

THE IMPACT OF ONLINE NEGATIVE WORD-OF-MOUTH ON
CUSTOMERS IN THE TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY

Mariana Pires do Rosário Costa

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Supervisor:

Prof. Daniela Langaro da Silva do Souto, Assistant Professor, ISCTE Business School,
Department of Marketing, Operations and General Management

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*“Begin at the beginning and go on till
you come to the end: then stop”*

Lewis Carroll

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Resumo

Hoje em dia, as redes sociais fazem parte da rotina diária da maioria da população portuguesa. Atualmente o Facebook une tanto consumidores como marcas sob o mesmo espaço, o que se mostra vantajoso na medida em que diminui a distância entre os intervenientes e permite uma troca constante de informações. No entanto, essa proximidade pode trazer alguns riscos uma vez que deixa as marcas mais expostas a situações negativas. Não mais uma má experiência, com um determinado produto ou serviço, ficou apenas entre o consumidor em causa e a própria empresa. É atualmente recorrente tornar-se pública, ficando facilmente disponível para inúmeras pessoas através da página da marca nas redes sociais.

O presente estudo pretende analisar o efeito da exposição dos leitores ao passa-palavra negativo, gerado por outros consumidores na página da marca nas redes sociais. Focando na indústria das telecomunicações, o efeito da exposição dos leitores ao passa-palavra negativo foi avaliado em termos de *brand attitude*, da perceção de qualidade da marca, das intenções de passa-palavra negativo e das intenções de patrocínio. Além disso, e considerando a indústria em análise, este estudo procurou também investigar se esses efeitos são ou não influenciados pelo tipo de consumidor, considerando consumidores contratuais e não contratuais.

Nesse sentido, foi distribuído um questionário *online* por 442 participantes revelando que apenas as intenções de passa-palavra negativo foram influenciadas pela exposição dos leitores ao passa-palavra negativo. Adicionalmente, a influência do tipo de cliente foi avaliada onde clientes contratuais reagiram de forma diferente de clientes não contratuais em termos da perceção de qualidade da marca.

Palavras-chave: Redes sociais; Passa-palavra; Passa-palavra negativo; *Brand attitude*; Perceção de qualidade da marca; Intenção de patrocínio;

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Abstract

Nowadays, social media platforms are part of the daily routine of the majority of the Portuguese population. Facebook is currently gathering both consumers and brands under the same platform, which on one hand is positive as it decreases the distance between both players and allows constant interchange of information. However, on the other hand, this proximity might imply some risks as brands are more exposed to negative circumstances. No longer has one's bad experience with a product or service stayed contained between the affected consumer and the company itself. It is now often turned public, becoming easily available to large amounts of individuals who are exposed to brand-related content posted on brand pages in social media.

The present study intends to analyze the effects of readers' exposure to negative brand related word-of-mouth generated by other consumers on companies' brand pages in social media. Focusing on the telecommunication industry, the effects of readers' exposure to negative brand related word-of-mouth were measured in terms of their effects on readers' brand attitude, perceived brand quality, negative word-of-mouth intentions and re-patronage intentions. Additionally, considering the industry under analysis, the current study also investigates whether these effects are influenced by the type of customer, with contractual and non-contractual customers being considered.

An online questionnaire was distributed to 442 respondents revealing that only negative word-of-mouth intentions was significantly influenced by readers' exposure to brand-related negative word-of-mouth. Additionally, the influence of the type of customer was validated with contractual customers reacting differently from non-contractual in perceived brand quality.

Keywords: Social media; Word-of-mouth; Negative word-of-mouth; Brand attitude; Perceived brand quality; Re-patronage Intention;

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1. Introduction to the topic

Today the world lives a time of technology and persistent interactivity where consumers tend to be highly critical and constantly seeking information.

The internet can be seen as an enhancer and facilitator of this process, where consumers easily reach the information sought, from different sources, and even discuss it on a large scale with hundreds of other consumers, at the distance of a click (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). It allows users to communicate fast, to innumerable people, anonymously if desired, for an undefined period of time (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004) by engaging in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). This type of interaction, that the appearance of the Internet slowly allowed to emerge, significantly contributed to the current online presence of brands. It became clear over the time that brands want to be where their customers are, which currently means online (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

This type of online activity it is often promoted by brands intending to establish deeper connections with their customers (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014). On the brand perspective, one of the main advantages of this phenomenon is the ability to stimulate positive word-of-mouth (WOM) and spread the reach of the brand message (Araujo *et al.*, 2015). The counter side relates to the great exposure that brands subject themselves by being on social media platforms - one of the easiest and most accessible way of sharing either good or bad opinions that will rapidly be available for wide amount of consumers. It is for this reason fundamental for sustained growth that companies understand and know how to deal with their clients on social media platforms (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014; Verhagen *et al.*, 2013; Buttle, 1998).

Although extensive, the study of word-of-mouth it is yet not clear in all aspects, giving researchers still a lot of ground to discover. A lot of studies on word-of-mouth analyzed it from a sender's perspective aiming to understand the main reasons of influence (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004; Ahluwalia, 2002; Anderson, 1998), others trying to understand the effects of word-of-mouth analyzed in the receiver's perspective (Bansal and Voyer, 2000; Bone, 1995; Charlet *et al.*, 1995). Even though it is yet to be measured the impact that negative word-of-mouth has indirectly, that is, not necessarily on whom the complaint is aimed at but on its readers.

Trying to fill this gap in the literature, the following dissertation will focus on the negative brand related word-of-mouth on Facebook and its impact on customers of the telecommunication industry in Portugal.

The telecommunication industry in Portugal can be generally described as an oligopoly where three main companies take the major part of the market: MEO, NOS, and Vodafone. Since September 2016 a new player entered the market: NOWO. This player is the rebranded Cabovisão, now with a different offer of services (adslfibra, 2017), but it is yet to prove its relevance in the market. According to the results of the first trimester of 2017 provided by the Portuguese National Communications Authority (ANACOM), the three main players in the market own 97,1% of the subscriber's market shares and those were the selected companies for the present study (ANACOM, 2017).

It is in the environment described above that this dissertation will focus on. Part of the objective of this study is to have better clearance on the impact that the exposure to negative brand related word-of-mouth has on readers of these complaints. This impact will be measured in terms of brand attitude, perceived brand quality, negative word-of-mouth intention, and re-patronage intention. Furthermore, and considering the industry under analysis, it is intended to investigate if different impacts can occur on customers according to the type of contract. This effect will be measured by analyzing customers with a loyalty contract with their telecommunication company and customers without it, since this is a common practice in this industry.

The structure of the following project will be divided into five parts. Firstly the main concepts and dimensions will be defined and described in the literature review, with the support of previous studies. Secondly the chosen method will be presented, in order to answer the research questions, followed by the analysis made to the data collected. Within the data analysis, the hypothesis made will be tested and the obtained results addressed in the next chapter. In a final part, and after presenting the main conclusions of the study and its managerial implications, the main limitations and recommendations for future research will be presented.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Word-of-mouth

Word-of-Mouth is a millennial and actual topic that has been accompanying the evolution of modern times. George Silverman characterized WOM as “*the oldest, newest marketing medium*” (Silverman, 2005) which shortly describes the essence of this concept. Since the beginning of oral tradition that WOM has been present in our daily lives. There are even several popular sayings mentioning this type of communication, mostly referring to some characteristics such as the speed and power of the message. Besides its ancient appearance, the concept of WOM has reached the modern days and it can be referred to as both an old and modern concept.

In the context of consumer behavior, the role of WOM has been the center of a vast amount of research over the years. As one of the earliest researchers of the topic, Arndt (1967) began to define WOM as an oral, person-to-person communication, between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as noncommercial, regarding a brand, product or service (Kimmel and Kitchen 2014; Arndt, 1967). A few years later a different approach was proposed by Stern (1994) based on the distinction between WOM and advertising. She defined WOM as an oral discourse dealing with consumption products, where the “*lack of boundaries*” was the main difference pointed by the author. According to Stern (1994: 7) “*WOM involves the exchange of ephemeral oral or spoken messages between a contiguous source and a recipient who communicate directly in real life*”. Additionally, one important contribution given by this author while distinguishing advertising and WOM is the concept of spontaneity brought to the WOM definition. In fact, if advertising involves a revised and rehearsed pre-written conversational exchange, WOM does not. Anderson (1998: 6) defined WOM as an “*informal communication between private parties concerning evaluations of goods and services.*”

More recent approaches on the topic brought different inputs, as the idea of positive and negative communications, the interpersonal communications, the concept of reference group and even the amount of senders and receivers involved in the communication process. (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014; Silverman, 2005; Kim *et al.*, 2001).

All considered, times have been evolving, and so does WOM and its definition. WOM does not necessarily needs to be, nowadays, oral, face-to-face or ephemeral. In some circumstances, it is not even required to be product or service related, but organizational focused (Kimmel and Kitchen,

2014). This follows the emergence of the digital era and the concept of electronic word-of-mouth. Although an old concept, WOM gained a new prominence today (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014) and is able to work as an accelerator of interpersonal messages.

eWOM can be defined as “*any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet*” (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004: 39). This definition combines several aspects previously mentioned in the literature and accurately describes this new form of WOM. It is argued that electronic word-of-mouth advances traditional word-of-mouth. By allowing the sharing between strangers, instead of only family and friends as the majority of traditional WOM, eWOM escalates the audience of the message faster.

More importantly, eWOM overcame the perishability of the traditional WOM since it occurs online and it can be accessed, collected and preserved (Ring *et al.*, 2014; Litvin *et al.*, 2008). This terminates the ephemeral nature that this type of communication previously had.

Nevertheless, as stated in previous research, these are two concepts that should not be dissociated as WOM is no longer a static concept of traditional or electronic. WOM, as it is lived in current times, can be seen as a flow of communications and interactions that can go from offline to the online contexts and evolve through people, groups and platforms (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014).

2.1.1. Negative word-of-mouth

In the current dissertation, attention will be drawn to the negative valence of WOM. In the online context, negative WOM can be defined as an informal way of sharing bad testimonials and complaints, discouraging the consumption of a particular product or service (Verhagen *et al.*, 2013; East *et al.*, 2007; Buttle, 1998).

So far, negative word-of-mouth has received considerable attention in the literature (Verhagen *et al.*, 2013; Samson, 2006; Wangenheim, 2005; Charlett *et al.*, 1995) having several studies found that negative word-of-mouth can induce stronger effects than positive word-of-mouth (Samson, 2006; Marsden *et al.*, 2005; Bone, 1995; Mizerski, 1982). In fact, Ferguson (2007) mentioned in his study on the topic that negative WOM can predict more precisely a decrease in a company's revenue than positive WOM is able to predict revenue growth. This statement is aligned with the

idea of the negativity effect, which relies on the greater weighing of negative information when compared to equally positive one while forming a judgment (Ahluwalia, 2002). In the field of consumer psychology it is a well-proven phenomenon that individuals are often more likely to remember negative events than positive ones, but under the marketplace conditions this may or may not be confirmed, depending on the circumstances that individuals may be exposed. Factors as brand familiarity or the level of product involvement may influence consumers' behavior (Samson, 2006; Wangenheim, 2005; Ahluwalia, 2002) and allow this effect to be increased or attenuated.

