



Optimisation Business processes

Written for eKomi ltd.

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Foreword

This thesis was written in the sales department of eKomi ltd in Berlin, Germany, from February 2010 until June 2010. The intent of this thesis is to examine how eKomi should optimise their business processes for online shops.

In particular I would like to thank my supervisor Matthaeus Bognar, CEO Michael Ambros, CEO Doreen Huber and supervisor Katinka Wieringa for giving me valuable advice and support.

Other important people concerning my thesis are Abdelhatif Icher, Franziska Berthold, Claudia Reiners, Eric Chapek, Margo Bonneur and Marcel de Koning whom I would like to thank for sharing their knowledge and supporting me during my thesis. They have helped me have a wonderful time in Berlin and I would like to wish them all good luck in their further careers. I hope that we are able to stay friends.

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Executive summary

eKomi Ltd is a fast growing international e-commerce company. This research has been written in order to gain knowledge and strength in order to provide the sales team with sales material; *“How should eKomi Ltd. optimise the business processes for online shops in order to increase sales?”*

The research question has been approached through several methods to be able to give a reliable and valid answer. Five research methods have been used, literature research, case studies, internal research, in-depth interview and a survey. The literature is the foundation for the whole report, then the case studies and the internal research have been analysed. With those results, the interview and the survey were undertaken in order to answer any unanswered questions. All the findings from the several methods combined resulted in recommendations for eKomi.

Validity and reliability have been taken into consideration as this enables this study to be reliable. The reliability focuses on the consistency and stability of the research, with random error taken into consideration. Limitations are found in the case studies, the internal research and within the survey country analysis.

The main findings are the increase in sales, which shows a 0-20% increase in sales, which have been found while combining the survey with the case studies. Another important finding is the 0-2.5% decrease in the dropout rate for eKomi’s customers. These are important findings for an improvement in sales conversations. Other important findings were also the negative answers concerning customer service and implementation. The strength of eKomi’s competitors; Bazaarvoice and Trusted shops are important to consider as this can help eKomi staying ahead of their competitors. Within the e-commerce market several important findings have been found.

Based on these findings it is recommendable that eKomi focus on their customer service and the speed of implementations. Additionally, they should also keep a close eye on Bazaarvoice and Trusted shop and work on their visibility within the several markets.

The sales team can use several findings to be able to point out the advantages for using eKomi. Therefore the increase in sales, decrease in dropout rate, the importance of trust, the strength of review systems and the changing online consumers are important arguments to show the business process optimisation.

Introduction

eKomi Ltd (later as eKomi) is a fast growing international e-commerce company, always seeking out new opportunities. Thus this research has been written in order to gain knowledge and strength in the fast growing e-commerce world.

*“Knowledge is power and for retailers, product knowledge can mean more sales”*¹(Waters, S). This has made eKomi Ltd. decide to research the main advantages while using the eKomi product. This will result in important knowledge for the sales team while selling the product to potential customers.

“Having a thorough understanding of the products on the shelves can allow a retailer to use different techniques and methods of presenting the product to customers” (Waters, S). Therefore the research question has been formulated: *“How should eKomi optimise the business process for online shops in order to increase sales.”* Throughout this research several methods have been used in order to find new knowledge and outline the knowledge already available.

Since eKomi is a young start-up company, founded in 2008, they need qualified people, a product which customers really want and to spend as little money as possible.² Therefore it is very important to research the customer’s needs and desires while constantly looking into future possibilities. and the possibilities in the future. This research is aimed at helping eKomi gather this knowledge they need and hopefully continue as a successful company.

The main aim of this research is to support the eKomi sales team within their sales conversation offering them the most important advantages while using eKomi. Throughout this thesis lots of research has been undertaken in order to fully understand and answer this research question (“How should eKomi optimise the business process for online shops”).

¹ Waters, S., Benefits of Product Knowledge, Knowing Your Products Can Mean More Sales. [Internet] Available from: http://retail.about.com/od/marketingpromotion/qt/product_knowldg.htm [Accessed 29 May 2010].

² How to start a start up. (2005) [Internet], Available from: <http://www.paulgraham.com/start.html> [Accessed 29 May 2010].

Chapter 1

Research information.

This research has been written for eKomi in order to gain advantages for the sales team. Therefore this research has been split into the different parts of the eKomi product, concerning the major advantages for eKomi's customers (online shops) while using the eKomi product. The report outline and the research question will be further explained in this chapter.

Research objectives

The objective of this research is mainly focussed on the customers (online shops) of eKomi. The research has been written for eKomi. eKomi develops feedback systems for online shops in order to create an extra value for online shops. Due to the fast emerging e-commerce market, eKomi puts a lot of resources into trying to stay ahead of their competitors. This is one of the main reasons for writing this research. Further information on the e-commerce market can be found in appendix A.

This research has been written for both the international and German sales teams. The sales team consists of 11 people, selling eKomi in several countries throughout the world. The sales team is at the moment active in Germany, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. With the information gathered the sales team will be able to optimise their phone conversations with potential customers. The sales team will receive a short recommendation paper about the information gathered.

Research question

"How should eKomi Ltd. optimise the business processes for online shops in order to increase sales?"

This research question has been provided by the eKomi management team; as they would like to optimise the advantages of using eKomi. This information will then be used by the sales team and as an informative whitepaper for interested customers.

The research question will focus on the existing customers, eKomi's employees, competitors, possibilities in the market, the existing available data and new gathered data. With the research question eKomi will mainly focus on the major advantages gained by their customers while using eKomi; what has changed within their online shop after implementing eKomi?

The literal explanation for optimisation is; *“Op-ti-mise; to make as effective, perfect, or useful as possible.”*³ Within this research question optimisation means that the major advantages for online shops; which will be researched through experience reports, as well as analysing existing and new gathered data. Major changes by using eKomi will be shown through analysing this gathered data, through this information the research question “what eKomi optimises within the business process of an online shop” will be answered.

The business process mainly means the increase in sales, decrease in bouncing rate and the customer satisfaction. Through eKomi’s current customers, the possibility exists to find advantages which have not yet been outlined. Summarised; the business process main focuses will rely on the:

Bouncing rate	Reputation on the internet
Ordering process	Customer trust ⁴
Quality of service level	Costs

Report outline

This paragraph will shortly outline the report; this will explain where information can be found and how this research has been built. In the first chapter, background information on the research question will be given.

Chapter Two will inform the reader about eKomi and their products. This will give the reader a good insight in the company and the product eKomi offers. Finally, the major advantages and the internal process will be outlined.

In Chapter Three the methodology will be examined. This will show which research methods have been used and how the research will be used in order to answer the research question. The combination of Chapter One and two will give the reader a full understanding on the research question.

The target group will be explained in Chapter Four. This Chapter will discuss who eKomi is connected to and will also explain the difference between eKomi’s customers and end customers. This chapter will make the reader understand the thesis target group. At the end of this chapter the competitors will be discussed, in order to compare eKomi with the main competitors in the market.

³ “definition”, dictionary.com, 2010, [internet], available from: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/optimize>

⁴ Liegener, B., (2010) Business process optimization. [internet] Available from: <http://www.s-cube-network.eu/km/terms/b/business-process-optimization> [Accessed 10 February 2010]

Chapter Five will contain both desk and literature research. Three subjects will be researched; these subjects are focused on possibilities for eKomi and advantages from using eKomi. This will result in new valuable data for eKomi.

Chapter six will discuss the main findings of the whole research. No conclusion will be drawn, but all the findings will be examined. This will give a good overview of the main findings during the research process.

Finally, chapter seven will contain the recommendation. Within this chapter the research question will be answered, which will in the end help the sales team during their sales conversations. This will also be the foundation of the whitepaper.

Chapter 2

eKomi Background Information.

eKomi Ltd. was founded in 2008. The main aim of eKomi is to provide a safer and more transparent internet environment.⁵ Consumers buy products through the internet as this is a quick and efficient option compared with visiting an actual shop, which in the end saves leisure time for other activities.⁶ eKomi has entered the market at the right moment, as online shopping has become popular in the last 5 years. eKomi has grown rapidly and they have emerged in the Spanish, Dutch, Swiss, Austrian, French, English, South African, Australian, US, Canadian and the eastern European markets. Due to this fast growth; eKomi has been able to become an international player in the e-commerce market. The fast growth has given eKomi the possibility to enter “new” markets, where the competition was low.

eKomi is a part of the Medici Holding; the Medici holding consists of three divisions, Medici, Yields and eKomi. Medici is an international digital marketing agency with a main focus on online marketing.⁷ The second division is Yields, who offer professional telemarketing and telesales services.⁸ Medici does not work together with eKomi, while Yields selects the sales team for eKomi. This gives eKomi the possibility to attract the most qualified sales people for their own team.

⁵ eKomi, (2010), [internet] Available from: www.ekomi.de [Accessed 2 February 2010]

⁶ Hummerston, A., (2008) Digital world Digital life. [internet] Available from: http://www.tnsglobal.com/assets/files/TNS_Market_Research_Digital_World_Digital_Life.pdf [Accessed 2 February 2010]

⁷ Medici, (2010), [internet] Available from: www.medici-internet.com [Accessed 24 April 2010]

⁸ Yields, (2010), [internet] Available from: www.yields.de [Accessed 24 April 2010]

Product information

eKomi offers three feedback systems; Shop feedback, Product feedback and visitors feedback. They will be shortly explained to gain a better insight to eKomi's business.

Shop feedback; the shop feedback is the "oldest" product, which focuses on the trustworthiness of an online shop. Customers, who have purchased a product from an online shop, will receive an email asking them to submit shop feedback. The questions within this shop feedback aim on the delivery and service, whether the shop is trustworthy or not and if other customers recommend this particular shop.

Product feedback; the product feedback system was introduced in December 2009 and focuses on the quality of the product. This product feedback is only offered in the enterprise package, the biggest package available targeted for big corporations.

Visitor's feedback; the visitors feedback is a new system introduced in February. This gives website visitors the possibility to evaluate the website. This means the feedback is given by everybody, not only people who have actually ordered a product.

Due to the fast growing product line and markets, eKomi Ltd. has decided to research how eKomi optimises the business processes of online shops in order to be able to point out the advantages of eKomi products and the differences with their competitors. This research also gives eKomi insight to what "potential" customers wish and explains the biggest advantages for online shops to use an eKomi product.

Feedback process

The review process can go through two different stages; depending on whether it is a positive or a negative review. The first stages do not depend on what review has been given, as the automatic email is send a few days after the order, to request the customer to submit a review. When the customer uploads their review it ends up in the eKomi system, depending on the number of stars and whether it is negative or positive.

The customer reviews are released every day by the eKomi review team; they check whether the review is correct and positive reviews are published straight away. When negative reviews are received, eKomi checks the review and if it fits the eKomi guidelines, then it is sent to the online shop. The online shop then has 5 working days to reply to the negative review to still have the possibility to satisfy their customer. This is called an arbitration process and when both parties find a solution then the review will be deleted. If the parties do not find a solution or eKomi believes the problem was caused by the online shop, the review will be published.

This means eKomi can always ensure independent customer reviews.⁹ When reviews are published, they are published on the certificate page and on the widget on the website, see appendix C.

Major advantages of eKomi

Direct customer reviews are very valuable as they enable online shops to improve their business processes and also strengthen customer loyalty.

Protected against negative opinions.



