ONLINE RECEPTION ANALYSIS: BIG DATA IN QUALITATIVE MARKETING RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Purpose — *The purpose of this paper is to forward an extension of reception analysis as a way to incorporate and give insight to social media mediations and big data in a qualitative marketing perspective. We propose a research method that focuses on discursive developments in consumer debates for example on YouTube — a large-scale open-access social media platform — as opposed to the closed and tightknit communities investigated by netnography.*

Methodology/approach — *Online reception analysis*

Findings — *Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, we find that big data can enrich online reception analyses by showing new aspects of weak tie online networks and consumers meaning making.*

Research limitations/implications — *The potential of online reception analysis is to encompass a discursive perspective on consumer inter- actions on large-scale open-access social media and to be able to analyze*

socialities that do not represent shared cultures but are more representative of transitory everyday interactions.

Originality/value of paper − *Our method contributes to the current focus to define levels of analysis beyond research centered on individuals and individual interactions within groups to investigate other larger socialities. Further, our method also contributes by incorporating and investigating the mediatization of interaction that social media contributes with and therefore our methods actively work with the possibilities of social media. Hence, by extending the advances made by netnography into online spaces, online reception analysis can potentially inform the current status of big data research with a sociocultural methodological perspective.*

Keywords: Big data; online reception analysis; netnography; discourse analysis; Webometrics; YouTube

INTRODUCTION

Big data is the big issue in marketing at the moment. It is proclaimed to be the solution to end all marketing problems in the future (Manyika et al., 2011). Some even claim that with big data we can dispense with the "why" questions (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2013), however others warn against trusting big data at the same time as they worry about the surveillance that big data also represents (Boyd & Crawford, 2011). In this paper, we investigate how big data can give perspective to analyses of consumers' interactions on large-scale open-access social media. They present a challenge to qualitative consumer research, because of the numbers of consumers interacting and their transitory engagement. YouTube users, for example, may be continuously present on YouTube, while engaging only temporarily with specific texts and other users, thus creating a different sociality than what is seen in small-scale closed social media communities such as brand communities (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Big data in this case provide data to understand forms of interaction, level of commitment, and common discourses, that would be hard to detect or interpret without the big data traces.

In qualitative marketing research the most widely adopted method for the study of consumers' meaning making activities online is netnography (Kozinets, 1998, 2002, 2006a, 2006b, 2009), which has provided the qualitative marketing literature with deep knowledge on co-creation (Füller,

Jawecki, & Mühlbacher, 2007; Kozinets, Hemetsberger, & Schau, 2008),
anticonsumption (Kozinets & Handelman, 1998), global consumer citizen-
ship (Rokka & Moisander, 2009), cross-cultural ambivalence (Nelson &
Otnes, 2005), consumers' meaning making (Broderick, Mclaran, & Ma,
2003), peer to peer file sharing (Cohn & Vaccaro, 2006; Giesler &
Pohlmann, 2003a, 2003b), and conflicts among consumers (de Valck, 2007).
True to its ethnographic heritage, netnographic studies are focused on
micro-textual analysis of closed communities with a group of core members
who produce, share, maintain, and sustain a fairly coherent community
culture with shared norms, rituals, narratives, and meanings (Goulding,
2005, p. 298). The focus on relatively demarcated communities makes
perfect sense when employing the netnographic method, because as an
extension of ethnography, the specificity of the particular community and
its defining practices and community ties form the basis of understanding
(Arnould, 1998; Kozinets, 1998, 2002, 2006a, 2006b, 2009).

However, there are many other types of online social contexts such as
YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and other large-scale open-access
social media where consumers interact and make meaning. Here, consumers
participate in high numbers in fleeting ways, but are nonetheless part of the
meaning making processes around brands and ads, because they share and
discuss for example TV commercials uploaded to YouTube. Further, due to
the technological properties of the platforms, these comments, images,
and consumer-made videos circulate not just within the platform but into
other platforms such as Facebook and more closed platforms such as
community networks, and in this fashion, these consumers, despite their low
engagement, spread their viewpoints in large circles. Manuel Castells call these
interactions and media convergences weak tie socialities (1996/2010, p. 388).
Such weak tie socialities, − a characteristic of a global network society − are
difficult to investigate with netnography, because they are not necessarily
examples of community but rather mediated expressions of readings.

In this paper we propose to incorporate big data in online reception ana-
lyses to understand disparate consumers' online interactions and meaning
making. The paper thus takes up Scott's consumer-response perspective on
advertising (Scott, 1994a, 1994b, 2008, 2009) and is an example of how qua-
litative and quantitative methods can be mixed when incorporating big data
in cultural analyses of large-scale open-access social media. The purpose is
to give a qualitative perspective on big data and approach online consumer
interactions and meaning making from a media sensitive perspective. The
paper hence contributes by making methodological proposals to understand
the "lived action"-perspective of the online every day, by decentering the

consumer subject as object of analysis and look at the fragmented everyday life (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Fiske, 1987/2011). Thus, a final contribution of this method is that it goes beyond consumer-centric interpretations, which is a recent concern within CCT-studies (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011; Moisander, Peñaloza, & Valtonen, 2009; Moisander, Valtonen, & Hirsto, 2009).