It is unquestionable that a negative experience has a negative influence on individuals, the problem companies are facing nowadays it is the reach that one complaint or dissatisfied experience can have instantly due to the extensive adoption of social media platforms. Allied with the fact that consumers trust the opinions other consumers post online (Ye *et al.*, 2011; Gretzel and Yoo, 2008) the phenomena of online negative word-of-mouth became a possible liability for companies. No longer one bad experience with a product or service stays contained between the affected consumer and the company itself. It is now public and easily available to a lot of individuals that may even not have known the brand before.

Considering all of this, it is of great interest and full of possible managerial implications the study of this topic into detail.

2.2. Social Media in the context of word-of-mouth

The dot-com bubble of 1995 - 2002 was a critical event in human history, which turned the Internet into a viable marketing tool (King, 2016). From then, blogs increased their popularity within the Internet environment, allowing common people to share their opinion and thoughts through the available platforms (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010), while, on the other hand, many marketers started to see the true value of it. The majority of companies are nowadays trying to implement online applications to be present in this new era of connectivity (Araujo *et al.*, 2015). Marketers use these online platforms as a way of promoting their products and services and be even more present in everyday life of their customers.

The concept of Social Media is defined 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 and Haenlein, 2010: 61).

The arrival of Social Media websites such as Facebook and Myspace in 2003 - 2004, marked a shift on the internet, with people evolving from a single user one-way communication method to an open environment of information that brings the possibility to connect people, share their experiences and receive feedback, in real time (King, 2016).

In the past years, it was possible to see, how people have created a positive attitude towards these social media platforms and changed their behavior within the online environment. It is this online confidence and liberty that works as a promoter of user generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Ye *et al.*, 2010) that in several cases appears as WOM, the main focus of this project. A lot of the research already done intends to understand which factors may influence the production of WOM from a sender's perspective (Hennig-Thurau, *et al.*, 2004; Ahluwalia, 2002). Samson (2006) for instance, brought the importance of the industry we are in, when analyzing word-of-mouth, to the discussion. He defended that different outcomes may be expected according to the industry, claiming that the WOM behavior should be seen in a framework that allows industry factors as high or low consumer commitment and, high or low consumer choices (Samson, 2006). This is a relevant input for this thesis since the industry in analysis is an oligopoly, one of the mentioned by the author in his framework, where some consumers may appear to be dedicated to the relation with its company by necessity, similar as what is sometimes referred as calculative commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1990). It is understandable that industries with few players, as an oligopoly, may at some point force consumers loyalty since no matter how dissatisfied the consumer is there is a small and limited number of brands he/she can choose from. Furthermore, it is also a characteristic of the telecommunication industry the loyalty contracts established with some customers for certain services, that end up forcing part of the relation established between the brand and the customer.

Additionally, factors like risk or involvement may be influential for WOM (Wangenheim, 2005). In his study, Samson (2006) suggested that businesses, particularly services, in high-commitment/low-choice may be especially sensitive to negative word-of-mouth. The inverse applies to the opposite valence positive word-of-mouth, which may be a better measure for low-

commitment/high-choice businesses. Other authors analyzed the question of involvement. Wangenheim (2005) for instance, selected as main constructs of its analysis the involvement, perceived risk and market mavenism as influencers of post-switching negative word-of-mouth concluding that they could indeed help to explain the post-switching negative word-of-mouth.

On the study of negativity effect, Ahluwalia (2002) also addressed the involvement consumers have with a brand as an influencer of the information process. The study defined three different types of involvement: outcome involvement, impression-relevant involvement and position involvement. According to different types of involvement, consumers may intensify or attenuate the experience of negativity. The study concluded that people familiar with a brand are likely to diagnose differently a new piece of information according to their type of involvement (Ahluwalia, 2002).

It is in light of these findings, and to bring additional interest to the study, that it is also intended to analyze the contractual component and its influence in readers exposed to negative brand related word-of-mouth.

Some studies already found that WOM has higher probabilities of being sought for services than for goods, which can possibly be explained by the fact that services generally present intensified inherent risks (Samson, 2006). By nature, services evaluation occur primarily after the purchase and consumption, which enhances the purchase uncertainty and, therefore, increases risk (Murray, 1991). From this point, it is understandable that a lot of WOM is produced and sought in services since consumers tend to search more information before assuming the risk of acquiring a service. When experiencing a bad service the need of expressing that negative sensation can lead to a production of new negative word-of-mouth, as a way of advising other consumers that are now in the same position they once were (Verhagen *et al.*, 2013; Litvin *et al.*, 2008). Additionally, it is a way of informing the company that their service was not as favorable as expected.

Satisfaction is an important player while studying WOM, either positive or negative since it is one potential trigger of this phenomenon (Buttle, 1998; Anderson, 1998; Westbrook, 1987).

Day (1983) defined satisfaction as an affective or emotional reaction to a determined experience of consumption. Similarly, it was also defined as the pleasant level of fulfillment in the context of consumption situations (Oliver, 1997). This concept is related to the notion of expectation since consumers tend to compare their consumption outcome with the expectation previously made. If

the obtained outcome proves to at least meet the expectation established, the consumer will tend to feel satisfied. The reverse logic is also applicable, once a consumer does not meet its consumption expectation it will feel dissatisfaction with the outcome of its experience (Oliver, 1997; Woodruff *et al.*, 1983). This sensation of satisfaction is believed to encourage positive WOM, as negative WOM can occur once one feels an unsatisfactory outcome throughout its consumption.

Consumers may experience different degrees of satisfaction, either positive or negative, which can possibly influence their behavior towards the consumed brand. Research by Swan and Oliver (1989), in their study of post-purchase communications by consumers, concluded that increasing levels of satisfaction would turn WOM more positive. Similarly, as dissatisfaction increases so does the complaint and negative WOM activity (Swan and Oliver, 1989; Bearden *et al.*, 1983).

There is a common belief held on the topic that negative word-of-mouth from unsatisfied customers is more influential on its readers than the positive word-of-mouth produced by satisfied ones (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014). But this is not a general conclusion, and there are in fact divergent opinions. East *et al.* (2007) for example, described that the purchase probability on a familiar brand is more impacted by positive word-of-mouth than from negative word-of-mouth. Additionally, it was found that recipients resist positive word-of-mouth on brands that they are unlikely to choose and resist negative word-of-mouth on brands they are likely to choose (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014). Also Naylor and Kleiser (2000), in their study on negative word-of-mouth vs. positive word-of-mouth, reported positive word-of-mouth to exceed negative word-of-mouth in volume. Results indicated that as word-of-mouth became more negative fewer people were approached (Naylor and Kleiser, 2000).

In sum, the relative impact of these two poles of WOM is a complex question depending on a variety of factors. Factors as the previous level of satisfaction (Naylor and Kleiser, 2000; Anderson, 1998; Buttle 1998), the level of commitment to the company (Samson, 2006) or even high levels of risk (Wangenheim, 2005; Bansal and Voyer, 2000) or involvement (Samson, 2006; Wangenheim, 2005; Ahluwalia, 2002) in the purchase decision may result in different outcomes.

2.3. Proposed model

Although a lot of research has been done, a significant number of studies addressed the matter of negative word-of-mouth on a senders' perspective. In fact, only a small portion of negative word-of-mouth studies addressed the question on the reader's perspective.

For the following dissertation, it is intended to analyze this gap in the literature and measure the impact of the exposure to negative brand related word-of-mouth, on the readers' perspective, on already customers of the brand. Different from other studies in the field, the impact will be analyzed by clustering two groups of customers – the contractual and the non-contractual ones. This is a new approach to the topic that will help to better understand the possible impacts of negative word-of-mouth when influenced by different factors. It is predictable that a contact with negative word-of-mouth can have a negative impact, but the main question that emerges is how negative can that impact be. In fact, one satisfied consumer may reconsider its brand opinion after reading unfavorable comments about a certain brand or service but will that affect its entire opinion on that same brand/service?

The following thesis intends to examine the impact on brand attitude, perceived brand quality, negative WOM intentions and re-patronage intention as illustrated in the research model proposed in figure 1.

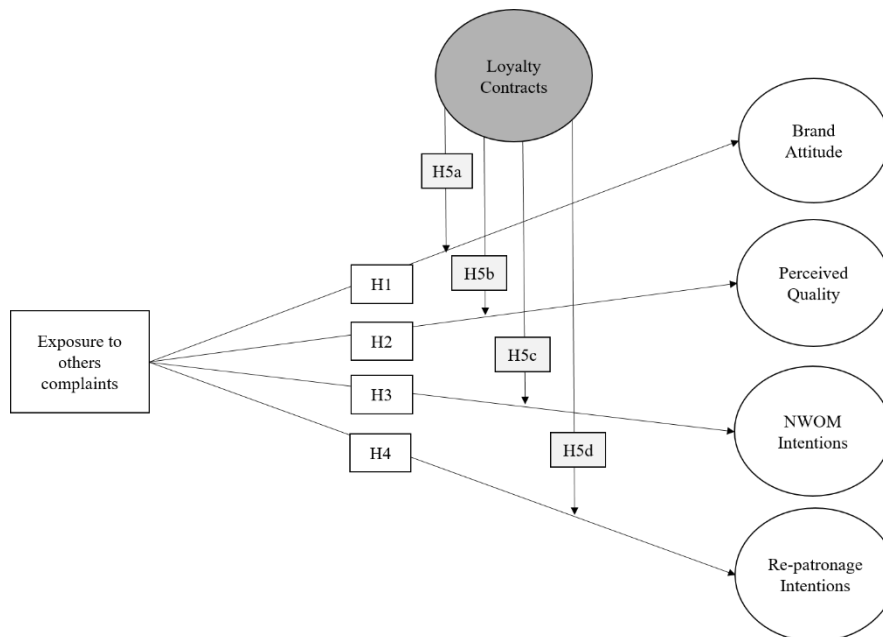


Figure 1- Research model
Source: Developed by the author

2.3.1. Brand attitude

One important part of being a brand it is to be able to distinguish itself on consumer's minds, which enables them to identify a brand's product or service from their competitors (Wang and Yang, 2010). In order to build a strong brand, it is important to establish the right structures in the current and potential customer's minds to build the appropriate brand knowledge (Langaro *et al.*, 2015; Keller, 2009). Through marketing communications, brands help consumers to develop several brand associations that reflect the way a brand is perceived in a consumer's mind, which reflects the brand image (Langaro *et al.*, 2015; Wang and Yang, 2010; Keller, 1993). Brand attitude appears as an evaluation of these associations. Keller (1993) defined brand attitude as "*consumers overall evaluations of a brand,*" reflecting the evaluative dimension of brand image (Langaro *et al.*, 2015). Hence, brand attitudes are the aggregation of all judgments developed by consumers as they, more or less intuitively or experimentally, connect with a brand.

