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ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH
IN ONLINE BRAND COMMUNITIES:
DRIVERS AND OUTCOMES

By

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Abstract

Current study advances the understanding of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the context of online brand communities (OBC) embedded in social media. The focal concept of this thesis is OBCeWOM, which represents a behavioural manifestation of OBC engagement – a growing stream of research in the brand community literature. By connecting the two key streams of research on online consumer-to-consumer and consumer-brand interactions, the current thesis addresses the nature, drivers and outcomes of OBCeWOM in the social media setting.

The study follows a sequential mixed-methods research design, where the data was first collected via 22 semi-structured interviews, followed by a survey of 652 members of social media-based OBCs. The research was divided into three studies in line with the stated research questions. Consistent with the RQ2 and RQ3, Study 1 utilised semi-structured interviews to identify the key motivations for and outcomes of OBCeWOM in the social media setting which were consequently included in the finalised conceptual framework. Following this, Study 2 relied on interview and survey data to answer the RQ1 by clarifying the dimensionality of and developing a new measurement scale for OBCeWOM. Finally, Study 3 utilised the survey data to confirm the relationships hypothesised in the conceptual model and answer the RQ2 and RQ3.

Findings of this thesis confirm the multi-dimensional nature of OBCeWOM, consisting of reading, posting and sharing components and offer a new reliable measurement for eWOM in the OBC context. Results of the study further identify four key motivations of OBCeWOM in the social media setting, including getting assistance from the brand, social interaction, social expression of opinions and expressing positive emotions. Concurrently, self-expression motivation has a negative effect on OBCeWOM. Finally, this thesis confirms the role of OBCeWOM in brand trust, brand loyalty, and oppositional brand loyalty. Current research offers several theoretical, methodological and managerial implications.

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature:

Printed name: Oleksandra Pasternak

Abbreviations

AVE – Average variance extracted

CFA – Confirmatory factor analysis

CFI – Comparative fit index

CR – Construct reliability

EFA – Exploratory factor analysis

EWOM – Electronic word-of-mouth

MLE – Maximum likelihood estimation

MTurk – Amazon's Mechanical Turk

NWOM – Negative word-of-mouth

OBC – Online brand community

OBCeWOM – Electronic word-of-mouth in the context of online brand communities

OBL – Oppositional brand loyalty

PCA – Principal component analysis

PWOM – Positive word-of-mouth

RMSEA – Root mean square error of approximation

SEM – Structural equation modeling

SNS – Social Network Site

TLI – Tucker-Lewis index

UGT – Uses and Gratifications Theory

WOM – Word-of-mouth

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research focus

Continuous development and proliferation of online and social media platforms mean that individuals spend a significant amount of their lives online. Recent evidence suggests that the average time that a person dedicates to Internet activities constantly increases, further amplified by the multiple media devices used by individuals (Ofcom, 2016). Concurrently, social media usage is characterised by continuous growth, where reportedly over 70 % of individuals aged 16 and above participate on social media platforms (Ofcom, 2016). Importantly, whereas a significant portion of this time is undoubtedly devoted to socialisation and communications with friends, individuals also increasingly participate in various consumption-related and brand-related interactions (Azar et al., 2016).

Indeed, market research data shows that majority of consumers turn to the online environment when searching for information about products and services, and often refer to opinions of other consumers before making a purchase decision (Morrison, 2014). In fact, additional evidence illustrates that over two-third of individuals check online reviews before choosing a brand (Gunelius, 2014). Furthermore, consumers can often return the favour and personally contribute to product-related discussions or simply leave feedback about their consumption experiences online. Such product-related sentiments can have a significant effect on other consumers – from creating awareness about different brands to shaping their attitudes towards them, thus playing an important role in consumer decision-making process (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009; Lopez and Sicilia, 2014; Lopez-Lopez and Parra, 2016). As such, recent data, for example, illustrates that around 80 % of US consumers acknowledge being influenced by their friends' social media activity as well as by the brands' social media posts (Wommapedia, 2016).

On the one hand, one can note a somewhat individualistic and often disjointed type of consumer brand-related interaction that exists online, such as the discussed above electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM hereafter). EWOM is usually defined as *"any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or a company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet"* (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 39). EWOM is ubiquitous, as it can be present on various online platforms and can take multiple forms. This can for instance include online consumer reviews, comments or feedback on e-commerce websites, or posts on social network sites (SNS) (Ladhari and Michaud, 2015; Pentina, Bailey and Zhang, 2015; Clare et al., 2016). Indeed, individuals constantly engage in eWOM – such as when they recommend a product to a friend on social media or post hotel reviews on Tripadvisor, or when they leave feedback about a purchase on Amazon.

On the other hand, a growing number of consumer brand-related interactions are more social or collective in nature. In fact, more and more consumers engage in brand-related interactions with others by joining online communities centred on specific consumption-related topics or even dedicated to particular brands (Ku, Wei and Hsiao, 2012). One type of such consumer collective is conceptualised as an online brand community (OBC), which represents a *"specialised, non-geographically-bound community, based upon social relationships among admirers of a brand in cyberspace"* (Jang et al., 2008). Examples of online brand communities spread across various product and service categories – from convenience products to technology and automobile brands – but have a major common element – appreciation for the focal brand (Cova and Pace, 2006; Arora, 2009; Kilambi, Laroche and Richard, 2013).

Brand communities are increasingly significant for marketers, as they often attract individuals who are highly interested in the brand, and can potentially serve as a source of valuable consumer information (Flavian and Guinaliu, 2005; Matzler et al., 2011). Indeed, the importance of brand communities for the brands is also recognised by marketing practitioners, who encourage businesses to continue to invest in community building (PSFK Labs, 2016). Recent evidence from academic research supports this and further signals the economic benefits of participation in online brand-related communities, associated for example

with increased sales for the brand (Manchanda, Packard and Pattabhiramaiah, 2015).

Just as eWOM, online brand communities take place within different online settings – from online forums to social media platforms (Pongsakornungslip and Schroeder, 2011; Zaglia, 2013). In fact, more recently academic and practitioner interest has steadily shifted towards the special type of OBCs embedded in social networks (Goh, Heng and Lin, 2013; Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015; 2016). There is anecdotal evidence that marketers, for example, have been interested in ways of encouraging one's engagement with brands on such platforms as Facebook and Twitter, with the availability of 'best practices' and practical recommendations to increase social media engagement (Fidelman, 2013; Jackson, 2016). On the other hand, academic researchers have focused on understanding the process of consumer and brand engagement within social media-based brand communities (Gummerus et al., 2012; Hollebeek and Chen, 2014). In fact, social media setting seems to be an ideal environment for OBCs to develop (Habibi, Laroche and Richard, 2014). Social media enables consumers to interact socially with one another as well as with the brands (Jahn and Kunz, 2012), where brands become intertwined in one's daily routine. The increasing interest in social media channels for branding is especially topical considering their popularity among consumers and brands. Social media channels see a continuous increase in membership and participation, with reportedly five new Facebook profiles created every second (Zephoria, 2016). In fact, it can be anticipated that Facebook – which is currently the largest SNS in terms of membership, having over 1 billion daily active individual users (Statista, 2016b) – will continue to be the priority among marketers' social media efforts. What is more, recent evidence shows that Facebook is the most preferred social media platform among B2C marketers when it comes to distributing content (Gesenhues, 2015).

Not surprisingly, taken together, the two identified areas of consumer brand-related interactions – namely electronic word-of-mouth and online brand communities – have been of interest to the academic research for over two decades. Albeit, to date the two streams of literature traditionally had very little overlap, usually each taking their separate research directions. In fact, despite being acknowledged as a frequent occurrence within the OBC setting

(Relling et al., 2016), little is known about the nature of eWOM among brand community members – let alone in the specific context of social media-based brand communities. Furthermore, the constant developments in the online and social media environments require ongoing attention to these concepts (Baldus et al., 2015), where the traditionally accepted approaches to understanding eWOM and its conceptualisation may be increasingly outdated.

Concurrently, evidence from the marketing practice signals that brands need to appreciate the value of online consumer-to-consumer interactions (Grunert, 2015). There is an indication that the majority of consumers will recommend the brand to others after interacting with the brand itself on social media (Glenday, 2013). It is, therefore, vital for the marketing practitioners to understand consumer motivations for eWOM engagement in the social media-based OBCs to be able to devise appropriate social media marketing strategies. Nonetheless, due to the almost non-existent connection between the eWOM and OBC literature and consequent lack of academic research on eWOM within the OBC setting, there is also limited understanding of eWOM drivers in this specific environment.

Finally, academic and industry sources agree on the significant influence of eWOM on consumers and consequently on brands. Academic literature points towards the positive relationship between eWOM and individual-level parameters, such as purchase intentions (e.g. Sparks and Browning, 2011; Baker, Donthy and Kumar, 2016), as well as market-level factors, such as firms' revenues (Liu, 2006; Kim, Park and Park, 2013). Concurrently, market research data confirms that over 70 % of individuals trust online opinions of other consumers, which are perceived as more credible in the eyes of individuals than company-generated advertising (Nielsen, 2012).

Albeit, OBCs embedded in social media represent a unique environment, where individuals can concurrently interact with their broader network of friends, as well as with other brand community members, potentially further influencing one another about the brand (Chang, Hsieh and Tseng, 2013). It is, therefore, important to understand the scope of this impact on the individuals who already form a strong bond with the brand, and often act as brand advocates (Matzler et

al., 2011) and ultimately overcome the non-members in terms of brand spending (Manchanda, Packard and Pattabhiramaiah, 2015).

1.2 Research purpose and objectives

This thesis aims to bring together the two identified streams of research on consumers' brand-related interactions. Specifically, the *purpose* of this thesis is to investigate consumer engagement in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the context of online brand communities (OBC). This study builds on the brand community and eWOM research, and loosely applies the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) to develop the theoretical framework.

In line with the existing limitations of the OBC and eWOM research, current thesis aims to connect the two streams of literature and examine the concept of eWOM within the OBC context. Addressing the current trends in the OBC literature (Gummerus et al., 2012; Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015; 2016; Habibi, Laroche and Richard, 2016), and the continuous importance of social media environment for marketing practice, this research particularly focuses on the OBCs embedded in Facebook.

This research is guided by two core *objectives*:

1) To explore the *nature* of eWOM in the context of OBC. In this regards, current research aims to refine the existing conceptualisation of eWOM and its measurement in the OBC setting.
2) To examine the *antecedents* of eWOM in the social media-based OBCs, and to investigate eWOM's *impact* on consumers' relationships with brands.

1.3 Research methodology

To address the research objectives, this thesis adopts an exploratory sequential mixed methods research design. Such design involves the collection of qualitative data using semi-structured interviews, which are analysed via

thematic analysis method. The qualitative phase is then followed by the quantitative data collection in the form of an analytical survey, where the primary data analysis methodology is represented by Structural Equation Modeling.

The selected empirical approach follows from the stated research objectives. Particularly, in line with the first objective, this study adopts a qualitative methodology to explore the nature of the identified phenomenon (eWOM) in a new and evolving setting – social media-based OBCs. Consistent with the second research objective, the qualitative stage is further used to identify the key motivations behind OBC members' eWOM communication, and the potential outcomes of this for the members' relationships with brands. The qualitative phase thereby informs the quantitative phase also by helping develop the second research instrument (survey) and finalise the conceptual model. Finally, the updated conceptual model is then tested in the second – quantitative stage.

The following research design adopted in this thesis involves three distinct studies: Study 1, which explores antecedents and outcomes of OBCeWOM and develops the conceptual model; Study 2, which focuses on the measurement development; and Study 3, which tests the research hypotheses in line with the conceptual model.

1.4 Expected contributions

Current thesis expects to make several contributions to the academic literature on eWOM and OBC. This project furthermore seeks to offer methodological contributions, and contributions to the marketing practice. First, this project aims to contribute to the growing literature on OBC engagement. Specifically, an emerging stream of research has examined the nature of OBC members' engagement in the community and identified several aspects of engagement, such as emotional, cognitive and behavioural (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015; 2016). Nonetheless, even when centred on one of the elements of engagement, such as OBC members' behaviour in the community, research in this area addresses engagement at the more general level comprised of different types of activities, such as 'liking' content, playing

games or participating in discussions within the community (Gummerus et al., 2012). Current study expects to contribute to this emerging literature by focusing on the specific micro-element of behavioural engagement in OBC – eWOM communication (Hatzithomas et al., 2016).

Secondly, current research aims to contribute to the conceptualisation of eWOM in a constantly evolving environment. Specifically, the study expects to provide a more holistic understanding of the nature and dimensionality of eWOM in the OBC setting. Due to the traditional separation of the two streams of research, existing literature has provided little empirical understanding of eWOM when it occurs among the members of OBCs and especially OBCs in the social media setting. Furthermore, there is little agreement among eWOM scholars about the appropriate approach to the dimensionality of eWOM, as the concept is concurrently treated as a unidimensional and a multidimensional construct (e.g. Wolny and Mueller, 2013; Toder-Alon, Brunel and Fournier, 2014; Babic et al., 2015).

Thirdly, this study intends to provide a methodological contribution by developing a measurement scale to capture the specific features of eWOM in the OBC setting. Admittedly, the current state of eWOM research encompasses a wide variety of different approaches to eWOM measurement, ranging from studies adopting econometric models to studies using survey methodology (Lee and Lee, 2009). Nonetheless, to date research that conceptualises eWOM as a focal construct within the social media-based OBCs is practically non-existent, which results in a limited number of comprehensive eWOM measurements that would account for the specifics of the embedded OBCs. The researcher seeks to develop a valid and reliable measurement for OBCeWOM by capturing the experiences of OBC members and addressing the specific elements of social media-based OBCs.

Concurrently, this study aims to offer a contribution to the marketing practice by proposing an up-to-date measurement of a specific micro-element of OBC engagement – eWOM. Evidence from the marketing practice suggests that brand managers increasingly need to be able to effectively evaluate consumers' engagement with brands (Frawley, 2015). In this regards current project seeks to develop a valid and reliable instrument which would be of value to social media

and brand managers in capturing the levels of consumers' OBCeWOM engagement.

Additionally, current thesis intends to advance the eWOM and OBC research by uncovering OBC members' motivations to engage in eWOM. The analysis of existing literature shows a multiplicity of potential antecedents of eWOM in various contexts (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Dellarocas, Gao and Narayan, 2010; Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015). Nonetheless, eWOM is exchanged through different online channels and takes various forms, and is potentially driven by different considerations and needs (Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015). Furthermore, the application of various theoretical lenses has contributed to the wider fragmentation of eWOM research related to its antecedents (Yang, 2013), and created additional challenges to identifying the core reasons for one's eWOM engagement. Importantly, very little is currently known about the OBC members' eWOM motivations, with virtually no empirical understanding of eWOM motives in the social media-based OBCs. Additionally, present study intends to enrich the current state of eWOM literature by simultaneously examining the motives for active and passive participation in eWOM.

Furthermore, this research aims to contribute to marketing theory and practice by empirically examining the role of brand community eWOM in facilitating consumers' relationships with brands. Though existing research acknowledges the power of eWOM on consumers and brands (Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski, 2006; Erkan and Evans, 2016a; 2016b), little is currently known about the influence of eWOM on the brands' most loyal followers. Specifically, the researcher expects to uncover potential outcomes of eWOM in the OBC setting through the qualitative stage and to test the relationships in the quantitative stage further.

Finally, current thesis hopes to advance the eWOM and OBC research by simultaneously investigating the activity of brand community members within and outside of the community. By focusing on eWOM in the OBCs, the study will delve into the members' online activity, whereas by examining the outcomes of this communication – it also expects to uncover the aspects of offline consumer behaviour.

1.5 Thesis structure

Current thesis is divided into 11 chapters, structured as follows. Following the introduction to the thesis, Chapter 2 provides a review of the present state of research on online consumer interactions about brands. It identifies eWOM and OBC as the core concepts pertinent to this research and discusses the two respectful streams of literature in relation to the stated research objectives. Specifically, the first part of the chapter discusses the nature of eWOM and its theoretical association with the concept of offline WOM, as well as an overview of eWOM antecedents, outcomes, and approaches to conceptualisation and measurement. The second part includes the review of the brand community research and addresses the conceptualisation, typologies and specifics of OBCs, and the issue of OBC engagement and eWOM as its behavioural manifestation. The chapter closes with the analysis of the current state of knowledge of eWOM in the OBC setting. Building on the analysis of the literature, this chapter concludes with a discussion of research gaps and an outline of research questions.

Chapter 3 presents the overall research design and approach to the research that guides the collection and analysis of empirical data. The chapter starts with the discussion of philosophical considerations pertinent to the current research, addressing the appropriate ontological and epistemological positions. Additionally, the chapter presents the chosen research context and addresses the arguments for the chosen analytical approach.

Chapter 4 concerns methodology adopted in Study 1 of this thesis. The chapter starts with an overview of the sampling design used in Study 1. The chosen method of data collection and approach to the qualitative data analysis in line with specific requirements for the rigour in qualitative research are also addressed.

Chapter 5 presents the results of the qualitative study – Study 1 of this thesis. Specifically, the chapter addresses the findings pertinent to the second research objective concerning the motivations for and outcomes of eWOM in the OBC setting. The chapter provides examples from the interviews (Study 1) to corroborate the findings.

Chapter 6 outlines the conceptual model developed on the basis of the results from Study 1 and the issues identified in the literature review. In line with the second research objective, this chapter presents and defines the key antecedents and outcomes of eWOM in the OBC setting. The conceptual model identifies the theoretical relationship between the constructs and stipulates the relevant hypotheses to be tested in the Study 3.

Chapter 7 is dedicated to the design of quantitative data collection and analysis and covers the issues applicable to the research design of Study 2 and Study 3 of this thesis. The chapter presents the quantitative research instrument and outlines the process of questionnaire development. Questionnaire structure is presented, followed by the discussion of sampling design and issues related to questionnaire administration. Finally, the chapter addresses the data analysis methodology adopted in the Study 3, and the steps undertaken to ensure the suitability of the collected data.

Chapter 8 outlines the specific steps employed in the Study 2 and the findings associated with the RQ1 – the nature of eWOM in the OBC setting. Specifically, the chapter discusses the issues related to the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the research constructs. It outlines the process of identifying the relevant measures for the constructs, as well as the development of new measures and presents the rationale behind the development of new measurement scales for OBCeWOM and significant adaptation of existing measures of several motivational variables. Finally, the chapter discusses the evaluation of psychometric properties of the newly developed measures followed by the assessment of the overall measurement model.

Chapter 9 presents the results of the Study 3 of the research. Specifically, in line with the RQ2 and RQ3, the chapter addresses the results of hypothesis testing related to the influence of specific motivations on OBCeWOM, as well as the effect of OBCeWOM on the several identified outcome variables.

Chapter 10 provides an in-depth discussion of study findings vis a vis the research questions stated in this thesis based on the evidence from the Studies 1 – 3. Specifically, here the results of the three studies are compared to the

evidence from the existing research on eWOM and OBCs, and their correspondence with or deviation from the existing literature is explained.

Finally, Chapter 11 addresses the key contributions of this thesis. It discusses the theoretical and methodological contributions of the current research, followed by the overview of the implications for the marketing practice. The chapter closes with a discussion of limitations of the current research and potential avenues for future enquiries.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the two relevant streams of literature related to online consumer brand-related interactions. Specifically, the current chapter bridges the two streams of research and addresses the two concepts which have largely been studied separately, but which are nonetheless essential to this study – namely, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and online brand community (OBC). It starts with the review of the literature related to eWOM, followed by the overview of brand community research.

Specifically, the first part of the chapter defines the concept of eWOM and discusses how it relates to the conceptually similar notion of traditional word-of-mouth (WOM). It explains the specifics of eWOM that occurs in the online context and presents the arguments which evidence its distinct nature compared to the offline WOM. It thereby supports that eWOM needs to be approached in a different manner. The chapter further addresses the issues related to the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the eWOM construct in the existing research. The review of eWOM antecedents and outcomes is also provided. These particular themes are addressed as they help understand the process of eWOM, how it starts, and why it is significant.

The second part of this chapter is dedicated to another equally important stream of literature on consumer brand-related interactions – OBC research. This section opens by defining the term 'brand community', followed by the review of its main features, typologies, and the specifics of the OBC context. The discussion of consumers' interactions in the OBC follows to address different approaches to brand community participation and engagement, as well as the notion of eWOM as a behavioural manifestation of engagement in the OBC. The chapter also provides an overview of existing studies connecting eWOM and OBC literature, thus explaining what the current state of knowledge on eWOM in the

OBC setting is. The chapter concludes by examining the research gaps identified in the existing literature to derive the research questions.

2.2 Electronic word-of-mouth

Communication is one of the core elements of human behaviour. Individuals exchange a considerable amount of information daily, meeting face to face for a cup of coffee, talking on the phone, exchanging emails, or chatting via social media channels. A large part of conversations involves topics related to products and brands, with individual brand names mentioned around 60 times during a week (Daye, 2013). Individuals exchange opinions about movies, restaurants, hotels and holiday destinations, and consult one another when choosing between various brands. According to Keller Fay Group (2011), every day around 2.4 billion conversations take place that include a brand. In fact, only in the US, there are around 3.3 billion daily brand mentions (KellerFay, 2011), where an average person addresses up to 10 brands a day (Keller and Fay, 2012). Industry research further discusses that one in eight product-related communication exchanges leads to sales (Friedman, 2014).

Constant developments in online and social media environment shape the ways individuals interact with other potential or actual consumers about products, services, and different brands. Despite the majority of product-related conversations happening face to face (KellerFay, 2011), the number of online consumer interactions continues to grow, where individuals are increasingly able to access consumer product rankings or commentaries related to products, companies or brands over the Internet (Sandes and Urdan, 2013). In fact, communicating one's own experiences with brands has never been easier, as it only takes a few seconds, for instance, to rank the quality of the restaurant one has just visited, or a couple of minutes to write a quick review on TripAdvisor reflecting on one's hotel stay.

This type of interaction falls under the category of uncontrollable marketing communication or external brand communication not directly initiated by the brands and outside of companies' directs involvement and control (Krystallis and Chrysochou, 2014). The direction and pace of conversations continue to change,

where consumers "…are eager to co-create and self-produce meaningful contents…to relate to their brands and companies" (Gambetti and Schultz, 2015, p. 1). In fact, researchers have discussed the shift of power from the companies to consumers (Burton and Khammash, 2010; Labrecque et al., 2013; Habibi, Laroche and Richard, 2016), who are able to influence the brands by voicing any existing concerns online where they become visible to a large number of individuals. Consequently, companies may find it more difficult to influence consumers with marketing communication messages with a variety of alternative sources of product-related information available to individuals, such as online reviews or rankings provided by actual consumers (Fang, 2014; Yang, Yang and Wu, 2016).

Conceptually, such examples of external brand communication can be addressed as different manifestations of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM hereafter). The term "eWOM" was introduced in a seminal paper by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), who defined the concept as:

> "…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).

Because eWOM originates from other individuals rather than companies, it represents a more trusted choice of product-related information among consumers than TV, print or online forms of advertising (Nielsen, 2013). This can be attributed to the higher perceived credibility and persuasiveness of consumer-generated versus company-initiated communication (Lopez and Sicilia, 2014). EWOM represents a valuable source of product knowledge, where over 61 % of customers report consulting online reviews before making purchase decisions (Charlton, 2015).

Given the importance of eWOM in consumer decision-making process (Lopez and Sicilia, 2014), the concept has received a considerable amount of attention in the academic literature as well as industry reports and publications. EWOM has been a steady topic of interest among academic researchers for over 15 years, with different online platforms and communication methods offering additional

research avenues. The academic scholarship includes different strands of research investigating eWOM. One strand for instance is interested in the causes of eWOM, and focuses on the factors that play a role in eWOM generation (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Chu and Kim, 2011; Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013). Others have examined the influence of eWOM on the companies (e.g. Amblee and Bui, 2011; Yang et al., 2012; Kim, Park and Park, 2013; Liang et al., 2015) and consumers (e.g. Cheung and Thadani, 2012; Jin and Phua, 2014; Lopez and Sicilia, 2014). Whereas another group of studies, for instance, addressed eWOM credibility and how consumers evaluated eWOM messages (e.g. Cheung et al., 2009; Ku, Wei and Hsiao, 2012; Moran and Muzellec, 2014).

One can argue that eWOM has been around for longer, as it takes its origins from traditional word-of-mouth *(WOM)* communication (Yeh and Choi, 2011; Berger, 2014; Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014). Traditional or face to face WOM is defined as *"…informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service"* (Harrison-Walker, 2001, p. 63). Offline WOM has received a significant amount of academic attention (e.g. Engel, Kegerreis and Blackwell, 1969; Richins, 1983; Buttle, 1998; Sundaram, Mitra and Webster, 1998; Brown et al., 2005). The concept was originally brought to light in such seminal works by Arndt (1967), who looked into the influence of WOM on consumers' purchase decisions, and Engel, Kegerreis and Blackwell (1969), who focused on the innovators and their motivations to disseminate product-related information.

Despite often being approached as a newer form of traditional WOM enabled by the developments of online environment (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski, 2006; Wu and Wang, 2011; Cheung and Thadani, 2012), existing literature highlights both similarities and differences between the two concepts. The next section contrasts the two forms of communication – offline WOM and online (eWOM), addressing the key parallels and distinctions between the concepts. This is necessary for establishing the conceptual boundaries of eWOM and the associated specifics of online context, but also for explaining the place of eWOM in the broader marketing literature.

2.2.1 Electronic word-of-mouth vs. offline word-of-mouth

2.2.1.1 EWOM vs. WOM – similarities

The concepts of electronic word-of-mouth and traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) share certain important similarities that lead to their frequent association in published academic research. These similarities pertain to the origins, influence and content of communication. Arguably, the key common characteristic relates to the *origin* or source of WOM and eWOM. It is usually accepted that both forms of communication are initiated by individuals rather than commercial entities (Lam and Mizerski, 2005; Lin and Heng, 2015).

Another important feature of WOM and eWOM is related to the *content valence*. Specifically, in this regards, research often distinguishes between positive, negative and neutral WOM (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004; Daugherty and Hoffman, 2014; Baker, Donthu and Kumar, 2016). Similar criteria is applied to eWOM (Hoffman and Daugherty, 2013; Pfeffer, Zorbach and Carley, 2014; Ladhari and Michaud, 2015). The matter of valence is often associated with the impact of WOM and eWOM on consumers, and there are conflicting views on the issue. In fact, whereas a stream of research argues for the stronger effect of negative WOM and eWOM on individuals (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Sweeney, Soutar and Mazzarol, 2005; Lim and Chung, 2011), other scholars provide evidence to the contrary (East, Hammond and Lomax, 2008).

Furthermore, both traditional and online WOM have proven to have a strong *influence* on consumers (Bone, 1995; Garnefeld, Helm and Eggert, 2011) and consequently on the companies. The two types of communication are often preferred to, and more trusted by individuals than company-initiated marketing initiatives (Chatterjee, 2011; Zehrer, Crotts and Magnini, 2011). This is supported by industry findings which report that combined WOM and eWOM represent the top influencers on consumers' purchasing decisions (Coffee, 2014).

In light of the conceptual closeness between the two concepts, a stream of eWOM research has argued for examining online consumer conversations through the lens of traditional WOM communication (Steffes and Burgee, 2009; Toder-Alon, Brunel and Fournier, 2014). For example, both Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) and Wolny and Mueller (2013) have supported the similarity between the two

concepts. These papers incorporated research on face to face WOM to explain consumer motivations to engage in eWOM. Similarly, Berger (2014, p. 586) has discussed that WOM encompasses "face to face discussions, as well as "word of mouse", or "online mention and reviews", proposing a list of potential behavioral drivers of online and offline WOM. Nonetheless, despite the identified similarities and argued conceptual closeness of WOM and eWOM, there are also significant differences between these concepts.

2.2.1.2 EWOM vs. WOM – differences

The major differences between offline and online WOM (eWOM) relate to their context, temporality, visibility, scope, strength of social ties, credibility and anonymity.

Probably the key distinction between the concepts is associated with the *context* of communication. Whereas traditional WOM refers to the face to face consumer interaction, eWOM captures computer-mediated interactions that appear across various Internet and social media platforms. These can include an extensive list of environments, such as review websites (Khare, Labrecque and Asare, 2011) and online communities (Yang, Mai and Ben-Ur, 2012), discussion forums (Chih et al., 2013) and bulletin boards (Huang, 2010), online blogs (Cosenza, Solomon and Kwon, 2015; Koeck and Marshall, 2015), personal and professional SNS such as Facebook (Hsu, Chih and Liou, 2016), Twitter (Canhoto and Clark, 2013; Hennig-Thurau, Wiertz and Feldhaus (2015) or Linkedin (Barnes and Jacobsen, 2014), and online chat rooms (Yeap, Ignatius and Ramayan, 2014). Kreis and Gottschalk (2015) further argue that the choice of online platform for eWOM generation is often not random, and consumers identify the most appropriate channel based on their underlying motivation to engage in eWOM. The existence of different eWOM contexts is important as previous research suggests that eWOM differs in its influence on consumers depending on the platform where it takes place (Erkan and Evans, 2016b).

Face to face, and online WOM further differ in the *temporal* aspect. In the offline WOM, the production and consumption of information happen simultaneously, making it synchronous (Berger, 2014). By contrast, eWOM can

take on both synchronous and asynchronous characteristics (Chu and Kim, 2011). Synchronous eWOM can take a form of a conversation in a chatroom, or exchange via mobile messaging apps, where the information is sent and received at the same time. Examples of asynchronous eWOM are comments on review websites, or blog posts, which are usually not consumed at the same time as they are produced, and are consequently characterized by a lower level of interactivity (Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Huang et al., 2011; Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013).

Additionally, unlike face to face WOM, eWOM leaves a permanent *electronic evidence,* it persists sometimes long after being created, and this can have a long-lived impact on the audience (Amblee and Bui, 2008; Breazeale, 2009; Cheung and Lee, 2012). In essence, eWOM messages can be viewed long after they are posted, which is in clear contrast to face to face discussions. This arguably enables a somewhat easier measurement of eWOM as it becomes observable and leaves a visible trace (Cheung and Thadani, 2012; King, Racherla and Bush, 2014).

Another distinction between the two concepts is the potentially much broader dissemination scope of eWOM (Jeong and Jang, 2012; Groeger and Buttle, 2014), benefiting brands with positive feedback, and creating a reason for concern for those receiving negative sentiments (Ward and Ostrom, 2006; Pfeffer, Zorback and Carley, 2014). Depending on the dissemination channel, eWOM messages can be *directed* at one or multiple individuals (Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Barasch and Berger, 2014), and can potentially encompass a considerably larger audience than in traditional WOM communication. In the case of eWOM, the sender may never have to personally meet the readers of their eWOM message (Hennig-Thurau, Wiertz and Feldhaus, 2015). In this instance, eWOM can be regarded as a less personal communication (Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013).

Traditional WOM and eWOM often differ in the *strength of social ties,* or the degree of closeness between the communicator and receiver of information (Groeger and Buttle, 2014; Baker, Donthu and Kumar, 2016). This difference is important, as the strength of social ties can moderate the impact of eWOM on consumers (Baker, Donthu and Kumar, 2016). The closeness between the communicator and the receiver of the message can affect eWOM persuasiveness

(Teng et al., 2014), and influence consumers' decisions (Steffes and Burgee, 2009), as well as motivate the individual to spread the message further to one's social network (Chu and Kim, 2011).

Furthermore, as opposed to face to face WOM, eWOM can offer *anonymity* to both parties – the communicator and the receiver of the message (Gelb and Sundaram, 2002). For example, existing research discusses that individuals can adopt aliases and avatars instead of real identities in online environments (Kim and Gupta, 2012). This feature nonetheless may have different relevance depending on the choice of eWOM setting.

Incidentally, the anonymity aspect of eWOM communication can create both opportunities and barriers for eWOM dissemination and influence. Specifically, existing research highlights the matter of perceived *credibility* and expertise of online reviews (Lee and Youn, 2009). For example, Cheung and Thadani (2012) note that in the face to face communication the receiver is often aware of the communicator's credibility. Conversely, Cheung and Lee (2012) argue that there may often be limited ways of evaluating the reliability of online information, such as review stars or credibility of the online platform itself.

2.2.1.3 EWOM vs. WOM – summary of the contrast

The key differences and similarities between traditional WOM and eWOM are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Key features of WOM and eWOM

Feature	WOM	EWOM
Platform / context	Face to face	Online
Origin	Consumer-initiated	Consumer-initiated
Valence	Positive, negative, neutral	Positive, negative, neutral
Form	Oral	Written
Permanent evidence	No	Yes
Strength of ties	Often strong	Often weak
Anonymity	No	Yes / No
Timing	Synchronous	Synchronous, asynchronous
Audience	Often directed at one	Directed at one / multiple individuals

To conclude, the review of the two constructs notes the conceptual closeness between eWOM and traditional WOM. The key points concern the non-commercial origins of the communication, its impact and the valence of the message. The two streams of research often overlap, and WOM theory is consulted to explain the similar notion of eWOM (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Berger, 2014).

Concurrently, there are clear contrasts between the two types of communication. In fact, overall the examination of the two constructs indicates that there are much more differences between the two forms of communication than there are similarities, thus questioning the common association of eWOM with face to face WOM. Probably the key distinction between offline and online WOM is related to the global connectedness and ubiquitous character of online and social media environment. It can be argued that eWOM does not need to be initiated by market mavens and opinion leaders to make a difference and influence consumer behaviour. Instead, individual consumers may potentially affect a vast network of individuals via for instance social media (Moran and Muzellec, 2014).

Furthermore, compared to the face to face WOM, it may be argued that the nature of eWOM is much more complex, where individuals may take on different and dynamic roles in communication, thus making the division between the sender and the receiver of information less prominent (Toder-Alon, Brunel and Fournier, 2014). This is especially important when examining eWOM in the social media context, where Kimmel and Kitchen (2014, p. 13) note that "offline model of a static, dyadic exchange no longer applies, if it ever did, to the online environment".

Based on the provided arguments and accepting the theoretical association between offline and online WOM, this study nonetheless treats eWOM as a separate concept. It thereby specifically focuses on the processes that underpin online word-of-mouth communication (eWOM).

2.2.2 Approaches to the conceptualisation and operationalisation of eWOM

Electronic word-of-mouth is usually defined as *"…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). As noted in the previous section, there is a multitude of online platforms, where eWOM takes place and is studied by the academic community. These include for example online opinion platforms (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Cheung and Lee, 2012), shopping websites (Erkan and Evans, 2016b), personal blogs (Shin, Song and Biswas, 2014) or SNS (Ladhari and Michaud, 2015) among others. Consequently, academic literature discusses different manifestations of eWOM, such as for instance online hotel reviews (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009), individuals' comments on Facebook (Ladhari and Michaud, 2015), or 'tweets' (Jin and Phua, 2014). Recently, a study by Hennig-Thurau, Wiertz and Feldhaus (2015) has for instance addressed an emerging form of WOM conceptualised as micro-blogging word-of-mouth (MWOM). Whereas Luarn, Yang and Chiu (2015) have approached check-in behaviour on social media sites as a form of 'social WOM'.

Due to a number of possible contexts where eWOM takes place, and its diverse forms, there seem to be differing views with regards to the exact conceptual boundaries of eWOM. Depending on the chosen online context and focus of the study, the concept of eWOM can encompass additional elements. For example, looking into eWOM on Facebook and Twitter, Wolny and Mueller (2014, p. 565) offer an extended conceptualisation of eWOM. The authors discuss that in addition to the traditionally accepted textual elements, eWOM can also reflect "non-textual communications, which can be observed by peers such as 'liking a brand on Facebook or recommending ('retweeting') a story on Twitter…". Hoffman and Daugherty (2013) further add that eWOM can encompass textual as well as graphic characteristics. The different approached to the conceptualization of eWOM are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Approaches to the conceptualisation and operationalisation of eWOM

Source	Term used / type of eWOM	Definition / conceptualisation	Components	Research context
Erkan and Evans (2016b)	EWOM	N/A	Information quality, information credibility, information usefulness, information adoption	Social media, shopping websites
Parry and Kawakami (2015)	Virtual WOM (vWOM)	N/A	VWOM	N/A
Hennig-Thurau, Wiertz and Feldhaus (2015)	MWOM (microblogging word of mouth)	"Any brief statement made by a consumer about a commercial entity or offering that is broadcast in real time to some or all members of the sender's social network through a specific web-based service"	Positive MWOM share, negative MWOM share, MWOM ratio, MWOM volume	Twitter
Babic et al. (2015)	EWOM	"The act of consumers providing information about goods, services, brands, or companies to other consumers…communicated through the internet (through, e.g., reviews, tweets, blog posts, "likes", "pins", "images", "video testimonials")"	Volume, valence, composite valence-volume, variance	E-commerce, review, social media, and other Internet platforms
Toder-Alon, Brunel and Fournier (2014)	EWOM	Adopted definition by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	Advice-seeking, advice-giving	Bulletin board
Shin, Song and Biswas (2014)	EWOM	Adopted definition by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	EWOM intentions	Personal blog, community website
Lopez and Sicilia (2014)	EWOM	Adopted definition by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	Opinion seeking, opinion giving	Travel forum
Jin and Phua	EWOM	Adopted definition by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	Intention to spread	Twitter

			eWOM	
(2014)			eWOM	
Wolny and Mueller (2013)	EWOM	"Non-textual communications, which can be observed by peers such as 'liking' a brand on Facebook or recommending ('retweeting') a story on Twitter, as well as the more commonly studied product reviews and comments on social networks"	EWOM engagement	Twitter
Okazaki, Rubio and Campo (2013)	EWOM	"Informal conversation by which opinions on products and brands are developed, expressed and spread"	EWOM intentions	SNS
Abrantes et al. (2013)	EWOM	Adopted definition by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	EWOM in-group, EWOM out-group	SNS
Yang et al. (2012)	WOM	N/A	Volume, valence	Web portal
Tsao and Hsieh (2012)	EWOM	N/A	PWOM communication	N/A
Strizhakova, Tsarenko and Ruth (2012)	Online WOM	N/A	EWOM intentions	N/A
Parry, Kawakami and Kishiya (2012)	Virtual WOM (vWOM)	"Virtual communication between consumers who have never met in real life"	VWOM	N/A
Lee, Kim and Kim (2012)	EWOM	Adopted definition by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	EWOM intentions	SNS
Kawakami, Kishiya and Parry (2012)	Virtual WOM (vWOM)	"Virtual communication between consumers who have never met in real life"	VWOM	N/A
Huang, Hsiao and Chen (2012)	EWOM	N/A	Perceived influence of eWOM	Online game community
Cheung and Lee (2012)	EWOM	N/A	EWOM intentions	Online opinion platform

Yeh and Choi (2011)	EWOM	"Specific type of WOM that transpires in the online setting and shares the fundamental characteristics of WOM"	Intention to give information, intention to obtain information, intention to pass information	Online brand community – bulletin boards
Chu and Kim (2011)	EWOM	Adopted definition by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	Opinion seeking, opinion giving, opinion passing	SNS
Chu and Choi (2011)	EWOM	Adopted definition by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	Opinion seeking, opinion giving, pass-along behaviour	SNS
Fong and Burton (2008)	EWOM	N/A	Information seeking, information giving	Online discussion board
Dellarocas, Zhang and Awad (2007)	Online WOM	N/A	Volume, valence, dispersion	Review websites
Sun et al. (2006)	Online WOM	N/A	Opinion leadership, opinion seeking	N/A
Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski (2006)	EWOM / C2C know-how exchange	"Interactions among individuals that serve as an information source that enhances competency and knowledge"	C2C know-how exchange	Website
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	EWOM	"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"	Frequency of platform visits, number of comments written	Consumer opinion platform
Ridings, Gefen and Arinze (2002)	Information exchange	N/A	Desire to get information, desire to give information	Virtual community

Not surprisingly, when it comes to the operationalisation of eWOM, existing research also approaches eWOM from various perspectives. For example, a group of studies focuses on a eWOM as comprised of a single component or dimension. As such, it is often operationalised as eWOM intentions (Cheung and Lee, 2012; Lee, Kim and Kim, 2012; Strizhakova, Tsarenko and Ruth, 2012; Okazaki, Rubio and Campo, 2013; Yang, 2013; Jin and Phua, 2014; Shin, Song and Biswas, 2014), or sometimes eWOM engagement (Wolny and Mueller, 2013). Some studies specifically stress the valence of eWOM for example by focusing on positive eWOM communication (Tsao and Hsieh, 2012).

