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ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH IN CONSUMER FASHION BLOGS

A netnographic study

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in consumer fashion blogs. The phenomenon of fashion blogs has become very popular among fashion consumers and companies within recent years. Fashion consumers buy clothes and shoes online, are active in social media pages, and produce electronic word-of-mouth in online communities. Fashion companies have noticed this change and want to be present in the Internet in different ways. In fashion blogs, there are consumers and companies present and creating content. From this content, the main idea was to gather fashion product-related topics that are important especially for fashion brands and retailers.

Theoretical framework for this study was constructed from electronic word-of-mouth. Electronic word-of-mouth is one of the biggest influencers of today's consumers. It comprises of negative and positive statements made by customers about a product or a company. The difference to the traditional word-of-mouth is that the message is made available to a multitude of people over the Internet. Organic and amplified eWOM were separated due to their differing and important nature in blogs. Organic eWOM is naturally created; amplified eWOM has a marketer influencing behind it. Before conducting the research it was important to understand the bloggers' and readers' motivations to engage in eWOM. The main motivations for blogging were self-expression, social belonging, economical and professional, and entertainment. The main motivations for reading blogs were information need, social belonging, economical, and entertainment.

Netnography was chosen for the research methodology because of its suitability in studying online communities and content created by their members. Netnography is a qualitative research methodology that is based on ethnography. It is directed for studying cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications. This study followed the flow of the netnographic research process. The six fashion blogs were selected according to the netnographic criteria and they were observed from the beginning of January 2011 to the end of March 2011. After the data collection and analysis, the results contained different fashion topics that emerged from the data. These were divided according to the nature eWOM – organic or amplified. The main topics in organic eWOM were personal style, brands, designers and retailers, tips and advice, and purchases. The main topics in amplified eWOM were received products, brands, designers and retailers, tips, and competitions. The topics were quite similar between organic and amplified entries even though some exceptions were evident.

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Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli kuvata ja analysoida elektronista word-of-mouth:ia kuluttajien muotiblogeissa. Muotiblogit ovat nousseet hyvin suosituiksi niin muodin kuluttajien kuin muotiyritysten parissa viime vuosina. Nykyajan muodin kuluttajat ostavat vaatteensa ja kenkänsä Internetistä, ovat aktiivisia sosiaalisen median käyttäjiä ja tuottavat elektronista suusta-suuhun-tietoa nettiyhteisöissä. Muotiyritykset ovat huomanneet tämän muutoksen ja haluavat myös olla esillä Internetissä monin eri tavoin. Muotiblogeissa sekä kuluttajat että yritykset ovat vahvasti esillä ja tuottavat sisältöä. Tärkeimpänä ajatuksena oli kerätä tästä sisällöstä muotituotteisiin liittyviä aihepiirejä, jotka ovat erityisen tärkeitä muotiyrityksille.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys rakentui elektronisen word-of-mouthin ympärille. Elektroninen word-of-mouth vaikuttaa vahvasti nykykuluttajien käyttäytymiseen ja ostopäätöksiin. Elektroninen word-of-mouth koostuu asiakkaiden positiivisista ja negatiivisista kommenteista yritykseen tai sen tuotteisiin liittyen. Nämä kommentit tavoittavat huiman määrän ihmisiä, koska ne ovat näkyvillä Internetissä. Tämä on suurin ero tavalliseen word-of-mouth:iin. Orgaaninen ja vahvistettu word-of-mouth käsiteltiin erikseen niiden erilaisten lähtökohtien perusteella. Orgaaninen word-of-mouth on luonnollisesti kehittynyttä, kun taas vahvistettu word-of-mouth on lähtöisin markkinoijan suorasta vaikutuksesta. Ennen tutkimuksen suorittamista oli tärkeää ymmärtää mitkä asiat motivoivat bloggaajia kirjoittamaan blogia ja ihmisiä lukemaan niitä. Suurimmat motivaattorit olivat itseilmaisu, tiedon tarve, sosiaalinen yhteenkuuluvuus, taloudelliset ja ammatilliset tavoitteet, sekä viihde.

Netnografia valittiin tutkimuksen metodiksi, koska se on kehitetty juurikin tutkimaan nettiyhteisöjä, niiden kulttuureja ja jäsenten tuottamaa sisältöä. Netnografia on kvalitatiivinen tutkimusmetodologia, joka pohjautuu etnografiaan. Tämän tutkimuksen toteuttamisessa noudatettiin netnografista tutkimusprosessia. Kuusi muotiblogia valittiin netnografisten kriteerien perusteella ja niitä seurattiin kolmen kuukauden ajan tammikuun 2011 alusta maaliskuun 2011 loppuun. Materiaalin keruun ja analysoinnin jälkeen muotituotteisiin liittyvät aihepiirit alkoivat hahmottua blogiteksteistä. Nämä aihepiirit jaoteltiin elektronisen word-of-mouth –lähtökohtien perusteella orgaanisiin aiheisiin ja vahvistettuihin aiheisiin. Orgaanisen eWOM:in pääaihepiirit olivat oma tyyli, brändit, suunnittelijat ja vähittäiskaupat, vinkit ja neuvot, sekä ostokset. Laajennetun eWOM:in pääaihepiirit olivat saadut tuotteet, brändit, suunnittelijat ja vähittäiskaupat, vinkit, sekä kilpailut. Aihepiirit olivat kuitenkin melko samankaltaisia, vaikka joitakin poikkeuksia löytyi.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Fashion marketing in the online environment

Fashion is a constantly changing industry due to the globalizing environment, new and more efficient technology and more demanding customers. For many consumers, fashion is more about lifestyle, identity and everyday life than just about the clothes (Doherty 2004, 744). Fashion marketing may involve anything from retailing to consumption and from operational issues to Internet marketing. The most recent changes in fashion industry and marketing concern the internationalization of retailing, new consumer needs and behavior, and the role of the Internet (Doherty 2004, 745–746). The Internet and its role in changing the needs and behavior of fashion consumers are going to be taken into more detailed examination.

In fashion retailing, the Internet is changing the consumer needs and behavior. E-commerce in Finland amounted to nearly ten billion Euros in year 2010 (TNS Gallup 2011). Especially women buy fashion and beauty products, home textiles and vacation trips online (Koskinen 2010). Online retailing sector continues to grow much faster than the traditional retailing sector but it has not yet become the dominating way of shopping even though it was predicted ten years ago (Weitz 2006, 309–310). In addition to the fast growth of online product sales, fashion retailing is predicted to change within the next years. E-commerce will continue to increase and new types of brick-and-mortar stores are going to emerge. This is due to the consumer-driven fashion industry where the fashion retailers need to provide them with what they want, where they want it, and at the price they want to pay (Kim & Johnson 2008, 276).

Since the fashion online retailing is growing, many consumers have recognized its unique benefits. Online fashion retailing gives customers, for example, greater time and cost efficiency, 24-hour accessibility and wider choice of products. (Song, Fiore & Park 2007, 553–554). Nick Robertson, the founder of ASOS, a fashion e-tailer also successful among Finnish consumers, addresses the difference between shopping in online and brick-and-mortar stores: "Online shopping isn't like high street shopping. Nobody likes to shop for

clothes on 50 different websites in one day. We have thousands of products in one place." (Marketing week, 2010). Brodie & Adamo (2009) illustrated yet another example of how well online fashion stores could operate: An important business woman's luggage has been lost during a flight and she desperately needs outfits for tonight's event. She picks up her Blackberry and orders a special delivery of her selected clothes to the hotel. The problem of lost luggage is easily solved.

Even though the benefits of online shopping are evident, some consumers still are inexperienced with e-commerce and hesitant to use for buying products online (Hernandez, Jimenez & Martin 2009, 1239). The greatest disadvantage in online shopping is that customers cannot examine the product physically before the purchase decision. Fit, color, design, and fabric are important features in shopping fashion products, and therefore, fashion and especially apparel products are identified as high risk items (Ha & Stoel 2004, 378). There are already some solutions to that problem, i.e. virtual fitting rooms and 3D product presentation, but it does not replace the need to physically touch the product (Song et al. 2007, 553–554). Personal service of retailer stores are also lacking from stores' websites. Kim, Kim & Lennon (2007, 495) stated that the general information and FAQs provided on the web page substitutes personal service in some cases. However, the web page cannot answer every single question.

The need for more information about a product is one reason why electronic word-of-mouth and consumer online communities are gaining popularity among consumers. Some e-tailers have already noticed the need for specific information by the consumers. For example, fashion e-tailer ASOS has created a forum on their website where consumers can share and ask for information from each other and from the staff (Marketing week, 2010). Specific information reduces the product and credit card risk perceived by many consumers, and ultimately creates trust between the consumer and the retailer, and satisfaction. (Kim & Lennon 2010, 257–258). Since also the social world is going digital, consumers turn more easily to other online communities created by other consumers. Those might be consumer fashion blogs, forums and other online communities. (Kozinets 2010, 7–16). Consumers see the opinions of other consumers more trustworthy than of the marketing professionals. Therefore, also marketing professionals have recognized the need to encourage word-of-mouth and other social marketing techniques. (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki & Wilner 2010, 71).

In addition to the traditional media that most fashion brands still consider as their main marketing channel, some have noticed the opportunities of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter (Morrissey 2010, 6). The most successful social media campaigns have gathered millions of consumers to their fan bases. However, luxury brands are afraid of destroying the exclusivity image if they engage too enthusiastically to social media campaigns. It is a fact that social media campaigns have challenges because the fashion company cannot control how the brand is perceived in different online community sites. Finding the right platform for the brand is the key.

Fashion blogs are a particular type of online community. They are more impersonal, than other online communities, in a sense that there is one authority figure and the rest of the members act as audience and commentators (Kozinets 2010, 32). However, the relationships might still be as deep and meaningful in interaction as in other online communities through the commenting possibility (Kaplan & Haenlein, 63). Blogs have a strong entertaining element and that is one reason why they have become so popular and influential among consumers as well as fashion marketers. Fashion blogs have thousands of readers even though the topics are from everyday life; shopping, clubbing, eating and hanging out with friends (Berner 2011). Most popular bloggers post entries at least once a day and the topics are mostly positive because readers are not interested in negative topics.

Some Finnish bloggers are paid for their writings by fashion magazines, such as Olivia, or blog platforms, such as Indiedays, but the blogger salaries are not as big as in Sweden and Norway, for example (Sevänen & Karila 2010, 16–18). A couple of years ago bloggers could not even dream about receiving monetary benefits for their writing. Fashion companies are beginning to notice that blogs are very influential source of electronic word-of-mouth. In Indiedays blog platform, there are advertisements of the biggest fashion retailers, such as H&M and Marimekko. In addition to the advertisements, popular bloggers receive products and suggestions about marketing partnership almost every day. Covert marketing campaigns, where the commercial source is concealed, try to reach consumers that avoid exposure to traditional campaigns (Ashley & Leonard 2009, 212).

In Finland, blog marketing is still in its infancy comparing to other countries but it is predicted that the blogger's salaries and other benefits are going to increase in the near future (Sevänen & Karila 2010, 17). Researcher Elina Noppari predicts that blog marketing is going to be one of the most important tools in the future because the word-of-mouth information is more effective than traditional marketing campaigns (Hirvonen 2011). Blog readers might not recognize these covert marketing campaigns as sponsored by firms if the blogger conceals the commercial nature of the message. Since blog marketing is increasing, there are rising concerns about the ethicality and legality of the procedures (Ashley & Leonard 2009, 213). According to Noppari, blogging should be as transparent as possible mentioning every marketing campaign behind the writings.

1.2   The purpose of the study and research questions

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze electronic word-of-mouth in consumer fashion blogs. The main idea is to find similarities among the texts that the blogger and its' readers are producing and gather fashion product-related topics that are important especially for fashion brands and retailers. In order to reach the purpose of this study, three research questions are presented:

1. What topics are shared in organic fashion blog texts?
2. What topics are shared in amplified fashion blog texts?
3. Are there any differences between organically produced and marketer-influenced fashion blog texts?

The first two questions address the importance of electronic word-of-mouth information in today's fashion industry. Social media, online communities and blogs are important sources of information when consumers are evaluating alternatives or purchases. This thesis will concentrate on fashion products and their related issues, such as brands, designers, retailers and buying behavior. Fashion products can be categorized as clothes, shoes, bags and other accessories. There are specific peculiarities concerning fashion products that are different from books or electronic devices, those mainly being the need to touch and try on the product. Usually, fashion products are considered as high risk

items, and this makes the buying process more complex. Especially, online consumers need specific information about the product or ordering process, for instance.

As online communities are influential concerning fashion products, consumer fashion blogs were chosen as a specific example of them. Fashion blogs are extremely popular these days (Blogilista 2010) and are influential to many consumers. Some read them just for fun, others to find specific information from fashion products. In any case, fashion blogs have the ability to create or destroy product needs and marketers have also acknowledged this issue. More and more blog marketing is used to attract customers. Therefore, marketer-influenced blog texts are differentiated from organically produced texts and separated by two different research questions. The content between these two type of texts may be fundamentally different or the same kind.

There are only few studies on what is actually written about fashion in blogs by its writers and readers. Previous theories of electronic word-of-mouth are taken into consideration but the main results are formed mainly from the naturally occurring data. In addition to the fashion content, interesting is also that bloggers can do almost whatever they want with their blogs. That is why the way bloggers tell the information is also taken into consideration. Some might use only writing, some might add pictures or some might even post videos. Only Finnish fashion blogs that are written by other consumers are taken into consideration since companies write blogs, as well, and their observation is not meaningful within this study.

Even if a blog is categorized as a fashion blog, topics may still range anything from cosmetics to food. Therefore, texts concerning only fashion product-related information are analyzed. Otherwise the information load would be overwhelming and non-specific according to the aim of this study. Fashion blog discussions must be followed intensively to find commonalities that give specific characteristics and elements to them. These characteristics and elements give good indication on what can be expected, for example, if a company gives their product to the blogger and asks them to evaluate it. Equally important are the comments of the readers and valuable information can be found in there, as well. These comments reveal, for example, the possible inadequacies or the positive features that might be found in fashion retailers' web pages concerning information.

Since this study uses and is based on many important but quite new Internet-related terms, the key concepts are presented in the following list:

- Blog:

  Blog is an abbreviation for weblog which can be defined as "special type of web page that is, in the ideal, frequently updated, and which consists of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order" (Kozinets 2010, 189).

- Electronic word-of-mouth:

  Electronic word-of-mouth can be defined as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via Internet" (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler 2004, 38).

- Fashion products:

  Fashion, in a broad sense, can be defined as "any product or service consumed as a part of a particular way of living" (Easey 2009, 145). In this study, fashion products are defined more specifically as clothes and clothing-related products, such as shoes and accessories.

- Netnography:

  Netnography can be defined as "a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications" (Kozinets 2002, 62).

2 ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH AND FASHION BLOGS

This section of this study explains the concept of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and discusses more specifically the communication process of electronic word-of-mouth starting from the electronic word-of-mouth communicator and ending to the receiver of the message. The motivations for writing and reading electronic word-of-mouth messages are discussed because they are important antecedents of eWOM. The last section discusses the eWOM content. From this, theoretical framework is developed.

2.1 The concept of eWOM

Electronic word-of-mouth can be defined as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via Internet" (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler 2004, 38). Consumers frequently create and search for electronic word-of-mouth information to reduce the perceived risk in making purchase decisions (Moore 2010, 98). As consumers are influenced by other consumers' opinions and reviews, electronic word-of-mouth is said to have the biggest impact on purchase decisions today (Manafy 2010, 5).

Traditional word-of-mouth usually occurs between two consumers. Electronic word-of-mouth message is coproduced between several people as figure 1 illustrates.
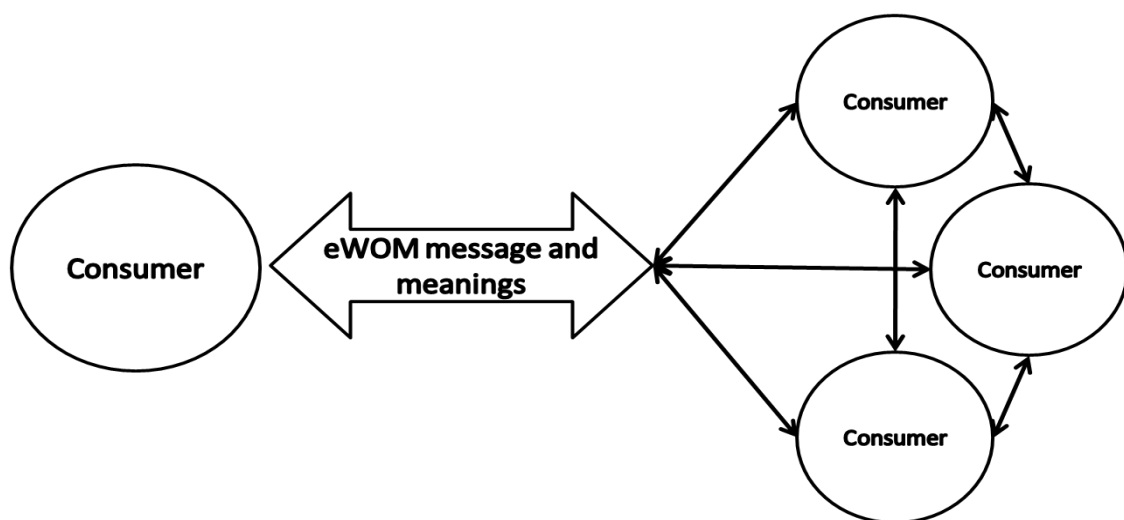

Figure 1.   EWOM production model (modified from Kozinets et al. 2010, 72)

The electronic word-of-mouth information is coproduced in the Internet in new media services, such as websites, electronic newsgroups, blogs and other online communities. Online communities are being used for electronic word-of-mouth and can be found by any person with computer skills and access to the Internet (Hung & Li 2007, 485–486). There can be found a plethora of information in online communities about products and companies, such as different brands, retailers, and shopping behaviors. Word-of-mouth has always influenced consumer behavior but its meaning and importance have increased with Internet (e. g. Lee & Youn 2009, 473–474; Park & Lee 2009, 61).