The first level of impact proposed in this study is brand attitude. As mentioned before, brand attitude is continuously being shaped in consumers' minds as they experience and gather different brand elements (Langaro *et al.*, 2015). This means that, as consumers start to receive negative inputs it is expected that their overall evaluation of the brand starts to be influenced negatively.

As asserted in the previous literature, social media communications influence brand attitudes (Abzari *et al.*, 2014) that according to the valence of these communications, positive or negative, may cause a similar impact. Considering word-of-mouth as a social media communication, it is expected that exposure to negative complaints negatively influences brand attitude, and so the following hypothesis it is proposed:

H1: Exposure to negative word-of-mouth has a negative influence on brand attitude

2.3.2. Perceived brand quality

While studying WOM, namely negative word-of-mouth, one important concept that immediately emerges it is the perceived brand quality. Similarly to the concept of satisfaction, innumerous times referred in WOM studies (Anderson, 1998; Buttle, 1998; Oliver, 1989; Westbrook, 1987), service quality also establishes a relationship between expectations and reality since it relies on the expectation a determined customer has for a determined service and the perception of the service

outcome. If the final outcome does not match the customers' expectation of quality, it is expected a feeling of dissatisfaction (Amoako *et al.*, 2016).

Perceived quality can be defined as the overall perception of quality or superiority that a determined product or service demonstrates, according to its purpose, when compared to the alternatives available (Aaker, 1991). Hellier *et al.* (2003: 1765) also defined it as "*the customers overall assessment on the standard of the service delivery process,*" which has a higher focus than the previous definition of the expectation that consumers have on what is considered the standard. One important factor to mention is that this perception, mentioned in both definitions, comes from a consumer's point of view, therefore, it can reveal different outcomes according to different consumers. If having a bad experience with a determined brand can negatively affect the consumers perceived brand quality of a certain brand, the same effect is possible when consumers realize other peer customers are experiencing bad events with that same service provider. For the current study, it is proposed that exposure to negative brand related word-of-mouth negatively influences the perceived quality of the brand.

H2: Exposure to negative word-of-mouth has a negative impact on perceived brand quality

2.3.3. Negative word-of-mouth Intentions

It is understandable that unsatisfied consumers may feel the will, at some point, to share their unsatisfying experiences with a certain brand. As already stated, and supported in the literature, this phenomenon is gaining relevance in social media where a big amount of complaints can be distributed to innumerable consumers in a short period of time (Verhagen *et al.*, 2013). Several motives to engage in eWOM communication were already mentioned in the literature (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004) but it is still yet to be proved if negative word-of-mouth can generate more negative word-of-mouth. Consumers exposed to similar peers' complaints may feel the urge to share their negative opinions on social media after being in contact with comparable behavior. It is possible that this type of behavior is more likely if consumers already feel some negative emotion towards the brand that can be triggered and incentivized after reading other complaints and therefore increased their negative word-of-mouth intention. That said hypothesis three is suggested.

H3: Exposure to negative word-of-mouth has a positive impact on consumer's negative word-of-mouth intentions.

2.3.4. Re-patronage intention

Nowadays, with highly critical and informed consumers, brands tend to experience more competitive environments in order to maintain their customers or even acquire new ones. The currently eased access to products, services and brand information's help consumers to be more aware and informed on the possibilities available on the market. It is in this informational context that the concept of re-patronage intention emerges as fundamental to brands since it reflects the consumer desire to repurchase a determined product/service from a previously selected company (Hess *et al.*, 2003). Hellier *et al.*, (2003) in their study on customer repurchase intention defined it as the individual's will on buying again a determined product/service from the same brand, considering the current situation and likely circumstances.

In the present study, it is intended to analyze the impact caused by the exposure to Facebook complaints. Supporting this decision is the results provided by Szymanski and Henard (2001) indicating that negative word-of-mouth reduces consumer's re-patronage intention. For that reason, on a deeper level than the previously described constructs, it is suggested that re-patronage intention, the intention to buy from the same brand or company in the future (Verhagen *et al.*, 2013), will be negatively influenced by the exposure to negative word-of-mouth.

H4: Exposure to negative word-of-mouth has a negative impact on re-patronage intentions

2.3.5. The moderation of loyalty contracts

It has been commonly accepted the importance of establishing a strong bond or relation between customers and brands. The shift from traditional to relational marketing, as it is described in "Marketing the Pinball Way" (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2013), has been a source of several studies previously made. Relationship marketing can be defined as "*the process of identifying, developing, maintaining, and terminating relational exchanges with the purpose of enhancing performance*" (Palmatier, 2008: 3). It is central to the concept the two-way flow of interaction between customers and the service provider. Morgan and Hunt (1994) suggested commitment as a contributive factor to disable consumers at considering different alternatives and avoid potentially high-risk actions since it is expected a trustworthy relation between both parts. Also, Meyer and Allen (1990) developed a three component model, from an organizational perspective, and established the three concepts of affective, continuance and normative commitment. It was proposed that employees

experiencing affective commitment continued committed because they wanted to, reflecting true and pure commitment. The ones with strong continuance commitment remained committed by need as those with normative commitment are referred to be committed because they felt ought to do so (Allen and Meyer, 1990).

Commonly referred in the literature is the distinction between two views of commitment: affective and calculative. Affective commitment relies on the emotional connection in the partnership, the identification with the values of the organization (Wetzels *et al.*, 1998). The calculative view, in contrary, refers to a cognitive evaluation of all pros and cons to consider the maintenance of the partnership (Wetzels *et al.*, 1998; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). It considers switching costs and the costs associated with the early termination of the partnership and balances them to reach a decision (Geyskens *et al.*, 1996). In fact, Lee *et al.* (2001) addressed this matter by studying the moderator role of switching costs in the customer satisfaction-loyalty link. Their study, focused on the mobile phone service market in France, supported the proposed idea of a negative relation between switching costs and customer satisfaction-loyalty. These findings were supported by Hauser *et al.*, (1994) that stated that as switching costs increase, consumers tend to become less sensitive to their satisfaction level. It is also believed that customer satisfaction and loyalty to a determined company or brand can be differently impacted by a numerous of factors such as loyalty programs, market regulations and switching costs (Lee *et al.*, 2001; Fornell 1992).

In this context, two concepts are considered in the telecommunication sector in Portugal. The first, referring customers that are under the conditions of a loyalty contract (contractual clients), which limits possible switching behaviors, and the second for customers that do not own this type of contract forcing their loyalty, thus remain clients of the brand by choice or desire.

It is understandable that commitment, as trust, influences the relation between the company and its customers (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Additionally, it is also expected that loyal consumers will be less vulnerable to the exposure of other complaints (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014), but considering different types of customers this impact may generate different outcomes. In fact, it is not the same a consumer that is experiencing a relation because he needs to, since it may face high switching costs or have a small number of viable alternatives, and a consumer that it is actually feeling a positive and cooperative behavior in the relation established (Lee *et al.*, 2001; Fornell, 1992). It is

in the light of the presented literature that these final hypotheses are proposed to scrutinize the moderator effect of loyalty contracts.

H5a: The effects of exposure to complaints on brand attitude will be more significant for contractual customers than for non-contractual.

H5b: The effects of exposure to complaints on perceived brand quality will be more significant for contractual customers than for non-contractual.

H5c: The effects of exposure to complaints on negative word-of-mouth intentions will be more significant for contractual customers than for non-contractual.

H5d: The effects of exposure to complaints on re-patronage intentions will be more significant for contractual customers than for non-contractual.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research objective

The impact that WOM has on consumers it is yet to be consensual and, as described early, it can be affected by external factors causing different possible results. The current dissertation intends to understand the impact that the readers exposure to negative word-of-mouth may cause, in two groups of customers: contractual and non-contractual. Based on the previous literature four main constructs are proposed to better measure this influence, considering different levels of impact, by analyzing brand attitude, perceived brand quality, negative WOM intentions, and re-patronage intentions, respectively.

3.2. Research method and sampling procedure

For this investigation, a quantitative approach was used by the means of a questionnaire to better answer the hypothesis proposed. This method was considered appropriate for this study since it enabled the distribution of the questionnaire for a large number of people that are considered to be participants of the same phenomenon, in this particular case behavior in social media (Quivy, R., Campenhoudt, L., 1992). The survey was elaborated through the online software Qualtrics (Appendix 1 and 2) and online distributed to easily reach a bigger amount of respondents and particularly Facebook users.

In terms of the sample, the target population of the investigation was Facebook users that were simultaneously customers of any Portuguese telecommunication company, without any other demographic limitations. The sample size was assumed valid if 100 or more responses were collected (Hair *et al.*, 2006).

3.3. Data collection

3.3.1. Typifying negative word-of-mouth

To answer the previously established hypothesis a two-phase data collection was followed. Firstly, to understand and typify the general online behavior of the telecommunication customers in Portugal a collection of *Visitor Posts* made on the Facebook brand pages of the previously selected brand was conducted. The purpose of this collection was to understand the general behavior of these customers in the Portuguese scenario and be able to furtherly recreate it on fictional posts

used in the second phase of data collection. All gathered posts, between the six brand pages, were analyzed and categorized by the complaint management framework proposed by Kelley, Hoffman, and David (1993) adapted and complemented by Cambra-Fierro, Melero, and Sese (2015). Each post was evaluated by its characteristics, type of loss, type of failure, complainer data, post outputs and response strategy adopted by the company (Table 1).

In terms of characteristics, the posts were evaluated in terms of valence and could be considered as negative, neutral or positive. Additionally, the time and date of each post were considered as well as the extension, in number of characters, and the volume of negative adjectives used in the complaint.

The type of loss intended to evaluate the economic perspective of the lost described by the customer in the complaint, thus it could be an economic failure when monetary issues were involved, and non-economic when the lost felt did not evolve any monetary problem. To refer that, complaints mentioning unavailable service (for any reason) were considered economic since the customer was monthly paying and if the service is unavailable, at least one day of his payment is lost.

The type of failure, adapted from Kelley *et al.* (1993), was categorized in terms of service/product failure, and further sub-grouped into 7 options, failures initiated by the customer and company failures (Table 1).

Furthermore, some data about the complainer was collected as the gender and the type of relation with the company, if contractual or non-contractual when it was indicated. For each post the number of comments, likes and shares were also collected.

Finally, it was explored the strategy response adopted by the company in terms of time of response (timeliness), the compensation offered to the complainer (compensation) and if any apology or recognition of the error was assumed (communication) (Cambra-Fierro *et al.*, 2015).