Another stream of research focuses on multiple components of eWOM. Within this group of studies, several scholars discussed different elements of eWOM in the context of SNS (Chu and Choi, 2011; Chu and Kim, 2011; Abrantes et al., 2013). Abrantes et al. (2013) for instance noted the different strength of relationships between individuals engaged in eWOM in SNS. As a result, the authors distinguished between eWOM in-group and eWOM out-group. Specifically, eWOM in-group refers to communication between individuals with strong ties, whereas eWOM out-group relates to exchange between individuals with weak ties (Abrantes et al., 2013).

Another group of researchers offers a different view of the components comprising eWOM. As an act of communication, eWOM involves providing and receiving information (Ridings, Gefen and Arinze, 2002; Sun et al., 2006; Fong and Burton, 2008; Yeh and Choi, 2011; Lopez and Sicilia, 2014), also referred to as advice seeking and advice giving (Toder-Alon, Brunel and Fournier, 2014). Chu and Kim (2011) have further argued for the inclusion of a third dimension – namely, opinion passing, which represents an 'enhanced dimension' of eWOM that becomes especially prominent in the online environment. The authors have thereby argued that the specifics of online platforms enable individuals to take on different roles in eWOM communication by seeking opinions of others, providing their own views about the products to other consumers, and passing information to others in their social network. Concurrently, Yeh and Choi (2011) have conducted one of the few studies of eWOM in the OBC context. Supporting the multi-dimensionality of eWOM, the authors have discussed three key

components of eWOM – intention to give information, intention to obtain information, and intention to pass information.

Attempting to quantify eWOM, others have looked at eWOM volume (Dellarocas, Zhang and Awad, 2007; Yang et al., 2012; Babic et al., 2015; Hennig-Thurau, Wiertz and Feldhaus, 2015) and dispersion (Dellarocas, Zhang and Awad, 2007), as well as specifically the number of comments or reviews written (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Moldovan, Goldenberg and Chattopadhyay, 2011; Oberhofer, Fuller and Hofmann, 2014). Other scholars have focused on the frequency of eWOM engagement (Wolny and Mueller, 2013) or frequency of platform visits (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), or share and ratio of positive eWOM to negative eWOM (Hennig-Thurau, Wiertz and Feldhaus, 2015). Furthermore, others have also noted the composition of the eWOM message, discussing eWOM valence (Dellarocas, Zhang and Awad, 2007; Yang et al., 2012; Babic et al., 2015).

Nonetheless, most of the times studies do not specifically focus on the dimensionality of eWOM, with researchers often testing relationships between several constructs associated with eWOM in their research models (Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014; Erkan and Evans, 2016a; Hsu, Chih and Liou, 2016). For example, previous research has looked into the relationship between eWOM credibility and eWOM adoption (Hsu, Chih and Liou, 2016); characteristics of eWOM information (such as quality, credibility, needs of information and attitude towards information) and consumers' actions towards this eWOM information (Erkan and Evans, 2016a). Others have also focused on the relationship between the attitude towards eWOM communication and intention to use eWOM communication media (Liang et al., 2013); or assessed such constructs as eWOM credibility (expertise, trustworthiness and similarity of eWOM source), attitude towards eWOM reading, and eWOM reading intention in the same model (Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014).

As a result, despite a significant number of eWOM studies published each year, several authors note that the literature in this area is still largely fragmented (King, Racherla and Bush, 2014). This fragmented character of eWOM research and approaches to eWOM conceptualisation and operationalisation has led to the variability of eWOM metrics and measures adopted. First, when adopting self-reported survey measures, some researchers have previously operationalised

eWOM as a single statement or a question (Lopez and Sicilia, 2014), whereas another group of studies has used multi-item scales to measure eWOM (e.g. Chu and Kim, 2011; Yeh and Choi, 2011; Strizhakova, Tsarenko and Ruth, 2012; Abrantes et al., 2013). Furthermore, a number of studies have also assessed eWOM using aggregate and proxy measures, looking at review stars (Pan and Zhang, 2011), average ratings (Dellarocas, Zhang and Awad, 2007; Duan, Gu and Whinston, 2008; Chintagunta, Gopinath and Venkataraman, 2010; Yang et al., 2012), or number of mentions or comments (Dellarocas, Zhang and Awad, 2007; Feng and Papatla, 2012; Yang et al., 2012; Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013; Barasch and Berger, 2014; Oberhofer, Fuller and Hoffman, 2014).

Overall the choice of metrics and measures used to assess eWOM often largely depends on the types and focus of the studies. Generally when the focus of the research is to analyse impact of eWOM on the market-level parameters (e.g. sales), researchers often adopt econometric models and measure eWOM as a number; whereas when focusing on eWOM's impact on consumer behavior, previous studies have adopted survey methodology thus measuring eWOM as a notion (Lee and Lee, 2009). Consequently, existing research has called for the development of more comprehensive eWOM measures especially if applied to the social media environment to account for its specifics (Toder-Alon, Brunel and Fournier, 2014).

2.2.3 Antecedents of eWOM

A significant stream of research explores the question of what drives individuals to engage in eWOM (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Wolny and Mueller, 2013). The research within this theme can be broadly divided into two strands: research looking into drivers of active eWOM engagement (or eWOM sending) (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Yen and Tang, 2015) and factors affecting passive eWOM engagement (or eWOM reading) (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014). Both strands have received significant attention, and have been studied in different contexts, such as for example virtual communities (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), travel or restaurant review websites (Yoo and Gretzel, 2008; Yang, 2013), online opinion platforms (Cheung

and Lee, 2012; Yen and Tang, 2015), or SNS (Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015).

The cumulative outcome of this research concerns the identification of a vast number of factors triggering active and passive eWOM engagement. For the purpose of this study, the factors are in turn divided into two broad categories – antecedents of eWOM and motivations for eWOM. Antecedents of eWOM include for example factors related to the specific features of products or consumers' evaluations of goods or services. Whereas consumer motivations refer to individual needs driving eWOM activity.

The majority of the literature looking into the causes of participation in active eWOM has focused on understanding its **antecedents**. In this regards previous research suggests that specific *features of the products*, as well as their evaluation by consumers, can cause eWOM generation (Dellarocas, Gao and Narayan, 2010; Moldovan, Goldenberg and Chattopadhyay, 2011; Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013). There is evidence that brands which are less complex, although of higher perceived quality and are more differentiated, lead to more eWOM (Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013). At the same time, product originality was found to influence the volume of eWOM, whereas product usefulness was found to affect the valence of eWOM (Moldovan, Goldenberg and Chattopadhyay, 2011). Furthermore, existing research discusses that brands need to be visible and exciting to trigger eWOM (Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013). Types of products can also make a difference, where experience goods seem to trigger more eWOM (Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013). Relating this specifically to the types of movies that receive most eWOM, previous research also found that both niche films (less known and less available), as well as high-grossing blockbusters, attracted more online reviews (Dellarocas, Gao and Narayan, 2010). Finally, there is also evidence that consumers tend to engage in more eWOM about brands they feel knowledgeable about (Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013).

Furthermore, besides the specific characteristics of the products, previous research suggested that factors related to *consumers' evaluation* of relationships and interactions with brands could trigger eWOM. It was found that satisfaction with and perceived fairness of company-customer interactions are important conditions of eWOM (Gebauer, Fuller and Pezzei, 2013). Previous research also

discussed that brand and community identification (Yeh and Choi, 2011), brand reputation (Amblee and Bui, 2008) and trust (Chu and Kim, 2011; Yeh and Choi, 2011) were important for eWOM generation. Finally, existing literature also evidenced that the nature and evaluation of eWOM itself could be a positive trigger of future eWOM, where eWOM acceptance by individuals could motivate them to share eWOM information further (Huang et al., 2011).

Of particular interest to this research is the stream of literature that looks into consumers' *motivations* as drivers of eWOM communication (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Okazaki, 2009; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Wolny and Mueller, 2013; Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015). Motivation is defined as *"an internal phenomenon causing individuals to conduct a particular action, arising due to perceived unfulfilled need(s) that move the individual 'away from psychological equilibrium"* (Burton and Khammash, 2010, p. 232).

Existing literature has approached eWOM motives in different ways. For instance, a group of scholars has adopted research on traditional WOM to explain motives for online WOM due to of the argued conceptual similarity between the two concepts (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Dellarocas, Gao and Narayan, 2010; Wolny and Mueller, 2013). From a different perspective, eWOM was also previously conceptualised as one of the elements comprising WOM (Berger, 2014). Whereas another stream of research specifically focused on identifying motivations for eWOM and relating them to the particular media channels (Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015; Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015).

Several scholars have provided significant headway to the development of research on eWOM motivations. These works include papers which focus on active and passive eWOM communication (writing and reading eWOM) in the context of online opinion platforms. One of the seminal works in this area was conducted by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), who focused on individual motivations to engage in eWOM communication on consumer opinion platforms. Relying on a survey of 2000 consumers, the authors have found that consumers engage in eWOM for several key reasons, including the desire for social interaction, concern for other consumers, self-enhancement, and economic incentives. Their paper focused on the participation in active eWOM and

assessed actual eWOM behaviour by two measures – frequency of platform visits and a number of comments written.

Several works have also advanced the literature on the motivations for passive eWOM. Here studies adopted both qualitative and quantitative methodology. Following a deductive strategy, Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003) have produced a list of theoretically derived motives for eWOM and combined them into five dimensions using factor analysis. These included the following motivations for eWOM reading: obtaining buying-related information, social orientation through information, community membership, remuneration, and learning how products could be consumed. The authors have used a survey of over 2900 members of online opinion platforms, and have argued that consumers mainly read eWOM to make better buying decisions and to save decision-making times.

A few scholars have built on the work by Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003) and identified additional motivations for reading eWOM in consumer opinion platforms using inductive approach (Burton and Khammash; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010). Burton and Khammash (2010) for instance used semi-structured interviews to derive motives for eWOM reading, whereas Khammash and Griffiths (2010) have adopted a case study approach, including interviews, observations, document analysis, and a survey. The two studies propose seven themes of motivations, including decision involvement, self-involvement, social involvement, product involvement, economic involvement, site involvement, and consumer empowerment.

Recently several studies have looked at eWOM motivations in the context of social network sites (Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015). Yen and Tang (2015) for example compared reasons for writing about one's hotel experiences on consumer opinion sites and on SNS. Using a survey of 252 consumers, the authors have identified three motivations for eWOM in SNS, including extraversion (or one's enjoyment of sharing positive experiences), social benefits, and dissonance reduction. Luarn, Yang and Chiu (2015) have looked into check-in behaviour on SNS as a type of 'social WOM'. The authors have grouped twenty potential motivations into four conditions, including personal, social, perceptual, and consumption-based conditions.

Overall the review of eWOM literature shows variability in the approaches to identifying, organising and conceptualising eWOM motivations. The studies in this stream differ in terms of a research setting, methods adopted, and the focus of research (i.e. active or passive eWOM). A significant number of papers on eWOM motivation focuses on the reasons for eWOM in the context of online consumer opinion platforms (e.g. Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010; Cheung and Lee, 2012; Yen and Tang, 2015). With regards to the methodology used, the majority of scholars adopt surveys (e.g. Yoo and Gretzel, 2008; Abrantes et al., 2013; Yang, 2013; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015), with only a limited number of studies incorporating qualitative methods (e.g. Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006; Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010). To date, the majority of studies have focused on active eWOM (e.g. writing online reviews) (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Abrantes et al., 2013; Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015), with less attention paid to consumer motives for reading eWOM (e.g. Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006; Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010). Finally, research in this area differs with regards to the theoretical approaches used to explain the motivations. Specifically, some studies rely on specific theories and frameworks to organise and categorise the motives, where the frameworks also vary considerably (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Cheung and Lee, 2012; Labsomboonsiri, Matthews and Luck, 2014). Whereas other works seem to focus on separate motives (Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006). The following sections synthesise the literature on eWOM motivations and address the chosen approach to organising the existing motives.

2.2.4 Categorising eWOM motivations

EWOM motivations have been previously approached using several theories. Applying Social Capital Theory, Labsomboonsiri, Matthews and Luck (2014) for instance have looked at eWOM via weak and strong social ties. The authors have identified the influence of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations on the development of the social ties in an online community. Whereas Wolny and

Mueller (2013) have adopted the Theory of Reasoned Action, proposing a path from motivations to attitudes → intention → behaviour.

By far most prominent theoretical frame is Uses and Gratifications Theory (Okazaki, 2009; Abrantes et al., 2013; Willemsen, Neijens and Bronner, 2013; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015). UGT is often adopted by marketing and communication scholars to explain media use and to identify drivers of different types of consumers' online behaviour. Having originated as a means to explain the appeal of traditional media to consumers (Blumler and Katz, 1974), UGT has since been successfully applied to the Internet in general, as well as to specific social media websites and online communities. UGT has been used to explain consumer motives for surfing the Internet (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999; Grant, 2005; Ko, Cho and Roberts, 2005; Jere and Davis, 2011) and visiting marketing websites (Ko, Cho and Roberts, 2005), as well as motives for using social media or user-generated media (Shao, 2009; Whiting and Williams, 2013), specific features of SNS (Smock et al., 2011), and participation in virtual (Sangwan, 2005) and brand communities (Sicilia and Palazon, 2008; Madupu and Cooley, 2010).

Studies applying UGT in different contexts have used varying approaches to organising diverse motivations associated with various media and communication activities. Different ways of categorising consumers' motives seem to be adopted depending on the specific focus of the study, and the type of media investigated (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011). For example, Sepp, Liljander and Gummerus (2011) have discussed three types of gratifications associated with writing blogs, including *process* gratifications, *content* gratifications and *social* gratifications. Process gratifications represented self-oriented motivations, related to emotion management, self-improvement and enjoyment. Content gratifications concerned motivations related to the content of the blog posts, such as for example enabling the blogger to document life events, entertain and enlighten others. Finally, social gratifications encompassed motivations related to individual's connection to others and included for instance the need for communication and discussions, receiving support from others, and image management.

The framework has also been adopted in the context of SNS. Jahn and Kunz (2012) for example focused on the drivers of Facebook brand page engagement. The authors organised these drivers into three groups: *content-oriented* (including functional and hedonic value), *relationship-oriented* (social interaction value and brand interaction value), *and self-oriented gratifications* (self-concept value).

UGT approach has also been previously applied to eWOM research. Abrantes et al. (2013), for example, have related several separate motivations for internet use to individuals' eWOM communication. The specific motivations included mood enhancement, escapism, social interaction and experiential learning. Whereas Kreis and Gottschalk (2015) have adopted UGT to relate different eWOM motives to consumers' choices for eWOM channels. The authors have argued that different channels can be grouped into three categories, offering *social*, *content*, and *process gratifications*, thus supporting various groups of motivations. Whereas Willemsen, Neijens and Bronner (2013) have focused on the content gratifications, addressed as motives concerned with the communication of message content, which encompassed such individual motivations for negative eWOM as altruism, venting dissatisfaction and empowerment.

Several studies have also applied UGT to the brand community context (Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo, 2004; Sicilia and Palazon, 2008; Bruhn, Schnebelen and Schafer, 2013). For example Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo (2004) have applied UGT to explain individuals' reasons for brand community participation. They have discussed that brand community participation is related to the five gratifications that individuals expect to receive, including *purposive value, self-discovery, maintaining interpersonal connectivity, social enhancement,* and *entertainment value*. Similarly, Sicilia and Palazon (2008) have discussed that participation in virtual brand communities provides *functional*, *social* and *entertainment* benefits to the members. Functional value is similar to the concept of purposive value in Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo (2004), and is related to obtaining information and advice (Sicilia and Palazon, 2008; Bruhn, Schnebelen and Schafer, 2013). Social value is associated with friendship, social interaction and opportunities for self-enhancement offered through community participation, and is similar to the interpersonal connectivity and social

enhancement values discussed by Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo (2004), and also related to the *symbolic benefits* discussed by Bruhn, Schnebelen and Schafer (2013) that are associated with social belonging and self-esteem. Finally, entertainment value refers to the fun, enjoyment, and relaxation associated with brand community participation (Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo, 2004; Sicilia and Palazon, 2008), and is similar to the concept of *experiential benefits* identified by Bruhn, Schnebelen and Schafer (2013).

Based on the different identified classifications of media use motivations according to UGT, and following the review of the literature concerning eWOM motivations in different media contexts, individual motives were organised into four categories (Table 3). Specifically, inspired by Sicilia and Palazon's (2008) classification, motives derived from existing research were grouped into social, functional (including information-related) and emotional / entertainment motives. Additionally, several motives were included into a separate category – self-oriented motivations. These categories and specific underlying motives are discussed in the following sections, starting with motivations related to active eWOM engagement and followed by individuals' motives for passive eWOM engagement.

Table 3. Motivations for eWOM communication

Source	Passive eWOM	Active eWOM	Motivation	Research context	Data collection method
Social					
Yen and Tang (2015)		✓	Social benefits	SNS	Survey
Luarn, Yang and Chiu (2015)		✓	Perceived social benefit, social support, tie strength, subjective norms	SNS	Survey
Kreis and Gottschalk (2015)		✓	Interaction benefits	SNS, chats, email	Survey
Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob (2014)	✓		Social function	OBC	Survey
Oberhofer, Fuller and Hofmann (2014)		✓	Making friends	Online community	Survey
Abrantes et al. (2013)		✓	Social interaction	N/A	Survey
Cheung and Lee (2012)		✓	Sense of belonging	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey
Bronner and de Hoog (2011)		✓	Social benefits	Consumer-generated, marketer-generated, mixed websites	Survey
Khammash and Griffiths (2010)	✓		Community membership, determination of social position, preferred authors, mediated advisor, understanding people, encouraging reciprocal reading	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey, interviews, observations, document review
Burton and Khammash (2010)	✓		Community membership, determination of social position, preferred authors, mediated advisor, understanding people, encouraging reciprocal reading	Consumer opinion platforms	Interviews
Okazaki (2009)		✓	Social enhancement	N/A	Survey
Goldsmith and Horowitz (2006)	✓		Influence of others, because it is cool	N/A	Critical incident technique, survey
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)		✓	Social benefits	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey
Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003)	✓		Community membership, determination of social position	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey

Functional					
Yen and Tang (2015)		✓	Altruism, platform assistance	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey
Luarn, Yang and Chiu (2015)		✓	Information sharing	SNS	Survey
Kreis and Gottschalk (2015)		✓	Helping others, helping the company, advice seeking, platform assistance	Company websites, product review websites	Survey
Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob (2014)	✓		Utilitarian function	OBC	Survey
Labsomboonsiri, Mathews and Luck (2014)		✓	Problem-solving support	Online forum	Survey
Yang (2013)		✓	Altruism	Restaurant review websites	Survey
Abrantes et al. (2013)		✓	Experiential learning	N/A	Survey
Cheung and Lee (2012)		✓	Enjoyment of helping	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey
Jeong and Jang (2011),		✓	Concern for other consumers, helping the company	N/A	Survey
Bronner and de Hoog (2011)		✓	Helping other vacationers, helping the company	Consumer-generated, marketer-generated, mixed websites	Survey
Khammash and Griffiths (2010)	✓		Learning how to consume a product, learning what products are new in the marketplace, trusted product opinion, non-expert product opinion, unique product experience, curiosity and broadening of horizons, improving writing style and language skills, risk reduction, reduction of search time	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey, interviews, observations, document review
Burton and Khammash (2010)	✓		Learning how to consume a product, learning what products are new in the marketplace, trusted product opinion, non-expert product opinion, unique product experience, curiosity and broadening of horizons, improving writing style and language skills, risk reduction, reduction of search time	Consumer opinion platforms	Interviews
Okazaki (2009)		✓	Purposive value	N/A	Survey

Yoo and Gretzel (2008)		✓	Concern for other consumers, helping a travel service provider	Travel review websites	Survey
Goldsmith and Horowitz (2006)	✓		Getting information easily, risk reduction, securing lower prices	N/A	Critical incident technique, survey
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)		✓	Concern for other consumers, advice seeking	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey
Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003)	✓		Learning how to consume a product, learning what products are new in the marketplace, risk reduction, reduction of search time	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey
Emotional / entertainment					
Yen and Tang (2015)		✓	Extraversion, dissonance reduction	SNS	Survey
Luarn, Yang and Chiu (2015)		✓	Perceived enjoyment	SNS	Survey
Kreis and Gottschalk (2015)		✓	Venting negative feelings	SNS, chats, email	Survey
Labsomboonsiri, Mathews and Luck (2014)		✓	Relaxation	Online forum	Survey
Abrantes et al. (2013)		✓	Mood enhancement, escapism	N/A	Survey
Jeong and Jang (2011)		✓	Expressing positive feelings	N/A	Survey
Khammash and Griffiths (2010)	✓		Compulsive habit and boredom, fun and enjoyment, dissonance reduction	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey, interviews, observations, document review
Burton and Khammash (2010)	✓		Compulsive habit and boredom, fun and enjoyment, dissonance reduction	Consumer opinion platforms	Interviews
Okazaki (2009)		✓	Intrinsic enjoyment	N/A	Survey
Yoo and Gretzel (2008)		✓	Enjoyment / positive self-enhancement	Travel review websites	Survey
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)		✓	Extraversion / positive self-enhancement	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey
Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003)	✓		Dissonance reduction	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey
Self-oriented					
Luarn, Yang and Chiu (2015)		✓	Image building, expressiveness	SNS	Survey

Kreis and Gottschalk (2015)		✓	Economic incentives	SNS, chats, email	Survey
Cheung and Lee (2012)		✓	Reputation	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey
Bronner and de Hoog (2011)		✓	Self-directed	Consumer-generated, marketer-generated, mixed websites	Survey
Khammash and Griffiths (2010)	✓		Economic involvement	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey, interviews, observations, document review
Burton and Khammash (2010)	✓		Remuneration	Consumer opinion platforms	Interviews
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)		✓	Economic incentives	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey
Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003)	✓		Remuneration	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey
Other					
Luarn, Yang and Chiu (2015)		✓	Customer satisfaction, perceived value, communicator involvement	SNS	Survey
Bronner and de Hoog (2011)		✓	Consumer empowerment	Consumer-generated, marketer-generated, mixed websites	Survey
Khammash and Griffiths (2010)	✓		Administrative	Consumer opinion platforms	Survey, interviews, observations, document review
Burton and Khammash (2010)	✓		Administrative	Consumer opinion platforms	Interviews
Goldsmith and Horowitz (2006)	✓		Unplanned (accidental), influenced by TV	N/A	Critical incident technique, survey

2.2.4.1 Motivations for active eWOM

The majority of identified motives to engage in active eWOM are related to the *social* functions of eWOM. Previous research suggests that communicating one's product-related views online and engaging in conversations with others enables individuals to experience social enhancement (Okazaki, 2009) and make friends (Oberhofer, Fuller and Hofmann, 2014). By participating in eWOM, individuals receive social (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015) and interactional benefits (Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015), and can experience social support (Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015). There is further evidence that individuals are motivated to contribute to eWOM generation through their sense of belonging to the community (Cheung and Lee, 2012). Finally, recent research looking at individuals' check-in behaviour on SNS as a form of social WOM discusses that the strength of ties between the communicator and the individuals who will see eWOM, as well as subjective norms – or willingness to conform to the accepted social norms of the group are important motivational drivers of this type of eWOM activity (Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015).

Another group of motivations is related to individuals' *emotional and entertainment* needs for eWOM. Previous research has found that by engaging in eWOM individuals get an opportunity for mood enhancement (Abrantes et al., 2013), are able to communicate their positive (Jeong and Jang, 2011; Yen and Tang, 2015) or negative feelings (Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015) associated with their product-related experiences. Engaging in eWOM is often perceived as a fun and enjoyable activity (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Yoo and Gretzel, 2008; Okazaki, 2009) that allows one to relax (Labsomboonsiri, Mathews and Luck, 2014) and temporarily escape from daily responsibilities (Abrantes et al., 2013). Finally, previous research also indicates that engagement in eWOM is driven by one's needs to reduce cognitive dissonance or possible frustration associated with the purchase (Yen and Tang, 2015).

An important subgroup of motivational drivers concerns *functional* or information-related motivations. Previous research has discussed that eWOM participation is largely associated with one's motivations to share information (Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015), thus obtaining the purposive value (Okazaki,

2009), and can further offer opportunities for experiential learning (Abrantes et al., 2013). Individuals often engage in eWOM generation in order seek advice (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015) and problem-solving support from other consumers (Labsomboonsiri, Mathews and Luck, 2014). EWOM posting behaviour can also be motivated by one's need for platform assistance, where one perceives they will be able to receive support from the platform administrators, and potentially make the company 'more accommodating' through publicising the message online (Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015). Additionally, existing research discusses that individuals engage in eWOM due to the altruistic drive to help other consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Yoo and Gretzel, 2008; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Jeong and Jang, 2011; Cheung and Lee, 2012; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015), as well as help the company (Yoo and Gretzel, 2008; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Jeong and Jang, 2011; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015).

Finally, several studies recognize specific *self-oriented* motives. Existing literature discusses that participation in eWOM provides opportunities to establish or enhance one's reputation by being perceived as having expertise on the topic (Cheung and Lee, 2012). Furthermore, recent research suggests that eWOM can be used as a way to express oneself and convey one's ideal image of themselves to the others (Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015). Finally, individuals can also be motivated by self-directed motivations (Bronner and de Hoog, 2011) related to receiving economic incentives for eWOM generation (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015).

2.2.4.2 Motivations for passive eWOM

Compared to the active eWOM engagement, the drivers of passive eWOM engagement (or reading of eWOM) have received less academic attention. To date, the majority of studies looking into factors predicting eWOM have focused on the triggers of active eWOM communication (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013; Luarn, Yang and Chi, 2015). Nonetheless, several researchers have uncovered antecedents (Sun et al., 2006; Chu and Kim, 2011) and individual motivations for reading eWOM (passive eWOM engagement) (e.g. Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014). For

example, when addressing antecedents of eWOM reading, previous research discussed that online opinion seeking behaviour was driven by consumers' skills and proficiency in using the Internet, as well as trust towards and strength of their social connection or social ties to other consumers (Sun et al., 2006; Chu and Kim, 2011). Chu and Kim (2011) also found that one's susceptibility to normative and informational influence could explain passive eWOM engagement.

A handful of studies has addressed consumers' *motivations* for reading online reviews or seeking online product opinions of others (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006; Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010; Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014). Similar to active eWOM motivations, the identified motives for eWOM reading fall under the social, functional (information-related), emotional / entertainment, and self-oriented categories.

Contrary to the active eWOM engagement, the majority of identified motivations to engage in passive eWOM (also discussed in the literature as eWOM reading or opinion / advice seeking) can be grouped into the *functional* category. Reading eWOM primarily satisfies utilitarian function, where individuals are interested in finding solutions to product-related issues or are looking for advice from other consumers (Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014). Within this category the motivations are largely related to obtaining product-related information, such as learning how the products are supposed to be consumed, or learning what products are new in the marketplace (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010), or are related to the overall simplicity of getting information (Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006). Furthermore, obtaining product-related information can make individuals feel empowered, such as when they are motivated to read eWOM that provides unique information on consumers' product experiences, when it originates from a trusted source, and from an ordinary individual who is non-expert, thus adding more credibility to eWOM information (Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010). Additionally, besides being driven by information-related reasons, consumers are also interested in seeking eWOM as a means to reduce the risks associated with a purchase, and to reduce the search time (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths,

2010). Finally, the opportunity to secure lower prices may also motivate consumers to engage in eWOM reading (Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006).

Engaging in eWOM reading can also be related to eWOM's *social* functions (Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014). Reading eWOM can help individuals better understand others (Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010), where one can be further motivated to read eWOM for the reason of belonging to the community (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010), as community environment provides opportunities to socialise and interact with others who share similar interests (Cova, Pace and Park, 2007; Stokburger-Sauer, 2010; Kuo and Feng, 2013). As such, eWOM reading can also be a result of influence by other individuals who have successfully looked for information in this way (Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006). Furthermore, reading online reviews can be motivated by the need to serve as a 'mediated advisor' – such as when helping friends or family find the required product-related information (Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010). Reading online reviews or product-related information posted by other consumers can also help determine one's social position by comparing one's product evaluations to those of others in virtual communities (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010). Previous research suggests that members of virtual communities are motivated to read eWOM posted by their 'preferred authors', whose writing style they appreciate (Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010).

A small number of motivations for passive eWOM were grouped under the umbrella of *emotional / entertainment* motives. This group was less prominently represented in existing research regarding the drivers of eWOM reading compared to the motives for writing eWOM. Three motives for passive eWOM were included in this category – namely, compulsive habit and boredom, fun and enjoyment, and dissonance reduction (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010). Finally, in contrast to the drivers of active eWOM engagement, the *self-oriented* category related to the motives for passive eWOM only included the motivation associated with economic incentives, or remuneration (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010).

Some of the motivations associated with active and passive eWOM communication identified through the extensive literature review did not fall under any of the four categories and were thereby grouped into a separate 'other' category of motivations. These encompassed the three motivational drivers for check-in behaviour, including customer satisfaction, perceived value of the service, and involvement of the communicator in the check-in activity (Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015). It also included a separate consumer empowerment motivation associated with eWOM engagement on online review websites (Bronner and de Hoog, 2011). Additionally, three factors associated with eWOM reading were included in this category, particularly accidental exposure to eWOM communication, one's influence by traditional media (TV), and one's administrative or site involvement (Burton and Khammash, 2010; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010).

Overall, despite the similar categorisation of motivations, individual motives associated with active and passive eWOM rarely overlap. This abundance of separate sets of motivations of eWOM communication associated with different online platforms further contributes to the fragmentation of eWOM research. The review of the literature offers multiple potential antecedents and motivational drivers of eWOM, albeit concurrently making it challenging to identify the key most sought gratifications or needs that individuals wish to satisfy by engaging in eWOM.

2.2.5 Outcomes of eWOM

Interest in eWOM is clearly driven by the significant outcomes of engagement in eWOM. Specifically, this strand of eWOM research offers different perspectives of eWOM influence. For example, a group of scholars discusses a significant influence of eWOM on consumers (e.g. Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski, 2006; Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009; Erkan and Evans, 2016a; 2016b). Another stream of research also notes the effect of eWOM on companies' performance (e.g. Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Amblee and Bui, 2011; Yang et al., 2012; Liang et al., 2015).

Academic literature has established that eWOM is often perceived as a more helpful and credible source of knowledge about brands, as it offers additional insights that are often difficult to obtain by simply relying on information provided by brands (Doh and Hwang, 2009; Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014). This is supported by findings from industry market research, which argues that consumers exhibit higher levels of trust towards online consumer reviews than towards market-generated communication (Nielsen, 2012), where over 61 % of consumers note that they would turn to online reviews prior to making a purchase decision (Charlton, 2015).

Past research, for instance, makes a clear link between *motivations for eWOM* reading and *behavioural outcomes* (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Khammash and Griffiths, 2010). Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003) find that need to obtain buying information as well as the need for social orientation has power to induce a change in consumers' buying behaviour and communication behaviour. Khammash and Griffiths (2010) have further built on this research and tested several additional behavioural outcomes of eWOM reading motivations, linking motivations related to self- and social involvement, consumer empowerment, product- and decision-involvement to such outcomes as communication and purchase behaviour, opinion leadership, loyalty behaviour towards the site, as well as novelty seeking and ability to make independent judgements.

A stream of research has focused specifically on identifying the outcomes of eWOM communication. In this regards several studies have made an important contribution towards consolidating and framing eWOM research (such as Cheung and Thadani, 2012; King, Racherla and Bush, 2014). In their systematic literature review Cheung and Thadani (2012) distinguished between *individual-level* and *market-level* (or firm-level) outcomes of eWOM communication. Individual-level parameters relate to the influence of eWOM on consumer behaviour, whereas market-level parameters refer to the effect of eWOM on companies (e.g. sales) (Lee and Lee, 2009; Cheung and Thadani, 2012; King, Racherla and Bush, 2014).

On the **market-level,** previous research suggests that eWOM can influence sales (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Amblee and Bui, 2011; Yang et al., 2012; Babic et al., 2015; Liang et al., 2015) and revenues (Liu, 2006; Kim, Park and Park, 2013), thus being potentially important for the brand's overall competitiveness. For

example, existing studies in this area have focused on the movie industry, and established a connection between eWOM and box office sales (Duan, Gu and Whinston, 2008), revenues (Kim, Park and Park, 2013) and performance (Chintagunta, Gopinath and Venkataraman, 2010). Others have linked eWOM on e-commerce websites to the sales of tangible goods such as e-books, further discussing that eWOM can signal the reputation of the brand (Amblee and Bui, 2011).

Of particular interest to this research is the influence of eWOM on the *individual-level outcomes*, or how eWOM affects other types of consumer behavior and what role it plays in consumers' further relationships with brands. This part of the literature is often concerned with identifying the outcomes of passive eWOM engagement (e.g. Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009; Sparks and Browning, 2011; Hsu, Lin and Chiang, 2013; Lopez-Lopez and Parra, 2016). For example, existing research has previously described the influence of exposure to eWOM in the form of the online product (Lee, Park and Han, 2008) or service reviews (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009; Sparks and Browning, 2011). Other studies focus on the impact of reading consumer comments on e-commerce websites (Erkan and Evans, 2016b). Whereas a group of scholars focuses on the impact of eWOM in the form of consumers' comments on SNS (Ladhari and Michaud, 2015). It thereby often addresses the influence of eWOM communication on the receiver of information. The overview of outcomes of eWOM communication in different contexts is presented in the Table 4.

Table 4. Individual-level eWOM outcomes

Source	Context / platform							Outcome
	Social media	Community / forum	Review website	Shopping website	Chat-room	Email / text message	N/A	
Lopez-Lopez and Parra (2016)			✓					Product attitude
Erkan and Evans (2016a)	✓							Purchase intentions
Erkan and Evans (2016b)	✓			✓				Online purchase intentions
Baker, Donthu and Kumar (2016)	✓	✓			✓	✓		Retransmission intentions, purchase intentions
Ladhari and Michaud (2015)	✓							Trust towards the hotel, attitude towards the hotel, perceived quality of the website, hotel booking intentions
Lopez and Sicilia (2014)		✓						Decision making
Jin and Phua (2014)	✓							Product involvement, eWOM intention, buying intention
Martin and Lueg (2013)							✓	Product attitude
Hsu, Lin and Chiang (2013)	✓							Attitudes towards online shopping
Chih et al. (2013)		✓						Purchase intentions
Huang, Hsiao and Chen (2012)		✓						Product attitude
Parry, Kawakami and Kishiya (2012)							✓	Perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, innovation use
Sparks and Browning (2011)			✓					Trust, hotel booking intentions
Garnefeld, Helm and Eggert (2011)							✓	Loyalty, commitment
Zhang et al. (2010)			✓					Online popularity of restaurants

Chakravarty, Liu and Mazumdar (2010)			✓					Movie evaluation
Vermeulen and Seegers (2009)							✓	Hotel awareness, hotel consideration, hotel attitude
Lee, Park and Han (2008)				✓				Product attitude
Gauri, Bhatnagar and Rao (2008)				✓				Online store loyalty
Awad and Ragowsky (2008)				✓				Trust towards the website
Sun et al. (2006)							✓	Online chatting, online forwarding
Lim et al. (2006)				✓				Trusting beliefs
Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski (2006)		✓						Perceived overall value of the firm's offering, loyalty intentions (WOM)

Within this part of research, previous studies stress that eWOM is a powerful type of communication, which enhances consumers' awareness about products or services and their consideration (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009) and online popularity (Zhang et al., 2010). EWOM has been found to influence consumers' evaluations of (Chakravarty, Liu and Mazumdar, 2010) and attitudes towards (Lee, Park and Han, 2008; Cheung and Thadani, 2012; Huang, Hsiao and Chen, 2012; Martin and Lueg, 2013; Lopez-Lopez and Parra, 2016) products and services, such as for example hotels (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009; Ladhari and Michaud, 2015) or movies (Chakravarty, Liu and Mazumdar, 2010), and also affect the overall perceived value of a firm's offering (Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski, 2006).

Previous research has also established that eWOM has a role in consumers' decision-making process (Lopez and Sicilia, 2014). Studies show that eWOM can affect individuals' online (Erkan and Evans, 2016b) and offline purchase intentions (Chih et al., 2013; Jin and Phua, 2014; Baker, Donthu and Kumar, 2016; Erkan and Evans, 2016a) and behaviour (Cheung and Thadani, 2012), or for example intentions to book a hotel (Sparks and Browning, 2011; Ladhari and Michaud, 2015). Finally, there is evidence that eWOM can influence individuals' trust (Lim et al., 2006; Sparks and Browning, 2011; Ladhari and Michaud, 2015), commitment and loyalty towards the company (Gauri, Bhatnagar and Rao, 2008; Garnefeld, Helm and Eggert, 2011).

