BLOGS-

A FORUM THAT CAN’T BE IGNORED

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Abstract

In today’s society, social media has become a part of many people’s everyday life. Social media can be seen as a new phenomenon with millions of daily users all over the world. Social media can further be defined as a forum where people are able to communicate and interact with each other.

This bachelor thesis is based on the social media phenomena; blogs - a forum that cannot be ignored. Internet is today commonly used as an information source, the question is if blogs work in the same way and what influence do blogs have over its receivers? This created the purpose of the research; to describe to what degree consumers are getting influenced over what is being negotiated in blogs. The purpose will be answered with help of a research question; what type of influence do blogs have over consumers? Which further are complemented with three hypotheses.

In this research a theoretical framework is presented with the theories; brand image, social media, blogs, word of mouth and opinion leader. To gain empirical evidence and to be able to answer the purpose of the research a quantitative method approach has been performed and the empirical findings were done through a questionnaire. Which was further analyzed, with help from the statistical data program SPSS.

The conclusion of the research has developed knowledge in the area, blog and moreover to which degree the forum influences its consumers. It could be established that blog have an impact and a relationship to the variables, brand image, word of mouth and opinion leader.

Key words: Blogs, Social Media, Brand Image, Opinion Leader and Word of mouth
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1. Introduction

The introduction chapter is constructed by a background and furthermore an introduction to the chosen subject, blogs. Blogs have in this chapter been discussed and problematized, which have resulted in a purpose and a research question of the study.

For ten years ago, traditional newspapers, for example The New York Times stood for 95 percent of all the news and message flow. Time has changed and today 95 percent of all information that a consumer read is through social media (Hughes, 2008), which can be defined as a forum where the readers are able to interact with each other (NE.se, 2012-04-02). One platform within social media is blogs - a forum that cannot be ignored.

1.1 Communication and Social Media

Communication is one of the most important human activities and is one of the most appreciated method to use when interacting and building relationship to others. Communication can therefore be defined as an exchange of thoughts where two or more people interact face-to-face, in letters or share pictures (Blythe, 2006).

Due to the developed technology the way to communicate has in the last couple of years changed. With Internet, information or a message can be spread in a very fast way, this through the whole worlds accessibility to the cyberspace and the 24 hours availability (Kirby & Marsden, 2006). It can therefore be established that the born of Internet has given the marketer big opportunities (Magnusson & Forssblad, 2009).

The World Wide Web was first introduced in 1990, with its growth Internet can today be seen as a phenomenon, with approximately two billions of users every day (ehow.com, 2012-02-20). With the emergence of Internet, social platforms have made it even easier to communicate with people from all over the world (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2006). However, social media can be described as a “variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumer’s intent on educating each other about products, brands, service, personalities and issues” (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2006, pp. 2). People are consequently able to communicate and interact more than ever before through different social media platforms (Li & Bernoff, 2011).
1.2 Influence

An individual can be influenced in many different ways, through culture-, social-, personal- and psychological factors. However, one of the strongest influencers is an opinion leader, which can be defined as a person with special skills, knowledge or opinion about a product, service or brand (Kotler et. al, 2009). This further can have an effect over a brand image which can be defined as the representation of a company constructed in a customers mind (Grönroos, 2007). Approximately 65 percent of all consumers are considering information from an opinion leader, family or friends as a trust worth and reliable source (Rice, 2001, as can be seen in Mason 2008).

With the rise of different social platforms, the forum blog has been developed and can today be seen as one of the forums that have the biggest influence within social media (Chau & Xu, 2007). In New York Times from 2006, the readers could read about a blog that had helped a company to grow its sale from 10,000 dollar to four million dollar in only four years (nytimes.com, 2006). A blog is an “open diary” where the writers share opinions with the readers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In 2009, 350 000 Swedish blogs were existing (internetstatistik.se, 2012-03-31) and with the wide use of Internet, this 350 000 blogs have the possibility to influence and share its opinions to its readers (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011).

1.3 Problem discussion

The popularity of social media makes it to a forum that cannot be ignored. It is a forum characterized by searching, publishing, dialogue, open participation, community, networking and fast diffusion of information (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011). Through social media companies have the opportunity to create a relationship with its consumers and also to be able to communicate with them (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011), in the same way social media can be seen as a consumer - to - consumer conversation (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Therefore the information that is figuring in social media is almost impossible for organizations to control; consequently companies are not able to have the power over the conversations about themselves (Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Anyhow, social media have changed companies earlier control over the content, timing and frequency over the negotiated information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). It can as a result be argued that the use of social media creates a reputation risk for companies. This since the user constantly faces unconfirmed information, both true and false (Ward & Ostrom, 2006).
The information can therefore differ from what the organization themselves share with the public, and their idea of what the company stands for and how they want to be seen (Aula, 2010).

One of today’s biggest trends in social media is blogging. As earlier described, companies existence in social media, in this case blogs, do not come without risks, this since the blog writer can have a big impact over the readers mind (Chen, 2010). How an organization wants to appear, do not necessary match the bloggers view of the company. Information that is negotiated in blogs can have a big influence on the readers mind, which can result in emerge in the companies view of the brand and the consumers brand image. What is transmitted about a company is almost impossible to control and it can have a great impact over the consumers view of the organization (Chen, 2010) and how the consumer perceives the brand image (Messner, 1963 as can be see in Meenaghan, 1995). This since consumers more frequently are relying to different social media platforms to conduct information and to make purchase decisions (Lempert, 2006 as can be seen in Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Companies needs to provide an appropriate, product, service process and communication, if the company succeed in this a brand image that is corresponding to the brand will be developed (Grönroos, 2007). The brand image can as mentioned before take place in different ways, for example a dissatisfied or disappointed customer can decide to share its thoughts in forums as blogs (Ward & Ostrom, 2006). This can result in that negative and maybe damaging information about the firm is available for other users online (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). Individuals’ cultural, personal and psychological elements are other factors that influence a purchase decision and an individuals’ view of a brand. This is something marketers in most case do not have an influence or control over but it can have a big effect on the perception of a brand. However, what can have a big impact on a consumers purchase decision, are people whom an individual see as an influence. These persons can be describes as someone whose views or advices affect an individual (Kotler et. al, 2008). Social media have a great power over existing as well as potential consumers in their purchasing behavior and in their view of a brand (Asur & Huberman, 2010). Nevertheless, consumers often tend to rely on persons they see as influencer who already has an experience or knowledge over a certain area (Solomon, 2009). Consumers do in this way have an ability to create an image over a brand, not based on his or hers own experience but
rather with help from social media (Asur & Huberman, 2010) or the influencer, so called opinion leader (Solomon, 2009). This will either have a positive or a negative affect over a brand (Solomon, 2009; Asur & Huberman, 2010).

The relationship between the receiver and the sender in the blogosphere can be seen as similar to the word of mouth phenomenon (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011). Word of mouth is something companies in many years have ignored, but are now considering as an important factor in the modern communication. Many studies have shown that word of mouth have a positive effect and efficiency on companies, today many retailers have discovered the phenomenon and realized the effectiveness with it. As well as word of mouth can be seen as a positive marketing tool, it can also have a bad influence over companies (Meiners. et al., 2010). This since bloggers usually is seen as a credible source of information and the receiver generally relies to the bloggers opinion (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011). As word of mouth implies, people tend to rely on peoples opinion in their surroundings (Meiners et al., 2010) and people they see as influencer (Kotler et. al, 2008).

Through this discussion it can most commonly be said that blogger can be seen as an independent actor. This means that a blog may have a high influence over its consumer, compared to a companies own marketing. It imply that it can affect more people if a blogger is satisfied or dissatisfied compared to an individual, because the blogger is able to reach more people through the World Wide Web than an individual are able to. Moreover, blogs can also imply a disagreement or a tension in between the companies view of their identity and the consumers picture of the company or a brand.

1.4 Purpose

To describe to what degree consumers are getting influenced over what is being negotiated in blogs.

1.5 Research question

What influence do blogs have over consumers?
1.6 Delimitation

Every research implies some kind of sample selection. This since it is impossible to involve a whole population in a research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This research will therefore be delimitated to the group in society that is consuming Internet and further blogs to the greatest extent. According to a study performed by the Swedish Central bureau of statistic, 2011, this group in society constitute university students in between 19-25 years old (scb.se, 2012-03-18). This study will therefore focus on University students in this age group at Linnaeus University this will also make the sample. Moreover, the research does not focus on blogs written by companies but rather individuals as bloggers.

1.7 Outline for each chapter

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<tr>
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<td>The discussion and conclusion section have combined the research. The empirical findings will be analyzed with help from the theoretical framework.</td>
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2. Theoretical Framework

There are many factors that have an influence over a consumer, this research will though focus on brand image, opinion leader and word of mouth. The research will further see if there are a connection between these three concepts and the variable blog. The theories have a central importance to the paper and a deep knowledge about them are required to be able to answer the purpose as well as the research question of the study.

2.1 Blogs and Social Media

2.1.1 Social Media

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) discuss that the trend of social media can be seen as an evolution, the use of Internet has today the same purpose as when it was borned. Social media has transformed the World Wide Web to what it was ordinary was created for; “A platform to facilitate information exchange between users” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, pp 60). In the last couple of years social media has grown tremendously, an arena where people are able to share personal identities and public messengers with each other have been created. Moreover, social media allows people to build and maintain a network of social interaction (Trusov, Buklin & Pauwels, 2009).

What makes social media so powerful is according to Li & Bernoff (2011) the people itself. Mangold & Falds (2009) mean that social media have become a major factor in consumer behaviour with help of the different word of mouth forums like blogs and social networking sites.

The rise of social media has created big opportunities for companies, to interact with existing as well as potential consumers, this to a low cost and a high degree of efficiency media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Hughes, 2008). Mangold & Falds (2009) support this discussion and continues with that many companies have today realized the importance of the concept, social media, and are involving the phenomenon in there marketing. Meiners et. al. (2010) further discuss that if a company is not presented in social media they run the risk to not be able to meet and correct negative comments and consequently have it harder to build a positive reputation. Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels (2009) argues that many online communities use different social media platforms to “spread the word”. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) though mean that the use of social media is not always easy, Ward & Ostrom (2006) continued this fact by discussing that social
media contains some risks for companies. Dissatisfied or disappointed consumers have with the born of Internet and social media changed from a private to a public phenomenon. What for a couple of years ago was shared with family and friends are today shared and available for the whole world through the web (Ward & Ostrom, 2006).

2.1.2 Blogs
It can be established that blogs have a great power over consumers, research has shown that six out of ten blog readers have purchased a product they were recommended on a blog. Blogs do consequently have a big influence power over consumers and a great penetrating power (www.svd.se).

Blogs can be presented as one of the earliest forum within social media. In its beginning, blogs were introduced as an “open diary” with the purpose of bringing online writers together to create a community (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, it is in the last couple of years blogs have become increasingly popular and is today one of the more rapidly growing concepts within social media (Chau & Xu, 2007).

