



**Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen**

# The connection between the characteristics of NWOM tweets and webcare

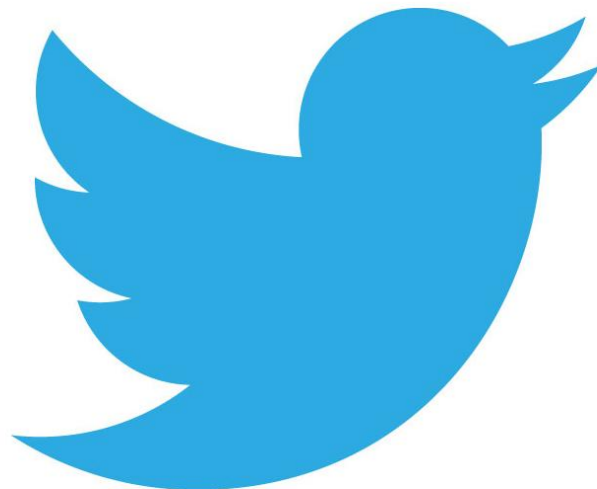
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Bachelorscriptie

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## Abstract

There have been several studies regarding NWOM and webcare, however, it has not been researched whether there is a connection between certain NWOM characteristics and the webcare reaction given. This study focused on whether certain characteristics of NWOM tweets elicit a webcare reaction by the addressed person/organisation. A total of 3 059 NWOM tweets were coded on the basis of certain NWOM and webcare characteristics. The results show that the object of the NWOM tweet and the use of @mention are more likely to elicit a webcare reaction. Furthermore there is a connection between the use of conversational human voice and whether a dialogue occurs between the Twitter user and the person/organisation that tweeted the webcare. These results, however, may not apply to other social media platforms, therefore further research regarding the connection between NWOM and webcare is necessary.

## 1. Introduction

Ever since the beginning of conversations between humans, WOM, or word of mouth, has been part of the human discourse (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). According to Arndt (1967) WOM is the communication between a receiver and a communicator, whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, regarding a brand, product or service (as cited in Toder-Alon, Brunel & Fournier, 2014). WOM often exists between family and friends; between people that are close to each other. Keller (2011) states that these are called close ties (as cited in Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). The people who create WOM can be seen as so called ‘opinion leaders’. These opinion leaders can exert personal influence on the decision-making of others by passing on, through informal WOM conversation, information they received from the media (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955).

In the past few decades there has been quite some research regarding WOM. Until now there have been three major streams of research, according to de Bruyn and Lilien (2008). However, this current research does not fit within these three major streams of research. They focussed merely on offline WOM, although another dimension of WOM has been growing rapidly in the past few years: eWOM (electronic word of mouth). This so called eWOM exists in the online environment, mostly in social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

Little research has focussed on eWOM; therefore the current study will further research this subject since, new perspectives are needed to better understand this concept. A

given characteristic of eWOM is that, because it exists online, it can be spread rapidly. It is therefore important that organisations monitor and manage the eWOM about their products and/or services, and especially the NWOM (negative word of mouth) since it can have great impact on an organisation. This monitoring and managing NWOM is called webcare.

Unfortunately, little is known about NWOM and the webcare reactions given by the organisations. The question arises whether certain characteristics of NWOM elicit webcare reactions by the addressed organisations. This current study will therefore research this subject. There will be focussed on Twitter, since it is currently one of the most popular social media platforms in the world. In September 2011 Twitter generated 95 000 000 tweets a day and in April 2011 Twitter had over 200 million users (Oosterveer, 2011). The focus will therefore be on certain characteristics of NWOM tweets and the webcare reactions that are possibly given by the addressed organisations.

## **1.1. Conceptual Background**

### **1.1. 1. Electronic word of mouth**

Even though a lot of WOM still takes place offline, there has been a rapid evolution in the use of WOM online. This is called eWOM, or electronic word of mouth. Since the start of the internet, technological developments have facilitated the means by which people connect to each other. The influence of social networks (such as Facebook and Twitter) and interpersonal communication, the process by which people exchange information, feelings and meaning, has become more important since consumers are disillusioned by the constant flow of mass-mediated marketing messages. Consumers are now turning to each other to obtain insight into brands, products and services (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014).

