

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Masters Degree in Management from the Faculdade de Economia da Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

## The Impact of Online Brand Community on Electronic Word-of-Mouth Communications

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## **Abstract**

Through brand communities, people share essential resources that may be cognitive, emotional and material in nature. They have been cited for their potential not only to enhance the loyalty of members but also to engender a sense of oppositional loyalty towards competing brands. This project explored how brand consumers belonging versus not belonging to a brand community; evaluate electronic word-of-mouth messages about the latest product released by Apple, the iPad. Each participant was exposed to a positive or negative product review and then surveyed. Evidence suggests that positive and negative consumer online recommendations provoke stronger reactions inside members of the community.

**Keywords: electronic word of mouth, brand community, virtual community, product recommendations**

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## **1. Introduction**

Word of Mouth (henceforth referred to as WOM) is considered to be one of the most influential sources of marketplace information for consumers (Alreck & Settle, 1995). This strong influence is supported by Sen & Lerman (2007), who affirm that consumers generally trust peer consumers more than they trust advertisers or marketers. Nowadays the Internet has become an essential tool not only within professional interactions but also in our personal life; we use it to get information, to sell or buy products and services, to share knowledge or just simply to communicate with others. This easy accessibility, reach and transparency have empowered marketers who are interesting in influencing and monitoring WOM, examining its effectiveness and buzz, or viral, marketing (Sun, Youn, Wu and Kuntaraporn, 2006). Social Networks such as facebook, linkedin, myspace, twitter, blogspot and youtube managed to arouse in people a sense of communication and interaction with others that was not imaginable 6 years ago and managed to emerge the new concept of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). eWOM, although being similar to the traditional form of WOM has distinguished characteristics as it often occurs between people who have little or no prior relationship with one another and can also be anonymous (Goldsmith & Horowitz 2006, Sen & Lerman 2007).

As consumers feel more encouraged to share their ideas and show their points of view, the volume of eWOM increases (Chatterjee, 2001), arousing in marketers the need and feel to deal with this relationship marketing, considered to be one of the leading marketing strategies in the future in which communication plays a major role (Andersen, 2005). Internet was indeed the great medium facilitating the communication among consumers and organizations (Pitta and Fowler, 2005), and several firms are

now starting to use several online tools such as chats, forums and online surveys to get in touch with their consumers, allowing interaction among them and trying to develop a long-term oriented relationship. These online relationships provoked the creation of the so called social groups on the Internet that have been traditionally referred to as virtual brand communities.

Through online brand communities, people from distinct geographical places share essential resources that may be cognitive, emotional, or material in nature. They allow their members to discuss and share brand experiences, positions, criticism and reviews among them, introducing a feeling of “Consciousness of a Kind” and Moral Responsibility, where members feel not only an important connection to the brand, but more importantly, a connection toward one another and a sense of duty to the community as a whole (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001).

The present work project attempts to test if belonging to a brand community, truly influences the way people interpret and absorb the reviews, comments and ratings of products made by others. Are they more immune to negative comments on the brand just because they belong to the community and have a shared consciousness? Do members develop a social identification based on the community, that is, do they reflect on the fact of belonging to a community, supporting and standing by its products or services related areas? Do the community members bring a more positive reinforcement when asked about a community related brand product than outsiders? Will the members condemn more vehemently negative comments or ratings?

Answers to these questions may help to understand the true power of virtual brand communities and their importance in any business and marketing strategy.

## **2. Conceptual background**

### **2.1 Electronic Word-of-Mouth**

The traditional forms of advertising are losing effectiveness, which made marketers more interested in better understanding the WOM effect (Nail, 2005). It is known that WOM communications and the role of the opinion spreaders are attractive because they not only gather the vision of overcoming consumer resistance with lower costs and fast delivery (Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels, 2009), but also, exert a strong influence on building awareness (Mahajan, Muller, and Kerin 1984), information dissemination (Goldenber, Libai, and Muller, 2001), product judgments (Herr, Kardes, and Kim, 1991), consumer satisfaction and repurchase intentions (Davidow, 2003). Moreover, customers who self-report being acquired through WOM add more long-term value to the firm than customers acquired through traditional marketing channels (Villanueva, Yoo, and Hanssens 2008).