There are visible differences between traditional word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth. Firstly, the relationship that the sender and the receiver have in the online context is considered to be weak. The sender and the receiver do not necessarily even know each other as they normally do in traditional word-of-mouth. The altruistic nature of word-of-mouth is questioned in the online setting because there is a possibility of profit-motivated eWOM communicators (Steffes & Burgee 2009, 43). Consumers, however, seek for cues to form opinions about the communicator's trustworthiness and credibility. These cues can be found in the platform where a message is posted (Lee & Youn 2009, 477–478; Andreassen & Streukens 2009, 252). Secondly, the conversation online usually takes place over a long period of time, while the traditional word-of-mouth conversation is immediate face-to-face talk. Thirdly, measuring electronic word-of-mouth is easier than measuring traditional word-of-mouth because eWOM is more visible due to the archiving nature of the Internet (Godes & Mayzlin 2004, 558).

Web pages with product reviews by a professional marketer are not considered as trustworthy as web pages by non-marketer (Lee & Youn 2009, 490–491). Professionals have been paid to write good reviews about a product but consumers usually have no incentives to write anything but their sincere views of the product. Therefore, personal blogs are somewhat more influential to consumers than a brand's own websites, for instance. However, the potential anonymity of the blog writer is a moderating factor because consumers do not know what circumstances and motives are affecting the blog writer's reviews.

Electronic word-of-mouth is more effective in some message topics than in others. If eWOM is negative, the impact on consumers is greater than when it is positive. The

product type is likewise a moderating factor. If the product is experience or a high risk product, e.g. a dress, eWOM has a bigger impact on customers. Customers do not have a significant amount of knowledge about an experience or high risk product, and therefore word-of-mouth information can be processed easier. In addition, the reputation of the website influences eWOM. If a web page is well-established, sense making and known within the audience, the messages are deemed more trustworthy (e.g. Demangeot & Broderick 2010, 133; Doh & Hwang 2009, 193–194; Park & Lee 2009, 65–66).

2.2 Motivations behind eWOM

The motivations represent the antecedents of eWOM. They are dependent on the type of eWOM user. Muntinga, Moorman & Smit (2011, 16) identified three types of social media users: consumers who participate but do not contribute, contributors who participate and contribute to the content, and creators who actively create the eWOM content. In fashion blog context, the blogger is the creator, commenting readers are contributors, and readers are consumers. Next their motivations are presented.

2.2.1 Creators

Creators of electronic word-of-mouth and opinion leaders and their motives have been widely researched area ever since the 1950's (Bertrandias & Goldsmith 2006, 26). Opinion leaders are closely related to eWOM and give a richer picture of the communication process. Opinion leaders are interested in and preoccupied with a certain product category, for example clothing and fashion, and acquire a position with superior experience over other consumers (Goldsmith & Clark 2008, 309). According to the American Marketing Association's definition (AMA dictionary 2011), opinion leaders have superior influence over other consumers' attitudes, opinions and behavior. As discussed about, there are some moderating factors that affect the influence of the communicator, such as character narrative and anonymity (Kozinets et al. 2010, 86). However, anonymity can encourage others to express truthful opinions. Next, there are listed some of the reasons why opinion leaders and electronic word-of-mouth communicators exist.

Self-expression and presentation

Blogs and other online communities give an opportunity to express individuality and unusual product choices to a multitude of people. Some consumers feel the need to differentiate themselves from other consumers, and that uniqueness can be acquired, quite easily, through consumption of products and brands that are different that most consumers would use. Consumers who want to differ from others and avoid similarity make purchase decisions that are different from the norm but still viewed as acceptable and distinct from the group (Goldsmith & Clark 2008, 310). Products that have a certain status are usually consumed by opinion leaders and people who want to create certain identity (Schau & Gilly 2003, 385). Consumption that is not related to any status group is not typical for opinion leaders (Goldsmith & Clark 2008, 319).

Opinion leaders influence consumers' opinions with their personal style and comments about trends. Others turn to them for advice and information. Especially in fashion, opinion leaders can be found in magazine editors, designers, celebrity stylists, and fashion consumers. Online communities, especially blogs, have enabled unknown consumers to build a fashion opinion leader identity because the public can reach them easily online (Schau & Gilly 2003, 394). Fashion opinion leaders are regarded as experts in fashion or as having a unique knowledge about fashion by fashion opinion seekers (Bertrandias & Goldsmith 2006, 27–28; Kretz & de Valck 2010, 319). Opinion leaders usually show their expertise visually and verbally, i.e. with pictures of personal style and names of designers and retailers.

Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht and Swartz (2004, 43) and Stoeckl, Rohrmeier and Hess (2007, 404) found in their researches that most of the bloggers liked to express themselves by writing about their everyday lives. Documenting life is a way to inform others, usually friends and relatives, about activities and events that happen in life. This usually includes photos in addition to texts. In a fashion context, a blogger might add a picture of an outfit worn in a particular event or activity. In addition to that, Internet discussion forums and blogs offer individuals an opportunity to express themselves in different ways than in normal life. Jung, Youn and McClung (2007, 30) even claimed that personal blogs give people the opportunity to express their true and inner selves. This might be part of the reason why electronic word-of-mouth has become such an effective and popular form of communicating.

Online communities can be a good platform for venting feelings and deeply felt emotions. Writers in online community platforms and bloggers comment on topics that are interesting and important to them. Sometimes they write meaningless chitchat just to indulge themselves. In any circumstance, online communities are seen as an important medium to make the voices heard (Nardi et al. 2004, 43). Consumers feel the need to share experiences with others when they have a joyful consumption experience. When the experience is negative, consumers vent the angry feelings by telling others about the event. Online communities can, therefore, serve as a platform for expressing negative and positive feelings (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, 44).

Social benefits and concern for others

There are social benefits in belonging to an online community group or writing a blog. Posting comments to a virtual platform signals participation and presence in this group (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, 42). Personal blogs can be devoted to supporting some social or community activity by sharing similar views with others. Identification and social interaction are basic human needs that online communities conveniently fulfill. However, online community platforms other than blogs are high in interactivity (Nardi et al. 2004, 46). Blogs have usually fewer comments than, for example, electronic mailing lists, and the inappropriate and unwanted comments can be deleted by the blogger.

Another social motive that influences consumers write to online communities is concern for others. Altruistic consumers feel the need to help others with their purchase decisions or save them from having the same bad experience as they did (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, 42). Therefore, there may be comments on positive or negative experiences. Consumers constantly evaluate alternatives and ask for tips and advice in the online setting. This makes helping others easy. Companies can also be considered as social institutions that can be supported by other means than just buying their products (Hennig-Thurau at al. 2004, 42). Customers who have gained a positive experience with a certain company's product or service easily feel the need to give something good in return. Consumers feel that by giving others positive feedback, the company will ultimately become more successful. That, too, is a certain form of altruism.

Economic and professional incentives

Economic incentives can act as a motivational factor for consumers to engage in electronic word-of-mouth and especially, blogging (Stoeckl et al. 2007, 406). An electronic word-of-mouth communicator may receive monetary rewards from the online community platform operator or from other sources and therefore, write consumer reviews or other material there. Wirtz and Chew (2002, 155–156) found that monetary incentives were effective in managing customers' word-of-mouth behavior. However, they may not be the reason why most people feel the need to act as a marketer for the company. Satisfaction with the company and the product, for example, may need to be the antecedent of marketing the company before monetary incentives could work. People who are more oriented to finding a good deal may see the monetary incentives as the primary reason to engage in word-of-mouth. Ryu & Feick (2007, 92) also pointed out that the consumer receiving rewards from the company might feel obliged to engage in positive word-of-mouth to balance the exchange.

Bloggers, especially, may have professional incentives for writing electronic word-of-mouth. Some influential bloggers have been asked to write for famous fashion magazines abroad (Kretz & de Valck 2010, 319). In Finland, bloggers are beginning to receive financial rewards for their texts but not enough to do it as a full-time job. They might be beginning their career as a journalist and use blog as a way of improving their writing style and language skills, or want to be a stylist and use blog as a way of showing others their sense of fashion and style. Blogs can, therefore, be seen as way to help to get a job or show off professional resources (Jung et al. 2007, 28).

Entertainment

One motive behind blogging is entertainment and passing time (Stoeckl et al. 2007, 406). Some might be feeling boredom and need a task to pass the time effectively; others might just desire personal pleasure from writing. Entertainment might be the reason why users of online community platforms are constantly gaining new members. Jung et al. (2007, 30) found that writers who have entertainment as the primary motive, spend more resources, such as time and money, on maintaining their blogs. Writing blogs can be considered as a specific trend today. Since everyone else is blogging, some consumer may also feel the need to engage in that.

2.2.2   Contributing and consuming

Although opinion leaders and electronic word-of-mouth information sources are a widely researched area, there are only few studies concerning the receivers of the message or participators of eWOM discussions. What is special and important, online communities offer unique customer experiences written by non-experts that cannot be found anywhere else (Khammash & Griffiths 2011, 84). This is why virtual consumer opinion platforms are increasingly popular and influencing people's purchase behavior and choices. In addition, it is as important to know what motivates people to read these texts as it is to know what motivates people to write them. An important element is also the comments that readers write contributing to the electronic word-of-mouth communications in the online community.

<u>**Information seeking**</u>

Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003, 53) identified different motivations that drive people to read others' texts in the online community platform. For most of the consumers, the main motive was information seeking. Opinion followers seek information from opinion leaders whose messages are considered as trustworthy. A consumer might feel some purchase decisions as risky or time consuming, and therefore turn to opinion leaders' evaluation of the product features. Evaluating different product alternatives can be difficult, and the consumer might save significant time and effort if there are product reviews online. In addition to buying-related information, learning what products are new on the marketplace and how a product should be used or consumed are other motives to search for information from online communities.

Huang, Chou & Lin (2008, 354) identified the motives in a more specific context but also found that information was one of the reasons why people read blog texts. People find the blog writer to be a source for trustworthy and new information. By reading blogs, consumers get the latest news and also a chance to ask a personal opinion from the blogger. Because some blog readers are seeking information actively, they are more open to and more motivated to process eWOM information (Andreassen & Streukens 2009, 252). As a consequence, bloggers should try to provide new and interesting information on their pages in order to maintain a good reputation among the audience.

Social benefits

Social needs are an important motivation for reading customer reviews on the Internet and joining online communities. When considering the product purchases, a customer might evaluate the product according to the evaluations and social associations that are on the online community (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh 2003, 54). An expensive luxury product can have associations with wealthy business men or brand new running shoes with successful athletes. Some consumers might feel that they receive biased or subjective information from friends or relatives on products, and therefore turn to more objective sources of information such as online communities. That reduces the cognitive incongruence that a consumer might feel after purchasing a product.

Belonging to an online community is an important motivation if a consumer wants to share their passion about products, brands and other consuming issues (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh 2003, 54). Consumers can join a virtual group or enhance the relationship with other members of the group by asking for information about issues that the group has knowledge about (Bertrandias & Goldsmith 2006, 29). This is important because otherwise the consumer might not understand the values and driving forces within a virtual group.

Consumer's need for affective exchange with others is a strong motivational element in blog surrounding. Huang, Chou & Lin (2008, 353–354) stated that affective elements proved to be the most important reason for reading blogs when compared to other types of online discussion communities. Friends can read each other's blogs and express feelings, interest or care about their issues. As blogs are more personal than most other online communities, readers might feel affective emotions. This encourages readers to express their personal feelings and opinions to the blogger and other readers. Another aspect of blogs is that consumers might feel a part of a craze or bandwagon if they read blogs since they are very popular at the moment. Marketers, especially, should be aware of these bandwagon motives to find the best blogs to advertise in.

Economic incentives

Hennig-Thurau & Walsh (2003, 54) listed remuneration, i.e. monetary compensation, as a motivational element of online community readers. Monetary rewards for consumers for contributing might be motivational in some online community platforms. However,

in blogs, for instance, there are usually no monetary benefits given to the readers. Bloggers might organize product lotteries in order to show appreciation to the readers but not to attract new readers. Behind these competitions, there may be marketing managers giving free products to the blog audience.

<u>Entertainment</u>

Khammash and Griffiths (2011, 84) found in their study that self-involvement motives have emerged quite recently. Self-involvement motives indicate that electronic word-of-mouth texts are read because it is fun and enjoyable. Therefore, online communities and especially blogs can be a source of entertainment. Huang, Chou & Lin (2008, 353–354) listed different entertainment reasons to read blogs. Some read them if they are bored or to prevent boredom, others to have fun or staying in touch with the recent topics. Blogs are described as a new grassroots form of journalism, and therefore, reading them can be regarded equally entertaining as reading magazines or news papers.

Kretz and de Valck (2010, 324, 326) also identified entertainment as one of the main reasons for reading fashion blogs. Popular bloggers are considered as close celebrities in a way that they are famous but still invite people to read their own personal issues. Bloggers telling stories about their and other people's lives make the audience to dream about better life, or relieve the desire for rumors and gossips. In addition to reading about secrets, the audience asks very personal issues about blogger's life such as love, money, and health. The more bloggers reveal, the popular they become.

2.3   The content of eWOM

The content of electronic word-of-mouth messages vary with the communicator and the topic. Most of the studies made about consumer-generated content, eWOM messages and consumer-to-consumer communication concentrate on examining the differences between positive and negative messages and their effects on consumers. This is mostly due to the interests of companies: How to encourage positive word-of-mouth and reduce negative word-of-mouth? (Needham 2008, 60). Only little attention has been given to the specific content of the messages, and ultimately, the story in the content is the source of influence (Moore 2010, 98). The content may be accelerated by direct

marketing campaigns or it may be communicator's own natural creation (Libai, Bolton, Bügel, Ruyter, Götz, Risselada, Stephen 2010, 270).

2.3.1   Organic eWOM

Organic word-of-mouth occurs naturally when people are pleased or displeased with a product or a company and want to share it with others (WOMMA 2011). This endogenous WOM has no direct intervention from the firm and occurs among consumers as a function of their experiences (Godes & Mayzlin 2009, 723–724).

Fashion content

The naturally occurring and rich content of fashion online communities and blogs are very useful for fashion companies as well as consumer researchers. Blogs, especially, can contain deep personal thoughts, opinions, experiences, and visual illustrations such as photos of products and outfits (Rickman & Cosenza 2007, 609–610). This content is individual fashion data that reveal current and future trends. Continuous collection of information from these sources will eventually give a clear picture on the habits and preferences of these consumers.

Thomas, Peters, and Tolson's (2007) study was conducted within an online fashion community called FashionLovers. The members of this community shared information about fashion and fashion-related topics with each other. In addition to the different discussions, the members posted pictures of themselves wearing particular outfits and invited others to comment on their looks. Personal opinions of style and fashion trends reflect personal style and strong opinion leadership. Trends are important because they change continuously and a certain look might be hard to accomplish without any help. Therefore, members who seek information rather than portray fashion opinion leadership asked advice from each other that, for example, what kind of accessories they could add to their own outfit to wear a specific trend.

It is difficult to discuss fashion without discussing brands, designers or retailers in online communities or blogs. Especially brands but also designers and retailers reflect personal style and identity but also they assist in giving and seeking information,

evaluating desired products and alternative products, and sharing purchase decisions (Kretz & de Valck 2010, 318–321). Word-of-mouth information on brands can influence purchase decisions positively or negatively, as some might use brands as tools for making judgments about others. At best, brands might be a symbol for a specific trend or for a beautiful piece of clothing that awakens the interest of others. Information about retailers is more specific than brands or designers in a sense that they identify the place to make purchases (Thomas et al. 2007, 596–597). Online fashion retailers may be mentioned with a direct link to their web store which makes purchasing even easier. Information seeking members of online communities asked for advice from each other where to buy specific brands, trends or garments.

Thomas et al. (2007, 595–596) found that many consumers turned to MySpace.com fashion community to acquire tips and advice on fashion issues. Tips and advice help other members of the community to evaluate alternatives because they learn about the products from each other. Tips and advice may include information about the quality, material, color and other product-related features. Some members, on the other hand, just want to know how to wear a brand or a trend. In electronic commerce especially, the consumers' needs for information are great because they cannot physically examine the product themselves. In fashion products, color, fit, sizes, and material are very important features for consumers. In addition to the information need, the consumers might feel that the information found on the e-tailer's website is inadequate or non-trustworthy marketing-related information. Therefore, consumers might feel more comfortable turning to other consumers for advice (Kozinets et al. 2010, 71).

In online communities, fashion product purchases and prices are discussed (Thomas et al. 2007, 597–598). The purchases were shown the same way as personal style was shown; by taking pictures of the items and posting them on the community site. Members may add specific product details to the pictures and explanations on how satisfied they are with the purchase. Purchase discussion also included experiences of the actual purchase situation in a brick-and-mortar store or an online shop. Members could compliment or complain about the quality of the service or the surroundings of the shop. If the value of the items purchased was mentioned, usually the writer wanted approval or admiration from the other members. Exact prices were mentioned to prove the high-end quality of an item, but also to inform others where the product could be

bought and at what price (Thomas et al. 2007, 599). Other members can evaluate noteworthy alternatives according to the price range they determined for their purchase. In electronic commerce, it is easy to inform others on good deals or sales by including a direct link to e-tailers' websites.

Non-fashion content

Similar studies disclosing blog content have been made outside fashion context. Miller & Pole (2010, 1516) conducted a study within influential health blogs and analyzed the characteristics and content. Andreassen & Streukens (2009, 259) created a conceptual framework for service innovation use from discussion forums content. The broad topics were quite similar to the fashion content studies. In health blogs and technological discussion forums personal opinions were presented in the form of experiences with a certain condition or with usage of certain products. These were presented to inform others and present expertise in these areas. This is typical of organic word-of-mouth since all of the messages are related to consumer's experiences with a product or company.