The forum blogs can be seen as a personal journal containing written thoughts, comments, links and pictures (Li & Bernoff, 2011; Maurya, 2011). Blog readers can furthermore start a conversation with the blogger through posting comments on a particular blog (Li & Bernoff, 2011). Consequently a blog can be defined as a forum where the readers can be exposed with detailed information from the bloggers personal life and with information over his or her thoughts and view of the world (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011). It can also be stated that social media and so further blogs have been replacing traditional journalism (Chen, 2010; Maurya, 2011). A recently performed study from 2011 showed that blogs were ordered on place number four out of ten global entertainment websites. This means that influential bloggers becomes stars themselves and can with today’s technology reach millions of readers worldwide (Colliander & Dahlén 2011). What is posted on blogs are usually seen as a more trustworthy source compared to for example companies own website. This since a blog usually is independent of marketers’ own selling interest and therefore the review is seen as a more credible source since it reflects the products actual performance (Lee, 2009). In the same way anyone can create a blog and the bloggers are commonly no trained
journalists and therefore the reader cannot be sure over that what is written is fair and correct (Johnson & Kaye, 2004).

So, how does it work? Is it just one person who is spreading his or her opinions to another? It is just about its function, it starts with one single event which further grows in a fast way and becomes ever more complex through networks. This interaction explains how the information or ideas are being spread from one person to another (Farrell, 2008).

As with everything, so even blogs do not come without risks. It can take form through dissatisfied or disappointed consumers who share their complaints in blogs (Ward & Ostrom, 2006). This may lead to that damaging information about the company is spread over Internet (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). An Ipsos MORI survey, 2006, even found that one third of the blog readers decided to not by a product after reading a negative review (Bulik, 2007 as can be see in Lee, 2009).

Moreover, blogs can be seen as a new forum of social interaction on the web. A forum as can be characterized by shared information which have an influence power over its receivers (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011).

2.2 Brand image

Brand image can be described as the representation of the goods or service that is constructed in the consumers mind of a company (Grönroos, 2007). Keller (1993) as can be seen in Lee, Lee & Wu (2009) defines brand image as a “perception about a brand as reflect to any brand aspect within the customer’s memory” (Lee, Lee & Wu, 2009 pp 3). It is the consumers thoughts and feelings towards a brand and can therefore be described as the mental image an individual have over a brand (Lee, Lee & Wu, 2011). An image can consequently be describes as the construction of the public impression of an organization or a brand (Bernstein, 1992 as can be seen in Hatch & Schultz, 1997). A companies image will in addition result in a companies reputation in either a positive or a negative way (Gray & Balmer, 1998; Vytautas et. al. 2007). Image can be formed and affected in many different ways, by the company itself as well as by other groups or individuals in society (Hatch & Schultz, 1997).

A brand image is working as a filter on the perceived service or product seen by the consumer. A positive brand image is enhancing the experience while a negative image is working in the opposite way. The importance of communicating a
positive and favorable image is therefore of central importance for a company and can further be seen as a resource (Grönroos, 2008). What companies send out is their identity, which basically are what the company chooses to negotiate about themselves, this are consequently something that can be controlled. Brand image on the other hand is the consumers perception of a company, this is consequently nothing that a company can control (Gray & Bamler, 1998; Meenaghan, 1995).

Image is influencing expectations (Grönroos, 2008) and can further be seen as a help for consumers when searching for information. This regarding both information negotiated from companies as well as from word of mouth (Li & Bernoff, 2011). A positive brand image is of central importance since it can be seen as recourse for companies, this since image has an ability to influence consumers apprehension of a company (Grönroos, 1993; Virvilait et. al. 2007). Therefore brand image can be seen as a result of a consumers experience as well as their expectations of a company (Grönroos, 1993). Further a positive image makes it easier for companies to communicate in an effective way and it makes people more receivable to word of mouth. A negative image on the other hand has the opposite effect on a company (Grönroos, 1993; Martenson, 2007; Virvilait et. al., 2007).

The image of a company can diversify between different individuals or groups (Grönroos, 1993). People are usually being described by their personality perceived by others and in the same way brands can be described in terms of their image perceived by customers. Studies have shown that customers often prefer brands and stores with image consistent with their self-image (Sirgy, 1982, 1985, 1986 in Graeff 1997). Self-image is a persons own perception of his or hers identity (Kotler et. al, 2009). Consumers often purchase products that reflect their self-image (Solomon & Douglas, 1987 as can be see in Graeff, 2007). Consumers who purchase a specific brand helps them to express whom they are and how they want to be seen by others (Graeff, 2007). A brand choice is as a result based on emotional feelings about a brand and the brands image seen by the consumers. How the brand satisfies consumers needs and fit the consumers relationship to the individuals’ world is other factor that plays an important role in the purchase decision (Meenaghan, 1995). An other study has verified this fact and shown that people are more willing to purchase products that they can identify themselves through, which further can result in a positive brand image (Graeff, 2007).

Further brand image is observed to influence a purchase intention, and with a strong
and favorable brand image the purchase intention would be larger (Wang & Yang, 2010). Because of the individual perception of a brand an image cannot be copied by competitors. However, even if competitors offering might look the same, the brand image want be the same because of the consumers individual perception and experience (Kotler et. al., 2008).

If a brand have a positive image, individuals would believe more in companies own marketing which further may result in a purchase (Wang & Yang, 2010). In addition a positive image from the consumers point of view put expectations on the company. If the experienced service quality answers the image it will enhance to the better but if the company does not meet the image the effect will be the opposite (Grönroos, 1993).

Moreover, a brand image can be described as the reality, therefore it is important for a company to negotiate something that is coherence with the reality. If companies fail in this process the reality will be the winner (Grönroos, 1993).

As earlier established a blog is usually created by an individual writer which implies that the blog is independent of marketers own selling interest (Lee, 2009) and therefore the forum can be discussed to have a great power over its receivers (www.svd.se). Furthermore brand image can be influenced by different factors, one possible influence source is a blog which as earlier discussed have the power to influence its receivers opinions (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011).

2.3 Opinion Leader and Word of Mouth

2.3.1 Opinion Leader

Today the human have less time available and further less money to spend on searching and evaluating information and alternatives. This can be seen as a reason to why consumers want to find information about a particular product or service as quickly and easy as possible (van der Merwe & van Heerden, 2009). Further van der Merwe & van Heerden (2009) mean that Internet has helped people in this phase. Internets large amounts of information that can be collected in a short time and for no cost have made it possible.

In all groups there are influencers, so called opinion leader (Kapferer, 2008). With their special skills, knowledge and personality these persons are able to influence others (Kotler et. al., 2009). An opinion leader helps the receiver to form their
attitudes, knowledge and opinions (Weimann et al., 2007). Opinion leaders can be discussed to be characterized by high status, education and social standing and can with this attributes be able to affect the receiver (Venkatraman, 1989 as can be see in Li & Du, 2010). However, opinion leaders can influence people in different ways. They can act as role models, which leads to imitations, they are giving advice and direction for purchase and use or they are spreading information through word of mouth (Chau & Hui, 1998). An opinion leader can help and gain a company in many ways, this through spreading product information, recommendations and personal comments (Li & Du, 2010).

The relationship between consumers and opinion leaders can be described as a large network. When opinion leaders share and recommend products online the receivers will communicate with them and further share it with other consumers (Meng et al. 2011). An opinion leader can in many ways be seen to have a power over its receiver. They have a knowledge power since they have evaluated the product or service attributes in an objective way (Menzel, 1981 as can be see in Weimann et al., 2007). Opinion leaders can also be seen to have a social power because of their status and position in society. Since they commonly are acting individually and are not connected to a company the information spread are usually more critical, this compared to companies own marketing or paid communication. An opinion leader is further discussed to share similar values and believes with the customers' and therefore they can also be seen to have a reference power. Since the consumers share common interest and believes with the opinion leader the information is more convincing (Solomon, 2009).

It has through previous research been stated that there are a relationship between opinion leaders and word of mouth (Meng et al. 2011; Richins, Root-Shaffer, 1988). This since opinion leaders is spreading information and recommendations to its followers. An opinion leader is usually known by society, for example movie stars and artists (Meng et al. 2011). Since opinion leaders have an influence over consumers, companies work hard to identify and find these leaders but unfortunately many of the influencer are everyday consumers and are consequently hard to find (Solomon, 2009).

Moreover, in this section it has been established that opinion leaders have an influence over its receivers (Kapferer, 2008) and are commonly not connected to a certain brand or company (Solomon, 2009). It is therefore possible that an opinion leader can have an effect over an individual’s brand image. This since image can be
affected in different ways for examples by an individual (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Further blogs are seen as a credible information source which have an influence over its consumers (Lee, 2009) and can through this influence millions of readers (Colliander & Dahlén 2011).

2.3.2 Word of Mouth

Word of mouth can be described as a communication between two or more people who is spreading information about a product, service or brand. In other words consumers who are providing other consumers with information which will either have a positive or negative affect (Meiners et. al. 2010). Word of mouth will generally have a positive affect over companies, and it will further contribute in new consumers (Meiners, et. al. 2010). Word of mouth has nowadays become more important (Rice, 2001 as can be see in Mason, 2008). However, 80 percent of the consumers of a brand are influence by other people compared to traditionally advertising. Further 65 percent of the consumers are looking for information from families and friends (Rice, 2001, as can be seen in Mason 2008).

The fact that word of mouth is rising in importance is something that Dye (2000) supports. Word of mouth can be seen as a “buzz” and it is a phenomenon that has change the way of marketing (Dye, 2000). This fact is also supported by Meiners et. al. (2010) who argues that McCathy’s (1960) “four P’s”, (promotion, price, place, product) is a good basic structure for a companies marketing, however, in today’s environment word of mouth needs to be included.

Word of mouth marketing is today a big phenomenon and has mostly grown with help of Internet and especially with help of social media. With this consumer have the opportunity to share thoughts, preference and experience with others. Therefore companies’ should use the opportunity with word of mouth in their marketing online (Trusov et. al. 2009).

A performed research regarding word of mouth marketing has been implemented with an aim to see the interaction between opinion leaders, fans and supporter who further are spreading the word to followers. The study showed that these leaders had an effect on its followers, which leads to spreading waves of purchasing (Farrell, 1998). As mentioned, word of mouth can be seen as a “buzz”, where people want to share their thoughts with others (Dye, 2000). Generation Y, 19-27 years old
(Kotler et. al., 2008) are nowadays harder to reach with traditional marketing. The best way to reach this generation is by word of mouth (Usatoday.se 2012-03-31).

With Internets rise and the increase of social media, word of mouth is moving much faster (Mohr, 2001). Internet has also provided companies with control opportunities regarding word of mouth. This since companies as well as all other Internet users has access to consumers reviews and thoughts and can consequently answer and meet possible complaints (Plummer, 2007 in Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011).

However it is seen as a very effective method within advertising but it do not come without difficulties (Mason, 2008). Nevertheless, in the same way as word of mouth can “make” a product or a company it can also have the opposite effect and “break “it. Consumers are furthermore relying more heavily on negative word of mouth compared to positive word of mouth. This especially regards new products and services, the human are in these situations paying more attention to negative reviews than to the positive word (Solomon, 2009). Negative word of mouth has been established to travel faster and further than the positive word (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011; Helm 2010). As mentioned before word of mouth tend to diffuse in a very fast way and information tends to change by traveling between people, the truth can sometimes change on the way. Word of mouth can in this way be very dangerous for a company especially if it is false (Solomon, 2009).

Word of mouth is not a new phenomenon or concept, but today it is considered as an important factor in marketing and in a consumers purchasing behavior. Word of mouth has for a long time been ignored by companies, this is due to the lake of discussion around the phenomenon in marketing literature. However, many companies have today understood the importance and the effectiveness of word of mouth, and how powerful it can be within social media (Meiners et. al. 2010).