The power of WOM has recently become even more relevant with the advent of the Internet. Some platforms that actually feature in our daily routine such product review websites, brands' and retailers' websites, personal blogs, message boards and social networking sites, helped to broaden the dimension of WOM (Bickar & Schindler 2001). Electronic-WOM (eWOM) usually occurs between people who have little or no prior relationship with another and this anonymity leads consumers to feel more comfortable in sharing their opinions, criticism and suggestions without revealing their identities (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006).

In a study conducted through an Internet Social Networking Site, where user sign-ups were tracked to see how they reacted to different cause-variables such as Media, Events

and WOM referrals, Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels (2009) found that the elasticity of WOM is much higher than any traditional marketing actions, meaning that WOM has stronger carryover effects than other types of traditional media, creating a strong impact on new customer acquisition.

Parallel to this research, Toubia and Stephen (2009) conducted an experiment in collaboration with a manufacturer of cosmetic products, in which they measured the impact of three promotional tools used in launching a new product. The results showed that the viral campaign, where members participated online by filling out an enrollment survey thereby earning discount coupons on the product, had a much bigger positive effect than the printed advertisement (newspapers and magazines).

As observed, the advances in electronic communications technology made WOM a particularly prominent marketing feature on the Internet, where it easily enables consumers to share their opinions, views, preferences and experiences on any other product or service. These peer-to-peer referrals have become an important phenomenon and marketers have tried to take advantage of their potential through viral marketing campaigns, leading to a more rapid and cost-effective adoption by the market (Krishnamurthy, 2001). In fact, managing WOM activity through targeted one-to-one seeding and several communication programs have become a usual practice for numerous researchers, who try not only to examine the conditions under which consumers are more likely to rely on others' opinions to take a purchasing decision, but also measure the variation in strength of people's influence on their peers in WOM communications.

Recently, in an experiment conducted on two internet book retail sites (Amazon.com and Barnesandnoble.com), where consumers were exposed to several reviews, it was

found that customer WOM affected purchasing behavior and positive book reviews led to an increase in the relative sales of that site (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006).

One of the distinguishing features that eWOM embraces is that it's generally difficult for consumers to determine the quality and credibility of the product recommendations when they seek advice from a communicator that has little or no prior relationship with the receiver (weak-tie sources) (Chatterjee, 2001). In an experiment where the reactions of 1100 recipients were studied after they received an unsolicited e-mail invitation from their acquaintances to participate in a survey, De Bruyn and Lilien (2008) found that tie strength exclusively facilitated awareness, that perceptual affinity triggered recipients' interest and that similar demographics had a negative influence on each stage of the decision-making process. These findings suggest that networks of friends and communities are more suited to the rapid and effective diffusion of online peer-to-peer referrals.

## **2.2 Brand Community and Virtual Brand Community**

Brand Community is a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand. It is marked by shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility. Its members are participants in the brand's larger social construction and play a vital role in the brand's ultimate legacy (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

Emerging literature is now revealing the importance of customer relationships as an imperative factor in marketing practices, enabling a stronger competitive advantage in the quest of the loyalty grail (Gruen, Summers, and Acito 2000). The true hope is that this loyalty will benefit the company by increasing the possibility that the community members will purchase the company's products in the future. Furthermore and also

according to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), membership and participation in brand communities have been found to create a sense of "oppositional loyalty" that leads members of the community to an adversarial view of competing brands.

In an experiment on 7506 members of four brand communities and two product categories, Thompson and Sinha (2008), found using a hazard modeling approach, that higher levels of participation and longer-term membership in a brand community, not only increased the likelihood of adopting a new product from the preferred brand but also decreased the likelihood of adopting new products from opposing brands.

Consciousness of a kind is one of the most important characteristic element that classifies Brand Community (Anderson 1983), the intrinsic feeling that members have that they are under the same "flag", sharing a collective sense of thinking and belonging. Bender (1978) defined it as a network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds.

Community strategies form a new kind of relational tool that allows brands to get closer to their consumers through their passions and to foster the creation of intimate and genuine relationships with them (Cova and Cova, 2001). In an experiment within the Jeep brand community, participants taking part in the Jeep brandfest (several outdoor activities with Jeep) were surveyed prior to the event and after it. McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig (2002) were able to conclude that brandfest participation led to more positive relationships of the participants towards their own vehicles, Jeep brand and Jeep corporate entity, showing that marketers can strengthen brand communities by facilitating shared customer experiences.

