

SHOWMETHESUSHI.NL

An online marketing strategy for Utrecht's online  
sushi restaurant's guide

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# Management Summary

This study provides an online marketing strategy for the online sushi restaurant guide [showmethesushi.nl](http://showmethesushi.nl). This website will include and review all sushi restaurants in Utrecht by means of a star rating system and textual commentaries of both the website owner and visitors. People do not want to spend much time searching for a handy website to compare sushi restaurants in Utrecht. Therefore this online marketing strategy needs to make sure it sets the website apart from competitors and enables the target audience to find the website quickly.

The research contained a survey with both open and closed questions that was conducted among the target audience; people who like sushi between 15 and 45 years old. In addition, interviews with the owners of the online restaurant guides [Eet.nu](http://Eet.nu), [Dinnersite.nl](http://Dinnersite.nl) and [Couverts.nl](http://Couverts.nl) were conducted. Lastly, an extensive competitor analysis was done of competitors [Eet.nu](http://Eet.nu), [Dinnersite.nl](http://Dinnersite.nl), [Couverts.nl](http://Couverts.nl), [lens.nl](http://lens.nl), [Yelp.nl](http://Yelp.nl) and [TripAdvisor.nl](http://TripAdvisor.nl). The website was analyzed and special attention was paid to the online marketing tools they use and their Unique Selling Points to determine their strengths and weaknesses.

Different marketing strategy models were applied to the online marketing strategy. The SOSTAC model by Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2009) was used as an overall strategy process model to provide a clear overview of the recommendations. In addition, a SWOT analysis (Kotler, 2012) was made of the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The Social Technographical Model (Li & Bernoff, 2008) was applied in the survey and the results have indicated that the target audience mainly consists of Joiners, Spectators and Critics. The Social Media Ecosystem by Schultz in 2007 (as cited by Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011) helped to analyze the competitor's use of social platforms and to determine what kind of Social Media Ecosystem will help succeed [showmethesushi.nl](http://showmethesushi.nl). Lastly, the Word of Mouth Marketing in online communities model (Kozinets, De Valck et al, 2010) and the Two Step Flow Theory (Two Step Flow Theory, n.d.) served as valuable frameworks while turning research results into recommendations.

The research among the target audience showed that the majority of people between 15 and 45 like having sushi regularly and do make use of online restaurant guides. However, many respondents indicated that they would not make use of a sushi restaurant guide specifically for Utrecht because they do not live near Utrecht. Therefore it is important for [showmethesushi.nl](http://showmethesushi.nl) to extend the reach of the website by including sushi restaurants in other cities in the Netherlands as well.

To distinguish itself from the many competing restaurant guides online, showmethesushi.nl should focus on an easy to use locator of the restaurants as a Unique Selling Point. Competitors do not often focus into detail on the location of restaurants, but many respondents noted that being able to see quickly which restaurant is near them is an important factor for them.

Furthermore, very important is that showmethesushi.nl will create an extensive Social Media Ecosystem. Recommended social media are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Google+ and Pinterest. On these social media share and win actions can be organized to encourage interaction with the audience. In addition, the Social Media Ecosystem should include blogs, newsletters and a forum.

The website itself should be as user-friendly as possible and not be overwhelming. Secondly, making the website personal in use will influence the visitor's decision making behavior positively. Therefore visitors should be able to make a personal profile to interact with others on the website's forum.

Also, it is recommendable that restaurant owners will have a choice between different accounts. This will offer showmethesushi.nl the possibility to earn money, reduce the amount of work and restaurant owners can choose their own way of working with the website.

It is very important that the website will be mobile optimized, since this increases the chance that people will return to the website. In addition, having a mobile application is necessary to keep up with competitors and to increase the user's convenience.

Corporate advertising on search engines and social media is not recommended. Chances are high that a big part of the target audience will not notice these ads due to banner blindness and the use of AdBlock. A more recommendable way of making money is to target people outside of Utrecht as well, this way expand the target audience and consequently attract sponsors.

Finally, in order to succeed it is necessary to track the performance of the website to find out which tools are working and which are not. Therefore tracking the traffic of the website should be done by means of Google Analytics. In addition, Key Performance Indicators such as opening rate and open click rate should be monitored for the newsletters.

# Table of contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Management summary</b> .....   | 2  |
| <b>Table of contents</b> .....  | 4  |
| <b>List of figures</b> .....  | 6  |
| <b>List of tables</b> .....   | 6  |
| <br><b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....  | 7  |
| 1.1 Introduction and background .....   | 7  |
| 1.2 Problem statement.....  | 9  |
| 1.3 Problem definition.....   | 10 |
| 1.4 Operationalization of concepts.....   | 10 |
| 1.4.1 Internet marketing.....   | 11 |
| 1.4.1.1 Web marketing.....  | 11 |
| 1.4.1.2 Email marketing.....  | 12 |
| 1.4.1.3 Social media marketing.....   | 12 |
| 1.4.2 Internet marketing strategy discussions.....  | 12 |
| 1.5 Restrictions to the research.....   | 13 |
| 1.6 Chapter division of the document.....   | 13 |
| <br><b>Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework</b> .....   | 15 |
| 2.1 Introduction.....   | 15 |
| 2.2 Internet marketing strategy models.....   | 15 |
| 2.2.1 The SOSTAC model.....   | 15 |
| 2.2.2 The SWOT analysis.....  | 17 |
| 2.2.3 Two Step Flow Theory.....   | 18 |
| 2.2.4 The Social Technographical model.....   | 19 |
| 2.2.5 The Social Media Ecosystem.....   | 21 |
| 2.2.6 Word of Mouth Marketing in Online Communities.....  | 22 |
| 2.3 Conclusion.....   | 24 |
| <br><b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b> .....   | 25 |
| 3.1 Introduction.....   | 25 |
| 3.2 Desk research.....  | 25 |
| 3.3 Survey.....   | 25 |
| 3.3.1 Limitations to the sample.....  | 27 |
| 3.4 Interviews with the owners of restaurant review websites.....   | 28 |
| 3.5 Competitor analysis.....  | 28 |
| 3.6 Interviews with sushi restaurant owners.....  | 29 |
| <br><b>Chapter 4: Findings and Conclusions</b> .....  | 30 |
| 4.1 Introduction.....   | 30 |
| 4.2 Is there a market for a restaurant review website specifically for sushi restaurants in Utrecht?.....         | 30 |
| 4.2.1 Demographics of the target audience.....  | 30 |
| 4.2.2 Attitude of the target audience towards sushi and restaurant guides.....                                    | 31 |
| 4.3 What are the key success factors for other restaurant review websites in reaching their target audience?..... | 33 |
| 4.3.1 Competitor analysis.....  | 33 |
| 4.3.1.1 Eet.nu.....   | 34 |
| 4.3.1.2 Dinersite.nl.....   | 34 |
| 4.3.1.3 Couverts.nl.....  | 35 |
| 4.3.1.4 lens.nl.....  | 36 |
| 4.3.1.5 Yelp.nl.....  | 37 |
| 4.3.1.6 TripAdvisor.nl.....   | 38 |
| 4.3.1.7 Summary.....  | 38 |
| 4.3.2 Target audience's attitude towards competitors.....   | 39 |
| 4.3.3 Conclusion of key success factors.....  | 42 |



|  |    |
|--|----|
| 4.4 Which tools does the target audience use to find the information they are looking for online?..... | 43 |
| 4.4.1 Results of the survey.....   | 43 |
| 4.4.2 Conclusion.....  | 47 |
| 4.5 What will be the Unique Selling Point of showmethesushi.nl?.....                                   | 48 |
| 4.6 SWOT analysis.....   | 49 |
| 4.6.1 Strengths.....   | 49 |
| 4.6.2 Weaknesses.....  | 50 |
| 4.6.3 Opportunities.....   | 50 |
| 4.6.4 Threats.....   | 51 |
| <b>Chapter 5: Recommendations</b> .....  | 52 |
| 5.1 Introduction.....  | 52 |
| 5.2 Where are we now?.....   | 52 |
| 5.3 Where do we want to be?.....   | 53 |
| 5.3.1 Sell.....  | 53 |
| 5.3.2 Serve.....   | 53 |
| 5.3.3 Sizzle.....  | 53 |
| 5.3.4 Speak.....   | 53 |
| 5.3.5 Save.....  | 54 |
| 5.4 How do we get there?.....  | 54 |
| 5.4.1 Implement the Unique Selling Point: restaurant locator.....                                      | 54 |
| 5.4.2 Target a wide audience, with emphasis on 15-25 year olds.....                                    | 54 |
| 5.4.3 Use an extensive Social Media Ecosystem.....   | 55 |
| 5.4.4 Make sure the website is as user-friendly as possible.....                                       | 55 |
| 5.5 How exactly do we get there?.....  | 55 |
| 5.5.1 Engage people through social media.....  | 56 |
| 5.5.2 Make use of blogs.....   | 57 |
| 5.5.3 Send newsletters.....  | 58 |
| 5.5.4 Make the use of the website personal.....  | 58 |
| 5.5.5 Be careful with spending money on corporate advertising.....                                     | 59 |
| 5.5.6 Offer different accounts for restaurant owners.....  | 59 |
| 5.5.7 Be optimized for mobile internet.....  | 60 |
| 5.5.8 Attract sponsors.....  | 60 |
| 5.5.9 Do not limit the website to Utrecht only.....  | 61 |
| 4.6 Who does what and when?.....   | 61 |
| 5.6.1 Time schedule.....   | 61 |
| 5.6.2 Budget.....  | 62 |
| 5.7 How do we monitor performance?.....  | 62 |
| 5.7.1 Monitor KPI's.....   | 63 |
| 5.7.2 Track website visitor's behavior.....  | 63 |
| 5.8 Conclusion.....  | 63 |
| <b>Bibliography</b> .....  | 64 |
| <b>Appendix</b> .....  | 67 |
| Appendix 1: Competitor Analysis.....   | 67 |
| 1.1 Eet.nu.....  | 67 |
| 1.2 Dinersite.nl.....  | 69 |
| 1.3 Couverts.nl.....   | 72 |
| 1.4 lens.nl.....   | 74 |
| 1.5 Yelp.nl.....   | 76 |
| 1.6 TripAdvisor.nl.....  | 78 |
| Appendix 2: Interview with Jeroen Wubbe, founder of Eet.nu.....  | 79 |
| Appendix 3: Interview with Ruud van den Brink, account manager at Dinersite.nl.....                    | 82 |
| Appendix 4: Interview with Lisa Wijvekate, communications employee at Couverts.nl.....                 | 84 |
| Appendix 5: Questionnaire restaurant review websites.....  | 86 |

## List of figures

### Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: The SWOT model.....                                | 17 |
| Figure 2: The Two-step Flow model.....                       | 18 |
| Figure 3: The Social Technographical Model.....              | 21 |
| Figure 4: The Social Media Ecosystem.....                    | 22 |
| Figure 5: Word of Mouth Marketing in online communities..... | 24 |

### Chapter 3: Methodology

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Figure 6: Confidence level and interval..... | 28 |
|--|----|

### Chapter 4: Findings and conclusions

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Graph 1: Demographical division of the target audience.....          | 32 |
| Graph 2: Do you ever eat sushi?.....                                 | 32 |
| Graph 3: How often do you visit a sushi restaurant?.....             | 33 |
| Graph 4: How often do you use a restaurant review website?.....      | 33 |
| Graph 5: Interest in showmethesushi.nl.....                          | 34 |
| Graph 6: Brand awareness of restaurant guides.....                   | 41 |
| Graph 7: Usage of restaurant guides.....                             | 41 |
| Graph 8: reasons for using a particular restaurant guide.....        | 42 |
| Graph 9: Essential features of an online restaurant guide.....       | 42 |
| Graph 10: Tools used to locate a restaurant.....                     | 45 |
| Graph 11: Social media use.....                                      | 45 |
| Graph 12: Importance of corporate advertising on social media.....   | 46 |
| Graph 13: Importance of corporate advertising on search engines..... | 46 |
| Graph 14: The importance of word of mouth marketing.....             | 46 |
| Graph 15: Popular blogs.....   | 47 |
| Graph 16: Participation in online activities.....                    | 48 |

## List of Tables

### Chapter 4: Findings and conclusions

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Table 1: Eet.nu.....                      | 35 |
| Table 2: Dinnertime.nl.....               | 36 |
| Table 3: Couverts.nl.....                 | 37 |
| Table 4: lens.nl.....                     | 37 |
| Table 5: Yelp.nl.....                     | 38 |
| Table 6: TripAdvisor.nl.....              | 39 |
| Table 7: Summary Competitor Analysis..... | 39 |
| Table 8: Unique Selling Points.....       | 49 |
| Table 9: SWOT analysis.....               | 50 |

### Chapter 5: Recommendations

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table 10: User accounts sushi restaurants..... | 61 |
| Table 11: Time schedule.....                   | 62 |
| Table 12: Budget.....                          | 63 |

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction and background

The history of sushi goes a long way back. Already in the 2nd century the people in South East Asia wrapped cured fish and meat in rice to preserve the quality. This sushi was then left for months to let it ferment (Smith, 2009). When it was ready to be eaten the rice would be thrown away and the cured fish or meat was eaten (Smith, 2009).

This idea started in China but was spread out to Japan, where it quickly became popular as Buddhism spread. Since many Buddhists avoid eating meat, fish is their main diet (Avey, 2012). The Japanese started fermenting their fish in Japanese rice wine, also known as sake ("History of Sushi", 2007, par. 3). This was called *nare* sushi, which means 'aged sushi' (Avey, 2012). During the 15th century, the *nare* sushi was split up into two types of sushi. The *hon nare* sushi was the original type of sushi and the *nama nare* was the same sushi but consumed much earlier. This way the rice was still edible as well, which added a more pleasant taste to the sushi. The *nama nare* sushi became quickly very popular.

Around the sixteenth century, vinegar was started to be added to the sushi to make the fermentation process go quicker. In addition, the smell of the sushi was much nicer than the one of *nare* sushi, which was always strong and not to everyone's taste. Consequently new types of sushi began to evolve using only fresh vinegar and cooked rice, some of which are still quite popular in Japan nowadays.

However, the sushi industry was still not done evolving. In the 1820's, the Japanese decided to start using raw fish for sushi. This is what we call *Edo*-style sushi and this is the kind of sushi we know nowadays. It was initially invented as a cheap kind of fast food that was sold on the streets of Edo, nowadays known as Tokyo. The Japanese cooks placed raw fish on top of the rice and called it *nigiri* sushi; this is what we still find on our menu's in modern sushi restaurants ("History of Sushi", 2007, para. 6).

In the 1970's sushi became more and more the centre of attention for being known as a healthy alternative for dinner. Japanese started businesses in the United States to serve the Japanese immigrants who lived there. First starting in Los Angeles, the Japanese businessmen introduced the sushi to their American colleagues. However, it was hard to persuade them to eat raw fish. This is why the California roll was introduced (Smith, 2009); first this roll only included cucumber but when the Westerners got used to the idea this was later replaced by raw fish. ("History of Sushi", 2007, para. 7). Sushi businesses started to settle in Hollywood as well, where

celebrities embraced the Japanese cuisine. Consequently the sushi virus spread towards New York and the rest of the States (Avey, 2012). Nowadays sushi is a widely acknowledged and immensely popular cuisine not only in Asia, but worldwide.

Also the Dutch became enthusiastic about this Japanese phenomenon. Nowadays there are over 16.000 sushi restaurants outside of Japan (Sushi Industry Statistics, 2013), of which 320 restaurants that serve sushi in the Netherlands. The restaurants are spread throughout the country, with the Amsterdam area as highlight. In the city of Utrecht there are at least 14 sushi restaurants (Sushi Restaurants in Utrecht, 2014). Rarely however are those businesses in the Netherlands Japanese, since most sushi restaurants owners are Chinese (Tomesen, 2010).

Part of the success of sushi in the Netherlands comes from the decreased prices over time. Sushi started out as a delicacy for the rich, since the fresh fish was an expensive product. When the fame and popularity started to increase, prices lowered in order to answer the great demand (Tomesen, 2010). In addition, sushi all-you-can-eat restaurants started popping up in the big cities to give the people as much sushi as they wanted for the lowest price possible.

To find a restaurant to our likings nowadays we usually use the internet to search for information. About ten years ago the first websites that gathered and reviewed restaurants started popping up in the Netherlands (Media Intelligence Lab, 2011). Now there are tens of different websites informing internet users about many different kinds of restaurants across the whole country. Many websites specialize in a certain type of cuisine or a certain place, but some of them manage to store all types of restaurants across the whole country, such as lens.nl and Eet.nu. Also international restaurant websites are entering the Netherlands, such as Yelp.com and TripAdvisor.com.

The influence of these websites on consumer's decisions has been subject of research. Research has indicated that the reviews have a significant influence on the restaurant choice of 8 out of 10 review users ("Online Consumer-Generated Reviews", 2007). This study also showed that customers were willing to pay between 20% and 99% more for a restaurant that has 5-stars instead of 4. In conclusion, restaurant review websites can have a significant influence on consumer's behavior and decision making and it is therefore important to offer accurate and complete information.

The online engagement of the Dutch audience is also an important factor for online businesses. In 2012, the Netherlands had an internet penetration of 92,9% ("Internet World Stats", 2013). Research showed that in Europe, Dutch internet users are one of the biggest online spenders. In 2011 the Dutch spent 34,4 hours online on average in one month ("Dutch Internet Users", 2011). In 2012 the number of hours slightly dropped

to 30.6 hours per month, making the Netherlands the third most online country in Europe (“UK Leads Online Engagement”, 2013).

The internet offers unlimited possibilities nowadays: literature reviews, gaming, online shopping, overseas phone calls, watching TV shows etcetera. Social networking is an important part of the Dutch online activities. 77% of the Dutch are part of at least one social network, with Facebook as the biggest shareholder (Blair, 2012). Consequently, restaurant review websites such as Yelp.com and Eet.nu handily react to this by implementing social media buttons on their homepage and offering the possibility to log in with Facebook before posting a review. Consequently Facebook-friends of the poster will be able to see that their friend posted something and the website will become more known. In addition, since 69% of the 12 to 25 year-olds have internet on their mobile phone (Blair, 2012), it is for a big part of the target audience possible to access a restaurant review website from any place they want, which is especially useful when looking for a place to have dinner in the neighborhood you are in at that moment. Consequently many restaurant review websites have developed an app for mobile phones (“lens op je mobiel”, n.d.) to make it even easier for the consumer.

In conclusion, the high popularity of sushi in the Netherlands in combination with the existing competition and the online marketing possibilities we have nowadays offer a lot of opportunities to successfully launch a sushi restaurant review website to help the target audience find their new favorite sushi restaurant.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

There are many online restaurant guides and since people are busy nowadays they don't want to spend too much time on searching for a handy website. Many of the competitors do not offer a user friendly and complete restaurant overview. A new website that will include and review all sushi restaurants in Utrecht by means of a star rating system and textual commentaries will be launched. Therefore the online marketing strategy for this website needs to make sure it sets the website apart from competitors. Consequently the target audience needs to be able to find the best website quickly.

### 1.3 Problem definition

The policy, research and sub questions are listed below.

#### Policy question:

- What kind of online marketing strategy would be effective to reach the target audience interested in sushi restaurants in utrecht?

#### Research question:

- What marketing models and tools are most effective for an entrepreneur to offer an online service by means of a website to the target audience in the Netherlands?

#### Sub-questions:

- Is there a market for an online restaurant guide specifically for sushi restaurants?
- What will be the Unique Selling Point of the sushi restaurant website?
- What are the key success factors for other online restaurant guides in reaching their target audience?
- Which tools does the target audience use to find the information they are looking for online?

### 1.4 Operationalization of concepts

An online marketing plan, in other words an internet marketing strategy, is necessary for a marketer and has many benefits. An *internet marketing strategy* is needed to provide consistent direction for an organization's online marketing activities so that they integrate with its other marketing activities and support its overall business objectives (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2009, p.201). By writing out the internet marketing strategy marketers set out a future direction for their internet marketing activities, make an analysis of the firm's external environment, internal resources and capabilities to inform strategy, articulate marketing objectives and make choices in strategic options to achieve those objectives, among many other functions.

According to McDonald, 2003 (cited from Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2009) a marketing plan provides helpful insights for the marketer because it helps to identify sources of competitive advantage, non-marketing functions, to force an organized approach, to develop specificity, to ensure consistent relationships, to get resources and to set objectives and strategies. Above all, marketing communications ensure that all messages sent out are linked to each other.