Word of mouth is in this chapter stated as information forwarded by an individual (Meiners et. al. 2010) and as earlier discussed blogs are usually created by individuals with no connection to a company. Because of this consumers look at information in blogs’ as a more reliable source than companies own marketing (Lee, 2009). Therefore the information negotiated in blogs a can be seen as word of mouth information which consequently can be dangerous for a company (Solomon, 2009).
2.4 Theoretical discussion

Brand image is a phenomenon that companies have no control over (Gray & Balmer, 1998), however it can be influenced by many different factors. Social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), blogs (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011), opinion leader (Li & Du, 2010) and so even word of mouth (Meiners et al. 2010), are influence elements that can result in image. These factors are nothing that a company can control or have an influence over, but they have a power over consumers image towards a brand (Gray & Bamler, 1998; Meenaghan, 1995). Even since image is nothing that a company have an impact over, they should work with negotiating a favorable identity (Gray & Bamler, 1998; Meenaghan, 1995) and be visible in social media to answer consumers complains or questions (Meiners et al., 2010), this to help consumers to build a positive image towards a brand (Wang & Yang, 2010).

With the high rise of users in social media and so even blogs it implies both risks and opportunities for a brand (Trusov et al., 2009; Chen, 2010). This since many consumers see bloggers as influencer with an impact over the receiver (Mason, 2008). Consumers tend to rely more on people in their surrounding (Rice, 2001, as can be seen in Mason 2008) or people they see as opinion leader (Kotler et. al., 2009). Therefore the information negotiated in blogs is usually seen as a more trustworthy compared to a companies own marketing (Rice, 2001, as can be seen in Mason 2008; Kotler et. al., 2009). A brand can because of this be stated to be dependence on their image (Vytautas et. al. 2007) and furthermore the sources that can influence the image. This can be both positive and negative for a company, but since the traveling word has the ability to change on the way it may amount a rumor risk (Solomon, 2009).

Everybody perceives companies identity and so even image in different ways (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). How information is being negotiated on forums in social media for example blogs, are consequently impossible for companies and so even bloggers to control (Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Furthermore image can be seen as a result of a consumers experience as well as their expectations of a company (Grönroos, 1993).

2.5 Chapter summary

The concepts discussed in this chapter, social media, blogs, brand image, opinion leader and word of mouth are variables that influence and affect a consumer. The different theories will help the researchers to create a knowledge in the area of blogs.
3. Conceptualization

Through the theoretical framework, knowledge and understanding over factors and in which way consumers and so further companies can be affected and influenced by blog consumptions has been created. However, it needed to be stated in which way and how consumers can be influenced by blogs. This is discussed through the research model and the three stated hypotheses in this chapter.

3.1 Research model

To clarify the link and the possible correlation between the different concepts from the theoretical framework a model has been constructed. The constructed research model (Figure 3;1) has an aim to help the researchers to establish the different influence aspects a blog may have over a consumer. The objects and the link between them have been established through the constructed theoretical framework.

Blogs have a big impact over its consumers and blog can therefore be discussed to be seen as an opinion leader (Li & Du, 2010). Further blogs may create word of mouth which is shared by the opinion leader and furthermore by the consumer (Meng et. al. 2011). Since blogger's have a big influence over its consumers and can be argued to be seen as an opinion leader this can affect a brand image.

Figure: 3;1 Research model:
Authors’ own illustration
The research model (Figure 3;1) helps the researcher to define what blog consumption might lead to. However, this research will not focus on all five relationships due to that previous research already has established that a relationship between some of the variables exists. This regards the correlation between opinion leader, word of mouth and brand image. Therefore the model this research will apply is illustrated below (Figure 3.2) which focuses on three relationships.

![Research model](image)

**Figure: 3;2 Research model:**
Authors’ own illustration

### 3.2 Hypotheses testing
According to Aaker et. al. (2011) hypothesis testing starts with an assumption, so called a hypothesis, based on a population parameter. The next step contains of conducting data from a suitable sample which is used to decide if the hypothesis are correct, or not.

Through the theoretical framework three hypotheses have been developed which needs to be tested in the empirical material which further will be collected. The three hypotheses will together create a complete reflection over what is going to be investigated in this research. It will also help the researchers to see the relevance and connection between the factors and further the way it influence consumers. This will lead to that the hypotheses will be either accepted or rejected.

#### 3.2.1 First hypothesis – Brand Image
From the theoretical framework it could be established that companies are aiming for a positive brand image among their consumers. However, many aspects can affect a brand image. Blogs has nowadays become a part of many people’s everyday life, and have the possibility to reach and influence millions of readers (Colliander & Dahlén 2011). What do needs to be investigated is if a correlation between the two concepts brand image and blogs exist, therefore the first hypothesis was created.
H₁ – *Blogs’ have a positive impact over a brand image*

3.2.2 Second hypothesis – Word of mouth

Word of mouth is defined as a communication between two or more people how share information with each other (Meiners et. al. 2010). With the rise of social media, word of mouth is moving much faster (Trusov et. al. 2009) and people are further tending to rely more heavily on information from people in their surroundings or people they rely on, compared to a company’s own marketing (Lee, 2009). What needs to investigated is if the information spread in blogs result in further communication, word of mouth, by its receivers. By this the second hypothesis was created.

H₂ – *Blog consumption result in word of mouth*

3.2.3 Third hypothesis – Opinion leader

From the theoretical framework it could be established that opinion leaders have an influence over consumers. Opinion leaders are people with special skill or knowledge in a certain area and have the possibility to influence others (Kotler et. al., 2009). However, are there a correlation between opinion leaders and blogs existing, can bloggers be seen as opinion leaders? By this discussion the third hypothesis was created.

H₃ – *Blogs’ are often seen as opinion leaders*

3.3 Conceptual framework

The table below contains the conceptual framework used for this research (Table 3.1). The conceptual and the operational definitions stated in this table act as a base for the operationalization and furthermore the constructed questionnaire.
To clarify the link and correlation from the theoretical framework a constructed research model has been created (Figure 3.2). The model shows the impact a blog may have over its consumer.

Three hypotheses have been designed which through the empirical investigation will be possible to answer. The hypotheses will further be rejected or accepted.
4. Methodology

In this chapter a clarification of how the research have been conducted and performed will be presented. The chapter contains of which method the research has approached, how the data have been implemented and which method that have been used to analyzed the collected data. In the end of every subchapter a discussion of the selected approach has been stated. In the end of the chapter a summary of the selected approached can be found.

4.1 Research approach

What kind of research approach that is suitable with the study depends on the aim with the research (Aaker et.al., 2011). Which theories that are going to be used and how the empirical data is going to be collected is other factors that needs to be considered (Bryman & Bell, 2011). How the data is going to be collected depends on the research of interest and an appropriate method needs to be determined. Is the study focusing on quantization considering the collection and analyze of data, or is the centrum of the study depending on qualitative research where the major importance is the individual word (Bryman & Bell, 2011)

4.1.1 Inductive vs. deductive research

There are two different ways of performing a research, inductive or deductive research. Deductive research is most frequently used when the researcher wants to establish if a relationship between the theories and the empirical data exist (Bryman & Bell, 2005). From deductive research a conclusion can be drawn through logical reasoning (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005). Since deductive research implies that the researcher already are familiar with the subject and chosen theories, hypotheses can be developed which will be based on the empirical research. The collected data will result in that the hypotheses will be either accepted or rejected (Bryman & Bell, 2005) (Table 4;1).

**Table Deductive: 4;1**: Authors’ own illustration

The table is adapted from Bryman & Bell (2011) pp. 23
However, a research can be performed in the other way around as well, so-called inductive research. The research approach implies that an observation that comes up with a result will be the first step. The result will further be tested in the theory (Bryman & Bell, 2005). The research approach can consequently be defined as the theory as an outcome of the research (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005).

This research will apply the deductive approach. Since the stated hypotheses are based on known theories which further are tested in empirical data. There is consequently a lot of existing research available about the different theories which are why the deductive approach will be followed.

4.1.2 Qualitative vs. Quantitative research

Simply qualitative research obtains insight and understanding over the problem while quantitative research has an aim to quantify the data (Malhotra, 2010).

The inductive research approach can be connected to qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2005). Qualitative research can be seen as an approach for exploring (Creswell, 2009) and the aim with the research is to get a deeper and more complete knowledge of individuals or groups attributes to a social or human problem (Bryman, 2011). Qualitative research often needs to be based on more than one data collection method (Bryman & Bell, 2005), which will help the researcher to get a variation in the data gathering (Bryman, 2001) (Table 4;2). Qualitative research is often criticized for being subjective, since the result usually is build on the researchers’ preference of what is importance from the performed method. The critics also discuss the consequences the method can imply if a researcher creates a relationship to the respondents. This approach also makes it hard to generalize the result since the performed method is applied on a specific group in society which most of the time can not be applied in any other context (Bryman & Bell, 2005).

The quantitative research on the other hand is connected to the deductive research (Bryman & Bell, 2005). The information that will be gathered in quantitative research, are used to summarize large amount of data (Ruane, 2005). This method makes it possible to use statistic analyze programs which will help the researcher to answer the hypotheses, which is based on the theory (Bryman, 2001). Quantitative research can be explained as a more formalized, structured and controlled approach compared to qualitative research (Table 4;2). The aim with quantitative research is to
make a generalization, the method is most of the time connected with surveys or so also called, questionnaires. Quantitative research also implies some negative aspects, for example the method does not differentiate between people and social institutions and the natural world (Bryman & Bell, 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
<th>Quantitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents view</td>
<td>Researchers view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>Distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured</td>
<td>Structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inductive</td>
<td>Deductive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few respondents, high variables numbers</td>
<td>High respondents, few variables numbers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4:2; Qualitative vs. Quantitative; Authors' own illustration*
*The table is adapted from Bryman & Bell (2011) p. 322*

The purpose of this research is to investigate how consumers are influenced through blog consumption from a large amount of respondents the quantitative research is most appropriate. If is possible to draw a generalizations that can be analyzed through statistic data. Through the analyzed data the established hypotheses can be either accepted or rejected.

**4.2 Research design**
A research design works as a help for how to use a specific method and how to analyze the composed data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Consequently the research design work as a guide for the research and it helps the study to move towards its objective (Aaker et. al. 2011). It creates the foundation of the research and can be classified into two; exploratory and conclusive design (Table 4:3). The goal with exploratory research is to obtain insight and understanding of the research problem (Malhotra, 2010). Thus, there is usually little previous knowledge to build the study on. The method in the exploratory research can be connected to qualitative research (Aeker et. al., 2011) and the sample size is as a result, small. The conclusive research on the other hand is of the more formal and structured design. The sample size is large and is build on a quantitative research.
Conclusive research design may be either descriptive or casual and descriptive research design may further be cross-sectional or longitudinal (Malhotra, 2010).

As the name imply descriptive research objective is to describe something, most commonly market characteristics or functions. Descriptive research assume that the researcher has much prior knowledge about the problem and the design requires a specification of; who, what, when, where, why and way of the research. It is also characterized by clearly defined data and the research is preplanned, structured and the sample size is based on a large group (Malhotra, 2010). The other branch is the casual research, which is used when it is important to show how one variable is a source or determines of another variable (Aeker et. al., 2011).