The benefits for a firm to grow brand community are immense and diverse. Community-integrated customers serve as brand missionaries, carrying the marketing

message into other communities and are therefore more forgiving than others when faced with brand product failures or lapses of service quality (Berry 1995).

Although WOM is difficult to directly observe in person-to-person contexts (Alreck and Settle, 1995), Virtual Brand Communities provide a trace of electronic WOM in archived threads that consumers and marketers can easily access and study, leading to more precise and targeted strategies. Virtual brand Communities are an extension of brand communities that managed to appear through the use of the Internet that was able to provide infrastructures to foster social interaction in different geographical areas. Hagel and Armstrong (1997) pointed out that virtual communities can help to satisfy four types of consumer needs: sharing resources, establishing relationships, trading and living fantasies.

In a recent study, Casaló, Flavia and Guinalú (2008) showed that participation in a virtual community had a positive influence on consumer commitment to the brand around the community is centered. Through the analyses of the role of trust, satisfaction with previous interactions and communication in the member's intentions to participate in the community, they also revealed that trust had a positive and significant effect on members' participation in the virtual community.

### **3. Hypotheses**

As mentioned before, previous research found significant effects of virtual brand communities in enhancing the preference and growing the bonds between users and the brand. The hypotheses of this study come in line with those conclusions focusing on the power of online recommendation and WOM.

Several researchers demonstrate that consumer satisfaction is influenced by the confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations (Olson and Dover 1979). Liu (2005), in an experiment on the dynamics and impact of WOM on Box Office Revenue found out that positive WOM increased performance. Senecal and Nantel (2004) showed through a web-based study that online recommendation sources influence consumers' online choices, products were selected twice as often if they were recommended. Finally, Huang and Chen (2006) stated that consumer recommendations are perceived to be more trustworthy than those of experts:

H1: Positive comments/ratings reported within an online community have a stronger positive effect on the preference and interest perception of the members belonging to the community than on the users beyond the community.

Wright (1974) found that negative information affected car purchase intent more than positive cues under high time pressure conditions. Mizerski (1982) stated that unfavorable ratings, as compared to favorable product ratings on the same attributes, prompt significantly stronger attributions to product performance, belief strength, and affect towards products. Furthermore, it has been argued that negative cues attract more attention and are therefore more heavily attributable to the stimulus object (Scott and Tybout, 1981). Finally, Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) stated that community members may oppose characteristics that may threaten the community.

H2: Negative comments/ratings reported from within an online community will have stronger effects than positive ones, on members also belonging to the community.

According to Kozinets (1999) the communications inside an online community increase the member's susceptibility to the opinions of the associated members. It was also revealed that strong tie sources could be more influential than weak ties sources (Brown

and Reingen, 1987). More recently Mc Alexander, Schouten and Koenig (2002) affirmed that community-integrated customers are more forgiving than others with product failures and negative information on the brand. Finally Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) pointed out the endurance and persistence existent in brand communities. They affirm that members share a common awareness concerning the commercial nature of the community, suggesting that members will be more passionate and sentimental when reporting about the brand.

H3: Negative product comments and ratings will have a weaker impact on consumers' interest and preference when placed beyond the online community than when placed within the community.

## **4. Experiment**

### **4.1 Research Overview**

The main objective of this project is to understand the impact of electronic WOM in virtual brand communities, when evaluating products that belong to them. The study will focus on differences that could emerge from reporting a product review and distinguish comments and ratings within the particular product brand community and beyond it. To compare the two groups of users, an experiment was run, in which participants assessed a website blog where they were confronted with a product review and two different types of criticism and ratings of the product (positive and negative) and then asked to complete a survey reporting what they felt.

## **4.2 Experimental Design**

To examine the hypothesis, the first requirement was to find a brand community that was well known and a product that could stimulate the consumers to participate in the experiment. Apple was the brand chosen, not only because of its awareness, but also for the reason that the company is known for being able to project a humanistic corporate culture and a strong corporate ethic, supporting good causes and involving the community in it.

Apple's online brand community resides on facebook, and has more than 112,000 members; it is destined not just for people who have an Apple product but rather for people who enjoy the brand and its meaning. It's a place for members to get along with each other by sharing product experiences, comments and questions they might have about the brand.

Furthermore, it was important to choose a product inside the brands' portfolio that was not totally known and explored by consumers so they didn't have a preferential view just because they own the particular product. The iPad is Apple's new device that was presented by Steve Jobs on 27th January 2010. It is a netbook and allows its users to run several computer applications, navigate on the internet and also store their music, photos, movies and games. Although this product was already released in the USA, it is just previewed for Europe on May 28th, which enhances this study's credibility as few users have a real experience with the product itself.

