

Chapter 4

Engaging in eWOM

A great number of studies (Abrantes et al. 2013; Cheung and Lee 2012; Gheorghe and Liao 2012; Mardhiyah et al. 2013; Musallam and Magalhães 2012; Wang et al. 2013) address the question of why consumers engage in eWOM. By identifying underlying motivations for people to engage in eWOM, researchers are able to understand, and influence, individual online information assimilation which can affect consumer purchase decisions, customer loyalty, and consumer commitment to the community. The objective of this chapter is to provide a review of the existing literature on antecedents and motivations to engage in eWOM communications from the perspective of senders of eWOM (people who give eWOM) and receivers of eWOM (people who seek eWOM). Knowing these motivations to engage in eWOM can help marketers to encourage people to post more and as a result have an impact on sales.

This chapter starts with a discussion of why people send eWOM communications, outlining the main antecedents and motivations. Following this, the motivations for consumers to receive eWOM are considered. The chapter ends with a summary of key points, discussion of future research directions and recommendations for practitioners.

4.1 Antecedents of eWOM

The sender of eWOM is defined as a person who transmits the communications (Cheung and Thadani 2012). Studies investigate what kinds of eWOM communications are more likely to be disseminated by consumers (Assael 2004; Hornik et al. 2015). Hornik et al. (2015) find a strong tendency towards negativity in the dissemination of eWOM—consumers spread negative eWOM to more recipients, for a longer period of time, and in a more elaborated manner compared to positive eWOM. Some academics consider negative eWOM to be more powerful and impacting than positive eWOM (Assael 2004; Chen et al. 2011b; East et al. 2008;

Hornik et al. 2015; Libai et al. 2013). A better understanding of the flow of eWOM communication will allow firms to effectively act and react to negative eWOM (Hornik et al. 2015).

Antecedents of eWOM determine eWOM behaviour (De Matos and Rossi 2008). eWOM is a consumption experience shared by customers who purchase the product, experience the service, or interact with the brand. Some customers choose to share their consumption experience with their friends or post it on product review websites, which can be used by other people. Nevertheless, not every customer shares their opinion after consumption. As a result, researchers became interested in exploring factors influencing people's eWOM sharing intention (Wolny and Mueller 2013). Satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, and trust are found to be the main antecedents of eWOM (De Matos and Rossi 2008; Lee and Jaafar 2011; Martin et al. 2008; Neumann 2015; Sichtmann 2007; Walsh and Beatty 2007).

Satisfaction. Satisfaction refers to the condition that happens as a result of a pleasant consumption fulfilment (Oliver 1997). A number of studies have investigated the effect of satisfaction on eWOM (De Matos and Rossi 2008; Kietzmann and Canhoto 2013; Lee et al. 2013a, b; Pourabedin and Migin 2015). It has been found that satisfied customers engage in positive eWOM (De Matos and Rossi 2008). Some authors explain the positive relationship amongst satisfaction and eWOM with the confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm (Jones and Reynolds 2006). The confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm proposes that customers evaluate a product/service performance and compare this evaluation with their prior expectations (Oliver 1980). Other studies propose that customer satisfaction also contains emotional dimensions, not just cognitive components (Oliver 1993, 1997), and that satisfaction based on emotions leads to recommendation behaviour (Martin et al. 2008; Neumann 2015). De Matos and Rossi (2008) propose some reasons for customers to spread eWOM based on their level of satisfaction. First, customers will be motivated to share about positive experiences with others if the product or service performance exceeds expectations. Second, if the customers' expectations are not met creating dissatisfaction, the customer will engage in eWOM as a form of reducing and sharing their negative emotions.

Loyalty. Loyalty is defined as an intention to repeat buying and perform other behaviours that show a motivation to remain with the provider of the services or products (Sirdeshmukh et al. 2002). According to Reichheld (1993), the act of referring a friend puts the actor's social image at risk. As a result, eWOM communications would not happen without an individual's loyalty. A number of studies consider eWOM as an indicator of loyalty (Lee et al. 2013a, b; Tsao and Hsieh 2012). Recent studies confirm that loyalty has a positive effect on eWOM by showing that loyal customers provide more eWOM (Lee and Jaafar 2011; Sichtmann 2007; Walsh and Beatty 2007). For example, Lee and Jaafar (2011) investigated the impact of customer loyalty on eWOM communications in the context of internet banking in Malaysia. By conducting a survey amongst 220 internet banking users, the results showed that greater customer loyalty is directly and positively related with greater levels of positive eWOM in respect to internet banking websites. They explained

their findings by the fact that customer loyalty to the website of a financial service provider is closely associated to the levels of satisfaction with that website.