The further classification that has to be done is if the design is cross-sectional or longitudinal. Cross-sectional design implies a collection of data from more than one case. The data gathering take place in a particular moment with an aim to result in a set of quantitative or qualitative information. The cross-sectional design strives for discovering a pattern and a link between the different variables. Longitudinal design is in contrast, mostly used with an aim to discover modifications. This design amount that a selection of individuals are studied more than one time (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Cross-sectional design can in additional be divided into single and multiple cross-sectional design. Single cross-sectional design implies that a sample of respondents is selected from the target population to contribute with information at one occasion (Malhotra, 2010). Multiple cross-sectional designs can however be described as a design how repeats two or more cross-sectional studies with an aim to investigate time and changes (Ruane, 2005) (Table 4.3).
This paper will focus on the descriptive research and further the cross-sectional and single cross-sectional design. Due to the research’s purpose which is to investigate to what degree consumers are influenced by blogs. Further a large sample is required and the researchers have prior knowledge in the subject. Moreover, the performed method has been taken place at a particular moment with an aim to discover a link between different variables. Due to the limitation of time and resources during the research.

### 4.3 Data Sources

In a research there are two ways of collecting information, primary or secondary data gathering (Aaker et al., 2011).

Secondary data can be described as information that has been collected in the past for another reason than the current study. Secondary data can therefore be seen as one of the easiest and inexpensive ways of gathering information (Aaker et al., 2011). It can further be discussed that secondary data can be collected and located quickly (Malhotra, 2010). There are some disadvantages by using secondary data (Aaker et al., 2011). As mentioned before the data have been collected for another purpose than the study in question, therefore the relevance of the data need to be taken into consideration (Malhotra, 2010). This also implies that a number of assumptions need to be drawn (Aaker et al., 2011).

However, secondary data can be a valuable source for primary research (Aaker et al., 2011). Primary data is collected especially to address a specific research
subject. It though implies high involvement by the research and it is a time consuming and expensive method (Malhotra, 2010).

This research will have a major focus on primary data but secondary data will in some case work as a complement. This mainly in the introduction and problem discussion chapter to create an understanding for the subject. However, the research will be based on primary data since the research will gain an answer on the specific research problem. The paper also conduct a relatively new concept with not that much previous research, furthermore the data needs to be updated.

4.4 Research strategy

Many factor needs to be consider when choosing research method. Every method implies different ways of collecting and analyzing the empirical data as well as them all have advantages and disadvantages. The researcher needs to be able to identify which method that is most suitable to the research. A couple of question can act as a help when considering which research method that is most appropriate (Table 4.4). The table shows how the three conditions; the type of research question, the control required by the investigator and the methods focus on contemporary events relation to the different research methods are connected to the five alternative research strategies (Yin, 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>(1) Form of Research Question</th>
<th>(2) Requires Control of Behavioral Events?</th>
<th>(3) Focus on Contemporary Events?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>how, why?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>who, what, where, how many, how much?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival Analysis</td>
<td>who, what, where, how many, how much?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes/no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>how, why?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>how, why?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.4; Research strategy: Authors’ own illustration
The table is adapted from Yin (2009) pp. 8*

What is most important when selecting the research strategy is to consider what kind of research question being asked. The first column implies a categorized scheme for this; “who”, “what”, “where”, “how”, and “why”. Further, assume that the researcher has decided to focus on the “how” and “why” question, then there are three
possible research method to consider; history, case study and experiment. When choosing between these, the researcher needs to continue looking at the next to columns (Table 4:4 column 2 & 3). The history method is to prefer if there is no control or access, then the investigator needs to rely on secondary data. Case study is preferable in contemporary studies, when the relevant behavior can not be manipulated. Lastly, experiments are used when an investigator can manipulate behavior, which for example can occur in laboratory settings (Yin, 2009).

In this research a survey was the most appropriate method to use this since the research questions are focusing on and “what” which implies that there are two possible methods to use; survey and archival analysis. Nevertheless, survey is a more appropriate study in quantitative research. It will help the researcher to make a generalization among the respondents about their opinions and view about blogs.

4.5 Data collection method
Within qualitative research there are three possible ways to collect data; in-depth interview, focus group and observation.

In-depth interview is one of the most common used method in qualitative research; the flexibility the method provides makes it to an attractive method. In-depth interviews’ is the most appropriate method when the researcher wants to gain more personal opinion, beliefs and values from the respondents over a specific subject (Bryman & Bell, 20112). In-depth interviews also contain some disadvantages; they are time consuming and consequently expensive. Furthermore the interviewer needs to have previous knowledge and certain skills over how to perform an interview (Bryman & Bell, 20112).

Focus groups are another data collection method related to qualitative method. Focus group implies that the respondents are asked about their preference, attitudes and beliefs towards a product, service or marketing activity. Through focus groups the respondents’ are able to address their opinion about a certain area. The researcher is through this method able to create an understanding over why people perceive in the way they do. Therefore focus groups can be seen as an important part in a qualitative research. As well as with in- depth interviews’ a focus group implies some disadvantages. The moderator needs to have special skills and experience in the subject,
the data a focus group provides can be hard to analysis, this since there is a lot of information that is gathered in a short period of time (Bryman & Bell, 2011²).

Observation is a method that often is performed during a long period of time. Observation can be selected into two different areas, ethnography and participant observation. Ethnography observation implies that the observers looks at a group, takes notes and further write a report (Bryman & Bell, 2011²).

There are many advantages by performing a qualitative research. It helps the researcher to get a deeper knowledge which result in that conclusion from the respondents’ beliefs and attitudes can be drawn. However, the different data collected method in a qualitative research needs to be strengthen with more than one method (Bryman & Bell, 2011²).

Quantitative research also provides different approaches that the researcher is able to use. Quantitative research can be collected through for example a survey (Bryman & Bell, 2011²).

Survey is an appropriate data collection method when the research requires a large amount of respondents, with only a few variables. Surveys are commonly used when performing social studies. The respondents’ are through a survey able to answer the questions individual. There are two different types of survey, census- and sample survey. With census survey the researcher study every elements of the population, while in sample survey the researcher just study a representative part of the population. Furthermore, survey is a fast and cheap method to use and can easily be adapted to the individual respondent (Bryman & Bell, 2011²).

In this research a survey has been performed, a sample survey. Since the research is a social study and the aim is to investigate and make a generalization over the selected sample.

4.6 Data collection instrument

4.6.1 Operationalization and measurement of variables

Through operationalization the theoretical part are being conducted to the empirical investigation. Consequently the research has to show a connection between the theoretical terms and the operational distinction. That is to say the concept needs to be defined, what also needs to be considered is how the presence of this concept are going to be scaled and what the researcher want to find out through the empirical
investigation. The operationalization will as a result act as a help for the researcher when deciding what is going to be measured and how it will be done. A well-worked operationalization will furthermore result in a strong validity, since the research then will present relevant argument for the correlation between the concepts and the way they are measured in (Ekengren & Hinnfors 2006).

To make this research measurable and to be able to show the link between the theoretical concepts and the empirical investigation, a composed table will work as a guide. The variables where further transformed into measurable items, Churchill et. al. (1984) mean that each construct can be measured in single or multiple indicators. Even since single indicators have a high rate of reliability it would not be able to capture everything by a construct. Therefore it would be of low construct validity and therefore it would be preferable to use the multiple indicators, since Churchill (1979) imply that multi-items measure is to recommend. For this reason the researcher in the questionnaire construction stage has been operationalizing each variable with multiple items (Table 4.5). However, the next step implied the researcher to decide how these items are going to be measured. Kinnear & Taylor (1991) describe measurement as a set of numbers to characterize objects. Further numbers are being used as symbols in the measuring. Hair et. al. (2010) mean that a researcher can not identify variation unless it can be measured.

Even since open questions provide the respondents with the opportunity to answer questions in their own way this research will follow the close question approach. This since it is stated to make the process easier for both the researcher and the respondents and also makes it easier to establish the relationship between the variables (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since the research has an aim to compare and see a pattern in the respondents answers, closed questions have been applied.

Study has shown that a popular measure technique to use in this kind of research is semantic differential scale, which can be described as a multi-scale questionnaire. This is performed by the respondents on a seven-point rating scale (Kinnear & Taylor, 1991).

The final variables and items used in the questionnaire are presented in the table below (Table 4.5).
Table 4.5: Operationalization, Authors’ own illustration

4.6.2 Questionnaire design

The use of questionnaires can be seen as one of the best ways to make a generalization over a specific topic (Bryman & Bell, 2011). When conducting a questionnaire it is important to stage the purpose of the research since it will help the research to maximize the response rate, the validity and reliability (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009).

**Letter of intent**

Since it is more commonly that respondents do not participate in a questionnaire survey, compared to an interview, it is of big importance to work towards increasing the respond rate. It is therefore important to design a letter of intent which explains the
purpose of the survey and why it is important. What also need to be stated in this letter is if the respondents’ answers are confidential and if they stay anonyms (Bryman & Bell, 2011\(^1\)) (Appendix 3).

**Question structure**

It is importance to design a questionnaire in an attractive and professional way, this to increase the respond rate (Bryman & Bell, 2011\(^1\)). The design and the length of the questionnaire need to be consider carefully so a level of higher respond rate will appear (Saunders et al., 2009). Further there are three different ways to build up the questionnaire; open-ended, close-ended and probe questions (Aaker et. al. 2011). Open-ended questions imply that the respondent is able to answer the questions with his or hers own words and the survey do not head the respondents’ thoughts in any direction. This type of questions is appropriate to use for research in fields where not that much research is available (Bryman & Bell, 2011\(^1\)). However, open questions can amount some issues for the researcher, they are time-consuming since the questions have to be coded, and the researcher need to summarize the answers from each respondent. Open questions also require some extra effort from the respondent which can reduce the respond rate (Bryman & Bell, 2011\(^2\)). Close-ended questions on the other hand imply that the respondent is getting served by a number of answering alternatives to choose between. This questionnaire structure makes it easy for the researchers to process and the respondents to answer (Bryman & Bell, 2011\(^1\)). Closed questions can in advance be coded and it helps the researcher to state relationships between the variables. Thus, closed questions lose the spontaneity (Bryman & Bell, 2011\(^2\)). By using a probe questionnaire structure open questions are used in connection with closed questions, this to provide the survey with additional information (Aaker et. al., 2011).

In the research closed questions have been used. Since the researcher aimed to see a correlation between the different theoretical variables; blogs, opinion leader, word of mouth and brand image. This implies that the researcher are able to code the questions in advance before analysis the questionnaire.

**Performing**

Before performing the survey a pre-testing or so also called a pilot-test needs to be performed. This with an aim to make sure that the questionnaire is working in the right
way (Bryman & Bell, 2011¹) and also to ensure that the questionnaire meets the researchers expectations (Aaker et al., 2011). To achieve a pilot-test is not of central importance when using a questionnaire since there no interviewer available for the respondent to handle possible ambiguity. Furthermore it is important to have in consideration when performing the pilot-test is to not include those respondents that are going to be included in the actual sample (Bryman & Bell, 2011¹).

**To conduct**

A questionnaire can be designed offline as well as online. The use of online survey has grown and can be implemented by both e-mail survey and web survey. By using e-mail survey, a smaller homogeneous group will be evaluated, while web survey makes it possible to reach a larger group of on-line user. The advantages by using web survey are the opportunity to be more flexible and the wider variety in terms of appearance. However, the use of online questionnaires can make it problematical since the respondents are not known by the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2011²).