In order to provide the WOM effect in a naturalistic and credible way, two Blogs were created to pass the review, comments and ratings of the product among the non members and members of the community. The blog context is highly relevant to this study because blogs have been increasingly popular sites of WOM campaigns (Kelly

2007; Rettber 2008). An estimation by eMarketer suggested that 50% of all Internet users are regular blog readers, a figure that predicts to rise to 62% by 2012 (Kutchera 2008). Moreover in 2006, a European survey indicated that blogs “are second only to newspapers as a trusted information source” (Brown, Broderick and Lee 2007).

The blogs were named “Top Reviews” and featured an iPad photo, a brief review of the product, user ratings and five selected user comments. The review of the product was equal for both blogs, it stated the dimensions of the iPad, its’ features, its’ environmental-friendly character and two cons of the product. The objective was that this review had a neutral impact when read; it was supposed to neither favor the product nor disfavor it.

The difference between these two blogs resided on the ratings and comments made. On one blog, referred to as Negative Blog (henceforth referred to as NB) (Appendix 1a), a low product consumer rating was given, two stars (an average of 1.8) out of five was the classification reported and on the other, referred to as Positive Blog (henceforth referred to as PB) (Appendix 1b), a high rating was given, four stars (an average of 4.2) out of five.

Moreover, on the NB five negative user comments were added. These comments purpose was to reinforce the negative information on the product. In contrast, on the PB five positive user comments were posted. In order to have negative and positive information of the same strength, the words used on each comment were carefully selected from a study conducted by Bochner and Van Zyl (2001), who measured the desirability ratings of 110 Personality-Trait Words and through a normative study were able to list and rank them from the most desirable word (rank 1) until the most undesirable (rank 110), in this list, words in common usage that are comprehensible,

unambiguous and familiar were given preference. The words Friendly (rank 4), Efficient (rank 26), Lovely (rank 2) and Practical (rank 18) were opposed with Unreliable (rank 106), Ostentatious (rank 84), Unfriendly (rank 108) and Snobbish (rank 92). The word Radical (rank 55) is supposed to work has a neutral midpoint, neither considered desired or undesired. It was intended that not only the words had approximately the same oppositional rank strength, but also that the words selected could be realistic and represented a good fit in classifying the iPad. The comments made on each blog are supposed to create this way, the same desire or undesired strength among the consumers.

### **4.3 Subjects**

Forty four subjects belonging to Apple's' online brand community, and forty four non community members subjects from Universidade Nova de Lisboa, participated in the study. From the total eighty eight participants in this study 53% were female and 47% were male.

### **4.4 Procedure**

The experiment was totally conducted online and had two different procedures; the first was made through online directed personal messages, where I requested and invited members of Apple's' community to participate in a study for a master thesis, participants were kindly asked to read a blog and answer a survey after it. One hundred and fifty four invitations were sent on facebook, half of them were attached to the PB link and the other to the NB link; forty four surveys came back answered, twenty two from the PB and the remaining from the NB.

The second procedure was to conduct a similar study for the consumers that didn't belong to the brand community. In order be sure that the members of the brand did not

differ in certain crucial aspects from the community a pre-test was conducted first to these participants (Appendix 2a). This pre-test asked participants about their identification with and liking of the brand Apple. On a 9-point scale, where -4 meant no identification with or total disliking of the brand, and 4 meant total identification or total likeness of Apple's brand. (note: you need to make clear that these are two different scales.) From fifty six pre-tests answered, forty seven came out positive (meaning that the identification or likability was positive >0), forty four were chosen, in order to match the number of members of the community that also answered the study, to proceed to the experiment. Again, twenty two were linked to PB and respective survey and other twenty two were linked to the NB. Important to notice that there were no significant differences between the members and the non members of the community and furthermore 90% of the non community members also reported having an Apple Product.

After reading the blog, all participants filled out the main questionnaire (Appendix 2b), which included the following measures:

- 1) Helpfulness of the Blog – Subjects were asked to indicate how helpful they found the iPad blog “Top Reviews” they read about on a scale from -4 and 4, where -4 meant not helpful and 4 meant very helpful.
- 2) Agreement with the Blog Review – Participants were asked to indicate to which extent they agreed with the iPad review they read about on a scale from -4 to 4, where -4 meant no agreement and 4 meant total agreement.
- 3) Agreement with the Blog comments and Ratings – Participants were asked to indicate to which extent they agreed with the iPad blog comments and ratings they were exposed to on a scale from -4 to 4, where -4 meant no agreement and 4 meant total agreement.