Inspired by Castells, we therefore suggest shifting the analytical focus from *users* to *uses* (1996/2010, p. 390) and thereby understand the accumulated patterns of behavior of weak tie socialities rather than specific communities' patterns. We argue for interpretative research at a discursive level, because, contrary to netnography's focus on types of users or types of communities, we suggest to focus on types of readings and patterns of response in a societal context, thereby moving the center of attention from the consumers alone to interplays of technology, texts, users, and contexts.

This paper is structured as follows; we analyze the differences between netnography and online reception analysis. Then we introduce the quantitative tool Webometric (Thelwall, 2008, 2009; Thelwall, Sud, & Vis, 2012) as a way to sort and classify big social media data and understand consumer networks, in order to find and qualitatively analyze smaller illuminating cases from a discourse analysis perspective (Elliott, 1996; Fairclough, 2003; Hackley, 2003) that enables understanding of how flows of meaning emerge from different kinds of data. Finally, we demonstrate the possibilities of this type of analysis in an example of four car TV commercials on YouTube.

ONLINE CONSUMPTION CULTURE − SOCIAL SPACE OR MEDIA SPACE

The interpretive turn in consumer culture research (CCT) (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Goulding, 1999) facilitated much needed investigations of consumers' experiences and meaning making primarily from either psychological (Tadajewski, 2006) or ethnographic (Sherry, 1991) perspectives, which have provided CCT research with many new insights into the lived lives of consumers and their meaning making processes (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011). The interpretive methods have developed with the field and have also expanded into new contexts with developments of the Internet and later social media. Especially Kozinets' work has made significant advances in the CCT and marketing literature on to how to approach online

social and cultural life with the development of the netnographic method (Kozinets, 1997, 2002, 2006a, 2009). However, netnography forwards a micro-textual analytical perspective focused on small portions of devoted consumers' online interactions and meaning making in closed communities.

The focus of netnographic analysis is a priori on cultural interpretation, that is on particular online communities as existing accessible social worlds (Kozinets, 2009, p. 132), where real people negotiate identity, symbolic systems, and relationships. Netnography accordingly produces understandings of online culture and communities as they appear in their online naturalistic setting (Kozinets, 1997, 1998, 2002, 2006b, 2009). Thus, netnography has declared the Internet to be a social space (Hine, 2005). It follows that to netnography, culture is culture whether it is online or offline, and in most cases, online culture is primarily an extension of offline culture to encompass geographically dispersed consumers (Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry, 2003; Kozinets, 1997, 2001, 2009; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Assuming that the Internet is primarily a social space, however, leaves out other perspectives such as the Internet as forms of meta-mediated communication (Jensen, 2011) that encompass multiple forms of media and layers of mediation, where technology sometimes have agentic capacities (Franklin & Graesser, 1997) that influence interpretive as well as social actions.

In netnographic investigations, agency as well as meaning belong to people in communities. So meaning is there in an almost tangible way, and there are right and wrong ways to interpret meaning both for community members and for the researcher. It is, for instance, possible to go back to the informants to perform member checks to find out if the netnographic researcher got it right and to give the informants voice as part of the research (Kozinets, 1997, p. 471, 1998, p. 369, 2002, p. 67, 2006b, p. 136, 2009, p. 148). Further, the community members are the keys to investigating meaning about for example the brands that brand community literature investigates (Cova & Pace, 2006; Fournier, McAlexander, Schouten, Sensiper, & Corporation, 2000; Kates, 2006; Luedicke, 2006; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Muñiz & Schau, 2005; Schau & Muñiz, 2007; Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009), contrary to the brand itself (Bjerrisgaard, Kjeldgaard, & Bengtson, 2012; Lury, 2009) or the medium through which meaning is articulated by the consumer (Jensen, 1990, p. 143; Schrøder, 1994, p. 339).

However, large-scale open-access social media platforms where large amounts of data are generated as a result of social meaning making based on fleeting and weak social ties require new methodological approaches that go beyond understanding consumer sociality as primarily organized through close-knit communities. Social life in large-scale open-access online

media is based on fleeting interaction, yet pervasive in its distribution, and further, it represents fragmented social interactions, yet forms coherent and contestable norms and meanings. Large numbers of users participate in minor ways and these forms of participation reaches into other platforms. Further, on YouTube, contradictions and disagreement are the norms that enable sharing and collaboration (Chmiel et al., 2011; Thelwall et al., 2012; van Zoonen, Vis, & Mihelj, 2011), contrary to closed communities, where contradictions and disagreement are threats to community (de Valck, 2007). Finally, YouTube engenders such vast numbers of users, videos, comments, and (dis)likes that it challenges the *assimilative practice* (Kozinets, 2009, p. 59) of a nethnographer.

Online Social Media as Mediated Space

A reception perspective focuses on more than interpersonal interactions in a community, because it is about mediated texts, the response they get from users, and how the users' media practices play into their interpretive activities (Jensen, 2007). Thus, we suggest to approach large-scale open-access social media platforms as a priori mediated spaces; for example, users only have access to them via media technology such as computers or mobile phones.

