



How responses to eWOM influence evaluations of organizations

The effect of eWOM type and response strategy on corporate reputation and perceived customer service

Loes Verberne

ANR 820451

Master's Thesis

Communication and Information Sciences

Specialization Business Communication & Digital Media

Faculty of Humanities

Tilburg University, Tilburg

Supervisor: Dr. P. van der Wijst

Second reader: Dr. M.M.H. Pollmann

Januari 24th, 2017

Acknowledgement

My special thanks go out to dr. Per van der Wijst for guiding me throughout the process of writing this Master's Thesis. Also, I would like to express gratitude to my fellow master students Veronika and Jenny who were always there when I had any questions and needed advice.

Abstract

Negative eWOM can have a disastrous effect on the reputation of organizations. Thus far, research has mainly focussed on how to reduce these effects and how responding to negative eWOM could lead to satisfied consumers. Positive eWOM from consumers who are already satisfied, by contrast, has received little attention in recent research. This study is the first one to compare responses to positive eWOM and negative eWOM and their effects on corporate reputation and perceived customer service. Additionally, a special role is designated to response strategy, which could generate different evaluations. To investigate this, an online survey was conducted (N = 261) with a 4 (response strategy: reactive – proactive – no reactive – no proactive) x 2 (eWOM type: positive eWOM – negative eWOM) between-subjects design. Participants judged six eWOM messages in one of the eight conditions by means of seven-point Likert scales. Results showed that for both eWOM types, an organizational response was better than no response. Responding to negative eWOM appeared to be more beneficial for organizations than responding to positive eWOM. More specifically, responding to negative eWOM affected both perceived customer service and corporate reputation positively, while responding to positive eWOM only had a positive impact on perceived customer service. For negative eWOM, reactive responses elicited better evaluations than proactive responses. An interaction effect was found between eWOM type and response strategy. Namely, reactive responses to negative eWOM were evaluated better on customer service than reactive responses to positive eWOM. Hence, organizations should aim for responding all eWOM messages, but responding reactively to negative eWOM should be the main focus.

Introduction

With 3.17 billion internet users, 2.3 billion active social media users and smartphone use during face-to-face conversations being increasingly common, the impact of the internet in our daily lives cannot be underestimated (Smith, 2016; Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). Especially checking social media and communicating with other users online have become regular activities throughout the day (European Publishers Council, 2015). Consumers also increasingly share product experiences publicly on social media, which can be read by everyone (Lee & Song, 2010). The Local Consumer Review Survey (2016) shows that people rely heavily on other people's product experiences, with 91 percent of the consumers at least occasionally consulting online consumer reviews to determine the quality of an organization.

Online messages about products and organizations are often referred to as electronic word-of-mouth or eWOM (Van Noort & Willemsen, 2012). Negative eWOM can do serious harm to an organization when not handled in a corrective manner (Van Noort, Willemsen, Kerkhof & Verhoeven, 2014). Therefore, organizations are now monitoring and responding to brand messages on social media. These webcare practices can transform negative eWOM into positive eWOM when a complaint is handled to the satisfaction of the consumer (Van Noort & Willemsen, 2012; Einwiller & Steilen, 2015). Corrective webcare responses are thus of utmost importance when it comes to upholding corporate reputation (Breitsohl, Khammash & Griffiths, 2010). However, Schamari and Schaefers (2015) highlight that webcare can also be advantageous when responding to positive eWOM, since webcare responses to positive eWOM result in even more positive eWOM messages and lead to higher levels of consumer satisfaction (Demmers, Van Dolen & Weltevreden, 2014).

No research has yet compared the effects of solved negative eWOM (that is, negative eWOM that is solved in such a way that it leads to positive consumer reactions) and positive eWOM (i.e. eWOM messages about positive consumer experiences without any negative information) on perceived corporate reputation and perceived customer service, although it has been shown that all eWOM has a large impact on consumers' evaluations of the organization (e.g. Van Noort & Willemsen, 2012; Park & Lee, 2008). This research aims to fill this gap in contemporary research.

Additionally, special attention is paid to the two response strategies distinguished by Van Noort & Willemsen (2012), namely reactive and proactive responses. Additional research looking at different response strategies is scarce. Therefore, this research will measure the influence of

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

reactive and proactive response strategies to both positive eWOM and solved negative eWOM on corporate reputation and perceived customer service.

The aim of this study is to extend existing research on eWOM and response strategies by answering the following research question: *What is the effect of eWOM type and response strategy on corporate reputation and perceived customer service?* The results of this study may generate important insights for organizations that actively use webcare, since the impact of different webcare strategies on consumer perceptions has not yet been studied extensively.

Theoretical framework

Electronic word-of-mouth

Consumer word-of-mouth (WOM) has always been an important element in decision-making processes of consumers. Recommendations of others have been found to be very important for people once they consider buying a certain product. In a study conducted by Richins and Root-Shaffer (1988), eight out of ten people said they took another's opinion about a product into account when making a decision. Since the beginning of this century, online consumer reviews have developed very quickly and became soon the ideal place to tell other people about product experiences (Dellarocas, 2003). Examples of well-known consumer review platforms are Tripadvisor.com or Yelp.com, on which people can gain more insight into product experiences of other consumers. Due to the digitalization of WOM, the impact of it changed radically. WOM no longer came from friends and family only, but also from numerous other consumers (Ring, Tkaczynski and Dolnicar, 2016). This electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has been defined by Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler (2004) as online expressions about products and brands by consumers, that are widely available to many other consumers and organizations because of the public nature of the web.

The advent of social networking sites caused a further increase in eWOM messages (Einwiller & Steilen, 2015). Social networking sites fall under the heading of 'social media' and are known as websites and apps where people can make their own profiles and establish virtual relationships with other people. Once a connection between users of a specific social media platform exists, they have access to each other's information and the content that they upload (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). People who lack technical skills are also able to upload their own content on social media like Facebook or Twitter, since it is relatively simple and straightforward (Einwiller & Steilen,

2015). This content can also handle opinions about and experiences with brands and products. Fellow social media users can read these eWOM messages, which may lead them to comment on those messages or even share them. Moreover, reading other people's messages may stimulate others to express their product experiences as well (Einwiller & Steilen, 2015; Willemsen, Neijens & Bronner, 2013). The easiness of posting eWOM messages on social media and the influence these messages have on others are two reasons for the enormous eWOM-increase as noted by Einwiller and Steilen (2015).

Social media platforms have given consumers the opportunity to speak freely about experiences with organizations. Where before the internet existed consumers were only 'passive receivers' of brand information and marketing expressions, they are now able to react and directly address a particular organization whenever they feel this is necessary (Hennig-Thurau, Malthouse, Friege, Gensler, Lobschat, Rangaswamy & Skiera, 2010). eWOM has become a very important part of the publicity of a brand and sometimes poses difficulties for organizations (Deighton & Kornfeld, 2009). That is, brand messages that an organization releases into the online environment are impossible to control completely. As pointed out by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2010), an organization trying to control an online marketing message can be compared to a person attempting to control the ball in the famous pinball-game. Like the ball in a pinball-game, a marketing message that is spread online is difficult to control, since nowadays people can comment on the message, share it with others or interpret it differently than the organization initially intended.

Based on the previously mentioned studies, it can be stated that social media make brand messages and publicity harder to control for organizations. From consumers' point of view, social media offer new opportunities for gathering relevant information about products and sharing either negative or positive product experiences with other consumers.

Positive eWOM

eWOM messages can either be positive, neutral or negative and it is the latter that has received most attention in recent studies (e.g. Willemsen et al., 2013; Van Noort & Willemsen, 2012; Einwiller & Steilen, 2015). However, the majority of all eWOM messages have a positive sentiment (Keller Fay Group, 2014). This makes positive eWOM at least as interesting to look at.

Positive eWOM results mainly from satisfactory product experiences, which is what every organization strives for. Purnawirawan, de Pelsmacker and Dens (2015) noticed that consumers who read positive reviews become more positive towards the organization when the positive

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

eWOM messages outnumber the negative ones. They also found that the level of trust in an organization increases after seeing more positive than negative eWOM. Moreover, the more positive reviews consumers read, the higher consumers rate an organization's popularity, which leads to a higher purchase intention (Park & Lee, 2008).

Furthermore, the Keller Fay Group (2014) found that consumers rely heavily on positive eWOM. Over 60 percent of the people who were shown positive messages, reported them to be very reliable, while not even half of them said this about the negative ones. Additionally, the same research found that people are more likely to tell others about the brand when they had read positive eWOM messages rather than negative eWOM messages. Schamari & Schaefers (2015) have shown that reading positive eWOM can lead observing consumers to also engage in eWOM. In addition, Brodie, Ilic, Juric and Hollebeek (2013) point out that positive eWOM leads to a more favorable attitude towards the brand, which makes it act as a free advertising for organizations (Park & Lee, 2013). These studies point out that positive eWOM can have many advantages and can shape the way consumers think about organizations. This may have important consequences for organizations' reputation, which makes it an interesting subject for examination.

Negative eWOM

The majority of studies in the field of eWOM has focussed on the risks of negative eWOM instead of the benefits of positive eWOM. This is understandable, since negative eWOM could have detrimental effects on brand evaluations and organizational reputation (e.g. Van Noort & Willemsen, 2012; Lee & Song, 2010). Oftentimes, consumers formulate negative eWOM in the form of a complaint on social media, based on negative product or service experiences (Einwiller & Steilen, 2015). Dellarocas (2003) and Willemsen et al. (2013) acknowledge that online complaints can be harmful to an organization's reputation because they are available to everyone.

Grégoire, Salle and Tripp (2015) distinguished, among other things, three ways in which consumers may express their discontent about products or services on social media relevant for this study: *directness*, *boasting* and *badmouthing*. Directness is actually the online form of basic complaining by addressing the organization directly through social media, such as leaving a message on their corporate Facebook page or sending them a Tweet using the '@'-mention. Grégoire et al. (2015) also show that when a complaint is dealt with nicely and to the satisfaction of the consumer, it may lead that happy consumer to share his or her experiences with the positive outcome on social media in order to show others how well s/he was helped. This is what Grégoire

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

et al. (2015) call *boasting*. Consumers may also complain online without informing the organization. This is referred to by Grégoire et al (2015) as *badmouthing* and can harm the organization's reputation when not responded to appropriately.

When other consumers read these negative eWOM messages, their attitudes towards the particular organization become more negative. This effect is even stronger when the messages with a negative sentiment outnumber the messages with a positive sentiment (Purnawirawan et al., 2015). Moreover, reading negative eWOM from other consumers makes observing consumers significantly less likely to buy products of that organization (Kim, Wang, Maslowska & Malthouse, 2016).

All of this shows that it is very important for organizations to monitor and respond to negative eWOM messages on their own Facebook page as well as beyond it. In the end, solving consumers' complaints successfully may lead to satisfied consumers and this can be beneficial for their reputation. This study aims to test this and shows whether reputation, along with perceived customer service, increases when complaints are solved successfully.

Webcare

When not handled with care, eWOM messages reach other internet users very rapidly. This can, especially in the case of negative eWOM, seriously damage organizations' reputation (Van Laer & De Ruyter, 2010; Lee & Song, 2010; Van Noort et al., 2014). More and more organizations have established a special department and designated employees to keep an eye on everything that is being said online about the organization (Van Noort et al., 2014). When deemed necessary, employees can involve themselves in online conversations in order to prevent negative eWOM messages from escalating further and reaching a larger audience. Such operations are referred to as webcare (Van Noort & Willemsen, 2012).