- 4) Willingness to buy the iPad after reading the Blog – Subjects were asked, on a scale from -4 to 4, to indicate how much were they willing to buy the iPad after reading the blog, where -4 meant no willingness to buy and 4 meant total willingness in buying the iPad.

Moreover, an additional section of the questionnaire was added to the members of Apple's brand that participated in the experiment (Appendix 2c). This section was created essentially to understand the level of likeness of the brand by its members. Again a likert scale was used to measure how strong the level of likability with the brand was; participants were asked to state on a scale from -4 to 4, where -4 meant strongly dislike and 4 meant strongly like. Finally, community participants were asked to report what were the principal factors that lead them to belong to Apple's community. The answer categories corresponded to Muniz and O'Guinn's (2001) main reasons why consumers belong to a community: Interaction with the company, grow relationships with other members, be aware for new releases and updates and increase commitment with the brand, an end open field choice, enabled any other reasons consumers wanted to state. Participants were able to choose one option they found that best described their relationship and expectations of the brand community belonging.

## **5. Results**

The data were analyzed through SPSS (version 16.0)

In order to analyze the data gathered after the experiment, several Independent Samples t-tests were used to test differences: (1<sup>st</sup>) Between community that saw and was tested through the PB and non-community that saw and was tested through PB; (2<sup>nd</sup>) Between community that saw and was tested through the NB and community that saw and was

tested through the PB; (3<sup>rd</sup>) between the community that saw and was tested through the NB, and the non-community that saw and was tested through the NB. All the t-tests were conducted with a 5% level of significance and as the population variance was unknown; it was not possible to assume equal variance.

On the first analysis the results showed that the PB had a stronger effect inside the community, rather than outside it. The null hypothesis that  $\mu_g = \mu_{ng}$  was rejected for all the three measures, where the p-value was small, except the review agreement, where the p-value assigned was greater than 0.05 (table value of 0.227), therefore there was enough evidence to support the alternative hypothesis stating that  $\mu_g > \mu_{ng}$  (Appendix 3a). In the group statistics (Appendix 3b) analysis it is understandable that the community had stronger average ponderation in all the four measures, with specific focus on the average difference between the willingness to buy the product after the PB blog reading, where almost a 3 point difference between the two different group respondents. Consequently, there is evidence supporting Hypothesis 1.

In the analysis of the influence of unfavorable information between the community (2<sup>nd</sup>), the t-test revealed that the null-hypothesis is vehemently rejected, meaning that means of both samples are not equal (Appendix 4a). However it appears that the strongest answers were given after the reading of the PB and not the negative one, in fact, observing the group statistics (Appendix 4b) only the negative comments and ratings have a stronger disagreement ( $\mu_{neg.comments/ratings} = -2.7273$ ) than the agreement with the positive ones ( $\mu_{pos.comments/ratings} = 2.3182$ ). Although it is a weak significance association, this result reveals that negative comments and ratings do in fact produce stronger effects than the positive, allowing me to weakly confirm Hypothesis 2.

Analyzing the differences between the community that saw and viewed the NB and the outer community subjects that had contact with the NB, the independent samples t-test revealed that the hypothesis should be rejected as the p-values in all characteristics sections are inferior to 0,05 (Appendix 5a). The subjects within Apple's community did in fact have stronger feelings and disagreements towards the NB (Appendix 5b), and also with the PB, as seen on the 1<sup>st</sup> t-test analysis, meaning that it is correct to affirm the support of Hypothesis 3.

Finally, a simple average revealed that from the forty four community respondents that answered the survey, 31,82% answer that their expectations on the community is to be aware for new product releases and updates and 27,27% revealed that their expectations within the community is to increase their commitment with the brand.

## **6. Discussion**

As predicted in the first hypothesis, the results support the idea that belonging to a community can positively affect the strength of preference and desire towards a product that is inserted in the community. The PB showed to members and non members of Apple's' community, revealed that a preferential view is felt by the first. However, there are interesting facts that can be analyzed with further rigor:

The largest range in the means is brought by the willingness to buy the product after reading the PB. Members of the community classified it almost three points higher than outside the community, they were more receptive towards the positive reviews and comments by other users, evidencing the feeling of "Consciousness of a kind", one of the particularities of brand community proved by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), it is evident that has members of the community, consumers feel that other subjects that

created the positive comments and ratings made in the blog, are also a part of the “we-ness” of Apple.