Commitment. Commitment is defined as a consumer's desire to maintain a relationship with an organization (Morgan and Hunt 1994). Some researchers measure commitment using a unidimensional approach (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002; Lacey et al. 2007), while others employ a multidimensional conceptualization (Fullerton 2003; Harrison-Walker 2001). Using a multidimensional approach to commitment, the researchers distinguish affective (positive emotional attachment) and calculative or continuance (perceived costs connected with leaving the company) commitment (De Matos and Rossi 2008). In the unidimensional approach, consumer commitment reflects only the affective dimension (Neumann 2015). Researchers find that consumer commitment has an impact on providing eWOM (De Matos and Rossi 2008; Lis and Horst 2013; Tsao and Hsieh 2012). For instance, applying meta-analysis De Matos and Rossi (2008) find that commitment has a strong positive impact on eWOM. Customers who have affective commitment are more likely to make an effort to support the company and engage in positive eWOM. In contrast, continuance commitment is negatively related to eWOM behaviour (Harrison-Walker 2001). Another study by Tsao and Hsieh (2012) found that customer commitment relates positively to positive eWOM communication in the context of clothing and medical services.

Trust. Trust is defined as "a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence" (Moorman et al. 1992, p 315). Morgan and Hunt (1994, p 23) refer to trust as "when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity". As a result, confidence and reliability are important components of trust in the context of marketing (De Matos and Rossi 2008). Several studies find an impact of trust on eWOM (De Matos and Rossi 2008; Sichtmann 2007; Tsao and Hsieh 2012). For instance, Sichtmann (2007) observed that trust in a corporate brand impacts customers' eWOM behaviour in a positive way. De Matos and Rossi (2008) receive similar results in their meta-analysis study.

4.2 Motivations to Send eWOM

As eWOM is an expanded form of traditional WOM, it is logical that studies have found they share core motivations to engage in communications regarding a product or a service (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). A motivation is defined as a force that drives individuals to take an action (Neumann 2015). Thus it is important to identify motivations in order to understand an individual's behaviour. Motivation comes from tension-systems, which create a state of disequilibrium. As people usually have a basic desire for balance, when the state is unbalanced they will try to restore the equilibrium by selecting a goal; this goal will release them from the tension (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). Based on the previous literature on traditional and online WOM, the main motivations to engage in eWOM are altruism, self-enhancement, venting feelings, social benefits, and economic incentives.

Altruism. Altruism is defined as the aim of increasing welfare of one or more people other than oneself (Cheung and Lee 2012). People who have altruistic motives volunteer themselves to share eWOM with other customers without expecting any reward in return. For instance, individuals share purchasing experiences just because other people need it (Allen and Meyer 1996). Also, individuals can have empathetic emotions towards an individual and will help this person (Cheung and Lee 2012). Concern for other customers is closely related to altruism (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). Motivation to help a company is the result of the individual satisfaction with a product or service and the desire to help the company. The intended effect of eWOM in this case is that the firm will become or stay successful. This motive can be supported by equity theory (Oliver and Swan 1989), which proposes that people desire equitable and fair exchanges. If an individual feels that he/she got a higher output/input ratio than the firm, then helping the company by engaging in eWOM about this company is a way to equalize the output/input ratio (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). Altruism is also connected to the enjoyment in helping other customers and companies, and it is the feeling of pleasure obtained from helping others. Studies have found that enjoyment in helping others motivates consumers to engage in eWOM (Cheung and Lee 2012; Hansen and Lee 2013; Lee et al. 2013a, b; Tong et al. 2013).

A study conducted by Bronner and de Hoog (2011) investigated motivations with which vacationers post eWOM. The findings show that altruism is one of the important motivations to post online reviews. Ho and Dempsey (2010) examine internet users' motivations to pass along online content. In order to investigate the motives, they use a survey of 82 undergraduate students. Results show that the need to be altruistic affects users' motivations to forward online content. Magalhaes and Musallam (2014) sought to identify the key factors leading consumers to engage in eWOM on Twitter. They use a questionnaire method and find that concern for other consumers and a desire to help the company motivate people to engage in eWOM on Twitter. Mardhiyah et al. (2013) focus on medical service to analyse the factors influencing consumer intention to engage in negative WOM communication. Using questionnaires and a sample of 123 people, the results show that altruism was one of the motivations to engage in negative eWOM. People engaged in eWOM communications to prevent other potential consumers from using this medical service.

Self-enhancement. Self-enhancement is a fundamental human motivation. Individuals like to present themselves positively. The things that people talk about influence how other individuals see them (Berger 2014). As a result, people usually share information that helps them to look good rather than bad (Chung and Darke 2006; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). Some researchers propose that status seeking is the main purpose for people to write eWOM (Berger 2014; Lampel and Bhalla 2007). Also individuals share eWOM because they would like to get an informal recognition and be seen as experts (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). Plume et al. (2016) provide an in-depth review of literature considering motivations related to personality implicated in eWOM.

