

Getting Social with

By

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# Preface

Since December 2010 I have been working in Restaurant Opium. Throughout the years I saw a lot of changes. The biggest change was probably when Opium was sold and the new owners, Marin Kwakkelstein en Jeroen Smeets, started running the restaurant.

After one year of working for the new owners, I had to leave for a year to study abroad. During this period I learned a lot about using social media for business purposes. When I came back to the Netherlands I was rehired at Restaurant Opium. I was very interested to find out how the restaurant was using social media.

I was a bit disappointed to see that Restaurant Opium was not using social media well. I wanted to help them and that is why I chose to do research on how they could improve this.

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# Summary

The owners of Restaurant Opium are using several types of media to communicate to their audience. Right now they do not know how they can use social media. Social media is a very popular marketing tool for businesses. For restaurants it is especially useful as it can be used to engage customers and to create customer loyalty. Many people are using social media, this means that this is where customers can be found nowadays. Therefore it is the perfect place for businesses to communicate to their audience. Restaurant Opium in Utrecht is not yet using this tool correctly, this is why they are missing out on an important marketing tool. The conclusions from this research can be used as an advice on how Restaurant Opium can use social media in order to improve customer loyalty.

Within this research three aspects of social media were analyzed. The first aspect is social media platforms: which platforms are suitable to use for Restaurant Opium. The second aspect is the reason why people use social media: what type of benefits do customers seek on social media. The last aspect is content: what kind of messages would interest the restaurant’s customers.

With these aspects in mind quantitative and qualitative data were collected for the research. To collect the quantitative data two surveys were carried out. One for Restaurant Opium’s current customers, and one for Restaurant Opium’s potential customers. The qualitative data consist of interviews with other restaurants and case studies on how other restaurants are using social media.

The findings of these data showed that a great number of Restaurant Opium’s customers use social media sites. Facebook is used by most customers. In addition, Twitter and Instagram are popular as well. Customers mostly seek functional benefits on a restaurant’s social media site. Moreover, no preference for conversational or marketing and sales messages was shown by the customers.

Facebook, Instagram and Foursquare are social media platforms that have proven to work successfully for other restaurants. In addition to that, restaurants engage with their clients by posting diverse, funny and relevant content. It has been found that a lot of customers who follow restaurants on social media platforms like to see posts on staff working at the restaurant. It has also been proven to be a smart move to use someone else’s network by tagging someone in a post.

Having carried out research on social media and how Restaurant Opium can use various social media platforms in marketing itself, the following advice can be offered: Restaurant Opium should be more active by providing customers with new content, especially on information on the restaurant. Moreover, they should look for opportunities to post content that interests the customers of the restaurant. Most importantly they should listen to their customers, ask them questions to find out their opinion and to be able to improve customer loyalty.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

Technology keeps changing every day. Approximately fifty years ago internet did not even exist whereas nowadays people cannot imagine living without it. Over the last few years, the phenomenon social media has found its way into people’s everyday lives. Many people around the globe are using social media platforms for a lot of different purposes. Social interaction is the main reason for most people to use social media. Staying in touch with friends and meeting new people with the same interests is why they use social media. Other reasons are seeking information, passing time, entertainment and relaxation (Whiting & Williams, 2013). A survey conducted by the British Office for National Statistics shows that social media are very popular in The Netherlands. 65% of the respondents of this survey used social media in the last three months which is a lot compared to other European countries (LMP, 2013). Nowadays there are also many businesses worldwide that use social media as a form to communicate with their stakeholders. According to Statistics Netherlands 40% of Dutch companies used social media in 2012 (CBS, 2012).

So what if you are the owner of a small business and you are not sure how to use social media to your advantage? . This is the case for the owners of Restaurant Opium. Restaurant Opium was first opened by Oscar de Goede en Chris Mignot in the spring of 2006. Restaurant Opium is a modern Asian restaurant in the city center of Utrecht. The restaurant is inspired by the beauty of Asia which is represented in its delicious dishes and decoration. In 2011 Oscar and Chris were looking for a new challenge. That is why they put the restaurant on the market. At the same time Marin Kwakkelstein en Jeroen Smeets were looking to buy a restaurant in Utrecht. Both of them already had experience with entrepreneurship, Marin had shared the ownership of Quignon Amersfoort and Jeroen owned 3512, a small restaurant in the center of Utrecht. At first they were searching for a new restaurant separately, but soon the old friends decided to work together. They bought Restaurant Opium in March 2011. The concept of the restaurant has stayed the same throughout the years. Only Marin and Jeroen decided to focus more on quality than quantity. They find it important that guests can enjoy a good night out, rather than having as many guests as possible in one night.

Approximately 350 guests come to enjoy dinner every week. The owners try to attract new guests by offering deals (for example: IENS Diner Deal or Restaurant Week), but using social media as a marketing tool could be a much cheaper option to achieve this.

This report was written to advise the owners of Restaurant Opium on how to use social media to improve customer loyalty. First, desk research was done in order to find out more about social media and how it can be used to a business’s advantage. After that, theories relating to this topic were researched. In order to answer the research question and sub questions some qualitative and quantitative research was carried out. The findings of this research are presented per sub question in chapter 6 of this report.

Right now 73% of all internet users are active on social media (Pew Research Center, 2013). This means that social media is the place where businesses can find their customers and communicate to them. In 2012 92.5% of B2C (business to consumer) marketers were using social media to market their business (Stelzner, 2012). The fact that so many marketers are using social media for marketing purposes shows that it is a good way to communicate to the clients. However, some small businesses like Restaurant Opium do not have the resources to investigate how they should use social media and how they can benefit from it. This research will provide them with an advice on how they can do this. Therefore, this research is really important to restaurants and other small businesses.

# Chapter 2. Problem description

As the owners, M. Kwakkelstein and J. Smeets, say: *“Communicating is not our strongest quality”.* Up till now they have tried using several types of media to communicate with their customers. They have used different sorts of print and internet media which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6. It is very difficult for the owners to see if their communication is effective. They do not know how to measure the outcome of their communication efforts. It is very difficult to ask each individual customer how they found the restaurant. At the moment they own some social media accounts, but they are not actively using them. Right now no one at the restaurant really knows how to use social media for business purposes. On a rare occasion an employee will post something on Facebook which does not seem to be effective at all, because these messages barely generate any likes and comments. The figure in appendix 1.1 shows that the amount of likes and comments on a business’s social media page represents customers’ brand engagement. If Restaurant Opium were using social media in the right way this would increase awareness, improve customer loyalty, help to build a relationship with the customer and in the end save costs. (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010) This means the owners of Restaurant Opium are facing a big problem, because right now they are missing out on using a very important marketing tool: social media.

Research question

How can Restaurant Opium successfully use social media to improve customer loyalty?

## Sub questions

1. Which social media platforms have been proven to be successful for restaurants or bars?
2. What benefits do customers seek on social media sites?
3. What is Opium’s marketing strategy like now?
   1. What are they doing now?
   2. Which social media platforms do Opium’s current and potential customers use?
   3. What are the preferences of Opium’s current and potential customers?
   4. What social media platforms are most effective to use for Restaurant Opium
4. What sort of marketing communication content should be provided by Restaurant Opium on social media?

# Chapter 3. Literature review

There are many definitions of what social media is and can be used for.

According to the Oxford Dictionary social media can be defined as “*websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.”* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

Ron Jones (2009) defines social media as *"a category of online media where people are talking, participating, sharing, networking, and bookmarking online."* (Jones, 2009).

Kietzmann et al explain how social media *“employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content.”* (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011).

Xiang and Gretzel (2010) define social media as *“Internet-based applications that carry consumer-generated content which encompasses “media impressions created by consumers, typically informed by relevant experience, and archived or shared online for easy access by other impressionable consumers”* (Blackshaw, 2006)*”* (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010)*.*

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) view social media as *“a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.”* (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

In order to be able to conduct this research it is important to understand what social media is. For this research the definition given by Kietzmann et al will be used, because this gives the clearest and most complete description of what social media is and what it can be used for.

With this definition in mind some other aspects of social media are analyzed. First, opportunities and challenges for businesses to use social media will be discussed. Second, the reason why people enter online communities will be explained. Third, a description of different kinds of content provided by businesses on social media will be given. Last, the most important social media platforms that are relevant to restaurants and small businesses will be described.