Despite a significant list of potential eWOM outcomes, review of existing literature shows that there is limited understanding of the influence of eWOM on the communicators themselves (Garnefeld, Helm and Eggert, 2011; King, Racherla and Bush, 2014). In other words, little is known about the behavioural or relationship outcomes of active eWOM participation. This seems to be associated with the way eWOM is assessed in the studies, where participants are given scenarios or vignettes with examples of written eWOM (Huang, Hsiao and Chen, 2012; Lopez-Lopez and Parra, 2016), or relate situations when they were exposed to eWOM (Martin and Lueg, 2013).

Overall, the review of existing eWOM literature indicates several important insights. First, the majority of studies interested in the *motivations* for eWOM focus on active eWOM components. As such, to date scholars have largely been

concerned with answering the question of what motivates individuals to generate eWOM, with less attention being paid to the causes for passive eWOM engagement. Conversely, when it comes to the *outcomes* of eWOM communication, previous research has mostly addressed the effects of passive eWOM engagement, or influence eWOM on the reader. This situation is also associated with the different perspectives on eWOM dimensionality and operationalisation.

Another important insight relates to the choice of *research setting* in existing studies. To date the majority of papers have focused on understanding eWOM motivations in the context of online opinion platforms (e.g. Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Cheung and Lee, 2012). One of the more recent trends in this stream of research looks into social network sites as platforms for eWOM communication (Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015), with an emerging stream of literature looking into eWOM among members of online brand communities (Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014).

A slightly different trend can be seen in the literature related to the outcomes of eWOM communication. Here studies seem to mostly focus on social media (e.g. Erkan and Evans, 2016a; 2016b), online communities (Baker, Donthu and Kumar, 2016) and shopping websites (Lee, Park and Han, 2008; Erkan and Evans, 2016b). Regarding the outcomes of eWOM, one context that is yet to receive attention from academic scholars is online brand community. Online brand communities represent a unique setting for eWOM, as contrary to online communities addressed in existing research, the former are dedicated to specific brands (Marchi, Giachetti and Gennaro, 2011; Yeh and Choi, 2011). The following sections review the literature on brand communities and discuss the issue of eWOM in online brand communities.

2.3 Brand community

2.3.1 Brand community overview

Online consumer interactions can take place on different platforms, where eWOM is concerned with one's consumption experiences, different service and

product categories, or specific brands. In practice, consumers for example have an option of posting one-off individual reviews of brands they have purchased on the e-commerce websites (e.g. Amazon) (Gu, Tang and Whinston, 2013), or engage in discussions with others interested in certain products or specific brands within platforms especially dedicated to the topics (Ku, Wei and Hsiao, 2012). One of the types of organised consumer groups is brand communities – a term introduced by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001, p. 412) in their study of Saab and Macintosh brand communities. The authors have conceptualised brand community as a:

> *"…specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand"*.

An identifying feature of brand communities is that their members are interested in a specific brand, as opposed to other consumption communities, where consumers can find information about different brands within the product category (Marchi, Giachetti and Gennaro, 2011; Yeh and Choi, 2011). Members of brand communities feel an emotional connection to the brand, where the brand plays an important part in their lives (Arora, 2009). Brand communities are groups of individuals "who just cannot stop loving their brand" (Banerjee and Banerjee, 2015, p. 22), exhibiting loyalty to the brand (Andersen, 2005; Flavian and Guinaliu, 2005; Thompson and Sinha, 2008; Hur, Ahn and Kim, 2011) and to the community (Scarpi, 2010). As a result, members of brand communities can develop resistance to negative information about their preferred brand (Marzocchi, Morandin and Bergami, 2013), and sometimes remain supportive of the community even after the brand is discontinued (Muniz and Schau, 2005).

Not surprisingly, since the introduction of the brand community concept, the interest to this phenomenon has been only growing. Existing literature addressed the benefits of brand communities, such as for example increasing brand awareness and consumer trust, allowing market segmentation and serving as a valuable source of consumer information, as well as sometimes allowing to generate income from advertising in the community (Flavian and Guinaliu, 2005; Matzler et al., 2011). Brand community members are thought to represent an important source of knowledge, and are able to contribute to product innovation (Fuller, Matzler and Hoppe, 2008), idea generation (Wu and Fang, 2010) and

success of new products (Gruner, Homburg and Lukas, 2013). Importantly, brand community members serve as advocates and evangelists for the brand (Matzler et al., 2011; O'Sullivan, Richardson and Collins, 2011).

Evidence from academic research suggests that brand communities are usually formed around strong, competitive brands with an enduring brand image and history (Sicilia and Palazon, 2008; Ewing, Wagstaff and Powell, 2013). Taking their roots from the sociology literature, brand communities traditionally share three key characteristics – referred to as brand community markers, including shared consciousness of a kind, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility to each other within the group (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). These core markers may vary in intensity within different brand communities, but they represent the key common features of these collectives (Schau and Muniz, 2002).

The consciousness of a kind is a core component of brand community and reflects a feeling of intrinsic connectedness to the other members of the community through a passion for the brand in question (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2008; Stokburger-Sauer, 2010; Kuo and Feng, 2013). Brand community members perceive a sense of belonging to the community, and identify themselves with the group (Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann, 2005; Zhou et al., 2012) even despite the geographical boundaries between the members, with Muniz and O'Guinn (2001, p. 419) stressing that "brand communities are largely imagined communities". The consciousness of a kind is characterised by two elements: legitimisation and oppositional brand loyalty (Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2007). Legitimisation refers to the separation of 'true' and 'opportunist' members within the brand community (Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2007), thus accepting that brand community members are not homogenous and can be driven by different motivations to join the community (Ouwersloot and Odekerken-Schroder, 2008), as well as different levels of participation (Gruner, Homburg and Lukas, 2013; Kang, Tang and Fiore, 2015).

This brand community marker is further characterized by a clear distinguishing between the members and non-members of the community, where brand community members feel special and different compared to consumers of other

brands (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Schau and Muniz, 2002), thus not just identifying themselves as who they are, but also contrasting themselves to who they are not (Hickman and Ward, 2007). This can further manifest through expressing oppositional brand loyalty, or negative feelings and adversarial behaviour towards rival brands (Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2008; Fuller, Matzler and Hoppe, 2008; Kuo and Feng, 2013; Japutra et al., 2014). An example of the manifestation of oppositional brand loyalty was illustrated in the research by Felix (2012), who described how the members of Yamaha R1 brand community expressed a feeling of 'we' against 'them' towards the bikers who rode Suzuki motorcycles.

Brand communities are also marked by *shared rituals and tradition*. These represent shared product experiences and social processes that signal community meaning within and outside the community (Flavian and Guinaliu, 2005; Cova, Pace and Park, 2007; Fuller, Matzler and Hoppe, 2008), and help support the community culture (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Stokburger-Sauer, 2010). They often include brand culture, stories and narratives, events and celebrations, specific jargon and dress-code (Schau and Muniz, 2002; Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2008; Dholakia and Vianello, 2009). Community rituals and traditions help reinforce the appreciation of the brand and its history and community values, where the members relate to one another through their shared memories of important events in the history of the brand (Flavian and Guinaliu, 2005; Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2008).

The final marker concerns the *sense of moral responsibility* which represents the perceived obligations of the community members to one another and community as a whole (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Kuo and Feng, 2013). It reflects the moral commitment to one another (Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2008), and is nurtured over a period of time through the development of the relationship between the community members (Dholakia and Vianello, 2009). This brand community marker is implicated in the integration and retention of members (Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2007, 2008), and can manifest through helping others in the community by responding to other members' queries, providing advice and educating new members about using the brand, or recruiting new members of the community (Schau and Muniz, 2002; Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2008; Dholakia and Vianello, 2009; Kuo and Feng, 2013).

Just as members of local communities share resources, food, thereby supporting each other, brand community participants share knowledge and information, similarly providing emotional and cognitive support (McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig, 2002).

2.3.2 Typologies of brand communities

Despite the shared key features of brand communities, these entities are characterised by important idiosyncratic differences. These concern such issues as brand community size, membership, brand categories, and governance. The overview of specific typologies of brand communities is discussed separately.

One of the key variations of brand communities is related to their number of members. Existing literature shows that brand communities can differ in size (Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann, 2005; Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006; Scarpi, 2010). In this regards researchers provide different conceptualisation of small and large brand communities. For example, Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann (2005) discussed small brand communities with less than 50 members and large groups consisting of over 50 members. Focusing on web-based groups, Scarpi (2010) defined small brand communities as groups of less than 100 members, and large communities as comprised of over 1000 members. Whereas Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) focused on small brand communities of around 10 members, who frequently meet and interact.

Secondly, existing research shows that brand communities can differ based on the social relations between the members. As such, these groups can be characterised by frequent social interactions between the members, or conversely very little social exchange (McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig, 2002; Sicilia and Palazon, 2008). Brand community members can possess a large amount of knowledge about one another, as well as know almost nothing about others in the group (McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig, 2002; Sicilia and Palazon, 2008). Moreover, brand community members can have varying levels of knowledge about and attachment towards the brand and thus different experiences within the community (Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann, 2005).

Depending on the specifics of brand community membership, Carlson, Suter and Brown (2008) further discuss that brand communities can be social and psychological. Social brand communities are characterised by social interactions among their members, including face to face or online. Whereas psychological brand communities don't involve a formalised membership, whereby individuals perceive a sense of community, but have no social relations among each other, thus making them imagined communities existing only in the minds of individuals.

Similarly, brand communities can further differ in individuals' motivations for membership and participation (Relling et al., 2016), where not all brand community members are necessarily fans of the brand (Andersen, 2005). In this regards, they Relling et al. (2016) have divided brand communities into social-goal and functional-goal communities. Social-goal communities are primarily used for social interactions among like-minded individuals who share a strong interest in the brand (Relling et al., 2016), and who are often more interested in relationships with others than with the brand (Fournier and Lee, 2009). Whereas members of functional-goal communities are less interested in socialization and are primarily looking to obtain balanced information about the brand (Relling et al., 2016).

Another variability in brand communities refers to the categories and types of brands. Existing research shows that brand communities are not limited to certain product categories (Arora, 2009). These groups can be formed around B2C (e.g. Cova, Pace and Park, 2007; Fuller, Matzler and Hoppe, 2008) and B2B brands (Andersen, 2005; Bruhn, Schnebelen and Schafer, 2013), or even started as an internal branding initiative (Devasagayam et al., 2010). Brand communities are created around luxury brands such as Hermes (Leban and Voyer, 2015) and convenience products such as Nutella (Cova and Pace, 2006) and Coca-Cola (Sicilia and Palazon, 2008). Examples of brand communities can be seen in automobile brands such as Harley-Davidson (Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann, 2005; Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006; Kilambi, Laroche and Richard, 2013), Jeep (McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002), HUMMER (Luedicke, 2006), Volkswagen GTI (Fuller, Matzler and Hoppe, 2008; Matzler et al., 2011), Hyundai (Jang et al., 2008), Yamaha (Felix, 2012) and Ducati (Marzocchi, Morandin and Bergami, 2013). Furthermore, research discusses a large number of

brand communities associated with technology brands such as Apple (Belk and Tumbat, 2005; Hickman and Ward, 2007; Kilambi, Laroche and Richard, 2013), Samsung and SKY (Jang et al., 2008), Nikon (Raies and Gavard-Perret, 2011), IBM, Oracle and SAP (Bruhn, Schnebelen and Schafer, 2013). Examples of brand communities can also be found in fashion brands such as Zara (Royo-Vela and Casamassima, 2011) and Nike (Kilambi, Laroche and Richard, 2013).

Brand communities are not necessarily created around tangible products, but can be initiated around entertainment brands related to movies such as Star Wars (Brown, Kozinets and Sherry, 2003), Star Trek (Eagar, 2009) or Xena (Schau and Muniz, 2002; Schau, Muniz and Arnould, 2009), games, such as Warhammer (Cova, Pace and Park, 2007; Cova and White, 2010) or Football Manager (Skandalis, Byrom and Banister, 2015), or even book series, such as Discworld (Eagar, 2009). Brand communities are also often associated with sports brands, such as Manchester United FC (Flavian and Guinaliu, 2005) and Liverpool FC (Pongsakornungslip and Schroeder, 2011), or a rugby team the Brumbies (Eagar, 2009); or formed within educational institutions (McAlexander and Koenig, 2010; Chauhan and Pillai, 2013). Given that there are generally non-existing barriers to joining brand communities, with potentially multiple communities dedicated to one brand, and the fact that consumers can own different brands in the same product category (Thompson and Sinha, 2008), individuals are often characterised by multiple brand community memberships (Schau and Muniz, 2002), and can even experience multi-brand loyalty (Felix, 2012).

Finally, multiplicity of brand communities is further revealed in the ways they are managed. Based on the brand community governance, existing research identifies company-managed (Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann, 2005; Kim, Bae and Kang, 2008; Woisetschlager, Hartleb and Blut, 2008) and enthusiast-run groups (Dholakia and Vianello, 2009; Raies and Gavard, 2011; Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Hsieh, 2015). In fact, many brands have initiated and nurtured their brand communities, as well as many brand enthusiasts, have formed communities around their favourite brands (Jang et al., 2008; Dholakia and Vianello, 2009). Existing research shows that company-initiated brand communities can serve as a valuable source of product-related information and feedback, and are often established to maintain a relationship with consumers (Jang et al., 2008). Enthusiast-run communities are characterized by their passion for the brand and

are often made up by participants who may not even share anything else in common (Dholakia and Vianello, 2009).

2.3.3 Online brand communities

The online brand community has emerged as a distinct type of brand community. These communities are not restricted by geographical boundaries yet are still marked by common identities and traditions (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Madupu and Cooley, 2010). Online brand communities (OBCs) refer to *"specialized, non-geographically bound communities, based upon social relationships among admirers of a brand in cyberspace"* (Jang et al., 2008, p. 57). Online brand communities can have their separate websites (Brodie et al., 2013), they can also be formed within Yahoo! or Google groups (Madupu and Cooley, 2010), or created within social network sites (SNS) (Relling et al., 2016).

A special type of OBC is a brand community in social network sites. The notions of **social media-based brand communities** or **brand communities in SNS** represent the more recent developments in the brand community literature (Sung et al., 2010; Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Goh, Heng and Lin, 2013; Laroche, Habibi and Richard, 2013; Zaglia, 2013; Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015; 2016). Social media refers to *"…a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content"* (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Social media is an important channel of brand communication, allowing customers to interact with companies whenever such wish arises; as well as offering a valuable and relevant communication channel for the businesses (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). Social media provides a positive environment for developing brand communities, allowing to strengthen trust and loyalty towards the brands by supporting customer-product, customer-brand, customer-company and customer-customer relationships (Laroche, Habibi and Richard, 2013). The context of social media is especially interesting for investigation as it allows co-existence of brand community pages with individual consumer profiles (Sung et al., 2010; Jahn and Kunz, 2012). Habibi, Laroche and Richard (2014, p. 125) note that the two concepts overlap, where "creation and

sharing of meaning are the most important aspects of brand community…and creation and sharing of content are the most important aspects of social media".

Previous research has found evidence of brand communities embedded in several different social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and Linkedin (Hede and Kellett, 2012). Importantly, though, among them, Facebook has attracted most academic interest (e.g. Gummerus et al., 2012; Chauhan and Pillai, 2013; Zaglia, 2013; Habibi, Laroche and Richard, 2014; Hollebeek and Chen, 2014; Park and Kim, 2014). The interest towards Facebook as an OBC setting can be potentially attributed to the enormous popularity of the SNS – in fact, Facebook has over 1 billion daily active users, making it the largest social networking site by the number of users (Statista, 2016a). Given the size of its audience, Facebook is an important marketing communication channel for companies and, reportedly, over 50 million small businesses manage their brand pages on Facebook (Constine, 2016). Evidence from the academic literature further supports that Facebook brand pages and brand-related groups can be conceptualized as brand communities embedded in social networks (Chang, Hsieh and Lin, 2013; Goh, Heng and Lin, 2013; Zaglia, 2013; Palazon, Sicilia and Lopez, 2015), being devoted to a single particular brand (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). Importantly, members of Facebook-based brand communities exhibit the three core community markers – consciousness of a kind, shared rituals and traditions and a sense of moral responsibility (Zaglia, 2013; Habibi, Laroche and Richard, 2014).

Facebook allows both brands and brand fans alike to establish communities, thus supporting company-run and enthusiast run communities (Zaglia, 2013; Palazon, Sicilia and Lopez, 2015). Both types of communities can encompass just a few hundred members, or include thousands of followers. Additionally, brand communities embedded in Facebook can potentially have access to an even wider audience via their existing members, who intentionally and unintentionally notify their network of friends about their affiliation with the brand community by simply commenting or liking the content on the page, potentially influencing others to join the brand community (Palazon, Sicilia and Lopez, 2015).

2.3.4 Participation in the OBC

Brand community researchers and marketing practitioners agree on the benefits associated with brand community membership and participation (Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2007; Sansevieri, 2012; Bruhn, Schnebelen and Schafer, 2014). For example, companies such as Apple and Harley-Davidson strongly support brand community development (Thompson and Sinha, 2008; Fournier and Lee, 2009). Academic research seems to support such actions and evidence shows that higher levels of community participation encourages brand evangelism (Langerak et al., 2003; Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann, 2005), promotes loyalty to the brand and fosters consumer-brand relationships (Andersen, 2005; Kim, Bae and Kang, 2008; Kuo and Feng, 2013), and has a positive effect on consumers' purchase intentions and behaviour (Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann, 2005; Goh, Heng and Lin, 2013).

Participation in the brand community refers to *"the extent to which a member actively engages in community activities and interacts with other brand community members"* (Tsai, Huang and Chiu, 2012, p. 676). It is important to note, however, that brand communities are not necessarily homogenous (Felix, 2012), and can be established in different online platforms, thus further varying in interactivity (Kuo and Feng, 2013), members' motivations (Relling et al., 2016) and types and intensity of members' participation (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011; Kang, Tang and Fiore, 2015). The idiosyncratic differences in brand communities have allowed for participation concept to be approached from different perspectives.

One of the common approaches to online brand community participation is by distinguishing between *active* and *passive participation* (Madupu and Cooley, 2010; Royo-Vela and Casamassima, 2011), where active participation generally involves producing and consuming content, whereas passive participation only refers to content consumption (Royo-Vela and Casamassima, 2011). Incorporating active and passive participation, Raies and Garvard-Perret (2011) have looked into the intensity of participation in online brand communities, approaching it as a three-dimensional construct composed of 1) frequency participation, 2) duration of participation, and 3) level of contribution reflected in the number of activities in which the individual takes part. Casalo, Flavian

and Guinaliu (2008) have focused on the active component of participation, discussing that it comprises three key factors, including 1) the determination to motivate the virtual community, 2) the value of the posts intended to help others in the community, and 3) the level of enthusiasm with which members post comments in the community.

Similarly, Madupu and Cooley (2010) in their conceptual paper discuss two common types of participation in online brand communities – *posting* and *lurking*. Lurking involves passive browsing of the page and reading other individuals' posts and comments. Posters often engage in conversations with others in the brand community, leave comments, post interesting information and respond to queries (Madupu and Cooley, 2010). In fact, according to the '1 percent rule' (Nielson, 2006, as cited in Madupu and Cooley, 2010), only 1 % of members represent frequent posters, whereas 9 % leave comments from time to time, and 90 % simply lurk. However, Madupu and Cooley (2010) discuss that lurkers can be of value to the company, as after reading something in the community, they can potentially spread the information outside the community, referring to this activity as 'active lurking'. Furthermore, they are often those members of the community, who participate when requiring customer support, and may continue the conversation with the original poster via additional channels (Madupu and Cooley, 2010). Chang, Hsieh and Lin (2013) have similarly approached OBC participation as an intention to *send* and *receive* market information.

Using the social practice theory, Schau, Muniz and Arnould (2009) have further looked into the process of collective value creation across different established brand communities. They have identified four broad categories of *co-creating practices* and their corresponding unique practices, including social networking – concerned with maintaining social relations between brand community members (welcoming, empathising, governing); impression management – related to supporting positive impression of the brand outside the community (evangelizing, justifying); community engagement – concerned with supporting members' association with the community (staking, milestoning, badging, documenting); and brand use – practices related to the improvement of members utilisation of the brand (grooming, customising, commoditising).

Several studies have focused on the consumer to consumer *(C2C)* *communication* in OBCs (Adjei, Noble and Noble, 2010; Noble, Noble and Adjei, 2012; Bruhn, Schnebelen and Schafer, 2013). C2C communication is conceptualised as *"the ongoing communication processes that occur between consumers in an OBC"* (Adjei, Noble and Noble, 2010, p. 635), and is composed of such aspects as frequency, duration of conversations, relevance and timeliness of exchanged information (Adjei, Noble and Noble, 2010; Noble, Noble and Adjei, 2012). Similarly, Wu and Fang (2010) discussed that C2C interaction comprised of such components as frequency and time spent on interaction, the scope of themes discussed in the community, and types of interaction. Overall C2C interaction could be regarded as a "social activity similar to the process of socialisation" (Wu and Fang, 2010, p. 577).

A growing stream of research is focusing on the concept of *engagement* in a brand community (Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann, 2005; Gummerus et al., 2012; Wirtz et al., 2013; Baldus et al., 2015). OBC engagement is defined as *"…consumer's intrinsic motivation to interact and cooperate with community members"* (Wirtz et al., 2013, p. 229). Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann (2005) related the concept of community engagement to the concept of 'citizenship', discussing that brand community members exhibited engagement by participating in community activities and providing support to the other members of the group, thus adding value to the community. Kuo and Feng (2013) discussed that brand community engagement together with product information sharing and community interactivity formed the core interaction characteristics in OBCs.

Based on the broader 'consumer engagement' concept, brand community engagement is generally operationalised as comprised of behavioural, cognitive and emotional components (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek and Chen, 2014; Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015; 2016). Cognitive engagement refers to the lasting mental states experienced by individuals and includes for example attention, concentration and reflections about the brand (or in this case the community) (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014; Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2016). Emotional engagement represents individuals' feelings and experiences in the OBC (Vivek, Beatty and Morgan, 2012), such as for example enthusiasm and enjoyment (Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2016).

Whereas behavioural engagement represents different activities associated with participation in the community (Brodie et al., 2013).

A group of researchers has particularly looked at the concept engagement from a behavioural perspective (van Doorn, 2010; Lee, Kim and Kim, 2011; Gummerus et al., 2012). Gummerus et al. (2012, p. 858) discuss that OBC engagement "includes all customer-to-firm interactions and consumer-to-consumer communications about the brand", including "online discussions, commenting, information search and opinion polls". Additionally, existing research suggests that WOM (van Doorn et al., 2012) and eWOM (Hatzithomas et al., 2016) can be addressed as elements of engagement behaviour. In line with identified research, the current thesis focuses on eWOM in the OBC through the perspective of the behavioural manifestation of OBC engagement (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014).

2.3.5 EWOM in the OBC

An emerging stream of literature looks into eWOM communication among the members of OBC (Yeh and Choi, 2011; Lee, Kim and Kim, 2012; Chang, Hsieh and Tseng, 2013; Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014; Relling et al., 2016). In one of the first studies that focuses on eWOM as a focal construct in the OBC context, Yeh and Choi (2011) have looked into *antecedents* of eWOM communication among the brand community members, composed of intention to give information, intention to obtain information and intention to pass information. The authors have identified that brand community members' eWOM intentions can be explained by brand loyalty and trust towards the community. This study has thereby shed initial light on the causes of eWOM in the OBC environment, and its composition.

A different study by Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob (2014) has looked into the *dimensions of eWOM credibility,* and how it affects brand community members' eWOM reading. The authors have identified source trustworthiness, source expertise and source similarity as the key components of eWOM credibility, that influence social and utilitarian functions of eWOM. Adopting Theory of Planned Behaviour, the study has established the relationship between

the two eWOM functions and brand community members' attitudes and intentions towards eWOM reading, thus offering some insight into individuals' eWOM motivations in the context of OBC.

Recently, Relling et al. (2016) have discussed that both positive and negative eWOM is a frequent phenomenon occurring between brand community members. The authors have further noted that two types of eWOM have a different *influence* on members' active participation in the community (measured by the sum of 'likes' and comments). Distinguishing between social-goal and functional-goal brand communities, the results of their study suggest, that in relation to the former where PWOM leads to increased brand community participation, NWOM has a diminishing effect on members' participation intentions, as within social-goal communities members are mostly interested in socialising with other like-minded individuals who share their positive feelings about the brand. Conversely, PWOM is relatively less valued in the functional-goal communities, whereas NWOM results in more active participation, as individuals are more interested in finding objective and balanced information about the brand.

The list of identified studies investigating eWOM as a focal construct in the context of OBC is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Research on eWOM within OBC

Source	Focus of the study	Method	Platform
Yeh and Choi (2011)	EWOM antecedents in OBC	Survey	Online community – bulletin boards
Lee, Kim and Kim (2012)	Role of self-construal on eWOM behavioural intentions in OBC	Experiment	Facebook
Chang, Hsieh and Tseng (2013)	Role of brand community eWOM in members' evaluation of brand decisions	Experiment	Bulletin board system, Facebook
Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob (2014)	Effect of eWOM credibility on eWOM reading	Survey	N/A
Relling et al. (2016)	Effects of positive and negative eWOM in social media-based brand communities depending on the community type	Quantitative content analysis, experiment	Facebook

To conclude, there are different ways in which individuals can participate in brand communities, such as engaging with the community (Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015; 2016) and collective value creation (Schau, Muniz and Arnould, 2009), and generally taking on passive and active participation roles (Madupu and Cooley, 2010; Royo-Vela and Casamassima, 2011). There is also some academic evidence that brand community members engage in both positive and negative eWOM in OBCs (Relling et al., 2016) by means of providing, obtaining and passing information (Yeh and Choi, 2011); as well as influence one another in the community (Palazon, Sicilia and Lopez, 2015), for example where the group can influence individual members' attitudes towards brand extensions (Chang, Hsieh and Tseng, 2013). To date, however, a very limited number of studies has explicitly looked into eWOM as a focal construct within the OBC context. Thus, despite a general agreement that OBCs offer ample opportunities for consumer interactions (Ewing, Wagstaff and Powell, 2013; Gruner, Homburg and Lukas, 2013: Kuo and Feng, 2013; Relling et al., 2016), little is still known about what triggers eWOM in OBCs, as well as what the possible outcomes of such communication are (Yeh and Choi, 2011; Chang, Hsieh and Tseng, 2013).

The following section discusses the gaps identified in the eWOM and OBC literature and addresses the questions guiding the current research.

2.4 Research gaps and research questions

The literature review reveals three research gaps related to the topics of eWOM and OBC. First, the analysis of previous research shows limited efforts aimed at connecting OBC and eWOM research in spite of evidence that indicates that a considerable amount of consumer-to-consumer interactions takes place within brand-related communities (Yeh and Choi, 2011). Within the OBC literature, a growing stream of research has focused on consumer engagement in OBC, where researchers have examined this concept from the macro-level – by identifying different types of engagement, such as emotional, cognitive and behavioural (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014; Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015, 2016). Several scholars have specifically studied behavioural OBC engagement as comprised of various online and offline activities (Gummerus et al., 2012).

Nonetheless, little is known about the specific micro-elements of behavioural OBC engagement, such as eWOM in the OBC context.

Though few studies considered eWOM in the context of online review websites such as Tripadvisor (Lopez-Lopez and Parra, 2016), or more recently social media (Chu and Kim, 2011; Wolny and Mueller, 2013; Daugherty and Hoffman, 2014; Hatzithomas et al, 2016), and online communities, they tended to concerns consumption communities and not to focus on communities dedicated to particular brands (Yang, Mai and Ben-Ur, 2012).

Concurrently, existing studies have taken different approaches to addressing eWOM dimensionality and its consequent operationalisation or measurement in various online contexts. Furthermore, very few studies have focused specifically on uncovering the dimensionality of eWOM and developing comprehensive eWOM measures, with eWOM often being approached as a unidimensional construct 'eWOM intentions' (e.g. Cheung and Lee, 2012; Okazaki, Rubio and Campo, 2013; Jin and Phua, 2014;) that does not fully capture the nature of eWOM as a communication process.

Finally, to date, a very limited number of studies have approached eWOM as a focal construct in the OBC context, and as a result, there has been limited understanding of the eWOM process in this environment. Therefore, the first research question of this thesis is:

RQ1: What is the nature of eWOM in the context of OBC?

The second gap concerns the confusion about antecedents of eWOM. A large number of antecedents of eWOM identified in the literature review shows that the research in this area is very fragmented (Yang, 2013), with different theoretical paradigms (including theories related to offline WOM) applied to explain the drivers of eWOM. As a result, multiple studies have looked into the antecedents of eWOM, identifying different triggers of eWOM related to for example consumers' evaluations of products and services, specific features of products and brands, or individuals' motivations to engage in eWOM (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Gebauer, Fuller and Pezzei, 2013; Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013). This has led to the abundance of possible factors encouraging individuals to participate in eWOM, including different drivers associated with

active and passive eWOM communication (e.g. Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015). Concurrently, previous research has also highlighted the differences in motivations to engage in eWOM depending on the platform or type of media used (Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015). Specifically, it is accepted that individuals are consciously choosing a type of medium to engage in eWOM depending on their motivations (Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015).

Furthermore, the majority of eWOM literature looks at eWOM from the individual level, where consumers individually post their product evaluations on the Internet, with others individually consuming and evaluating these posts. However, brand community members are characterised by frequent interactions and socialisation behaviour that may shape the reasons behind eWOM communication in this context. Finally, given that the majority of eWOM research has looked at antecedents of eWOM in the contexts of online opinion platforms, or online communities not dedicated to specific brands (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Yoo and Gretzel, 2008; Cheung and Lee, 2012), as a result to date very little is known about brand community members' motivations to participate in eWOM communication. Consequently, the second research question is:

> *RQ2: What are OBC members' motivations to engage in eWOM communication within the community?*

Finally, previous research has highlighted the importance of eWOM in shaping consumer behaviour and impacting firms' performance (e.g. Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski, 2006; Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Amblee and Bui, 2011; Erkan and Evans, 2016a; 2016b.). Despite the existing evidence of the power of eWOM and the consistently growing number of studies in this area, the research on the impact of eWOM is still largely fragmented (Cheung and Thadani, 2012; Georgi and Tuzovic, 2016). Additionally, the majority of eWOM literature has been concerned with identifying the outcomes of passive eWOM engagement, with limited research focusing on the effect of eWOM on the communicator who takes part in active eWOM engagement.

Furthermore, due to the limited attention to eWOM within the OBC literature, little is known about the potential outcomes of brand community eWOM on consumers' relationships with brands (Chang, Hsieh and Tseng, 2013). Due to a very different nature and specifics of OBCs, such as members' interest and affection towards a specific brand, and social character of community environment, compared to the generally investigated contexts of eWOM (e.g. online opinion platforms, online communities, or review websites), it is expected that additional outcomes of eWOM associated with OBC environment will be uncovered. Thus, the third research question is:

RQ3: What are the outcomes of eWOM communication among the members of OBC?

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the two streams of literature that are essential to the current study. It has addressed the key issues related to the eWOM research, including the relationship between the literature on traditional WOM and eWOM, outlining the key similarities and differences between the two concepts. As a result, despite the conceptual closeness between WOM and eWOM, and previous application of WOM literature to explain the growing phenomenon of eWOM, the two concepts have significant differences that call for a clearer separation between them.

The review of eWOM literature also shows a consistent interest in the concept resulting in various lines of investigation. This has however contributed to the fragmentation of eWOM research and various approaches to explaining the nature of eWOM communication, its causes and outcomes. Concurrently, the review of the literature has shown that the majority of eWOM research has been initiated in the online opinion platforms, product review websites, or online communities, and more recently SNS, where eWOM is rarely dedicated to a specific brand. In this regards, there have been fewer attempts to relate eWOM to the branding literature, and especially positioning eWOM communication into the context of OBC.

Therefore, the second part of this chapter has addressed the concept of brand communities and existing approaches to conceptualising brand community participation. The review of brand community literature has further strengthened the argument for connecting the eWOM and OBC literature, with OBCs identified as a potentially social and supportive environment for eWOM communication. Review of OBC literature has indicated that despite several recent attempts to address eWOM in the OBC environment, to date still, only a small number of studies have focused on connecting eWOM and brand community literature, with the two streams of research generally addressed as separate and rarely overlapping.

As a result, very little is known about the nature, drivers and outcomes of brand community members' eWOM communication, necessitating the three corresponding research questions posed at the end of the chapter. Due to the lack of research on OBC members' eWOM communication especially in the social media setting, and the evolving nature of this environment, current research employed two types of data collection – qualitative and quantitative, and was divided into three studies to answer the stated research questions. The following chapters address the research methodology in detail.

Chapter 3: Analytical approach

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the research design that underpins the collection and analysis of empirical data. The chapter opens with an overview of the research philosophy that guides the overall enquiry and a brief discussion of the chosen research paradigm and its epistemological and ontological principles. The chapter then discusses overall research design and the relationship between study questions and empirical procedures concerning data collection and analysis. The chosen study setting is also presented.

3.2 Research paradigm

As any other piece of academic research, this study is guided by a set of practices, beliefs and assumptions that frame the way the researcher approaches the enquiry. In other words, the study follows a certain research paradigm (Morgan, 1980) which concerns a set of assumptions about what the nature of reality (ontology) and the position of scientific enquiry within this reality (epistemology). These assumptions affect the types of questions being investigated, the type of methodology used, and the type of knowledge that is being produced. Understanding different research paradigms allows researchers to identify which areas of knowledge require investigation, and also importantly – it directs the researcher towards choosing the appropriate methodology (Deshpande, 1983).

In situating the study within the ontological and epistemological continuum, it is important to recognise the debates concerning paradigms. Different authors provide varying categorisations of paradigms and there is an ongoing debate on their number and definitions (Morgan, 1980; Guba, 1990; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe

and Jackson, 2015). For example, Guba (1990) suggests that social scientists are often guided by one of the four key paradigms – positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivism (or interpretivism). The paradigms are in turn characterized by certain philosophical considerations – namely, ontology, epistemology and methodology (Guba, 1990). Research *epistemology* is interested in identifying what kind of knowledge there is, its nature, and the way in which we know what is true (Blaikie, 2010). Research *ontology* is concerned with understanding what reality is, or what the "nature of social entities" is (Bryman, 2004, p. 16).

Ontology centres upon the idea that social entities are either objective or simply reflect our perceptions (Lundberg and Young, 2005). These ontological differences are reflected in the two competing paradigms – interpretivism and positivism. *Interpretivism* asserts that "social reality is regarded as the product of its inhabitants; it is the world that is interpreted by the meanings participants produce and reproduce as a necessary part of their everyday activities together" (Blaikie, 2010, p. 99). It is thus concerned with understanding the reality from the viewpoint of the research participants, thereby rejecting the position that the reality is always objective (Belk, 2006). *Positivist* researchers, on the other hand, believe that all solid knowledge can only be established by experience, as "anything that cannot be verified by experience is meaningless" (Blaikie, 2010, p. 98).

Considering the interpretivist-positivist continuum, the current project adopts a **post-positivist stance**. Post-positivism assumes the need to objectively report reality but also accepts that there may be different interpretations of reality (Henderson, 2011). It also acknowledges that reality can be accurately discovered and communicated using appropriate research designs and methods (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013). At the same time, post-positivism takes a position that one can never fully comprehend reality, which is based on the rules of nature (Guba, 1990), and the aim is to "generate a reasonable approximation of reality that is tied closely to what is observed" (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013, p. 7).

Post-positivism reflects "an approach to research where large amounts of qualitative data are categorised to produce quantitative data to be analysed using statistical methods" (Dwivedi et al., 2009, p. 55). In line with the post-positivist paradigm, in this project the researcher aims to achieve objectivity and reduce possibility of bias by incorporating data triangulation (Moutinho and Hutcheson, 2011). Specifically, current project involves the use of qualitative and quantitative data to answer the research questions.

Post-positivism has implications for *epistemology*. For example, it carries assumptions of *modified objectivity,* acknowledging that like any human being, the researcher can never be truly objective (Guba, 1990), where "objectivity is approximated by external verification" (Pickard and Dixon, 2004). Nonetheless, the examination and interpretation of the data should be as systematic and transparent as possible to closely reflect the reality (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013). Thus, the researcher needs to scrutinize his or her assumptions, and rigorously analyse and review the findings to minimize the bias and achieve research validity (Ryan, 2006; Pickard, 2013). Furthermore, in line with the modified objectivist epistemology, the researcher is concerned with the way "the findings "fit" with pre-existing knowledge" and how they are accepted by the "critical community" of academic peers (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 110).

The study adopts a post-positivist stance for several reasons. First, the research builds on the body of knowledge that aims to uncover "objective" reality questions and explicitly seeks generalizable knowledge. Furthermore, the study aims to establish the causal relationships between the proposed research constructs. Specifically, the researcher is interested in uncovering the causal relationships between the key individual motivational constructs and eWOM communication, as well as eWOM and its outcomes, which is in line with the positivist view. At the same time, the study is also concerned with exploring the nature of eWOM communication in the context of social media-based brand communities, and the measurement of eWOM construct. As such, this requires a more exploratory approach to uncover the meaning of the core research concept, thus steering the research towards the post-positivist paradigm which encompasses both qualitative and quantitative enquiry. Post-positivism is adopted as it sees value in methodological triangulation and encourages the

combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the depth of the research problem and overcome the shortcomings of adopting only quantitative methods (Guba, 1990; Brand, 2008). By allowing and legitimizing the use of mixed methods, post-positivisms allows flexibility in research designs. For example, interview protocols may be structured or semi-structured; and the data analysis follows a specific pattern or order to be transparent, with any explanations based on the collected data (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013). The post-positivist assumptions seem to fit very well with the current context, which due to the novelty of the phenomenon under investigation requires both exploratory and confirmatory logic.

3.3 Overall research design

Several parameters capture the current research design. Research design represents "the plan, structure and strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answers to research questions and to control variance" (Blaikie, p. 37). Current study adopts a predominantly *mixed-methods strategy using abductive reasoning.* This is associated with the specifics of the research problem, where the purpose is neither to purely test an existing theory, nor to generate new theory. Rather, the researcher seeks to fill in specific gaps in the existing literature and clarify the phenomenon which is currently not fully captured by the existing theory. This thesis "involves back-and-forth engagement with the social world as an empirical source for theoretical ideas, and with the literature…" in line with abductive approach (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 27). To refine the theory, the first stage includes exploratory phase with qualitative interviews. Following this, the second phase employs a refined theory with a modified conceptual model influenced by the findings from the qualitative stage. The updated conceptual model is then tested in the quantitative phase. Specifically, in this project, the first phase is used to explore the motivations for and nature of eWOM activity on Facebook brand pages, which represent a constantly evolving context. The findings of the qualitative study are then loosely matched with an existing theoretical

framework – UGT. It is then followed by the quantitative phase, where the application of motivations identified through the qualitative phase is tested.