A central aspect in reception studies is technology's mediation and users' technological manipulations of texts and how texts and their reception changes based on technology's intermediation (Castells, 1996/2010). This means that the concept of text is opened up in an online reception perspective, because the analytical text is a wide variety of constellations, where texts and users are just two aspects, and where technology is always an aspect as well. Thus, reception studies operate at a discursive level and investigates patterns of response (Schrøder, Drotner, Kline, & Murray, 2003, p. 116) and their situatedness in larger social discourses. Consequently, reception studies also aim at showing the dynamics of interpretations and how interpretations feed into textual and societal discourses and enforces or changes them.

Data

Linda Scott conceptualized reception studies as consumer-response in 1994. As interpretive research it draws on the same methods as netnography, and an entire reception study can sometimes be based on one person's

interpretations of a text − typically the researcher's (Scott, 1990, 1994a, 1994b, 2008). Yet, other consumer-response studies adopt an empirical base, where both interviews (Gilly & Wolfinbarger, 1998; Kates & Shaw-Garlock, 1999; McQuarrie & Mick, 1999, 2003; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2010; Scott & Vargas, 2007) and experiments (McQuarrie & Mick, 1999, 2003; McQuarrie & Phillips, 2005; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004; Scott & Vargas, 2007) have been utilized. However, the data resulting from these methods are at a discursive level and therefore focus on how the interpretation is situated in a wider interpretive community (Fish, 1976, 1978). Thus, reception studies approach a different analytical level than netnography's micro-textual level, since it represents not only the individual's phenomenological context and how the interpretation is situated in that context, but also includes historical, social, technological, and textual contexts.

The different levels of analysis between netnography and reception studies also mean that the employment of quantitative methods results in data that have different interpretive potential. Thus, for reception studies, quantitative data is one way of moving from a micro-textual analytical level to a discursive analytical level. Therefore, part of a reception analysis is to make sense of consumers' media use and media interpretations by accumulating consumer responses (Wilson, 2009, p. 4). And to that end big data becomes a valuable part of the analysis, because of it accumulative character (Mayer-Schönberge & Cukier, 2013).

Theory Building

Reception studies build theory about the connections between texts, users, technology, and context in a wider sense. From a reception studies perspective, a different understanding of meaning emerges in reading processes between text and reader (Livingstone, 1993, p. 7), based on collective conventions of textual forms and readings of these forms (Scott, 1994a, p. 463). So rather than culture and interpretations of culture, the focus for reception studies is on processes of interpretation and how these interpretations originate both in texts, consumers and media practices. As a consequence, meaning as one unified community-reified entity is not a concept within consumer-response (Scott, 1994a, p. 463). Rather, meaning is a matter of literacy and context (Livingstone, 2008), and not only the literacy of the text, but also of social interpretive interactions and the media technology employed by the text or the reader in the interpretive moment (Livingstone, 2004). That is, an advertisement that is viewed on TV at home

in the living room can be interpreted in a different way than when viewed on YouTube or Facebook by the same person, and the addition of more people adds more ways of reading. Thus, context in consumer-response is something quite different than the particular community context investigated by netnography, where meanings particular to that community can be experienced and understood (Kozinets, 2006b, p. 133). In reception studies, context can be approached from more interpretive levels; it can be within the text as the contextualizing of a rhetorical trope (McQuarrie & Phillips, 2008, p. 9) or the historical context of an ad (Scott, 2008, p. 299). Thus, context is both constructed and given and therefore also influencing and influenced by a given text's *intentions and outcomes* (Scott, 2008, p. 299).

ONLINE RECEPTION ANALYSIS BY WAY OF BIG DATA

In the following we present the sketch of an online reception analysis that employs big data via YouTube to show how big data can be a way to methodologically show the larger context of the qualitatively analyzed discourses. The analysis builds on the comments to four American car ads from spring 2012. The ads follow up on Chrysler's Superbowl ad *Its halftime in America* featuring Clint Eastwood. The four follow-ups each promote a different Chrysler brand; the Dodge Challenger, the Ram Pickup Truck, the Jeep Wrangler, and the Chrysler 300. On YouTube, however, they are all part of the Chrysler channel, and they were all launched on March 30, 2012. The collective theme of the ads is to overcome the financial crisis through hard work, pulling together, and resilience. The ads and their intertextual relationship are described in the appendix.

Since this paper is meant as a demonstration of the digital consumer-response and how to build an analysis from quantitative and qualitative methods, we only demonstrate aspects of the analyses and of the material. Thus, this analysis cannot be considered complete or exhaustive, it is intended as an example of how big data can deepen a qualitative online reception analysis.