Social media is a new hybrid marketing tool. It enables companies to directly communicate with consumers and it gives consumers the possibility to communicate with each other (Mangold & Faulds., 2009). This means the power has shifted. In traditional marketing marketers held all the power over corporate communication. Now social media enable consumers to communicate to each other about brands (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). This communication can be positive or negative. As companies are no longer in control it can be difficult for them to shape those discussions in their favor.

## Opportunities and challenges

For Restaurant Opium it is important to see which opportunities and challenges are related to social media for business use. The opportunities show why it is beneficial to use social media when owning a restaurant. On the other hand, the challenges point out the difficulties Restaurant Opium could encounter when using social media.

Opportunities  
There are many reasons why social media is a suitable marketing tool to create customer loyalty. For example it is less costly than traditional marketing and it is easier to target marketing geographically as well as demographically (Moore, 2013). One of the most important reasons to use social media is that it engages people(Bax, 2013). According to Dave Scholten, commercial segment manager of Gordon Food Service®, it is engagement that builds customer loyalty and pushes sales. Furthermore, social media is a good tool especially for restaurants as dining itself is a social activity. Nowadays the conversation continues online, it is easy for restaurants to participate in this conversation. In addition, the National Restaurant Association reported in 2011 that social media users dine out more often compared to people who do not use social media (Bax, 2013).

Challenges  
One of the biggest challenges when using social media is the measurability. It is very hard to measure the outcome of your input. Normally you can measure the outcome of the effort and money you put into marketing in the ROI (return on investment) by looking at sales. However, the use of social media does not have direct effect on sales (Hunt, 2013). Social media is one of the first marketing tools that gives customers the opportunity to give feedback; companies should use this to build a long and strong relationship with them. The outcome of social media effort should be measured in a different way from how traditional media was measured. Social media can be measured in different categories: brand awareness, brand engagement and word of mouth (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). The figure in appendix 1.1 shows how these three variables can be measured per social media platform.

## Online communities

An online community is a social group or organization where people voluntarily become a member and participate in interactive activities with other members to exchange desired benefits they seek through communities of their choice (Kang, Lee, Lee, & Choi, 2007). A social media page of a company can be seen as an online community. Online communities can be used for branding and creating commitment and a relationship with the customer (Keller, 1993) (Flavián & Guinalíu, 2006). However, a virtual community can only work successfully as a marketing tool when it meets the customers’ expectations in terms of benefits (Wang, Yu, & Fesenmaier, 2002). Customers might visit an online social community, but if their expectations are not met, there is a small chance that they will return to this community (Baird, 2012). Benefits are the aspects that the participants believe the virtual community could do for them (Keller, 1993). Moreover, it is important that these benefits are communicated clearly to the potential members of the community (Kang, Lee, Lee, & Choi, 2007). There are four types of benefits that can be found; functional benefits, social–psychological benefits, hedonic benefits and monetary benefits (Kang, Tang, & Foire, 2014).

Functional benefits are the underlying advantages of participating in an online community. Usually they are directly related to the product or service and based on basic motivations as physiological and safety needs (Keller, 1993). One of the most important reasons to participate in an online community is the exchange of information. Interaction can be used to solve problems by obtaining information or sharing information with others.

Social–psychological benefits can be divided into social and psychological benefits. Social benefits focus on the ability to help and support each other within a virtual community. Psychological benefits focus more on expressing your own identity and belonging to a group. Due to the fact that they are a bit similar and interrelated both benefits combined can be seen as one beneficial factor (Kang, Tang, & Foire, 2014).

Hedonic benefits can be described as the feeling of enjoyment and pleasure a person gets from participating in an online community (Bridges & Florsheim, 2008). It is about entertainment in two manners. On the one hand, there is individual entertainment which has to do with spending time and relaxation. On the other hand, it is about communal entertainment, this is about getting enjoyment from interaction with other participants (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004).

Monetary benefits enable participants to save money or spend less (Mimouni-Chaabane & Volle, 2010). These benefits could be provided in the form of special deals, free coupons or better prices a person receives when participating in the online community.

Loyalty occurs in the online community if a participant sets the organization’s interests above his own interests. An example of this is spreading positive word of mouth (Kang, Lee, Lee, & Choi, 2007). Active participants are more likely to be loyal than passive participants. Passive member tend to only use the social media page for the benefits and will do nothing in return, they are also called free riders or lurkers (Preece, Nonnecke, & Andrews, 2004). In contrast, the active members are very motivated to participate in the online community. They will create content and provide support to other members, thus increasing the knowledge of other members.

For this research it is relevant to understand what online communities are and what benefits customers might seek on them. In this way Restaurant Opium’s customers can be provided with the right benefits in order to keep them interested in participating in the online community.

## Content

The previously mentioned benefits can be offered in several ways. Therefore, different types of content can be described. It is important to see the different ways small businesses can provide customers with the benefits they are looking for.

Jeahnig has encountered several forms of content that can be used on social media for marketing purposes for businesses. Each type of content should generate customers’ engagement (Jeahnig, 2013).

**Asking questions**Questions are likely to generate likes, shares and comments. The question should be easy to answer and a little bit provocative, this way it will stimulate the fans to share their opinions.

**Focus on the fan .** Getting to know your fans is very important when using social media. Also most people love to talk about themselves and what they want. That is why fans should be provided with the opportunity to share this by for example giving them a choice, letting them make a decision or letting them fill in a blank.

**Pictures**  
Presenting the audience with visual content will make them feel special, because they belong to the exclusive group that can see the pictures.

**Public figures .** Talking about famous people in general is supposed to get people’s attention. Therefore, it can be smart to relate your brand to a popular public figure if you can find a relevant link. However, if you do it all the time it will start to bore people.

**Contests and promotions .** An important reason for people to become an online fan of the brand are the exclusive discounts and specials that are offered on the social media page. However, it is possible that people might just become a fan for one day to use the promotion. That is why it is important to have a strategy to keep engaging the fans once the promotion is over.

**Cross-pollinate**Cross-pollination is making your audience aware that you are active on more than one social media platform. For example by posting your Instagram pictures on your Facebook page in order to get your Facebook fans to follow you on Instagram as well. When there are more opportunities to get in touch with your customers, there is a bigger chance that they will engage with your brand. In the end this will result in a better relationship.

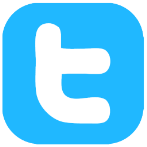
Moreover, in 2012 an analysis of the Facebook pages of twelve different restaurants in the USA was made to find out what types of messages are popular within the hospitality industry on Facebook. (Kwok & Yu, 2012) The messages were divided into two categories: conversational, and marketing and sales. Moreover they used four different types of message media: status, photo, video and link. The popularity was based on the amount of likes and comments on the messages. The analysis of the findings indicate that messages containing a photo or status were more popular than those containing link and video messages. Furthermore, conversational messages containing words related to the menu, special occasions or questions are more popular than marketing sales messages containing words related to marketing campaigns or promotions. These words are shown in figure 2 in appendix 1.2.

## Platforms

There are many different types of social media. All these platforms differ in scope and functionality. The main categories are social networking sites, professional networking sites, media sharing sites, social news and bookmarking sites and (micro)blogging (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). However not all of them will be suitable when having the desire to reach (potential) customers for a certain restaurant. It is important to establish where a company’s target audience is active, that is where that company should be as well (Bax, 2013). That is why it is important for this research to show which social media platforms are relevant for restaurants.

An article in Next Course, a professional magazine in the restaurant industry, describes the most suitable social media platforms for restaurants: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Foursquare, Pinterest and Google+ (Bax, 2013). Moreover, research shows that the social media platforms that are used most in the Netherlands in 2014 are Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter and Google+ (Newcom Research & Consultancy B.V., 2014). The exact amount of users is shown in appendix 1.3. Both YouTube and LinkedIn are not that relevant for Restaurant Opium, therefore these will be left out of this research. YouTube is useful for brands that use video content, for example advertisements. LinkedIn is a professional network, it is relevant to use for B2B service providers and recruitment companies (Chitwood, 2014). . Furthermore, there are some new platforms which have also become very popular nowadays: Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, Foursquare and WeChat (Newcom Research & Consultancy B.V., 2014). The exact amount of users per platform are shown in figure 4 in appendix 1.4. Snapchat can be used for small businesses; however, it reaches a younger audience as 80% of the users are younger than 24 years old (Grauer, 2014). Also WeChat is mostly used by teens and therefore both platforms are not relevant for Restaurant Opium.