Consequently, an internet marketing strategy is necessary for showmethesushi.nl in order to reach the right target audience. An internet marketing plan will help to approach the target audience with the right messages, set objectives and identify competitors and ways to distinguish itself from those competitors. Without a marketing plan the website will not be led in a certain direction, send inconsistent messages and therefore reach no one.

#### **1.4.1. Internet marketing**

Internet marketing consists of different specialized areas. The most common areas are web marketing, email marketing and social media marketing. The purpose of these types of marketing is to make direct sales via electronic commerce ("Internet Marketing", 2014).

##### **1.4.1.1 Web marketing**

*Web marketing* consists of multiple marketing tools such as e-commerce websites, affiliate marketing, promotional of informative website, advertising on search engines and Search Engine Optimization. All of those will now be explained individually.

- E-commerce stands for electronic commerce and is a term to describe business that is done on the internet and makes use of internet-based tools, such as email, instant messaging, shopping carts, FTP etcetera ("Electronic Commerce", 2014.). Electronic commerce can be both business-to-business or business-to-customer.
- Affiliate marketing is an automated marketing program where web masters place banners or buttons on their website for web advertisers ("Affiliate Program", 2014). When a customer clicks on this banner or button and goes to the web advertiser's website to e.g. make a purchase, the webmaster receives a fee from sales. The most common forms of affiliate marketing are pay-per-click, pay-per-lead and pay-per-sale.
- Advertising on search engines, also known as search engine advertising, means your ad comes up in the search engine when customers are searching for your product or service ("Search Engine Advertising", 2014).
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a combination of techniques, strategies and tactics to make your website rank higher in the search results to increase the number of visitors of your page ("Search engine optimization", 2014). It improves your chances of being found by customers by e.g. placing a link to your website on other web pages and uploading texts with as many search key words as possible on your own page.

#### **1.4.1.2 Email marketing**

According to Brick Marketing, ("What is email marketing?", 2014) *email marketing* is a way to approach your customers directly via email. It is a low cost marketing tool and it directly reaches the target audience that is interested in your business since you can send it to current or prospective customers. The message you send them can consist of texts, graphics and links.

A big advantage of email marketing is the possibility to extensively track the effectiveness. It is possible to track Key Performance Indicators such as the open-click-rate, conversion rate and bounce rate. A popular type of email marketing is sending newsletters to provide customers for instance with new information or the latest offers.

#### **1.4.1.3 Social media marketing**

*Social media marketing* implies the use of advertising and marketing through social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn ("Internet Marketing", 2014). It is an easy way to reach potential customers who do not know your organization yet. It is a very low cost marketing tool that still offers the opportunity to reach a large amount of users ("SMM", 2010). In addition, on social networking sites it is possible to track the demographics and visiting behavior of your visitors, which could provide valuable information about your target audience. Social media marketing is typically used in addition to other marketing tools instead of replacing them.

#### **1.4.2 Internet marketing strategy discussions**

Since the introduction of the internet, many scholars have been investigating and suggesting about the influence of the internet on consumer marketing and the behavior of the consumer. Some of those implications will be pointed out here.

Efthymios Constantinides (2004) stated that websites are of vital importance for persuasion of the consumer and should be seen as such by the marketer. Functionality factors such as usability and interactivity, content factors such as the marketing mix and psychological factors are the main components of the website that could influence online consumer behavior. By managing those three factors the marketer should be able to reduce the customer's uncertainty by communicating trust and credibility (Constantinides, 2004).

Regarding the internet marketing tools that are necessary for online marketing, blogs have been increasingly popular as tools for Word of Mouth marketing campaigns, according to Kelly (2007), Rettberg (2008), and Sernovitz (2006) (as cited in Kozinets, De Valck et al, 2010). Also, according to Kutchera (2008), 50 percent of all internet users read blogs regularly and this figure is predicted to keep rising (Kutchera, 2008 as



cited in Kozinets, De Valck et al., 2010). Therefore blogs could be a valuable marketing tool to include in the online marketing strategy for showmethesushi.nl.

In addition, an early insight in the online consumer marketplace was the Cluetrain Manifesto by Levine, Locke, Searle, & Weinberger (2001). Later this theory was developed into the Social Media Ecosystem by Schultz (2007) discussed in 2.4.6 of this chapter. According to the Cluetrain Manifesto, the online marketplace is not about messages, but about conversations. Therefore marketing should not be only about attracting attention via reach, but instead continuing this attention through engagement (Levine, Locke, Searle, & Weinberger (2001) as cited in Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011).

In conclusion, many suggestions have been done about influencing the consumer's behavior regarding online marketing. In combination with the right tools those theories could be an important factor of the online marketing strategy.

### **1.5 Restrictions to the research**

Because of time constraints a limited number of people of the target audience could be reached. Therefore, due to the small sample of the survey, the results of the research cannot be generalized.

Secondly, because of the lack of participation among the restaurant owners, no conclusions could be drawn regarding the expectations of restaurant owners towards online restaurant guides. Therefore no recommendations were made regarding sponsorship and involvement of restaurant owners.

### **1.6 Chapter division of the document**

**Chapter 1** is the **introduction** to the topic. It contains background information about sushi, sushi restaurants and the arrival and development of sushi in the Netherlands. It also contains some information on the online behavior of the Dutch target audience. Subsequently a **problem statement** is given to make the purpose of this research clear and the **problem definition** contains the research questions that will guide this studies. Lastly, terms and discussions regarding online marketing strategies are defined.

**Chapter 2** is the **theoretical framework**. The theoretical framework provides a context for the topic online marketing and will explain some marketing theories and models that will be used throughout this research.

**Chapter 3** describes the **methodology** of the research. It explains how the needed information was acquired and what it is used for. It describes the used techniques and methods and the sample size of the study.

**Chapter 4** contains the **findings and conclusions**. The results of the research are described and analyzed. The theory of the theoretical framework is applied here to draw conclusions.

**Chapter 5** is the final chapter and contains the **recommendations**. The conclusions of chapter 4 were turned into a applicable advise for showmethesushi.nl needed to develop an online marketing strategy.

# Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

## 2.1 Introduction

In chapter 1 the introduction and background of the study were discussed. The research was explained and formulated and the research question and sub questions were listed. In this chapter the theoretical framework for the study is discussed.

Internet marketing, also known as online marketing, addresses advertising and marketing efforts that make use of the internet and email to make direct sales via e-commerce, in addition to sales leads from websites or emails ("Internet Marketing", 2014). Online marketing is often used in combination with traditional offline marketing such as advertising on radio, television, in newspapers, magazines and outdoor advertising. In this chapter the theoretical concepts and theories that relate to the internet marketing strategies and its tools are discussed.

## 2.2 Internet marketing strategy models

There are many different models that are applicable in internet marketing. For the purpose of this research some models will be discussed in this section.

### 2.2.1 The SOSTAC model

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick provide an overall strategy process model for strategic internet marketing. The SOSTAC model consists of a situational analysis, objectives, a strategy, tactics, actions and control (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2009, p.211). During every stage there is some overlap with other stages in terms of planning; previous stages may be revisited. In order to complete the SOSTAC model certain questions need to be asked;

- *Where are we now?* - The **situational analysis** describes the current goal performance, customer insight, SWOT, brand perception and internal capabilities and resources.
- *Where do we want to be?* - The **objectives** describe a vision in terms of Sell (customer acquisition), Serve (customer satisfaction), Sizzle (site stickiness and visit duration), Speak (number of engaged customers) and Save (quantified efficiency gains). Together those objectives form the 5 Ss.
- *How do we get there?* - The **strategy** is about segmentation, targeting and positioning, Online Value Proposition, sequence, integration and tools such as email

and web functionality.

- *How exactly do we get there?* - The **tactics** refine the details of the strategy. This includes an e-marketing mix, details of contact strategy and an e-campaign initiative schedule.
- *Who does what and when?* - **Actions** determine the details of the tactics, such as responsibilities and structures, internal resources and skills and external agencies.
- *How do we monitor performance?* - Lastly, the **control** stage determines the way of monitoring performance, e.g. by KPI's, usability testing, customer satisfaction surveys etc.

With this in mind, there are different ways of approaching a marketing strategy. Mintzberg and Quinn (1991, as cited in Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2009) make a distinction between **prescriptive** and **emergent** strategy approaches. In the prescriptive strategy approach there are three elements of strategy; strategic analysis, strategic development and strategy implementation. Those are sequentially linked together. However, in the emergent strategy approach the distinction between those elements is less clear; here they are interrelated.

For showmethesushi.nl an emergent strategy approach will be used. This means that the online marketing strategy will be implemented at the same time as it is being developed. This way practice will teach what works and what not. This emergent strategy approach enables the marketer to respond quickly in a highly dynamic environment such as online marketing (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2009).

Regarding the SOSTAC model, all of the questions need to be answered for showmethesushi.nl. The situational analysis will include goal performance, such as the number of visitors and participating (paying) restaurants, and a SWOT analysis of the website. Secondly the objectives will describe the desired number of visitors, paying restaurants and rate of customer satisfaction. Consequently the strategy and tactics need to realize these goals. The research among target audience and competitors will have to identify the most efficient ways and tools that should be in this strategy, for instance social media, newsletters and corporate advertising. As a consequence of the emergent strategy, the actions that need to be taken can take place simultaneously the development of the strategy. Lastly, the control stage could consist of setting and measuring KPI's and testing customer satisfaction by surveys.

### 2.2.2 The SWOT analysis

Kotler (2012) has designed various marketing tools and strategies for a marketing communications plan, also known as *integrated marketing communications*.

One marketing tool that is indispensable for a marketing plan is the SWOT analysis. This is a tool to evaluate the company's overall strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T) (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p.53). On the next page you can see the model for a SWOT analysis.

Strengths come from internal assets and positive situational factors that could help the company to reach its goal. For instance, for showmethesushi.nl this could be the knowledge there is about the target audience and what exactly they want.

Weaknesses are internal restrictions and negative situational factors that could influence the company's performance. Opportunities are favorable factors and trends in the external environment, such as the lack of user-friendliness of competing websites, and threats are unfavorable external factors and trends, like the number of competing websites for showmethesushi.nl.

The purpose of this analysis is to match the firm's strengths to attractive opportunities while overcoming the weaknesses and threats. Showmethesushi.nl needs a SWOT analysis to uncover its own strengths and opportunities and find out which weaknesses and threats should be dealt with.

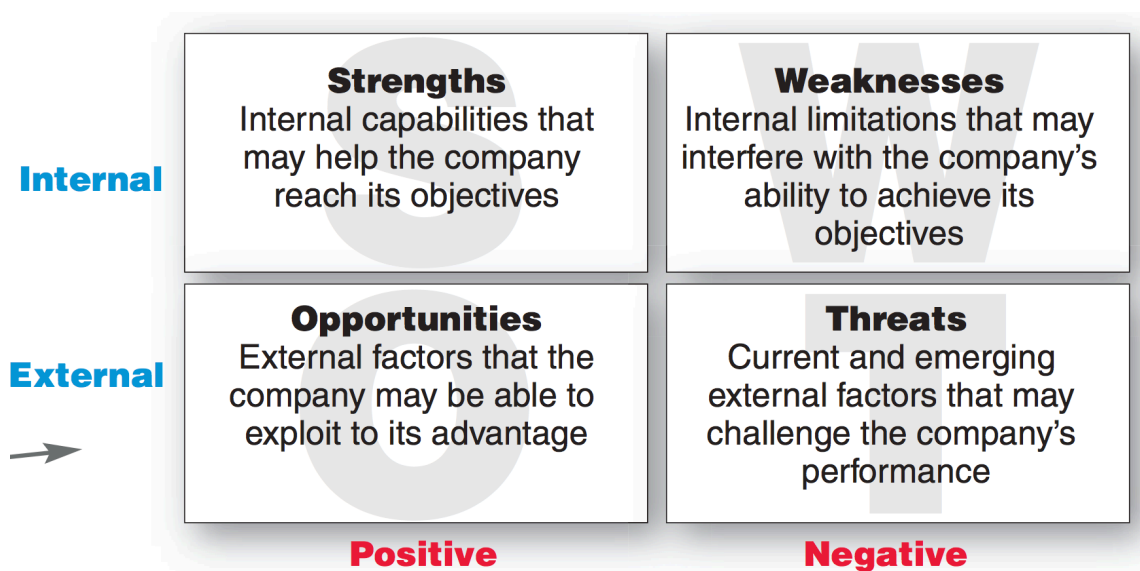


Figure 1. The SWOT model

### 2.2.3 Two Step Flow Theory

Another useful theory to keep in mind in order to reach the target audience is the Two Step Flow Theory. This communication model was introduced by Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet in *The People's Choice* (1944), which was a study focused on the decision-making process during a presidential election campaign (Two Step Flow Theory, n.d.).

The Two Step Flow Theory implies that informal, personal contact has a huge influence on people's decision making behavior. The model has two stages: first, opinion leaders, who are individuals, pay close attention to the information they receive from the mass media. Consequently those opinion leaders give their own interpretation to this media content; this is called their 'personal influence'. As a result they pass on this interpreted information to other individuals during social contact. This way the opinion leaders have quite some influence on other people's attitudes and behaviors.

This model could be very relevant for showmethesushi.nl since people's opinions are of great worth for a review website. Opinion leaders can post their opinion about restaurants and the website and this way influence many other people. In addition, seeing many reviews will motivate others to leave a review as well. Consequently, the large number of reviews will be an indication for new visitors that the website is used often and therefore a trustworthy source. Therefore is it very important to encourage customers to leave reviews as much as possible.

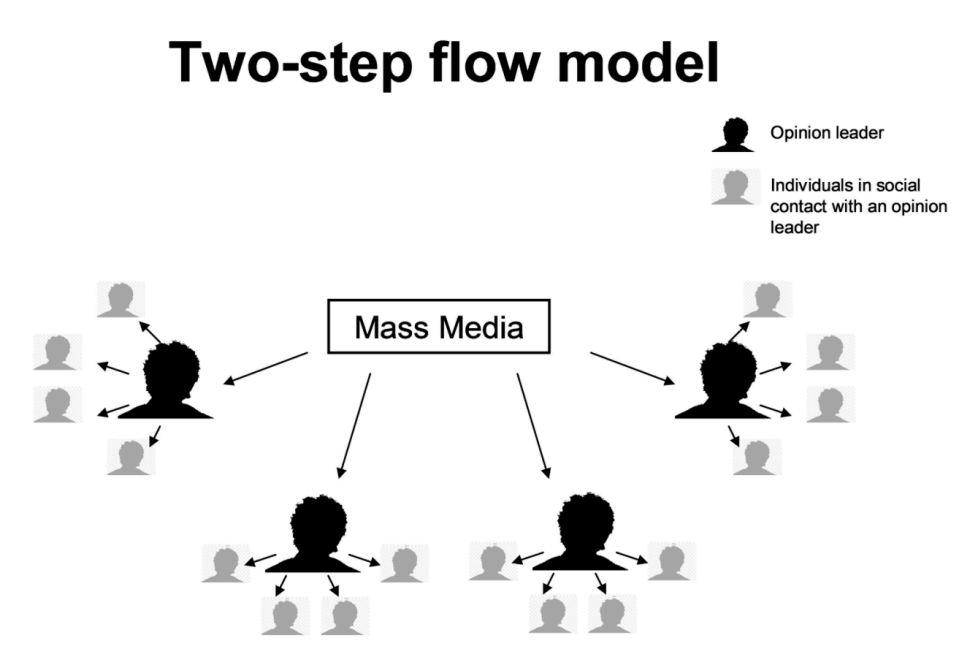


Figure 2. The Two-step flow model

#### 2.2.4 The Social Technographical Model

Since the marketing field has made a great shift from offline tools to online tools during the past decade, new marketing models are necessary as well. People have started to participate online in blogs and social media and therefore these are great tools to target them. However, not all people contribute in the same way and with the same involvement, as explained by Li and Bernoff (2008). Therefore they created a model with which marketers can make profiles of their target audience. The people are grouped based on the *groundswell* activities in which they participate, such as visiting social networking sites, watching videos and reading posts from other users, updating your status, commenting on other's blogs etcetera (Li & Bernoff, 2008).

The image on the following page shows the social technographical ladder. Every step represents a group of consumers; the higher on the ladder, the more involved this group is in groundswell activities. To join a higher ranked group, consumers should participate in one of the earlier mentioned activities at least once a month (Li & Bernoff, 2008). The social technographical profiles on this ladder are as follows:

- *Creators* are the ones that at least once a month publish an article or blog, maintain a website or upload a video or audio.
- *Conversationalists* participate frequently in dialogues such as status updates on Facebook or Twitter. Unlike the other groups they must do this weekly instead of monthly to stay in this profile.
- *Critics* react to other online content, such as status updates, blogs or reviews.
- *Collectors* save URLs and tags, vote for websites on Digg or use RSS feeds. This collecting is very important to keep the online work of creators organized.
- *Joiners* participate in or maintain profiles on a social networking site.
- *Spectators* consume what the other groups produce, such as blogs, articles, videos and audio. This is the largest group of all.
- *Inactives* are part of the online population but are non-participants in online activities. This group is continuously decreasing.

When you know which group your target audience is part of, you can adjust your social media strategy to it. By conducting a research among the target audience, it is possible to notice differences between people with different age groups, genders, political views and so on. A good example of this was the marketing strategy of Barack Obama during his 2008 presidential election. After concluding that 27% of the Democrats are Joiners, he started his own social media network site (my.barackobama.com), which highly contributed to his election as president (Li & Bernoff, 2008, p.55).

For showmethesushi.nl this social technographical model could be of much use to set a social media strategy. A survey among the target audience should find out what people's online behavior is and this information could be used to set up the most interesting platforms to reach this particular group of people. For instance, when a high percentage of the target audience appears to enjoy writing blogs and uploading videos, showmethesushi.nl could start a blog where users can post their own articles and videos regarding restaurants and food. This way hopefully there will be more people interested in using showmethesushi.nl.