Nevertheless by using an offline questionnaire the researcher can send it through post, and then it is important that the researcher include a return envelope. It is stated that an online survey has a higher responded rate than an offline survey (Bryman & Bell, 2011²).

The questionnaire will be designed and performed online, as a web survey, this to maximize the responded rate. The questionnaire has been pre-tested in order to secure the validity and reduce possible ambiguity and errors. A selected group of ten potential respondents and an expert, a supervisor with knowledge in the subject was included in the pre-test.

**4.7 Sampling**

In almost every situation the researcher have to do a sample selection. When performing a survey it is practically impossible to involve a whole population (Bryman & Bell, 2011²). A population can consequently be defined as objects that share some common distinctiveness to a marketing research problem (Aaker et al., 2011). It is about delimitations in both time and resources which confine the research from a whole population. The questions about sampling are always current in a quantitative method.

The first step in the sampling process is consequently to define the population in terms of interest of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011²). This is of central
importance for the research and what needs to be considered is the sampling elements (Aaker et. al., 2011) the objects from which the information is desired (Malhotra, 2010), sampling units (Aaker et. al., 2011) which contains the element that is available for selection (Malhotra, 2010) and area of coverage (Aaker et. al., 2011).

Further the sample frame needs to be defined (Bryman & Bell, 2011) which contains of a list of directions for identifying the target population (Malhotra, 2010). Only the respondents who answer the research’s criterion will be included in the survey.

**Sample Size**

Lastly the sample size will be defined, which can be decided through several different methods (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The used sample size is usually influenced by time and costs, even though a large sample size is preferable, since the amount of sampling errors will be reduced. The researcher also needs to keep the non-response in mind when deciding the sample size. It is likely that some of the respondents’ in the sample do not want to participate in the survey and therefore a larger sample size than desired should be asked to participate. One sample size method is *convenience sampling*, which basically can be described as an inexpensively and quickly way to gain information (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Aaker et. al., 2011). The sampling method implies that the people in the ambient environment, which is useful to the aim of the research, are asked to participate in the survey (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The information that is collected through convenience sampling must be closely evaluated by the researcher, since it is respondent most available during the specific time (Aaker et al., 2011). *Snowball sampling* in the other hand imply that the researcher take contact with a small group appropriate with the research subject, the result can be very useful since it gain a deep understanding for groups in the society that is already familiar with the special research subject (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Aaker et. al., 2011). What though can be discussed as a negative aspect with this sample size method is that people that are socially visible are more likely to be selected (Aaker et. al., 2011).

In this research a *statistical sample method* will though be applied, according to (Malhotra, 2010) this is the most fair and correct sample size will be collected. The method gives the research a limited numbers of observations selected from a population which result in generalizations about the population.
The population size in this research is economic students' at Linnaeus University, which is 4,500 (studentnytt.se, 2012-04-13). With help from Malhotra's (2010) formula a minimum number of respondent which have to be collected in this research have been calculated (Figure 4.1).

\[
n = \frac{2500 \times N \times Z^2}{[(N-1) + (2500 \times Z^2)]}
\]

Figure 4.1; Calculated sample size

Adapted from Malhotra (2010).

4.7.1. Sampling frame, Sample selection & Data collection procedure

A study performed by the Swedish Central bureau of statistic, 2011, showed that people in between 16-24 years old, both genders, people who have a post-secondary education and students, constitute the group in society that are the highest users of Internet (sbr.se, 2012-03-18). Furthermore a study, 2008, showed that 26 percent of the Swedish population was consuming blogs and the consumption has become a part of the everyday use on Internet among young people. Blog consumption is largest by men and woman in the age 16-18 and something smaller by people in between 19-25 (les.se, 2012-03-18).

Due to Internet and blog consumption the research has included University students' in between 19-25 years old, both genders.

Furthermore the statistical sample method have been applied in this research, which result in that a minimum of 354 respondents have to be included in this research. This supported from Bryman & Bell (2011) who mean that an increase in the sample size increase the precision of the sample.

4.8 Data analysis method

The most commonly used computer software program for analyzing quantitative data for social scientists is SPSS, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. When analyzing the collected data in the statistical program SPSS it is important to make
distinctions between the different kinds of variables that is found in the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The result of a questionnaire research may vary when using it in SPSS, depending on the types of questions’ (Aaker et al., 2011).

There are different ways of analyzing the collected data in SPSS. One way is through descriptive statistics which helps to summarize the information and present the data in frequency table (Aaker et al., 2011). Correlation analysis is another way of analyzing data which involves measuring the strength between two different variables. Correlation analysis can result in either a positive or a negative outcome. A positive correlation means that the two compared variables have a high correlation on each another. A negative correlation on the other hand implies that one of the variables has a low correlation in relation to another (Aaker et al., 2011). The result of a correlation analysis is often presented in a correlation matrix, which indicates the coefficient of correlation between each variable (Malhotra, 2010).

Regression analysis or hypothesis testing is a statistical technique that is used in business research to see a relationship between two or more variables. The purpose by using regression analysis, is to build a regression model or a prediction equation which shows how one variable relate to others independent variables (Aaker et al., 2011).

In this research all three analysis methods have been used. Descriptive statistics, to summarize the collected data and show the respondents respond. Correlation analysis, with the aim to investigate if the different variables have a relationship and strength between each other and if it has a positive or negative impact on one another. The last analysis method, regression analysis, which has been used to establish if the hypotheses as presented in Chapter three could be either rejected or accepted.

4.9 Quality criteria
In business research there are different evaluation criteria to make the research more reliable and valid. Therefore it is important to use different measurement when creating quality standards (Yin, 1994). In quantitative research there are four different ways to measure the validity and reliability; content validity, construct validity, criterion validity and the reliability. The four measurements will be defined and discussed in this subchapter.
4.9.1 Content validity
Content or so also called face validity means that the researcher of a study needs to establish that the used method actually measures the content of the concept in question. This can be done through asking other people whether or not the measure reflects the concept that is the focus of the research. This people work as a judge for the researcher and do usually contain persons with expertise in the certain field (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

To support the content validity a operationalization scheme has been constructed, further the questionnaire has been pre-tested on a selected group of people as well as an expert in the subject, the researchers supervisor, this to increase the validity in the research.

4.9.2 Construct validity
The construct validity implies that the researcher deduce relevant hypotheses from the theory. It can for example happen through drawing up ideas of how one variable affects another one, it will consequently show the relationship between these two (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

To make the research more valid and to see if the operationalization measure what it is suppose to measure a correlation was performed in the research. Further the correlation test makes it possible to see if there are relationships between the variables measured from the operationalization table.

4.9.3 Criterion validity
Criterion validity investigates if the measurement scale performs as expected in relation to other variables. Criterion variables can for example be; demographic and psychographic characteristic, attitudinal and behavioral measures. According to the time period, criterion validity can take two forms. Concurrent validity, which is used when data is being evaluated, and the criterion validity are collected at the same time. Predictive validity implies that the researcher collect data on the scale at on point in time and the data from the criterion variables at a future time. For example, attitudes towards a certain product could be used to predict future purchase of a product (Malhotra, 2010).
In the research, regression analysis was performed to make sure that the right questions were asked in the questionnaire. From the regression analysis the hypotheses could be either accepted or rejected.

4.9.4 Reliability
Reliability regards the question of whether the result of a study is repeatable and consistent. The reliability does mostly regard quantitative research, since the researcher here is aiming for a stable result. Three factors can be involved when considering if a measure is reliable or not. *Stability*, which fundamentally amount that the measure is stable over time, the researcher needs to be confident in that the result will not change. *Internal reliability* are focusing on that several internal items are forming a total scale. *Inter-observer consistency* regards when there is more than one observer in for example, recording an observation or the translation of data into categories. This since a lack of consistency in their decisions and opinions making can happen (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

To establish the reliability in this research a reliability test has been performed. The reliability test will make sure that the research is reliable and if the research would be performed again a similar result will be found.

4.10 Chapter summary
In this research, a deductive approach with a quantitative research has been applied, furthermore a questionnaire have been constructed. This to be able to answer the researchs purpose and research questions. However, a questionnaire was chosen as a method since the research has an aim to draw generalizations and to see connections between different variables. By this reason primary data is used, since the research requires data, specific for the research subject.

The statistical program, SPSS, have been used to analyze the collected data, which is the most common used tool in quantitative research. The use of SPSS have helped the researcher to answer the hypotheses, whether it will be rejected or accepted as well as test the validity and reliability in the research.

Below Figure, 4.2, has been conducted where the methodology summery of the methodology chapter is presented.
Figure 4.2, Summary
Authors' own illustration
5. Analysis and result

This chapter will present the data that has been collected with the quantitative method; questionnaire survey. The chapter contains first of an overview over the sample and further a presentation over the applied method, which leads to a respond rate. Later in the chapter empirical material will be presented that have been analyzed with help from the statistical program SPSS. The data that has been presented is in line with the research question and has acted as a help when analyzing the hypotheses. The results have further been analyzed with help from the theoretical chapter.

5.1 Overview of the sample

As presented in the sample frame, statistic has established that people in between 16 to 24 years old in both genders are the one who are consuming Internet the most (sbr.se, 2012-03-18). Furthermore a study shows that both females and males in the ages 19 to 25 are the biggest consumers of (Findahl, 2012-03-18). This worked as a foundation when selecting the sample and the sample frame. The questionnaires were further e-mailed to economic students at Linnaeus University. To make sure that the respondents meet the age requirement, an age question where asked in the beginning of the questionnaire. This also regards the respondents’ blog consumption. The respondents that were not in the right age’s group as well as did not fulfill the blog consumption requirement were not included in the empirical analysis.

5.2 Quantitative data presentation

An online survey has been conducted based on the variables identified in the theoretical framework. The operationalization did further work as a guide when conducting the different questions in the survey.

The purpose with the questionnaire was to develop empirical material over in which way blogs influence consumers. The sample did therefore include the group in society which is the biggest user of Internet and so further blogs. The survey include following questions:

- Personal information (gender, age)
- Respondents consumption of blogs
- Attitudes towards blogs and blogs influence over consumers’
The questionnaire has been divided into four parts, this with an aim to facilitate for the respondents as well as for the researcher when analyzing.

The questionnaire has been further discussed with an expert in the subject and a pilot study has been performed on a selected group of ten potential respondents. This has helped the researchers to improve the questionnaire and avoid errors before the questionnaire was performed on the actual sample.

5.2.1 Sample and respond rate

The questionnaire were send out by e-mail to 4 500 economic students at Linnaeus University (lnu.se 2012-04-18). As presented, in chapter 4.7 - Sampling frame, the research population is 4 500 students, and by using Malhotra’s (2010) statistical method, the sample size that needed to be collected was 354 respondents.

The numbers of respondent answering the questionnaire where 509 students at total, however, of the 509 student not everyone implemented the criteria’s for usable respondents. Therefore only 385 respondents were suitable for the research. The survey was by e-mailed send out to 4500 student which resulted in a respond rate on; 8.7 percent (Figure 5.1). Even though the respond rate was low it is acceptable for this research and survey. Since the statistical method provided that this research needed a minimum of 354 respondents and the collected useable questionnaires where 385 the researcher defined the respond rate as good as and more than enough.

\[
\frac{385}{4500-124} = 0.087 \times 100 = 8.7\% 
\]

*Table 5.1: Respond rate*

Authors own illustration adapt from Bryman & Bell (2010) pp 189

*Figure 5.1: Responded rate*

Authors own illustration with help from Bryman & Bell (2010) pp 189
5.3 Descriptive Statistic

The aim with the research has been to establish what kind of influence blogs have over a consumer and how a brand image can be affected from what is being negotiated in blogs.

