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External Brand Communication:
A Literature Review of the Antecedents to Word-Of-Mouth

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Abstract

Growing importance of word-of-mouth (WOM) has been acknowledged by both academics and practitioners. Consumers rely heavily on WOM in brand evaluations and consequent purchase decisions. Swift advance of social media has further facilitated online consumer discussions, or electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). While positive WOM has been found to attract new customers and strengthen brand commitment, negative WOM can severely damage brand reputation. Understanding what drives consumers to engage in positive or negative communication about brands is often crucial to a company's long-term success.

Previously studies have addressed determinants of WOM and eWOM, however research in this area is still fragmented and unsystematic. Integrating previous research on both traditional WOM and online eWOM, this paper attempts to provide a systematic literature review of different antecedents and motives for engaging in communication about brands. It also aims to provide clarity concerning the construct of "WOM" and its different forms and facets.

Key words: word-of-mouth, electronic word-of-mouth, literature analysis, antecedents

Introduction

Word-of-mouth (WOM hereafter) has been a topic of interest among researchers and practitioners for several decades (Arndt, 1967; Anderson, 1998). Defined as "informal communication directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of goods and services and / or their sellers" (Westbrook, 1987, p.261), WOM has been branded as the second most important source of product information for consumers (Kamins et al., 1997). WOM has proven to be a strong determinant of consumers' purchase decisions and brand evaluations (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Laczniak et al., 2001).

Emergence of first public online blogs has further facilitated product discussions between consumers, allowing for the first eWOM research papers to be published in the top journals around 15 years ago (Wright & Hinson, 2008; Breazeale, 2009). Since then WOM and eWOM have been approached by the academics through the attribution theory (Kim & Gupta, 2012), in the source credibility literature (Cheung et al., 2009), and interpersonal communication theory (Dellarocas et al., 2010) to name a few. The phenomenon of eWOM has been addressed in different contexts – services (Severt et al., 2007) and products (Zhang et al., 2010); from different perspectives – antecedents (Khammash & Griffits, 2010) and consequences (Duan et al., 2008), costs and benefits (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010); within two levels of analysis – market-level (Lee et al., 2011), which looks at the impact of eWOM on market-level parameters, such as sales, and individual-level (Gruen et al., 2006), which studies eWOM's effect on the individual-level parameters, such as consumer purchase decisions.

Given the importance of WOM and eWOM, considerably less attention has been paid to understanding their predictors (Brown et al., 2005; Berger & Schwartz, 2011). Overall, the majority of published empirical research in the area of eWOM is looking at its outcomes, and the causes of eWOM are still understudied (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Breazeale, 2009). Furthermore, even though studies in the fields of consumer behavior and brand relationships have addressed eWOM as a behavioral response to brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), satisfaction (Mangold et al., 1999), surprise (Derbaix & Vanhamme, 2003), usually these studies consider eWOM indirectly, serving as an outcome of the mentioned constructs which are central to the research. Moreover, WOM is often regarded as a measure of customer loyalty, or as a part of a broader 'behavioral intentions' construct (Hightower et al., 2002), leading to a lack of academic knowledge about WOM / eWOM antecedents with them being focal concepts (Anderson, 1998; Mazzarol et al., 2007). Finally, understanding what causes WOM and eWOM is important for the practitioners, enabling them to take a proactive role in facilitating positive feedback and maintaining strong brand reputation.

The objective of this paper is to provide a systematic overview of the antecedents of WOM and eWOM. To date only a few studies have attempted to compare these two concepts (Shankar et al., 2003; Harris et al., 2006), but none of the identified peer-reviewed publications has attempted to provide a

systematic review of the causes of both WOM and eWOM. This was noted by Harris et al. (2006) and Libai et al. (2010) who have suggested the need to investigate the differences between "virtual" eWOM and "real-world" WOM; their antecedents, and formation of social capital within social structures like virtual communities.

The overview of the search strings employed and journals used in the review is provided in the Appendix 1. The structure of this paper is as follows: first, the concept of WOM is presented, followed by the review of WOM antecedents. Second, the concept of eWOM is defined, and distinct features and antecedents of eWOM are discussed. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of differences in consumers' motives and antecedents of offline and online brand communication. Recommendations for future research and practical implications are presented.

WOM Conceptualization

Extensive researchers' and practitioners' attention towards WOM is not without reason. Consumers increasingly invest their trust in WOM, choosing consumer-generated information to advertising (Huang et al., 2011). WOM is positively associated with product sales and a company's revenues (Duan et al., 2008); increased consumer loyalty, overall perceived value of a company's offerings (Gruen et al., 2006), and positive brand perceptions (Amblee & Bui, 2008).

WOM has an important influential power in the 6 existing relationship markets: customer, supplier, referral, recruitment, influencer and internal (Buttle, 1998). For instance, in the 'influencer' market WOM can affect investment decisions, while in the 'recruitment' market one can get a position in a firm through referral (Gremler et al., 2001; Hong et al., 2005). WOM is important to the whole marketplace – both consumers and manufacturers. It has a potential to decrease information asymmetry and create a situation where both parties have the same knowledge about the available products and services (Dellarocas & Wood, 2008).

