users’ comments or complaints (8.8%). For further information, see appendix A. No comments were categorized into the other groups, Comments to corporate reactions to a complainant’s prior social media complaint and Comment on Corporate brand page and Corporate Brand Page tagged in a post. However, it was noted that the users made some of the wall posts more formal, like they were writing an email, but when users commented on posts, they did not worry about their spelling or language.

Customers have the option to complain privately, via phone, in person, email or private message on Facebook. Some comments specifically address the fact that they had complained privately but had not been answered and were therefore using different
channels. In order to escalate, users reached out with public complaints after a failed attempt to complain privately.

When consumers wanted to complain they would comment on corporate posts (38%) or comment on corporate brand pages (33.9%). When they were commenting on corporate posts, they would make a complaining statement or sharing their negative opinion on statuses on a specific topic. When customers had issues, they would comment on corporate posts (50%). The comments were sometimes regarding posts made by brands, where consumers were only informing the brand that their website or the phone was not working probably. Then, users would comment on other users’ comments or complaints, that they would maybe not raise this issue on their own but were commenting to agree with others (33%). When customers wanted to joke, they would tag the company brand page in their posts (100%), such posts on Twitter would notify the company about the reference. When it comes to Facebook, the company is not always notified – only if the customer would specifically tag the company and the company would allow such tags. When it comes to praise, users would choose to comment on corporate posts (41.8%) and others would tag the company in their post (34.2 %). When customers wanted to ask questions, they commented on corporate posts (60%), the comment is regarding the topic of the post. Sometimes customers would just use the opportunity to reach the company by posting their opinion. For further explanation, see Appendix A.

**Percentages of company responses to comments**

When analysing the responses, there was a difference found in how and when they were executed. Comments on corporate brand pages were answered or responded to 54.2% of the time. The relative frequency between where the comment was stated and if the company responded, when users comment on corporate posts 62.2% they did not respond to the user. On the other hand, companies answered 88.2% of the time when comments were made on a corporate brand page.

When companies responded they often would suggest that user should send them more information privately or sometimes other users would comment before the company to help them out. Domino’s answers were professional, they apologise to the customer and then ask for further information in a private message and that is to check if the customer did buy a pizza and to collect the complaint (see example below).

Hagkaup replied to a customer by just saying “Lögum þetta. Kv. Hagkaup,” or in other words, they would fix it. The complaint in question was a technical issue regarding the opening hours of a newly renovated store that had yet to be updated.

**Descriptive statistics regarding where the comments were located for each company**

Table 7 below depicts the distribution in percentages regarding where the comments were located on the brand pages. Most of the comments for Domino’s were users tagging them in their statuses. Hagkaup received 75% of the comments on their own posts. Half of the comments for Lindex were posted directly on their brand page. Nola.is had only comments posted directly on their brand page. Subway and Sæta Svinið both received the most comments on their own posts. Síminn received 44.7% of their comments on their brand page, but 35.6% comments were on posts that they made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of Comment</th>
<th>Domino’s</th>
<th>Hagkaup</th>
<th>Lindex</th>
<th>Nola.is</th>
<th>Subway</th>
<th>Sæta Svinið</th>
<th>Siminn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand page</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On posts</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other users’ comments</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand page tagged in a post</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hagkaup had 81 company-made posts at the time of the research, which is in line with how many comments were collected. Domino’s posts daily on Twitter and therefore they are tagged in many posts. Sæta Svinið is not on Twitter but that does not stop consumers from tagging them in posts. Síminn does have a lot of posts on their brand page although they actively reply to customer comments.
5.3 Cause of Complaints

In order to interpret the complaints, they needed to be categorised. The categories that were identified as causes of problems were: core services, corporate policies, customer-employee interactions, technological problems and other problems. The main issues of each online interaction were then logged and totalled.

Table 8 displays the overview of the complaint categories, what keywords were considered for each category, and an example of a comment or post from a user. Core services was noted 340 times. Corporate policy was noted 37 times, and the keywords for that were opening hours, new store opening and price. A customer/employee interaction was noted 12 times and the keywords for that category were driving skills and service. A technological problem was noted 55 times and keywords for that were web service failure and store locations. Four comments were grouped into other problems, as they were mainly suggestions.