Cybermetrics

A cybermetric search can via its analysis of big data give an idea of the patterns of response and networks that the videos are part of. Using

Webometric, developed by Mike Thelwall (Prabowo & Thelwall, 2009; Thelwall, 2009; Thelwall, Buckley, & Paltoglou, 2011, 2012; Thelwall et al., 2012; Thelwall & Wilkinson, 2010), it is possible through big data repositories around the ads to get insight into relationships among users that can otherwise be discovered only by the work-intensive processes of going through the individual users and their friends lists. Webometric enables the collection of Applications Program Interface (API), that is code that give access to information the users have shared on their channels, such as gender, age, and nationality. In this case, we use a purposive sample, having preselected the four *Halftime in America* ads, however, Webometric can also be used to sample videos on certain topics in a grounded way through thematic searches (Thelwall, 2009; Thelwall et al., 2012).

Using the videos' URLs, Webometric can do a combined search of the four videos and thereby show who replies to the videos, indicate YouTube connections between users of one or more ads such as friends and channels subscriptions, generate lists of the topics discussed, and help create central statistics about the videos and its consumers. Finally, Webometric can generate visual networks of connections and show the comments that connect users around a video. In doing so, Webometric enables subsequent qualitative analyses of the quantitative data, because it shows connections in data and preserves the qualitative aspects such as users and comments in contexts.

Metrics of the "It's Halftime in America" Campaign

The data were all downloaded on July 28, 2012. We have selected four examples where specific user comments work as nodes attracting other comments; the users are fullblastman, goodwifeweaver, smithras09, and jmorris6758, see Figs. 1−3. The networks are based on comments, and next to them are the exchanges in writing. Furthermore, the diagram shows username, age, and gender if the user has revealed the information on their channel.

The networks of comments show the discussions as they unfold in relation to the ads and users. However, in order to get more insight for the later qualitative analysis, it may be relevant to know whether the commenting users know each other beforehand, or whether they share interests, as indicated by for example shared subscriptions. Further, it is possible to draw networks of friendships between users, and of friends in common, but in this case, none of the users are friends on YouTube, nor do they share
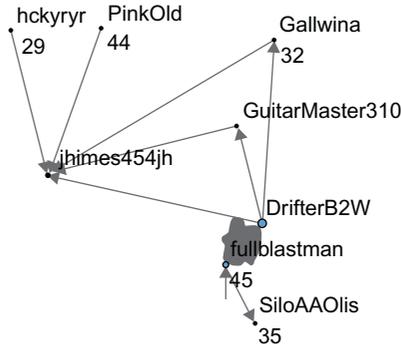
Fig. 1.   Network Associated with fullblastman.
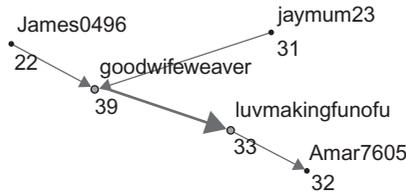
Fig. 2.   Network Associated with goodwifeweaver.
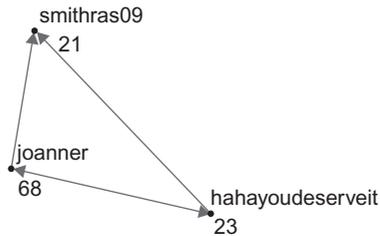
Fig. 3.   Network Associated with smithras09.

friends there. Further, they do not subscribe to each other's channels. They do, however, share interests in one visible way, namely that they subscribe to the same channels − just not each other's. Fig. 4 shows how relations are drawn as a network of subscriptions-in-common.

The users share subscriptions with other users, but of the selected representative users, goodwifeweaver shares only one subscription with the other
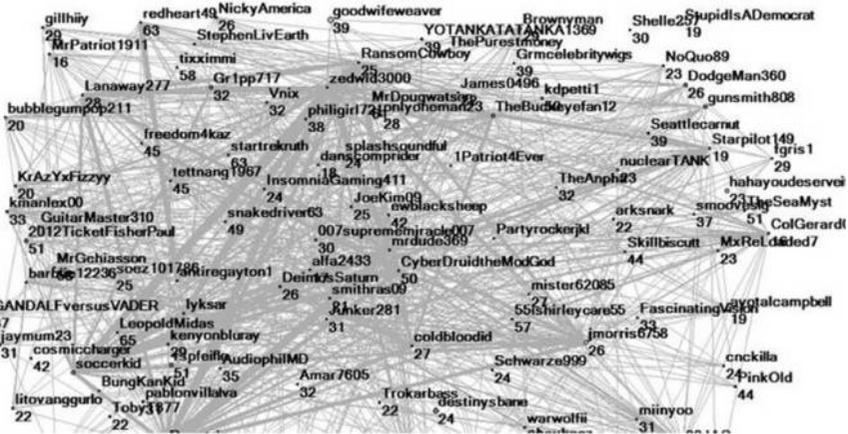
Fig. 4. Excerpts of Subscription-in-Common Network.

users with whom she is engaged in conversation. Smithras09 and jmorris 6758 do not share any subscriptions with the users with whom they discuss, although they share many subscriptions with other commentators. Finally, fullblastman shares no subscriptions with any of the other commentators around these four ads. Consequently, if the users know each other, their connections are not visible on YouTube, and they do not make a point of recognizing each other on YouTube. Nevertheless, the conversations seem to unfold mainly within an American context. Out of all the users who comment on these four videos and list their nationality, only 42 are not Americans, and out of the 42 non-US commentators, 17 are from Canada. This is not surprising, however, since the ads are directed at an American audience and circulate on American TV. Thus, media convergence facilitates the congregation of American users around the ads (Jenkins, 2006). Compared to the general population on YouTube, the almost exclusively American audience is skewed, because American users make up approximately 35.6 % of YouTube's population (Thelwall et al., 2012, p. 8). Arguably, many users do not register any information about their age, gender, or location; these statistics can therefore only be taken as indicative, as is any use of big data (Boyd & Crawford, 2011; Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2013). Further, users who do not comment are not part of the statistics and are as a consequence invisible to the analysis.