Furthermore, Kimmel and Kitchen (2014) state that because of the technological developments business-to-consumer marketing tools, such as public relations, advertising and direct mail, have become less important. There has been a shift from business-to-consumer communication to consumer-to-consumer communication. Consumers are now more powerful and critical than they were ever before. They are becoming more and more powerful due to the rapid evolution of the internet and mobile communication devices. People can easily connect to each other and information can spread rapidly. Hence it is important that organisations adjust their marketing communication plans to these developments and become more active in the online environment.

Several models of social media have classified organisations regarding their online activity (Diaz 2010; van Luxemburg & Zwiggelaar, 2012, as cited in Kimmel & Kitchen,

2014). These models describe four stages: (1) the 'ad-hoc' stage, (2) the 'connection' stage, (3) the 'engagement' stage and (4) the 'transformation' stage. The third stage, the 'engagement' stage is the most relevant for this study. In the 'engagement' stage organisations engage in two-way communication with consumers and utilize social media for well-defined purposes. The 'engagement' stage shows that social media marketing allows companies to communicate instantly and directly with their stakeholders. This shows that there has been a shift from traditional one-way messaging to a more direct and expanded dialogue between organisations and their consumers and other stakeholders (Matthews, 2010). The direct and expanded dialogue gives rise to consumer's positive feelings that they are being heard and their ideas are incorporated in product or service design.

### **1.1.2. NWOM and webcare**

Social media marketing (Matthews, 2010) is of great importance when negative messages about a product or service of an organisation appear online. This so called negative word of mouth (NWOM) can have great impact on an organisation. A characteristic of online NWOM is that it can be formed by and propagated via thousands or millions of people on the internet within several hours (Pfeffer, Zorbach, & Carley 2014). A partial explanation for this rapid spreading can be found in the study by Le Pair and Van Dongen (2013). Their study focussed on Twitter and shows that the intention of Twitter users to spread NWOM tweets is significantly higher the more they are exposed to NWOM tweets on their timeline. Le Pair and van Dongen (2013) furthermore show that NWOM certainly has impact on an organisation, since it can e.g. influence consumers' trust in an organisation. They researched the influence of NWOM tweets that appear on a consumer's Twitter timeline on consumers' brand trust. They found that the NWOM tweets have a damaging effect: the consumers' brand trust is significantly lower than neutral (where neutral is equal to four on a scale from one to seven).

Furthermore, it is assumed that NWOM is not only of impact on consumers' brand trust, but also on consumers' decision making (Assael, 1955, as cited in Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). Because of this impact it is important that organisations monitor the NWOM on the internet and develop marketing communication strategies to react on this NWOM. According to Van Noort and Willemsen (2011) this engaging in online interactions with complaining consumers by actively searching the web to address consumer feedback is called 'webcare'.

### 1.1.3. Response strategies

When engaging in online interactions with complaining consumers it is important to use the right response strategy. When it comes to organisations responding to online NWOM, there are several response strategies possible. These response strategies may affect the consumers' attitude towards the organisation. Lee and Song (2010) researched the influence of an organisation's response strategy on the perception of observers, who only read NWOM, on attribution and the organisation reputation. The three response strategies used were: (1) 'accommodative' strategies which involve any form of apology, compensation and/or corrective action, (2) 'defensive' strategies which involve many forms of actions such as taking an attack on the accuser and denying responsibility, and (3) 'no action' strategies where no action is undertaken and organisations remain silent.

Lee and Song (2010) found that first of all, defensive response strategies had a stronger impact on the consumers' perception that the organisation was at fault than no action strategies. They found that no action strategies had the lowest value of responsibility for the problem, even though it was expected that the accommodative strategies would have the lowest value of responsibility. This is because, for example, organisations apologizing may be seen as taking responsibility for the problem and thus it may provoke blame for the incident. However, accommodative strategies may influence consumers' evaluation in a positive way since corrective actions of an organisation are mostly positively valued by consumers.

