

## **25 million conversations about brands in Belgium every week**

### **3 out of 10 brand conversations results in a change of opinion**

**Every week Belgians have 25 million conversations about brands. One third of these conversations changes their opinion about the brand. The conversations with most impact are about the brand and the products themselves, and to a lesser extent about the communication campaigns. Everyone takes part in this “word-of-mouth”, not just the super influencers. The aim with which and how you start a conversation are the main factors that determine whether the conversation results in a change of opinion concerning a brand. This is apparent from Conversation Mapping research conducted by InSites Consulting and Boondoggle.**

#### **25 million conversations about brands every week, 1 in 3 changes his/her opinion.**

Extrapolation of the number of conversations measured during the two week study shows that every week 25 million brand conversations take place. Moreover, all Belgians talk about brands: men, women, young, old, people who are not interested in the brand,... In all, 124 product categories and 404 brands were discussed in the recorded conversations.

#### **1 op 3 conversations changes the receiver's opinion.**

32% of the conversations changed the opinion of one or several participants. This also means that in 7 out of 10 conversations the participants' opinion remained unchanged. For companies it is therefore also important to assess the importance of conversations in their communication mix.

#### **Conversations about the brand and the product have more impact than conversations about advertisements.**

If we look at all the product categories, 66% of the conversations seems to concern the brand, 36% the products and only 11% specific communication campaigns.

And brand and product conversations are what really change people's opinions.

Companies are able to steer these conversations by taking into account 4 essential elements:

- always depart from the identity of the brand
- give a social or useful role to the brand in the life of the consumer.
- prove this role, not just communicate it.
- create commitment around the brand.



Peter Verbiest, Strategic Director Boondoggle : *“Consumers are able to check and compare all brand and product stories through the new information flows. Sustainable brands therefore have no other choice than to build their brand story from their real identity and to be authentic. To make this story relevant for a consumer, every brand must also, more than ever, ask itself the critical question: what role does my product or service have in the life of a consumer? What information, conversation, entertainment value am I providing him/her?”*

### **Impact of a conversation much greater when it departs from a question.**

The impact of a conversation is strongly influenced by the way it began. Is someone spontaneously giving his/her opinion or was the person asked to give his or her opinion? However, the chances of meaningful impact increase up to 75% when the conversation departs from a question.

Some people have more of an impact on other people's opinion. But everyone can, provided that companies produce an engaging story about their brand, contribute a great deal to positive brand conversations and opinions.

Dennis Claus, Senior Consultant at InSites Consulting : *“A great deal of attention goes to creating so-called “evangelists” who spontaneously try to convince others of their opinion. However, the research showed that it is better to create a situation of question and answer between consumers. In other words, “Ask an acquaintance” is more powerful than “Tell a friend”.*”

### **Bashing, barking, bonding or serenade conversations.**

Conversations can be broken down into 4 categories depending on the tone of the conversation (predominantly positive or negative) and the possible impact on your audience (a big change of opinion or hardly any difference). It is noticeable that brands in the same sector are often grouped within the same conversation categories.

**Bonding** conversations are conversations in which a company is under the illusion that the brand is safe. They are positive conversations, free of obligation, which can also be described as chit chat. They rarely result in a change of opinion, but strengthen a positive relationship with the brand. Conversations about radio stations, games and consoles are popular bonding conversation topics.

**Barking** is a conversation category in which the tone is chiefly negative but which do not often result in a change of opinion about a brand. Companies need to stay alert and prepare for a possible escalation. For companies, the best way to deal with barking is to create more commitment among (potential) consumers and to provide better information about the strengths of the brand and product. Soft drinks are often a topic of barking conversations.

**Bashing** conversations have a very negative content with a great deal of impact. Consumers have these conversations in case of an acute problem with the product or a service. Companies need to track down these conversations quickly and react constructively.



The **Serenade** category comprises the positive conversations which can effectively bring about a positive change of opinion among "receivers" and "distributors". In their communication, companies need to emphasize the positive attributes expressed in the Serenade conversations about their brands. It is important to give ambassadors the necessary tools and information to make it easier for them to convince others. Car brands are typical Serenade conversation topics.

*In terms of method, an online journal was applied in this Conversation Mapping research. 799 respondents were asked to report all their conversations about brands in an online journal over a period of 2 weeks. These figures are representative for the Belgian population in terms of gender, language, training and age (15-55 age category). The following product categories were surveyed in detail in this study: cars, soft drinks, mobiles, mp3 players, computers, gaming, sports articles, spirits and media. For each of these sectors, Boondoggle and InSites Consulting worked out a pilot pathway with major partners in the sector. The result is the first applied Belgian research study about conversations.. InSites Consulting translated this into a new research tool, Conversation Mapping. It allows offline and online conversations about a brand to be mapped and tracked on a daily basis. Boondoggle translated the results, based on its vision on communication, into a method that allows communication strategies to be adjusted and refined.*



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## Contact

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### InSites Consulting

InSites Consulting is a leading marketing research company in the field of online market research with a strong international position. It was established as a spin-off of the Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School. Via an online panel comprising more than 2,000,000 panel members spread over 25 European countries, both quantitative and qualitative online marketing research is carried out. The head office in Ghent has 70 highly-skilled and experienced employees. InSites Consulting stands for: expertise and consulting, driven by innovation, excellent customer service and quality-oriented. More information on [www.insites.eu](http://www.insites.eu).

### Boondoggle

Boondoggle is a renowned full-service communication agency with offices in Leuven, Amsterdam, Dublin and Shanghai. The agency was established in 2000 under the name i-merge and from the start held a thought leadership position in the digital world of communication. Boondoggle developed into a full-service agency over the past two years but is still very much digital in its thinking. Boondoggle produced some great work over the past years for customers such as Axion, Volvo, Dreamland, Electrabel, Sensoa and many others. Its blog <http://blog.boondoggle.eu> is a very valuable source of information for marketers and competing colleagues about 'digital marketing and communication'. More information is available on [www.boondoggle.eu](http://www.boondoggle.eu).