The users address each other across age and gender; smithras09 is 21 and male and is addressed by Joanner, who is 68 and female. The other

sample users are engaged in less diverse conversations, when it comes to age diversity, but still display variations in age and gender (Fig. 5). The users' age and gender differences may be part of the explanation for their lack of shared subscriptions; at least the diagram of shared subscriptions suggests a correlation between age and shared subscriptions.

The youngest users are 15 and male, and the oldest user is 68 and female. Of the users that have revealed their gender (and assuming they have told the truth), 18% are females and 82% males. Furthermore, the predominant age groups are between 20 and 29 years old. This may not be surprising, since the ads in this sample are all car ads, but it is also consistent with previous research on YouTube. Thus, Thelwall et al. found that when gender was recorded, three-quarters of the YouTube users were males, and the most common age was 20 (Thelwall et al., 2012, p. 7). In relation to the half-time ads, the women who have recorded their age are generally older than the males. The female average age is 42, with users ranging from 22 to 68.

In this instance, at least two aspects are suggestive of the over-representation of young males among the commentators. Firstly, the commercials mainly address males, due to the products they advertise, and the characters in the commercial are mostly men, thereby suggesting that male audiences more readily identify with the characters in the ads. Secondly, the overarching themes of recession and job markets in the commercials are acutely more relevant to the male audience of twentysomethings because they have a higher risk of unemployment and job loss as a result of the recession. Furthermore, according to the American Bureau of Labor, the recession has had wider implications for males between 16 and 24 than for other groups (Bureau of Labor, 2012). However, this is only speculation, as the quantitative data does not offer information about this.
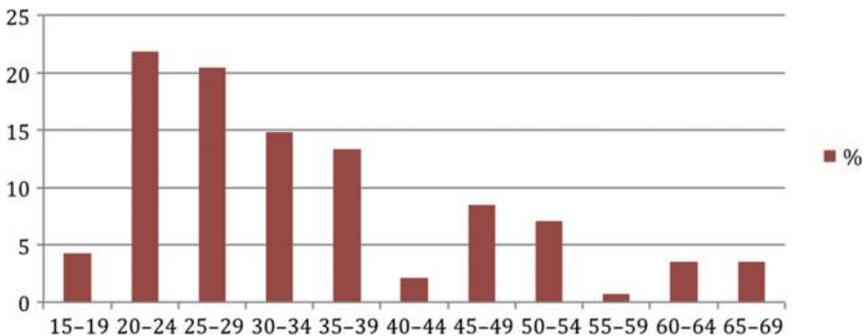

Fig. 5.   Age Distribution among Commentators.

The analysis of some of the big data provides us with an overall understanding of who are present in these comments and the social composition in the conversations. It is important to underline that the way we approach big data is not as correlations as Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier (2013). Rather, we use big data to identify consumer actions that would otherwise be hard to detect. Thus, with these quantitative patterns in place, we suggest returning to the comments and videos to develop the qualitative perspective.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

To get a better understanding of the comments and thereby the response to the ads, we carried out discourse analyses of the commentaries. Discourse analysis is particularly suited for analyzing the intertextual relationship between big and small discourses (Fairclough, 1992a, p. 102, 1992b, p. 195). That is, discourse analysis situates texts within big Discourse, because any text draws on and interacts with Big Discourses in society. Netnography sometimes also uses discourse analysis (Kozinets, Maclaran, Hogg, & Catterall, 2003; Maclaran, Hogg, Catterall, & Kozinets, 2004). However, the differences in epistemology between netnography and discourse analysis is a challenge when combing these methods. The issue lies in their emic and etic approaches, respectively (Pike, 1967). Netnography works from the inside and attempts to see culture from the perspective of the insider (Kozinets, 2009, p. 60). Accordingly, the connection between small discourse and big discourse is difficult, if working from a netnographic perspective (Maclaran et al., 2004, p. 164) because the micro-social perspective regards discourses as emerging, whereas Big Discourse generally involves prior understandings of the phenomenon (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000, p. 1134). Discourse analysis, on the other hand, views culture as a dialectic between structure and agency (Fairclough, 1992a, p. 45). Thus, discourse analysis is a *"top-down" way of seeing* (Fairclough, 1992a, p. 226). However, in this paper we forwards the perspective that big and small discourse-flows are not contradictory, but complementary, because from a consumer response perspective, the context is always the wider society, and therefore Big Discourses are always also part of the small micro-level discourses. In the following, we develop an example of how big and small discourses interact in one of the commentaries and show how mediation is part of the interaction.