According to Van Noort et al. (2014), webcare may have a positive effect on three large corporate pillars. In the first place, webcare can have positive effects on customer care. Whenever consumers express themselves negatively about a product of the organization, the organization's employees should try to solve the encountered problems of consumers. Van Noort et al. (2014) state that it is the organization's duty to turn angry consumers into satisfied ones. If the organization succeeds in doing so, satisfied consumers may share positive eWOM about the organization. This is what Grégoire et al. (2015) call *boasting*. The second main function of webcare relates to public relations. Negative eWOM about a particular organization that is publicly

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

available can shape people's thoughts. By responding quickly to its consumers and showing that they are important, an organization can preserve or even improve its reputation. Hence, responding to negative eWOM is crucial for upholding corporate reputation (Van Noort et al., 2014). Lastly, webcare could work out positively for the marketing department. Negative product experiences can be used to improve organizations' existing products or can be used as input for new products or services. In this way, products can be improved at all times and lead to increasing sales numbers and an increased corporate image. In short, webcare has become a useful tool across multiple organizational departments.

Corporate reputation and perceived customer service

This research adds to the few existing studies about positive eWOM by investigating its effects on the three functions of webcare. Webcare's marketing- and PR-function will both be measured through corporate reputation, since corporate image and reputation are closely aligned and the terms are used interchangeably in research (Rokka, Karlsson & Tienari, 2013; Bataineh, 2015; Boyd, Bergh & Ketchen, 2009). This study will, like Rokka et al. (2013) use corporate image and reputation as synonymous under the heading of corporate reputation. Corporate reputation is based on the impression that consumers have of an organization's performance in the market and on how the organization expresses and promotes itself publicly (Kim & Lee, 2010). Reputation is thus a very important abstract concept that enables organizations to create enduring advantages over competitors (Boyd et al., 2009). Moreover, a favorable reputation could lead to a higher purchase intention (Bataineh, 2015).

The customer care-function of webcare is investigated through perceived customer service. Jeong and Jang (2011) refer to this as 'perceived service quality' and define it as the overall value people assign to the received service. It has been shown that positive evaluations of customer service increase customer satisfaction and future buying intentions (McDougall & Levesque, 2000; Taylor & Baker, 1994). Both reputation and perceived customer service appear to be powerful predictors of buying intention, which makes them important concepts for organizations.

Webcare responses to positive eWOM

Initially, the practices of webcare have been developed to reduce the potential disastrous effects of negative eWOM. However, as Schamari and Schaefer (2015) point out, webcare can also be used by organizations to increase the number of positive eWOM messages. They look at webcare as a social reward that should encourage consumers to also create positive brand-content.

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

The mentioned research of Brodie et al. (2013) indicated that positive eWOM leads to a positive attitude towards the brand. Moreover, Schamari and Schaefer (2015) have shown that responding to positive eWOM can be even more beneficial, in the sense that observing consumers are more likely to engage in positive eWOM compared to when no webcare response is given. Corporate responses to positive eWOM on social media platforms evoke higher levels of surprise compared to corporate responses on the organization's own website, since an answer of an organization on social media is less expected than an answer to a message posted on a platform that is owned by the organization. Organizational responses on social media positively impact the organization's perceived communication style and subsequently lead to increasing positive eWOM intentions. Based on these results, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1a: Perceived customer service will be evaluated more positively after positive eWOM messages followed by a webcare response than without a webcare response.

H1b: Similarly, corporate reputation will be evaluated more positively after positive eWOM messages followed by a webcare response than without a webcare response.

Webcare responses to negative eWOM

As pointed out earlier, negative eWOM can be turned into positive eWOM when complaints are responded to and handled to the satisfaction of consumers (Einwiller & Steilen, 2015; Van Noort & Willemsen, 2012; Grégoire et al., 2015). They may even be so happy with the result, that they decide to share their positive encounters with the organization online to show other users how well they were helped. This is what Grégoire et al. (2015) call boasting. These results of Grégoire et al. (2015), Einwiller & Steilen (2015) and Van Noort & Willemsen (2012) lead to the following hypotheses:

H2a: Perceived customer service will be evaluated more positively after negative eWOM followed by a webcare response than without a webcare response.

H2b: Similarly, corporate reputation will be evaluated more positively after negative eWOM followed by a webcare response than without a webcare response.

To date, no research has yet compared the effects of solved negative eWOM to positive eWOM messages. Other studies have shown that people tend to assign more weight to negative eWOM than to positive eWOM (Chiou & Cheng, 2003; Willemsen, Neijens, Bronner & de Ridder, 2011). This phenomenon has been labeled "the negativity effect". This effect implies that negative information is seen as more useful compared to positive information when people allocate products

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

by their quality (Herr, Kardes & Kim, 1991). Additionally, negative product information has a direct linkage to low-quality products in people's minds, because there is only one interpretation possible. Positive and neutral information is open to more interpretations and thus not as clear as negative information (Willemsen et al., 2011; Herr, et al. 1991). For example, a smartphone with a poor battery is seen as typical for low-quality smartphones, while a smartphone with a decent battery does not make it a high-quality smartphone. A smartphone with a decent battery can still be of low quality due to other features. Herr et al. (1991) have found that even when positive information is present, the negative information is highlighted in people's memory. This negativity bias holds even when there is only one slight negative characteristic of a product among a lot of positive information. These results might imply that, even when a consumer complaint is solved properly, the encountered negative product information prevails over positive product information. The negativity effect found by Herr et al. (1991) and Willemsen et al. (2011) leads to the expectation that eWOM messages that only contain positive information are evaluated more positively than eWOM messages containing also negative information. For this study, it implies that positive eWOM messages (i.e. messages from satisfied consumers complimenting the organization with their good service) are seen as more positive than negative eWOM that is successfully solved through the use of webcare. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H3a: Perceived customer service will be evaluated more positively after positive eWOM than after solved negative eWOM.

H3b: Similarly, corporate reputation will be evaluated more positively after positive eWOM than after solved negative eWOM.

Reactive versus proactive webcare strategies

This study also takes into account the different webcare strategies that can be used by organizations when responding to positive eWOM and solved negative eWOM. Van Noort and Willemsen (2012) made a two-fold distinction: reactive and proactive webcare responses. Using a reactive webcare strategy, organizations only respond to an eWOM message when the sender of that message asks for that response. This can be done through explicitly asking for an answer or stating that an answer is desired. Posting a message on the corporate Facebook page of an organization or tagging the organization in a post is also considered as asking for a response, since the sender of that message is then directly addressing the organization (Van Noort et al., 2014). In turn,

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

organizations respond proactively when they react to an eWOM message on their own initiative. That is, when consumers do not address the organization nor explicitly ask for a response.

The study of Demmers et al. (2014) is probably the only research so far that has studied the effects of reactive and proactive responses to positive eWOM messages. They suggested that a positive eWOM message directed at the organization, e.g. a compliment about good service, leads to greater consumer satisfaction when a reactive response was offered (e.g. an expression of gratitude) than when this message was not responded to. This had already been proven for negative eWOM by Van Noort and Willemsen (2012), but Demmers et al. (2014) show that responding reactively to positive eWOM is also beneficial. This result did not hold for proactive responses. Proactive responses to positive eWOM messages led to lower levels customer satisfaction compared to no proactive response. An explanation could be that consumers feel that their privacy has been violated when an organizational response is not specifically elicited by the consumer (Demmers et al., 2014). These outcomes resulted in the following hypotheses:

H4a: Perceived customer service will be evaluated more positively after positive eWOM followed by a reactive response than without that reactive response.

H4b: Similarly, corporate reputation will be evaluated more positively after positive eWOM followed by a reactive response than without that reactive response.

H4c: Perceived customer service will be evaluated more negatively after positive eWOM followed by a proactive response than without that proactive response.

H4d: Similarly, corporate reputation will be evaluated more negatively after positive eWOM followed by a proactive response than without that proactive response.

H4e: Perceived customer service will be evaluated more positively after positive eWOM followed by a reactive response than when followed by a proactive response.

H4f: Similarly, corporate reputation will be evaluated more positively after positive eWOM followed by a reactive response than when followed by a proactive response.

What responses to negative eWOM is concerned, a reactive response has been proven to have a positive influence on the evaluation of a brand compared to no webcare response (Van Noort and Willemsen, 2012). When responding to a complaint when explicitly asked for, an organization shows its sympathetic skills and shows it is willing to start a conversation with the consumer.

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

Proactive responses to negative eWOM also elicited favorable evaluations of the brand, but less positive than when a reactive response was used. Hence, a reactive response strategy leads to more positive brand evaluations than a proactive strategy. Based on Van Noort and Willemsen (2012), three hypotheses are formulated that are each split in two subhypotheses:

H5a: Perceived customer service will be evaluated more positively after negative eWOM followed by a reactive response than without that reactive response.

H5b: Similarly, corporate reputation will be evaluated more positively after negative eWOM followed by a reactive response than without that reactive response.

H5c: Perceived customer service will be evaluated more positively after negative eWOM followed by a proactive response than without that proactive response.

H5d: Similarly, corporate reputation will be evaluated more positively after negative eWOM followed by a proactive response than without that proactive response.

H5e: Perceived customer service will be evaluated more positively after negative eWOM followed by a reactive response than when followed by a proactive response.

H5f: Similarly, corporate reputation will be evaluated more positively after negative eWOM followed by a reactive response than when followed by a proactive response.

Since a reactive webcare strategy has been shown to be more beneficial than a proactive webcare strategy for both positive eWOM and negative eWOM in previous research, a main effect of webcare strategy on perceived customer service and corporate reputation can be expected.

H6a: Perceived customer service will be evaluated more positively after reactive responses than after proactive responses.

H6b: Similarly, corporate reputation will be evaluated more positively after reactive responses than after proactive responses.

Assuming that for example a reactive strategy is best to use, it is still not clear on which eWOM type it has the strongest effect. More specifically, do reactive responses to positive eWOM have a stronger effect on reputation and perceived service? Or do reactive responses to negative eWOM generate the most positive results? The same question remains for the proactive webcare strategy. In other words, it is plausible that the webcare strategy (reactive or proactive) moderates the effect of positive eWOM and negative eWOM on corporate reputation and perceived customer service,

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

based on the degree in which people expect to be answered (Schamari & Schaefer, 2015) or the degree people experience privacy violations (Demmers et al., 2014). This insight could be useful for organizations with a small webcare team that do not have the capacity to answer all eWOM messages. It might be useful to know which response strategy to which eWOM type generates the most favorable evaluations so that they can make a wise choice about which eWOM messages to focus on.

H7a: Webcare strategy moderates the effect of eWOM type on perceived customer service.

H7b: Webcare strategy moderates the effect of eWOM type on corporate reputation.

This research is one of the first to include both positive and negative eWOM and to investigate whether solved negative eWOM has the same effects as positive eWOM on perceived customer service and corporate reputation, taking into account different response strategies. The remaining of this study aims to test the suggested hypotheses. In the next section, the means through which this will be established are explained, followed by the results and a discussion containing the managerial implications of the results and some limitations of this study.

Method

The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of eWOM type (positive and negative) and response strategy (reactive and proactive) on perceived customer service and corporate reputation.

Design

This study used a 4 (response strategy: reactive response – proactive response – no reactive response – no proactive response) x 2 (eWOM type: positive eWOM vs. negative eWOM) between-subjects design. Eight versions of the same survey were used to have people answer questions about corporate reputation and perceived customer service, based on the Facebook messages they were shown. Table 1 shows an overview of the eight conditions in this study.

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

Table 1

An overview of the eight conditions in this study

Design	
Condition	Equivalent control condition
Positive eWOM with reactive response	Positive eWOM without reactive response
Positive eWOM with proactive response	Positive eWOM without proactive response
Negative eWOM with reactive response (<i>Solved negative eWOM</i>)	Negative eWOM without reactive response
Negative eWOM with proactive response (<i>Solved negative eWOM</i>)	Negative eWOM without proactive response

When eWOM was posted on the corporate Facebook page, it is assumed that the consumer expects a response from the organization (Van Noort et al., 2014). As a result, the response of the organization to these kind of messages are categorized as reactive. When the eWOM message was posted on consumers' personal Facebook page, a response was most likely not expected. When organizations responded to these messages, their responses were categorized as a proactive (Van Noort & Willemsen, 2012). When an eWOM message posted by a consumer had a negative sentiment, but was turned to a positive sentiment after the organization provided a satisfying response, either reactively or proactively, it is referred to as solved negative eWOM. When the eWOM message itself already had a positive sentiment, it is referred to as positive eWOM.