Bronner and de Hoog (2011) investigated motives of vacationers to contribute to review sites and found self-enhancement to be one of the motivations. Using a

questionnaire based on the consumer experience of using openrice.com, a study conducted by Cheung and Lee (2012) shows that enhancement of reputations affects motivation to post eWOM. Hansen and Lee (2013) find that self-enhancement of their reputations significantly motivates people to post positive eWOM. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) employed an online sample of 200 German web-based opinion platform users and found that self-enhancement is one of the primary reasons why consumers publish their experience on online platforms. Another study, conducted by Yap et al. (2013), finds similar results in the financial service context. Additionally, this study investigates how particular motivations are associated with different eWOM message characteristics.

Venting feelings. Social sharing of emotions helps individuals to regulate their emotions (Rime 2009). It can help individuals to deal with negative experiences which cause negative feelings. As a result, eWOM helps to reduce the emotional impact (Pennebaker et al. 2001)—by expressing anger individuals feel better (Berger 2014). It is found that angry or dissatisfied customers share eWOM to vent their feelings (Berger 2014; Wetzer et al. 2007). Also, sharing eWOM lets consumers regulate their emotions through punishing a company for a negative experience (Gregoire and Fisher 2008; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Wang et al. 2013). On the other hand, motivations to engage in eWOM can be to express positive emotions, which are experienced during a successful consumption experience (Sundaram et al. 1998). The reason for expression of positive emotions is that an individual's positive consumption experience brings a psychological tension because of a strong desire to share the joy of the experience with other people. This tension can be reduced by sharing eWOM, leading them to vent positive feelings (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004).

Mardhiyah et al. (2013) aforementioned medical service study shows that venting negative feelings is another of the motives for engaging in negative eWOM. Also, it shows that consumers chose negative eWOM because they perceive that it would have a stronger impact on a company. In the same service context, a study conducted by Gheorghe and Liao (2012) had similar results. Matta and Frost (2011) investigated what motivates top reviewers to engage in eWOM. Using data from amazon.com, the study found that anxiety reduction is one of the motivations for engaging in eWOM. A study, performed by Musallam and Magalhães (2012), finds that venting negative feelings is one of the primary factors to express opinion in Twitter. Wang et al. (2013) find that the desire for revenge and psychological relief can be fulfilled if the consumer employs eWOM to review an unsatisfactory product.

Social benefits. By sharing eWOM on the Internet, a consumer becomes part of a virtual community. Affiliation with a virtual community can represent a social benefit to an individual for reasons of identification and social integration (see Plume et al. 2016). As a result, consumers engage in eWOM to participate and be part of the virtual community (McWilliam 2000). Precisely, an individual can write comments on online platforms because this behaviour shows his/her participation and presence

with the community and enables him/her to obtain social benefits from this community membership (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004).

A study by Cheung and Lee (2012) used questionnaires of 203 individuals and shows that the sense of belonging is one of the motivations for people to engage in eWOM. Similarly, Hansen and Lee (2013) employed a survey method and found evidence that a sense of belonging has the most impact on consumers' intentions to engage in eWOM. Also, Choi and Scott (2013) found that female SNS users engage in eWOM to feel the sense of belonging to the community. A study of 200 German customers by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) explored the motivations consumers have for articulation of their views in web-based opinion platforms. The results showed that social benefit is one of the primary reasons for consumers to publish their experience on web-based opinion platforms. Another study conducted by Munzel and Kunz (2014) showed that social bonding motivates people to comment on other's reviews and forward other users' reviews. The study tested the findings by using questionnaire and sample of 693 users of tripadvisor.com.

Economic incentives. Consumers are motivated to engage in eWOM to get an economic incentive. These can be in the form of web points or coupons provided through opinion platforms in exchange for eWOM (Amblee and Bui 2008). The motivation of economic incentives comes from the distinctive characteristic of eWOM. In contrast with traditional WOM, eWOM is exchanged through the assistance of a third party.

A study by Ahrens et al. (2013) explored on the ways in which existing customers can be used as a tool for increasing the acquisition of new customers with the aid of financial rewards for successful referrals. The study involved a large-field experiment with 45,000 members of an online mall. The findings showed that the magnitude of financial incentives and the relative magnitude of the incentives for the senders and receivers both influenced e-referral rates. Another study, conducted by Guo et al. (2009b), employed a sample of 167 university students in order to investigate how to maximize consumers' positive eWOM. It was found that economic incentives can affect consumers' spread of eWOM. Jin et al. (2010) investigated users' continuance intention to spread eWOM in an online opinion platform, and found that extrinsic rewards motivate consumers' continuance intention to contribute eWOM.

A chain of UK pubs, Hungry Horse, motivates consumers to leave a review by offering them a financial incentive. Their statement says: "Providing you with a great experience means everything to us, which is why we want to hear from you. Please provide your feedback on your last visit to one of our pubs in this survey. As a thank you, we will enter you into a draw with a chance to win £1000" (Hungry Horse 2016).