Table 8
Descrptive statistics and examples of complaint categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaint Category</th>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Number of instances</th>
<th>Instances in total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core services</td>
<td>Product offerings, Prices, Promotions, Product quality</td>
<td>“Er hægt að kaupa iphone 7+ í símabúðinni á Akureyri? Finn ekkert um það á siddunni ykkar.” (Siminn)</td>
<td>85, 29, 24, 23</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate policy</td>
<td>Opening hours, New store opening, Prices</td>
<td>“Opnunartímar?” (Hagkaup)</td>
<td>5, 7, 8</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer/employee interaction</td>
<td>Driving skills, Service</td>
<td>“Síðan hvenær þurfa sendlar Domino’s á þessum stæðum að halda?” Picture of a car in a handicap parking spot (Domino’s)</td>
<td>5, 2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological problems</td>
<td>Product Offerings, Web Service Failure, Store Location</td>
<td>“Mér finnst allt í lagi að láta sina áskrifendur vita af því þegar ein stóð eins og TCM hverfur af skjánum. Í lengri tíma voru öflugur truflanir á útsendingum sjónvarpsfélagsimann í ca 2 mánudri í allvega í hliðunum í Reykjaavík. Þesar truflanir eru enn, endurum og eins.” (Siminn)</td>
<td>5, 6, 3</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other problems</td>
<td>Suggestions</td>
<td>Elsku Dominos! Dagur islenskrar tungu er á morgun. Viljið þið reyna að finna annað orðalag heldur en “toppuð með” þegar þið segið frá hvaða sösa er ofan á pizzunum ykkar. (Dominos)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Core Services

Core Services are the standard products or services the customer can expect from the company. Problems were either with the quality of a product or the price. Most of the complaints were due to a product offering in the core service. Consumers complained that their favourite items were missing or unavailable. Complaints about the price was a trend in a way that consumers were comparing prices in Iceland to other countries or even other stores. Some consumers felt that promotions were misleading, or that the product quality was not sufficient.

Corporate Policies

Procedures or principles that companies operate by are categorised as corporate policies. Some users complained about opening hours. Others complained about corporate policies with prices after sudden increases in prices and saying that they had no interest in paying the new price for that particular product. A few complaints were regarding a new store and that it was promoting an unhealthy lifestyle.

Customer-Employee interactions

Problems can often arise in human interaction. Customers frequently complained about employee driving skills and speed racing. Other comments included personal services and lack of enthusiasm.

Technological problems

Complaints about technological problems were frequent for the telecommunications industry. This included missing product from the product selection of websites, the website not operating, an error on the website and store location, and bad connections or weak signalling resulting in an error in the television broadcast.

Other problems

Complaints that were not categorised into these four groups were collected in a category labelled as others. In other were examples of suggestions of how Domino’s should improve their Icelandic when talking about what to put on a pizza.
5.4 Perceived Underlying Motives of Social Network Complaints

The complaints were analysed and six underlying motives for complaints were identified. Due to the fact that it is hard to see if consumers were serious when seeking redress or announcing a boycott, it was assumed that it was a serious complaint rather than humour. For some of the comments it was easier to identify the underlying motives, with the help of emoticons and tags.