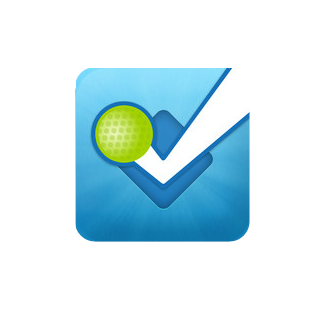
**Facebook**Research shows that Facebook is the most popular social media platform in the Netherlands. 8.9 Million Dutch people use Facebook and 59% of the respondents use it on a daily basis (Newcom Research & Consultancy B.V., 2014). It is easy and free to open up a business account on Facebook. With Facebook a lot of people can be reached by just posting one simple message. When you post a message it will appear in the news feed of your fans. If your fans like or comment on the message it will also appear on the news feed of their friends. This way a lot of people can be reached with a little effort (Sullivan, 2010).

**Twitter** With 3.5 million Dutch users Twitter is the second most popular social media platform (Newcom Research & Consultancy B.V., 2014). Twitter allows its users to read and send messages containing only 140 characters. It is a fast way to share information. That is why it is an ideal platform that businesses can use to send out real-time updates. Such as news items relevant to the restaurants or updates on specials (Bax, 2013). .  
Moreover, most restaurant users do not understand how to use Twitter properly; also they think Facebook works better. This is because they only compare the number of followers (Twitter) and fans (Facebook). Usually Facebook seems like a better platform. However, on Facebook you can only reach your fans, whereas on Twitter you can reach a much bigger audience. You can listen to people and start a conversation with them without even ‘knowing’ them, this way you can easily find new customers (Foodservice Instituut, 2013).

**Google+** The amount of Google+ users has grown a lot over the past year (Newcom Research & Consultancy B.V., 2014). It works the same way and has most of the same features as Facebook (Bax, 2013). The big difference is that Google+ is more formal and more professional and has a bigger search value. On this platform it is possible to connect the content of the platform with your website content. This will also make your website easier to search on Google (Chitwood, 2014).

**Instagram**Last year the number of Instagram users grew with 100%. At the start of 2014 this platform had 1.4 million Dutch users (Newcom Research & Consultancy B.V., 2014). Instagram can be used to share visual content and short, 15-second videos. Food served in restaurants usually looks like a small piece of art, and people love taking and sharing these kinds of pictures (Chitwood, 2014) (Bax, 2013). Besides, hashtags can be used to reach a bigger audience. When a customer posts a picture and includes a tag of the restaurant this means all his followers will see the place where the picture was taken. When this person has many followers it seems like free advertisement (Culy, 2013).

**Pinterest** This platform had 1.1 million Dutch users in January 2014. The amount of users grew with 120% last year which makes it one of the fastest growing social media platforms in the Netherlands (Newcom Research & Consultancy B.V., 2014). Pinterest can be used to share creative visual content. The pictures are placed in so called Pin-Boards. This means that pictures are automatically categorized which makes them easier to share. This platform is mostly used by women; the male-female ratio is 1-4 (Chitwood, 2014).

**Foursquare** Foursquare is a location-based social media platform mostly used on mobile devices. Users can check in at locations and thus share with their followers where they are. The followers will then assume this person likes this location, that is why a check-in can be seen as a recommendation (Bax, 2013). It is important to make sure to claim your own venue on Foursquare. This way you can make sure to provide correct and up-to-date information (Chitwood, 2014).

**Review sites .** Another type of social media that is very important for restaurants are online review websites. Research has shown that 61% of the customers read online reviews before buying a product. Furthermore, 72% of all customers think online reviews are as reliable as personal recommendations(Bosteels, 2014).In the restaurant industry these numbers are a bit different, 45% of the people who have dinner in a restaurant decide which restaurant to go to with the help of online review websites (Pan J. , 2012). Most popular review websites in The Netherlands are Iens, Dinnersite, Eetnu and Tripadvisor.

# Chapter 4. Theoretical framework

There are many theories that are relevant to this research. They are discussed in this chapter.

## Social network analysis

The social network theory studies interaction and social relationships between people within a network. The individuals in a community are seen as connected actors or nodes; they are all dependent and interconnected. There are several ties that can show how the individuals are interrelated, for example, frequency of communication, kinships and common beliefs (Pan & Crotts, 2012). All these ties together create a structure. Mathematical models are used to study the structure, development and evolution of the network. Furthermore, it can be used to determine an individual’s place within the structure and the opportunities and threats it will see (Kane, Alavi, Labianca, & Borgatti, 2014). When applying this theory to social media, the content can be seen as nodes. This theory is relevant to this research, because it explains that everything and everyone in an online community is connected to one another. This is also the case on the social media sites of Restaurant Opium.

## Word of mouth and psychological ownership theory and perceived control

Restaurant Opium’s customers offer word of mouth feedback on several review websites. This theory explains what it is that motivates customers to do this.

Word of mouth communication happens offline as well as online and has a big influence on the decision making of consumers. Online reviews are a good example of online word of mouth communication. Usually this type of communication has more impact on consumers than an advertisement. This is because consumers are more involved in word of mouth and it is considered to be more credible than advertising (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007).

The psychological ownership theory explains why people offer word of mouth feedback; why people post messages containing their opinions on for example a restaurant. These messages can either be positive or negative. Customers that are loyal to the company are more likely to send negative messages to the company itself only and they will share positive experiences with everyone. Customers that are not loyal will also post negative messages for everyone to see (Mattila, 2001). What motivates loyal customers to posting a message is rewarding the company, and other customers are motivated to helping other people in their decision-making process. Both types of customers will have a sense of control and influence which will give them a feeling of pleasure and satisfaction (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003). This means that companies should give consumers the feeling that they are in control. Positive feedback should be visible externally whereas negative feedback should be kept internal.

## The conceptual model of enhancing consumer brand relationships on restaurant Facebook fan pages

According to this model (Kang, Tang, & Foire, 2014) benefits should have a positive influence on a consumer’s participation within an online community. The model is shown in appendix 1.5. Active participation will have a positive influence on brand commitment and brand trust. Moreover, brand trust should have a positive influence on brand commitment.   
Previous research indicated that social-psychological and hedonic benefits have a positive influence on participation. Active participation was also proven to have a positive influence on brand trust and brand commitment. However, this research also showed that functional and monetary benefits had no significant effects on participation. The benefits that Restaurant Opium’s current and potential customers seek are discussed in chapter 6.

## Social exchange theory

The social exchange theory is relevant to this research because it demonstrates why people participate on social media platforms. The theory explains that people engage in behaviors they find rewarding. Social exchange should be rewarding to people, otherwise they will not engage. This means the social exchange theory supports the model of enhancing consumer brand relationships on restaurant Facebook fan pages. If people are rewarded with the benefits they are looking for, they will be likely to participate in an online community. . This theory describes the process of social exchange between individuals. It suggests that when someone provides someone else with social interaction, that person will be likely to feel the obligation to return the favor by contributing to the conversation (Sarkar, Au, & Law, 2014).

## McLuhan’s Media Theory

This theory states that “the media is the message”, in other words, it does not matter what kind of message you want to get across, it is all about choosing the right medium (McLuhan, 1995). This also highlights the importance of choosing the right platform for the right message. It indicates that it is important to consider that each social media platform has its own purpose. Therefore, it is very important to Restaurant Opium to consider each platform carefully.

## Socialgraphic framework

This framework indicates a new type of segmentation. Instead of focusing on customers’ demographics, geographic and psychographics, companies need to study consumers’ online sociographics. These consist of the websites they visit, their online behavior, their social influence and the social information people they rely on. Then customers can be separated according to their level of engagement (Owyang & Li, 2010). Understanding the customers is an important aspect of social media. By looking at their customers’ sociographics Restaurant Opium could find out much more about them.

The approach is similar to the traditional segmentation; it also needs answers to certain questions:

• Where are your customers online?

• What are your customers’ social behaviors online?

• What social information or people do your customers rely on?

• What is your customers’ social influence?

• How do customers use social media in context of your products?