Similar to the fashion context, in health blogs and technological discussion forums topics revolved around companies and businesses (Miller & Pole 2010, 1516; Andreassen & Streukens 2009, 259). Consumers use companies names to inform what they have bought, what products they prefer to use or will never use again. In addition to business, there were topics concerning issues with law and politics since they are important in health sector. Expertise of opinion leaders was shown in discussions about health research and news, and product launches and developments. In accordance with information motivation, many requests of advice and help were evident in both of these forums. Blogging and creating eWOM content were seen as helping others without marketing interferences. These topics would provide companies with useful knowledge about issues they need to take into consideration with future operations. Monitoring the discussion forums is important in brand positioning and creating higher brand and customer equity.

2.3.2   Amplified eWOM

Amplified word-of-mouth occurs when marketers launch campaigns specifically designed for encouraging and accelerating WOM (WOMMA 2011). Marketing managers are increasingly taking actions to influence customer-to-customer interactions by different agent campaigns, opinion leader programs and viral marketing. This can be called also exogenous WOM (Godes & Mayzlin 2009, 723–724) and it has a positive effect on increasing sales. These campaigns have been mainly studied according to their profitability, perceived reliability, optimality in promoting, and ethicality (Libai et al. 2010, 270).

Fashion content

Thomas et al. (2007, 598–599) found some promoting activities in FashionLovers community even though most of the information was organic. The self-promoters in online communities are usually new fashion designers or small boutique owners. Members can post pictures of their designs to the community, encourage others to visit their website and subsequently increase sales. Instead of advertising themselves in the online community, big fashion companies prefer to influence and inspire word-of-mouth marketing by offering their products to the members of online communities (Corcoran 2010). Opinion leaders, especially, have the most influence on others and are good targets of word-of-mouth marketing actions by fashion companies. Word-of-mouth marketing can be considered a part of PR practices. However, money being paid, for example, for bloggers to use and promote their product is considered to be unethical. More common rewards are free products and services, vouchers, and discounts that are somehow related to the company's main product (Ryu & Feick 2007, 84).

Identifying candidates for blog campaigns

Kozinets et al. (2010) followed a specific seeding campaign of a new technology device. The devices were seeded in selected personal blogs in order to generate word-of-mouth. In this study, the researchers wanted to find out the themes and categories that could emerge from the seeding campaign. The character narrative always forms the backbone of the content in blogs. The character narrative tells the story, identity and even life theme of the blogger. In addition to character narratives, commercial and communal norms affect how bloggers respond to the seeding campaign. On one hand,

blogger may feel pressure from the company to write about the seeding product and on the other hand, blogger may feel pressure from the community to not to write about the product. Therefore, it is important to identify the suitable opinion leaders for the seeding campaigns. This is important because without the identification WOM marketing might not be as successful as it would be with the right bloggers. The blog content determines the popularity of the blog and helps to understand the messages, writing style and tone of communication (Li & Du 2010, 196–197). Thorough familiarization with the content helps companies in the identification process of popular blogs and opinion leaders to where and to whom to promote their product or service.

2.4   Synthesis of the theoretical framework

The past studies have mainly concentrated on eWOM in general; the motivations of opinion leaders and opinion seekers, and the effective and moderating factors of the eWOM messages (e.g. Bertrandias & Goldsmith 2006; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). These studies have mainly discussed eWOM in online community platforms, such as discussion forums. Some studies have been made to disclose the content and topics of eWOM in areas of service innovation, health, technology and fashion industry (e.g. Andreassen & Streukens 2009; Miller & Pole 2010; Kozinets et al. 2010; Thomas et al. 2007; Kretz & de Valck 2010). Service innovation and fashion industry content data was collected from discussion forums, and health industry data from consumer blogs. The data was organic and there were not any companies interfering to the creation of eWOM information. In the study made by Kozinets et al. (2010), the eWOM information was strongly affected by the seeding campaign of a technological device. The seeding campaign was directed to consumer blogs.

This study documents eWOM content that can be found from consumer fashion blogs. The content can be organic as well as amplified due to a marketing campaign. The motivations of eWOM message sender and receiver are moderately taken into consideration in the synthesis of theoretical framework of this study. However, the main emphasis is on the message content that the blogger and the blog audience is creating. Theoretical framework was developed from an overview of electronic word-of-mouth and from the topics that were discovered from the eWOM content studies. Figure 2

illustrates the process of electronic word-of-mouth in blogs (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Kozinets et al. 2010; Muntinga et al. 2011; Goldsmith & Clark 2008; Nardi et al. 2004; Jung et al. 2007; Hennig-Thurau & Walsh 2003; Huang et al. 2008). Since the theoretical literature concerning word-of-mouth information especially concerning fashion was scarce, the framework only familiarizes the reader of the process and elements of electronic word-of-mouth. The framework will be used as a guiding and helping tool in analyzing texts from the empirical material.
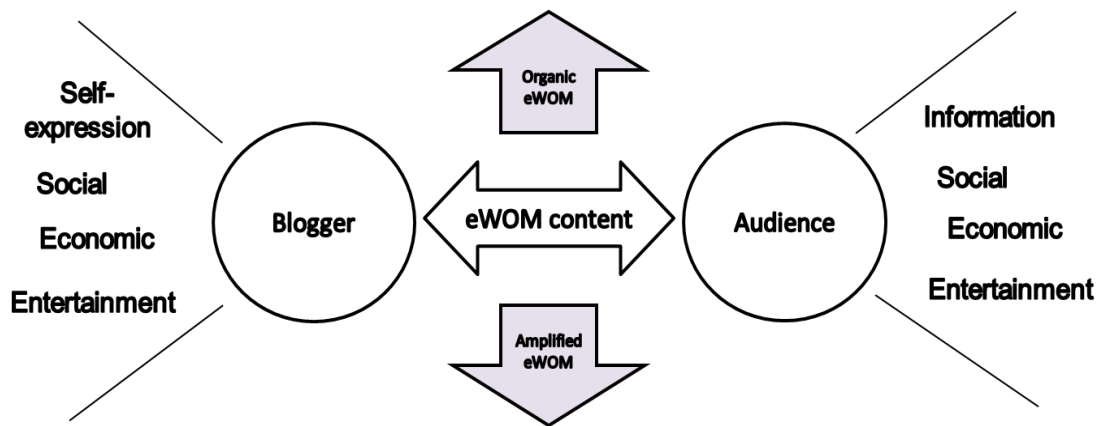
Figure 2.   Blog motivational antecedents and eWOM content exchange

The framework consists of the blogger who mainly creates the content in fashion blog. In addition, there is the audience that consists of readers who only consume the blog and contributors who write in the commenting box. Their motivations (self-expression, information, social, economic and entertainment) have an effect on how and whether they choose to communicate in the blog. One must be aware of these motivations because they are crucial part of blogs. In addition to the motivations of the blogger and the audience, the possibility of marketing influences has to be taken into consideration. If there is a direct influence by a marketer, the eWOM content will be amplified. If there are not any direct marketing influences, the eWOM content will be organic. In the middle of the blogger and the audience is the actual message that they send to each other. It represents the bloggers' entries as well as the audience's comments. This study will concentrate on analyzing those messages and revealing their fashion content because the used method is suitable for analyzing mostly the social acts and not as much human characteristics or deeply felt emotions and motivations.

3   CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

The following chapter will describe in detail the research methodology used in this study. As the research approach is based on fairly recently developed and not commonly used methodology, netnography, it will need a thorough description and justification.

3.1   Research approach based on online ethnography

Online ethnography is a new methodology developed from ethnography because of the increasing use of the Internet. As consumers are increasingly taking part in online communities and networks as a part of their social life, a new method of studying those consumers, and the phenomena in general, was important to develop. (e.g. Kozinets 2010, 2; Rokka 2010, 381; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 96–97). In the literature, there are many names for doing ethnographic research on the Internet: online ethnography, virtual ethnography, and netnography. There have been debates concerning the appropriate term, but it seems now that the name "netnography" has earned the popularity as the term meaning online ethnography. The term netnography will be used also in this study from now on.

Ethnography has historic roots in studying cultures in distant places and understanding holistically a certain way of life. Today, ethnography as a methodology is used by a variety of disciplines trying to understand specific areas of interest, such as coffee drinkers or newly married women (Hine 2000, 41). In ethnography, it is important that the researcher becomes part of the culture and understands fully the rituals and artifacts. In studying online cultures, it is also important that the researcher understands the meanings behind writing and specific language and becomes a member of that culture (Kozinets 1998, 366). Ethnography was the suitable basis for developing a specific method for studying online cultures. Hence, netnography can be defined as "a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications" (Kozinets 2002, 62).

Internet can be categorized as a special cultural artifact of our time. Giuseppe Mantovani (2002, 307–309) challenges the false belief that technological innovation as itself can change or have an impact on people. Technology is only a medium for the social actors for gaining access to the Internet, be visible there and create and manipulate visible information. Complicated social processes, such as globalization, de-localization, and on the other hand, creation of trans-national cultures, are due to the increasing use of the Internet. Internet, as a communication technology, is a social product or a culture and therefore, ethnographic methods are suitable for studying them. However, the amount of information on the Internet and the difficulty of finding the right information are challenging aspects in netnography.

Netnography is different from ethnography due to the object of study, i.e. social experiences. Entering an online social portal differs from face-to-face experience in terms of "accessibility, approach, and the span of potential inclusion" (Kozinets 2010, 5). Participation to and observation of the online community is very different from real-life communities because of the nature of the field. There is no travel and significant investments needed. However, the length of stay in the field and observation style, i.e. lurking or participating, needs to be decided. The amount and analysis of the data is also different (Kozinets 2010, 5). Fieldnotes are equally important in both ethnography and netnography. However, inscription is considerably easier in netnography since all the data is already in electronic form. The third difference considers the ethical procedures that vary considerably between ethnography and netnography (Kozinets 2010, 5). These differences do not mean that the online communities are not as heterogenic and interesting as real life communities are – vice versa, they are changing the world and creating new cultural nuances (Kozinets 2010, 36–37). As a conclusion, one may say that the positive differences are that netnography is significantly cheaper, simpler and less time consuming methodology than ethnography. Therefore, netnography is very suitable for many studies when the time, money and other resources are scarce.

There are also possibilities of blending ethnography and netnography. In many research settings, they can complement and extend each other. This research will take netnography as a methodological approach as purely as possible as can be seen from the figure 3.
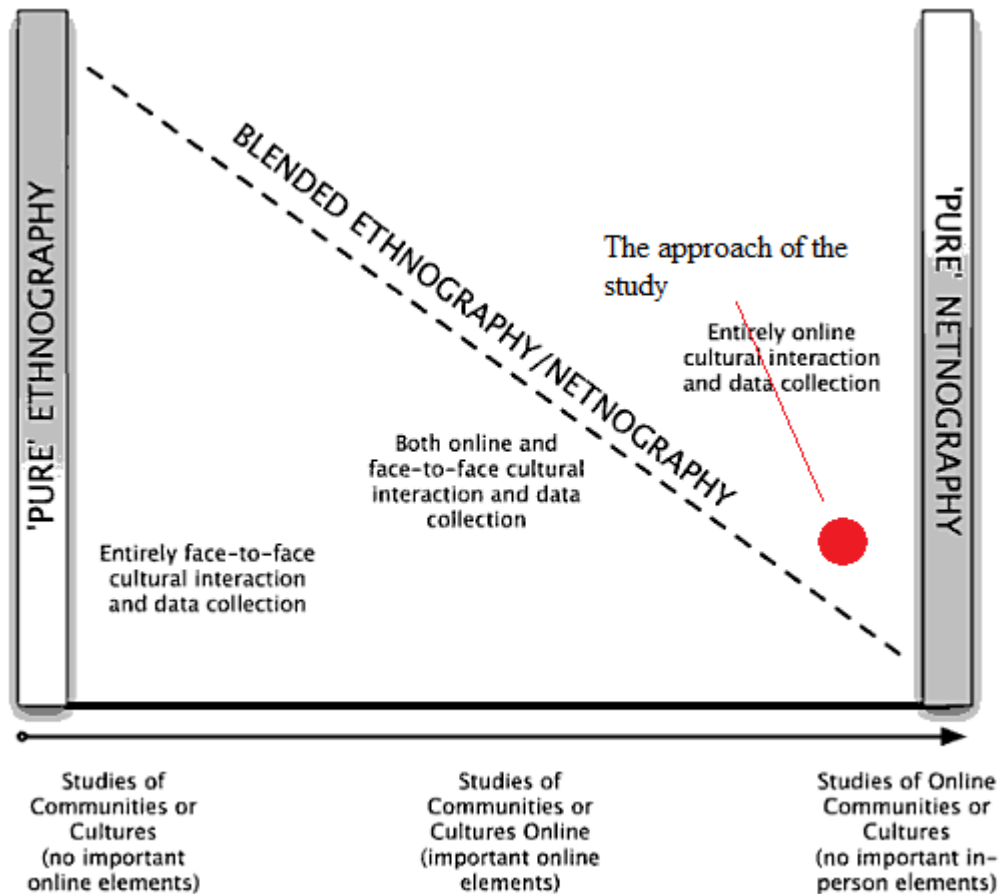
Figure 3.   The research approach to ethnography and netnography (Kozinets 2010, 67)

Since this study concentrates on social interaction in fashion blogs, it is not meaningful and sometimes even possible to gather information with interviews due to the bloggers decision on not to give one. On this kind of study, these in-person elements may serve as a validation on some findings and give richness to the ready-made data. However, it was chosen that the main empirical data is the material found naturally in blogs.

Online communities are the products of social communication on the Internet. The terms meaning these computer-mediated communities vary from virtual communities to online communities. In practice, online communities comprise of a variety of Internet forums, such as electronic bulletin boards, listservers, markets and auction sites, social media and networking sites, blogs, game communities, and special interest communities (Miller, Fabian & Lin 2009, 306). Online communities create non-expensive and easy forum with no boundaries for communicating about a specific interest. They allow

people to form relationships whether they know each other before or not, or whether they live in the same city or not. Online communities have lower transaction costs because the information is available to everyone who can gain access to the community.

Netnography is especially suited for consumer researchers because there can be found a wide range of consumption and marketing-related topics on the online communities. Consumers write narratives, i.e. stories and tales, about their consumption habits and experiences (Shankar, Elliott & Goulding 2001, 429–430). Consumer researchers and marketers who actively seek and follow these narratives will gain significant opportunities by understanding consumption patterns and product choices (Kozinets 1999, 253). More specifically, marketer can observe and collect information from online communities, host or sponsor them, provide content for them, or participate as a member of the community (Miller et al. 2009, 307). When the data is collected in rich and varied forms, the consumer descriptions will be as rich and varied.

When fashion industry is concerned, observing online communities may give crucial insights on style and what are today and future trends. Fashion forecasting and predicting shopping behavior is extremely difficult task to do because the nature of it is frenetic and fast paced. Rickman and Cosenza (2007, 609–612) offered a solution to this from observing blogs and finding information there for forecasting future trends and applying them to fashion business quickly. Netnography is also suited for studying sensitive topics as Langer and Beckman (2005, 200) showed. They studied cosmetic surgery consumers and found it difficult to recruit voluntary participants for interviews. Netnography offered a solution and gave deeper insights into cosmetic surgery consumer's motivations, opinions and also worries. Therefore, netnography is suitable for studying consumers on issues that they do not feel comfortable on discussing face-to-face. However, ethical procedures must be taken into extreme consideration when studying sensitive issues with netnographic methods.

Practically, netnography is about observation of participants in online contexts. It may also include methods like interviews, discourse analysis and visual analysis but they all take place in the virtual world. Netnography aims at a similar holistic understanding of a phenomenon as ethnography does but uses data that has been generated with computer as a communication tool (Kozinets 2010, 60). Netnography is about observing

"naturally" occurring data and texts, and one of its benefits is that the surroundings are not created artificially by the researcher. Therefore, it is more unobtrusive than interviews and surveys (Kozinets 2006, 279). Putting netnography to the context of this study, observing intensively writings of fashion blogs will give a holistic understanding of word-of-mouth and consumer reviews in consumer blogs concerning fashion products. However, this study cannot overlook the phenomena of fashion blogs since their meaning is much more than just a medium of sharing reviews about products.

There are also challenges that come with netnography (Kozinets 2006, 282). The amount of data that can be found online is huge. It is important that the topic is focused because, otherwise, the information collected can be irrelevant. Within this research, the topic of fashion blogs was decided before the methods. The form of data is mostly textual without the peculiarities of talking face-to-face. The anonymity of people, the tone of voices and body language are lacking and reducing the richness of data. Luckily, fashion bloggers tend to tell some background information about themselves but most of the readers remain anonymous. In addition, bloggers usually use emoticons to fill the void of tone and body language. The major challenge that affects the whole research is the ability to interpret the data found. The data can be full of writing that is unique and different from everyday writing. In order to interpret the data correctly, the researcher must possess the knowledge of that particular online culture. These challenges in this research setting will be discussed further in the evaluation of the research section.