Table 9 displays examples of complaint objectives of the complaints. Most of the complaint objectives were seeking advice or suggestions (38.5%), followed by venting or airing their anger (29.1%). The smallest categories included criticism and negative comments regarding a product or the brand (12.1%), followed by entertainment (0.8%), comparisons (0.4%) and warning others (0.2%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaint Objective</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>Takk Króna fyrir þessar sníldar kerrur! Fleiri búðir áttu að taka ykkur til fyrirmyndar! Valdi Krónuna því ég þurfti að fara með lítlu stelpuna í innkaup og þetta einfalda manni lifði með bílstöl Bónus Hagkaup .. svo eith hvað sé nefnt (Hagkaup)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism</td>
<td>Of kolvetnaríkur !!!!!!! (Sætta Svíníð)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>Hvað er að fréttu með þennan stað suður-vestur af Nígeríu? Lengst úti á hafi. (Domino’s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking advice/Suggestion</td>
<td>Gildir black friday líka í vefverslun? (Lindex)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venting</td>
<td>Er þetta starter ? 2 spínatblöð og rifin rauðrófa 2500 kall (Sætta Svíníð)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warning others</td>
<td>Fyndið - Domino’s a Selfossi er líka algjör skita!! Buin að gefa þeim ótal sênsa og gefst ekki upp en pizzurnar eru ekki í likkindum við Domino’s í RVK (Domino’s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequency of complaint objectives for each company

Table 10 displays the frequency of complaints for each company analysed in this research. Complaint objectives towards Domino’s include 48.9% venting and 33.3% seeking advice or suggestions. Subway also received complaints that were venting, or 46.2%. Hagkaup, Lindex, Nola.is and Siminn all had the most frequency in seeking advice or suggestions.

Table 10
Frequency of complaint objectives for each company

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaint Objective</th>
<th>Domino’s</th>
<th>Hagkaup</th>
<th>Lindex</th>
<th>Nola.is</th>
<th>Subway</th>
<th>Sæta</th>
<th>Svínið</th>
<th>Siminn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparisons</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking advice/Suggestions</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venting</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warning others</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Difference between Facebook and Twitter

Table 11 displays the frequency of complaint objectives on Facebook and Twitter. Facebook has the most complaint objectives regarding seeking advice or suggestions, 49.5%, followed by venting, 34%. Complaint objectives on Twitter were 53.7% venting, followed by 29.3% seeking advice or suggestions.

Table 11
Frequency of complaint objectives on Facebook and Twitter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaint Objective</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparisons</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking advice/Suggestions</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venting</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warning others</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Percentages of complaint objectives for each comment type

In table 12 are the percentages of complaint objectives for each comment type. The complaints objective included 69.9% venting and 23.1% criticism. The suggestions objective included 73.9% seeking advice and suggestions, and 17.4% criticism. The issues objectives included seeking advice or suggestions half of the time, but 30% of it was venting. The questions objective included 88.1% seeking advice or suggestions.

Table 12
Percentages of complaint objectives for each comment type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaint Objective</th>
<th>Complaints</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparisons</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking advice/Suggestions</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>88.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venting</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warning others</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5 Summary

In table 13 below is an overview of the dominant variables, listed in a data collection. The findings suggest that users in this research use Facebook to complain and ask questions, while Twitter is more commonly used for complaints or praises. The most common problems that elicit types of complaining on social media are with core services, i.e., regarding product offerings, prices, promotions and product quality. Consumers’ objectives were also examined, and they were found to be seeking advice or suggestions, or venting.

Table 13
The dominant variables found during the research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Type of comment</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Location of Comment</th>
<th>Comments answered by company</th>
<th>Complaint category</th>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Complaint objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>Hagkaup</td>
<td>Complaint</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Comment on corporate post</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Core Service</td>
<td>Product Offering</td>
<td>Seeking advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27.46%</td>
<td>44.63%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>65.47%</td>
<td>58.31%</td>
<td>73.26%</td>
<td>26.71%</td>
<td>47.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>Domino’s</td>
<td>Complaint</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Corporate Brand Page tagged in a post</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Core Service</td>
<td>Product Quality</td>
<td>Venting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95%</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>97.5%</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>36.31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Discussion and Conclusion

Social media can be an attractive platform for companies because they can reach their target audience (Zarrella, 2010). However, companies are discovering that the communication channel is two ways and that the customer has a lot of power. Consumers are starting to use this power to express their dissatisfaction towards the company or about specific products. Recent research found that consumers who use Facebook and Twitter are more likely to complain on those sites and the percentage from 2015 and 2016 is just increasing (Ombudsman, 2016). The problem is that there is currently not much known about what consumers are writing on social media (Ekiz, et al., 2012). To the author’s best knowledge, this is the first study of complaint objectives on Facebook and Twitter brand pages. The reason why online complaint objectives have not been studied before might be that Facebook and Twitter are constantly evolving and their popularity is growing.