Furthermore, Van Noort and Willemsen (2011) distinguish two types of response strategies regarding NWOM: proactive versus reactive webcare. A proactive webcare strategy is when a brand takes on a proactive approach and responds unsolicitedly to NWOM and a reactive webcare strategy is when a brand responds to NWOM because it is explicitly asked to do so. In the case of Twitter this is when the brand is directly addressed by the use of @mention. @mention is when a Twitter user aims to refer to a specific person or organisation (Oosterveer, 2011).

The results of the study by van Noort and Willemsen (2011) show that consumers who were exposed to webcare posts, no matter reactive or proactive, evaluated the brand more positively. No significant difference was found in brand evaluation between the reactive and proactive webcare. These results clearly show that webcare reactions on NWOM are of great importance on the consumers' evaluation of a brand.

The study by van Noort and Willemsen (2011) also researched the use of conversational human voice. According to Kelleher (2009) conversational human voice can be defined as a natural and engaging style of organisational communication, as perceived by

the public of an organisation, based on interactions between individuals in the organisation and individuals in publics. Conversational human voice is very important for effective online communication. Organisations can also use conversational human voice when responding to communications that have been initiated by the consumer (van Noort & Willemsen, 2011). That perceived human voice positively influences consumers' brand evaluations. However, the study by Van Noort and Willemsen (2011) did not focus on Twitter. Therefore the question arises how conversational human voice is used in webcare reactions on Twitter. There are several possibilities to show conversational human voice in webcare reactions on Twitter, e.g. by using personal pronouns or the first name/initials of the person who tweeted the webcare reaction. Another question that arises is whether conversational human voice in webcare reactions on Twitter creates a dialogue between the Twitter user and the addressed organisation.

## 1.2. Research Questions

Even though there is a growing importance for organisations to monitor the online environment and to react to NWOM, there are still many organisations that do not do so. A study by Barnes and Jacobsen (2014) shows that only the non-profit sector shows a widespread monitoring activity. Moreover, they found that nearly one in three organisations makes no effort to listen to NWOM if it does not come through their own social media portals such as Twitter and Facebook. This study only focussed on four distinct groups and may therefore not be relevant for consumer goods firms.

Additionally, Pfeffer et al. (2014) state that future work should cover organisations' reactions to online firestorms, where firestorms are defined as sudden discharges of large quantities of messages containing NWOM and complaint behaviour against a person, organisation or group in social media networks. These studies, however, have only focussed on whether there are webcare reactions. It has not yet been researched whether there is a connection between certain NWOM characteristics in social media, and especially Twitter, and the webcare reactions given. This will therefore be the focus of this current study. It will be researched whether certain characteristics of NWOM tweets regarding a product, service, organisation or person/group of an organisation, elicit a webcare reaction by the addressed organisation. The results of this study will provide more insight in the way organisations respond to NWOM: what characteristics of NWOM tweets elicit a webcare reaction.

Several aspects of the tweets and the webcare reactions that are possibly given will be taken into account, such as the object of the NWOM (the complaint), the way the

person/organisation is addressed, whether a webcare reaction is given by the person/organisation and whether a dialogue occurs between the Twitter user and the addressed person/organisation. The following research question and sub-questions have been created in order to research this subject.

**1. To what extent do certain characteristics of NWOM tweets about a product, service, organisation or person/group of an organisation elicit a webcare reaction by the addressed organisation?**

- A. Does a connection exist between (1) the number of followers of the Twitter user and (2) the number of retweets of the NWOM tweet, and whether a webcare reaction is given or not?
- B. Does a connection exist between (1) the object of the complaint and (2) what form of address is used, and whether a webcare reaction is given or not?
- C. Does a connection exist between (1) the response strategy and (2) the use of conversational human voice in a webcare reaction, and whether a dialogue occurs between the Twitter user and the person/organisation that tweeted the webcare reaction?

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Materials

This study utilized tweets that contain NWOM. A total of 12 935 Dutch tweets have been collected between the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February and the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2014. The tweets have been automatically selected on the basis of certain hashtags that were used in the tweets. A hashtag is a way for people to search for tweets. The collected tweets had to have at least one of the following hashtags: #fail, #faal, #zucht, #pff and #slecht.