Post Characteristics	Valence	Negative	
		Neutral	
		Positive	
	Extension		
	Volume of negative adjectives		
Types of loss	Economic		
	Non-economic		
	Types of failure	Service /Product Failure	Policy failure
			Slow/unavailable service
			System pricing
Out of stock			
Product/service defect			
Alterations and repairs			
Bad information			
Customer initiated failure	-		
Company failure	Mischarged		
Complainer Data	Gender		
	Relationship with company		
Post Outputs	Number of likes		
	Number of comments		
	Number of shares		
Strategy Response	Timeliness		
	Compensation		
	Communication		

Table 1- Online visitor posts evaluation criteria

Source: Adapted from Kelley et al. (1993) & Cambra-Fierro et al. (2015)

3.3.2. Measuring instrument

The second collection of data consisted of an online questionnaire, as mentioned. As the focus of this study was the customers' Facebook behavior with their telecommunication company, questions to determine these two factors were initially made. Although a small percentage of respondents were expected not to be either a telecommunication customer nor a Facebook user, those were the defined eliminatory answers since these type of respondents would probably not understand the thematics approached.

To understand and define the type of client, in terms of service consumption and Facebook usage, questions focused on that topic were initially addressed. Afterwards, respondents were asked to select their mobile phone operator, from a list of the 6 main Portuguese brands randomly presented (Vodafone, MEO, NOS, Yorn, WTF, and Moche). Only one brand could be selected, individuals with more than one provider were asked to select the most frequently used. The whole questionnaire was afterward focused on the selected brand by the respondent and assumed as their telecommunication provider.

To determine the contours of the relation between client and company the following questions were addressed to conclude the duration of the relation established, the current degree of satisfaction and the types of service that the client acquires from the company selected. It is a current common practice to share the same telecommunication provider for different services as mobile phone, TV, internet and/or telephone, reason why it was clearly specified along the questionnaire which service was being referred. Although the central service in analysis is the mobile phone one, it was also analyzed if the respondents shared the same company for other services available, or only for the first one.

To understand the type of relation between the customer and the company, important topic on this study, respondents were asked if they were at the time under the terms of a loyalty contract.

To define the type of Facebook user, respondents were asked about the frequency of usage of this social network, if they follow brands on this platform and if they ever used a Facebook brand page to complain about any unsatisfactory experience.

Concluded the initial part, the sample was exposed to Facebook posts considered to be made on their telecommunication provider Facebook brand page. The respondents were randomly divided into two groups where one of the groups was exposed to 4 negative posts as the other group was only exposed to 4 neutral posts, according to the typification of posts made in the primary collection of data. To assess the respondents understanding of the valence of the posts presented they were asked to evaluate each of the presented posts as *Negative*, *Neutral* or *Positive*, and additionally asked about the type of action they would feel prompted to take: *like*, *comment*, *share* or *any of the above*.

Author	Dimension	Item
Spears and Singh (2004)	Brand attitude	BA1: Unappealing/appealing BA2: Bad/good BA3: Unpleasant/pleasant BA4: Unfavourable/favorable BA5: Unlikable/likable
Schivinski and Dabrowski (2015)	Perceived brand quality	PQ1: Most of the products of this brand are of great quality PQ2: The likelihood that this brand is reliable is very high PQ3: Products of this brand are worth their price
Blodgett, Hill, and Tax (2015) and Schivinski and Dabrowski (2015)	Re-patronage intentions	PI1: What is the likelihood that you would shop at this retail store in the future? PI2: If this situation had happened to me I would never shop at this store again.* PI3: If this had happened to me I would still shop at this store in the future. PI4: If it were possible to do so without problems, I would choose another company* PI5: I intend to remain the company's customer
Blodgett, Hill, and Tax (2015)	Negative word-of-mouth intentions	NW1: How likely would you be to warn your friends and relatives not to shop at this retail store? NW2: If this had happened to me I would complain to my friends and relatives about this store NW3: If this had happened to me I would make sure to tell my friends and relatives not to shop at this store.

* Reverse coded

Table 2- Table of items
Source: developed by the author

In the final part of the questionnaire validated measures from previous studies were used and applied in a 7-point Likert scale to measure the constructs brand attitude, perceived brand quality, re-patronage intentions, and negative word-of-mouth intentions. Some of the items were semantically adapted in order to maintain the coherence of the study.

Brand attitude was measured using 5 items adapted by Spears and Singh (2004) to measure general brand evaluations on a bipolar scale (e.g. Unappealing/Appealing; Bad/Good) ranging from 1 to 7.

To measure perceived brand quality the original 3 item scale proposed by Schivinski and Dabrowski (2015) was used. Answers were given on a 7-point Likert scale from 1- Totally Disagree to 7 – Totally Agree. The construct re-patronage intention was adapted from the scale of Blodgett, Hill, and Tax (2005) and Schivinski and Dabrowski (2015) reflecting the intention to repurchase a determined product or service from the same telecommunication company in the future. In a 7-point Likert scale the responses were scored from 1- Totally Disagree to 7-Totally Agree. From the original scale two items had to be reversed (PI2 and PI4) in order to maintain the coherence of the data, and so all answers were recoded with the help of SPSS. All previous 1 were replaced by 7 and the same logic was applied to all the points of the Likert scale.

At last, negative word-of-mouth intentions was adapted from the scale of Blodgett, Hill, and Tax (2015) and measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 1- Totally Disagree to 7 – Totally Agree. The complete list of items can be found in Table 2.

3.4. Pre-test

Before its final release, a pre-test of the questionnaire was made that intended to test the elaborated survey and to reveal potential problems or errors before the final collection of data (Malhotra and Birks, 2006). This method helps researchers to better understand the coherence of their questionnaire by aligning the sequence of questions and assure the correct use of words of what it is stated and asked.

A pre-test was made with 8 responses that helped to rectify some minor errors, add a few complimentary comments and improved the order of the questions. All of the alterations made helped the respondents to have a better understanding of the survey and the questions asked.

Only after this step, the final questionnaire was distributed online by the means of a link with data being collected in July 2017.

3.5. Data analysis procedure

Regarding the first phase of data collection, that typified negative word-of-mouth, the data previously collected and treated in Microsoft Excel was coded and introduced as a database into IBM Statistics SPSS 22.0. To reach conclusions from the data, descriptive analysis was conducted from the 120 *Visitor Posts* collected regarding the measures presented in 3.3.1. With the conclusions drawn fictional posts were created.

After a satisfactory amount of responses was obtained in the online questionnaire the acquired data was extracted from the Qualtrics software directly to the statistic software SPSS 22.0 where the variables were recoded and introduced in order to build the database of this research. An initial filtering revealed the main invalid responses that were immediately removed as well as the responses that did not match the target sample.

Two items of re-patronage intention had to be reverse coded, PI2 and PI4, to assure the coherence of the scale due to their reverse tone. Additionally, to ease future analysis, a variable labeled as “negative group” was created, with the compute variable tool, to separate the respondents into two different groups of exposition. In that way, respondents exposed to negative Facebook posts were coded into 1 as respondents exposed to neutral Facebook posts were coded as 2.

Finished all the treatment of the data, an initial descriptive analysis of the sample was developed in terms of the total target sample and the two subgroups defined, for comparison reasons. Moreover, descriptive analysis of the items with means and modes between the groups was also considered for the comparison of groups.

To check dimensionality and validate the reliability of the scales exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted. A principal components analysis was performed, firstly using Kaiser’s criteria of extracting factors with eigenvalues equal or greater than one and repeated until a satisfactory value of explained variance was obtained resulting in the extraction of 5 components. This analysis intends to reduce the dimensionality of the scale (Malhotra and Birks, 2006). The KMO measure was also analyzed and considered good above 0,8 according to Marôco (2014). All item loadings’ scored above the acceptable value of 0,500 (Marôco, 2014) with one exception, although no alterations were made. To evaluate the reliability of the scale the Cronbach’s alpha was executed where variables with a score above 0,600 were considered satisfactory (Marôco, 2014, Hair et al., 2006).

To analyze the hypothesis proposed statistical tests were conducted to reach conclusions. The chosen test for hypothesis 1 to 4 was the independent sample t-test for two samples, as it intends to know if two randomly selected samples have significantly different means (Marôco, 2014). The comparison of means occurred between the group of respondents exposed to negative posts and the group exposed to neutral posts.

The same test was used to test hypothesis number 5. Firstly the sample was divided in two groups: contractual and non-contractual clients. In each of these subgroups, the independent t-test was conducted by comparing the means in each construct between respondents exposed to negative posts and respondents exposed to neutral posts. The moderator effect of loyalty contracts was then analyzed by comparing the results obtained in contractual and non-contractual where significantly different results were expected.

This test requires two preliminary assumptions, the normality of the distributions of the variables, which was assumed since the samples are large ($n > 30$) and by the central limit theorem it is possible to assume normality (Marôco, 2014), and the equality of variances analyzed with the Levene test. To reject the null hypothesis of the independent sample t-test, indicating that the means of the variables are significantly different, the Sig. (2-tailed) value needs to be observed and for a confidence interval of 95%, Sig. (2-tailed) should be $< 0,05$ (Marôco, 2014).

The detailed analysis and results obtained will be presented in the next chapter.

4. Results

4.1. Typifying negative word-of-mouth

On a primary phase, and after the analysis of previous studies on the subject, an online content analysis was developed in order to better understand the online complaint behavior in the Portuguese telecommunication industry, as described in the methodology.

To do this, the structure of the telecommunication industry in Portugal was analyzed and understood. As previously mentioned, the market is an oligopoly dominated by the three main companies: MEO, NOS, and Vodafone. Figure 2 shows the detailed distribution of the share of subscribers between the main players.

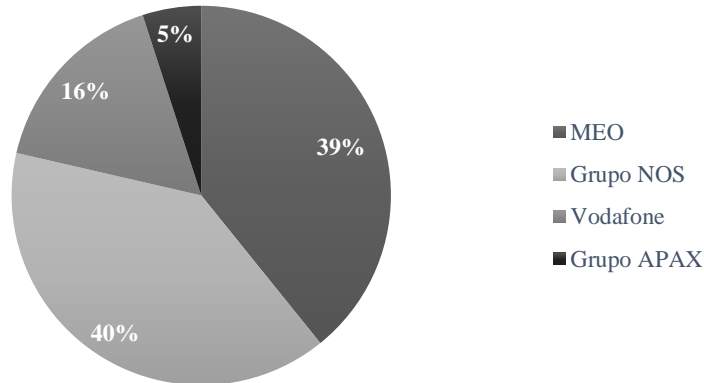


Figure 2- Share of subscribers' Portuguese market (%)
 Source: ANACOM (2017)

The same study indicated that the penetration rate of smartphones in Portugal is of 71,5% and the current internet usage on mobile phone is increasing 2,4% in comparison with the homologous period (adslfibra, 2017).

