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"Listening to strangers?
The user-generated workplace review phenomenon
and its content characteristics"

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I. Introduction

"Don't talk to strangers" (Christou, 2012), it's a sentence, which most kids hear from their parents. However, in the new era of consumer-generated content, the cautionary words of our parents are loosing its importance, when most of the people from an early age engage in the chatter of the virtual world. Most of us are familiar with new media, some might be event a little addicted to content generation on Facebook or other social media sites. Thus keeping our promise of not talking to strangers might not be possible anymore, when most of us have over 100 Facebook 'friends' or place our trust in user generated content. It was just over the past few years that the *new media* have rapidly developed and have been adopted by a vast amount of young and older population. Now, apart from the phenomenal invention of the social network site such as Facebook, user generated content is becoming another major influential factor in virtual interactions on the Internet.

The online user-generated content came into existence in 2005 through its prevalent usage in the area of new media and web publishing. Nowadays, user generated content is being attributed to most of the activities that users engage in on the web. It ranges from publishing on Facebook, uploading videos to Youtube to writing reviews on a travel website. Those tools have and will likely be changing the way that people interact online.

They have managed to influence our way of gathering, sharing, and consuming information. The virtual communication is not only changing the way we interact between each other but also the communication strategies of businesses or governments. As O'Connor (2010) described, "the Internet is evolving from a push marketing medium to one where peer-to-peer generation and sharing of data are the norm" (p.

754). The new media managed to create a tremendous shift in the communication theories.

It introduced the notion of a two-way communication between the vast entities and a single individual. What it means is that a single user can interact with a global company and even start a successful boycott. Nowadays, the user is constantly gaining more power to choose the information they want to read or post online. They also are taking over the power to influence other's opinion. User-generated phenomenon works on same basis. A single user review seems trustworthier than a review of the original source.

User-generated reviews can be compared to the idea of word-of-mouth but virtual. As underlined by Anderson, 1998; Goldenberg, Libai, & Muller, 2001; Stokes & Lomax, 2002; Zhu & Zhang, 2006, the significance of word-of-mouth on business has been widely discussed and researched, particularly because of the increased adoption of the Internet, which has transformed the way world-of-moth is being distributed (cited in Ye, Law, Bin & Chen, 2011: 635).

"The increasing use of web 2.0 applications has generated numerous online user reviews sites" (ibid: 634), which caused the need for constant research in this area. The diverse investigations soon proved the "influence of user-generated reviews on the sales of products such as CDs, books, and movies" (ibid: 634). The major reason why user-generated reviews influence the sales of diverse products is being attributed to the perception the consumers have of the information provided in the online user reviews. The consumers believe the information to be of higher credibility than the one given by the producer (Bickart & Schindler, 2001). As the user-generated review trend is being further investigated into other areas of businesses such as the service area including travel bookings, it expanded further into user-generated reviews about companies.

The recent creation of websites and platforms that allow for people to review their experiences in a workplace, satisfaction with an employer or evaluate as an external person the recruitment process, derived from the established notion of user generated review platforms for products. The question that arises is whether the user-generated reviews about companies have same attributes and effects as the ones that review products. Moreover, its online communication system may vary when relating it to other online communication system or ones constructed offline. To find out the communication system of the online review websites it is crucial to analyze this phenomenon from a theoretical perspective and then apply qualitative research method to understand the construction and underlining framework of such reviews.

1.0. Research questions

Therefore to begin closing the research gap in this area it is crucial to find out what kind of communication system surrounds the phenomenon of a work-place review website. Once a theoretical framework is established the research can begin to answer the question of to what extent is it possible to form a categorization system for online review communication environment. The categorization system for review websites is defined as the main content characteristics of a workplace review.

1.1. Hypotheses

H1: The more content, the more variations

H2: The more variations, the higher the system complexity

H3: The higher the complexity, the smaller chance for a formation of a detailed categorization system.

II. Relevance for communication science

Online reviews are a type of product information created by individuals based on their personal usage experiences (Yubo & Jinhong, 2008). In essence, online reviews are word-of-mouth via the Internet.

Product reviews voiced by consumers online represent an emerging market phenomenon that is becoming a vital component in peoples' purchasing decisions. It is commonly accepted that word- of-mouth communication can have a substantial influence on product choice (Walsh et al., 2004 cited in Mangold & Smith, 2012). Word-of-mouth is seen as more credible than advertising, as it is perceived as having passed through the evaluation of 'people like me' (Allsop, Bassett, & Hoskins, 2007). According to Keller (2007), word-of- mouth has become the most influential communication channel (cited in Mangold & Smith, 2012:142). Therefore, it can be safely said that the research confirms the influence of a product review on user's decision making, however, the real research gap is in the section of user-generated reviews about companies and whether they have the same effect and construction as those reviewing a product.

When looking at today's recruiting process it is prevalent that the candidates have more influence in recruiting process than before the ear of Internet. In today's digital era, they have the opportunity to easily inform themselves about the company they are considering as well as read the necessary reviews to make up their minds about where to apply. To do this they use new media such as various social media sites, companies recruitment websites or most recent addition job/feedback website such as kununu.com to find the most relevant and valid information about a company or organization.

This shift in importance of information source and the increasing significance of user generated content, its characteristics, construction and purposes for various stakeholders serves interesting area of research for the communication science.

This particular research will try to investigate the construction of the online review communication system. It hopes to find out a categorization system for this particular medium by looking at characteristics of the most desired information in user-generated posts from the side of the users rather than the effects it has on the businesses image or likeability. This perspective provides interesting insights for both sides of the stakeholders: the consumers (users) and the industries (businesses).

Moreover, it investigates the more unconventional WOM, the one that occurs in a virtual world, where the communicator has no social ties to the audience (Pan & Zhang, 2011:599). Therefore, the lack of personal relationship to the communicator shifts the focus of the evaluation to the content of the review (Walther 1996 cited in Pan & Zhang, 2011:599). Analyzing the content of the review aims at finding out the significant content characteristics as well as proving their effectiveness when looking at it from the perspective of the user. Finally, in line with the "online ethnography, or netnography" (Kozinets 2002 cited in Pan & Zhang, 2011:599), it can be argued that the "notion of virtual presence of an online communicator (i.e., reviewer)" is playing an important role and that these traits influence the effectiveness of communicated information (Pan & Zhang, 2011:599)

III. Theoretical framework

1.0. Conceptual Discussion of the Mass Media and New Media discourse

"The desktop revolution has brought the tools that only professionals have had into the hand of the public. God knows what will happen now" (Marvin Minsky, Time 1983 cited in Schäfer, 2011: 9). Schäfer (2001), in his book Bastard Culture!: How User Participation Transforms Cultural Production, discusses the evolution of the computer age and its implications on the cultural production and mass and new media discourse. Using the cover photos of the Time magazine from 1983 and 2007 respectively he portrays the shift that occurred within the Information Age (Schäfer, 2011: 9). In 1983 the cover photo showed a man sitting in front of the PC separated from his roommate, the magazine nominated "PC as the 'Machine of the Year'" announcing that "the Computer Moves In" (ibid). The unknown at this point was user's usage intentions. However, already in 2007 the Times changed the focus from the machine to its user. It portrayed a computer screen which reflected an image of "Person of the Year" saying "Yes, You" (ibid). Schäfer's comparison of the two cover photos clearly signifies the connotations of the emerged "information society" (ibid). Due to the invention and spread of the Internet, the emerging and constantly re-shaping information society started to concentrate on the value of the user as the receiver and later producer of content. According to Schäfer, it was the Internet that "diffused the aspects of the computer" (2011:10), allowing not only the technology to interact with one another but also the people itself. Owning a PC or having Internet access became a common privilege that expanded from business to individual households (ibid).

Schäfer identifies four main trends that according to him influenced the computer usage

habits:

> 1. The computer developed into a medium for work, leisure and entertainment
> 2. The Internet became the primary means to connect computers, thereby constituting a world-wide information infrastructure
> 3. The emergence of the World Wide Web (WWW) which, with its graphical user interfaces and hypertext structures, made networked computers a useful tool for common users and consequently became a mass medium by 1995
> 4.Most recently, in concern with the above, broad-band Internet connections and related services enabled users to publish, organize and share large quantities of data online (Schäfer, 2011:10)

The technological evolutions and societal transformations had a wide spread effect on

various forms and communication ideologies. One of the most affected notions of

communication was the one of Mass Media. One major difference in the concept of

Mass Media between now and then lies in the definition of the mass communication,

which unlike previously claimed (e.g. Budd and Ruben, 1988; Turow, 1990, 1992) now

does not need the involvement of an 'institutional communicator'. As stated by Napoli,

2010, the "Mass communication is now a much more egalitarian process, in which the

masses can now communicate to the masses" (Fonio et al., 2007 cited in Napoli, 2010:

509). Meaning, the notion of "mass" is now being interpreted in a more inclusive

manner, by taking into account not just the receivers of content but also the senders and

creators of the content. Nowadays, the interpretation of mass communication suggests

that with the increased popularity and spread of Internet, the Web 2.0 (Mabillot, 2007)

and platforms such as Youtube or Facebook, the individual audience have nearly the

same capacity of content dissemination as the traditional institutional communicators.

Therefore, the traditional sense of mass media has transformed into the new media,

where "participation in public discourse" (Napoli, 2010: 510) and creative content

generation are more wide spread (Beer and Burrows, 2007; Benkler, 2006; Kendall,

2008). However, the dynamics of one-to-many in mass communication still persists;

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nowadays there are just many more communicators, unlike in the past (ibid).

Due to the shifting structural paradigm of the traditional media, new notions have been suggested such as 'prosumers' and 'produsage', which highlight the fact that the producers are now also the consumers of the content (Bruns, 2007; Deuze, 2007). As Beer and Burrows (2007) state: 'Perhaps the key defining feature of Web 2.0 is that users are involved in processes of production and consumption as they generate and browse online content, as they tag and blog, post and share' (p.8).

Moreover, what is worth exploring is the strong focus on the user's capabilities to produce content. In many user-generated discussion this aspects seems to be of the highest importance, despite the fact that the ability to create content has been long present in the media environment for example with the home PCs or even home recorders. The major difference is that now the users are able to spread, disseminate their content easier and on a larger scale.

However, the great focus on user's content generation capabilities and the overly optimistic approach to new media let's us forget about the problems that mass media had and now new media took over. Despite the claimed interactivity and empowerment, there are still old problems of e.g. standardization or copyright that need to be addressed (Andrejevic, 2008). The UGC might value self-expression but is still threatened of being exploited in a sense of free labor of online users (Andrejevic, 2008; Terranova, 2000). According to Van Dijck, 2009, "UGC is firmly locked into the commercial dynamics of the mediascape" (p.53). Therefore, in spite of the positive discourses surrounding the UGC (self-expression, self-realization, empowerment) it is important not to forget that the market will try exploiting those. For example, most media

companies as Facebook have very strict intellectual property rights but often disregard the copyrights of the user. Facebook clearly states in their legal rights and policy agreement that everything that goes on Facebook becomes automatically the property of Facebook (Facebook, 2013). As Andrejevic (2009) argues, "the battle over intellectual property rights is a proxy for a broader struggle for control over the interactive media environment and the value generated by YouTube's users" (p. 406).

Therefore, it seems that the new media experiences similar issues as the old mass media. The slight difference is the issue of increased proliferation of democratization that can result in a cultural "flattening" (Andrejevic, 2009). However, the fragmentation of digital media, the increased diversity and individuality could also be argued as a positive development. According, to Van Dijk, (2013) the "new digital and interactive media" provide a better "intermediary, selective and information-processing functions" than the old mass media (Van Dijk, 2013).

2.0. Conceptual explanation of UGC

The phenomenon of user-generated content is the main focus of the thesis. This chapter investigates the phenomenon from a historical point of view, then continues to explore its nowadays format by identifying the main factors for its rapid development (Web 2.0, and Participative Web concept). It then goes on defining the term concentrating mainly on the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) approach. Finally, it mentions the UCG formats and various platforms.

2.1. Brief History of UGC

Despite the idiom *User-Generated Content* being coined in past decade, the act of creating amateur media content has some longer historical roots. The UGC derive from the production of personal media, which according to Lüders, (2008) are "the tools for interpersonal communication and personal expression" (p. 684) and are poles opposite to the mass media which, serve as the tool for "mass dissemination of mass produced messages" (Kim, 2010: 7). To simplify, professionals within official institutions create the mass media whereas amateurs without any pre-given standards generate the personal media (ibid).

Despite the common believe that the UGC is a very recent phenomenon it is clear that it has some deep-rooted foundation. The online UCG phenomenon's origins should be attributed to the general UCG development, taking into consideration already the 19th century periodicals or the zine culture and home videos during the 20th century (Davis, 1997; Petrik, 1992; Ross, 1991). Already then amateurs have had the idea and motivation to start producing own media content, without a pre-designed goal or aim to affect the audience in a desired manner (ibid). The amateur/alternative and resistant media have existed long before the online UGC was established; they had and have an

impact on the transformations within a society (ibid). They were and are the ones that allow minorities in our societies to speak up and be heard (ibid).

According to Turner (2006) and Armstrong (1981) it was mainly the libertarianism during the 60s and the 70s that played a pivotal role in the development of the UGC trend. Armstrong is the one who argues that personal media advanced the most during the era of digital utopianism. Turner on the other hand, states that the digital utopianism began with the "nonprofessional counterculture" in the 70s (cited in Kim, 2010: 8). In his opinion, the important and shared traits of utopianism and counterculture are: the supportive attitude toward technology and the "American individualism" (ibid). Moreover, he believes the 70s counterculture depicts discourses such as user participation, amateur Do-It-Yourself culture and democratization (Benkler, 2006), which till today are a vast part of the UGC culture. He goes on discussing the continuous development of UGC by saying that in the 90s technoculture and early 21st century digitalization (Benkler, 2006), blogs, social networking sites including Myspace and Facebook have been the fuel of user- generated publishing.

Unlike Turner who avoids the ambivalence of the counterculture, Armstrong (1981) strongly states that mainstream media and personal media have an "interactive relationship" (Kim, 2010: 9). He also supports the above-mentioned point that alternative media have an effect on the shaping of the society, adding towards the social change, that according to him was clearly seen between the 60s and 70s. Finally, he points out an important fact that "[not] only do ideas introduced by alternative media modify society, they are also themselves modified in the course of being absorbed by mainstream culture" (Armstrong, 1981: 25). However, the potential that the personal media carry on is only then taken into existence when the ideas portrayed in those media are either being recognized as needed or rejected as unnecessary or radical

(Brian, 1998 cited in Kim, 2010:9). To summarize the historical introduction, it can be argued that any media content produced by non-professional users, or the so called "alternative" or "independent" media" as well as some of the "DIY" trend can be attributed to the pool of the online UGC ancestors (Armstrong, 1981).

2.2. Concepts surrounding UGC

2.2.1. Cultural transformation

John Blossom (2009) begins his book, entitled *"Content Nation - Surviving and Thriving as Social Media Changes Our Work, Our Lives and Our Future"*, with the lines:

"This is a story about you – one of billions of publishers in the world today. Sent an email lately? You're a publisher. Posted a photo, a video, a comment, or a vote on a Web site? You're a publisher. Keyed in a text message to friends on your cell phone? You're a publisher". (Blossom, 2009:2 cited in Schäfer, 2011:37)

As seen in the above-mentioned quote, the nowadays media discourse, technology is often surrounded with highly positive connotations, where the shift in the cultural production is often closely related to the emancipation of the user and its increased power. Technology is often idealized as a "neutral means" (Schäfer, 2011:36) for users to form communities and achieve influential status through their collective efforts. This "technological imaginary" (Schäfer, 2011:34) was carefully constructed over the formative years of the Internet by many scholars but also strongly influenced by various campaigns of IT related companies. Scholar such as Yochai Benkler, 2006 or Pierre Levy, both believed and promoted the phenomenon as a "collective intelligence" (Schäfer, 2011:35), where the actions of the large number of users result in "information management and content creation" (ibid).

Through such optimistic almost encouraging academic discussions, the image of Web 2.0 was easily defined as "friendly, caring and democratizing" (Schäfer, 2011:35). Moreover, as mentioned above, diverse IT companies further romanticized the Web 2.0 image by launching their campaigns, which aimed at encouraging the general public to use their products and familiarize with the new technologies. Examples would be: Cisco Systems whose main campaign slogan "Empowering the Internet Generation" already depicts their intentions of promoting the World Wide Web, or the German branch of Vodafone, who managed to introduce a highly catchy term "Generation Upload", which was carefully designed to motivate the user to be creative, and encourage them to expand their social networks (Schäfer, 2011:34).

However, the optimistic associations and the positive image created through the campaigns contradicts on one hand with the actions of the IT companies such as Microsoft, Google and so on, which are continuously taking part in the development and implementation of surveillance, censorship, and repression in undemocratic and even democratic countries (Schäfer, 2011:35). Most recent example as described in a The Guardian article by James Ball (2013), would be of the government online surveillance scandal in the US (Ball, 2013, Online).

Therefore, it should be concluded that the earlier discourses concentrated on promoting the diffusion of the World Wide Web, and believed the "social progress" to be a result of technological development, whereas the newer discourses focus on promoting the positive aspects of the World Wide Web (equality, collectiveness, democracy) and attribute social change to the "rhetoric of community" (Schäfer, 2011:37). It should not be forgotten that despite the new discourses relating the social change mostly due to the way we use the technology, the shifts in the cultural change happen because of a much

more complex system of interrelations (discussed further the paragraph below) and that

the Web 2.0 has its limitations and negative connotations (ibid).

2.2.2. Concept of Web 2.0.

It is important to concentrate further on the concept of Web 2.0 in order to be able to

understand the phenomenon of UCG. Tim O'Reilly who in 2004 coined the concept of

Web 2.0 recognized the shortcomings of the Web 1.0 concept and transformed it from a

provider dominated platform to a user oriented, "democratic" platform (ibid).

The old applications did not fully disappear but rather were adjusted to meet the

expectations of the modern user (see figure 1 below).

Figure 1. Comparison of old and new applications

Web 1.0	-	Web 2.0
Mp3.com	-	Napster
Ofoto	-	Flickr
Publishing	-	participation
Page views	-	cost per click
Britannica Online	-	Wikipedia
Personal websites	-	blogging
Screen scraping	-	web services
Akamai	-	BitTorrent
Double Click	-	Google AdSense
Domain name speculation	-	search engine optimization
Directories (taxonomy)	-	tagging (folksonomy)
Content management systems	-	wikis
Evite	-	upcoming.org and EVDB
Stickiness	-	syndication

(Floymayr, 2009: 17)

As well summarized by Hamann (2008), all new Web 2.0 applications are based on the new Software- Generation concept, which allows for collaboration (p.216).

Web 2.0 is being technically described a set of "web technologies, often abbreviated as AJAX for 'asynchronous Java and XML', that facilitate easy publishing and content sharing, as well as the establishment of social networks" (Schäfer, 2011:9). Those new Web technologies began providing the possibility for users to publish their own opinion or give feedback to somebody else's. The Web 2.0 publishing and sharing fundamentals rely on the concept of participation, which frames a new communication structure. The users of the Web 2.0 advanced from being merely consumers and receivers to Producers and transmitters (Hamann 2008: 217).

In this way the passive audience quickly became active members of the cultural production. For example, through Youtube Video platform the users received the chance to portray themselves, their ideas and share it with millions of people. Youtube unlike the Television closes down the distance between the users by allowing a more personal approach, the possibility of own individual expression and interpretation (Hamann 2008: 217)

Moreover, another major difference in the Web 2.0 concept lies in its Software approach, which is now treated as Service rather than Product. The quality and worth of the services are nowadays not solely depended on the company that provided it but on the users itself (ibid). They are the ones producing the content for those applications and sometimes take part even in the programming or transformations of the service infrastructure (e.g. Skype). Such fluid software, which allow for user's influence and input are called "Social Software" (Richter/ Koch, 2007). An example of services, which rely on user's content, would be various Internet- Communities such as Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, which work due to the user-generated content and users'

expanding networks. Same principle is applied in platforms such as Wikipedia, Flickr, Youtube or even the Social Bookmarking sites as Mr. Wong or Del.icio.us (Hamann 2008: 216) but of course also the review websites such as kununu.at.

Finally, maybe the most distinct change in the new Web 2.0 is the level of simplicity of the services. The user-friendlier the interface the more successful is the service (Hamann 2008: 215). However, in order to avoid over romanticizing the concept of Web 2.0 it is crucial to mention the recent critical voices, which are drawing attention to the problematic aspects of the Web 2.0 platforms. Some of those difficulties pointed out by Keen 2007; Zimmer 2008, Scholz 2008; Mueller 2009; Schäfer 2009, relate to the misuse of personal information by service providers, privacy policies, risks for younger user through easily enabled and magnified Cyber-Mobbing and the general threat of Spam and Phishing (Schäfer, 2011:37).

To summarize, the Web 2.0 as pointed out by Hamann, 2008, allows users to be receivers and producers, it creates new spaces for public self-assurance, self-representation as well as influences the way the public opinion is being formed (Hamann 2008: 217). The structural and cultural changes of the World Wide Web helped attracting millions of diverse users, which due to their active participation continue spreading the idea of online socialization and user content generation (Schäfer, 2011:9).

2.2.3. Participative web concept

The expression "Participative Web" (OECD, 2007: 8) is closely related to the whole concept of Web 2.0, because it reflects the Web 2.0 collaborative and interactive characteristics as well as underlines the user's important role in the existence and

development of those services. As stated by the OECD report 2007, the popularity of participative web notion

> represents an Internet increasingly influenced by intelligent web services based on new technologies empowering the user to be an increasing contributor to developing, rating, collaborating and distributing Internet content and developing and customizing Internet applications (OíReilly, 2002, 2005; MIC, 2006; OECD, 2006b cited in OECD, 2007: 8).

Meaning that one of the main "features of the participative web is the rise of 'the user-generated content' or the so-called 'rise of amateur creators'" (ibid). However, user participation itself is a broad concept and therefore should be specified in a more structured manner.

According to Schäfer (2009) it is "a complex discourse consisting of the following factors:

> a. a rhetoric that advocates social progress through technological advancement
> b. a cultural critique demanding the reconfiguration of power relations
> c. the qualities of related technologies, and
> d. how these qualities are used for design and user appropriation
> e. the socio-political dynamics related to using the technologies (Schäfer, 2009: 15)

Moreover, Schäfer (2009) manages to narrow down the concept of participation by distinguishing between explicit and implicit participation (p.51)

This distinction allows us to take into consideration to groups of users, the active and passive ones, which have different characteristics, uses of the Web 2.0 and expectations. Moreover, it treats the Web 2.0 not only as an "enabling technology" (ibid: 52) but also as one that also influences the nowadays media practices (ibid: 55). It expands the understanding of the participatory culture to a "hybrid constellation of information technology and large user numbers interacting in a socio-technical ecosystem" (ibid: 79).

Figure 2. "Examples of explicit and implicit participation"

Explicit Participation	Implicit Participation
E.g. fan culture, activism, cooperating in software development, contributing to Wikipedia and other resources, writing blogs, posting and creating content.	Uploading files to user-created content platforms such as Flickr. Adding tags (to Flickr, Delicious, etc.), using rating platforms such as Digg.com, placing Digg buttons on a website, rating and watching videos on YouTube.
Sharing content in P2P systems, 'donating' processing power to SETI, Folding@Home and others.	Default P2P systems for distribution. Providing 'views', 'click rates' through visiting websites and retrieving content.

(Schäfer 2009:52)

As seen in the above table of comparison (see figure 2), explicit participation is characterized by being consciously undertaken and usually through diverse intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors. It is very heterogeneous in terms of the type of the user (includes both professional and amateur users), their context of origin (paid labor, leisure, voluntary work) and the method of usage (ibid: 51). Implicit participation is on the other hand not essentially a conscious action. Often it is a "design solution that takes advantage of certain habits that user have" (ibid).

The platforms that provide such implicit user participation possibility often benefit from user's input (gather market information, information to improve various services). Platforms that encourage implicit participation are for example Peer-to-peer (P2P) file – sharing systems as BitTorrent, which use user's files stored on their "hard drive and the processing power for a wide distribution performance" (ibid). Other examples would be Skype an IP telecommunication service, which also employs the same P2P principle by "sharing hardware and connectivity for distribution purposes" (ibid). Already by watching a Youtube video or Liking something on Facebook, users engage in an implicit participation by generating data, which can be later used for search engine optimization (Kessler cited in Schäfer, 2009:52). The examples of the implicit user

participation clearly show how technology closely interrelates with the users and how both affect one another.

Therefore, knowing the complex web of relationship that surrounds the participative concept it is imperative to use theoretical tools such as "dispositif" to avoid a simple hermeneutic reading of the media content. If the participation concept is being analyzed in its various forms on the basis of the dispositif, it will result in realization of diverse relations in between of the three main domains: "discourses (popular, scholarly, bureaucratic, legal...), technology (basic features and design) and people and social use (what users actually do with the new technologies)" (Schäfer, 2009:17).

The different domains as seen in the figure 3 below are all interrelation to one another forming different forms of participation and creating a another kind of communication system (Neves and Neves, 2006).

Figure 3. "The dispositif of participatory culture"
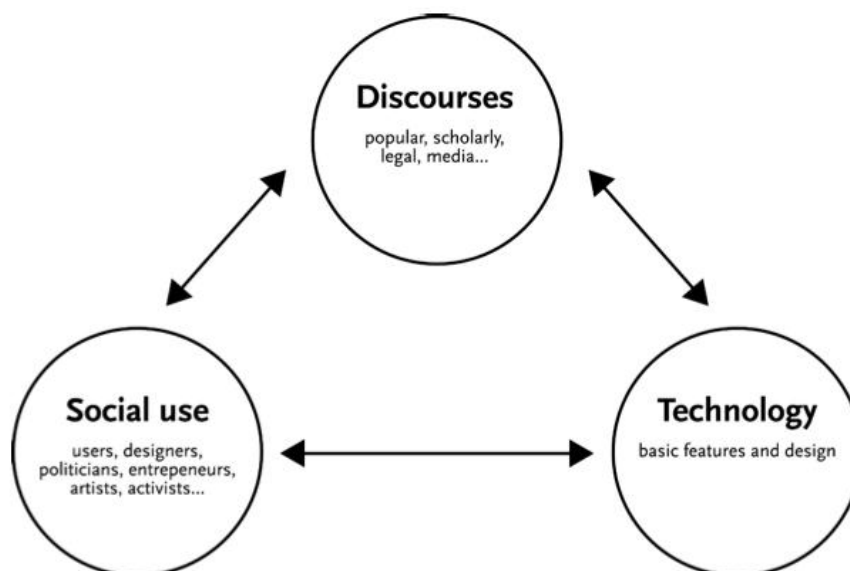
(Schäfer, 2009: 16)

Looking at the participatory culture using the tool of dispositif helps pinpoint the arising

issues within it. Often omitted problem within the framing of participation is the wrongly assumed user emancipation and shifting power relations within cultural production due to a rising frequency of user activity. This causes the assumption that increased user activity equals an increased power of the user (ibid:14). For example the online revolution initiated as a response to the Iranian elections in 2009 strengthened the belief in the revolutionary power of the users. This media myth was created through omitting the fact that despite the brave actions of the online users, same technologies helped track the online protesters (ibid: 38).