Pie chart 1, (Figure 5.2) shows that 385 suitable respondent answered the questionnaire, and that 257, approximately 67 percent of them were females and 128 respondents, 33 percent where males. In appendix from Statistic a more detailed and clear statistic is provided (Appendix from Statistics 5.10).

![Pie chart](image)

*Figure 5.2: Pie char 1, Numbers of respondents by gender.*

Bar chart 1 (Figure 5.3) illustrates to which width the respondents was getting influenced over what is being negotiated in blogs. It indicated that the respondents in the sample had different opinions' about the forum blogs influence degree. 47 respondents, approximately 12 percent did strongly disagree with the statement, while 11.2 percent strongly agreed. However, answer alternative number five which indicated “agree”, was the most commonly stated answer, 80 respondents, 20.8 percent believed that was the best suitable answer. As established in Figure 5.3 the respondents had different opinions over blogs influence degree (for more statistics, Appendix from Statistic, Table 5.13).
The empirical result as presented in bar chart 2 (Figure 5.4) indicated to which extent the respondents thought the information negotiated in blogs could hurt a brand. As can be seen in Figure 5.4, most of the respondent did agree in that a brand can take damage over information spread in blogs, 127 respondents, approximately 33 percent agreed with this statement. Further only 14 respondents, 3.6 percent did strongly disagreed over a brand can take damages of what is being negotiated in blogs (for more statistics, Appendix from Statistic, Table 5.17).

As presented in bar chart 3 (Figure 5.5) the empirical result shows to which degree the respondents believed that a brand could take benefit from what is being negotiated in blogs. As could be found in Figure 5.5, most of the respondents did strongly agreed in this question, and meant that a brand could take benefits from what is being negotiated in blogs, 139 respondents, approximately 36 percent indicated with the
statement. Only nine respondents, 2 percent, strongly disagreed in this question. Figure 5.5, shows that most of the approached respondents all agreed with the statement in one or another way, a brand can take benefit from information spread in blogs (for more statistics, Appendix from Statistic Table 5.18).

![A Brand Can Take Benefits From Blogs](image1)

*Figure 5.5; Bar chart 3, A brand can take benefit from blogs.*

Bar chart 4 (Figure 5.6) shows to which degree the respondents identify themselves with blogs they consume. From the empirical findings it could be stated that most of the asked respondents strongly disagreed compared to the respondents that strongly agreed in this question, 102 respondents, approximately 26 percent strongly disagreed in the statement that they could identifying themselves with blogs they consume. This in relation to merely 18 respondents, 5 percent who strongly agreed in the question (for more statistics, Appendix from Statistic Table 5.20).

![Identify With Blogs](image2)

*Figure 5.6; Bar chart 4, Individuals identify themselves with blogs.*
As presented in bar chart 5 (Figure 5.7) the respondents were asked if they did forward positive information negotiated in blogs to people in their soundings. It shows that the respondents had different opinions about what they communicate. However the Figure shows that most of the respondents strongly disagree, 92 respondents, approximately 24 percent. This compared to the respondents that strongly agreed, 22 respondents, 8 percent. Anyhow, from Figure 5.7 it could be established that some of the respondents agreed on answer alternative number five; 69 respondent, 18 percent. This indicates that the respondents that selected scale number five did communicate some of the positive information they read in blogs further (for more statistics, Appendix from Statistic Table 5.24). This refers to the last question in the questionnaire, (Appendix 5), if the respondents do further communicate negative information from what is stated in blogs. The empirical findings (for more statistic, Appendix for statistics, Table 5.24) were almost identical with the result from the positive communication question.

![Bar chart 5: Positive communication from blogs.](image)

**Figure 5.7, Bar chart 5; Positive communication from blogs.**

5.4 Reliability

A cronbach’s alpha test was performed to establish the reliability for each variable; this means that the result should be unchangeable if the study would be repeated. In table 5.2 cronbach’s alpha is presented for each variable, each variable include the majority of all previous described items. To be reliable, cronbach’s alpha should be over 0.6 and therefore one item in the research had to be removed, since the cronbach’s alpha score was lower than 0.6 which indicated on a not trustworthy value (Table 5.2). The removed item was OPR1, “I do not follow bloggers recommendations regarding brand or products”.

48
A possible reason for why this item had a poor value could be that the question was negatively stated. This item was therefore not seen as reliable and had to be removed.

As shown in Table 5.2 all cronbach’s alpha score are higher than 0.6 which indicated on a high internal consistency, that is to say high reliability on the questionnaire.

Furthermore all respondents that were participating and meet the requirements of the chosen sample were used in the calculation of cronbach’s alpha. The researcher could further establish that all respondents had answered 100 percent of the questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>0.607</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>0.640</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion Leader</td>
<td>0.762</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>0.764</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 Reliability
Authors’ own illustration adapted from SPSS

5.5 Correlation

The aim with the correlation test is to investigate whether there was a relationship between the variables or not and furthermore the strength of the relationship (Miller et.al. 2002). The diagonal boxes in Table 5.3 are only reporting the relationship between each variable and itself, therefore the correlation of these boxes are 1.

The first relationship indicates brand image, where the variable correlate with blogs it shows that the Pearson Correlation is 0.552, Sig (2-tailed) is 0.000 and N = 385 (sample). Consequently there is a highly significant (p<0.01), a correlation of 0.552, and therefore it could be established that there are a correlation between the two variables, blogs and brand image. It also indicated that with 99 percent security a correlation exists between the two variables. When looking at the next relationship it can be deduced that Pearson Correlation is 0.487, Sig (2-tailed) is 0.000 and N = 385. This indicates that there are a correlation between these two variables, opinion leader and blogs. With this in consideration the rest of Table 5.3 can be deduced. Nevertheless
it shows that there are correlations between all the variables, blogs, brand image, opinion leader and word of mouth.

Table 5.3 also shows that the most correlated variables are brand image and blogs (0.552) and the lowest correlation are between word of mouth and opinion leader (0.341). Anyhow all correlations can be trusted since they all have a significance level on 0.000. It indicates that the questionnaire measured what it was supposed to and further the survey was valid.

![Correlations Table](image)

*Table 5.3 Correlation
Authors’ own illustration adapted from SPSS*

5.6 Regression analysis

The three stated hypotheses have been tested though regression analysis. This with the reason of that the stated hypotheses will be either accepted or rejected. Blogs did in the regression analysis act as the independent variables and brand image, word of mouth and opinion leader have been the dependent variable in respective test.

Regression analyses test if the hypotheses are statistical significance, which is a criterion for accepting a hypothesis. A number that is commonly used for the significance is 0.01. If the value is larger than 0.01 the risk to be wrong is bigger and the hypothesis needs to be rejected and if the number is lower than 0.01 it is a greater chance for the result to be correct and the hypothesis can be accepted (Levine et al., 2008).

The beta score is also an important number in hypothesis testing; it shows which effect the independent variable has on the dependent variable. The value of beta
is in between 0 and 1, where 0 indicates on no impact and 1 stands for a big impact (Levine et al., 2008).

H¹ – Blogs have a positive impact over a brand image

The first hypothesis of the research was to see if blogs have a positive impact over a brand image. Presented in Table 5.4 the pictured number shows to which extent the independent variable can explain the variation in the dependent variable.

The interesting number in this case is the “R Square” which explains the variance in between 0 and 1, a high number indicates on a better and greater explanation power. “R square” in Table 5.4 is 0.305, which means that 30.5 percent of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable. Consequently brand image is affected by blogs in 30.5 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODEL SUMMARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MODEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Predictors: (Constant), BLOGS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4 Model summery H¹
Authors’ own illustration adapted from SPSS

The “Coefficients” which is shown in Table 5.5 is though the most important table. Here the B-coefficient, as can be seen in the table below (Table 5.5) is 0.350. The number 0.350 indicates which effect the independent variable has on the dependent variable. It illustrate that if there would be a change in blog consumption or the way consumers look at blogs the effect on the brand image should according to the regression analysis increase with 0.350 percent (table 5.20). Consequently an increase in one variable results in an increase in the other variable as well. The P-value or the Sig-value is in this table 0.00 which means that the coefficient is significant, reliable (Table 5.5).
Due to this interpretation $H_1$, blogs have a positive impact over a brand image, can be accepted.

$H_2$ - Blog consumption result in word of mouth

The second hypothesis of this research was to test if blog consumption results in word of mouth. As can be seen in Table 5.6, the “R Square” is 0.264, which means that 26.4 percent of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable. Consequently the variable word of mouth is influenced by blogs in 26.4 percent (Table 5.6).

Further, the B-coefficient as is stated in Table 5.7 is 0.215, which shows that if there should be a change in blog consumption or the way consumers look at blogs the effect on word of mouth should according to the regression analysis increase with 0.215 percent (Table 5.7).

The P-value or the Sig-value in this table is 0.00, which indicates that the coefficient is significant, which means that the stated result is reliable.
Due to this interpretation $H^2$, blog consumption result in word of mouth, can be accepted.

$H^3$ - Blogs are often seen as opinion leaders'

The third hypothesis in the research was to see if a blog can be seen as an opinion leader. Presented in Table 5.8, the “R Square” is stated as 0.237, which means that 23.7 percent of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable. Consequently the variable opinion leaders’ is related to blogs in 23.7 percent (Table 5.8).

From Table 5.9, the B-coefficient is stated as 0.316, which shows that if there would be a change in blog consumption or the way consumers look at blogs the effect on opinion leader should according to the regression analysis increase with 0.316 percent (Table 5.9).

The P-value or the Sig-value is in table 5.24, 0.00, which means that the coefficient is significant, reliable.
Table 5.9 Coefficient $H^3$
Authors' own illustration adapted from SPSS

Due to this interpretation $H^3$, bloggers are often seen as opinion leaders,' can be accepted.

Since all three hypotheses could be accepted they supported the research model as established in Chapter three in the research (Figure 5.8).

5.7 Chapter summary

In the analyses and result chapter the results from the questionnaires’ have been presented. Further the empirical results have been obtainable with help from the statistical program, SPSS. The chapter contains of the respond rate from the questionnaire, the descriptive findings, the correlation analysis as well as the regression analysis. Through the regression analysis the researchers have been able to test the researches stated hypotheses and further either reject or accept the hypotheses. All three hypotheses could be accepted, and through the correlation analysis it could also be established that a correlation between the variables existed.
6. Discussion and conclusion

In previous chapter the collected data from the quantitative approach, questionnaire was presented. Furthermore the empirical findings has been analyzed with help from the theoretical framework, to be able to describe in which way consumers are getting influenced over what is being negotiated in blogs. Moreover, the discussion and conclusion chapter will answer the purpose of the research and tie the research together. Finally, a section of implementations, limitations and further research have been presented.

Chapter two, theoretical framework, showed the existing research among the different concept, brand image, opinion leader and word of mouth. Social media and so further blogs are though a fairly new concept with not much research done. However, not many empirical studies have investigated the area, blogs and particular not the relationships this study observe. The research had an aim to indicate a relationship between the different concepts. A research model was further composed to act as a help when investigating the possible relationships. From the research model three hypotheses where developed in order to examine the impact on the different variables. After the sample selection the questionnaire was performed and a number of statistical tests were implemented in the previous chapter. In this chapter a discussion around the empirical findings will happen.