(Owyang & Li, 2010)

# Chapter 5. Methodology

This research is deductive. it is called deductive, because results from previous studies were tested (Verhoeven, 2011). First, the conceptual model of enhancing consumer brand relationships on restaurant Facebook fan pages by Kang at al was tested (Kang, Tang, & Foire, 2014). Second, based on an analysis of restaurant business- to- consumer communications by Kwok and Yu (Kwok & Yu, 2012), the preference for content of Restaurant Opium’s customers was tested. Both these studies have been discussed in the literature review and the theoretical framework.

## Quantitative data

In order to be able to test the previous studies, quantitative data was collected through surveys. Two surveys were conducted, one among current and the other one among potential customers. The surveys can be found in appendix 2 and 3. Both surveys contained the same questions. However, the questions in the survey for current customers were specifically about Restaurant Opium. Whereas the questions in the potential customers’ survey were about restaurants in general.

Participants  
The current customers were contacted via internet and via the quarterly newsletter that Restaurant Opium sends out to a client database of around 2000 people. A few other current customers were contacted via a personal email. In the end, the survey was filled in by 28 current customers.   
Potential customers were approached via internet, on social media sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn, as well as via direct email. This survey was filled in by 153 people.

### Survey questions

In order to get as much response as possible the survey was kept short, only relevant questions were included. The surveys consisted of ten multiple choice questions.

In order to test the previous studies, certain questions were included in the survey. The conceptual model of enhancing consumer brand relationships on restaurant Facebook fan pages explains that consumers seek certain benefits in online communities. Study by Kang et al showed that social-psychological and hedonic benefits had a positive influence on participation (Kang, Tang, & Foire, 2014). Question 5: "What is your main reason to use a social media page of Restaurant Opium?” was included in the survey to find out which benefits Restaurant Opium’s customers seek on a restaurant’s social media sites. Each of the four possible answers contained one of the four benefits: functional, monetary, socio-psychological and hedonic. The participants could only choose one answer.

Question 6 was asked to find out whether Restaurant Opium’s customers prefer conversational or marketing and sales content. “On a scale of 1-3, how much do you like the content of the following messages. 1: I do not like it, 2: neutral. 3: I do like it”. The four quotes that followed contained conversational or marketing and sales messages. For each message the participants had to indicate whether they liked it or not, or if they might have felt neutral about the message. Previous studies showed that customers preferred conversational messages over marketing and sales messages (Kwok & Yu, 2012).

### Analysis

The data that was collected through the survey was analyzed with the program SPSS. The results of both surveys were analyzed separately to see if there was a difference between the preferences of current and potential customers**.** Since more potential customers filled in the questionnaire, the analysis is based on percentages. The most important results are included in the findings in chapter 6.

## Qualitative data

In order to find out what proved to work for other restaurants on social media interviews were carried out and case studies were undertaken.

### Interviews

The interviews were held with some of Restaurant Opium’s competitors to see how they use social media. The people that manage the social media sites of those restaurants were interviewed to see what works and what does not work for them on social media and to find out what their experiences were with using social media as a marketing tool. Marcel Kamphuis is an external social media expert hired to manage Hofman Café’s social media. The assistant manager of Mick O’Connell’s restaurant and bar, Stephanie O’Reily, is responsible for the pub’s social media. Mark Harmsen is the owner of King Arthur’s restaurant and bar and manages its social media pages. The full interviews can be found in appendix 6.

### Analysis

Coding was used to analyze the interviews. (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) (Seidman, 2005) (Fielding & Thomas, 2008). . First, the data collected through the interviews was reduced by underlining everything that was relevant. These were parts that were repeated by the interviewees, something surprising, similar to previously found data or relating to a theory or relevant in any way. Next, these parts were selected and put together in a separate document. The three different interviewees were given different colors in order to be able to see who said what. Next, all parts were divided into various categories. The process of the analysis can be found in appendix 6.4. The most relevant results, or a combination of the data can be found in the findings in chapter 6.

### Case studies

For the case studies some restaurants in the Utrecht area that were doing exceptionally well on social media were examined. In the end, three restaurants were examined. Two restaurants in Utrecht really stood out from other restaurants in the area when looking at the social media sites they used and the amount of fans/followers they had on each site. Furthermore, the third restaurant that was examined is in Amsterdam and is also doing great on social media. Even though this last one is not in Utrecht it is added to the research, because it has accounts on many different social media sites.

### Analysis

First, all social media sites that were used by the three restaurants were examined. It was difficult to include every message ever posted by all three restaurants in the case studies. Therefore, the data was reduced by looking at what type of messages were used more often, the type of messages that worked exceptionally well, or that did not work at all. These are all included in the case studies in appendix 7. Next, a comparison was made between the different case studies in order to see what the restaurants’ social media pages had in common. The sort of messages that were noticed to work for more than one of the restaurants were included in the findings in chapter 6.

# Chapter 6. Findings

In this chapter you will be able to read the findings of the research. All findings are presented per sub question. The findings are based on the data collected with the surveys, interviews and case studies. The findings of the survey can be found in appendix 4 and 5. Appendix 6 contains the full interviews and appendix 7 contains all three case studies.

## 1. Which social media platforms have been proven to be successful for other restaurants or bars?

Previously, in the literature review, some social media platforms that experts find most suitable to use for a restaurant were described. Those are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Foursquare, Pinterest and Google+ (Bax, 2013). To find out what works for restaurants in and around Utrecht some case studies and interviews have been conducted. These can all be found in appendix 6 and 7. The following locations have been researched:

* Mick O’Connell’s, an Irish pub located near the Dom in the city center of Utrecht;
* King Arthur, a restaurant at Oudegracht in Utrecht;
* Hofman Café, a place located at Janskerkhof, a square in the center of Utrecht;
* STAN & CO., a restaurant that recently opened its doors in Utrecht;
* Zussen, the popular lobby-restaurant in Utrecht;
* MOMO, a restaurant located in Amsterdam.

### Facebook

Facebook is the only social media platform on which all six venues have an account. Moreover, the people that were interviewed were most positive about using Facebook. When they were asked which platform they found most successful for their restaurant they all talked about Facebook. Mick O’Connell’s only uses Facebook and has no other platforms to compare Facebook to.

This is why Mark Harmsen thinks Facebook is successful for King Arthur: *“It is free and I know for a fact that the people like King Arthur, because they have liked the page. It is a form of direct marketing and it works in two ways. Via Facebook you can start a conversation with the people.”* When he said that he knows people like King Arthur’s restaurant and bar on Facebook he wanted to say that it is better than, for example, print media. Because then you might be reaching 7000 people and it could be the case that only 50 of them like King Arthur’s. However, when using Facebook he reaches 2316 people, and he knows they all like King Arthur’s, because they are all fans on Facebook.

Marcel Kamphuis of Hofman Café was very pleased with Facebook advertising: *“when you use Facebook advertisement in a smart way you will reach a lot of people. With this advertising you can be very specific in who you want to reach. This way you are able to reach a specific audience, and you only pay per person who sees the advertisement so this a very cheap way of advertising.”*

### Foursquare

Images 1 and 19 in the appendix 7 show that this works for Zussen and MOMO. They have made sure the right contact information is on the Foursquare page. All content is provided by customers, because they post pictures and give each other tips.

### Twitter

Three out of the six researched venues have an account on Twitter. Zussen still has an account on Twitter, but only used it from 2010 till 2012. Mark Harmsen says that he barely uses Twitter, he only tweets when he finds something newsworthy. He mostly uses Twitter to react to people who mention King Arthur in a Tweet: *“80% of my tweets are retweets or reactions to people that tweet about eating at the King.” .* Marcel Kamphuis of Hofman Café tries to tweet something every day. He is positive about using Twitter: *“Several bands come to perform at Hofman, I usually tweet about this with a #bandname. Afterwards bands will also post something about having performed at Hofman, so all their fans will see this. Also guests tweet about being at Hofman sometimes.”*

### Instagram

Compared to the previously mentioned social media platforms Instagram is new. Over the past year its popularity has grown immensely; in one year the number of users in The Netherlands has doubled (Newcom Research & Consultancy B.V., 2014). STAN & CO. and MOMO have an account on Instagram. STAN & CO. only began using Instagram at the end of March 2014, and in a very short time they have gained almost forty followers. MOMO has got more followers on Instagram than STAN & CO. MOMO uses cross-pollination to create more awareness for their Instagram account. Each month they post a collage of the best Instagram pictures taken by guests that month on their Facebook page. This way all 5782 Facebook fans will become aware of the existence of their Instagram account.