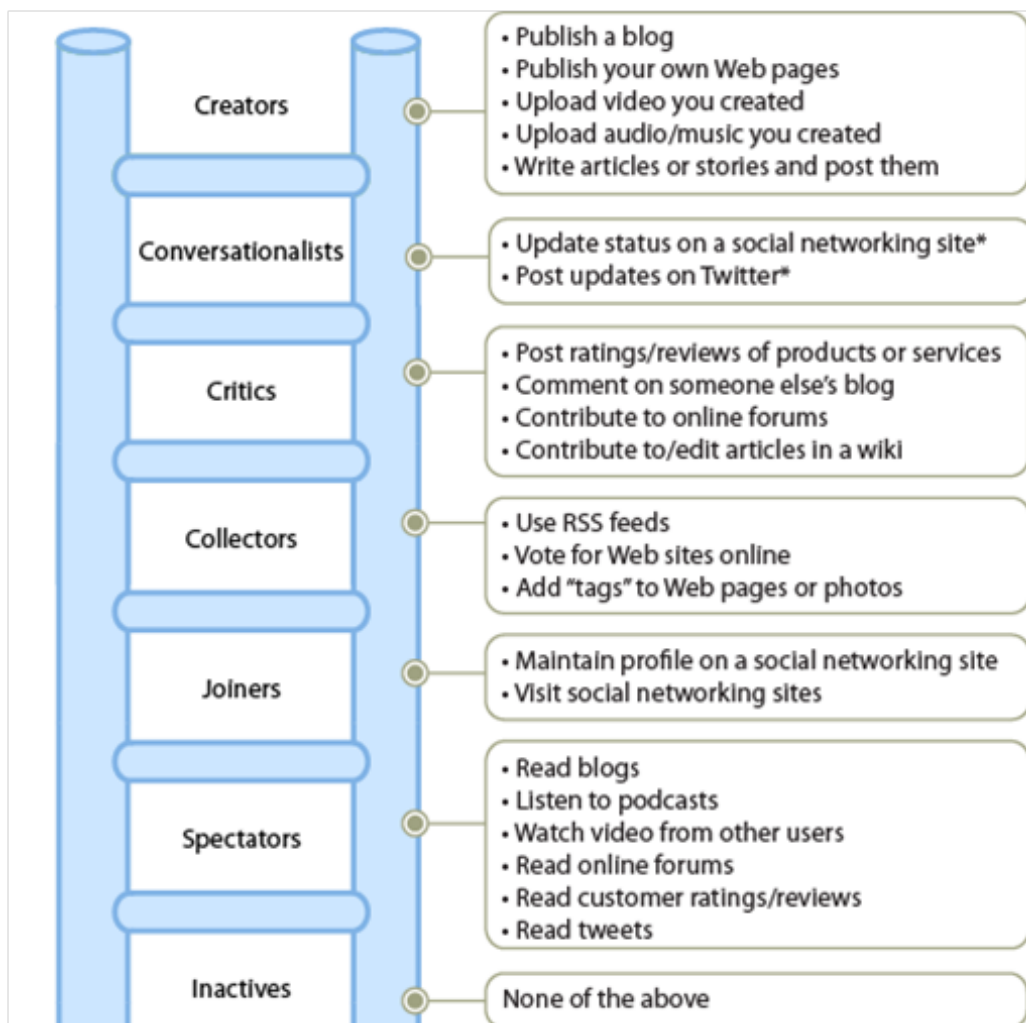
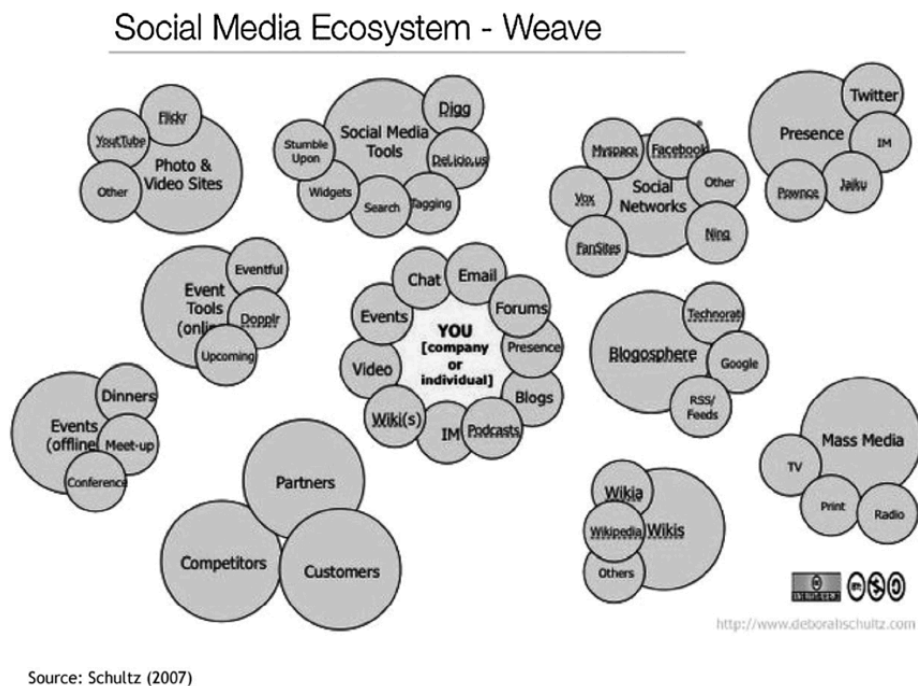


Figure 3. The Social Technographical Model



### 2.2.5 The Social Media Ecosystem

The Social Media Ecosystem was created by Schultz in 2007 (as cited by Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011) and is seen as a necessary tool for the marketer to manage the social media. Marketeers must learn to navigate between the different platforms, and by the transmission of messages the consumers will start conversations about the product or service and this way become part of the spheres of influence.



*Figure 4. The Social Media Ecosystem*

Corcoran wrote in 2009 (as cited by Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011) that this ecosystem is dividable into three media types. The first one is owned media, which is controlled by the marketer, such as the company's website. The second is paid media, which is bought by the marketer, such as paid advertisements and sponsorships. Finally, the third one is earned media. These are not controlled or bought by the marketer such as word-of-mouth and viral marketing.

The Social Technographical Ladder of Li and Bernoff (2008) explained in page 6 is also of importance for the social media ecosystem. Knowing that there are seven types of social influences, namely Creators, Conversationalists, Critics, Collectors, Joiners, Spectators and Inactives is of importance for marketers to choose the type of messages that need to be centralized in the ecosystem (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011). This way a company can create its own version of the social media ecosystem.

Secondly it is important to identify and keep track of key performance indicators (KPI's). This is critical in order to measure success. The third step is to create a clear and integrated story that is consistent on all social media. When creating the social media ecosystem, it is important to keep in mind that social media does not have to cost a lot of money. It is more important to be connected to the users than to spend a lot on expensive productions and media.

Last but not least, social media is about being unique and setting yourself apart from others. Most social media offer opportunities to customize user engagement by techniques that are based on existing technology.

Showmethesushi.nl will have to make use of a sophisticated Social Media Ecosystem to build the audience that is needed to make the website profitable. Social Media Ecosystems of competitors will be analyzed in order to research what works well and will be used as an example for showmethesushi.nl. In addition, the target audience will give her opinion on favorite social media and blogs, which will have to be applied to the Social Media Ecosystem. This way a distinctive Social Media Ecosystem for showmethesushi.nl can be built which will reach the intended target audience and set the website apart from competitors.

#### **2.2.6 Word of Mouth Marketing in Online Communities**

According to Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki and Wilner (2010) word of mouth marketing (WOMM) is part of a complex cultural process with a determinable pattern. The model in figure 2 is an analysis of the online behavior and influence of bloggers. At first sight the WOMM may seem similar to traditional public relations or paid promotions, but the difference is in the new contextual elements that do not appear in professional journalism and advertising. Therefore the WOMM campaign is subject to more complex and less defined cultural relationships (Kozinets, De Valck et al, 2010).

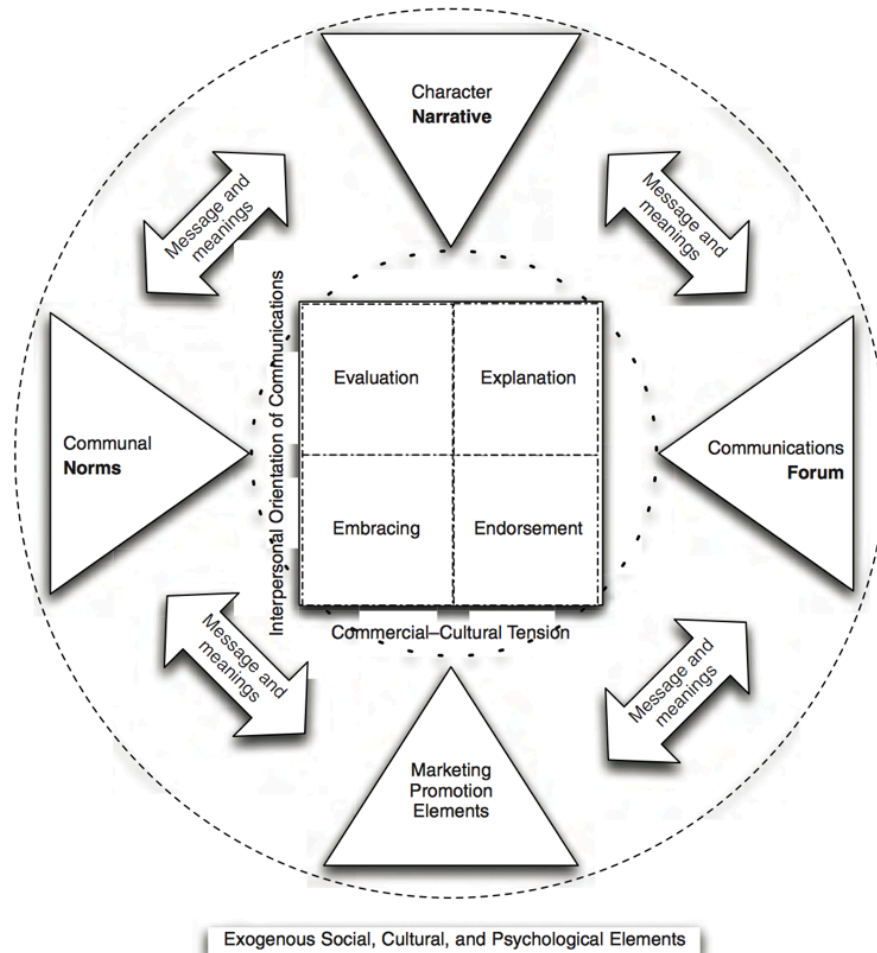


Figure 5. Word of Mouth Marketing in online communities

The word of mouth communication among bloggers that is important for marketers, namely the market-based message and its reception by the audience, is influenced by four factors.

The first influence comes from the *character narratives* that the blogger settles himself into and which results in personal stories characteristic for this particular blogger. For example, a loving mom writes blogs that stress traits such as kindness and helpfulness. More examples are political bloggers, citizen journalists and review bloggers, of whom the latter might be of influence of showmethesushi.nl

Secondly, WOM communications always take place in a particular *forum*, which is in this case the blog. Other examples are social networking sites, forums or offline places such as schools and bars. Within this particular platform, there are distinctive types of blogs; mommy blogs, food blogs, review blogs, fashion blogs etcetera.

Thirdly, the WOM communication is influenced by the *norms* of this certain community, which could affect the expression, transmission and reception of the message and its meanings (Kozinets, De Valck et al., 2010). The norms depend on the community and its members, such as the size, average age, type of lifestyles, ethnicity and so on.

Lastly, the WOM messages are affected by the *promotional characteristics* of the campaign such as the type of product, the brand objectives, the terms and humorousness of the campaign (Kozinets, De Valck et al., 2010).

Those four elements all influence the message and its expression. The figure shows how the elements are connected through their influence on the messages and meanings, which lead to evaluation, explanation, embracement and endorsement of the message. A commercial promotion becomes this way valuable information for a certain community.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

For the theoretical framework the goal was to find both classic as well as new marketing models and theories. Finding 'updated' models or models especially for online marketing was harder than expected, especially since most marketing models are specifically aimed at making people buy products, which is in the case of this research not applicable. Therefore the focus shifted towards theories that aimed at influencing people's behavior. However, also models focused on social media proved to be very applicable to the research. The theories and models described above are all very valuable for creating an online marketing strategy and will be taken into account during the next chapters.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

In chapter 2, the theories and concepts that relate to online marketing strategies were discussed. In this chapter the methods and techniques that will be used to execute the research are discussed. For this research a mixed method was used; this involves both quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to collect data to answer the research questions and to offer an advice. These quantitative and qualitative research methods will now be explained.

## 3.2 Desk research

The desk research consisted of exploring marketing theories and techniques to see if they would be applicable to the online marketing strategy. Together those theories and techniques form the theoretical framework of the study. In addition, the desk research also served to gain and explain basic online marketing terms to make sure reader and researcher would be on the same level of understanding regarding these terms.

## 3.3 Survey

A survey among the target audience was conducted to research the most effective ways to reach the target audience. In addition, the survey also served to find out about their expectations and needs regarding a restaurant review website. This survey contained questions to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to answer the research questions stated in section 1.3.

Since there was no database available regarding this topic, such as a list of sushi restaurant visitors, an operational population was set. An operational population is a section of the population that is defined more specifically (Verhoeven, 2011). This was necessary because the original population is very large. The operational population for this research consist of both men and women of between 15 to 45 years old. The target audience eats sushi at least once a year and participates in online activities at least one hour a week. Those requirements are necessary to narrow down the large population and make sure the right people, namely sushi enthusiasts, are able to be reached online.

The theoretical framework served as a guideline to determine what was needed to research about the target audience, and therefore what kind of questions should be put in the survey. A questionnaire of 21 questions was created, consisting of 18 closed questions and 3 open questions. The goals of the survey were as following:

- Find out whether there is a market for a sushi restaurant review website focused on Utrecht
- Find out which social media, search engines and blogs would be the most effective in reaching the target audience
- Research if and how often the target audience already uses restaurant review websites
- Research what the target audience likes and dislikes about these restaurant review websites

By getting answers to these questions it is possible to adjust the online marketing strategy for [showmethesushi.nl](http://showmethesushi.nl) to the target audience in the best way possible.

In addition, the models described in chapter 2 were integrated in the questionnaire as much as possible. To start with, the Social Technographical model was implemented by asking the target audience about their online behavior. This way it was possible to make a profile of the target audience based on their online activities. Secondly, it is important to research the participation in social media among the target audience in order to create a Social Media Ecosystem described in 2.4.6. Therefore the target audience was asked about their use of social media, search engines and blogs. In addition, the knowledge about blog use was also applicable to the theory of word of mouth marketing in online communities described in section 2.4.7. Additionally, questions about word of mouth were asked to add data about this theory. Lastly, a start of the SWOT analysis was made by investigating what functions of the competing restaurant review websites the target audience does or does not like.

As said before, since the researcher set requirements to the target group because there was no database of sushi restaurant visitors available, in this research non-probability sampling was used. The survey was distributed in the form of an online questionnaire which could be reached by clicking on a link. This link was distributed mainly through Facebook through either the researcher's friends or open groups with people outside the researcher's network. This way a couple of thousand people were reached, most of whom meet the target group's requirements. However, using only Facebook would influence the social media usage since then all of the respondents would have a Facebook account. Therefore I also emailed the survey to friends, family and colleagues, asking them to fill in the survey and forward the email to their contacts. This way the Snowball Sampling Method (Verhoeven, 2011) was applied.

The goal was to have a 95% confidence level and a confidence interval of 5 points. To reach this a number of 384 respondents would be necessary. However, due to time

constraints this was not a realistic goal. Therefore the confidence interval was increased to 8 points, which means a number of 150 respondents were needed.

The survey was structured to target sushi eaters only, since this is the most important trait of the target audience. This means that when the third question 'Do you ever visit a restaurant to have sushi?' was answered with 'no', the survey would be finished immediately. Consequently, in addition to the people who did not complete the survey for other reasons, a significant number of people did not finish the survey. In total a number of 191 respondents started the survey and 104 of them filled in the survey completely. This means the confidence interval dropped to 10 points, with the confidence level still at 95%.

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| What margin of error can you accept?<br>5% is a common choice              | 10 %  |
| What confidence level do you need?<br>Typical choices are 90%, 95%, or 99% | 95 %  |
| What is the population size?<br>If you don't know, use 20000               | 20000 |
| What is the response distribution?<br>Leave this as 50%                    | 50 %  |
| <hr/>  |       |
| Your recommended sample size is  | 96    |

Figure 6: Confidence level and interval (Raosoft.com, 2004)

The results of the survey were been entered in SPSS and analyzed by using tables, bar charts, cross tabs and pie charts.

### 3.3.1. Limitations to the sample

The research conducted by the survey has a limited scope which means the results might not be representative for the whole population. Due to time constraints it was not possible to reach a wider number of participants, and consequently the confidence interval dropped to 10. As a result the results cannot be generalized.

This survey is attached as an appendix on page 87.

### **3.4 Interviews with owners of restaurant review websites**

In order to do an extensive competitor analysis, three of the owners of well-known restaurant review websites were interviewed about their online marketing strategy, target audience and marketing goals. This information will offer knowledge regarding the strategy and Unique Selling Points of showmethesushi.nl.

Seven restaurant review websites were emailed with the request for an interview on their website marketing. Since expert interviews were necessary those websites were selected through purposive sampling; namely the first seven websites that came up on Google when searching for 'restaurant Utrecht' and 'restaurant recensie Utrecht'. Since those websites come up first one could assume they have the best marketing strategy compared to other websites that come up lower in the ranking.

Three of the seven invited websites responded positively to the interview request. The other four were due to either time constraints or unreachability not available. The websites who did respond positively were Eet.nu, Dinersite.nl and Couverts.nl. lens did not have time for an interview. Yelp and Tripadvisor were called on their business phone numbers, but turned out to be inaccessible, since all communication goes through their online help desks and it is not possible to talk to someone in person by phone. Lastly, Maarhoewashet.nl was left out of the research because they were not available for an interview and the survey indicated that 0% of the respondents knew this website.

The website owners were asked 14 open questions in the form of a phone interview through Skype. They were called on their business phone and the conversation was recorded by the use of QuickTime Player. Afterwards the whole interview was transcribed. All interviews are attached as an appendix to this document.

The interviews were coded by means of open coding (Verhoeven, 2011). This means the codes were grouped and put in hierarchy. Consequently the answers were compared and processed into a conclusion, which you can read in chapter 4.

### **3.5 Competitor analysis**

Apart from the interviews with the website owners, an extensive competitor analysis was done by analyzing their websites. The websites of all seven competitors were checked on general information such as number of visitors and number of restaurants, but also which functions they possess, which social media and other promotional tools they use, usability of the website etcetera. Combined with the interviews this information helped to determine all strengths, weaknesses and Unique Selling Points of



the competitors. These were summarized in a table to provide a quick overview of the complete competitor analysis.

### **3.6 Interviews with sushi restaurant owners**

To collect more qualitative information, a short survey of four questions were sent to eleven sushi restaurant owners to gain knowledge on their opinion on restaurant review websites. To make showmethesushi.nl interesting for both the target audience and the restaurants, it was necessary to know what restaurants expect and appreciate about restaurant review websites. This way the possibility of sponsoring could also be investigated and the restaurant's requirements regarding sponsoring in case they would be interested. The questions asked were the following:

1. Would you be interested in being mentioned on a restaurant review website?
2. Which features of your restaurant would be important for you to be mentioned?
3. Would you be willing to sponsor a restaurant review website focused on sushi restaurants? What would be the requirements in this case?
4. Would you be willing to pay for an easier findable position on this website? What would be the requirements in this case?

The intention was to compare the answers of the sushi restaurant owners and to take them into account regarding the recommendations for showmethesushi.nl.

Unfortunately, after emailing twice, only one of the restaurant owners responded. Because of the researcher's stay outside the Netherlands it was not possible to go by in person. Therefore the answers could not be generalized and were omitted in the recommendations.

# Chapter 4: Findings and Conclusions

## 4.1 Introduction

In chapter 3 the methodology of the research was explained. The quantitative and qualitative research methods were discussed and the ways of distribution and analysis were explained. In this chapter the results of this research will be discussed and conclusions will be drawn.

In order to answer the research question of this study, first the sub questions need to be answered. The sub questions were as following:

- *Is there a market for a restaurant review website specifically for sushi restaurants in Utrecht?*
- *What will the Unique Selling Point of the sushi restaurant guide be?*
- *What are the key success factors for other restaurant review websites in reaching their target audience?*
- *Which tools does the target audience use to find the information they are looking for online?*

## 4.2. Is there a market for a restaurant review website specifically for sushi restaurants in Utrecht?

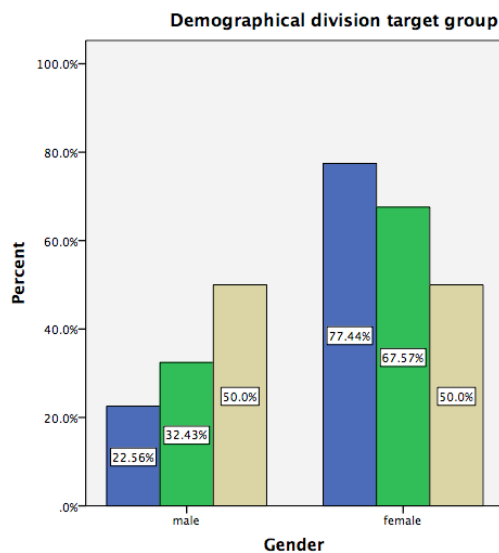
The results of the survey can answer this question. The survey researched the demographics of the target audience and their attitude towards a restaurant review website specifically for sushi restaurants in Utrecht.

### 4.2.1 Demographics of the target audience

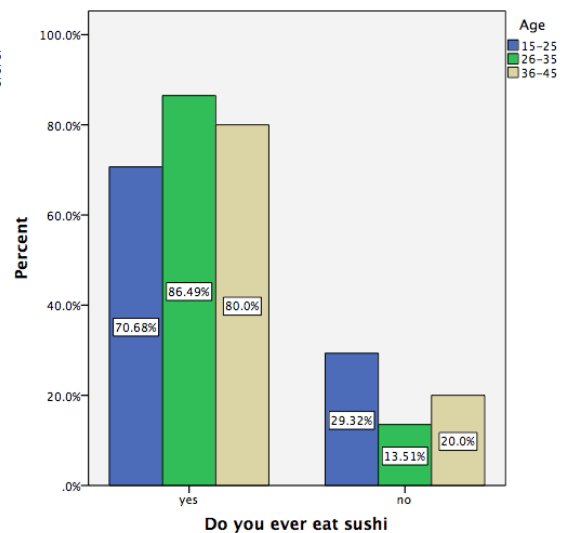
Of the 191 participants in the survey, 25,9% was male and 74,1% was female. 69,8% was between 15 and 25, 19,6% between 26-35 and 5,3% between 36 and 45 years old. Figure 1 shows the demographical division of the target audience.

Results show that there is not a big difference in popularity of sushi between males and females; respectively 71,4% and 75,0% goes to restaurants to have sushi.