6.1 Discussion

The research is based on empirical findings and the analysis is based on 385 students in between 19 to 25 years old. The purpose with the research was to gather information over in which way consumers are influenced by blogs and how the consumption can affect a brand and its image.

As earlier established in the correlation analysis a relationship between all variables, blog, brand image, opinion leader and word of mouth are existing. Consequently it showed that a change in one variable effect another variable. It could therefore be established that an increase in the consumption of blogs will influence brand image, word of mouth and so even opinion leaders’.

The research has contributed with knowledge in many aspects and has made it possible for the researchers to make generalizations. The result of the research
has proved blogs power over the consumers and so further companies. The research has also empirically established the relationship between the different concept, blogs’, brand image, opinion leader and word of mouth.

As earlier established in previous research blogs has a powerful influence over its readers (www.svd.se), this statement was something the respondents in this research agreed about. However, most of the respondents did not look at blogs as a trustworthy information source, even though the forum inspired the majority. This argue against previous research which indicates that blogs usually are seen as credible source compared to traditional marketing since the writer of a blog most commonly are an individual with no connection to a company. Even though it was founded from the statistical analysis that (46 percent, where 15 percent were standing neutral) were getting inspired of blogs even though they did not look at the information as trustworthy. This refers to that the empirical findings did not indicate that the majority looked at bloggers as opinion leaders (31 percent looked at bloggers as opinion leaders). Opinion leader can be characterized as role models, consequently a person the receiver identify her or himself with (Chau & Hui, 1998). It can therefore be argued that the majority of the respondents in this research did not identify themselves with the blogs they consumed and did therefore not look at these as trustworthy, anyhow they admitted to be inspired and influenced over this information source.

Regarding the effects a blogs might cause for a company seemed to be an area where the respondents possessed knowledge. 72 percent respective 81 percent agreed in that a brand or a company can take damage respective gain over the information in blogs’. It can through this be established that a brand image can be shaped through blog consumption which further may or may not lead to a purchase. A blogs impact over a consumers brand image is consequently something a company need to take in consideration. A company can as well as be gained by a blogs’ word take damage over the negotiated information. Since this information is nothing a company can control they firstly need to work with communicating a favorable identity and secondly being active and respond to false information regarding the forum blogs. Moreover, in the question of brand image it can be discussed to be a big differences between a companies own marketing and the information spread in blogs. This since even if the information negotiated in blog can be positive for a brand or a company the brand image that will be shaped is maybe not coherence with the company itself.
You do not need to be a blog reader to be reached by the information negotiated in blogs. This since the receiver of a message in a blogforum sometimes tends to pass forward this information to people in their surroundings or further in social network platforms. 34 percent respective 31 percent admitted that they forwarded positive respective negative information read in blogs. This fact results in that the information from blogs will reach a bigger group than just the blogreader.

6.2 Discussion of hypothesis testing

One of the aims with the research was to test the developed research model, presented in chapter three. From the model, three hypotheses were created, which further was tested with help from the statistic program SPSS. The statistical test that has been used is regression analysis. In previous chapter, the result from the empirical findings were presented. Depending on the outcome from the regression analysis, the hypotheses could be either accepted or rejected. From the findings and the regression analysis it could be stated that all three of the hypotheses could be accepted and consequently supported. In the next upcoming section the hypotheses will be discussed and connected to previous research and the researches theoretical framework.

6.2.1 Blogs have a positive impact over a brand image

Many different aspects can affect a brand image, not at least by the customer themselfe. Consequently a brand image can be seen a result of consumers own experiences as well as the expectations on a company (Kotler et al. 2008). In the theoretical finding it is further established and discussed that the forum blogs do have a great impact over its readers and have the possibility to reach millions of readers world wide (Colliander & Dahlén 2011). With blogs impact over its readers in consideration, the first hypothesis was created; blogs have a positive impact over a brand image, with an aim to determine if there are relationships between the two concepts.

The first hypothesis was significant, supported (Table 5.5), with a p-value on 0.00 which mean that the first hypothesis were accepted. Further the empirical findings (as can be seen in the B-coefficient, Table 5.5) picture that blogs do have an impact over a brand image in a positive way. Furthermore consumption of blogs results in that a consumers brand knowledge commonly get prepossessed. Even though this hypothesis did just look at the positive affect a blog may have over a brand image it is
most likely that the affect work in the opposite way as well. This can also be deduced in the descriptive analysis from the statistical test (Table 5.5).

6.2.2 Blog consumption result in word of mouth

Previous research have shown that consumers today are getting more influenced by other people compared to companies own advertising (Rice, 2001, as can be seen in Mason 2008). It has also been established from the theoretical framework that people who is seen as an opinion leaders or fans have a big effect on its followers and can therefore have a big impact (Farrell, 1998). With this in mind the second hypothesis was created; blog consumption result in word of mouth.

Even the second hypothesis was significant, supported which can be seen in Table 5.7. Through the second hypothesis it could therefore be established that an individuals' consumption of blogs result in word of mouth. What is being negotiated in blogs creates word of mouth which indicated that the information is further communicated outside the forum. This implies that even a non-blogreader can be reached by the negotiated information in a blog. For a company this may imply that positive word about a brand or product has the ability to reach a much bigger group than just the reader of a blog. As with everything there is also a downside, which amount that the negative word can work in the same way. For the blogger themselves the acceptance of this hypothesis might lead to that their blog get attention even outside the forum which can lead to more consumers of the specific blog.

6.2.3 Blogs are often seen as opinion leaders’

An opinion leader is as mentioned before usually seen as a person that share common values and believes with its followers. Further it has been established from the theoretical findings that the receiver can see an opinion leader as a more trustworthy and convincing source among many others (Solomon, 2009). Therefore it can be discussed that an opinion leader can help a company in many aspects, for example through spreading product information and recommendations. With this in consideration the third hypothesis was created; blogs are often seen as a opinion leader, with an aim to determine if blogs are seen as opinion leader and so further have this kind of power over its consumers.
The third hypothesis was significant, therefore supported and accepted as can be seen in Table 5.9. Since the correlation between the variables existed, bloggers can be seen as an opinion leader. This means that blogs can have an affect and a reference power over its readers. The acceptance of this hypothesis implies that a company can take benefit from a blogger. This can happen though marketing themselves though the blog, however, it can also be seen as a weakness, if the blogger do not like the brand or product, it can have a negative power over the company. This since a person who sees a blogger as an opinion leader will rely on the positive information that is spread in the forum as well as the negative information. Moreover, in a consumer perspective it can be a seen as a resource to see a person in this research a blogger as an opinion leader. This because the consumer look at the opinion leader as a role model which may give advice and opinions which further may lead to a purchase. Consequently an opinion leader make the work easier for a consumer through giving advice which result in that the consumer save time and money on searching for information.

6.3 Implications

This section will present the implementation for the research. It section is further divided in two parts. First a theoretical implication is presented, with focus on the theoretical and research implementation. Last a managerial implication is presented which the research has contributed with.

6.3.1 Implications for theory

The main purpose of the research has been to discover if blogs have an impact over its readers and in which way. Since blogs are a relative new phenomenon, an understanding and knowledge over the phenomena and its influence over its consumers has been created. In this section the main theoretical implications in this research is discussed.

First, the result in the research has strengthened the fact over blogs influence over its receivers. It was shown in the empirical findings that consumers of blogs are getting influenced and inspired of the forum. This is in line with previous research which stated that blogs can be seen as an information source.

Second, it could through the research be stated that there was a hesitation in the question of blogs trustworthiness. Previous research has stated that social media
and so further blogs are more commonly seen as a trustworthy source compared to traditional media. This fact was not in line with the empirical findings in this research even though some of the respondents went along with the statement. It can therefore be discussed that previous studies do not correlate with the findings regarding this particular question.

Finally, the concepts that are used in the research which have been proved and developed by other researchers as separately concepts was developed as hypotheses in relation to the constructed research model. This has result in new theoretical findings and knowledge which means that the research has contributed with development in the field of blogs. The foremost contribution of the research has been the forum blogs degree of influence over its receiver and in which way it can affect a company.

6.3.2 Implications for managers

From this research it could be established that a blog do not only need to be seen as a platform where the bloggers share their opinion with its consumers. A company can also take use of a blog which can result in advantages for a company.

First, blogs can be seen as a platform for feedback and discuss where companies have the possibility to get knowledge over consumers opinion and thoughts about their brand as well as being able to meet possible complains. This can further help companies to improve their brand image. Companies can see blogs as a communication tool which can act as a help for a company to improve their image.

Second, the result from the empirical investigation shows that consumers of blogs sometimes tend to communicate the information they have read in blogs further to people in their surroundings. This fact implies that it is not only the blogreader that might be influenced by the information but rather also the people in the consumers surroundings. This can affect a company in a positive as well as a negative way.

Finally, companies can use a blog as a marketing tool for no cost at all. This since bloggers can be seen as opinion leaders which have the possibility to influence consumers. If a company is able to identify an opinion leader who are in line with their brand and products the company can win advantages which result in that a positive brand image is negotiated and further communicated to people in the blogreaders surroundings.
6.4 Limitation of the study

During the time period of the study, the researchers’ worked hard to minimize potential errors as well as fulfill the aspect that was intended to be investigated. However, no research can be perfect or flawless, this section, limitation of the study, will present limitation that occurred during the research.

The concept blog is as stated before a relatively new concept with a lack of previous research in the area. This result in that there was not that much knowledge over the forum and so furthers its influence over consumers. The ignorance in the area is a possible explanation, to why the majority of the sample admitted not to be influenced by the forum. It is likely that blogs are not seen as an accepted influence source in nowadays society. This will most likely change in a couple of years with an increase in available research, within social media.

What also can be discussed is that even though the performed questionnaires were based on previous research, some errors accrued when time to analyze the statistics. The answer to that many of the questions were spread the researchers believed was due to that more questions over respondents consumption of blogs needed to be included in the questionnaire.

Time and money is other limitation to almost every research. With a longer period of time and a larger budget the numbers of respondents would probably increased. This would also make the respond rate higher. The questionnaire was in the research further transmitted through e-mail, which can be another explanation to why the response rate was quite low. If the research would be performed during a longer time the researcher would performed the survey both online, as well as offline which most likely would raise the response rate.

6.5 Suggestion for future research

This section will present suggestions for future research, in the area of blogs- a forum that cannot be ignored. There are many different aspects that can and needs to be developed and further discussed within the area of blogs.

However, the findings in this research have been collected through a quantitative study, this with an aim to investigate how and to what degree consumers are getting influenced of the forum blogs. Therefore a recommendation for further
research would be to get a deeper knowledge over to which extent consumers are using blogs a focus group could be performed. This to be able to gain a deeper understanding over the consumption of blogs and its influence. Consequently a qualitative research method should be to suggest.

A further study could also be divided into gender; it would be interesting to see if the study would differ if only females were included in the research and vice versa. This might result in that the empirical findings would be more consistences even though previous research shows that male and females are consuming blogs to the same extent.

A future research could also focus on a specific blog area, for example fashion or food. There might be a difference in the forum blogs influence depending on what type of blogreader the consumer are and through investigating one or more of these groups separately this question would be answered.

### 6.6 Conclusion remarks

The purpose of this bachelor thesis has been to make investigate to what fact consumers are getting influenced over what is being negotiated in blogs. The research has provided the researchers with knowledge in the area of blogs to be able to draw generalizations.