The main result of this observation is that there is a difference between objectives of the complaints between platforms. Analysing and collecting observational data can explain the difference between platforms and the objectives with statistics and numbers. Facebook is more for seeking advice and suggestions rather than Twitter, which is a platform for consumers to vent their anger. However, when it comes to restaurants on Facebook, the main complaint objectives are to vent anger. Findings should help marketing managers with their social media planning and actively follow up with complaints and questions from their customers. This is imperative because it is important to follow up with complaints and understand them in order to improve the services or products of the company.

6.1 The Difference Between Complaining on Facebook and Twitter

There was found to be a difference in complaint behaviour on Facebook and Twitter. On the Facebook brand pages that were analysed, it was found that 35.6% of comments were complaints, and a similar amount were questions. When looking at Twitter, the comments were 31.5% complaints and 1.2% praises. The praising type of comment was significantly more present on Twitter, while the complaining type was more used on Facebook, when judging by the number of comments in each category. Complaints and negative word of mouth is posted directly on brand pages and posts. Praises and positive word of mouth is mostly posted on personal walls, to be shared with friends.
Another difference in the types comments was found between industries. Retail and Restaurants received different types of comments; restaurant pages received more complaints while retail pages received more questions. However, one restaurant (Sæta Svinið), which had recently opened, received more questions than complaints on their brand page, which could be because it is a new restaurant or that they did not have a high ratio on responding to comments, as responsiveness of the company is found to have an impact on the consumer’s decision to complain online (Wu, 2012).

When looking at the comment objectives, there was a difference between Facebook and Twitter. Facebook comments were more inclined to be seeking advice or asking questions; on the other hand, comments on Twitter included more of venting or joking.

**6.1.1 Communication Channels and Public Complaints**

When it comes to public complaints it was interesting see that there was a difference between where consumers complain and where they praise. When analysing the comments on the Facebook pages, they included either questions or complaints, but when looking at Twitter, they included either complaints or praises.

A major component in the consumer’s decision of a communication channel when complaining is the likelihood of the company responding. As previously stated, the companies used in this research allowed posts on brand pages; however, many companies do not allow it. Therefore, many users comment on corporate posts where commenting is always allowed and visible. However, companies included in this research did not respond to comments on their posts in more than 60% of those cases.

The brand pages were full of content from the brands about promotions and advertising that were not informational.

It was noticeable that users and brands use Facebook and Twitter for different purposes. Users use those platforms for reaching out to the brand for information and communication while brands use them only to advertise and reach their target audience. These results are in line with previous research that was done on telecommunications brand pages, where the results stated that the brands were using it for public relation and users were making complaints and requesting information from the brand (Monterrey, 2015).
6.2 Causes of Social Media Complaints

What triggers these users to make a social media complaint? Primarily, it is from a source of dissatisfaction, but it also has the added convenience of having the brand being active on the same social media platform as the user. A lack of personal interactions does not stop users from complaining (Robertson, Nichola, 2012).

A large part of the reason for complaining is because of a core service failure due to, e.g., product offerings, prices, promotions or product quality. Previous research has shown that consumers were likely to complain online after a failed attempt at a privately voiced complaint (Ward & Ostrom, 2006; Tripp & Grégoire, 2011). After reviewing the complaints, the author found few incidents of double-deviation. Customers feel that if a complaint is not handled properly through a private channel, they might need to post it on social media in order to draw attention to the failure (Harrison-Walker, 2001; Grégorie et al., 2009). In just a few years, the social media complaints have changed from being the customer’s last opportunity to complain in order to get a satisfaction guarantee. Customers can threaten to take the complaints to social media and cause a bad word of mouth if a complaint is not handled to the customer’s satisfaction.

When customers have had previous experiences with a restaurant where the expectations were set, people are more likely to complain if there is even the slightest deviation or a minor service failure.