Besides the previously mentioned social media platforms, the experts also referred to Pinterest and Google+. However, none of the researched restaurants use these.

## 2. What benefits do customers seek on social media sites?

As already described in the literature review research has shown that there are four main benefits that users seek when entering an online community. The benefits are: functional, social–psychological, hedonic, and monetary. In the research social-psychological and hedonic benefits showed positive influence on participation within the online community (Kang, Tang, & Foire, 2014). The restaurant’s social media pages can be seen as online communities. To find out which benefits are preferred by Restaurant Opium’s current and potential customers the following question was included in the questionnaire:

*5. What is your main reason to use a restaurant’s social media page? (1 answer)  
-Getting information from the restaurant   
-Receiving special deals and offers   
-Recreation   
-Sharing experiences with others*

Getting information is an example of a functional benefit, because functional benefits are directly related to the product, in this case the restaurant.

Receiving special deals and offers are monetary benefits. Recreation is an example of a hedonic benefit, because these are feelings of enjoyment when spending free time on the online community.  
Sharing experience with others in an example of social-psychological benefits, because those focus on the ability to help and support each other; this can be done by sharing your own experiences.

Current customers . Out of all 28 current customers that have filled in the questionnaire only three people have used a social media page of Opium in the past half year. This shows how poor Opium is doing social media wise. All of these people said they were using social media to get information.

### Potential customers

Not all potential customers have used a restaurant’s social media page in the past half year. The main reason for people to use these social media sites is to get information about the restaurant. Other reasons that are clearly less important are giving feedback and receiving special deals and offers. The reasons for potential customers to use social media of a restaurant are shown in figure 6, the blue part shows the people who have not used a restaurant’s social media page.

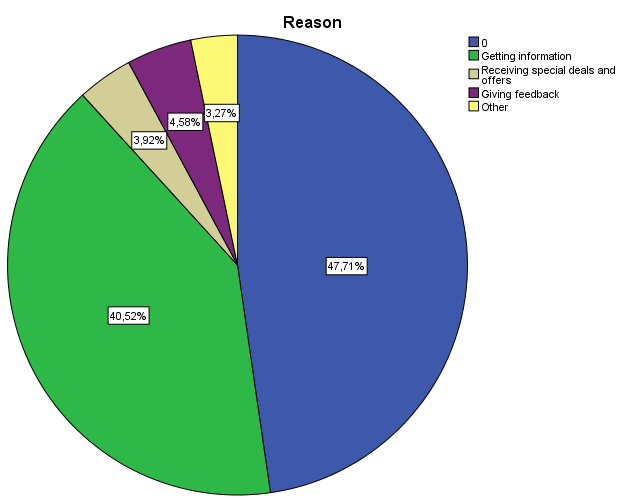


Figure 6. Reasons potential customers use restaurants social media

3.a. What is Restaurant Opium’s marketing strategy like now? What are they doing now?

In order to find out the answer to sub question 3a, about Restaurant Opium’s marketing, Jeroen Smeets who is one of the owners of the restaurant was interviewed. Jeroen was asked about the marketing Restaurant Opium has been using over the past few years. Here is what can be concluded from this conversation.

Restaurant Opium’s owners have used several types of media for marketing purposes. They have tried out a number of media, some working better than others.

### ****Print****

**Magazine**  
Last March Restaurant Opium placed a promotions in Glamour and Libelle, Dutch magazines for women. In Jeroen’s opinion magazines do not work for Opium. It costs a lot of money, and it is very hard to measure the return on investment, because it is very hard to find out how people found the restaurant. It is not clear if people actually came because they saw it in the magazine.

**Uitloper**  
The ‘Uitloper’ is a sort of folder containing an agenda of events that take place in Utrecht. It is possible for businesses to place advertisements in the Uitloper. Every week 25,000 copies of a new Uitloper are distributed to hundreds of locations in Utrecht where people can take one for free (Smit, 2014).   
This is also not proven to be working for Opium. There was no significant rise in customers or sales after the placement of an advertisement in the Uitloper.

**Lonely planet**

This can be described as a form of free unintentional publicity. Writers of the Lonely Planet decide if a place is worthy of being mentioned in this travel guide or not (Lonely Planet, 2014). However, it is great publicity as the Lonely Planet is one of the most popular travel guides world-wide. In the newest edition of June 2013, Restaurant Opium is mentioned. This is also noticeable, because nowadays there are more international guests.

### ****Internet****

**Website**Since the beginning of April 2014 Restaurant Opium has a new website. The website is taken care of by an external expert. This new website has better options for SEO and thus the website is easier to find in search engines. This new website is also compatible for mobile devices. This is becoming more important these days, because the number of people using the internet via their mobile device keeps rising. From 2012 to 2013 this has risen enormously from 44% to 50% (Ruigrok Netpanel, 2013).

Five aspects that are important for a restaurant’s website are: having a SEO-friendly content management system, including a photo gallery, showing the menu and prices, displaying content information prominently on every page and having a mobile restaurant website (Restaurant engine, 2014). Restaurant Opium’s new website includes all these aspects, this should have a positive effect on sales. . Moreover, the new website also has links to the Facebook and Twitter accounts of the restaurant. There are also some links to review websites. On top of that, it is possible to make an online reservation via the website.

**Review websites .** It is possible to write reviews about Restaurant Opium on several websites. Restaurant Opium has made its own page or profile on IENS, Couverts and Tripadvisor.

-IENS   
Every restaurant can become a member of IENS. This organization helps restaurants to connect to potential customers and it helps customers to find the perfect restaurant. Restaurants can also join their promotions as ‘IENS diner deal’ or ‘IENS diner weeks’. This means that the restaurant can offer a certain menu for an affordable price. On IENS individuals can write reviews and rate a restaurant based on the food, service and decoration. Furthermore, they can make a reservation any time of the day (IENS, 2014). Based on 145 reviews, Restaurant Opium has an average rate of 8.2.The restaurant is ranked quite high on IENS, when only entering the search term ‘Utrecht’, Restaurant Opium is ranked 15th out of 462 restaurants.

- Couverts . Couverts works similar to IENS. Restaurants can make their own page, include some pictures and contact information. Customers can write a review and rank the restaurant according to price/quality, ambiance and service. It is also possible to make an online reservation via this website. Also on Couverts Restaurant Opium is rated as very good with an 8.4 . Coincidently Restaurant Opium is also ranked 15th on Couverts when searching for restaurants in Utrecht, however on Courverts it is ranked 15th out of all 1122 restaurants in the province of Utrecht.

- Tripadvisor . Tripadvisor is different from the previous two review websites. Tripadvisor claims to be the biggest travel website in the world. It helps travelers plan their trips, it offers recommendations for hotels, resorts, holidays, restaurants and much more. On this website some contact information of the restaurant is visible. Furthermore, it is possible to read and write reviews and upload and look at pictures (Tripadvisor, 2014). Restaurant Opium has only 30 reviews on Tripadvisor, this is very few compared to 146 and 72 on IENS and Courverts.

Review website definitely have an influence on Restaurant Opium’s sales. Jeroen said: *“Review websites work for us! They can have a very positive influence when we receive good reviews. When there is a bad review, we immediately notice it in the amount of online reservations people make.”*  
Moreover figure 7 below shows that Miccas28 posted a review about Restaurant Opium on IENS on May 1st (Iens, 2014). The highlighted section means: *“Visiting Opium for the first time, the promise of Asian food and the positive reviews were decisive factors. …”*



Figuur 7. Positive reviews have effect on decision to visit Restaurant Opium.

**Newsletter**Restaurant Opium sends out a quarterly newsletter to a client database of over 2000 people. Each newsletter announces three winners of a €50 coupon. Furthermore, these newsletters can contain information on a new menu, the opening hours of an upcoming national holiday and contact information. It is difficult to see how many people actually read these newsletters.

**Promotions**Every month Restaurant Opium has a different promotion. This can be via IENS or Couverts, but there are also other online organizations that Restaurant Opium is linked to. These promotions usually include a three or four course menu for a certain price. The promotions last for a few weeks, during these weeks there are more guests than when there is no promotion. This means the promotions have a positive influence on the sales.