Another problem connected to the myth of user emancipation lies within the unclear role of the media corporations. They shifted from a clear push media structure to pull media strategy, where they serve merely as a platform providers for the user generated content. However, the user activities, both implicit and explicit are often used for data collection, socio-political control as well as often serve as new means for doing business (ibid). The online activity of users becomes the "new business model" (ibid: 14) and is quickly put under surveillance or even control. No company would like to end up with a scandal, as did the U-Bike lock company, that due to a user generated video lost millions of dollars. Such events influenced the companies to employ a better monitoring system of online activities and sometimes tools for prevention and control of user's negative opinion.

2.3. Factors influencing development of UGC

As described in the above paragraphs the user- generated content is a phenomenon that is deeply routed in the culture of participation and became immensely popular with the introduction of Web 2.0. However, the OECD manages to organize the influential

factors into four different dimensions and distinguishes them as technological, social,

economic and Institutional/Legal drivers (see figure 4 below).

Figure 4. "Examples of drivers of user-created content"

Box 1. Examples of drivers of user-created content

Technological Drivers

Increased broadband availability

Increased hard drive capacity and processing speeds coupled with lower costs

Rise of technologies to create, distribute, and share content

Provision of simpler software tools for creating, editing, and remixing

Decrease in cost and increase in quality of consumer technology devices for audio, photo, and video

Rise of non-professional and professional UCC sites as outlets

Social Drivers

Shift to younger age groups ("digital natives") with substantial ICT skills, willingness to engage online (*i.e.* sharing content, recommending and rating content, etc.) and with less hesitation to reveal personal information online

Desire to create and express oneself and need for more interactivity than on traditional media platforms such as TV

Development of communities and collaborative projects

Spread of these social drivers throughout older age groups and to fulfil certain societal functions (social engagement, politics and education)

Economic Drivers

Lower costs and increased availability of tools for the creation of UCC (*e.g.* for creating, editing, hosting content) and lower entry barriers

Increased possibilities to finance related ventures and UCC sites through venture capital and other investment possibilities

Lower cost of broadband Internet connections

Increased interest of commercial entities to cater to the desire for user-created content and the long tail economics (including mobile operators, telecommunication service providers, traditional media publishers and search engines)

Greater availability of money related to advertising and new business models to monetise content

Institutional and Legal Drivers

Rise of schemes which provide more flexible access to creative works and the right to create derivative works (*e.g.* flexible licensing and copyright schemes such as the Creative Commons licence)[18]

Rise of end-user licensing agreements which grant copyright to users for their content

(OECD, 2007:13)

2.4. Definitions

The user-generated phenomenon has a fluctuating discourse and due to many factors

affecting its development and shape poses a challenge to define it. Users as the creators

and fuel of UGC have been very quick in adopting the online technologies into their

daily lives. They embraced the opportunity of becoming the content producers and have

vastly influenced the shaping of the nowadays user-generated phenomenon. The

concept of UGC continues to cause an unsolved uproar for the policy makers and poses new challenges not only for the businesses with an online social presence but also those without one.

User-generated content has an extensive meaning as it encompasses a variety of media content offline and online. It depends on two behaviors of the users: first on consuming content (e.g. reading or listening), second on producing content meaning posting in variety of content formats such as visual or acoustic (Ahn, Duan & Mela, 2013: 3). Moreover, the two main uses of user generated content is the utility of information or the pleasure of reading, watching or listening, whereas the utility for the user that posted the content might lie in the increased reputation, popularity and so on (ibid).

On one hand, Croteau (2006) provides a broad definition of UGC by explaining UGC as self-produced media content, and leaving out the important aspect of amateurship. Such definition broadens the scope of media, makes almost any content that is formulated by users a UGC. However, if narrowed down to the online UGC, it comes down to everything that an amateur user creates online.

On the other hand, OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007) makes the clear distinction between offline and online and defines UGC as "i) content made publicly available over the Internet, ii) which reflects a certain amount of creative effort, and iii) which is created outside of professional routines and practices" (p. 4). However, such definition might be hard to accept when most of the content is not always purely amateur or without the intent to gain profit. For example, many global companies encourage their consumers to participate in UGC media activities, however, when those become a "commodity with economic value" (Kim, 2010:11) then the definition loses its validity (Mosco, 1989).

Moreover, the PGC (Professionally- Generated Content), the opposite of UGC, often incorporates into their professionally generated content some amateur content. For example, the show *America' s Funniest Home Videos* is a combination of both. It relies on the homemade short clips from users, which are being featured in the show and sometimes receive prizes in the form of money or technological equipment (Kim, 2010:11). Therefore, the strict definition of OECD might sometimes exclude an amateur produced content but also disregards parts of the most accepted forms of user-generated content such as Youtube.com or Facebook, which for many companies serves as a great marketing tool. OECD definition would force us to disregard company's fan page Facebook sites as User-generated content and only focus on ordinary's people profiles. UGC "which is created outside of professional routines and practices" strongly excludes any PR related material.

Another important distinction that should be made is the one between of User-generated content and Consumer-generated content. Despite both being very similar, Consumer-generated content is a form of User-generated content, and might be an interesting specification in relation to the topic of this thesis. The nowadays consumers due to the various online platforms and the available online social presence of many business, have a place and subjects to speak to, comment on or research. Nielsen (2008) describes it by writing:

> Consumer-Generated Media encompasses the millions of consumer-generated comments, opinions and personal experiences posted in publicly available online sources on a wide range of issues, topics, products and brands. CGM is also referred to as Online Consumer Word- of Mouth or Online Consumer Buzz. CGM originates from:
> - Blogs
> - Message boards and forums
> - Public discussions
> - Discussions and forums on large email portals (Gmail, Yahoo!, MSN)
> - Online opinion/review sites and services (Amazon.com, Hostelworld.com, Kununu.at)
> - Online feedback/complaint sites (Nielsen, cited in Buzzcapture B.V, 2008: 3)

The CGC is produced solely by consumers, and includes opinions, advices as well as reviews. The content can be posted in various formats, such as text, images, videos etc. and holds a great value for the companies that often use this data for consumer satisfaction analysis. The Consumer-generated-content is the more narrow specification of the wide concept of user-generated content. The CGC format investigated in this research is employer review site. An example of such a platform in the Austrian job market is the kununu.at website, which consists of many consumer generated reviews. The amateur reviews relate to a company's working atmosphere, employment conditions, and so on. The website however, also has a professional section where companies create their own online profile. An Employer Branding- Profile that lets the company portray their positive characteristics of their workplace from their point of view and tailors the image in order to attract only most desired job candidates is being excluded from the analysis as it is a professionally generated content rather than amateur consumer generated content.

2.5. Formats of UGC

To sum up the User-generated content conceptual explanation chapter, it is important to mention the great deal of formats of UGC, which are portrayed in a self-explanatory table of the OECD (see figure 5 below)

Figure 5. Formats of UGC

Type of Content	Description	Examples
Text, novel and poetry	Original writings or expanding on other texts, novels, poems	Fanfiction.net, Quizilla.com, Writely
Photo/Images	Digital photographs taken by users and posted online; Photos or images created or modified by users	Photos posted on sites such as Ofoto and Flickr; Photo blogging; Remixed images
Music and Audio	Recording and/or editing one's own audio content and publishing, syndicating, and/or distributing it in digital format	Audio mash-ups, remixes, home-recorded music on bands websites or MySpace pages, Podcasting.
Video and Film	Recording and/or editing video content and posting it. Includes remixes of existing content, homemade content, and a combination of the two.	Movie trailer remixes; Lip synching videos; Video blogs and videocasting; Posting home videos; Hosting sites include YouTube and Google Video; Current TV
Citizen journalism	Journalistic reporting on current events done by ordinary citizens. Such citizens write news stories, blog posts, and take photos or videos of current events and post them online.	Sites such as OhmyNews, GlobalVoices and NowPublic; Photos and videos of newsworthy events; Blog posts reporting from the site of an event; Cooperative efforts such as CNN Exchange
Educational content	Content created in schools, universities, or with the purpose of educational use	Syllabus-sharing sites such as H20; Wikibooks, MIT's OpenCourseWare
Mobile content	Content that is created on mobile phones or other wireless devices such as text messaging, photos and videos. Generally sent to other users via MMS (Media Messaging Service), emailed, or uploaded to the Internet.	Videos and photos of public events, environments such as natural catastrophes that the traditional media may not be able to access; Text messages used for political organising.
Virtual content	Content created within the context of an online virtual environment or integrated into it. Some virtual worlds allow content to be sold. User-created games are also on the rise.	Variety of virtual goods that can be developed and sold on Second Life including clothes, houses, artwork

(OECD, 2007: 15)

2.6. Platforms of UGC

Finally, there is a wide selection of platforms online where such content can be found, for example: online encyclopedias (e.g. Wikipedia and reference web sites), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), photo sharing (e.g. Flickr), user rating & review (e.g. Amazon, Internet Movie Database and kununu.at), market (e.g. eBay and craiglist), blogs, discussion boards, video games (e.g. *World of Warcraft* and *Second Life*), and online video sites (e.g. YouTube). Out of all of those user-generated platforms and forms of user content, the one that is of interest for this thesis is the user review websites, in particular those that concentrate on reviewing companies (e.g. kununu.at).

For more detailed outline of all the UGC platforms see figure 6 below.

Figure 6. UGC platforms

Type of Platform	Description	Examples
Blogs	Web pages containing user-created entries updated at regular intervals and/or user-submitted content that was investigated outside of traditional media	Popular blogs such as BoingBoing and Engadget; Blogs on sites such as LiveJournal; MSN Spaces; CyWorld; Skyblog
Wikis and Other Text-Based Collaboration Formats	A wiki is a website that allows users to add, remove, or otherwise edit and change content collectively. Other sites allow users to log in and cooperate on the editing of particular documents.	Wikipedia; Sites providing wikis such as PBWiki, JotSpot, SocialText; Writing collaboration sites such as Writely
Sites allowing feedback on written works	Sites which allow writers and readers with a place to post and read stories, review stories and to communicate with other authors and readers through forums and chat rooms	FanFiction.Net
Group-based aggregation	Collecting links of online content and rating, tagging, and otherwise aggregating them collaboratively	Sites where users contribute links and rate them such as Digg; Sites where users post tagged bookmarks such as del.icio.us
Podcasting	A podcast is a multimedia file distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds, for playback on mobile devices and personal computers	iTunes, FeedBruner, iPodderX, WinAmp, @Podder
Social Network Sites	Sites allowing the creation of personal profiles	MySpace, Facebook, Friendster, Bebo, Orkut, Cyworld
Virtual Worlds	Online virtual environment.	Second Life, Active Worlds, Entropia Universe, and Dotsoul Cyberpark
Content or Filesharing sites	Legitimate sites that help share content between users and artists	Digital Media Project

Note: Podcasting, blogs and related technologies are also increasingly used in the professional context (OECD, 2006b).

(OECD, 2007:16)

3.0. Conceptual explanation of User concept

The following chapter will analyze the concept of user in the new media environment. It will begin looking at the historical changes, which are also briefly described in the UGC analysis chapter. It will continue exploring further importance of online identity and how it drives the user to produce content (individualization). Finally, it will try to formulate own definition relevant for the thesis and discuss the user's prevalent traits and attributes as well as the possible effects UGC can have on an individual.

3.1. Historical change

Various scholars are strongly emphasizing the shifts taking place within the media environment. Users, consumers, participants within the changing media landscape are gaining more technological capital and are often becoming not only the "receiver" (consumers) of the media but also the producers. Their active participation is forming a strong and constantly expanding amateur culture. They are continuously investing their time to improve their own technical skills to be able to take advantage of the possibilities of "social organization" (Schäfer, 2011: 41) and gaining more influence in the political arena (e.g. Bruns 2006; Jenkins 2002, 2006b; Benkler 2006; Schäfer 2009 in Schäfer, 2011).

Up until recently the involvement of audience with mass media was limited to "reading and interpreting texts" (Hall 1980; Fiske 1995 cited in Schäfer, 2011: 41), which was done by only a small group of specialized people. However, in the past decade the mere interpretation took a form of own media production. Joost Raessens (2005) argues that due to the technological changes the users "not only produce, alter, and distribute media texts, but also to develop or modify software, the production means of the digital age"

(p.383 cited in Schäfer, 2011:42). He sees this as the major difference between the past "culture participation" and the unfolding notion of "participatory culture"(ibid).

The nowadays, "deconstruction of media texts" takes the form of content "construction". The existing media contents can be easily modified or re-produced, re-invented by a user (ibid). The shift within the power structures of the media producers and consumers has been attributed to the concept of participatory culture. The concept is often used for legitimizing the current cultural phenomenon (ibid). As described in the Participative Web concept paragraph, quoting the OECD (2007) statement can outline user participation:

> (...)new technologies empowering the user to be an increasing contributor to developing, rating, collaborating and distributing Internet content and developing and customizing Internet applications (OíReilly, 2002, 2005; MIC, 2006; OECD, 2006b cited in OECD, 2007: 8).

Various scholars have been trying to classify the diverse types of user participation. Alvin Toffler coined the term "prosumer" (Toffler 1980) whereas years later a new term of "produser" actualized it (e.g. Bruns 2006, 2007, 2008).

Jenkins et al. 2006, underlines that the 'new consumers' are not limited to being only 'critical readers'. He stresses that the user can nowadays use the "new worldwide connected social structures, communication, and distribution channels, facilitated by the Internet" (Jenkins 2006:246) to fully embrace their new roles as "produsers"(e.g. Bruns 2006, 2007, 2008). As mentioned before and underlined by Jenkins, the "amateur culture" isn't a new phenomenon, but is however, strongly magnified by the Internet (2002).

Jenkins explains the new participatory culture as being

> a new mode for cultural production:
> 1. with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement
> 2. with strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others
> 3. with some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced   is passed along to novices
> 4. where members believe that their contributions matter

5. where members feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least, they care what other people think about what they have created). Not every member must contribute, but all must believe they are free to contribute when ready and that what they contribute will be appropriately valued. (Jenkins et al. 2006:7)

3.2. Online Identity

Individualization is an important base for UGC. In the nowadays-social landscape, where the new media allow for cultural flattening and the decreased need for personal relations, the notion of individualization is flourishing. The notion of individualization has its routes long before the Internet came into existence. However, in its nowadays form the trend traveled from the Western world at the end of the 20th century and continued to rapidly transform till the beginning of the 21st century. The strong individualization could be seen in many areas of life, such as consumer behavior or promoted lifestyle or in the development platforms such as Facebook that promote the 'I' tendency and self-portrayal. In sociology various scholars discussed the term.

Michael Vester understands the process of individualization as working towards the development of "new competences" (Vester, 1997:104), through new teaching reforms and expanded horizon, "growing participatory revolution" (ibid), more people actively involving themselves into political and social discussions and "self-realization" (ibid), as act of emancipation and not only hedonistic pursuits (ibid). However, Schulze (1992) is urging to see both positive and negative sides of the individualization process (p.24). He is underlining that the increased focus on the "self" and the wide spectrum of choices (Meckel, 2008: 61) can result in the constant search for self-realization and hedonism (ibid). He argues the life becomes an "Adventure project" (Schulze, 1992) where the people are making choices according to their own values and preferences rather the ones of the group. Unfortunately, the constant search for gratification and satisfaction can be tiring and create pressure (Simanowski, 2008:12).

Moreover, the changing structures of society are often described as the process of pluralization of social forms of life. Simmel often related the concept of individualization to "pluralization of individuals" (cited in Honneth, 2004: 465) where he outlines the danger "an impoverishment of social contact and of the deepening of people's mutual indifference" (ibid) as the "network of anonymous social contacts expands" (ibid).

A later analysis of Markus Schroer (2001) shows three different approaches to the phenomenon of individuality; Axel Honneth (2004) summarizes it by saying:

> at one end, the growing allotment of 'individuality' by means of education, administration, and the culture industry has been described as an advance in discipline, from which emerged a distinctive form of conformist individualism that actually paralyses the individual's conscious powers of resistance; at the other end, following Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, there is found the view that interprets the neutralization of tradition and the diversification of social functions as embodying the possibility that individuality may increase, so that individuals' capacities for planning their own lives in a conscious and responsible manner might be unleashed; and situated between these two extremes one encounters, finally, a third school of thought in which the process of individualization is seen as a two-sided event, bringing about at one and the same time an obvious emancipation of the individual from traditional ties yet also, in the background, a deepening of conformism. (Honneth, 2004:466)

Mark Schroer clearly shows that individualization is a complex concept, where social diversification and emancipation play an important role (cited in Honneth, 2004: 466). The notion of emancipation is often put into question and debated whether the so-called process of individualization only happens on the surface adding to the conformism. Putnam (2000) argues that the increasingly fast paste mobile lives of people don't allow them to form a deeper long term social ties and therefore often end up forming "purely egocentric attitudes with respect to those with whom they interact" (Putnam, 2000). Putnam pinpoints correctly the increased speed of live, which can also be seen in the aspects of communication of people nowadays (ibid). Due to the possibility of instantaneous communication, people often form quick, shallow online relationship.

Trading out of lack of time, personal, face-to-face human contacts with those online via social media, or even messaging platforms such as wassup, allows despite actual human contact feel socially satisfied. For Sennet (1998) a long-term personal relationship with face-to face contact is an important trigger for the "fragmentation and individualization of the social life" (p. 28).

However, in today Internet society the new communication channels expand the notion of personal relationship forming new types of communities (online and offline). Ulrich Beck (1993) tries to analyze the new social formations and summarizes it saying: "Mit der Individualisierung wachst die Suche und Sucht nach dem Gegenteil: das neue Wir, Familie, Religiositat, Esoterik (...)" trans. "With the individualization grows the search and addiction for the opposite: the new We, Family, religiosity, mysticism (...)" (p.74).

Finally, the individual nowadays faces an increased pressure from various institutions as for example the job market to be 'authentic', constantly re-invent the self and thus the "self-discovery" is almost being forced upon the individual.(Baethge, 1991; Kocyba, 2000 cited in Honneth, 2004:467).

3.3. New definition of 'User'

The notion of 'user' in nowadays constantly modulating society is very general and needs a closer specification. Due to the increased importance of the notion of online content production and usage the earlier term of "prosumer" (Toffler, 1990: 239) is being replaced by the concept of "produser" (Bruns, 2008). Alvin Toffler's term prosumer is concentrating far too much on "the integrated, on-demand industrial production process" (Toffler's, 1990: 239) rather than on the non-commercial aspect of production and usage. He denotes that in the production process the consumer is

"contributing not just the money but market and design information vital for the production process. Buyer and supplier share data, information, and knowledge. Someday, customers may also push buttons that activate remote production processes. Consumer and producer fuse into a "prosumer."" (Toffler, 1990: 239). This was possible because the production shifted away from the factory to society (Ritzer, Dean & Jurgenson, 2012: 382). The production is thus happening in a "social factory", "a factory without walls" (Negri, 1989 cited in Ritzer, Dean & Jurgenson, 2012: 382). However, the term prosumer no longer applies to the digital environment where the "consumption" (ibid) took a new meaning. Previously connoting some commodities that are perishable and produced on a strict demand, now the World Wide Web allows for an "infinite production" of goods (Booth, 2010:41). While the existence of producers on the market level relies on the selling of products, the produsers ignore this structure by the notion of sharing (Ibid: 42).

However, nowadays a new hybrid role of user is unfolding, were producing and using is fusing into one, creating the term "produser" (Burns & Schmidt, 2012: 2). Burns, 2008, skillfully marks the underlining meaning of the term produser as being much more than just usage or production, he states that produsage is "the collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement" (Bruns, 2008). Produser has a few characteristics that match those of a fan. The produser "exists in a community of other produsers, is a part of a participatory culture, and collaborated through interactivity" (Booth, 2010: 41)

In order to avoid a misunderstanding a set of crucial characteristics deduced by Burn, 2008, will serve as the guide for understand the meaning of the term produsage for this thesis (see figure 7).

Figure 7. Produsage characteristics

> •   "**Open Participation, Communal Evaluation:** Produsage environments are open to participation by a wide and diverse community – indeed, in order to achieve their tasks they depend on both community size and diversity. Barriers to productive participation are kept low, to enable as many users as possible to make the step from user to produser; the evaluation of their contributions proceeds on a produsage basis, too – that is, the community decision-making processes which decide about what contributions are retained or dismissed are themselves also collaborative and open to almost all participants.
>
> •   **Fluid Heterarchy, *Ad Hoc* Meritocracy:** The status of participants within the community of produsers derives from the quality of their contributions to the shared project. What emerges from this is neither a flat structure – despite their openness to contributors, produsage communities do have recognised leaders – nor a clear and permanent hierarchy: more junior participants do have the potential to gain status by participating in a consistently constructive fashion. The community is structured as a heterarchy, therefore: a multi-headed organisation with continuing leadership turnover.
>
> •   **Unfinished Artefacts, Continuing Process:** While the goals of a produsage project may be clearly articulated, due to the open participatory nature of the environment the process for achieving these goals is less directed. Development takes place on various fronts at once – many (often small) changes to aspects of the project are made in parallel by a diverse range of users, and gradually improve the quality. While at certain points the current collection of content may be declared to be a new and improved 'version', in reality the current state remains a temporary snapshot, and development continues indefinitely.
>
> •   **Common Property, Individual Rewards:** Effective participation by a diverse range of contributors depends on minimal hurdles to further contribution. This especially includes the maximal availability of existing content for further development – both technical barriers and legal restrictions must be minimised, therefore. The latter may involve an implicit or explicit declaration of existing content as common community property (for example through Creative Commons or similar licences). This also implies that it is difficult, if not impossible, for participants to directly extract royalties from the content they have contributed – therefore, the chief currency in produsage projects is personal status, not financial rewards"

(Burns, 2008 cited in Burns & Schmidt, 2012: 2).

3.4. UGC effects on the produser

User generated reviews rely on the same source as any other user generated content; they are all produced by the nowadays produsers. User generated reviews work on a similar principle as the phenomenon of Word-of mount. However, online reviews are perceived to have a wider audience reach and ability to spread instantaneously. Due to those two factors, and the proven influence word of mount has on the decision making process of consumers, user-generated reviews are often being investigated for their influence on the readers choices. Various empirical researches have been conducted to tackle this knowledge gap (e.g., Mudambi & Schuff, 2010; Zhu & Zhang, 2010; Sen, 2008; Park, Lee, & Han, 2007; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006 cited in Beng Soo Ong, 2013:464). Most of them concentrate on product review websites such as Amazon.com or travel services such as TripAdvisor (Beng Soo Ong, 2013:464).

Gill (2010), in his research on hotel review sites confirms that consumer reviews have a strong impact on the opinion formation of prospect clients. He goes further by saying that online reviews play a bigger role than the opinions posted on official traveler agent's website (cited in Beng Soo Ong, 2013:464). Moreover, most of the user generated reviews are "up-to-date, immediate" (Beng Soo Ong, 2013:464) and assembled by a vast number of produsers that often inform about the smallest details that as Gold, 2005 and Sharkey, 2008 proclaim could influence negatively decisions of a certain group of consumers (cited in Beng Soo Ong, 2013:464). Finally, Frumkin (2007), makes an interesting observation by saying the online reviews could "impact the recruitment efforts" (cited in Beng Soo Ong, 2013:464). In his case he is concentrating on the recruitment efforts of hotels that could have difficulties employing enough staff if the reviews highlight the hotel as a bad working place.

The thesis is concentrating on a review website that focuses on providing reviews on various companies and their work environment. The impact of user-generated reviews on the audience reading them provides a strong reasoning as to why this thesis is concentrating on this phenomenon. Due to the small amount of research in this area, by conducting this research the thesis will try to fill in some knowledge gap within the area of online reviews. It will concentrate on determining the communication system and content standardization for a review website.

4.0. Conceptual framework of content

Using the definition of OECD (2007) when defining UGC, it can be said that it is "i) content made publicly available over the Internet, ii) which reflects a certain amount of creative effort, and iii) which is created outside of professional routines and practices" (p. 4). When looking at the types of content prevalent in the UGC debate it can be narrowed down to: "information-oriented content, entertainment/popular culture-oriented content, and personal/social/expressive-oriented content" (Jönsson and Örnebring, 2011:132). However, Jönsson and Örnebring (2011) see the issues that might come from making divisions and state "(information/entertainment, public/private) these conceptual pairs are better thought of as end points on a continuum rather than an absolute dichotomy" (p.132). Despite this issues and the continuous "hybridization" (ibid) of media content this categorization of content can point towards the "kind of content audiences are invited to produce" (ibid). However, this concentration on content typology leaves out the interactive process of how the content is nowadays formed and its fluid changeable format. Now apart from going through a process of interactivity with the technology to produce online content the user is also exposed to many critics related to any content he posts. This often causes the content to transform and adapt in order to form the best version possible. This is an interesting distinction between the push-mass media content and the rather pull media content that is being generated nowadays. Therefore, 'content' in nowadays understanding is more of a process than a tangible material. It is a fluid process that does not end after the content is published.

5.0. Conceptual Explanation of Online Communication Environment

5.1. Mass Communication vs. Individual Communication

Due to the changing media landscape it is important to critically analyze the existing communication components and its definitions. To begin, an analysis of the communication concept will foster a better understanding of the UGC phenomenon and its mechanism. The main forms of communication that need to be crucially distinguished for this thesis are: mass communication and individual communication, which are both made available on the Internet medium.