Discourses of Recession

The following quote has been retrieved using Webometric, but we also recommend going through parts of the data manually. Webometric generates networks based on exchanges, so comments not posted as replies will not appear in the commentator network. This creates a particular bias since the exchanges on YouTube are often motivated by disagreements (Thelwall et al., 2012, p. 12), as are exchanges in general on large-scale open-access social media (Chmiel et al., 2011, p. 4). However, many positive statements may disappear completely from the analysis if only the comments in the Webometric network are considered. Therefore, we study the commentary perusing both the network analyses and as they appear online to ensure that the analyses encompass both isolated statements and exchanges.

Below is an example of an argument between five users that appeared as comments to the Dodge variation of the *Halftime in America* theme.

> jmorris6758: Here's the thing people: The recession has been over for a while now, and the economy has improved. The main problem with most of us is not that we can't find a job, its that we are not willing to move past our old careers and start a career in a different field. Let's face it, this recession didn't just cause unemployment, it destroyed job fields that will never come back because employers saw that cutting them was a good idea and decided not to bring them back.

> AroundSun -> jmorris6758: The recession is not over, I don't know what you are thinking or where you are getting your info from. We are pursuing the same policies that caused the disaster in the first place. We put a bandaid on a bullet wound and treated some symptoms but not the disease itself. Not only is it not over, it is going to get worse. Even if we discontinue current policies, we are going to have to take our lumps first like we should have 5 years ago, before the situation ever improves.

> jmorris6758 -> AroundSun: You saying the recession is not over is like saying global warming is not real. You state no facts yet facts back my claim up. Your opinion is not what is counted, but it is dully noted ….

> miinyoo -> jmorris6758: There's a large swath of reasons this isn't accurate. While the rationale for it is very reasonable, there are deeper issues. Without trust, the economy cannot function and the only reason there is any trust at all is the Fed. Artificial trust. That can't go on forever. Something has to give. Until confidence is restored and the debt/fraud/criminality rectified, things will be glum and new hugely expensive ventures to produce new capital and quality jobs will stay rather scarce.

> Roberta Ross -> jmorris6758: You are so right! When I lost my job of 10 years with a $55,000.00 salary, I looked for work & found a black hole. So I willingly took a job at $8.75 an hour, 15 hours a week, a year later I am a supervisor up to $10.00 and 25 a week, split shifts are great I get to drive all the way home and back in between my shifts. I have 2 other "occasional" jobs. Aug. I close on my shortsale & moving myself

into a friends basement. Last night I dreamed I was balling my eyes out, but things are really great

bettergetdave -> jmorris6758: I couldn't disagree with you more. Which job fields did employers see as good to get rid of and they wouldn't come back? PS love the commerical even though it's from Dodge.

The quotes display very little information about the ad. In fact, only the first user, jmorris6758, comments on the overall theme of the ads; that because of the recession, positive American values must be emphasized and examples of good civic behavior saluted. jmorris6758 further contradicts the campaign message by stating that the recession has been over for a while, and that people have to change their expectations to the job market, because the job market has changed. The other users join the conversation to debate jmorris6758's statement from various perspectives. Aroundsun disagrees with the statement for political reasons and calls for a profound change of the political and economic systems. Miinyoo also expresses political disagreement, but points to a fundamental lack of trust in American society, which has to be rebuilt in order to restore civil society. Roberta Ross at first seems to agree with the initial statement, but then goes on to share her personal story of how she lost her job and now juggles three unstable jobs while living in a friend's basement. Her final remark − dreaming that she is balling her eyes out, but things are great − adds a satirical twist to her story, and thus her comment challenges jmorris6758's statement about people not adapting to the new job market. Finally, bettergetdave asks jmorris6758 to qualify his statement with examples of job fields that were consciously selected to be disposed of. bettergetdave is the only one of the users in the exchange that actually mentions the ad, yet the ad is the initiating cause of the argument between the users.

The users have gathered to see the ads and have subsequently been motivated by the user comments to debate. The ads' presence on YouTube has facilitated the users' coming together to debate the campaign statement. And the statement in this case is not about whether or not to buy the car advertised nor is it about the narrative of the commercial. Rather, the users debate the call of the overall campaign to pull together and follow the solid, dependable, hardworking, sacrificing people in the ads. In doing so, the campaign is trying to be a positive factor in the US recession-ridden society, yet the YouTube-users are not necessarily agreeing with the campaign statement, and they use their access to digital media platforms to debate.

Additionally, the example shows that the users may not be supportive consumers of the brand but can still appreciate the message of the commercial. bettergetdave's comment, that the ad is good even if it is from Dodge, shows a critical consumer reading because the user differentiates between the brand and the ad. While the user does not seem ready to act on the selling proposition to buy a Challenger forwarded by the ad, the comment shows appreciation for the ad narrative. Further, the comment points to how ads become social texts rather than persuasive texts (Ritson & Elliott, 1999; Scott, 1994a, 1994b) because the users to a large degree ignore the persuasive message and use the ads for debates about recession and job-market.