Without customer reviews

with customer review

The eKomi review products give online shop the advantage to protect themselves against negative opinions spread over the World Wide Web. Unsatisfied customers are likely to tell other potential customers about their bad experience and without a review system unsatisfied customers could publish their opinion on blogs. This then results in negative reviews all over the World Wide Web. eKomi research shows that unsatisfied customers rarely return and due to the arbitration possibilities online shops have the possibility to turn unsatisfied customers into satisfied customers.¹⁰

Conversion rate optimisation

Online shops can optimise their conversion rate through increased visitors trust. Because of the eKomi widget; visitors trust the online shop more as they can see actual feedback from recent customers. The formula of the conversion rate can be seen below; when the amount of web transactions (actual customers) increases, the conversion rate automatically grows. An increased conversion rate means increased sales in comparison with the amount of visitors.¹¹

Increased size of shopping basket

Due to the increased visitors trust, potential customers are more likely to buy more, as they trust

$$\text{Conversion Rate} = \frac{\text{\# of Web Transactions}}{\text{\# of Unique Visitors}}$$

the online shop. This increased trust also results in less order cancellations. For both of these advantages there is one explanation; as trust will help hesitating customers to buy the product. Trust increases through visible reviews of recent buyers, potential customers can then see whether customers are satisfied.¹²

⁹ Ross, M., (2010), The power of customer feedback

¹⁰ Ross, M., (2010), The power of customer feedback

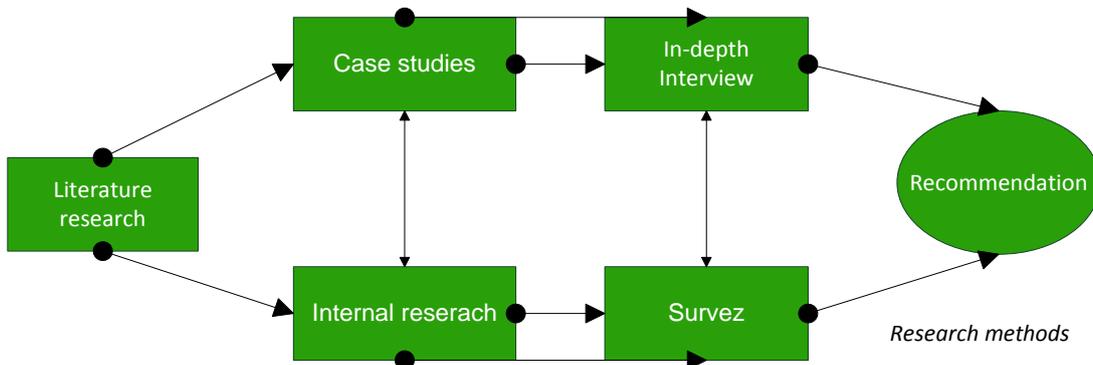
¹¹ Freedman, B., (2009) A fresh look at conversion rate [internet] Available from: <http://www.showcasemarketing.com/ideablog/?p=89> [Accessed 14 February 2010]

¹² Ross, M., (2010), The power of customer feedback

“How should eKomi Ltd. optimise the business processes for online shops in order to increase sales?”

Five ways of information gathering have been chosen; within this chapter those methods will be further explained.

Research methods and Design



1. Literature Research

The literature research has been used for chapter 3, where more insight into the e-commerce has been researched in order to fully understand the e-commerce world, which will enable a better answer to the research question. This literature research focuses on the existing findings concerning the e-commerce market, based on the online customers, eKomi’s customers and the competitors in this market.

Within Chapter Three a competitor analysis is also given, as a comparison with the competitors will be important for the research question. The answered research question will help the sales team within their sales conversation. Therefore a good insight in the competitors is also needed, as potential customers are likely to ask the differences between the competitors. Therefore the several competitors have been analysed.

The eye tracking research in Chapter Four has also been written through literature research, as with this information the best spot for the eKomi widget has been researched and whether eye tracking would be a worthy investment for eKomi.

Background information on the industry research is also based on literature research, as some knowledge had already been gathered. This created a strong foundation for the internal research.

2. Case Studies

As several case studies have been written by current customers, they have been analysed in order to provide the visitors to buy process with an answer. Through those case studies, the information was provided in order to analyse the average increase in sales.

The answer is not based on a reasonable sample size from eKomi's customers. As the average increased sale is based on case studies from a few customers, the answer should always be shown as an assumption. The case studies have been written by customers, which mean they are based on the actual changes which have occurred after implementing eKomi. Therefore it can be said that the case studies are valid, as the cases studies have been written by several companies. They have calculated the increase in sales after implementing eKomi.

3. Internal research

As said before, the internal research will be used for the branch/industry research. Within this research, ekomi's customers will be researched in order to see in which branches the customers are active in order to see the main branches; this will be combined with the amount of feedback given.

Within this research, the widget spot has to be taken into consideration as the widget spot can result in a different amount of reviews. Therefore the widget spot difference between high, middle and low on the homepage has been made.

This information will enable to answer which branches see the most advantages in using eKomi. This will help the sales team targeting their potential customers. The combination of several countries will also help the sales people from several countries to try a new approach.

4. In-depth interview

The in depth interview has been taken with members of the sales team in order to gather internal knowledge out of the company. The in depth interview focuses on the knowledge which has already been gathered within the sales team but has not been spread between the several countries. For the full interview see appendix H. The interview has been taken within the UK, Dutch, French and German market. Within every country one interviewee will be approached and asked to answer the question to share their knowledge.

The information gathered will also be used for the branch/industry research in chapter 5. This information will be combined with the information gathered through the analysis (internal research) of the current customers of eKomi.

As can be seen, the in-depth interview and the survey are not combined. This decision has been made, as the survey is going to be sent out to all the customers. This in turn would mean that some customers would receive both the survey and the in depth interview, resulting in double information.

The other reason for this decision is that a lot of knowledge is gathered within the sales team, but most of this information has not been shared with the company. This means information in for example the English market, which could also be useful for the Dutch market, is not shared. As a result, the in-depth interview will be taken within the different markets, to be able to analyse the knowledge and be able to combine the strengths.

A standardised, open-ended interview has been chosen, as this gives the interviewees the possibility to give a wide answer. Standardised means that everybody gets the same questions and this makes it possible to compare the answers given. The combinations of standardised and open-ended will help sharing and analysing the knowledge gathered by the sales team.

5. Survey

The survey is a computer-administered questionnaire, as the eKomi feedback system will be used. (See appendix G). By using the eKomi system, the targeted people are familiar with the program. As this system has already been developed it will not require a lot of time nor money.

Within the survey, one open and four closed-ended questions have been asked. Mainly closed ended questions has been chosen as they are easier to analyse especially as the survey has been taken in four languages; English, Dutch, German and French.

The questions can be answered through an ordinal scale and through an interval scale. Most of the questions can be answered through the 5 star system of eKomi; 1 star is the worst, 5 stars is the best ranking. An exemption are the first 2 questions which can be answered through interval scales, as the possible answers are based on the percentage increase or decrease since using the feedback system from eKomi. Within the survey one question can be answered with yes or no; whether the interviewee would recommend eKomi. The interval scaled questions result, in quantitative data, while the yes/no, ordinal scale and open question result in qualitative data.

It has been decided to send the survey to all eKomi's customers, with the eKomi customer group consisting of 1312 surveys. This is the number of paying customers. While this means a lot of data will be collected, this decision has been made by the management, as the answers can differ extremely per customer. This means sending the survey to a lot of customers resulting in the highest validity possible, as customers come from different countries, differ per size and differ per industry. This also means a sample size has not been made.

The data gathered through this survey has been inserted in spss. Through spss the possibility exists to fully understand and research the data gathered. Several graphs will be presented in order to show the answers given by the respondents.

With all the data gathered, the current customers can be analysed, which can answer what optimisation within their business process they have noticed and whether this is already used as an advantage while using eKomi. Also, this can show the average increase, which could also help the sales team as an actual number always provides a better sales argumentation.

The response rate for mailed surveys is generally lower than for other methods. According to the sample size calculator with a confidence level of 90, 225 respondents should be necessary.¹³ This means a respondent rate of 17% in order to have reliable results. A 15% response rate has been achieved, which means the results are reliable and will be used for the recommendation.

Validity and Reliability

Construct Validity

The validity chapter will be divided per subject and not per research method.¹⁴ Various types of evidence through several types of research have been selected before concluding and this is called Triangulation.¹⁵ The several research methods used are an in-depth interview, a survey, Case studies, Literature research and internal research. By combining those research methods, the research question will be provided with a valid answer.

External Validity

External validity is closely connected to generalization.¹⁶ This is based on the fact that the survey has not been sent out to a certain sample size but to all the existing customers. This means the survey has not been generalised as every customer from several countries received the survey. The biggest pitfall could be the recommendation based on the Case Studies, as this might be easier to generalise. The conclusion has been based on just four business cases, which means the conclusion could not be valid for all the potential customers.¹⁷ During the research this should be taken into consideration, which makes it easier to avoid this pitfall. This has also been explained in the paragraph about the visitors to buy process, it can be used as an estimation but not as an actual result.¹⁸ The gathered information is both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative data can be observed but not measured, while quantitative data can be measured.

¹³ Raosoft inc., (2004), [internet] Available from: <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html> [Accessed 29 May 2010]

¹⁴ Colorado State University, (2010) Validity: Example [internet] Available from: <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/research/relval/com2b1.cfm> [Accessed 20 April 2010]

¹⁵ Silverman, D., 2010, (p277) Doing Qualitative Research, 3rd edition, London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

¹⁶ Silverman, D., 2010, Doing Qualitative Research, 3rd edition, London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

¹⁷ Trochim, W.M.K., (2006), External validity [internet] Available from: <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/external.php> [Accessed 12 April 2010]

¹⁸ Remenyi, D., Williams, B., Money, A. & Swartz, E., 1998, Doing research in Business and Management, London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Therefore it has been chosen to use both kinds of data, as both the observed and measured data are important to be able to answer the research question. This also results in a more valid and reliable answered research question.¹⁹

Reliability

Reliability focuses on the research and whether this has been done stable and consistently and always taking into consideration a random error. (See graph below)²⁰ It is also connected to validity, as a research has to be reliable and valid to be able to correctly answer the research question.²¹



For research the reliability chapter must show that no matter when the research was done, it would have resulted in the same answer. It shows how much you can trust the outcome.²²

The survey gives answers from customers; which means the results are authentic, as the surveys were filled out by the target group. Customers could choose themselves whether they wanted to respond to the survey. This overall means the customers gave correct answers. As the graph above shows; a random error must always be taken into consideration. This can mean somebody misunderstood the questions or did not want to fill out the survey and therefore gave the wrong answers.

The business cases are all based on actual gathered results, throughout a certain number of days. This means those results are actual results and are definitely reliable, as the results are mathematical and calculated in the correct way. The results have also been gathered within different time schemes and at different times.

Within the internal research, the industry research has been done. All the widget and industry information from several online shops have been gathered and researched. The information gathered are all numbers gathered throughout the period they have been using eKomi. Within the conclusion, generalisation has to be taken into consideration as not all the eKomi customers can be evaluated. Thus the conclusion will not be completely reliable, but gives a good estimation of several industries.

¹⁹ Roberts, D. (2010), Qualitative vs Quantitative, [Internet] Available from:

<http://regentsprep.org/REgents/math/ALGEBRA/AD1/qualquant.htm> [Accessed 9 April 2010]

²⁰ Remenyi, D., Williams, B., Money, A. & Swartz, E., 1998, Doing research in Business and Management, London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

²¹ Trochim, W.M.K., (2006), Theory of reliability [internet] Available from: <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/reliabl.php> [Accessed 12 April 2010]

²² Changing Minds, (2010), Reliability, [Internet] Available from: <http://changingminds.org/disciplines/hr/selection/reliability.htm> [Accessed on 12 April 2010]

The literature research has been based on internal and external articles because this combination increases the reliability as both internal and external factors have been taken into consideration. Subsequently, several articles from different writers have been gathered, which means different research and points of views have been combined. Due to this combination the reliability is maximised, as different angles have been reviewed.