WOM can have a negative or positive valence (Anderson, 1998). Positive WOM (PWOM) includes communicating positive experiences to the others and even sometimes recommending and praising the brands (Buttle, 1998). There is evidence, that in some industries like online auctions the majority of feedback is positive (Dellarocas & Wood, 2008). Negative WOM (NWOM) is often described as dysfunctional behavior (Gebauer et al., 2012), and can take a form of private complaining, rumor, or communicating one's negative experiences about a brand to the other consumers (Anderson, 1998). Often researchers in the field of WOM focus either on positive or on negative WOM, with fewer publications addressing both (Sweeney et al., 2012); and there are contradictory findings about the level of effect of PWOM and NWOM on the receiver (Buttle, 1998; East et al., 2008).

There is also certain confusion in the measurement of WOM, where some include active recommendation close to brand advocacy, while others consider simply mentioning the product to the other consumers, be it in a positive or a negative manner. In an attempt to compensate for this confusion, others include WOM frequency, or richness and depth of the message in their measures, discussing praise (Ladhari, 2007; Mazzarol et al., 2007).

WOM communication is not always comprised of credible and reputable information. When WOM takes a form of a rumor, its content is evaluated less favorably by consumers, though it still may cause severe damage to companies' business activities (Kamins et al., 1997). In order to preserve positive brand reputation firms need to understand what causes consumers' WOM engagement, and this will be discussed in the next section.

WOM Antecedents

Despite the large scope of publications in the area of WOM antecedents, most of the time WOM is not a focus of the studies, but is addressed as an outcome of another construct central to the research (Anderson, 1998; Mazzarol et al., 2007). There is also a certain confusion in the classifying WOM causes, with some discussing motives (Engel et al., 1969), goals, antecedents (Wetzer et al., 2007), factors (Richins, 1987), triggers and conditions (Mazzarol et al., 2007). For example, Mazzarol et al. (2007) discuss that triggers represent situational factors that prompt consumers to engage in WOM (e.g. responding to a recognized need). Whereas conditions enhance the likelihood of WOM, but on its own are not enough to cause WOM (e.g. closeness of giver and receiver). Similarly, Wetzer et al. (2007) separate WOM antecedents and consumers' goals to engage in WOM. Antecedents are the factors that affect whether WOM will take place, or to what extent. Whereas goals for WOM are what consumers wish to achieve when engaging in WOM. There is however little agreement about the correct classification. As a response to these findings, the following section will collect insights from different theoretical perspectives addressing WOM, and combine the factors into related groups. A complete list of identified antecedents is provided in the Appendix 2.

Personality Traits and WOM Motives

Researchers and practitioners have long been interested in identifying individual characteristics or personality traits, which predict WOM in some consumers. Previous studies have identified individuals who are more likely than the others to engage in WOM - market mavens, opinion leaders and consumer advocates (Money et al., 1998; Chelminski & Coulter, 2011).

Market mavens are those individuals who due to their vast market knowledge have the power to influence others in their purchase decisions through WOM (Money et al., 1998; Wangenheim, 2005). Similarly, opinion leaders affect others in their product adoption. The difference between the two

consumer types is that while opinion leaders are knowledgeable about particular products, market mavens are aware of the more overall marketplace information (Chan & Misra, 1990; Lyons & Henderson, 2005). Market mavens and opinion leaders are concerned with promoting positive marketplace knowledge (Chelminski & Coulter, 2011). Consumer advocates are distinct from these two concepts as they are often more concerned with preventing others from having a dissatisfactory experience. The three groups of influentials are often motivated by concern for other consumers, a greater sense of obligation to share the knowledge, or pleasure from being perceived as a reputable individual (Mazzarol et al., 2007; Cheema & Kaikati, 2010; Chelminski & Coulter, 2011).

However, not only market mavens and opinion leaders engage in WOM. Individuals who spread WOM are usually self-confident, sociable, extraverted, agreeable and close to the receiver of the message (Mazzarol et al., 2007; Fernandes & Santos, 2008; Ferguson et al., 2010). They are characterized by need for material resources and information, shopping enjoyment, value consciousness and fashion innovativeness (Mowen et al., 2007). Furthermore, their communication can be triggered by a recognized need to provide information, promotion or mentioning of the brand in a conversation (Mangold et al., 1999; Mazzarol et al., 2007). Overall, these individuals are often motivated by product involvement, opportunity for self-enhancement, concern for others, entertainment from delivering a message, and dissonance or anxiety reduction (Engel et al., 1969; Sundaram et al., 1998; Wangenheim, 2005; Chung & Darke, 2006). This is further supported by Wetzer et al. (2007) who add such goals as comfort search, advice search and bonding. On the other hand, dissatisfied consumers often pursue different goals for WOM, including venting dissatisfaction and even desire to retaliate after the negative service encounter (Sundaram et al., 1998; Gregoire & Fisher, 2006; Wetzer et al., 2007).