Goncalves Mair (2005) believes individual communication is responsible for a "direct, personal communication between two people". Whereas Maletzke (1979), defines mass communication as

> jene Form der Kommunikation, bei der Aussage öffentlich (also ohne begrenzte und personell definierte Empfängerschaft), durch technische Verbreitungsmittel (Medien), indirekt (also bei räumlicher oder zeitlicher oder raumzeitlicher Distanz der Kommunikationspartner) und einseitig (also ohne Rollenwechsel zwischen Aussagenden und Aufnehmenden) an ein disperses Publikum (im soeben erläuterten Sinne) vermittelt werden
>
> *trans.* any form of communication in which the statement publicly (without limited and personally defined receivers), by technical means of dissemination (media) indirectly (e.g. in spatial or temporal or spatio-temporal distance of the communication partner) and one sided (without role change between giving evidence and reception) is being transferred to a dispersed audience (in the sense just explained) (Maletzke, 1979)

However, due to the new channels of communication such as the Internet, the definition of Maletzke should be slightly updated. The change most prevalent is the speed of message dispersion. Nowadays, the fast Internet access, allows messages to be spread in an almost instantaneous manner unlike before the existence of the online world. Despite the fact that it is possible sometimes to respond to a mass communicated message, give feedback, the two-way exchange is a characteristic of an individual communication. Moreover, the individual communication allows the two communicating parties to

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understand each other better, to be capable of estimating the true meaning of a message, however does not mean the communicating users have to necessarily see each other personally. Finally, to summarize Heinz Pürers (2003) argues that communication is a social action that is connected with subjective meanings and relies on the thoughts, actions of other people.

The interesting changes in the communication system is its addition of online complexity, which helps to get rid of geographical barriers and allows for a more responsive communication in the sense of how quick one in Europe sending a message on Facebook can receive an answer from somebody in USA. The technological aspect in the nowadays communication is a very important one, as despite popular discourse it plays a role in the changing communication patterns. Nowadays, the communication happening between two or more individuals can be facilitated via new technologies such as the Internet and provides channels of communication that are poles apart from the medium such as the telephone. Therefore, the communication science has begun looking what changes occur when communicating and interacting with people via the online media. Looking at those changes they have introduced a new notion of Interactivity.

5.2. Interactivity (user with computer) vs. Interaction (user with user)

According to the Duden dictionary, Interaction means, "die Wechselbeziehung zwischen Personen und Gruppen" trans. "the interrelationship between individuals and groups" (Duden, 1996:375). Michael Jäckel on the other hand underlines the aspect of "action" in his definition of Interaction by writing:

> Auf der Beziehung zwischen zwei oder mehr Personen, die sich in ihrem Verhalten aneinander orientieren und sich gegenseitig wahrnehmen können. Die physische Präsenz der Interaktionspartner ist ein wichtiges Definitionselement. Interaction beschreibt einen Handlungsablauf und die diesen konstituierenden Faktoren. Im Zentrum der Betrachtung stehen überschaubare soziale Systeme (temporäre oder dauerhafte)

> trans. "the relationship between two or more persons that orient themselves according to one another and perceive each other reciprocally. The physical presence of the interaction partners is an important element of the definition. Interaction describes a sequence of actions happening on these fundamental factors. In the center of consideration are manageable social systems (temporal or permanent) (Jäckel, 1995: 463).

Max Weber (1984) also highlights that Interaction is "a soziales Handeln, das seinem Sinn nach auf das Verhalten anderer bezogen wird und darin in seinem Ablauf orientiert ist", trans. "a social action that forms its meaning according to the behavior of others and in which it orients its process" (p.19). Weber (1984) tries to mark that Interaction has one important characteristic, which is its "wechselseitige Orientierung" trans. "reciprocal orientation" (ibid). In our interaction we often orient ourselves according to the reaction and action of the other participant of the conversation. We interact when "the action of one person, sparkle the reaction of another" (Opp, 1972:113 cited in Jäckel, 1995:464). Therefore, looking at the above definitions we can deduce that Interaction is social action that occurs between two or more people and whose actions are affected by one another.

However, how is interaction different from the notion of Interactivity? According to the Duden dictionary Interactivity means, "Dialog zwischen Computer und Benutzer" trans. "a dialogue between computer and the user" (1996:375). Therefore, when looking at the definitions of Interaction and Interactivity a clear distinction can be made between the two notions. This identified difference allowed for establishing a communication bridge between technology and the users.

In this area, the communication science distinguishes the types of communication according to the medium that is being used. What this means, is that there are media that *accommodate interaction* between people and there are *interactive media,* which directly interact with the user. An easy example of an interactive media would be

Computer games whereas media channel accommodating communication is for example Skype, which works on a similar principle as a normal phone. Therefore, the communication scientists prefer to separate the two notions of *Interactivity* and *Interaction*. *Interactivity* becomes solely the interaction of the user with the medium itself and the notion of *Interaction* describes the communication happening between two human beings by the use of new communication technology. (Hoeflich, 1995:519). Therefore, computer mediated communication (Interaction) cannot occur without the active interaction of the user with the medium (interactivity). Meaning, in order to interact with another human being via computer mediated communication channel such as Skype, the user has to first interact with the computer by switching it on and then program it to call.

Sociologists such as DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989) underline that Interactivity "generally refers to processes of communication that take on some of the characteristics of interpersonal communication" (p.341). Therefore, as stated before, the notion of Interactivity not only considers the computer mediated communication but also the interaction of the user with the medium itself. Kious (2002), provides an extensive definition of Interactivity by saying:

> Interactivity can be defined as the degree to which a communication technology can create a mediate environment in which participants can communicate (one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many) both synchronously and asynchronously and participate in reciprocal message exchanges (third-order dependency). With regard to human users, it additionally refers to the ability of users to perceive the experience to be a simulation of interpersonal communication and increase their awareness of tele-presence. (Kious, 2002: 379).

The importance of the Interactivity notion lies in the role of technology in the process of computer-mediated communication. Nowadays, the users in order to be able to communicate and interact with another person have to understand how the process of interactivity between them and the new communication systems works. They require the

knowledge and familiarity of the new technology and it's ability to 'talk back' to the user in order to be able to communication and interact. Therefore, interactivity should be seen not a separate notion but a part of interaction, a part of online communication system.

Finally, when referring back to the notion of communication it can be concluded that interaction does not exist without communication. However, communication can exist without interaction (Jäckel, 1995:467). A simple example to demonstrate that would be a mass media communicator sending a message to the passive recipient, who has no means to respond. In this way communication is happening but there is lack of interaction.

Due to the fact that the thesis investigates the phenomenon of UGC, it would be of interest for further research to find out to what extent this form of media allows for interaction. The question of how does the user interact with the UGC and the computer to reach a singular or broader audience could be further investigated.

5.3. Critique of 'community' concept online

A key part of the user-generated phenomenon, to be more precise the review websites is the notion of community. On one hand, according to Rheingold (1994), virtual communities are:

> are cultural aggregations that emerge when enough people bump into each other often enough in cyberspace. A virtual community is a group of people who may or may not meet one another face to face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks (p.57-58 cited in Pagani, 2005:937).

Unfortunately, Rheingold's definition is firstly a bit too general, seeing the diverse amounts of social formations that are happening online, secondly, not updated, as nowadays there are more than just bulletin boards and networks.

On the other hand, Preece (2000), expresses his concern that "online community" (cited in Bruhn, 2011: 233) is often too easily and generally described as "any collection of people who communicate online (Bruhn, 2011: 233). Therefore, sociologists often try to make a distinction between "groups, networks and communities" (ibid). The difference between the three terms is that a group has clear membership rules, where only people of similar interests are able to join, whereas, networks consist of "relationships or connections that can cross boundaries... they can vary in size, complexity, and density" (ibid). Sometimes, a local group can expand and becomes "networked", which means a local group can be connected to a notion wide network that shares same interests.

Finally, communities are the ones that "connote the strength of relationships in networks"(ibid). Their magnitude can be deduced by the method of "network analysis" (ibid). The analysis can provide good inside on how strong or weak are certain online relationships between the people within a network. Moreover, it allows for receiving solid data on the reasons behind people's participation in online communities. Henry Jenkins (2006) believes that user's participate because they feel that their contributions are valued, needed and experience "some degree of social connection with one another "(Jenkins, et al. 2006:7). User review websites, such as kununu.at is a specialized information network, which consists of a community of people that share similar interests. In the case of kununu.at it would be the interest in the job market, evaluating the work atmosphere and finding the right place for their line of work. Review sites as public forums are based on the idea of community. Van Dijck (2009) categorizes three types of communities: "communal, taste and brand" (p.41). Review website fall under the taste community same as would Youtube. "Taste communities|" (Kim, 2010:149 cited Van Dijck, 2009: 41) are defined by people who share similar tastes. On the review websites the users usually align themselves to specific viewpoints. They share

similar tastes in travels, products, work atmospheres or want to underline their disapproval on the topic at hand. Review websites however, can also fall under the category of "brand community" (ibid) because when people review a product or service their opinions and tastes can often be attributed to a specific brand.

5.4. Social reciprocity

The participation in virtual communities such as the taste communities, which include the review platforms, is voluntary. The user can anytime decide to quit the community and never participate again. Therefore, the user's involvement is based mostly on his passion, and commitment and identification (Wenger and Snyder 2000 cited in Ning Shen, Yan Yu & Khalifa, 2010:338). Moreover, it relies on "social exchange norms such as reciprocity, is contingent upon the individual's understanding of the context" (Constant et al. 1994), "which is mainly reflected through members' identities" (Weber et al. 2004).

Reciprocity in virtual communities drives people to generate content, it obliges them to the other members of the community (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Often users go on review websites to find specific information about a product or in this case company. Due to them receiving the needed support they feel the need to repay with equal or higher amount of support to the online community that helped them out. Reciprocity therefore "offers a mutually gratifying pattern of exchange of various resources" (Gouldner, 1960 cited in Wa Chan & Yiyan Li, 2010:1034). Dahl et al, (2005) supports this by saying that "recipients of positive actions or resources experience a sense of indebtedness they can reduce only through reciprocation" (cited in Wa Chan & Yiyan Li, 2010:1034).

However, the notion of reciprocity is not sufficient to explain why some users decide to reciprocate with a great deal of their own content or some make a minimal effort. The "theory of resource exchange"(Foa and Foa, 1974 cited in Wa Chan & Yiyan Li, 2010:1034) could be helpful to portray the various user behaviors. A resource within an online community can be "anything that one person can transmit to another" (cited in Wa Chan & Yiyan Li, 2010: 1034). According to Foa (1971), the theory distinguishes six kinds of resources: "love (i.e., expressions of affectionate regard, warmth, and comfort), status, information, money, goods, and services" (cited in ibid). In this case the "social interaction, including reciprocating behaviour" (ibid) is the one that mirrors the process of resource exchange. Therefore, the user that shares his resources by providing information or other kind of support outlined above obtains some kind of "reciprocal expressions of gratitude" (ibid). Gratitude or admiration as well as own content production, own help in return (reciprocating behavior) are the ways the users express their respect for the other members of the online community that provides them with "information (i.e., structural benefits) and socio-emotional (i.e., social bonds and individual enjoyment) resources" (Wa Chan & Yiyan Li, 2010 :1034).

Moreover, other theories such as those of interactivity (e.g. telepresence), underline the importance of the "structure of the media" (e.g. Review websites) in motivating the user to increase their amount of contributions (Hausman and Siekpe, 2009; Song and Zinkhan, 2008 cited in Wa Chan & Yiyan Li, 2010 :1034). According to Chen and Wells (1999), it is the "informativeness (content richness, information accessibility) or navigatability (speedy search)" (p.30) that determine the level of structural optimization. For the review website, it is in particular their search engine accuracy as well as organized and updated posts that reflect the crucial structural components. Those efficiency promoting components help generating "efficient, useful, and rich

information resources (...) and thus motivate users to engage in reciprocal interactions" (Burgoon et al., 2002 cited in Wa Chan & Yiyan Li, 2010 :1034).

Daft and Lengel (1984) summarize this point by stating: "rich media provide multiple cues and facilitate rapid feedback, which enable the exchange of sufficient information". Therefore, user's ability to reciprocate increases when the review websites posses "efficient structure-based features". (cited in Wa Chan & Yiyan Li, 2010 :1034).

5.5. User 'trust' online

Another important aspect that should be discussed considering the user-generated review phenomenon is the trust in online world. The trust that the users place in an unknown person's opinion, website full of mostly anonymous reviews.

In the past communication systems the notion of impersonal communication did not need to be dealt with. However, nowadays, with the rise of the online impersonal communication, the notion of trust among the online users must be re-examined. As stated by Luhmann in his book "*Trust and Power*" trans. "Vertrauen- Ein Mechanismus der Reduktion sozialer Komplexitaet" (1989), "differentiated media of communication, its language, and symbols, bring new risks and thus provide new kinds of trust problems" (p.52).

In order to be able to form an understanding of trust in the online world, it is crucial to explore the researches that have been conducted to conceptualize trust in the offline environment. The reasoning behind it stems from the fact that the interactions in the online and offline world have much in common. Trust most of the time reduces "risk, fear and complexity in the offline environment"(Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck, 2008: 738), and it could do the same for the online system. Luhmann (1979), explain this occurrence by stating that trust "provides the means to decrease complexity in a

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complex world by reducing the number of options one has to consider in a given situation" (Luhmann, 1979 cited in Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck, 2008: 738)

Moreover, Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck (2008) argue, "since trust is the social capital that can create cooperation and coordination in the offline environment, it probably can do the same in the online environment" (ibid).

Trust in an offline environment was frequently discussed by Parsons (1978), who believed it could only occur between people that have "common values and goals". Moreover, he considered that there has to be "adequate symbolization of both competence and integrity" (Parsons, 1978: 46–7). His view was that

> Sharing values makes agreement on common goals easier, and 'confidence' in competence and integrity makes commitment to mutual involvement in such goals easier . . . All these considerations focus mutual trust in the conception or 'feeling' of the solidarity of collective groups (Parsons, 1978: 46–7).

However, his definition does not take into consideration the system of the online world, where most of the communicators are unfamiliar and mostly don't share same values or often don't even disclose the goals and values in online world. Luhmann (1979) describes the notion of trust is a very holistic way by saying:

> Trust (Vertrauen), in broadest sense of confidence in one's expectations, is a basic fact of social life. In many situations, of course, man can choose in certain respects whether or not to bestow trust. But a complete absence of trust would prevent him even from getting up in the morning". (Luhmann, 1979: 4). He bypasses Parsons definitions by stating "social order is based on established behaviour expectations between persons (Kangas, 2001: 138 cited in Jalava, 2003:186).

The expectations that Luhmann is mentioning are not defined by similar values or goals. The expectations are those that form the norms and values (ibid). Therefore, Luhmann argues that because of the social order being build not upon share values, the actors are starting to be indifferent and the trust is a "blending of knowledge and ignorance" (1979: 26). "It could even be seen as one of the most important elements of indifferent communication of modern society" (Jalava, 2003: 186). He continues on defining trust

by pinpoint that trust cannot exist without risk (Jalava, 2003: 174). Deutsch (1962) explains this point by stating "trust is only possible in a situation where the possible damage may be greater than the advantage one seeks" (Deutsch, 1962: 302 cited in Jalava, 2003: 175).

However, does this definition of trust also apply to the online world, to be more specific to the relationship a user has with the review websites. A definition by Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck (2008) is seen as an adequate one. It connotes that trust is "an attitude of confident expectation in an online situation of risk that one's vulnerabilities will not be exploited." (p.740). According to Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck, there are several key components that relate to the formulation of trust in the online environment: "risk, vulnerability, expectation, confidence and exploitation" (p.741). Risk is in particular an inseparable concept of the online world, where users are everyday faced with new privacy challenges, new unknowns. Moreover, the notions of 'vulnerability and exploitation' are closely interrelated. Sabel (1993) mentions both in his interpretation of trust by saying that trust is ''the... confidence that no party to an exchange will exploit another's vulnerabilities" (cited in Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck, 2003: 742). In the online world a user without a great deal of experience or technical knowledge is vulnerable and can be easily exploited by for example believing a pop up window that assures a 100% win if he types in his personal details. It may sound silly to the digital natives but there are many that would still fall for the most basic online scams. In case of the user-generated reviews, some websites employ professionals to post under an ordinary user, pay consumers to post a positive review of a product or use services that can potentially influence the decision of a future reader. Finally, to visualize the notion of online trust, Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck (2003) have developed a model for online trust.

Figure 8. "Model of on-line trust"
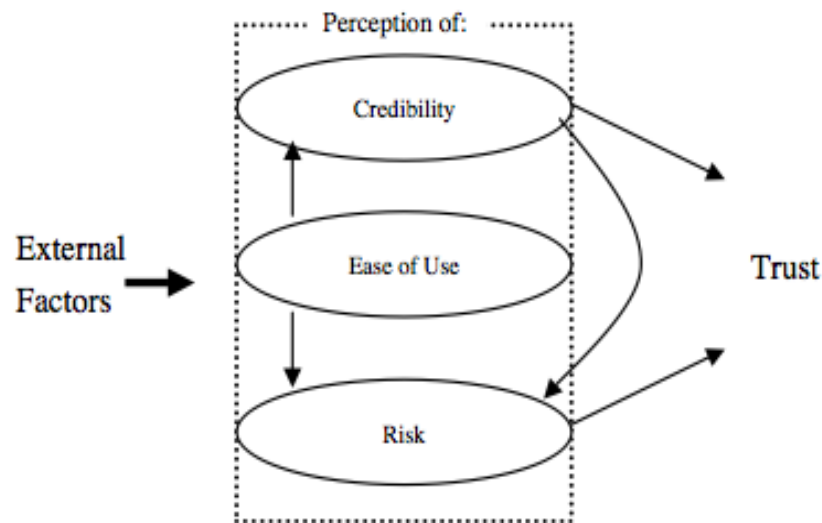
(Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck, 2003:749)

It focuses on "factors that impact trust in a website" (Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck, 2003:750), which are separated into external factors and perceived factors such as credibility, ease of use and risk. Moreover, it identifies the effect "external factors" (ibid: 749) could have on the level of trust. The external factors as outlined by Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck can focus on the past experiences of the "trustor" (ibid). Trustor is the person that decides to trust a website, his or her past experiences related to trust could be negative, which could result in the user being less likely to trust the website. However, other external factors could directly relate to the trustee (the website), how it is designed or how much relevant information it is providing (Ganesan, 1994; Doney and Cannon, 1997; Kim and Moon, 1997; Cheskin Research and Studio Archetype/Sapient, 1999; Marcella, 1999; Milne and Boza, 1999; Nielsen et al., 2000; Fogg et al., 2001a, b cited in Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck, 2003:749).

The perceived factors on the other hand, are defined in the model as credibility, ease of use and risk (Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck, 2003:750). The distinction that these

are perceived factors allows navigating between various trustors and their perception. One person can have high digital literacy and easily navigate through any website, perceiving it as easy to use. Whereas another individual without any technical experience could have trouble understanding the construction of the website and therefore perceive it as difficult to navigate. Therefore, this model, which has a strong theoretical base, is an important component to understand the notion of trust in the phenomenon of online generated reviews.

IV. Theoretical reasoning

1.0. Need for tailored communication theory

The above chapter analyzed the concept of user- generated review phenomenon from an individual approach. Beginning with a brief history of media landscape, it identified, defined and analyzed UGC microelements such as user, platform, and content. Moreover, it examined the technological phenomena of Web 2.0 and its closely related social and mental phenomena of trust, commitment (participatory web concept, social reciprocity), identity and interactivity that the UGC relies on. Finally, it made a short introduction into the debate of the online communication, a key aspect of the review phenomenon.

However, to understand the User Generated Review phenomenon at a macro level, it is necessary to look at the phenomenon from a system perspective. To do so, the theory of social systems by Luhmann (1995) will serve as the underlining theoretical framework. It will help to understand the system that is being investigated, its elements (autopoiesis) and thus the constructed complexity. Moreover, it will be triangulated with some micro level theories of Rational Media Choice that includes Media Richness theory summarized by Döring (2003), which provide the insight on how users make their decision to choose a certain information source, and the theory of Cultural Capital that underlines the importance of people's original environment and previous knowledge and experiences in shaping new perceptions or acclimatizing to a new environment. This theory triangulation will serve as the means to formulate a tailored communication theory that explains the communication system meaning that is formed through the selection process derived from the social system theory of Luhmann. However, due to the time constrains and resources limitation the thesis will only

investigate the macro level of one unit of the communication system meaning. It will leave the further analysis of a larger macro scale analysis behind. However, it will relate to some points made by multilevel theorists such as Jan van Dijk or Emanuel Castell.

2.0. Luhmann's system theory introduction

In Luhmann's system theory the world poses as the highest point of reference. For him the world is the category that encompasses everything else, all the systems and environments (Luhmann, 1973). He strongly negates the possibility to surpass the world and defines it as unit in which everything happens, in which all the complexities serve as the main problem of his "functional structural" analysis (ibid). He also underlines that the "ultimate complexity of the world" (Luhmann, 1990 cited in Neves and Neves, 2006:6) is not comprehensible by a human mind.

He identifies system not as one whole but as "difference", he argues that it is defined "by its difference in relation to the environment" (Neves & Neves, 2006:6). The environment whereas "encompasses all of the possible relations, possible events, and possible processes" (ibid) and is consistently more "complex" than the system (ibid).

He goes on explaining that a system can create its own complexity (autopoiesis) when it seals its self off from the environment generating its own "elements". Maturana and Varela (1980), defines Luhmann's autopoiesis

> as unities, as networks of productions of components that recursively, through their interactions, generate and realize the network that produces them and constitute, in the space in which they exist, the boundaries of the network as components that participate in the realization of the network (Maturana and Varela, 1980 cited in Zeleny, 1981: 21).

After defining the environment, system and its autopoiesis, Luhmann elaborates by connoting that the complexity is "totality of all the events (in the world)" (cited in Neves & Neves, 2006:6) and does not exist as a concept without the "necessary

presence of an observer who observes the complexity: the second order observer[1]"

(ibid). Moreover, the complexity can easily increase when "the number of relations

between the elements grow" proportional to the "increasing number of possibilities"

(ibid:5).

Finally, as mentioned above, Luhmann underlines that existence of both the

environment and the system can only be seen because of their "difference" (ibid). In

turn the difference can be observed via the "effects of communication" (ibid). He

connotes that communication is responsible for a system's ability to "reproduce and

operate"(Luhmann, 1989). The crucial differentiation between Luhmann and Parsons

theories is Luhmann's premise that "social systems are not comprised of persons and

actions but of communications" (Luhmann, 1986:145). Utterances serve as the

"identifiable components of a system" and basis for "the system's regeneration"

(Luhmann, 1990:12).

Therefore, Luhmann's theory of systems narrows down to three important aspects:

1. the interdependence of variables maintains systems,
2. the environment allows for structures/processes, and
3. a social system emerges as a result of communication
   through an autopoietic connection. (Terpstra, 2013, Online)

3.0. Further communication frameworks

Unlike Luhmann's (1995) "selection" oriented perception of communication, defining it

as "coordinated selectivity. It comes about only if ego fixes his own state on the basis of

uttered information" (p. 154). There is a great deal of other definitions of

communication. Due to their great proliferation it is necessary to understand their main

differences to be able to analyze Luhmann's stance on this subject. Many theorists

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[1] "It concerns the observation of observations, that is, to identify the differentiations the systems make to observe. In this sense, the second order observer does not observe "facts", but how the systems operate to access the facts of the environment in accordance with its structure." (Neves & Neves, 2006:6)

concentrate either on the *technical aspects* of the communication or focus on a more *meaning-centered approach* (Steinberg, 2007: 39). The technical approach centers on how the message is being transmitted. It not only discusses the effectiveness and accuracy of a transmitted message but also the characteristics of the channels that facilitates the exchange of messages. In the technical aspect the communication is seen as a "linear (one- way) sequence of events from Person A to Person B" (ibid). Devito as one of the theorist whose communication definition revolves around the "transmission paradigm", wrote:

> Communication is "the process or act of transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver, through a channel and with the interference of noise; the actual message or messages sent and received; the study of the processes involved in the sending and receiving of message (1986: 61 cited in Heat & Bryant, 2000).

Despite this definition's popularity it has a several major limitations especially when applying it to the online communication. It assumes that a functional communication is a process where a sender transmits a message to a receiver, who comprehends it exactly in same way as the sender intended it to be understood (Steinberg, 2007). However, this definition could not work in the online environment, where the senders transmit a message that is usually understood and transformed in many ways before it reaches the final target audience. Moreover, the fact that Devito describes communication as either a process or action could pose a problem when trying to understand the meaning of communication. According to the Cambridge online dictionary a process is defined as "a series of actions taken in order to achieve a result" (Dictionary.cambridge.org, 2013). When taking into account that a process always has a premeditated aim it is hard to apply Devito's definition of communication to the online environment. Online communication often takes place without a goal or without reaching a particular result. Users can also send out messages without a conscious goal to influence their receivers, sometimes the goal of the message is formed after the message has been sent out.

Therefore, despite many academics having a linear approach to communication, there are various others that tried to capture the meaning of communication from the perspective of stimulus-response paradigm (Gerbner, 1967; E.M. Rogers and Kincaid, 1981; Cronen, Pearce, and Harris, 1982; Hewes and Planalp, 1987 and Dance, 1976 cited in Heat & Bryant, 2000).

Gerbner (1967) believed that communication "evokes" meaning, his definition of communication as "interaction through messages" (p. 430 cited in Heat & Bryant, 2000) concentrated on the making of a meaning. However, his concentration on interaction through "formally coded symbolic events of shared significance" (ibid) that resulted in "evoking significance" (ibid) lacked the consideration for "informal and unintentional behavior" (Heat & Bryant, 2000).

It can be concluded that the meaning-centered approach focuses on how the messages are being interpreted. It tries to understand the motivations behind human communication, the process and the interaction during the communication. Steinberg (2007) points out that this perspective results in communication being defined as "a dynamic process of exchanging meaningful message" (p.39). She underlines that this definitions allows for communication to be a flexible, constantly changing process, which has no definite end. This view allows for communication to have a greater influence on the behavior and beliefs of the communication participants.