The final corpus existed out of 3 059 NWOM tweets plus the webcare reactions that were possibly given on these NWOM tweets. The 3 059 NWOM tweets all met the criteria that determined whether a selected tweet was NWOM or not. The tweet had to be about (1) a complaint regarding a product, service, organisation or person/group that is obviously part of an organisation (such as leaders of a political party), where (2) the impression exists that the Twitter user seems to be harmed or could possibly be harmed by using that product, service or

organisation and/or seems to discourage other twitter users to use the product, service or organisation and (3) where a webcare reaction by the addressed organisation is possible.

## 2.2. Procedure

The 12 935 Dutch tweets that were selected on the basis of certain hashtags (#fail, #faal, #zucht, #pff and #slecht.) did not all contain NWOM. Therefore, two reselections resulted into the final corpus of 3 059 NWOM tweets. The first reselection was done by eighteen coders, who all received 682 tweets that had to be reselected on the basis of the three criteria that have been described above. This reselection was done in order to determine whether a tweet contained NWOM or not. Tweets that did not contain NWOM were coded '0'. Tweets that did contain NWOM were coded '1'.

The second reselection was done by eighteen coders again. This time they received a different part of the corpus. The coders recoded tweets that (1) did not exist anymore, (2) of which the Twitter account was deleted and (3) tweets that the second coder believed not to be NWOM. These tweets were recoded from '1'(NWOM) to '0' (no NWOM). Furthermore, tweets that were 'pure' retweets were recoded from '1' (NWOM) to '2' (retweets). 'Pure' retweets can be recognised by the letters 'RT' in the beginning of the tweet. They were recoded '2' in order to still be able to use them as an indication for webcare reactions.

In order to answer the research question and the sub-questions, several characteristics of the 3 059 NWOM tweets and the webcare reactions that were possibly given were coded. The full codebook can be found in appendix A. Some variables in the codebook appeared to be irrelevant for this current study and have therefore not been used. These variables include the 'additional hashtags' used in the NWOM tweets, the 'sector of the organisation', whether a webcare reaction came from a special 'webcare account' and the 'reaction speed' of the organisation that tweeted the webcare reaction.

To answer sub-question A, the 'number of followers' of the Twitter user and the 'number of retweets' of the NWOM tweets were coded. The 'number of followers' and the 'number of retweets' were both written down in exact numbers instead of by using codes. Furthermore it was researched whether the organisation mentioned in the NWOM tweet responded to the NWOM; whether there was a webcare reaction or not. If a webcare reaction was given it was coded '1'. If not, it was coded '0'.

Furthermore, to answer sub-question B, the 'object of the complaint' and the way the person/organisation is addressed were coded. The 'object of the complaint' could either be about (1) a product or (2) a service of an organisation, (3) about the communication of an



organisation (e.g. customer service) or (4) about a person/group of an organisation or the organisation itself. The last value also includes political parties.

There were three possibilities for addressing a person/organisation in the NWOM tweet: by using '@mention', a 'hashtag', or only the 'name' of the person/organisation. @mention can be used anywhere in the body of the tweet and directly addresses other Twitter users. The Twitter users will see in their notifications that they have been mentioned. This shows that @mention is the most direct way to address another Twitter user. A hashtag is often used as well. Hashtags do not directly address another Twitter user, but are used to make it easier to find certain tweets/keywords. Organisations can search for tweets about themselves or their products/services by e.g. typing #kpn or #vodafone in the Twitter search bar.

Additionally, to answer sub-question C, the 'response strategy', the use of conversational human voice and whether a 'dialogue' occurs have been coded. There were three possible response strategies: 'defensive', 'accommodative', or 'different'. A defensive strategy is when certain forms of action are used, such as attacking the accuser and denying responsibility (Lee and Song, 2010). An accommodative strategy is when there is a form of apology, compensation or corrective action.

In order to research the use of conversational human voice, two variables were created. The variable 'human voice: name' was created to see whether the person who responded to the NWOM tweet used his/her first name, initials or no name. The variable 'human voice: personal pronoun' was created to see whether the webcare reaction used 'I' or 'we/us' to refer to the organisation or whether they did not. Last but not least it has been coded whether a dialogue occurs with the Twitter user after an organisation responded to the NWOM tweet. A dialogue can be defined as the Twitter user responding at least once to the webcare reaction given by the addressed organisation in the NWOM tweet.