Product Evaluation Factors

A wealth of research is focused on the effect of satisfaction on WOM (Athanassopoulos et al., 2001; Bowman & Narayandas, 2001; Severt et al., 2007). Higher levels of satisfaction generally increase the likelihood of WOM (Meuter et al., 2000; Kau & Loh, 2006). Once the consumers are satisfied, trust makes them feel confident about the company's reliability, and positively affects their PWOM intentions (Kim et al., 2009). Some also discuss an asymmetric U-shaped relationship between satisfaction and WOM, where peak levels of satisfaction lead to higher levels of WOM (Anderson, 1998), especially when the recovery time is shorter (Swanson et al., 2001). Besides satisfaction, WOM can be driven by commitment (Harrison-Walker, 2001; Brown et al., 2005), (e-)loyalty (Srinivasan et al., 2002) and brand identification (Tuskej et al., 2011).

Dissatisfaction has even a stronger effect on NWOM among consumers to whom the product is important, and who perceive little chance of positive outcome (Blodgett et al., 1993), or are dissatisfied with the recovery effort

(Richins, 1983), and do not complain (Voorhees et al., 2006). Dissatisfied consumers can choose to change the service providers, and the reason for switching can be a determinant of NWOM (Wangenheim, 2005). Problem severity and perceived inconvenience caused by the product failure can also cause NWOM (Brown & Beltramini, 1989; Weun et al., 2004).

On the other hand, moderate to high service recovery efforts (Maxham, 2001; Vaerenbergh et al., 2012), as well as consumers' repurchase intentions (Petrick, 2004) have a positive effect on PWOM, even higher than when the firm has not failed in the first place (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002). This is congruent with the notion of "service recovery paradox" or "secondary satisfaction" – a situation when consumers who have experienced a service failure, are more satisfied post recovery than those who have not experienced a failure at all (Blodgett & Anderson, 2000; McCollough et al., 2000).

Consumers' expectations often explain the role of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with products or services in facilitating WOM (Bearden & Teel, 1983; Blodgett et al., 1993). Recent evidence also suggests that consumers have to be either very satisfied beyond their expectations with some degree of surprise (Derbaix & Vanhamme, 2003) to engage in PWOM, or be in the zone of outrage and pain, or very dissatisfied (Berman, 2005) to engage in NWOM. Consumers' prior expectations affect their perceptions of service quality (Boulding & Kalra, 1993; Gonzalez et al., 2007; Gounaris et al., 2010), which together with perceived value increase the chances of PWOM (Hartline & Jones, 1996; Babin et al., 2005; Hutchinson et al., 2009; Turel et al., 2010).

In the event of dissatisfaction, consumers' NWOM can be predicted by their attributions of fault (Curren & Folkes, 1987). Specifically, often NWOM will depend on whether the cause of dissatisfaction is seller- or buyer-related, controllable or uncontrollable by the seller, and stable or temporary (Swanson et al., 2001; Lam & Mizerski, 2005). For example, dissatisfied consumers may still engage in PWOM if they perceive that the failure was their fault, or if they believe a technology (uncontrollable) failure was in place (Meuter et al., 2003). On the other hand, if the blame for the dissatisfactory experience is attributed to the company rather than the consumer themselves, the latter would be prone to engage in NWOM (Richins, 1983).

Similarly, WOM is a function of perceived justice (Blodgett et al., 1993, 1997). Employees' extra-role behaviors (e.g. when they become brand ambassadors for their companies) are positively associated with consumers' perceived justice or fairness, which increase the likelihood of PWOM (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2003). High interactional justice (when consumers are treated with respect), can often compensate for the distributive justice (any actual refund they have received) (Blodgett et al., 1993, 1997; Kim et al., 2009). Customer familiarity (Soderlund, 2002), as well as customer-to-customer interactions (Moore et al., 2005), perceived relationship benefits or social aspects of relationship (Gwinner et al., 1998; Reynolds & Beatty, 1999; Hausman, 2003) are strongly correlated with PWOM. Overall long-term relationship with the company increases the chances of consumer advocacy (Reynolds & Beatty, 1999).

Finally, specific product or brand characteristics can serve as possible explanatory factors to WOM (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Berger & Schwartz, 2011). For example, more publicly visible or constantly promoted brands (which are therefore top of the mind) generate more ongoing WOM over continuing periods of time. More interesting and novel brands generate more immediate WOM, however cease to be discussed shortly as the interest fades (Berger & Schwartz, 2011). Product originality (Moldovan et al., 2011) and self-relevance (Chung & Darke, 2006) determine the amount of WOM, as well as product usefulness determines WOM valence (Moldovan et al., 2011).

Affective Factors

A growing area of research looks at the WOM phenomenon through the consumer psychology literature, and the role of emotions in facilitating consumer behavior, including WOM (Westbrook, 1987; White, 2010). There is a view that depending on WOM valence (positive or negative) WOM antecedents can be more emotionally or cognitively based (Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008). Thereby PWOM is often more carefully considered and driven by cognitive rational evaluations; while NWOM is more immediate and emotional in nature, and occurs more frequently than PWOM (Sweeney et al., 2005).