However, the meaning-centered approach can be still expanded on by adding the transactional approach to communication (ibid:40). Here the scholars try to emphasize communication as a process that also contributes to formation of a relationship between the communication subjects. Steinberg, (2007) called it the transactional definition (p.40).

There are countless other approaches and types of communication definitions. Dance (1970) for example lists 15 various focus points of communication, which encompass:

> symbols and verbal speech, understanding, interaction, uncertainty reduction, process transmission, linking and binding, common experience, channel, memory, modification, stimuli, purpose/intent, time/situation and power (cited in Heath & Bryant, 2000).

4.0. Application of Luhmann's system theory

The communication continues to have different focal points and challenges its frameworks by establishing new contexts and environments in which it exists. Luhmann goes away from the transmitted message concept and forms a system approach. According to him the previous communication concept "implies too much ontology" and believes that "the entire metaphor or possessing, having, giving, and receiving" is misplaced and needs re-thinking (Luhmann, 1995, p. 139). Luhmann strongly stresses that communication is not an "action" and is not defined by "actors" (cited in Neves & Neves, 2006). According to Luhmann theory, communication is a selection consisting of "the selection of information, the selection of a form, and the selection of an understanding" (cited in Andersen, 2003). The first selection centers on the various "possibilities" (Luhmman, 1995:140). Whereas the selection of the form of communication relates to how the "message is communicated" (Andersen, 2003). Finally, the selection of understanding, concentrates on the selection of the relations between the message and ensuing communications (ibid); the underling meaning rather than a simple registration of the message by a "psychic system" (ibid). Luhmann (1995) points to the fact that the medium is the meaning and not the channel (p. 140). Therefore, his theory can be used to analyze the system of today's communication in the online and offline world. Luhmann's theory differentiates itself from others by its

system formation, which manifests not through actions or people but by the relations created via communication.

Luhmann theory applies best to the online review website environment because the communication that occurs on that platform cannot be understood in terms of traditional linear or meaning centered definition of communication. When applied to the communication on a user review platform these theories point out discrepancies in the notion of online communication. Firstly, the definition of communication originated in the offline system, making it unfit for the explanation of the online communication system. If online communication would be defined on the basis of offline communication model, it would have to work on the premises of the assumption that somebody is receiving the message send out into the system. It would have to presume that there is a communication receiver who can relate to the message. The way this could occur on the review platform is very limited, as the reviews are usually a one way non- instantaneous communication which is either rated or in case of Kununu only liked or shared via Facebook, Xing or Google +. There is no direct response as in an offline system, where the communication is happening instantaneously. The message might be sent out instantaneously into the virtual communication environment but the interaction is not instantaneous. Secondly, due to this non- instantaneous communication and the great amount of reviews, there is also no guarantee that the message sent out will ever be received, that a person will read it if it has traveled too far down the main front page. Luhmann (1996) refers to the consequences of this kind of information archiving as "complexification of the system" (p.170 cited in Neves & Neves, 2006:6), he states: "communication is not capable even of making simultaneous compact impressions. Instead it produces the temporalization of the complexity in the consecutiveness of what is different" (cited in Neves & Neves, 2006:6). This means that due to the increase of

variation within a system and the ability "to overcome the locality and temporality" (ibid) of the communication, the impressions of communications are being captured and compared to one another instead of being forgotten. The environment's variation increased, meaning there is more information to sort through making the system more complex.

The theory of Luhmann has a better understanding of the complexities of the online communication system. First and foremost, it is not based on the presumption of a sender-receiver model. Luhmann understands the social system as an emergence of communication not action of a certain individual (ibid). Luhmann's student Stichweh (2000) argues that the reason for this distinction is due to the fact that "actions of psychic systems (minds) and of social systems are difficult to distinguish using action theory" (p.73). He continues to elaborate on it by saying "the interaction of the actor and his environment can only be described when the actor and environment are placed on the same analytic level" (ibid). Therefore, Luhmman's theory connotes that the social systems are formed on the basis of "communication between psychic systems (minds)" and not singular system affecting the individual (ibid).

So taking into account that Luhmann understands the systems existence as one formed through communication relations. Where communication is not an action but a selection process of possibilities, form and understanding. It is then important to analyze how this communication selection process happens in the environment of a company review platform. How the selection of understanding, thus the links between various communications, forms a meaning in this particular online environment.

5.0. Tailored communication system meaning theory

Thus the proposed tailored communication system meaning theory is based on Luhmann's selection process. Where **selection of possibilities** is the first stage of the process. Jan van Dijk (2013) mentioned the notion of "network", which according to him "is a relatively open system linking at least three relatively closed systems (...) that supports interactions within and between social system" (Van Dijk, 2013). The communication system works on a similar basis; it has many possibilities, many interactions that increase the number of variations. Apart from having the two main variations of online and offline communication system, it has many further complexities. For the purpose of the research the selection will concentrate on the online communication system.

The second stage of the process is the **selection of the channel** of communication, the environment by which it's surrounded. To choose the appropriate channel the theory of rational media choice trans. "rationalen Medienwahl" (Döring, 2003: 131) can be applied here. It not only underlines the importance of the medium channel itself but also recognizes the significance of the content of the medium itself. The theory argues that in a rational media choice the medium is being chosen according to the situation, which requires specific level of socio-emotional and content- purpose satisfaction (ibid). Meaning each medium has its own appropriateness to the various communication tasks that need to be undertaken. In case of this communication system, it would be to find most useful workplace reviews.

When connecting the ration media choice model with Luhmann's selection process, it is prevalent that every environment has its own autopoiesis. For example, Facebook has its own complexities such as a large network of communication, circles of friends, own communication purpose and environments. Those kinds of system and environment

distinctions apply for all other channels of online communication. In case of this research, the channel is kununu.at review website.

Due to the fact that the second selection stage is supposed to answer the question of how the message is being communicated (Van Dijk, 2013). In the environment of kununu.at the message is being communicated through a textual form, semi-structured format. What is meant by a semi-structured format; is the guidance questions that leave plenty of room for the user to express his opinion, however diverse it might be. The environment of the website reviews has various level of complexities. It has its employee or future employee review environment as well as company profile environment, as well as further autopoiesis of each company's particular review environment. The reviews are the textual communication that relate to one another, either within the same environment or to others.

The relations between the various reviews of the companies or one company create the **underlining meaning**, the third selection that according to Luhmann is the understanding. Reading the various statements and comparing them to one another creates an understanding of what is that the communication system tries to communicate. In this way, despite the fragmentized and individualized society as well as its extensive plurality the system exists and creates meaning through the communication it encompasses. It is not limited or depended on a common background or the "absence of commonly-shared life-world perspective" (Becker and Mark, 1999: 61). However, despite the decreased significance in Luhmann's theory of shared meaning or the significance of social presence, cultural capital, identity or commonly shared normative fundaments in system formation, it should not be forgotten that those aspects have an effect on the selection of communication form or even understanding.

There is a reason as to why communication occurs in so many systems and environments. Lumman's system creation simply allows for the different social systems to interact with one another and create "transcontextual viewpoints." (Becker and Mark, 1999: 61). However, even on this transcontextual level it is important not to forget that the communication itself could be infused with cultural capital, individuality, social presence or reflect certain common shared norms.

The two communication systems, online and offline interrelate very often and thus it is inevitable that the communicators from one system will have other commonly shared understanding with that of another system.

For example, Social Presence theory developed by John Short, Ederyn Williams and Bruce Christie, takes into consideration the importance of the human factor in user-generated content. It proposes that communication will be more compelling if the social presence of a medium is appropriate to the communication requirements of the task (Short, Williams & Christie: 1976). The social presence theory also conveys that when two parties interact they are both concentrating to behave according to their specific roles in order to keep the personal relationship. According to Short, Williams and Christie these two aspects of interaction are defined as "interparty and interpersonal exchanges" (Short, Williams & Christie: 1976). However, as the computer mediated communication developed, new aspects and views of social presence have emerged. Social presence according to Short, Williams and Christie (1976) is viewed as "the awareness of others in an interaction combined with an appreciation of the interpersonal aspects of that interaction". Nowadays, with the increase usage of the Internet the notion is being interpreted in the light of online presence. Social presence is associated to the way messages are posted online and how they are understood and perceived by others (Kehrwald, 2008: 89-106). Rains (2007) underlines that due to the missing social cues

in the CMC, the interpretations are becoming more crucial. The gaps left by the greater anonymity in CMC, allow for a more context deductive analysis of a message's attributes (Jiang, Bazarova & Hancock, 2011). As investigated by Handcock and Dunham (2001), the increased degree of intimacy experienced online, allows an easier attribution of the communicated message. Joinson (2001) argues further that the greater anonymity leads to disinhibition, allowing for a more free disclosure of information. However, social presence theory has some gaps, especially in relation to the modern communication technologies and therefore has been challenged with the "social influence model of media use" (Fulk et al., 1990). This model argues that media awareness and understanding is "partly subjective and socially constructed, and will thus vary across individuals and situations" (Galletta & Zhang, 2006: 153). The perception of social presence in a message might be influenced by external factors, or depend upon the familiarity with the subject that conveys the message. Thus social presence theory might have its limitations as to the impact it could have on the underlining meaning of the communication within the user generated review environment. As user-generated reviewers lack direct and personal relations to one another, the conveying of the meaning works only upon the quality of their contents.

Moreover, something that Luhmman did not take into consideration with some of the online communication environments is that some environments are accessible to all that can connect to the Internet. Kununu.at website has no restriction such as Facebook, which requires a login and provides privacy setting for its own network of friends. Kununu.at is a relatively open system and therefore when the selection of meaning is being chosen it might not be equal to the desired understanding of the meaning. A good example where the selected understanding is not equal to the initial message is the

recent Twitter scandal of an insensitive joke going wrong.   Justine Sacco, a PR executive before stepping into the plane to South Africa posted on Twitter a joke stating "Going to Africa. Hope I don't get AIDS. Just kidding. I'm white!" (Bercovici, 2013). After posting it she stepped onto a 12hour flight "not realizing what kind of Twitter avalanche of fury she started" (ibid). Most of the people understood and described the joke as pure racist, however, those that knew her or had another view on the issue understood it as a "self deprecating joke about white guilt and Western privilege – about the sheepish feeling of being physically close to tragedy while remaining safe in an economic and cultural bubble" (ibid). Jeff Bercovici, a Forbes journalist and a friend of Justine, asked some people around and came to the conclusion that many also took it same way, that "she was more mocking the aloofness white people can have on this issue, not celebrating that aloofness" (ibid). Therefore, it can be seen that the cultural capital and identity or commonly shared normative fundaments play a role in the formation of a meaning in a system. The joke was very offhand, inconsiderate due to the seriousness of AIDS and unjustifiable. Nevertheless, if the selection of understanding left room for forgiveness, for questioning the real motives behind the joke, Justine would not be as harshly condemned as she was if not due to the unstoppable spread of hatred towards her in the Twitter environment.

Therefore, it can be said the selection process based on Luhmann's system theory is a fitting yet limited macro theory for analyzing the review environment. As despite the selection process allowing for a system communication meaning to be formulated, the selected understanding might not always equal to the desired understanding of the communication within an environment. This as discussed above might be due to the decoding differences of the communication that could be influenced from the undefined normative fundaments, the variation of the messages infused with cultural capital and

identity. According to Bourdieu, (2013) cultural capital "refers to the collection of symbolic elements such as skills, tastes, posture, clothing, mannerisms, material belongings, credentials, etc. that one acquires through being part of a particular social class" (Bourdieu, 2013). This can be quite an important aspect when the communicated opinions in reviews stem from equal experiences of a company workplace with same culture. Whereas the gap might occur when the experiences are being related to those with no knowledge of such capital. This way as mentioned before, the communication system meaning might not come out same as the desired understanding. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze the content of the reviews and find out the main similarities but also the differences that are being often falsely understood.

V. Methodology

1.0. Theoretical outline

If looking at user-generated website from a system level using the Network society theory of Jan van Dijk (2013), it can be concluded that due to the increasing complexity of the world, an individual has to "break out of his/her own safe environment to compete on relatively open and anonymous markets" (Van Dijki, 2013). Therefore, user-generated review websites serve as relatively open environment, which holds the necessary information and could provide the desired understanding of the job market that an individual is searching for. Understanding the macro theoretical reasons behind the sustainability of the review environment as a communication system, it is necessary to reason as to why a person would choose this system on an individual level.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), "which is regarded as the most influential and widely applied theory for explaining individuals' acceptance and use of information systems" (Lee, Kozar, & Larsen, 2003 cited in Ayeh, Au & Law, 2013: 133), gives reasoning for why the research concentrates on user-generated review websites. The model is particularly useful for understanding user's behavior and explaining his/her reasons for adopting a new technology at an individual level (Lee et al., 2003; Morosan, 2010; Schepers & Wetzels, 2007 cited in Ayeh, Au & Law, 2013: 133). The TAM theory was adapted from the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980 cited in Ayeh, Au & Law, 2013: 133), it concentrates on determining a user's "attitude and behavioral intention" (Ayeh, Au & Law, 2013: 133) towards the use of a new system. It predicts that those stem from the user's perception of the "usefulness and ease of use" (ibid) of a particular system. Davis et al, underline that the *anticipated usefulness* of a

technology is the main reason why an individual would use it regardless of whether he likes the system or not (cited in ibid). Therefore, it might occur that despite disliking a technology a user would still use it.

For example reviews might be disliked because they allow for easy data manipulation. Meaning that some platforms do not have a strict policy on reviewing the authenticity of the posted reviews, which often results in 'fake' reviews being composed by the company itself or a specially employed individual who writes positive reviews only. This treat of lack of authenticity or trust could potentially scare of the readers from using such websites. However, the benefits of review websites outweigh the negatives. That's why the users would still visit review websites to gather a variety of opinions because they are easily accessible and provide most useful information (Dillon and Morris, 1996, pp.3-32).

Moreover, in the context of this study, the review website that is being investigated provides the opportunity for the future employees to form a holistic image of a company by reading the diverse reviews from the perspective of the employees and fellow candidates. Therefore, the prospective employees' attitudes and intentions to use that specific user review platform are influenced by their perceptions of the ease of use and the usefulness of kununu.at in deciding for the right job.

What is meant by "perceived usefulness"? Davis (1989) defined it as the degree to which a person believes that the use of a particular system enhances his or her work (cited in ibid). This means that the "perceived usefulness" lies in the purpose of finding out all the relevant information about a company (e.g. its work attitude and

atmosphere), which according to the users can be quickly obtained on a review website such as kununu.at.

What is meant by perceived ease-of-use? Davis defines it as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort" (Davis, 1989 cited in ibid). In case of reviews, the users can easily access the website kununu.at, which provides a straightforward structure with detailed search engine options for finding the desired reviews. It has a transparent service division, where one part of the website is designed for the employees and the other for companies (See picture 1 & 2 below).

Picture 1. Kununu Website – reviewers sections

(Kununu.at, 2013, Online)

Picture 2. Kununu Website- company profile section

(Kununu.at, 2013, Online)

The part for the employees provides the opportunity to search for reviews of companies from various industries or the possibility to write a review as an employee of a company or as a stakeholder that had a certain experience with a particular reviewed company (e.g. applied for a job and was unsatisfied with the human resources division, which did not provide any response). Whereas the part of the website for the employers gives them the chance to create their own profile and present themselves from their perspective. Moreover, in this way the company can keep track and respond to any negative reviews that they might be receiving.

However, apart from the two main qualities such as quick accessibility and easy usage, we could assume that the users view online review websites such as kununu.com as more reliable than advertising, because it is perceived as having passed through the evaluation of "people like me" (Allsop, Bassett, & Hoskins, 2007 cited in Mangold & Smith, 2012: 143) and can be easily compared to second or third opinion before making

any decision. Finally, Nielsen's Global Online Consumer Survey supports the argument of user's preference to visit a review website, by revealing that 70% of online shoppers trust reviews written by people they don't personally know (NeilsenWire, 2009 cited in Mangold & Smith, 2012: 143).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the TAM model provides a good justification why users nowadays would turn to online reviews websites rather than seeking a face-to-face advice from a friend. The online company review websites would enhance their performance in formulating a rich web of opinions by giving them a quick and easy access to various reviews. The two main attributes of fast access to an immense source of information and easy usability outweigh having to find friends with an experience of the desired company that could give a face-to-face opinion.

Another model that supports the decision to use the review website rather than finding face-to-face recommendations or information via other means is the one of Tétard and Collan, the Lazy User Model. It focuses on the "needs and characteristics of the user in the dynamic process of solution selection, when several competing solutions are available" (cited in Salmela & Sell, 2011:59)

Tétard and Collan, suggest that the Lazy user Model is based on the principle that the user will always choose a "solution that demands the least effort" (ibid). The construct's aim is to "try to explain how an individual (user) makes her selection of solution to fulfill a need (user need) from a set of possible solution (that fulfill the need)" (ibid). As mentioned above the model suggests that the user will choose from the pool of solutions "limited by the circumstances (user state)" (ibid), the one that requires the smallest "effort" (ibid). The actually decision-making process begins with a "user's need" (ibid), definable as "explicitly specifiable want, completely fulfill able" (ibid: 60), and

can be distinguished as tangible or intangible. This thesis would concentrate on the intangible need for information on various companies. Therefore, in order to find the necessary information thus fulfill the need, the user would turn to the most easily accessible source such as the one of a review website.

Due to its online presence and wide range of reviews the kununu.com review website serves as the solution requiring the least effort and having the least limitations (user state). The user state encompasses "both the user characteristics and the circumstances" (ibid). The user characteristics can be the "age, social and cultural belonging and experience" (ibid), whereas the circumstances relate to the "location, available time and resources" (ibid). In the digital age where most graduates in Europe are characterized as technological natives, owning at least one device that connects to the Internet the user state easily narrows down the possible solutions. In the case of user's need to obtain information about a company he/she wants to work, the Lazy User Model points towards the online review website as the best solution. This is due to the fact that the user characteristics in nowadays digitalized world steer towards digital literacy, the user is at ease browsing and finding information on a website, and due to many product review websites, the user is familiar with the concept of "user generated review websites" such as kununu.com. Moreover, the circumstances also point towards the online review website as it is nowadays easier accessible source of information for people's opinions rather than searching for individual people in the physical world that have had experience with the company that they want to find information about. Summarizing, the Lazy User Model, indicates that users will turn to online review websites to fulfill their need for information because it is easily accessible, easily usable and requires the least effort from their side.

2.0. Method type

After having shown the reasoning on why the research will concentrate solely on the review sites, it is important to give a rationale on why the research is concentrating on the content characteristic of a review; the most desired content. The explanation is quite simple; it is mostly due to the fact that in a virtual social environment reviewers and readers are often strangers. Therefore, the lack of "traditional social ties" obliges consumers to assess a message underlining meaning almost solely based on the content of the communicated message (Walther 1996 cited in Pan & Zhang, 2011: 599).

It can be said that the most suitable way to find out the most desired characteristics of a review, meaning the expectations users have of the review content is by conducting an explorative research. In order to be able to set the right questions, and later be able to cross-reference the answers from the structured interviews, a content analysis of various company reviews was conducted. The analysis of existing workplace reviews provides the necessary information to formulate content categories based on user's content inclinations. Furthermore, a set of interviews will be conducted to find out the review content expectations of the users or future users. The transcribed answers will also be analyzed through the method of a content analysis and the extracted content categories will serve as another reliability method.

2.1. Content analysis

The qualitative content analysis by Mayring with its "procedures of inductive category development" (Mayring, 2000:3) serves as the right method to categorize and identify various most prevalent content characteristics. According to Margrit Schreier whose

approach overlaps frequently with the one of Mayring, content analysis "is a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material. It is done by classifying material as instances of the categories of a coding frame" (Schreier, 2011:1). She underlines that Qualitative Content Analysis is suitable when the data needs analyzing to become meaningful. Moreover, she points out that "data never 'speaks for itself', it does not 'have' a specific meaning" (ibid:2), because the meaning is always formulated by the person that analyses the data. Each person will have their own perception of a set of words, and their interpretations will be affected by their "individual background: what we know about a topic, the situation in which we encounter it, how we feel at the time" (ibid:2) and so on.

Mayring identifies the three most prevalent characteristics of qualitative content analysis as: "Summary, explication and structuring" (Mayring, 2007 :58). He explains them by saying the following:

> **Summary**: attempts to reduce the material in such a way as to preserve the essential content and by abstraction to create a manageable corpus which still reflects the original material. For this the text is paraphrased, generalized or abstracted and reduced (Mayring cited in Kohlbacher, 2006: 16).
> **Explication**: involves explaining, clarifying and annotating the material. As a first step a lexico-grammatical definition is attempted, then the material for explication is determined, and this is followed by a narrow context analysis, and a broad context analysis. Finally, an "explcatory paraphrase" is made of the particular portion of the text and the explication is examined with reference to the total context (ibid).
> **Structuring**: corresponds more or less to the procedures used in classical content analysis and is also viewed as the most crucial technique of content analysis, the goal of which is to filter out a particular structure from the material. Here the text can be structure according to content, form and scaling. The first stage is the determination of the units of analysis, after which the dimensions of the structuring are established on some theoretical basis and features of the system of categories are fixed. Subsequently definitions are formulated and key examples, with rules for coding in separate categories, are agreed upon. In the course of a first appraisal of the material the data locations are marked, and in a second scrutiny these are processed and extracted. If necessary the system of categories is re-examined and revised, which necessitates a reappraisal of the material. As a final stage the results are processed (Mayring, 2007 :58).

This model of qualitative content analysis allows for an inductive and deductive category formulation. Deductive process of defining categories is theory-guided and

rule-guided. It takes into consideration the past and current research and theories in the investigated area that could be attributed to creating the categories. Whereas the inductive process of determining categories is an "open technique" (Gläser and Laudel, 2013). The open technique is using a system of open coding that extracts necessary categories solely from the text itself (Mayring, 2007: 75). The structure of this process can only be retained if a similar reduction process as the one for deductive qualitative and quantitative analysis is being used. Mayring defines the four reduction steps as "Paraphrasing, Generalizing the abstraction level, First reduction, Second reduction" (Mayring, 2007:62).

However, Mayring lays out the process for the inductive categories building in the following diagram:

Figure 9. "Diagram for inductive category building"
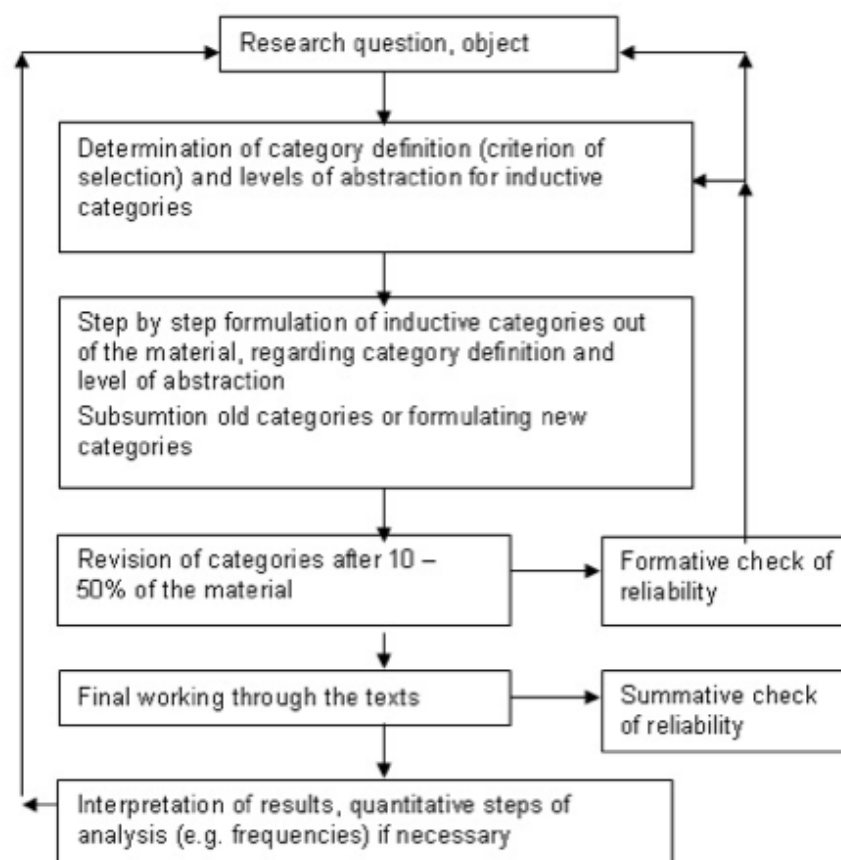
(Mayring, 2000 cited in Kohlbacher, 2006: 19)

Firstly, it is important to define the research question and the level of abstraction. Determining the level of abstraction helped to narrow down the data. To be more specific, the "formulated criterion" (Kohlbacher, 2006: 19) assisted in choosing which material is relevant and which one should not be taken into consideration. Once the data was reduced, a coding frame was formulated. Coding frame according to Margrit Schreier

> is a way of structuring your material, a way of differentiating between different meanings vis-a-vis your research questions. It consists of main categories or dimensions and a number of subcategories for each dimension, which specify the meanings in your material with respect to these main categories (Frueh, 2007; Holsti, 1969 cited in Schreier, 2012: 61).

To decide what dimension will be used in the coding frame, the method combined a "concept-driven" and "data driven" strategy to structure and generate the dimensions (Schreier, 2012:84). Concept driven approach is based on "what is already known about the topic" whereas the data-driven approach allows the "categories to emerge from the material"(Schreier, 2012:84). The concept driven, deductive method took the knowledge and categories established in past researches in the area of review analysis. The deductive method served as a support and guideline to the inductive method of category building. The categories were built via an inductive analysis method, however, compared to the deductively formed groups.

After a 10-50% of the material was coded a revision should be made to check for the reliability of data. After all material has been worked through and categories were build as well as no new categories are being deduced, the process of category building is finished. However, the newly build categories can be further interpreted via a *Feinanalysis*, grouped together, or analyzed via a quantitative analysis to see how often some categories are appearing in the text.

2.2. Interview method

The interviews were conduced in order to obtain first hand information about the content needs of review users. The target group for this research constituted of individuals that are media and communication students and are familiar with the concept of company reviews. Moreover, they have used the reviews sites at least once to form their opinion about a company and preferably but not necessarily wrote their own review. The focus lies on the media and communication students because of the limited resources and time, which do not allow for a more extensive field study. However, the method can be used by other researches for determining the review content criteria for other target groups.