Having that in mind, those were the chosen companies for the collection of data from the Facebook brand pages. Within this three main companies, it is important to mention that each of them has at least two different brands targeting different consumers, generally younger. For the purpose of the study six Facebook brand pages were analyzed, representing the six main brands of mobile telecommunications operating in Portugal: MEO, NOS, Vodafone and the respective sub-brands Moche, WTF, and Yorn. At the time of the analysis, May 2017, the number of fans of each Facebook brand page was collected, described in Table 1, in order to understand the dimension and online presence of each of this brands. The main brands had around 1 million followers whereas

the sub-brands had only around 300,000 followers, with exception to Moche that had considerably more (Table 3). It is interesting to note that data from online and non-online context reflected the same reality of usage.

Brand	Number of followers
MEO	1.405.000
NOS	1.327.000
Vodafone	961.000
Moche	651.000
WTF	247.000
Yorn	227.000

*Table 3- Number of Facebook followers
Source: developed by the author*

In the sample of 120 posts collected, 77,5% were made by Male individuals and 22,5% by Female. The majority of visitor posts were considered *Negative* (65,8%), 30% were *Neutral* and the remaining percentage represented visitor posts considered as *Positive*. This result supports the idea that social media is nowadays being used by angry consumers to expose their problems and complaints about brands.

In terms of the complaints (the 79 negative posts), 67,1% mentioned problems about the product or service provided by the company and 27,8% reflected problems with the company itself or the person responsible for the customer service. The remaining percentage (5,1%) involved posts that are, without a doubt, negative but do not explicitly indicate the reason of dissatisfaction (e.g. customers that simply indicate that will change operator, not more details were revealed).

Focusing on the types of failures, from the respondents facing problems directly related to the product or service provided by the company 11 initial sub-groups retrieved from the literature were considered although some of them did not reflect relevant input during the analysis and were for that reason dismissed. Table 2 reflects the groups with responses where the three sub-groups that aggregated more responses were *Product/service defect* (32,1%), *Slow or unavailable service* (30,2%) and *System pricing* (24,5%).

The failures related to the company or its employees were sub-divided into two groups where the majority of these respondents indicated *Employee attention failure* (68,2%) as the remaining 31,8% complained about being *Mischarged*.

The *Neutral* visitor posts were mainly composed of questions made to the brand by its customers or potentially new customers, for this reason, the majority of posts defined as *Neutral* do not reflect any type of failure.

In terms of *Strategy Response*, three parameters were analyzed in order to better understand the strategy adopted by the company after receiving its complaints. From the total of 120 posts in analysis, 93,3% obtained a response from the service provider as only 6,7% did not. It is important to say that this parameter was analyzed by the variable *Timeliness* which indicated the number of days between the post and the response of the company. That said, all the 93,3% of the posts that obtained an answer received it on the same day. This indicates a very extreme behavior in which the company providing the service either quickly answers their customer's complaints on the Facebook page or does not answer at all. Regarding the type of answer in the majority of the responses provided (62,5%), the company gave an explanation or apology to the complainer directly on the comment of answer. The remaining percentage represents answers provided that do not show any explanation or apology to the complainer.

The variable *Compensation* did not appear to be relevant in this analysis since there were not answers mentioning any type of economic compensation on any of the Facebook posts under analysis. This phenomenon only allows the conclusion that this type of companies do not offer refunds directly on public Facebook posts, even though it is possible that this type of approach happens by less visible ways (for example through private message).

With the conclusions reached during this first descriptive analysis, it was possible to recreate 4 typical posts from each considered relevant valence: Negative and Neutral. These recreated visitor posts were integrated into the second part of data collection where the respondents were randomly selected and exposed to posts either Negative or Neutral. This created two different groups of respondents in the sample that will be mater of study in further analysis.

4.2. Measuring instrument

The online questionnaire had a total of 442 responses of which 68 corresponded to unfinished questionnaires, reason why they were removed from the sample. Of the remaining 374 responses, 3 of them were from people claiming not to have any telecommunication service provider at the moment and 4 of them represent the number of people that answered negatively to the question “*Do you have a Facebook profile page?*”. Both questions were considered to be eliminatory where respondents were forced to end the survey in case of a negative answer, since respondents with a no Facebook experience and/or within the services provided by this type of companies may not understand the thematics approached. After that, some responses were also excluded from the sample since there was indication that respondents were not paying attention to the questions asked. The final target sample represents 325 valid responses (n=325).

4.3. Sample characterization

In terms of demographic characteristics, the target sample under analysis is mainly composed by female individuals being 65,8% against the remaining 34,2% of male. In terms of age, the sample is considerably young. This variable was initially defined by a range of 6 groups between 18 to +65, only the two lowest groups that englobe individuals from 18 to 34 years old account for a cumulative percentage of 74,5%. In terms of education, the sample is highly educated in general, 58,2% have a *Bachelor* degree followed by 28% that indicate to have a *Master* degree. The remaining percentages are split between the top and the bottom levels of the range representing only 13,8%. 50,4% of the sample are workers, 27,1% are *Students* and 12,6% claim to be *Student-worker*, which is aligned with the overall representation of ages.

Regarding the brand of mobile phone communications, the sample is well distributed between the 6 main brands under analysis being the top 3 the main brands: *Vodafone* (28,9%), *MEO* (26,2%) and *NOS* (19,7%). It is an interesting fact considering that the sample it is mainly composed of younger individuals and that is the target group of the sub-brands of each of these telecommunication service providers.

The majority of the respondents are clients of their service provider for *more than 4 years* (58,2%) followed by the range between *1 and 2 years* (17,2%). When asked about the current satisfaction with their telecommunication company the mean of responses were of 5,04, which represents

Satisfied, with a standard deviation of 1,12. The sample is divided nearly in half by customers that are under a loyalty agreement (49,5%) with their telecommunication company and customers that are not (50,5%), which will be subject of further analysis in this research.

The target sample was also analyzed considering the two subgroups of exposure as it follows.

4.3.1. Group exposed to Negative posts

As described in the methodology, the experiment was designed to randomly create two groups of respondents according to the type of Facebook posts exposure. The negative subgroup represents respondents exposed to negative Facebook posts (complaints), and it has 158 individuals (n=158) from the target sample. 68,4% of these are female as 31,6% are male. Regarding the distribution of age this subgroup follows the tendency of the sample having a larger number of young participants, the interval with most responses was “18-24 years”, the lower bound, with 57%. The remaining intervals registered “25-34” and “35-44” with a percentage of 15,2% each, “45-54” with 3,8%, “55-64” with 7% and “+65” 1,9%.

Considering the level of education the subgroup is mainly composed of individuals with a Bachelor degree (57,6%) followed by individuals with a Master degree (32,3%), and in terms of occupation, most of the respondents indicated to be currently working (46,2%) or studying (29,7%). 12,7% of the people in the group considered themselves as *Student-Worker* as 7,6% were *Unemployed* and 3,8% *Retired*.

In terms of the behavioral variables describing the relationship between customer and the telecommunication company, the negative subgroup has 44,3% of customers under the conditions of a loyalty contract, and 55,7% without it. In terms of the current level of satisfaction with their telecommunication service provider the subgroup mean is 5,10 which represents “*Satisfied*” in the scale applied. The distribution between the telecommunication companies registered as follows, *Vodafone* 35,4%, *MEO* with 20,9%, *NOS* 17,1%, *Yorn* 13,9%, *WTF* with 8,2%. The majority of the respondents (57,6%) are clients of their service provider for more than 4 years.

4.3.2. Group exposed to Neutral posts

Not as relevant as the previously described group, but still important for comparison reasons, the neutral subgroup represents respondents exposed only to neutral Facebook posts. The group is composed by 167 respondents of which 106 are Female (63,5%) and 61 Male (36,5%). Considering demographic characteristics, once again the subgroup is described as young aggregating the majority of the respondents (53,9%) in the lower bound of ages “18-24”, followed by “25-34” with 22,8%. The remaining respondents had lower frequencies split between the other intervals.

Concerning the literacy and current situation of the subgroup, the majority of the respondents indicated to have a bachelor degree (58,7%), 24% were Masters. The other answers registered as following: “*Middle school*” 1,2%, “*High school*” 14,4% and “*Ph.D.*” 1,8%. In terms of occupation, the subgroup has similar results with the sample, having a significant larger number of Workers (53,0%), Students (24,6%) and Worker-Student (12,6%).

Focusing on the behavioral aspects, the respondents were divided by the brands in analysis as indicated: *Vodafone* 22,8%, *MEO* 31,1%, *NOS* 22,2%, *Yorn* 9,6%, *WTF* 7,2%, *Moche* 6%. Similar to the sample, the subgroup mainly has respondents that are clients of the selected brand for more than 4 years (58,7%). The group is divided nearly in half between customers with loyalty contract (49,5%) and customers without loyalty contract (50,5%).

	Total Sample (n=325)	Negative subgroup (n=158)	Neutral subgroup (n=167)
Gender: Male Female	34,2% 65,8%	31,6% 68,4%	36,5% 63,5%
Age: 18-24 25-34 35-44	55,4% 19,1% 10,5%	57% 15,2% 15,2%	53,9% 22,8% 6%
Telecommunication company: Vodafone MEO NOS	28,9% 26,2% 19,7%	35,4% 20,9% 17,1%	22,8% 31,1% 22,2%
Duration of relationship: <1 year 1-2 years 2-3 years 3-4 years +4 years	9,8% 17,2% 9,8% 4,9% 58,2%	10,8% 16,5% 10,1% 5,1% 57,6%	9% 18% 9,6% 4,8% 58,7%
Mean satisfaction	5,04	5,10	4,98
Loyalty Contract: Yes No	49,5% 50,55	44,3% 55,7%	54,5% 45,5%

Table 4- Sample characterization
Source: developed by the author

Table 4 resumes the characterization of the target sample and both subgroups, negative and neutral. In comparison, it is possible to conclude that both groups have similar characteristics being the main points of disparity the gender, as the negative group has a few more female respondents, the distribution between the telecommunication companies, the mean satisfaction that appears to be lower in the neutral group and, at last, the number of respondents with a loyalty contract. Although similar, the subgroup exposed to negative brand related word-of-mouth has fewer respondents with a loyalty contract.

4.4. Descriptive analysis of the scales

All scales were submitted to a descriptive analysis to allow better comparison of responses between the two subgroups.

All scales were measured with a 7-point Likert scale being 4 the neutral score towards the sentence presented. All values above the neutral point reflect concordance or agreement with the statement as all scores below indicates disagreement with it.

Looking particularly at brand attitude, where each item indicated two opposite valences of attitude towards the brand it is possible to conclude that different results were obtained in each group (Table 5). Even though the most chosen answer, the mode, of each item was higher in the negative group when compared to the neutral group, the means are very similar. This is only possible if the negative group also has lower values of the variable to balance the means. All means, in both groups, scored approximately 5 indicating a positive agreement with the features presented. The item with a higher score was “*Unappealing/Appealing*” in both groups, as the item with lower results was “*Unfavorable/Favorable*” with 5,13 in both subgroups of respondents.