White (2010) grouped consumer emotions into three groups: positive, negative and bidirectional (which could be attributed both to the self and to the others, e.g. anger or disappointment). Previously such negative emotions as sadness and anger (Nyer, 1997), disappointment and regret (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 1999, 2004) and guilt (Soscia, 2007) have been found to determine NWOM. Another finding suggests that schadenfreunde (an emotion of joy experienced from observing another's downfall) (Sundie et al., 2009), and rumination (extensive thinking about the causes and outcomes of a problem) often elicit NWOM (Strizhakova et al., 2012). Among the positive emotions predicting WOM studies have mentioned joy (Nyer, 1997), gratitude (Soscia, 2007), pleasure and arousal (Ladhari, 2007; Ha & Im, 2012).

Within the branding literature Fedorikhin et al. (2008) discuss consumers' propensity to recommend brand extensions if they have elevated levels of emotional attachment to a parent brand. Another study discusses that brand love (a certain level of passion and emotional attachment to a brand usually experienced by satisfied consumers) leads to PWOM (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

To sum up, face-to-face WOM is often shared between friends and relatives, and is often a response to the senders' perceptions of the quality of the offer, consequent affective responses, and specific personality traits. WOM has importance in the product context, where product characteristics can trigger WOM intentions, and services context, where relationship benefits often motivate consumers to praise the firm.

eWOM Conceptualization

Lately researchers and practitioners have become even more interested in the newer form of WOM – electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). eWOM constitutes '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, p.39).

eWOM differs from WOM in several important ways. First, eWOM as opposed to WOM leaves permanent electronic evidence, which can have a long-lived impact on the audience (Amblee & Bui, 2008; Breazeale, 2009). Second, eWOM has a larger dissemination scope, creating opportunities for companies with positive feedback, and threatening those with negative feedback: 'a typical dissatisfied consumer will tell 8 to 10 people about his / her problem. For me, you are: 2,358' (Ward & Ostrom, 2006, p.226).

Furthermore, traditional WOM and eWOM differ in the strength of ties between the information seeker and the information source (or the degree of closeness and intensity of interaction) (Hansen, 1999; Levin & Cross, 2004). This involves another major difference – anonymity of online reviewer's identity (Gelb & Sundaram, 2002). Consumers engaging in eWOM on online communities often have alias, or created identities (Kim & Gupta, 2012), which can shape the perceived authority and credibility of the reviews. Ku et al. (2012) discuss the difficulties of finding reputable reviews in online discussion forums, suggesting that among others such factors as the average product rating and average trust intensity towards the post help online consumers identify reputable reviews.

eWOM can take place in a variety of virtual community platforms: online message boards (e.g. opinion blogs and discussion forums); social networks (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Linkedin); online chat rooms or virtual worlds, or even boycott Web sites (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Jayawardhena & Wright, 2009). It can be synchronous and asynchronous, as well as directed at one and multiple individuals (Bronner & de Hoog, 2011). Usually researchers focus only on one type of platforms, e.g. boycott Web sites (Ward & Ostrom, 2006), online opinion platforms (Fong & Burton, 2008), review sites (Bronner & de Hoog, 2011) or social networking sites (Cheung & Lee, 2012).

There is a distinction between consumer-generated and firm-generated eWOM, or organic and amplified (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Organic eWOM occurs naturally as opposed to amplified, which is stimulated by companies with a purpose to create buzz (Libai et al., 2010). Thus eWOM is often confused with the terms 'viral marketing' and 'buzz marketing' (Carl, 2006), which are both initiated by people closely affiliated with a company, and with a purpose to acquire new customers (Phelps & Lewis, 2004). As a result it is often difficult to distinguish between user-generated and sponsored eWOM.

Just like traditional WOM, eWOM is a powerful communication tool, which affects consumers' perceptions of product quality and their purchase decisions (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Wangenheim & Bayon, 2004; Schumann et

al., 2010); enhances consumer learning (Hung & Li, 2007) and facilitates brand commitment (Garnefeld et al., 2010). However, the differences between the two concepts suggest a more complex character of eWOM (broader audience, issues of credibility, specific features of online platforms etc.), which raises a concern in the academic world about the applicability of existing WOM theories to explain the newer phenomenon of eWOM (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Different Approaches to eWOM Antecedents

Researchers and practitioners are increasingly interested in the causes of organic eWOM, namely specific contextual factors, brand-related characteristics and personal motives (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). With regards to this eWOM can be approached from a perspective of a sender (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) and a receiver of the message (Cheung et al., 2009; Ku et al., 2012), representing different motivations to post online reviews and to read them. Burton & Khammash (2010) have made a major contribution to the eWOM research from a reader's perspective, identifying 18 motives for reading reviews on online opinion platforms (with regards to different types of involvement - product, decision, economic, site, self-, social involvement and consumer empowerment).