Facebook was used as the main platform in this study not only because it is the largest and most popular social medium (European Publishers Council, 2015), but also because Facebook forms the ideal place to spread and post eWOM (Svensson, 2011). The circulation of eWOM on Facebook is facilitated through liking, sharing and commenting. Through these actions, eWOM messages reach other Facebook users very rapidly (Svensson, 2011). Facebook was preferred over Twitter, because Facebook has substantially more users, which makes it more likely that participants are familiar with the Facebook layout and procedure (European Publisher's Council, 2015). Also, the only study so far that has focussed on responses to positive eWOM (Demmers et

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

al., 2014) used Twitter as the main platform. It is interesting to see whether responding to eWOM on Facebook generates the same or different results as responding to eWOM on Twitter.

In total, twelve different eWOM messages were extracted from the web with the use of Coosto. Coosto is a software program that allows organizations to easily track what is being said about them. Half of the messages in this study had a positive sentiment, while the other half had negative sentiment. A schematic overview of the all messages and the manipulations used in this study can be seen in Figure 1.

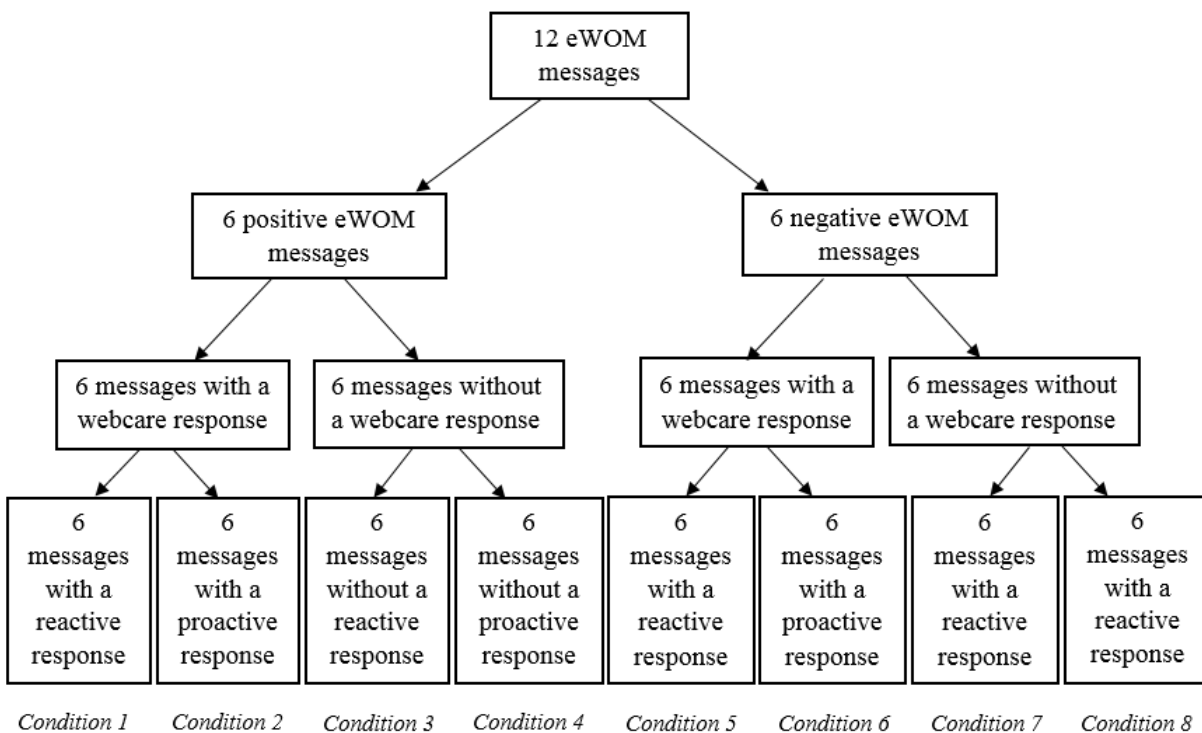


Figure 1. Schematic overview of this study's design.

Stimuli

Both positive eWOM messages and negative eWOM messages were originally posted on the corporate Facebook page of Bol.com to which Bol.com responded reactively. These reactive conditions were changed into proactive conditions by manipulating the Facebook page by means of Paint and the Inspect-option of the internet browser. By using the same eWOM messages as a basis for both the reactive and proactive conditions, the possibility that the wording in the messages influenced participants' judgments was eliminated. Looking at Figure 2, the message in condition

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

1 describes the customer service as ‘*super*’, similar to condition 2, 3 and 4. If, for example, in condition 2 the customer service would have been described as ‘*uitstekend*’, it may lead to lower judgments of perceived customer service since ‘*uitstekend*’ may be perceived as less positive than ‘*super*’.

Bol.com is a well known and respected Dutch webshop selling all kinds of different products. Moreover, Bol.com is known for its active presence on social media and their willingness to keep their consumers satisfied. The name of Bol.com was manipulated to prevent people from becoming biased. its name was changed into “*Bedrijf*”, followed by a capital letter: X, Q, T, R, P and S.

The names of the consumers were changed into basic Dutch female names: Eva de Vries, Anne de Jong, Ellen van de Berg, Tessa van Dijk, Floor Jansen and Iris Bakker. Every condition consisted of six separate eWOM messages directed at a different organization; one from each female. By including only female consumers, the possibility that people base their judgments on the gender of the sender was ruled out. Sometimes, small adjustments in the eWOM message had to be made in order to make the eWOM message fit the personal Facebook page of consumers, e.g. changing subject pronouns like ‘*jullie*’ into ‘*zij*’ (‘you’ into ‘them’). The control conditions were established by simply deleting the responses from the organization. The four manipulations for the positive eWOM condition can be viewed in Figure 2, while the four manipulations of the negative eWOM condition are displayed in Figure 3. All stimuli can be found in Appendix II.



Figure 2. The four manipulations of the positive eWOM condition.

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM



Condition 5: Solved negative eWOM posted on the corporate Facebook page with a reactive response from the organization



Condition 6: Solved negative eWOM posted on the personal Facebook page with a proactive response from the organization



Condition 7: Negative eWOM placed on the corporate Facebook page with no reactive response from the organization



Condition 8: Negative eWOM placed on the personal Facebook page with no proactive response from the organization

Figure 3. The four manipulations of the negative eWOM condition.

Participants

Overall, 261 participants filled out the complete survey. Considerably more females participated in the study ($N = 190$) than males ($N = 71$). The mean age of all participants was 27.3 ($SD = 10.5$), with the youngest participant being 17 years old and the oldest 69 years old. The majority of participants had a university degree (63.6%), followed by 27.2% with an HBO degree and 5.4% with an MBO degree. 3.4% of the participants reported to have finished secondary school, without any further education. Since this study handled eWOM messages on Facebook, participants were asked how often they checked Facebook. 204 of the 260 respondents said they checked their Facebook multiple times a day, which is equal to 78.2%. 37 respondents said to open Facebook on a daily basis (14.2%) and 9 respondents reported once every two days (3.4%). 6 participants said they checked Facebook less frequently (2.4%) and 5 participants indicated to have no Facebook profile (1.9%).

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

Procedure

The recruitment of respondents was done through online channels like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and email. People were asked to participate in this survey by sending them the link to the Qualtrics-survey. After reading the universal introduction, respondents were randomly assigned to one of the eight conditions. Each survey consisted of six eWOM messages. After reading a message (and whether or not the subsequent response), questions had to be answered on a sevenpoint Likertscale. It took respondents approximately ten minutes to finish the survey.

Measures

Corporate reputation was measured using the *RepTrak™ Pulse* scales, introduced by Ponzi, Fombrun and Gardberg (2011). They extensively investigated the fit of the scales that altogether make up corporate reputation and found that the four identified sub-constructs capture the construct of corporate reputation well. Moreover, the *RepTrak™ Pulse* was tested among consumers in seventeen countries, which evidenced its cross-cultural validity. In addition, several other studies have used the *RepTrak™ Pulse* in their analyses of corporate reputation (e.g. DiStaso, Vafeiadis, & Amaral, 2015; Deephouse, Newburry & Soleimani, 2016). The four sub-constructs of corporate reputation constructed by Ponzi et al. (2011) can be found in Appendix I.

Measurements of perceived customer service were based on a scale developed by Brady and Cronin (2001). Their study found quantitative as well as qualitative proof for their construct called ‘perceived service quality’. According to Brady and Cronin (2001), outcome, interaction and environmental quality together make up the construct of perceived service quality. Other studies (Dagger, Sweeney & Johnson, 2007; Akter, D’Ambra & Ray, 2013; Kallweit, Spreer & Toporowski, 2014) have already successfully used this scale or parts of this scale to measure the perceived quality of provided service by businesses. This research only used the outcome and interaction items of the Brady and Cronin (2001) scale, since items about environmental quality are not applicable to this study. Questions pertaining to *interaction* focussed on the attitude, behavior and expertise of the organization (e.g. “the attitude of organization X demonstrates their willingness to help). Questions related to *outcome* dealt with the specific answer given by the organization (e.g. “organization X gives the kind of answer that its customers are looking for”). In total, eight items measured perceived customer service, which can be found in Appendix I.

Two additional questions were asked about the intrusiveness of the organizations’ responses. Demmers et al. (2014) and Van Noort & Willemsen (2012) have stated that people evaluate

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

reactive responses more positively compared to proactive responses, because they feel proactive responses are inappropriate and a violation of people's privacy. To test whether this is an actual reason for the difference in evaluation between reactive and proactive responses, questions about intrusiveness were included. Every question in this survey had to be answered on Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). At the end, some demographic questions concerning sex, age, level of education and Facebook use had to be answered.

Data analysis

Perceived customer service, corporate reputation and intrusiveness were all measured by means of multiple items. Reliability checks showed that the reliability of the scales was not affected by translation from English to Dutch. The items measuring intrusiveness did not come from an existing scale, but were found to be reliable. The Cronbach's alpha's can be found in table 2. One customer service variable, corporate reputation variable and intrusiveness variable were established by taking the mean of all six eWOM messages.

Table 2

Reliability of the dependent variables per eWOM message

	Bedrijf X (condition 1-8)	Bedrijf Q (condition 1-8)	Bedrijf T (condition 1-8)	Bedrijf R (condition 1-8)	Bedrijf P (condition 1-8)	Bedrijf S (condition 1-8)
Customer Service	$\alpha = .95$	$\alpha = .97$	$\alpha = .96$	$\alpha = .97$	$\alpha = .97$	$\alpha = .97$
Reputation	$\alpha = .94$	$\alpha = .94$	$\alpha = .94$	$\alpha = .95$	$\alpha = .95$	$\alpha = .94$
Intrusiveness	$\alpha = .76$	$\alpha = .78$	$\alpha = .82$	$\alpha = .87$	$\alpha = .77$	$\alpha = .83$

To test hypotheses 1 to 7, two-way MANOVAs were performed, while the additional analyses of the effects of eWOM type and response strategy on intrusiveness were performed using a two-way factorial ANOVA.

Results

In this section, an overview of the means for all different conditions are displayed. Subsequently, the results of the hypotheses testing are displayed, followed by additional analyses of intrusiveness.

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

Descriptives of the dependent variables

The means and standard deviations for the three dependent variables across all eight conditions can be found in table 3. All group sizes were roughly equal.