Interviews serve as the right method for determining the content categories because as stated by Brennen, 2013 they can be "used to gather a large amount of useful, interesting, relevant and /or important information" (p.26-27). Moreover, as underlined by Warren, 2002

> Qualitative interviewing is heavily influences by a constructivist theoretical orientation which considers reality to be socially constructed; from this perspective, respondents are seen as important meaning-makers rather than 'passive conduits for retrieving information' (p. 83 cited in Gubrium, and Holstein, 2002).

Therefore, taking this perspective into consideration, it is important to conduct interviews in a consistent and unbiased manner. It is imperative to disclose all methodological information and goal of the studies to the participants, so that their answers won't be potentially influenced. Therefore, before beginning the interview process, it is crucial to define the method and carefully familiarize with each stage of this kind of qualitative method. Brennen, 2013, defines interviews as "a focused, purposeful conversation between two or more people" (p.27) and emphasizes that they can be conducted face-to-face but also online or via telephone.

Moreover, she clarifies that there are three types of interviews: "structured, semi-structure and unstructured" (ibid). For the purpose to find out the content categories of media related company reviews from the media students it seems adequate to use the semi-structured type of interviews. Unlike the structured reviews, the semi-structured ones despite having a pre-established set of questions leave room for "follow up questions ... to clarify answers given by the respondent" (p.28). Kvale's (1996) seven stages of an interview investigation serve as a competent guideline for designing and conducting such a methodology:

> 1. Thematizing: Formulate the purpose of the investigation and describe the concept of the topic to be investigated before the interviews start.
> 2. Designing: Plan the design of the study, taking into consideration all seven stages, before the interview starts.
> 3. Interviewing: Conduct the interviews based on an interview guide and with a reflective approach to the knowledge sought
> 4. Transcribing: Prepare the interview material for analysis, which commonly includes a transcription from oral speech to written text.
> 5. Analyzing: Decide, on the basis of the purpose and topic of the investigation, and o,n the nature of the interview material, which methods of analysis are appropriate.
> 6. Verifying: Ascertain the generalizability, reliability, and validity of the interview findings. Reliability refers to how consistent the results are,, and validity means whether an interview study investigates what is intended to be investigated.
> 7. Reporting: Communicate the findings of the study and the methods applied in a form that lives up to scientific criteria, takes the ethical aspects of the investigation into consideration, and that results in an readable product. (Kvale, 1996: 88).

As described in the above theory chapters, the concept that is being investigated is the one of user review phenomenon. Establishing through various theories such as the one of Complexity Reduction and pass researches, the users often choose reviews as their first information source. Therefore, knowing that the need for reading online review is prevalent, the empirical research concentrates on the content characteristics of a work-place review. The content analysis of posted reviews aims at finding out the information categories that the review producers are most focused on. Whereas the interviews will investigate not only producers of such reviews but also the users and their particular

content needs.

To be able to find out the necessary content categories and cross-reference them with those established via content analysis of 30 reviews. The following questions will be asked:

2.2.1. Questions

Testing questions:

1. Are you familiar with the concept of work-place reviews?

2. Would you take a review into consideration before you formed your own opinion about a workplace?

Content questions?

1. What is important for you at a job?

2. What are the important physical and material characteristics at your current or future workplace?

3. What are the important physiological and immaterial characteristics at your current or future workplace

4. What information you are looking for when you make your decision about applying to a specific company?

5. What do you believe is important to others at their job?

6. What do you believe would other want to read in a review about a workplace?

2.3. Reliability

According to Schreier, "an instrument is called reliable to the extent that it yields data that is free of error" (Schreier, 2012: 167). The method and the data it produces is perceived "reliable" (ibid:174) if its "consistent" (ibid). Consistency can be evaluated in two different techniques. It either compares the coding "across persons" (ibid: 167) or

"across points in time" (ibid). Schreier outlines both strategies as following:

> Comparisons across persons. Two (or more) coders use the same coding frame to analyse the same units of coding, and they do so independently of each other ('blind coding'). The underlying concept of reliability is called intersubjectivity. The coding frame is considered reliable to the extent that the resultss of the analysis are not only subjective, but intersubjective, i.e. apply across persons (Schreier, 2012).
> Comparisons across points in time. One coder uses the same coding frame to analyse the same units of coding. The underlying concept of reliability is called stability. The coding frame is considered reliable to the extent that the results of the analysis remain stable over time (Schreier, 2012).

For this research the strategy of using two coders to analyze the data and form categories was used. Assessing the consistency of the method is helpful in pin pointing any issues that might be existent in the coding frame. In the quantitative content analysis method, such information is obtained by calculating the "coefficient of agreement" (ibid: 170). However, in qualitative content analysis this number might not be so representative and that's why it is more constructive to hold a discussion between among the coders to estimate the reliability. This procedure is based on two coders coding the same material independently and then comparing the categories they have build, spot the difference and resolve them (ibid: 174). Same course of action was used to determine the reliability of the research instrument of this thesis. The two coders coded independently and then met to discuss any disagreements (see appendix 1 and 2 for detailed outline). This yielded in a standardized system of coding, which was proved by a high percentage of Inter-coder-reability (reliability between two coders).

2.4. Validity

Apart from concentrating on the reliability of the coding frame it is important to evaluate its validity as well. Valid instrument according to Schreier is one that "captures what it sets out to capture. A coding frame is valid to the extent that the categories adequately represent the concepts under study" (ibid: 175). There are two

types of validity that are crucial for evaluating this methodology: "face validity (dealing with inductive coding frames) and content validity (dealing with deductive coding frames)" (ibid: 186). As claimed by Neuendorf, "Face validity refers to the extent to which your instrument gives the impression of measuring what is supposed to measure (2002: 115 cited in Schreier, 2012: 185). Whereas "Content validity" is defined by Neuendrof as extent to which "an instrument covers all dimensions of a concept" (ibid). To establish a problem with the validity of a data- driven coding frame it is crucial to identify if the following signs: "high coding frequencies for residual categories; high coding frequencies for one subcategory compared to the other subcategories on a given dimension; and under differentiated abstract categories" (Schreier, 2012: 188).

2.5. Sampling

For the interviews a sampling method called "snowball sampling" will be used to select the interviewees. Goodman, describes the method in the following way:

> A random sample of individuals is drawn from a given finite population. Each individual in the sample is asked to name k different individuals in the population, where k is a specified integer; for example, each individual may be asked to name his "k best friends," or the "k individuals with whom he most frequently associates," or the "k individuals whose opinions he most frequently seeks," etc. The individuals who were not in the random sample but were named by individuals in it form the first stage. Each of the individuals in the first stage is then asked to name k different individuals. (Goodman, 1961:148)

Goodman's application of snowball sampling serves as the most fitting method to retain the necessary randomness of the sample in order not to influence the results. The finite population would be in this case the students of Media and Communication at the Vienna University.

3.0. Previous studies

This research investigates the phenomenon of user-generated content and the communication system it represents. To be more exact the investigated part of the user-generated content phenomenon is limited to the workplace review websites with the example of kununu.at. A theory-based approach to this particular communication system yields with an analysis and framework of this system's functionalities. To explore further the reasons behind the systems sustainability the research coded the perceived most useful categories of a workplace review. The content analysis as well as reviews helped understanding the environment of the review website and the reason behind why the reviews are structured in a particular way. Previous studies in related fields such as psychology or themes such as product reviews provide a good inside on the type of methodology that works with such kind of research questions as well as examples of perspectives that could be investigated when looking at review websites and psychological reasoning behind the motivation to post reviews.

There was no research that exactly investigates the content categories in the area of company reviews. However, some studies have investigated other characteristic of user-generated reviews. Most were concentrating on the structural composition of reviews or its linguistic characteristics, whereas this research tries to formulate content categories, which are most desired by the users (e.g. job atmosphere, pay, possibility of development). For example, the study done by Willemsen, Neijens, Bronner and Ridder (2011), titled *"Highly Recommended! The Content Characteristics and Perceived Usefulness of Online Consumer Reviews"* concentrates on investigating three specific linguistic characteristics such as argumentation style, expertise claims and review valence. They argue "the mere presence of arguments consequently leads people to have more confidence in a communicator and to find his/her judgment more persuasive"

(2011: 23). When looking at expertise claims they underline that information provided by an expert is perceived to be more "trustworthy and useful, and to have more influence on the brand attitudes, purchase intentions and purchase behaviors of consumers" (Harmon & Coney, 1982; Lascu, Bearden, & Rose, 1995 cited in ibid: 22). Finally, for review valence they claim that "the more positive (negative) the valence of a review, the more (less) likely people are to purchase the reviewed product" (ibid:22) and that consumers believe more negative than positive reviews.

Another research that investigates reviews using the method of content analysis is the one of Ramaswami and Verghese (2003), they investigate the kind of information that the reviewers provide and their power to persuade the reader. Their coding frame is based on the "economic theories of information search"(Ramaswami and Verghese, 2003: 10). Quoting Nelson (1970, 1974), they connote that there are "search qualities" and "experience qualities" (Nelson, 1970, 1974 cited in Ramaswami and Verghese, 2003: 10). The former describes the characteristics of a product that are available before the purchase such as price or functions, whereas the latter relates to information that can be only obtained after the purchase and usage of the product (ibid). Their expectations center around the fact that customers are more likely to communicate experience related qualities that are not provided by the manufacturer (ibid). Ramaswami and Verghese, 2003, explain the initial need to review as satisfaction of "two communicative goals: informativeness and influence" (ibid: 8). They explain these two goals by stating:

> The informativeness goal is met as reviewers describe their experience with a specific brand and summarize their response to the brand's performance, presumably with a focus on the kinds of information that they feel would be useful to their readers and likely unavailable from other sources. Since the context of these reviews is one in which they have no social tie to the reader (beyond a shared interest in the product category), they may have a second goal—to persuade the reader that they are a credible and worthy reviewer—and that their recommendations (positive or negative) regarding the reviewed brand ought to be considered seriously. (Ramaswami and Verghese, 2003: 8).

Both researches investigate the UGC phenomenon from a micro level point of view, where they try to find out the individual characteristics of the content of product reviews and their persuasive qualities as well as explain the need for such reviews in first place. This is a helpful guideline when trying to understand the theoretical background of review creation as well as forming an understanding of the structure of a persuasive review.

Finally, an article of Computer Mediated-Communication journal that closely relates to the research at hand consists of a theoretical analysis of the "Communication Processes in Participatory Websites". Walther and Jang, (2012), create a framework that "identifies common elements and their functions across a variety of Web 2.0 platforms". This journal articles helps to spot the difference between the various online communication channels pointing to the characteristics of participatory review websites that differ vastly from the kununu.at review website, which has limited participation possibilities. For example, it states that participation occurs in order to enhance user's belonging to a group (Farzan et al, cited in Walther and Jang, 2012: 8). Moreover, it uses the silence theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1993) to underline that one might adjust his own opinion according to the "opinion climate" (Walther and Jang, 2012: 9) prevalent on the website. In order not to be isolated due to an unpopular opinion, their perceptions might become regulated (ibid). This theory however fitting for other participatory review platforms does not apply to the kununu review channel as it has very limited participatory features and provides a great deal of anonymity.

However, due to the lack of studies that concentrate directly company reviews instead of product reviews, content analysis is a crucial method to find out valid content categories of company reviews. The above-discussed studies serve merely as a guideline for understanding the psychological reasoning behind review writing or its

structural construction, however, lack any reference to work-place content category building.

4.0. Research specifications

A qualitative method is relevant for this research, as no study has been yet conduced to find out the content categories that are most important for company reviews. A prior content analysis of various reviews will serve as a valid method to fill the general paucity of research in the area of the company review content characteristics and will provide a good range of categories for further investigation. To answer the question of which identified content categories are most desired, the results will be crossed referenced with those found by through the personal interviews.

The reviews that will be analyzed are strictly related to workplace in a media industry, therefore companies such as Herolds, Orf or Krone serve as good examples. The amount of reviews that will be analyzed will be determined via the snowballing method (Goodman, 1961:148), which allows to analyze reviews until no more new categories can be formed. To preserve valid data no more than 10 and no less than 9 reviews will be analyzed per each chosen at random media related company.

Whereas the interviews will be conducted with people that are familiar with technology, the Internet and have heard about the notion of user-generated reviews, moreover have read such reviews before. The target group therefore will be media students, experts in this field. They are those that will be able to clearly state what content they are expecting to see in a review of a media related job position. The sample will be 5 interviews, and participants will be chosen using a snowball sampling method. To avoid dropouts a clear statement of the interviews duration will be given in the introduction whereas the demographic questions will be asked at the end of the interview (Döring, 2003: 230).

VI. Results

The research tries to answer the question of to what extent is it possible to form a categorization system for online review communication environment? By categorization system the research understands the most desired content characteristics of a workplace review.

The content analysis was conduced upon 28 reviews taken from the kununu.at website. The 28 reviews were complied from three media related companies with each contributing 9-10 reviews. Due to the fact that there were no previous studies that investigated the content categories of workplace reviews, the method used a „data-driven" (Schreier, 2012:84) strategy to deduce the content categories of a useful review. The initial pilot coding was based on 10 reviews from Herold. Both coders had to paraphrase each coded sentence and deduce main keywords from it.

In the comparison table 1 below it can be seen that the initial interpretation of the sentences were quite diverse by both coders. The inter-coder reliability reached only 46% (30 out of 65 keywords matched with the meaning for both coders). The first pilot pointed out several obstacles that needed to be addressed before the next coding trial. Firstly, the differences were mostly occurring due to not defined guidance questions for the qualitative analysis. After defining that the analysis is trying to find out solely the content categories related to the workplace and the company itself, it was easier to pinpoint the categories that the employees were structuring their reviews upon. Moreover, defining some of the keywords helped to later obtain better inter-coder reliability, which in the second round of coding was 85% (55 matching codes out of 65 codes see appendix 2 for the full pilot coding 2).

Table 1. Pilot coding comparison

Code	Original user statement	Keywords Coder1	Keywords Coder 2
A/1/2/1	Sehr großes Interesse, dass es den Mitarbeitern gut geht und gefördert werden.	managers intentions/support	employee development
A/1/2/2	Sehr offener, ehrlicher und verständnisvoller Umgang	managers leadership style/behavior	interaction
A/1/2/3	Im Verkauf geht es ums verkaufen, nicht mehr und nicht weniger	tasks diversity	task flexibility
A/1/2/4	Sehr gute Ausbildung für den Verkauf.	employee development	employee development
A/1/2/5	Abgesehen von verkaufen, sind die Aufgaben nicht sehr vielseitig	tasks diversity	work dynamic
A/1/2/6	Sehr gute Ausstattung der Außendienstmitarbeiter!	office standards/equipment	equipment
A/1/2/7	Man erhält eine sehr gute Einschulung und Ausstattung	employee development and office standards	working conditions
A/1/2/8	Die besten Voraussetzungen den Job erfolgreich durchzuführen	job atmosphere	working conditions
A/1/2/9	Ich habe von meinen Vorgesetzten stets Unterstützung erhalten	managers leadership style/behavior	management support

A/1/3/10	Als Aussendienstmitarbeiter im Verkauf muss einem die Taetigkeit im Verkauf und im Aussendienst gefallen und man sollte ca. wissen auf was man sich einlaesst. Sonst nuetzt die beste Firma nichts	requirements of the job	requirement for the job
A/2/4/1	leistungsfreundliches Klima	work atmosphere	working conditions
A/2/4/2	hoher Grad an Identifikation der Mitarbeiter mit dem Unternehmen	company identity	identification with company
A/2/4/3	innovativ	company attributes	dynamics
A/3/4/1	Es klingt zwar kitschig, aber HEROLD ist eine Familie	work atmosphere	corporate community
A/3/4/2	Loyalität, Unterstützung und Aufmerksamkeit stehen an oberster Stelle	personnel values	staff characteristics

(First trial coding-for complete coding see appendix 1)

The main issues discovered during the first pilot coding were related to the definition and scope of 'work atmosphere', 'working conditions' and 'leadership style/behavior'. The term work atmosphere was misplaced, as it does not belong to the core business vocabulary. The term was replaced by organizational culture or working conditions depending on the specifics of the sentence context. „Working conditions" (Businessdictionary.com, 2013) serve as a term that encompasses all the various sub-dimensions such as the internal environment, work culture. There is a major difference between internal environment and work culture. According to the business dictionary

„working environment" comprises of all the physical factors of a workplace. They define it as

> Location where a task is completed. When pertaining to a place of employment, the work environment involves the physical geographical location as well as the immediate surroundings of the workplace, such as a construction site or office building. Typically involves other factors relating to the place of employment, such as the quality of the air, noise level, and additional perks and benefits of employment such as free child care or unlimited coffee, or adequate parking (Businessdictionary.com, 2013).

Whereas the 'work culture' is a more narrowed down definition of the "organizational culture" (ibid). Organizational culture normally encompasses not only the work culture meaning the way the business treats its employees, the amount of freedom that is given to them to make business decisions but also the organizational values and expectations. The definition from business dictionary (2013) is as following:

> The values and behaviors that contribute to the unique social
> and psychological environment of an organization. Organizational culture
> includes an organization's expectations, experiences, philosophy, and values that
> hold it together, and is expressed in its self-image, inner workings, interactions
> with the outside world, and future expectations. It is based on
> shared attitudes, beliefs, customs, and written and unwritten rules that have
> been developed over time and are considered valid. Also called corporate culture,
> it's shown in
> (1) the ways the organization conducts its business, treats
> its employees, customers, and the wider community,
> (2) the extent to which freedom is allowed in decision
> making, developing new ideas, and personal expression,
> (3) how power and information flow through its hierarchy, and
> (4) how committed employees are towards collective objectives.
> It affects the organization's productivity and performance, and provides
> guidelines on customer care and service, product quality and safety, attendance
> and punctuality, and concern for the environment. It also extends to production-
> methods, marketing and advertising practices, and to new product creation.
> Organizational culture is unique for every organization and one of the hardest
> things to change (Businessdictionary.com, 2013).

Therefore, to make a clear distinction the company's believes, values, image were categorized into the *external employer profile* and the inner workings of the company were coded as *work culture* that together with *environment* falls under the umbrella category of *internal working conditions*.

After the second pilot coding was successfully conducted with a good inter-coder-reliability of 85% the interpretation proceeded for the rest of the reviews. When all reviews were paraphrased sentence by sentence and each generated specific keywords, both coders proceeded with building their categories. An extract of the final category building is seen in the table 2 below (full coding frame see appendix 3).

Table 2. Extract from final category building

Code	User defined category	original user statement	Para-phrasing	Keyword	Main category	1st Level Sub-category	2nd Level Sub-category	3rd Level Sub-category
C/5/3/4	Contra	abteilungsübergreifende Kommunikation könnte besser sein, Mitarbeiter events (leider) eine Seltenheit, aber wenn diese stattfinden, legendär! :)	cross-departamental communication needs improvement, lack of employee events	employee relations	internal working conditions	work culture	staff aspects	social relations
C/5/3/4	Contra	abteilungsübergreifende Kommunikation könnte besser sein, Mitarbeiter events (leider) eine Seltenheit, aber wenn diese stattfinden, legendär! :)	cross-departamental communication needs improvement, lack of employee events	inter-departmental communication	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
C/6/3/1	n.a.	entscheidungsschwache führungsebene	managers behavior/ competences	supervisor competencies	internal working conditions	work culture	staff aspects	competences

C/7/3/1	Verbesserungsvorschläge	1. mitarbeiter sozialleistungen angemessen bezahlen bzw. vertraglich regeln 2. überstunden ausbezahlen 3. interne kommunikation verbessern	improve social benefits, work contracts, pay overtime, internal communication	compensation	internal working conditions	work culture	task aspects	compensation
C/7/3/1	Verbesserungsvorschläge	1. mitarbeiter sozialleistungen angemessen bezahlen bzw. vertraglich regeln 2. überstunden ausbezahlen 3. interne kommunikation verbessern	improve social benefits, work contracts, pay overtime, internal communication	employees communication attributes	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	

The final main categories can be seen in the table 3. The whole content of the reviews was split *into external employer profile* and *internal working conditions*. This was due to the fact that a lot of users mentioned the external characteristics of the company at which they work or worked as well as its financial stability and growth perspectives. Those statements did not relate to the internal work conditions directly and therefore needed categorizing into a separate dimension. The table 3 shows the distribution of the two main categories across the three workplace review sets as well as their frequencies. It is prevalent that the users concentrate on the internal working conditions significantly more than on the company external attributes.

Table 3. Main categories frequencies

Count of Main category	Company			
Main category	Herlod (A)	Krone (C)	ORF (B)	Grand Total
external employer profile	12	5	9	26
internal working conditions	57	47	59	163
Grand Total	69	52	68	189

Table 4. Main category and 1ˢᵗ level subcategories frequencies

Count of Main category		Company			
Main category	*1st Level Subcategory*	Herlod (A)	Krone (C)	ORF (B)	Grand Total
external employer profile	company image	3	1	4	8
	company values	1		4	5
	growth prospects	1	4	1	6
	product portfolio	2			2
	(blank)	5			5
external employer profile Total		12	5	9	26
internal working conditions	environment	7	7	9	23
	work culture	47	38	46	131
	(blank)	3	2	4	9
internal working conditions Total		57	47	59	163
Grand Total		69	52	68	189

Furthermore, the two main dimensions were diversified into subcategories. The external employer profile dimension was enhanced with the following subcategories: company image, company values, growth prospects product portfolio or blanks (assignment of more specific subcategory not possible).

Whereas the second dimension internal working conditions has two 1st level subcategories: environment (which signifies the tangible conditions around the office),

work culture and blanks. The table 4 shows the distribution of the main and 1st level subcategories and their frequencies according to each analyzed set of workplace reviews.

Table 5. 1st level and 2nd level subcategories frequencies

Count of Main category		Company			
1st Level Subcategory	*2nd Level Subcategory*	Herlod (A)	Krone (C)	ORF (B)	Grand Total
company image	(blank)	3	1	4	8
company image Total		3	1	4	8
company values	(blank)	1		4	5
company values Total		1		4	5
environment	**office standards**	4	2	4	10
	(blank)	3	5	5	13
environment Total		7	7	9	23
growth prospects	(blank)	1	4	1	6
growth prospects Total		1	4	1	6
product portfolio	(blank)	2			2
product portfolio Total		2			2
work culture	**communication attributes**	9	4	6	19
	job security		2	2	4
	staff aspects	30	19	18	67
	task aspects	6	12	19	37
	Structure/hierarchy	1		1	2
	(blank)	1	1		2
work culture Total		47	38	46	131
(blank)	(blank)	8	2	4	14
(blank) Total		8	2	4	14
Grand Total		69	52	68	189

Due to the diversified opinion statements within each review set, especially in the area of work culture, the 1st Level subcategories had to be elaborated on further. In order to retain a logical structure some 1st Level Subcategories expanded into the following 2nd Level Subcategories: *environment* had office standards whereas *work culture* had communication attributes, job security, staff aspects, task aspects, structure/hierarchy and blanks. Some of the 2nd Level Subcategories where specified further and gained 3rd Level Subcategories. The following 2nd Level Subcategories had further

specification: *office standard* were specified into equipment; *staff aspects* divided into competences, development, employer performance expectations, responsibilities, social relations and staff fluctuation; whereas *task aspects* contained compensation, degree of difficulty, distribution, diversity and workload. The rest of the 2nd Level Subcategories did not require any further detailed subcategories (For exact division and subcategories frequencies see tables 6 and 7 below).

Table 6. 2ⁿᵈ level and 3ʳᵈ level subcategories frequencies

Count of Main category		Company			
2nd Level Subcategory	***3rd Level Subcategory***	Herlod (A)	Krone (C)	ORF (B)	**Grand Total**
communication attributes	(blank)	9	4	6	19
communication attributes Total		9	4	6	19
job security	(blank)		2	2	4
job security Total			2	2	4
office standards	**equipment**	1			1
	(blank)	3	2	4	9
office standards Total		4	2	4	10
staff aspects	**competences**	14	14	6	34
	development	3		5	8
	employer performance expectations	2			2
	responsibilities	3	2	2	7
	social relations	6	3	5	14
	staff fluctuation	1			1
	(blank)	1			1
staff aspects Total		30	19	18	67
task aspects	**compensation**	2	7	7	16
	degree of difficulty		2	2	4
	distribution	1			1
	diversity	3	2	7	12
	workload		1	3	4
task aspects Total		6	12	19	37
Structure/hierarchy	(blank)	1		1	2
Structure/hierarchy Total		1		1	2
(blank)	(blank)	19	13	18	50
(blank) Total		19	13	18	50
Grand Total		69	52	68	189

Table 7. Allocation structure and frequencies of all main and subcategories.

Count of Main category				Company	Krone (C)	ORF (B)	Grand Total
Main category	*1st Level Subcategory*	*2nd Level Subcategory*	*3rd Level Subcategory*	Herlod (A)			
external employer profile	company image	(blank)	(blank)	3	1	4	8
		(blank) Total		3	1	4	8
		company image Total		3	1	4	8
	company values	(blank)	(blank)	1		4	5
		(blank) Total		1		4	5
		company values Total		1		4	5
	growth prospects	(blank)	(blank)	1	4	1	6
		(blank) Total		1	4	1	6
	growth prospects Total			1	4	1	6
	product portfolio	(blank)	(blank)	2			2
		(blank) Total		2			2
	product portfolio Total			2			2
	(blank)	(blank)	(blank)	5			5
		(blank) Total		5			5
	(blank) Total			5			5
external employer profile Total				12	5	9	26
internal working conditions	environment	office standards	equipment	1			1
			(blank)	3	2	4	9
		office standards Total		4	2	4	10
		(blank)	(blank)	3	5	5	13
		(blank) Total		3	5	5	13
	environment Total			7	7	9	23
	work culture	communication attributes	(blank)	9	4	6	19
		communication attributes Total		9	4	6	19
		job security	(blank)		2	2	4
		job security Total			2	2	4

		staff aspects	**competences**		14	14	6	34
			development		3		5	8
			employer performance expectations		2			2
			responsibilities		3	2	2	7
			social relations		6	3	5	14
			staff fluctuation		1			1
			(blank)		1			1
		staff aspects Total			30	19	18	67
		task aspects	**compensation**		2	7	7	16
			degree of difficulty			2	2	4
			distribution		1			1
			diversity		3	2	7	12
			workload			1	3	4
		task aspects Total			6	12	19	37
		Structure/hierarchy			1		1	2
		Structure/hierarchy Total			1		1	2
		(blank)	(blank)		1	1		2
		(blank) Total			1	1		2
	work culture Total				47	38	46	131
	(blank)	(blank)	(blank)		3	2	4	9
		(blank) Total			3	2	4	9
	(blank) Total				3	2	4	9
internal working conditions Total					57	47	59	163
(blank)	(blank)	(blank)	(blank)					
		(blank) Total						
	(blank) Total							
(blank) Total								
Grand Total					69	52	68	189

1.0. Results correlation

The content analysis of the existing reviews yielded in two main categories: external company profile and internal working conditions. When comparing it to the categories built from five personal interviews (see full category building appendix 4), it can be seen that none of the five interviewees spoke about external company profile. They all concentrated on the internal working conditions, in particular the co-workers relationships, salary and development opportunities. The charts 1 and 2 below portray this difference.