The survey proved the popularity of sushi in the Netherlands is one of all ages. 70,7% of the 15-25 year olds eat sushi, followed by an impressive 86,5% of the 26-35 year olds. 80% of the 36-45 year olds likes to have sushi, as shown in figure 2.



*Graph 1: Demographical division of target group*

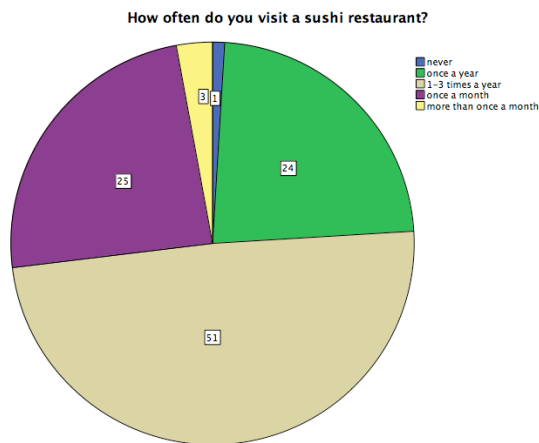


*Graph 2: Do you ever eat sushi?*

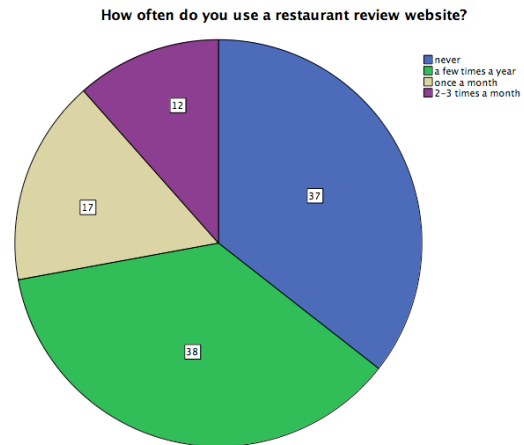
#### 4.2.2 Attitude of the target audience towards sushi and restaurant guides

Of all the respondents, 49% visits a sushi restaurant 2 to 3 times a year. 23% eats sushi once a year and almost a quarter of the respondents even goes to a sushi restaurant once a month, as seen in figure 3. The percentage of people who never go to a sushi restaurant is negligible because the survey was ended when people answered 'no' to the question 'Do you ever eat sushi'.

In addition, figure 4 shows that 36,5% of the respondents uses a restaurant review website a few times a year. 16,4% uses these website once a month and 11,5% even consults the internet 2 or 3 times a month. The remaining 36,6% says never to use a restaurant review website. These results would indicate there should be more than enough interest in a website that compares all sushi restaurants. This interest in sushi and restaurant review websites form a very important factor of the SWOT-analysis for showmethesushi.nl: these are external factors that form an opportunity for showmethesushi.nl to exploit these to its advantage. A thorough SWOT analysis will be done in section 4.6.



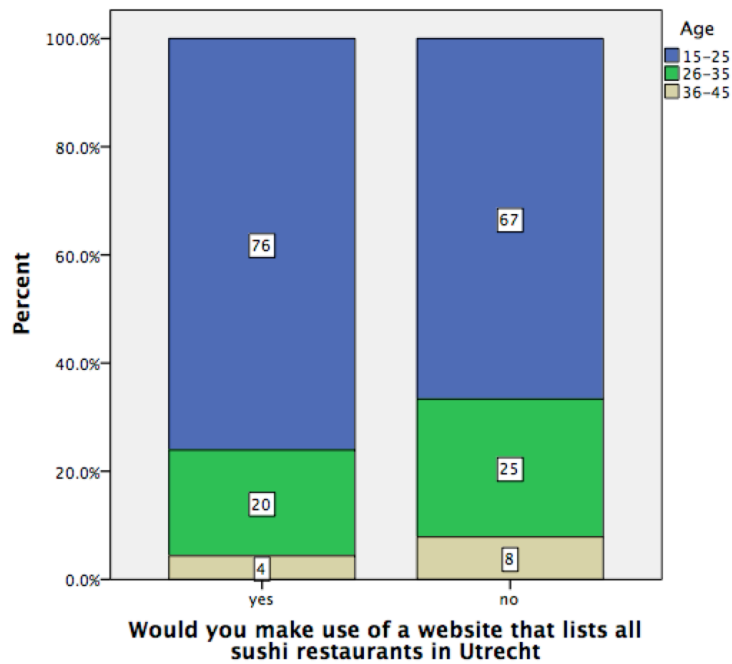
*Graph 3: How often do you visit a sushi restaurant?*



*Graph 4: How often do you use a restaurant review website?*

In order to research the interest in a restaurant review website especially for sushi restaurants in Utrecht, the respondents were asked if they would use such a website. 46,1% responded with 'yes' and 53,9% said 'no', as seen in figure 5. Of the people who say they won't use the website, 50,9% says it's because they don't live near Utrecht. The others mention various reasons such as they know the good sushi restaurants already, they don't eat sushi that often or there are already enough other websites. However, the people that were interested in using the website said it would be easy, efficient and handy to be able to compare all sushi restaurants on one website.

Interestingly, the number of positive responding people seems to decrease as the age increases. Of the 15-25 year olds, 50,7% would use the website, followed by 40,9% of the 26-35 year olds and 33,3% of the 36-45 year olds. This mean it could be most profitable for showmethesushi.nl to target the younger audience. Recommendations will be described in depth in chapter 5.



Graph 5: Interest in *showmethesushi.nl*

### 4.3 What are the key success factors for other restaurant review websites in reaching their target audience?

In order to be able to do an extensive competitor analysis, employees of three of the most successful competing restaurant guides were interviewed. They were asked about the marketing tools they use and what they think their unique selling point is. In addition to this, the target audience was asked in the survey about their favorite restaurant guides and what they like about those sites. All of this information together gives an informative view on the key success factors of the competitors.

#### 4.3.1 Competitor analysis

The participating competitors are Eet.nu, Dinersite.nl and Couverts.nl. All of those were analyzed separately on the basis of the conducted expert interviews, information found on their websites and the survey among the target audience. In addition to those three, an analysis of lens.nl, Yelp.nl and TripAdvisor.nl will also be made. Unfortunately lens did not have time to participate in an interview but regarding the popularity of this restaurant guide it is necessary to include them in the competitor analysis. Yelp and Tripadvisor are international websites who were not available for an interview, but seen the popularity of these websites a competitor analysis was necessary.

In this chapter the short version of the competitor analysis is shown. The complete analysis with clarification, details and relevance of former mentioned marketing communication theories can be found in appendix 1.

#### 4.3.1.1 Eet.nu

According to the founder of Eet.nu, this website is currently the biggest restaurant guide of the Netherlands. The website was started in 2006 and grew from being a side project into the most successful project of the founder, Jeroen Wubbe. An expert interview with Wubbe can be found in appendix 2. The focus has always been to show all restaurants, cafes and cafeterias in the Netherlands in order to make the choice for the Dutch audience easier. At the moment Eet.nu covers over 32.000 restaurants in the Netherlands and Belgium. More than 300 customer reviews are submitted every day and the website has a monthly average of 1.2 million visitors (Eet.nu, 2014). Eet.nu targets everyone who likes to eat out, but they mostly reach females between 20 and 49 years old with an average or higher salary and education.

| Social Media Ecosystem                               | Key Success Factors                  |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and Instagram             | Sophisticated Social Media Ecosystem |
| Newsletter: 400.000 subscribers, opening rate of 25% | User-friendliness website            |
| App for iPhone: used 200.000/month                   | Mobile optimized                     |
| Eet.nu Community                                     | Account choice for restaurant owners |
| Forum  |                                      |
| Blog page  |                                      |
| External reservation system                          |                                      |
| Unique Selling Point                                 | Weaknesses                           |
| User-friendliness of the website                     | Forum is inactive                    |
|  | Purpose of blog is unclear           |

Table 1: Eet.nu

#### 4.3.1.2 Dinersite.nl

Dinersite.nl is the oldest online restaurant guide of the Netherlands. It started as a graduation project of founder Menno de Vries, who decided to continue with it as a business. In 18 years the website grew into a restaurant platform with over 13.000 restaurants. Every month the website has more than 750.000 unique visitors. Image 2 shows the homepage of Dinersite.nl.

For this analysis an interview was done with the account manager of Dinnersite.nl. The expert interview with Van Den Brink is attached in appendix 3.

| <b>Social Media Ecosystem</b>                         | <b>Key Success Factors</b>           |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Facebook  | Google AdWords                       |
| 4 different monthly newsletters                       | Many 'special' pages on the website  |
| Dinnersite-tab on external Facebook pages             | Mobile optimized                     |
| Google AdWords  | Account choice for restaurant owners |
| <b>Unique Selling Point</b>                           | <b>Weaknesses</b>                    |
| Very first online restaurant guide of the Netherlands | Website could be overwhelming        |
|   | Not many reviews online              |
|   | Weak Social Media Ecosystem          |

*Table 2: Dinnersite.nl*

#### **4.3.1.3 Couverts.nl**

Couverts.nl is described as an online reservation platform for restaurants in the Netherlands. Besides that, Couverts figures as a marketing partner for several other organizations and culinary events. The website functions more as a reservation platform than a restaurant guide, since information about restaurants is only shown when these restaurants have joined Couverts with a paid account. In 2013 the website was used for 5.5 million reservations ("Infographic Couverts 2013, 2013"). Image 3 shows the homepage of Couverts.nl

The target audience is people between 25 and 35, however the end-users tend to be slightly older, according to Lisa Wijvekate, communications employee at Couverts. Couverts.nl is owned by RTL Nederland, which gives them the possibility to be promoted on the RTL TV channels, radio and online channels. The interview with Wijvekate can be found in appendix 3.

| Social Media Ecosystem              | Key Success Factors   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube | Mobile optimized  |
| Smartphone app: downloaded 530.000  | Promotion on RTL TV channels  |
| RTL TV channels, radio and online   | Smartphone app  |
| Inspiration page                    | Many different newsletters  |
| Weekly newsletters                  |   |
| Unique Selling Point                | Weaknesses  |
| Trusted review system               | Restaurants can only choose a paid account                                  |
|                                     | Customers can only place a review when reservation is done through Couverts |

Table 3: Couverts.nl

#### 4.3.1.4 lens.nl

With 1.5 million visitors a month, lens has the biggest number of visitors of the in this study analyzed competitors. On the website a 100.000 reviews a year are submitted which cover more than 19.000 restaurants in total. The website started 15 years ago and ever since it builded the highest number of visitors in the Netherlands of the compared competitors. lens' target audience mainly consists of people between 20 and 49 years old who are highly educated. Image 4 shows the homepage of lens.nl.

| Social Media Ecosystem                         | Key Success Factors  |
|--|--|
| Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, YouTube | Sophisticated search function  |
| Monthly newsletter                             | Many own promotion tools and events                                      |
| Mobile app                                     | Mobile optimized   |
|  | Smartphone app   |
|  | Restaurants can choose account   |
|  | Sophisticated review system  |
|  | High brand awareness   |
| Unique Selling Point                           | Weaknesses   |
| Extensive search possibilities                 | Not much interaction for visitors available due to lack of blog or forum |

Table 4: lens.nl



#### 4.3.1.5 Yelp.nl

Yelp.com is an American company that started in 2004 to help find people local businesses such as restaurants, dentists and mechanics. The website grew international and is now operating on a world wide basis. The company has offices in San Francisco, Palo Alto, New York, Phoenix, London, Dublin and Hamburg. Yelp has an average of 132 million unique visitors per month and includes 57 million local reviews. Unfortunately, there is no data available of these numbers for the Netherlands only. Image 5 shows the homepage of Yelp.nl.

| Social Media Ecosystem                         | Key Success Factors                       |
|--|---|
| Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, YouTube | Free account for businesses               |
| Official Yelp blog                             | Mobile optimized                          |
| Community Blogs                                | Apps for iPhone, Android, Kindle and iPad |
| Extensive Yelp account possibilities           | Very extensive Social Media Ecosystem     |
| Apps for iPhone, Android, Kindle and iPad      | Internationally known                     |
| Weekly newsletter                              |   |
| Unique Selling Point                           | Weaknesses                                |
| Very extensive Social Media Ecosystem          | No blog for Dutch market                  |

Table 5: Yelp.nl

#### 4.3.1.6 TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor is a travel website that offers information and reviews on restaurants, hotels, housing, flights and activities all over the world. The website is active in 30 countries and has monthly 66 million unique visitors. The website includes 150 million reviews and has 44 million members. Image 6 shows the homepage of TripAdvisor.nl.

| Social Media Ecosystem                         | Key Success Factors                             |
|--|---|
| Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, YouTube | Free account for businesses                     |
| Three weekly newsletters                       | Mobile optimized                                |
|  | Smartphone app                                  |
|  | Internationally known                           |
| Unique Selling Point                           | Weaknesses                                      |
| Very extensive travel guide worldwide          | Restaurants is only a small part of the website |

Table 6: TripAdvisor.nl

#### 4.3.1.7 Summary

The USP's, strengths and weaknesses of all competitors can be summarized as following:

| Website       | USP   | Strengths   | Weaknesses   |
|---------------|---|---|--|
| Eet.nu        | User-friendliness                                     | Sophisticated Social Media Ecosystem, Mobile app, restaurants can choose between profiles | Forum is inactive, purpose of blog is unclear        |
| Dinnersite.nl | Very first online restaurant guide of the Netherlands | Restaurants can choose between profiles, many special pages on homepage                   | Not many reviews online, weak Social Media Ecosystem |

| Website        | USP                                   | Strengths   | Weaknesses  |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Couverts.nl    | Trusted review system                 | Promotion on RTL TV channels, smartphone app, many different newsletters  | Restaurants can only choose a paid account, customers can only place review when reservation is done through Couverts |
| lens.nl        | Extensive search possibilities        | Sophisticated review influence system, high brand awareness, smartphone app, different profiles available for restaurants | Not much interaction for visitors available due to lack of blog or forum  |
| Yelp.nl        | Very strong Social Media Ecosystem    | Smartphone app, internationally known   | No blog for Dutch market  |
| TripAdvisor.nl | Very extensive travel guide worldwide | Smartphone app, internationally known   | Restaurants is only a small part of the website   |

*Table 7: Summary Competitor Analysis*

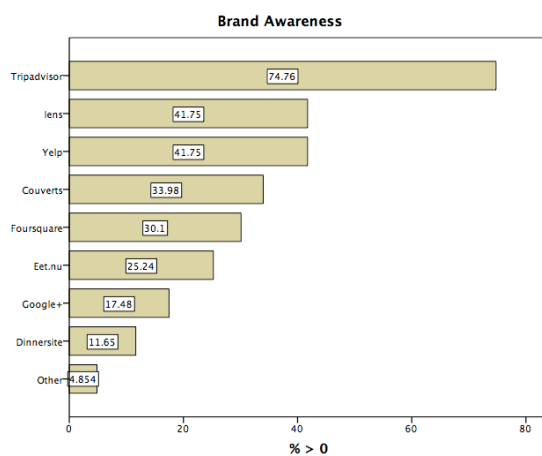
#### **4.3.2 Target audience's attitude towards competitors**

As stated in section 4.2.2, 67% of the respondents indicates to make use of online restaurant guides. In order to research which restaurant guides are best known and most used, the respondents were asked the following two questions:

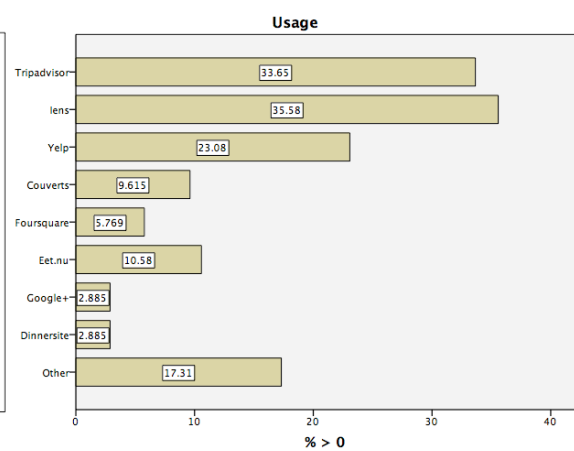
- *Which restaurant review website do you know?*
- *Which restaurant review website do you use?*

The difference between those two questions is important because people might know a certain website, but might not like it because of (the lack of) certain features. Consequently a website can have a high brand awareness but this does not have to say anything about the number of users. Therefore the questionnaire also included the questions which features of the restaurant guide they liked and did not like. The results of this question will be analyzed later in this section.

Results show indeed that there is a difference between brand awareness and actual usage of the brand. According to the survey, 74,8% of the respondents know Tripadvisor, but only 33,7% actually uses this website. This also counts for Yelp, who has a brand awareness of 41,8% and is used by 23,1% of the respondents. lens is doing better with 41,8% brand awareness and 35,6% of the people who also use it. After lens Couverts is the best known restaurant guide with 33,98% brand awareness. However, only 9,6% of the respondents uses Couverts.nl. Self-proclaimed 'biggest restaurant guide' Eet.nu is only known among 25,2% of the respondents and used by 10,6%. Lastly, the Netherlands's oldest restaurant guide Dinnersite.nl is only known by 11,7% of the respondents. Figure 6 and 7 show these results in a bar chart.



*Graph 6: Brand awareness of restaurant guides*



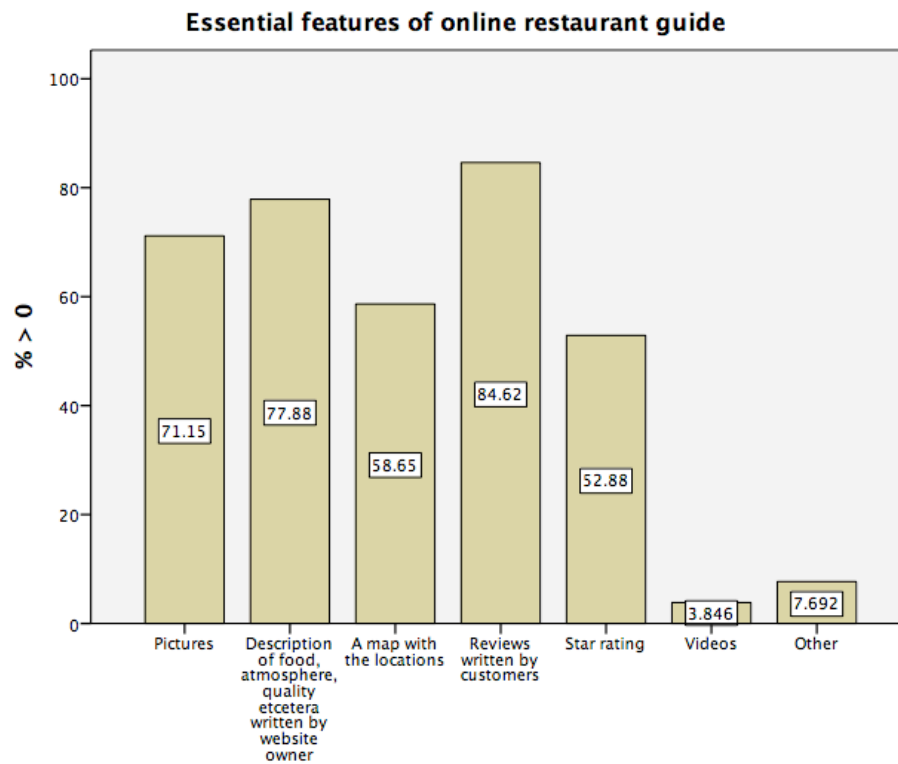
*Graph 7: Usage of restaurant guides*

The most important reasons for using a certain restaurant guide is the presence of customer reviews. 43% of the respondents mention this as one of the reasons to use the restaurant guide of their preference. In addition, 72% says to make use of customer reviews. This means 29% makes use of the reviews but do not see them as an important reason to use a certain guide.

The types of offered restaurants, number of offered restaurants and user-friendliness of the website are all equally appreciated by circa 23% the respondents. Other important reasons mentioned are an available smartphone app and the ranking in Google. Many people seem to stick to the first guide they find through Google. This confirms the importance of a proper SEO strategy. Figure 8 shows the results in a bar chart.