Table 3

Means and standard deviations of all dependent variables for all conditions

	Positive eWOM				Negative eWOM			
	Reactive N = 34	Proactive N = 34	No reactive N = 32	No proactive N = 33	Reactive N = 32	Proactive N = 32	No reactive N = 31	No proactive N = 33
Customer	5.64	5.70	5.33	5.27	5.93	5.61	2.85	2.73
Service	(0.49)	(0.40)	(0.68)	(0.69)	(0.50)	(0.46)	(0.89)	(0.74)
Reputation	5.06	5.23	5.08	5.08	5.32	4.94	2.74	2.69
	(0.77)	(0.57)	(0.74)	(0.75)	(0.72)	(0.68)	(0.90)	(0.80)
Intrusiveness	2.23	2.38	-	-	1.83	2.29	-	-
	(0.89)	(0.82)			(0.60)	(1.00)		

Hypotheses testing

The first hypothesis handled positive eWOM conditions and predicted that perceived customer service (H1a) and corporate reputation (H1b) would be evaluated more positively after a response than without a response. In turn, the second hypothesis handled the negative eWOM conditions and also predicted that perceived customer service (H2a) and corporate reputation (H2b) would be evaluated better when a response was present than without a response. These hypotheses were tested simultaneously by means of a two-way MANOVA, including both eWOM type and response presence as independent variables and customer service and reputation as dependent variables. Normality had been violated, so Pillai's trace was interpreted. The MANOVA showed a significant interaction, $V = 0.53$, $F(2, 256) = 143.49$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .68$. Therefore, a look at the subsequent univariate ANOVAs was needed for further analysis. The two-way ANOVA for customer service reached significance, $F(1, 257) = 283.34$, $p < .001$, $\omega = .23$, just as the two-way ANOVA for corporate reputation, $F(1, 257) = 161.91$, $p < .001$, $\omega = .21$. Simple effects analyses were performed to see which conditions differ from each other.

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

Positive eWOM (H1). Simple effects analysis showed that perceived customer service was significantly higher when positive eWOM was followed by a response ($M = 5.67, SD = 0.45$) than no response ($M = 5.30, SD = 0.68$). Therefore, H1a is confirmed. Simple effects using reputation as a dependent variable revealed no significant difference between positive eWOM with a response ($M = 5.14, SD = 0.09$) and without a response ($M = 5.08, SD = 0.09$), concluding that reputation is not influenced by response presence. Therefore, H1b is not supported. The results of the simple effects analyses can be seen in table 4.

Negative eWOM (H2). As expected, simple effects analysis showed that negative eWOM with a response ($M = 5.77, SD = 0.51$) was judged substantially better on perceived customer service than negative eWOM without a response ($M = 2.79, SD = 0.81$). This means that H2a is confirmed. The same is true for corporate reputation, since the simple effects showed that reputation is significantly better when negative eWOM is responded to ($M = 5.13, SD = 0.72$) than when not responded to ($M = 2.71, SD = 0.84$). Therefore, H2b is also confirmed. The mean differences and p-values of the simple effects analyses can be found in table 4.

Table 4

Simple effects analyses of eWOM type and response presence on customer service and reputation

	Positive eWOM (H1)		Negative eWOM (H2)	
	Response vs. no response		Response vs. no response	
	<i>Mdif</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Mdif</i>	<i>p</i>
Customer service (a)	0.38	.001	2.99	<.001
Corporate reputation (b)	0.07	.611	2.41	<.001

Note. Significant results are in bold

Positive vs. solved negative eWOM (H3). H3 predicted that perceived customer service (H3a) and corporate reputation (H3b) would be evaluated more positively after positive eWOM than after solved negative eWOM. This means that the only conditions taken into account here are the ones in which a response is present. A one-way MANOVA was performed with eWOM type as the independent variable with exclusion of the control conditions. The MANOVA showed no significant differences in perceived customer service or reputation evaluations between positive

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE eWOM

eWOM and solved negative eWOM, $V = .028$, $F(2, 129) = 1.88$, $p = .157$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Therefore, H3a and H3b are not supported.

Hypotheses 4 and 5 compare the four response strategies with each other, with H4 focussing on positive eWOM and H5 on negative eWOM. The corresponding sub hypotheses were tested at once by means of a two-way MANOVA with eWOM type and response strategy as independent variables. The two-way MANOVA showed a significant interaction effect of eWOM type and response strategy on perceived customer service and corporate reputation, $V = 0.54$, $F(6, 506) = 31.4$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .27$. The subsequent univariate two-way ANOVA for perceived customer service is significant, $F(3, 253) = 95.74$, $p < .001$, $\omega = .23$, just as the two-way ANOVA for corporate reputation, $F(3, 253) = 55.68$, $p < .001$, $\omega = .21$. This implies that there are differences in perceived customer service and corporate reputation between the conditions. Simple effects were performed to identify the significant differences.

Positive eWOM (H4). Pairwise comparisons of the simple effect analysis showed that perceived customer service is better when positive eWOM is followed by a reactive response rather than no reactive response. Therefore, H4a is confirmed. No significant effect was found for reputation. Hence, H4b is rejected. Means and standard deviations can be found in table 3. Contrary to the expectation, positive eWOM with a proactive response received higher customer service evaluations than without a proactive response, concluding that H4c is not supported. No significant difference was found for corporate reputation, indicating that H4d is not supported either. Additionally, no significant difference between a reactive and a proactive response to positive eWOM was found for both perceived customer service and corporate reputation. Therefore, H4e and H4f not supported. The mean differences and p-values can be found in table 5.

Negative eWOM (H5). The pairwise comparisons of the simple effects analysis showed that customer service and corporate reputation evaluations were higher when a reactive response was present compared to no response. Therefore, H5a and H5b are supported. As expected, a proactive response to negative eWOM led to higher perceived customer service and corporate reputation evaluations than no proactive response. Hence, H5c and H5d are confirmed. Lastly, reactive responses to negative eWOM led to significantly higher customer service evaluations and corporate reputation evaluations than proactive responses. Hence, H5e and H5f are confirmed. All results of the simple effects analysis can be found in table 5.

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

Table 5

Simple effects analyses of eWOM type and response strategy on customer service and reputation

	Positive eWOM (H4)						Negative eWOM (H5)					
	Reactive vs. no reactive		Proactive vs. no proactive		Reactive vs. proactive		Reactive vs. no reactive		Proactive vs. no proactive		Reactive vs. proactive	
	<i>Mdif</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Mdif</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Mdif</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Mdif</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Mdif</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Mdif</i>	<i>p</i>
Customer service	0.32	.042	0.43	.005	-0.59	.700	3.08	<.001	2.89	<.001	0.31	.045
Corporate reputation	0.02	.927	0.15	.415	-0.16	.350	2.58	<.001	2.25	<.001	0.38	.043

Note. Significant results are in bold

H6 predicted that perceived customer service (H6a) and corporate reputation (H6b) would be evaluated more positively after reactive responses than after proactive responses, irrespective of eWOM type. Subsequently, H7 predicted that response strategy moderates the effect of eWOM type on perceived customer service (H7a) and corporate reputation (H7b). Those hypotheses were assessed simultaneously with a two-way MANOVA that only took into account the conditions in which a response was present. Concerning H6, no significant main effect of response strategy was found, $V = 0.02$, $F(2,127) = 1.32$, $p = .272$, $\eta^2 = .02$. As a result, H6a and H6b cannot be supported.

Additionally, the two-way MANOVA again found no main effect of eWOM type on customer service and reputation evaluations. Concerning H7, no significant interaction effect was found of response strategy and eWOM type on the combined dependent variables, $V = 0.05$, $F(2, 127) = 2.98$, $p = .054$, $\eta^2 = .05$. However, the separate univariate ANOVAs produced by the MANOVA did show a significant interaction effect of eWOM type and response strategy on both perceived customer service, $F(1, 128) = 5.26$, $p = .023$, $\omega = .03$, and corporate reputation, $F(1, 128) = 5.21$, $p = .024$, $\omega = .03$. To break down the interaction, further simple effects analyses were performed. These showed that reactive responses to negative eWOM led to better perceived customer service evaluations than reactive responses to positive eWOM, $p = .015$. No significant difference was

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

found for proactive responses between both eWOM types, $p = .44$. Therefore, H7a is supported. A graphical overview of this interaction effect can be found in the left graph of Figure 4.

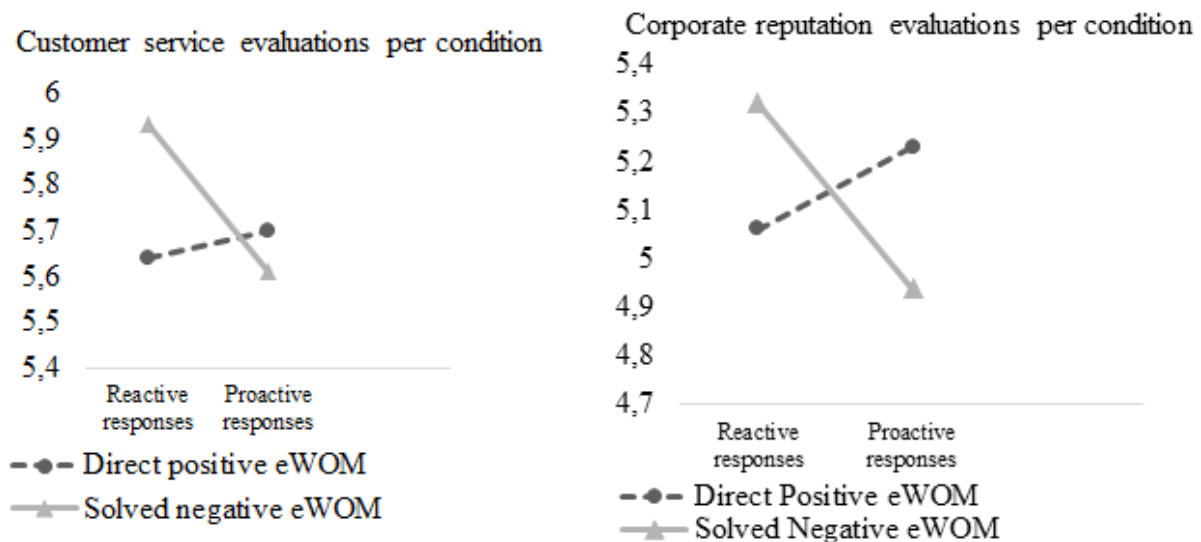


Figure 4. Graphs displaying the means of customer service and reputation for the two response strategies on both eWOM types.

Interestingly, while the ANOVA showed a significant interaction effect of eWOM type and response strategy on corporate reputation, subsequent simple effects analysis revealed no significant differences between reactive responses to positive eWOM and negative eWOM, $Mdif = -0.26$, $p = .129$, nor between proactive responses to positive eWOM and negative eWOM, $Mdif = 0.29$, $p = .092$. Though, the difference between -0.26 and 0.29 is significantly different, which explained the significant p-value in the ANOVA. As can be seen in the right graph of Figure 4, this means that in the positive eWOM condition, corporate reputation was better when responses were given proactively, while in the negative eWOM condition corporate reputation was better when responses were given to reactively. Despite this result, the nonsignificant simple effects imply that H7b is not supported.

Additional analysis of intrusiveness

The influence of eWOM type and response strategy on intrusiveness was measured through a two-way factorial ANOVA. No main effect was found of eWOM type on intrusiveness, $F(1, 128) = 2.75$, $p = .100$. There was a main effect of response strategy on intrusiveness, $F(1, 128) = 4.39$, $p = .038$, $\omega = .02$. Proactive responses ($M = 2.34$, $SD = 0.90$, BCa 95% CI [2.10, 2.60]) were perceived as more intrusive than reactive responses ($M = 2.03$, $SD = 0.79$, BCa 95% CI [1.85,

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

2.20]). The effects are performed by means of 1000 sample bootstrapping. No interaction effect of eWOM type and response strategy on intrusiveness was found, $F(1, 128) = 1.15, p = .285$.