Chart 1. 1st level subcategories' frequencies from review analysis
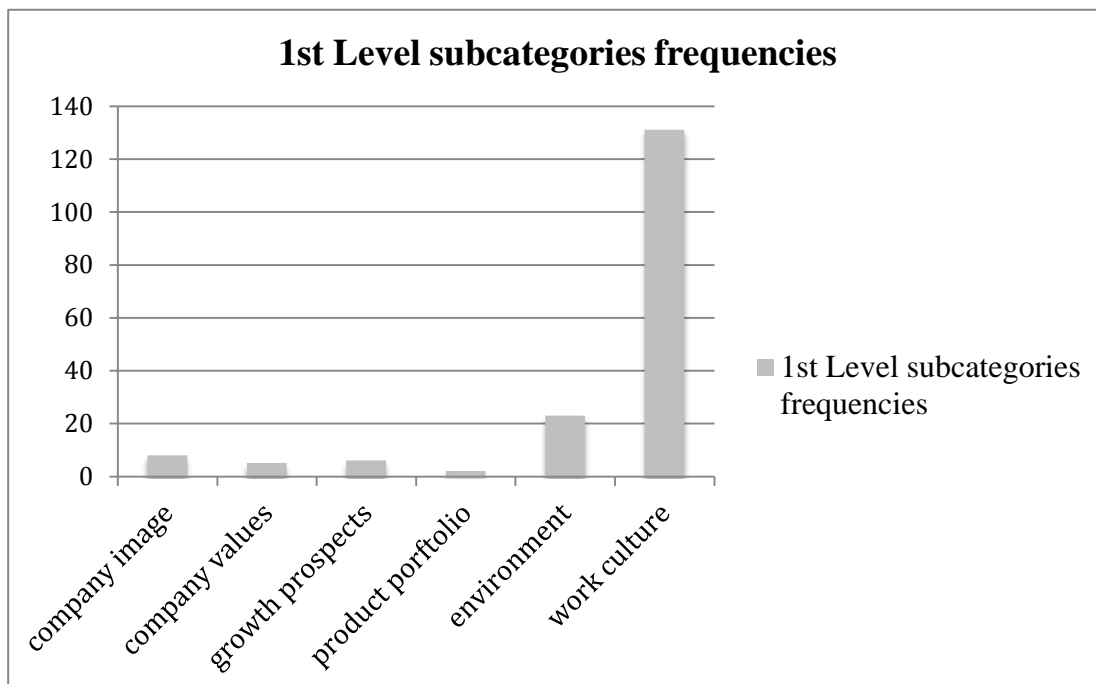
Chart 2. Interview categories frequencies
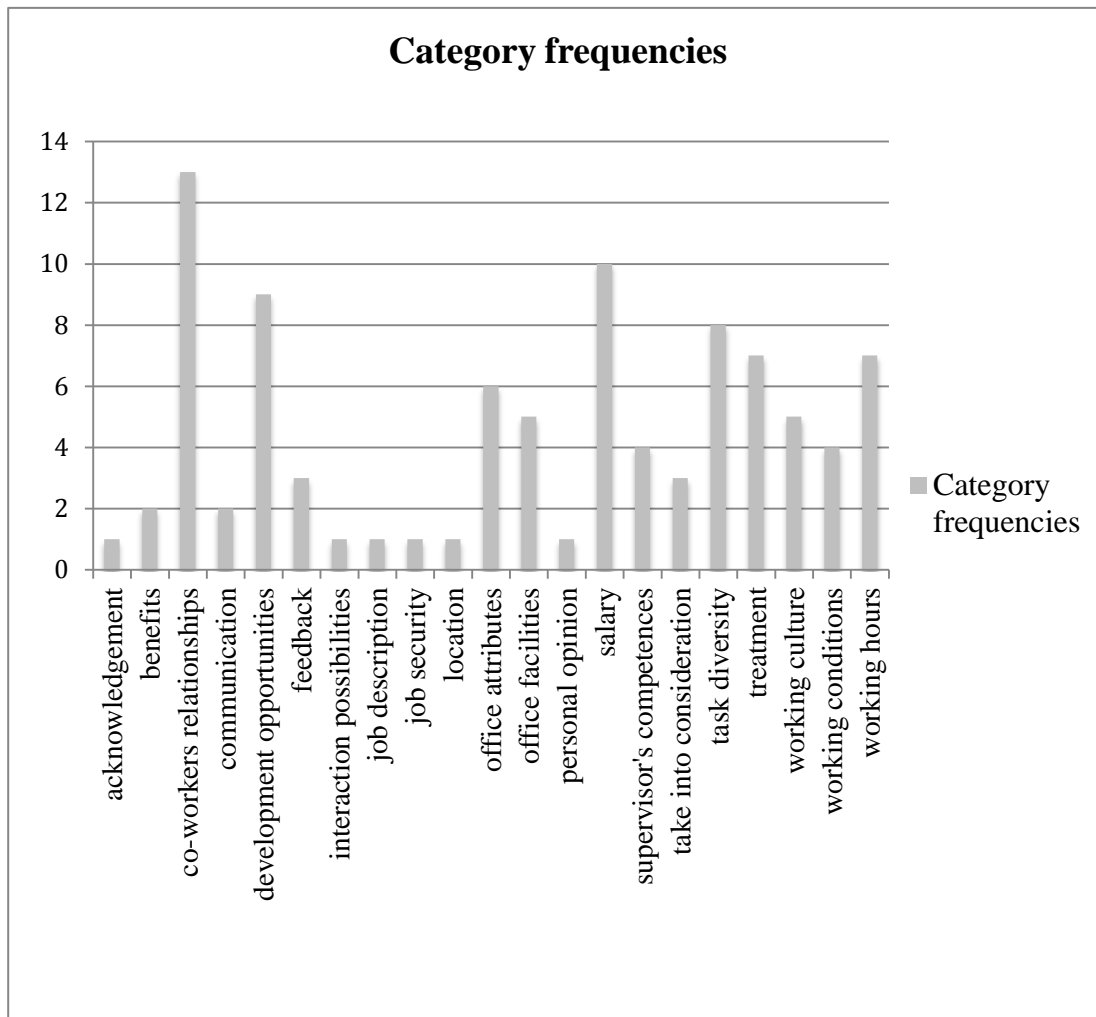
However, it has to be mentioned that the frequencies only relate to how often they mentioned particular categories when answering the whole set of questions. It should be noted that many did not mention salary until the question nr. 7 „What do you think others would want to read in a review?" was asked; then 4/5 talked about salary. When answering the question nr. 3 about "What is important for you at a job?", they concentrated mostly on the social aspects of workplace: the co-workers relationships and treatment, whereas only 1/5 mentioned salary (see chart 3 and 4 for comparison). This is an interesting fact, as it seems that most attribute salary to 'need' of other people, whereas self prefer to talk about social aspects of a workplace.

Chart 3. Code frequencies for Question 3
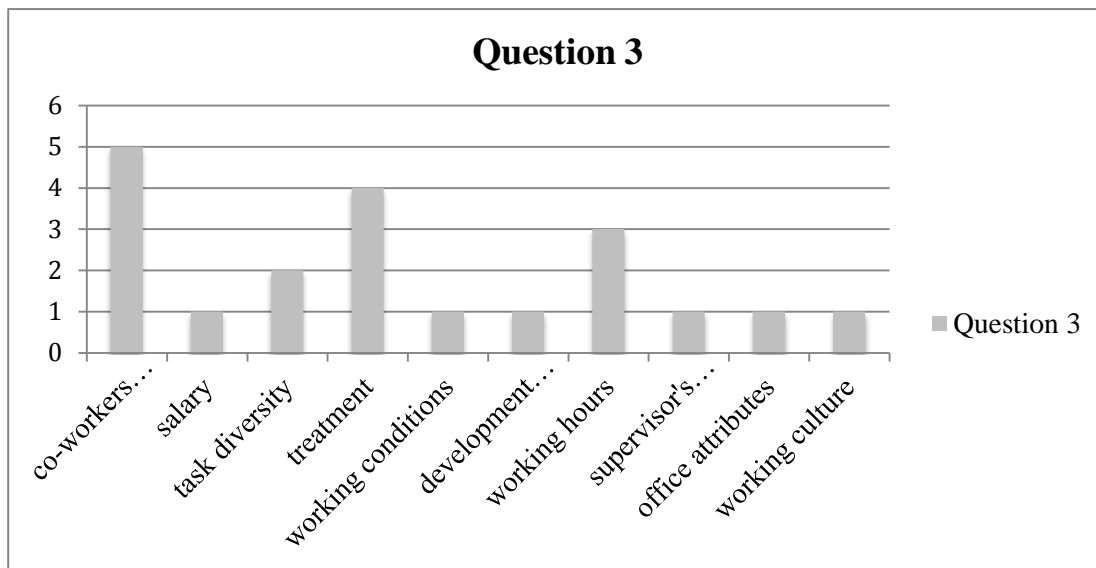
Chart 4. Code frequencies for Question 7
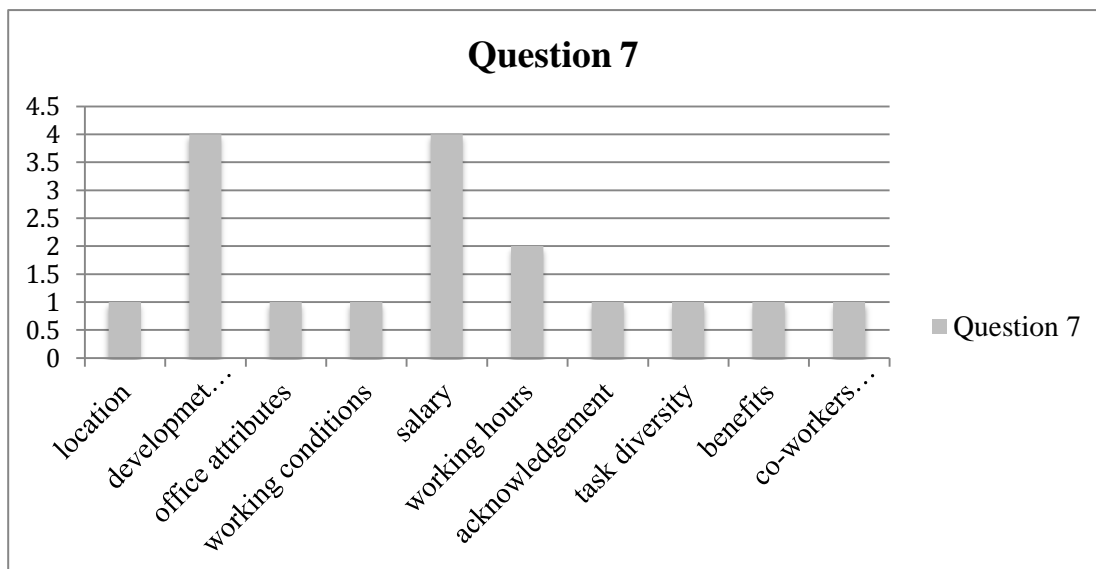
In general there were many categories from the interview analysis that overlapped with those found through the review content analysis: social relations, task diversity, development opportunities, communication, office facilities, supervisor's competences and working hours and so on. In general they mentioned most of the internal working conditions that were deducted from the content analysis of the existing reviews, which confirms the desire for such categories to be present in a workplace review.

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VII. Analysis

1.0. Intertwining categories

The analysis has been based on the kununu.at website, which consists of company reviews that are located in Austria. The website provides the opportunity to not only review a company commenting on it but also rating it. There are pre-given rating categories, which are often used by the user as a guideline for their commentary. The categories are as following: Vorgesetztenverhalten (supervisor's behaviour), Kollegenzusammenhalt (teamwork), Interessante Aufgaben (interesting tasks), Arbeitsatmosphaere (Work atmosphere), Kommunikation (communication), Arbeitsbedingungen (working conditions), Work – Life Balance, Gleichberechtigung (equality), Umgang mit Kollegen 45+ (treatment of colleagues above 45), Karriere-/Weiterbildung (career, further development), Gehalt und Benefits (payment and benefits), Umwelt-/Sozialbewusstsein (social responsibility), Image. Firstly, it is noticeable that the categories are overlapping each other, for example teamwork is closely related to the treatment of colleagues 45+. They are part of the team as anybody else, the distinction here is unnecessary, especially that out of all 28 coded reviews only one has mentioned this category, and wrote „good and respectful relations with the colleagues above 45 (A/5/7/7). This statement is questionable to the extent that good and respectful behavior should be exerted to all team members no matter the age. Therefore, the two categories (team work and treatment of colleagues above 45) could be merged together. Moreover, working conditions is a very general term, which could include categories such as interesting tasks, payment and benefits, career and development. The same applies to work atmosphere category, which could also consist of communication, supervisor's behavior. Another issue that appears in the pre-given rating categories is the added bias that can be seen in the category „interesting tasks". It

automatically points to a more positive opinion about the task, a person reviewing this aspect might be inclined to think in a more positive way seeing this category. The category could be added to the working conditions category instead.

Throughout the content analysis it was prevalent that the users use those rating categories as their guideline for their comments structure (see full category building appendix 3). However, they often mismatch the category and their description, for example in a review of Krone a user used the „image" category and stated „the executives/managers lack good communication skills, social competences and ability to cope with the work load" (C/4/2/7/). Such description would fall under the general category of work culture rather then the image category that relates to the external opinion of a company. Another example would be a review of Herolds where the user adopted the teamwork category to state, „there are no division of responsibilities regarding customers" (A/6/9/6), which directly relates to bad task organization rather than the relations between the team members. Therefore, kununu's pre-defined rating categories often caused confusion when users used them to express their opinion.

However, when analyzing the 28 reviews, it has become apparent that structuring user opinions will not be an easy task. Most of the issues lie in the fact that some categories are a part of other categories. The most outstanding example would be that of communication category. It has been quite noticeable that some distinguish communication as a separate category but also go on describing it within another categories. For example, a user reviewing ORF used communication category to describe that they have „more than one meeting a day" (B/5/3/3), whereas another user reviewing Herolds used the supervisor's behavior category to mention, „that he always knew what his supervisor expects of him" (A/5/6/1). This sentence relates to the

behavior of the supervisor but also to the clear communication between him and the employee. This proves how communication is often intertwined in many categories and therefore should not be a separate category. The interactions between the different review categories seem to make more variations and increase significantly the complexity of a review. Sometimes the autopoiesis of each review overlaps another creating further complexities, making it even harder for the communicated message to have one single meaning.

2.0. Content focus of the reviews

Building the category system from the analyzed reviews has its flaws. It is mainly due to the interviewing of communication category into many of the other categories but also due to its many levels. Using too specific categories would cause the communication to be bias and flow into a pre-determined direction, such as the pre-given rating category of kununu „interesting tasks". Therefore, to simplify and clean up the category system, only the main categories and 1st level subcategories could be used to produce a consistent review structure. Main categories are *external employer profile* and *internal working conditions*. This is a clear distinction between the company's external image, its marketing strategies and identity, and the company's internal working conditions that concentrate on the „atmosphere" within the working place. It is important to make such distinction as a few reviews concentrated mostly on the external image of the company. When relating those reviews to one another it became apparent that some understand a review's purpose to be an evaluation of the company's exterior image rather than the internal social and physical aspect of a workplace; a critical analysis of a company's mission statement, rather than the company as a workplace. These kinds of reviews lack any kind of social presence and become almost a customer's opinion rather than an employee's personal experience. An example of such review can be seen in Review 7 about Herlod „Big social and innovative company" (trans. from German, A/7/11/1), or the review 1 about ORF stating „Too much influence from the politics, which gives the public service broadcaster a bad image „Staatsfunk" " (trans. from German, B/1/2/9). These kinds of reviews lack any kind of insider information, which is often desired from this review community. Therefore, the distinction between the external and internal attributes of a company could serve as a good guideline to consider both sides of a company. Those that do not trust the

anonymity of the website could review only the external company image without giving away too many personal opinions, whereas those that want to share more information could review both aspects of the company. Such distinction could also be used as a good filter for the external observers of the review website.

Furthermore, the 1st level subcategories serve as a good elaboration on the main categories. For the external employer profile they consist of company image, company values, growth prospects, product portfolio. Whereas for the internal working conditions they divide into environment and work culture. This distinction is important because it divides the physical and the social aspects of a workplace. As seen on the chart 5, the social aspects „work culture" of the workplace have a higher importance than the physical aspects of a workplace. This can be seen through the amount of reviews that mention work culture 85% unlike the small amount of reviews 15% that evaluate the physical environment of a workplace.

Chart 5. 1st level subcategories division

1st Level Subcategories division

15%

85%

■ environment
■ work culture
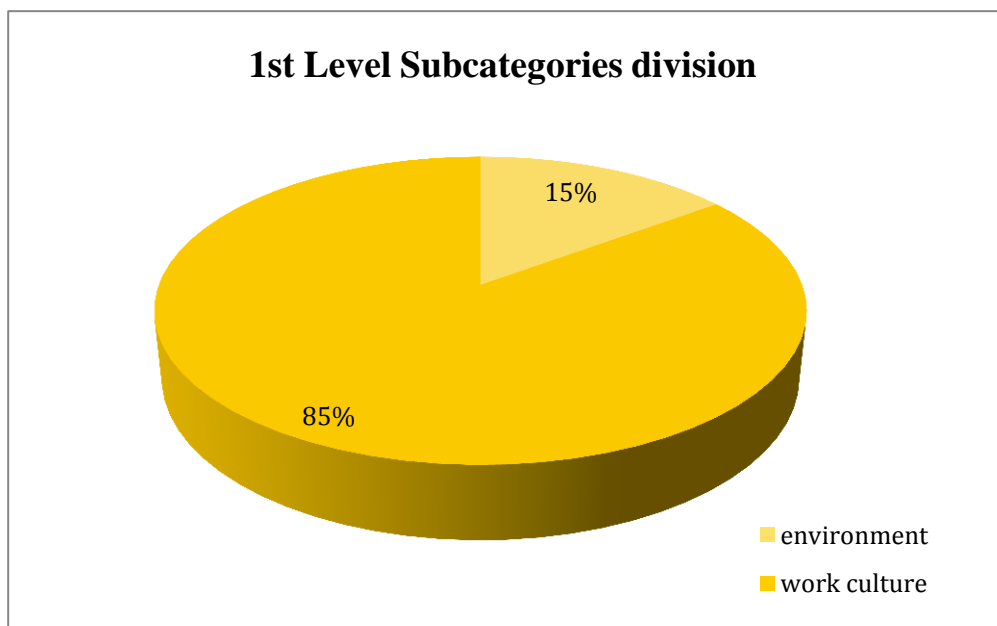
The reviews concentrating on the internal working conditions to be more specific the work culture, have found the intangible aspects of a workplace to be more important to comment on. They found in particular social relations and communication that happens not only between employees of same department but also interdepartmental communication important. Moreover, the behavior and communication skills of the supervisor where often commented on. The importance of the social aspects of the workplace could be explained using the social exchange theory. The theory argues that "people are fundamentally social animals" (Reader, 2013) and that they "orient themselves to the world through the relations they have, and depend on social interaction" (ibid). Moreover, it elaborates stating that if employees feel well received at a workplace they will more likely want to form relationships with other employees (ibid). Same explanation can be applied when taking into account Luhmann's theory of social systems. When an environment is open enough to receive new members it is likely to grow further and sustain itself in case others decided to leave.

Chart 6. Environment category division
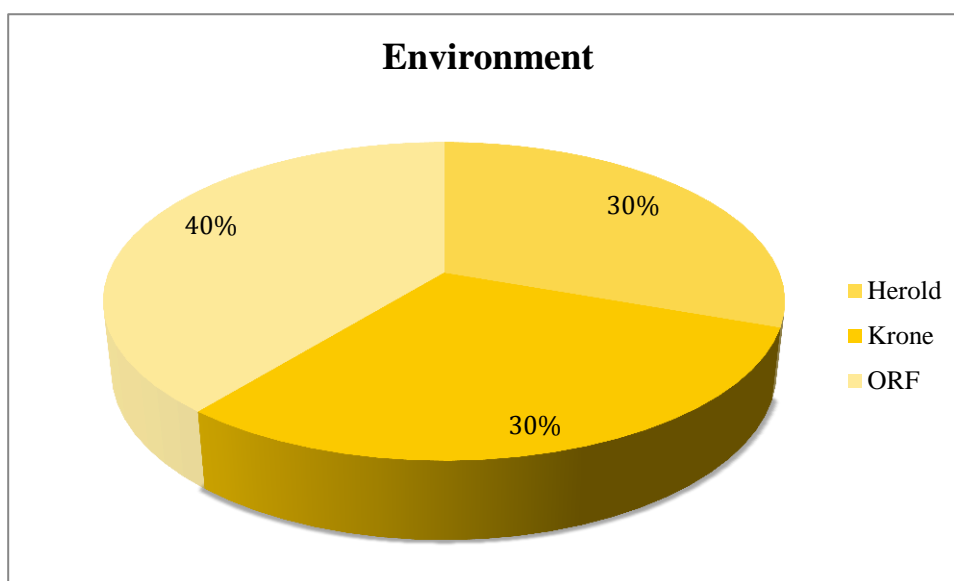
Chart 7. Work culture category division

Work culture

35%   36%

29%
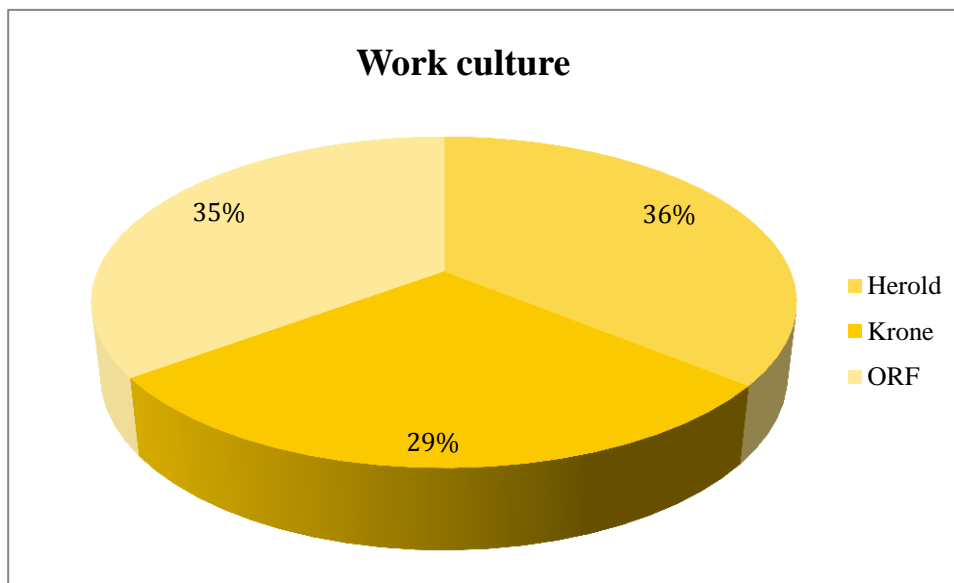
- Herold
- Krone
- ORF

The graphs 6 and 7 show that within each subcategory the three analyzed companies have a similar amount of reviews dedicated to both categories. For example, for work culture all three companies Herold, Krone, ORF have a similar amount of reviews (around 30% each) that fall under this category. This is an interesting result as it shows that each set of reviews values the work culture quite equally. The fact that most reviews concentrate on the social aspect of a workplace stems also from the fact that the analyzed reviews are from the media and communication sector where those values are very strongly imprinted. In the business sector more physical and tangible aspects are taken into consideration. However, this is only an observation upon the read reviews and would need to be further elaborated in order to confirm it.

3.0. Increased complexity

Moreover, when analyzing the three sets of reviews, it became apparent that online communication system and in this case the review website differ from the offline communication system in this way that it has an increased complexity due to temporalization (Luhmann, 1996:170 cited in Neves & Neves, 2006:6) of the communication. The website serves as an archive of all the reviews that have been posted from the beginning of the creation of this communication channel. Therefore, the gradual increase in variation causes the environment to be more complex. Nowadays, the observers need to form their understanding upon relating not only 3 reviews but also 30 or more to one another. According to Jan van Dijk, the information is being distributed in different variations across many channels and packages, and the resulting „information overload" (Jan van Dijk, 2013) requires the communication to be shorter and more selective. Therefore, the users of the review website will not take their time to compare 30 reviews but take only a few latest reviews in order to create their understanding. This would also happen in a Face-to-Face communication. It is more likely that a person would talk to a few people within his own familiar environment to form his opinion about a company's workplace rather than have a discussion with 30 different people. Same principle is also applied to the online communication; people will only choose a few reviews to relate to one another in order to form their opinion. The reviews chosen will be likely those that are most recent and those that contain enough of content. As seen from the content analysis, the most desired content of a review relates to the work culture. When looking at the table with all codes statistics, it can be specified that the reviews often write about communication attributes as well as staff competences, which often relate to the behavior and communication qualities of the supervisor (see table 7). Therefore, despite the difference in communication's

complexity in the online environment, it is still trying to function in a similar way as the communication in offline word.