The interview provided reliable information as the interviewees are close colleagues, which means a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee has been established. This results in a confident interviewer and an interviewee who trusts the interviewer, thus the result is honest and reliable.

Limitations

This paragraph consists of the limitations which have been found throughout the research. Most of the limitations have been outlined in the paragraphs above. In order to get a clear overview, all the limitations will be outlined.

This thesis has some limitations. The main limitations are the internal research, the case studies and the survey. Within the internal research, not all customers have been evaluated which means that the industry research is estimated.

The results from the internal research are based on the results from the interview and also from the internal research. Within the internal research, customers from several industries have been chosen based on the answers given in the interview. Additionally, the group researched is not the correct sample size. As a result those outcomes are not completely valid and therefore an estimation.

The second limitations consist due to the case study research, as the answer is not based on a reasonable sample size from eKomi's customers. This is because the average increased sale is based on case studies from a few customers. As a result, it can be said that the results are not completely reliable, therefore the outcome should always be shown as estimations.

The third limitation can be found in the survey, as the number of respondents has not been spread fairly, the number of German companies who replied is much higher than the number of foreign customers. This is due to the fact that the number of German customers is higher, this also means that comparing countries would not be fair concerning the difference in the number of answers. This means that the country analysis will not be reliable.

Chapter 4

Online customers, eKomi's customers and competitors

This chapter will explain the relation between eKomi, the online web shops, the end customers and their competitors. This outline will give a better insight to eKomi's business. The graph below shows the contact and correlation between the three different parties; it can be seen that all parties are somehow connected with each other.



Online consumers

As stated in appendix A (The e-commerce branch) expands the e-commerce branch rapidly, which for e-commerce companies means that they have to keep an eye on their customer wishes. This paragraph will outline the behaviour and attitude of online consumers throughout the years and the expected changes in the future.

Nielsen wire, (2009) *"However, in this new age of consumer control, advertisers will be encouraged by the fact that brand websites are trusted at that same 70 percent level as online consumer opinions"*.²³ As can be read in the above quote; brand websites, which means expensive brand marketing, is as important as online consumer opinions. This for online shops will result in different ways of spending their marketing money.

According to D. Petrovic (2008), online consumers go through three stages when purchasing a product. Stage one is the initial search where they mainly use major search engines in order to find information. The participants in D. Petrovic's survey primarily searched for the highest matches compared with their search text. The second stage focuses on finding the right product. Within this stage the participants narrow down their research by adding a specific character in the search engine while most of the participants only looked at the first page of the major search engines. Stage three includes seeking human advice and customer reviews, in order to compare prices and quality. This research shows that consumers value real consumer reviews when purchasing a product online.²⁴

²³ Nielsenwire, (2009), Global Advertising: Consumers Trust Real Friends and Virtual Strangers the Most, [internet] Available from: <http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/consumer/global-advertising-consumers-trust-real-friends-and-virtual-strangers-the-most/print/> [Accessed 12 February 2010]

²⁴ Petrovic, D. (2007), Analysis of Consumer Behaviour Online, [internet] Available from: http://analogik.com/article_analysis_of_consumer_behaviour_online.asp [Accessed 12 February 2010]

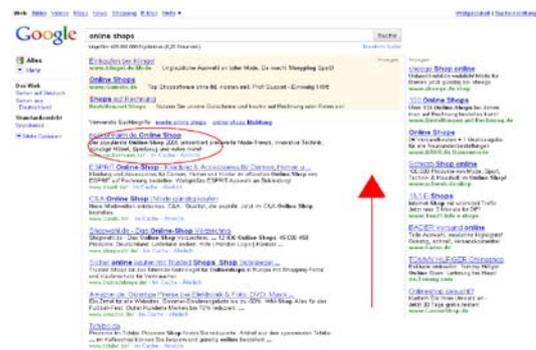
The 'Digital world Digital life' study implies that most of the European market is growing fast; people spend more time on the internet in order to efficiently use their leisure time. Germany is one of the biggest online purchasing markets with 73% of the population having bought goods or services on the internet in the last month. Canada is the less emerged market having only 38% who bought products or services on the internet in the last month. Worldwide, the percentage of people who bought goods or services on the internet in the last month is 57%, which means that the online market is getting bigger compared with "real" shops. Through this study it has also been determined that a lot of time is spent investigating and getting recommendations/reviews before the actual purchase. One out of 10 online consumers discusses their potential purchase with others in order to get advice.²⁵ According to S. Sial, less than 10% of the online customer behaviour has something to do with demographic background; this gives online shops the possibility to sell their online products through the web to several countries.

eKomi's Customers

Online customers are not the direct customers of eKomi, as eKomi sells their review system to online shops, which they can then use in order to create trust. Online shops are shops selling products through the internet, and these products can be just about anything. At this moment eKomi has approximately 1300 online shops as customers.

Online shops are reached through marketing activities, the sales team, but also through visiting fairs. eKomi has already found several articles about the wishes of online shops. The main goal for online shops is to increase their sales, which automatically results in a higher turnover.

For online shops it is very important to be visible on the internet, which can be achieved by search engine optimisation (SEO), making it easier for consumers to find the online shop. SEO means that the online shop improves the volume or quality of their traffic. For an online shop it is advantageous to be ranked as high as possible in the Google search results. Through customer feedback it is possible to achieve higher visibility, as the feedback gives the online shop the possibility to end up higher in the Google ranking (SEO). This is due to the reviews given by the customers of the online shop.



Google Ranking

²⁵ Hummerston, A., (2008) Digital world Digital life. [internet] Available from: http://www.tnsglobal.com/assets/files/TNS_Market_Research_Digital_World_Digital_Life.pdf [Accessed 2 February 2010]

For shops it also is important to increase their customer trust, as online shops should get as much trust as possible. Within the e-commerce branch it is very important to gain trust, as this is one of the most important issues for potential buyers. When customers do not trust the online shop, they are likely to leave and buy at a competitor. Due to the fast growing e-commerce market, there are lots of competitors appearing in the market.²⁶ As discussed in 'Digital world, Digital life'; potential consumers spend a lot of time on the internet investigating a product but then still buy the product in a store. This is mainly due to security concerns or because it is more "fun" to buy from a store.²⁷ Online shops could take advantage of those numbers by showing their potential customer that they are trustworthy.

Competitors

With the competitor analysis it can be seen what the main advantages of competitors are and whether eKomi also offers those advantages or can slightly change their product to be able to also offer these advantages. This information is also important for the sales team in order to point out the differences between the competitors. The complete competitor analysis can be found in appendix D,

Below a table is shown with eKomi and their four main competitors. In this paragraph the prime focus will be on the main competitors. This approach has been chosen because in the feedback market there are a lot of small competitors who only focus on one market or only offer one kind of product. Those competitors will not be evaluated as they, unless they grow, are not a big threat for eKomi.

	Countries	Core Business	Starter Price	Professional Price	Pro professional Price €	Product Feedback	Evaluator	Editorial control of feedbacks	Widget website	Comment function	Arbitration	Imp. / support	Visitor Feedback
BazaarVoice	8	Feedback	1.639,58 €	and up	and up	Yes	Buyer only	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Trusted Shops	6	Feedback	59,00 €	79,00 €	99,00 €	No	Buyer only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, guides	No
Trustpilot	12	Shop	35,00 €	70,00 €	120,00 €	No	all	by shop	No	Partner	Yes	Barely	No
Powerreviews	2	Feedback	80,00 €	199,00 €	299,00 €	Yes	Buyer only	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	yes	No
eKomi	12	Feedback	39,00 €	69,00 €	299,00 €	Yes	Buyer only	by eKomi	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Bazaarvoice²⁸, Trusted shops²⁹, Trustpilot³⁰ and Powerreviews³¹ are the main competitors of eKomi. These competitors were also the main outcome from the interviews and therefore it has been chosen to mainly focus on the biggest competitors.

²⁶ Anthonj, J., (2008) 10 Tipps für den Aufbau eines Onlineshops, [internet] Available from: <http://www.online-artikel.de/article/10-tipps-fuer-den-aufbau-eines-onlineshops-1816-1.html> [Accessed 12 February 2010]

²⁷ Hummerston, A., (2008) Digital world Digital life. [internet] Available from: http://www.tnsglobal.com/assets/files/TNS_Market_Research_Digital_World_Digital_Life.pdf [Accessed 2 February 2010]

²⁸ Bazaarvoice, (2010) [internet] Available from: www.bazaarvoice.com [Accessed 2 May 2010]

²⁹ Trusted shops, (2010) [internet] Available from: www.trustedshops.com [Accessed 2 May 2010]

³⁰ TrustPilot, (2010) [internet] Available from: www.trustpilot.com [Accessed 2 May 2010]

³¹ Powerreviews, (2010) [internet] Available from: www.powerreviews.com [Accessed 2 May 2010]

Further on in the chapter the differences per competitor will be discussed. Bazaarvoice mainly focuses on product feedback, with a main focus on bigger customers as their product price starts at \$ 2000.³² This means that they only target key accounts and this is a future approach for eKomi. Therefore they could become a competitor for eKomi as they also offer product feedback. The only main difference between eKomi and Bazaarvoice are the prices and the visibility of the widget. Bazaarvoice is one of the main competitors in the UK market.

Trusted shops is the biggest competitor in the German market, but it is also growing in other markets, as they currently provide their service to 12 countries. Their prices are kind of similar compared to eKomi. The main difference is that eKomi offers product feedback and Trusted Shops does not. This also results in a higher price in the last price, as within eKomi the product feedback is only included in the enterprise package. Then as an extra addition eKomi offers the visitors feedback, which is not offered by any other competitors.

Another main competitor for eKomi is Trustpilot, as their prices are similar to eKomi. The main differences are that Trustpilot only offers shop feedback and does not show the widget on the website. Additionally, not all the customers are able to comment on the review, as this is only possible for Trustpilot partners. Lastly, implementation and support is not offered and they do not offer visitors feedback. All together these factors make Trustpilot a smaller competitor than Bazaarvoice and Trustedshops.

The last main competitor is Powerreviews as they offer a similar support to eKomi. The main differences are that eKomi is available in far more languages, which offers eKomi the possibility to faster emerge in those targeted countries. Also the prices of eKomi are slightly lower, but in all the products of Powerreviews, product feedback is offered. eKomi could use this as an advantage as some potential customers do not want to use product feedback and they could currently then use one of the smaller packages of eKomi. Lastly powerreviews differs from all the other competitors as it does not offer visitors feedback.

These four main competitors will be taken into consideration while writing the recommendation. Overall eKomi offers more possibilities for a reasonable price. eKomi should always try to stay ahead with the products they are offering and keep a good track of exactly what their competitors are doing and how they are doing it. Additionally, eKomi should focus on the international market, as

³² Kaplan, D, (2007) Bazaarvoice raises \$9M for product reviews [internet] Available from: <http://venturebeat.com/2007/09/10/bazaarvoice-raises-9m-for-product-reviews/> [Accessed 22 February 2010]

they have already established themselves as a leader in the German market. By focusing on the international market they could also become an important player in those markets.