Conclusion and discussion

Conclusion

As mentioned before, this study is the first that focusses both eWOM types and the role of reactive and proactive response strategies at the same time. The answer to the research question ‘*What is the effect of eWOM type and response strategy on corporate reputation and customer service?*’ is twofold. First, both positive eWOM and solved negative eWOM have a positive effect on perceived customer service, but only solved negative eWOM influences corporate reputation. Providing a response to negative eWOM is thus more effective, since this positively affects both customer service and corporate reputation. Positive eWOM itself is enough to elicit high reputation judgments. Second, providing a reactive or a proactive response does not lead to differences when applied to positive eWOM, but when applied to negative eWOM, reactive responses lead to a better corporate reputation and customer service than proactive responses. Both response strategies are seen by observing consumers as better than no response at all, irrespective of eWOM type.

Discussion

eWOM type. This research indicates that positive eWOM followed by a response does not lead to better perceived customer service or a better corporate reputation than negative eWOM that is properly solved, despite the negative information being present. This implies that the negativity effect described by Willemsen et al. (2011) and Herr et al. (1991) does not apply here. Apparently, consumers find the positive final outcome more important than the initial negative information. This leans more towards a positivity effect rather than a negativity effect, because people seem to place more importance on the positive information rather than condemn the organization for its bad initial service. This is reflected in the numbers, since solved negative eWOM also leads to relatively high scores, just as positive eWOM (see table 3). A study performed by Folkes and Patrick (2003) found the positivity effect. They indicated that when consumers do not know the organization very well, consumers tend to view a single service encounter with a positive outcome as a blueprint for all the other services that the organization provides. This phenomenon is also known as the law of small numbers (Tversky & Kahneman, 1971). Implemented in this study, the law of small numbers means that consumers basically generalize one eWOM message to the entire organization. Folkes and Patrick (2003) state that the generalization of a positive encounter is more

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

salient than the generalization of a negative experience. This combined effect of the law of small numbers and the positivity effect may eliminate the expected negativity effect, which could be a reason for the fact that no difference was found between positive eWOM and solved negative eWOM.

Moreover, the different eWOM messages were presented to the participants in isolation. Although each participant saw six eWOM messages, all six eWOM messages were directed at another organization. Participants were forced to base their judgments of all six organizations on one single service encounter, which restrained them from making comparisons. As previously mentioned, the positivity effect is more likely to occur when consumers have to base their judgment on one single option rather than when they are able to compare a particular service experience to multiple other eWOM messages (Posavac, Sanbonmatsu, Kardes & Fitzsimons, 2004). Hence, the design of the experiment may induced a bias of small numbers that influenced consumers' opinions about the organizations.

While no differences in corporate reputation and perceived customer service were observed between positive eWOM and solved negative eWOM, both eWOM types were judged substantially better with a response than without it. Positive eWOM with a response led to an increased perception of customer service, but did not lead to an increase in corporate reputation. The increase in customer service might be caused by the fact that an organization explicitly shows appreciation and commitment to its consumers (Xie, Zhang, Zhang, Singh & Lee, 2016), while the presence of a response does not affect corporate reputation, which is already positive (Demmers et al., 2014). Negative eWOM, on the other hand, can have drastic consequences when not responded to accurately (e.g. Van Noort & Willemsen, 2012). Like Einwiller & Steilen (2015) and Van Noort & Willemsen (2012), this study shows that responding to negative eWOM is very important for upholding reputation along with perceived customer service.

Response strategy. In this study, responding to eWOM has been shown to be advantageous, regardless of the kind of response strategy. Specifically, both a reactive and a proactive response to positive eWOM result in a more favorable evaluation of customer service than no response, but does not influence corporate reputation. In the case of negative eWOM, both reactive and proactive responses positively influence customer service and corporate reputation. In the case of proactive responses, this is exactly the opposite of what was expected. Demmers et al. (2014) found that proactive responses were seen as intrusive, which resulted in an even worse attitude towards the

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

organization than when no response was offered. A possible explanation for this incongruity could be that in the study of Demmers et al. (2014), participants had to imagine they had posted the eWOM message. In this study, participants were observing consumers reading an eWOM message posted by someone else. Observing consumers may not see proactive responses as being intrusive since it is not their privacy that is at stake, but the privacy of the consumer who posted the message. This would also explain the low scores assigned by participants on the intrusiveness scales (see table 3).

For positive eWOM, no difference was found between reactive and proactive responses in evaluations of corporate reputation and perceived customer service. This outcome could also be explained by the fact that participants were observing instead of posting consumers. Alternatively, the perceived intention of the response may have mitigated the effect on attitude found by Demmers et al. (2014). When consumers believe that the organization responds because it has the consumers' interest at heart and wishes to help its consumers, a response is labeled as accommodative. Accommodative responses make consumers more positive towards the organization and have a positive effect on satisfaction and reputation (Lee & Song, 2010). A response to positive eWOM, either reactive or proactive, could be perceived as accommodative, since organizations show appreciation for the positive consumer feedback.

For negative eWOM, however, reactive responses led to a better perceived customer service and corporate reputation than proactive ones. This result is in line with Van Noort and Willemsen (2012) and could be clarified by the attribution theory. Consumers may internally attribute proactive responses to negative eWOM (Kniesel, Wayguni & Diehl, 2014). This means that consumers believe that an organization responds proactively to negative eWOM only to maintain their reputation instead of supporting the consumer. Internally attributed webcare responses worsen the attitude towards organizations (Kniesel et al., 2014). This negative attitude may have been expressed through lower judgments of corporate reputation.

eWOM type and response strategy. No differences in corporate reputation and perceived customer service were found between positive eWOM and solved negative eWOM. However, customer service was evaluated more positively when a reactive response was given to negative eWOM than to positive eWOM. Response strategy thus moderates the effect of eWOM type on customer service. A reason for this could be that consumer complaints largely result from service failures that need to be fixed by the organization (Cho, Im & Hiltz, 2003). Positive eWOM does

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

not need to be solved. Additionally, service recovery leads to high levels of satisfaction and other positive emotions (Belén del Río-Lanza, Vázquez-Casielles & Díaz-Martín, 2009; Willemsen et al., 2013). Responding reactively to negative eWOM might therefore be more necessary than responding reactively to positive eWOM, which could have caused the better customer service judgments to solved negative eWOM than to positive eWOM.

It is striking to note that in the positive eWOM conditions, proactive responses resulted in higher reputation judgments (in absolute numbers, difference was nonsignificant), while in the negative eWOM conditions reactive responses resulted in higher reputation judgments (see Figure 4). A plausible reason why proactive responses are evaluated better on corporate reputation in the case of positive eWOM could be the degree of surprise, as studied by Schamari & Schaefer (2015). They suggested that responses to positive eWOM on consumer-generated platforms are more surprising for consumers than responding to positive eWOM on brand-generated platforms, which leads to more favorable attitudes towards organizations. In this study, responding proactively can be seen as responding on consumer-generated platforms, since the organization does not control consumers' personal Facebook page. Hence, responding to positive eWOM messages on consumers' personal Facebook page evokes stronger surprise feelings than responding to positive eWOM messages on the organizations' Facebook page (i.e. reactive responses). This could have resulted in a better corporate reputation when looking at absolute numbers.

Intrusiveness.

Proactive responses to eWOM are rated as more intrusive than reactive responses, although even proactive responses are barely intrusive according to observing consumers. Again, this could be due to the fact that it is not the privacy of the observing consumer that is infringed (as in the study of Demmers et al., 2014) but that of the sender. An explanation for the difference in intrusiveness between the response strategies might be that proactive responses are not asked for by consumers, while reactive responses are solicited (Van Noort & Willemsen, 2012).

Implications

This research was the first to compare positive eWOM to solved negative eWOM and has some useful managerial implications on how to deal with eWOM. First, it shows that responding to both positive and negative eWOM is beneficial. Therefore, organizations should aim for answering all types of eWOM messages. If this is not feasible, solving negative eWOM should have the highest priority. Specifically, solved negative eWOM enhances both perceived customer

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

service and reputation, while responses to positive eWOM only positively affect perceived customer service. Additionally, unanswered negative eWOM leads to a drastically lower reputation and perceived customer service than unanswered positive eWOM. This shows that providing a response to negative eWOM is more important than responding to positive eWOM.

Furthermore, this research indicates that observing consumers of positive eWOM do not judge reactive responses differently from proactive responses. This implies that both response strategies are permissible for organizations to use when replying to positive consumer feedback. A reactive response is advised when negative eWOM messages are encountered, since this leads to better evaluations than a proactive strategy. However, a proactive response strategy may also be used to counter negative eWOM, because both strategies lead to more favorable attitudes than no response.

When responding to all eWOM messages is too labor-intensive, it may be wise to focus on negative eWOM in combination with a reactive webcare strategy. Not only does solving negative eWOM boost perceived customer service and corporate reputation, responding reactively to negative eWOM also has a stronger positive effect on perceived customer service than responding reactively to positive eWOM. The remaining of this section will discuss some limitations to this research and directions for future research.

Limitations and directions for future research

Although this study makes some valuable contributions in the field of eWOM research, some limitations associated with this study have to be highlighted. First of all, the sample was not a good representation of the general population. Not only were 74.8% of the participants 25 years or younger, the majority of the sample was also female (72.8%) and highly educated (90.8%). Therefore, caution is advised when making any generalizations to other populations.

Secondly, Bol.com does not sell one specific product, but all kinds of products. The different products that consumers were talking about in the eWOM messages could have influenced the evaluations of corporate reputation and perceived customer service. More specific, if an eWOM message is about a product that observing consumers are indifferent towards (e.g. baby bottles), it might have resulted in lower scores on both reputation and customer service. This relates to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). Applied to this study, consumers might not have been motivated to process an eWOM message thoroughly because they are not interested in the topic. Subsequently, consumers might have processed the eWOM message via the ELM's peripheral route, which led to judgments about the organization

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

based on the feeling they had towards the message instead of a rational judgment. This uncertainty can be eliminated in follow-up studies by asking additional questions about the attitude towards the discussed product or by focussing on one specific product category.

Thirdly, this study only took into account eWOM messages posted on Facebook. The results of this research might be different when using other social media channels, like Twitter or Instagram. Since Twitter messages can only consist of 140 characters, eWOM messages are substantially shorter (European Publishers Council, 2015). This could lead to different evaluations. EWOM messages on Instagram are always accompanied by a photo. The inclusion of an image could also be of influence when judging organization. Therefore, these results cannot be generalized to other social media channels.

Besides these limitations, directions for future research can be derived from the current study. The participants in this study were observing consumers. It could be interesting for future research to compare the evaluations of eWOM-observing and eWOM-posting consumers. These two groups might perceive eWOM responses differently when it comes to intrusiveness and privacy violation, which could have an influence on corporate reputation and perceived customer service. Comparing these two groups within one study might generate important insights.

Apart from focussing on perceived customer service and corporate reputation, it might be useful to investigate the likelihood of repurchase. It is interesting for future research to investigate whether successfully solved negative eWOM is enough for consumers to make a repurchase at the organization, or whether they still switch to a competitor. This might lead to useful knowledge, since high sales is the ultimate goal of many organizations.

Finally, eWOM messages written by acquaintances could result in different evaluations of perceived customer service and corporate reputation than eWOM messages written by unfamiliar consumers. Therefore, future research should investigate whether familiarity with the writer influences evaluations of organizations.