6.3 Objectives of Complaining on Social Media

When analysing the author’s opinion of the objectives of complaints or questions, the primarily objective was stated, as some of the comments could have multiple objectives. Some people complain to make the company aware of problems, to help them change these processes in order to give better service, or due to loyalty of the company (Hirschman, 1970). Eight goals for negative word of mouth are found to be comfort searching, venting, advice searching, bonding, entraining, self-presentation, warning others and revenge (Wetzer et al., 2007). These objectives were used when observing the comments but only four of these objectives were found: entertainment, seeking advice (advice searching), venting and warning others. However, two additional objectives were found: making comparisons and criticism (Istanbulluoğlu, 2014). This shows that there are similarities in the objectives when complaining online and offline.

A research from 2004 stated that the primary motive to complain on a social media network is to vent anger (Mattila, Wirtz, 2004). A surprising outcome was that
not all comments were aiming to vent anger – it depended largely on the industry, but also what social media platform was being looked at. For companies in the fast food industry (Domino’s and Subway) consumers were mostly venting their anger. In comparison, users commenting on retail or telecommunications pages were seeking advice or information. If a user would want to warn others, it is possible that he would consider a different approach than posting publicly, for example, by posting on his wall (not tagging the brand) or informing his friends in a closed group.

6.4 Research Findings

In this observation, a methodology of netnography was used to gain a better understanding on complaint behaviour on social media. Seven brand pages were observed on both Facebook and Twitter, and a total of 522 comments were analysed. Additionally, the literature on complaint behaviour and online complaints was investigated.

6.4.1 What Kind of Comments are on Social Media Brand Pages?

After analysing the comments found on brand pages, six categories were made. These six categories are complaints, praises, suggestions, issues, questions and jokes. Complaints counted for the largest proportion, followed by questions and then praises. Complaints were stated differently through the seven brand pages that were analysed, although they all had the same tone of voice that the user was trying to make a point by complaining. The author was surprised to see that questions counted for the third of the comments analysed in this research. This means that it is not enough for a brand to be present on social media with promotions and posts, and that their followers expect a certain level of communication with the brand. It was interesting to see the big difference between the number of praises and complaints. The praises usually were to inform others and the brand about how outstanding the services or the products were. After analysing the comments, it was obvious that consumers are fully aware of their power when it comes to their dissatisfaction, but not necessarily when it comes to praising the company on social media.

6.4.2 What Kinds of Complaints are on Social Media?

Consumers complain about core services more than 75% of the time. They complain about product offerings, prices, promotions and product quality. In other words, the weak points of companies shine through on social media if something is
wrong with their service or product. Furthermore, they complain about their interaction with the staff, high prices, opening hours and web difficulties.

Due to the convenience of complaining on social media, the threshold for submitting a complaint is getting lower. There is a slight difference between complaints and suggestions and the difference lies in the wording. For instance: “Why can't I look at any Christmas decorations on your website?” – in a way, this is complaint but also a suggestion if the users were to phrase it differently.

6.4.3 What are the Objectives of Social Media Complaints?

It would be interesting to see if there is a difference in complaint objectives when comparing online versus offline complaining. The complaint objectives seem to be similar between online and offline complaints. However, it was stated in the literature that offline complaints are counted more often as consumers venting their anger. When analysing the objectives for this study, seeking advice and venting anger were the most prominent objectives found in this research.

There is a convenience in satisfying multiple objectives with a single online social media complaint. For example, a single comment can convey venting, a warning to friends and family, and a suggestion for the company to use different ways to service the client.

6.4.4 Are Social Media Complaints Different Between Platforms?

There seems to be a difference in how complaints are stated between the two platforms. The platforms are different and Twitter has different options to contact the brand than on Facebook. However, that does not change the fact that there is an opportunity to complain about or give praise to a brand or product on these social media platforms. Facebook comments were more formal; questions were being asked and advice being sought after. Twitter received a more informal feedback, with more users venting their complaints or posting jokes. Those are two very different approaches. Because of the lack of Icelandic users on Twitter, the amount of public complaints and discussions on that platform is considerably lower than on Facebook. This also means that companies might not see the benefit of dedicating an employee to monitor Twitter discussions.
6.5 Research Contributions

This research has made a few contributions to online behaviour studies. The data collected and the research results are actual comments from users. This is the first social media complaint behaviour study in Iceland using netnography as a research method.