The total corpus of 3 059 has been coded by eighteen coders in total. Each coder coded 173 NWOM tweets. In order to calculate the interrater reliability all coders coded the first 30 NWOM tweets of the person after him/her on the list of eighteen coders. Only the variables 'object of the complaint', 'sector of the organisation' and 'response strategy' were used. All eighteen files consisting out of 30 NWOM tweets coded by two coders were merged together in order to calculate the overall interrater reliability. The interrater reliability of the variable 'object of the complaint' was unsatisfactory  $\kappa = .61, p < .001$ . However, the interrater reliability of the variable 'sector of the organisation' was satisfactory  $\kappa = .73, p < .001$ .

Furthermore the interrater reliability of the variable ‘response strategy’ was unsatisfactory  $\kappa = .61, p < .001$ .

### 3. Results

An independent-samples t-test showed no significant difference between the number of followers of the Twitter user and whether a webcare reaction was given or not ( $t(3057) = 1.49, p = .137$ ). Twitter users who got a webcare reaction on their NWOM tweet ( $M = 505.07, SD = 2259.14$ ) did not have a higher average number of followers than Twitter users who did not get a webcare reaction on their NWOM tweet ( $M = 719.03, SD = 3606.33$ ). However, an independent-samples t-test did show a significant difference between the number of retweets of an NWOM tweet and whether a webcare reaction was given or not ( $t(2822.13) = 4.79, p < .001$ ). NWOM tweets that got a webcare reaction ( $M = 0.09, SD = 0.564$ ) had a lower average number of retweets than NWOM tweets that did not get a webcare reaction ( $M = 0.40, SD = 2.97$ ).

Table 3.1. Chi-square test percentages for ‘object of the complaint’ versus ‘webcare reaction’

Value	No webcare reaction	Webcare reaction
Product	75.9	24.1
Service	71	29
Communication	64.6	35.4
Person/group/party/organisation	93.7	6.3

When looking at the object of the complaint, a Chi-square test showed a significant relation between the ‘object of the complaint’ and ‘webcare reaction’ ( $\chi^2(3) = 223.50, p < .001$ ). The Chi-square test percentages can be found in table 3.1. First of all, NWOM tweets regarding the communication of an organisation elicited more webcare reactions than NWOM tweets about a product, service or person/group/party/organisation. Second of all it is clear that NWOM tweets about a person/group/party/organisation elicited far less webcare reactions than NWOM tweets about a product, service or the communication of an organisation.

Table 3.2. Chi-square test percentages for ‘@mention’ versus ‘webcare reaction’.

Value	No webcare reaction	Webcare reaction
No @mention	92.3	7.7
Beginning	60.3	39.7
Elsewhere	66.2	33.8

Furthermore, a Chi-square test showed a significant relation between ‘@mention’ and ‘webcare reaction’ ( $\chi^2 (2) = 375.52, p < .001$ ). The Chi-square test percentages can be found in table 3.2. NWOM tweets that used @mention in the beginning or elsewhere in the tweet elicited much more webcare reactions than NWOM tweets that did not use @mention.

Table 3.3. Chi-square percentages for ‘hashtag’ versus ‘webcare reaction’

Value	No webcare reaction	Webcare reaction
No hashtag	71.4	28.6
Hashtag	85.3	14.7

Another Chi-square test showed a significant relation between ‘hashtag’ and ‘webcare reaction’ ( $\chi^2 (1) = 80.66, p < .001$ ). The Chi-square test percentages can be found in table 3.3. However, this time NWOM tweets that did not contain a hashtag elicited more webcare reactions than NWOM tweets that did contain a hashtag.

When looking at whether a dialogue occurs or not the connection between the variables ‘response strategy’, ‘human voice: name’ and ‘human voice: personal pronoun’ has been researched. In order to calculate these results only the tweets that got a webcare reaction ( $n = 702$ ) were selected.