Brand attitude	Neutral group (n=167)		Negative group (n=158)	
	μ	Mode	μ	Mode
<i>Unappealing/Appealing</i>	5,31	5	5,44	6
<i>Bad/Good</i>	5,19	5	5,26	6
<i>Unpleasant/Pleasant</i>	5,23	5	5,17	5 ^a
<i>Unfavorable/Favorable</i>	5,13	5	5,13	6
<i>Unlikable/Likable</i>	5,28	5	5,26	6

Table 5- Brand attitude descriptive
Source: developed by the author

^aMultiple modes exist, the smallest value is presented.

Analyzing now perceived brand quality, the item with a higher score was in both groups “*The likelihood that this brand is reliable is very high*” with 4,30 in the neutral group and 4,37 in the negative one. Both groups revealed answers very near to the neutral position in this item as in the overall construct. The general target sample showed to have very neutral perceptions of the quality of their current telecommunication service provider. Moreover, when asked about the fairness of the prices applied to the brand's products this was, in fact, the item with lower score in perceived brand quality, 3,57 and 3,87 in neutral and negative groups respectively. This reflects a level of disagreement with the current prices. In the negative subgroup, 3 was even the mode answer of this item. Detailed results can be found in Table 6.

Perceived brand quality	Neutral group (n=167)		Negative group (n=158)	
	μ	Mode	μ	Mode
<i>Most of the products of this brand are of great quality</i>	3,90	4	4,04	4
<i>The likelihood that this brand is reliable is very high</i>	4,37	4	4,30	5
<i>Products of this brand are worth their price</i>	3,57	4	3,87	3 ^b

Table 6 - Perceived brand quality descriptive
Source: developed by the author

In terms of the intention to produce negative word-of-mouth, this was the construct with more differences between the subgroups. In this particular variable, it is important to state that answers need to be analyzed through a reverse logic as higher values of the variable represent higher intentions of producing negative word-of-mouth. That said, the group exposed to negative word-of-mouth reflected higher scores in each item than the neutral group. The mean values were between 4,79 and 5,41 for the negative group and the mode was the higher value of the scale in all the items.

In the neutral group, participants showed considerably lower intentions of creating negative word-of-mouth being the mode of responses in all the three items, 4, the neutral value of the scale. Accordingly, the mean value of the items was evaluated between 3,66 and 3,98 which represents disagreement with the statements asked (Table 7).

^b Multiple modes exist, the smallest value is presented.

Negative WOM intention	Neutral group (n=167)		Negative group (n=158)	
	μ	Mode	μ	Mode
<i>How likely would you be to warn your friends and relatives not to shop at this retail store?</i>	3,98	4	5,41	7
<i>If this had happened to me I would complain to my friends and relatives about this store</i>	3,80	4	5,08	7
<i>If this had happened to me I would make sure to tell my friends and relatives not to shop at this store</i>	3,66	4	4,79	7

Table 7- Negative word-of-mouth intention descriptive
Source: developed by the author

Finally, in terms of the intentions to remain a customer of the brand, re-patronage intention, as expected the respondents in the negative group revealed general lower levels of this construct. The item with a higher score was in both groups the statement “*I intend to remain the company’s customer*” with mean 5,04 and 5,02 in the neutral and negative group respectively. The similarity in the mean responses indicates that despite the exposure to negative word-of-mouth both groups of customers had positive intentions on remaining customers of their brand, indicating a low impact of the exposure on this item. The rest of the items scored close to 4 in the neutral group, a neutral position with the statements, and closer to 3 in the negative group revealing slightly disagreement with the same sentences (Table 8).

Re-patronage intention	Neutral group (n=167)		Negative group (n=158)	
	μ	Mode	μ	Mode
<i>What is the likelihood that you would shop at this retail store in the future?</i>	4,77	5	4,92	4
<i>If this situation had happened to me I would never shop at this store again.</i>	4,17	4	3,27	4
<i>If this had happened to me I would still shop at this store in the future.</i>	4,05	4	3,24	4
<i>If it were possible to do so without problems, I would choose another company</i>	4,02	4	3,44	4
<i>I intend to remain the company’s customer</i>	5,04	5	5,02	4

Table 8- Re-patronage intention descriptive
Source: developed by the author

4.5. Validation of measures

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to check dimensionality and validate the reliability of the scale. From the principal components analysis conducted an initial solution with 3 factors was presented using Kaiser's criteria. This initial extraction explained 62% of the variance of the initial variables which was considered a low percentage reason why the process was repeated until a final solution was reached with 5 principal components that account for 73,4% of the variance of the initial variables.

Constructs	Factor Loadings					Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
	1	2	3	4	5		
<i>Brand Attitude</i>							
BAT1	,854	,012	,073	-,002	,136	0,939	,937
BAT2	,845	-,162	,247	,044	,156		,921
BAT3	,881	-,122	,186	,013	,105		,920
BAT4	,854	-,089	,236	,064	,134		,922
BAT5	,882	-,027	,122	,069	,156		,925
<i>NEGATIVE WORD-OF-MOUTH Intentions</i>							
NW1	-,094	,734	-,344	-,060	-,030	0,796	,832
NW2	-,064	,846	,029	-,245	,066		,690
NW3	-,073	,810	-,061	-,341	-,056		,638
<i>Re-patronage Intentions</i>							
PI1	,263	,006	,816	,138	,151	0,733	,696
PI2	,032	-,377	,060	,808	,058		,689
PI3	,035	-,203	,127	,872	-,028		,691
PI4	,224	-,345	,489	,348	,073		,660
PI5	,263	-,221	,786	-,006	,148		,694
<i>Perceived brand quality</i>							
PQ1	,406	,027	,309	,051	,537	0,575	,412
PQ2	,252	-,042	,037	-,029	,712		,475
PQ3	,046	,012	,112	,034	,784		,548

Table 9 - Results from exploratory factor analysis

Source: developed by the author

Through the varimax rotation it was possible to verify that all items loaded above 0,500 (Marôco, 2014) with exception to one item of Re-patronage Intention (0,489) but no item was deleted considering the importance of the question made and the fact that the chosen scales for the study were already used and validated in previous studies bringing credibility to the measures.

This decision was also supported by the good value obtained in the Cronbach's alpha of this construct. The KMO test revealed a good value ($KMO > 0,8$) according to Marôco (2014).

From the reliability test of the scale, measured with the Cronbach's Alpha all variables scored more than 0,600, considered a satisfactory value (Marôco, 2014, Hair *et al.*, 2006), with exception to perceived brand quality. Nevertheless, to proceed the research it was preferred to assume this low value of the scale as a limitation of the study than to exclude this variable.

The Cronbach's Alpha value if the item deleted was also considered, as resumed in Table 9, and even though one item of negative word-of-mouth would result in a higher Cronbach value if deleted the original scale was used considering the high loading of the item.

4.6. Hypothesis testing

From the t-test made the following results were obtained. Regarding the first hypothesis, *exposure to negative word-of-mouth has a negative influence on brand attitude*, the t-test result accepted the null hypothesis $\text{Sig. (2-tailed)} = 0,855 > \alpha$, informing that there is no significant statistical difference between the mean of brand attitude in both groups. In that reasoning, the first hypothesis has to be rejected since it was not detected significant difference between the group exposed to negative word-of-mouth and the group not exposed.

A similar result was verified for the second hypothesis, *exposure to negative word-of-mouth has a negative impact on perceived brand quality*, the null hypothesis of the test was accepted $\text{Sig. (2-tailed)} = 0,265 > \alpha$, though no significant difference between the groups was achieved. Hypothesis 2 is rejected.

In terms of negative word-of-mouth intentions, this variable reflected significant different means between the group exposed to negative complaints and the neutral group. Respondents from the group exposed to negative brand related word-of-mouth reflected higher intentions of negative word-of-mouth than the group exposed to neutral (Mean difference= 1,276) which confirms hypothesis number 3 that *exposure to negative word-of-mouth has positive impact on consumer's negative word-of-mouth intentions*. At last, re-patronage intention did not reflect a significant difference between the groups in analysis. The detailed results of this test can be found in Table 10.

Construct		n	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	
<i>Brand attitude</i>	Negative group	158	,183	0,855	,024	No significant difference
	Neutral group	167				
<i>Perceived brand quality</i>	Negative group	158	1,116	,265	,124	No significant difference
	Neutral group	167				
<i>Negative word-of-mouth intentions</i>	Negative group	158	8,157	,000	1,276	Significantly different
	Neutral group	167				
<i>Re-patronage intentions</i>	Negative group	158	-1,101	,272	-,0839	No significant difference
	Neutral group	167				

Table 10 - Independent sample t-test result

Source: developed by the author

Regarding hypothesis number 5, about the moderator effect of loyalty contracts, additional independent t-test analysis was conducted. To perform this analysis, the question “*Do you own any loyalty contract on your mobile phone service?*” was considered and used to define the two groups the contractual clients (n= 161) and the non-contractual (n= 164). As showed in table 11 and 12, for each of these groups it was compared the customers exposed to negative posts and the customers exposed to neutral brand related word-of-mouth, in all constructs.

To start the two assumptions of the test were verified, the normality of the distributions of the variables by the central limit theorem (Marôco, 2014) and the equality of variances through the Levene test (Sig. > 0,05). To mention that in the contractual group, re-patronage intentions construct did not assume the equality of variances between the two groups in analysis.

In terms of contractual clients from the 161 respondents, 70 of them were exposed to negative posts as 91 were exposed to neutral posts. Regarding the first construct, brand attitude, no statistically significant difference was found between the two different groups (Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,465) where the neutral revealed higher levels of brand attitude than the negative (mean difference = -1,152). Perceived brand quality reflected similar results having the respondents exposed to neutral complaints higher perceptions of the quality of their service provider (mean difference = -0,184), even though no significant difference was found between the groups (Sig. (2-tailed) = ,246).

Negative word-of-mouth intention result, the only with significant difference in the contractual clients (Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,000), suggest that these respondents had significant different intentions of producing negative word-of-mouth between the ones exposed to neutral posts ($\mu = 3,89$) and the

ones exposed to negative posts ($\mu = 5,05$). At last, no statistically significant difference was found between the groups in terms of re-patronage intention in contractual clients (Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,468). All detailed information can be found in table 11.