In another example, Amazon allows consumers to rate reviews and has created a reputation system for people who write online reviews. Reviewers with high ratings are featured first in the listings, given an honorary title, and membership in an honorary group. Additionally, they are sometimes chosen to receive new products to review ahead of them arriving for general sale. This is the combination of using motivations such as economic incentives, self-enhancement, and social benefits together (Matta and Frost 2011). It appears that such a strategy works well as in 2010 Amazon was reported as being the largest single source of online consumer reviews (Business Wire 2010).

The box below provides real-life examples of how companies motivate consumers to engage in eWOM:

While most of the studies generalize motivations for all eWOM senders (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Matta and Frost 2011), Munzel and Kunz (2014) study different types of consumers who contribute to eWOM. Based on the literature about social capital, social exchange theory, and transformative consumer research, the authors conduct a study of 693 individuals on a hotel review website. Using content analysis and a latent profile analysis, they find the following types of contributors: lurkers (mostly first-time writers), creators (mostly interested in writing reviews), and multipliers (prefer to comment on and forward others' reviews). Creators are mostly driven by altruistic motives. Lurkers are driven by individual benefit motives. Multipliers are mostly driven by social motivations. It is an important issue for managers to identify and profile contributors, especially in the context of virtual communities (Wasko and Faraj 2005).

Some studies show that there are factors that can moderate the motivations of engaging in eWOM, such as tie strength (Guo et al. 2009b; Luo and Zhong 2015; Song and Sun 2011), demographics (Kim et al. 2011; Han 2008), and product type (Dellarocas et al. 2010; Fan 2011; Feng and Papatla 2012; Henke 2013; Ogut and Cezar 2012). Research has also considered the role that eWOM motivations have on frequency of consumers' engagement with eWOM. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) found that motivations of social benefits have the strongest positive impact on platform visiting frequency and the number of comments provided, and that venting negative feelings is negatively related to the frequency of platform visit. As a result, differences in consumers' eWOM behaviour such as frequency of providing eWOM will be affected in different ways depending on their eWOM motivations (Han 2008).

Table 4.1 summarizes all motivations for consumers to provide eWOM communications, outlining the relevance for marketers, as well as limitations of current studies.

Table 4.1 Motivations to provide eWOM

Characteristics	Citation	Key findings	Relevance	Limitations and future research
Altruism	Cheung and Lee (2012), Guo et al. (2009b), Hansen and Lee (2013), Ho and Dempsey (2010), Lee et al. (2013a, b), Magalhães and Musallam (2014), Mardhiyah et al. (2013), Matta and Frost (2011), Munzel and Kunz (2014), Musallam and Magalhães (2012), Pourabedin and Migin (2015), Shen et al. (2011), Tong et al. (2013), Wolny and Mueller (2013), Yen and Tang (2015), Zhang and Lee (2012)	Concern for other consumers, helping the company, and enjoyment of helping positively affect motivations to engage in eWOM.	Online platforms can provide a mechanism where individuals who provide useful eWOM recommendations are identified and informed about their help to other users. Also, allowing contributors and readers to connect through person-to-person messages can help readers to show appreciation for the received reviews.	1. Sample of participants. Most studies use students. Future research should include a more diverse sample of potential users in different age categories, professions, and experience of using eWOM. 2. Most of the studies are self-reported which can lead to response bias. 3. The impact of individual characteristics (e.g. income, age, gender, education, personality) is not considered. Future research should consider the influence of personal characteristics on posting eWOM. 4. Future research can investigate why consumers are not interested in spreading eWOM.
Self-enhancement	Bronner and de Hoog (2011), Cheung and Lee (2012), Guo et al. (2009b), Hansen and Lee (2013), Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), Jin et al. (2010), Magalhães and Musallam (2014), Matta and Frost (2011), Munzel and Kunz (2014), Musallam and Magalhães (2012), Son et al. (2012), Wang et al. (2014), Yap et al. (2013)	Status seeking, getting informal recognition, and being seen as experts is positively connected to providing eWOM.	Online platforms can add publicly visible cues to the reviewer's profile such as length of membership and number of reviews written. They can also introduce profile badges such as "reviewer of the month" or "expert" which would attract more attention from other users and enhance their status.	
Venting feelings	Gheorge and Liao (2012), Mardhiyah et al. (2013), Matta and Frost (2011), Musallam and Magalhães (2012), Wang et al. (2013), Yap et al. (2013), Yen and Tang (2015)	Expressing positive or negative emotions motivates people to engage in eWOM.	Companies should address negative messages with valid reasons, apologies, and determination to improve product quality. Also, companies can try to reduce negative eWOM by making it easy for consumers to contact the company directly and answer the consumer's complaint promptly.	