**Facebook**Since January 2012 Restaurant Opium has had a Facebook account. Messages are posted on the account sporadically. Lately, the number of likes has risen a little bit. On April 14 2014 Restaurant Opium had 294 likes. A few weeks later, on May 8, there were 333 likes (Facebook, 2014). This is because guests can use the WIFI in the restaurant when they like the page. The likes have gone up a bit, but there is still very little interaction on Facebook.

**Twitter**Restaurant Opium has had a Twitter account since March 2011. Only this account is never used, the last tweet was tweeted in July 2011 (Twitter, 2014).

**Foursquare**Restaurant Opium exists as a location on Foursquare (Foursquare, 2014). It is possible for users to check-in and to leave tips for other customers. However, this location is not (yet) claimed by Restaurant Opium.

## 3.b. Which social media platforms do Opium’s current and potential customers use?

To find out the answer to this question, the following item was included in the survey:

*3. Which social media platforms do you use?   
-Facebook  
-Twitter  
-Instagram   
-Blogging  
-LinkedIn  
-Pinterest  
-Google+  
-Foursquare  
-Other …*

### Current customers

Many of Restaurant Opium’s current customers use Facebook and LinkedIn. After that Twitter and Instagram are most used. Figure 8 shows the percentage of the social media platforms used by current customers.

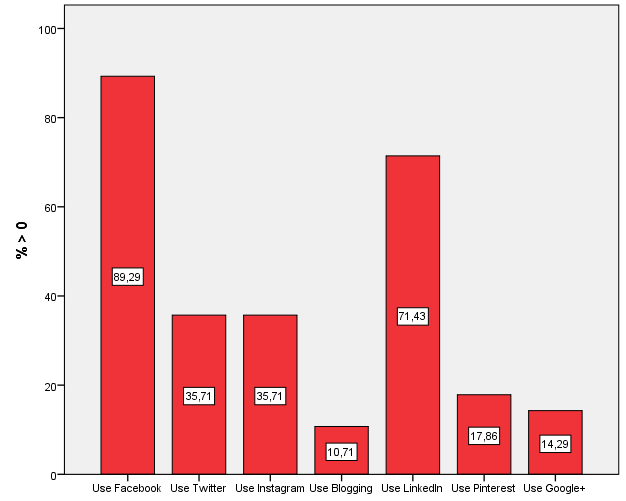


Figure 8. Social media usage current customers.

### Potential customers

As you can see in figure 9 below potential customers also mostly use Facebook and LinkedIn. Also Twitter and Instagram are used by almost 40% of the potential customers.

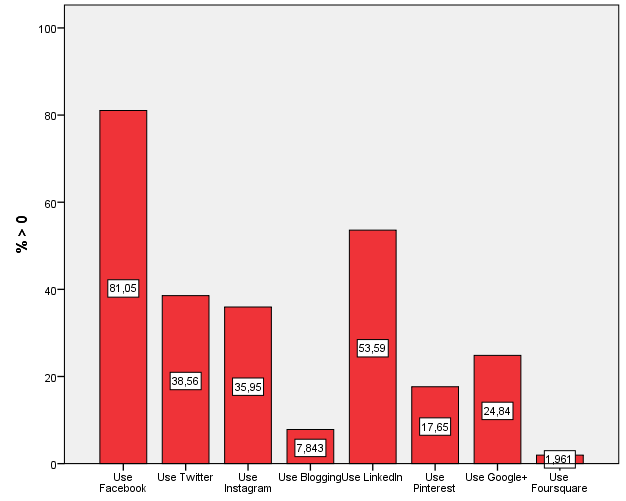


Figure 9. Social media usage potential customers

## 3.c. What are the preferences of Opium’s current and potential customers?

The reason why customers will use Restaurant Opium’s social media page has been discussed before. The aspect that will be reviewed here is the content that customers prefer to see on the social media page of a restaurant. .  
In the literature review two types of content are discussed: conversational messages and marketing and sales messages. To find out which type of content is preferred by current and potential customers of Restaurant Opium the following question was included in the survey:

*6. On a scale of 1-3, how much do you like the content of the following messages. 1: I do not like it, 2: neutral. 3: I do like it  
-Hope everyone has made fun plans this Christmas. Merry Christmas everyone!   
-Summer starts, time to open up the terrace and enjoy our new menu   
-Share, Like and WIN a coupon of €50   
-This week’s special offer only for our Facebook fans: three course menu only €25*

The first two answers contain a conversational message, in the last two options the content is marketing and sales related.

### Current customers

The percentage of current customers that liked each post:  
Conversational 1: 14,3%  
Conversational 2: 64,3%  
Marketing and sales 1: 39,3%  
Marketing and sales 2: 71,1%

Figure 10. Percentage of current customers who like each messages

The percentage of current customers that did not like each post:  
Conversational 1: 50%  
Conversational 2: 14,3%  
Marketing and sales 1: 46,4%  
Marketing and sales 2: 17,9%

Figure 11. Percentage of current customers who do not like each messages

### Potential customers

Figure 12 and 13 show potential customers prefer the messages Conversational 2: ‘Summer starts, time to open up the terrace and enjoy our new menu’ and marketing and sales 2: ‘This week’s special offer only for our Facebook fans: three course menuonly €25’. Most people are neutral about Conversational 1: ‘Hope everyone has made fun plans these Christmas days. Merry Christmas everyone!’. And the respondents are mostly negative about marketing and sales 1: ‘Share, Like and WIN a coupon of €50’

Figure 12. Percentage of potential customers who like each messages

Figure 13. Percentage of potential customers who do not like each messages

## 3.d. What social media platforms are most effective to use for Restaurant Opium?

To answer this question three factors have to be considered.

1. the social media sites that can be successful to use for a restaurant.

2. the social media sites that customers are using. There is no point in using a social media site if your customers are not there.

3. the influence each social media platform has on customers.

The first two factors have been discussed in sub question 1 and 3b. In order to find out how much influence each social media platform has on customers the following question was included in the survey:

*7. How much influence does each of the following social media have on you on a scale of 1 – 5. 1 being none at all and 5 being a lot*

*1 2 3 4 5   
Facebook  
Twitter  
Blogging  
Instagram  
Foursquare  
Pinterest  
Google+*

### Current customers

The figures below show the percentage of current customers who feel that social media has little or no influence (figure 14) or some and a lot of influence (figure 15) on them. .   
Both figures show that most people are not influenced by Google+, Foursquare and blogging. The social media sites that have most influence on current customers are Facebook and Instagram.

Figure 14. None or little influence of social media platform on current customers

Figure 15. Some or a lot of influence on current customers

### Potential customers

Figure 16 and 17 show that none of the social media sites have a big influence on potential customers. The one that influences them the most is Facebook which is the same for current customers. Other than that Twitter, blogging and Instagram can have some influence on potential customers.

Figure 16. None or little influence of social media platform on potential customers

Figure 17. Some or a lot of influence of social media platform on potential customers

## 4. What sort of marketing communication content should be provided by Restaurant Opium on social media?

The content that should be provided by Restaurant Opium depends on what kind of content customers prefer and the kind of benefits they look for in the restaurant’s social media page. These aspects have been discussed in sub question 2 and 3c.

Furthermore Restaurant Opium can learn from the content provided by other restaurants on social media. What works and what does not work for other restaurants on social media has been discussed here.

### What works for other restaurants on social media?

**Humor**The example of P. Diddy in image 3 of appendix 7.1 shows that humor on social media works. Zussen compared their own bartender to P. Diddy in a Vodka advertisement. Fans on Facebook thought this was very funny, this way the post generated a lot of response. .  
Moreover, Marcel Kamphuis told that humor works for Hofman Café as well: *“Humor is something people like a lot. For example, one time Hofman put a sign outside saying ‘Coffee €8,-, Hi can I get a coffee? €5 and Hi can I get a coffee please? €2,50’ people really liked this, we got a lot of comments and it got shared and retweeted many times”*

**Cross-pollination**MOMO uses cross-pollination by sharing a collage of the best Instagram picture on their Facebook account each month. MOMO has many fans on Facebook and by doing this they are trying to get more followers to their Instagram account. Image 17 in appendix 7.3 shows that these posts are popular which means they are raising awareness for their Instagram account.

**Personalization**STAN & CO. does shows its own style or personal experiences to their fans(Image 10 appendix 7.2). Moreover, Zussen shows the people who work at the restaurant (Image 4 appendix 7.1). Furthermore, both Marcel Kamphuis and Stephanie O’Reilly said that pictures of employees work for Hofman Café and Mick O’Connell’s. These type of posts get liked a lot and many people tend to comment on them.