*Graph 8: Reasons for using a particular restaurant guide*



*Graph 9: Essential features of an online restaurant guide*

To the question; ‘What are essential features of an online restaurant guide?’ the answer was clear: almost 85% of the respondents think customer reviews are important. On the second place is an objective description of the food, atmosphere and quality written by the website owner. This is followed by pictures and a map with the locations of the restaurants. A star rating is seen as essential by half of the respondents and interestingly enough, only 3,8% thinks videos are essential. Other important features that were mentioned often are information about prices and menu and the possibility to search for restaurants by type of kitchen. Also 10% of the respondents said a good overview of near-by restaurants was important for them. This is why lens might be the most used website: their search function offers all of these possibilities.

The most heard comment to the question: ‘What don’t you like about the review website you are using?’ is fake reviews. Many people realize reviews might be written by the restaurants itself and therefore untrustworthy. In addition, the comments ‘too many reviews’, ‘too few reviews’ and ‘too old reviews’ are all heard as well. It is clear that customer reviewing can be very valuable as well as annoying for customers. This is something that showmethesushi.nl should keep in mind when designing the website.

#### **4.3.3 Conclusion on key success factors**

- *Extensive search options*

After analyzing the competitors and the target audience’s opinion, it becomes clear that lens.nl is the most successful competitor in the market, thanks to their extensive search options. Customers seem to highly appreciate being able to filter on type of kitchen, budget and proximity.

- *Sophisticated review influence system*

This could be another reason for lens’ popularity. Customers are looking for trustworthy advice and want to see only relevant reviews.

- *Strong Social Media Ecosystem*

In addition, having a strong Social Media Ecosystem is very important to reach and engage customers and this way keep them interested in the website. Using different social media and newsletters are key. Fact is that all of the restaurant guides have one or more newsletters that seem to be very successful in reaching customers.

- *Smartphone app*

Key success factors that also count for many competitors are having a smartphone app. The use of mobile internet will keep increasing and being available on mobile increases the chance that customers will return.

- *Offering different types of profiles*

Giving restaurants the possibility to choose from different profiles is important. Offering a free profile lowers the barrier to join and by offering a paid profile the restaurant can use the website the way they like.

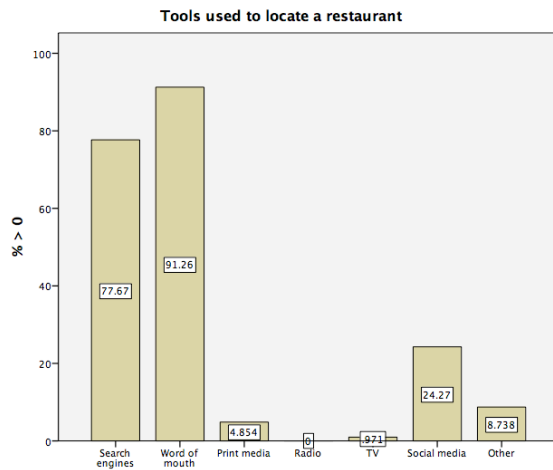
#### **4.4 Which tools does the target audience use to find the information they are looking for online?**

One way to make a website a success is creating a lot of traffic. In order to reach the right target audience, the marketer needs to know what online tools the target audience uses. In this research the target audience was asked by means of a survey about their use of search engines, social media, AdBlock and blogs.

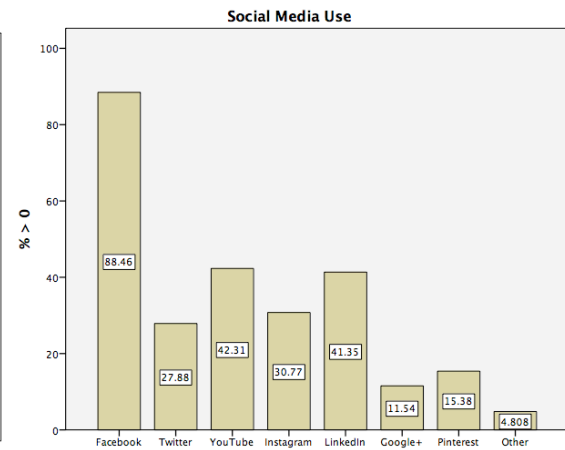
##### **4.4.1 Results of the survey**

The audience was asked in what ways they learn about new websites, or what tools they use when they are trying to find a restaurant. Word of mouth turns out to be a very strong influencer that a marketer should make use of. No less than 91,3% says to use word of mouth when trying to locate a restaurant. This means that they pay attention to social media, blogs and friend's references regarding restaurants. The second most important tool are search engines. The winner is clear: 96,2% uses Google, almost 2% uses Bing and 0,97% an other search engine. Figure 8 shows the results.

Social media prove to be still highly popular with Facebook as highlight. Of the respondents, 88,5% is on Facebook, 42,3% is on YouTube and 41,4% is on LinkedIn. Twitter, Instagram, Google+ and Pinterest are all significantly less popular. Figure 9 shows the popularity of the different social media.



Graph 10: Tools used to locate a restaurant

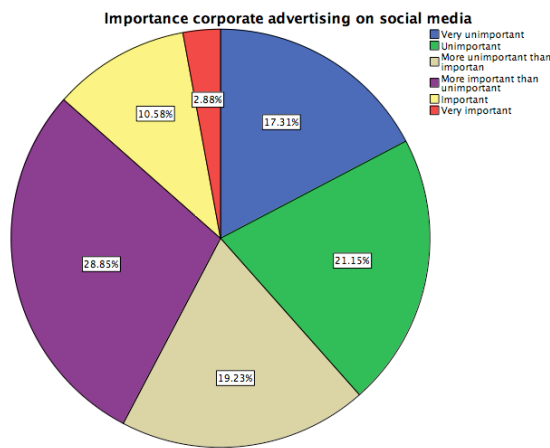


Graph 11: Social media use

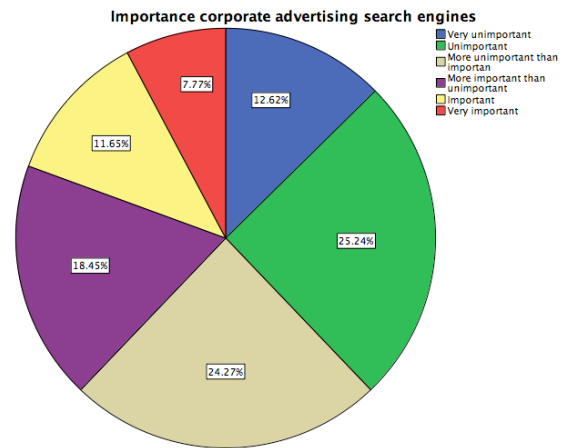
As figure 10 and 11 indicate, search engines and Facebook can be highly essential in reaching the right target audience. On both of these tools corporate advertising is possible for a relatively small amount of money. To measure whether this would be an effective way of advertising, the target audience was asked how important corporate advertising on both social media and search engines is. According to the results, corporate advertising is seen as not important by almost 58%, with varying evaluations between 'more unimportant than important' and 'very unimportant'. In addition, corporate advertising on search engines is similarly unpopular: 62% says it's unimportant to them. Figures 12 and 13 show the results.

This lack of valuation might be caused by the fact that many people experience corporate ads as annoying. Consequently more and more people make use of advertisement blockers such as Adblock. This means those users won't see any ads and consequently rate these ads as 'unimportant'. Therefore it is important to research the number of people among the target audience who use Adblock. The results of the survey show that 50,5% uses Adblock. This is important for showmethesushi.nl to take in consideration when planning on corporate advertising on social media and search engines.





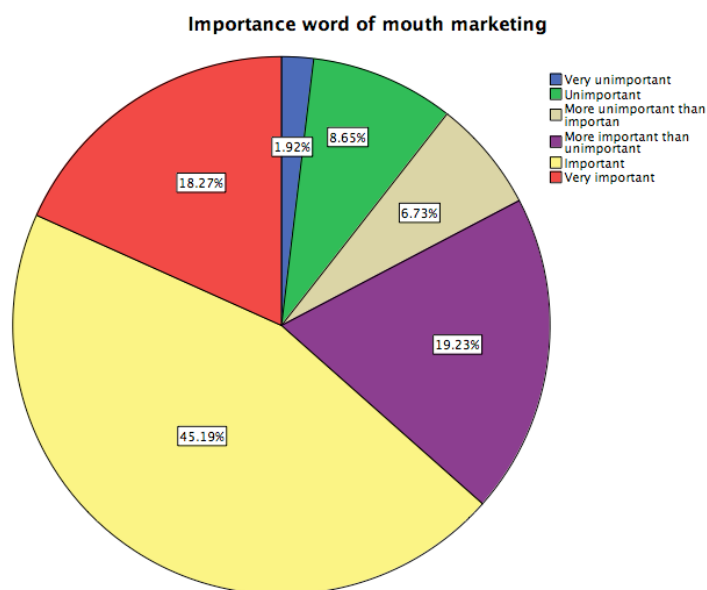
*Graph 12: Importance of corporate advertising on social media*



*Graph 13: Importance of corporate advertising on search engines*

Another interesting factor that came out of the survey, was the valuation the target audience gave to word of mouth marketing. Interestingly, almost half of the respondents (45,2%) says word of mouth is important for them. 18,3% even says it's very important for them and 19,2% thinks it's more important than unimportant. Less than 17% rates it as unimportant. Figure 14 shows the results.

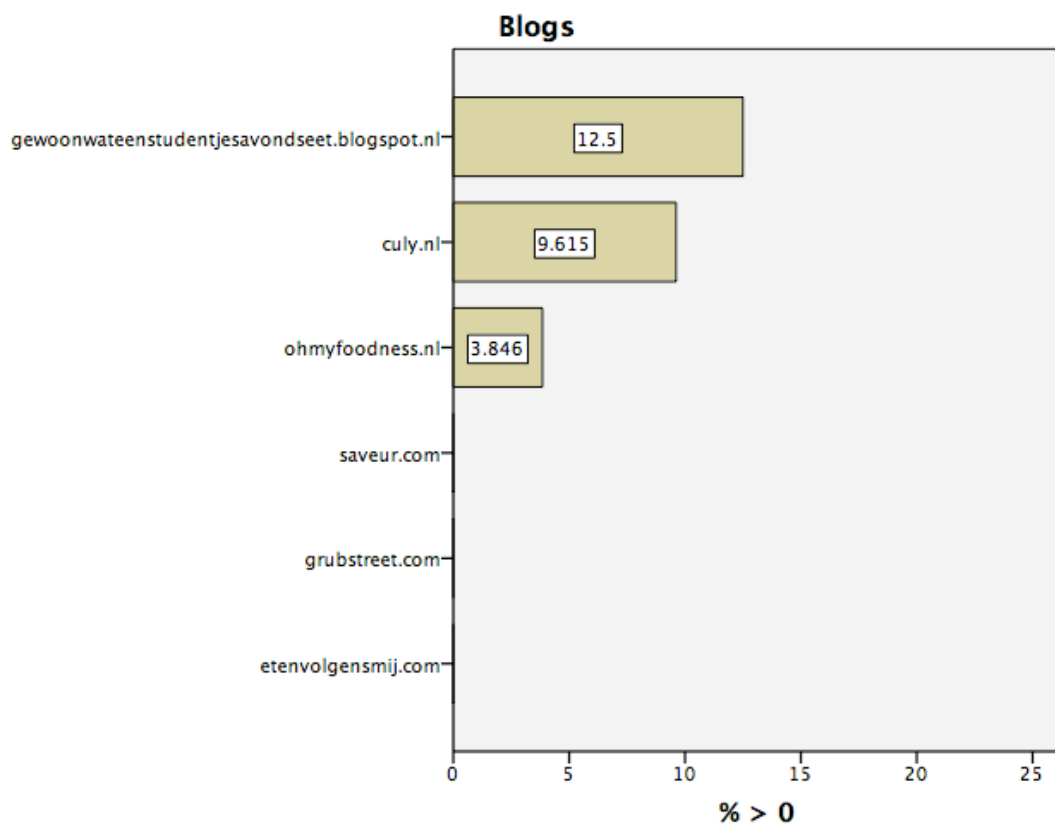
When asked further into this topic, 73% of the respondents says to to recommend websites to others by word of mouth. Very often heard reasons for why they do this is 'When I'm excited about something, I like to share it with others' and 'It might help someone else as well'. This implicates that sharing and helping are important social aspects for the target audience.



*Graph 14: The importance of word of mouth marketing*

The results regarding word of mouth marketing are very useful for marketers because they can stimulate word of mouth with their campaigns. Joining social media, encourage bloggers to write about their brand and sent viral videos into the world are all great ways to stimulate word of mouth marketing. More specific recommendations for showmethesushi.nl will be described in chapter 5.

As mentioned before, blogs are a very effective way to create word of mouth marketing. In order to complete the recommendations for showmethesushi.nl, the survey also researched which blogs would be most popular among the target audience. Figure 15 shows the results.

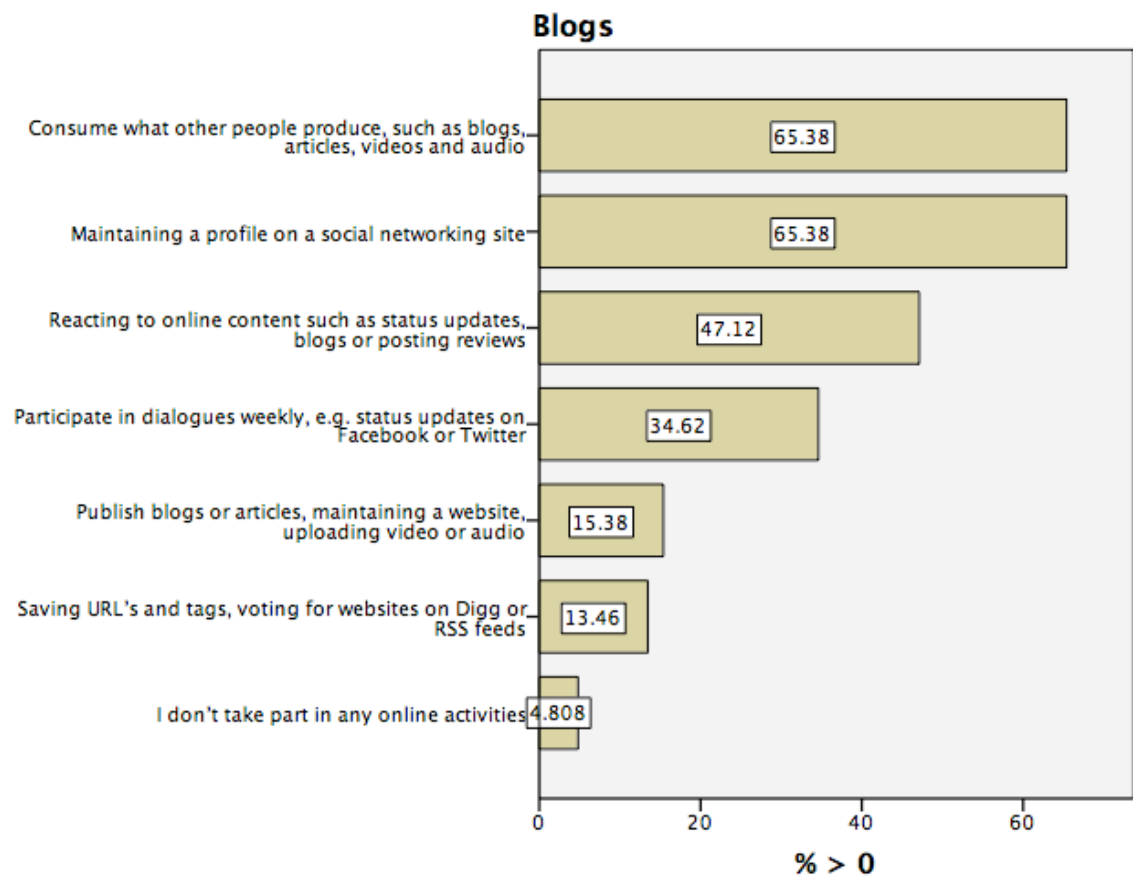


Graph 15: Popular blogs

The blog gewoonwateenstudentjesavondseet.blogspot.nl turns out to be most read by the target audience. On the second place comes culy.nl, followed by ohmyfoodness.nl. Other blogs were unknown to the target audience or too small to be taken into account. The percentage of people who read food blogs appears to be relatively small, which should be taken into consideration when considering word of mouth marketing through blogs.

Lastly, according to the Social Technographical model described in section 2.5.4, a target audience can be divided into certain groups according to their online activities.

According to this model, not all people contribute in the same way and with the same involvement (Li & Bernoff, 2008). Figure 16 shows which online activities the respondents of the survey participate in.



*Graph 16: Participation in online activities*

According to the results, the target audience seems to be quite a passive one. The two most popular online activities are consuming what others produce and maintaining a profile on a social network site. This means the majority of the target audience can be categorized in the groups Joiners and Spectators.

However, on the third place with almost half of the people, reacting to online content is also a popular activity, which means that half of the target audience can be considered Critics. This is good news for showmethesushi.nl, because this means that a considerable number of people might be interested in posting reviews and stimulating word of mouth marketing.

#### **4.4.2 Conclusion**

There are two tools that stand out in importance to the target audience: Google and word of mouth marketing. For the latter, Facebook is the most popular social medium,

followed by YouTube and LinkedIn. Many people say that they like sharing things and helping others, which should be a helpful clue to the marketer.

Corporate advertising is seen as not so important by the target audience, and since half of the people use AdBlock the marketer should be considerate when planning on advertising on social media and search engines.

Lastly, the most read blog is [gewoonwateenstudentjesavondseet.blogspot.nl](http://gewoonwateenstudentjesavondseet.blogspot.nl). Blogs are not read in large numbers but it might be valuable to consider starting a word of mouth campaign through this blog. In addition, half of the target audience can be seen as Critics according to the Social Technographical model. This means this group enjoys reacting to online content and posting reviews.

#### 4.5 What will be the Unique Selling Point of showmethesushi.nl?

Like the competitors, showmethesushi.nl needs a Unique Selling Point (USP). The USP's of the competitors are the following:

| Website        | USP  |
|----------------|--|
| Eet.nu         | User-friendliness                              |
| Dinnersite.nl  | Very first restaurant guide of the Netherlands |
| Couverts.nl    | Trusted review system                          |
| lens.nl        | Extensive search possibilities                 |
| Yelp.nl        | Very strong Social Media Ecosystem             |
| TripAdvisor.nl | Very extensive travel guide worldwide          |

*Table 8: Unique Selling Points*

The USP of showmethesushi.nl should be different from the USP's of its competitors to call it unique. Another important factor is that the target audience should find this USP valuable. The USP should be a feature of the website that makes people choose for your website instead of another one.

In the survey, 10% of the people noted that being able to see quickly which restaurant is near them is an important factor for them. None of the other restaurant guides show all sushi restaurants in Utrecht and not all competitors offer the possibility to search by neighborhood.

Therefore it is wise for showmethesushi.nl to focus on location as a USP. Since the website only focuses on Utrecht, this is already a very important factor. In addition, the website should have a large map which is easily navigated in, the search engine

should offer the possibility to filter on neighborhood and the description of the restaurants should include a route description by foot, car, bike and public transport. All of this should be mobile optimized so that the visitor can use the locator anywhere he is.

More recommendations regarding the USP is described in chapter 5.

#### 4.6 SWOT analysis

As described in section 2.5.2, the SWOT analysis is an indispensable marketing tool to evaluate the company's overall strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T) (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, p.53). The SWOT analysis needs to help the company unravel opportunities that should be taken advantage of and weaknesses that should be overcome in order to overcome threats.

The SWOT analysis is as following and will be explained in more depth in the following sections.

| Strengths   | Weaknesses  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear and easy to use locator</li> <li>- Includes ALL sushi restaurants in Utrecht</li> <li>- Possibilities to expand to other cities</li> <li>- Knowledge about target audience and their preferences</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brand awareness is not strong yet</li> <li>- No reviews are online yet</li> <li>- No marketing budget</li> </ul> |
| Opportunities   | Threats   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of people interested in sushi</li> <li>- Number of people using restaurant guides</li> <li>- Internet use is becoming more mobile</li> <li>- Competitors offer little information about sushi in Utrecht</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of other restaurant guides</li> <li>- Strong competition from lens</li> </ul>                             |

Table 9: SWOT analysis

##### 4.6.1 Strengths

**The USP: a clear and easy to use locator.** As described in section 4.5, since many people in the survey noted how important it is for them to have a quick overview of the locations, the Unique Selling Point of showmethesushi.nl will be a large map with

neighborhood filter. None of the competitors have such a map and therefore it makes showmethesushi.nl unique.

**All sushi restaurants are mentioned.** All of the competitors fail in mentioning all sushi restaurants. lens comes closest with 15, but according to research there are 18 sushi restaurants in Utrecht. Showmethesushi will include all restaurants that offer sushi, including the ones with only take-away service.