Other interesting fact is that although the product review itself was supposed to be neutral and merely informational, the members of Apple showed a slight preference for it anyhow, evidencing a stronger likeability with it. Finally, it was shown as stated by H1 that positive online recommendation sources do in fact influence consumers’ choices.

The second hypothesis is merely confirmed by the analysis of the negative ratings and comments made about the iPad. In fact, members showed a greater disagreement with the negative reinforcement; this is consistent with Muniz and O’Guinn’s (2001) findings that communities unite to opposed threats, real or perceived. Anyhow, it is curious to notice that although the product characteristic review was the same for both NB or PB, the members exposed to the PB revealed that this review was quite helpful and showed agreement and willingness to buy the iPad, opposed to the ones that were exposed to the NB, that revealed that the review was not helpful and neither agreed with it.

The final hypothesis was a complement to the first one, and it is evident that the community is vehement more in disagreeing with the negative comments and ratings than the outer community that also share a sense of likeness with the brand. These findings are consistent with Schouten and Koenig’s (2002) research, where it was stated that community-integrated customers are more forgiving than others with negative information on the brand. In fact, the negative comments and ratings were severely condemned by the community when compared to the non-members differing almost 3 points in the likert scale.

The research reported in this work project might have several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the fact the members of Apple Community might have understood the purpose of the study and behaved as “stronger” brand participants, might have influenced their valuations.

Moreover, consumers generally feel strong about the brand Apple, as it has a great awareness and media information and attention, which may narrow the possibilities of the conclusions of this study to be generalized to any other brand or community.

Another limitation was the fact that it was not possible to measure the level of participation of the members inside the community. Where they stronger members and opinion leaders, with a high degree of comments and posts inside the community?

Furthermore, it is important to notice that the samples could be different, has the non-members of the community were all NOVA students, being this way more likely homogeneous than the Apples’ community members. Finally, and as the blog created had no prior knowledge or credibility, the subjects may not have considered it trustful and honest.

## **7. Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to understand the power of brand communities in an eWOM context. It was intended to understand and assess if there were differences between actual members of a brand community and consumers that also do like and feel related to the brand, but are not a part of the community, when assessing information of a product with opposed valence.

This main objective was achieved since, in the experiment, evidence was found to support the idea that members of the brand community do react differently and have a stronger position towards negative or positive product related comments. These findings extend the work of the influence of online product recommendations on consumers' online choices (Senecal and Nantel, 2004), and are consistent with previous research that showed that participation in a virtual brand community has a positive influence on consumer commitment to the brand around which the community is centered (Casaló, Flavián, Guinalú, 2008).

This insight might be useful for companies that want to create and enhance stronger relationships (through participation) with their customers and possibly benefit from some levels of loyalty. A strong brand community may in fact not only increase customer loyalty but also lower marketing costs, authenticate brand meaning and influx several ideas and opinions to grow and expand the business. Through commitment, engagement, and support, companies can cultivate brand communities that deliver powerful returns.

The hypotheses supported may represent an opportunity for brand communities, which should take advantage of the new media turn up and social networking process.

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## 9. Appendices

### Appendix 1a – Top Reviews, Negative Blog


# TOP REVIEWS

TERÇA-FEIRA, 4 DE MAIO DE 2010

## IPAD REVIEW



**SEGUIDORES**

 Seguir  
com o Google Rede Social

Ainda não existem seguidores.  
[Seja o primeiro!](#)

Já é membro? [Iniciar sessão](#)

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**ARQUIVO DO BLOGUE**

- ▼ 2010 (1)
- ▼ Maio (1)
- IPAD REVIEW

The new iPad released by Apple features a device with a 9.7in LED backlight multi-touch display with a pixel resolution of 1024x768 that allows users to store and watch their videos, songs pictures and books and run several applications.

iPad is far more environmental friendly. iPad is BFR-free, it's a chemical compound to make electronics fire resistant, Arsenic-free display glass, Mercury-Free LCD display, Recyclable Glass and aluminum and PVC-free.