**Only post the relevant, do not spam .**   
Although both Marcel Kamphuis and Stephany O’Reilly post messages on social media every day, Mark Harmsen is convinced that it is important not to spam fans by posting too many messages. Otherwise they will just unlike the page or get bored. Stephanie posts something every day in order to keep her fans informed about the meal of the day and the sports games. These are important reasons why people go to Mick O’Connell’s, therefore it is relevant information. Mark on the other hand, does not have something relevant to post on King Arthur’s social media every day.

**Use each platform differently .**  
Both King Arthur and Hofman Café have an account on more than one social media platform. Each platform works in a different way and can be used for different purposes. That is why it is important to post unique content on each platform and not copy paste from one to the other. This way people could also be interested in following you on more than one social media page.

**Use other people’s network .**  
Both Hofman Café and King Arthur use other people’s network. Hofman Café does this by tagging a band on Twitter and King Arhur tags employees or guests. Mark Harmsen said these kind of posts were seen by most people.

**Timing**As Stephanie O’Reilly posts about the meal of the day and the sports games around two to three hours before it starts, so that the fans still have time enough to consider this option. Also Marcel Kamphuis thinks about the timing of his posts when he lets the fans know who will perform when in Hofman Café.

### ****What does not work for other restaurants on social media****

**Only care about yourself .**   
MOMO is a restaurant that does not only care about itself. They show their audience they are interested in them. This way they do not only engage the audience but also give them the feeling that they care about them. Image 16 in the appendix 7.3 shows that this is something MOMO does very well.

**Use music or video content .**Both STAN & CO. and MOMO have tried to insert this music and video content on their social media page, MOMO even has a Soundcloud account. For both restaurants this type of content does not generate much response. Examples of this can be found in the appendix 7, images 10 and 20.

**Use the same content more than once .**Zussen uses the same content every week by showing the same promotional image over and over again. Image 6 in appendix 7 shows that this does not generate much response.

# Chapter 7. Discussion of findings

This chapter contains a discussion of the findings per sub question.

## 1. Which social media platforms have been proven to be successful for other restaurants or bars?

Experts advise restaurant owners to use several social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Foursquare, Pinterest and Google+ (Bax, 2013). However, there is a difference in what experts recommend and the platforms that are really used by restaurants. Some of the recommended social media platforms do not seem to work for restaurants in and around Utrecht. Pinterest and Google+ are not used at all by the restaurants that were researched. The success of the other social media platforms will be discussed next.

### Facebook

Facebook is the platform that seems to be used successfully by all six venues that were researched. Facebook is the perfect place to get into contact with the audience and start a conversation with them. Facebook can be used to get to know the customers and to find out what they want. The good thing about Facebook is that no effort and money are wasted on an audience that is not interested in your company. The people that are directly reached on Facebook have all chosen to like the place, which means they must be interested. Another advantage is that their friends may also come upon some of your messages.

### Foursquare

Foursquare is a social media platform that requires little effort. A restaurant might be an existing Foursquare-location. The only thing that needs to be done is to claim the location. When this is done, the information on the restaurant that is provided on Foursquare has to be checked and the correct information has to be inserted. Foursquare users will do the work for you, they will give each other tips, post pictures and all their friends will be able to see this.

### Twitter

Twitter only seems to be used successfully by only one of the six researched venues. Marcel Kamphuis from Hofman café talked positively about tagging bands in tweets. All people that follow those bands would then see his tweets which would raise awareness of Hofman café. However, Restaurant Opium never has any performances, therefore they would not be able to use the same strategy as Marcel Kamphuis.

### Instagram

Instagram is only used by two of the six researched venues. This might be because Instagram is relatively new compared to the other social media platforms. It is used successfully by both venues. Instagram has become very popular, in a short period of time the platform gained many users. MOMO and STAN & CO. did well by reacting to this new trend in social media.

## 2. What benefits do customers seek on social media sites?

Previous studies indicate that there are four types of benefits that customers seek on companies’ social media sites. These are: functional, social–psychological, hedonic, and monetary benefits.

From the results of the survey that was conducted among current customers it can be concluded that the only benefits current customers seek on Restaurant Opium’s social media pages are functional benefits.

The findings of the survey that was conducted among Restaurant Opium’s potential customers showed that they are mostly seeking functional benefits on a restaurant’s social media page. For some of the potential customers social-psychological and monetary benefits are also important.

From the results of both questionnaires it can be concluded that the most important reason for customers to use a restaurant’s social media page is getting information which means they are seeking functional benefits.

3.a. What is Restaurant Opium’s marketing strategy like now? What are they doing now?

### Print

Right now several different types of media are used for the marketing of restaurant Opium. Especially the outcome of the marketing done with print media is hard to measure, therefore the owners have no idea if their efforts with print marketing make a difference for the sales of Restaurant Opium.

### Internet

The online media that are used by Restaurant Opium seem to work better than print media. It is also easier to measure online media. There is a significant increase in the number of guests visiting the restaurant when Restaurant Opium offers promotional deals or receives positive feedback on a review website. That is why it might be smart for the owners to focus more on online marketing rather than spending money on print media.

### Social media

Furthermore, Restaurant Opium has some social media accounts. There is a Facebook and a Twitter account and there is a location of Restaurant Opium on Foursquare. The fact that there is very little interaction on the Facebook page shows that right now this is not working for Restaurant Opium. The advantage that social media has above other types of media is that it enables companies to have two-way communication with their customers. Instead of just communication to the customers, companies can now communicate with the customers. For Restaurant Opium this does not work yet on Facebook. .  
The Twitter account has not been used since 2011. They probably thought Twitter did not work for Restaurant Opium, so they just stopped tweeting. .  
Moreover, Restaurant Opium is an existing location on Foursquare. However, this location has not been claimed by the owners. By claiming this location some more relevant information could be added on, for example, opening hours and contact information. In addition, it is possible to use free tools once a location is claimed.

## 3.b. Which social media platforms do Opium’s current and potential customers use?

The platforms that are used by current and potential customers are very much alike. The percentages of current customers that use each social media platform is similar to the percentage of potential customers that use each platform. From the outcome of the surveys it can be concluded that both current and potential customers mostly use Facebook and LinkedIn. The next most used social media platforms are Twitter and Instagram.

The other platform: Google+, Pinterest, blogging and Foursquare, do not seem to be very popular among Restaurant Opium’s current and potential customers. Those platforms are used by less than 25% of the respondents of both questionnaires.

## 3.c. What are the preferences of Opium’s current and potential customers?

The preference that has been researched to answer this question is the preference that customers have towards certain types of messages posted by companies on social media. These type of messages are conversational or marketing and sales messages. From the outcome of the survey it can be concluded that both current and potential customers do not have a preference for conversational or marketing and sales related messages. They both expressed a more favorable attitude towards conversational message 2: ‘Summer starts, time to open up the terrace and enjoy our new menu’ and marketing and sales message 2: ‘This week’s special offer only for our Facebook fans: three course menuonly €25’.

This shows that there is not a certain type of message that customers prefer. It really are the words and/or the pictures within the messages posted by companies on social media that have to appeal to the customers.

## 3.d. What social media platforms are most effective to use for Restaurant Opium?

The conclusion of sub question 1 shows that the social media platforms that have been proven to work successfully for other restaurants are Facebook, Instagram and Foursquare.

The conclusion of sub question 3b indicates that Restaurant Opium’s current and potential customers are using Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram.

However, the outcome of the surveys reveal that the only social media platform that has an influence on current and potential customers is Facebook. This is probably due to the fact that Facebook is the platform which is used most.

From all these results it can be concluded that for Restaurant Opium Facebook is the most effective platform to use.

## 4. What sort of marketing communication content should be provided by Restaurant Opium on social media?

What can be concluded from the findings is that most of the customers are looking for information on a restaurant’s social media page. This information can of course be offered in different ways. Marketing communication content from other restaurants on social media was researched to find out what would be the best way to inform Restaurant Opium’s customers on social media. The following paragraphs describe what can be concluded from the findings.

**Humor**  
Using humor on social media is something that seems to be working for several other companies. People like to laugh, so why not make them smile via social media as well.

**Cross-pollination**  
If you own more than one social media account it is useful to use cross-pollination. This is how you can get your fans of one of your social media pages to like your other social media page as well.