References

- Akter, S., D'Ambra, J., & Ray, P. (2013). Development and validation of an instrument to measure user perceived service quality of mHealth. *Information and Management, 50*, 181-195.
- Bataineh, A. Q. (2015). The impact of perceived e-WOM on purchase intention: The mediating role of corporate image. *International Journal of Marketing Studies, 7*, 126-137.
- Belén del Río-Lanza, A., Vázquez-Casielles, R., & Díaz-Martín, A. M. (2009). Satisfaction with service recovery: Perceived justice and emotional responses. *Journal of Business Research, 62*, 775-781.
- Boyd, B. K., Bergh, D. D., & Ketchen Jr. D. J. (2009). Reconsidering the reputation-performance relationship: A resourced-based view. *Journal of Management, 36*, 588-609.
- Brady, M. K., & Cronin, J. T. (2010). Some new thoughts on conceptualizing perceived service quality: A hierarchical approach. *Journal of Marketing, 65*, 34-39.
- Breitsohl, J., Khammash, M., & Griffiths, G. (2010). E-business complaint management: perceptions and perspectives of online credibility. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management, 23*, 653-660.
- Brodie, R. J., Ilic, A., Juric, B., & Hollebeek, L. (2013). Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Business Research, 66*, 105-114.
- Chiou, J-S., & Cheng, C. (2003). Should a company have message boards on its web sites? *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 17*, 50-61.
- Cho, Y., Im, I., & Hiltz, R. (2003). The impact of e-services failures and customer complaints on electronic commerce customer relationship management. *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior, 16*, 106-118.
- Chotpitayasunondh, V., & Douglas, K. M. (2016). How “phubbing” becomes the norm: The antecedents and consequences of snubbing via smartphone. *Computers in Human Behavior, 63*, 9-18.
- Dagger, T. S., Sweeney, J. C., & Johnson, L. W. (2007). A hierarchical model of health service quality: Scale development and investigation of an integrated model. *Journal of Service, 10*, 123-142.

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

- Deephouse, D. L., Newburry, W., & Soleimani, A. (2016). The effects of institutional development and national culture on cross-national differences in corporate reputation. *Journal of World Business, 51*, 463-473.
- Deighton, J. A., & Kornfeld, L. (2009). Interactivity's unanticipated consequences for marketers and marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 23*, 2-12.
- Dellarocas, C. (2003). The digitization of word of mouth: Promise and challenges of online feedback mechanisms. *Management Science, 49*, 1407-1424.
- Demmers, J., Dolen, W. M. van, & Weltevreden, J. W. J. (2014). "Bedankt voor het compliment!" Het effect van bedrijfsreacties op positieve online word-of-mouth. In: A. E. Bronner et al. (Eds.), *Ontwikkelingen in het marktonderzoek: Jaarboek MarktOnderzoek Associatie* (vol. 39, pp. 55-70). Haarlem, the Netherlands: SpaarenHout.
- DiStaso, M. W., Vafeiadis, M., & Amaral, C. (2015). Managing a health crisis on Facebook: How the response strategies of apology, sympathy and information influence public relations. *Public Relations Review, 41*, 222-231.
- Einwiller, S. A. & Steilen, S. (2015). Handling complaints on social network sites – An analysis of complaints and complaint responses on Facebook and Twitter pages of large US companies. *Public Relations Review, 41*, 195-204.
- European Publishers Council. (2015). *EPC global social media trends 2015*. Retrieved from <http://epceurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/epc-trends-social-media.pdf>
- Folkes, V. S., & Patrick, V. M. (2003). The positivity effect in perception of services: Seen one, seen them all? *Journal of Consumer Research, 30*, 125-137.
- Grégoire, Y., Salle, A., & Tripp, T. M. (2015). Managing social media crises with your customers: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *Business Horizons, 58*, 173-182.
- Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, D. D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the internet? *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 18*, 38-52.
- Hennig-Thurau, T., Malthouse, E. C., Friege, C., Gensler, S., Lobschat, L., Rangaswamy, A., & Skiera, B. (2010). The impact of new media on customer relationships. *Journal of Service Research, 13*, 311-330.

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

- Herr, P. M., Kardes, F. R., & Kim, J. (1991). Effects of word-of-mouth and product-attribute information on persuasion: An accessibility-diagnostics perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17, 454-462.
- Jeong, E., & Jang, S. (2011). Restaurant experiences triggering positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) motivations. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 30, 356-366.
- Kallweit, K., Spreer, P., & Toporowski, W. (2014). Why do customers use self-service information technologies in retail? The mediating effect of perceived service quality. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21, 268-276.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53, 59-68.
- Keller Fay Group, Market Research and Consulting Firm Dedicated to Word of Mouth (2014). *Busting the Myth that Negative WOM is More Powerful than Positive Talk*. Retrieved from <https://www.kellerfay.com/busting-myth-negative-wom-powerful-positive-talk/>
- Kim, Y-E., & Lee, J-W. (2010). Relationship between corporate image and customer loyalty in mobile communications service markets. *Africa Journal of Business Management*, 4, 4035-4041.
- Kim, S. J., Wang, R. J-H., Maslowska, E., & Malthouse, E. C. (2016). Understanding a fury in your words: The effects of posting and viewing electronic negative word-of-mouth on purchase behaviors. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 54, 511-521.
- Kniesel, H., Waiguny, M. K. J., & Diehl, S. (2014). Is it worth responding? The effect of different response strategies on the attitude toward the reviewed hotel. *Conference contribution Icora 2014*. Amsterdam: European Advertising Academy.
- Lee, Y. L., & Song, S. (2010). An empirical investigation of electronic word-of-mouth: Informational motive and corporate response strategy. *Computer in Human Behavior*, 26, 1073-1080.
- Local consumer review survey. (2016). Retrieved from <https://www.brightlocal.com/learn/localconsumer-review-survey/#UP>
- McDougall, G. H. G., & Levesque, T. (2000). Customer satisfaction with services: Putting perceived value into the equation. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 14, 392-410.

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

- Park, D-H., & Lee, J. (2008). eWOM overload and its effect on consumer behavioral intention depending on consumer involvement. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 7, 386-398.
- Park, H., & Lee, H. (2013). Show us you are real: The effect of human-versus-organizational presence on online relationship building through social networking sites. *Cyberpsychology, behavior and social networking*, 16, 265-271.
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 19, pp. 123-205). New York: Academic Press.
- Ponzi, L. J., Fombrun, C. J., & Gardberg, N. A. (2011). RepTrak Pulse: Conceptualizing and validating a short-form measure of corporate reputation. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 14, 15-35.
- Posavac, S. S., Sanbonmatsu, D. M., Kardes, F. R., & Fitzsimons, G. J. (2004). The brand positivity effect: When evaluation confers preference. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31, 643-651.
- Purnawirawan, N., de Pelsmacker, P., & Dens, N. (2015). The impact of managerial responses to online reviews on consumers' perceived trust and attitude. In I.B. Banks et al. (Eds.), *Advances in Advertising Research* (Vol. 5, pp. 63-74). Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer.
- Richins, M., & Root-Shaffer, T. (1988). The role of involvement and opinion leadership in consumer word-of-mouth: An implicit model made explicit. *NA – Advances in Consumer Research*, 15, 32-36.
- Ring, A., Tkaczynski, A., & Dolnicar, S. (2016). Word-of-mouth segments: Online, offline, visual or verbal? *Journal of Travel Research*, 55, 481-492.
- Rokka, J., Karlsson, K., & Tienari, J. (2013). Balancing acts: Managing employees and reputation in social media. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 30, 802–827.
- Schamari, J., & Schaefers, T. (2015). Leaving the home turf: How brands can use webcare on consumer-generated platforms to increase positive consumer engagement. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 30, 20-33.
- Smith, K. (2016, March 7). Marketing: 96 amazing social media statistics and facts for 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/96-amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts-for-2016/>

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

- Svensson, A. (2011). *Facebook – The social newspaper that never sleeps. A study of Facebook eWOM's persuasiveness on the receivers* (Master's thesis, University of Gothenburg). Retrieved from https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/26249/1/gupea_2077_26249_1.pdf
- Taylor, S. A., & Baker, T. L. (1994). An assessment of the relationship between service quality and customers satisfaction in the formation of consumers' purchase intention. *Journal of Retailing, 70*, 163-178.
- Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1971). Belief in the law of small numbers. *Psychological Bulletin, 76*, 105-110.
- Van Laer, T., & De Ruyter, K. (2010). In stories we trust: How narrative apologies provide cover for competitive vulnerability after integrity-violating blog posts. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 27*, 164-174.
- Van Noort, G., & Willemsen, L. M. (2012). Online damage control: The effects of proactive versus reactive webcare interventions in consumer-generated and brand-generated platforms. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 26*, 131-140.
- Van Noort, G., Willemsen, L. M., Kerkhof, P., & Verhoeven, J. W. M. (2014). Webcare as an integrative tool for customer care, reputation management, and online marketing: A literature review. In P. J. Kitchen and E. Uzunoglu (Eds.), *Integrated Communications in the Post-Modern Era* (pp. 77-99). Basingstoke, England: Palgrave MacMillian.
- Willemsen, L. M., Neijens, P. C., & Bronner, F. A. (2013). Webcare as customer relationship and reputation management? Motives for negative electronic word of mouth and their effect on webcare receptiveness. In S. Rosengren, M. Dahlen, and S. Okazaki (Eds.), *Advances in Advertising Research* (Vol. 4, pp. 55-73). London, England: Springer.
- Willemsen, L. M., Neijens, P. C., Bronner, F. A., & Ridder, J. A. de (2011). "Highly recommended!" The content characteristics and perceived usefulness of online consumer reviews. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 17*, 19-38.
- Xie, K. L., Zhang, Z., Zhang, Z., Singh, A., & Lee, S. K. (2016). Effects of managerial response on consumer eWOM and hotel performance: Evidence from TripAdvisor. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 28*, 2013-2034.

Appendix I

Survey questions on sevenpoint Likertscales

Perceived customer service

1 = strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree

1. Bedrijf [...] is vriendelijk
2. Bedrijf [...] laat zien consumenten graag te willen helpen
3. Bedrijf [...] begrijpt de behoeften van haar consumenten
4. Bedrijf [...] heeft verstand van zaken
5. Bedrijf [...] reageert snel op berichten
6. Bedrijf [...] geeft consumenten het gewenste antwoord
7. Bedrijf [...] probeert consumenten een zo goed mogelijke ervaring te bieden
8. De service die bedrijf [...] biedt is uitstekend

Corporate reputation

1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree

1. Bedrijf [...] geeft me een goed gevoel
2. Ik vertrouw bedrijf [...]
3. Ik bewonder en respecteer bedrijf [...]
4. Bedrijf [...] heeft een goede reputatie

Intrusiveness (only asked in conditions where a response was present)

1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree

1. De reactie van bedrijf [...] is opdringerig
2. De reactie van bedrijf [...] is inbreuk op de privacy van de consument

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

Appendix II

All stimuli used in this research per condition

Six stimuli of condition 1: positive eWOM followed by a reactive response.

Eva de Vries ► **Bedrijf X**
20 hrs · Scherpenheuvel, Belgium · 🌐

Super klantenservice van bedrijf X! Jullie hebben een sip kindje weer heel gelukkig gemaakt. Dankjewel :)

Like Comment Share

Top Comments ▾

Bedrijf X Wat goed om te horen dat onze verrassing zo in de smaak is gevallen, Eva. We zijn blij dat we weer een lach op zijn gezicht hebben kunnen toveren! 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 4 november om 19:50

Anne de Jong ► **Bedrijf Q**
4 november om 18:26 · 🌐

Pakje verloren? Geen probleem bij bedrijf Q ! Wederom bedankt voor de goede opvolging en service! 😊

Leuk Reactie Delen

Chronologisch ▾

Bedrijf Q Graag gedaan, Anne! 😊 We gaan er vanuit dat je de nalevering snel in huis hebt. Als we je nog ergens mee kunnen helpen, dan weet je ons te vinden. Voor nu alvast een fijn weekend.
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 1 · 4 november om 18:46

Ellen van de Berg ► **Bedrijf T**
2 november om 21:00 · Hilversum, Noord-Holland · 🌐

Top geregeld Bedrijf T, fijn gesprek gehad met James (klantenservice) en alles netjes en snel opgelost. Ga zo door!!!