Although its user interface is based on iPhone and iPod Touch (which means that there is no UI learning curve involved for the users), iPads keyboard is difficult to use and there are no multiple tasking functions.

**Users Rating:**

**\*\* (1.8 out of 5)**

**Some Users Comments:**

"I found it an unreliable device" Pedro Santos

"A radical product" Margaret Carson

"It's just ostentatious" Joan Biron

"It's an unfriendly gadget" George Furti

"It's a little bit snobish" Sean Ryllie


PUBLICADA POR BB EM 16:11 0 COMENTÁRIOS

## Appendix 1b – Top Reviews, Positive Blog

# TOP REVIEWS

SEGUNDA-FEIRA, 26 DE ABRIL DE 2010

## IPAD REVIEW



The new iPad released by Apple features a device with a 9.7in LED backlight multi-touch display with a pixel resolution of 1024x768 that allows users to store and watch their videos, songs pictures and books and run several applications.

iPad is far more environmental friendly. iPad is BFR-free, it's a chemical compound to make electronics fire resistant, Arsenic-free display glass, Mercury-Free LCD display, Recyclable Glass and aluminum and PVC-free.

Although its user interface is based on iPhone and iPod Touch (which means that users may work on it the the same way they did with other Apple devices), iPads keyboard is difficult to use and there are no multiple tasking functions.

**Users Rating:**

\*\*\*\* (4.2 out of 5)

**Some Users Comments:**

"I found it a friendly device" Pedro Santos

"It's efficient" Joan Biron

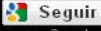

"I love its features!" George Furti

"It's so practical" Sean Ryllie

"A radical product" Margaret Carson

PUBLICADA POR BB EM 17:32

**SEGUIDORES**

 Seguir 

com o Google Rede Social

Ainda não existem seguidores.  
[Seja o primeiro!](#)

Já é membro? [Iniciar sessão](#)

**ARQUIVO DO BLOGUE**

- ▼ 2010 (1)
- ▼ Abril (1)
- IPAD REVIEW

## Appendix 2a – No Community pre-test

**1. pre test 1.1**

**1. Tens algum produto da APPLE?**

MAC

iPhone

iPod

iPad

Nenhum

**2. Gostas da marca APPLE?**

Não gosto      -3      -2      -1      É me indiferente      1      2      3      Gosto Muito

Classifica

**3. Identificas-te com a marca APPLE?**

Não me Identifico      É me indiferente      Identifico-me Totalmente

Classifica

[Next](#)

Survey Powered by:  
**SurveyMonkey**  
"Surveys Made Simple."

## Appendix 2b – Main Questionnaire

**1. Blog Section**

**1. Reminding the review you read. How do you find it helpful?**

Not Helpful      -3      -2      -1      Not Helpful nor Helpful      1      2      3      Extremely Helpful

Classify

**2. Do you agree with the review?**

Strongly Disagree      -3      -2      -1      Indiferent      1      2      3      Strongly Agree

Classify

**3. Do you agree with the ratings and comments made?**

Totally Disagree      -3      -2      -1      Neither agree nor disagree      1      2      3      Totally Agree

Classify

**4. After reading the blog TOP REVIEWS I am more willing in buying an IPAD**

Totally Disagree      -3      -2      -1      Neither agree nor disagree      1      2      3      Totally Agree

Classify

[Next](#)

Survey Powered by:  
**SurveyMonkey**  
"Surveys Made Simple."

## Appendix 2b – Community after-test

**2. Community**

**1. Do you have an apple device?**

Mac

iPod

iPhone

iPad

No

**2. How do you feel about the brand APPLE**

Strongly Dislike   -3   -2   -1   Indiferent   1   2   3   Strongly Like

Classify

**3. What do you expect from the brand community APPLE you are a part of?**

Interaction with the company

Grow relationships with other users

Be aware for new releases and updates

Increase my commitment with the brand

Other (please specify)

**4. What is your gender?**

Male

Female

**Appendix 3a – Group Statistics on the PB (within the community vs. beyond the community)**

**Group Statistics**

	Community	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Helpfulness Review	yes	22	2,1818	1,22032	,26017
	no	22	1,1818	1,40192	,29889
Agreement Review	yes	22	1,8636	1,55212	,33091
	no	22	1,3182	1,39340	,29707
Comments/Ratings	yes	22	2,3182	1,17053	,24956
	no	22	,7273	1,38639	,29558
Willingness Buy	yes	22	2,5455	1,05683	,22532
	no	22	-,3636	1,43246	,30540