Consequently, current research adopts an ***exploratory sequential mixed-methods research design***. Such research design involves first conducting qualitative data collection and analysis and is then followed by quantitative data collection and analysis. Applying this design to the current project meant that qualitative interviews were followed by an analytical survey. The process of this mixed methods design as it is applied in the current research is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Exploratory sequential mixed methods design
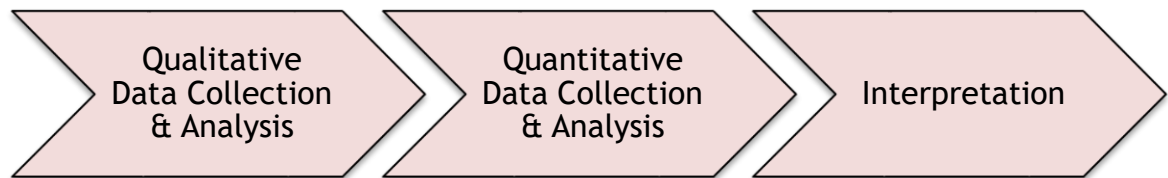
Source: Adapted from Creswell (2014)

Overall, the choice of research methods depends on the research problem that is investigated, as well as researcher's background and the audience it addresses (Creswell, 2014). The use of methodological triangulation through adopting qualitative and quantitative methods allows to reach a more thorough and comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon (eWOM), as well as to test the causal relationships between eWOM and its antecedents (motivations) and outcomes.

In line with the research objectives, current project was split into 3 studies. ***Study 1*** involved qualitative data collection and analysis and was concerned with developing the conceptual model. ***Study 2*** used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to develop the research measurement for the Study 3 and to answer RQ1. Finally, ***Study 3*** involved quantitative methodology to test the conceptual model and to answer RQ2 and RQ3.

The reasons for adopting the ***qualitative*** stage were two-fold:

1) To inform the conceptual model that would be tested in the quantitative stage (Study 3). This included identifying the key motivations and outcomes of eWOM in OBCs.

2) To generate (additional) items and develop measures of eWOM within Facebook-based brand communities as well as (potential) newly uncovered motivations and outcomes.

The qualitative approach is appropriate in this study as it aims to explore consumers' motivations and outcomes in a constantly changing environment. It is acknowledged in this research, that the areas of eWOM and brand community have on their own experienced increased theoretical developments over the last decades (e.g. Laroche et al., 2012; Abrantes et al., 2013; Goh, Heng and Lin, 2013; Habibi, Laroche and Richard, 2014; Lopez and Sicilia, 2014; Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014; Ballantine and Yeung, 2015). However, there is very little research connecting the literature on eWOM and social media-based brand communities, thus making it difficult to understand what drives brand fans to communicate with each other within the brand community, and which forms this communication takes.

Specifically, whereas the literature review has resulted in the identification of a large list of eWOM motivations and outcomes found in different online contexts, this has made it challenging to identify the most important and appropriate ones to be included in the model. Additionally, to the researcher's best knowledge, none of the identified studies addressed eWOM motivations and outcomes in the social media-based brand communities. It was thus concluded that it would not be possible to fully capture the phenomenon of eWOM and identify the key drivers and consequences of eWOM within the social media-based brand communities solely based on the existing theory. Due to the ever-changing social media context, the applicability of existing motivations needed to be examined, with the constant changes and developments in the online environment requiring ongoing attention to these concepts (Baldus, Voorheer and Calantone, 2015). Thereby, the qualitative stage was undertaken to find the core motivations and outcomes of eWOM appropriate in the context of social media-based brand communities.

In line with the three research questions, the ***quantitative*** stage (analytical survey) was adopted for the following purposes:

1) To confirm the dimensions and measurement of OBCeWOM in the social media-based setting (RQ1);

2) To establish which of the motivations derived in the Study 1 had a positive hypothesised effect on OBCeWOM (RQ2);

3) And similarly, to identify which of the hypothesised outcomes of OBCeWOM outcomes held true (RQ3).

To the quantitative stage was broken down into 2 studies – Study 2 and Study 3, dealing with the measurement of the research constructs and the assessment of the structural model respectfully. Study 2 involved a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology. It was concerned with exploring the nature and dimensionality of eWOM within the context of social media-based brand communities, and to develop the research instrument for Study 3. A new measurement scale was developed for eWOM communication, reflecting the identified dimensions of the construct. Additionally, measures for several motivational constructs were also developed. This was done in the instances where the motives have either not been tested quantitatively or where there were no appropriate measurement scales found. The detailed procedures concerning the two studies and results are discussed in Chapters 8 and 9. The overview of all of the data collection methods used for in this research is presented in the Appendix D.

3.4 Research setting: Facebook brand pages

As indicated in the introduction, this study focuses on eWOM in the context of OBCs embedded in social media. Specifically, Facebook represents the chosen social media platform. This choice of setting is driven by several considerations. First, Facebook brand pages have been recently acknowledged as special types of OBCs embedded in social networks (Laroche, Habibi and Richard, 2013; Zaglia, 2013; Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015; 2016). Zaglia (2013)

importantly identifies that Facebook groups and pages are both characterized by the three key brand community markers – consciousness of a kind, moral responsibility, and rituals and traditions, though with some being more strongly evident, and the others less salient.

Secondly, the choice of Facebook as a platform for brand community eWOM is influenced by the overwhelming popularity of the social network. As of the second quarter of 2016, Facebook reportedly had 1.13 billion daily active users, making it the largest Social Network Site by the number of users (Statista, 2016a; 2016b). Facebook is, therefore, a growing marketing communications channel for companies, with reportedly over 15 million business pages present on this platform as of 2013 (Koetsier, 2013). This number increased in 2015, with reportedly at least 50 million just small business pages registered on Facebook (Constine, 2016).

Regarding the specific communities of interest, this research includes both official and unofficial Facebook brand pages and groups. This was largely driven by the exploratory nature of the first research phase, where the researcher was interested in the motivations, dimensions, and outcomes of brand community participation on Facebook, as well as in understanding what was happening in the communities. Therefore in the exploratory phase participants were encouraged to discuss the communities where they felt they were most active, and that could include both official and enthusiast-run pages. Conversely, the confirmatory phase only included official brand pages. This was driven by the results of the qualitative phase, where the majority of participants discussed their membership in company-run OBCs. Additionally, current research was interested in testing the impact of eWOM on consumers' relationships with brands. Official brand pages were deemed as a more appropriate environment for this purpose.

3.5 Chapter summary

The chapter has outlined and justified the general research design guiding this project. Concerning the general design, the project followed the principle of post-positivism. The study employed a mixed-method approach with a

qualitative data collection and analysis followed by the quantitative stage. The exploratory qualitative stage was aimed at developing the conceptual model and answering the first research question. Whereas the confirmatory quantitative stage was used to test the empirical model and address the two remaining research questions. The research was thus split into three studies – Study 1 - conceptual model development, Study 2 – measurement and Study 3 – hypothesis testing. Facebook brand pages were chosen as a research setting.

Chapter 4: Research methodology Study 1

4.1 Introduction

The first phase of this research project follows a qualitative design. In particular, the study pursuits exploratory aims through the collection of interview data and thematic analysis. The sections below address in detail the design decisions undertaken in Study 1 starting from the data collection, going into data analysis and finishing with the question of rigour in qualitative analysis.

4.2 Sampling: selection of study participants

Qualitative phase adopted a combination of purposive and snowball sampling to recruit participants. ***Purposive sampling*** method involved choosing participants that were knowledgeable about the research topic, and able to generate meaningful insights that helped answer the two research questions (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Bryman, 2004). Here "the sample units are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study" (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 78). Considering the focus on eWOM, the purposive sampling in this study meant that interviewees had to satisfy the 3 following criteria:

a) Be aged 18 years old or over,

b) Participate in one or more OBC on Facebook

c) Engage in eWOM communication in the Facebook-based OBC (including active and passive eWOM communication, such as for example reading

other OBC members' comments, commenting under the brand's or members' posts, sharing information within or outside the community).

To access individuals that fit the stipulated criteria, the researcher began with her contacts, and then followed a *snowball approach*. Snowball sampling represents a type of convenience sampling, where "the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others" (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 192). The researcher thereby asked some of her contacts to participate in the study and to suggest other potential interviewees who would satisfy the participation criteria. Using snowball sampling provides the flexibility of data collection and allows the issue to be investigated in-depth, as the participants recruited fit the participation criteria and can provide insights into the research problem.

Interviewee recruitment followed a "theoretical approach" (Glasser and Strauss, 1967), where the data collection lasted until the data saturation had been reached, where no new information was uncovered in the interviews (Baker and Edwards, 2012).

4.3 Qualitative interviews

The qualitative data collection involved semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are often adopted to "confirm study domains and identify factors, variables, and items or attributes of variables for analysis or use in a survey" (Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte, 1999, p. 149). Although the interview protocol followed a list of themes and questions, the interview approach was flexible, where some questions were crossed out, while others were added depending on the flow of the conversation. The researcher was interested in the participants' stories in detail and in soliciting rich examples from their own experiences, thereby not forcing the predefined concepts and theories (Magnusson and Marecek, 2015). Adoption of semi-structured interviews is in line with traditions of post-positivist researchers, as they allow flexibility in

gathering the data, where the researcher can alternate between the questions depending on the flow of the discussion, add follow-up questions and ask additional clarification (Mitchell and Jolley, 2009).

The data collection involved face to face and Skype interviews used to accommodate the participants that were out of direct proximity from the researcher. Considering the structure of interviews, at the beginning of the interview respondents were advised about the purpose of the study, main themes of the interview, and that the interview should take up to 1 hour. Participants were advised that their anonymity would be preserved, that they would be provided with a Plain Language Statement and that they would able to ask questions if the additional explanation of the study and its process was required. Once the participants agreed to take part in the research, they were provided with a Consent Form to sign. In total 22 interviews were carried out and the average interview lasted 38 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed resulting in 170 pages of transcription (using Font size 12 and line spacing 1).

Respondents were free to talk about one or more brands of their choice within any product and service category. The semi-structured interview protocol was developed over a period of four weeks. The initial theoretical framework (Appendix B) produced following the review of existing research was used to develop and structure the interview guide. Over the process of the interviews, some of the questions were rephrased with the latest social media jargon to suit the participants.

The interview guide is presented in the Appendix A. The interview guide was divided into four themes – where interviewees were asked to 1) talk about their communication in the brand community, 2) outside of the brand community, 3) the effect of such communication on their social life, and 4) outcomes of such communication for their relationship with brands. At the start of the interviews, respondents were asked to name a brand that they 'liked' on Facebook, and discuss how and why they joined the brand community. The questions concerning the different communication activities that respondents took part in within and outside the community followed. It was important to provide an

understanding of the concept of eWOM within the social media-based brand communities and to identify its dimensions and generate items for the construct.

4.4 Study sample

Table 6 below provides the summary of the interview sample. In total 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Participants were members of various brand communities on Facebook that included official and enthusiast-run brand pages and groups within different product and service categories, such as for example fashion, technology, sports, hospitality or entertainment among others.

The sample was composed of participants from various age groups, nationalities, and included both male and female participants. Interviewees were employed in different industries and roles, and also included students and individuals in part-time and full-time employment. The overview of participants' demographics is presented in Table 6. To preserve participants' anonymity, their names were changed to codes that started either with a letter 'F' or 'M' indicating their gender and followed by a number from 1 to 18.

Table 6. Qualitative phase – respondents' demographics

Name	Interview duration, min	Nationality	Language	Employment	Age Group	Brand category
F1	44	US	EN	Working full-time	36-50	Fashion / Clothing, Technology,
M1	27	US	EN	Working part-time	25-35	TV / Entertainment, Automobile, Food / Beverages, Electronics
F2	24	France	EN	Student	19-24	Political organization
F3	39	Ukraine	RU	Student	25-35	Fashion / Clothing, Fashion / Accessories
M2	20	France	EN	Student	19-24	News / Publishing, Hospitality / Tourism, Food / Beverages
F4	23	Lithuania	EN	Student	25-35	Fashion / Accessories, Festival, Hospitality / Tourism
F5	55	India	EN	Student	19-24	Education, Fashion / Clothing, NGO, Technology
F6	41	Poland	EN	Student	19-24	Fashion / Clothing, Fashion / Accessories, Home Decor
F7	101	Greece	EN	Working part-time	25-35	Festival, Fashion / Clothing, Fashion / Accessories
M3	49	Colombia	EN	Working full-time	25-35	News / Publishing
F8	21	UK	EN	Working full-time	25-35	Festival
F9	24	France	EN	Student	25-35	Fashion / Clothing
F10	23	Greece	EN	Student	25-35	Fashion / Clothing
F11	33	Ukraine	RU / EN	Self-employed	25-35	Fashion / Clothing, Retain & Consumer Merchandise
M4	49	UK	EN	Working full-time	19-24	Sports
F12	39	Malaysia	EN	Student	19-24	Fashion / Clothing, Games / Entertainment

F13	26	Greece	EN	Self-employed	25-35	Food / Beverages
F14	41	Australia	EN	Working full-time	19-24	Public Services, Fashion / Clothing
F15	62	Ukraine	RU	Working full-time	25-35	Health / Beauty, Gifts
F16	29	France	EN	Student	19-24	Music / Entertainment, Fashion / Accessories
F17	34	Australia	EN	Working full-time	19-24	Social, Hospitality / Tourism
F18	23	Nigeria	EN	Self-employed	25-35	Celebrity Brand

4.5 Rigour in qualitative research

Multiple strategies were employed in data collection and analysis to assure rigour in qualitative design. Specifically, the development and execution of the adopted design followed the suggestions by Guba and Lincoln (1994). Furthermore, considering that the project adopts a post-positivist research approach, validity, and generalisability criteria were also followed (Creswell and Miller, 2000). Research validity aims to examine the integrity of conclusions derived from research (Bryman and Bell, 2011). When it comes to qualitative inquiry, there is not one approach to evaluating the validity, where different authors recommend undertaking varying procedures (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). Additionally, depending on the adopted research paradigm, the studies would often employ different sets of criteria to assess validity in qualitative research (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

In line with the post-positivist paradigm, the researcher focused on ensuring the validity of the qualitative data from the perspectives of three stakeholders: the researcher herself, the participants and the reviewers (Creswell and Miller, 2000). Specifically, to ensure the validity of the findings from the perspective of the researcher, the study utilised *data triangulation.* As such, the qualitative phase was followed by the quantitative data collection, which was aimed at confirming or disconfirming the hypothesised relationships. From the standpoint of the participants, the researcher employed *member checks.* For this purpose, following the data collection, several interviewees were contacted to evaluate the accuracy of their interview transcripts and the researcher's interpretation of the quotes. Finally, the researcher also used an *audit trail* to satisfy validity from the reviewer's viewpoint. The steps employed in coding were shown to the two marketing academics who evaluated the analysis (ibis).

Additionally, this research has adopted several other elements of ensuring validity. In line with Stenbacka (2001, p. 552), the researcher recruited *"strategically well-chosen respondents"* and used the method of *"non-forcing interviews".* As discussed earlier, qualitative phase involved recruiting participants who would be knowledgeable about the research problem. This was ensured by stipulating specific criteria for participation (discussed in the section

4.2). The approach to interviews was flexible, where the exact questions were not treated as final, rather broader themes were predefined. As such, additional questions could be added depending on the flow of the discussion.

Finally, consistent with Shenton (2004), the researcher took steps to ensure that participants were not pressured to take part in the research, and were genuinely willing to participate. To ensure *"honesty in informants"* (Shenton, 2004, p. 66), the researcher advised the participants about the purpose of the study, and informed them that they could exit the study at any point without giving an explanation.

4.6 Approach to qualitative data analysis

The qualitative data analysis was driven by the post-positivist research approach, and the interviews were analysed using a ***thematic analysis method***. This type of qualitative analysis is widely accepted and adopted within the post-positivist paradigm (Guba and Linkoln, 1994; McGregor and Murnane, 2010). The main advantage of thematic analysis is its flexibility, as unlike other methods of qualitative analysis, it is not tied to particular epistemological approach and theoretical framework, and may be adopted by researchers taking either a realist or constructionist stance (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The thematic analysis further offers flexibility in the process of data analysis. It allows searching for patterns and themes within the data, going back and forth to the literature and data to make sure that the analysis is solid and thorough (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This advantage leverages an important feature of qualitative data analysis: there are no rules about the number of times a theme or a pattern within the theme is observed for it to be coded. It is not explicitly required that a theme takes a large amount of text in an interview and the researcher has flexibility in a sense that they should apply their own judgement about what is going to be considered a theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006). An important condition in identifying and coding themes is that they provide valuable insight to the research questions (Boyatzis, 1998). This does not mean

that the analysis becomes superficial and incomplete, as the themes are revisited multiple times, with the sub-themes emerging, and the data being organized in the most adequate and thorough way (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Following the procedures of thematic analysis (Joffe and Yardley, 2004; Vaismoradi et al., 2013), the analysis aimed to uncover both manifest (mentioned) and latent (implicit) themes that needed further interpretation. As such, the analysis not only focused on the explicitly acknowledged motivations as they were mentioned in the interviews but also on the examples that were not so explicit.

The interview transcripts were coded using a combination of deductive and inductive coding (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Deductive codes were applied to the individual motivations where the purpose to match the actual data with the broader motivational categories identified in the literature. A more inductive approach to coding was employed when identifying the outcomes of eWOM communication. The approach to coding is consistent with methodological guidelines because "no theme can be entirely inductive or data driven", and the researcher's prior knowledge and assumptions will always affect the way the data is coded (Joffe and Yardley, 2004, p. 58).

The qualitative data analysis represented an iterative process, where the researcher initially developed a preliminary theoretical framework based on the literature on eWOM and OBCs, and loosely applying the UGT. Specifically, the list of motivations found in the literature was synthesised, and broader categories of motivations were included in the theoretical framework based on the review of the relevant literature. The initial theoretical framework with a general list of categories of motivations is illustrated in Appendix B.

These categories, however, were not treated as final, as the researcher took a step away from the initial framework and let the themes and subthemes emerge during the interviews. The newly emerged themes and subthemes were then compared with those in the preliminary research framework, and further, the literature was reanalysed. These steps were repeated, where the researcher would go from the interview data back to the literature to constantly compare and justify the grouping of subthemes into higher-order themes using theoretical

basis. The process of data analysis thereby represented a continuous refinement and going back to the literature, with new categories and motives emerging and the motives being categorised in the most appropriate way so as to reflect the underlying category closely. Finally, it was decided that enough theoretical evidence supported the grouping of the themes and subthemes, as the new conceptual model was developed. The first- and second-order themes were to varying extent derived from the existing eWOM literature, and were then matched with the empirical data. To ensure the reliability of thematic coding, the specific codes and quotes were checked regarding their correspondence with the chosen definition of the constructs. The example of thematic analysis is illustrated in Appendix C.

4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the specific decisions guiding qualitative Study 1. The qualitative phase included 22 semi-structured interviews with OBC members. Participants were recruited using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling approaches. The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis method. The data collection and analysis were aimed at ensuring rigour of the qualitative design, including by satisfying the validity and generalisability criteria as appropriate within the post-positivist approach.

Chapter 5: Study 1 findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results from the qualitative phase (Study 1) and is structured as follows. First, online brand community members' motivations to engage in eWOM in Facebook-based OBCs are presented. Next, the outcomes of eWOM communication in social media-based brand communities for the consumer-brand relationships are outlined. Finally, the chapter summary addresses the key highlights discussed in the chapter.

5.2 EWOM motivations

Motivation in this study is defined as *"an internal phenomenon causing individuals to conduct a particular action, arising due to perceived unfulfilled need(s) that move the individual 'away from psychological equilibrium"* (Burton and Khammash, 2010, p. 232). The analysis of the data reveals a total of 10 motivations for eWOM communication among the members of Facebook OBCs. Particularly, the motives presented in the framework were derived from the literature on eWOM communication, as well as supported by the qualitative data. The next section discusses the identified motivations and their respectful categories.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Information and assistance

The *information and assistance* theme includes motives related to obtaining and providing information in the community, helping fellow brand community members, as well as providing assistance to the focal brand by sharing the information about it outside the community. Previous research has shown that

brand community participation is driven by informational or functional values, where members are interested in getting help and advice from other members (Sicilia and Palazon, 2008), and objective information about the brand (Relling et al., 2016). Over the course of the analysis four specific motivations emerged within this first-order theme, namely: *(1) community advice search, (2) brand assistance, (3) helping others and (4) helping the brand*. The findings related to each of the mentioned motivations are discussed below.

5.2.1.1 Community advice search

One of the most prominent motivations for reading eWOM on the brand community page was information seeking motivation. Specifically, interviewees mentioned the need to look for assistance or advice from other consumers with regards to the brand. Furthermore, interviewees were interested in other fans' opinions about the brand, how it could be used, and its qualities. In this theme, participants refer to the brand community itself as a source of information – specifically members of the brand community whose reviews or comments can be found there – as opposed to the interviewees' social network. Thus, this motivation was labeled *community advice search*.

For instance, referring to the Glastonbury festival brand page, one of the interviewees (F8) mentioned that she was interested in reading the latest gossips, news, and 'inside information' about the event:

> *'...Mainly for information – especially before the lineup was announced – you always get into any festival I guess where there are rumors going about ...so a lot of people would write comments with what they've heard or what they suspect, or maybe inside information though people somebody knows'* (F8).

Similarly, another interviewee (M4) discussed his experience on the Portsmouth Football club brand communities (official page and enthusiast-run groups). The interviewee mentioned the need to receive news about the football club from the brand fans:

> *'I think mainly to get kind of match day updates, so you know being outside the country it's pretty nice having like goal updates and kind of gossip about the club, so new players that sign new contracts – stuff like that so…I suppose without those groups around that brand I wouldn't be able to keep in touch with the football club news'* (M4).

Qualitative data also shows that brand community members use the community to find out credible information about the brand and its qualities from other members who have had experience with the brand. This is discussed by one of the interviewees (F13):

> *'I want to have an idea about the brand – if they like it or not if there's any problem with this product'* (F13).

Another participant (F9) further addresses this motivation with reference to the possibility of future behavior, rather than reflecting on the actual past experiences. The interviewee discusses being interested in reading what other people say on the page, looking for their views and opinions about the product:

> *'Sometimes we are looking into a product, and we don't know if we should buy it or not – it's probably a good way to go about it – just ask on the page, see what people who like the page have to say about it… To get information from those who probably use the product'* (F9).

Community advice search was one of the most documented motivations and was noticed across the interviews. Interviewees from different brand communities discussed reading other people's comments on the brand community page, and these communities included brands from various product and service categories, including for example festival brands, brand communities dedicated to fashion, as well as consumer technology brands.

5.2.1.2 Brand assistance

In addition to looking for information from fellow brand community members on the brand community pages, interviewees frequently mentioned the brand itself as a source of information about its products or services. In this regards this

communication posted on the community page is viewed as eWOM as it is made by an individual and becomes visible to other brand community members, as well as potentially to non-members by virtue of them being 'connected' to the poster.

One of the interviewees (F14) stated that she has previously engaged in eWOM by leaving comments on the brand community to enquire about the brand from the brand page managers. This is described as:

> '…it's a good way to get quick responses or quick feedback or quick answers to your questions' (F14).

Specifically, this was perceived as a convenient way to get information from the brand, where the participant (F14) described her experience as:

> 'I sometimes comment underneath the photos – asking the brand a question. If they haven't put the price up on something or they didn't put a link…' (F14).

Furthermore, the data has evidenced that brand community administrators on Facebook were sometimes contacted publicly on the page for their assistance with the product. For example, another interviewee (M1) mentioned his experience on the Amazon Kindle Facebook brand community:

> '…I had a Kindle, and one time I had a question about it, so instead of calling customer support, I went on their Facebook page, and I asked the question, and they answered it' (M1).

Perceived as being different from the previous motivation, where other brand community members acted as a source of information – here interviewees described directing their enquiries to the brand itself. This motivation encompassed such keywords as 'question', 'response', 'feedback' from the brand, and was consequently labelled as *brand assistance*.

Not surprisingly, this motivation was prominent in the context of official Facebook brand pages, where brand community members could communicate with the brand directly on the page. Hence, it did not emerge in the context of

enthusiast-run brand communities, as they are usually managed by other brand fans.

5.2.1.3 Helping others

Another prominent motivation documented in the interviews was the need to provide informational assistance and support to others. This was evident in replying to queries made by other brand community members on the brand community page, as well as outside the brand community – by informing friends about different brands and their characteristics. One of the interviewees (F6) described her experience on a brand community page dedicated to a shoe brand, where the interviewee replied to another fan's query about one of the brand's products:

> '...somebody asked about the shoe size, so I think that one person asked if the size is like normal size, or it's a little bit smaller, and then I commented 'ok yeah, the shoes are smaller'' (F6).

Here interviewees further discuss the need to help others in their social network by providing information about different brands. An example of this would also be when a brand community member shares an offer or information about competition from the brand community page to a friend on the social network. Often when describing this motivation, brand community members shift their discussion from helping other brand community members to helping their contacts on Facebook. In this way, they are discussing their actions both on the brand community page and beyond – but focusing on the need to provide help or some kind assistance, often in terms of providing information about the brand to their friends or other brand community members whom they often do not even know personally.

Another interviewee (F1) mentioned that she would share something she read on the brand page with her friends on the social network if she thought it would be 'helpful' or 'useful' to them and that they would 'appreciate that information'. This is further supported by another interviewee (F17) discussing her experience with brand community pages:

> *'…even when sometimes I know my friends like the same pages, they might not be seeing it [information], so it's important to share it with them'* (F17).

In this regard, the qualitative data shows that brand community members engage in the reciprocal behavior, where they are motivated not only by the need to receive information either from the brand, or from the other brand community members but are also driven by the motivation to help others in the community and outside its boundaries.

5.2.1.4 Helping the brand

In addition to helping other consumers, the interviews show that the participants also feel a need to support the brands that they follow on Facebook. When referring to this motivation, which is labelled as *helping the brand*, interviewees mention their positive feelings towards and experience with the brand, and the consequent willingness to support it and give something in return. Participants mention that they 'want to share good information' about the brand, and want to get 'a lot of people to like the page' (F2).

For example, one interviewee (M1) discussed a situation, when he wanted to show appreciation to the brand for its efforts and work on developing its products. The informant chose to thank the brand by posting a comment on the brand community page:

> *'…Kindle – they were announcing adding new features on it, and I was like 'oh that's awesome, thanks for working on this'* (M1).

The data further illustrates that OBC members experience the need to support the brand by promoting it on their social network, introducing it to their friends, thus acting as brand advocates (F1):

> *'They bring me flowers, and I take photos, put comments, put that photo with flowers and tag that company in those photos - and everybody knows it. It's some kind of advertising for them'* (F1).

It is worth mentioning that interviewees would sometimes talk about both their personal experiences on the brand community pages, but also describe activities of other members that they observed within the communities. For example, one of the interviewees (F7) talks about something she sees on the brand pages she follows:

> '...there are brands who are organizing an event or something, and you see that people participated in that event, they ... make a post thanking them ... and they say 'oh really nice' or you know they make comments which show their support' (F7).

The data evidences that OBC members invite others to join the brand communities, thus promoting the brand to their network of friends. This occurs most frequently when the brand community members have a friendly relationship with the individuals managing the brand community, or have an active role in the community. In this way, the interviewees perceive that are helping the people connected to the brand. This is discussed by one of the informants (F7):

> '...I may share something on purpose just because I know that a friend of mine is kind of involved with a brand, so, in this case, I definitely try to promote this brand – you know, make it exposed to more people' (F7).

It also becomes evident throughout the conversations with participants that they feel a close connection to the brand, be it a friend's coffee shop, or a technology brand that they use. Thus they feel the need to give something in return for a good experience, or to thank the brand, and by posting positive feedback on the page, they feel that they are able to help the brand become more successful, where their actions matter.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Social value

The *social* theme refers to one's social connections with others, as well as signalling one's identity or status to others. Thus, social benefits "are group-referent, i.e., the referent of these values is the self in relation to other group members" (Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo, 2004, p. 244).

This higher-order theme included the motivations that are more other-oriented, as well as more individualistic or self-oriented, but that are still manifested as social factors. The following three motivations include *(1) social interaction, (2) self-presentation and (3) social expression of opinions.*

5.2.2.1 Social interaction

One of the most frequently mentioned reasons to engage in eWOM on the brand community pages and beyond was the willingness to interact with others and to socialize. Interestingly, sometimes interviewees even stressed that the comments or feedback that they posted on the brand communities were not even so much related to the brand itself, where the brand was somewhere in the background, and the key motivation was to connect with friends or other brand fans. For example, one interviewee described his experience on the Breizh Cola brand community page (M2):

> *'I've seen one of my friends…he shared something about it [Breizh Cola], and I commented on it ... And it was not to comment about the brand really; it was more to comment about this area in France, and about my friend…' (M2).*

Another interviewee (F17) further explains that she often shares content from the brand community page onto her friends' timelines as a way to initiate a conversation:

> *'…it's important just you know spark a conversation, and it's also kind of nice to yeah just start a conversation with people about that kind of thing…' (F17).*

This motivation seemed to be prominently linked to the characteristics of Facebook as an SNS. Thus, interviewees would shift their story from describing their experience with the brand community page to their overall experiences on the social network, and these experiences seemed to be perceived as very interconnected. One of the interviewees discussed one of the main reasons why she engaged in eWOM on brand communities, as well as outside of the brand communities with her network of friends on Facebook (F7):

'It's something that I like – I like socialising. Generally you know scrolling down my newsfeed and you know just making relaxing comments…' (F7).

Furthermore, participants mentioned how they enjoyed the opportunity to 'reach out' to others (F10), or simply 'stay in contact' (F12). Interviewees also stressed that they simply 'liked socializing' (F7), and sometimes felt the need to 'start a conversation with people' (F17), where they would share the brand-related information with others for this reason. Hence, this motivation was labeled as *'social interaction'*.

5.2.2.2 Self-presentation

Another self-oriented but socially enabled motivation which transpired during the interviews was the *self-presentation* motivation. This factor was strongly communicated both explicitly and implicitly throughout the majority of the interviews, and seemed to similarly take roots from the specific nature of the social network site.

The qualitative data shows that many of the informants perceive their personal Facebook profile as an extension of one's self; it represents one's identity online. A major part of consumer behaviour can be traced online – including pages individuals 'like', stories they 'follow', brands they engage with – it is all reflected on the newsfeed and is quickly disseminated to one's social network. This poses a question, whether this nature of social media somehow shapes the way people interact online and more specifically – interact with brands or with each other about brands on social media.

As characterized by one of the interviewees (F10), Facebook has become a part of people's everyday lives:

'… I was quite familiar with his [designer] work and I really admired him and I just wanted him to be a part of my sort of everyday life, since I'm always on Facebook and I wanna see his work appearing here and there, so I checked him out on Facebook, and I found him, and I liked his page' (F10).

There is an overall understanding that one's own identity on Facebook is an extension of one's real personality and it has an ability to convey a certain message to one's network of friends. Thus, respondents discuss taking advantage of this by choosing what message to convey. Participation in OBCs on Facebook is also a signal of one's personality, identity and it can start from day one on Facebook. Interviewees discuss being 'selective' (M3; F7; F17) and 'strategic' (F10) with the kind of message that they are conveying to the rest of their social network by engaging in eWOM on OBCs. This is discussed by two informants (M3; F10):

> '... Mostly I try to use my Facebook as strategically as possible because I know that potential employers also look at it when you apply, so I'm trying to repost, and I try to make smart comments on articles that are in relation to my work and to my specialization' (F10).

> '... It has to be something that I feel identified with because I think when you share something about a brand – you are also making a statement. And...if you are doing it in your personal page – I think you have to be even more careful... because it's a bigger statement' (M3).

Furthermore, interviewees relate their constant understanding that anything publicly posted on Facebook – even on the separate brand community pages – will be visible to a large number of individuals at once. Brand community members are thus constantly aware of their broader social network, and how they may be perceived by others through their posts. Hence, brand community environment is also different to other types of virtual communities established on other platforms – where there can be some anonymity attached to the individual profiles. In the case of embedded brand communities on Facebook, individuals have their real online identities that have been established over time, with the network of friends developed. The data suggests that here is a constant understanding and realization that brand pages are tightly connected to their personal profiles on Facebook – just as anything else on the social network. Brand community pages almost become an extension of the individual profile, as they shape an image or an impression that the individual is intentionally or unintentionally sending to the rest of the world. This is documented in one of the interviews (M3):

'I think if you connect with a brand in this way – or you're making it…part of you because it's gonna be this brand or the message – that this brand is transmitting – it's gonna be part of the impression that these other people have of you. So it's kind of like a personal statement. Yeah I mean sometimes it will be bigger, sometimes people don't care, or they don't even think about it, but I think like as a whole – like when you do it a lot, then people start like getting ideas about who you are or what you like' (M3).

Even though interviewees were happy to describe their activity on the brand communities and the ways in which they interacted with others about brands, when asked directly to characterize their roles in the OBCs, sometimes interviewees would characterize themselves as 'silent observers' (M4). They further stated that they would only share information or contribute to the discussions when it was very good or very relevant and interesting for their friends. In this regards, they characterize themselves as more of consumers of brand-related content, who go onto the OBCs or follow the brand's updates on the news feed. This conflict seems to be linked to the ways brand members want to see themselves, or possibly, how they want others to see them. Thus, during the discussions with brand community members, it became evident that their activity, or the nature or form of their communication, is shaped by their awareness of openness of the brand communities. The openness of the brand communities' content shapes the way their personal profiles are seen and what they are associated with, or what kind of image they project. This seems to serve as a trigger to filter the amount of communication, where interviewees discuss stopping themselves from overly sharing; as well as influencing the form it takes, whether it is in a private message, or whether it is shared onto their friends' walls for example.

The way brand community members wish to present themselves to the rest of their social network can shape the nature of their communication about brands, as well as the intensity of communication. Thus, projecting one's self-image can serve as a driver and a gatekeeper of brand-related eWOM, where some information is 'strategically' shared publicly, while other things are shared privately or simply consumed and not retransmitted.

5.2.2.3 Social expression of opinions

Another social motivation that could be regarded as more self-oriented is labelled as the *social expression of opinions*. This motive is different from the 'helping others' motivation, as the latter reflects a willingness to help others through sharing information, whereas 'social expression of opinions' motivation refers to one's need to express to the others in the community what they think about the brand and the issues discussed in the community.

This motive became evident in the interviews as a need to state one's personal opinion about their consumption experiences, specific features of the product (including colour, size, design), attitude towards the products – when they like or dislike it and justify or explain why; or react to others' posts or comments. Members of the brand communities mentioned that they often felt the need to say what they thought about the products, to share their positive or negative opinions with other members or friends in the broader social network. Furthermore, eWOM could be triggered in this case if the respondents felt strongly about the issue discussed on the brand page, or agreed or disagreed with other people's opinions. This is evidenced in one of the interviews (F18):

> '... if I have my opinion towards what they are discussing about – I have to comment on it' (F18).

Another informant (F11) relayed a situation that may prompt her to comment on someone else's brand post:

> 'For example... if... I'm in love with these shoes, or even I have these ones, and someone writes 'they are ridiculous' or something like this, so in this case I write 'no, really I like them, they are very comfortable, modern, stylish – you don't understand anything in fashion...'' (F11).

Interviewees also discuss the need to express their agreement or disagreement with something that they encounter on the page. Furthermore, this motivation is also observed by the brand community members, where a member of several sports brand communities discusses (M4):

> '...there's always, someone who's disagreeing...there's just you know football, there's a lot of opinionated people, that will think they are

managers or you know they have a very good understanding of the football club so... yeah, there's a lot of people saying 'Oh I disagree with that' or... 'I agree with that'' (M4).

The data suggests that in this sense brand community members use the community page not just to socialise and interact with others about the brand. It is also utilised to satisfy a more individualistic motivation – to let others in the community know what they think about the different issues discussed in the community.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Entertainment value

The third and final first-order theme that was identified represented *entertainment* theme, and reflected fun and relaxation through interacting with others, and emotional release (McQuail, 1983; Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo, 2004; Madupu and Cooley, 2010; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011). This theme contained three subthemes – three separate motivations triggering eWOM, namely: *(1) enjoyment, (2) escapism* and *(3) expressing positive emotions* motivations.

5.2.3.1 Enjoyment

The first motivation within this category was labeled *enjoyment,* as it reflected enjoyable and pleasurable experiences associated with engaging in eWOM (Labsomboonsiri, Matthews and Luck, 2014; Teichmann et al., 2015). When describing their experiences on the brand community pages, interviewees mentioned such keywords as 'fun', 'amusing', 'hilarious', 'entertaining' and 'enjoyment'. Here they were describing the feelings of enjoyment that they experienced when for instance reading through other brand community members' posts and comments on the page. For instance, one of the interviewees mentioned how she liked reading the conversations that people have on the brand pages, saying (F14):

'…you know it's amusing – the arguments that people are having' (F14).

Participants further discuss spreading eWOM from the brand community pages to their broader network of friends, where one of the interviewees explains her engagement in brand-related eWOM as a way to:

> '…make them [friends] feel amused, if it's something funny…' (F12).

Interviewees also describe that it is 'highly entertaining' (F17) to watch other brand community members express their conflicting ideas about some issue discussed on the brand page. Referring to a social network brand community that she participates in, another interviewee further explained (F17):

> '…there's so many different thoughts on particular topics, you know you are always gonna have people with conflicting ideas, and it's really really funny to watch them argue cause it's just quite hilarious' (F17).

Another interviewee (M3) further adds to this, explaining that reading negative eWOM, in particular, provides entertainment and enjoyment value:

> 'Probably because they are funny or very mean, and then that catches my curiosity – you know, we as humans are all very attracted to the negative stuff…If I see a very positive comment next to a very negative comment – I will for sure first go to negative and see it...Because it's really funny, or because it's something very mean' (M3).

Thus, the qualitative data seems to support the importance of the entertaining aspect of eWOM communication on the brand community pages. The interviews seem to show that OBC members enjoy watching other brand community members initiate conversations, and leave comments underneath brands' posts, especially if they express very different and conflicting opinions.

5.2.3.2 Escapism

Another subtheme that emerged during the interviews is described as 'escaping aspect' (F7) – "a classic motivation associated with most types of media" (Grant, 2005, p. 612). Brand community members can engage in eWOM to relax, or possibly even briefly escape from their daily occupations (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999; Abrantes et al. 2013). This may motivate them to go on the brand page to

read other fans' comments, and this activity would take them away from what they are doing, or distract them from something that is stressful. This is described by one of the interviewees as follows (F7):

> *'Even in times that I'm really really busy, or stressed, I…you know, I want to escape for a while, it relaxes me to go to a page, and, you know – think of something irrelevant, and I don't know…let's see what they say here'* (F7).