Leuk Reactie Delen

3

Bedrijf T Graag gedaan Ellen! Dit vinden wij erg fijn om te horen 😊 We hopen dat we je snel weer bij ons terug zien. Veel plezier met je bestelling!
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 1 · 4 november om 18:46

Tessa van Dijk ► **Bedrijf R**
2 november om 20:20 · Zelzate, Vlaams Gewest, België · 🌐

Ben fantastisch geholpen door Wouter van jullie klantendienst bij een probleem met een cadeaukaart.
Waarvoor hartelijke dank bedrijf R!

Leuk Reactie Delen

Chronologisch ▾

Bedrijf R Wat goed om te lezen dat je naar tevredenheid geholpen bent, Tessa. Als je op een ander moment weer hulp nodig hebt, dan kun je ons ook via Facebook benaderen. We wensen je een fijne avond! 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 2 november om 20:32

Floor Jansen ► **Bedrijf P**
26 oktober om 17:32 · 🌐

Bedankt bedrijf P voor de koffer vol met Lonely Planets! Dat ik nog maar veel mooie reizen mag maken, first stop: Cuba & Costa Rica volgende week 🌍

Leuk Reactie Delen

8

Bedrijf P Leuk om te zien dat de boeken zo leuk in ontvangst zijn genomen, Floor! Heel erg veel plezier ermee. 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 1 · 26 oktober om 17:38

Iris Bakker ► **Bedrijf S**
15 oktober om 18:03 · 🌐

Babyflesjes niet aangekomen? Kaartje met excuses, een gift-card en refund binnen 2 werkdagen. Super service! Bedankt bedrijf S!

Leuk Reactie Delen

10

Bedrijf S Super leuk om te horen, Iris! 😊 Veel succes en plezier met het nieuwe gezinslid. Komt vast helemaal goed! 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 1 · 15 oktober om 18:30

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

Appendix II (continued)

Six stimuli of condition 2: positive eWOM followed by a proactive response.

The image displays six Facebook posts arranged in two columns. Each post consists of a customer's review and a business's response. The posts are as follows:

- Post 1 (Left):** Customer **Eva de Vries** (20 hrs, Scherpenheuvel, Belgium) reviews **Bedrijf X** for "Super klantenservice van bedrijf X! Zij hebben een sip kindje weer heel gelukkig gemaakt! :)". **Bedrijf X** responds: "Wat goed om te horen dat onze verrassing zo in de smaak is gevallen, Eva. We zijn blij dat we weer een lach op zijn gezicht hebben kunnen toveren! 😊".
- Post 2 (Right):** Customer **Tessa van Dijk** (2 november om 20:20, Zelzate, Vlaams Gewest, België) reviews **Bedrijf R** for "Net fantastisch geholpen door Wouter van de Bedrijf R klantendienst bij een probleem met een cadeaukaart. Heel netjes opgelost!". **Bedrijf R** responds: "Wat goed om te lezen dat je naar tevredenheid geholpen bent, Tessa. Als je op een ander moment weer hulp nodig hebt, dan kun je ons ook via Facebook benaderen. We wensen je een fijne avond! 😊".
- Post 3 (Left):** Customer **Anne de Jong** (4 november om 18:26) reviews **Bedrijf Q** for "Pakje verloren? Geen probleem bij bedrijf Q ! Wederom een zeer goede opvolging en service gekregen. Erg blij mee! 😊". **Bedrijf Q** responds: "Graag gedaan, Anne! 😊 We gaan er vanuit dat je de nalevering snel in huis hebt. Als we je nog ergens mee kunnen helpen, dan weet je ons te vinden. Voor nu alvast een fijn weekend."
- Post 4 (Right):** Customer **Floor Jansen** (26 oktober om 17:32) reviews **Bedrijf P** for "Bedankt bedrijf P voor de koffer vol met Lonely Planets! Dat ik nog maar veel mooie reizen mag maken, first stop: Cuba & Costa Rica volgende week 😊". **Bedrijf P** responds: "Leuk om te zien dat de boeken zo leuk in ontvangst zijn genomen, Floor! Heel erg veel plezier ermee. 😊".
- Post 5 (Left):** Customer **Ellen van de Berg** (2 november om 21:00, Hilversum, Noord-Holland) reviews **Bedrijf T** for "Top geregeld bij Bedrijf T, fijn gesprek gehad met James (klantenservice) en alles netjes en snel opgelost. Ga zo door!!!". **Bedrijf T** responds: "Graag gedaan Ellen! Dit vinden wij erg fijn om te horen 😊 We hopen dat we je snel weer bij ons terug zien. Veel plezier met je bestelling!".
- Post 6 (Right):** Customer **Iris Bakker** (15 oktober om 18:03) reviews **Bedrijf S** for "Babyflesjes niet aangekomen? Kaartje met excuses, een gift-card en refund binnen 2 werkdagen. Super service van bedrijf S!". **Bedrijf S** responds: "Super leuk om te horen, Iris! 😊 Veel succes en plezier met het nieuwe gezinslid. Komt vast helemaal goed! 😊".

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

Appendix II (continued)

Six stimuli of condition 3: positive eWOM without a reactive response

<p> Eva de Vries ▶ Bedrijf X 20 hrs · Scherpenheuvel, Belgium · 🌐</p> <p>Super klantenservice van bedrijf X! Jullie hebben een sip kindje weer heel gelukkig gemaakt. Dankjewel :)</p> <p>👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share</p>	<p> Tessa van Dijk ▶ Bedrijf R 2 november om 20:20 · Zelzate, Vlaams Gewest, België · 🌐</p> <p>Ben fantastisch geholpen door Wouter van jullie klantendienst bij een probleem met een cadeaukaart. Waarvoor hartelijke dank bedrijf R!</p> <p>👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen</p>
<p> Anne de Jong ▶ Bedrijf Q 4 november om 18:26 · 🌐</p> <p>Pakje verloren? Geen probleem bij bedrijf Q ! Wederom bedankt voor de goede opvolging en service! 😊</p> <p>👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen</p>	<p> Floor Jansen ▶ Bedrijf P 26 oktober om 17:32 · 🌐</p> <p>Bedankt bedrijf P voor de koffer vol met Lonely Planets! Dat ik nog maar veel mooie reizen mag maken, first stop: Cuba & Costa Rica volgende week 🤗</p> <p>👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen</p>
<p> Ellen van de Berg ▶ Bedrijf T 2 november om 21:00 · Hilversum, Noord-Holland · 🌐</p> <p>Top geregeld Bedrijf T, fijn gesprek gehad met James (klantenservice) en alles netjes en snel opgelost. Ga zo door!!!</p> <p>👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen</p>	<p> Iris Bakker ▶ Bedrijf S 15 oktober om 18:03 · 🌐</p> <p>Babyflesjes niet aangekomen? Kaartje met excuses, een gift-card en refund binnen 2 werkdagen. Super service! Bedankt bedrijf S!</p> <p>👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen</p>

Six stimuli of condition 4: positive eWOM without a proactive response

<p> Eva de Vries 20 hrs · Scherpenheuvel, Belgium · 🌐</p> <p>Super klantenservice van bedrijf X! Zij hebben een sip kindje weer heel gelukkig gemaakt! :)</p> <p>👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share</p>	<p> Tessa van Dijk 2 november om 20:20 · Zelzate, Vlaams Gewest, België · 🌐</p> <p>Net fantastisch geholpen door Wouter van de Bedrijf R klantendienst bij een probleem met een cadeaukaart. Heel netjes opgelost!</p> <p>👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen</p>
<p> Anne de Jong 4 november om 18:26 · 🌐</p> <p>Pakje verloren? Geen probleem bij bedrijf Q ! Wederom een zeer goede opvolging en service gekregen. Erg blij mee! 😊</p> <p>👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen</p>	<p> Floor Jansen 26 oktober om 17:32 · 🌐</p> <p>Bedankt bedrijf P voor de koffer vol met Lonely Planets! Dat ik nog maar veel mooie reizen mag maken, first stop: Cuba & Costa Rica volgende week 🤗</p> <p>👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen</p>
<p> Ellen van de Berg 2 november om 21:00 · Hilversum, Noord-Holland · 🌐</p> <p>Top geregeld bij Bedrijf T, fijn gesprek gehad met James (klantenservice) en alles netjes en snel opgelost. Ga zo door!!!</p> <p>👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen</p>	<p> Iris Bakker 15 oktober om 18:03 · 🌐</p> <p>Babyflesjes niet aangekomen? Kaartje met excuses, een gift-card en refund binnen 2 werkdagen. Super service van bedrijf S!</p> <p>👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen</p>

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

Appendix II (continued)

Six stimuli of condition 5: negative eWOM with a reactive response (i.e. solved negative eWOM)

 **Eva de Vries** ▶ **Bedrijf X**
4 november om 12:44 · 🌐

Nogal vervelend dat jullie de levering de volgende dag beloven op jullie website en ik 2 dagen later nog steeds niets in huis heb. Ook geen melding gehad van eventuele vertraging. Kan dit nagekeken worden aub? Alvast bedankt.

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

Chronologisch ▾

 **Bedrijf X** Dat is inderdaad verre van ideaal, Eva! We willen dit graag voor je nakijken. Kun je ons in een privébericht je bestelnummer sturen? Dit in verband met je privacy. Dan gaan we voor je uitpluizen waarom je pakket zijn reis naar jou heeft verlengd. We wachten je bericht af. 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 2 · 4 november om 12:52

 **Eva de Vries** Bedankt voor jullie snelle reactie. PB is verstuurd. Ik wacht op jullie antwoord. Bedankt! 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 4 november om 12:58

 **Tessa van Dijk** ▶ **Bedrijf R**
25 oktober om 17:28 · 🌐

Bedrijf R? Waar blijft mijn game nou? Op de site vermelden jullie dat die bezorgd wordt op de vrijgeefdatum, maar ik heb nog helemaal niks binnen gekregen 😞

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

Chronologisch ▾

 **Bedrijf R** Dat vraagt om onderzoek, Tessa! We snappen dat je zo snel mogelijk je game binnen wilt hebben. Heb je een bestelnummer voor ons in een privébericht? Dit in verband met je privacy. We horen het graag! 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 1 · 25 oktober om 17:40

 **Tessa van Dijk** Ik krijg hem morgen binnen zie ik in jullie berichtje. Bedankt voor het uitzoeken!
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 1 · 25 oktober om 20:14

 **Anne de Jong** ▶ **Bedrijf Q**
2 november om 15:33 · Appingedam, Groningen · 🌐

Waar blijft mijn nieuwe boek van Saskia Noort, Bedrijf Q? Heb het 30 oktober besteld en zou het dan 31 oktober binnen moeten hebben.. Heb tot nu nog steeds niks gezien

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

Chronologisch ▾

 **Bedrijf Q** Dat is niet prettig, Anne! Als het een brievenbuspakje is, wordt'ie niet op maandag bezorgd. We raden je aan om vandaag nog even af te wachten. Kun je ons het bestelnummer sturen in een PB? Dan kijken we even met je mee. 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 2 november om 15:37 · Bewerkt

 **Bedrijf Q** We hebben met je meegekeken, Anne! We zien dat het boek inmiddels jouw kant op is gestuurd. Als je nog meer vragen of opmerkingen hebt, schroom niet en stel ze aan ons in een privébericht. We zitten voor je klaar! 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 3 november om 14:25

 **Anne de Jong** Bedankt voor de moeite! Heb het boek inmiddels binnen en ben al druk aan het lezen!
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 4 november om 13:21

 **Floor Jansen** ▶ **Bedrijf P**
26 oktober om 17:30 · 🌐

Toch wel vreemd dat blu-ray van The Conjuring 2 overall binnen 24uur beschikbaar is en dit bij bedrijf P ongeveer 5 weken duurt, en dat net voor Halloween 😞

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

Chronologisch ▾

 **Bedrijf P** Dat is inderdaad vreemd, Floor. The Conjuring 2 is heel geschikt voor Halloween! Stuur je ons een privébericht? Dan kijken we of we ervoor kunnen zorgen dat de Blu-ray toch op tijd bij je op de mat kan liggen. We wachten je reactie af. 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 26 oktober om 17:51

 **Floor Jansen** Dat zou helemaal top zijn! PB verstuurd. Ben erg benieuwd!
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 26 oktober om 18:39

 **Ellen van de Berg** ▶ **Bedrijf T**
4 november om 4:58 · 🌐

Hoe zit het nu, bedrijf T? Volgens jullie is mijn pakket op woensdag verstuurd en zou ik het gisteren ontvangen moeten hebben. Ik word een beetje gefrustreerd van deze hele bestelling..