Contractual Clients (n= 161)						
Construct		n	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Result
<i>Brand attitude</i>	Negative group	70	-,733	,465	-1,152	No significant difference
	Neutral group	91				
<i>Perceived brand quality</i>	Negative group	70	-1,164	,246	-,184	No significant difference
	Neutral group	91				
<i>Negative word-of-mouth intentions</i>	Negative group	70	5,009	,000	1,159	Significantly different
	Neutral group	91				
<i>Re-patronage intentions</i>	Negative group	70	-,728	,468	-,080	No significant difference
	Neutral group	91				

Table 11- Independent sample t-test results contractual clients
Source: developed by the author

Focusing on the non-contractual clients from a total of 164 respondents, 88 were exposed to negative posts and 76 were exposed to neutral posts. Between these two groups of exposition, no significant difference was found in terms of brand attitude and re-patronage intention. Even so, these constructs revealed higher mean values in this second group, which partially supports the idea of the moderator effect caused by contracts.

In contrast, there were significant mean differences in perceived brand quality (Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,014) and negative word-of-mouth intention (Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,000).

After dividing the sample in two groups, contractual and non-contractual, comparisons reflected that no significant difference was found in the majority of the variables in analysis. The moderator effect proposed would be confirmed if different results were obtained in each group, indicating that having or not a contract affects the respondent's perceptions. That said, hypothesis 5a, 5c, and 5d were rejected indicating that no moderation effect was found in terms of brand attitude, negative word-of-mouth intention and re-patronage intention, respectively.

Hypothesis 5b was supported as significant different results were obtained between, there is evidence that the type of contract owned by customers moderates the perceptions of quality on a determined brand.

Non-Contractual Clients (n= 164)

Construct		n	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Result
<i>Brand attitude</i>	Negative group	88	,726	,469	,122	No significant difference
	Neutral group	76				
<i>Perceived brand quality</i>	Negative group	88	2,473	,014	,379	Significantly different
	Neutral group	76				
<i>Negative word-of-mouth intentions</i>	Negative group	88	6,535	,000	1,401	Significantly different
	Neutral group	76				
<i>Re-patronage intentions</i>	Negative group	88	-1,100	,273	-,113	No significant difference
	Neutral group	76				

Table 12 - Independent sample t-test results non-contractual clients
Source: developed by the author

Table 13 resumes the results obtained for each proposed hypothesis after the analysis concluded

Hypothesis	Result
H1: Exposure to negative word-of-mouth has a negative influence on brand attitude	Reject
H2: Exposure to negative word-of-mouth has a negative impact on perceived brand quality	Reject
H3: Exposure to negative word-of-mouth has a positive impact on consumer’s intentions to create negative word-of-mouth	Accept
H4: Exposure to negative word-of-mouth has a negative impact on re-patronage intentions	Reject
H5a: The effects of exposure to complaints on brand attitude will be more significant for contractual customers than for non-contractual	Reject
H5b: The effects of exposure to complaints on perceived brand quality will be more significant for contractual customers than for non-contractual.	Accept
H5c: The effects of exposure to complaints on negative word-of-mouth intentions will be more significant for contractual customers than for non-contractual.	Reject
H5d: The effects of exposure to complaints on re-patronage intentions will be more significant for contractual customers than for non-contractual.	Reject

Table 13- Hypothesis results
Source: developed by the author

5. Conclusion

The present dissertation proposed a model to study the impact that the exposure to brand related negative word-of-mouth can have on its readers', more precisely in terms of brand attitude, perceived brand quality, negative word-of-mouth intentions and re-patronage intentions. Moreover, it was analyzed the moderator effect of loyalty contracts on these customers.

A lot of research has been done to understand the factors that influence the production of WOM on a sender's perspective (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004; Ahluwalia, 2002; Anderson, 1998), but not as much tried to see it in the receiver's perspective (Bansal and Voyer, 2000; Bone, 1995; Charlet *et al.*, 1995). This study aimed to understand the impact that brand related negative word-of-mouth can have on its readers, considering it was produced by other peer customers. For that, an experiment was conducted, through an online questionnaire that allowed to quantify the hypothesis proposed in the light of the literature.

This study revealed that, although expectations lead to a negative impact on customers exposed to negative information, this impact was not fully reflected in the research made. In fact, the exposure to brand related negative word-of-mouth of other customers did not affect the perceptions of consumers in terms of brand attitude, perceived brand quality or even re-patronage intention. This phenomenon can be possibly explained by the fact that a lot of information that is nowadays presented on Facebook is not considered relevant and in some cases not even truthful, discrediting part of the messages one can receive from this social network. Additionally, from the study of Kimmel and Kitchen (2014), it was found that recipients tend to resist negative word-of-mouth on brands they are likely to choose, which can explain the results obtained since customers were analyzed in terms of their already chosen brand.

Nonetheless, different results indicated that the customers exposed to negative brand related content had significant higher intentions of creating more negative word-of-mouth. This is a relevant finding that companies should be aware and take into consideration since indicates that negative word-of-mouth can generate more negative word-of-mouth.

The study also contributed to better understand the role of loyalty contracts in the sector and how this can affect the consumer's behavior. As hypothesized, our findings confirmed the premise of the moderation effect of loyalty contracts on perceived brand quality. Consumers under the

obligation of a loyalty contract reflected lower values of perceived brand quality of their telecommunication company than those without it. Hypothesis 5b was supported since significant different results were obtained between respondents exposed to negative and neutral posts in non-contractual clients group. On the contrary, no significant difference was found in the contractual clients for the same construct. It is the different outcome in both groups, contractual and non-contractual, that supports the moderation brought by the loyalty contracts, *ceteris paribus*. This finding is supported by Lee *et al.* (2001).

Contrary to what was expected, no statistically significant results were obtained in terms of the effect of loyalty contracts in brand attitude (H5a), negative word-of-mouth intention (H5c), and re-patronage intention (H5d). Negative word-of-mouth intentions revealed indeed differences between the two types of exposure (neutral and negative), however, this result was obtained in both contractual and non-contractual clients, suggesting no moderation effect. Leading to the same conclusion were the results obtained regarding brand attitude and re-patronage intention since no significant differences were found as a result of the independent sample t-test.

Nonetheless, it was possible to verify that all constructs revealed higher values in the non-contractual group than in the contractual one. This was verified both in the customers exposed to neutral and negative brand related content. Exception has to be made to the negative word-of-mouth intentions construct since this must be considered inversely, as higher values of the construct indicate a more negative behavior. This fact indicates that non-contractual clients revealed more positive evaluations of their telecommunication company than the contractual ones, even after being exposed to negative or neutral brand related word-of-mouth. Even so, no statistically significant difference was found.

All things considered, it is of interest to realize that the hypothesis of the moderator effect revealed an impact in the evaluation of the customer towards the brand that is more connected with the cognitive side of the individual (the case of perceived brand quality) but, no significant impact was found with the two variables that involved more action towards the brand, as it would be the case of engaging in negative word-of-mouth or even switching brands. This can be explained by the fact that the contractual customers under analysis were not necessarily unsatisfied to the point to evaluate the option of leaving the brand or producing complaints. In fact, it is possible for a

customer to be simultaneous ought to remain a client of the company and affectively committed to it (Allen and Meyer, 1990) as these are not mutually exclusive.

In sum, the present study investigated the influence of exposed readers' to brand related negative word-of-mouth and the moderation effect of loyalty contracts. Although only a small part of the negative influence proposed was supported, significantly contribution was brought in the analysis of loyalty contracts. Nevertheless, there is still potentialities to be explored in the matter of word-of-mouth, particularly in social media.

5.1. Marketing and Managerial Implications

As mentioned in the beginning of the study, the topic of word-of-mouth is full of managerial implications. This particular research, allowed some valuable findings that aligned with the previous literature can be of great interest to the area.

The research developed did not reveal significant impact from the exposition to brand related negative word-of-mouth content in all the variables in analysis, giving the impression that even though this type of complaints should be taken into consideration and minimized as possible, no significant indirect effect will be spread to other customers. Nonetheless, due to the subjectivity of the phenomenon of word-of-mouth, this should not be underestimated.

One variable that did reveal its impact was the negative word-of-mouth intentions, indicating that attention should be drawn to this situation. The exposed readers to negative complaints appeared to feel higher intentions of producing negative word-of-mouth. Firstly, it is important that brands understand their customer's overall appreciation and satisfaction with the brand itself. If one is entirely satisfied, its intention of producing negative word-of-mouth cannot be increased, since there are no negative comments the customer would like to do. On the other hand, if by reading other complaints one customer feels that this approach is a good way to expose their unfavorable thoughts, a snowball effect can be initiate where negative word-of-mouth brings more negative word-of-mouth.

Especially attention should be given to customers with loyalty contracts so they won't feel trapped in their contract and can simultaneously feel connected with the brand by not only the contract established but also because it is their personal intention.

Managers need to understand the power social media can have and develop strategies and measures to deal with the challenges that emerge from it. Word-of-mouth, both good and bad, can have strong impacts through the online environment but it has to be dealt correctly.

5.2. Limitations and directions for future research

The current study focused on the impact of the exposure to negative word-of-mouth in the telecommunication industry. It would be of interest, for future research, that different sectors or industries would be considered to complement the study. In this particular case, the industry in analysis was an oligopoly which à priori limits the consumer's alternatives, in some other industries different characteristics could be addressed accordingly. For example, the restaurant industry since it depends on the recommendation factor and negative word-of-mouth may play a major role on it. Similarly, only Portuguese companies and customers were considered in this study. To extend this investigation to other countries would be interesting, although difficult for comparisons since it would allow to measure the influence and impact of the cultural context (Anderson, 1998).

The subjectivity of the posts presented represent a limitation of the study, even though the majority of the subgroup has considered the negative posts as negative and the neutral posts as neutral, this evaluation depends on the individual appreciation. Not all posts presented as negative were considered that way by the sample, which may have affected some of the results. Future research on the topic could consider a different approach to expose customers to this type of word-of-mouth to minimize this problem.

Another limitation to be considered was the measure of perceived brand quality, as previously mentioned in the validation of measures. The scale was not as reliable as desired, even though acceptable, which may have affected the results.

At last, the current study only investigated the topic on the Facebook platform but other social media platforms could be considered and analyzed in terms of the effect of negative brand related word-of-mouth, such as Youtube or even Instagram.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 - Online questionnaire in Portuguese

Este questionário destina-se à realização de um estudo para uma tese do Mestrado de Marketing do ISCTE-IUL. O objectivo será analisar o comportamento do consumidor nas redes sociais. Todas as respostas são anónimas e não serão divulgadas para nenhum outro fim. O tempo previsto para a conclusão do questionário é de cerca de 5 minutos.

Obrigada desde já!

Mariana Costa

1 - É actualmente cliente de alguma operadora de telecomunicações? Considere serviços de televisão, internet, telefone fixo e/ou telefone móvel.

- Sim*
- Não*

2- Qual a sua operadora de telemóvel?

Selecione apenas aquela que utiliza mais frequentemente

- Vodafone*
- MEO*
- NOS*
- Yorn*
- WTF*
- Moche*
- Outra*

3- Há quanto tempo é cliente dessa operadora?