Here brand community members discuss feeling the need to distract themselves from daily tasks and occupations, where they just wish to relax and temporarily forget about something that is worrisome. One of the informants explains (F7):

> *'…you know to relax and escape you know from what I do, because I want to think of something else, to occupy myself with something else, and not to think of something that I'm really worried about. So it's a silly way you know to forget other things'* [F7].

Interviewees admit that participation in the brand community eWOM makes them 'think of something irrelevant' (F7) and enables them to concentrate on something else and avoid thinking about something stressful in their lives. One of the interviewees (F17) further reiterates that relaxation and distraction is one of the benefits that motivates her to read brand community members' eWOM:

> *'[It's] a very kind of relaxed environment – maybe when I'm on FB it's just scrolling on my phone, and it's just light browsing, and it's kind of like a nice relaxing way to seek out, entertain more information and to not feel too pressured'* [F17].

The data seems to suggest that the identified motivation drives both active and passive eWOM engagement, where brand community members read comments made by other individuals on the brand community page; as well as active eWOM by scrolling down the page and making 'relaxing comments' (F7) with a goal to temporarily take their mind off pressing issues and concerns.

5.2.3.3 Expressing positive emotions

Finally, interviewees repeatedly describe their need to *express positive emotions* (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013) as a motivational factor triggering eWOM about brands that they 'like' on Facebook – both on the brand community pages and beyond – within their broader social network. Specifically, participants often discussed their willingness to share 'excitement' (F7; F8; F15) about what was happening with the brand. One of the informants discussing the Glastonbury Festival brand page, described her experience on the page as follows (F8):

> *'I've been sharing quite a lot... And also just in general just because I'm quite excited about their festival... because I'm excited that I'm going'* (F8).

Here participants explain the need to express this positive feeling about the brand, or the brand's news, thus sharing it with others in the community, as well as outside the community to their network of friends. One of the interviewees describes this motivation (F13):

> *'... because I'm very excited and I want other people to see it'* (F13).

Another informant (F7) also discussed introducing one of her friends to a restaurant brand community, and later observing the friend, who has just experienced the brand sharing her positive feelings about it:

> *'... because she wanted to share her excitement. Because she really liked the product, she was expecting this moment, and she finally liked it (product)'* (F7).

Overall the data has illustrated that this motivation was related to the strong interest in the brand and its news, and the subsequent feeling of excitement and anticipation of what was going to happen, or what has been experienced, and the strong need to share this excitement with others. This motivation was most prominent in the interviews with members of different brand communities, including gaming community, hospitality and festival brands.

5.3 EWOM outcomes

In addition to identifying motivations or reasons for eWOM within the social media-based brand community context, this study was also concerned with the outcomes of such communication. Previous research has studied eWOM within different online contexts, and as a result a number of different outcomes of eWOM were identified in the literature, such as for example consumers' product involvement (Jin and Phua, 2014), product attitude (Lopez-Lopez and Parra, 2016) and purchase intentions (Baker, Donthu and Kumar, 2016) among others. However, to the researcher's best knowledge, previous studies have not looked into the outcomes of eWOM among members of OBCs.

To explore these relationships, participants were asked whether they perceived or felt that anything has changed in their relationship with the brands that they 'liked' on Facebook since they started communicating with others on the page, or consuming content produced by other brand fans. Within the *eWOM outcomes* theme, three distinctive subthemes emerged: *(1) brand loyalty, (2) brand trust* and *(3) oppositional brand loyalty.*

5.3.1 Brand trust

One of the most prominent outcomes that were mentioned was *trust* towards the brand. Here interviewees indicated that through constant exposure to the brand online – by seeing the posts on the newsfeed, or going to the brand community page itself – and seeing how the brand reacts and respond to other consumers – they felt their trust towards the brand increased. Furthermore, reflecting on personal experience of communicating with a brand on the OBC (e.g. to resolve an issue, or enquire about something) – and having received satisfactory level of communication exchange – they further admitted that this resulted in the feeling of trust towards the brand, where one informant (F17) stated:

> *'I've become more trusting of the brands'* (F17).

Interestingly, interviewees also related stories of previous negative experiences with the brands that were though positively resolved through communicating with the brand in the brand community. As a result, such experience further led to the growing level of trust for the brand as evidenced in another interview (F14):

> '*I was really impressed with how they responded, and I was saying…I was really annoyed [with the company], they, you know, the response that they gave me wasn't ideal, you know it wasn't the best. But just because they took the time to you know write a quite lengthy response to me explaining why my post was late you know, who I could contact for more information, how I can track it in the future – all this kind of stuff that really kind of I suppose made me trust the company a little bit more- it made me you know…it kind of eased my concerns that I had initially, so that was a really good experience*' (F14).

Trust is reported to be a result of positive personal experience with the brand, as well as observed brand's behaviour. Thus, Facebook allows consumers not only to connect with brands personally but also to monitor their behaviour towards other fans. Thereby, brand community members can form their opinions about the brands, and develop the feeling of trust towards brands that treat them and others well. This is also explained by one of the informants (F7):

> '*…they were really nice to me, apart from the fact that they had a really nice product, I was really impressed with the way that they treated me…I have seen their behavior – I think I trust them and I want to use them again*' (F7).

Thus, the qualitative data confirms that trust can form as a result of both active and passive eWOM communication, where brand community members read other members' communication on the page, as well as by personally engaging in brand-related eWOM.

5.3.2 Brand loyalty

Interviewees further reported amplified loyalty towards the brand as manifested in increased purchasing of the brand's products. Being able to see a large amount of information from the brand community on their newsfeeds, OBC members confirmed that they noticed an increase in purchasing from the brand, as they became more informed about it. One of the members of a fashion brand community discussed this theme (F6):

> '…I definitely buy more…I cannot really resist myself…' (F6).

This also had implications for choosing one brand over another, and giving preference to the brand that they know and have had experience with, and are furthermore constantly exposed to and connected to on Facebook. This is explained by one of the informants (F14):

> 'So they actually have like a brick and mortar store – like a physical store in my work building, and it's usually because I see something on my Facebook feed, on my phone, and I go on my lunch-break to the store. Because I know that there's a deal, or I know there's special on, so it makes me more likely to shop here than…at the competitors' (F14).

Taken together, the evidence from the qualitative stage seems to indicate that exposure to the brand content on the brand pages creates an element of *behavioural brand loyalty* among the brand community members. Admittedly, this outcome was discussed as a reflection of overall engagement with the brand community page, where some respondents did not specify whether they felt their loyalty increased due to the participation in eWOM or overall experience with the brand community. However, as both brand-generated and consumer-generated content appears on the page and can be consumed by the brand community members, it is expected that consumer-generated eWOM would lead to the increased levels of loyalty (both behavioural and attitudinal).

5.3.3 Oppositional brand loyalty

Finally, interviewees also reported feeling negative sentiments towards opposing brands, which on occasions seem to have included the elements of *oppositional brand loyalty*. Here one of the interviewees (M4) discusses his personal experiences with his favourite sports brand, as well as observing other brand fans' actions on the brand page:

> *'I know a lot of fans will publicly share stuff that is derogatory to other fans…' (M4)*

> *'…of course, I've got closer with this brand, so I'm gonna have clear sort of negative vibes to the opposing brand'* (M4).

Behaviour of brand community members who exhibit oppositional brand loyalty can vary. In practice, consumers who express oppositional brand loyalty may actively search for their preferred brand, recommend it to others, as well as even limit their product choice to this brand (Madupu and Cooley, 2010; Kuo and Feng, 2013). This has been mentioned by another participant (F7):

> *'..if I feel that I support a brand, it has happened to me to you know to see a brand [...] and knowing that I'm theoretically interested in the products or services they provided to me, but it has happened to me to think that [...] 'oh no, it is not right to make a 'like' on this page, or to promote this page, because I feel like I support the other one, and in case that I want to buy something or use a service of this kind, I have already found where I'm gonna do this'* (F7)

Furthermore, interviewees also report expressing negative views about opposing brands. This is illustrated in another example (F2):

> *'…well now I really do dare say that they [opposing brands] are [bad]'* (F2).

It is worth discussing that the last two outcomes – specifically, brand loyalty and oppositional brand loyalty were not as strongly pronounced throughout the interviews, and were reported only by a few participants, whereas brand trust was mentioned more frequently. The data has demonstrated that oppositional

brand loyalty manifested in the brand communities where participants seemed to be more involved with the brand, and the brand played an important role in their lives – e.g. in the sports brand communities or brand communities dedicated to political organisations. Elements of brand loyalty were reported in the communities related to fashion, including clothing and accessories brands.

5.4 Implications of Study 1

There are several implications of the qualitative study. First, the data reveals a range of motivations for eWOM among the members of OBCs. Specifically, 10 individual motives associated with social, information and entertainment categories have been identified. Importantly, however, to the researcher's best knowledge, this is the first study that identifies these 10 motivations in the OBC context.

Noteworthy findings concern eWOM outcomes. Three outcomes of eWOM in OBC have been identified, namely – brand loyalty, brand trust, and oppositional brand loyalty. Specifically, previous research has made a connection between eWOM and trust (Ladhari and Michaud, 2015) and eWOM and loyalty (Garnefeld, Helm and Eggert, 2011). Although to the researcher's best knowledge, this is the first study which identifies oppositional brand loyalty as a potential outcome of eWOM in the OBC.

Thirdly and most importantly, the qualitative findings inform the conceptual model in a significant way. In particular, the revisions include identification of three categories of motivations based on the interview data as opposed to the four categories identified in the literature review. The literature review has suggested that eWOM is largely driven by social, functional, self-oriented and entertainment / emotional groups of motivations. Based on the evidence from the interviews, the self-oriented category is combined with the social group of motivations as the divisions between the self- and social eWOM motives are not as prominently seen in the OBC context. Next, the functional group of motivations identified in the literature is seen as largely information-oriented and is thus renamed into 'information and assistance' category.

Finally, the second part of the conceptual model has also undergone modifications based on the results of the Study 1. Specifically, review of existing literature has identified 'purchase intentions' as one of the most cited outcomes of eWOM communication (e.g. Sparks and Browning, 2011; Jin and Phua, 2014). Findings from the qualitative study, however, indicate potential relationship between eWOM and brand loyalty, eWOM and brand trust, and eWOM and oppositional brand loyalty. Consequently, the second part of the model was modified to reflect the findings revealed in the interviews. The transformed conceptual model and relationships between the constructs are covered in detail in the next chapter. Specifically, in the following chapter the research constructs are defined, and hypothesised relationships are outlined. These relationships are later tested in the quantitative stage discussed in the Chapter 9.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the findings from the Study 1 of the research, which consisted of 22 semi-structured interviews with members of Facebook-based brand communities. This chapter has been divided into two parts, addressing the motivations and outcomes of eWOM communication in the context of social media-based brand communities.

Results of the Study 1 indicate the existence of three categories of brand community members' motivations to engage in eWOM – related to receiving information and assistance, social value, and entertainment value. Each of the categories in their turn encompasses a number of separate motivations (10 in total), which have been addressed individually. The chapter has also outlined the key eWOM outcomes that have emerged during the interviews, including brand trust, brand loyalty, and oppositional brand loyalty. Finally, the implications of Study 1 and how they feed into the conceptual model have been discussed.

Chapter 6: Conceptual framework

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conceptual model developed based on the findings from the literature review and results of the qualitative stage of this research. The chapter synthesises the literature and qualitative findings and focuses on the relationships between the constructs and proposes hypotheses to be tested in the confirmatory Study 3. The discussion integrates past literature and qualitative findings to advance the preliminary theoretical framework and then develops a new model outlining the concepts and formal research hypotheses.

6.2 Quantitative phase: overall logic

The overall aim of the quantitative phase is to address the question of antecedents and outcomes of eWOM in the online brand community (OBC) context. This is accomplished in two stages: measurement development (Study 2) and hypothesis testing (Study 3). The confirmatory model in Study 3 addresses two questions. The first question concerns the antecedents of eWOM communication. The second question concerns the outcomes of eWOM. The model that captures these questions is presented in Figure 2. The model consists of three layers: antecedents, eWOM communication, and eWOM outcomes. The following sections discuss them in detail.

Figure 2. Conceptual framework

6.3 Core concept – OBCeWOM

As this thesis focuses on the specific type of electronic word-of-mouth in a particular context (online brand community), OBCeWOM is hereby chosen as a working term to address the core research concept. The definition of OBCeWOM used in this study is based on the eWOM conceptualisation provided by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) and is adapted to the context of social media-based brand communities. As such, OBCeWOM is defined in the current research as:

> *Communication initiated by the brand community members about a brand, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet. This includes posting and reading the brand-related communication within the brand community, and forwarding the communication outside the community.*

6.4 Research hypotheses: motivations for OBCeWOM

Following the qualitative analysis and in line with the Uses and Gratifications Paradigm, this research proposes three categories of eWOM motivations (Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo, 2004; Sicilia and Palazon, 2008). The first category is related to *information and assistance value* of eWOM and includes four motives – community advice search, brand assistance, helping others and helping the brand. The second category is related to the *social value* of eWOM and includes three motives – social interaction, self-presentation and social expression of opinions. Finally, the third group of motives concerns motives related to the *entertainment value* of eWOM, including individual motives of enjoyment, escapism and expressing positive emotions. The following sections develop the formal hypotheses that link motivations with eWOM.

6.4.1 Community advice search and OBCeWOM

Findings from the qualitative stage have revealed that brand community members are interested in receiving information from fellow members with

regards to their experiences with the brand, opinions, and suggestions. Based on Berger (2014), community advice search is hereby defined as the *willingness to get assistance, suggestions or just an outside perspective about the brand and its use from the members of the community.*

The need to get knowledge about products from other consumers is at the core of traditional word-of-mouth research (Sundaram, Mitra and Webster, 1998; Mowen, Park and Zablah, 2007; Wetzer, Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2007). For example, in the early research on word-of-mouth, Sundaram, Mitra and Webster (1998) argued that consumers were driven to engage in negative WOM by advice seeking motivation. The authors found that this motive was present among consumers who have had a negative experience with a product and in this way looked for counsel regarding the ways of solving their issues.

Similarly, eWOM can be triggered by the need to look for advice from other consumers (Wetzer, Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2007; Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014). Consumers may express their experiences with a product and ask the others on the online opinion platforms to give feedback on how to solve a certain problem (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003) further argued that consumers were interested in reading online reviews to understand how to consume or use products.

Furthermore, participation in online communities has been previously linked to the members' need to receive 'information value' – referring to getting and sharing information in the virtual community, and knowing what others in the community think (Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo, 2004; Dholakia et al., 2009). Additionally, social media use is often driven by individuals' need to look for information, as well self-education, receiving how-to-instructions and simply getting help regarding different issues (Whiting and Williams, 2013). This can be explained by the fact that individuals often are not sure about how to behave in specific purchasing or consumption situations, where it can be difficult to make a choice without knowing certain information or without understanding the experiences of other customers (Berger, 2014).

Drawing on the findings from previous research, it is argued that brand community members would be similarly driven to engage in eWOM in the

community in order to receive brand-related advice. Research on brand community also discusses that members can take on different roles in the community, often possessing varying levels of knowledge about and experience with the brand (Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann, 2005; Hung, Li and Tse, 2011). Positioned within the social media platforms, brand communities can potentially attract a lot of customer-to-customer interaction and communication. As such it is expected that brand community members will be driven by the motivation to seek advice about the brand from the fellow community members. This is hypothesised as:

> *H1: Brand community members' advice search motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.*

6.4.2 Brand assistance and OBCeWOM

In addition to looking for support and information from the other brand community members, individuals are able to reach out and communicate with the brand directly on Facebook (De Vries, Gensler and Leeflang, 2012; Tsai and Men, 2013; Azar et al., 2016) using the brand community page (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). Brand assistance motivation is hereby defined as the *willingness to get information, assistance and problem-solving support from the brand*. Made publicly on the page, members' posts and comments can be regarded as eWOM as it becomes visible to the other members of the community and potentially individuals outside the community. It has previously been established that the value derived by individuals from interacting with a brand is positively related to their fan page engagement and intensity of fan page usage (Jahn and Kunz, 2012).

Previous research on virtual opinion platforms has shown that consumers may be driven to leave eWOM on the Web-based opinion platforms looking for operators' (moderators') support in their product queries. Hence, consumers potentially view them as advocates, where the platform operators will communicate with the company on behalf of the consumers to solve their issues with the product (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Brand-managed or official Facebook brand communities often allow brand community members to get in touch with the brand directly for example by publicly posting their enquiry or comments on the brand community page. Findings from the qualitative stage suggest that brand community members view this method of communication with the brand as a more convenient option. Being connected to the brand on Facebook allows them to address their issues directly on the page, rather than calling customer service or sending emails. Furthermore, brand community members believe that by contacting the brand publicly on the Facebook page will ensure a swift reply, as this would put a certain pressure on the company, where other brand fans will be able to see the conversation.

Consumers thus may be motivated to engage in eWOM within the OBC for the purpose of enquiring about a product or solving a product-related issue anticipating a response and assistance from the brand itself. It is thereby hypothesised:

> *H2: Brand community members' brand assistance motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.*

6.4.3 Helping others and OBCeWOM

Motivation to help others is defined as the *willingness to assist others by sharing information about brands* (Alexandrov, Lilly and Babakus, 2013). Just as the need to receive information about products and brands from other consumers, sharing one's experiences to help others with their purchasing decisions or even potentially prevent them from having negative experiences is also at the centre of eWOM communication (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Wetzer, Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2007; Yoo and Gretzel, 2008; Alexandrov, Lilly and Babakus, 2013).

Examples of such behaviour have been found in online travel communities and forums, where eWOM has been linked to vacationers' motivation to help other fellow travellers decide on a more suitable destination choice (Bronner and de Hoog, 2011). Similarly, participation in online consumption-related communities has been associated with members' desire to help others in the community

(Dholakia et al., 2009). This willingness to assist others with product-related queries is sometimes regarded as a form of altruism (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Teichmann et al., 2015), where the information provider does not expect anything in return. Conversely, others discuss that as individuals benefit from other consumers' product-related support, it is only fair for them to help others by sharing their own consumption experiences (Cheung and Lee, 2012). This stream of literature thereby relates the 'helping' motivation to reciprocity.

This was further emphasized in the findings from the qualitative stage, that have revealed that brand community members often feel the need to help others in the community, as well as outside of the community. This manifests in sharing content that may be beneficial for other members of the OBC, or for the informer's social network; and responding to other community members' brand-related queries. Finally, brand community literature discusses that brand communities are characterized by strong social ties between their members, or consciousness of a kind, where members feel intrinsic connection to the other members of the community through their shared interest in the brand (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2008; Kuo and Feng, 2013). It is thereby anticipated that brand community members will be driven to help other community members with their knowledge about and experience with the brand. This is hypothesized:

> *H3: Brand community members' motivation to help others in the community is positively related to OBCeWOM.*

6.4.4 Helping the brand and OBCeWOM

Consumers' willingness to help the company (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) is sometimes argued to be an outcome of consumers' satisfaction with a product (Sundaram, Mitra and Webster, 1998). It is explained that individuals are interested in supporting the brand that has provided them with a satisfactory experience, thus taking action to make it more successful by engaging in positive communication about the brand. Furthermore, previous research has argued that because of a chain of positive experiences with the brand, the individual may be reluctant to say anything negative about the company, and even potentially

engage in positive eWOM about it, thereby promoting the brand (Mazzarol, Sweeney and Soutar, 2007). This motivation reflects consumers' willingness to 'give something in return for a good experience', and is also related to the altruism motive (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) and Yoo and Gretzel (2008) further discuss that this situation can be described through the equity theory, where individuals are looking for fair exchanges. In this instance when a person perceives that they are receiving higher benefits than they are giving in return, they may equalize the relationship by helping the company by providing positive information about it over the Internet. Research on traditional WOM has furthermore identified that consumers who have experienced a satisfactory response to a product failure are often motivated to help the company by sharing positive WOM about it (Sundaram, Mitra and Webster, 1998).

Drawing from Sundaram, Mitra and Webster (1998), helping the brand motivation is hereby defined as *brand community members' willingness to support a brand, give something in return for a good experience, so that the brand will become more successful*. Findings from the qualitative study suggest that brand community members often want to promote their favourite brand to their friends on the social network by for example introducing them to the brand community, and acting as brand advocates. Furthermore, brand community members engage in eWOM on the page to show appreciation to the brand for working on specific products. In this way, brand community members provide positive feedback to the brand, which is visible to other brand community members, as well as the poster's social network. Based on the findings from Study 1 and given the brand community members' strong interest in and affection for the brand, it is anticipated that individuals will be motivated to engage in eWOM within the community in order to show their support for the brand. This is hypothesised:

> *H4: Brand community members' motivation to help the brand is positively related to OBCeWOM.*

6.4.5 Social interaction and OBCeWOM

Social interaction motivation is defined as the *willingness to meet and talk with others, as well as to get peer support and a sense of community* (Park, Kee and Valenzuela, 2009). Traces of this motivation find its roots in the early research relating to the Internet and new media, which has argued that online environment serves as a "facilitator of interpersonal communication" (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999, p. 57).

More recently, this argument has been reiterated in the context of virtual communities and online consumer interactions. Research in this area has found that consumers often join online communities to meet like-minded individuals, receive social support and companionship, and even develop relationships and friendships (Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo, 2004; Abrantes et al., 2013). Through interacting with other consumers within virtual platforms, individuals develop stronger links to the community and are able to receive social benefits through being affiliated and integrated with the group (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Previous research in the social media context has also identified a strong social interaction theme. Studies suggest that individuals contribute to discussions and participate on social media platforms to get to know others who share similar interests and simply to socialize (Park, Kee and Valenzuela, 2009; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011; Whiting and Williams, 2013). Furthermore, Jahn and Kunz (2012) have looked into fans' activities on Facebook brand pages, and have identified that fan-page engagement is driven by individuals' needs for social interaction.

Both offline and online brand communities are often characterized by strong social bonds between their members, where they share an interest in the focal brand, participate in brand-related events, and even use specific community jargon to communicate within the group (Cova, Pace and Park, 2007; Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2008; Fuller, Matzler and Hoppe, 2008; Dholakia and Vianello, 2009). Findings from the qualitative study suggest that brand community members often engage in brand-related eWOM to initiate a conversation, perceiving Facebook as a social network and embedded brand community pages as a place to reach out to many different individuals. It is thus

anticipated that brand community members will engage in brand-related eWOM within the community for the purpose of social interaction. It is hereby hypothesised that:

> *H5: Brand community members' social interaction motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.*

6.4.6 Self-presentation and OBCeWOM

The self-presentation motivation refers to an individual's *"willingness to manage another's impression or image of oneself"* (Wetzer, Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2007, p. 665). Results from the Study 1 have revealed that brand community members are often concerned about how they are perceived by others, and what kind of image they are projecting when they share and leave comments about brands on the brand community pages.

Evidence from WOM literature supports these assertions. For example, past studies have shown that individuals can be motivated to contribute to product-related information for self-enhancement reasons, where such contributions signal expertise and increase the reputation of the individual (Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2004; Wetzer, Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2007; Cheung and Lee, 2012). Sundaram, Mitra and Webster (1998, p. 530) discuss that WOM enables individuals to "enhance their image among others by projecting themselves as intelligent shoppers...to show connoisseurship, to project themselves as experts, to enhance status, and to seek appreciation". Engel, Kegerreis and Blackwell (1969, p. 15) further discuss that WOM serves a specific purpose to attract attention to the individual, and even "suggest status, or assert superiority".

Individuals are driven by the desire to be perceived well by others – reflecting one of the core human motivations – which enables them to increase their self-esteem and feel better about themselves (Barash and Berger, 2014; Berger, 2014). As a result, finding oneself in a social situation an individual often focuses on communicating positive aspects of his or her personality, rather than sharing any information that may be negatively perceived by others (Angelis et al., 2012; Barash and Berger, 2014). Berger (2014, p. 588) argues that "... just like

the car they drive, what people talk about impacts how others see them (and how they see themselves) ... people are more likely to share things that make them look good rather than bad ... and look special, show connoisseurship, or garner status...".

Finally, several studies have also linked self-enhancement motivation to eWOM (Alexandrov, Lilly and Babakus, 2013; Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013), whereas fan page engagement has been found to enhance one's social self-concept (Jahn and Kunz, 2012). Due to theit embeddedness in the SNS, it is expected that OBCs would be perceived as an extension of one's profile on Facebook, where an individual's engagement in eWOM would be shaped by his or her need to present themselves to the other community members. It is thus hypothesised:

> *H6: Brand community members' self-representation motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.*

6.4.7 Social expression of opinions and OBCeWOM

There is evidence that social media engagement and participation can be driven by individuals' need to express their thoughts and opinions about various issues, and making them known to others (Whiting and Williams, 2013). Stephen and Lehmann (2009) have also found that social expression of one's opinion is one of the core reasons for WOM transmission. It is expected that this driver will be especially salient when the issues discussed are of high importance to an individual, or are for example of political nature, or concern such topics as sports or TV entertainment.

Although extant eWOM research has to date largely neglected this antecedent of brand-related consumer exchange, this motivation has been revealed in the findings from the qualitative study, where interviewees have related their need to state their opinions about their consumption experiences. It has been further explained in the qualitative stage that individuals feel the need to express their views about specific features of products (including for example colour or design), as well as their attitude towards products in general. Study 1 has also revealed that it is often important for the brand community members to clearly

explain and provide arguments regarding the reasons behind their sentiments, and communicate to the others why they feel in a particular way. This factor is hereby conceptualised as *the need to express one's thoughts and opinions concerning a brand socially*.

Brand community research suggests that brand community members are not homogenous, and often can be characterized by different cultural and social backgrounds, as well as varying levels of community engagement (Royo-Vela and Casamassima, 2011; Tsai and Men, 2013) and intensity of participation (Kang, Tang and Fiore, 2015). Brand community members' idiosyncratic differences create a potential for variations in opinions about brand-related issues, as well as agreements and disagreements. It is thus expected that brand community members would be willing to react to the issues discussed in the community by communicating their own views, where the need to express their opinions will be strong. It is hereby hypothesised:

> *H7: Brand community members' social expression of opinions motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.*

6.4.8 Enjoyment and OBCeWOM

One of the primary functions of the Internet and social media is to provide entertainment, enjoyment and to enhance one's mood state (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999; Luo, 2002; Park, Kee and Valenzuela, 2009; Abrantes et al., 2013), be it in the form of online games, videos or music (Whiting and Williams, 2013), or branded entertainment (Ashley and Tuten, 2016). Indeed, besides providing information value, social media is often used for fun, humour and enjoyment (Bronner and de Hoog, 2010). Enjoyment motivation is hereby conceptualised as *communicating with others to experience pleasure, fun, and enjoyment* (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999; Madupu and Cooley, 2010).

Previous research has shown that online community members are often driven by the need to obtain entertainment value by interacting with others within the community, as this becomes a fun and pleasurable experience (Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo, 2004; Teichmann et al., 2015). Similarly, Facebook groups are often

primarily used for their ability to provide amusement and enjoyment to the participants (Park, Kee and Valenzuela, 2009).

Past research has discussed that individuals are more prone to share content that is positive, funny, and would entertain and amuse others, as well as prefer consuming content that provides enjoyment and entertainment (Taylor, Strutton and Thompson, 2012). Messages that provide entertainment value have the propensity to increase one's feeling of connectedness between the receiver and the poster of the message (Utz, 2015). Similarly, Bronner and de Hoog (2010) discuss that eWOM is often consumed purely for entertainment purposes, where consumers are driven to online chats and discussion forums.

Results from the qualitative study suggest that members of Facebook-based brand communities encounter a variety of entertaining content on the brand community page, ranging from funny consumer-generated comments and posts to heated brand-related discussions. The findings further indicate that brand community members value the entertainment and enjoyment that they can experience when for example reading other members' comments on the brand community. Finally, findings from Study 1 also indicate that brand community members often perceive generating or sharing brand-related content as a fun and enjoyable experience. Hence, it is hypothesised:

> *H8: Brand community members' enjoyment motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.*

6.4.9 Escapism and OBCeWOM

Escapism motivation is defined in this study as *a state of psychological immersion and absorption in which people escape from their everyday concerns and responsibilities for a period of time* (Abrantes et al., 2013). Escapism is a well-established motivation within the UGT research, and this motive has been linked to one's communication and media consumption (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999). Early UGT studies have identified that communicating with others can be triggered by one's willingness to avoid pressing tasks and simply pass the time (Rubin, 1983). Following UGT research found strong support for escapism

motivation in driving consumers' media usage, including traditional media and new media consumption (Grant, 2005; Hall-Phillips et al., 2016). Specifically, previous studies have found a relationship between one's need to temporarily escape the reality and their TV viewing activity (Henning and Vorderer, 2001), news reading (Diddi and LaRose, 2006), Internet usage (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999; Courtois et al., 2009), and more recently social media engagement (Hall-Phillips et al., 2016). There is evidence that escapism is an important factor driving individuals' online gaming activities (Li, Liau and Khoo, 2011; Li et al., 2015), as well as interactions with brands on social media (Davis, Piven and Breazeale, 2014).

Traces of escapism theme have been identified in the brand community research. For example, Cova, Pace and Park (2007) have found that members of a gaming brand community Warhammer appreciate the escapism function that playing the game can offer them. Furthermore, it has been established that consumers can experience a 'sense of escapism' while interacting with brands on social media (Davis, Piven and Breazeale, 2014).

Previous research has connected escapism to eWOM, where Abrantes et al. (2013) have found an indirect effect of escapism on in-group and out-group eWOM. Finally, findings from the qualitative stage provide further support to the link between escapism motivation and eWOM, indicating that brand community members may be motivated to engage in eWOM in order to temporarily escape from their daily responsibilities, and distract themselves from any pressing concerns. This is hypothesised:

> *H9: Brand community members' escapism motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.*

6.4.10 Expressing positive emotions and OBCeWOM

Consumers may feel strong positive emotions about the brand or their consumption experiences. One of the key factors influencing consumer's WOM activity is affect, or emotional driver (Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013). This project defines the expressing positive emotions motivation as a *need to release*

a psychological tension, and share the joy of the positive brand experience with other people (Jeong and Jang, 2011).

Previous research has established that one's WOM motivation to express positive feelings is often driven by their positive consumption experiences (Sundaram, Mitra and Webster, 1998). Applying this motivation to eWOM, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) and Jeong and Jang (2011) have found that consumers may engage in the eWOM generation and sharing, including writing comments, and sharing brand-related information with others as a means to reduce the psychological tension experienced as a result of strong positive feelings.

Within this area, research has taken several directions – where affect is discussed at a broader level, with (Westbrook, 1987; White, 2010) for example focusing on one's need to express positive feelings; whereas another stream of research identifying specific emotions that can lead to one's WOM intentions and behaviour (Ladhari, 2007; Soscia, 2007; Ha and Im, 2012; Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013). Emotion-sharing driver has been disassembled to uncover specific emotions that are at the core of one's consumption experiences, where previous research has largely focused on the relationship between one's satisfaction with consumption experience and engagement in WOM about products or services (Dellarocas and Wood, 2008; Gebauer, Fuller and Pezzei, 2013), with higher levels of satisfaction or even delight (Berman, 2005) being stronger predictors of WOM. There is additional evidence that certain individual emotions are responsible for triggering positive WOM communication (Westbrook, 1987; Schoefer and Diamantopoulos, 2008; White, 2010), including such positive sentiments as gratitude (Soscia, 2007), pleasure, arousal, joy (Ladhari, 2007; Ha and Im, 2012), and surprise (Derbaix and Vanhamme, 2003). More recently, Lovett, Peres and Shachar (2013) discussed a relationship between excitement and WOM, which previously had been overlooked.

The emotion-related driver is expected to be even more prevalent in the context of online brand communities, where members often experience a strong emotional connection to the brand and community (Park and Kim, 2014). Findings from the qualitative stage suggest that brand community members engage in eWOM to share their excitement about the brand and its news. It is thus anticipated that brand community members will experience strong positive

feelings about the brand, which would motivate them to engage in eWOM about the brand. It is hence hypothesised:

> *H10: Brand community members' motivation to express positive emotions is positively related to OBCeWOM.*

6.5 Research hypotheses: outcomes of OBCeWOM

Based on the previous research on eWOM, online brand communities, as well as insights from the interviews, this research proposes several outcomes of eWOM communication in the brand community context. These include brand trust, brand loyalty, and oppositional brand loyalty. The formal hypotheses connecting eWOM and its outcomes, as well as additional connections between the outcomes are discussed in the following sections.

6.5.1 OBCeWOM and brand trust

Trust is essential to any relationships, as it signals one's "confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity" (Morgan and Hunt, 1994, p. 23). Not surprisingly, trust has been identified as a core element of relationship marketing that is of vital importance to an organization's success (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Kramer and Tyler, 1995). Trust is important as it helps decrease the level of uncertainty and ambiguity when choosing a brand that would satisfy consumer needs and expectations (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Doney and Cannon, 1997).

Trust is an important indicator of relationship quality (Aurier and N'Goala, 2010), and is a core component of long-term relationships (Ganesan, 1994; Jevons and Gabbott, 2000). Trust develops over time (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001), based on the parties' knowledge about, and their experiences with one another. Because trust is rooted in the knowledge about the partner, for trust to develop, the parties need to interact and accumulate a history of exchanges that would allow them to anticipate one another's behaviour (Kramer and Tyler, 1995). Brand trust can be regarded as a "calculative" and carefully evaluated

process, whereby the brand shows that it is able to fulfil its obligations, as consumers also assess the costs against the benefits of staying in the relationship (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001).

Trust is often described as being composed of several sets of beliefs that one party has about the other, making it a multidimensional construct (Ridings, Gefen and Arinze, 2002; Reast, 2005; Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2007; Li et al., 2008). Previous research often mentions such dimensions of trust as *ability* (or competence), *benevolence* and *integrity* (or honesty) (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Ridings, Gefen and Arinze, 2002; Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2007). Competence refers to the one party's beliefs in the other party's knowledge and skills to satisfy their needs (Coulter and Coulter, 2002). Honesty is the belief that the other party will carry out their promises (Doney and Cannon, 1997). Finally, benevolence reflects the belief of one party that the other party is concerned with the former's wellbeing (Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2007), especially in the event of something unexpected happening.

In this study, brand trust is defined as one's *"confident expectations of the brand's reliability and intentions in situations entailing risk to the consumer"* (Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen, 2003, p. 37). This definition consequently considers 2 dimensions of brand trust – *reliability* (rational or cognitive aspect) and *intentions* (emotional aspect) (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003; Delgado-Ballester, 2004; Matzler et al., 2011). Brand *reliability* refers to how much a consumer believes that the brand can deliver on its promise and satisfy his or her needs. Brand *intention* dimension corresponds to how strongly the consumer believes that in case anything unexpected happens with the utilization of the brand, it will put the consumer's interests first (Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen, 2003).

Previous research has established a positive relationship between the value creation practice of community engagement and brand trust (Mosavi and Kenarehfard, 2013), as well as online community participation and trust (Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2007). This supports the view that trust develops over time trough interaction and some kind of exchange or communication between the relationship parties. Recent research further discusses that eWOM can be a precursor of brand trust, where for example hotel bookers have reported higher

levels of trust towards the hotel that has generated positive online reviews (Ladhari and Michaud, 2015).

Findings from the qualitative study suggest that brand community members experience trust towards the brand that they follow on Facebook. It is expected that eWOM will enhance brand community members' trust towards the brand, as they follow the brand's news and updates on Facebook, becoming more knowledgeable about the brand, and aware of the brand's actions. Also by being constantly exposed to the brand on the Facebook brand community, and interacting with the brand and other brand community members, it is expected that individuals will become more confident in the brand's reliability and intentions, as they will be able to have enough information to make a judgement. Hence, it is hypothesised:

> *H11: OBCeWOM is positively related to brand trust.*

6.5.2 OBCeWOM and brand loyalty

The concept of brand loyalty has attracted a large amount of interest among marketing scholars for several decades (e.g. Bloemer and Kasper, 1995; Fournier and Yao, 1997; Oliver, 1999; Harris and Goode, 2004; El-Manstry and Harrison, 2013). Thus, a variety of definitions and dimensions of brand loyalty can be found in the literature, including for example action loyalty, affective loyalty, conative loyalty, and cognitive loyalty (Harris and Goode, 2004; Evanschitzky and Wunderlich, 2006; El-Manstry and Harrison, 2013) among some of the more recently identified dimensions. Consequently, researchers agree, that brand loyalty is broader in meaning than simply the act of repurchasing the brand (Jacoby and Kyner, 1973; Bloemer and Kasper, 1995), with Rubinson (1996) (cited in Taylor, Celuch and Goodwin, 2004) stressing that including both behavioural and attitudinal components to the conceptualisation of brand loyalty will strengthen its predictive power. There is furthermore an agreement in the academic literature that brand loyalty has attitudinal and behavioural characteristics (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Taylor, Geluch and Goodwin, 2004; Russell-Bennett, McColl-Kennedy and Coote, 2007; Grohmann, 2009; Rosengren and Dahlen, 2015).

In this study brand loyalty is conceptualised as *"a deeply held commitment to rebuy a preferred brand or service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same brand or same brand set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour"* (Oliver, 1999, p. 34). Based on the evidence from the previous research, this research accepts that brand loyalty encompasses two components – attitudinal and behavioural. *Attitudinal loyalty* refers to "a degree of dispositional commitment in terms of some unique value associated with the brand" (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001, p. 82). *Behavioural (or purchase) loyalty* is defined as "repeated purchase of the brand" (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001, p. 82).

There are ample antecedents of loyalty uncovered in the literature, with a stream of research noting consumers' satisfactory experience with the brand as core driver of brand loyalty (Bloemer and Kasper, 1995; Russell-Bennett, McColl-Kennedy and Coote, 2007), as well as commitment (Rauyruen and Miller, 2007) and trust (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Taylor, Geluch and Goodwin, 2004) among the key brand loyalty triggers.

Further findings also add that brand loyalty stems from interactions with the brand but also with other customers (Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski, 2006). Furthermore, the concepts of WOM and loyalty are tightly interlinked, as WOM is often considered as a signal of loyalty, and is often described as an important component of loyalty intentions (Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski, 2006) or behavioural loyalty (Tsao and Hsieh, 2012), although Watson et al. (2015, p. 797) discuss that measuring loyalty with inclusion of WOM component contradicts both "empirical and theoretical arguments for their separation".

