Chapter 8
Conclusion

This book was written to provide a comprehensive overview on the subject of eWOM communications from a marketing perspective. eWOM communications have developed from traditional WOM communications. Even though eWOM is mostly anonymous and happens between people with weak ties, in comparison with traditional WOM, it is more powerful because it has a significant reach and it is publicly available. The key areas of the literature were examined, including motivations to engage in eWOM, its persuasiveness, its impact, and how to manage it. Most of the studies examined these areas separately; however, it is necessary to take into account all eWOM communication facets in order to use them successfully in business. For example, persuasiveness of eWOM communications depends on consumer motivations to use them, which in turn influences information adoption, affecting purchase intention, and hence sales.

People engaging in eWOM communications have different motivations which would influence their behaviour and perception of eWOM. It was found that motivations can even influence frequency of providing or seeking information. Companies should pay attention to consumers' motivations to engage in eWOM while developing their marketing strategies. Also it is important to identify "social influencers" and "market mavens" to encourage them to spread positive eWOM communications and discourage them from spreading negative eWOM communications about company's products and services. Additionally, it would be beneficial for marketers to know how personal characteristics can influence engaging in eWOM as well as factors preventing people from seeking and sharing eWOM. Thus, future research is necessary.

Depending on individuals' motivations they can consider persuasiveness of eWOM communications in different ways. For example, consumers with prevention goals will rely on negative eWOM communications more than on positive ones. For eWOM communications to be persuasive they should be perceived as helpful and credible by consumers. Numerous studies have investigated factors influencing persuasiveness of eWOM communications such as consumer characteristics, platform type, and product type. These findings can be used by platform operators

to provide guidelines for users on how to write persuasive product and service reviews. Previous studies mostly focused on how platform type, such as marketer-generated and consumer-generated, can influence persuasiveness of eWOM. However, current studies have not yet considered how social media platforms can influence persuasiveness of eWOM communications. Because of the difference in technology base, communications methods, and conduct of members on different platforms, helpfulness, and credibility of eWOM can vary.

It was found that the effect of eWOM communications on information adoption, attitude change, purchase intention, and sales depends on consumer characteristics (e.g. involvement), type of platforms (e.g. consumer-generated and marketer generated), and type of product (e.g. search, experience, or credence). Previous studies did not consider all these factors while studying the effect of eWOM communications; instead they just focused on a limited number of them. This book offered a review of the existing studies to summarize these factors and the effect of eWOM communications. To be able to use eWOM communications successfully in their marketing strategies companies need to take a variety of important factors into account, not just focus on one or two. eWOM is a very powerful business tool which introduces a variety of opportunities for companies to attract more attention of their product, brand, or service and increase sales. However, it can also introduce new challenges for business—if used incorrectly it can lead to damage in reputation, decrease in sales, and even ruin the business. Still, many companies ignore the power of eWOM communications, or use them inappropriately. Thus, this book aimed to explain the importance of eWOM communications and provide directions for practitioners which can be used in their marketing strategies.

The Internet has enabled individuals to share their product and service experiences with an array of people without geographical limitations. As a result, lots of people will be able to use this information in their purchase decision which can affect companies' sales. Thus, companies should monitor and manage eWOM communications. This book provided an overview of the techniques which can be employed by companies to capture eWOM communications with different online platforms. Also, this book tried to provide practitioners with eWOM response strategies. However, a detailed guide outlining actions for companies to answer eWOM depending on its valence, style, platform type, senders' characteristics, and product characteristics is now needed.

Even though this book offers a comprehensive overview of eWOM communications in the marketing context, it has some limitations. First, eWOM communications are considered only from the marketing perspective, and as a result several elements of the literature have not been considered in this book. Second, this book only focused on eWOM communications but did not consider related areas such as buzz marketing, which is a viral marketing technique that focuses on maximizing eWOM potential of a certain campaign or product. Thus future studies can provide more detailed directions for researchers and practitioners on viral marketing techniques.

In conclusion, this book attempted to cover various aspects of eWOM communications and will be useful as a ready reference for students, academics, and marketing practitioners to understand the notion of eWOM communications in the marketing context.