<p>Social benefits</p>	<p>Bronner and de Hoog (2011), Cheung and Lee (2012), Choi and Scott (2013), Guo et al. (2009b), Hansen and Lee (2013), Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), José-Cabezudo and Camarero-Izquierdo (2012), Luarn et al. (2014), Matta and Frost (2011), Munzel and Kunz (2014), Niu et al. (2010), Wolny and Mueller (2013), Yap et al. (2013), Yen and Tang (2015), Zhang and Lee (2012)</p>	<p>Affiliation with a virtual community for identification and social integration motivate people to engage in eWOM.</p>	<p>Online platform providers can allow consumers to create their own personal profile where they can add other users as friends and directly communicate with them. Also publicly visible cues to the reviewer's profile such as length of membership can be added.</p>	<p>5. Future research could examine eWOM in a cross-cultural setting. 6. Studies do not connect how particular motivations are associated with particular platforms.</p>
<p>Economic incentives</p>	<p>Ahrens et al. (2013), Guo et al. (2009b), Jeong and Moon (2009), Jin et al. (2010), Lee et al. (2013a, b), Matta and Frost (2011), Niu et al. (2010), Son et al. (2012)</p>	<p>Consumers are motivated to engage in eWOM to get an economic incentive which can be in the form of web points or coupons provided through opinion platforms.</p>	<p>Opinion platforms can provide coupons, free delivery, or web points in order to increase individuals' participation in eWOM.</p>	

4.3 Motivations to Receive eWOM

eWOM receivers are individuals who seek others' opinions to evaluate products or services (Watts and Dodds 2007) or who respond to such communications (Cheung and Thadani 2012). In order to understand the impact of eWOM on consumer decision-making, it is necessary to identify motives that influence their eWOM seeking behaviour (Burton and Khammash 2010). There are several motives for using or receiving eWOM including risk reduction, social approval, reduction of searching time and effort, getting product (usage) information, and social interaction benefits.

Risk reduction. Consumers use eWOM in order to decrease the perceived risk in making purchase decisions (Goldsmith and Horowitz 2006). Studies find that individuals tend to rely on interpersonal information sources when the perceived risk of making a purchase is high (Bansal and Voyer 2000). As a result, consumers think that eWOM information will provide them with clarification and feedback opportunities and decrease before-purchase uncertainty about a product or service (Silverman 2011). Thus, collecting eWOM information helps build receivers' trust and confidence and effectively reduces perceived risks of the purchase (Ha 2002).

Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003) investigated motives of consumers to read the articulation of other consumers using a sample of 2903 German consumers. The results showed that risk reduction in buying decisions is one of the motives to read others recommendations. Another study conducted by Kim et al. (2011) explored motivating factors for consumers to read online hotel reviews, through an online survey with 781 respondents in Las Vegas. The result shows that risk reduction is one of the main motivations for individuals to seek eWOM. Zhang and Lv (2010) found similar results using a survey method and sample of 127 college students in the context of computer consumption.

Social approval. Social approval is connected to information search process for the social function of consumption (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003). Consumers are motivated to seek eWOM in order to purchase a product or service which is accepted by other people, be aware of a product's social image, compare their idea about a product with other people, or pursue other individuals' approval of their purchase decision (Han 2008; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003).

A study conducted by Huang et al. (2013) used focus groups to understand consumers' motives for reading book reviews on the Internet and found that social approval is one of the motives for engaging in this type of eWOM. Another study by Kim et al. (2011) found that social approval is one of the main reasons for consumers to read online hotel reviews.

Reduction of searching time and effort. People seek eWOM in order to reduce search time and effort in purchase decision-making (Goldsmith and Horowitz 2006). High volumes of information and wide varieties of products make it difficult for consumers to know all the alternatives (Han 2008). In this case, eWOM is a convenient way to obtain buying-related information with less time spent on searching activities.

Hennig-Thurau and Walsh's (2003) study illustrates that consumers read online eWOM mainly to save decision-making time and make better purchase decisions.

The results of structural equation modelling used in this study show that their motives for retrieving eWOM strongly influence their online behaviour. Khammash and Griffiths (2011) find similar results through an interpretive case study approach using online opinion platform ciao.com. Furthermore, Kim et al. (2011) show that reduction of search time and effort motivates consumers to read online hotel reviews.

Getting product (usage) information. Consumers read eWOM in order to receive product-related information (Goldsmith and Horowitz 2006; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003). By using eWOM, consumers can receive information about new products and services, learn how to consume products, and solve problems connected with consuming a product. Consumers tend to rely on eWOM as product characteristics become more complex and technical (Godes et al. 2005). The reason for this can be that eWOM is provided by actual product buyers and users and, as a result, is more relevant to consumers compared with information which is provided by markets or manufactures (Bickart and Schindler 2001).

A study conducted by Burton and Khammash (2010) collected data from ciao.com to show that consumers use eWOM in order to get product information. Chu and Kim (2011) investigated the determinants of eWOM derived via SNSs. Analysis of a self-administrated survey, involving 363 students, showed that information influence is associated with SNS users seeking eWOM. The aforementioned study by Huang et al. (2013) also found that getting product information motivates people to read internet book reviews. Kasabov (2014) investigated motives of Chinese consumers to use eWOM in SNSs and found that information is a key motivation to seek eWOM in SNSs.