**Possibilities to expand to other cities.** When showmethesushi.nl becomes a success, the website has options to expand the service to other cities. This will increase traffic and the chance of attracting more sponsors.

**Knowledge about target audience and their preferences.** Thanks to the extensive research done among the target audience, showmethesushi.nl has a lot of valuable knowledge about the behavior and preferences of the target audience that competitors might not have. With this information the online marketing strategy can be adjusted to the target audience in the most effective way.

#### 4.6.2 Weaknesses

**Brand awareness is not strong yet.** Since showmethesushi.nl is a new website, much work needs to be done in order to increase the brand awareness. After all, brand awareness is the most important factor for creating traffic.

**No reviews are online yet.** As resulted from the survey, reviews are the most important factor of a restaurant guide according to the target audience. Gathering reviews will take a lot of time and therefore this will stay a weakness for the website as long as the focus is not totally laid on this aspect.

**No marketing budget.** Since showmethesushi.nl has no visitors and sponsors yet, the website does not make any money. Consequently, marketing costs have to be paid on the owner's own expenses and should therefore stay as low as possible. This could weaken the marketing effectiveness.

#### 4.6.3 Opportunities

**Number of people interested in sushi.** According to the survey, of all respondents who started the survey 74,4% eats sushi, divided over all age groups. Of this group 74% of the people eat sushi multiple times a year. This means the interest in sushi is very high and a sushi restaurant guide should be profitable of this.

**Number of people using restaurant guides.** The same survey indicated the the

majority of the respondents uses online restaurant guides regularly. In combination with the interest in sushi, this is good news for a website specifically for sushi restaurants.

**Internet use is becoming more mobile.** According to the research described in section 4.3.1.1, mobile search behavior to restaurants is quickly growing and the number of people owning a smartphone as well (Merks-Benjaminsen, 2013). Since showmethesushi.nl will focus on location of sushi restaurants, this will be a very important factor for all customers using their smartphone to find a restaurant near them when they don't have access to a computer.

**Competitors offer little information about sushi in Utrecht.** Most of the competitors show only half or less of the competitors. Showmethesushi.nl can take advantage of this by making sure every sushi restaurant is listed so that customers will have the most choice.

#### **4.6.4 Threats**

**Number of other restaurant guides.** As seen in the competitors analysis, the target audience has quite some websites to choose from when they search for a restaurant guide. Also, many people tend to stick with the site they first found in the Google ranking.

**Strong competition from lens.** lens is most used by the target audience and has a very strong Unique Selling Point.

# Chapter 5: Recommendations

## 5.1 Introduction

In chapter 4 the results of this research were discussed, the subquestions were answered and conclusions were drawn. In this chapter, the recommendations that will give an answer to the policy question 'What kind of online marketing strategy would be effective for reaching the target audience looking for sushi restaurants in utrecht?' will be discussed. The recommendations are based on the former described desk research, survey, interviews and competitor analysis and have resulted in the following execution of the SOSTAC model.

The following principles of the SOSTAC model, as described in section 2.5.1, will be applied to the study:

- *Where are we now?*
- *Where do we want to be?*
- *How do we get there?*
- *How exactly do we get there?*
- *Who does what and when?*
- *How do we monitor performance?*

## 5.2 Where are we now?

This question is normally answered through a situational analysis that describes the current goal performance, customer insight, SWOT, brand perception and internal capabilities and resources.

Since showmethesushi.nl is not yet a website in use, there is no performance and brand perception to be monitored yet. The SWOT analysis made in section 4.6 explains the current situation of the website.

The SWOT analysis indicated that the strengths of showmethesushi.nl are having a clear and easy to use locator, the inclusion of all sushi restaurants in Utrecht, the possibilities to expand to other cities and the knowledge about the target audience and their preferences. Weaknesses are that the brand awareness is not strong yet, there are no reviews online yet and there is no marketing budget. Opportunities for showmethesushi.nl are the number of people interested in sushi, the number of people using restaurant guides, the fact that internet use is becoming more mobile and competitors offer little information about sushi in Utrecht. Lastly, threats for



showmethesushi.nl could be the number of restaurant guides online and the strong competition of lens.nl.

### **5.3 Where do we want to be?**

To answer this question, objectives need to be set in terms of Sell, Serve, Sizzle, Speak and Save. Objectives should be SMART, which means they should be Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Reasonable and Timed.

#### **5.3.1 Sell**

The goal of the website is earning money, and therefore acquiring paying restaurant accounts are necessary. Since the average number of paying restaurant accounts of the competitors is around 10%, it is important that showmethesushi.nl can keep up with this. Since there are 18 sushi restaurants in Utrecht, the objective should be set on at least 2 paying restaurants in the first half year.

In addition, sponsors will be necessary to make the website profitable. Since this will be hard as long as there is no extensive customer base, the objective will be modest and set on one sponsor after one year after the website launch.

#### **5.3.2 Serve**

To keep customers satisfied, a short customer satisfaction survey can be done among both visitors as well as restaurants with an account. This can be done after the first half year when showmethesushi.nl has had the time to properly build a customer base.

#### **5.3.3 Sizzle**

Since visitors who are looking for a restaurant online on average visit restaurant guides for about 5 minutes (Merks-Benjaminsen, 2013) an objective can be set for the visit duration of showmethesushi.nl. Since showmethesushi.nl will start with far less listed restaurants than the average restaurant guide, the objective can be set on 2 minutes per visit. According as the website will expand, this objective should be increased.

#### **5.3.4 Speak**

Since customers will have different ways to become engaged in the website, as will be explained in section 5.5, it is important to indicate how much engagement is aimed for during the first year. Since the average opening rate of a restaurant newsletter is about 25%, showmethesushi.nl should aim for an opening rate of the newsletter of at least 24%. In addition, during the first half year of building the customer base, it is important to make sure people will make an account and take part in the forum and the blog. Therefore, the objective for these for the first half year will be 100 members who can

take part in the forum and at least 3 visitors who write blogs on a monthly basis. These objectives should be increased to 300 account members and 6 blog writers after one year after the launch of showmethesushi.nl.

#### **5.3.5 Save**

Efficiency gains should be made by means of Google Analytics, which will help improve SEO and social media strategies. In addition, KPI's of the newsletters should be measured in order to increase the opening rate and open click rate.

### **5.4 How do we get there?**

In this section the strategy is described; this concerns recommendation about segmentation, targeting and positioning, Unique Selling Points and tools such as email and web functionality. Details of the strategy will be described in section 5.5.

#### **5.4.1 Implement the Unique Selling Point: restaurant locator**

As described in section 4.5, the Unique Selling Point needs to be focused on locating restaurants. The research showed that customers value this factor very much and competitors are not so much focussed on this.

The homepage of the website should consist out of a large map of Utrecht with easy and smooth navigation. Restaurants should be clearly visible on the map and be clickable. The search engine should be interactive with the map when a specific location is typed in. The search engine should offer the possibility to search on neighborhood as well as distance. In addition, a GPS tracker could be implemented so that people can search for the nearest three restaurants. The description that comes with the restaurant should include clear information regarding the route by car, foot, bike and public transport. Consequently, the website and a mobile application should be available to trace restaurants from any place the customer is at.

#### **5.4.2 Target a wide audience, with emphasis on 15-25 year olds**

As the results of the survey showed, both sushi and online restaurant guides are popular among a large part of the Dutch audience. Both males and females between the age of 15 and 45 like to eat sushi regularly and use restaurant guides to locate a restaurant to their taste. Therefore it would be wise to target all of these people through the online marketing described in section 5.5. However, the results of the survey also testified that the number of positive responding people to the idea of a sushi restaurant website seems to decrease as the age increases. Therefore showmethesushi.nl should

emphasize on its efforts to reach the younger target audience. Social media is an excellent tool of doing this, as explained in section 5.5.1.

#### **5.4.3 Use an extensive Social Media Ecosystem**

Reaching people online is already difficult enough, and therefore it is important to use many different channels to increase the chance they will be reached. This can be done by using the following channels:

- Social media
- Blogs
- Newsletters
- Forum

In addition, visitors should be able to make a personal account on the website that enables them to communicate with other visitors and the restaurants. Details regarding the desired Social Media Ecosystem will be given in section 5.5.

#### **5.4.4 Make sure the website is as user-friendly as possible**

The conducted research showed that according to both the competitors as well as the target audience, a decisive factor of websites is their user-friendliness. The website needs to be clear, simple, easy in use and not overwhelming. According to Constantinides (2004), by managing functionality factors, content factors and psychological factors on the website the marketer should be able to reduce the customer's uncertainty by communicating trust and credibility.

For example, the homepage of showmethesushi.nl should consist only out of the map and search function described in section 5.4.1. When people click on a restaurant the homepage will be extended in length and show the restaurant's information below the map. This way people can easily scroll back up to the map and click on another restaurant. No more, no less. This gives the visitor peace of mind and he will not be overwhelmed by an overload of buttons and functions.

### **5.5 How exactly do we get there?**

In this section the **tactics**, or the details, of the strategy will be refined. This includes an e-marketing mix, details of contact strategy and an e-campaign initiative schedule.

### **5.5.1 Engage people through social media**

As stated in the Cluetrain Manifesto described in section 2.4, the online marketplace is not about messages, but about conversations. To engage visitors, the social media messages you use need to be interesting and inviting. Since 47% of the target audience in the survey likes reacting on online content, they should be given enough opportunities to do this. This should be done with the following social media.

- *Facebook*

According to the research, Facebook will reach the most people and is therefore inevitable. The audience can be engaged by asking them questions, e.g. 'What is your favorite sushi?', organizing win actions and asking them to share their experiences on [showmethesushi.nl](http://showmethesushi.nl). Posts should be placed at least two times a week to keep the audience interested, but no more than three times a week to prevent them from feeling spammed. Likes should not be bought; these are not real accounts and therefore will not take part in conversations. This will decrease the relative number of people talking about you and this will alert Facebook that the posts are not interesting enough. Consequently, the chance that posts will be shown to real people who liked the page will be decreased. Therefore buying likes is a waste of money and will hurt the business (Loomer, 2012).

YouTube, Twitter and Instagram can be used as additional social media. LinkedIn is also popular but since this platform is not so much used for entertainment it will probably not reach the right target audience.

- *YouTube*

YouTube can be used to post videos of the different sushi restaurants. In addition, short clips of promotional actions can be made and easily distributed through YouTube.

- *Twitter*

Since Twitter can only be used for short messages, it can be used for referring to promotional actions on Facebook and YouTube. Also short news messages and updates about interesting reviews can be tweeted. Twitter messages can be sent every day or even multiple times a day since it's an effective way to have direct contact with followers.

- *Instagram*

Instagram is a platform to share pictures on mobile devices. Showmethesushi.nl can use Instagram for showing pictures of sushi, restaurants and promotional images.

Google+ and Pinterest are not highly used but since they are for free, it is recommendable to join them as well. For these social media it is not necessary to produce separate content; the posts made for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram can also be uploaded here.

There are many ways to start a conversation with the audience. For showmethesushi.nl it is important to increase brand awareness and therefore it would be profitable to let people share your status. For example, organize a share and win action on Facebook. Prizes could be a discount voucher for a sushi restaurant, the dvd of the documentary *‘Jiro Dreams of Sushi’* and so on.

In addition, another way to engage visitors is by ‘shocking’ them. Making an advertisement that creates buzz is a very effective way of doing this. Showmethesushi.nl could make an ad with e.g. a naked woman covered only in sushi. Sex always attracts people and this could be a good way to let people start a conversation or discussion about the ad and consequently increase brand awareness.

The results of the survey also indicated that many people like to share things and help others. Making use of this social human trait could be very effective in engaging people. For instance, organize special win actions for 2 people; sharing a status update or rewarding the funniest comment on a picture with as a prize a sushi dinner for two. Also make use of special days such as Valentine’s Day and Mother’s Day to give people the opportunity to share something with their loved ones.

Lastly, nowadays ‘viral’ videos are a very effective way to make your brand go ‘viral’. However, producing such a video involves a significant amount of money and seen the current marketing budget of showmethesushi.nl this might be something to invest in at a later stage.

### **5.5.2 Make use of blogs**

The results of the survey shows that about a quarter of the target audience reads food blogs. Showmethesushi.nl could take advantage of this by stimulating these blogs to talk about them. According to Kelly (2007), Rettberg (2008), and Sernovitz (2006) (as cited in Kozinets, De Valck et al., 2010), blogs have been increasingly popular as tools for Word of Mouth marketing campaigns. As the Word of Mouth Marketing in online communities model described in section 2.5.6 suggests, the market-based message and its reception by the audience is influenced by four factors. To make optimal use of

these four factors, namely the character narrative, the type of forum, the norms of the community and the promotional characteristics of the campaign, a food blog seems most applicable to showmethesushi.nl. Research showed that the two Dutch blogs culy.nl and gewoonwateenstudentjesavondseet.blogspot.nl are most read by the target audience. To make use of their influence, those two blogs can be offered a reward, for instance a discount voucher, in return for being mentioned in one of their blog articles. This way many people can be reached outside of the social media circles. Gewoonwateenstudentjesavondseet.blogspot.nl for example has 8000 page views a day. Being mentioned in many different external websites such as blogs will also increase the SEO results for showmethesushi.nl

In addition to contacting external blogs, showmethesushi.nl could also start its own blog. On this blog visitors can be given the chance to write about their experiences and opinions with sushi and sushi restaurants. This way visitors will feel more engaged with the website and at the same time, having a blog is an effective SEO technique that will benefit the website's ranking in Google.

#### **5.5.3 Send newsletters**

Newsletters are an important factor of the Social Media Ecosystem's owned media. Having multiple channels of owned media is important because these are the channels that you have full control over. In addition, all of the competitors have one or more newsletters and for some of them this is a key success factor. Therefore it is important that showmethesushi.nl does not stay behind in this essential trend.

Newsletters should be sent monthly to prevent people from feeling spammed. In addition, newsletters should be informative and profitable to the subscribers in order to preserve their attention and loyalty. Therefore making use of discounts for subscribers only could be an effective way to attract and keep subscribers. In addition, since people like to share, encouraging people to invite others to subscribe to the newsletter in return for a reward such as discount, can effectively increase the number of subscriptions. Lastly, the newsletter can be used to encourage people to post reviews on showmethesushi.nl. It is very important that the number of reviews will be increased from the start on in order to make visitors trust the website. According to the Two Step Flow theory, opinion leaders are necessary to influence and stimulate others to a particular behavior. When there are not enough reviews online, people might feel doubtful about a restaurant and the trustworthiness of showmethesushi.nl, and consequently not be stimulated to post a review as one of the first ones.

#### **5.5.4 Make the use of the website personal**

According to the Two Step Flow Theory, informal and personal contact is very important for people's decision making behavior. As the research showed, the majority of the

target audience are either Spectators, Joiners or Critics. According to the Social Technographical model, Joiners are likely to join a platform and maintain their profile. Spectators like to consume online content and Critics like talking about it. For showmethesushi.nl it would be profitable to offer them the opportunity to make a personal account on the website with which they can contact other users and where restaurants can contact them, to talk about a placed review for instance. In addition, a forum should be opened where visitors can talk about any related topic to sushi, restaurants, cooking etcetera. By making the website personal people will feel more engaged and they can choose whether to participate in the conversation or just consume it.

#### **5.5.5 Be careful with spending money on corporate advertising**

Since showmethesushi.nl has no marketing budget, it is advisable to only spend money on things that will have a significant effect on the number of visitors. The research showed that corporate advertising on search engines and social media probably won't have the desired effect. 50,5% of the target audience uses AdBlock, which means these people won't see any ads. In addition, the majority of the people indicated that corporate advertising on search engines and social media is not important to them. Apart from AdBlock, this high number might be caused by the phenomenon 'Banner Blindness', where internet users consciously or subconsciously ignore banners and other advertisements. According to Adotas, 86% of internet users 'suffer' from banner blindness. Therefore spending money on corporate advertising does not seem like a sustainable investment for showmethesushi.nl.

#### **5.5.6 Offer different accounts for restaurant owners**

As seen in the competitor analysis, many competitors give the restaurants a choice between different accounts. Showmethesushi.nl will list every sushi restaurant in Utrecht by describing the experience of the website owner. However, restaurant owners should be given the opportunity to update their own page and choose for different types of accounts to do this. Offering them a free account will lower the barrier for them to join, and the more restaurants profile themselves on the website the less work it is for the webmaster. Then again, since the website needs to make money the free account should have limited functions. Restaurant owners will want to add a link to their website, update their own pictures, add videos etcetera. For an account with these functions they should pay showmethesushi.nl. Consequently, not all restaurants will do that so restaurants who do pay have an advantage over those who don't pay. In addition, the paid account should offer the restaurant a place on top of the page so that they will be seen by more people.

As an extra way to make money, showmethesushi.nl could offer the service to make professional pictures or videos of the restaurant. This could be part of a third, more expensive account, as opposed to the free account and the paid account for which restaurants have to provide the pictures and videos themselves.

In the schedule below an example of the benefits of the three accounts is provided.

| <b>Free Account</b>            | <b>Plus Account</b><br>(Including all benefits of the free account) | <b>Superstar account</b><br>(Including all benefits of the Plus Account) |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Address, prices, opening hours | Add your own pictures and videos                                    | Professional Pictures provided by showmethesushi.nl                      |
| Promotional text               | Menu card   | Professional videos provided by showmethesushi.nl                        |
| Contact visitors               | Link to your website  | Track statistics of your page  |
|                                | More visibility   |  |
|                                | Take part in discount actions                                       |  |

*Table 10: User accounts sushi restaurants*

#### **5.5.7 Be optimized for mobile internet**

As research showed, the use of mobile internet is increasing and also becoming more important for searches for restaurant guides. Therefore the website needs to be mobile optimized for all smartphones in order to satisfy the visitor's needs. In addition, a mobile app is desirable to keep up with competitors and increase the user's convenience. This is also an important part of the Unique Selling Point: the locations of the restaurants need to be traceable any time and any place, especially when the customer is in the vicinity of a restaurant but does not have a computer to look for the locations.

#### **5.5.8 Attract sponsors**

Since the main goal of showmethesushi.nl is making money, sponsors are of essential importance. Sponsors can be offered a banner placement on the website or discount deals can be made. These discount deals can be used for promotional actions on social media and in newsletters.



### 5.5.9 Do not limit the website to Utrecht only

Focusing on sushi restaurants in Utrecht might be a good start to introduce the website and build up an audience, but the target audience could be much bigger than Utrecht residents and visitors only. As many people in the survey indicated, people who do not live near Utrecht would not make use of the website, even though they like to eat sushi. Therefore it seems wise, once the basis of the website is done, to extend the website to the other big cities and eventually to the rest of the country. This will increase the number of visitors and consequently the number of sponsors and paying accounts.

## 5.6 Who does what and when?

Actions determine the details, the timing and the budget of the tactics.

### 5.6.1 Time schedule

The planning of the strategy can be found in the following table.

| When                            | What  |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Week -1: Week before the Launch | Join Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Google+ and Pinterest. Post the first blog post, written by showmethesushi.nl |
| Week 0: Launch the website      | Encourage people on social media to visit the website and sign up for the newsletter                                      |
| Week 1                          | Start posting twice a week on social media  |
| Week 2                          | Post the second blog post, written by showmethesushi.nl   |
| Week 3                          | Send the first newsletter   |
| Week 4                          | Post a few try-out topics on the forum<br>Post the third blog post, written by showmethesushi.nl                          |
| Week 5                          | Actively approach restaurants to encourage them to join   |
| Week 6                          | Post the first blog post written by a visitor   |
| After 2 months                  | Start analyzing KPI's of newsletter and website   |
| After 3 months                  | Actively approach external blogs, asking them to write about you in return for a reward                                   |
| After 6 months                  | Analyze if objectives have been reached   |

| When            | What                                    |
|-----------------|---|
| After 12 months | Analyze if objectives have been reached |

Table 11: Time Schedule

### 5.6.2 Budget

Since showmethesushi.nl is a start up company, everything will have to be paid on account of the owner as long as no investors are attracted. Therefore it is important to keep the costs as low as possible and attract investors as soon as possible. Fortunately, many online marketing tools are available for free nowadays which will save a lot of money. Newsletter programs and tracking tools such as Google Analytics are available for free. Social media accounts for companies are also free. Producing videos and pictures for the Superstar account can also be done without any costs since the necessary tools are already in the possession of the website's owner.