Chapter 5

Internal research

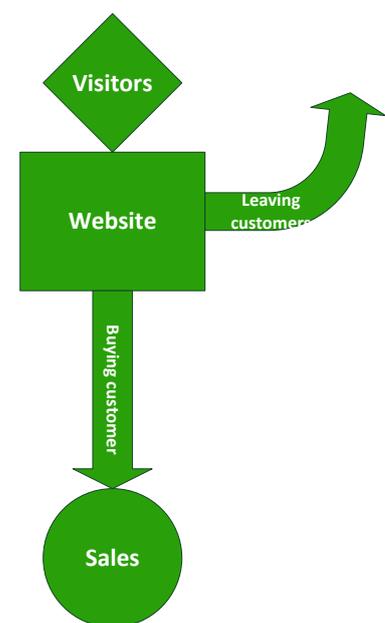
Visitors to buy process

This chapter evaluates the 'visitors to buy process', (appendix E). Within this research the focus will be on "the visitors to buy process" in order to figure out what kind of calculation example can be shown to potential customers to show them the advantages. (See appendix E).

As can be seen in the process drawing; a visitor visits the website and notices the eKomi widget. If this visitor clicks on this widget they are able to see the reviews given by other consumers. Within the process a cookie will be used, as visitors (potential customer) will get attached to a cookie. A cookie can give a unique identity number to every visitor, which means those visitors will have their own cookie file with information.³³ Within this research a cookie has been given to every visitor to be able to follow their navigation through the website.

As can be seen in appendix E, there are two different processes which are not connected to each other. Process one can show the number of people visiting the website and the number of people who click on the widget. As soon as a visitor enters the website; he will get a unique identity number (cookie). Process two shows the number of people who gave an evaluation, as all the people visiting received their personal identity. The cookie file sees immediately when a person who clicked on the widget gives an evaluation. Through this cookie file system, online web stores are able to calculate their increase in sales.

In the first phase eKomi tested the conversion change with the eKomi widget, through a trial which has been done with four stores. In the small process example you can see that a visitor can either become a buyer or he leaves the website.



Website visit process

With the test, eKomi removed the eKomi widget from the website for 7 days and then afterwards replaced it 7 days. With this information eKomi can see the number of visitors that came in and the percentage which actually bought and as explained in chapter 1 this is called the conversion rate.

³³ Brain, M., (2001?) Cookie basics, [Internet] Available from: <http://computer.howstuffworks.com/cookie1.htm> [Accessed 19 February 2010]

Through this test it can be seen if on an average, the conversion rate for online shops increased while using the eKomi widget.

The trial has been undertaken by the IT-team through contacting the customers in order to start the test. With these results the average change can be calculated, which can be used for the sales team in order to be able to point out “new” advantages for using eKomi. The customers who participated in the test are;

GamePointsNow	IT-Budget Hardware
Goldankauf123	Rucksack Center

Out of those four customers business cases have been written, which are going to be evaluated in this chapter. See appendix F for the whole business cases.

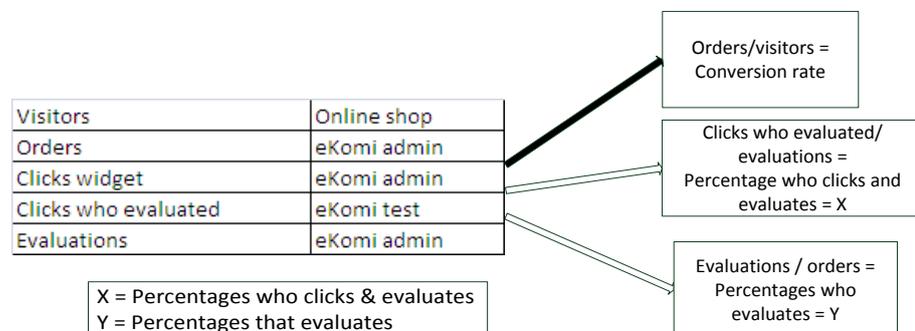
GamePointsNow noticed a 5% increase of sales a few weeks after implementing eKomi. According to GamePointsNow, the increase is due to the fact that the eKomi widget increases the customer confidence for potential customers. ³⁴

The second business case has been written for RucksackCenter. They noticed a 12% increase in their conversion rate. This means the number of actual sales compared with the number of visitors has increased by 12%. This indirectly means that the number of sales has increased. They also noticed that their dropout rate decreased. ³⁵

IT-Budget Hardware noticed a 10-20% increase in sales through the eKomi widget. They saw an increase in sales within 4 days. ³⁶

Goldankauf123 saw an 30% increase in their turnover since using eKomi and they think they could actually let their turnover increase by 50% if they can show their customers the reviews are not manipulated. ³⁷

With those four business cases it can be seen that all of them saw an increase in sales. Goldankauf123 noticed the biggest increase in sales, which is probably due to specific



³⁴ Ward, S., (2009) Erfahrungsbericht GamePointsNow
³⁵ Bruckschlägl, A., (2009) Erfahrungsbericht Rucksack Center
³⁶ Laves, C., (2009) Erfahrungsbericht It-Budget Hardware
³⁷ Joseph, K., (2009) Erfahrungsbericht dipl.-ing Klaus Joseph von Goldankauf123

market they are in. As they buy gold from customers and send back the money, this branch is considered as very trust sensitive. By showing the feedback, customers trust their company and decide to sell their gold. For the other three the sales increased between 5 – 20% and this percentage of increase is more reliable for the overall market than the amount of increase for Goldankauf123. This percentage of increase can always be used during a sales conversation; they always have to take into consideration that this is based on three customers so it is only an estimation.

Order * Y =	Amount of people that evaluated
Order * x =	Amount of people who clicked & evaluated
Orders - amount of people who clicked & evaluated =	Amount of people who bought without click
Amount of people who click & evaluate / orders =	Percentages who clicks & evaluates
Amount of people that evaluated / orders =	Percentages who not clicks & evaluates
People who clicked / People who didn't click =	Approximate % increase in sales

This calculation is adaptable to every eKomi customer, which immediately shows the percentage of visitors who bought using the eKomi feedback widget. This can be seen due to a programme which attaches a cookie to a visitor, making it possible to follow this visitor during his stay on the online shop webpage. Through this programme it is possible to actually calculate the increase in sales due to the eKomi feedback system.

This test has not been done with a lot of customers, as it is a time consuming task for the IT team, which at this moment is extremely busy. Therefore it has been chosen to use the business cases available and take the test when the IT team has more time.

This information helps the eKomi sales team with an extra tool in order to convince potential customers (online shops) to purchase the eKomi feedback system. Underneath a short example of the actual “advertisement” will be given. This can be used as a marketing tool in both the marketing as the sales team.

X% higher conversion rate through the eKomi widget.

X% people who clicked on the widget bought.

the widget will not be missed.⁴¹

In the picture the eye tracking example has been implemented in one of eKomi's customers. As can be seen the widget is placed on the right hand side. This would be recommended for all the online web stores.

eKomi eye tracking product

Within this paragraph the research will focus on the usability of an eye tracking product of eKomi. As eKomi's main focus is on a safer and more transparent internet environment, the eye tracking product could be included in eKomi's product range. Therefore money and knowledge on the eye tracking product is needed. An eye tracking product can be bought or specialist hired, but this would be a very expensive investment. It would also be very hard to resell the product, unless eKomi could become a reseller. This would mean eKomi would sell the product on commission or on profit.⁴²

eKomi could then choose to develop a product themselves, but this will be a costly process, as money must be invested in research and development. Therefore new employees and new computer systems must be bought.⁴³

As can be read in the paragraph above, a lot of information can already be found on the internet, which can also result in a reasonable expectation. The average customers of eKomi are medium-small businesses, who are not so likely to buy a product that expensive, as they have less money to invest than the huge enterprises. Therefore it would be recommendable for eKomi to not develop nor sell the product, as this would be a risky investment. The investment is very risky as the probability that the product will be sold to their target group is very small.

Industry research

Within this research several segment or industries will be analysed, in order to find out which industry needs eKomi the most. Three research methods will be combined in order to get a good insight into the industries that need eKomi the most.

First of all an interview has been taken, in order to see in which industry eKomi is the most active and which could be interesting industries to focus on. The Spanish market has not been interviewed as at the moment of writing, there is no salesperson in the Spanish market. Through the interview it can be seen that the baby/kids branch is one of the main branches eKomi is focussing on, as in every country one of the main branches is the baby/kids branch.

⁴¹ MyPure, (2010) [internet] Available from: www.mypure.co.uk [Accessed 2 May 2010]

⁴² Charland, A., (2008) Is Eye Tracking out of reach? [internet] Available from: <http://www.insideria.com/2008/04/is-eye-tracking-out-of-reach.html> [Accessed 3 May 2010]

⁴³ Brendant, D., (2010) The price of Eye Tracking. [internet] Available from: <http://eyetrackingupdate.com/2010/05/13/price-eye-tracking/> [Accessed 3 May 2010]

Branches\Markets	NL	DE	UK	FR
1. Baby/kids	X	X	X	X
2. High Fidelity	X	X		X
3. Health/Cosmetics		X	X	
4. Office supplies			X	
5. Fashion		X		
6. Furniture		X		

Active industries

The table above shows all the gathered data concerning the branches eKomi is active in. Germany is the biggest market and as a result they have the most main branches. Health/cosmetics, Baby/kids and High Fidelity (later as HiFi) are the three main shared branches in different countries. The other branches are specific per country. Therefore has been chosen to analyse the HIFI, Baby/kids and a less shared branch the office supplies.

This research will focus on the branches where eKomi is active in. This has been chosen as those branches can be targeted by the countries that have not yet approached them. As can also be read in the methodology this research has been narrowed down, as all the branches cannot be researched, as this would have been too time consuming. By choosing the branches where some countries are already active in, this gives the sales team also the possibility to show a reference example to the potential customers.

Bottom example

Middle example



Top example

Within this research the spot of the widget has to be taken in to consideration. Therefore there are three different spots for the widget; bottom⁴⁴, middle⁴⁵ and top⁴⁶ (see images). While doing research the spot of the widget has been taken into consideration, as the higher the widget the more

⁴⁴ Greetz, (2010) [internet] Available from: www.greetz.nl [Accessed 27 May 2010]

⁴⁵ Bree, (2010) [internet] Available from: www.bree.de [Accessed 27 May 2010]

⁴⁶ MyPure, (2010) [internet] Available from: www.mypure.co.uk [Accessed 27 May 2010]

visible it is for a website visitor and the higher the likelihood a review will be given. The nine most common branches within eKomi have been researched, combining the spot of the widget, the number of orders and the number of reviews given.

In appendix F the graphs from the industry research can be found. While analysing the spot of the widget and the outcomes of the graphs the conclusion can be drawn that not much correlation can be noticed.

The most noticeable difference is that overall the Hi-Fi branch has on an average a higher percentage of widget clicks. Therefore it would be recommendable to focus on this branch and inform them about the results found. In both the Office supply and the babies and kids branch no correlation between orders, widget clicks or reviews has been found. This could mean that it strongly depends on the size of the online web store.

Chapter 6

Findings

Within this chapter all the findings will be discussed and outlined. This approach has been chosen as a clear overview will then be gathered in order to be fully able to write the recommendation. Within this chapter all the gathered data will be reviewed, counting for both the excising and the newly researched data which will be needed for answering the research question. In the table on the site all the findings have been listed. The significance is shown with numbers, 1 is less important and 5 the most.

As this thesis consists of several research methods, the findings will be discussed per research method. As a result qualitative and quantitative data will be mixed throughout this chapter. In this chapter all the findings will be discussed in order to write a proper recommendation.