When addressing the readers' perspective, some also study how consumers evaluate the reviews (Kim & Gupta, 2012), as well as act on them (Sweeney et al., 2008). Some studies look at the credibility of eWOM, and the process of finding reputable and trustworthy reviews (Ku et al., 2012). In line with this research Pan & Zhang (2011) indicate that review characteristics (e.g. valence and length) affect their perceived helpfulness. Kim & Gupta (2012) discuss that single emotional expressions in a negative online review can decrease its informative value.

Some research has delved into consumers' internet communication in terms of both information seeking and information giving (Fong & Burton, 2008), discussing that eWOM generation and eWOM consumption are complimentary activities for the majority of consumers (Yang et al., 2012).

Never-the-less, finding a message sender is often more difficult, than its reader (Bronner & de Hoog, 2011). Due to the voluntary nature of online feedback, not every product or service, or company encounter is discussed. Perceived psychological costs of providing eWOM (e.g. reluctance to give negative feedback) often transform into reporting bias. For instance even though about 99 % of online feedback posted on the Internet auction eBay is positive, this does not represent the number of satisfied users (Dellarocas & Wood, 2008). Many unpleased traders may decide not to report their dissatisfaction with another party in order not to receive the same negative feedback from them. Similarly, others may be reluctant to provide positive feedback if the majority of previous posts are negative (Schlosser, 2005). This may be explained by consumers' reciprocal behavior, when they respond to the

positive or negative actions of others in the same manner. In fact, reciprocity is widely present on social networks: "I you follow me, I will follow you", where people 'befriend' or 'follow' those who choose to 'follow' them more as a courtesy (Leider et al., 2009; Brogan, 2011). The following section will discuss the socially constructed character of eWOM and its different antecedents from a sender's perspective.

Antecedents to eWOM sending

Given the similarities of WOM and eWOM, previously eWOM motives have been approached through the traditional WOM literature (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Dellarocas et al., 2010). As a result similar motives have been identified, such as concern for others and the potential for self-enhancement (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Cheung & Lee, 2012).

In addition to personal motives, consumers engaging in eWOM are largely driven by socially-induced factors. Moe & Schweidel (2012) discuss that consumers often experience a 'bandwagon' effect (which is often present at political votings), where the opinions of others can determine an individual's choice. Similarly, expert opinions can motivate consumers' product discussions (Feng & Papatla, 2012). An individual's decision to contribute to an online review can be largely driven by their susceptibility to interpersonal influence and social environment (community), and often eWOM senders are driven by desire for social interaction and desire for economic incentives (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, Bronner & de Hoog, 2011; Chu & Kim, 2011). This is further supported by the findings from Cheung & Lee (2012) and Gebauer et al. (2012), who add that sense of belonging to a group or sense of community and opportunity to increase own reputation are among the major personal and social motives to engage in eWOM communication.

Consumers can also pursue company-directed motives, such as consumer empowerment (desire to motivate a company to introduce changes through voicing a public opinion) and helping a company (Bronner & de Hoog, 2011).

However not only social environment or personality characteristics impact eWOM intention. The product characteristics (availability, popularity and innovativeness) (Dellarocas et al., 2010; Feng & Papatla, 2012) as well as information itself (its quality, authority, authenticity and interesting content) can serve as antecedents to consumers' acceptance of information and their resending intentions (Huang et al., 2011).

Furthermore, several conditions, characteristic of the online context have to be met in order to generate effective eWOM – group cohesion (strong / weak ties), network specifics and web-site design, and relational motivations (social norms and trust) (Hung et al., 2007; Chu & Kim, 2011; Ha & Im, 2012). Yang et al. (2012) add to these findings, discussing that overall media exposure is positively related to eWOM generation.

Overall online feedback can help reduce information asymmetry and add value only if the information provided is of good quality (Dellarocas & Wood, 2008). Hung & Li (2007) identify three sets of sources of meaningful eWOM exchange, clearly positioning eWOM as a knowledge exchange which

enhances learning experience and social capital. These sources include structured eWOM (ensuring the quality of the content); cognitive focus (shared topics of interest) and social relations (social identity and opportunity to establish own reputation as a knowledgeable opinion leader). Drawing on the social capital theory, the authors also discuss two different types of knowledge exchange happening online (tacit personal knowledge about products and services, and explicit professional knowledge), among which only tacit is shared in the VCC (virtual communities of consumption) (Kozinets, 1999; Hung & Li, 2007). Henning-Thurau et al. (2004) explain this through a focus-related utility construct, discussing that modern consumers feel a need to contribute, add value to the community through their knowledge and expertise.

Enhancing consumer learning, eWOM facilitates consumers' brand choices and serves as a signal of brand reputation (Hung & Li, 2007; Amblee & Bui, 2008). Furthermore, existing online brand reputation serves as an antecedent to engage in additional eWOM (Amblee & Bui, 2008). Reputation of complementary goods (pooled reputation of products with similar characteristics to the product in question) increases the chances of eWOM occurring for the reviewed product. The notion of the pooled reputation is related to the research on co-branding (also known as 'brand alliance' or 'brand bundling'), which represents a mutually beneficial public relationship between two or more independent brands (Seno & Lukas, 2007).