4.0. Categorization system

The figure 10 below shows the research's partially successful attempt in forming a categorization for the review communication system. The two main categories show a good distinction between the two goals that the users have when reviewing a workplace. One aim is to talk about the external view of the company and the second to review the internal working place that so often is unknown to the general public. This distinction could help navigate between the more personal and less personal reviews, because describing the company's image is something that can be easily deduced by visiting the official company's webpage or reading about it on some news platforms. The second level categories found from the content analysis show how both of the main categories diversify further. Due to the fact that the majority concentrated on the internal working conditions, these subcategories will be discussed in more details. The internal working conditions where described by many using various content categories. Some concentrated more on the general picture of the workplace describing a little bit of everything: task diversity, the relationship between the colleagues, the supervisor's behavior and competences and so on.

Most of the opinions were unstructured and the thoughts were quite scattered. Therefore, when trying to group the categories it turned out that there are two main aspects that the users differentiate on. They often talk about immaterial, intangible aspects such as co-workers relationship, the perceived atmosphere or the communication, and material aspects of the job such as payment, office facilities and so on. This was the reason why the 1st level subcategories diversified into environment (the

tangible material surrounding) and work culture (the immaterial social surrounding). This seemed like a good distinction until the point where some would review the job security, this is from one side achieved through a contract or good payment, but the descriptions given were more focused on the feeling of security. Therefore, here were the first issues that the categorization system faced. Another issues as mentioned above was the category of communication, which was often mentioned in a separate part of the review by giving the general opinion of departmental communication but also often intertwined in other aspects of the workplace. Some would be describing the behavior of the supervisor and then continue commenting on his ability to communicate the tasks well to the employee. This possibility of matching two categories to one sentence made the grouping of communication category a difficult decision and might need to be investigated further. All in all the categorization system is showing the most used and desired content categories of a workplace review. However, the grouping of this system might still need further investigation.

Already the difficulties arising while deducing the categorization point to how complex the online communication system is on the review website. They point to the fact that a review system without clear review objectives might cause major confusion and misunderstanding.

Figure 10. Built category diagram
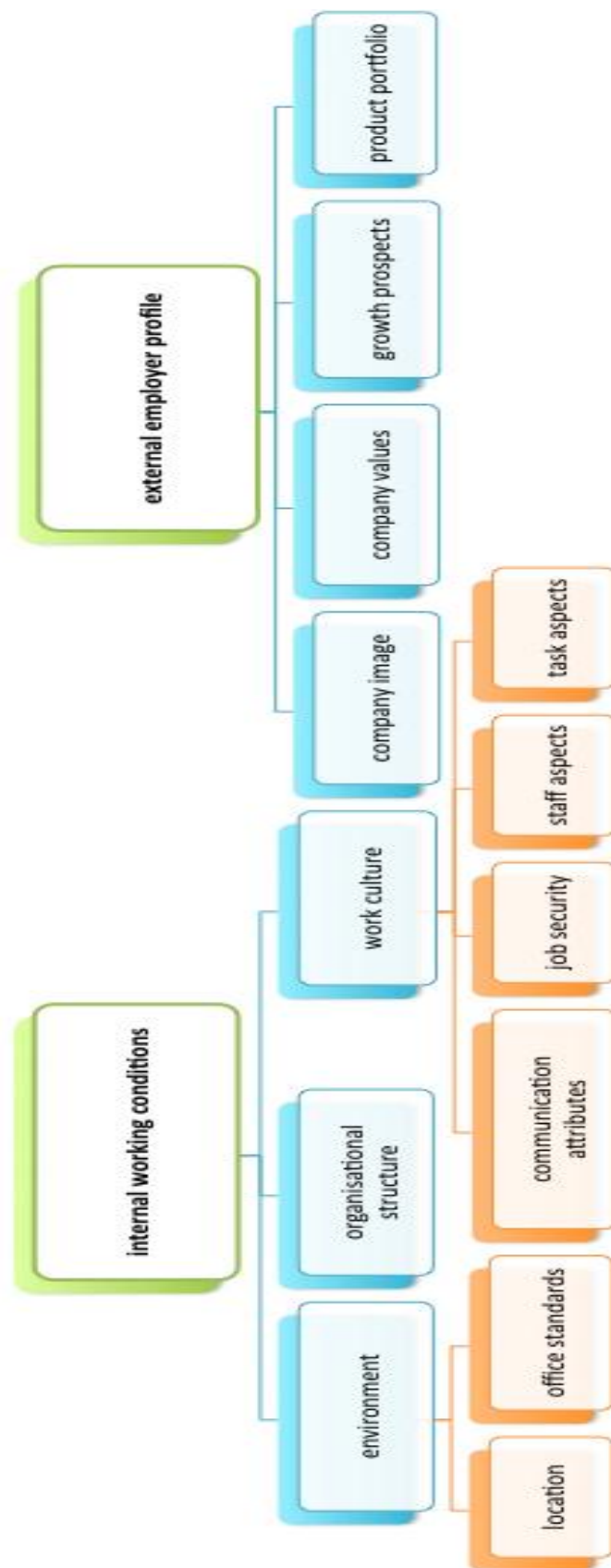
5.0. Communication system on review website

Conducing the content analysis of both existing reviews and conducted interviews shed light on how review website has its own unique environment. On one hand, it has a higher complexity due to the long-term temporalization of communication that often results in information overload (Van Dijk, 2013), which proves both hypothesis 1 and 2:

H1: The more content, the more variations

H2: The more variations, the higher the system complexity

What is meant by long-term temporalization is that everything that has been communicated is saved and therefore can form new relations between one another at a later time. Moreover, the communication that is being archived does not necessarily have to be relevant when trying to form an understanding about a company's workplace. It can be outdated or unclear causing more confusion than meaning. However, the increased complexity can be reduced by filtering only a desired part of the communication on the website. This is normally achieved on similar communication mediums through filter options as well as simplified category system. Therefore, forming a categorization system for review websites would serve as an important tool to reduce complexity of the review system and decrease the possibility of misinterpretation.

Apart from the lack of categorization system, there are many other aspects of online review communication system that have been noticed to be different in comparison to the offline communication system and that could create further complications when trying to convey a meaning.

On the other hand, the unique communication environment on the website often relies upon the system of Face-to-face communication. With lack of any kind of similarity to the offline communication, the review website would not evoke enough trust and

openness to sustain itself. It would not be understandable for the people that come from an environment based on Face-to-face communication system. However, the reviews, which convey personal opinions and are therefore filled with social presence, own identity or cultural capital, can make the communication have a familiar feeling of a Face-to-face communication.

On the other hand, online communication differs significantly from Face-to-face communication in the sense that it is not instantaneous in relation to interaction and it is short. The messages that are being uploaded onto the website provide no need for instant reply. Often the interaction on such review websites is very limited. On kununu.at the reviews can only be liked or shared by the reader or commented on by the reviewed company itself. However, these are only optional and therefore some reviewers might never know if their opinion was ever read and understood. In relation to that, Jan van Dijk (2013) mentions in his analysis of Network society that the discussions that happen online, occur in many mediums but last shorter (Jan van Dijk, 2013). So due to the many possibilities within an online communication environment, the attention span has to be shortened in order to cope with the amount of complexity of the environment. The KISS principle, which has been developed by the US Navy in the 60s, applies quite well to the way the communication is constructed online. „Keep it short and simple" (cited in Schönbach, 2009) a variation of the original KISS acronym, describes how the communication is being constructed online. Due to online communication environment's higher complexity the messages have to be short and simple. This way the system can deal with the nowadays-short attention span of the users and be open enough, convey clear meaning for people from other environments.

VIII. Conclusion

Communication online is a very complex system that intertwines a lot of different aspects of offline communication that is normally taken for granted, such as trust or authenticity. The online communication environment brings such issues more light despite offline communication having them too. Each component of the online communication is being repeatedly analyzed and compared to the offline system of communication. This is inevitable as both communication environments often intersect with one another. People from an offline communication environment have to interact with the computer to be able to interact with another human being that might be coming from another environment of communication. This poses already the first difference as in a personal face-to-face communication there is no additional barrier or rather steps to communicate.

Moreover, if it comes to the holistic analysis of the review communication system, the main issue that arises here is the relative openness of the system. Anybody from another environment can enter the system. This can cause misunderstanding when selecting the meaning of a review message, or when creating one.

An interesting analogy could be hypothesized when the review system would be created on the basis of Facebook's communication system. If the review website was formed more as a semi closed community where the people know each other better, their identities and commonly shared values, where there was more opportunity for follow up questions, the review website would have a better mechanism for transcribing reality into virtuality. However, this would require more motivation from the side of the community members as well as would lose the anonymity that often makes the user's brave enough to post their opinion.

However, the complexity can be reduced through the construction of a categorization system that helps to form a common system understanding and meaning. The two main categories that prevailed throughout the analysis were *external employer profile* and *internal working conditions*. Each having their own subcategories, external employer profile diversified into: company image, company values, growth prospects and product portfolio, whereas internal working conditions into: environment (physical aspects) and work culture (social aspects). Nevertheless, creating a categorization for such complex communication system was not fully successful and might not be able to be formed in a very precise manner, which proves the third hypothesis that the higher the complexity, the smaller chance for a formation of a detailed categorization system. However, applying further research, larger sample number might result in more detailed categorization system.

Nevertheless, without any kind of categorization system, the communication on the review website would be to complex and lack common ground to be understood.

IX. Limitations

The main limitations of the research were it's time and budget constrains. In order to yield with a more detailed category system, a more experimental research methodology should be applied, which would increase the validity of the research. Moreover, sampling reviews from various industries and analyzing them could provide a more holistic analysis of the general communication system existing on review website. Therefore, the methodology of this research could be expanded and used for other review environments.

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XI. Figures, Tables, Charts and Pictures index

XII. Appendices

Appendix 1. Pilot coding 1 comparison

Code	Original user statement	Keywords Coder1	Keywords Coder 2
A/1/2/1	Sehr großes Interesse, dass es den Mitarbeitern gut geht und gefördert werden.	managers intentions/support	employee development
A/1/2/2	Sehr offener, ehrlicher und verständnisvoller Umgang	managers leadership style/behavior	interaction
A/1/2/3	Im Verkauf geht es ums verkaufen, nicht mehr und nicht weniger	tasks diversity	task flexibility
A/1/2/4	Sehr gute Ausbildung für den Verkauf.	employee development	employee development
A/1/2/5	Abgesehen von verkaufen, sind die Aufgaben nicht sehr vielseitig	tasks diversity	work dynamic
A/1/2/6	Sehr gute Ausstattung der Außendienstmitarbeiter!	office standards/equipment	equipment
A/1/2/7	Man erhält eine sehr gute Einschulung und Ausstattung	employee development and office standards	working conditions
A/1/2/8	Die besten Voraussetzungen den Job erfolgreich durchzuführen	job atmosphere	working conditions
A/1/2/9	Ich habe von meinen Vorgesetzten stets Unterstützung erhalten	managers leadership style/behavior	management support
A/1/3/10	Als Aussendienstmitarbeiter im Verkauf muss einem die Taetigkeit im Verkauf und im Aussendienst gefallen und man sollte ca. wissen auf was man sich einlaesst. Sonst nuetzt die beste Firma nichts	requirements of the job	requirement for the job
A/2/4/1	leistungsfreundliches Klima	work atmosphere	working conditions
A/2/4/2	hoher Grad an Identifikation der Mitarbeiter mit dem Unternehmen	company identity	identification with company
A/2/4/3	innovativ	company attributes	dynamics
A/3/4/1	Es klingt zwar kitschig, aber HEROLD ist eine Familie	work atmosphere	corporate community

A/3/4/2	Loyalität, Unterstützung und Aufmerksamkeit stehen an oberster Stelle	personnel values	staff characteristics
A/3/5/3	Selbst ein sehr kritischer Mensch, sehe ich in dieser Firma eine wahnsinnige	staff attributes	staff scope
A/3/5/4	Entwicklung und einen enormen Zusammenhalt	work relations, personal development	staff characteristics
A/3/5/5	BEACHTENSWERT: auch wenn du denkst, dir kann nicht geholfen werden (Probleme, Motivation) - ich bin noch nie ohne Lösung aus einem Gespräch gegangen.	leadership style/managers support	staffs' problem solving
A/3/5/6	Herold ist Arbeitgeber, Familie, Freund, enger Vertrauter und manchmal sogar Psychologe	company profile	employer profile
A/3/5/7	Leider sind vorallem im Verkauf die zu erreichenden Zahlen keine Leichtigkeit sondern eher eine Herausforderung.	tasks/ expectations	employer expectations
A/3/5/8	Schaffbar auf jeden Fall, aber nur mit Ehrgeiz, Diszipling und Geduld mit sich selbst.	employee characteristics	staff characteristics
A/3/5/9	1. Mehr Kontakt zu den einzelnen Bundesländern, denn nur zusammen ist man stark!	communication	communication and interaction
A/4/6/1	Gute Firma - top Produkt	company profile	identification with company
A/4/6/2	schlechte Firmenpolitik... immer: mehr! mehr! mehr	employer expectations/ workload policy	company policy
A/4/6/3	Deshalb hohe Flugtuation!	employee fluctuation	employee fluctuation
A/5/6/1	Ich bin seit knapp 4 Jahren im Unternehmen und wusste zu jeder Zeit, was mein Vorgesetzter von mir erwartet.	employer/employee communication	task clarity
A/5/6/2	Konflikte wurden konstruktiv gelöst, Probleme und Befindlichkeiten ernst genommen.	managers support	conflict management

A/5/7/3	Sei es als Verkäufer oder als Manager, ein gemeinsames Miteinander wird bei HEROLD gelebt und fördert das Erreichen der Umsatzziele	work relations/ corporate relations	corporate community
A/5/7/4	Neue Produkte bringen neue Herausforderungen, denen ich mich aber immer gerne gestellt habe	challenges/ task diversity	work dynamic
A/5/7/5	Sicherlich gibt es das eine oder andere, was nicht passt, im Großen und Ganzen herrscht aber eine positive Arbeitsatmosphäre	work atmosphere	working atmosphere
A/5/7/6	Die Kommunikation ist bei so einem großen Unternehmen nicht immer effektiv, da sehr viele Abteilungen immer miteinbezogen werden, aber ich habe noch nie länger als 24h auf einen Rückruf von meinen Kollegen bzw. von meinen Vorgesetzten gewartet.	corporate communication efficiency	communication
A/5/7/7	Respektvoll und Wertschätzend beschreibt den Umgang mit Kollegen 45+ ganz gut	work relations/ corporate relations	employee respect
A/5/7/8	HEROLD ist immer wieder auf der Suche nach Marktnischen und kreiert dazu die passenden Produkte.	company profile	company development
A/5/7/9	Der Dialog wird, trotz der Größe des Unternehmens, mit jedem gesucht, sei es Lehrling, Verkäufer, Innendienst, Praktikant oder Manager.	corporate communication	communication and interaction
A/6/8/1	Kommunikation ist ein Fremdwort - ein Rückruf kann Wochen dauern	corporate communication efficiency	communication
A/6/8/2	es sind wenig Kapitäne am Ruder - Führungskräfte sind in diesem Unternehmen in einem unglaublichen Anzahl vorhanden	leadership efficiency	leadership

A/6/8/3	ungeschult und alleingelassen wird zu lasten der Mitarbeiter und Kunden in der Gegend herumgerudert	managers leadership style/behavior	leadership
A/6/8/4	offensichtliche Fehlentscheidungen werden in so einem Konzern durchgeboxt	leadership style/behavior	decision making
A/6/8/5	ohne Kontakt zu den Verkäufern und zum Kunden verliert man schnell den Bodenkontakt.	corporate communication	interaction
A/6/9/6	Es gibt keine Gebietsaufteilung bei Stamm und Neukunden	task/client management	client base
A/6/9/7	Welchen Kunden man im nächsten Jahr bekommt bestimmen kleine Innendienst Mitarbeiter	task/client management	client base
A/6/9/8	Viele Kunden werden billig am Telefon im Folgejahr kontaktiert	corporate communication	client treatment
A/6/9/9	Trotz allem halten Aussendienstmitarbeiter zusammen.	work relations/ corporate relations	communication and interaction
A/6/9/10	mangelhaft	office standards/equipment	facility
A/6/9/11	Hatte hervorragend verdient - jedoch das sinkende Schiff nach 15 Jahren verlassen.	reward/salary	employee dissatisfaction
A/6/9/12	Sozialleistungen - nein!	benefits	employee dissatisfaction
A/6/9/13	Telefonbücher dürfte es nicht mehr geben.	corporate sustainability	sustainability
A/6/9/14	Nach 15 Jahren erschrecken mangelhaft Herold ist aus meiner Sicht ein tot gerittenes Pferd.	company profile	company development
A/6/9/15	1. Weniger Manager - Verkäuferanzahl halbieren und die Verbleibenden hervorragend belohnen	management hierarchy	employee expectation
A/6/9/16	Sich von einigen Produkten verabschieden	company product portfolio	product portfolio
A/6/9/17	Glasklare Kommunikation nach innen und aussen	corporate communication	communication
A/7/11/1	Großes, soziales und innovatives Unternehmen	company attributes	company policy

A/8/12/1	Im Großen und Ganzen dürfen wir uns nicht beschweren	managers leadership style/behavior	employee satisfaction
A/8/12/2	Sie gehen sehr gut mit uns um.	managers leadership style/behavior	employee satisfaction
A/8/12/3	Wir sind ein Zahlenorientiertes unternehmen und deshalb werden auch öfters Maßnahmen getroffen die für den Mitarbeiter nicht so überzeugt sind.	company identity/ policies	employee dissatisfaction
A/8/13/4	Man wird sehr unterstützt von den Kollegen	work relations/colleagues support	communication and interaction
A/8/13/5	Nur leider gibt es wie in jeder großen Firma schnell gerede.	corporate communication	communication and interaction
A/8/13/6	Dadurch das man als Vertreter nicht oft im Büro ist es wirklich in Ordnung.	office standards/equipment	facility
A/8/13/7	Ich persönlich bin ausgeglichen. Man darf sich nur nicht alles zu Herzen nehmen dann ist das kein Problem.	workload	employee satisfaction
A/9/13/1	gutes Klima verbunden mit tollen Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten	work atmosphere, e.g. employee development	working atmosphere
A/9/14/2	Ein solides Unternehmen, welches sich mit Innovativen Produkten seinen Kunden einen Marktvorteil verschafft.	company attributes	company performance
A/10/14/1	HEROLD fast perfekt	company attributes	company characteristics
A/10/14/2	nahezu alles	company attributes	company characteristics
A/10/15/3	Adaptierung der Räumlichkeiten, Mitarbeiterevents, Kick Off	employee development, employee support,	required adaptations

Appendix 2. Pilot coding 2

Code	Original user statement	Keywords Coder1	Keywords Coder 2
A/1/2/1	Sehr großes Interesse, dass es den Mitarbeitern gut geht und gefördert werden.	support from supervisor	support from supervisor
A/1/2/2	Sehr offener, ehrlicher und verständnisvoller Umgang	supervisor behavior	treatment from supervisor
A/1/2/3	Im Verkauf geht es ums verkaufen, nicht mehr und nicht weniger	task diversity	task diversity
A/1/2/4	Sehr gute Ausbildung für den Verkauf.	employee development	employee development
A/1/2/5	Abgesehen von verkaufen, sind die Aufgaben nicht sehr vielseitig	task diversity	task diversity
A/1/2/6	Sehr gute Ausstattung der Außendienstmitarbeiter!	office equipment	office equipment
A/1/2/7	Man erhält eine sehr gute Einschulung und Ausstattung	employee support	employee support
A/1/2/8	Die besten Voraussetzungen den Job erfolgreich durchzuführen	working conditions	working conditions
A/1/2/9	Ich habe von meinen Vorgesetzten stets Unterstützung erhalten	support from supervisor	support from supervisor
A/1/3/10	Als Aussendienstmitarbeiter im Verkauf muss einem die Taetigkeit im Verkauf und im Aussendienst gefallen und man sollte ca. wissen auf was man sich einlaesst. Sonst nuetzt die beste Firma nichts	job requirements	job requirements
A/2/4/1	leistungsfreundliches Klima	internal environment	internal environment
A/2/4/2	hoher Grad an Identifikation der Mitarbeiter mit dem Unternehmen	identification with company	identification with company
A/2/4/3	innovativ	company attributes	company attributes

A/3/4/1	Es klingt zwar kitschig, aber HEROLD ist eine Familie	work atmosphere	corporate community
A/3/4/2	Loyalität, Unterstützung und Aufmerksamkeit stehen an oberster Stelle	employee values	employee values
A/3/5/3	Selbst ein sehr kritischer Mensch, sehe ich in dieser Firma eine wahnsinnige	employee characteristics	employee characteristics
A/3/5/4	Entwicklung und einen enormen Zusammenhalt	employee development	employee relation
A/3/5/5	BEACHTENSWERT: auch wenn du denkst, dir kann nicht geholfen werden (Probleme, Motivation) - ich bin noch nie ohne Lösung aus einem Gespräch gegangen.	employee relations	employee relation
A/3/5/6	Herold ist Arbeitgeber, Familie, Freund, enger Vertrauter und manchmal sogar Psychologe	employer profile	employer profile
A/3/5/7	Leider sind vorallem im Verkauf die zu erreichenden Zahlen keine Leichtigkeit sondern eher eine Herausforderung.	employee responsibilities	employee responsibilities
A/3/5/8	Schaffbar auf jeden Fall, aber nur mit Ehrgeiz, Diszipling und Geduld mit sich selbst.	employee characteristics	employee characteristics
A/3/5/9	1. Mehr Kontakt zu den einzelnen Bundesländern, denn nur zusammen ist man stark!	inter-departmental communication	communication
A/4/6/1	Gute Firma - top Produkt	company image	image
A/4/6/2	schlechte Firmenpolitik... immer: mehr! mehr! mehr	performance expectation	performance expectation
A/4/6/3	Deshalb hohe Flugtuation!	employee fluctuation	employee fluctuation

A/5/6/1	Ich bin seit knapp 4 Jahren im Unternehmen und wusste zu jeder Zeit, was mein Vorgesetzter von mir erwartet.	departmental communication	communication
A/5/6/2	Konflikte wurden konstruktiv gelöst, Probleme und Befindlichkeiten ernst genommen.	support from supervisor	support from supervisor
A/5/7/3	Sei es als Verkäufer oder als Manager, ein gemeinsames Miteinander wird bei HEROLD gelebt und fördert das Erreichen der Umsatzziele	employee relations	employee relation
A/5/7/4	Neue Produkte bringen neue Herausforderungen, denen ich mich aber immer gerne gestellt habe	task diversity	employee responsibility
A/5/7/5	Sicherlich gibt es das eine oder andere, was nicht passt, im Großen und Ganzen herrscht aber eine positive Arbeitsatmosphäre	internal environment	internal environment
A/5/7/6	Die Kommunikation ist bei so einem großen Unternehmen nicht immer effektiv, da sehr viele Abteilungen immer miteinbezogen werden, aber ich habe noch nie länger als 24h auf einen Rückruf von meinen Kollegen bzw. von meinen Vorgesetzten gewartet.	inter-departmental communication	communication
A/5/7/7	Respektvoll und Wertschätzend beschreibt den Umgang mit Kollegen 45+ ganz gut	employee relations	employee relations
A/5/7/8	HEROLD ist immer wieder auf der Suche nach Marktnischen und kreiert dazu die passenden Produkte.	company development	company development

A/5/7/9	Der Dialog wird, trotz der Größe des Unternehmens, mit jedem gesucht, sei es Lehrling, Verkäufer, Innendienst, Praktikant oder Manager.	inter-departmental communication	communication
A/6/8/1	Kommunikation ist ein Fremdwort - ein Rückruf kann Wochen dauern	managers communication attributes	communication
A/6/8/2	es sind wenig Kapitäne am Ruder - Führungskräfte sind in diesem Unternehmen in einem unglaublichen Anzahl vorhanden	supervisor efficiency	supervisor efficiancy
A/6/8/3	ungeschult und alleingelassen wird zu lasten der Mitarbeiter und Kunden in der Gegend herumgerudert	supervisor behavior	supervisor behaviour
A/6/8/4	offensichtliche Fehlentscheidungen werden in so einem Konzern durchgeboxt	supervisor behavior	supervisor behaviour
A/6/8/5	ohne Kontakt zu den Verkäufern und zum Kunden verliert man schnell den Bodenkontakt.	customer communication	communication
A/6/9/6	Es gibt keine Gebietsaufteilung bei Stamm und Neukunden	employee responsibilities	employee responsibilities (task allocation)
A/6/9/7	Welchen Kunden man im nächsten Jahr bekommt bestimmen kleine Innendienst Mitarbeiter	employee responsibilities	employee responsibilities
A/6/9/8	Viele Kunden werden billig am Telefon im Folgejahr kontaktiert	customer communication	communication
A/6/9/9	Trotz allem halten Aussendienstmitarbeiter zusammen.	employee relations	employee relations
A/6/9/10	mangelhaft	office standards	office standards

A/6/9/11	Hatte hervorragend verdient - jedoch das sinkende Schiff nach 15 Jahren verlassen.	compensation	compensation
A/6/9/12	Sozialleistungen - nein!	compensation	compensation
A/6/9/13	Telefonbücher dürfte es nicht mehr geben.	corporate social responsibility	corporate social responsibility
A/6/9/14	Nach 15 Jahren erschrecken mangelhaft Herold ist aus meiner Sicht ein tot gerittenes Pferd.	company image	corporate image
A/6/9/15	1. Weniger Manager - Verkäuferanzahl halbieren und die Verbleibenden hervorragend belohnen	hierarchy	hierarchy
A/6/9/16	Sich von einigen Produkten verabschieden	product portfolio	product portfolio
A/6/9/17	Glasklare Kommunikation nach innen und aussen	product portfolio	product portfolio
A/7/11/1	Großes, soziales und innovatives Unternehmen	company attributes	company attributes
A/8/12/1	Im Großen und Ganzen dürfen wir uns nicht beschweren	supervisor behavior	supervisor behaviour
A/8/12/2	Sie gehen sehr gut mit uns um.	supervisor behavior	supervisor behaviour
A/8/12/3	Wir sind ein Zahlenorientiertes unternehmen und deshalb werden auch öfters Maßnahmen getroffen die für den Mitarbeiter nicht so überzeugt sind.	supervisor behavior	supervisor behaviour
A/8/13/4	Man wird sehr unterstützt von den Kollegen	employee relations	employee relations
A/8/13/5	Nur leider gibt es wie in jeder großen Firma schnell gerede.	employees communication attributes	communication
A/8/13/6	Dadurch das man als Vertreter nicht oft im Büro ist es wirklich in Ordnung.	office standards	office standards