Excising knowledge

The increase in conversion rate and the increase in the size of a shopping basket are findings which have been outlined before but also helped during the research. The protection against the negative feedback shows that customers who are unsatisfied with their purchase will

Findings	Significance
Protection against negative feedback	3
Increase in Conversion Rate	4
Increase in Shopping Basket	4
Expanding European Marking	2
Recommendation and Reviews	4
No Demographic background	2
SEO	4
Brand Advertisement	5
Trust	5
Competitors	4
Visitors to buy process	5
Eye Tracking	3
Industry research	2
Customer satisfaction	4
Product satisfaction	4
Value increase	5
IT problems	3
eKomi is too expensive	1
Customer service	2

likely want to publish their opinion. Through the eKomi system the online shop is able to decrease the number of negative reviews spread over the World Wide Web.

Conversation rate increase means that the number of visitors compared with the number of customers decreases, which means a higher percentages buys. The more visitors buy the higher the conversion rate. Due to an increase in trust customers are attempted to buy more products at once, which means an increase in the size of their shopping basket. Consequently an increased shopping basket means an increase in turnover.

E-Commerce Market

The e-commerce market has been researched. The main findings are that the e-commerce is expanding rapidly, especially in the European market, and that within the e-commerce market potential customers seek for recommendations and reviews from previous customers, in order to take a decision whether to buy or not. Then based on demographic research the online customer behaviour is not based on the demographic background and this results in opportunities for online shops to sell their product throughout the world. Online web shops seek for visibility and trust over the World Wide Web, they try to reach visibility through search engine optimisation or brand websites, which is a very costly investment. Trust is very important as this is the main importance for potential customers in their deciding process.

Competition

The competition within the review branch is very strong, therefore the main competitors have been analysed. The four main important competitors are Bazaarvoice, Trusted shops, Trustpilot and Powerreviews. Those results are based on literature research and the answers gathered through the interview. There are also several smaller competitors who have not been analysed as they are not a big threat at this moment. The main differences will be shown in the table below.

	Countries	Core Business	Starter Price	Professional Price	Pro professional Price €	Product Feedback	Evaluator	Editorial control of feedbacks	Widget website	Comment function	Arbitration	Imp. / support	Visitor Feedback
BazaarVoice	8	Feedback	1.639,58 €	and up	and up	Yes	Buyer only	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Trusted Shops	6	Feedback	59,00 €	79,00 €	99,00 €	No	Buyer only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, guides	No
Trustpilot	12	Shop	35,00 €	70,00 €	120,00 €	No	all	by shop	No	Partner	Yes	Barely	No
Powerreviews	2	Feedback	80,00 €	199,00 €	299,00 €	Yes	Buyer only	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	yes	No
eKomi	12	Feedback	39,00 €	69,00 €	299,00 €	Yes	Buyer only	by eKomi	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Overall can be seen that eKomi has a competitive price and that they offer several extra feeds compared with their main competitors.

Visitors to buy process

Within the visitors to buy process a calculation has been set up in order to calculate the increase in sales and decrease in conversion rate. Based on the business cases that have been evaluated, the increase of sales is between 5-20%. Within the near future the real IT-testing will be accomplished, based on those results a more reliable answer can be given.

Eye Tracking

Eye tracking is an expensive fast upcoming product; which allows websites to track the eye of their visitors. This gives eKomi the possibility to inform their customers about the most preferable spot for the widget; which are the left hand corner or the right hand sight of the website. To be able to produce an eye tracking system eKomi will need to invest money and people.

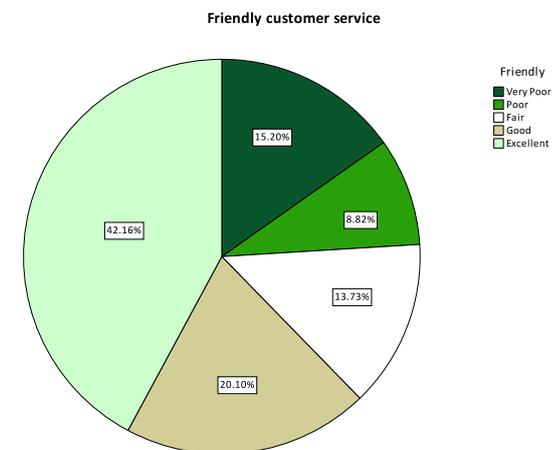
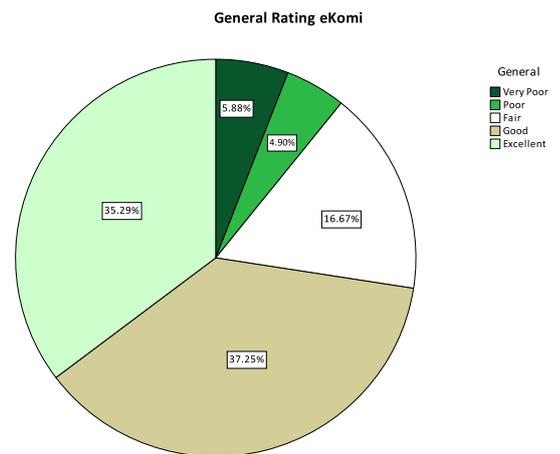
Industry Research

Within the Industry research the information from the interview and internal information has been combined in order to analyse different industries. What has been found is that the correlation between industry and the number of order, widget clicks and reviews given is not very high. The only noticeable correlation was within the Hi-Fi industry; as the average percentages of widget clicks was higher compared with the other industries,



Survey

Within the survey the customer satisfaction and the increase in revenue and decrease in dropout rate has been analysed. Within the survey the eKomi 5-star rating has been used. The overall customer satisfaction is shown in the graph "General Rating eKomi". This shows the overall satisfaction of eKomi's customers in a range from very poor to excellent. 89.21% of eKomi's customers rated eKomi in the scale from fair to excellent. 10.78% of the respondents rated eKomi from very poor to poor. In appendix G can be seen that the customer service has been rated better then the friendliness of the customer service, as 24.02% of the respondents think that eKomi's customer friendliness is very poor or poor.



Mean and answers per country

Country	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
DE	3.89	186	1.150
UK	4.33	3	.577
FR	4.50	4	1.000
NL	4.00	11	.447
Total	3.91	204	1.115

Against 11.27% respondents who rated the customer service poor to very poor. As can be seen in the table the customer service with a mean of 4.15 and a median and mode of 5 has been ranked the highest. The customer friendliness has been rated the lowest by the respondents with a mean of 3.65, a median of 4 and a mode of 5, the mode of 5 shows that the answers given highly fluctuate. The average per country and the number of answers per country are given in the table on the side. Here can be seen that the number of respondents has not been spread fairly. Therefore the analyses per country will not be completed.

Customer satisfaction

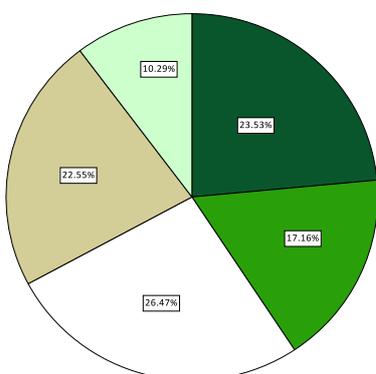
		General	Recommend	Service	Friendly	Response
N	Valid	204	204	204	204	204
	Missing	1	1	1	1	1
Mean		3.91	1.83	4.15	3.65	3.82
Median		4.00	2.00	5.00	4.00	4.00
Mode		4	2	5	5	5

Within the survey the eKomi customers have been asked to evaluate the increase in revenue, the decrease in their dropout rate and their feeling whether eKomi adds value to their business. The table shows the average answers per question. The revenue is on an average answered with an increase between 1-5%, which can also be seen in the graph. About 73% of the respondents saw an increase in their revenue against 62.5 % who saw a decrease in their dropout rate. The answer given the most in the dropout question is 1, which is a 0% decrease in the dropout rate. With an average of 2.32, this means the answers given highly fluctuate.

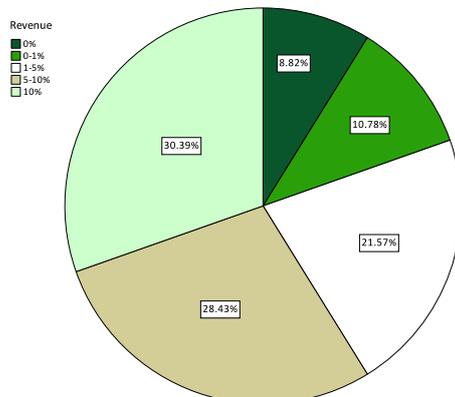
Value

		Revenue	Dropout	Value
N	Valid	204	204	204
	Missing	1	1	1
Mean		2.79	2.32	3.61
Median		3.00	2.00	4.00
Mode		3	1	5

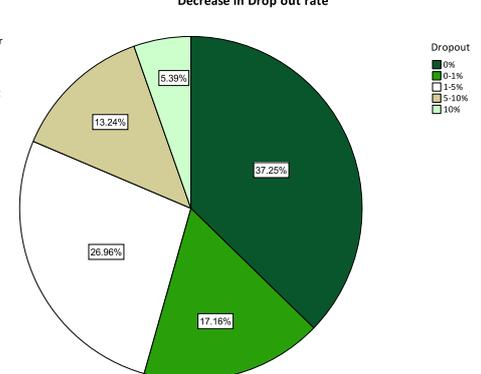
Increase in Revenue



eKomi adds value



Decrease in Drop out rate



The third question concerning the value added by using eKomi is whether the customers think eKomi adds value to their business. This question has been answered with the highest average, 80% of the respondents think eKomi adds value to their business against 19.6% who think barely no value has been added since they use eKomi. The most common given answer is good and the answer in the middle is excellent.

The quality rating of the products is shown in the table. As can be seen the main product from eKomi has been rated the highest and the product review system has been rated the lowest. The graphs concerning these results can be found in appendix I.

Product satisfaction

		Shop	Product	Visitor
N	Valid	204	204	204
	Missing	1	1	1
Mean		3.86	2.81	3.09
Median		4.00	3.00	4.00
Mode		4	4	4

The open questions have also been analysed, asking why this certain amount of stars has been given. As within this research the main focus is on the optimisation the answers are categorised. The main answers given say that:

- There are/were troubles with the implementation or technical department.
- The prices are too high.
- Problems with customer service mainly based on respondents time and on invoices.

Also shown within customer friendliness and customer service are trouble with IT and problems with customer service. Then the most commonly given tip by the customers is to increase their visibility within the market.

Chapter 7

Recommendation

Discussion

Within this paragraph the findings will be interpreted. First of all the main findings will be summarised. The main findings are outlined in the table below also stating their significance, where one is the lowest and five is the highest. Those findings together will form a recommendation.

Out of all those it can be said that eKomi could optimise parts of its own business process in order to be fully able to help (potential) customers to optimise their business process.

Throughout this research it has been found that for online consumers the main importance whether to buy or not depends on trust, which can be reached through the eKomi independent review system. This review system would be a smart investment especially in the European Market as within

this market online shopping is becoming more and more popular. Then also for online customers recommendations and reviews are important information whether to buy or not as this is not dependent on the demographic background of the customers.

Online shops consider search engine optimisation as an important marketing tool, as this increases the likeliness that potential customers find their website. The review system from eKomi does help customers with search engine optimisation, as through the reviews given by their customers their ranking within Google will be higher. The reviews also increase the trust within the online web shop, which helps potential customers in their decision process. Throughout this research it has been found out that brand advertisement is seen as an important but expensive marketing tool. It has been proven has been that customer opinions are on the same level of importance as brand advertisement. Online consumers do depend on recommendations or reviews from former customers. Therefore it can be said that online shops should invest in a review system, as this provides trust and cheaper advertisement. These findings, combined with the already existing findings, increase in shopping basket, increase in conversion rate and the protection against negative feedback. Show that several advantages for online shops occur when implementing eKomi. These advantages combined will help the eKomi sales team within their sales conversations.