Social interaction benefits. Because the Internet plays a role in facilitating interpersonal communications and activities, individuals can take part in other consumers' shopping experiences or have a sense of belonging to a community by looking for other consumers' postings on online eWOM platforms (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003). Burton and Khammash (2010) investigated motivations for reading customer reviews on a consumer opinion platform within the UK market using an interview method. They found that social interaction benefit motivates consumers to seek eWOM. A further study by Khammash and Griffiths (2011) has similar results using platform ciao.com.

The box below provides real business examples of how companies make their websites more convenient for consumers to use in order to look for eWOM.

Catalogue retailer Argos provides an aggregated rating for each item they sell. In this way consumers can check the overall rating of an item to save time instead of going through all reviews. Another example of features which platform operators use to save customers searching time is the opportunity to sort reviews. For example, pharmacy chain Boots lets consumers sort reviews by most relevant, featured reviews, top contributors, newest, oldest, highest rating, lowest rating, most helpful, longest, and shortest. By using this technique, the company enables users to personalize their search and save time while looking for product-related information shared by other users.

Studies have found that motivations for engaging in eWOM can affect the frequency of visits to online opinion platforms (Han 2008; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). For instance, individuals who are motivated by the interest in social interaction benefits seek eWOM on a regular basis. However, consumers whose motivation is risk reduction in purchase decision tend to seek eWOM occasionally only when they need it. Thus, differences in consumers' eWOM behaviour, such as frequency of seeking comments, will be affected in different ways depending on their eWOM motivations (Han 2008). Also, Munzel and Kunz (2014) claim that people who read others' eWOM perceive a social debt and feel the obligation to give something back to the community. It means that seeking eWOM can lead to producing eWOM.

Table 4.2 presents the motivations to seek eWOM communications, which have been discussed above.

4.4 Discussion and Concluding Points

The Internet environment provides many different ways for consumers to share their opinions and personal experiences with others (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003). The question why people provide and seek others' articulations through the Internet has attracted interest from numerous researchers. Specifically, studies have investigated both senders' and receivers' motivations to engage in eWOM communications (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Magalhaes and Musallam 2014; Matta and Frost 2011). Studies have found that the main antecedents of providing eWOM are satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, and trust (De Matos and Rossi 2008; Lee and Jaafar 2011; Martin et al. 2008; Neumann 2015; Sichtmann 2007; Walsh and Beatty 2007). Using both qualitative and quantitative techniques, previous studies have found that the main motivations for people engaging in eWOM are altruism, self-enhancement, venting feelings, social benefits, economic incentives, risk reduction, social approval, reduction of search time and effort, getting product (usage) information, and social interaction benefits (Akyuz 2013; Bronner and de Hoog 2011; Burton and Khammash 2010; Gheorghe and Liao 2012; Guo et al. 2009b; Hansen and Lee 2013; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003; Lee et al. 2013a, b; Matta and Frost 2011). While most of the studies generalize motivations to articulate eWOM for all senders (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003; Huang et al. 2013; Kim et al. 2011), Munzel and Kunz (2014) found that there are different types of consumers such as lurkers, creators, and multipliers who have different motivations. Also, it was found that motivations to engage in eWOM can affect how often consumers seek or provide eWOM (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Han 2008).

It is important to understand the difference between antecedents and motivations. Antecedents determine consumers' motivations to engage in eWOM (Yen and Tang 2015). For example, when a consumer has a feeling of commitment it predicts why this consumer feels the need to help the company by engaging in eWOM. Another example of how antecedents of eWOM can influence consumer motivations to

Table 4.2 Motivations to seek eWOM

Motivations to seek eWOM	Citation	Key findings	Relevance	Limitations and future research
Risk reduction	Akyuz (2013), Burton and Khammash (2010), Awad and Ragowsky (2008), Goldsmith and Horowitz (2006), Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003), Khammash and Griffiths (2011), Kim et al. (2011), Zhang and Lv (2010)	Consumers use eWOM in order to decrease the perceived risk in making purchase decisions, especially when perceived risk of the purchase is high.	It is important for the managers of online platforms to monitor their customer reviews in terms of availability, appropriateness of language, and having sufficient content.	1. Sample of the participants. Most of the studies use students. Future research should include a more diverse sample of potential users in different age categories, professions, and experience of using eWOM. 2. Most of the studies are self-reported which can lead to response bias. 3. Future research should investigate why people do not seek eWOM.
Social approval	Huang et al. (2013), Kim et al. (2011), Matta and Frost (2011), Yap et al. (2013)	Consumers are motivated to seek eWOM in order to purchase a product or service which is accepted by other people, be aware of a product's social image, compare their idea about a product with other people, or receive other individuals' approval for their purchase decision.	Marketers should encourage consumers to interact with each other and to share new topics using the company website.	
Reduction of search time and effort	Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003), Burton and Khammash (2010), Khammash and Griffiths (2011), Kim et al. (2011), Munzel and Kunz (2014)	People seek eWOM in order to reduce search time and effort in purchase decision-making. High volumes of information and wide varieties of products make it difficult for consumers to know all the alternatives.	Marketers should provide aggregated recommendation ratings.	