A/8/13/7	Ich persönlich bin ausgeglichen. Man darf sich nur nicht alles zu Herzen nehmen dann ist das kein Problem.	working conditions	working conditions
A/9/13/1	gutes Klima verbunden mit tollen Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten	employee development	employee development and internal environement
A/9/14/2	Ein solides Unternehmen, welches sich mit Innovativen Produkten seinen Kunden einen Marktvorteil verschafft.	company attributes	company attributes
A/10/14/1	HEROLD fast perfekt	company image	company image
A/10/14/2	nahezu alles	company attributes	company attributes
A/10/15/3	Adaptierung der Räumlichkeiten, Mitarbeiterevents, Kick Off	office standards	office standards and corporate culture

Appendix 3 – Full coding frame

Company	Review number	Code	User defined category	original user statement	paraphrasing	Keyword	Main category	1st Level Subcategory	2nd Level Subcategory	3rd Level Subcategory
Herlod (A)	Review 1	A/1/2/2	Vorgesetztenverhalten	Sehr offener, ehrlicher und verständnisvoller Umgang	good and fair behavior of managers	departmental communication	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
Herlod (A)	Review 3	A/3/5/9	Verbesserungsvorschläge	1. Mehr Kontakt zu den einzelnen Bundesländern, denn nur zusammen ist man stark!	strengthen the contact	inter-departmental communication	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
Herlod (A)	Review 5	A/5/6/1	Vorgesetztenverhalten	Ich bin seit knapp 4 Jahren im Unternehmen und wusste zu jeder Zeit, was mein Vorgesetzter von mir erwartet.	clear communication between employees and managers	departmental communication	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
Herlod (A)	Review 5	A/5/7/6	Arbeitsbedingungen (Räume, ...)	Die Kommunikation ist bei so einem großen Unternehmen nicht immer effektiv, da sehr viele Abteilungen immer miteinbezogen werden, aber ich habe noch nie länger als 24h auf einen Rückruf von meinen Kollegen bzw. von meinen Vorgesetzten gewartet.	communication is not always effective	inter-departmental communication	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
Herlod (A)	Review 5	A/5/7/9	Pro	Der Dialog wird, trotz der Größe des Unternehmens, mit jedem gesucht, sei es Lehrling, Verkäufer, Innendienst, Praktikant oder Manager.	good interpersonal communication	inter-departmental communication	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
Herlod (A)	Review 6	A/6/8/1	Vorgesetztenverhalten	Kommunikation ist ein Fremdwort - ein Rückruf kann Wochen dauern	bad communication	managers communication attributes	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
Herlod (A)	Review 6	A/6/8/5	Vorgesetztenverhalten	ohne Kontakt zu den Verkäufern und zum Kunden verliert man schnell den Bodenkontakt.	lack of communication to the customers	customer communication	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	

Herlod (A)	Review 6	A/6/9/8	Kollegenzusammenhalt	Viele Kunden werden billig am Telefon im Folgejahr kontaktiert	customer communication	customer communication	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
Herlod (A)	Review 8	A/8/13/5	Kollegenzusammenhalt	Nur leider gibt es wie in jeder großen Firma schnell gerede.	gossip	employees communication attributes	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
ORF (B)	Review 3	B/3/2/3	Kommunikation	Wenn st als Mitarbeiter wissen willst, was im Unternehmen läuft schaust am besten im Online-Standard nach :-[	as an employee if you want to know what is going on in the company just look online	internal communication	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
ORF (B)	Review 3	B/3/3/9	Contra	Zu wenig Selbstbewusst sein gegenüber anderen Abteilungen - wir sorgen fürs Programm nicht die Administration, die uns die Vorschriften macht/machen will !	the department lacks self-confidence in comparison to other departments especial the one of administration which has too much to say	inter-departmental communication	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
ORF (B)	Review 5	B/5/3/3	Kommunikation	mehrmals täglich Besprechungen	more than one meeting a day	internal communication	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
ORF (B)	Review 6	B/6/4/3	Contra	Arbeitsklima, Räumlichkeiten, interne Kommunikation, Gleichberechtigung	work atmosphere, office space, internal communication, equality	departmental communication	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
ORF (B)	Review 9	B/9/4/1	n.a.	Mehr Sicherheit für Freie Mehr Karrierechancen Klarheit für Angestellte	more security, more oportunities to make a career, clarity for employees	departmental communication	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
ORF (B)	Review 9	B/9/4/2	Verbesserungsvorschläge	1. Mehr Sicherheit für Freie 2. Mehr Karrierechancen Klarheit für Angestellte	more security, more oportunities to make a career, clarity for employees	departmental communication	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes	
Krone (C)	Review 10	C/10/4/1	Kommentar	abwechslungsreich, am puls der zeit, niemals langweilig, ständig neue herausforderungen, kommunikativ	diverse tasks, never boring, always new challenges and good communication	employees communication attributes	internal working	work culture	communication attributes	

Krone (C)	Review 4	C/4/2/10	Contra	Keine Sozialleistunge n (Bonuszahlung en, Krankenstand) , da keine fixe Anstellung, einige Führungskräft e schlecht ausgebildet (legen kein Führungsverh alten an den Tag), Einschulungsp hase (1 Woche) wird nicht bezahlt, fehlende Kommunikatio n und Information, sehr hohe Fluktuation an Mitarbeitern (vor allem bei	no social benefits, executives lack training, one week of unpaid probation, lack of communicatio n and information, high employees rotation	employees communicatio n attributes	internal working conditions	work culture	communication attributes
Krone (C)	Review 5	C/5/3/4	Contra	abteilungsübe rgreifende Kommunikatio n könnte besser sein, Mitarbeiterev ents (leider) eine Seltenheit, aber wenn diese stattfinden, legendär! :)	cross-departamental communicatio n needs improvement, lack of employee events	inter-departmental communicatio n	internal working conditions	work culture	communicatio n attributes
Krone (C)	Review 7	C/7/3/1	Verbesserungs vorschläge	1. mitarbeiter sozialleistunge n angemessen bezahlen bzw. vertraglich regeln 2. überstunden ausbezahlen 3. interne kommunikatio n verbessern	improve social benefits, work contracts, pay overtime, internal communicatio n	employees communicatio n attributes	internal workin	work culture	communication attributes

Appendix 4. Interview transcripts and coding frame

A) Interview Barba	Questions	Answers	Keywords	Code
A1	Are you familiar with the concept of online reviews?	Yes I am, I read often product reviews before I buy something. I look at pro and contra, what others said about the value for money. I find review very practical.	pratical	
A2	Would you take a review into consideration before you formed your own opinion?	It depends from the situation. If I had a few options lined up, then I would take work-place reviews into consideration. However, with the nowadays job market, I guess I would have to take what comes.	would take into consideration depending on the situation	take into consideration
A3	What is important for you at job?	I find working conditions, the environment very important. Also if I can understand myself well with my colleagues. The team has to fit. It would be ideal if the job would also be fun, because if I do something I hate, nothing will be able to make it better. Of course pay is important but for me mostly the team, the environment, where I am being valued and treated with respect. Moreover, I would like the job tasks to be diversified, feel promoted to do new things, not too boring.	working conditions, relationship with colleagues, interesting and diverse tasks, salary, fair treatment	working conditions
A3				co-workers relationships
A3				task diversity
A3				treatment
A3				salary

A4	What are the important physiological and immaterial characteristics at your current or future workplace?	As mentioned before, the atmosphere has to fit, the team and relations between colleagues. It's important to me to feel respected but also valued and given opportunities to develop myself.	the relationship with the colleagues, feel respected, development opportunities	co-workers relationships
A4				development opportunities
A4				treatment
A5	What are the important physical and material characteristics at your current or future workplace?	To be honest I haven't thought about it that much. But if it comes to some physical aspects of the job, it would be nice if there was enough light and fresh light at the work place, a good desk I	bright working space, good facilities (desk).	office facilities
A5				office attributes
A6	What information you are looking for when you make your decision about applying to a specific company?	I would look at the task area, whether it's something that interests me. If the pay fits, the working hours, if I can estimate what exactly I would be doing at that job.	task diversity, payment, working hours, job description	task diversity
A6				salary
A6				working hours
A6				job description
A7	What do you think others would want to read in a review?	If the pay is sufficient, and fair, the work location, the general conditions. The more detailed information in a review the better. But if its too long, or doesn't interests me I skip to the next one.	fair salary, location of the office, general conditions. The more details the better	salary
A7				location
A7				working conditions

A8- follow up ques	Would do you prefer Face to face or reviews	If I had the chance to ask somebody I know about the job I'm applying for then definitely face- to - face because you can ask them questions about stuff that interest you the most. You don't need to blindly rely on the Information written in a review, with which you can't always identify yourself with. In a face-to-face conversation you don't have this trust issue because whatever you might not understand you can always ask to be clarified. However, if I had no time to search for a person to that had experience with a particular company, and because I am mostly a shy person I would probably anyway go on review sites first to make up my mind.	prefer face-to-face because there is not trust issue but due to time constrains and the ease, reviews are preferred	
B) Interview Michael				
B1	Are you familiar with the concept of online reviews?	Yes, I've read some	yes	
B2	Would you take a review into consideration before you formed your own opinion?	Not always, some I feel I can believe and some I can't. If they reflect my thoughts then I feel like they confirm what I felt.	it depends whether they reflect similar thoughts	take into consideration

B3	What is important for you at job?	I need some space to develop, I need challenge. I want to be able to decide myself what I can do. The team is very important for me, because you can have very interesting tasks but if the people you work with don't fit then it masks the good sides of the job. It has to be flexible and fair. The employer has to be tolerant to you and your work-life balance.	challenge, development possibilities, good team work, tolerant employer, flexible and fair job environment	development opportunities
B3				co-workers relationships
B3				treatment
B3				task diversity
B3				working hours
B4	What are the important physiological and immaterial characteristics at your current or future workplace?	I need the team to be social, have some social event outside of work, where we don't always talk about work but care about the person that are in front of me, to have a good personal relationship with the team. Generally speaking social contact. I need to feel like I'm in a family, especially the boss has to motivate and makes us feel welcome.	social aspects, co-workers relationship, family atmosphere, supervisors behavior is important	co-workers relationships
B4				working culture
B4				supervisor's competences

B5	What are the important physical and material characteristics at your current or future workplace?	I need a clean office, some sunlight and fresh air, not just air conditioning. Some nice view, because I need to be able to look away from my screen sometimes and relax my eyes. I need a good functioning computer and unrestricted Internet, where I can access Facebook. Also would be great to have a kitchen to be able to sometimes bring your own food. As well as have a 100% non-smoking environment.	clean and bright office, fresh air, non-smoking. Functioning facilities, such as computer, Internet, Kitchen.	office attributes
B5				office facilities
B6	What information you are looking for when you make your decision about applying to a specific company?	I am looking for the real personal information, true comments, more emotional opinions. For example, if somebody writes I had a problem at a work place and states also the reason for it then I can trust it. I would want to read about both aspects of the job, physical and social but I value more the social aspects because those I can't find out that easily. It's all about knowing how the person feels at work.	true personal opinion, reasoning. Both physical and social aspects, the feeling of the person who worked there	personal opinion
B6				co-workers relationships
B6				working conditions
B6				treatment

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B7	What do you think others would want to read in a review?	People are interested to know how the working conditions really are. The office, how it is, is it old or new, some physical details about it. I think they might also be interested in how they can develop there.	working conditions, office characteristics, development chances	working conditions
B7				development opportunities
B7				office attributes
B8- follow up ques	How do you want it to be structured?	I want it to be structured and to the point, but subjective. Because you are writing the review about how you felt there, preferably in a structured way with a given sections so you have an idea where to start.	to the point, but structured, personal opinion expressed via given sections	
C) Interview Anja				
C1	Are you familiar with the concept of online reviews?	Of course I am familiar with the concept, mostly I started with hostelworld.com review. Work place reviews is a much newer concept to me.	familiar	
C2	Would you take a review into consideration before you formed your own opinion?	I think I would definitely take it into consideration, because what's written there is not normally known publicly, you don't get such information from a public website or in the interview. You know there are many things you wouldn't expect. About how you feel there, if you are discriminated or all kinds of things.	definitely take into consideration, get to know things that aren't know publicly.	take into consideration

C3	What is important for you at job?	What's really important for me is the contact with people, because in media you got to know what the other person is doing, what the main person is doing. I need people around me to feel more accepted. Other important thing would be flexible work hours. Of course the stress in media industry is really tiring therefore support from the managers would be helpful. For example in Krone, there were two main editors, who don't write much themselves but only concentrate on editing the many articles, and I think that's important, that you have a person who you can always turn to.	close contact with people, feeling of acceptance. Flexible work hours, support from the managers, mentor.	co-workers relationships
C3				working hours
C3				supervisor's competences
C4	What are the important physiological and immaterial characteristics at your current or future workplace?	Definitely, first of all feedback. The best way to learn is when you get a feedback as often as possible. I had my own buddy, she showed me everything at the begining, this way very helpful. Other thing, you need to feel accepted, that you fit there. They even relied on me in the complete begining to go to the airport and report about the demonstrations there. You get back as much as you give I guess.	constructive criticism, support, acceptance, freedom and challenge	feedback
C4				development opportunities
C4				working culture

C5	What are the important physical and material characteristics at your current or future workplace?	I definitely need a good computer that I can work on. Because in Presse I had a horribly slow computer, which didn't connect to anything. It is important that you don't have problems with the technical things when you are in time stress, because you go crazy. Material things, it has to be light, it has to be homey. A positive working environment. It would be quite useful to have some cheap food posibilities close to the working place.	good facilities (computer, Internet). Bright office, positive home like atmosphere, dining possibilities	office facilities
C5				office attributes
C6	What information you are looking for when you make your decision about applying to a specific company?	I would like to first to know what kind of people work there, what feeling she or he had about the co-workers. Payment I guess, because in media, especially at the begining it's hard to earn anything. Maybe also the perspectives about future. Because if somebody is writing they hired me but can fire me at any time, this isn't nice. But I care most about personal relationship and some money. If I could be really picky, I would want to work in a place where I can choose my own topics, spend a lot of time on research, where I would have freedom, flexibility and money.	opinion about the co-workers, payment, development chances,security, personal relationships, freedom and flexibility with own tasks.	co-workers relationships
C6				salary
C6				task diversity
C6				job security

C6				development opportunities
C7	What do you think others would want to read in a review?	I think salary, maybe also working times, because I believe many people prefer to have a strickt distinction between work and personal life. Although I think in media thats not that easy to do. But when I think of others, I guess they would want to know how much break they have, or the hierarchy, how quickly you can rise in it as high as possible.	salary, working hours, break, development possibilities	salary
C7				working hours
C7				development opportunities
D) Julia				
D1	Are you familiar with the concept of online reviews?	Yes a little bit	familiar	
D2	Would you take a review into consideration before you formed your own opinion?	Yes of course	would consider them in a decision process	
D3	What is important for you at job?	Flexibility, I think it would be great to have some flexibility in working hours. Then I think, personalisation, that I'm not just anybody, but that I can bring in my own personality, so the relationships between the other journalists and the boss. It would be nice to have a work place where some light comes in, because where I worked you never knew if its day or night, it was really depressing.	flexibility in working hours. Personal approach to employees, relationships between co-workers, bright work space.	working hours
D3				co-workers relationships
D3				treatment

D3				office attributes
D4	What are the important physiological and immaterial characteristics at your current or future workplace?	The relationships with the colleagues and the boss, I think is really really important. The whole climate in the work place. For example, the competition, it's not that good to have too much competition. That everybody is on the same level, and not that the boss is somewhere high up and looks down on you when you talk to him. And that the boss let's you do something, gives you your own responsibilities. Because if you are not responsible for anything, its boring.	the relationship between co-workers and the boss, not too much competition, horizontal communication, responsibilities	co-workers relationships
D4				communication
D4				task diversity
D5	What are the important physical and material characteristics at your current or future workplace?	Own computer, own work desk. Kitchen would be nice, because otherwise you have no possibilities to eat something. To get paid would be great.	good facilities (desk, computer), kitchen, salary	office facilities
D5				salary

D6	What information you are looking for when you make your decision about applying to a specific company?	How many hours you have to work. Then if you have responsibility for anything, what do you actually do at work. I would like to read something about the boss, his behaviour, how he communicates, that would be really interesting. The payment of course, how much do you really get. I would like to know if you just stay at your desk or if you are really able to go outside and do interviews, basically do real journalistic stuff.	working hours, responsibilities, opinion about the behavior and characteristics of the supervisor, salary, task diversity and challenges	working hours
D6				development opportunities
D6				salary
D6				supervisor's competences
D6				task diversity
D7	What do you think others would want to read in a review?	I think for the most people payment is really important and working hours. And maybe the location of the work. For many people it is also important what they are able to do, if they are responsible for anything, own contribution, have challenges, not too much but so that you learn. So many people complain about it, that it was so boring and that they hated it.	salary, working hours, location, acknowledgement, challenges, task diversity	salary
D7				working hours
D7				acknowledgement
D7				task diversity
D7				development opportunities
E) Melanie				

E1	Are you familiar with the concept of online reviews?	Yes, I read reviews sometimes and I wrote myself some, I think its important because other people can inform themselves through them.	familiar, important to share your experience so others can inform themselves	
E2	Would you take a review into consideration before you formed your own opinion?	I would take them into consideration	would consider them in a decision process	
E3	What is important for you at job?	Fair treatment, but also that you get along well with others, the team. Generally, the work climate. I think these are the two most important aspects.	fair treatment, good relationship with co-workers, work atmosphere	treatment
E3				co-workers relationships
E3				working culture
E4	What are the important physiological and immaterial characteristics at your current or future workplace?	So the work atmosphere, the way the colleagues treat you, respect you, not to up tight, direct approach. That you are able to have a good relationship with your colleagues, that you are able to go for lunch with them not just work.it would be good to have a direct one level communication, so that they don't come from up and looks down on you or punishes you if you make a mistake. I prefer rather constructive critics and feedback than just punishment.	work atmosphere, co-workers relationship, respectful treatment. Horizontal and direct communication, feedback	working culture
E4				co-workers relationships
E4				feedback
E4				communication

E5	What are the important physical and material characteristics at your current or future workplace?	I think payment is important but its not the most important thing, because if I would have to go everyday to work which I would hate, I would prefer to get paid less but enjoy what I'm doing. It would be nice to have a nice office space, where I don't have to sit in some kind of cellar like office all the time in front of computer. So change is nice. Job where I can interact with people. A friendly job atmosphere, so nice light place, not so depresive. Kitchen would be a nice addition but its not such a big deal. But for example childcare possibility, some big companies offer that, I think its a good thing.	salary, interesting job, bright office space, facilities (computer),kitchen, interaction possibilities, task diversity, childcare	salary
E5				office attributes
E5				task diversity
E5				benefits
E5				interaction possibilities
E5				office facilities
E6	What information you are looking for when you make your decision about applying to a specific company?	I would want to read the stuff that are important for me, if its fair work place, about the work place atmosphere, how are the colleagues, how are the supervisors, so that you aren't scared of them. So that they are able to tell you what they want from you, of course criticism is also important but constructive. Generally, if the treatment is fair.	work place atmosphere, co-workers relationships, supervisor behavior, feedback, fair treatment	working culture

E6				co-workers relationships
				treatment
		157		feedback
E6				supervisor's competences
E7	What do you think others would want to read in a review?	I guess for many its important how much money they would get, I guess also other additional benefits a work place provides. For example, I saw some work places that offered to pay the fitness studio membership. Maybe also the development possibilities, because that is also motivating. and as mentioned before how the people are at the work place.	salary, other benefits, development posibilities, characteristics of co-workers	salary
E7				benefits
E7				development opportunities
E7				co-workers relationships

XIII. Curriculum vitae

Name:	Pauline Schreuder

Studium: 2011-2013 Universität Wien

Magisterstudium Publizistik und Kommunikationswissenschaft

2007– 2010 Universität Southampton Solent, UK

Bakkalaureus der Medien und Kommunikation

Mai 2010   Abschluss des Studiums an der Universität Southampton Solent

mit BA Hons Second Class-First division

Schule: 2003–2005 The British International School of Prague – IGCSE

Schulabschluss: 2005– 2007   International Baccalaureate (IB) an der 'British International

School of Prague' (6 Lehrfächer inklusive: Polnisch HL und English HL)

Berufliche Tätigkeiten:

Seit Nov. 2013   Multimedia Betriebspraktikum bei OSCE in der Presse and Information Abteilung

Seit Feb. 2013   Marktforschung bei A.C. Nielsen

Seit Sep. 2012   Redaktorin bei UTV- Universitätsfernsehen

Okt.–Dez. 2010   Arbeitsvertrag bei Nestle Polska, in der Marketing Abteilung

Juli–Sept. 2010   Betriebspraktikum bei Nestle Polska in der Marketing Abteilung

Mitarbeit bei Marktforschung und -analyse, sowie beim Relaunch der gesamten Produktpalette. Entwickelung einer neuen Marketingstrategie für kulinarische Produkte; Entwurf neuer Verpackungen; Kommunikation in unterschiedlichen Medien

Dez.–April 2010   Entwicklung einer Aufklärungskampagne für Hampshire Fire and Rescue

Erstellung einer Werbekampagne zur Sicherheit im Straßenverkehr und Vorbereitung eines detaillierten Plans (Report ist verfügbar)

Jan.–April 2009   Event-Promotion für das Musical Moulin Rouge am Itchen College in Southampton

Herstellung und Verbreitung von Werbematerial (wie z. B. von Plakaten, Karten, Reklamezetteln, Websites, Rundfunkwerbung, Presseartikeln.

Österreich, den 31. Dezember 2013

XIV. Abstracts

1.0. Abstract – German

Online-Nutzer tragen maßgeblich zum Wandel der modernen Medienlandschaft bei, in der nutzergenerierte Berichte eine zuverlässige Informationsquelle werden und ein neuartiges, komplexes Kommunikationssystem darstellen. Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht das Wesen dieses Kommunikationssystems, das auch das Phänomen der Bewertungsplattformen von Arbeitsplätzen beinhaltet. Dabei stellt sich die Frage: „inwiefern es möglich ist ein Kategorisierungssystem für das Online-Bewertungsumfeld zu erstellen?" Unter dem Kategorisierungssystem der Arbeitsbewertungsplattformen versteht man die inhaltlichen Hauptcharakteristika, die in einer Arbeitsplatzbewertung gefragt sind. Im Rahmen der Fragenbeantwortung bedient sich diese Arbeit der Luhmann'schen Systemtheorie (Luhmann, 1995), der Theorien der rationalen Medienwahl (Döring, 2003: 131) und anderer relevanter Kommunikationsmodelle sowie der Inhaltsanalyse von existierenden Arbeitsplatzbewertungen und vollzogenen persönlichen Interviews. Die Arbeit kommt zu dem Schluss, dass diese Kommunikationssysteme aufgrund der langfristiger Temporalisierung der Kommunikation eine erhöhte Komplexität aufweisen (wobei jede Bewertung auf dem Medium gespeichert ist) und ihrer Verflochtenheit mit den traditionellen Aspekten der Offline-Kommunikation, die normalerweise als gegeben erachtet werden (in etwa die Authentizität oder das Vertrauen in das Medium).

Darüber hinaus wird die Komplexität durch die Tatsache erhöht, dass die relative Offenheit des Systems die wechselseitigen Beziehungen zwischen den Kommunikationssystemen ermöglicht. Nutzer des einen Systems könnten die Bewertungen, die in einem anderen System entstanden sind, missverstehen. Jedoch kann dieser Komplexität durch die Schaffung eines gemeinschaftlichen Verständigungssystems, das die Kategorisierung vereinheitlicht, entgegengesteuert werden. Die zwei vorherrschenden Kategorien, die in der Bewertung der Analyse dominiert haben, waren das externe Arbeitgeberprofil und die internen Arbeitsplatzkonditionen. Beide Bereiche wurden in Unterkategorien untergeteilt, wobei bei dem externen Arbeitgeberprofil zwischen dem Image des Unternehmens, den Unternehmenswerten, den Wachstumsaussichten und dem Produktportfolio unterschieden wurde, während bei den internen Arbeitsplatzkonditionen zwischen

Arbeitsumgebung (physikalische Aspekte) und Unternehmenskultur (soziale Aspekte) diversifiziert wurde. Nichtsdestotrotz war die Schaffung eines Kategorisierungsprofils für so ein komplexes Kommunikationssystem nicht vollends erfolgreich, wodurch sich die Notwendigkeit der Erforschung dieser Systeme durch weitere experimentellen Methoden ergibt.

2.0. Abstract - English

The online users are those that vastly contribute to the change in the media landscape, where user-generated reviews are becoming a reliable source of information and form a new complex communication system. The research investigates what kind of communication system surrounds the phenomenon of work-place review websites and answers the related question of "to what extent is it possible to form a categorization system for online review communication environment". The categorization system for review websites is defined as the main content characteristics desired in a workplace review. The research answers the questions through a theoretical analysis using Luhmann's system theory (Luhmann, 1995), Rational Media Choice theory summarized by Döring (2003: 131) and other relevant communication models, as well as content analysis of existing work- place reviews and conducted personal interviews. It finds that this particular online communication system has an increased complexity due to long-term temporalization of communication (each review is saved on the medium), and intertwines many aspects of the offline communication, which normally are taken for granted such as trust or authenticity. Moreover, the complexity is being increased due to the relative openness of the system, allowing for various environments to interrelate. People coming from one environment might misunderstand reviews written in another environment. However, the complexity can be reduced through the construction of a categorization system that helps to form a common system understanding and meaning. The two main categories that prevailed throughout the analysis were *external employer profile* and *internal working conditions*. Each having their own subcategories, external employer profile diversified into: company image, company values, growth prospects and product portfolio, whereas internal working conditions into: environment (physical aspects) and work culture (social aspects). Nevertheless, creating a categorization for such complex communication system was not fully successful and needs to be examined further through other more experimental research methods.