Through the competitor analysis it can be seen that the main competitors have some differences with eKomi. The main difference is that all of the competitors do not offer the visitors feedback. Bazaarvoice will be a future threat as they are focussing on key account, which is going to be a future approach for eKomi. Within the German market is Trusted shop the biggest competitor, as they have a lot of visibility within the market. Power reviews and Trust pilot are the main international threats. EKomi should keep an eye on (upcoming) competitors in order to stay in the market and show their potential customers the difference with their competitors.

The visitors to buy process gives a calculation for customers to see how much their sales has increased and how much their conversion rate has decreased. Based on the business cases the approximate increase in sales is between 5-20%. This shows customers the importance and help of eKomi. Within the upcoming future eKomi should make the test with more customers to be able to provide a more reliable increase in sales as this research has been based on 4 customers. However this percentage shows an estimation which can be used by the sales people.

After an in depth analysis of the eye tracking product it can be said that this product would not help eKomi. This is because the development of an eye tracking product is really expensive and also

risky. As the average customers of eKomi are medium-small sized business the likeliness that they will invest in a product that expensive is very low. While researching, a lot of information has been found which resulted in the best widget spot recommendation. For online web shops it is recommended to place it on the right hand sight of a website.

The industry research shows that no big differences between industries can be found. This also means that eKomi can target all the online shops industries. The most noticeable difference found is that the HiFi branch on average has a higher percentage of widget clicks. This could mean that website visitors want to gather more information before they decide to buy. This could also mean that HiFi shops are less trusted then online shops in other branches. This could be used by the sales team when approaching a HiFi online shop.

Through the survey information gathered, it has been evaluated whether current customers are satisfied with the services eKomi offers and what change in dropout rate and sales they have noticed. The customer satisfaction has been graded well, the customer friendliness has been graded the lowest, and this could be a point of improvement for the eKomi team. The open questions also show that the customer service at some point need some improvement especially concerning the IT-department, as implementation take a long time.

The product satisfaction results show that the product review system has been graded the lowest; this is probably due to the fact that this product offered by eKomi does not work in all the countries. This has caused several problems as customers who would like to use this product cannot implement it yet. It would be preferable for eKomi to work on the product development and then they will be able to implement the product within the system of all the online shops who are still waiting for it.

The value increase shows what customers have noticed after implementing eKomi. As can be seen in the findings, the average grade of whether customers think eKomi adds value to their online shop has been answered with 3.61 out of five. This means most of the customers think eKomi does add value to their business. The average increase in revenue is 2.79, which means that the average eKomi customer thinks their revenue increased between 0-5percent. The customers showed that the dropout rate has decreased less, with an average answer of 2.32; they saw a decrease between 0-2.5percent. This is probably due to the fact that the dropout rate also depends on the fact if a visitor ended up on the website he was looking for. This also relies on the marketing department of the online shop itself. Overall it can be said that eKomi does add value to online shops.

When comparing the visitors to buy testing with the survey can be seen that the estimated increase in sales is higher than the answers given within the survey. As the visitors to buy process is only based on four examples, the survey results can be considered as more reliable.

As can be seen in the literature research, review systems are considered as an important marketing tool in adding trust. Throughout this research it has been shown that eKomi's review system does add value to the online shops. Therefore the literature agrees with the findings within this research.

This research has been written for eKomi, but can also provide online shops or other players within the e-commerce market with useful information concerning the development of the e-commerce market. Online shops can use this research to see how to preferably optimise their business processes to be able to generate more sales.

Recommendations

The following recommendations concerning the research question are hereby made. *"How should eKomi Ltd. optimise the business processes for online shops in order to increase sales?"*

eKomi should optimise the visitors to buy testing in order to give a fully reliable answer on the increase of sales. At this moment they can provide their (potential) customers with the estimation of 5-20%. When this testing is completely done they can provide their potential customers with an actual number and provide them with the calculation example to calculate their possible increase. This information can also be combined with the answers from the survey, which showed an increase of 0-5%. eKomi can show their customers a 0-20% increase in sales, which indirectly shows a optimisation in the business process. Which can also be said is that 70.47% of the respondents noticed an increase in their revenue.

The decrease in dropout rate (0-2.5%) should also be used as a sales advantage; this also shows an optimisation within the online shops business process. This will help the sales team convincing potential customers about the advantages for using eKomi. Another important number is the 62.75% of the respondents who noticed a decrease in their dropout rate.

Recommendable for eKomi is to work on their customer service, as implementation can take a long time and the product review package does not completely work yet. They should focus on the IT-implementation as the survey pointed out that many customers said this implementation often takes too long. eKomi should also increase their customer friendliness and keep on track with the invoices as the survey results showed that mistakes have been made in this area. By optimising those services, eKomi will be more likely to help online shops within their business process optimisation as the implementation will not take so long.

eKomi should work on their product review package, as this product is for online shops to implement. When these changes have been made eKomi's sales team will be able to fully inform and help (potential) customers.

eKomi should also follow the e-commerce market and keep an good eye on their main competitors (Bazaarvoice, Trusted shops, trustpilot and Powerreviews). This will enable eKomi to stay ahead of their competitors and therefore provide the best possibilities for online web shops (potential customer) to optimise their business processes. Without good knowledge of the market it will be hard to inform their (potential) customers about their main advantages. Within this market they have to focus on Bazaarvoice, which will be a future competitor as they only approach key accounts, which will become more important for eKomi. Trusted shop, their main competitor in the German market, has at this moment more visibility in the German market. Therefore eKomi should increase their visibility within all the markets. Within the e-commerce market it would also be recommendable to focus on the European market as this market will undergo a big growth the upcoming years.

eKomi should not invest in the new eye-tracking product, but they should inform their customers about the best widget spot. The best widget spot for eKomi customers would be on the right hand side, visible when entering a website. This will help eKomi's customers fully optimise their business processes, as potential customers can immediately see the widget and therefore collect trust when needed. Through the widget visibility an increase in trust can be achieved which then will result in more sales.

eKomi should also focus on the HiFi branch, as through the research has been found that on an average the widget had been used more. Therefore it can be said that this branch needs more trust in order to optimise their business process. Within the other branches not much correlation has been found, which also means that all branches should be approached by eKomi.

The eKomi sales team should also use within their sales conversation the findings from the literature research. As those stated that brand advertisement, which is a really expensive investment, is as important as customer review system. Customers also value recommendations and reviews, which helps them within their buying process. The sales team should also focus on the importance of trust for online consumers, which is increased by the eKomi review system. Within those sales conversations can also be used that 80% of the eKomi customers think eKomi adds value to their business.

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Appendices

Appendix A (e-commerce market)

This paragraph will give a short outline about the e-commerce branch in order to get a better insight in the several possibilities within this branch. The e-commerce is a fast upcoming branch, which automatically results in a lot of possibilities but also a fast growing number of competitors.

The internet became popular in 1994 and the e-commerce market really started growing after 2000, as in that year the security protocols were finished. The e-commerce history is unthinkable without Amazon and Ebay, as they were two of the first internet companies who offered electronic transaction. Throughout the years a lot of companies decided to (also) trade their products through the internet, which resulted in the crowded e-commerce market of today.⁴⁷

E-commerce means product and services sold through electronic systems, the internet or other computer networks. The amount of trade has increased tremendously throughout the years, as for businesses it is an easy and cheap way to sell their products.⁴⁸ eKomi works in this business by offering a product which enables companies to gain insight in their customers thoughts. As the e-commerce market grows the number of competitors offering a feedback systems is also growing; an competitors analysis can be found in appendix A.

25% of people see the internet as a market place for buying and selling and 63% uses the World Wide Web to research a product or service before buying it. It is expected that both of those percentage will grow; which will result in more sales in the e-commerce market. Those numbers are global numbers, as the differences per countries are big, as Germany is one of the biggest e-commerce markets, while the Netherlands is still a bit behind. Expected is that all the global markets will keep on growing.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ E-Commerce Land, (2004), [internet] Available from: http://www.ecommerce-land.com/history_ecommerce.html [Accessed on 3 February 2010]

⁴⁸ Gspay, (2009), [internet] Available from: <http://www.gspay.com/the-e-commerce-market.php> [Accessed on 3 February 2010]

⁴⁹ Hummerston, A., (2008) Digital world Digital life. [internet] Available from: http://www.tnsglobal.com/assets/files/TNS_Market_Research_Digital_World_Digital_Life.pdf [Accessed 2 February 2010]

These numbers give eKomi advantages, as this will automatically mean that more companies will start working in the e-commerce market and more consumers will start buying products online. As customer trust is very important within the e-commerce market, eKomi will be able to further develop within the e-commerce market. As an e-Retailer it is very important to be a trustful online shop, otherwise it would be impossible to sell your product. The easiest way to be trustworthy is by establishing a brand, but this is not as easy as it sounds⁵⁰. eKomi helps e-retailers with gaining trust with their customer feedback systems; website visitors can see the feedback from customers, which gives them a secure feeling.

⁵⁰ Matched IT, (2009?), [Internet] Available from: <http://www.matthedit.com/Articles/Articles.aspx?id=increase-ecommerce-sales-customer-confidence&c=ecommerce> [Accessed on 4 February 2010]

Appendix B(Certificate & Widget)



[eKomi for Online Shops](#)

Current mypure.co.uk rating:



from over 1135 customer reviews



Trust through the Gold customer seal of approval!

eKomi guarantees:

- » Genuine customer feedback
- » Cannot be manipulated
- » Personal Problem Resolution
- » Verified eKomi e-retailer
- » 1135 positive feedback



customer feedback:

Following customers have left a personal note:



customerfeedback from 2010-05-28 at 20:51

Everything was to my satisfaction



customerfeedback from 2010-05-28 at 20:35

Delivery was very fast and ordering was very easy. Great website for organic products at a reasonable price though I wish they had water based nail polish.



customerfeedback from 2010-05-28 at 19:29

I needed to phone the site because an item I wanted was not in stock. The assistant was really friendly and helpful. When the item did come back in stock, I found the website easy to use and the ordering was really quick and simple.



customerfeedback from 2010-05-28 at 11:34

Very good service and prompt delivery.



customerfeedback from 2010-05-28 at 11:22

A1 SERVICE A1 PRODUCT



eKomi partner information

Partner ID Z6NJC324J569GPY

mypure.co.uk

mypure.co.uk

The online natural beauty and organic skin care specialists

URL:	mypure.co.uk
Status:	available
Offerer:	mypure.co.uk The Old Chicken Shed Bethersden, Kent, TN23 6JL
Contact:	Telephone: 0845 456 0639 E-Mail: enquiries@mypure.co.uk Fax: 020 7504 8099
Authorised representative:	Australis Distribution Ltd
Verifications:	1135 customerfeedback
arbitration processes	5
Last Update:	2010-05-28 at 20:51
Verified by:	<i>H. Ambros</i> Michael Ambros CEO eKomi Ltd.