There is still lack of knowledge about brand-related eWOM among online brand community members (Yeh & Choi, 2011). Previous research has shown that brand- and community-related factors can motivate the members to engage in eWOM (Scarpi, 2010; Yeh et al., 2011). Both brand- and community-evangelism are present on the web-based brand communities, with brand-related WOM determined by brand affect, and community-related WOM – by community loyalty. Customer commitment as a dimension of relationship quality can also be a driver of eWOM (Tsao & Hsieh, 2012). Carlson et al. (2008) and Yeh & Choi (2011) add to these findings, discussing that brand-identification and community identification together with trust in the fellow community members have a strong predictive power on their eWOM intentions.

Online communities can also serve as a platform for consumers to voice their discontent to the public. Feeling betrayed, consumers can experience a need to gather the public to join their protest against the company. Motivated by four main reasons – a need to punish the company, demonstrate their power of public influence, warn others, and to counter the personal devaluation caused by the betrayal, they construct protest web-sites (Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Experiencing negative emotions associated with betrayal (e.g. anger, frustration, misery), they find others alike and encourage each other to vent their dissatisfaction. These emotions can in fact enhance the feeling of betrayal among the dissatisfied individuals, leading to the emergence of shared identities ('we against them').

Finally, different cultural background can determine the choice to engage in eWOM. There is evidence that consumers from collectivistic cultures are

more likely to engage in information seeking, while their counterparts from individualistic countries are more likely to contribute to online discussions (Fong & Burton, 2008). Liu et al. (2001) earlier found that consumers from individualistic cultures would particularly engage in NWOM in the event of negative service experience, but will not praise the positive service. At the same time cultures with lower individualism or higher uncertainty avoidance will be more likely to praise a service (Liu et al., 2001). Furthermore, cultural confinement can motivate consumers to increase online communication in an attempt to engage more socially with other representatives of their own culture. Later on though, due to the acculturation, this motivation to connect with people from 'home' will gradually fade, as consumers become more integrated into their current society (Huggins et al., 2013).

To conclude, eWOM antecedents and consumer motives for eWOM can often be different to those of offline WOM. Particularly, in addition to consumers' personal characteristics or product features, eWOM is often shaped by the specific character of an online community and interaction between its participants. Thus, it becomes more socially constructed and may be affected by the opinions of others.

Discussion

The objective of the paper was to provide an overview of the research on traditional and online WOM. The comparison of these two constructs and a discussion of their previously identified antecedents allow drawing several conclusions.

First, the findings from the systematic literature review suggest a more complex character of eWOM communication, reflected in the broader audience, issues of credibility and specific features of online platforms. Whereas traditional WOM is largely defined by personality-related factors, such as consumers' emotional state, or product-evaluation factors such as satisfaction with the offer and its perceived quality; eWOM is characterized by the sociable character and interactive features of online communities. As a result, it is often conditional upon community and brand identification, network characteristics, and relational motivations, such as social norms and trust.

Second, the level of consumer interaction and their involvement differs across online platforms. Within the virtual communities or online brand communities consumers are more described as members of the communities rather than participants. Therefore their motives for contributions are often more socially induced and constructed.

Within online platforms consumers gain power to vent their dissatisfaction to the public and encourage others to join their cause. This type of consumer activism can severely damage brand reputation and discourage future sales. Therefore, today more than ever practitioners need to focus their attention on preventing the causes of dissatisfaction, and creating brand evangelists among their consumers.

Finally, more research should look into how eWOM motives evolve through the members' social interaction and community integration. Virtual communities of consumption and online brand communities should serve as fertile context for this purpose.

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Appendix 1

Articles used in the literature review of WOM and eWOM antecedents

Journal	Number of articles	ABS 2010	VHB 2011
Advances in Consumer Research	3	2	C
Decision Support Systems	1	3	B
European Journal of Marketing	5	3	C
Information & Management	1	3	C
International Journal of Advertising	1	2	D
International Journal of Electronic Commerce	1	3	B
International Journal of Research in Marketing	1	3	A
Journal of Advertising Research	1	3	C
Journal of Business Research	12	3	B
Journal of Consumer Psychology	2	4	B
Journal of Consumer Research	1	4	A+
Journal of Economic Psychology	1	2	B
Journal of Interactive Marketing	3	2	B
Journal of Management Information Systems	1	3	A
Journal of Marketing	4	4	A+
Journal of Marketing Communications	2	2	*
Journal of Marketing Management	1	3	D
Journal of Marketing Research	4	4	A+
Journal of Retailing	5	4	A
Journal of Service Management	2	2	C
Journal of Service Research	9	3	A
Journal of Services Marketing	8	2	C
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	8	3	A
Journal of Travel Research	2	3	*