3.2   Flow of the netnographic research process

The research process somewhat follows the typical process of qualitative research. It begins by identifying the research topic and ends in writing the results. This study is more explorative by nature but went back and forth with existing theories of electronic word-of-mouth, and new information found in consumer fashion blogs. In detail, the research process and schedule of this netnographic study is presented in figure 4.
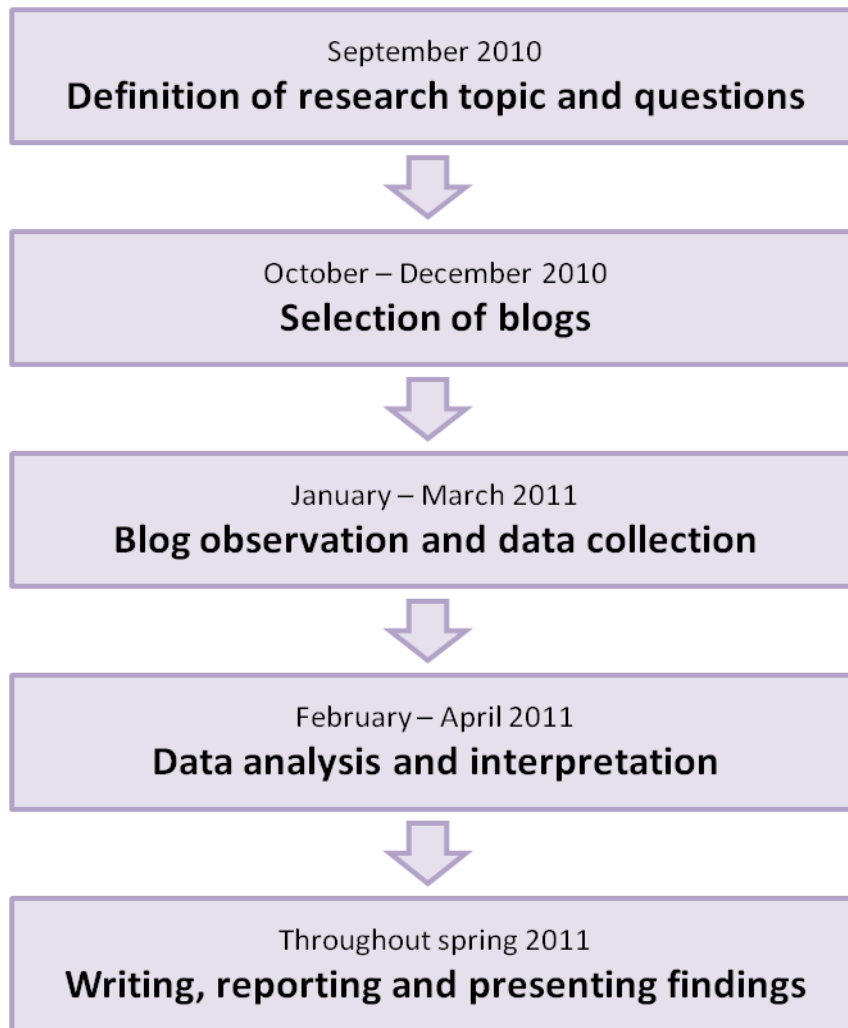
Figure 4.   Flow of the research process (adapted from Kozinets 2010, 61)

The different stages of this netnographic study will be discussed more in detail in the following sections.

3.2.1   Definition of research topic and questions

Constructing and focusing research questions are as important in netnographic study as in any other type of study. Kozinets (2010, 80) suggested that netnographic approach might be more suitable for explorative studies because the phenomenon of Internet cultures and communities is quite new. However, netnography is also suitable for narrowing previously identified theories to create deeper understanding of them. In both approaches, it is useful to start with quite broad research questions that can evolve

during the research process. In most netnographic studies, it can be seen that the final research questions have changed dramatically from the original ones.

This research process began from the vague idea of fashion e-commerce but quite quickly evolved to fashion blogs, as they have a significant influence on fashion consumers in today's markets (Kretz & de Valck 2010, 326). In addition to this, the phenomenon of fashion blogs has gained a lot of public and non-public attention in the recent years. The initial research questions of this study concerned fashion e-commerce word-of-mouth in fashion blogs. However, when searching for the right fashion blogs, it became quite clear that there is not enough information about fashion e-commerce in particular in fashion blogs. Even though the bloggers buy clothes from online shop as regularly as from brick-and-mortar shops, they are not separated as clearly as the previous research question would have required. Therefore, the research question needed to be altered to include all fashion products whether they are bought online or not. The final research questions can be found in chapter 1.2.

3.2.2   Selection of blogs

When the Internet is used for collecting the main empirical material, it is important to evaluate the sites and web pages critically (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 99). Kozinets (2010, 89) created a list of criteria for evaluating online communities and sites appropriate for the study in question. The online community should relate to the research focus and question. Since fashion blogs were already part of the purpose and research questions of this study, the relevancy criterion was fulfilled quite easily. In addition, the blogs needed to have information about fashion products and preferably about fashion commerce. Many blogs that are identified as fashion blogs have also information about other lifestyle issues, such as food, exercise, and travel. Therefore, fashion-related texts were important to ensure enough information about the subject being analyzed.

The second criterion addresses the activity of the community (Kozinets 2010, 89). The community should have recent and regular communication. The blogs for this study were chosen according to the top list by Blogilista.fi (Blogilista.fi 2010). The website

lists weekly ten most popular blogs, according to the number of subscribers, in Finland and most of them are usually fashion blogs. The readers that have selected the blog as their favorite are the subscribers. The top list gave indication that the blogs are active, have entries every day, and have huge amounts of followers and potential commenting readers. The popularity criteria fulfilled also the third and the fourth criteria of the list, i.e. interactivity and substantiality, because there is a continuous flow and criticality of communications between blogger and audience.

The next two criteria according to Kozinets (2010, 89) are heterogeneity and richness of data. Six different fashion blogs were chosen to assure these two criteria. The age of the bloggers ranges from 20 to 30 and also their fashion styles are somewhat different. Therefore, also the audience is different in every blog. Only negative thing is that the bloggers' ages could have ranged more. It would have been interesting to find fashion bloggers over 40 but they are still quite rare. In addition, male fashion bloggers are quite hard to find. Therefore, the heterogeneity of the blogger does not vary as much as would be preferable. However, using unknown bloggers could have endangered the other criteria, such as popularity and activity.

According to the ethical procedures of netnography, permission to use texts found in these fashion blogs was asked by email directly from the bloggers. If the permission would have been asked publicly in the commenting section of the blog, this might have caused a disruption in the flow of comments and in the naturally occurring texts (Kozinets 2010, 180). In addition, their preferences for being cited in this study were asked and one blogger wanted to remain anonymous even if the texts are public. Therefore, her blog is cited as blog 1 and a pseudonym was given to replace her real name. The pseudonym was chosen according to the most common female name in Finland in 2009. Other bloggers are presented with their real names. The profiles of the chosen bloggers are presented in table 1.

Table 1.   Profiles of bloggers

Blog	Name	Age	Hometown	Occupation	Blog platform	Entries/month
1	Aino	22	Helsinki	Working	New look	33
2	Salla	20+	Turku	Student	Indiedays	25
3	Niina	30+	Tampere	Working	Olivia	48
4	Emmi	22	Helsinki	Student	Indiedays	39
5	Tuukka	20+	Dublin	Working/ student	Indiedays	15
6	Linda	22	Stockholm	Student	Indiedays	44

Three of the bloggers do not mention their exact ages in the blog and therefore, the ages are marked with +. Entries/month is an average amount and was calculated from the entries written in January, February and March in 2011. More detailed character narratives of the six bloggers (Kozinets et al. 2010, 74) can be found in appendix 1.

3.2.3   Blog observation and data collection

Blog texts are naturally occurring textual materials that can be used as an empirical material. Blogs are a source of information that "can contain rich, detailed, longitudinal data about individuals and their consumption practices, values, meanings and beliefs" (Kozinets 2007, 138). Sometimes, naturally occurring texts are more appropriate than interviews and focus group materials because the researcher's role is unobtrusive. Given the topic of this study, the results might be more useful for fashion companies if the researcher's role is unobtrusive. Fashion companies might not have a saying in the blog texts either. Therefore, observation was the main approach in collecting data and the researcher's participation in blogs was low, as illustrated in figure 5.

Low-None   Ratio of researcher's **participation** in online community vs. observation   High

Observational Netnography   Participant-observational Netnography   Autonetnography
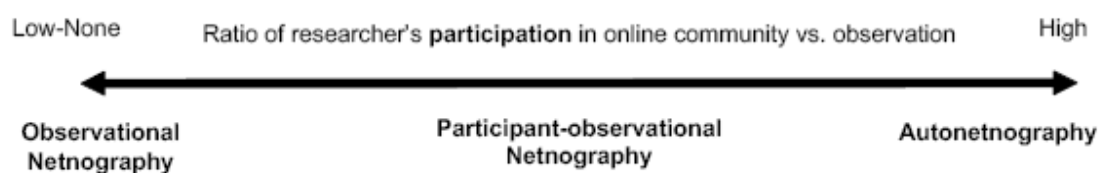
Figure 5.   A spectrum of different types of netnography (Kozinets 2007, 133)

Data collection and data analysis do not happen separately; they are very much intertwined (Kozinets 2010, 95–96). Blog texts are usually archived according to the topics they are related to. That brings an enormous help for the data collection procedures but do not exclude researcher's own analytic coding. Netnography should not be tied too closely to any one particular data collection method but it should include multiple methods and techniques (Kozinets 2007, 132). In this study, a few observational techniques such as qualitative content analysis, visual analysis and interpretive analysis were used. Content analysis was used to some extent to expedite the data collection and coding. Coding is a specific tool to get familiar with the data and ultimately, forms similar units of data that helps processing it further (Moisander & Valtonen 2006, 120).

Since this study is based more on observational netnography than autonetnography, the data consists of archival and fieldnote data (Kozinets 2010, 98). Blog texts and audience comments concerning fashion product-related information were collected from these six blogs from the beginning of January to the end of March in 2011. All non fashion-related entries and comments were excluded from the data. Total collected data amounted to 1 726 pages of text in 1.5 spacing, 238 361 words and 315 entries. One entry may receive hundreds of comments. Hence, most of the pages consisted of comments. Fieldnote data consisted of researcher's own reflective and observational comments. In fashion blogs, visual material is very important in addition to texts. Photos and videos were described within the blog text using visual vocabulary (Moisander & Valtonen 2006, 87).

Netnographers may use new technologies for recording, saving, creating databases, mapping and handling data. These programmes are referred to as CAQDAS or computer-assisted qualitative data analysis programmes (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 106–107). In this study, the collected data was sorted and classified into Microsoft Word sheets according to each individual blogger and the nature of eWOM in the entry, i.e. organic or amplified. Specific data analysis programmes were not easily available and would have taken time to learn how to work with it. Therefore, Word was chosen as an easy and simple tool in collecting the data and in further analysis. Fieldnotes were written to the same Word sheets as they occurred to mind. Visual material was not

saved in any personal files but a description of them was put together with the archival text if it was relevant information according to this study.

3.2.4   Data analysis and interpretation

To analyze, means to examine the data according to the method and ultimately, making sense of it to create an interpretation of the phenomenon that the data represents (Moisander & Valtonen 2006, 101). The phenomenon is the focus of interest and the data only gives access to understanding of it. In addition to the data, historical and social cultural contexts need to be taken into consideration. That gives a broader and more correct perspective to the interpretation. Even though the data is naturally occurring narratives, the researcher acts as a co-creator of the narrative because of the interpretation process (Shankar et al. 2001, 442). Practically, this means turning textual, visual and fieldnote material into a finished research report (Kozinets 2010, 119).

The data collection and analysis are not two separate processes. Collecting and, especially, coding the data is preliminary analysis because it forces to refine and categorize the data according to the aim of the study. These codes and classifications label the data according to a more general phenomenon that they belong to (Kozinets 2010, 119). However, an interpretive framework that consists of preliminary assumptions, ideas, principles and appropriate practices, is useful to specify beforehand (Moisander & Valtonen 2006, 103). In addition, theory plays an important role in interpretation. Theory gives a preliminary perspective to the data and act as a basis for interpretation. In this study, theory and data spoke a dialogue where ideas and interpretations were tested and challenged.

In addition to analytic coding, hermeneutic interpretation must belong to the analysis process as well to ensure the quality. Hermeneutic approach to research tries to grasp a meaning of different existential dimensions that are usually impossible to measure. Interpretation and understanding of these non-measurable, i.e. qualitative, dimensions are the key issues in hermeneutics. Everyday actions are labeled with the help of language. Texts and language are interpreted in hermeneutics to create deeper understanding of things. Of course, non-linguistic expressions are equally important to

interpret. The basic idea of the hermeneutic process, i.e. circle, is that the part must be understood in order to understand the whole (Moisander & Valtonen 2006, 111).

According to Per-Johan Ödman (2007, 115–116), the main elements of the process of hermeneutics are interpretation, understanding, pre-understanding and explanation. "Interpretation is the act through which researcher present understanding". Pre-understanding is based on earlier learning, experiences and feelings. Therefore, pre-understanding is not neutral and has a direction. Sometimes it leads to misinterpretation and forces to change understanding of things. At best, it helps to form a correct understanding and interpretation. Explanation is a base for interpretation and understanding, as well. In order to understand, things must be explained.

Within this study, the understanding grew with constantly changing new interpretations and with new experiences rising from the texts and visual material. According to the hermeneutic helix knowledge and theory is a growing process as new data is collected, analyzed and interpreted (Ödman 2007, 119). On one hand, by analyzing and interpreting the individual elements in blog texts, the meaning of the whole is constructed. On the other hand, individual elements could not be understood without the meaning of the whole. The meaning of language or certain words must also be taken into account with the social and historic context they have because the meaning alters within different contexts. According to Kozinets (2010, 125) the interpretation begins with breaking the blog texts down to different elements, finding similarities among them, closely examining them, analyzing the characteristics behind them, evaluating them according to the further information and then reading and writing them according to the issue they represent.

In practice, the interpretation and analysis started when the collected data was sorted and classified into Microsoft Word sheets according to each individual blogger and according to the nature of eWOM in the entry, i.e. organic or amplified. After this collection and initial filing, the entries were carefully gone through and coded according to the bloggers own categorization and the topics found from the previous studies. The entries consisted of bloggers own texts, comments that the audience had written below the entry and written descriptions of important photos and videos. This part of the data collection and analysis refined and categorized the data according to the aim of this

study. The understanding of the whole fashion blog phenomena grew with the new experiences rising from the texts and visual material. After the big picture of fashion blogs was clear, the different elements, i.e. topics, and similarities among them started to become evident. The connections between bloggers and entries gave interesting insights to the data. The fieldnotes were written from the ideas rising from these elements and results started to emerge. The best examples of the blog texts were selected to represent the element or topic. Images were understood as specific signs and cues that derive their meaning from cultural conventions (Moisander & Valtonen 2006, 87). Since the blog texts and images are usually bound together, the analysis of images was not as difficult as it would have been without text.

3.2.5   Writing, reporting and presenting findings

This report was written throughout the research process. Writing is important tool for collecting, analyzing and refining ideas to make the study even better. Writing and presenting let others know what is being done and enables to gather important feedback. It is important to choose the intended audience and write accordingly (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 281). This study was written mainly to the academic research audience although some practical implications are presented in the conclusions section for business practitioners. Written text was evaluated and altered according to the suggestions throughout the process.

The question of language was carefully taken into consideration in this study. The blog texts being analyzed are in the native language of the researcher of this study. The native language criterion is important concerning the nature of the blog texts. Blog texts and especially comments are mostly written in Finnish slang or a certain dialect. It would be difficult for a non-native Finnish speaker to understand some expressions. However, since this thesis was chosen to be written in English, careful translation was used in the example texts presented in this study. Preserving the same tone was important because otherwise, this may have caused errors in interpretation by the readers of this study. Some blog texts, e.g. in Tuukka's blog, were written both in Finnish and in English. From those texts, the examples were directly selected in English and precisely transferred to this report with miss-spellings.

3.3 Evaluation of the study

Kozinets (2010, 162) identified ten different evaluation criteria that are designed to ensure netnographic research quality: coherence, rigour, literacy, groundedness, innovation, resonance, verisimilitude, reflexivity, praxis, and intermix. The first one of the criteria, the coherence, means that each different interpretation made from the same data is free from internal contradiction and gives a unified pattern (Kozinets 2010, 163). To ensure coherence, the collected and interpreted data must form an entity that is whole and similar to each other in nature. In this study, the coherence rule has been followed by collecting information according to the preliminary assumptions made in the theory section. This ensures the coherent form through entire study.

Rigour represents the extent to which the research follows the methodological guidelines (Kozinets 2010, 165). In this study, rigour tells how well netnography is understood and utilized to conduct the research. Since netnography is a fairly new and uncommon methodological approach, but increasingly important in the virtual world, the method was carefully studied before starting to conduct the research. The principles of planning and entering blogs, data collection, analysis and interpretation were studied and then utilized in a rigorous manner. Research ethics were also followed by asking permission from all the bloggers to use their texts, making clear to them the true intentions of this study and concealing one blog with a number and a pseudonym according to the blogger's request. Continuously, basic choices within this study were justified according to the accepted standards of netnography.

Literacy represents the degree to which the text recognizes past relevant literature and research approaches (Kozinets 2010, 162). Past literature concerning the word-of-mouth and fashion blog topic of the study was carefully reviewed before actually conducting the research. Meeting this criterion was extremely difficult because there is so much information that is related to this study but not precisely relevant. The difficulty was to find the most suitable past literature from a huge arena of studies and use it as a starting point in forming a theoretical base for making further assumptions. However, this criterion was met to some extent and studies, as relevant as they can be, were examined.

Groundedness is a criterion that defines the extent to which the results and potential theoretical implications are supported by data (Kozinets 2010, 166). In addition, the links between the theory and data are clear and easily convinced to the audience. All the theoretical implications made in this study are supported by an example of a blog text or a comment which is representative of the issue type. Of course all the data, from what the implications were made, is not possible to present within this study. Therefore, the examples were selected according to the degree of commonality they have with the general flow of the text. The readers will, therefore, see the links between the data and theory easily.

Innovation in quality netnographic research seeks to extend current knowledge and create something new (Kozinets 2010, 164). Of course the amount of innovativeness can be minor or major but it has to create new ways of understanding different systems or actions, for instance. Studies similar to this have not been made much because the phenomena of fashion blogs and electronic research are quite new. Therefore, there is certain newness in this study even though major innovation cannot be done with these resources and abilities.

When writing about other human beings it is important to enhance the understanding of each other rather than create lifeless stereotypes (Kozinets 2010, 167). Resonance is about empathy, compassion and understanding of others. In netnographic context, the interpretation should be done with thoughts and feelings. Since the fashion blogs are written by humans and not by emotionless machines, the feelings and tone of the texts were analyzed the same way as words. It is important to look behind the words to find the true meaning of texts. The researcher has included her skills in empathy to the interpretation process.