Still, mobile optimization of the website and implementing a smartphone application will cost money. However, much money can be saved by making use of services which allow the user to do a lot of the building and maintaining himself. In addition, prizes and discount vouchers are necessary to give away to bloggers and social media win actions. After doing research, a budget estimation is given in the following table.

| Tool  | Costs per month | Costs per year   |
|---|-----------------|------------------|
| Mobile optimization website via <a href="http://www.ekomobi.com">http://www.ekomobi.com</a> | 15\$ / 11€      | 180\$ / 132€     |
| Smartphone app built by <a href="http://www.igenapps.com">www.igenapps.com</a>              | 4,99\$ / 3,65€  | 49,99\$ / 36,60€ |
| Discount vouchers & prizes  | €50             | €600             |
| <b>Total</b>  | 64,65€          | 768,60€          |

Table 12: Budget

### 5.7 How do we monitor performance?

Lastly, monitoring performance is extremely important. The **control** stage determines the way of monitoring performance, e.g. by KPI's and usability testing.

### **5.7.1 Monitor KPI's**

Keeping track of Key Performance Indicators is essential to determine which marketing tools work and which do not. Newsletters should be tracked for opening rate and click through rate. These indicate whether the people actually open the newsletter and how many of them click on to the website. This information can be used to find out which topics people find interesting.

### **5.7.2 Track website visitor's behavior**

Also recommendable is tracking the website visitors through Google Analytics. With this free package it is possible to see where your visitors are coming from, which pages they click on most and therefore which marketing tools are working.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

When starting a new business, it is important to do a feasibility study in order to evaluate the potential for success of the business and determine any strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The study done in this document was aiming on determining the most effective online marketing strategy to reach the target audience interested in sushi restaurants in Utrecht.

By means of the SOSTAC model six important questions regarding the position, objectives and strategy of showmethesushi.nl have been answered. The recommendations are based on the conducted research and should make sure that showmethesushi.nl reaches the right target audience with the most effective tools that fit the budget.

Firstly, showmethesushi.nl should focus on a practical restaurant locator as the Unique Selling Point of the website to meet the target audience's needs. Secondly, an extensive Social Media Ecosystem is needed and should include social media, blogs, newsletters and a forum. The website itself should be user-friendly and personal and different types of accounts should be offered to restaurant owners. Furthermore, the website should be optimized for mobile internet and include a mobile application. Lastly, in order to reach the goal of making money, showmethesushi.nl should not limit the website to Utrecht only so that a wider target audience will be reached and consequently more sponsors can be attracted.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1: Competitor Analysis

### 1.1 Eet.nu

According to the founder of Eet.nu, this website is currently the biggest restaurant guide of the Netherlands. The website was started in 2006 and grew from being a side project into the most successful project of the founder, Jeroen Wubbe. The focus has always been to show all restaurants, cafes and cafeterias in the Netherlands in order to make the choice for the Dutch audience easier. At the moment Eet.nu covers over 32.000 restaurants in the Netherlands and Belgium. More than 300 customer reviews are submitted every day and the website has a monthly average of 1.2 million visitors. Image 1 shows the homepage of Eet.nu.

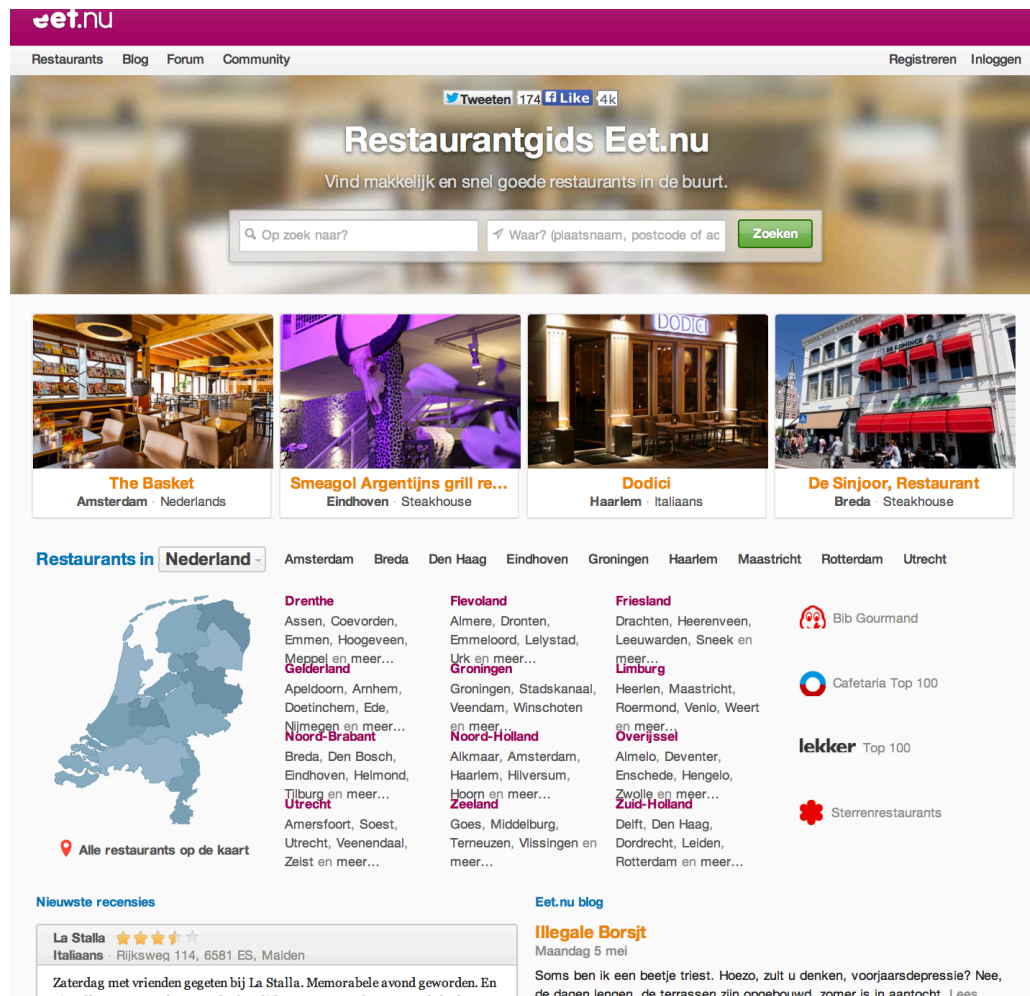


Image 1: The homepage of Eet.nu

Eet.nu targets everyone who likes to eat out, but they mostly reach females between 20 and 49 years old with an average or higher salary and education. The users of Eet.nu can make a profile that will show their written reviews, submitted pictures and the possibility to follow other users. This is called the Eet.nu Community. This way Eet.nu tries to make the website experience more personal. Visitors can see the latest posted reviews on the starting page of the community. The Community seems to be very active, since posts are being submitted a couple of times every hour.

The website also offers a forum where visitors with an account can discuss everything regarding restaurants and food. The forum appears to be less active than the Community page, since the last reaction dates of one week ago.

Another feature of the website is the blog page, where different bloggers can post their blog about anything regarding food and restaurants. However, it is not clear how new bloggers can apply for being published on this page. There is also no overview page of the bloggers that already take part. On the blog page a culinary agenda can also be found.

In addition to the website, Eet.nu has its own app for iPhone that helps customers find a restaurant in their vicinity. The app is used about 200.000 times a month.

The website announces that the monthly newsletter has over 400.000 subscribers. From the interview with Jeroen Wubbe, which can be found in the appendix on page 80, the newsletter appeared to be the most effective marketing tool of Eet.nu. According to Wubbe, the newsletter has an average opening rate of 25%, which is quite in compliance with the average opening rate of a restaurant newsletter (Average Email Campaign Stats of MailChimp Customers by Industry, 2014).

Eet.nu makes use of Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and Instagram. Facebook and Twitter are the most important ones because there the most direct contact with customers takes place. In addition to social media, Eet.nu uses Google to reach the people who do not know them yet. By using optimization techniques such as logically structuring the website and posting blogs the website will rank higher in Google.

Eet.nu says to be constantly working on new features that keeps the website interesting for visitors and restaurants. At the moment a new function is being developed for restaurants" on their website they can place a reservation system that will link to Eet.nu. Visitors that make a reservation through this system will receive an



email the next day with the request to leave a comment at Eet.nu. This increases the chance that visitors will leave a review.

Considering all of the above mentioned features, Eet.nu has a sophisticated Social Media Ecosystem. Being present on four different social media, measuring the KPI's of the newsletter, maintaining blogs and forums and implementing widgets such as the reservation system for external websites are all part of the Social Media Ecosystem as described in section 2.5.5. By combining all of these functions Eet.nu reaches a wide audience and engages them in the main goal of the website; sharing opinions and thought on restaurants and food. Clearly this has paid off in the number of visitors and therefore this Social Media Ecosystem can be seen as a key success factor. Consequently it can serve as an example and inspiration for showmethesushi.com. Recommendations regarding this topic will be described in chapter 5.

Regarding other key success factors, according to Wubbe the Unique Selling Point is the user-friendliness of the website. Wubbe: 'It's easy to use and has a good overview. You can quickly find what you are looking for. This is what makes people come back.'

Another key success factor might be that Eet.nu is mobile optimized. Mobile search behavior to restaurants is quickly growing and the number of people owning a smartphone as well (Merks-Benjaminsen, 2013). 74% of the visitors say they are more likely to return to a website in the future when it is mobile friendly (Google, 2012).

Lastly, an important factor for its success might be that Eet.nu gives restaurants a choice: free placement on the website or the possibility to increase their reach by paying for it. Less than 10% of the restaurants on Eet.nu pay for this placement, but it does give them many advantages: they will be highlighted on top of the city page of the city they're located in and they can add pictures, the menu card, slogans etcetera. This way the restaurant will be profiled better and consequently increase brand awareness.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>USP</b>        | User-friendliness   |
| <b>Strengths</b>  | Sophisticated Social Media Ecosystem, Mobile app, restaurants can choose between profiles |
| <b>Weaknesses</b> | Forum is inactive, purpose of blog is unclear   |

## 1.2 Dinnersite.nl

Dinnersite.nl is the oldest online restaurant guide of the Netherlands. It started as a graduation project of founder Menno de Vries, who decided to continue with it as a

business. In 18 years the website grew into a restaurant platform with over 13.000 restaurants. Every month the website has more than 750.000 unique visitors. Image 2 shows the homepage of Dinersite.nl.



Image 2: The homepage of Dinersite.nl

Just like Eet.nu, Dinersite.nl gives the possibility to restaurants to pay for their account in return for more profiling possibilities, which is done by approximately 10% of the restaurants with a profile on the site. With this membership restaurants can add their own pictures, videos and texts, a link to their website will be shown and they can take part in paid and unpaid promotions.

The Dinersite has many tabs and functions of which the visitor can make use. Not only restaurants are listed, also food events, a food calendar, special deals, Dinersite news, new restaurants and menu cards and special qualifications such as Michelin have their own page. In addition, in accordance with the season, the homepage shows tabs for Mother's Day, Terrace and Beach. This makes it easier for the customer to quickly find the topic they are looking for, but at the same time it can be overwhelming. The website is also mobile optimized, which is a very important condition for visitors to return, as seen described in section 4.3.1.1.

Visitors can make a profile on the website with which they can place reviews and keep track of their reservations and favorite restaurants. However, the website does not seem to specialize in customer reviews, since many restaurants do not have any review.

Dinnersite has 4 different monthly newsletters that visitors can subscribe for. Also restaurants with a paid profile receive a monthly newsletter. According to Ruud van den Brink, account manager at Dinnersite.nl, the newsletters are among the most effective communication tools. Unfortunately the opening rate is not known. The expert interview with Van Den Brink is attached in the appendix on page 83.

Dinnersite.nl is present on Facebook, where according to Van den Brink a lot of interaction with the audience takes place. A special Facebook widget they have developed is the Dinnersite-tab that restaurants can place on their own Facebook-page. In the tab the Dinnersite information about the restaurant will be shown and people can go to the Dinnersite page directly from there.

In addition to this, Dinnersite uses Google AdWords to create more traffic from Google to the website. According to Van den Brink this is very effective in creating traffic. Therefore it might be one of their key success factors.

According to Van den Brink himself, the Unique Selling Point of Dinnersite is their age. Since they were the first one to start an online restaurant guide their brand awareness is very big.

Taking all of the above described features in account, Dinnersite does not seem to have a very extensive Social Media Ecosystem. Apart from Facebook no social media is used and the only other way Dinnersite reaches out to its audience is by email. Also not many reviews are being posted, which is not very stimulative for new users to post a review or visit a restaurant. According to the Two Step Flow Theory described in section 2.5.3 informal and personal contact has a huge influence on people's decision making behavior. If there are no opinion leaders who make use of their personal influence on others, in this case this will certainly have negative influence on people's behavior. When there are no reviews, people might feel doubtful about a restaurant and if they decide to visit the restaurant they will probably not feel addressed to be the first one to post a review.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>USP</b>        | Very first online restaurant guide of the Netherlands                   |
| <b>Strengths</b>  | Restaurants can choose between profiles, many special pages on homepage |
| <b>Weaknesses</b> | Not many reviews online, weak Social Media Ecosystem                    |

### 1.3 Couverts.nl

Couverts is described as an online reservation platform for restaurants in the Netherlands. Besides that, Couverts figures as a marketing partner for several other organizations and culinary events. The website functions more as a reservation platform than a restaurant guide, since information about restaurants is only shown when these restaurants have joined Couverts with a paid account. In 2013 the website was used for 5,5 million reservations (“Infographic Couverts 2013, 2013”). Image 3 shows the homepage of Couverts.nl

The target audience is people between 25 and 35, however the end-users tend to be slightly older, according to Lisa Wijvekate, communications employee at Couverts. Couverts.nl is owned by RTL Nederland, which gives them the possibility to be promoted on the RTL TV channels, radio and online channels. The interview with Wijvekate can be found in the appendix on page 85.

Couverts.nl is mobile optimized and has a smartphone app that has been downloaded 530.000 times. According to <http://www.couverts.nl/digitaalreserveringsboek>, the website has a brand awareness of 58% in the Netherlands.

Visitors can make a profile on the website to keep track of their reservations, reviews, favorites, newsletter subscriptions and it gives them the possibility to invite friends through social media to join Couverts. However, placing a review is only possible with an account and moreover, a review can only be made when a reservation for this restaurants has been made through Couverts. According to Wijvekate this is called the ‘trusted review system’ and it is the Unique Selling Point of the website, since it is not possible anymore to place a fake review. However, it also seems that this will significantly decrease the chance that people will place reviews, simply because they it is not always possible. Consequently, when looking at the social technographical model described in section 2.5.4, people will most likely tend to stay in the Spectators group, instead of moving into the Critics group. This means that according to the Two Step Flow model, the target audience’s behavior will be more difficult to influence because there are not many opinion leaders.

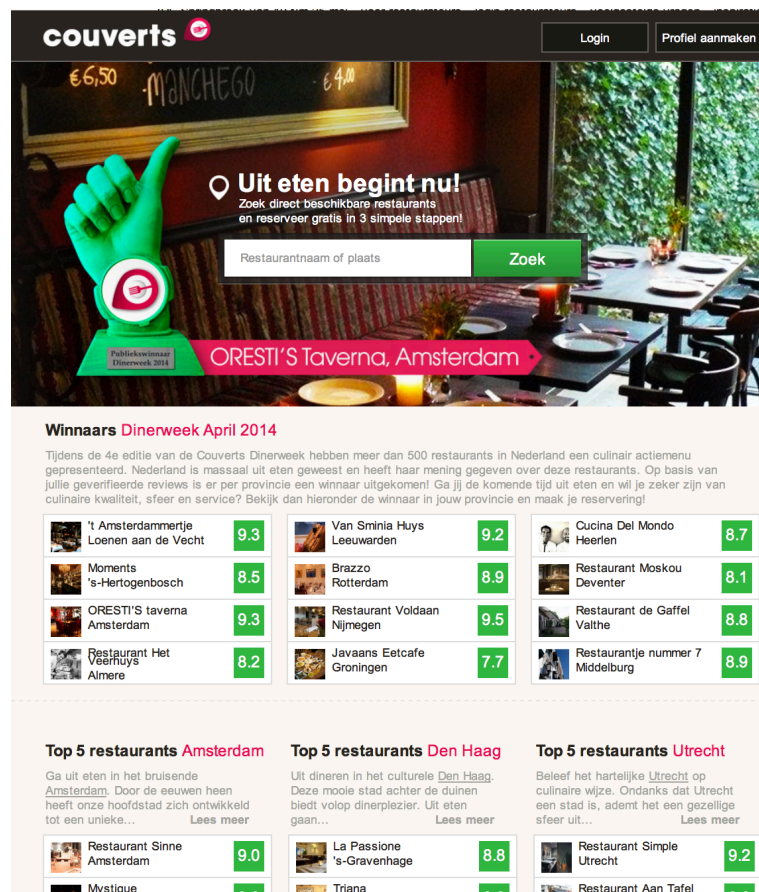


Image 3: The homepage of Couverts.nl

Couverts.nl has a so-called 'inspiration' page where special promos, events, news and certain restaurants are being promoted. For instance the Couverts Dinerweek is promoted here; a yearly week in which participating restaurants offer a menu for a special price. At the end of the week winning restaurants will be chosen based on the submitted reviews on Couverts.nl.

Couverts makes use of different social media: Facebook and Twitter form the basis of the Social Media Ecosystem, complemented by Google+ and YouTube, which are less intensely used. In combination with the different new letters and the inspiration page, Couvert's Social Media Ecosystem seems to be quite solid. However, some important elements are missing, such as blogs, open review possibilities and other ways for people to contribute to the website. On the other hand, thanks to their connection with RTL Nederland Couverts has access to TV and radio promotion, which sets them apart from other restaurant guides.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>USP</b>        | Trusted review system   |
| <b>Strengths</b>  | Promotion on RTL TV channels, smartphone app, many different newsletters  |
| <b>Weaknesses</b> | Restaurants can only choose a paid account, customers can only place review when reservation is done through Couverts |

#### 1.4 lens.nl

With 1,5 million visitors a month, lens has the biggest number of visitors of the in this study analyzed competitors. On the website a 100.000 reviews a year are submitted which cover more than 19.000 restaurants in total. The website started 15 years ago and ever since it builded the highest number of visitors in the Netherlands of the compared competitors. Image 4 shows the homepage of lens.nl.



Image 4: The homepage of lens.nl

lens.nl is a very extensive restaurant guide including an online reservation system. The search function on the website is sophisticated, offers a lot of search possibilities and is easy in use. Visitors can search on combinations of region, type of kitchen, online reservation possibility, price-range, food grade, sustainability and many more. lens has many of its own promotions such as an lens gift coupon, lens DinerDeals and events

such as lens Diner Dagen. The website is mobile optimized and includes its own smartphone app.

lens' target audience mainly consists of people between 20 and 49 years old who are highly educated. lens sends out a monthly newsletter with 'culinary inspiration' and promotions for restaurants. They are present on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+ and YouTube, of which the last 2 do not seem to be actively in use.

Restaurants can make a profile for free, but a paid account offers them a wider reach, more possibilities to add pictures, texts, menus and to make use of the online reservation system.

lens has a sophisticated system when it comes to customer reviews ("Over lens, n.d.). The newer the review, the heavier its rating counts for the average grade of the restaurant. When a review is older than 2 years it does not count at all anymore. In addition, reviews of experienced review writer count heavier than reviews of new visitors. Lastly, the average grade of all restaurants also counts: the influence of this average grade decreases as a restaurant receives more reviews. This is a method that is also used by e.g. IMDb, the biggest film review website world wide.

lens' Social Media Ecosystem has a wide reach and offers low-access contribution possibilities for the visitor in the form of reviews. However, they do not have a blog or a forum where visitors can interact with each other or the company. This will have to take place via social media. lens's Unique Selling Point comes down to the extensive search possibilities, which is very inviting to use because of its user-friendliness.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>USP</b>        | Extensive search possibilities  |
| <b>Strengths</b>  | Sophisticated review influence system, high brand awareness, smartphone app, different profiles available for restaurants |
| <b>Weaknesses</b> | Not much interaction for visitors available due to lack of blog or forum  |

## 1.5 Yelp.nl

Yelp.com is an American company that started in 2004 to help find people local businesses such as restaurants, dentists and mechanics. The website grew international and is now operating on a world wide basis. The company has offices in San Francisco, Palo Alto, New York, Phoenix, London, Dublin and Hamburg. Yelp has an average of 132 million unique visitors per month and includes 57 million local reviews. Unfortunately, there is no data available of these number for the Netherlands only. Image 5 shows the homepage of Yelp.nl.