Certificate Page

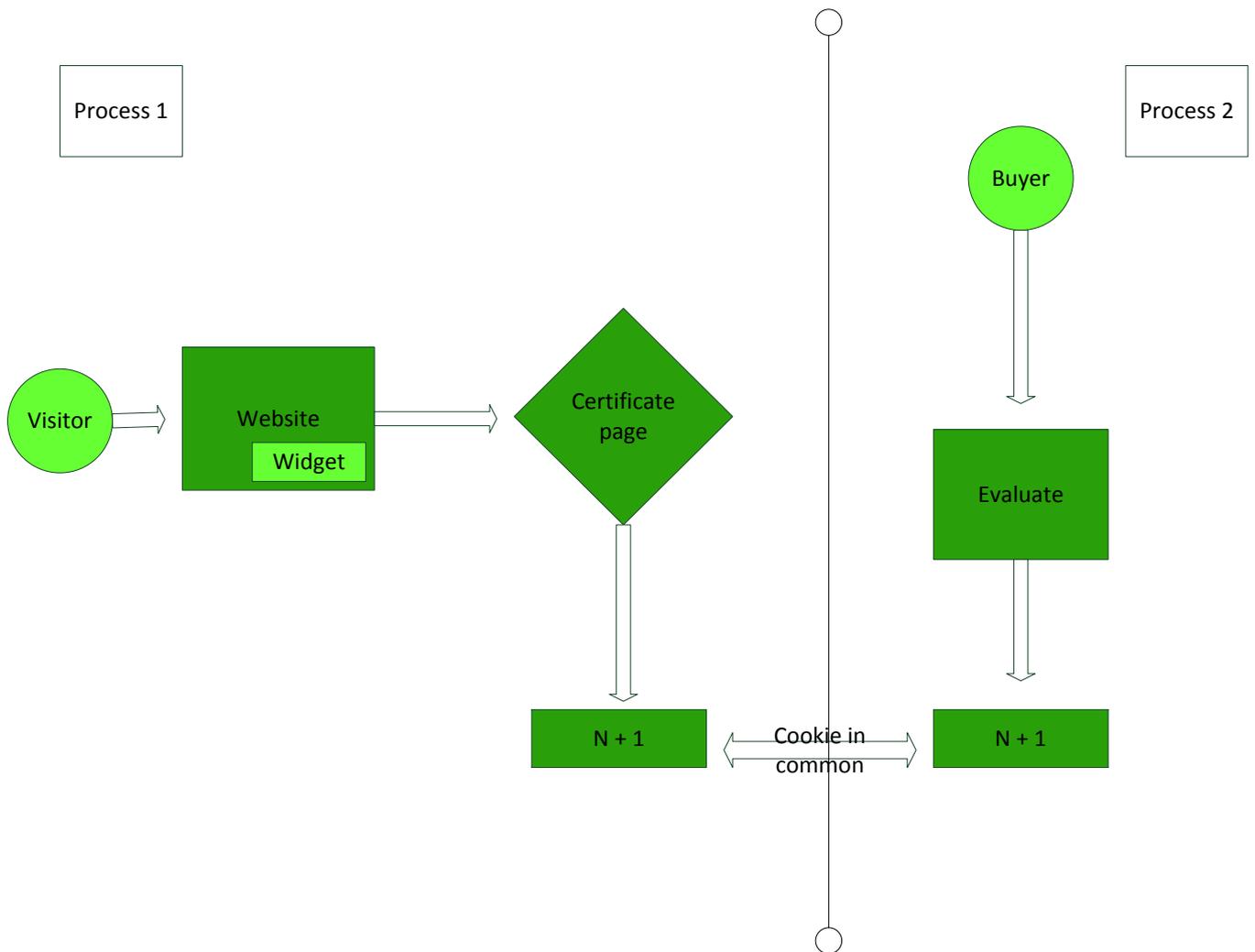
Widget

Customer Rating **4.9/5**

Very good service and prompt delivery.

GUARANTEED real customer feedback

Appendix C (Visitors to buy Process)



Erfahrungsbericht zur Conversionrate-Steigerung mit eKomi

GamePointsNow



"Using eKomi's customer feedback tools, we've increased our sales from new customers by 5% within just a few weeks. ... It also opens up a useful platform for dialogue with our customers, so we can see what they like about the site and where we can make improvements. We'd recommend eKomi to other online shops to increase sales, customer confidence and encourage a more transparent shopping environment."

Simon Ward, CEO at www.GamePointsNow.de



"Der Einbau von eKomi war dank des XT-Plugins super einfach. Seit dem ich das Widget in meinem Rucksack-Shop eingebunden habe, konnte ich die Conversionrate um 12% steigern! Auch die Bestellabbrüche gehen zurück und das Feedback lässt sich wunderbar für die Shopoptimierung nutzen!"

Andreas Bruckschlögl - Shopmanager von www.Rucksack-Center.de



Ich bin sehr zufrieden, dass wir uns für eKomi entschieden haben: Wir verzeichnen seit Online-Stellung des Widgets vor 4 Tagen 10 bis 20 % mehr Auftragseingänge!

Christoph Laves – Inhaber www.it-budget.de

Erfahrungsbericht von Goldankauf123

„Ein großes Stück unseres enormen Erfolges können wir ekomi.de verdanken.“



Goldankauf123 ist die Goldverkaufsplattform der Gegenwart und Zukunft. Sie bieten einen Live Goldrechner der direkt an die Rohstoffbörse in London angebunden ist und alle 60 Sekunden die Goldpreise aktualisiert. Mit dem erfolgreichen Geschäftskonzept und dem hervorragenden Bewertungssystem von ekomi will Goldankauf123 noch viele weitere Länder erschließen. Mit dem Markteinstieg in Großbritannien ist ihrem einmaligen Angebot bereits der Schritt in die Internationalisierung gelungen.

„Das Feedback unserer Kunden spiegelt fast immer exakt unsere Arbeitsweise wieder. Verblüffend ist, dass gut 15 % aller Kunden die eine Bewertung abgeben, sehr ausführlich über die Erfahrungen mit unserem Unternehmen schreiben.“



„Das Bewertungssystem von ekomi ist bei uns zentrales und wichtigstes Marketinginstrument. Durch die Kundenbewertungen haben wir einen Weg gefunden unsere Versprechungen öffentlich zu beweisen. Schätzungen zur Folge konnten wir unseren Umsatz dank ekomi.de um mind. 30 Prozent steigern.“

„An dieser Stelle möchten wir den Gründern und Mitarbeitern von ekomi.de für den großartigen Einfall dieses Bewertungssystems danken und stehen als Referenzkunde für branchenfremde Unternehmen gerne zur Verfügung.“

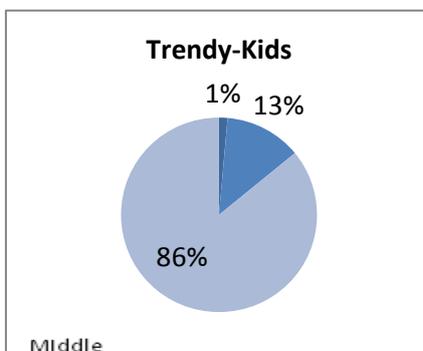
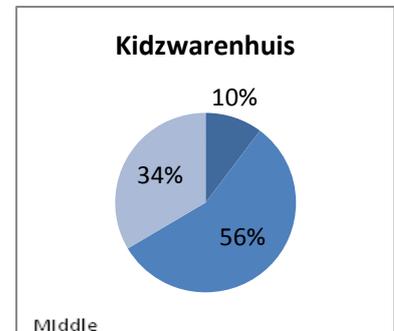
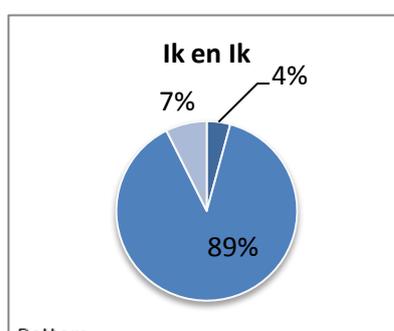
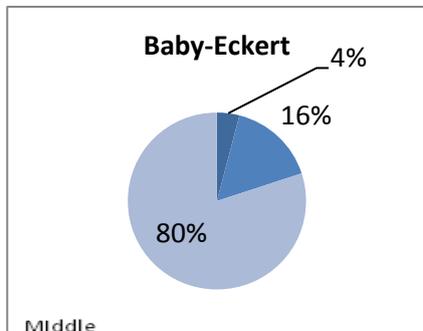
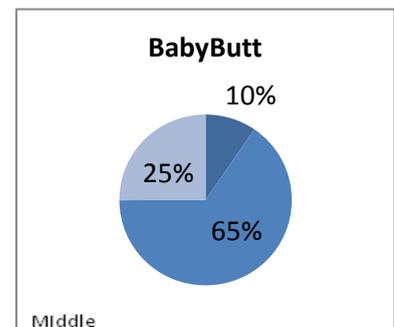
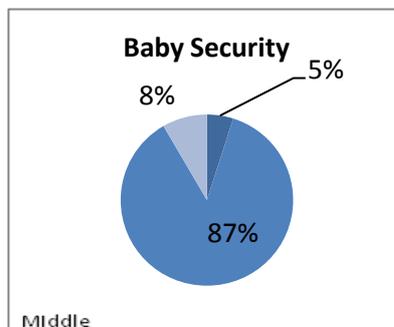
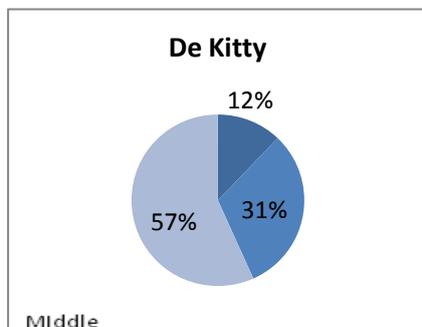
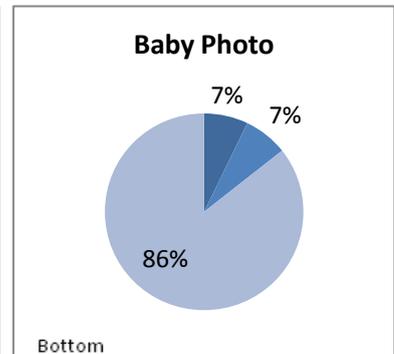
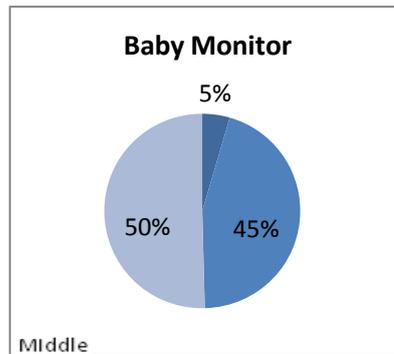
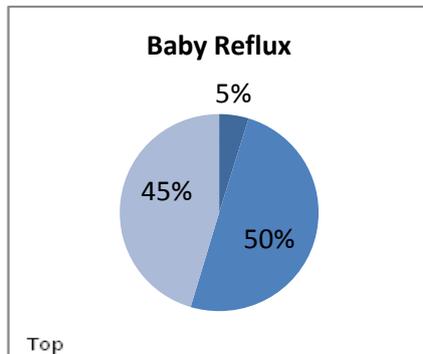
Dipl.-Ing. Klaus Joseph / Shop-Manager von Goldankauf123

Appendix E (Industry graphs)

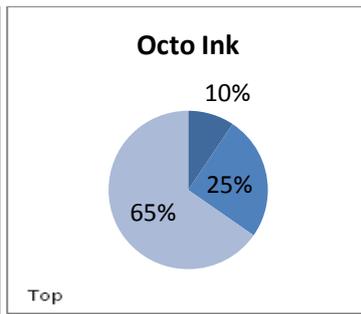
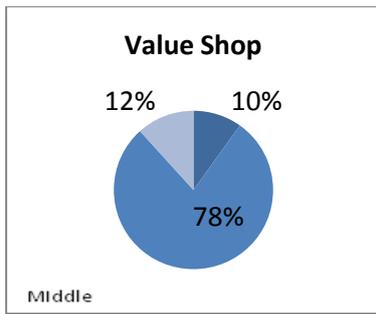
Within this appendix all the graphs per industry are shown. Dark blue are the reviews given this month, a bit lighter orders this month and the lightest blue are the number of widget clicks from this month. Based on those percentages the trust dependency per industry has been researched.