Verisimilitude is a criterion that can be used to evaluate the quality of text and how well it represents and simulate the real world (Kozinets 2010, 168). The story that the netnographic text represents must be believable and persuasive. After the reader had read the text, he or she must feel a certain connection to the community or culture in question. This study represented the real fashion blog world as truthfully as can be. Therefore, examples of the real blog texts are presented also in this study. This will give the reader a right perception of the type of texts there can be found in blogs. Overly

confident assumptions were not made from the texts but reasonable commonalities were drawn in order to fulfill the aim of the study.

Reflexivity is a criterion that portrays the extent to which netnographic text acknowledges the role of the researcher and the alternative interpretations that some other researcher could make (Kozinets 2010, 169). The researcher should be part of the setting, culture and context and portray the positive and negative occurrences of the research process truthfully. In this study, an open text approach has been included to portray the facts and findings. This approach means that the texts are left open for criticism and alternative approaches. Since the conclusions were drawn according to the researcher's analysis of the text, some other researcher might notice other issues emerging from the data. Therefore, the researcher's role in this study is portrayed as truthfully as can be portrayed.

Praxis can be defined as "practical action aimed at social betterments" (Kozinets 2010, 171). A good netnographic text inspires and empowers social action, especially, for using technology in positive ways. Hopefully, this study inspires more studies done with netnographic methods and shows the increasing importance of blogs and other sources of useful naturally occurring information. This study shows how great of an information is available for all researchers no matter where they are located and what resources they may possess.

Intermix criterion takes into account the interconnections that the social interaction has online and offline (Kozinets 2010, 171). It is important to remember this because members are part of a culture both online and offline and do not exclude the other when acting in another. The netnographer must take also into account the real social world when conducting a research in a virtual social community. Intermix criterion might, in some situations, demand combining netnography with ethnography because some interesting aspects of a phenomena might be missing in an online forum. In this study, netnography and ethnography were not combined because it would have not been relevant according to the aim of the study. The connection between bloggers' social life online and offline, however, was recognized in the interpretation process. The everyday life happenings are behind every blog entry.

4 CONSUMER FASHION BLOG CONTENT

This chapter discusses in detail the content of fashion blogs. The topics found during the analyzing and interpretation process are presented here and divided according to the type of electronic word-of-mouth: organic and amplified. It must be noted that if the blogger has disguised the direct marketing influence behind some entry and it is not visible in any way, the entry has been analyzed as organic.

4.1 Organic fashion blog topics

4.1.1 Personal style

Each fashion blogger studied here have a unique personal style. It continues to be the scarlet thread that combines all the blog entries together and gives a reader clues about the general style of the blog. Some were more serious about fashion; others had more relaxed approach to style.

> As you can see, I'm not stylish - at least not in the way people commonly think stylish people to be. In addition to that, I have made all possible style mistakes. So what? At least there's something to laugh about - perfection is boring. In my opinion, getting dressed is first and foremost about feeling. It is a long and wonderful play (Niina 1.1.2011).

Outfit of the day

Whatever the approach to fashion might be, personal style is the most common topic in fashion blogs and probably the reason why so many like to read them. One can say that clothes act as a tool in showing unique personal style. All of these bloggers are true fashion opinion leaders by a having unique style. As Goldsmith & Clark (2008, 310) said, fashion opinion leaders want to differ from others and avoid similarity with others. The bloggers enjoy the attention they receive from others and fashion blogs are a great portal for collecting audience. As Thomas et al. (2007, 594) pointed out, the most typical way to document personal style in blogs is to present an outfit worn on a

particular day. These entries are usually quite short and simple consisting of one or multiple photos of the outfit worn by the blogger and brand details down below. Every piece of clothing is labeled according to the brand and in some cases, according to the retailer. If the product is not bought from the traditional store of the brand, as in the example from Aino's blog, the retailer is also mentioned.

> Scarf Gina Tricot, vest Vila Nelly.com, grey bomber jacket H&M (new! found from sales for 15€), tunic Ellos, leggings Gina Tricot, necklace Pieces, shoes Dr. Martens eBay, bag Zara eBay (Aino 15.1.2011).

It is important to mention brand or retailer of every piece of clothing because the readers are very interested where the products can be bought. Fashion bloggers are role models because of their unique personal style and therefore, the readers tend to copy the style or pick an interesting product to their own outfit. If some brand or retail information is missing, the readers will ask about it in the commenting section of the blog. However, if the brand is easily recognizable as in Linda's Louis Vuitton handbags, the brand may not be individually mentioned (Kretz and de Valck 2010, 318). Some readers intentionally seek for information and inspiration from these bloggers; others might read them just for fun but become interested in a piece of clothing that the blogger has (e.g. Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003, 53; Huang et al. 2008, 353–354).

Sometimes the blogger might tell something special about a particular piece of clothing and show how to add an outfit around it as in the example entry of the outfit of the day presented in appendix 2. This way bloggers can write details about that piece of clothing and show the outfit of the day in the same entry. The blog audience compliments about bloggers style and appearance very often. They get inspiration to their own style and this may be the reason why so many read fashion blogs. The readers may want to ask also defining questions and experiences about some particular piece of the outfit of the day, such as size or material information. In addition to the blogger, other readers want to share their experiences. This might even evolve to discussion forum type of experience sharing between the blogger and the readers (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, 44).

Street and celebrity style

In addition to the outfit of the day entries, bloggers show their personal style to the audience by referring to other fashion icons that they get inspiration from. This indicates that even though the fashion bloggers are opinion leaders they too seek for inspiration and information from others. Being a creator of eWOM does not exclude from being a consumer of eWOM too (Muntinga et al. 2011, 16). Street style pictures are bloggers' favorites because they portray different persons' individual style and because they cannot be found from commercial sources, such as fashion advertisements and magazines. Bloggers include the reasons why they get inspired by a street style photo and add brand details to the photo if some product is recognizable. In high end fashion, products are easily recognizable because they are unique and might have a logo. However, high street retailers' products are more difficult to recognize and brands are not mentioned.

> Tommy Ton the great photographer behind Jak & Jil -blog has once again done great job while taking street style photos outside the shows and showrooms. I gathered here my favorites and most inspirational ones from Style.com and GQ.com (Tuukka 15.1.2011)

Celebrity style is as inspirational for fashion bloggers as for regular fashion consumer (Thomas et al. 2007, 600). This is shown to the audience the same way as street style inspiration – by a picture of a celebrity and definitions about what is inspirational of the celebrity's outfit. The audience tends to give their own opinion about the outfit in the commenting section of the blog. Some comments are positive and affirmative; others visibly disagree with the blogger's opinion. The discussion between blogger and audience, according to this topic, revolves around trends rather than brands. This is different compared to the outfit of the day entry where the discussion is more about brands and retailers, i.e. where to buy the product.

> Here's some celebrity style spotting again! This time our charming lady on her way to the nail salon is Camilla Bell with simple but beautiful outfit. Call me boring but simplicity is beautiful – at least to my own eye. The classic pieces such as black pencil skirt and elegant flats never

disappoint me, especially when combined to light girly ruffles. Love it, love it, love it…! (Linda 21.2.2011).

<u>Trends</u>

Discussions about different trends are a popular topic and a way to show and evaluate personal style. Bloggers bring trends to discussion in their entries and encourage the audience to take part in the discussion by evaluating the trend. A photo representing the trend is also included in the entry because it helps the audience to visualize the trend easier. The photos are not, usually, taken by the bloggers themselves but captured from different web pages, such as e-tailers' or magazines' web pages. Audience is eager to give their own opinions about the trend. The trends in discussion might be something very different from bloggers' normal styles as the next example illustrates.

I spotted quite interesting pair of shoes from Asos and I can't decide whether they are tacky or just funny. The shoes cost about one hundred Euros and you can find them also in lucite. What do you think? (Salla 12.1.2011).

Different ways of dressing up according to a specific trend were also popular discussion topic as were in FashionLovers community (Thomas et al. 2007, 597). The audience, especially, asks the blogger how they should wear a similar piece of clothing as seen on the blogger, for example, for a special occasion. In addition to the audience, bloggers themselves may ask how to wear certain piece of clothing that is different from their normal style, for example a vest or a scarf. Blog entries concerning trends are more interactive than other entries. As Niina and Emmi pointed out, one of the reasons why they started to blog was to have a place to write about fashion to likeminded people. They enjoy discussing about fashion and trends and did not have friends with whom to share their enthusiasm. In the blog, they could share ideas and their enthusiasm about fashion like in a hobby club and create social contacts with the readers (e.g. Nardi et al. 2004, 46). Questions inspire readers to share their opinions about trends and create conversation around the topic.

4.1.2   Brands, designers, and retailers

Brands, designers and retailers are a crucial part of telling others about their own style (Kretz & de Valck 2010). As discussed about, brand, designer, and retailer information is included in today's outfit entries. In addition, the blogger might dedicate the whole entry for discussing brands or designers.

New collections

In addition to the product details, a blogger could make an entire entry about a new collection of a brand or a designer. These entries are often from bloggers' favorite brands and include brands' own promotional or catwalk photos. Bloggers that take more of a journalism approach to blogging, such as Tuukka and Niina, evaluate different brands' fashion shows or new collections critically. They show their favorite items from the show and tell why the show was successful and why not. Bloggers try to keep the mood of the blog as positive as possible and therefore, there are rarely any negative opinions or evaluations of brands new collections. This is very different from discussion forums where many consumers vent their negative feelings (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, 44). Blog is more of a portal where one can show sense, knowledge, and expertise in fashion (Goldsmith & Clark 2008, 309).

> I am quite late with this entry because the fabulous AW10-11 line of Kirsi Nisonen was released ages ago. But it's ok, better late than never. In fact, I got a wakeup call from the TV where I saw an advertisement of Maria! which is going to continue airing in 26.1. In the advertisement, Maria wore Kirsi Nisonen's design, a hair band with two rosettes as fluffy ears. Love it! If it wasn't the hair band, it was an exact duplicate (Niina 11.1.2011).

Brand history and details

Bloggers like to show and share their expertise and knowledge in fashion by writing detailed presentations of their favorite brands (Kretz & de Valck 2010, 319). The information may include a short history of the brand such as when, where and by who the company was founded. In addition to the history, the information may include names of the designers, where the brand is currently located and sold, and what type of

products are the brand's signature items. The information is usually very detailed and gives the audience background information of the brand before familiarizing with the actual products. Photos of the products are shown with the brand details.

> Diemme is from the Montebelluna area which is known to be one of Italy's leading shoe industry towns. It was interesting to hear that Diemme is still run in Montebello by the original Italian owners who are two brothers. Nowadays Blender Agency is responsible of the designs world wide except for Japan. In Japan there is another local office who does the design for Japanese market (Tuukka 27.1.2011).

Bloggers may also predict what will be the trends for the future and what products within the brand's collection are going to be popular. These evaluations are very useful for fashion companies in trend forecasting and improving own collections (Rickman & Cosenza 2007, 609–610). The bloggers compare the brand's previous collections to the current one and make judgments according to that. This illustrates a very professional style of blogging. It almost seems that some bloggers take blogging as a certain form of journalism where the background information needs to be in order before writing an entry.

4.1.3   Tips and advice

Fashion blogs can be considered as a place to share and ask for tips and advice about fashion-related issues. They are two-way portals in this sense because the tips and advice can be shared and asked by the blogger and the audience. By giving advice and tips in fashion issues such as great deals on products or how to wear a specific piece of clothing, show concern for others and benefits those who read the advice (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, 42). In addition, the need for information was evident in multiple comments asking for advice (Huang et al. 2008, 354).

Product experiences

The bloggers and the audience share and ask for experiences concerning fashion products. They may share their joy about a good product or warn others about a bad

product. As said earlier, the bloggers tend to avoid negative product reviewing because that could easily create negative atmosphere in the blog. However, the readers are willing to share their negative experiences with other readers and the blogger (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, 44). In the example below, Linda made an entry about leather flats that she wanted for the next summer. She emphasized the fact that her previous flats were faux leather and durable only for one summer. Many readers shared their own opinions about the differences between leather and faux leather flats.

> I'm sorry to tell you that, the Tory flats are not any durable as cheap flats made from faux leather. I don't know why but I guess it is because flats have such a thin sole. They last for one summer, two at the utmost if you don't care for the worn-out look. In the third summer, they would break into your feet if you didn't buy a new pair.. :S (Luisa 1.2.2011 in Linda's blog).

Negative as well as positive experiences shared by the reader could easily influence the final choice of the bloggers (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh 2003, 54). If the blogger decides not to buy the product, many readers may end up in making the same decision in accordance to their fashion opinion leader. It is obvious that fashion bloggers concentrate on giving positive opinions about products and negative opinions are given by the readers mostly. The blog readers who ignore the comments and concentrates only on the blog entry do not see the negative information. However, if a blog reader seeks more about the product in question she most likely will read the comments, i.e. others experiences, as well.

General advice on dressing up is also given in blogs. Niina dedicated an entire entry for giving advice on using perfect underwear because it is a basis for dressing up correctly. She has noticed that many women use underwear that is wrong in size or shape and therefore, clothes are not fitting properly. She emphasized the fact to the readers that all clothes will fit better if the underwear is right for the body. Many readers admitted having these problems that wrong underwear causes and were truly grateful to Niina for giving this advice. Some readers who were already aware of the issue shared their experiences with different underwear. The fashion blog entries may concern basics of dressing up and still make many people happy.

> Thank you Niina, such a wonderful entry that was spot on! I think I will go seeking those sensible undergarments next – all those problems you mentioned had my name on them ;) (sara r 25.1.2011 in Niina's blog).

Sales

Bloggers prefer to give special sales tips to the blog audience as appendix 3 illustrates. This can be considered as a form of altruistic behavior (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, 42). The blogger has knowledge about great shopping deals and wants to share them with other fashion-enthusiastic people. These special shopping tips usually concern retailer sales. Fashion blogs are read nationally and therefore, these retailer sales that the blogger recommends can be found online. It is easy to include a direct website and make online shops available to every reader despite the town they live in. Bloggers may also include a picture of the product, brand name and the price they can be bought from the online store.

> Last fall, I fell in love with Swedish Hasbeen Jodhpurs. The funny clog booties were good for my feet, easy to walk in and of course, beautiful. I eagerly surfed through the brand's website and noticed at once the simple model of the booties. My moment came when Asos sales started and the price of my loved ones was reduced. A tip for others who have a desire for Hasbeens: almost all models are still on sale in Asos KLIK! (Niina 6.1.2011).

Product alternatives

In addition to sales and great deals, advice for alternative purchases was given in fashion blogs. Niina found an H&M dress similar to her Tiia Vanhatapio dress and recommended to buy it if the real thing is too expensive. She included prices and pictures of the dresses found in the brands' websites so that eager customers could easily find them. Consumers are evaluating alternatives and may use the blog to ask for or tip others about alternative products (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003, 53; Thomas et al. 2007, 595–596). They share knowledge about alternative products for example if the blogger's product is sold-out or too expensive. For example, Salla bought a pair of jeans that was too expensive according to many readers that commented the entry. One reader

offered a solution to their problem. Linda wore pumps bought over a year ago and many readers asked where they can buy them and one reader gave a tip.

> To everybody who have a desire for those nude pumps: there are almost similar ones in Mango's spring line :) (Outi 28.1.2011 in Linda's blog).

Favorite shops

Fashion bloggers make entries about their favorite shops in their hometown and abroad. This is a consequence of a multitude of comments where readers ask for fashion bloggers' favorite shops. The reasons why readers tend to ask about these shops may be that they have not been in the city before, wants to duplicate bloggers' looks by shopping in the same stores or try the lifestyle of the bloggers. They may be dreaming of what it would be like to be famous fashion blogger (Kretz and de Valck 2010, 324). The questions are asked no matter what the topic of the entry is; fashion-related or not. These entries consist of collection of shops, reasons why they are favorite, what brands are sold there, and where they can be found. Usually, there is a map included in these entries.

> What stores are there in Sweden? Where should I go? :) I'm going to Sweden in a couple of weeks and I would like to know. I haven't been to Sweden before :((jensu 13.1.2011 in Linda's blog).

Fashion bloggers might answer these enquiries immediately as Linda did to the example above. In this situation, the blogger just lists the favorite shops but do not include where exactly they can be found. Appendix 4 illustrates a part of an entry about favorite shops given to the audiences benefit with a map.

Product details

More often consumers order products from the Internet or from mail order companies. This can be seen in blogs as multitude of questions concerning sizes and materials. Readers ask frequently for advice about product sizes, especially, shoe sizes because they are very different with different brands. Other questions may concern clothing, bag, and accessory sizes. Readers might feel more comfortable in asking the information from the bloggers, who are seen as sources of trustworthy information, than

directly from the company (Kozinets et al. 2010, 71). The readers evaluate what sizes should they purchase according to the sizes of the bloggers. If the blogger is the same size as the reader, they ask what size he or she wears. If the blogger is not the same size as the reader, they ask more about the fit of the product and might include their own measurements. This way the blogger can make own evaluations about the perfect size to the reader.

> Hi, sorry that I'm stupid but what size do you wear in Minna Parikka shoes? Normally I wear about 40 so do you think that 40 should be ok with the Raquel model? (Möhkö 14.1.2011 in Niina's blog)

In addition to sizes, material details are asked from the bloggers because they are not typically included in the entries as can be seen in the example below. It can be difficult to tell from the picture what kind of material the product is. Sometimes fashion bloggers might emphasize the material if it is an important part of the product. For example, it is important that clothing made for athletic purposes is made from technical and breathing materials or that a winter jacket has a fur lining which is very warm. In these circumstances, the audience tends to ask also for more material details about the product. Bloggers, usually, do not include price details to the typical outfit of the day entry. They do not seek approval from the audience by mentioning how much their clothing has cost but rather inform others in the purchase entries where they can be bought and what price (Thomas et al. 2007, 599). However, readers might ask for prices in the comment section. This usually indicates that the reader is interested in the product and wants to evaluate if the price is suitable for purchasing.