**Personalization**  
It is important to show your customers that you are not just a company, but that there are people behind that company. These types of posts generate a lot of interaction on the social media page.

**Only post relevant information, do not spam .**  
The number of times you should post something depends on the type of business you have and what your customers want to hear. It is important to only post relevant content in order to keep your audience interested. Think about what your fans want to hear before posting a message and ask yourself if it will interest them. Based on the last five posts new people will decide to like you or not.

**Use other people’s network .**   
By tagging people in your posts you will be using someone else’s network. This way a lot more people are reached, because by doing this not only your own fans will see the posts, but your fans’ friends will see it too and they will like what they are seeing because it is about one of their friends.

**Think about timing .**  
It is important to consider the time at which you post a new message. For example you can think about what time people will be checking their Facebook account to make sure your message will not be all the way down on their wall by the time they check Facebook. Moreover, you should consider at what time your fans will want to know certain things.

**Care about the customer .**   
Of course it is important to show your customers who you are and what you are like, but you should not promote yourself too much. You should also show interest in your customers. Ask them questions about their preferences, thank them for their efforts once in a while and react to their comments.

**Keep it fresh .**   
It is important to be creative and to keep coming up with new content in order to keep your audience interested. If the same messages are posted again and again this will bore the audience.

**No music .**  
Music should not be posted on social media. This has been proven not to work for other restaurants on social media.

# Chapter 8. Advice

This chapter answers the research question and offers an advice on how Restaurant Opium can successfully use social media in order to improve customer loyalty.

Right now Restaurant Opium is missing out on big opportunities. They have an account on some social media platforms, but by not providing enough and interesting content this does not generate any interaction with their customers. This interaction is what it is all about on social media, the ability to start a conversation with customers is what makes social media an interesting marketing tool.

A simple step such as asking customers to like your Facebook page in order to be able to use the Wi-Fi generated around 10% more likes within a month. This shows that Restaurant Opium’s customers are on social media. However, just getting customers to like you is not enough, something has to be done in order to keep these new fans interested. Right now there is still no interaction with customers on Restaurant Opium’s social media. This can be changed.

## Platforms

A good start is made by creating an account on the right platforms. Facebook is the platform used by most customers and this also works for other restaurants. It is good that Restaurant Opium already has a Facebook account. Moreover, it is advisable to create an account on Instagram. Right now Instagram’s popularity is increasing a lot in the Netherlands. Some of Restaurant Opium’s customers already have an account on this platform. Restaurant Opium should create an account in order to provide for those who have an account on this platform, and for the customers that will create an account on Instagram in the near future. Although not many customers are using Foursquare, it is smart to claim the location ‘Restaurant Opium’ on this platform. It only takes a few minutes to claim the location and to make sure the contact information is correct. That is the only that thing needs to be done when using this platform. However, when there is some information and there are some pictures, customers will be more likely to check in on this location.   
On the other hand, the Twitter account which is owned by Restaurant Opium should be removed, because Twitter does not seem to work for many other restaurants. When customers look for Opium on Twitter they will find a sad, empty page; this is not a good way to promote yourself.

## Create awareness

It is important to let your customers know that they can find you on social media. There are already some links to social media pages incorporated on the website. The link to Twitter should be removed and links to Foursquare and Instagram should be added. .  
Something else that can be done is to put the icons of the used social media on the receipt, or on the survey customers receive with the receipt. Also the icons can be included on Restaurant Opium’s business cards.

## Usage of platforms

Each social media platform has its own purpose. That is why it is important to provide different content on each platform.

Foursquare  
The content on Foursquare will be provided by customers themselves; they can give each other tips and upload pictures. The only content Restaurant Opium has to provide here is contact information.

Instagram  
Instagram is used to share visual content. Pictures showing the ambiance, food and drinks should be provided. Hashtags can be used to reach a bigger audience. Besides you followers, other people will see the picture as well. For example a picture of a deliciously looking dish can be uploaded with a hashtag saying ‘Asian’. This way people who are looking for ‘Asian’ on Instagram will see the picture.

### Facebook

Facebook will still be the most important platform for Restaurant Opium. It can be used to provide customers with different kind of content. Besides, many customers use this platform. Here is what Opium should do on Facebook:

**Listen to your customers .**In order to be able to provide for your customers it is important to listen to them. Take time to get to know them and show them you are interested. This can be done by asking questions so that they get the chance to give their opinion. For example, ask them what they would really like to see on the next menu or which cocktail is their favorite. Showing an interest also means responding to their comments. If they post something on your Facebook page for example: “Had a wonderful night with great food at Opium”, only liking this post is not enough. By responding to this, for example: “that is good to hear, hope we will see you soon” you show this person that you care and that you are interested.

**Be creative .   
Creativity is important on social media. People do not want to see the same message twice. It is crucial that the content is unique. Fans also like to receive special deals or offers. It is advisable to not just give them something, but to make them do something for it. This creativity will be appreciated by your fans.**

**Look for opportunities and use them .  
Look for things your fans are likely to be interested in. People like humor on social media. When something funny happens in the restaurant or close to the restaurant this should be used in a message on Facebook. Similarly, when a famous person has dinner at Restaurant Opium, this should be posted on social media. For example, your fans will be interested to see that the mayor of Utrecht has dinner at Restaurant Opium on King’s Day. Furthermore, an opportunity to use someone else’s network should be used. For example, when an employee leaves to start up his own business you can post something to thank him and wish him luck, and use his network by tagging him in that post.**

**Be active but do not spam .  
Make sure to provide your customers with new content and post messages at the right time. Do not overdo it by posting too much, because then your fans will think your messages are spam.**

## ****Plan****

First of all a decision has to be made on who will be responsible for Restaurant Opium’s social media pages. Whether this is something the owners are willing to do themselves or whether someone should be hired to handle Restaurant Opium’s social media is a matter that should be decided upon. It should be someone who works at the restaurant. It is important that the person who manages Opium’s social media is familiar with the restaurant. This person has to know what is going on in the restaurant and has to be able to communicate this to the customers on social media. From now on the person who is responsible for the social media will be called the social media coordinator.

The social media coordinator should create an account on Instagram and claim the location on Foursquare as soon as possible. This is easy to do and it does not take much time.

New content should be provided on Facebook and Instagram every week. That means the social media coordinator has to post a new picture on Instagram and write a new post on Facebook every week. In order to be able to make Restaurant Opium’s social media more interactive the owner should give the social media coordinator time to check the social media pages daily. Around 15 minutes a day should be sufficient to be able to react on people’s comments.

# ****Chapter 9. Limitations****

In this chapter the constraints and limitations on the research are discussed. There are some factors that could influence the validity of the study. Moreover, some suggestions for further research will be provided.

There may be some limitations to the interviews. The interviewees are people that work for competitors of Restaurant Opium, so they may not have answered all questions truthfully or they may have withheld important information. In addition, both Hofman Café and Mick O’Connell’s are bars. Although they are businesses in the hospitality industry, the social media usage of a bar might differ from that of a restaurant. Also customers might want different things from a bar’s social media page.

Furthermore, not all respondents may have answered the questions in the survey truthfully. Some of them may have thought the questions were too difficult and may have randomly chosen an answer. Also some answers are missing. Maybe people did not understand the question or they thought it took too long to complete the whole questionnaire.

Besides, there may be some constraints to the comparison of current and potential customers’ needs. Much more potential customers filled in the survey. The population of current customers that responded to the survey may not be big enough to give a good representation of the needs of this group.

The biggest constraint was time. If there had been more time, the surveys could have been completed by more customers. In addition, more suitable interviewees could have been found.

# Chapter 10. Further research

This chapter contains some suggestions for those who would like to do further research on this topic.

## Qualitative data collection

Further research on social media and restaurants should focus on restaurants specifically. In this research qualitative data was collected by interviewing people who were responsible for the social media of bars and pubs. These types of venues may use social media very differently and have a totally different target audience than restaurants. The recommendation for future research is to collect qualitative data from direct competitors; restaurants with the same target audience.

## Quantitative data collection

In order to be able to make a comparison of potential and current customers, more current customers should complete the survey. Not many people read all newsletters they receive from companies. Therefore, current customers should be contacted in different ways. For example, by contacting them directly in the restaurant. Another way to get more response would be to give away a free dinner to one of the respondents.

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