In this analysis, we see how big data can be a tool to show the resonance board of the qualitative analysis because big data in this case is a way to demonstrate the way big, and small discourses are negotiated and expressed around particular ads and users. The users' digital media practice further their interaction and participation in both small and big discourse because the linkages between lived lives, institutional discourses, and ad response become visible in the comments on YouTube. The Webometric analysis further shows that these users most likely have no previous engagements with each other, so the debate that emerges between the users is not a reenactment of familiar statements from a closed circle of users but a resemblance of the debate that takes place in society about the current recession. Yet, the Webometric analysis also reveals that not all parts of American society participate in the debate; those engaged on YouTube are mainly males in their twenties. Thus, structures of silence are also part of the online reception analysis, since it is possible to point to missing segments and voices in the analysis. Thus, a central point of the analysis is to understand the various segments and subdivisions that make up the mass audience on YouTube, however, not from a community perspective, rather we look at users as audiences and analyze their comments as their public and collective interpretation of media (Castells, 1996/2010, p. 363).

DISCUSSION

Big data in this case gives a way to understand whom the responses come from and what their connections are, therefore big data give direction to the online reception analysis. The initial description of the ad campaign develops the textual framework that the ads belong to and the users

comment on, but it also connects the campaign to Chrysler's current situa-
tion in American society. The Webometric analysis develops the social
demographics and possible user networks in the comments. It indicates
who are present in the comments and points to patterns of response. Thus,
the cybermetrics show that the dominant users are young American males
and that despite their lack of prior connections they are keen to debate the
underlying economic and political discourse of the ad campaign. Young
men are a particularly difficult group to engage through broadcast media;
however on YouTube they become visible as a critical audience and inter-
act as a weak tie public inspired by the ads. As such, Webometric maps the
debate and helps connect the statements analyzed in the discourse analysis
to users. This is of course only possible in the cases where the users have
revealed information about themselves on YouTube. Finally, the discourse
analysis demonstrates the issues and discourse that are important to the
users and how they use the ads to create a space where it is possible to
share their viewpoints and discuss current societal issues. The discourse
analysis also confirms that the users are critical and aware of the ads'
intended message, and that they are capable of ignoring that message and
using the advertising text for their own social purposes.

   Through the combination of big data and online reception analysis the
connections between interpretation as a social practice and the pervasive-
ness of these social practices become apparent. In this case, the online
reception analysis shows that concerned consumers use their digital media
practices to discuss and question societal discourses, and that ads as a
pervasive cultural form (Kenney & Scott, 2003; Scott, 1994a) facilitate
these consumer discussions because they work as textual nodes that inspire
consumers to interact. Big data further provide the accumulative data to
show the generalizability of the online reception analysis. Through the
combination of the big data mapping and the qualitative analyses of
discourses in the comments it becomes possible to show the socialities
emerging through the weak tie interactions (Castells, 1996/2010) on
YouTube.

   Furthermore, the combination of big data and online reception analysis
shows new aspects of consumer responses to ads. That is, users on
YouTube are not necessarily invested in brands or products as for example
members of brand communities (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) or consumption
tribes (Canniford, 2011a, 2011b; Cova, 1997; Cova, Kozinets, & Shankar,
2007) are. Reception analyses focus on any constellation that includes con-
sumers and texts, because they are not concerned with whether or not there
is a consumption relationship. Through a reception approach, readers of

texts are neither consumers, anticonsumers, or indifferent. They are people interpreting texts in certain contexts.

The particular audience that is identified through our analysis are younger American men. This group is often elusive as mass media audience, because they to a large extent have moved from broadcast media to online forms of media. Yet, through our reception analysis we are able to identify them as an audience via their uses of online texts and technologies. Moreover, we can develop an understanding of their investment in societal debates, that they often are not seen participating in via traditional forms of media (Connell, 2005; Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013). Thus, a benefit from combining a reception perspective with big data is that the idea of who makes meaning through ads is widened from the consumers who are positively or negative invested in the particular brand, product, or service, to everybody encountering the ad online. For an online reception analysis, big data provide a way to show more analytical perspectives and include more aspects of data. The possibilities of handling big data as part of the analysis are to widen the understanding of who can be valuable informants, because the mapping of consumer-responses shows how, for example, YouTube users voluntarily and on an everyday basis interact critically with advertising texts. Through the large quantities of data, it is possible to connect different levels of discourse and thereby show how everyday ad response is influenced by "Big Discourse" such as Economy, Politics, and Nation.