> Hey could you answer quickly that what material are your faux leather leggings from H&M? Thank you! (younameit 8.2.2011 in Emmi's blog).

Buying procedures

Some readers do not know about the procedures of buying online and they turn to fashion bloggers because they are very familiar with purchasing clothes online. Commonly asked questions about electronic commerce are about the billing procedures, shipping costs and times. This shows that many consumers are still quite hesitant of

buying from online stores because the procedures are very different from buying from brick-and-mortar stores. Hesitant customers and blog readers would rather ask advice on the procedures from a blogger than e-tailers customer service (Kozinets et al. 2010, 71). The ultimate reasons remain unknown but usually it is that they do not trust the commercial source and see fashion bloggers as trustworthy and experienced consumers in the area of e-commerce.

> How have you handled the bills with Nelly.com? I ordered a pair of shoes last November that arrived on time but I still have not received the bill...:D I guess I should be in contact with the customer service. (Sanni 16.1.2011 in Aino's blog).

4.1.4 Purchases

As Goldsmith & Clark (2008, 310) said, fashion opinion leaders want to differ from others and avoid similarity with others. Fashion bloggers make purchase decisions that are different from the norm but still viewed as acceptable and distinct from the group. The purchases are presented in distinctly different ways than, for example, outfit of the day.

<u>New products</u>

Online communities are places to discuss about purchases (Thomas et al. 2007, 598) and fashion blogs are no exception. However, the fashion bloggers in this study do not boast about expensive high-end purchases but rather cheap but good findings form sales and high-street chain stores. Bloggers tend to show their newly purchased products on hangers or on other settings such as on the floor or on the table as appendix 5 illustrates. New purchases are rarely included in an outfit with other clothes but if they are, they are usually mentioned in the product details as new. Bloggers take pictures of the purchased products and then add product details including a brand, where it was bought, and how much it cost. Bloggers also give explanation on why the product was purchased, for example, because it fitted nicely or the color was rare. This is different from other fashion related entries because there is more information given on the product.

> Yep, I think so too that the top looks a bit cheap but it fitted so nicely that I had to drag it to the cashier. I think it cost 25 Euros and shop was Terranova. The Bronx shoes on the other hand were something that I have looked for a long time: pumps with low heels. It felt a bit painful to pay 80 Euros but I have already gotten over it (Salla 5.1.2011).

In addition to the photo presentation of purchased products, bloggers also make video material from their purchases. It is easy to show the purchased products in a short video clip. The audience can see different aspects of products more properly than just in a photo, for example how the material flows. On the other hand, the audience asks the blogger to wear the purchases in addition to showing them on hangers because they like to see how the product looks on a person.

Purchase stories

Bloggers may tell the entire purchase experience like a story. The story usually begins with the desire of the product but some obstacles, such as high pricing, come across in actually buying them. In this particular story, the price went down and the blogger decided to buy them. Even then he wasn't completely sure about the shoes but now that he has worn them a couple of times, he is sure about them and a satisfied customer. The stories are interesting because they tell in detail the emotions associated with the purchase experience (Thomas et al 2007, 597); e.g. desire, uncertainty, and happiness.

> It has been many times close that I would have purchased the Converse x Comme des Garçons Play sneakers. Now I can admit that the price is justified especially compared to the normal Scandinavian Converse pricing, but earlier it didn't feel fully arguable to pay big money for canvas shoes. I spotted these from sales but I was first a bit unsure about the color. After wearing them couple times I feel that the dark color is an excellent choice to the dry winter circumstances that we have here (Tuukka 16.1.2011).

Desired products

In addition to the actual purchases, bloggers tell about products and brands that they desire in their wardrobe. These entries usually consist of one product and a longer

explanation why the blogger wants it or multiple products presented as a shopping list as appendix 6 illustrates. Shopping list products are presented on a very general level. For example, the blogger might say that he or she wants a similar white blouse as presented in the entry. When the desired purchase entry consists of only one product, the message is more precise; the blogger might say that he or she wants the exact white blouse of the specific brand presented in the entry (Kretz and de Valck 2010, 320). Bloggers always include photos of these desired purchases from brands' own or e-tailers' websites.

> As I thought about my cardigan problem, the popular and versatile DKNY Cozy cardigans came to my mind. They have exactly the right loose fit that I have been looking for. My old H&M version begins to be so worn-out and linty that it's suitable only for home use. Cozy (and other loose cardingans) is so appealing to me because of its versatility. You can dress it in many ways and hence, create many variations from the same cardigan. It's like you can get multiple cardigans for the price of one! (Linda 14.2.2011).

In Linda's and Tuukka's blogs, there were some objects of desire evident that they eagerly wanted to possess, but fanatic and hysterical desire was not seen in any of the six blogs (Kretz & de Valck 2010, 320). The readers that have earlier experiences with these desired products may give their own opinions whether they are positive or negative. Some readers might suggest similar products from different brands; others might ask the price and place to buy them, as well. There can be seen some promotional activities also by small shop owners in these entries (Thomas et al. 2007, 598–599). They inform the blogger that the desired products can be found in their shop.

Online purchases
Online purchases are discussed in fashion blogs in a more detailed manner than brick-and-mortar purchases. This may be because the purchase situation is more complex in an online setting than in a brick-and-mortar shop. The online purchase entries first consist of the fashion products that the blogger has ordered. The e-tailer's name is of course mentioned, adding picture of the product taken from the website, name of the brand and product, and some product details, such as materials, sizes and prices. The

readers give comments about the products that could be positive or negative. Some even say that they have ordered the same products because they are so beautiful.

> Today I accidently opened up a news letter in my e-mail and got lost in Nelly's web pages in a shopping mood and what do you know, now these lovelies are on their way to me: (1.) Nelly Shoes Exclusive Matsumoto 3 are l-o-v-e-l-y! They are made from fur (? :D) that has a leopard print. The heels are 12 cm and the platform sole is 3 cm so they should be comfortable to walk in. Price was 54,50€. (2.) I love Motel dresses! I fell in love with this too in the first sight. Although the price (69,90€) feels a bit too high, I had to order the dress. (3.) Vila faux fur vest was something that I have been drooling for months so ordering it was a no-brainer. Price was 39,90€" (Aino 6.1.2011).

Fashion bloggers make an entry after receiving the ordered package. The products are then evaluated according to how well they fit the expectations. The level of satisfaction about the products is told to the audience (Thomas et al. 2007, 597). After receiving the products ordered at the previous example, Aino evaluated how the shoes felt in her feet, did the material look the same as in the picture, if the sizes fitted her properly, what negative issue were with the products and what bothered her. The negative issues might be big or small details. For example, Salla received a different dress that she had ordered but liked it and decided to keep it and Aino was bothered by two zippers on both sides of the shoes. When Emmi made an order, she learned from the mistakes that she did in the previous order and ordered differently this time.

> I learned from the previous red jeans that I ordered and this time ordered pants from the petite collection in size four. Maybe this time they won't give in so much after the first use. I also hope that the order would come a bit quicker because I cannot wait any longer! (Emmi 7.3.2011)

Deliveries are a crucial part of online purchasing. Delayed deliveries were a popular topic among bloggers after Christmas. If the deliveries take longer than expected, blogger write their mildly upset feelings in the blog. Audience had the same experience

with delayed deliveries and discussed them in the comment section. Some were very frustrated and vent their negative feelings towards the e-tailers; others might be even concerned that if they are going to receive them at all. Their comments expressed relief because they noticed that others' deliveries were delayed too. As discussed about, blogger tend to avoid negative writing but in these entries mildly negative feelings could be seen (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, 44). However, the overall mood was kept positive even though some negative aspects were mentioned.

> I presume that the British deliveries are delayed at the moment. I have heard from many directions that deliveries last and last. I received my Christmas present yesterday after three weeks waiting. But I don't care, one can wait for the good things to happen (Niina 16.1.2011).

4.2   Amplified fashion blog topics

4.2.1   Received products

The fashion retailers and designers more and more try to reach blog readers by giving bloggers free products. The blogger's character and communal norms affect whether the products are shown in the blog or not (Kozinets et al. 2010).

> But I do always tell if there are marketing powers behind my entry, covert advertising sucks! (Niina 25.1.2011).

Outfit of the day

One of the most influential ways of reaching potential and current customers is giving a blogger a piece of clothing that he or she incorporates to her personal style and everyday wardrobe (Corcoran 2010). These kinds of pieces are shown in the outfit of the day entries from where the blog audience gets inspiration to their own outfits. The marketing campaign itself is not that visible because the piece of clothing is presented the same way as the clothes that bloggers buy themselves. Fashion bloggers mention the

name of the brand or designer and show the photos of the products incorporated to the outfit of the day where other clothes might be bought by the blogger.

> I have received many requests from you to tell you about my all time favorite clothes. Here's one piece of clothing above all favorites. A skirt that I received from Putiikki (Putiikki's own line) last summer has surprisingly become my favorite skirt. I usually don't wear dark blue but in this skirt the color just works. Big pockets create a look that's relaxed and to talk about the relax feeling of the rubber band waist! I'm obviously into comfortable these days (Niina 5.1.2011).

Amplified marketing campaigns are proven to be successful and profitable (Godes & Mayzlin 2009, 723–724). Also in blogs, the audience acts very enthusiastically about these pieces and might ask for more information on the availability of the product. A reader commented to Niina's entry in the previous example that she had dreamed about a skirt just like that and had tried to find one. She had been trying to find the skirt from Putiikki's web page and asks if it is still available. As Niina co-operates with the store, she answers to these kinds of inquiries and gives further instructions how to reach the retailers. This gives an indication that the blogger acts almost as a sales person for the fashion retailer. Later, the same reader wrote to Niina that she had received the last skirt from the store and was very happy and pleased.

The previous example illustrated how perfectly this type of blog marketing activity can work. However, these promotional activities do not work always as flawlessly. It can be seen from the texts that is very important that the product given to the blogger is similar to her other clothes and related to the personal style. The same designer gave two shirts to two different bloggers. Both of the bloggers introduced the shirts as a part of their outfit of the day. In Niina's blog the audience was enthusiastic as before because the shirt was exactly Niina's own unique style.

> And then I received my own red and blue striped shirt from the collection. Love it! A piece of clothing couldn't be more my style than

this shirt, shoulder buttons and all. The soft and perfectly relaxed shirt could almost be named as "made for Niina" :D (Niina 15.1.2011).

The same designer also sent a different striped shirt to Emmi. The shirt was presented in the same way as a part of the outfit of the day. Most of the readers commented how much they liked the shirt, as they did in Niina's blog. However, it was obvious that the shirt did not match her usual style and therefore, a few readers accused Emmi for taking free promotional products and selling her blog for marketing activities. Both of these bloggers felt comfortable to present these received products in the blog but the suitability of the bloggers own style must have been checked properly (Kozinets et al. 2010; Li & Du 2010, 196–197).

> I have to give a little different opinion here in the commenting section. As soon as I saw the photos, I knew that this is a sponsored advertisement because the shirt is so far away from the clothes you normally wear – i.e. blatantly out of your style. Of course it is ok and even preferable to try new things but this shirt hardly would have picked your attention in a store and ended up here in your blog if you would have had to pay something for it. But Finnish art industry always needs sponsoring, that I don't deny! (Moonie 22.1.2011 in Emmi's blog).

<u>Purchase-like stories</u>

Retailers may give bloggers an opportunity to select something from the brand's collection for free. Selecting the product gives a blogger a similar feeling of buying the product. This is a way of ensuring that the product given for free is blogger's own style. By giving some item that is selected by marketer, there is a chance that the product is not blogger's style. If the blogger can choose the product, there is a bigger chance that the product is her style and incorporated to the outfit of the day. The audience ends up seeing the product in a photo and on a blogger that is important in creating inspiration.

> I received this mail last week: "Hello Salla, the spring is coming and our jacket collection currently has the biggest selection of different alternatives. We would like to offer you the coat of your own choice from our Kop kolmio shop in Turku". Of course, I jumped for joy and

rushed right into H&M to try on all the jackets. This cutie came home with me" (Salla 14.3.2011).

In addition to products, retailers give bloggers gift cards and discounts and they can choose something from the collection with it (Ryu & Feick 2007, 84). These are usually presented the same way as purchases mentioning also the price of the product even though it was free for the blogger. Using of the gift card may be presented in a detailed manner, as the example below illustrates. It is similar to the purchase story mentioning the feelings of shopping (Thomas et al 2007, 597). Gift card may give the blogger a feeling of buying the product and may value it more than just receiving the product chosen by somebody else. That gives an indication that the shopping itself gives pleasure, not just the product.

> I received a gift card to G-Star Raw shop in Kluuvi from a blog campaign and last Friday my goal was to spend it. At first I thought that there's nothing that would suit me (my image of the brand was a bit sporty and non-Sallaish), but I was wrong: I succeeded on my goal better than I thought and now I have the world's most perfect pants (that by the way I was wearing on Saturday at the bar)! <3 The material was quite stretchy and had a wet-look, price was about 140€" (Salla 31.1.2011).

Product details

When bloggers receive free products, they are also given very detailed information about the product. The bloggers can, therefore, tell to the audience as much information about the product as they want. If the product has some special features, it is important that the blogger knows them and wants to promote them to the audience. Fashion blogger use own language that is different from marketing language and sounds authentic and easily reliable. That works especially when the product supposes to have features that might sound unbelievable to the consumers and need verification from a consumer that the product actually works (Lee & Youn 2009, 490–491).

> Well, those jeans fitted like a glove – and yes, especially from the bum. Bottom Up's secret is the diagonal cut in the back that gives shape and should fit every bum. Irene who is like million meters (or about 20 cm)

taller than me tried the pants also and they fitted her as perfectly as me…
That proves that jeans' promise is no joke (Emmi 5.3.2011).

4.2.2 Brands, designers, and retailers

Brands, designers, and retailers are mentioned in amplified entries as often as in organic entries because they form the basis of fashion language (Kretz & de Valck 2010).

Continuous co-operation

A few of the selected fashion bloggers are in a continuous co-operation with fashion retailers. The retailers are mentioned in multiple entries that might concern new product lines, regularly received products and discounts, and news or events that the blogger forwards to the audience. Niina co-operates with a fashion retailer from Tampere and she informs her readers of special discounts, events, and of course, new products. That indicates that the blogger can be considered almost as working for the retailer. Co-operations are different from one-time product give-aways because the relationship lasts longer and the blogger receives more benefits but also might have more obligations. It is important that the blogger relates to the retailer and brand. Otherwise, he or she might be reluctant to accept the co-operation offer from the retailer.

> Guys from Fida asked if I would be interested in co-operating with them and of course, I am interested! In addition to make purchases with a discount, I feel that I'm supporting a good cause. In my opinion, Fida does wonderful charitable work (Aino 24.2.2011).

The blogger may justify the new co-operation to the readers in according to the communal norms (Kozinets et al. 2010, 83) and reminds that the basic content of the blog is not going to change. In the example above, Aino makes it clear that the retailer makes important charitable work and therefore, she is privileged to work with them. She was a regular customer of Fida before the co-operation offer so it did not come out of the blue for the audience. Of course, there are always some skeptical readers commenting in every entry about a co-operation with a retailer.

> So you get a discount from things, did I understood correctly? Does that mean less money for charity when you buy it than when a regular customer buys? I'm just wondering how it really works =) (iitres 24.2.2011 in Aino's blog).

Even though the blogger might have positive experiences with the co-operating retailer, blog readers' negative experiences about the same retailer can have many social benefits if they are written in the blog comments (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, 42). Blogger Emmi told that she received a winter jacket for free from online shop that she had also previously co-operated with. She was really glad that the jacket was exactly how she hoped it would be. Then she started receiving comments that were sent by disappointed customers of the same online shop.

> I ordered a winter jacket from them in the end of November and was very excited about it. I still haven't received it and no one answers my e-mails about the jacket or returning the money. The deadline of Paypal also expired because they once send me an e-mail and promised to send the jacket next week. I already informed my bank about this if I could have my money back. I'm just wondering that are they sending clothes just to popular bloggers so that they can deceive a regular consumer. I hope I was the only unlucky one (Taru 23.2.2011 in Emmi's blog).

Emmi felt sorry about the incident and told that other readers have had the same experiences with this online retailer. After this example some readers started to make similar comments and as a consequence, others were very disappointed and write that they are too afraid of ordering anything from there. Emmi suggested that she asks about this issue from her contact person from the online retailer. She encouraged that everybody who have had problems sends their e-mail addresses and names of the ordered products and she will forward the message. By helping others, Emmi showed a genuine concern for others (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, 42).

<u>Collections</u>

Bloggers get invitations to retailers' showrooms where the new and current fashion collections are presented. These are usually events organized specifically for bloggers

but they are invited for the same reasons that journalists and magazine editors are invited to the showrooms. Fashion retailers main goal in organizing these showroom events is that bloggers would report about the clothes to the consumers. Bloggers usually receive a goodie bag and food in the event but mostly they do not receive any major benefits from visiting the retailer. Fashion bloggers are fashion enthusiasts that like to stay ahead regular consumer in current trends (Goldsmith & Clark 2008, 310).

> On Friday, I quickly stopped at Bestseller before going to work. They had organized an event for bloggers. The brands of Bestseller are, for example, Only, Vila, Vero Moda, and Pieces. We got a sneak peak of next spring and summer clothes and accessories (Aino 7.3.2011).

Bloggers can take photos freely of the products they like and then show them to the blog audience including explanation of the main themes of the collection and why the products were liked. The showroom products usually are not in the shops yet so the blog readers feel privileged to see them for the first time. They are interested in that when these products arrive in stores and may add comments about the collection. Some bloggers answer these questions in detail but some leave the comments unanswered. In these instances, the retailers can also collect opinions about their products (Rickman & Cosenza 2007, 609–610).

4.2.3 Tips

Fashion bloggers give tips to the audience about events and new shop openings where they might be invited themselves or have received the information in the press-releases.