- **Bewertungen diesen Monat:**
- **Bestellungen diesen Monat:**
- **Widgetklicks diesen Monat:**

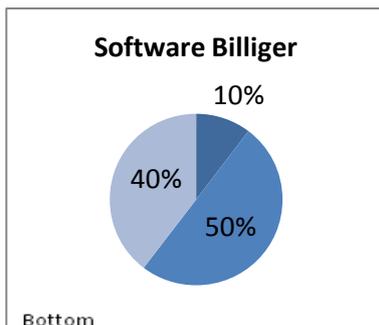
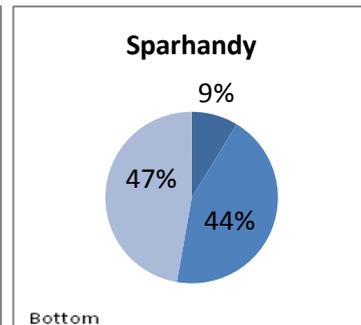
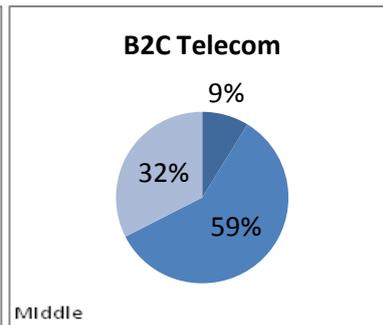
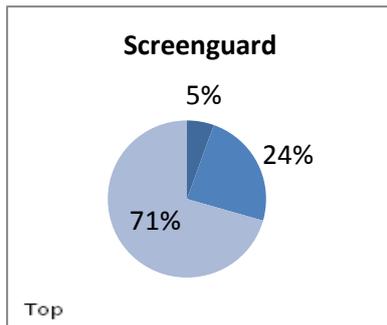
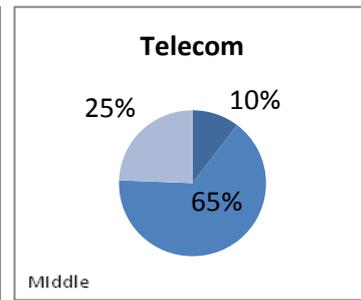
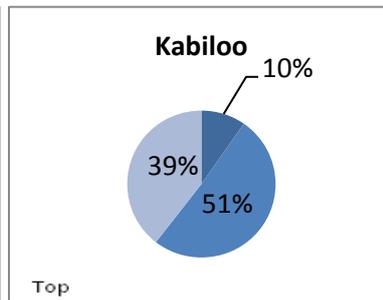
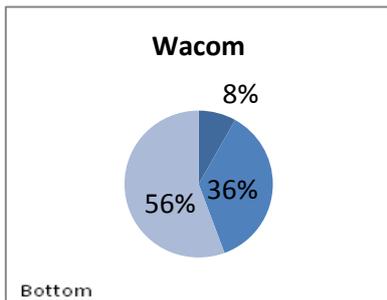
Babies and kids:



Office supplies



HIFI



Appendix F (Survey)

This appendix shows the questionnaire sent to eKomi's customers.

Dear customer,

eKomi Ltd. is committed to customer satisfaction and would like to know how well we are doing. Therefore we have chosen to send a survey in order to identify our customer needs. Please take a few minutes to participate in this survey. Completing this survey will help us improve any areas that need attention.

You may begin the survey by clicking on the website link below; we appreciate your quick response!

www.feedback.nl

If you have questions about the survey, please contact Marloes Florijn (florijn@ekomi.nl).

Thank you for participating.

Kind regards,

Your eKomi team.

1. General
2. Advantages
 - a. How much has your revenue increased after implementing eKomi? (0%,1-5%, 5-10%, 10% or more)
 - b. How much has your dropout rate decreased after implementing eKomi? (0%, 1-5%, 5-10%, 10% or more)
 - c. Overall do you think eKomi adds value to your business? (Stars)
3. Product
 - a. How do you rate the quality of our shop feedback? (Stars)
 - b. How do you rate the quality of our visitors feedback? (Stars)
 - c. How do you rate the quality of our product feedback? (Stars)
4. Customer service
 - a. Do we respond to problems within 48 hours? (Stars)
 - b. Do our customer service representatives provide a friendly service? (Stars)
 - c. Do we provide clear and effective communication? (Stars)
 - d. How would you rate customer service overall? (Stars)
5. Would you recommend us to other companies? (Yes/No)

Appendix G (Sales team interview)

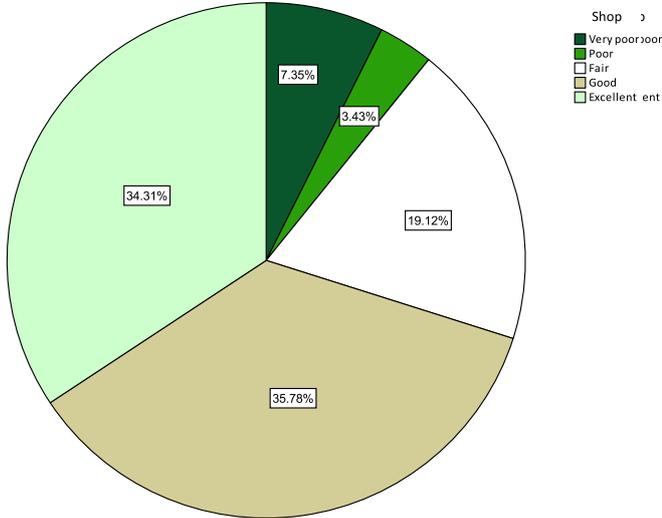
Underneath the main questions of the interview are shown.

- 1) Which industry/branch/segment needs eKomi the most, what kind of online shops are seeking for more trust than other online shops?
- 2) Why do you think those industries/branches/segment do need eKomi more?
- 3) In which industry/branch/segment are most of your customers in your country?
- 4) Which industry/branch/segment would you recommend eKomi to target on?
- 5) Who is the main competitor in your country?
- 6) What are the main advantages for using eKomi, which advantage do you mainly use in your sales conversations? And why have you chosen for this particular advantage?
- 7) Within the existing customers in your country what main changes have you noticed after they implemented eKomi?
- 8) What would you suggest eKomi to change in order to be able to increase sales?

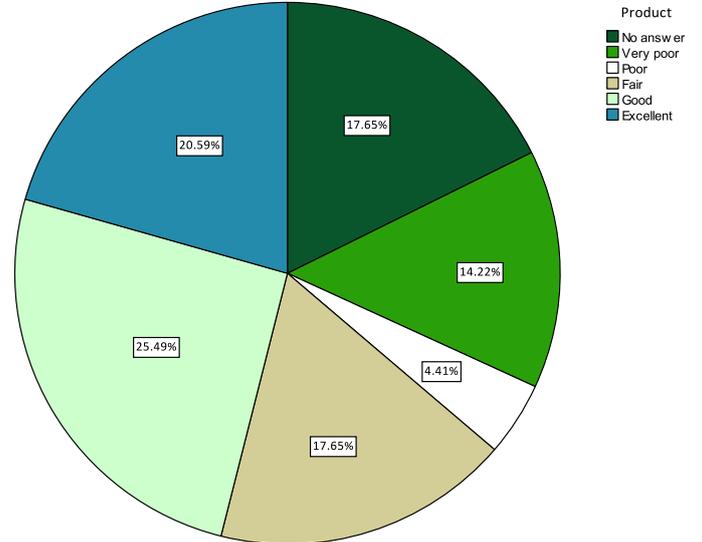
Appendix H (Statistics survey)

Underneath the graphs which have not been added in the research are shown. The questions concerning those graphs are shown above the graphs.

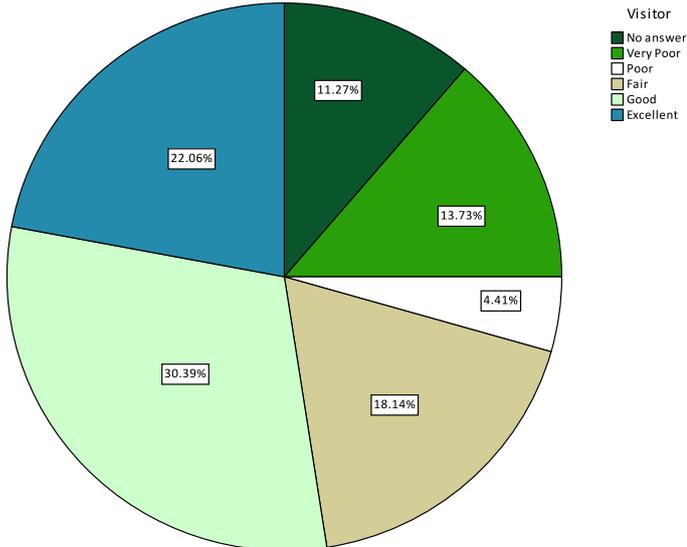
How do you rate the quality of our shop feedback?



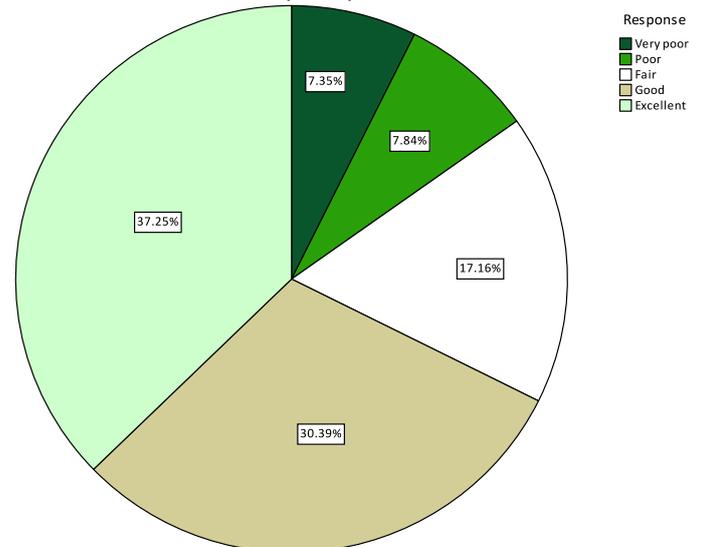
How do you rate the quality of our product feedback?



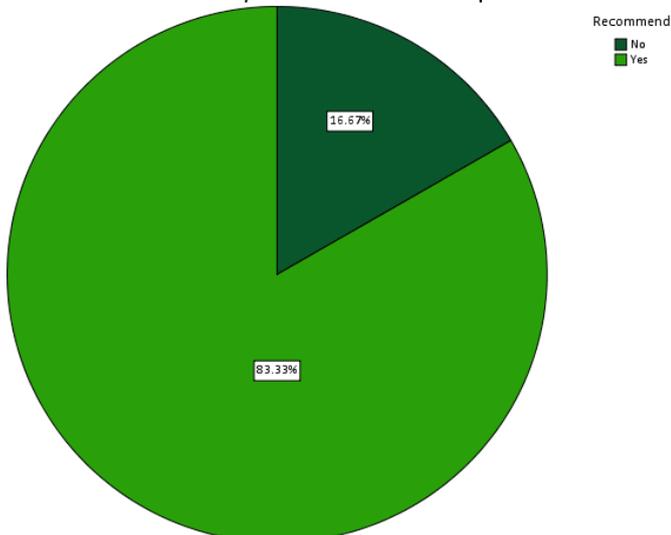
How do you rate the quality of our visitors feedback ?



Do we respond to problems within 48 hours?



Would you recommend us to other companies?



How would you rate the customer service overall ?