Management Science	1	4	A+
Marketing Letters	3	3	B
Marketing Science	2	4	A+
Psychology & Marketing	5	3	B
Total Quality Management & Business Excellence	1	2	*
Tourism Management	3	4	*

The overview of the search strings

Database	Search term used	Type of search	Timeframe	Number of hits	Number relevant
EBSCO, Google Scholar	Online word-of-mouth, electronic word-of-mouth, internet word-of-mouth, word of mouse, word of mouth	Peer-reviewed, academic journals	All period	327	94

Appendix 2

List of WOM & eWOM antecedents identified in the literature

Factor	WOM / eWOM	Term used (where applicable)	Author
Product – related factors			
Public visibility	WOM	Driver	Berger & Schwartz (2011)
Accessibility			
Interesting product			
Originality		Antecedent	Moldovan et al. (2011)
Usefulness			
Self-expressive brand		Predictor	Carroll & Ahuvia (2006)
Self-relevant product		n/a	Chung & Darke (2006)
Availability	eWOM		Dellarocas et al. (2010)
Popularity		Antecedent	Feng & Papatla (2012)
		n/a	Dellarocas et al. (2010)
Innovativeness		Antecedent	Feng & Papatla (2012)
Product / service – evaluation factors			
Expert ratings	eWOM	Antecedent	Feng & Papatla (2012)
Customer-based corporate reputation	WOM	n/a	Walsh & Beatty (2007)
Likelihood of successful redress / service recovery efforts		Antecedent	Singh (1990), Fernandes & Santos (2008)
		Determinant	Blodgett et al. (1993)
		Predictor	Richins (1983)
		n/a	Maxham (2001), Voorhees et al. (2006)
Process recovery communication			Vaerenbergh et al. (2012)
Problem severity		Predictor	Richins (1983), Weun et al. (2004)
		n/a	Brown & Beltramini (1989)

Perceived inconvenience			
Product importance		Determinant	Blodgett et al. (1993)
Perceived risk		Antecedent	Wangenheim (2005)
Perceived justice		Determinant	Blodgett et al. (1993), Blodgett et al. (1997)
		Predictor	Maxham & Netemeyer 2003)
	eWOM	Trigger	Gebauer et al. (2012)
Perceived quality	WOM	Antecedent	Harrison-Walker (2001), Gonzalez et al. (2007), Ferguson et al. (2010), Gounaris et al. (2010)
		n/a	Boulding et al. (1993), Hartline & Jones (1996), Hausman (2003)
Perceived value		Antecedent	Hartline & Jones (1996), Hutchinson et al. (2009)
		Predictor	Turel et al. (2010)
		n/a	Babin et al. (2005)
Reason for switching		Antecedent	Wangenheim (2005)
Satisfaction		Antecedent	Anderson (1998), Athanassopoulos et al. (2001), Brown et al. (2005), Gonzalez et al. (2007), Wangenheim & Bayon (2007), Fernandes & Santos (2008), Hutchinson et al. (2009), Kim et al. (2009), Gounaris et al. (2010), Ha & Im (2012)
		Stimulus	Mangold et al. (1999)
		Predictor	Maxham & Netemeyer (2002), Moore et al. (2005), White (2010)
		Determinant	Blodgett & Anderson (2000)
		n/a	Reynolds & Beatty (1999), Meuter et al. (2000), Bowman & Narayandas (2001), Babin et al. (2005), Kau & Loh (2006), Severt et al. (2007)
	eWOM	Trigger	Gebauer et al. (2012)
		n/a	Dellarocas & Wood (2008)
Employee performance	WOM	n/a	Hartline & Jones (1996),
Hedonic shopping value / shopping enjoyment		Antecedent	Mowen et al. (2007)
		n/a	Jones et al. (2006)
Sender-related factors			
Product involvement	WOM	Motive	Engel et sl. (1969), Sundaram et al. (1998)
		Antecedent	Wangenheim (2005)

Coincidental communication / product mentioning in a conversation		Stimulus	Mangold et al. (1999)
		Trigger	Mazzarol et al. (2007)
Prompted need for information		Stimulus	Mangold et al. (1999)
		Trigger	Mazzarol et al. (2007)
Other communication		Stimulus	Mangold et al. (1999)
Giver-receiver closeness / tie strength		Condition	Mazzarol et al. (2007)
	eWOM	Antecedent	Chu & Kim (2011)
Interpersonal influence		Motive	Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), Cheung & Lee (2012)
		Antecedent	Cheung & Lee (2012)
		Source	Hung & Li (2007)
Self-involvement (self-enhancement, reputation)	WOM	Motive	Engel et sl. (1969), Sundaram et al. (1998)
		Goal	Wetzer et al. (2007)
Entertaining		Antecedent	Wangenheim (2005)
Market mavenism		n/a	Lam & Mizerski (2005)
Locus of control		Condition	Mazzarol et al. (2007), Fernandes & Santos (2008)
Self-confidence			Mazzarol et al. (2007)
Extraversion		Antecedent	Ferguson et al. (2010)
Agreeableness			
Other-oriented values		Motive	Engel et sl. (1969), Sundaram et al. (1998), Chelminski & Coulter (2011)
		Goal	Wetzer et al. (2007)
Concern for others / altruism / consumer advocacy	eWOM	Motive	Hennig-Thurau (2004), Bronner & de Hoog (2011), Cheung & Lee (2012)
		Antecedent	Cheung & Lee (2012)
			Mowen et al. (2007)
Need for information / advice search	WOM	Motive	Sundaram et al. (1998)
		Goal	Wetzer et al. (2007)