It could through the empirical findings be established that blogs do have an impact and a correlation to the different variables; brand image, word of mouth and opinion leader. The three stated hypotheses and the constructed research model have helped the researcher to gain this knowledge and so further the conclusion. Blogs have an ability to influence its reader and further what is being negotiated in blogs can have a power over an individual’s perception of a brand. This information can in a further step be communicated to people in the blogreaders surroundings. It implies that even individuals who are not consumer of blogs can get reached by the information.

Through the empirical findings it could be stated that the receiver of a blog are getting influenced over the information and that the respondents brand knowledge further are getting preprocessed by this. The readers can consequently see the forum as an information source, which contributes with approachable information for no cost at all. The blog consumer can thus save time and money through blog consumption.

This can in a company perspective amount that a brand, product or a company can be affected in both a positive and a negative way. The forum can by companies be seen as an inexpensive marketing channel which can gain a brand and a
company. In the same way the information negotiated in a blog can work in the opposite way as well and disfavor a brand.
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**Usatoday.com** (Received 2012-03-32)
Hej,

Vi är två studenter vid Linneuniversitetet i Växjö som skriver vår kandidatuppsats i marknadsföring och skulle behöva just din hjälp.

Idag så konsumerar ungefär 26 procent av Sveriges befolkning bloggar, ett forum inom sociala medier som växer snabbt. Vår undersökning går ut på att få en förståelse över hur Du, som consument av bloggar påverkas av vad som förmedlas.

Frågeformuläret består av XX antal frågor och tar inte mer än tio minuter att besvara. Alla svar är anonyma och kan inte sammankopplas med Dig. Det är viktigt att Du svara på alla frågor och att Du svarar så ärligt som möjligt. Dina åsikter betyder mycket för oss.

Om Ni har några frågor så tveka inte att höra av dig till Johanna Jönsson på: jjo009@lnu.se eller Sofie Peters på: spevb09@lnu.se

Tack för Din medverkan!

Johanna Jönsson och Sofie Peters

Linneuniversitetet i Växjö
Ekonomihögskolan
Marknadsföringsprogrammet
Appendix 2 – Questionnaire – Swedish

Enkät

Tack för din medverkan. Du ska nu få svara på en enkät bestående av 17 frågor rörande din bloggkonsumtion och din påverkan av bloggar.

Kön:  
Kvinna:  □
Man:  □

Ålder:  
18 år eller under  □
19-25  □
26 år eller över  □

Var vänlig, läs igenom och svara noggrant på frågorna, du svarar genom att ringa in det svarsalternativ som du anser passa in på dig bäst. 1- Håller inte alls med, 4- Neutral och 7- håller med till fullo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1</th>
<th>Håller absolut inte alls</th>
<th>Håller med till fullo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Jag konsumerar bloggar minst en gång i veckan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Jag ser bloggar som en trovärdig informationskälla</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Jag påverkas och inspireras av information som delges i bloggar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Jag upplever ofta att den information som förmedlas i bloggar är köpt av företag</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Om du uppfattar informationen köpta av företagen, ser du den då som trovärdig?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 2</th>
<th>Håller absolut inte alls</th>
<th>Håller med till fullo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Min varumärkessyn påverkas ofta av vad jag läser på bloggar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Jag anser att information som delges på en blogg kan skada ett varumärke</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Jag anser att varumärken kan gynnas av information som kan delges på en blogg</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Jag tar ofta till mig positiv information i jämförelse med negativ information vad gäller varumärken eller produkter på en blogg</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Part 3

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Jag identifierar mig med bloggar jag konsumerar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Om du håller med; bloggar som jag identifierar mig med ser jag som trovärdigare än andra</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Jag följer inte bloggars rekommendationer vad gäller produkter och varumärken</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Jag lägger större vikt vid information som förmedlas på bloggar i jämförelse med företags egna reklam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Part 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. Jag kommunicerar ofta positiv information från bloggar vidare till personer i min omgivning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Jag kommunicerar ofta negativ information från bloggar vidare till personer i min omgivning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tack för Din medverkan!
Hello,

We are two students from Linnaeus University in Växjö that are writing our bachelor thesis within marketing.

Today, approximately 26 percent of the Swedish populations are consuming different types of blogs. We would like to see how and what kind of influence blogs have over you, as a consumer.

The questionnaire contains of XX questions and will take just about ten minutes for you to answer. The answers will be anonymous and cannot trace back to you. It is important for the research that you answer all the questions, and that you answer as honestly as possible. Your opinions mean a lot to us.

If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact Johanna Jönsson at; jjodt09@lnu.se or Sofie Peters at; spevb09@lnu.se

Thank you for your cooperation!

Johanna Jönsson and Sofie Peters

Linnaeus University in Växjö
School of Business and economics
Marketing program
# Questionnaire

Thank you for choosing to participate in the questionnaire, you will now answer 17 questions regarding your blogs consumption and your influence from blogs.

**Sex:**
- Female
- Male

**Age:**
- 18 years old or younger
- 19-25
- 26 years old or older

Please, read the questions carefully and circle the number (between 1-7) that feels most suitable.

1= Strongly agree, 4= Neutral, 7= Strongly agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I'm a big consumer of blogs</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I see blogs as a trustworthy information source</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I'm getting influenced and inspired by information negotiated in blogs</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sometimes I perceive information negotiated in blogs as information that is bought by a company</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If you see the information bought by a company, do you believe it is a trustworthy source?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My brand knowledge often gets influenced of information I read in blogs</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My personal thought is that information negotiated in blogs can damage and hurt a brand</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I believe that a brand can take benefit from what is being negotiated in blogs</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I do more often reflect over positive information regarding a brand or a products that is negotiated in blogs compared to negative negotiation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Part 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. I can usually identify myself with blogs I consume</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. If you agree, the blogs that I identify myself with do I usually see as more trustworthy compared to others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I do not follow bloggers recommendations regarding brands or products</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I’m getting more influenced by information negotiated in blogs compared to a company own advertising</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. I often communicate positive information I have read in blogs to people in my surrounding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I often communicate negative information I have read in blogs to people in my surrounding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you!
APPENDIX FROM STATISTICS

Table 5.10 Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
<th>VALID PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>66,8</td>
<td>66,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>33,2</td>
<td>33,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.10; Numbers of respondent by gender*  
Authors own illustration adapted from SPSS

Table 5.11 Blog consumption

I SEE MYSELF AS A REGULAR CONSUMER OF BLOGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
<th>VALID PERCENT</th>
<th>CUMULATIVE PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>13,1</td>
<td>13,1</td>
<td>13,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4,9</td>
<td>4,9</td>
<td>18,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6,2</td>
<td>6,2</td>
<td>24,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8,8</td>
<td>8,8</td>
<td>33,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9,0</td>
<td>9,0</td>
<td>42,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>12,7</td>
<td>12,7</td>
<td>54,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>45,3</td>
<td>45,3</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.11; BLOG 1*  
Authors’ own illustration adapted from SPSS

Table 5.12 Blogs as a trustworthy information source

I SEE BLOG AS A TRUSTWORTHY INFORMATION SOURCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
<th>VALID PERCENT</th>
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*Table 5.12; BLOG 2*  
Authors’ own illustration adapted from SPSS
Table 5.13 Influenced by blogs

**I'M GETTING INFLUENCED AND INSPIRED BY INFORMATION NEGOTATION IN BLOGS**

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<th>CUMULATIVE PERCENT</th>
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Table 5.13; BLOG 3
Authors’ own illustration adapted from SPSS

Table 5.14 Information in blogs bought by a company

**SOMETIMES I PERCEIVE INFORMATION NEGOTATITED IN BLOGS AS INFORMATION THAT IS BOUGHT BY A COMPANY**

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Table 5.14; BLOG 4
Authors’ own illustration adapted from SPSS

Table 5.15 Blogs as a trustworthy source

**THE INFORMATION BOUGHT BY A COMPANY, IS IT A TRUSTWORTHY SOURCE**

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<th>CUMULATIVE PERCENT</th>
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Table 5.15; BLOG 5
Authors’ own illustration adapted from SPSS
Table 5.16 Brand knowledge increases with blogs consumption

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<th>PERCENT</th>
<th>VALID PERCENT</th>
<th>CUMULATIVE PERCENT</th>
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Table 5.16; BRAND IMAGE 1  
Authors’ own illustration adapted from SPSS

Table 5.17 Information in blogs can hurt a brand

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<th>MY PERSONAL THOUGHT IS THAT INFORMATION NEGOTIATED IN BLOGS CAN DAMAGE AND HURT A BRAND</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
<th>VALID PERCENT</th>
<th>CUMULATIVE PERCENT</th>
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Table 5.17; BRAND IMAGE 2  
Authors’ own illustration adapted from SPSS

Table 5.18 Brand can take benefits from a blogs

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<th>I BELIEVE THAT A BRAND CAN TAKE BENEFIT FROM WHAT IS BEING SAID IN BLOGS</th>
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<th>PERCENT</th>
<th>VALID PERCENT</th>
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</table>

Table 5.18; BRAND IMAGE 3  
Authors own illustration adapted from SPSS
Table 5.19 Positive information in blogs

I DO MORE OFTEN REFLECT OVER POSITIVE INFORMATION REGARDING A BRAND OR PRODUCT THAT IS NEGOTIATED IN BLOGS

<table>
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</table>

Table 5.20 Identify with blogs

I CAN USUALLY IDENTIFY MYSELF WITH BLOGS I CONSUME

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Table 5.21 Identify myself with bloggers, more trustworthy

THE BLOGS THAT I CAN IDENTIFY MYSELF WITH I DO USUALLY SEE AS MORE TRUSTWORTHY COMPARE TO OTHERS

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Table 5.20; OPINION LEADER 1
Authors’ own illustration adapted from SPSS

Table 5.21; OPINION LEADER 2
Authors’ own illustration adapted from SPSS

79
Table 5.22 Bloggers recommendation

DO NOT FOLLOW BLOGGERS RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING BRAND OR PRODUCT

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<th>VALID PERCENT</th>
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Table 5.23 Influenced by blogs more than a company's own advertising

I'M GETTING MORE INFLUENCED BY INFORMATION NEGOTITED IN BLOGS COMPARE TO A COMPANY OWN ADVERTISING

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Table 5.24 Positive information

I OFTEN COMMUNICATE POSITIVE INFORMATION I HAVE READ IN BLOGS TO PEOPLE IN MY SURROUNDINGS

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<th>CUMULATIVE PERCENT</th>
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Table 5.24: WORD OF MOUTH 1
Authors' own illustration adapted from SPSS
Table 5.25 Negative information

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*Table 5.25; WORD OF MOUTH 2
Authors' own illustration adapted from SPSS*
Linnaeus University – a firm focus on quality and competence

On 1 January 2010 Växjö University and the University of Kalmar merged to form Linnaeus University. This new university is the product of a will to improve the quality, enhance the appeal and boost the development potential of teaching and research, at the same time as it plays a prominent role in working closely together with local society. Linnaeus University offers an attractive knowledge environment characterised by high quality and a competitive portfolio of skills.

Linnaeus University is a modern, international university with the emphasis on the desire for knowledge, creative thinking and practical innovations. For us, the focus is on proximity to our students, but also on the world around us and the future ahead.

Lnu.se
Linnaeus University
SE-351 92 Kalmar/SE-351 95 Växjö
Telephone +46 772-28 00 00