Table 3.4. Chi-square test percentages for ‘response strategy’ versus ‘dialogue’

Value	No dialogue	Dialogue
Defensive	36.7	63.3
Accommodative	37.3	62.7
Different	41.2	58.8

A Chi-square test showed no significant relation between ‘response strategy’ and ‘dialogue’ ( $\chi^2(2) = .309, p = .857$ ). The Chi-square test percentages can be found in table 3.4. The webcare response strategy used, either defensive, accommodative or different, does not influence whether a dialogue occurs or not.

Table 3.5. Chi-square test percentages for ‘human voice: name’ versus ‘dialogue’

Value	No dialogue	Dialogue
None	36.2	63.8
First name	31.9	68.1
Initials	40.6	59.4

Moreover, another Chi-square test showed no significant relation between ‘human voice: name’ and ‘dialogue’ ( $\chi^2(2) = 3.29, p = .194$ ). The Chi-square test percentages can be found in table 3.5. It shows that whether the webcare reaction contains someone’s first name or initials, or none of them, does not influence whether a dialogue occurs or not.

Table 3.6. Chi-square test percentages for ‘human voice: personal pronoun’ versus ‘dialogue’

Value	No dialogue	Dialogue
None	44	56
I	34	66
We/us	34.1	65.9

However, a Chi-square test did show a significant relation between ‘human voice: personal pronoun’ and ‘dialogue’ ( $\chi^2(2) = 7.80, p = .020$ ). Webcare reactions that use either the personal pronouns ‘I’ or ‘we/us’ more often create a dialogue than webcare reactions without a personal pronoun.

## 4. Conclusion and discussion

This study researched whether certain characteristics of NWOM tweets about a product, service, organisation or person/group of an organisation elicit a webcare reaction. It was first of all quite striking that only 22.95 percent ( $n = 702$ ) of the 3 059 NWOM tweets elicited a webcare reaction.

However, the results show that there are indeed several characteristics of NWOM tweets that are more or less likely to elicit a webcare reaction.

The results show that the number of followers of a Twitter user did not influence whether a webcare reaction was given or not. Perhaps organisations who actively use webcare do not take notice of the number of followers. However, the results show that NWOM tweets that did not get a webcare reaction had a higher number of retweets than NWOM tweets that did get a webcare reaction. This result is quite striking, however, it is unclear whether it is the number of retweets that influences whether a webcare reaction is given or not, or whether the webcare reaction influences the number of retweets. For example, Twitter users who see a NWOM tweet with a webcare reaction might not feel the intention to retweet it, since the problem is already ‘solved’. However, one can only see whether a webcare reaction is given by ‘opening’ (clicking on) the NWOM tweet, whilst one can retweet without having to open the tweet. Also, the results of ‘number of retweets’ versus ‘webcare reaction’ may be coincidental since the number of NWOM tweets that were retweeted in this corpus was very low. Only 11.5 percent of the 3 059 NWOM tweets were retweeted.

Furthermore, when looking at the ‘object of the complaint’, NWOM tweets about the communication of an organisation more often get a webcare reaction than NWOM tweets about a product, service or a person/group/party/organisation. This could perhaps be explained by the fact that the communication departments of organisations, such as the helpdesk and the customer service, are more active in the online environment, including Twitter. As Barnes and Jacobsen (2014) state, Twitter has grown in importance and many organisations now use it as an extension of their customer service function.

Moreover, NWOM tweets that contained @mention more often elicited a webcare reaction than NWOM tweets without @mention. When a Twitter user uses @mention he or she directly addresses the organisation. The organisation will see that it has been mentioned in its notifications and is therefore more likely to respond. It is, however, striking to see that NWOM tweets that contained a hashtag elicited less webcare reactions than NWOM tweets without a hashtag. NWOM tweets without a hashtag more often got a webcare reaction. However, these results might not be trustworthy since tweets coded with ‘no hashtag’ could possibly have an @mention instead, since all three variables ‘@mention’, ‘hashtag’ and ‘no name’ were coded for each NWOM tweet. In that case the @mention might have elicited the webcare reaction instead of the hashtag.