(continued)

Table 4.2 (continued)

Motivations to seek eWOM	Citation	Key findings	Relevance	Limitations and future research
Getting product (usage) information	Bi (2011), Burton and Khammash (2010), Chu and Kim (2011), Henning-Henning-Thurau and Walsh (2003), Huang et al. (2013), Kasabov (2014), Khammash and Griffiths (2011), Miquel-Romero and Adame-Sanchez (2013), Reichelt et al. (2014), Song and Sun (2011)	Using eWOM, consumers can receive information about new products and services, learn how to consume products, and solve problems connected with consuming a product.	Opinion portal providers can create an additional section on their website such as Quick Fix information or Tips and Hints. These sections can provide an individual with basic information which can help them to solve small product issues.	4. Future research should study the impact of demographic variables on reading motivations in order to help target responses.
Social interaction benefits	Burton and Khammash (2010), Khammash and Griffiths (2011)	Individuals can partake in other consumers' shopping experiences or have a sense of belonging to a community by looking for other consumers' postings on online eWOM platforms.	Website operators can help consumers take advantage of social benefit by creating the feeling of a virtual community and enabling consumers to share more feeling to compare their evaluations.	

engage in eWOM can be the case when the consumer is highly satisfied with the product or service he might be motivated by the need to share this excitement with other consumers.

Summary of Key Points

- Satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, and trust are found to be the main antecedents of eWOM.
- Motivations for people to provide eWOM include altruism, self-enhancement, venting feelings, social benefits, and economic incentives.
- Motivations of people who seek eWOM include risk reduction, social approval, reduction of search time and effort, getting product (usage) information, and social interaction benefits.
- Frequency of engaging in eWOM communications is influenced by motivations to seek and provide eWOM.
- Knowing and understanding consumers' motivations to provide eWOM will lead to better understanding of information exchange behaviour on the Internet.

It is important to identify motives for engaging in eWOM because it helps to understand and predict information exchange behaviour on the Internet (Han 2008). Also, studying eWOM motivations can help ascertain their influence on how often consumers engage in providing eWOM. By identifying underlying motivations for people to engage in eWOM, researchers are able to understand, and influence, individual online information assimilation which can affect consumer purchase decisions, customer loyalty, and consumer commitment to the community (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003).

Understanding motivations for providing eWOM can be useful not only for researchers but also for marketers and managers. It can help managers to improve reader engagement and information assimilation (Burton and Khammash 2010). Marketers should try to identify “social influencers” or “market mavens” on SNSs and encourage them to spread positive product information regarding selected brands or discourage them from sharing negative eWOM within their personal networks.

Knowing motivations to engage in eWOM allows platform operators to design their service in a more customer-oriented way (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). For example, for individuals who are motivated by social relationships, online platform providers can allow consumers to create their own personal profile, where they can add other users as friends and directly communicate with them. Also, publicly visible cues on the reviewer's profile such as length of membership can be added (Cheung and Lee 2012).

For people who are motivated by altruism, online platforms can use a mechanism where individuals who provide useful eWOM recommendations are identified and informed about their help to other users. Also, allowing contributors and readers to

connect through person-to-person messages can help readers to show their appreciation for the received reviews (Cheung and Lee 2012). For people who are motivated by economic incentives, opinion platforms can provide coupons, free delivery, or web points in order to increase individuals' participation in eWOM. To engage people motivated by self-enhancement, online platforms can add publicly visible cues to reviewers' profiles such as number of reviews written and helpfulness votes. Also, they can introduce a badge such as "reviewer of the month" or "expert" which would attract more attention from other users and enhance their status (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004).

In the case of venting negative feelings, which produces negative eWOM, the company should address the negative message with valid reasons, apologies, and determination to improve product quality (Wang et al. 2013). Also, the company can try to reduce negative eWOM by making it easy for consumers to contact the company directly and answer the consumer's complaint promptly.

Understanding consumers' motivations to seek eWOM can be beneficial for marketers and managers of companies. Marketers should consider social relationship factors in order to develop personalized marketing communications strategies to fulfil SNSs users' needs (e.g. gaining social capital). For example, when targeting consumers who are susceptible to interpersonal influence, eWOM marketing could be a good online communication technique as these SNS users are more likely to follow social influences (Chu and Kim 2011). Also, rewarding the best reviewers could attract a greater number of readers and hence, attract sponsors to the site who want to create links to their retail sites.

Marketers should target customers with particular reading motivations to influence and encourage them positively to read about their products. Knowing the reading motives can help platform providers to develop a more customized environment. Platform providers should take into consideration the different effects of reading motives on readers' behaviour. For example, for customers who is motivated by social approval platform providers can structure information in accordance to the readers' information search process and increase the amount of accessible information dealing with products relevant to individuals' social positioning (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003).