Comfort search			
Dissonance reduction		Motive	Engel et sl. (1969)
			Sundaram et al. (1998)
Anxiety reduction / venting negative feelings		Goal	Wetzer et al. (2007)
	eWOM	Motive	Bronner & de Hoog (2011)
Social activity / gregariousness	WOM	Factor	Richins (1987)
		Condition	Mazzarol et al. (2007)
Desire for social interaction / sense of belonging / sense of community / bonding		Goal	Wetzer et al. (2007)
	eWOM	Motive	Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), Bronner & de Hoog (2011), Cheung & Lee (2012)
		Trigger	Gebauer et al. (2012)
Fashion innovativeness	WOM	Antecedent	Mowen et al. (2007)
Value consciousness			
Need for material resources			
Technology anxiety		n/a	Meuter et al. (2003)
Confusion proneness			Walsh & Mitchell (2010)
Desire for economic incentives	eWOM	Motive	Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), Bronner & de Hoog (2011)
Consumer empowerment			Bronner & de Hoog (2011)
Organizational advocacy / helping companies	WOM	Condition	Mazzarol et al. (2007)
	eWOM	Motive	Bronner & de Hoog (2011)
Revenge	WOM		Sundaram et al. (1998)
		Goal	Wetzer et al. (2007)
	eWOM	Motive	Ward & Ostrom (2006), Gregoire & Fisher (2006), Bronner & de Hoog (2011)
Product experience		Driver	Yang et al. (2012)
Media exposure			
Affective factors			
Positive affect / emotions	WOM	Antecedent	Westbrook (1987)
		Predictor	White (2010)
Gratitude		Antecedent	Soscia (2007)
Pleasure			Ladhari (2007), Ha & Im (2012)

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Arousal	WOM, eWOM		Nyer (1997)
Sadness			
Joy / satisfaction			
Surprise		Determinant	Derbaix & Vanhamme (2003)
Negative affect / emotions		Antecedent	Westbrook (1987), Schoefer & Diamantopoulos (2008)
Anger			Nyer (1997), Wetzer et al. (2007)
Disappointment		n/a	Zeelenberg & Pieters (1999, 2004)
Guilt		Antecedent	Soscia (2007)
Regret		n/a	Zeelenberg & Pieters (2004)
Rumination			Strizhakova et al. (2012)
Schadenfreunde			Sundie et al. (2009)
Regret	WOM	Antecedent	Wetzer et al. (2007)
Frustration			
Irritation			
Uncertainty			
Brand-relationship factors			
Brand attachment	WOM	n/a	Fedorikhin et al. (2008)
(e)-Loyalty		Predictor	Moore et al. (2005)
		n/a	Srinivasan et al. (2002)
(Brand) Commitment		Antecedent	Harrison-Walker (2001), Brown et al. (2005)
		n/a	Carlson et al. (2008), Tuskej et al. (2011)
Brand affect			Scarpi (2010)
Customer familiarity			Soderlund (2002)
C2C interactions		Predictor	Moore et al. (2005)
Brand love			Carroll & Ahuvia (2006)
Relational benefits		n/a	Gwinner et al. (1998)
Social aspects of relationship			Hausman (2003)
(Brand) Identification		Antecedent	Brown et al. (2005), Tuskej et al. (2011)

Community identification	eWOM		Yeh & Choi (2011)
Brand reputation		n/a	Amble & Bui (2008)
Trust	WOM	Antecedent	Kim et al. (2009)
	eWOM		Chu & Kim (2011), Yeh & Choi (2011)
Platform-related factors			
Web-site design	WOM	Antecedent	Ha & Im (2012)
Ratings environment		Factor	Moe & Schweidel (2012)
Cognitive focus	eWOM	Source	Hung & Li (2007)
Structured eWOM			
Cultural factors			
Cultural dimensions	WOM		Liu et al. (2001)
		n/a	Fong & Burton (2008)
Cultural confinement	eWOM		Huggins et al. (2013)
Acculturation			
Other factors			
Return / repurchase intention		Antecedent	Petrick (2004)
		n/a	Severt et al. (2007)
			Meuter et al. (2000), Swanson et al. (2001)
Attribution	WOM	Predictor	Richins (1983)
		Antecedent	Curren & Folkes (1987)
Product promotion		Trigger	Mazzarol et al. (2007)
Information character (authenticity, quality, authority, interesting content)	eWOM	Antecedent	Ha & Im (2012)
			Huang et al. (2011)