Whereas a large amount of research focuses on brand loyalty → WOM / eWOM sequence (Yeh and Choi, 2011; Roy, Lassar and Butaney, 2014; Casidy and Wymer, 2015, 2016; Watson et al., 2015), where brand loyalty precedes consumer interactions, some other studies suggest possibility of a reversed relationship, where online consumer interactions foster brand loyalty. For example, Laroche et al. (2012) have found that value creation practices, such as social networking, community engagement, brand use and impression management practices can convert into brand loyalty through the existence of

brand trust. Furthermore, previous research has also established a relationship between participation in virtual communities and brand loyalty (Shang, Chen and Liao, 2006; Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2010), and brand community engagement and brand loyalty (Brodie et al., 2013). Finally, several studies also linked WOM and eWOM to brand loyalty (Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski, 2006; Garnefeld, Helm and Eggert, 2011; Roy, Eshghi and Sarkar, 2012).

Findings from the qualitative study suggest that brand community members' loyalty to the brand is strengthened through their interactions on the OBC, where they make a conscious decision to choose the brand in question over the alternatives. Based on the evidence from the previous research, as well as findings from the qualitative phase, it is expected that through communicating with other members of the community and being exposed to the brand-related communication inside the community, brand community members' loyalty towards the brand will be strengthened. It is hereby hypothesised:

H12: OBCeWOM is positively related to brand loyalty.

6.5.3 OBCeWOM and oppositional brand loyalty

Along with loyalty towards a chosen brand, brand community members can experience oppositional brand loyalty as a means to support their favourite brand (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Cova, Pace and Park, 2007; Thompson and Sinha, 2008; Kuo and Feng, 2013). The concept of oppositional brand loyalty was introduced by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), who described it as an important aspect of brand community members' consciousness of a kind. Oppositional brand loyalty is often considered as a core characteristic of brand community affiliation (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; O'Sullivan, Richardson and Collins, 2011). It is hereby defined as the *active rejection of rival brands, including expression of negative views, or even adversarial behaviour towards rival brands* (adapted from Kuo and Feng, 2013).

An important aspect of oppositional brand loyalty is that it unites and consolidates the members of the community, and at the same time delineates them from non-members (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Muniz and Schau, 2005; Kuo

and Feng, 2013), where the 'us' versus 'them' attitude is present both in relation to the brands and to the brand fans. This is reflected in the distinction made by the brand community members between 'our brands' and 'other brands' (Muniz and Hamer, 2001; Felix, 2012), wherein this way brand community members wish to defend their own choices and challenge the choices of members of opposing brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

Traces of oppositional brand loyalty have been previously noticed among the members of automobile brand communities Saab and Volvo (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001), as well as among consumers of soft drinks, such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi (Muniz and Hamer, 2001). Similar to oppositional brand loyalty is the concept of 'schadenfreude' - a feeling of happiness about a rival's downfall (Hickman and Ward, 2007), though it does not reflect the behavioural aspect of actively opposing a rival brand.

Behaviour of brand community members who exhibit oppositional brand loyalty can vary. In practice, consumers who express oppositional brand loyalty may actively search for their preferred brand, recommend it to others, as well as even limit their product choice to this brand (Kuo and Feng, 2013; Madupu and Cooley, 2010). They may also express negative opinions about rival brands, and refrain from purchasing such brands or engage in 'playful rivalries' with consumers of rival brands (Kuo and Feng, 2013; Muniz and Hamer, 2001; Thompson and Sinha, 2008).

Madupu and Cooley (2010) further discuss that the notion of 'oppositional brand loyalty' is different to the general concept of 'brand loyalty' (which is often characterized as having 2 dimensions – behavioural and attitudinal) (Oliver, 1999; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Rosengren and Dahlen, 2015), whereby *oppositional brand loyalty* refers to the *active rejection of rival brands* (Davidson, McNeill and Ferguson, 2007; Madupu and Cooley, 2010), and loyalty refers to passive rejection of rival brands. Thus, in some instances oppositional brand loyalty can strengthen the loyalty to the preferred brand, as well as in extreme cases even lead to the development of anti-brand communities (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2006; Kuo and Feng, 2013).

To date, there is still very little research on oppositional brand loyalty, and in particular – what triggers it among brand fans. One of the few existing empirical studies on oppositional brand loyalty has identified that brand community commitment can lead to the development of oppositional brand loyalty (Kuo and Feng, 2013). Additionally, some research indicates that participation in brand communities may play a role in fostering oppositional brand loyalty, where Thompson and Sinha (2008) discuss that brand community members with higher levels of participation express stronger oppositional brand loyalty. Furthermore, sharing some similarities to the concept of brand loyalty, it is expected that oppositional brand loyalty is also rooted in brand-related consumer interactions.

Findings from the qualitative stage suggest that members of social media-based brand communities can develop negative feelings towards rival brands, and even leave negative comments about these brands. Hence, it is expected that brand community members will experience a sense of oppositional brand loyalty by engaging in the brand community eWOM. Therefore, it is hypothesised:

H13: OBCeWOM is positively related to oppositional brand loyalty.

6.5.4 Brand trust and brand loyalty

The concepts of brand trust and brand loyalty have received ample attention in academic research (e.g. Bloemer and Kasper, 1995; Delgado-Ballester, 2004; Harris and Goode, 2004; Chatterjee and Chaudhuri, 2005; Ha and Perks, 2005; Rosengren and Dahlen, 2015). There is also strong evidence indicating the existence of a relationship between the two constructs, with previous research showing that brand trust can potentially foster the development of loyalty in consumers (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen, 2003; Matzler et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2015).

It is assumed that consumers who have been able to evaluate the brand and have been assured of the brand's reliability and intentions are likely to give preference to the brand in question over other alternatives. Furthermore, as reiterated by Lee et al. (2015), it is unlikely that brand loyalty would exist without brand trust, as trust is at the core of strong and long-lasting customer-

company relationships, being a precursor of brand commitment (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2002).

Supporting the trust-loyalty relationship, one of the recent studies has identified that consumers who trust their preferred mobile phone brand are also more loyal to that brand (Lee et al., 2015). Importantly, brand trust has been identified as an antecedent of brand loyalty in several contexts, including virtual brand communities (Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2007) and social media-based brand communities (Laroche et al., 2012).

Finally, findings from the qualitative study have indicated that brand community members can strengthen both trust and loyalty towards the brand through engaging in eWOM. It is also expected that by getting more knowledgeable about the brand and by being constantly exposed to other brand community members' opinions about the brand, brand community members will become more trusting of the brand. This, in turn, will play a role in increasing their loyalty towards the brand, in terms of its attitudinal and behavioural aspects. Furthermore, based on the findings from the previous research, which provides strong evidence about existence of relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty, it is hypothesised:

> *H14: Brand community members' trust towards the brand is positively related to brand loyalty.*

6.6 Summary of hypotheses

The graphical representation of the conceptual model is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Conceptual model
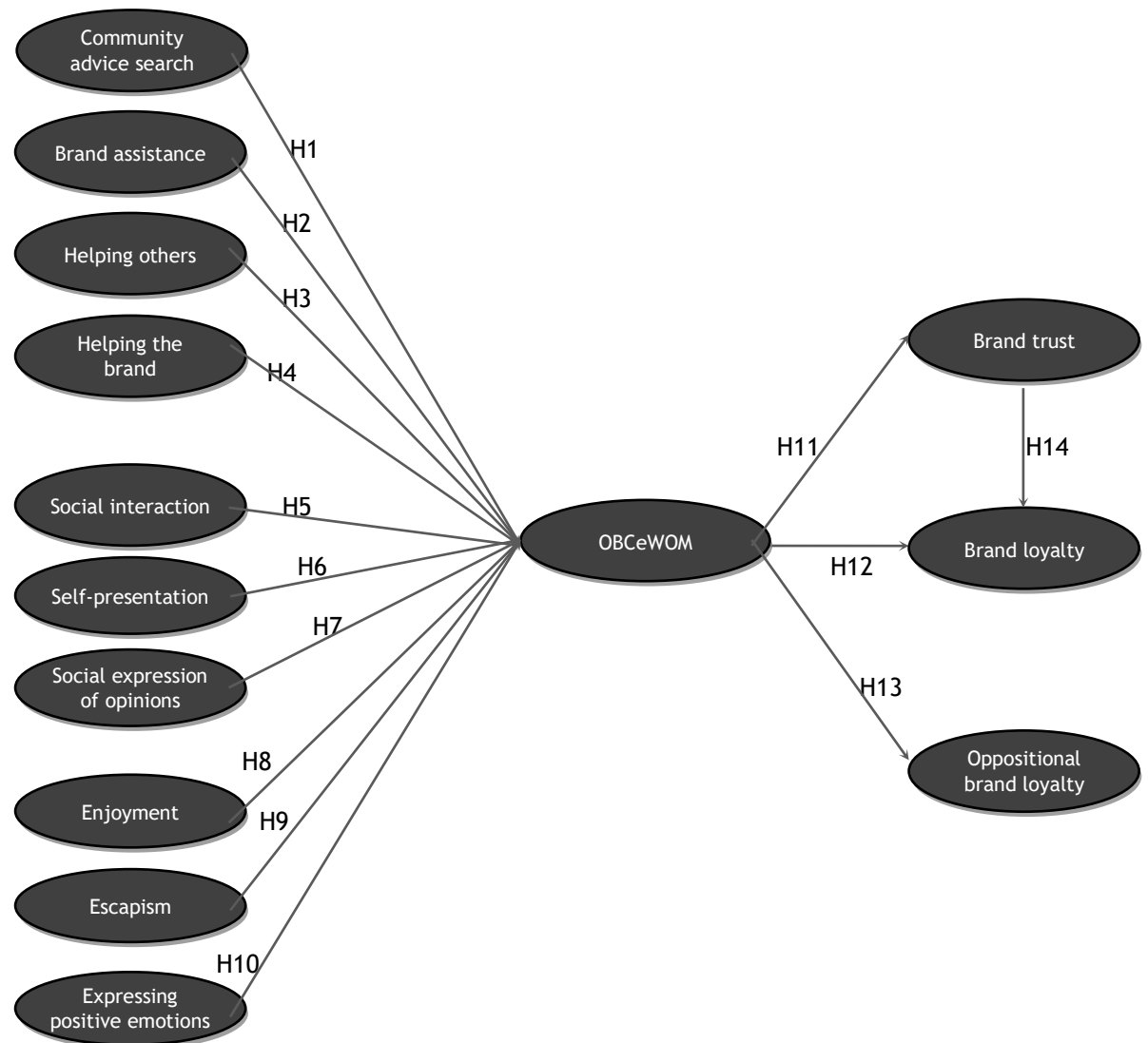
6.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the conceptual model developed based on the literature review and the findings of Study 1. Furthermore, the proposed relationships between the constructs have been formally expressed in the form of research hypotheses. Specifically, the chapter addressed the relationships between the ten motivational constructs and OBCeWOM, as well as the

relationships between OBCeWOM and its three outcome constructs. Finally, the relationship between the two outcome constructs – brand trust and brand loyalty – is also discussed and hypothesised. Overall 14 hypotheses have been proposed. The next chapter outlines the collection of quantitative data that will be used to test the model empirically.

Chapter 7: Quantitative data collection

7.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the procedures concerning the collection of quantitative data. It thus covers the aspects of research design pertaining to Study 2 and Study 3 of this thesis. The chapter opens with the development of the questionnaire and its structure. This is followed by the overview of the questionnaire pre-test and pilot test. Next, the final structure and content of the questionnaire are addressed. The specifics of questionnaire administration and sampling design of the quantitative data collection are also explained. Finally, the chapter closes with the discussion of the data analysis adopted in the Study 3.

7.2 Questionnaire development

The questionnaire development followed the procedures suggested by Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (1991). The questionnaire reflected the conceptual model, which in turn was developed based on the insights from the qualitative data analysis and review of the previous literature. The final model included 14 constructs. In the first step of questionnaire development, the concepts or "the basic building blocks of theory" (Blaikie, 2010, p. 115) were defined. Specifically, the insights from the literature and the qualitative study helped to identify the domain of the constructs and this involved searching for the relevant definitions for the research constructs in the published academic papers and books in the fields of marketing and communication research. Next, the most appropriate definitions were evaluated in terms of their fit to the research context and ability to explain the core research constructs. Additionally, during the conceptualisation stage, the dimensions of the constructs were identified, where appropriate.

Finally, following the conceptualisation stage, the concepts were operationalised or transformed into variables (Blaikie, 2010). This stage involved a search for the measurement scales for the study constructs within existing literature. Existing scales were found and evaluated. At this stage, several decisions were also made, including regarding the minimum number of items to be used, where it was decided that each of the variables would be measured by at least 2-3 items to achieve high levels of construct validity (Maydeu-Olivares and McArdle, 2003).

Next, the decisions regarding the appropriate measurement scales to be used for each of the variables were also made by addressing each of the variables separately. This process involved reviewing published papers in search for appropriate measurement scales for each variable. As a result, half of the measures were adapted based on the existing scales, and the rest were developed for this research. Consistent with the post-positivist paradigm, most of the variables were operationalised as 7-point Likert-type questions (Brand, 2008), excluding the screening questions and questions related to the demographics of respondents. The operationalisation of each construct is outlined in the following section.

7.3 Pre-test and pilot

7.3.1 Pre-test

The questionnaire was first pre-tested among a small group of participants to check their understanding of the questions, in particular if there were any issues with the structure of the survey, the wording of the questions, or question clarity. In accordance with the suggestions of Bryman (2004) the participants were chosen from the same target group as the main study participants. As a result, a few minor issues with the wording of some of the questions had been identified, and those questions were subsequently rephrased. Furthermore, a few participants expressed that the questionnaire could be restructured to minimize the fatigue, which was also taken into consideration. Following the revisions, the questionnaire was again discussed with some of the participants

via Skype, who confirmed its appropriateness, and thus the questionnaire was finalised.

7.3.2 Pilot study

The survey was pilot tested on a small number of participants to evaluate the psychometric properties of the developed scales. The pilot study was carried out during the period of 3 months. The researcher used two approaches to recruiting participants. First, official brand pages on Facebook were contacted via direct messages, where the researcher explained the purpose of the study and enquired about the possibility to post the survey on the brand pages for the brand community members to respond. For participating in the study, respondents were offered a chance to win a £25 Amazon voucher. The researcher contacted over 150 brand pages, but only three agreed to post the survey. This resulted in a very small number of survey answers.

Due to the challenges of getting access to the participants through the brand community managers, the researcher also approached the brand community members directly. In this instance, snowball approach was used, where the researcher contacted her personal network of brand community members and asked to forward the questionnaire to other potential participants who satisfied the study requirements.

It is suggested that pilot studies should include samples with a minimum of 10 – 30 respondents (Hill, 1998, as cited in Johanson and Brooks, 2009). Additionally, as the pilot study was concerned with the pre-evaluation of the developed measurement scales, a ratio approach to estimating the minimum sample size was also checked. Specifically, OBCeWOM scale consisted of 12 items, thus as suggested by Gorsuch (1983) a minimum number of respondents should be 5 per variable, which equals to 60 survey responses. The two approaches to data collection resulted in 182 returned surveys in total, thus satisfying the mentioned requirements to the pilot sample size. Following the screening of the returned questionnaires, only those that contained less than 2 % of missing data were retained. Where missing data was not critical to the analysis and for example represented demographic variables – these surveys were also kept. This

in total produced 68 surveys that were accepted for the initial data analysis concerned with checking the psychometric properties of developed scales.

7.4 Final questionnaire structure and content

The final questionnaire included 4 broad sections, starting with filtering questions and finishing with demographics-related questions. The statements included positive and negative wordings and were mixed to avoid common method variance. The opening page of the questionnaire introduced the potential participants to the research, stating its purpose and duration of the study. The researcher's details were included, and the respondents were informed that they could contact the researcher for clarification or if they had any questions about the study.

The questionnaire structure followed a funnel approach (Oppenheim, 1992). The survey started with screening questions aimed at limiting survey participation to the relevant population. First of all, in order to qualify to take part in the survey respondents had to be 18 years old or older, consistent with the requirements of the Glasgow University ethics. Secondly, the participants had to be members of one or more official brand communities on Facebook.

If the respondents passed this qualification page, they were asked to indicate whether they were members of any official brand communities on Facebook. Those who answered negatively to the question were immediately screened out from the study. Participants who answered positively to this question were then asked to name the brand community that they perceived they participated the most. Table 7 below lists the qualifying questions.

Table 7. Screening questions

1. *Are you 18 years old or above? 2. *Are you a member of any official brand page on Facebook? 3. *Please name an official brand page on which you are most active / where you participate the most. *Denotes questions requiring an answer*

Next, the survey proceeded with general questions about participants' involvement with Facebook brand communities. These served as warm-up questions, aimed at engaging the participants in the survey. The third part of the questionnaire included questions about the outcomes of OBCeWOM, OBCeWOM activity, and motivations for OBCeWOM – making up the bigger and more statement-rich part of the survey. Finally, the last part of the questionnaire was made up of general questions about participants' demographics. The full questionnaire is presented in Appendix G.

7.5 Questionnaire administration

The questionnaire was administered via an online crowdsourcing market (OCM) Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). An OCM represents an internet-based platform, where employers outsource their tasks to potential workers in return for some agreed compensation (Steelman, Hammer and Limayem, 2014; Antoun et al., 2015). MTurk is a type of OCM which allows employers to find potential workers for their tasks (called 'HITs') (Goodman, Cryder and Cheema, 2013).

Being a relatively new source of recruiting participants, MTurk has already received popularity among academics in the fields of social sciences – including within psychology, marketing and brand management publications (e.g. Yang, Vosgerau and Loewenstein, 2013; Labrecque, 2014; Paharia, Avery and Keinan, 2014; Swimberghe, Astakhova and Wooldridge, 2014; Gao and Mattila, 2015; Wolter and Cronin, 2015). Following the successful results of these studies, social media, brand community and eWOM scholars have accepted the advantages of MTurk as a participant recruitment method (Minton et al., 2012; Baldus, Voorhees and Calantone, 2015; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015).

Mturk represents an alternative to student samples and consumer panels. Indeed, several studies have shown that MTurk samples show good psychometric properties – including reliability, convergent and divergent validity (Buhrmeister, Kwang and Gosling, 2011; Goodman, Cryder and Cheema, 2013; Steelman, Hammer and Limayem, 2014). Scholars discuss the practicality and flexibility of collecting the data using MTurk, where it can sometimes take less than 24 hours to collect a few hundred responses (Buhrmeister, Kwang and Gosling, 2011). This

is because there are thousands of potential MTurk workers online across different time zones, and many are able to take part in one study simultaneously.

MTurk workers were compensated $1.50 for completed survey. The average time taken to complete the survey was 8 minutes, making it an effective hourly rate of $11.25. The researcher took measures to ensure that the survey participants represented the required target group – brand community members. Thus the respondents were advised about the purpose of the study and the conditions of participation were outlined on the MTurk website (e.g. being a member of 1 or more brand communities on Facebook; having participated on the page within the last 6 months). MTurk also allows setting 'qualifications' – thus making the task (or HIT) visible to a specific group of workers who satisfy the required qualification. In this study the following qualifications were set: (1) the workers had to be based in the US, (2) they had to have a record of approved HITs on MTurk – minimum 5000 HITs; (3), and they had to have an approval rate of no less than 97 %. The last 2 requirements have been suggested by MTurk experts as a way to ensure the potential workers had a good reputation on MTurk (Turkrequesters, 2012).

Participants who opened the survey link (hosted on the Survey Monkey) were introduced to the research in more detail. They were also asked to indicate their consent to participating in the study in accordance with the requirements of the University of Glasgow Ethics and advised that they had to be 18 years old or older to take part. This requirement was also met by MTurk, as the platform only allows registration to workers who are 18 years and older.

Once the data was collected, the researcher checked the answers to ensure that existing brand communities were mentioned. MTurk was also chosen due to the possibility of checking the data before accepting the work. MTurk allows the researcher to check the submitted work to ensure the requirements are met and that the quality is satisfactory. Only after these checks are performed, and the work is approved, the compensation is released to the workers. The researcher has an option of not approving the submitted work and thus releasing the task to another worker. This results in downgrading the initial worker's reputation on Amazon MTurk, which in its turn limits this worker's future assignment choices.

In this way, Amazon MTurk maintains the quality and integrity of its service (Mason and Suri, 2012).

7.6 Quantitative study sampling

The target population of the main study included members of official brand pages on Facebook. Specifically, the main study sample was made up of female and male participants aged 18 years old and above, who belonged to one or more brand community within (but not limited to) the following product categories: automotive, consumer electronics, fashion, food and beverage, hospitality and tourism, media and entertainment, beauty and personal care, social, sports, and telecommunications.

There are a few challenges involved in outlining the target population. First, it is not possible to know the exact number of brand community members on Facebook. According to several sources, Facebook had about 1.55 billion active Facebook users in 2015 (Loomer, 2015; Statista, 2015). Second, even though there are a few sources that provide information about the approximate number and sizes of existing official brand pages, this is not an exhaustive list, where numerous new brand communities are created by businesses. Finally, the pilot study has identified a few challenges in data collection with regards to getting access to the brand pages and recruitment of participants. Due to these reasons, the researcher decided to use *non-probability convenience sampling* technique to recruit participants.

Non-probability sampling entails non-random selection of study participants, as opposed to probability sampling (Babbie, 2016). Non-probability samples are often utilized in situations where it is difficult to acquire suitable population data and thus when lacking the reliable sampling frame (Malhotra, Agarwal and Peterson, 1996). Even though non-probability convenience sampling is often characterized by accessibility, cost-saving and easiness of data collection, the main limitation of this technique is that it is difficult to judge the representativeness of these samples (Bryman, 2004; Babbie, 2016).

There are different types of convenience samples (e.g. online panels, student samples, crowdsourcing panels) accepted as appropriate in marketing research for the specific purposes of the relevant studies (Zikmund and Babin, 2013; Landers and Behrend, 2015; Roulin, 2015). Thus, it is advised that researchers should consider advantages and drawbacks associated with the choice of a particular recruitment platform when choosing convenience sampling (Landers and Behrend, 2015). For instance, it has been suggested that to study online behaviour, recruiting participants also online may be the most appropriate method (Reis and Gosling, 2010). Landers and Behrend (2015, p. 160) further suggest that especially in this instance launching a study on MTurk "…is not only acceptable – it is also ideal".

Furthermore, MTurk represents such advantages as having a diverse group of potential respondents, thus offering potential generalizability of the results to a wider population (Buhrmeister, Kwang and Gosling, 2011; Goodman, Cryder and Cheema, 2013). The majority of MTurk workers report having received higher education, including undergraduate and postgraduate degrees (Ipeirotis, 2010).

According to the MTurk website, the platform has over 500 000 workers from 190 countries. However, as the focus of the study was not to explore the cultural differences of brand community members, it was decided to limit participation to workers from the US. This was also driven by the language requirements, where the questionnaire was developed in English, as well as due to a potentially larger pool of participants from the US than from any other country. According to Ipeirotis (2010), participants from the US represent over 75 % of the total workforce.

There are no specific rules when deciding on a sample size in the non-probability samples; rather it often depends on different ad-hoc approaches, including rules of thumb suggested by other scholars, as well as budgetary constraints (McCormack and Hill, 1997). The decision about the sample size in this study is based on the chosen data analysis methodology – Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Usually, the guidelines concerning the appropriate sample size either suggest minimum and adequate values or advise estimating the sample size using ratios. For example, previous studies have suggested using sample sizes of no less than 100 respondents when conducting Factor Analysis (Gorsuch, 1983;

Kline, 2016). Whereas Gorsuch (1983) suggests using ratios approach to calculating the appropriate sample size in each study, with an often accepted ratio of 5 cases per item. However, following this approach when developing a new scale, it is suggested that the ratio should be at least 15 respondents per item in the scale in question (Hulin et al., 2001). The sample size of the main study was 652, with the total number of items in the questionnaire N = 80, which is above the recommended ratio (652 / 80 = 8.15), making the sample size appropriate.

The overview of participants' demographics is presented in Table 8. The presented data concerns such variables as age, gender, employment, as well as variables related to the brand community membership.

Table 8. Participants' demographics

Gender	
Female	48 %
Male	54 %
Age	
18-24	11 %
25-34	46 %
35-44	28 %
45-54	11 %
Over 55	4 %
Education	
High school	25 %
Technical / vocational training	11 %
Professional qualification / diploma	7 %
Undergraduate	44 %
Postgraduate	11 %
Other	2 %
Employment	
Student	5 %
Self-employed	15 %
Working full-time	62 %
Working part-time	7 %
Out of work / retired	9 %
Other	2 %
Brand category	
Food & beverage	22 %
Media & entertainment	16 %
Fashion	16 %
Sports	13 %
Consumer electronics	11 %
Beauty & personal care	9 %

Other	4 %
Automotive	3 %
Social	3 %
Hospitality & tourism	2 %
Telecommunications	1 %
Membership duration	
Less than 6 months	8 %
6 months - 1 year	32 %
2 - 5 years	52 %
More than 5 years	8 %
Frequency of brand community participation	
Multiple times a day	15 %
Once a day	20 %
A few times a week	44 %
A few times a month	18 %
Less than once a month	3 %

As illustrated in Table 8, participants of the Study 2 were almost equally distributed in terms of gender, with 52 % being male and 48 % of respondents – female. In terms of age, the majority of participants were millennials aged 25 to 34 (46 %), followed by the second largest group of participants aged 35 to 44 (28 %). The majority of participants possessed higher education, with almost a half of the participants educated to undergraduate level (44 %), and 11 % holding postgraduate qualifications. Finally, the majority of respondents were in full-time employment (62 %).

Brand communities within the 'food & beverage' (22 %), 'media & and entertainment' (16 %), and 'fashion' (16 %) categories were the most popular among the respondents, with the majority of participants belonging to the brand communities for over 2 years (52 %). Finally, most of the respondents have indicated that they encounter the content from the brand community on average a few times a week (44 %), with 20 % indicating that they visit the community or see the content from the page on their newsfeeds once a day.

7.7 Approach to data analysis

The main data analysis was split into several key stages, including data cleaning, factor analysis, assessment of the measurement model and hypothesis testing using SEM. The data was analysed using SPSS and AMOS statistical packages.

First, data screening was performed to identify any potential issues with the data. This included checking the data for any **missing values, univariate and multivariate outliers**, and assessment of **normality assumptions** – specifically the shape of distribution by examining the skewness and kurtosis measures.

Second, the data was assessed with regards to its applicability for factor analysis. The researcher used several approaches to ensure the appropriateness of the data for the factor analysis, including conducting **Bartlett's test of sphericity, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)**, and checking the **correlation coefficients**. Following these procedures, **EFA** was performed to check the reliability and unidimensionality of the newly developed scales. Particularly, Principal Components Analysis with Varimax method has been chosen, as it is often suggested as the most commonly utilized orthogonal rotation technique (Pallant, 2005).

Finally, SEM was utilised first to assess the measurement model, and further to test the structural model and the proposed hypotheses. SEM represents "a comprehensive statistical approach to testing hypotheses about relations among observed and latent variables" (Hoyle, 1995, p.1). SEM and its application in this research are discussed in detail further in the chapter.

7.7.1 Data screening and descriptive statistics

Data screening is an important step that needs to be taken prior to any data analysis, as it allows resolving potential issues with the data. It is necessary to ensure that there are no issues that will affect the following statistical analysis. Data screening was performed on the main study sample (N = 652). This section discusses the following issues with regards to the data screening: checking the

data SPSS file for any possible errors, missing data, outliers, and normality assessment.

First, the researcher checked the SPSS data file for any possible errors associated with *data input*. This was followed by transforming any negatively worded items to avoid the negative correlation between the positively and negatively worded items and any subsequent problems with reliability (Nunnally, 1978; Kline, 2009).

Due to the specifics of the sampling design the main sample had no *missing data*. Respondents from Amazon Mechanical Turk were recruited to participate in the study, and they were advised that only fully completed questionnaires would constitute finished assignments. Additionally, Survey Monkey was programmed in a way that respondents could not skip any of the questions. Thus, this recruitment method produced 652 questionnaires with no missing data.

The next step was concerned with screening the data for potential outliers. *Outliers* represent cases of extreme values, where variable scores are very different from others. Prior to conducting data analysis, the data set was checked for the presence of *univariate* (extreme scores on one variable) and *multivariate* outliers (extreme scores on two or more variables) (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). Outliers should be treated with caution, as they can result in errors during the analysis. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) mention four key causes of outliers in a data set:

1) Errors during the data entry stage

2) Errors in coding the missing values

3) Outlier cases represent observations outside of the researcher's target population

4) A larger number of extreme values in the distribution of a specific variable than in a normal distribution.

Depending on the data analysis planned, the researcher needs to take a certain approach to detecting outliers (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). In this case, the

data analysis is performed with ungrouped data, with techniques including factor analysis and SEM. Thus outliers are assessed looking at the *standardized z-scores*. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) recommend treating the values > 3.29 as outliers, though also noting that a few extreme values may be present in large datasets. The majority of scale items did not show the presence of outliers, with only a few items having modified z-scores > 3.29 (Appendix H), and thus signalling the presence of univariate outliers. These items were screened for the specific observations that represented outliers. Furthermore, additional analysis was performed to identify univariate outliers by studying the **box plots** for each variable. This test also indicated the presence of a few univariate outliers.

However, after conducting the two separate tests to detect univariate outliers, it was decided not to perform the transformations, and to keep the data as is for the following reasons: 1) the percentage of outliers on each of the variables that had extreme values was minimal (no more than 2 % of all observations); 2) most of the observations with extreme values were similar across the variables; 3) due to the nature of data collection – where the respondents were free to choose any brand (page) within a variety of product and service categories, which may have led to a number of extreme values across such variables as brand loyalty, brand trust, motivation to assist the brand, and enjoyment felt on the brand page. Furthermore, Hair et al. (2008) argue that the researchers should keep the outlier cases unless they can prove that the outliers fall outside of the target population. The screening questions were aimed to ensure that only respondents who satisfied the research criteria would take part in the study. Thus no transformations are performed.

The presence of multivariate outliers was assessed using the *Mahalanobis distance* test. The suggested value of probability estimate that would indicate an outlier is p < 0.001 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). The test has shown that only 4 % of all the observations had a probability value of Mahalanobis distance < 0.001. Thus, it was also decided to keep the cases without performing any transformations.

Following the tests to check the presence univariate and multivariate outliers, the next step is to test the *normality* assumptions, in other words – that the data is normally distributed. *Normality* refers to 'a symmetrical, bell-shaped

curve, which has the greatest frequency of scores in the middle, with smaller frequencies towards the extremes' (Pallant, 2005, p.53). The two measures of interest with regards to normality are skewness and kurtosis (Pallant, 2005; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). *Skewness* reflects "the symmetry of the distribution", while *kurtosis* refers to the "peakedness of distribution" (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013, p. 113). The effect of skewness and kurtosis though is diminished with large samples (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013), as in this case, where the sample size is N = 652. The generally accepted levels of skewness coefficient are -1 to +1, which suggests no issues with normality due to skewness. Furthermore, normality was also assessed analysing the actual shape of the distribution as observed on the *histograms*.

The results of *normality assessment* as estimated by the values of skewness and kurtosis; as well as further measures of **mean** and **standard deviation** are presented in Appendix H. Furthermore, normality assumptions were assessed by evaluating the **histograms**.

It is visible from the table in Appendix H that the levels of *kurtosis* do not > 7 in any of the variables, while *skewness* has a good indicator across all variables apart from 7 indicators making up the brand trust variable, 3 brand loyalty indicators and 1 indicator of oppositional brand loyalty. These indicators have the skewness values slightly deviating from the [-1 to +1] range. However, the **histograms** show that all the variables are more or less normally distributed. Thereby, based on the findings of normality tests with regards to kurtosis and skewness values, which do not indicate strong violations of normality, it is decided not to take any data treatment. Hair et al. (2008) discuss that issues with normality may be ignored if the sample size exceeds 200, which is the case in this research, where the main sample size is N = 652. This is also driven by the fact that the data doesn't have to be normally distributed to allow for certain analysis. In this case SEM does not require data normality. Therefore the researcher proceeded to the analysis without transformations.

Following the normality assessment, the main sample (N = 652) was randomly split into 2 parts to be used correspondingly for:

(1) Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) of the OBCeWOM construct, assessment of reliability of all study constructs, and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the OBCeWOM construct;

(2) CFA to assess the measurement model, and hypothesis testing using SEM which included all main (scale) constructs. As a result, sub-sample (1) included N = 250 responses, and sub-sample (2): N = 402. The results of the EFA and internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) tests are discussed in the following chapter (Chapter 8).

7.7.2 Structural equation modeling

The main data analysis technique used in this research was Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM represents a collection of statistical methods, which "…uses various types of models to depict relationships among observed variables, with the same basic goal of providing a quantitative test of a theoretical model hypothesized by the researcher" (Schumacker and Lomax, p. 2010). SEM is used to estimate the causal relationship between variables (Hoyle, 2012). It is often discussed as being a confirmatory approach, as it requires the researchers to formulate the hypothesis and draw the relationships between the variables, thereby formulating the model (Kline, 2016). SEM allows the researcher to conduct reliability and validity tests. SEM has been widely applied and supported as a strong statistical tool in the marketing and consumer research (Baumgartner and Homburg, 1996; Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 2000).

SEM is a two-step technique, which includes testing a measurement model and a structural model (Khine, 2013). Prior to testing the hypothesized model, the researcher needs to estimate the measurement model. A *measurement* model is used to specify "…the relationship between observed variables and latent variables" (Khine, 2013, p. 6). The measurement model needs to be evaluated before testing the structural model, and this is done following several steps, which are discussed below. A measurement model can further show if the observed variables (or indicators of the construct) are strongly interrelated, or if there are indicators that are not strongly related to the rest, which may lead to the deletion of such indicators before testing the structural model (Khine, 2013).

First, the researcher needs to evaluate the model fit, assessing a number of *model fit* indices. Model fit shows the researcher if the overall measurement model is acceptable and valid, or how well "the data fit the model" (Khine, 2013, p. 14). Dagnino and Cinici (2016) suggest evaluating and reporting a number of fit indices, as some of them may be affected by the sample size, as well as the complexity of the model. For this purpose, several indices are chosen to evaluate the goodness of fit of the model, including Chi-Square statistic (CMIN), CMIN/DF, RMSEA and CFI recommended by Kline (2005), and TLI further suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999). Chi-square (CMIN) compares the observed model to the predicted model, with lower values signalling good fit (Gravetter and Wallnau, 2011). Relative Chi-square (CMIN/DF) adjusts the Chi-square to the degrees of freedom to take into account model complexity, with values <2 advocated as a good fit, and values from 2 – 5 suggesting acceptable model fit (Kline, 1998). RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) is one of the frequently reported and recommended model fit indices, which evaluates the "extent to which a model fits reasonably well in the population" (Brown, 2015, p. 71). Here acceptable values should not exceed 0.08, whereas values < 0.05 are suggesting an even better fit (Westland, 2015). CFI (or comparative fit index) compares the proposed model to the null model (Bentler, 1992; Iacobucci, 2010), and is another frequently reported index, that is relatively not affected by sample size. Researchers discuss that values > 0.9 suggest acceptable model fit (Westland, 2015). Finally, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) is reported with recommended values > 0.9 indicative of good model fit (Hair et al., 1992; Hu and Bentler, 1999). The overview of the model fit indices assessed in this study as well as their suggested values are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Model fit indices used in this research

Model fit index	Recommended values	Source
CMIN (Chi-square**)**	the < the better	Westland (2015)
CMIN/DF	< 2 – ideal, 2 – 5 – acceptable	Kline (1998), Westland (2015)
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	>0.9	Hair et al. (1992)
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	> 0.9 – acceptable, > 0.95 - good	Hu and Bentler (1999), Schumacker and Lomax (2010), Westland (2015)
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	< 0.08, ideally < 0.05	Hooper, Coughlan and Mullen (2008)

Source: developed for this research

Finally, in addition to evaluating the estimates (or loadings) for all the indicators and the model fit indices, the researcher also needs to evaluate the reliability and validity of the measurement model. This is done by assessing the composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) for all the study constructs (Hair et al., 1992). This process is discussed in the next section. Following the assessment of validity and reliability of the measurement model and all of the study constructs the researcher can test the *structural model*. Structural model reports "the causal connections among the latent variables" (Blunch, 2008, p. 5), and allows the researcher to test the hypothesised relationships.

7.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the key aspects of research design related to the Study 2 and Study 3 of the thesis. Specifically, the use of analytical survey was justified where it was employed to answer the RQ1 – 3 related to the motivations, dimensions and outcomes of OBCeWOM.

The chapter addressed the process of questionnaire development, its structure, and administration. The questionnaire development followed the steps suggested by Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (1991), including conceptualisation and operationalisation of the study constructs. The questionnaire followed a funnel approach and was split into four parts, addressing different themes and types of questions. It was pre-tested, and pilot tested to check participants' understanding of the questions and to conduct the preliminary assessment of the psychometric characteristics of the measures. The final questionnaire was administered via Survey Monkey software and targeted members of official OBCs on Facebook. Participants were recruited via an online crowdsourcing panel Amazon MTurk, which resulted in 652 complete responses.

Finally, the chapter also discussed the data analysis methodology employed in the Study 2 and 3, where the data analysis consisted of several procedures, including data screening and normally assessment, EFA, CFA, and SEM.

Chapter 8: Study 2 – measurement

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the procedures employed in developing the survey instrument. It addresses the issues related to the measurement of the study constructs and is divided into three parts. The first part of the chapter addresses the process of developing the OBCeWOM scale. This section starts by discussing the rationale and steps employed in developing the OBCeWOM scale. Findings from Study 1 relevant to the OBCeWOM conceptualisation, dimensionality, and operationalisation are explained. Next, the results of EFA and CFA are presented, followed by the assessment of face and content validity of the developed measures.

The second part of the chapter discusses the operationalisation of the adapted motivational variables. This section reports the detailed procedures involved in the adaptation and evaluation of the measures and explains the reasons for creating each of the measures. Finally, the last part of the chapter provides an overview of measures for the remaining variables, which were adopted from the existing literature. The chapter closes with the assessment of the full measurement model using CFA, and evaluation of validity and reliability of the measures.

8.2 EWOM scale development process

8.2.1 Rationale for developing the OBCeWOM scale

As recommended by Churchill (1979), it is important to justify the need for a new measurement scale for an existing concept. The author further states that the development of a new scale is preceded by a thorough literature review in search for adequate measures. In the absence of appropriate measurement

scales (for instance, if the previously proposed measures are not relevant to the specific context), the need for and the appropriateness of the newly proposed measures has to be explained and justified (Churchill, 1979).