<u>Shopping events</u>

Bloggers mention quite often unique shopping happenings that are organized only once in a year or very rarely. They receive invitations to these happenings and therefore, share it with their blog audience. This is very journalism-like information that can be seen in magazines and television. Fashion bloggers that have this kind of information in their blogs might have strong professional aspirations and fulfill them through their blogs (Jung et al. 2007, 28). Fashion blogs can be seen as one channel of reaching

consumers that do not continuously read magazines or watch television. The events usually are bloggers own favorites that they would probably go to. Otherwise, they might not be mentioned in the blog at all.

> Surprise surprise, I won't make it to the Helsinki Vintage this year either, but you go and enjoy! More information on tickets and schedule from here KLIK! I'm going to enjoy the wintery scenes in Lapland on Sunday :) (Niina 1.3.2011).

New shops

Bloggers also receive information on new shop openings. This is also very journalism and expertise-like information in blogs (Jung et al. 2007, 28; Kretz & de Valck 2010, 319). The entry might include a press-release or just an explanation of the brand or the retailer by the blogger why this is relevant information. The retailers might be bloggers' favorite from abroad and new in Finland or they might be new in the Internet as shown in the example below. The audience tends to comment on these entries more than shopping event entries because they concern more readers than just one-time event. In one example, many readers were happy to hear that a new retailer was opening stores in Finland. That inspired many and the conversation evolved to discussion of favorite fashion retailers that are not located in Finland but should be.

> During last week opened the new men's fashion webstore Mr Porter which is the brother of women's loved Net-A-Porter. Besides the good brand selection is Mr Porter is already now a great example how can familiar concepts be brought on a new level. The site is packed with highly relevant, interesting and well implemented men's fashion related content." (Tuukka 23.2.2011).

4.2.4   Competitions

Competitions are very popular campaigns for collecting information for future reference and receiving positive image in fashion blogs. Retailers organize competitions with bloggers where the readers can win products or gift cards. Economic incentives may not

be the main reason why the audience likes to read blogs but they are the reason why many readers give comments to the blog entry (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh 2003, 54). This can be seen in the significant difference between the number of comments that a regular entry and a competition entry has.

New products

Retailers work together with bloggers in organizing competitions where blog audience can win product prizes. The entries typically begin by blogger telling something about the brand or product and choosing her favorite items from the selection. This way the blogger introduces the brand to the audience and may contain very detailed information about the products such as price and material information. After introducing the brand, blogger gives an explanation about the competition and blog readers can choose products that they like, design something or just comment the blog entry and take part in the competition.

> After trying them on, two different sets were selected: the ivory colored Sorbet balconette (1.) and the black beautifully ornamented Linnea (2.). We decided with Patricia people that because I got the chance to try their lingerie so should one of you too. You can enter the competition by voting your favorite of these two sets (Emmi 24.3.2011).

Retailers may collect information about their products for future reference by organizing competitions with bloggers (Rickman & Cosenza 2007, 609–610). The audience can take part in the competition by giving a comment about the product or collection that is a topic of the entry. These comments usually are quite non-descriptive but sometimes readers might take a lot of time to write their opinions about the retailers' products and give truly valuable information.

Gift cards

In addition to product prizes, gift cards are popular prizes in competitions organized by a blogger and a retailer (Corcoran 2010). In these instances, also the blogger receives a gift card as a benefit from doing something for the retailer. These tasks might consist of presenting the retailer's new clothing line in the blog or selecting own favorites from the line. Usually, the same gift card is also offered to one of the readers if they place a

comment in the blog. What is interesting is that the blogger, usually, tells what did she or he buy with the gift card but it remains unknown what the reader bought.

> But hey, guess what.. soon one of you is going to be a happy owner of Aleksi13 gift card worth 150 Euros because I received one to give away. You can join in the competition by commenting this entry. Why don't you tell what you thought about the new clothing line :) (Salla 9.3.2011).

4.3 Conclusions and managerial implications

Electronic word-of-mouth in consumer fashion blogs was quite evident. In the definition of electronic word-of-mouth, the statements concerned products or companies (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, 38). In fashion blogs selected for this study, most of the entry topics revolved around fashion products and companies. The aim was to differentiate organic and amplified topics found in blogs. This proved to be sometimes quite uncertain because the bloggers might hide the commercial source of the entry. However, many bloggers gave indication in their blogs that they do not hide marketing forces and write honestly about them. This transparency improves the ethical aspects of the covert marketing campaigns in blogs.

The synthesis of theoretical framework presented the model of electronic word-of-mouth exchange between the blogger and audience. The content may be amplified or organic whether there is a direct marketing influence behind the message or not. The motivations behind writing and seeking eWOM messages (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003) were discussed in the results because some of the motivations behind entries and comments were evident. However, specific mapping of prevailing motivations was not possible within this study because the method of observational netnography is suitable only for analyzing social interaction; not personal motivations. Therefore, the motivations were left out from figure 6. The figure illustrates the re-evaluation of the theoretical framework where the fashion blog eWOM content was analyzed according to the nature of the message. The detailed fashion topics can be seen in the upper and lower boxes.

Personal style
•Outfit of the day
•Street style
•Celebrity style
•Trends

Tips and advice
•Experiences
•Sales
•Product alternatives
•Favorite shops
•Product details
•Buying procedures

Brands, designers, retailers
•Collections
•History
•Company details

Purchases
•New products
•Stories
•Desired products
•Online

Organic eWOM

Blogger

eWOM content

Audience

Amplified eWOM

Received products
•Outfit of the day
•Stories
•Product details

Tips
•Shopping events
•New shops

Brands, designers, retailers
•Continuous co-operation
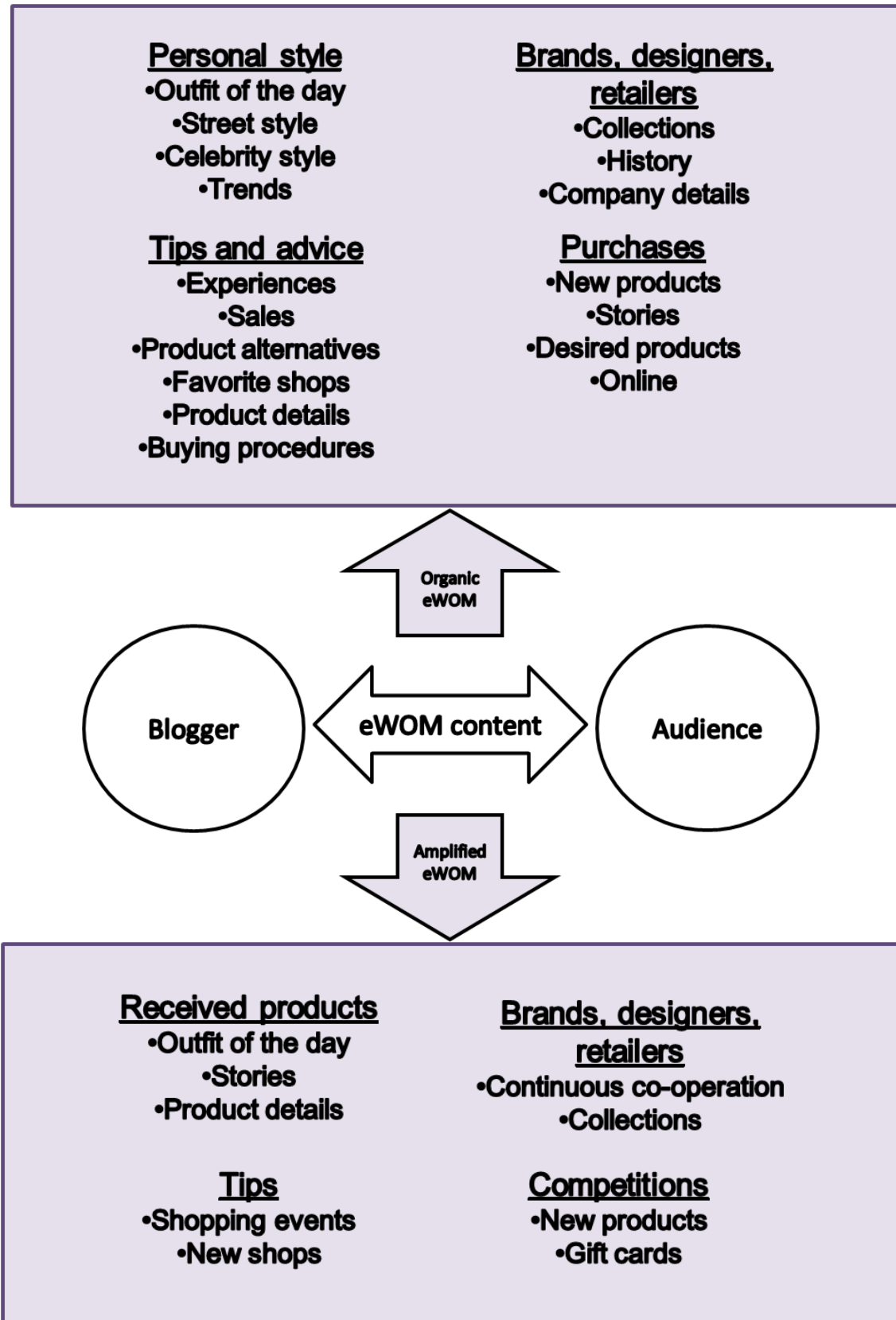•Collections

Competitions
•New products
•Gift cards

Figure 6.   Re-evaluation of the theoretical framework

The main organic topics were personal style, company information, such as brands, designers and retailers, tips and advice, and purchases. Personal style of the blogger was portrayed in multiple ways by showing the audience the outfit of the day, evaluating others' style and trends in general. In the personal style entries, brands and retailers were discussed but they were not the main topic. However, they were discussed in the entries that showed to the audience new fashion collections, history and detailed presentations of a particular brand. Within these topics, the motivations of self-expression and entertainment were most visible (Nardi et al. 2004, 43; Stoeckl et al. 2007, 406). The bloggers have fun in creating their identity and opinion leadership by presenting their expertise and knowledge in fashion through personal style.

It is very common that tips and advice are asked and given in fashion blogs. Within this topic, the information need was mostly evident (Huang et al. 2008, 354). Due to the active use of the commenting section in the blog, the audience asks for advice from the blogger. In addition, it is not at all uncommon that the blogger asks for advice from the audience. Fashion bloggers tend to write only about positive experiences but the audience writes negative as well as positive experiences (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, 44). Tips were given by both audience and bloggers and they consisted mainly of great deals, retailer sales, alternative product choices, and favorite shops. The uncertainty aspects of e-commerce could be seen in messages concerning product details and buying procedures. Readers can be uncertain about the material, color or sizes of the products available in online stores and ask about the blogger for more information. The same aspect was seen in buying procedures, such as delivery time, costs and returns.

Entries discussing purchases emphasized the shopping expert side of the blogger (Goldsmith & Clark 2008, 310). Within these entries, the bloggers tell about their successes in finding good deals. The multiple purchases were shown in their own entries that were different from outfit of the day entries where the products are worn by the blogger. The purchases are shown on hangers or others ways on display but rarely on bloggers. The purchases are sometimes explained in a very detailed manner like a story that begins from a desire and end to the after purchase feelings of the product. These stories contain emotions that many consumers go through when buying something from joy to disappointment. In addition to bought products, fashion bloggers also tell about products that they would like to buy.

As can be noticed from the figure 6, the amplified topics are not as varied as organic topics are. This might be due to the fact that there were not as many amplified entries as organic entries. Bloggers may prefer their own topic ideas and like to express themselves in their own terms, as could be seen in organic topics. However, when bloggers are influenced by direct marketing the received products are shown to the audience in a similar way than bought products. This means that the received product is incorporated to the blogger's outfit of the day. If a blogger can choose the product him or herself, the acquiring of the product is told to audience in a similar way than blogger's purchases. If the received product is a part of a specific marketing campaign, the blogger may tell very detailed information about the product or collection, such as how the collection was born or what special aspects the product has.

When the bloggers discuss about the brands or retailers, they may be in a continuous relationship with them. In a continuous relationship, the blogger almost acts as an employee for the company by promoting different sales, giving discounts to the blog audience and presenting new products that they have. Behind these topics the bloggers' desire for creating relationships with companies and for professional advancements are evident (Jung et al. 2007, 28). They receive press releases of new shop openings and shopping events that the audience might go to. Competitions organized by the blogger and the retailer are increasingly popular in blogs. Bloggers want to give their audience the same possibility to receive the same benefits as they receive. The audience tends to be very eager to take part in these competitions in the hopes of receiving monetary benefits (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh 2003, 54).

As a conclusion, the organic and amplified eWOM topics are not as different as might have been assumed. In its' best form, the amplified topics resemble as much organic topics as possible because then they are not blatantly different from the general feeling of the blog. However, some topics and motivations can only be seen either in organic or amplified messages. The self-expression and information need were seen mostly in organic topics, and monetary and professional advancements in amplified topics. Even though some topics were fundamentally different, their presentation was similar. For example, if a blogger receives a gift card or can choose a product on her own, the use of these benefits are explained in the same way as the product was purchased with blogger's own money.

The companies that engage in fashion blog marketing may want to take several implications from this study. Blog competitions are a good way to collect information from consumers. Even though there might not be many comments in all of the entries, the fashion blog audience is big and therefore, reaches easily many consumers. An incentive, e.g. gift card or a product prize, encourages many readers who would not otherwise comment to place a comment (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh 2003, 54). It must be kept in mind that not all readers want to give much effort to give truly valuable information but some of them will always have true value. Another aspect of fashion blog marketing is influencing the readers. Bloggers' outfit of the day influences many readers to buy the products because they are seen on a person and incorporated to other products. The brands and retailers are mentioned in addition to the photo of the outfit of the day. Therefore, they are easily found if somebody wants to buy them.

Negative experiences are rarely written by bloggers because they prefer to keep overall positive feeling in the blogs. If they do not like the received product they may ignore it totally. It is safer to give gift cards or an opportunity for the blogger to choose the product. This ensures more freedom for the blogger to express her or himself and more likely the product is incorporated to the outfit of the day. If the given product is chosen by a marketer and it is not similar to bloggers own style, the audience may perceive the given product as negative marketing activity. The audience trusts that the bloggers represent their true opinions and disclosure any marketing activities behind the entries (Huang et al. 2008, 354). Therefore, fully covert marketing rarely can be accomplished.

If the gift card is given as a payment for the blogger from doing something for the retailer or as a part of a campaign, it would be better to make sure that the gift card is used in accordance with the campaign. If the blogger first presents her favorite items from a new collection, receives a gift card from doing that, and then selects something else with the gift card than the selected favorites, there is a conflict that might have a negative influence in some readers. This gives a feeling that the products are selected just to receive the gift card and not because the blogger actually likes them. In order the blog campaign to be successful, it has to be assured that the blogger gives an impression to the blog audience that he or she truly likes the retailer's products, would spend money on them and wear them. When selecting bloggers for a campaign, the above mentioned issues and the blog content must be examined (Li & Du 2010, 196–197).

5   SUMMARY

Fashion industry has changed tremendously within the Internet era and the change continues as new types of online business models are needed to reach the even more demanding consumers. On one hand, some fashion consumers require huge selection of different products within the shortest time-frame and with minimum effort. Online shops may give the answer to this requirement. However on the other hand, some fashion consumers might feel uncertain with these online stores and choose traditional stores instead even though shopping requires significantly more time and effort. Uncertain consumers turn easily to other consumers in online environments and ask for specific information, experiences and recommendations, i.e. electronic word-of-mouth.

Online communities, such as electronic mailing lists, discussion forums, and weblogs, have become very popular as a consequence of digitalizing social world. Not only consumers seek for information on those online communities, but also for entertainment and social relationships. The fashion retailers have noticed the fact that consumers spend time on social sites and seek for information on online communities. Therefore, some of the marketing efforts have been transferred to these communities and especially in fashion industry, to consumer fashion blogs. Fashion blogs have become very popular within the recent years mainly because of their entertaining nature. In fashion blogs, the interaction between the blogger and audience is considered to be weaker than in discussion forums. However, electronic word-of-mouth is a strong element in fashion blogs as well.

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze electronic word-of-mouth in consumer fashion blogs. The main idea was to find similarities among the texts that the blogger and its' readers are producing and gather fashion product-related topics that are important especially for fashion brands and retailers. In order to reach the purpose of this study, three research questions were presented:

1. What topics are shared in organic fashion blog texts?
2. What topics are shared in amplified fashion blog texts?
3. Are there any differences between organically produced and marketer-influenced fashion blog texts?

In consumer fashion blogs, the texts can be roughly divided into organically produced and marketer-influenced texts. It was important to make a difference between these two types, because electronic word-of-mouth is also divided into organic and amplified messages. As online communities are influential concerning fashion products, consumer fashion blogs were chosen as a specific illustration of them. Some read them just for fun, others to find specific information from fashion products. In any case, fashion blogs have the ability to create or destroy product needs and marketers have also acknowledged this issue. More and more blog marketing is used to attract customers.

This study was limited to fashion products and their related issues, such as brands, designers, retailers and buying behavior. Fashion products can be categorized as clothes, shoes, bags and other accessories. Only Finnish fashion blogs that are written by consumers were taken into consideration since companies write blogs, as well, and their observation was not meaningful within this study. Even if a blog is categorized as a fashion blog, topics may still range anything from cosmetics to food. Therefore, texts concerning only fashion product-related information were analyzed. The comments of blog readers and the visual presentation in blogs, including photos and videos, were taken into consideration.

There are only few studies on what is actually written about fashion in blogs by its writers and readers. Previous theories of electronic word-of-mouth were taken into consideration but the main results were formed mainly from the naturally occurring data. Electronic word-of-mouth can be defined as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via Internet. This differs from the traditional word-of-mouth, which usually is between two persons, in following ways: the relationship between the sender and the receiver is weaker, there can be multiple senders and receivers, the conversation lasts longer, and measuring the effects is easier. Despite the differences, electronic word-of-mouth is said to have the biggest influence on purchase decisions today.