**Appendix 3b – Independent Samples T-test on the Positive Blog (within the community vs. beyond the community)**

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Helpfulness Review	Equal variances assumed	,242	,625	2,524	42	,015	1,00000	,39626	,20031	1,79969
	Equal variances not assumed			2,524	41,217	,016	1,00000	,39626	,19986	1,80014
Agreement Review	Equal variances assumed	,256	,616	1,227	42	,227	,54545	,44470	-,35198	1,44289
	Equal variances not assumed			1,227	41,521	,227	,54545	,44470	-,35229	1,44320
Comments/Ratings	Equal variances assumed	,780	,382	4,113	42	,000	1,59091	,38684	,81023	2,37159
	Equal variances not assumed			4,113	40,852	,000	1,59091	,38684	,80958	2,37224
Willingness Buy	Equal variances assumed	1,119	,296	7,665	42	,000	2,90909	,37952	2,14318	3,67500
	Equal variances not assumed			7,665	38,636	,000	2,90909	,37952	2,14120	3,67698

**Appendix 4a – Independent Samples T-test within the community (positive blog vs. negative blog)**

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Helpfulness Review	Equal variances assumed	9,481	,004	7,607	42	,000	3,54545	,46609	2,60485	4,48606
	Equal variances not assumed			7,607	36,778	,000	3,54545	,46609	2,60088	4,49003
Agreement Review	Equal variances assumed	,647	,426	7,419	42	,000	3,27273	,44114	2,38246	4,16299
	Equal variances not assumed			7,419	41,350	,000	3,27273	,44114	2,38205	4,16341
Comments/Ratings	Equal variances assumed	,240	,627	15,165	42	,000	5,04545	,33269	4,37405	5,71686
	Equal variances not assumed			15,165	41,350	,000	5,04545	,33269	4,37374	5,71717
Willingness Buy	Equal variances assumed	,788	,380	11,627	42	,000	3,81818	,32838	3,15549	4,48087
	Equal variances not assumed			11,627	41,857	,000	3,81818	,32838	3,15542	4,48094

**Appendix 4b - Group Statistics within the community (positive blog vs. negative blog)**

**Group Statistics**

	positive or negative blog	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Helpfulness Review	pos	22	2,1818	1,22032	,26017
	neg	22	-1,3636	1,81385	,38671
Agreement Review	pos	22	1,8636	1,55212	,33091
	neg	22	-1,4091	1,36832	,29173
Comments/Ratings	pos	22	2,3182	1,17053	,24956
	neg	22	-2,7273	1,03196	,22001
Willingness Buy	pos	22	2,5455	1,05683	,22532
	neg	22	-1,2727	1,12045	,23888

**Appendix 5a - Independent Samples T-test on the Negative Blog (within the community vs. beyond the community)**

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Helpfulness Review	Equal variances assumed	3,431	,071	-3,245	42	,002	-1,63636	,50421	-2,65391	-,61882
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,245	40,732	,002	-1,63636	,50421	-2,65485	-,61788
Agreement Review	Equal variances assumed	,231	,633	-4,572	42	,000	-1,86364	,40765	-2,68630	-1,04097
	Equal variances not assumed			-4,572	41,975	,000	-1,86364	,40765	-2,68631	-1,04096
Comments/Ratings	Equal variances assumed	,156	,695	-7,558	42	,000	-2,45455	,32476	-3,10994	-1,79915
	Equal variances not assumed			-7,558	41,719	,000	-2,45455	,32476	-3,11007	-1,79902
Willingness Buy	Equal variances assumed	1,009	,321	-2,306	42	,026	-,77273	,33505	-1,44889	-,09657
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,306	41,988	,026	-,77273	,33505	-1,44889	-,09656

**Appendix 5b - Group Statistics on the Negative Blog (within the community vs. beyond the community)**

**Group Statistics**

	Community	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Helpfulness Review	yes	22	-1,3636	1,81385	,38671
	no	22	,2727	1,51757	,32355
Agreement Review	yes	22	-1,4091	1,36832	,29173
	no	22	,4545	1,33550	,28473
Comments/Ratings	yes	22	-2,7273	1,03196	,22001
	no	22	-,2727	1,12045	,23888
Willingness Buy	yes	22	-1,2727	1,12045	,23888
	no	22	-,5000	1,10195	,23494