After the review of the eWOM literature in search for conceptualisation and measurement of eWOM, no appropriate scale was found. One of the possible reasons for this could be the lack of research into the eWOM activity within the context of online brand communities, and especially – brand communities embedded in social networks (in this case Facebook). Furthermore, the chosen research context is constantly developing, where new features and applications emerge. This requires measures that would be able to capture the specifics of this environment closely. Thereby, in order to accommodate for the specifics of the chosen online setting, and based on the insights gathered from the Study 1 that highlighted additional aspects of eWOM in the context of social media-based brand communities not captured in previous research, it has been decided to develop a new measurement scale for OBCeWOM.

8.2.2 EWOM scale development process

The development process followed guidelines for marketing scale development provided by Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (1991). The overview of the general process and steps undertaken during the development and validation of the eWOM measurement scale is provided in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Steps employed in developing and validating the OBCeWOM scale

Step 1
Literature review to identify the dimensions of eWOM

⬇

Step 2
Interviews to explore the nature and dimensions of eWOM within the Facebook-based brand communities

⬇

Step 3
Interview analysis and second review of the literature to finalise the dimensions and draw the initial pool of items

⬇

Step 4
Assessment of face and content validity of the proposed scale

⬇

Step 5
Questionnaire development and pre-test to check participant understanding of the questions

⬇

Step 6
Pilot data collection and reliability assessment

⬇

Step 7
Assessment of discriminant and convergent validity

(Source: Author based on Veloutsou, 2007)

More specific steps employed in the scale development are explained in the next paragraphs.

8.2.3 Identifying the domain of construct

The OBCeWOM scale development started with identifying the domain of the construct. This is following the steps suggested by Churchill (1979, p. 67), who state that it is necessary to state what the concept is, and what it is not – in other words, what "is included in the definition and what is excluded". Based on the insights from the Study 1, eWOM definition provided by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) was adapted to suit the context of Facebook-based brand communities. The concept is EWOM is hereby defined as:

> *Communication initiated by the brand community members about a brand, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet. This includes posting and reading the brand-related communication within the brand community, and forwarding the communication outside the community.*

8.2.4 Identifying the dimensions of OBCeWOM

Following the guidelines set out by Churchill (1979), a thorough literature review has been undertaken to identify the dimensions and appropriate measurement scale for eWOM communication. The literature review has highlighted several issues important for the conceptualisation and operationalisation of eWOM.

Review of the literature has illustrated that there is a lack of consensus regarding the dimensionality of WOM and eWOM, with a stream of research approaching them as unidimensional constructs (e.g. Bloemer, de Ruyter and Wetzels, 1999; Athanassopoulos, Gounaris and Stathakopoulos, 2001; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2004; Babin et al., 2005; Turel, Serenko and Bontis, 2010; Cheung and Lee, 2012; Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Karjaluoto, Munnukka and Tikkanen, 2014; Yen and Tang, 2015), with some

researchers using a combination of items that measure both WOM and eWOM as a single construct (Yeh and Choi, 2011).

Conversely, fewer studies look at WOM and eWOM as multi-dimensional constructs (e.g. Harrison-Walker, 2001; Ridings, Gefen and Arinze, 2002; Sun et al., 2006; Goyette et al., 2010; Chu and Kim, 2011; Yeh and Choi, 2011; Lopez and Sicilia, 2014). Existing studies offer variability in WOM and eWOM dimensions. For example, a study by Goyette et al. (2010) identifies such dimensions of WOM as intensity, negative valence, positive valence, and content. Other authors discuss that eWOM includes such components as opinion seeking (Sun et al., 2006; Chu and Kim, 2011; Lopez and Sicilia, 2014), opinion giving (Chu and Kim, 2011; Lopez and Sicilia, 2014), and opinion passing (Chu and Kim, 2011) or forwarding (Sun et al., 2006). Similarly, one of the few studies looking into eWOM in the context of online brand communities suggests that eWOM is comprised of such dimensions as an intention to give information, intention to obtain information, and intention to pass information (Yeh and Choi, 2011).

8.2.5 Qualitative insights

Results of the qualitative study support previous research with regards to the dimensions of OBCeWOM, but also provide additional understanding of the specifics of OBCeWOM within social media-based brand communities. Specifically, findings from Study 1 indicate the existence of 3 dimensions of OBCeWOM in the context of social media-based brand communities, including *reading* information on the brand community, *posting* information on the brand community, and *sharing* information outside of the community. They are similar to the previously described dimensions of eWOM in the context of SNS (Chu and Kim, 2011) and brand community (Yeh and Choi, 2011) – such as opinion seeking (or obtaining information), opinion giving (giving information), and opinion passing (passing information). Opinion-passing dimension has however been overlooked in the literature, and is likely to occur specifically in the context of social networks (Chu and Kim, 2011, p. 51), enabling consumers to "spread the word on a global scale", and making it an "enhanced dimension of eWOM in

SNS". The results of the Study 2 identifying the 3 dimensions are discussed in the following sections.

8.2.5.1 Theme 1: OBCeWOM Reading

Reading eWOM in the brand community was the most prominent dimension, and was mentioned by all of the interviewees. It represents a passive OBCeWOM component, where brand community members read posts and comments initiated by other members on the brand community page. Interviewees discuss consuming content on the brand communities, including reading other members' comments about the brand to get ideas about how to use the brand, or how to combine different clothing styles (for example in the case of a fashion brand community). Here interviewees mentioned such keywords as 'reading', 'looking through', and 'scrolling down' when referring to the communication originating from the other brand community members.

The interviews started with participants being asked to explain their relationship with a chosen brand community and the content originating from it. Generally, interviewees discussed being exposed to the content of the page almost daily – when they opened Facebook and scrolled down their newsfeeds. Most of the participants reported that they didn't initially feel the need to go the page as they would get most recent information assorted on the newsfeed, but if something caught their eye, they would follow the link to the page to read further:

> *'If I've seen something in my newsfeed, and I haven't had time to look at it – I go back, and I check their actual page, and I see what they posted, and maybe I look at the couple of other things that they've been posting recently'* [F17].

> *'Yeah, maybe I could read the post to check if someone already bought something   from this collection'* [F16].

Interestingly, here informants often did not separate the origin of the content that they encountered on the page – whether it was fan-created or company-

generated. Then the researcher would ask for clarification to enable the clear separation of eWOM communication and brand-created messages.

> *'Yes, I do actually [read what others post on the page]....I just want to see if they share my opinion, or if they think differently'* [F10].

> *'I am even curious when I see that for example, 5 people shared this post, I'm even curious to click and see who are those people who shared the picture or this new   post in general'* [F7].

Furthermore, as previously discussed, interviewees often described what they observed on the brand communities, and this included activities that other brand community members engaged in. Thus, in the examples above another theme has emerged – related to the active side of OBCeWOM communication – addressed in this study as OBCeWOM posting.

8.2.5.2 Theme 2: OBCeWOM Posting

In addition to passively consuming content initiated by other brand community members, the members also generate their own content. There are different ways in which brand community members express themselves within the brand communities, including for example replying to other brand community members' comments or posts. This is discussed by one of the interviewees (F6):

> *'...one person asked if the size is like normal size, or it's a little bit smaller, and then I commented 'ok yeah, the shoes are smaller''* (F6).

The comments can also turn into discussions about the brand between the members, with one of the informants reporting (F14):

> *'...it was a hockey or sports club – they posted something about a team that had won or the team that had done really well, and I was commenting, or having a discussion with someone about – like how they played...'* [F14].

 Besides exchanging comments and getting involved in discussions with others within the OBC, members can also gather information about the brand outside of

the community and then share it with other brand community members. This includes sharing the news that they have heard about the brand outside of the brand community, discussing rumours, or for example posting links from other sources onto the brand communities. This is explained by the interviewees (F8; M4):

> '... Especially before the line-up was announced – you always get into any festival I guess where there are rumours going about... so a lot of people would write comments with what they've heard or what they suspect, or maybe inside information through people somebody knows – one of the acts...' (F8).

> '... There's always rumours about new players coming into the club; a classic is someone's seen someone's car in the football club, and it's a private number platter, and they start circulating rumours that it's a big superstar or something... So yeah maybe they've linked an article from the BBC' (M4).

The information that these members of the brand communities were bringing in the community sometimes originated from Facebook itself, while on other occasions it was content encountered on the Internet but outside Facebook and in places such as various blogs, other social networks or the news, even by members of the brand community that do not actively engage in the OBCeWOM exchanges inside the community.

Furthermore, interviewees discuss commenting under the brand posts and directing their enquiries to the brand on the brand community page. This is again observed by one of the informants (F6):

> '... some of them leave the comments – like with some nice words, and also like that 'I would like to have this thing' or 'I would   totally   buy it'' [F6].

Hence, it is documented that OBCeWOM could be addressed not just to the other brand community members, but also to the brand itself. Interestingly, the latter activity can be interpreted initially as communication solely with a brand, however, after further analysis, this action has emerged as a new aspect of

OBCeWOM. Specifically, in the context of Facebook-based brand communities, it bears characteristics of eWOM and falls under the adopted eWOM conceptualisation. Due to the embeddedness and openness of brand communities positioned within the social network, a communication directed at the brand becomes eWOM, as it is visible to the other members of the brand community, as well as in many cases is also available to the posters' broader social network.

8.2.5.3 Theme 3: OBCeWOM Sharing

Members of brand communities on Facebook can engage in eWOM communication within the community (on the page), as well as outside the community (within their broader social network). As discussed in the previous dimension, this action could be both unintentional (which includes leaving comments on the brand community addressed either towards the brand or other members, thus importantly making them appear elsewhere on the social network due to the openness of Facebook-based brand communities); and intentional, which is of interest to the final dimension of OBCeWOM identified in this study – OBCeWOM sharing. Intentional sharing of OBCeWOM includes purposefully forwarding, or passing on information from the brand community, for example onto one's personal timeline, or addressed to specific friends on the SNS.

This theme was further characterized by two subthemes, including publicly sharing information from the brand community to members' broader social network, and privately passing on content from the brand community to the members' Facebook friends. First, addressing the public aspect of passing on OBCeWOM, brand community members can 'share' the content originating from the brand community onto their personal Facebook profiles. This becomes visible to a large number of contacts in the individual's social network and can be potentially picked up and spread further, becoming viral. This is discussed by one of the interviewees (F1):

> *'If we are talking about brands – it's a flowers' store, which I really like, and it's a local store, and that person is doing an amazing job. And I share her work on my timeline* [F1].

Furthermore, participants also report addressing their communication towards specific individuals, thereby sharing brand-related information onto their friends' timelines. This is evidenced by several informants (M3; F1; F8):

> *'When I see something that it's gonna be very interesting for a friend of mine – it   has to be a very close friend – then I share it, like the article or a link or this post on their wall'* [M3].

> *'Yeah, I will share to my friends who also like Chanel, and you know – we will talk about that'* [F1].

> *'Sometimes I quote them in a post on my newsfeed, sometimes I'll send it directly to a specific friend, so it goes onto their wall, or sometimes in a private message – depending on what I write to go with it'* (F8).

Secondly, addressing the private aspect of OBCeWOM, interviewees reported sharing interesting posts from the brand community to their friends through private messages. Often the friends do not belong to the brand community, and thus may not be aware of the information related to the brand. Interviewees discuss that appreciating and emphasizing with their friends' potential privacy preferences, they try to adapt the way they share relevant brand-related information with friends. In this instance interviewees (F9; F11; M3) discuss opting for private messages on Facebook instead of sharing the posts on friends' timelines:

> *'Because well I don't know if they want it to be public or not, so might as well go with private. And if they wanna make it public – they can do it by themselves'* (F9).

> *'Occasionally I can send some link to my mother, to my friends – if I for example – I know that my mother is looking for like red shoes, and I found these shoes on this page, so I will send a link to her. But I don't share these links on my page for example – just [private]'* [F11].

> *'Or sometimes some of my friends don't have an open wall, so I have to like send them a message or something like that'* [M3].

Thereby, the OBCeWOM sharing dimension is composed of communication that is passed on both privately and publicly on Facebook. Overall this theme included such keywords as 'share', 'forward', 'timeline' and 'private messaging'.

8.2.6 Sample of items and operationalisation

Following the identification of the OBCeWOM dimensions, the researcher consulted the eWOM literature in search for the appropriate measurement scale. Several prior eWOM studies have identified similar dimensions of the construct (Chu and Kim, 2011; Yeh and Choi, 2011), and thus were screened with regards to their applicability to this research. However, after further examination of the interview scripts, it was understood that the concept was more complex. The scale needed to address different aspects in order to reflect and measure what the brand community members were experiencing. Thus, the interviews were further examined in the search for specific terms discussed and statements made by the interviewees that would characterise the specifics eWOM activity happening within the context of social media-based brand communities. Based on the interviews and the review of existing research, OBCeWOM was operationalised as a three-dimensional construct involving reading, posting and sharing dimensions.

8.2.7 Validity of OBCeWOM measures

The development of OBCeWOM measures has undergone major changes and iterations over the period of five months. This process included consulting the existing measurement and interviews to identify the most appropriate statements. The developed OBCeWOM scale was subjected to face and content validity assessment concurrently with the six developed constructs measuring motivations for OBCeWOM.

Face validity was assessed by the researcher to ensure that the statements were measuring what they were set to measure (Webb, 2002). Face validity reflects "the degree to which the scale is capable of representing the

characteristic / variable of interest" (Webb, 2002, p. 149). As a result, the number of statements for the OBCeWOM measurement scale was finalised to 14 items measuring 3 dimensions that were retained for the following content validity assessment (Table 10).

Table 10. Content validity assessment (OBCeWOM)

N	Source	Items	Expert validation		
			Delete	Edit	Keep
OBCeWOM Reading					
1.	Interviews	I read what other people say about the brand on the brand page quite regularly.		X	
2.	Interviews	I tend to go through other people's comments about the brand on the brand page.			X
3.	Interviews	I often look for the opinions of the other members of the brand page.		X	
4.	Chu and Kim (2011)	I usually like to read what other people say about the brand on the brand page before choosing products.	X		
5.	Interviews	I look for any information that other brand followers may have about the brand.			X
OBCeWOM Posting					
6.	Interviews	I leave comments on the brand page quite regularly.		X	
7.	Yeh and Choi (2011)	I often share the information I know about the brand with others in the community.		X	
8.	Interviews	I often reply to other people's comments on the brand page.		X	
9.	Interviews	I participate in discussions about the brand when I feel it is appropriate.			X
10.	Interviews	I post my product or service queries publicly on the page.		X	
OBCeWOM Sharing					
11.	Interviews	I like sharing interesting information about the brand from the brand page to my personal timeline.		X	
12.	Interviews	I share brand posts from the brand's Facebook page to my friends' Facebook timelines.			X
13.	Chu and Kim (2011)	When I read something about the brand on the brand page, I will pass it along to my other contacts on Facebook.	X		
14.	Interviews	I pass along interesting information I see there either privately to my friends			X

		(e.g. private messages, emails), or to other places on the Internet (e.g. Twitter, blogs etc.).			

Content validity is another type of validity that is assessed prior to data collection. Content validity is assessed by experts, who use their judgement to evaluate whether the set of items indeed measure what they are supposed to (Webb, 2002). Content validity of the OBCeWOM construct was assessed by 2 senior marketing academics in the UK. The experts systematically examined the statements one by one to ensure that they appropriately incorporate the domain of the construct and its dimensions, checking that all of the items closely reflect the chosen conceptualisation. As a result, 12 items survived the procedure. The final set of items for the OBCeWOM scale is presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Final set of items (OBCeWOM)

N	Source	Items

N	Source	Items
Most of the times that I come across the content originating from this Facebook brand page or visit the page:		
OBCeWOM Reading		
1.	Interviews	I read what others have to say about the brand.
2.	Interviews	I tend to go through other people's comments about the brand on the brand page.
3.	Interviews	I seek out opinions of the other members of the brand page.
4.	Interviews	I look for any information that other brand followers may have about the brand.
OBCeWOM Posting		
5.	Interviews	I leave my comments about the brand when I think I have something to add.
6.	Yeh and Choi (2011)	I share new information I have about the brand if I have any.
7.	Interviews	I respond to what is posted when I have something to add.
8.	Interviews	I participate in discussions about the brand when I feel it is appropriate.
9.	Interviews	I post my product or service queries publicly on the brand page if I have any.
OBCeWOM Sharing		
10.	Interviews	I share interesting information about the brand from the brand page to my personal timeline.
11.	Interviews	I share brand posts from the brand's Facebook page to my friends' Facebook timelines.
12.	Interviews	I pass along interesting information I see there either privately to my friends (e.g. private messages, emails), or to other places on the Internet (e.g. Twitter, blogs, etc.).

The same procedure was applied to the 6 motivational constructs for which new measurement was developed. The content validity results for community advice search, brand assistance, helping others, helping the brand, social expression of opinions, and expressing positive emotions motivations are presented in Appendix E.

8.2.8 Exploratory factor analysis

The pilot study was used to make a *preliminary* assessment of the measurement scale necessary to ensure that there were no issues with the measurement and involved checking the internal consistency of the OBCeWOM scale, and the number of OBCeWOM dimensions. However, to ensure that the results hold on a bigger sample, the researcher also repeated the above-mentioned procedures on the part of the main sample (N = 250).

Specifically, the first part of the main sample (N = 250) was used to assess the dimensionality of the developed scale and ensure that there were no issues with the reliability of the measures. The OBCeWOM scale was first subjected to Factor Analysis using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to identify the number of factors (dimensions) that need to be extracted. PCA is one of the most widely accepted techniques to test the unidimensionality of a proposed scale (Pallant, 2005; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). The results of the discussed procedures (as estimated using the pilot and part of the main sample) are reported below.

However, prior to conducting the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), it was necessary to check the suitability of data. There are a few requirements to the sample when conducting the EFA, including regarding the sample size, and the strength of relationships between the variables (Pallant, 2005). First, the sample size should be adequate for this type of analysis (a suggested rule of thumb is 5:1 ratio of cases per item) (Gorsuch, 1983). In this case, after the total sample was split into 2 parts, this resulted in N = 250 cases available for EFA. EFA in this instance is performed on separate constructs, where the number of items is 4-12, thereby making the ratio at least 20:1, and indicating that the sample size is appropriate for this type of analysis. Furthermore, the suitability of the sample size was also checked through ***Bartlett's test of sphericity***, where the

recommended coefficient should be statistically significant at p < 0.05 (Pallant, 2005). Finally, the ***Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)*** should be > 0.6 (Pallant, 2005). The results of these tests are illustrated in Table 12.

Table 12. Results of the KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity

Test	Sample	
	N = 68	N = 250
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.894	0.907
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, Sig.	0.000	0.000

Another condition of the appropriateness of the data for EFA is the strength of relationship among variables, which is measured by the correlation coefficients (Pallant, 2005). It is suggested that there should be at least some correlations with values > 0.3 (Pallant, 2005). The majority of correlation coefficients were > 0.3, with only a few scoring slightly below this threshold. All the conditions of the appropriateness of the data are satisfied for the eWOM scale, where the majority of correlations in the correlation matrix are > 0.3; and Bartlett's test of sphericity has a coefficient significant at p < 0.05 (Table 13). Thus, it the researcher preceded with the EFA.

Following the data suitability tests, factor analysis is performed in 2 steps. The first step is ***factor extraction***, concerned with identifying the dimensionality or structure of the variables. It is performed in order to identify the number of factors that make up a variable. As discussed earlier, for this purpose ***PCA*** was conducted – one of the most commonly used methods of factor extraction (Pallant, 2005). PCA is concerned with reducing "…the dimensionality of the data set which consists of a large number of interrelated variables, while retaining as much as possible of the variation present in the data set" (Jolliffe, 1986, p. 1). During the Factor Analysis, the researcher chose the option to 'exclude cases pairwise', which excluded the case from the analysis only if the data necessary for certain part of the analysis was missing (Pallant, 2005). In this test, the number of factors is identified by checking the ***scree plot*** and looking for ***eigenvalues*** above 1 (Pallant, 2005). Finally, after the identification of the number of factors that need to be extracted the researcher conducts ***factor rotation***. One of the recommended and commonly used techniques for factor

extraction is orthogonal rotation using varimax approach, also uses in this study (Manly, 2005; Pallant, 2005).

However, Pallant (2005) also discusses that the researcher can utilize their own judgement to determine the number of factors to extract, especially if the items load moderately on different factors (or components). In this case, it may be necessary to extract a different number of factors to identify the most appropriate combination based on the factor loadings (Pallant, 2005). The results of factor extraction (based on the scree plot, and the number of eigenvalues > 1) suggest the existence of 2 components of OBCeWOM scale (as shown in Appendix I).

However, the component matrix also presented in Appendix I has indicated that several items load moderately on different factors. Furthermore, the insights from the interviews and the review of the literature suggests the existence of 3 dimensions of OBCeWOM, where *posting* and *sharing* represent different dimensions. This has led the researcher to extract 3 factors. The results of factor rotation are presented in Appendix I. The rotated component matrix indicates that the items load strongly on the 3 dimensions. Thus, the results of the EFA indicated the existence of 3 dimensions of OBCeWOM, where the factors loaded strongly on the component (1) OBCeWOM Posting; (2) OBCeWOM Reading; and (3) OBCeWOM Sharing. This is in agreement with the conceptualisation of the OBCeWOM construct in this study.

8.2.9 Confirmatory factor analysis

Following the data normality analysis, EFA, as well as assessment of the internal consistency of the study constructs, the researcher could proceed with the CFA. This part of data analysis was broken down into several steps, including assessing the unidimensionality of the developed eWOM scale, evaluating the full measurement model and assessing the validity and reliability of the measures included in the analysis.

Prior to testing the measurement model, the researchers need to ensure that the newly developed scale is unidimensional. The unidimensional construct is

defined as a construct "in which the set of indicators has only one underlying trait or concept in common" (Hair et al., 1992, p. 431). This is achieved checking the factor loadings for the latent constructs. It is advised, that the factor loadings should exceed the values of > 0.5, where the factor loadings (standardized regression weights) with lower values should be dropped. As seen in Table 13, all the factor loadings are above the acceptable threshold, signalling the unidimensionality of the eWOM scale. CFA of the newly developed eWOM scale was performed on the first part of the main sample (N = 250).

Table 13. Standardized regression weights (OBCeWOM)

Items			Estimate
eWOMP1	<---	eWOM Posting	0.866
eWOMP2	<---	eWOM Posting	0.830
eWOMP3	<---	eWOM Posting	0.916
eWOMP4	<---	eWOM Posting	0.865
eWOMP5	<---	eWOM Posting	0.645
eWOMR1	<---	eWOM Reading	0.777
eWOMR2	<---	eWOM Reading	0.832
eWOMR3	<---	eWOM Reading	0.844
eWOMR4	<---	eWOM Reading	0.828
eWOMS1	<---	eWOM Sharing	0.881
eWOMS2	<---	eWOM Sharing	0.841
eWOMS3	<---	eWOM Sharing	0.714

The CFA of the OBCeWOM scale is run by correlating the 3 sub-dimensions (Figure 5).

Figure 5. OBCeWOM CFA model
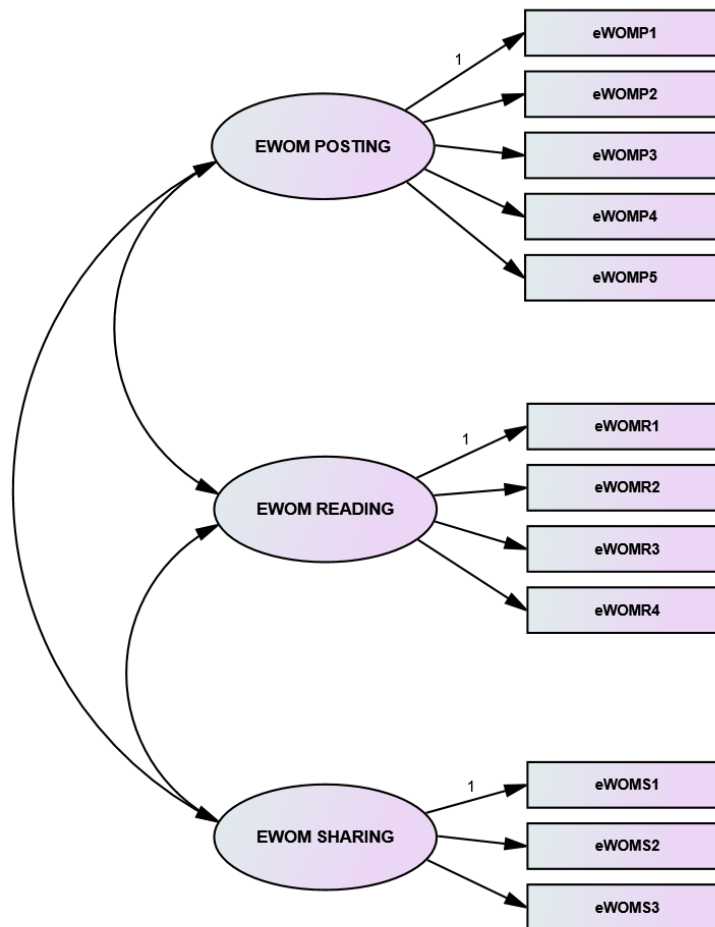
First, the model fit indices are evaluated. As seen from the Table 15, most of the model fit indices show acceptable levels of model fit, with values of TLI (0.951) and CFI (0.963) well above the recommended values, suggesting very good fit. The relative Chi-square values (CMIN/DF = 2.619) also fall within the acceptable range. However, the analysis indicates issues with the RMSEA index, where the values are slightly above the acceptable threshold of 0.08.

Therefore, potentially some adjustments need to be implemented – the procedure referred to as model re-specification. Model re-specification concerns any changes to the measurement or structural model, for example, those that could improve the model fit (Hox and Bechger, 1998; Hoyle, 2014). This could include dropping the measures that do not perform well (in the case of the measurement model) or including additional causal relationships between

constructs (when dealing with a structural model) (Morgan-Thomas, 2015). Many researchers advise being cautious when considering modifications of the model, with extensive modifications or re-specifications not advisable (Hair et al., 1992; Hox and Bechger, 1998). This largely concerns deleting the items, where Hair et al. (1992) suggest dropping no more than 20 % of the items.

To identify potentially problematic items, the modification indices are evaluated to see if any of the factors are strongly related (modification indices > 20). Upon the examination of the modification indices it is noticed that the errors between two items on the OBCeWOM reading dimension – OBCeWOMR3 and OBCeWOMR4 are highly correlated (> 20). Therefore it is decided to delete OBCeWOMR4. No other issues are detected. Thus the model is run again. Following the re-specification of the CFA of the OBCeWOM scale, the model fit is improved significantly. The results of the initial measurement model and the re-specified model are presented in Table 14.

Table 14. CFA model – model fit (OBCeWOM)

Model fit indices	Values (initial model)	Values (re-specified model)	Criteria
CMIN	133.565	90.270	the < the better
CMIN/DF	2.619	2.202	< 2 – ideal, 2 – 5 – acceptable
TLI	0.951	0.966	> 0.9
CFI	0.963	0.975	> 0.9 – acceptable, > 0.95 – good
RMSEA	0.081	0.069	< 0.08, ideally < 0.05

Specifically, the RMSEA values have dropped to the acceptable level (0.069), whereas TLI (0.966) and CFI (0.975) indicate very good fit. CMIN/DF (2.202) further suggest acceptable fit, with acceptable Chi-square values CMIN = 90.270.

8.3 Other adapted measures – motivations for OBCeWOM

To identify the remaining measurements, initially, the literature search was undertaken. Nonetheless, the review of existing research has failed to provide appropriate measures for six motivational constructs. As such, additional measurement scales were adapted for the following variables: community advice

search, brand assistance, helping others, helping the brand, social expression of opinions, and expressing positive emotions. Prior to the development of the scales, in total 28 different existing measurements were evaluated, albeit none of them on their own were fully capturing the aspects of corresponding motivations discussed in the interviews.

The process of measurement adaptation in this instance was slightly distinct from that of OBCeWOM scale development, as it largely included adopting a combination of items from previous literature and statements developed from the interviews. Nonetheless, these constructs were subjected to the face and content validity assessment concurrently with the newly developed OBCeWOM measures. The results of content validity are presented in Appendix E.

The following section addresses the issues associated with the adaptation of the mentioned motivational constructs and explains the need to adapt the measures by discussing the drawbacks of existing scales. The complete list of measures used in this research, including the adapted scales and scales borrowed from existing literature is presented in Table 15.

Table 15. Operationalisation of study constructs

Construct	Items	Source
Community advice search	*When I visit the brand's Facebook page, I feel that:*	
	I want to get advice about the brand and its products or services from other followers.	Dholakia et al. (2009)
	I am interested in other people's thoughts about the brand.	Interviews
	I can receive answers to my questions about the brand from other members of the brand page.	Dholakia et al. (2009)
	I like to get ideas from other members about how to use the brand.	Interviews
Brand assistance	*When I visit the brand's page on Facebook, I feel that:*	
	I want to get answers to my queries from the brand on this page.	Jahn and Kunz (2012)
	I can get information I need about the brand from the brand owners.	Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009)
	I can receive support from the brand about their products / services.	Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)
	I am willing to learn about the brand from the brand owners.	Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009)
Helping others	*When I express myself on the brand's Facebook page:*	
	I want to assist others with my knowledge about the brand.	Interviews
	I am willing to help others get the information they want / need about the brand.	Alexandrov, Lilly and Babakus (2013)
	I want to help others by sharing my own experiences with the brand.	Bronner and de Hoog (2011)
Helping the brand	*When I express myself on the brand's Facebook page:*	
	I want to help this brand to be successful.	Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)
	I am willing to support this brand with my activity on the page.	Interviews
	I want to repay the brand for the good experience.	Interviews
Social expression of opinions	*When I visit the brand's Facebook page, I feel that:*	
	If I have a strong opinion about something that is being discussed about the brand on the brand page – I have to comment on it so the others will see it.	Stephen and Lehmann (2009)

	I need to let others in the community know what I think about the brand and its products or services.	Interviews
	I need to make it clear if I agree or disagree with someone's opinion about the brand on the page.	Interviews
Expressing positive emotions	*When I express myself on the brand's Facebook page, I feel that:*	
	I want to express my joy about my experience with the brand.	Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)
	I feel good when I can tell others on the page about the brand.	Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)
	I need to share my excitement about the brand with others on the page.	Interviews
	I have to get my feelings about the brand off my chest.	Interviews
Social interaction	*When I visit the brand's page on Facebook, I feel that:*	
	I want to meet other people interested in this brand.	Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009)
	I want to feel like I am a part of this group of people who are interested in the brand and visit this Facebook page.	Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009)
	I can communicate about different things with other members of the brand page.	Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009)
	I can stay in touch with people who are interested in this brand.	Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009)
Self-presentation	*When I express myself on the brand's Facebook page:*	
	I want to make a good impression on the people who see my posts.	Jahn and Kunz (2012)
	I want to improve the way I am perceived by the people who see my posts.	Jahn and Kunz (2012)
	I wish to present who I am to the people who see my posts.	Jahn and Kunz (2012)
	I am willing to present who I want to be to the people who see my posts.	Jahn and Kunz (2012)
Enjoyment	*When I visit the brand's Facebook page, I feel that:*	
	What is posted on the page is fun.	Jahn and Kunz (2012)
	What is posted on the page is exciting.	Jahn and Kunz (2012)
	What is posted on the page is pleasant.	Jahn and Kunz (2012)
	What is posted on the page is entertaining.	Jahn and Kunz (2012)
Escapism	*When I express myself on the brand's Facebook page:*	
	I can get away from what I am doing.	Courtois et al. (2009)

	I can escape from my responsibilities.	Courtois et al. (2009)
	I postpone tasks that I should complete first.	Courtois et al. (2009)
	I can forget about my daily occupations.	Courtois et al. (2009)
Brand trust (reliability dimension)	This is a brand that meets my expectations.	Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen (2003)
	I feel confidence in this brand.	Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen (2003)
	This is a brand that never disappoints me.	Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen (2003)
	The brand guarantees satisfaction.	Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen (2003)
Brand trust (intentions dimension)	This brand would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns about its products or services.	Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen (2003)
	I could rely on this brand to solve a problem I may have with its products or services.	Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen (2003)
	This brand would make any effort to satisfy me.	Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen (2003)
	This brand would compensate me in some way if I have a problem with its products or services.	Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen (2003)
Brand loyalty (attitudinal dimension)	I am loyal to this brand.	Carpenter (2008)
	I am committed to this brand.	Carpenter (2008)
	I do not consider myself a loyal customer of this brand. (R)	Carpenter (2008)

Brand loyalty (behavioural dimension)	I always use this brand of products / services.	Cai, Zhao and He (2015)
	I buy only this brand of products / services.	Cai, Zhao and He (2015)
	I purchase this brand routinely and use it regularly.	Cai, Zhao and He (2015)
Oppositional brand loyalty	There is no way I will ever consider buying products / services of opposing brands even if they can better meet my specific needs.	Kuo and Feng (2013)
	I will actively express opposing views or negative opinions to products / services of opposing brands even if the products are considered better by other people.	Kuo and Feng (2013)
	I have no intention to ever try products of opposing brands even if the products are widely discussed by other people.	Kuo and Feng (2013)
	I will actively discourage others from buying products of opposing brands even if an opposing brand has new and better products.	Kuo and Feng (2013)

8.3.1 Community advice search

Community advice search motivation was conceptualised as a willingness to get assistance, suggestions or just an outside perspective about the brand and its use from the members of the community (Berger, 2014). Analysis of existing research has yielded 7 potential scales to measure advice search, including measures for similar information-related factors, such as 'obtaining buying-related information', 'learning how a product is to be consumed' (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003), or 'utilitarian function' (Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014). The measures chosen for the construct were adapted from the research by Dholakia et al. (2009), where 2 items were largely modified to suit the current research, and 2 items were developed based on the results from the interviews. The community advice search construct was measured by 4 items.

8.3.2 Brand assistance

Brand assistance motivation was conceptualised as a willingness to get information, assistance and problem-solving support from the brand. Brand assistance motivation represents a new factor identified in this research, which to the researcher's best knowledge has not been assessed empirically. Thus, review of existing literature was broader in scope and included a search for similar information-related motivational constructs which could be used as a basis for developing the measures.

This has resulted in 4 items being adapted from existing studies – specifically 1 item modified and adapted from the 'advice search' construct in Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), and 1 item from the 'brand interaction value' variable in Jahn and Kunz (2012). Additionally, 2 items were modified and adapted for this research from the 'information seeking' factor in Park, Kee and Valenzuela (2009).

8.3.3 Helping others

Helping others motivation was conceptualised as a willingness to assist others by sharing information about brands (Alexandrov, Lilly and Babakus, 2013). Based

on the review of existing literature 9 different measurements were evaluated prior to the measure development. The identified measures corresponded with similar constructs, such as for example 'concern for other consumers' (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), warning (Wetzer, Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2007), or 'affection' (Rubin, Perse and Barbato, 1988).

Consequently, the measurement scale for the construct was developed for this study based on the measures from Bronner and de Hoog (2011) and Alexandrov, Lilly and Babakus (2013), as well as insights from the interviews. Specifically, 1 item was borrowed from each study, and 1 item was developed based on the results of the qualitative stage. The overall measurement scale for the motivational variable 'helping others' consisted of 3 items.

8.3.4 Helping the brand

Helping the brand motivation was conceptualised as brand community members' willingness to support a brand, give something in return for a good experience, so that the brand will become more successful (Sundaram, Mitra and Webster, 1998). This motivation has not received much empirical attention in the eWOM literature, and thus only 2 potential measures were identified (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011). Additionally, the scales measuring helping others or concern for others motivation were also evaluated to identify a potential basis for modifying or developing new measures (e.g. Cheung and Lee, 2012; Teichmann et al., 2015).

Nonetheless, the scale measuring the construct was loosely based on the 2-item scale from Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), where 1 item was borrowed and adapted for this research, and 2 items developed based on the interview findings. The construct was thereby measured by 3 items.

8.3.5 Social expression of opinions

Social expression of opinions motivation was conceptualised as the need to socially express one's thoughts and opinions concerning a brand. To the

researcher's best knowledge, only in one study by Stephen and Lehmann (2009) has been quantitatively tested this construct. Nonetheless, the review of the literature has identified 2 other measures of related constructs – namely, 'expression/affiliation' (Kaye, 2005) and 'opinion expression' (Wang, 2007).

Albeit, after careful evaluation of the measures, it was decided that the scales used by Stephen and Lehmann (2009) would be more appropriate, as they reflected the identified motivation more closely. Thus, their measurement scale was borrowed and adapted for this research. Specifically, 2 of the items from the initial scale were adapted to suit this research, as they closely reflected what was needed to be measured; and 1 item was developed based on the insights from the interviews. The overall scale thereby consisted of 3 items measuring the social expression of opinions motivation.

8.3.6 Expressing positive emotions

The motivation to express positive emotions was conceptualised as a need to release psychological tension, and share the joy of the positive brand experience with other people (Jeong and Jang, 2011). The review of existing research has resulted in 5 different potential measurements to be identified. These included measurements for related constructs, such as 'emotional release' (Zhang and Pentina, 2012), 'pleasure' (Rubin, Perse and Barbato, 1988), 'extraversion/self-enhancement', or even 'venting negative feelings' (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

The construct was consequently measured with 4 statements. Specifically, 2 items were adapted from Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), and 2 items were generated from the qualitative findings.

8.4 Other existing measures

8.4.1 Motivations for OBCeWOM

8.4.1.1 Social interaction

Social interaction motivation was conceptualised as a willingness to meet and talk with others, as well as to get peer support and a sense of community (Park, Kee and Valenzuela, 2009). The measurement scale was also borrowed from Park, Kee and Valenzuela's (2009) socialisation dimension of uses and gratification, as it most closely reflected the conceptual definition of the construct, and has been successfully applied in the context of Facebook groups, which is a related environment to the current research context. One item was dropped to ensure discriminant validity, as it closely corresponded with a statement from the community advice search motivation construct. Overall the social interaction motivation was measured by a 4-item scale.

8.4.1.2 Self-presentation

Self-presentation motivation was conceptualised as "willingness to manage another's impression or image of oneself" (Wetzer, Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2007, p. 665). Existing scale was adopted to measure the construct, and was based on the measurement of the similar 'self-concept value' construct identified in the study by Jahn and Kunz's (2012). In their study, the scale was characterized by a very strong Cronbach's alpha value (0.91), and it was also applied in the context of Facebook brand pages. The measurement scale used in this research consisted of 4 items.

8.4.1.3 Enjoyment

Enjoyment motivation captured communicating with others to experience pleasure, fun, and enjoyment (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999; Madupu and Cooley, 2010). Statements measuring enjoyment motivation were adopted from existing research and were based on the 4-item scale measuring a similar 'hedonic value'

construct found in the study by Jahn and Kunz (2012). This was driven by 3 considerations: 1) the item scales were most closely reflecting the conceptualisation of the construct; 2) in their study the scale had very good internal consistency measured by Cronbach's alpha (0.88); and 3) it was applied in the context of Facebook brand pages.