The motivations of writing and seeking eWOM are widely researched areas. In this study, it was important to identify the background of bloggers and blog audience. Fashion bloggers are opinion leaders in their own area, and for them, expressing

knowledge and expertise is an important motivation. The opinion seeker, on the other hand, respects and actively looks for leader's opinions online. The desire for specific information is an evident motivation for reading eWOM. Social belonging needs are a motivating factor for both bloggers and blog readers. Even though the surroundings are virtual, connecting with others and helping others has significant social benefits. The chance of getting monetary benefits from blogging and writing is also a motivation for both writers and readers. However in Finland, these benefits are not that significant. In addition to monetary benefits, opinion leaders may have professional incentives because by showing their expertise in some areas might lead to job offers. In fashion blogs especially, entertainment is a strong motivational factor for the blogger and the audience. Blogging is considered to be a fun hobby and reading blogs a good way to pass time.

Organic eWOM occurs naturally when a person wants to tell others about the positive or negative experience with a product or a company. The content of organic eWOM depends of course from the subject being discussed but similar topics can be found from the previous studies made in this area. Personal issues, such as personal style, expertise and experiences with trends or usage of a product, were popular topics in organic discussions. Company-related information, such as brands, designers, retailers, and business practices, was another popular topic. Information giving and requesting comprises also a big part of organic eWOM. These may be issues such as advice on style or usage of products or tips on new launches and developments.

Amplified eWOM occurs when a marketer launches a campaign or in another way encourages others to speak about a product or a company. The marketer tries to have an influence to the content of amplified eWOM but ultimately it is in the hands of the eWOM creator. The amplified eWOM studies have mainly concentrated on discovering the effects and influence it has on the readers according to the reliability and ethicality. In addition, the effects on profitability have proven to be positive. In order the campaign could work, the character narratives of the blogger and prevailing culture in the blog is important to examine, i.e. how he or she creates the campaign blog content according to own character and pressures from the audience. In conclusion, finding the right platform and person to encourage word-of-mouth is important.

In this study, the research approach was based on netnography. Netnography is a fairly recent and not so commonly used methodology developed from ethnography. Since the social world is going digital and online cultures are increasingly popular, a suitable methodology in studying them was needed. In detail, netnography can be defined as a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications. It aims at a similar holistic understanding of a phenomenon as ethnography does but uses data that has been generated with computer as a communication tool. In netnography, social experiences are equally meaningful to study as in ethnography, and the investments are smaller because the researcher does not have to travel anywhere.

Online communities are the products of the social communication on the Internet. Online community is a term for a variety of Internet forums, such as electronic bulletin boards, listservers, markets and auction sites, social media and networking sites, blogs, game communities, and special interest communities. These communities are popular because they enable to form relationships in a non-expensive way without boundaries. Marketers and researchers have noticed that community member openly writes about values, meanings and feelings. A marketer who understands these communities and actively follows them will gain significant opportunities to understand their consumption patterns and product choices. When the data is collected in rich and varied forms, the consumer descriptions will be as rich and varied. For example, observing blogs may give valuable information for forecasting future trends and applying them to fashion business quickly.

Putting netnography to the context of this study, observing intensively the writings of fashion blogs gave a holistic understanding of word-of-mouth and consumer reviews in online blogs concerning fashion products. The research process somewhat followed the typical process of qualitative research that began by defining the research topic and questions. In the beginning, the research topic was quite broad but evolved during the process to comprise of fashion blogs and eWOM content. The six blogs were selected according to the following criteria: relevant information about fashion and fashion products, high amount of activity by the blogger, interactivity with the audience and substantiality of the information. In addition, the heterogeneity of the bloggers and

richness of the data was important criteria. The chosen bloggers were popular, interesting in fashion-sense and active in their blogs. More heterogeneity between them would have given more richness to the data but since blogging is a fairly new phenomena, fashion bloggers are mainly women and under thirty. Permission to use texts, according to the ethical procedures of netnography, was asked by email directly from the bloggers.

Blog observation was the main tool in collecting data. Blogs are a source of information that can contain rich, detailed, longitudinal data about individuals and their consumption practices, values, meanings and beliefs. Naturally occurring texts were the empirical data and hence, the researcher's role was unobtrusive. Observational techniques such as qualitative content analysis, visual analysis and interpretive analysis were used as a help to divide the material into topics. Blog texts and audience comments concerning fashion product-related information were collected from these six blogs from the beginning of January to the end of March in 2011. Total collected data amounted to 1 726 pages of text in 1.5 spacing, 238 361 words and 315 entries. Fieldnote data consists of researcher's own reflective and observational comments. In addition to textual data, important visual and audiovisual data was described among the actual data.

In this study, the collected data was sorted and classified into Microsoft Word sheets according to each individual blogger and according to the nature of the eWOM in the entry, i.e. organic or amplified. After this collection and initial filing, the entries were carefully gone through and coded according to the bloggers own categorization and the topics found from the previous studies. The entries consisted of bloggers own texts and comments that the audience had written below the entry. This part of the data collection and analysis refined and categorized the data according to the aim of this study. The understanding of the whole fashion blog phenomena grew with the new experiences rising from the texts and visual material. After the big picture of fashion blogs was realized, the different elements, i.e. topics, and similarities among them started to rise. The fieldnotes were written from the ideas rising from these elements and results started to emerge. The best examples of the blog texts were selected to represent the element or the topic. Since this study is written in English, the examples of Finnish blog texts were translated into English.

The results of this study were divided into organic eWOM topics and amplified eWOM topics in consumer fashion blogs. The idea was to find out whether there are any differences between them or not. The main organic topics found in fashion blogs were personal style, company information, such as brands, designers and retailers, tips and advice, and purchases. It was seen in multiple entries that bloggers' personal styles played a crucial part of the blog. In these entries, bloggers showed their expertise in fashion and inspired many readers. Personal style was portrayed by the outfit of the day and evaluating others' style and trends. Brands portray personal style but they were also discussed in the entries that showed new fashion collections, brands' history and detailed presentations.

It is very common that tips and advice are asked and given in fashion blogs. These kinds of discussions can be seen in online forums where eWOM is mostly exchanged but also in fashion blogs due to the active use of the commenting section of the blog. Advice and tips were asked and given by both bloggers and audience. This was a peculiar detail because one could think that the audience only asks for advice and the blogger gives tips. The detailed topics in this section were experiences, shopping tips such as sales and great deals, and e-commerce advice on product sizes and delivery costs for instance. Advice and tips were asked from the bloggers because they are considered to have expertise on fashion consumption. Entries discussing purchases emphasized this experienced consumer side of the blogger. The purchases had their own entries where bought products were shown on hangers or other ways on display but rarely worn by the bloggers. The prices were important to mention in order the audience to notice the good bargains. The buying experiences were told in a very detailed story-like entry.

The amplified topics were not as varied as the organic topics. This may had been due to the fact that there were not as many amplified entries as organic entries. The amplified topics consisted of received products, company information such as brands, designers and retailers, tips given to the audience, and competitions. When the blogger was excited about received products, they were shown to the audience in a similar way that bought products as incorporated to the outfit of the day. If a blogger could choose the product him or herself, the receiving of the product was told to the audience in a similar way than blogger's purchases. If the received product is a part of a specific marketing

campaign, the bloggers told very detailed information about the product or collection, such as how the collection was born or what special aspects the product has.

When the bloggers discuss about the brands or retailers, they may be in a continuous relationship with them. In a continuous relationship, the blogger almost acted as an employee for the firm by promoting different sales, giving discounts to the blog audience and presenting new products that they sell. Furthermore, the bloggers informed about new shop openings and shopping events that the audience might go to. Competitions organized by the blogger and the retailer were popular in blogs. Bloggers want to give their audience the same possibility to receive the same benefits as they receive. The audience tends to be very eager to take part in these competitions.

As a conclusion, the organic and amplified eWOM topics were not as different as might have been assumed. In its' best form, the amplified topics resemble as much organic topics as possible because then they are not blatantly different from the general feeling of the blog. However, some topics and motivations can only be seen either in organic or amplified messages. Tips and advice messages came from the information need and competitions came from the retailer's desire to organize one. Even though some topics are different, their presentation is similar. For example, if a blogger receives a gift card or can choose a product on her own, the use of these benefits are explained in the same way as the product was purchased with blogger's own money.

The companies that engage in fashion blog marketing may want to take several implications from this study. Blog competitions are a great way to collect information from consumers. An incentive, gift card or a product prize, encourages many readers to place a comment on the blog. Another aspect of fashion blog marketing is influencing the readers. Bloggers' outfits of the day influence many readers to buy the products because they are seen on a person and incorporated to other products. The brands and retailers are mentioned in addition to the photo of the outfit of the day. Therefore, they are easily found if somebody wants to buy them. All in all, it has to be assured that the blogger gives an impression to the blog audience that he or she truly likes the retailer's products, would spend money on them and actually wear them. The open relationship between the blogger and the audience should be never forgotten.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Blogger character narratives

Blog 1: *

This blog is being kept by a 22 year old girl called Aino from Helsinki. She says that she loves ice cream, cats, and flea markets. Her favorite blogging subjects are fashion, shopping, flea markets and life in general. She works in a clothing shop and as a journalist for fashion magazine.

*The name and web address of the blog are hidden.

Blog 2: Focus on fashion

This blog is written by a twenty plus year old Salla from Forssa but currently lives in Turku. She loves clothes and dressing up. She also reminds in her profile that her stories are not meant to be taken seriously, and promises her readers to post every day. She is a student but wants to change her subject within the university.

<http://focusonfashion.indiedays.com/>

Blog 3: Nelliinan vaatehuone

This fashion blog is one of the most popular blogs in Finland. The blog is written by Niina who is 30 years old, crazy about shoes and loves to make her own dresses. In addition to that, she has a lovely husband and an extraordinary cat named Nöpö. She also admits that she writes the blog humorously but fashion is always going to remain the main subject. She works in an office but sometimes offers to help small fashion shop keepers in Tampere. <http://www.olivia.fi/nelliina>

Blog 4: No fashion victims

This blog is written by a 22 year old girl called Emmi from Espoo. She does not say strictly about what she writes about but fashion and other interesting phenomena in her life are the main subjects. She loves to travel and has strong aims for the future career-wise. Someday she wants to be an editor for a fashion magazine.

<http://nofashionvictims.indiedays.com/>

Blog 5: Material world of Tuukka

This blog is written by Tuukka who is a Bachelor of Science from Helsinki School of Economics. He currently lives in Ireland and is working there. He started blogging in 2010 because he wanted to share his ideas and experiences about clothes and fashion. He is passionate about fashion as well as arts, design, music, and marketing.

<http://tuukka13.indiedays.com/>

Blog 6: P.S. I love fashion

This blog is written by Linda who is 22 year old girl living and studying in Stockholm. She is a passionate shopper and loves high heels, beautiful and classic clothes, and designer bags. Linda writes about every day issues in her life and especially, economics studies are mentioned quite often in her writings.

<http://www.psilovefashion.indiedays.com>

APPENDIX 2: Outfit of the day entry

Dagens – tennarit in action

Wednesday 23. March 2011

Ralphin tennareista pyysitte kuvaa jalassani, joten tässä tulisi tämän päivän asukuvaa tennareissa.

Varsin sopivaan väliin tulikin tämä kenkäpari ostettua, saappaissa nimittäin alkaa jo olla hieman liian kuumat oltavat pikkuvarpailleni. Tänäänkin luvassa on melkein 10 plusasteen lämpötilaa auringonpaisteineen, joten tennarit ovat täydelliset näille keleille, kun vielä ballerinoilla ei ihan tarkene.

Muutenkin tykkään, että tennareiden tuoma sopiva rentous toimii todella kivasti monissa tilanteissa. Esimerkiksi juuri tässä tämänpäiväisessä kokonaisuudessani se tasapainottaa virallista bleiseriä, ja tekee kokonaisuudesta täysin eri henkisen kuin esimerkiksi tiukkojen saappaiden kanssa.

bleiseri Zara / toppi Gina / housut Zara / vyö Zara / huivi Mulberry / kengät Polo Ralph Lauren

(Linda 23.3.2011)

APPENDIX 3: Sales tip entry

(Niina 12.2.2011)

APPENDIX 4: Favorite shops entry

Stockholm shopping guide

Wednesday 02. March 2011

Tukholman shoppailupostausta olette minulta pyytäneet monet kerrat, mutta häpeäkseni sain sen toteutettua vasta näinkin pitkän odotuksen jälkeen. Nyt on kuitenkin kuvia napsittu ja shoppailureitti suunniteltu, joten eiköhän siirrytä suoraan asiaan!

Reitti koostuu siis lähinnä omasta kokemuksestani siitä, mitkä ovat parhaita shoppailupaikkoja täällä, ja mihin esimerkiksi 5 tunnin risteilypysähdyksellä mielestäni kannattaisi suunnata. Olen laatinut teille hieman karttaa osviittoineen, josta näettekin, miten kätevästi reitti kulkee keskustassa läpi aina Sturegallerianista Sergelin torille asti. Reitin alkupäähän pääsee helposti satamasta tunnelbanalla (punainen linja, pysäkki Östermalmstorget, nousu Stureplanille) ja reitin loppu päästä sitten pääsee taas helposti tunnelbanalla takaisin laivaan (riippuen satamasta, Vikingillä matkustettaessa punainen tai vihreä linja ja hypätään Slussenissa pois, Siljalla matkustettaessa punainen linja Ropstenia kohti ja hypätään pois Gärdetissä).

Tässä siis kyseinen aarrekartta Tukholman shoppailuita varten, ja sen jälkeen hieman kuvia ja selostuksia merkityistä kohteista:

(Linda 2.3.2011)

APPENDIX 5: Purchase entry

mites tässä näin kävi

Voin kertoa, että näiden kuvaamisessa meni *hetki*...nyt siis ostoksia sieltä rapakon takaa!

1. Superpehmoinen huppari Urban Outfittersistä, jossa oon hengaillut nyt nää kaks jetlagituspäivää kotosalla. Normihinta oli jotain päälle 70 dollaria, mä pulitin tosta nyt vajaan 10 dollaria - ei paha. **2.** Urban Outfittersin ruutupaita, jonka näittekin jo siinä asuvideossa. **3.** Kirjailtu viittamainen neuletakki, Urban Outfittersin aleista tämäkin. **4 & 5.** Pari perustoppia, mistäs muualtakaan kuin Urban Outfittersistä. **6.** Valkoinen neuleponchojuttu Forever 21:stä. **7.** Oranssihtavan ruskea bleiseri H&M:stä. Maksoi tuolla 20 dollaria, en tiedä mokoman hintaa täällä meillä, mutta veikkaisin että ainakin 20 euroa - eli ehkä mä nyt tossa muutaman euron säästön tein, haha.

(Emmi 21.2.2011)

APPENDIX 6: Desired purchases entry

FRIDAY 11. MARCH 2011

I LIKE THESE ITEMS.

A random selection of interesting items that I have spotted during the last weeks.

SPRING ESSENTIALS

WE HAVE COLLECTED QUALITY PIECES FROM OUR FAVORITE BRANDS TO GIVE YOU OUR LIST OF THIS SEASON'S MUST HAVES. ASK US HOW WE CHOSE THEM AND WE'D TELL YOU THAT WE'VE LOVED THEM FOR YEARS. FIND MORE ESSENTIALS ON TWOINCHCUFFS.COM

1 FIELD NOTES Memo Books 2 CONTEGO Kipling Frames in Black/ Navy 3 WOOLRICH Pique Stitch V- Neck Sweater in Grey 4 HICKEY FREEMAN Navy/ White Cotton Striped T- Shirt 5 ALEXANDER OLCH Linen Scarves in Red/ White/ Oatmeal 6 EARNEST SEWN Fulton 06 Maz Dark 7 GENERIC SURPLUS Opal Suede Wingtips

Simple products like the Woolrich grey sweater: Twoinchcuffs.com Spring Essentials – The Bengal Stripe.

(Tuukka 11.3.2011)

APPENDIX 7: Competition entry

Nelly.com ystävänpäivän kisailu!

07.02.2011 19:39 Nelliina

****** KISAILU PÄÄTTYNYT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*********

Vitsi miten kiva skaba luvassa! Olisi ollut jo aikaisemmin, jollen olisi lahjakkaasti sössinyt sähköpostieni kanssa. Nelly.com tarjoaa ystävänpäivän kunniaksi teille seuraavaa:

NELLY FASHION VALENTINE

NELLY.COM LOVES NIINA

Voita asut, jotka tekevät ystävänpäivästäsi maagisen!

Millä asulla sytytät sydämet tuleen ystävänpäivänä?

1. Valitse 3 tuotetta vaatteista, asusteista, kauneus-tuotteista tai muista kategorioista Nelly.com:issa.
2. Liimaa tuotteiden linkit tämän viestin kommentti-kenttään.
3. Perustele, miksi juuri sinun valitsemasi tuotteet tulevat tekemään ystävänpäivästä maagisen.

Niina esittelee 10/2 blogissaan kaksi onnellista voittajaa, jotka voittavat koko toivomuslistansa Nelly.com:ista.

nelly.com

Krhm ja minun vuokseni voittajat eivät ikävä kyllä saa ihanaa asukokonaisuuttaan ystävänpäivään mennessä, pahoittelen! Mutta eiköhän romanttista ja kaunista asua tarvitse muutenkin :) Joten nyt valitsemaan lemppareita, perustelemaan ja torstaina katsotaan kenen kahden onnekkaan toivelistan Nellyläiset toteuttavat. Klikkaa tästä valikoimiin KLIK!

Good luck!

***** HUOM! älkää huolestuko jos kommenttinne eivät heti näy, linkkejä sisältävät kommentit menevät automaattisesti valvontalistalle ja minun pitää ne manuaalisesti hyväksyä.*****

👍 Like   One person likes this. Be the first of your friends.

(Niina 7.2.2011)