- Menos de 1 ano
- Entre 1 a 2 anos
- Entre 2 a 3 anos
- Entre 3 a 4 anos
- Há mais de 4 anos

4- Avalie o grau de satisfação com a sua operadora actualmente:

- Completamente insatisfeito
- Muito insatisfeito
- Insatisfeito
- Nem satisfeito nem insatisfeito
- Satisfeito
- Muito Satisfeito
- Completamente satisfeito

5- Possui um contracto de fidelização no seu serviço de telefone móvel que esteja vigente?

- Sim
- Não

6- Utiliza a mesma operadora para outros serviços de telecomunicações?

(por exemplo televisão, telefone fixo, Internet)

- Sim
- Não

7- Quais?

- Televisão
- Internet
- Telefone Fixo
- Outro _____

8- Possui um perfil de Facebook?

- Sim
- Não

Skip To: End of Survey If Q8 = Não

9- Com que frequência utiliza o Facebook?

- Várias vezes por dia
- Uma vez por dia
- Duas a três vezes por semana
- Uma vez por semana
- Menos do que uma vez por semana

10- Segue algumas marcas através desta rede social?

- Sim
- Não

11- Alguma vez utilizou a página de Facebook de uma marca para fazer uma reclamação?

- Sim
- Não

Considerando o Facebook da sua operadora de telemóvel observe atentamente as seguintes publicações feitas na página.

Grupo 1 – Negative posts



Miguel Rodrigues

Boa tarde, gostava de saber porque é que nunca consigo aceder à Internet em casa (zona de Loures)! Espero que a situação seja resolvida em breve!!

Like · Comment · 9 minutes ago · 🌐

👍 2 people like this.



Write a comment ...

13a - Considera esta publicação:

- Positiva
- Negativa
- Neutra

14a - Indique o que faria em relação a este post

-
- Gosto
- Comentário
- Partilha
- Nenhuma das anteriores



16a – Considera esta publicação:

- Positiva
- Negativa
- Neutra

17a - Indique o que faria em relação a este post

-
- Gosto
- Comentário
- Partilha
- Nenhuma das anteriores



18a - Considera esta publicação:

- Positiva
- Negativa
- Neutra

19a - Indique o que faria em relação a este post

-
- Gosto
- Comentário
- Partilha
- Nenhuma das anteriores



21a - Considera esta publicação:

- Positiva
- Negativa
- Neutra

22a - Indique o que faria em relação a este post

-
- Gosto
- Comentário
- Partilha
- Nenhuma das anteriores

Grupo 2 – Neutral posts



13b - Considera esta publicação:

- Positiva
- Neutra
- Negativa

14b - Indique o que faria em relação a este post

-
- Gosto
- Comentário
- Partilha
- Nenhuma das anteriores



16b - Considera esta publicação:

- Positiva
- Neutra
- Negativa

17b - Indique o que faria em relação a este post

-
- Gosto
- Comentário
- Partilha
- Nenhuma das anteriores



19b - Considera esta publicação:

- Positiva
- Neutra
- Negativa

20b - Indique o que faria em relação a este post

-
- Gosto
- Comentário
- Partilha
- Nenhuma das anteriores



22b - Considera esta publicação:

- Positiva
- Neutra
- Negativa

23b - Indique o que faria em relação a este post

-
- Gosto
- Comentário
- Partilha
- Nenhuma das anteriores

24 - Indique, numa escala de 1 a 7, o seu grau de concordância com as afirmações abaixo:

(Considere os posts que leu anteriormente)

	<i>Discordo completamente</i>	2	3	<i>Não concordo nem discordo</i>	5	6	<i>Concordo completamente</i>
<i>Se esta situação acontecesse comigo eu iria reclamar da minha operadora aos meus amigos e familiares</i>							
<i>Se esta situação acontecesse comigo eu ia garantir que dizia aos meus amigos para não adquirirem produtos/serviços da minha operadora</i>							
<i>É provável que eu alerte os meus amigos e familiares para não adquirirem produtos/serviços da minha operadora</i>							

25 - Indique, numa escala de 1 a 7, o seu grau de concordância com as afirmações abaixo:

	Discordo completamente	2	3	Nem concordo nem discordo	5	6	Concordo completamente
<i>Eu estou disposto a adquirir produtos/serviços da minha operadora no futuro</i>							
<i>Se uma destas situações tivesse acontecido comigo eu não voltaria a adquirir produtos/serviços da minha operadora</i>							
<i>Se uma destas situações tivesse acontecido comigo eu voltaria a adquirir produtos/serviços da minha operadora</i>							
<i>Eu escolheria outra operadora, se fosse possível de o fazer facilmente</i>							
<i>Eu tenciono continuar a ser cliente da minha operadora</i>							

26 - Segundo os critérios abaixo, avalie a percepção que tem da sua operadora de telemóvel

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<i>Não apelativa</i>								<i>Apelativa</i>
<i>Má</i>								<i>Boa</i>
<i>Desagradável</i>								<i>Agradável</i>
<i>Desfavorável</i>								<i>Favorável</i>
<i>Difícil de gostar</i>								<i>Fácil de gostar</i>

27 - Avalie numa escala de 1 a 7 o seu grau de concordância com as afirmações abaixo:

	<i>Discordo Completamente</i>	2	3	<i>Não concordo nem discordo</i>	5	6	<i>Concordo Completamente</i>
<i>A maioria dos produtos/serviços da minha operadora são de grande qualidade</i>							
<i>A probabilidade da minha operadora ser uma marca de confiança é muito alta</i>							
<i>Os produtos/serviços da minha operadora têm um preço adequado</i>							

28 - Idade:

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- +65

29 - Género:

- Masculino
- Feminino

30 - Habilitações Académicas:

- Ensino Básico (até ao 9º ano)
- Ensino Secundário (até ao 12º ano)
- Licenciatura
- Mestrado
- Doutoramento

31 - *Situação Actual*

- Desempregado*
- Trabalhador*
- Estudante*
- Trabalhador Estudante*
- Reformado*

Appendix 2- Online questionnaire in English

The following questionnaire is part of the study of a dissertation for the Master in Marketing at ISCTE-IUL. The goal is to analyze the consumer behavior on social media. All responses will be anonymous and will not be used to any other end. The predicted time to finish the questionnaire it is about 5 minutes.

Thank you!

Mariana Costa

1 – Are you currently client of any telecommunication company?

Consider services of cable, internet connections, mobile phone and telephone

- Yes*
- No*

*2- What is your **mobile phone** service provider?*

Only select the one you most frequently use

- Vodafone*
- MEO*
- NOS*
- Yorn*
- WTF*
- Moche*
- Other*

3- For how long are you client of that company?

- Less than 1 year*
- Between 1 and 2 years*
- Between 2 and 3 years*
- Between 3 and 4 years*
- For more than 4 years*

4- Rate your current level of satisfaction with your telecommunication service provider:

- Completely unsatisfied*
- Very unsatisfied*
- Unsatisfied*
- Neither satisfied neither unsatisfied*
- Satisfied*
- Very Satisfied*
- Completely satisfied*

5- Do you own any loyalty contract on your mobile phone service?

- Yes*
- No*

6- Is your mobile phone company the same for other telecommunication services?

(for example television, telephone, Internet)

- Yes*
- No*

7- Which one(s)?

Television

Internet

Telephone

Others _____

8- Do you have a Facebook profile?

- Yes
- No

Skip To: End of Survey If Q8 = No

9- How frequently do you use Facebook?

- Several times a day
- Once a day
- Two to three times a week
- Once a week
- Less than once a week

10- Do you follow any brands on this social network?

- Yes
- No

11- Have you ever used a Facebook brand page to make a complaint?

- Yes
- No

Considering the Facebook brand page of your mobile phone company please observe the following posts made on the page.

Group 1 – Negative posts



13a – Do you consider this post as:

- Positive
- Negative
- Neutral

14a – Indicate what you would do regarding this post:

-
- Like
- Comment
- Share
- Any of the above



16a - Do you consider this post as:

- Positive
- Negative
- Neutral

17a - Indicate what you would do regarding this post:

-
- Like
- Comment
- Share
- Any of the above



18a – Do you consider this post as:

- Positive
- Negative
- Neutral

19a - Indicate what you would do regarding this post:

-
- Like
- Comment
- Share
- Any of the above



21a - Do you consider this post as:

- Positive
- Negative
- Neutral

22a - Indicate what you would do regarding this post:

-
- Like
- Comment
- Share
- Any of the above

Group 2 – Neutral posts



13b - Do you consider this post as:

- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative

14b - Indicate what you would do regarding this post:

-
- Like
- Comment
- Share
- Any of the above



16b - Do you consider this post as:

- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative

17b - Indicate what you would do regarding this post

-
- Like
- Comment
- Share
- Any of the above



19b - Do you consider this post as:

- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative

20b - Indicate what you would do regarding this post:

-
- Like
- Comment
- Share
- Any of the above



22b - Do you consider this post as:

- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative

23b - Indicate what you would do regarding this post:

-
- Like
- Comment
- Share
- Any of the above

24 – On a scale of 1 to 7 rate your level of agreement with the statements below:

(Consider the posts previouslt read)

	Completely disagree	2	3	Neither agree neither disagree	5	6	Completely agree
<i>How likely would you be to warn your friends and relatives not to shop at this retail store?</i>							
<i>If this had happened to me I would complain to my friends and relatives about this store</i>							
<i>If this had happened to me I would make sure to tell my friends and relatives not to shop at this store.</i>							

25 - On a scale of 1 to 7 rate your level of agreement with the statements below:

	Completely disagree	2	3	Neither agree neither disagree	5	6	Completely agree
<i>What is the likelihood that you would shop at this retail store in the future?</i>							
<i>If this situation had happened to me I would never shop at this store again.</i>							
<i>If this had happened to me I would still shop at this store in the future.</i>							
<i>If it were possible to do so without problems, I would choose another company</i>							
<i>I intend to remain the company's customer</i>							

26 – Following the criteria below, rate the perception you have on your mobile service provider

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<i>Non-appealing</i>								<i>Appealing</i>
<i>Bad</i>								<i>Good</i>
<i>Unpleasant</i>								<i>Pleasant</i>
<i>Unfavourable</i>								<i>Favourable</i>
<i>Unlikeable</i>								<i>Likeable</i>

27 - On a scale of 1 to 7 rate your level of agreement with the statements below:

	Completely disagree	2	3	Neither agree neither disagree	5	6	Completely agree
<i>Most of the products of this brand are of great quality</i>							
<i>The likelihood that this brand is reliable is very high</i>							
<i>Products of this brand are worth their price</i>							

28 - Age

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- +65

29 - Gender:

- Masculine*
- Feminine*

30 – *Educational qualifications:*

- Basic Education (9° grade)*
- High School (12° grade)*
- Bachelor*
- Master*
- PhD*

31 – *Current situation*

- Unemployed*
- Worker*
- Student*
- Student worker*
- Retired*