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

Chronologisch ▾

 **Bedrijf T** We begrijpen dat je je zorgen maakt, Ellen. Kun je ons het bestelnummer in een privébericht sturen? We zoeken graag even voor je uit wat er aan de hand is. 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 4 november om 8:06

 **Bedrijf T** Hartelijk dank, Ellen. We pakken dit voor je op! Je hoort van ons.
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 1 · 4 november om 14:49

 **Ellen van de Berg** Dankjewel bedrijf T! Heb mijn bestelling inmiddels ontvangen!
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 1 · 5 november om 16:47

 **Iris Bakker** ▶ **Bedrijf S**
15 oktober om 14:59 · 🌐

Heb woensdag ruim voor 20.00u besteld en het is nu, op zaterdagmiddag nog niet binnen. Ik was altijd een tevreden klant van bedrijf S, maar de laatste tijd maken jullie de beloftes niet waar. Jammer!!

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

Populairste reacties ▾

 **Bedrijf S** Dat klinkt niet goed, Iris. Zeker onze trouwe klanten maken we graag weer gelukkig! We gaan achterhalen wat er met je pakket is gebeurd. Kan je in een privébericht je bestelnummer doorgeven? Dit in verband met privacyrichtlijnen. We wachten je bericht af!
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 15 oktober om 15:18

 **Iris Bakker** Dag bedrijf S,
Bedankt voor de reactie en het kijken waar mijn pakket is. Deel 1 van het pakket is zojuist afgeleverd! Volgens jullie kan ik deel 2 18 oktober verwachten. Dank voor de duidelijkheid!
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 16 oktober om 10:33

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

Appendix II (continued)

Six stimuli of condition 6: negative eWOM with a proactive response (i.e. solved negative eWOM)

 **Eva de Vries**
4 november om 12:44 · 🌐

Nogal vervelend dat bedrijf X de levering de volgende dag belooft op de website en ik 2 dagen later nog steeds niets in huis heb. Ook geen melding gehad van eventuele vertraging. Een slechte zaak van bedrijf X!

👍 Leuk 🗨️ Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Bedrijf X** Dat is inderdaad verre van ideaal, Eva! We willen dit graag voor je nakijken. Kun je ons in een privébericht je bestelnummer sturen? Dit in verband met je privacy. Dan gaan we voor je uitpluizen waarom je pakket zijn reis naar jou heeft verlengd. We wachten je bericht af. 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 📌 2 · 4 november om 12:52

 **Eva de Vries** PB is verstuurd. Ik wacht op jullie antwoord. Bedankt alvast! 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 4 november om 12:58

 **Anne de Jong**
2 november om 15:33 · Appingedam, Groningen · 🌐

Heb het nieuwe boek van Saskia Noort besteld bij Bedrijf Q, maar nog steeds niet binnen. Heb hem 30 oktober besteld en zou het dus 31 oktober binnen moeten hebben. Maar nog steeds niks!

👍 Leuk 🗨️ Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Bedrijf Q** Dat is niet prettig, Annel! Als het een brievenbuspakje is, wordt 'ie niet op maandag bezorgd. We raden je aan om vandaag nog even af te wachten. Kun je ons het bestelnummer sturen in een PB? Dan kijken we even met je mee. 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 2 november om 15:37 · Bewerkt

 **Bedrijf Q** We hebben met je meegekeken, Annel! We zien dat het boek inmiddels jouw kant op is gestuurd. Als je nog meer vragen of opmerkingen hebt, schroom niet en stel ze aan ons in een privébericht. We zitten voor je klaar! 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 3 november om 14:25

 **Anne de Jong** Bedankt voor de moeite! Heb het boek inmiddels binnen en ben al druk aan het lezen!
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 4 november om 13:21

 **Ellen van de Berg**
4 november om 4:58 · 🌐

Nog steeds aan het wachten op mijn bestelling.. Volgens bedrijf T is mijn pakket op woensdag verstuurd en zou ik het gisteren ontvangen moeten hebben. Ik word een beetje gefrustreerd van deze hele bestelling..

👍 Leuk 🗨️ Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Bedrijf T** Hi Ellen, we begrijpen dat je je zorgen maakt. Kun je ons het bestelnummer in een privébericht sturen? We zoeken graag even voor je uit wat er aan de hand is. 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 4 november om 8:06

 **Bedrijf T** Hartelijk dank, Ellen. We pakken dit voor je op! Je hoort van ons.
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 📌 1 · 4 november om 14:49

 **Ellen van de Berg** Dankjewel bedrijf T! Heb mijn bestelling inmiddels ontvangen!
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 📌 1 · 5 november om 16:47

 **Tessa van Dijk**
25 oktober om 17:28 · 🌐

Zit nog steeds op mijn nieuwe game te wachten van Bedrijf R.. Op de site vermelden ze dat die bezorgd wordt op de vrijgeefdatum, maar ik heb nog helemaal niks binnen gekregen 😞

👍 Leuk 🗨️ Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Bedrijf R** Dat vraagt om onderzoek, Tessa! We snappen dat je zo snel mogelijk je game binnen wilt hebben. Heb je een bestelnummer voor ons in een privébericht? Dit in verband met je privacy. We horen het graag! 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 📌 1 · 25 oktober om 17:40

 **Tessa van Dijk** Ik krijg hem morgen binnen zie ik in jullie berichtje. Bedankt voor het uitzoeken!
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 📌 1 · 25 oktober om 20:14

 **Floor Jansen**
26 oktober om 17:30 · 🌐

Toch wel vreemd dat blu-ray van The Conjuring 2 overal binnen 24uur beschikbaar is en dit bij bedrijf P ongeveer 5 weken duurt, en dat net voor Halloween 😞

👍 Leuk 🗨️ Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Bedrijf P** Hi Floor, dat is inderdaad vreemd. The Conjuring 2 is heel geschikt voor Halloween! Zou je ons een privébericht kunnen sturen? Dan kijken we of we ervoor kunnen zorgen dat de Blu-ray toch op tijd bij je op de mat kan liggen. We wachten je reactie af. 😊
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 26 oktober om 17:51

 **Floor Jansen** Dat zou helemaal top zijn! PB verstuurd. Ben erg benieuwd!
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 26 oktober om 18:39

 **Iris Bakker**
15 oktober om 14:59 · 🌐

Pff woensdag ruim voor 20.00u besteld bij bedrijf S en mijn bestelling is nu, op zaterdagmiddag nóg niet binnen. Ik was altijd een tevreden klant van bedrijf S, maar de laatste tijd maken ze de beloftes niet waar. Jammer!!

👍 Leuk 🗨️ Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Bedrijf S** Hi Iris, dat klinkt niet goed. Zeker onze trouwe klanten maken we graag weer gelukkig! We gaan achterhalen wat er met je pakket is gebeurd. Zou je in een privébericht je bestelnummer kunnen doorgeven? Dit in verband met privacyrichtlijnen. We wachten je bericht af!
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 15 oktober om 15:18

 **Iris Bakker** Dag bedrijf S,
Bedankt voor de reactie en het kijken waar mijn pakket is. Deel 1 van het pakket is zojuist afgeleverd! Volgens jullie kan ik deel 2 18 oktober verwachten. Dank voor de duidelijkheid!
Vind ik leuk · Beantwoorden · 16 oktober om 10:33

THE EFFECTS OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EWOM

Appendix II (continued)

Six stimuli for condition 7: negative eWOM without a reactive response

 **Eva de Vries** ▶ **Bedrijf X**
4 november om 12:44 · 🌐

Nogal vervelend dat jullie de levering de volgende dag beloven op jullie website en ik 2 dagen later nog steeds niets in huis heb. Ook geen melding gehad van eventuele vertraging. Kan dit nagekeken worden aub? Alvast bedankt.

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Tessa van Dijk** ▶ **Bedrijf R**
25 oktober om 17:28 · 🌐

Bedrijf R? Waar blijft mijn game nou? Op de site vermelden jullie dat die bezorgd wordt op de vrijgeefdatum, maar ik heb nog helemaal niks binnen gekregen 😞

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Anne de Jong** ▶ **Bedrijf Q**
2 november om 15:33 · Appingedam, Groningen · 🌐

Waar blijft mijn nieuwe boek van Saskia Noort, Bedrijf Q? Heb het 30 oktober besteld en zou het dan 31 oktober binnen moeten hebben.. Heb tot nu nog steeds niks gezien

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Floor Jansen** ▶ **Bedrijf P**
26 oktober om 17:30 · 🌐

Toch wel vreemd dat blu-ray van The Conjuring 2 overal binnen 24uur beschikbaar is en dit bij bedrijf P ongeveer 5 weken duurt, en dat net voor Halloween 😞

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Ellen van de Berg** ▶ **Bedrijf T**
4 november om 4:58 · 🌐

Hoe zit het nu, bedrijf T? Volgens jullie is mijn pakket op woensdag verstuurd en zou ik het gisteren ontvangen moeten hebben. Ik word een beetje gefrusteerd van deze hele bestelling..

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Iris Bakker** ▶ **Bedrijf S**
15 oktober om 14:59 · 🌐

Heb woensdag ruim voor 20.00u besteld en het is nu, op zaterdagmiddag nóg niet binnen. Ik was altijd een tevreden klant van bedrijf S, maar de laatste tijd maken jullie de beloftes niet waar. Jammer!!

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

Six stimuli for condition 8: negative eWOM without a proactive response

 **Eva de Vries**
4 november om 12:44 · 🌐

Nogal vervelend dat bedrijf X de levering de volgende dag belooft op de website en ik 2 dagen later nog steeds niets in huis heb. Ook geen melding gehad van eventuele vertraging. Een slechte zaak van bedrijf X!

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Tessa van Dijk**
25 oktober om 17:28 · 🌐

Zit nog steeds op mijn nieuwe game te wachten van Bedrijf R.. Op de site vermelden ze dat die bezorgd wordt op de vrijgeefdatum, maar ik heb nog helemaal niks binnen gekregen 😞

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Anne de Jong**
2 november om 15:33 · Appingedam, Groningen · 🌐

Heb het nieuwe boek van Saskia Noort besteld bij Bedrijf Q, maar nog steeds niet binnen. Heb hem 30 oktober besteld en zou het dus 31 oktober binnen moeten hebben. Maar nog steeds niks!

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Floor Jansen**
26 oktober om 17:30 · 🌐

Toch wel vreemd dat blu-ray van The Conjuring 2 overal binnen 24uur beschikbaar is en dit bij bedrijf P ongeveer 5 weken duurt, en dat net voor Halloween 😞

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Ellen van de Berg**
4 november om 4:58 · 🌐

Nog steeds aan het wachten op mijn bestelling.. Volgens bedrijf T is mijn pakket op woensdag verstuurd en zou ik het gisteren ontvangen moeten hebben. Ik word een beetje gefrusteerd van deze hele bestelling..

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen

 **Iris Bakker**
15 oktober om 14:59 · 🌐

Pff woensdag ruim voor 20.00u besteld bij bedrijf S en mijn bestelling is nu, op zaterdagmiddag nóg niet binnen. Ik was altijd een tevreden klant van bedrijf S, maar de laatste tijd maken ze de beloftes niet waar. Jammer!!

👍 Leuk 💬 Reactie ➦ Delen