It was also researched whether the response strategy and the use of conversational human voice in the webcare reaction influenced whether a dialogue occurred between the

Twitter user and the person/organisation that tweeted the webcare reaction. The results show that there is no connection between the response strategy used, either defensive, accommodative or different, and whether a dialogue occurs. For all three response strategies about 60 percent of the webcare reactions created a dialogue. However, conversational human voice does influence whether a dialogue occurs between the Twitter user and the organisation of the webcare reaction, but only when personal pronouns such as 'I' and 'we/us' are used. A person's first name or initials mentioned in the webcare reaction do not influence whether a dialogue occurs. Only webcare reactions that used 'I' and 'we/us' were more likely to create a dialogue. According to van Noort and Willemsen (2011) communication with a human voice invites the audience to communicate. For Twitter this means that Twitter users have the tendency to respond to webcare reactions that contain human voice, in this case personal pronouns.

## **5. Limitations and future research**

This study has taken a step into defining the connection between the characteristics of NWOM tweets and the webcare given, and the connection between webcare characteristics and whether a dialogue occurs. The results have shown that there are several characteristics of NWOM tweets that are more likely to elicit a webcare reaction, and that some characteristics of the webcare reaction are more likely to create a dialogue. However, there were some issues with the research design regarding the use of @mention and hashtags. Tweets that did not contain a hashtag could instead have an @mention, since all three variables regarding the way the person/organisation is addressed were coded for all NWOM tweets. This probably influenced the results whether a hashtag elicits a webcare reaction or not. It is important that future research takes this fault into account.

Also, since the number of NWOM tweets with retweets was very low, results that show if retweets influence whether a webcare reaction is given or not are submissive to coincidence. Furthermore, it is unclear whether it is the number of retweets that influence the webcare reaction or whether it is the webcare reaction that influences the number of retweets. Future research should focus on this possibility and research whether Twitter users who see a NWOM tweet with a webcare reaction have less intention to retweet than Twitter users who see a NWOM tweet without a webcare reaction. The fact that one has to 'open' a tweet in order to see whether there is a webcare reaction should be taken into account.

This study only focussed on Twitter which means that the results may not apply to NWOM and webcare reactions on other social media platforms, such as Facebook. It is important that future research focuses on other social media platforms in order to gain more knowledge regarding the connection between NWOM and webcare reactions. Moreover, this study only focussed on what characteristics of NWOM tweets elicit a webcare reaction. It is, however, not yet researched why organisations decide to tweet these webcare reactions and whether these webcare reactions on Twitter actually influence the organisation's reputation positively. This should play an important role in future research as well.

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## Appendix A: Codebook

### NWOM Tweets

- a. Characteristics of Twitter user who tweeted the NWOM tweet
  - *Number of followers*
  - *Number of tweets*
  - *Number of retweets*
- b. Characteristics of the content of the NWOM tweet
  - *#complaint:*
    - 1 = hashtag tweet has been selected on
    - 2 = additional hashtag
    - 3 = additional hashtag
    - 4 = additional hashtag
  - *Object of the complaint:*
    - 1 = product
    - 2 = service
    - 3 = communication
    - 4 = person/group/party/organisation
- c. Characteristics of addressed person/organisation
  - *Sector:*
    - 1 = profit
    - 2 = non-profit
    - 3 = government
    - 4 = education
    - 5 = media
    - 6 = unknown
  - *form of address: @mention*
    - 0 = no
    - 1 = beginning
    - 3 = elsewhere
  - *Form of address: hashtag*
    - 0 = no
    - 1 = yes
  - *Form of address: name*

0 = no

1 = yes

## Webcare

### a. Webcare reaction

0 = no

1 = yes

### b. Characteristics of sender webcare

#### - *Reaction speed*

1 = 0-30 minutes

7 = 6-12 hours

2 = 31-60 minutes

8 = 12-24 hours

3 = 2 hours

9 = 2 days

4 = 3 hours

10 = 3 days

5 = 4 hours

11 = 4 or more days

6 = 5 hours

### c. Characteristics of content webcare

#### - *Strategy:*

1 = defensive

2 = accommodative

3 = unknown

#### - *Human voice: name:*

0 = none

1 = first name

2 = initials

#### - *Human voice: personal pronoun*

0 = none

1 = 'I'

2 = 'we/us'

### d. Characteristics of reaction on webcare

#### - *Dialogue:*

0 = none

1 = at least one reaction of Twitter user who tweeted the NWOM (tweet + webcare + tweet)