Yelp visitors can make an account or log in with their Facebook profile. With a profile they can become friends with other Yelp users, send messages to them, find events, write reviews, take part in the forum and keep track of favorite places. Users can also 'check in' with their Yelp account in the place where they are and post this on Facebook. Yelp also has its own blog, which is described as 'The official voice of Yelp HQ in San Francisco. It's a place for us to talk about press, product and policy at Yelp.com' (<http://officialblog.yelp.com>). In short, this is the official blog where Yelp events in the USA are promoted and reported about. In addition, Yelp also has Community Blogs for other countries where local Yelp events are discussed, however there is none for the Netherlands yet.

Business can join Yelp for free and post their own pictures and message customers. Yelp makes money by selling ads to local businesses. Having an advertisement on Yelp does not influence the reviews of the business.

Yelp.nl is active on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram and YouTube. They have a mobile optimized website and has apps for iPhone, Android, Kindle and iPad. Yelp has a weekly newsletter with updates on business openings and events in the city of your choice.



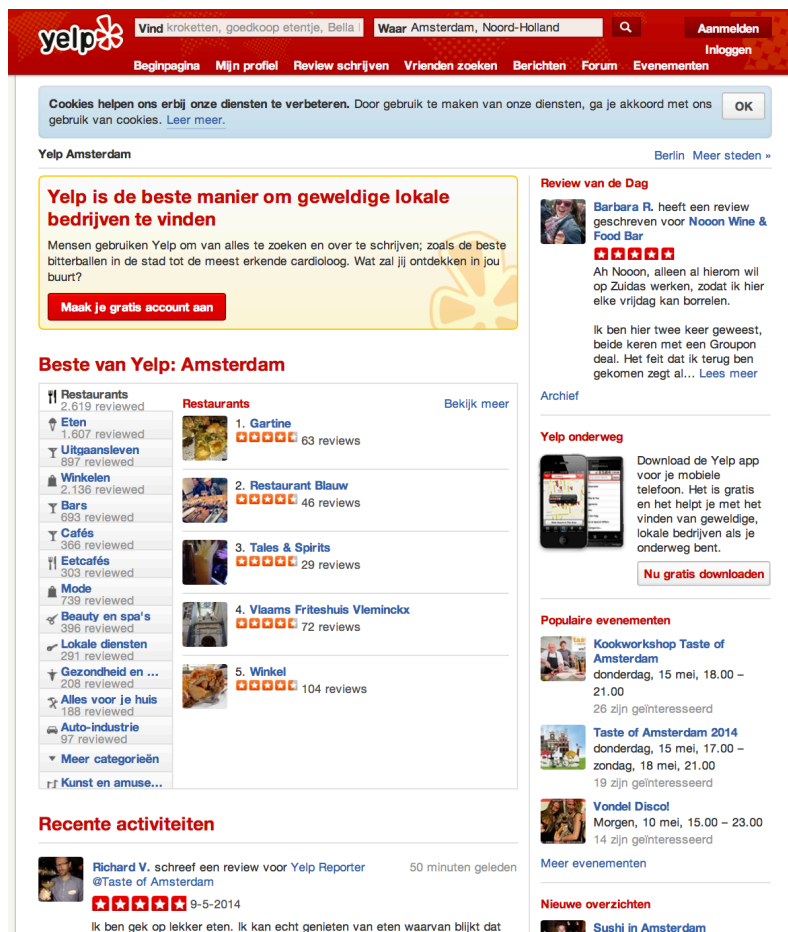


Image 5: The homepage of Yelp.nl

As described earlier, Yelp.nl has a very extensive Social Media Ecosystem. Through social media and with the personal account visitors can contact each other and businesses, can contribute to the forum and leave reviews, by newsletter they are kept up to date and the blog functions as both informative and offers great SEO value. By offering all these possibilities Yelp users are quickly upgraded to Creators, the most active group of the Social Technographical Model. Also, the Word of Mouth marketing model is highly relevant in this business model. Blogs are frequently updated and available per country, which makes it easier to target the right audience and keep the message up to date and relevant for them. However, a large drawback is that this Community Blog is not available for the Netherlands. This means messages on the blogs are not relevant for the Dutch audience and therefore it might have decreased influence on them.

|                   |                                       |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>USP</b>        | Very strong Social Media Ecosystem    |
| <b>Strengths</b>  | Smartphone app, internationally known |
| <b>Weaknesses</b> | No blog for Dutch market              |

## 1.6 TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor is a travel website that offers information and reviews on restaurants, hotels, housing, flights and activities all over the world. The website is active in 30 countries and has monthly 66 million unique visitors. The website includes 150 million reviews and has 44 million members. Image 6 shows the homepage of TripAdvisor.nl.

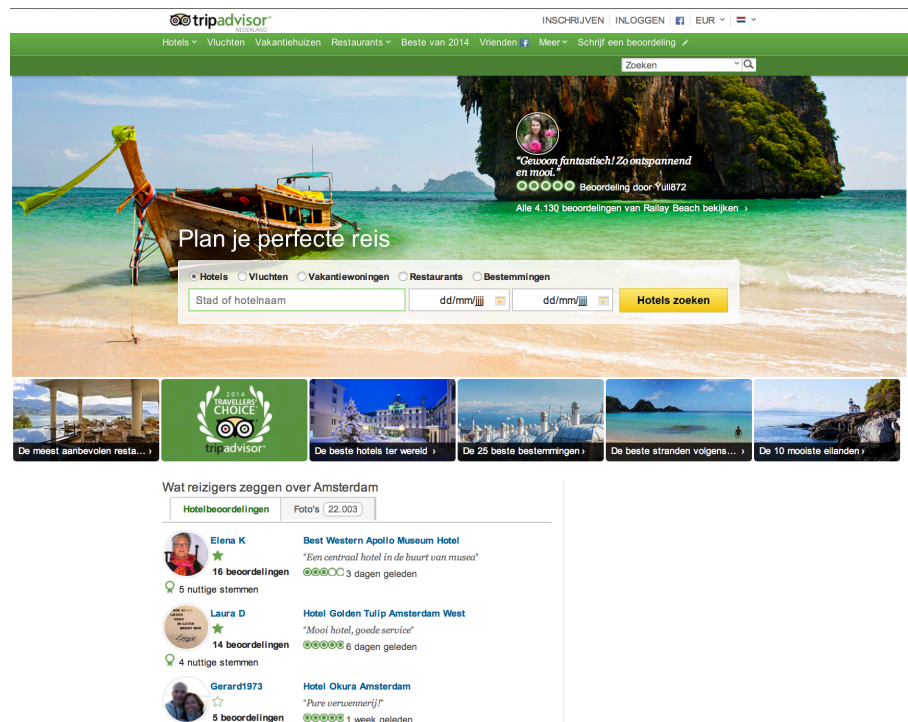


Image 6: The homepage of TripAdvisor

Visitors can log in with their email address or Facebook account. With a profile they can become friends with other TripAdvisor users and write reviews. There is no forum or blog for visitors to participate in.

Registration for businesses is for free and offers them the possibility to add pictures, text, videos, receive the newest customer reviews and send newsletters.

TripAdvisor is active on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram and YouTube. They send three weekly newsletters on travel updates and promotions. There is no special newsletter about restaurants.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>USP</b>        | Very extensive travel guide worldwide           |
| <b>Strengths</b>  | Smartphone app, internationally known           |
| <b>Weaknesses</b> | Restaurants is only a small part of the website |

## **Appendix 2: Interview with Jeroen Wubbe, founder of Eet.nu.**

### **Can you summarize in a few sentences what Eet.nu is?**

Eet.nu is currently the biggest restaurant guide of the Netherlands. We show all restaurants, cafes and cafeterias in the Netherlands on our website so people can see where they can eat and make a choice between those restaurants. This has always been the focus of the website.

### **When did you start your website?**

We started in 2006.

### **What is the target group of your website?**

Actually it's everyone who enjoys life and likes eating out, in the age of 16 to 80. For everyone who likes good food.

### **How many visitors a day do you have?**

Including the app we have now 1.4 million visitors every month. This number is quite stable.

### **With which goals did you start your website?**

It started as a side project among other things we were doing. At one point it started running so well that we made it our main project. We didn't have any specific goals for the project. We just saw the chance to make a better website than other restaurant review websites so it became our goal to become the best and most user friendly restaurant guide. As a consequence we started earning money, but this was never the main goal.

### **How long after the launch did you reach this goal of becoming the best?**

Quite quickly already, because we did very well in Google. After about a year we had more hits than our competitors.

### **What is the USP of your website?**

I think the user-friendliness of the website, it's easy to use and has a good overview. You can quickly find what you are looking for. This is what makes people come back.

### **How do you aim to reach your target audience?**

Mainly by showing people that we are very user-friendly, we believe this is the best marketing tool. When people see you on TV but you have a bad website, they will visit you once but never return. So by being a good, independent and trustworthy website we hope people will keep using us.

**And do you try to reach the people who have never heard of your site?**

Yes, through Google. When people google a restaurant in a certain city we will come up high, so that's how we reach them. Besides that we are working on other products to reach people who are unknown with us. For example, we are implementing a reservation system that can be placed on a restaurant's website but which will link to us. Those people receive an email the next day about their experiences and the request to leave a comment on Eet.nu.

**You were just talking about Google. Do you make use of for instance Google Adwords or SEO techniques?**

We don't use Google Adwords, but we have always been using optimization techniques. Mainly by building your site with a logical structure and make sure all pages do what they are supposed to do.

**Which social media do you use and how?**

We use Facebook, Twitter, Google+ a bit and Instagram a bit. Facebook and Twitter are the most important ones, however I also think social media are overrated. We do have direct contact with our customers and organize win actions now and then. However, we prefer to focus on building a good website than on how many likes we get on Facebook, because likes are not a good indication of how good your website is and how much interaction there is with customers.

**Which communication tool has proved to be most effective for you?**

Email is most effective for us. Our monthly newsletter has an opening rate of 25%.

**How important is word of mouth advertising to you?**

It is very important that people talk about you. We track online where this happens, especially on social media of course.

**Do the restaurants pay you to be on your website?**

Hardly 10% of the restaurants pay for it, the others are for free. The ones who pay are being highlighted on top of the city page of the city they're located in. They can also add pictures, the menu card, slogans etcetera. This way they can profile themselves better so it really has added value for them.

**Did you make use of marketing models in your marketing strategy?**

Not really. Times have changed and the theoretical models might still be useful but we prefer to do things in a way of which we think is effective, not according to models. For instance, lately we were highlighted in the App Store of Apple, which earned us a lot of

downloads even though we didn't do anything for it. So this is not because we used a marketing book but just because Apple thought our app is good.

**How much do you spend on communication and marketing?**

We don't really know, we don't have a special budget for this. When we think something will work we will pay money for it but we don't really keep track of this.

**Do you earn enough money with the websites to cover all costs?**

Yes, more than enough. We are a profit making company.

**Is your website sponsored by corporations?**

We used to do this but we kind of stopped with advertising campaigns. We mainly did banner campaigns but we don't believe in this anymore. They make your website look ugly and it can decrease the user friendliness of the website. So now we prefer to focus on other ways of making money.

**What are your marketing goals at the moment?**

At the moment we are mainly working on extending Eet.nu, producing new tools to keep Eet.nu interesting for the visitors. The goal is to keep the visitors because then the restaurants will stay as well. But the visitors are the most important for the website.

**What would you recommend to a new website to reach as many people as possible?**

I would say make a website that a lot of people find useful. And do something better than others. You don't have to have a completely new idea but the execution should be better than the existing websites.

### **Appendix 3: Interview with Ruud van den Brink, account manager at Dinnersite.nl, has been working for Dinnersite.nl for seven years**

#### **Can you summarize in a few sentences what Dinnersite.nl is?**

Dinnersite is a restaurant internet guide, where we hope to gather all Dutch restaurants. We have more than 13.000 restaurants now of which 10% is paying customer.

#### **What is your target audience?**

Everyone who visits restaurants.

#### **With which goals did you start your website?**

It started as a graduation project of the founder Menno de Vries and he decided to continue with it as a business. Since this was 17 years ago there were no internet restaurant guides yet, so the challenge was to start the very first one. Any specific goals I do not know about.

#### **What is, according to you, the USP of your website?**

That's our age. We were the first ones to do start an internet restaurant guide. Therefore we have a huge brand awareness.

#### **How do you aim to reach your target audience?**

We use email, Facebook and Google AdWords. We sent monthly news letters to visitors of Dinnersite and to our paying restaurant customers. I'm not sure about the opening rate, but they turn out to be pretty effective. There are four types of newsletters visitors can choose to receive so we can target the people pretty accurately.

#### **Which social media do you use and how?**

We use only Facebook. We used Twitter in the past but it was not successful. On Facebook we have a lot of interaction with our followers. Also, restaurants can make a Facebook-tab on their personal Facebook page and there will appear Dinnersite information. This means more promotion for us.

#### **Which communication tool proved to be most effective for you?**

We mostly reach our visitors through email and all internet tools. Especially Google Adwords is very effective in guiding visitors to our website.

#### **Is your website sponsored by corporations?**

Yes, there are ways of sponsorship but I'm not allowed to tell you more about that.

**What would you recommend to a new website to reach as many people as possible?**

Be creative, clear and simple. Make sure navigation on your site is as easy as possible.

## **Appendix 4: Interview with Lisa Wijvekate, communications employee at Couverts.nl**

### **Can you summarize in a few sentences what Couverts.nl is?**

Couverts is an online reservation platform for restaurants in the Netherlands. Besides that, Couverts figures as a marketing partner for several other organizations and culinary events.

### **What is the target group of your website?**

Anyone who wants to book a table online. We aim for the generation between 25 and 35 years old, but our end-users are usually slightly older.

### **With which goals was the website started?**

It was a combination of the thesis of someone who went to the Hotelschool and someone who designed start-up organizations. They got to know each other a few years ago. They started as a reservation platform, a phone number the consumer could call and Couverts would pass it on to the restaurant. Right now we've grown much bigger and the booking of reservations goes completely automatically.

### **What is the USP of your website?**

This is the trusted review system: guests only receive a link to write a review once they've actually visited the restaurant. Also, we have a strong market position with several marketing partners. We also have strong marketing channels from RTL Nederland since we are owned by RTL.

### **How do you aim to reach your target audience?**

By using the right and enthusiastic tone of voice. We also use blogs and intensive email marketing.

### **How often do you send newsletters and what's the opening rate?**

I don't know the opening rate, but the newsletters are sent weekly. We have different newsletters, for example one about new restaurants, but also newsletters about promo specials. Those we sent out every week, but we also have a newsletter special that we only sent out when there is a new big announcement to make.

### **Which social media do you use and how?**

Twitter and Facebook. We are also on Google+ and YouTube but those are less intensely used. We also have an inspiration blog where we pay attention to specials actions, news and events regarding restaurants and food.



**Do the restaurants pay you to be on your website?**

Yes, all restaurants pay a fixed amount and a variable amount for the reservations that come through our channels.

**What do the paying restaurants get in return for sponsorship?**

They have a bigger reach and therefore more brand awareness.

**How much do you spend on communication and marketing?**

In terms of budget, I don't know When it comes to time, this is all we spend time on. B2B and B2C are the vital parts of our company.

**Is your website sponsored by corporations?**

No, but we are owned by RTL Nederland. We have other marketing partners, but these corporations aren't based on financial partnerships.

**What would you recommend to a new website to reach as many people as possible?**

Think well about your business. You can have a nice website, nice email marketing, nice blog and nice Facebook posts, but it definitely requires a strong strategy.

## **Appendix 5: Questionnaire restaurant review websites**

For my thesis I'm writing an online marketing strategy for a sushi restaurant review website.

If you are between the age of 15 and 45, please help me out by filling in this survey!  
Thank you!

### **1. What is your gender?**

- A. Male
- B. Female

### **2. What is your age?**

- A. 15-25
- B. 26-35
- C. 36-45
- D. 46-55
- E. >55

### **3. Do you ever visit a restaurant to have sushi?**

- A. Yes
- B. No

### **4. How often do you visit a sushi restaurant? (choose what comes closest)**

- A. Never
- B. Once a year
- C. 1-3 times a year
- D. Once a month
- E. More than once a month

### **5. Which tools do you use when trying to locate a restaurant? Multiple answers possible.**

- a. Search engines
- b. Word of mouth (recommendations from people you know, including social media)
- c. Print media
- d. Radio
- e. TV
- f. Social media
- G. Other;.....

### **6. Which of the following search engines do you use? Multiple answers possible.**

- A. Google
- B. Yahoo
- C. Bing
- D. Ask
- E. Other;.....

### **7. Which social media do you use? Multiple answers possible.**

- A. Facebook
- B. Twitter
- C. YouTube
- D. Instagram
- E. LinkedIn
- F. Google+
- G. Pinterest
- H. Other;.....

### **8. Do you know or read one or more of the following food blogs? Multiple answers possible.**

- A. Culy.nl
- B. Etenvolgensmij.com
- C. Gewoonwateenstudentjesavondseet.blogspot.nl
- D. Ohmyfoodness.nl
- E. grubstreet.com
- F. saveur.com
- G. Other:.....

**9. In which online activities do you take part *at least* once a month? Multiple answers possible.**

- A. Publish blogs or articles, maintaining a website, uploading video or audio
- B. Participate in dialogues weekly, e.g. status updates on Facebook or Twitter
- C. Reading online content such as status updates, blogs or posting reviews
- D. Saving URL's and tags, voting for websites on Digg or RSS feeds
- E. Maintaining a profile on a social networking site
- F. Consume what the other groups produce, such as blogs, articles, videos and audio
- G. I don't take part in any online activities.

**10. Please give your opinion.**

**How important is word of mouth advertising to you for getting to know websites?**

- |                |           |           |             |      |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------|
| 1              | 2         | 3         | 4           | 5    |
| Very important | Important | Undecided | Unimportant | Very |
| unimportant    |           |           |             |      |

**How important is corporate advertising on social media to you for getting to know a website?**

- |                |           |           |             |      |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------|
| 1              | 2         | 3         | 4           | 5    |
| Very important | Important | Undecided | Unimportant | Very |
| unimportant    |           |           |             |      |

**How important is corporate advertising on search engines to you for getting to know a website?**

- |                |           |           |             |      |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------|
| 1              | 2         | 3         | 4           | 5    |
| Very important | Important | Undecided | Unimportant | Very |
| unimportant    |           |           |             |      |

**11. Do you use AdBlock?**

- A. Yes
- B. No

**12. Do you recommend websites to others by word of mouth? e.g. through social media, blogs, etc. Please explain your answer.**

- A. Yes, because.....
- B. No, because.....

**13. How often do you use a restaurant review website? With restaurant review website is meant e.g. lens.nl or Yelp.com**

- C. Never
- D. A few times a year

- E. Once a month
- F. 2-3 times a month
- G. 1 or more times a week

**14. Would you make use of a website that lists all sushi restaurants in utrecht?  
Please explain your answer.**

- A. Yes, because.....
- B. No, because.....

**15. Which restaurant review websites do you *know*? Multiple answers possible.**

- A. Dinnertime
- B. Yelp
- C. lens
- D. Eet.nu
- E. Tripadvisor
- F. Couverts.nl
- G. Foursquare
- H. Google+
- I. Maarhoewashet.nl
- J. Other:.....

**16. Which restaurant review websites do you *use*? Multiple answers possible.**

- A. Dinnertime
- B. Yelp
- C. lens
- D. Eet.nu
- E. Tripadvisor
- F. Couverts.nl
- G. Foursquare
- H. Google+
- I. Maarhoewashet.nl
- J. Other:.....

**17. Why do you use this website(s) in particular? Multiple answers possible.**

- A. Type of restaurants they offer
- B. Number of restaurants they offer
- C. User-friendliness of the website
- D. Presence of customer reviews
- E. Other;.....

**18. Do you make use of reviews written by customers who visited the restaurant?**

- A. Yes, they are useful
- B. No, they are confusing
- C. No, it takes too much time to read them
- D. Other;.....

**19. Which functions do you think are essential for a restaurant review website?  
Multiple answers possible.**

- A. Pictures
- B. Description of food, atmosphere, quality etcetera written by website owner
- C. A map with the locations
- D. Reviews written by customers
- E. Star rating
- F. Videos
- G. Other;.....

**20. What features/functions do you like about the restaurant review website you are using?**

.....

**21. What features/functions don't you like about the restaurant review website you are using?**

.....

**22. What would you recommend to a new website to reach as many people as possible?**

.....

This is the end of the survey. Thank you!