Website operators can help consumers to take advantage of social benefit by creating the feeling of a virtual community and enabling consumers to share more feelings to compare their evaluations. Also, encouraging consumers to interact with each other and to share new topics using the company website can attract potential customers for the purpose of social reassurance (Kim et al. 2011). Considering the high importance of risk reduction as a motive for reading eWOM, it is important for managers of online platforms to monitor their customer reviews in terms of availability, appropriateness of language, and having sufficient content (Khammash and Griffiths 2011).

Taking into account the importance of seeking eWOM to get product (usage) information, website managers might need to dedicate a section in their website for Tips and Hints or Quick Fix information. These sections can provide individuals with basic information in order to help them to solve non-major problems that may

be encountered when using their products and services. Also, using the example of opinion portals, their providers could devote a section in their communities especially for new products and services so it would be easier for consumers to find these new products (Khammash and Griffiths 2011). For people who are motivated to read eWOM because of the reduction of search time and effort, marketers should provide aggregated recommendation ratings and all the information about competing products in the same place.

Points for Practitioners

- Marketers should try to identify “social influencers” or “market mavens” in social networking sites and encourage them to spread positive product information.
- Knowing motivations to engage in eWOM enables platform operators to design their service in a more customer-oriented way.
- Marketers should target customers with particular reading motivations to positively influence and encourage them to read about their products.
- Knowing the reading motives can help platform providers to develop a more customized environment.

Some studies have investigated motivations for users to engage in eWOM for particular platforms (Choi and Scott 2013; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003; Kasabov 2014; Khammash and Griffiths 2011). For example, Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003) studied motivations to read eWOM using an online opinion platform. Another study conducted by Choi and Scott (2013) using SNSs showed that users engage in eWOM to feel the sense of belonging to a community. Additionally, it was found that motivations to engage in eWOM could vary depending on the Internet platform. For example, Dirksz (2014) found that sharing experiences on Facebook was motivated by self-enhancement and social benefits while sharing on an opinion platform was driven by altruism and venting feelings to punish a company. However, limited research has been done in connecting certain eWOM motivations with particular internet platforms. As a result, future research is needed to study how motivations to engage in eWOM can depend on the type of online platform and whether or not eWOM motives influence the channel choice to engage in eWOM communications. It would advance our understanding on information exchange behaviour on the Internet and can be used by companies in their marketing strategies.

Even though studies have investigated why people engage in eWOM communications (Bi 2011; Bronner and de Hoog 2011; Burton and Khammash 2010; Cheung and Lee 2012; Chu and Kim 2011; Goldsmith and Horowitz 2006; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003; Musallam and Magalhães 2012; Pourabedin and Migin 2015), they did not consider the impact of individual characteristics such as income, age, gender, education, and personality on engaging in eWOM. Knowing this will help companies to create specific marketing strategies to involve different groups of people in

disseminating eWOM. Additionally, existing studies do not examine engagement in eWOM in different cross-cultural settings (Burton and Khammash 2010; Cheung and Lee 2012; Chu and Sung 2015; Guo et al. 2009b; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). Current cross-cultural studies propose that different cultures produce distinctly different media usage and communication styles that, in turn, influence consumer behaviour online (Pfeil et al. 2006). As a result, opinion giving and seeking behaviour can be different from country to country because of cultural variations. Therefore, an investigation in different cultural contexts will help understanding of the effect of culture in social relationships and eWOM communications.

A great number of studies examine why consumers provide or seek eWOM on the Internet (Bi 2011; Bronner and de Hoog 2011; Burton and Khammash 2010; Cheung and Lee 2012; Chu and Kim 2011; Goldsmith and Horowitz 2006; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003; Musallam and Magalhães 2012; Pourabedin and Migin 2015). However, future studies should investigate why consumers do not provide or seek eWOM. It will help both researchers and marketers to identify and eliminate factors that might be preventing consumers in providing and seeking eWOM.

Recommendations for Future Research

- Consider the influence of personal characteristics on providing and seeking eWOM.
- Investigate why consumers do not provide or seek eWOM.
- Explore the role of cultural context on consumers providing and seeking eWOM.
- Examine how motivations to engage in eWOM can depend on type of online platform and whether or not eWOM motives influence the channel choice to engage in eWOM communications.

This chapter has explored the motivations for consumers to provide and seek eWOM. Knowing motivations of people to engage in eWOM will advance understanding of information exchange behaviour on the Internet. [Chapter 5](#) investigates persuasiveness of eWOM communications. In order to be persuasive, messages should be considered as helpful and credible. Many studies prove the link between credibility and helpfulness of eWOM and information acceptance, which can influence attitude and purchase intentions of consumers, and hence sales. As a result, understanding why people perceive communications as helpful and credible is an important area for marketing research.