Thus, we argue that the combination of big data in quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis helps us approach the weak tie socialities in a holistic and contextual way (Jick, 1979). That is, through the combination of methods and data accumulation, we are able to point out new forms of interaction and different audiences on YouTube. Without the big data perspective, we would not be able to discuss the pervasiveness of the qualitatively identified behavior, and vice versa, without the qualitative analysis we would be unable to discuss the depth of the user-developed discourses and pervasiveness of user activities.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we show that online reception analysis is a way to approach large-scale open-access social media platforms and understand consumers' interpretive activities on such platforms. Through both quantitative and qualitative analyses, we show how big data can be used in a qualitative

marketing research perspective to open up our understanding of users and texts and how they interact on and through digital media. The aim of this research is different from netnography's blueprint of a specific community culture, and online reception analyses embark on different forms of analyses, even if the methods of data collections employed are largely the same as those used in netnography. One might argue that where netnography's focus on communities exhibit the traits of modern forms of "the social," fleeting and ephemeral social interactions on large-scale open-access social media represent postmodern forms of sociality (Maffesoli, 1996). That is, the weak tie forms of sociality characterized by Castells as *the new electronic culture* (1996/2010, p. 397). The method we propose here can be said to be a way to grasp such fleeting forms of sociality by way of analyzing big data. The type of big data we focus on are a form of digital material traces of such weak tie forms of sociality.

The combination of big data and consumer-response provides perspectives on processes of interpretation, textual flows, and embeddedness of big and small discourses in everyday interpretation of ads. As such, it delineates the ways digital media practices are part of the interpretive activities that consumers engage in, for example on YouTube. Thus, big data and consumer-response pinpoints the ways in which small and large communities are connected through structures of text, interpretations, and technology, and offers a way to conceptualize these connections.

That is, we propose to engage with big data as a possibility to get access to the everyday, transitory consumer activities with texts and technology that are difficult to hold on to from a qualitative perspective because of their ephemeral character. Big data is then a repository of consumer interactions and can be viewed as traces of a different kind of sociality. Thus, by looking beyond the immediate text-reader relationship, online reception analysis enables research that situates consumers, texts, and technologies in larger societal frameworks. Our paper demonstrates one way to develop further the advances made in qualitative marketing research by netnography into the online spaces. Thus, online reception analysis can potentially contribute to the current status of big data analysis to incorporate qualitative, culturally based insights.

APPENDIX: THE INTERTEXTUAL RELATIONSHIP OF THE ADS

It's halftime in America is a campaign launched by Chrysler during Super Bowl 2012, later expanded with four commercials all promoting different Chrysler brands. The campaign is intended to motivate Americans to move forward in troubled times, and to offer hope and encouragement. The first commercial, It's halftime in America, featured Clint Eastwood and became the theme of a political discussion initiated by Karl Rove, former adviser to the Bush administration, who asserted the viewpoint that the commercial was promoting Obama's reelection. The commercial promotes Chrysler as an all-American company that fights alongside with the Americans to turn the current economic crisis around. And in fact, Chrysler has, as most American car companies, received subsidies from the American government to overcome the crisis. However, that aspect is only an implicit part of the commercial, as the commercial displays images of ordinary Americans trying to make ends meet and work their way through the crisis. Clint Eastwood is the node that keeps the various images together. Through a montage between Americans and Eastwood as the quintessential American, he narrates a story of how it is time to pull together and meet the challenges of recession face on. Thus, the commercial presents discourses of crisis, nation, and markets.

The initial Superbowl commercial is the overarching textual context of these four ads, and as such facilitates connections between the texts. All the commercials have been developed together and shot at the same time. It's halftime in America includes footage from the other commercials and works as meta-text, which includes the other four commercials in it. The Superbowl commercial therefore functions as a framework for the interpretation of the other ads, and even if the recession for example is never mentioned in the four subsequent ads, the theme is already part of their soundboard, because it has been introduced in It's halftime in America.

Shaun in the Challenger: tells the story of a father who has served in the army and been away from his family. As he is now back with his family, he reflects on the sacrifices his family has made while he was away. Especially the son has stepped up and never complained, even if he missed his dad. Now the father gets to drive his son to school, and the ride provides many a father and son moment for the two. The spot is intended to celebrate family values and American military actions for freedom.

Jenny in the Jeep Wrangler: the story of Jenny is about a family that has split up, and mother and children have moved away to begin again. The daughter in the family tells the story, and as she complains about the changes that have happened, she also acknowledges their mother's hard work to navigate their new circumstances and make a comfortable home for them. Once again, the ride to school is the time when the mother and children share some family time together and come to terms with their new situation. The ad is meant to inspire perseverance and reinvention of one-self. And maybe this is Chrysler's way of justifying their repositioning of Jeep Wrangler toward women, even if Jeep usually has had a solid consumer-base among twenty year-old males.

Chrysler 300 — my son Steve: This ad is once again the story told by a father, although this time the story is about an adult son and the father's pride of the son's accomplishments. The son has his own company, and through hard work and just enough risk-taking, he has managed to build a solid business over thirty years. The father, who narrates the story, shares his feelings of having brought up a sensible and self-made man. The intention behind the story is to inspire big dreams and the desire to make your own way in the world.

Tommy and the RAM: finally, Tom and the RAM is told by a wife, who shares her love for her hardworking husband. As images pass of the husband working at all hours, the wife recounts his determination and dedication to provide for the family. We are let in on how she leaves encouraging messages for him on his answering machine to help him keep up his spirits. The commercial is intended to express perseverance and commitment.

None of the stories directly addresses the American economy or the difficult times the country is going through at the moment; however, because of the intertextual connection to the more elaborate Superbowl ad, recession is the underlying premise of the stories.