The data collected was from across three industries and seven companies, of which the retail and restaurant industries had not been studied academically before. Furthermore, the social media platform Twitter has just recently gained a foothold in Icelandic society and has had limited studies published on the topic.

6.6 Managerial Recommendations

This study has demonstrated that it is very important for companies to follow up with discussions on social media. To be active and present on social media, both Facebook and Twitter. Companies need to take into account and prepare for the communication on social media to be two-sided and that social media are complaint channels.

Research has shown that companies/brands need to adjust their viewpoints on complaint handling. As online complaints are public, the handling of customer complaints is not limited to the customer services department anymore. Consumers can now view how companies handle other online complaints. Online complaint handling must be considered as an essential element of the company’s public communication strategies.

Some companies/brands prefer not to have a presence on Facebook or Twitter and other disable the discussion section to block consumer posts. This might make it appear to be a complaint free page, but the study shows an evidence that it might not be the best practice in most cases. Some consumers only need to vent their frustrations and voice their complaints in order to feel better about the situation, and doing so on the company page can help with consumer satisfaction. It might actually help to provide a channel where consumers can complain to companies, in order to improve satisfaction levels and to decrease the negative word of mouth.

Therefore, the author suggests the following guidelines for communication on social media: 1. Follow up with discussions; 2. Be transparent 3. File every complaint and observe it, as there might be some valid points that the company can use for its core competency; and 4. Have the content engaging, helpful, interesting, including fun facts and promotion.
6.7 Limitations and Future Studies

The results of this study should be interpreted according to its limitations. The first limitation is the scope of the study, as it was only conducted on Facebook and Twitter brand pages, which at the time were the two most used social media platforms. The second limitation of the research is that the Internet is always changing and is unpredictable, such as the number of likes and comments on both Twitter and Facebook. The third limitation is that this study only addresses public communication, but Facebook allows private communication as well, that cannot be publicly observed. The fourth limitation is the ability for the company and users to delete posts, as those posts are not available anymore and as such were outside of the scope of this research. The fifth limitation of the study is the result of the research method, as traditional netnography demands in depth interviews with members of the community or the people that have been observed. This study uses the observational part of the method, which means that interviews with the subjects could disrupt the community and be construed as being obtrusive. Furthermore, all background information and social demographic characteristics of the users are missing. It is therefore recommended that researchers who use online research methods should bear these limitations in mind.
Further studies could explore further the online complaining behaviour within different industries to reveal the product or service that leads to increased complaining online. Furthermore, observing how consumers use different social media platforms to complain or to compliment might help to enhance the understanding of consumer complaining behaviour on social media networks.
7 References


Subway - Um Subway. (n.d.). Retrieved from [http://www.subway.is/UmSubway/](http://www.subway.is/UmSubway/)


8 Appendix

8.1 Appendix A – Descriptive statistic

Where was the comment located?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where was the comment located?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comment on a corporate brand page</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment on a corporate post</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments to other users comments/complaints</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate brand page tagged in a post</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
<th>Where was the comment located?</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>Company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where was the comment located?</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-.265**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>-.265**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment on corporate Brand Page</th>
<th>Respond</th>
<th>No respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment on Corporate Post</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments to other User's comments or complaints</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Brand Page tagged in a post</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Company responsiveness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>54.2 %</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>45.8 %</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>522</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Complaint objective**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaint Objective</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparisons</td>
<td>0.4 % (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism</td>
<td>12.1% (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>0.8% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking advice/Suggestions</td>
<td>38.5% (201)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venting</td>
<td>29.1% (152)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warning others</td>
<td>0.2% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% (423)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>