8.4.1.4 Escapism

Escapism motivation was conceptualised as a state of psychological immersion and absorption in which people escape from their everyday concerns and responsibilities for a period of time (Abrantes et al., 2013). Statements for the escapism motivation construct were adopted from a study by Courtois et al. (2009), as the items most closely reflected the conceptual definition of the construct. The measurement scale for escapism motivation thereby consisted of 4 items.

8.4.2 Outcomes of OBCeWOM

8.4.2.1 Brand trust

Brand trust was defined as "confident expectations of the brand's reliability and intentions in situations entailing risk to the consumer" (Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen, 2003, p. 37). Items for the brand trust scale were adopted from Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen (2003). The construct consisted of 2 dimensions – brand reliability (extent to which a consumer believes that the brand can deliver on its promise and satisfy his or her needs), and brand intention (how strongly a consumer believes that in case anything unexpected happens with the utilization of the brand, it will put the consumer's interests first) (Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen, 2003). Even though Chaudhuri and Holbrook's (2001) conceptualisation and measurement of brand trust has been more widely used, and it has been previously applied in the brand community context (Fuller, Matzler and Hoppe, 2008; Bruhn, Schnebelen and Schafer, 2013), the chosen conceptualisation of brand trust should provide the following advantages: 1) it is comprised of 2

aspects – cognitive and emotional, which will provide more conceptual richness; 2) it is consistent with previous research on trust which regards it as a multidimensional construct; 3) in this definition a brand is considered as an active relationship partner. The items of the brand trust scale closely matched the conceptualisation of the construct and had very strong internal consistency in the study by Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen (2003): Cronbach's alpha = 0.81 for the brand reliability dimension, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.83 for the brand intentions dimension. The measurement scale for the brand trust construct consisted 8 items, including 4 items measuring brand reliability and 4 items measuring brand intentions components.

8.4.2.2 Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty was conceptualised as "a deeply held commitment to rebuy a preferred brand or service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same brand or same brand set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour" (Oliver, 1999, p. 34). The construct was composed of 2 dimensions – attitudinal and behavioural components. Attitudinal loyalty measures were adopted from Carpenter (2008) and reflected "a degree of dispositional commitment in terms of some unique value associated with the brand" (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001, p. 82). Behavioural loyalty measures were borrowed from Cai, Zhao and He (2015) and adapted for this research, and referred to "repeated purchase of the brand" (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001, p. 82). The chosen scales closely reflected the conceptual definition of brand loyalty construct and had very strong internal consistency as measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient, where attitudinal loyalty achieved the value of α=0.91, and behavioural loyalty – α = 0.83. The measurement for the brand loyalty construct thereby consisted of 6 items, reflecting attitudinal and behavioural components, each measured by 3 items.

8.4.2.3 Oppositional brand loyalty

Oppositional brand loyalty was conceptualised as an active rejection of rival brands, including expression of negative views, or even adversarial behaviour towards rival brands (Kuo and Feng, 2013). So far the concept of oppositional brand loyalty has received very limited empirical attention. To the researcher's best knowledge, the only existing measurement scale for the construct was a formative measure found in the work of Kuo and Feng (2013), who have based their measurement on the works by Muniz and Hamer (2001) and Thompson and Sinha (2008). The 4 items from the Kuo and Feng's (2013) study were slightly adapted to suit this research. In particular, to achieve discriminant validity, as the oppositional brand loyalty concept bears similarities to the concept of loyalty, the borrowed items were slightly modified to stress the difference in the two constructs.

8.4.3 CFA on full measurement model

Prior to estimating the structural model the researcher needs to evaluate the measurement model. ***Measurement model*** estimates the "connections between the latent variables and their manifest indicators" (Blunch, 2008, p. 5). ***Latent variables*** represent the variables that are not directly measured by a specific score for example, or any other generally accepted measurement, but are indirectly estimated by their ***indicators*** (Blunch, 2008; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). Furthermore, ***error terms*** (ε) are added to the indicator variables, indicating that "factors other than the latent variable affect the result of a measurement" (Blunch, 2008, p. 5).

The measurement model is assessed by evaluating its model fit indices and validity. The measurement model is estimated using the second part of the main sample (N = 402). During this step, the first level measurement model using CFA is estimated, where all sub-dimensions form separate factors. First, model fit indices are examined. Table 16 presents the results of model fit indices of the first run of the full measurement model.

Table 16. CFA model - model fit (full measurement model)

Model fit indices	Values (first run)	Values (re-specified model)	Values (re-specified model following the convergent and discriminant validity tests)	Criteria
CMIN	4103.526	3959.730	3146.550	the < the better
CMIN/DF	2.204	2.201	2.133	< 2 – ideal, 2 – 5 – acceptable
TLI	0.889	0.891	0.907	> 0.9
CFI	0.901	0.903	0.917	> 0.9 – acceptable, > 0.95 - good
RMSEA	0.055	0.055	0.053	< 0.08, ideally < 0.05

As shown in Table 16, the majority of model fit indices produce acceptable levels of fit, except for TLI (0.889), which is slightly below the suggested threshold. However, RMSEA (0.055), CMIN/DF (2.204) and CMIN (4103.526) indicate an acceptable level of model fit, with CFI values adequate at 0.901.

First, the standardized regression weights (factor loadings) are checked, where all values need to be > 0.5 to be acceptable. All of the factor loadings are acceptable. However one item on the attitudinal brand loyalty scale *(blA3)* has values < 0.6. Upon the examination of the modification indices for potential cross-loadings or items (values > 20), it is seen that the item correlates strongly with items on other scales. Therefore, it is decided to drop the *blA3* item.

Next, the measurement model is run again following the deletion of the item on the behavioural brand loyalty scale *(bla3)*. This procedure does not have a significant effect on the model fit (Table 17).

8.4.4 Validity and reliability of the study constructs

Following the evaluation of model fit the researcher conducted reliability and validity assessment of the proposed constructs. This step is required before proceeding with the hypothesis testing.

Reliability of a scale is concerned with how the measurement scale stays stable over time if the tests were to be repeated in the future, as well as its internal consistency, or whether the items hold together (Pallant, 2005). In this study, the researcher focused on evaluating the internal consistency of the proposed measurement scales. *Internal consistency* indicates whether the "the items that make up the scale are all measuring the same underlying attribute" (Pallant, 2005, p. 6). Internal consistency is estimated evaluating the following coefficients: Cronbach's alpha, inter-item correlations, item-to-total correlation, composite reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

The presence of reliability does not mean that validity is also established. Thus further tests need to be performed to ensure the validity of the measures (Hair et al., 1992). *The validity* of a scale is a "degree to which it measures what it is supposed to measure" (Pallant, 2005, p. 6). Two types of validity were assessed using statistical techniques, including convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Convergent and discriminant validity are subcategories of construct validity, and thus the researcher needs to satisfy these two criteria to establish construct validity (Trochim, Donnelly and Arora, 2015). The presence of *convergent validity* indicates "similarity between measures of theoretically related constructs" (DeVellis, 1991, p. 50). Convergent validity is assessed by evaluating the construct loadings and AVE. *Discriminant validity* shows that the construct is different from other constructs used in the research (Harrington, 2009). Discriminant validity of the constructs is assessed by comparing the values of AVE to the squared correlations of the corresponding constructs. The overview of reliability and validity tests and accepted thresholds suggested by previous research is presented in Table 17.

Table 17. Validity and reliability coefficients assessed in this research

Reliability / Validity	Coefficient / test	Recommended values	Source
Type of reliability			
Internal consistency	Cronbach's alpha (α)	**≥ 0.70**	Pallant (2005)
	Inter-item correlations	**0.30 – 0.70** , not **>0.80**	Pallant (2005)
	Item-to-total correlation	**≥ 0.30**, not > α	Pallant (2005)
	Composite reliability / Construct reliability (CR)	**≥ 0.70**	Hair et al. (1992)
	Average Variance	**≥ 0.50**	Hair et al.

	Extracted (AVE)		(1992)
Type of validity			
Content validity	Developed measurement scales evaluated by academic experts		Webb (2002)
Convergent validity	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	≥ 0.50	Hair et al. (1992)
	Composite reliability (CR)	≥ 0.70	Hair et al. (1998)
Discriminant validity	Comparison of AVE and squared correlations (SIC)	AVE > SIC	Fornell and Larcker (1981)

The specific procedures concerning validity and reliability are discussed in the following sections.

8.4.4.1 Reliability

Following the results of the PCA, each extracted factor was checked for reliability. One of the key indicators of reliability of a scale is its internal consistency, or in other words – how well the items fit together and measure the same construct (Pallant, 2005). Internal consistency of the scales was checked calculating the **Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α).** Cronbach's alpha was calculated for all of the constructs independently (Table 19). First, it was computed using the pilot sample (N = 68). Where some of the variables had missing values, the cases were excluded from the procedure. The rule of thumb for the Cronbach's alpha is that it should be > 0.7 (Pallant, 2005). As shown in the Table 18, all constructs are characterized by strong internal consistency (α > 0.7), except for the *behavioural brand loyalty (BLB)* when tested in the main sample (N = 250), which is characterized by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient slightly below the recommended threshold (α = 0.659). Thus, item *blb2* is dropped, resulting in α = 0.711, which is at the acceptable level.

Additionally, corrected **item-total correlation** index was estimated, where the rule of thumb was for each value to be less than the overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale, but not < than 0.3, otherwise this would indicate that the item was not measuring the same construct as the scale as a whole (Pallant, 2005). All the items produced satisfactory values of item-total correlations. **Inter-item correlations** were also checked, where the all the values were > 0.3

indicating acceptable levels of correlation between the items (Hair et al., 1998). The majority of the scales produced inter-item correlation values in the range from 0.4 to 0.7.

Table 18. Reliability of study constructs

Items	Pilot sample (N=68)			Main sub-sample (N=250)		
	(α)	Corrected item-total correlation	α if Item Deleted	(α)	Corrected item-total correlation	α if Item Deleted
OBCeWOM Reading 1	0.915	0.778	0.899	0.906	0.773	0.886
OBCeWOM Reading 2		0.842	0.876		0.810	0.871
OBCeWOM Reading 3		0.802	0.890		0.794	0.878
OBCeWOM Reading 4		0.800	0.891		0.787	0.879
OBCeWOM Posting 1	0.939	0.827	0.926	0.911	0.811	0.884
OBCeWOM Posting 2		0.870	0.918		0.782	0.890
OBCeWOM Posting 3		0.889	0.914		0.855	0.875
OBCeWOM Posting 4		0.911	0.911		0.826	0.881
OBCeWOM Posting 5		0.684	0.950		0.612	0.925
OBCeWOM Sharing 1	0.837	0.725	0.747	0.853	0.741	0.778
OBCeWOM Sharing 2		0.740	0.737		0.778	0.742
OBCeWOM Sharing 3		0.637	0.833		0.658	0.855
Brand Trust Reliability 1	0.891*	0.694	0.884	0.879	0.783	0.836
Brand Trust Reliability 2		0.827	0.843		0.732	0.851
Brand Trust Reliability 3		0.814	0.841		0.755	0.849
Brand Trust Reliability 4		0.746	0.868		0.738	0.846
Brand Trust Intention 1	0.890*	0.620	0.905	0.895	0.766	0.869
Brand Trust Intention 2		0.816	0.836		0.823	0.845
Brand Trust Intention 3		0.820	0.835		0.811	0.849
Brand Trust Intention 4		0.793	0.847		0.696	0.898
Attitudinal Brand Loyalty 1	0.725	0.693	0.468	0.808	0.770	0.637
Attitudinal Brand Loyalty 2		0.627	0.541		0.743	0.661

Attitudinal Brand Loyalty 3		0.363	0.872		0.514	0.926
Behavioural Brand Loyalty 1		0.805	0.604		0.551	-
Behavioural Brand Loyalty 2	0.817	0.564	0.848	0.711	Deleted	Deleted
Behavioural Brand Loyalty 3		0.661	0.763		0.551	-
Oppositional Brand Loyalty 1		0.854	0.914		0.715	0.821
Oppositional Brand Loyalty 2	0.935****	0.785	0.938	0.861	0.613	0.863
Oppositional Brand Loyalty 3		0.888	0.903		0.753	0.805
Oppositional Brand Loyalty 4		0.871	0.908		0.765	0.802
Community Advice Search 1		0.716	0.907		0.707	0.807
Community Advice Search 2	0.907	0.835	0.865	0.852	0.725	0.799
Community Advice Search 3		0.788	0.881		0.687	0.816
Community Advice Search 4		0.831	0.865		0.662	0.828
Brand Assistance 1		0.741	0.875		0.661	0.815
Brand Assistance 2	0.895*	0.818	0.846	0.845	0.692	0.799
Brand Assistance 3		0.720	0.882		0.680	0.805
Brand Assistance 4		0.794	0.855		0.700	0.797
Social Interaction 1	0.916*	0.768	0.905	0.903	0.721	0.900
Social Interaction 2		0.794	0.896		0.813	0.864

Social Interaction 3		0.820	0.887		0.807	0.868
Social Interaction 4		0.853	0.876		0.801	0.868
Self-presentation 1		0.875	0.931		0.840	0.926
Self-presentation 2	0.947	0.886	0.927	0.940	0.863	0.919
Self-presentation 3		0.844	0.940		0.890	0.910
Self-presentation 4		0.891	0.926		0.832	0.929
Helping Others 1		0.785	0.951		0.896	0.905
Helping Others 2	0.929	0.893	0.866	0.943	0.892	0.910
Helping Others 3		0.890	0.870		0.859	0.936
Helping the Brand 1		0.787	0.921		0.807	0.841
Helping the Brand 2	0.919*	0.898	0.830	0.896	0.796	0.850
Helping the Brand 3		0.823	0.893		0.781	0.863
Social Expression of Opinions 1		0.786	0.750		0.798	0.912
Social Expression of Opinions 2	0.858	0.815	0.720	0.919	0.871	0.853
Social Expression of Opinions 3		0.613	0.904		0.837	0.881
Escapism 1		0.686	0.834		0.638	0.875
Escapism 2	0.862**	0.770	0.800	0.874	0.805	0.808
Escapism 3		0.598	0.867		0.687	0.855
Escapism 4		0.790	0.789		0.797	0.812
Enjoyment 1		0.837	0.910		0.854	0.866
Enjoyment 2	0.930	0.845	0.907	0.911	0.820	0.879
Enjoyment 3		0.824	0.915		0.750	0.902
Enjoyment 4		0.849	0.906		0.782	0.891
Expressing Positive Emotions 1	0.933***	0.851	0.911	0.889	0.768	0.853
Expressing Positive		0.787	0.931		0.797	0.842

Emotions 2						
Expressing Positive Emotions 3		0.918	0.887		0.822	0.831
Expressing Positive Emotions 4		0.818	0.921		0.649	0.899

*N=67, **N=64, ***N=65, ****N=66

8.4.4.2 Validity

Following the estimation of the measurement model and examination of the model fit indices, the quality of the measures is checked. Specifically, the *validity* of the measures is checked in the process of evaluating the measurement model. This concerns the evaluation of convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is assessed by looking at the factor loadings, calculating the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR). AVE "reflects the overall amount of variance in the indicators accounted for by the latent construct" (Hair et al., 1992, p. 449).

First, the *maximum likelihood estimates* illustrate that the observed variables indeed measure the latent constructs, with all the relationships being significant at p < 0.05. Next, factor loadings *(standardized regression weights)* are screened again, with all values having satisfactory scores > 0.5. Following this convergent validity is estimated by calculating the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The formula used for calculating the AVE is presented below:

$$AVE = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} Li^2}{n}$$

Here L_i refers to the standardized factor loadings, where i is the number of items. This is then divided by **n** (which is the number of items) (Hair et al., 2008).

As seen from the Table 20, all constructs have acceptable levels of AVE (> 0.5), signalling convergent validity. Furthermore, during this step construct reliability (composite reliability) (CR) is estimated using the following formula (Hair et al., 2008):

$$CR = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^{n} L_i)^2}{(\sum_{i=1}^{n} L_i)^2 + (\sum_{i=1}^{n} e_i)}$$

Here *e* refers to the error variance terms.

Next, *discriminant* validity was estimated. This is done comparing the values of AVE to the squared correlation estimates (SIC) of the corresponding constructs. The AVE and SIC values are presented in Table 20. First, correlation values are

squared and then compared to the corresponding AVE values. Several constructs have indicated issues with discriminant validity.

- Specifically, discriminant validity problems are identified between variables *expressing positive emotions* and *helping the brand*. It is thus decided to delete the problematic item on the *expressing positive emotions scale (emot4)*, leading to the increased AVE and achieving of discriminant validity.

- Problems with discriminant validity are seen between the 2 dimensions of *brand trust*. Here the modification indices are examined to identify a problematic item *(btR4)* which loads highly on the *brand trust intentions dimension (BTI)*. The item *btR4* is thus deleted, which allows achieving discriminant validity.

- Similarly, the two *brand loyalty* dimensions fail the discriminant validity test and are thus combined into one variable. The Cronbach's alpha test is further performed to assess the internal consistency of the combined scale consisting of 4 items, with $\alpha = 0.864$ indicating strong internal consistency. Furthermore, combining the 2 components has led to the increase in convergent validity for the overall brand loyalty scale (based on the CR and AVE values).

- Problems with discriminant validity were also found between the variables 'community advice search' *(CAS)* and 'brand assistance' *(BA)*. However, in this case, it was decided to delete the variable 'community advice search' from the further analysis, as it was too similar to the 'brand assistance' variable. The 'community advice search' motivation was chosen for deletion as it was a more researched construct, where previous studies have found evidence of a relationship between this motivation and eWOM. Whereas brand assistance motivation is an understudied construct, and thus is deemed important to be tested statistically.

All other values of AVE are above the SIC values, supporting the discriminant validity. This allows the researcher to proceed with estimating the structural model. The results of the convergent and discriminant validity following the discussed modifications are presented in Table 19 and Table 20 below.

Table 19. Convergent validity results

Variable	Convergent validity	
	AVE (> 0.5)	CR (> 0.7)
Brand assistance	0.64	0.88
Helping others	0.81	0.93
Helping the brand	0.74	0.89
Social interaction	0.68	0.89
Self-presentation	0.77	0.93
Social expression of opinions	0.78	0.91
Enjoyment	0.66	0.88
Escapism	0.69	0.90
Expressing positive emotions	0.77	0.91
Brand trust (reliability)	0.69	0.87
Brand trust (intentions)	0.71	0.91
Brand loyalty	0.64	0.87
Oppositional brand loyalty	0.65	0.88
OBCeWOM posting	0.73	0.93
OBCeWOM reading	0.77	0.91
OBCeWOM sharing	0.62	0.83

As seen from Table 19, all constructs have satisfactory levels of CR. Thus, based on the evaluation of factor loadings (all > 0.5), evaluation of estimates (all significant at $p < 0.05$), calculation of AVE, and CR, it can be concluded that the measurement model is acceptable.

Table 20. Discriminant validity results

	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Helping others (1)	0.81	1															
Brand trust (intentions) (2)	0.71	0.10	1														
Brand trust (reliability) (3)	0.69	0.06	0.64	1													
Brand loyalty (4)	0.64	0.13	0.36	0.46	1												
Oppositional brand loyalty (5)	0.65	0.04	0.01	0.00	0.12	1											
Expressing positive emotions (6)	0.77	0.62	0.16	0.08	0.21	0.18	1										
Social expression of opinions (7)	0.78	0.49	0.05	0.01	0.09	0.14	0.57	1									
Helping the brand (8)	0.74	0.64	0.20	0.17	0.30	0.12	0.71	0.41	1								
Self-presentation (9)	0.77	0.38	0.02	0.01	0.09	0.09	0.35	0.31	0.36	1							
Enjoyment (10)	0.66	0.21	0.16	0.16	0.20	0.06	0.27	0.16	0.32	0.16	1						
Escapism (11)	0.69	0.03	0.01	0.04	0.00	0.06	0.10	0.12	0.05	0.11	0.02	1					
Social interaction (12)	0.68	0.46	0.09	0.03	0.15	0.13	0.47	0.56	0.44	0.42	0.35	0.13	1				
Brand assistance (13)	0.64	0.57	0.26	0.16	0.22	0.03	0.47	0.44	0.48	0.21	0.26	0.04	0.48	1			
EWOM sharing (14)	0.62	0.35	0.09	0.04	0.15	0.15	0.46	0.48	0.38	0.16	0.25	0.06	0.46	0.40	1		
EWOM reading (15)	0.77	0.33	0.05	0.04	0.12	0.08	0.36	0.37	0.31	0.18	0.24	0.04	0.43	0.40	0.32	1	
EWOM posting (16)	0.73	0.47	0.08	0.04	0.12	0.06	0.48	0.61	0.42	0.20	0.18	0.03	0.47	0.54	0.55	0.47	1

8.5 Chapter summary

This chapter was dedicated to the processes employed in Study 2 of this research and presented the steps involved in developing the survey instrument. As such, this chapter reported the transition from the fully qualitative Study 1 to the combined qualitative and quantitative Study 2 concerned with the measurement of the research constructs.

Specifically, it was discussed that out of 14 variables 7 were borrowed from existing literature. In the absence of appropriate measurements, 1 new measurement was developed for the core research construct – OBCeWOM. Additionally, 6 measures were developed through the adaptation of existing measures and insights from the interviews. The 6 adapted measures included community advice search, brand assistance, helping others, helping the brand, social expression of opinions, and expressing positive emotions. Consequently, whereas the development of OBCeWOM scale was largely based on the results of the qualitative stage, the remaining measures were mostly developed by adopting and modifying items from existing literature as well as insights from the interviews.

Overall, the extensive procedures involved in outlining the conceptual boundaries of the core research construct (OBCeWOM), and the following development and assessment of the research instrument allow to approach OBCeWOM as a valid and reliable construct. The process included conducting thematic analysis of the interviews and going back and forth to the literature review to shape the conceptual boundaries of the core concept, identification of the three dimensions of OBCeWOM and its operationalisation. Following this, the psychometric properties of the newly developed measurement were evaluated, where it has undergone content and face validity assessments to ensure that the items measure exactly what they should be measuring.

Additionally, all of the variables used in this research were subjected to additional validity and reliability tests. Reliability of research constructs was established by checking inter-item correlations, item-to-total correlations, Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted. All constructs have shown satisfactory levels of internal consistency and convergent

validity, whereas 2 measures have failed the discriminant validity test. Subsequently, the community advice search variable was deleted from further analysis.

Additionally, the EFA and CFA were conducted in the Study 2. EFA has resulted in extraction of 3 dimensions of OBCeWOM communication – OBCeWOM posting, OBCeWOM reading, and OBCeWOM sharing. CFA of OBCeWOM scale involved checking the unidimensionality of the construct and was followed by the CFA of the full measurement model, which signified satisfactory model fit.

Chapter 9: Study 3 – hypothesis testing

9.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the data analysis in the Study 3 of this research and presents the results of hypothesis testing using Structural Equation Modeling. Specifically, the chapter presents three models, starting with the assessment of the initial structural model and followed by two modified models. Following the evaluation and estimation of the models, the applicability of the final structural model is assessed on two separate samples. The results of hypotheses testing in line with the conceptual model and including additional relationships are presented after the evaluation of the model parameters. The chapter closes with the summary of results.

9.2 Summary of hypotheses and model estimation

The final body of evidence concerns confirmatory data analysis of the stated research hypotheses. As outlined in Chapter 3, the thesis addresses two sets of hypotheses. The first set examined antecedents of OBCeWOM and corresponds to RQ2. The second set of hypotheses confirms the outcomes of OBCeWOM and relates to RQ3. For the analytical purposes, the task of hypothesis testing concurrently addresses both sets of hypotheses through SEM model. The summary of research hypotheses is presented in Table 21.

Table 21. Summary of hypotheses

EWOM motivations	
H1	*Brand community members' community advice search motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.
H2	Brand community members' brand assistance motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.
H3	Brand community members' motivation to help others in the community is positively related to OBCeWOM.
H4	Brand community members' motivation to help the brand is positively

	related to OBCeWOM.
H5	Brand community members' social interaction motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.
H6	Brand community members' self-representation motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.
H7	Brand community members' social expression of opinions motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.
H8	Brand community members' enjoyment motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.
H9	Brand community members' escapism motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.
H10	Brand community members' motivation to express positive emotions is positively related to OBCeWOM.
EWOM outcomes	
H11	OBCeWOM is positively related to brand trust.
H12	OBCeWOM is positively related to brand loyalty.
H13	OBCeWOM is positively related to oppositional brand loyalty.
Other relationships	
H14	Brand community members' trust towards the brand is positively related to brand loyalty.

*Not tested due to the deletion of community advice search variable

The hypothesis testing involved SEM and employed model modification strategy. In this approach, an initial theoretically driven model is estimated, and this is followed by the model modification stage, where additional relationships may be added or removed based on the model properties and modification indices. This approach starts with the measurement model (CFA) and follows with the structural model (SEM). In this study, the CFA model has been estimated in Chapter 8, and the analysis presented here builds on that model. The process of estimation and evaluation of the structural model is presented in the next section.

9.2.1 Model 1

To test the hypothesised relationships between the variables the measurement model (CFA) is transformed into the structural model (SEM). The CFA model is transformed into a structural model by drawing the causal paths from independent (*exogenous*) variables to the dependent (*endogenous*) variables. Independent variables are correlated, while error terms (ε) are added to all the

dependent variables. Similarly, error terms are also added to the second-order variables. The initial structural model (model 1) is shown in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6. Initial structural model (model 1)
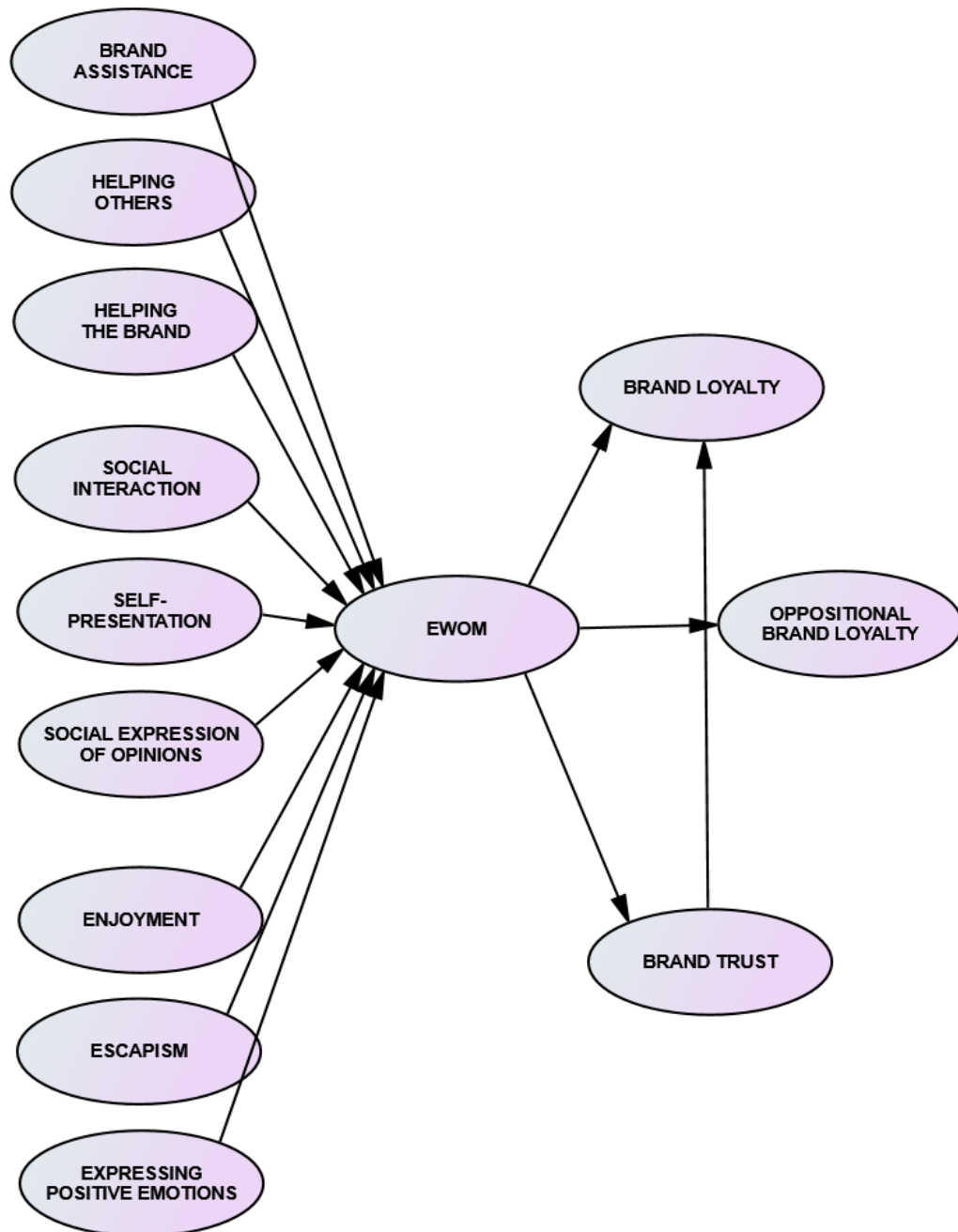
Based on the research hypotheses presented in the conceptual model, the initial model includes 9 exogenous constructs and 4 endogenous constructs which are linked with 13 relationships capturing the research hypotheses. Specifically, following the results of the measurement development and CFA of the full

measurement model addressed in the Chapter 8, one hypothesis was dropped from the statistical analysis. This concerned the relationship between the community advice search (CAS) motivation and OBCeWOM in line with hypothesis 1 (H1). The variable was deleted from the following structural model estimations due to the failed discriminant validity test (discussed in the Chapter 8).

Because the properties of SEM enable concurrent testing of dependence relationships at multiple levels, the focal construct of OBCeWOM sits in the middle of the model being preceded by 9 antecedents and leading to 3 outcomes. To test the structural model, AMOS software was used. Once the model had been drawn and the hypothesised relationships included in the model, it was estimated using the data set of 402 respondents which reflected a randomly split sub-sample of the original sample (N = 652) (the issue of sample split is discussed in the Chapter 7). The structural model has been estimated using The Maximum Likelihood estimation.

To evaluate the model fit, a combination of model fit indices and chi-square statistics were used. The chi-square statistics was evaluated first. Although the chi-square test is significant (CMIN = 3519.142, df = 1541, p = 0.000), potentially signalling poor model fit, the chi-square test alone is not enough to evaluate the model fit, where the significance may indicate sensitivity to the sample size rather than inadequate model (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). Consequently, a combination of comparative and absolute fit indices were also assessed to evaluate the model fit. Specifically, RMSEA (0.057) and CFI (0.902) indicate good model fit, with the TLI values (0.894) just slightly below the recommended cut-off values. Table 22 presents the results of the initial structural model related to its fit parameters.

Table 22. Initial structural model (model 1) - model fit

Model fit indices	Values	Criteria
CMIN	3519.142	the < the better
CMIN/DF	2.284	< 2 – ideal, 2 – 5 – acceptable
TLI	0.894	> 0.9
CFI	0.902	> 0.9 – acceptable, > 0.95 – good
RMSEA	0.057	< 0.08, ideally < 0.05

Overall the initial SEM model is acceptable, and conclusions could be drawn. Overall the tentative results of structural model testing indicate acceptance of 8

of the 13 hypothesized relationships tested at significance level p < 0.05 (Table 23). These include results related to the motivations and outcomes of OBCeWOM. Specifically, the results of the initial structural model show the positive influence of 4 motivations on OBCeWOM – namely, brand assistance, social interaction, social expression of opinions and expressing positive emotions. The positive effect of OBCeWOM on all of the hypothesized outcomes, including brand trust, brand loyalty, and oppositional brand loyalty is also supported. Finally, the model provides support for the positive relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty.

Table 23. Initial structural model (model 1) – results of hypothesis testing

	Hypothesis	S.E. (ß)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	Result
EWOM motivations					
H1	Community advice search → OBCeWOM	Variable dropped from the analysis due to issues with discriminant validity			
H2	Brand assistance → OBCeWOM	0.288	4.686	***	Supported
H3	Helping others → OBCeWOM	-0.072	-1.015	0.310	Rejected
H4	Helping the brand → OBCeWOM	0.123	1.532	0.126	Rejected
H5	Social interaction → eWOM	0.241	3.493	***	Supported
H6	Self-presentation → OBCeWOM	**-0.107**	-2.347	0.019	*Rejected
H7	Social expression of opinions → OBCeWOM	0.381	5.848	***	Supported
H8	Enjoyment → OBCeWOM	0.059	1.388	0.165	Rejected
H9	Escapism → OBCeWOM	**-0.076**	-2.188	0.029	*Rejected
H10	Expressing positive emotions → OBCeWOM	0.181	2.153	0.031	Supported
EWOM outcomes					
H11	OBCeWOM → **Brand trust**	0.361	6.418	***	Supported
H12	OBCeWOM → **Brand loyalty**	0.256	5.689	***	Supported
H13	OBCeWOM → **Oppositional brand loyalty**	0.373	6.830	***	Supported
Other relationships					
H14	Brand trust → **Brand loyalty**	0.622	11.248	***	Supported

*Indicates a negative relationship

9.2.2 Model 2

In addition to the hypothesized structural model, a second model was estimated. The purpose of this model was to test the reversed relationship between OBL and OBCeWOM. This is driven by the limited understanding of the predictors and outcomes of oppositional brand loyalty in the academic research. Specifically, existing research has established a path relationship from brand loyalty to OBCeWOM (Yeh and Choi, 2011; Roy, Lassar and Butaney, 2014; Casidy and Wymer, 2015; 2016; Watson et al., 2015). Whereas oppositional brand loyalty is a largely understudied construct, and it is not clear whether oppositional brand loyalty predicts OBCeWOM.

The modified model 2 includes 10 exogenous and 3 endogenous variables connected by 13 relationships. Similar to the initial model 1, OBCeWOM is positioned in the centre of the model, being preceded by 10 predictors (9 motivations and OBL), and followed by 2 outcomes and a causal relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty. The modified model reflecting the hypothesised relationships and including the reversed relationship from OBL → OBCeWOM is presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Modified structural model (model 2)
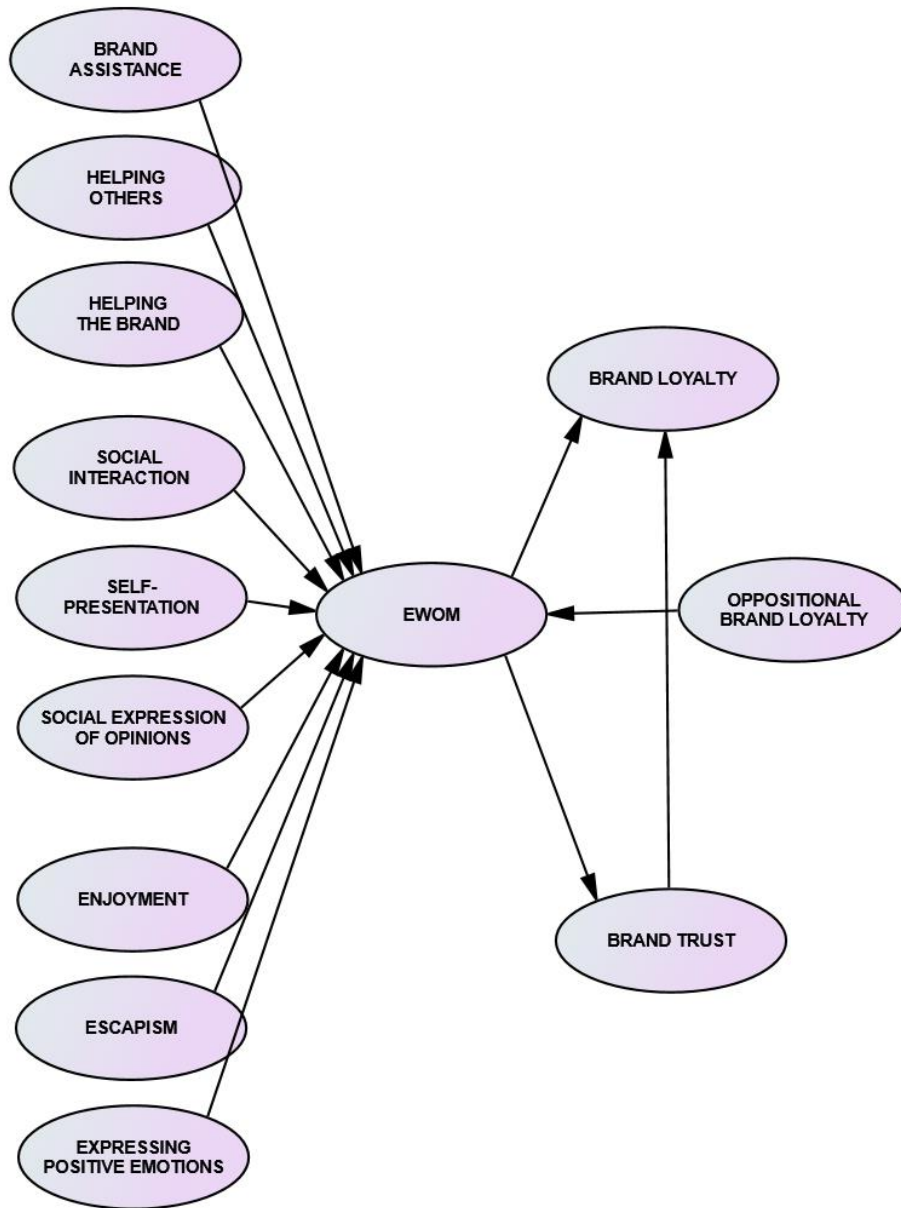
The modified model (model 2) is estimated using the same data set (N = 402). Following the estimation of model 2, it is evaluated using a combination of the chi-square statistics and comparative and absolute fit indices. The results of the model evaluation with regards to its fit and the criteria applied in this research are presented in Table 24. Overall the model fit indices and the chi-square statistics show acceptable levels of model fit. Specifically, although CMIN values are significant (3469.252, df = 1532, p = 0.000) with TLI (0.896) slightly below

the accepted cut-off value, both CFI (0.904) and RMSEA (0.056) indicate adequate model fit.

Table 24. Modified structural model (model 2) – model fit

Model fit indices	Values	Criteria
CMIN	3469.252	the < the better
CMIN/DF	2.265	< 2 – ideal, 2 – 5 – acceptable
TLI	0.896	> 0.9
CFI	0.904	> 0.9 – acceptable, > 0.95 – good
RMSEA	0.056	< 0.08, ideally < 0.05

Following the evaluation of the model fit, the results of the hypothesis testing can be addressed. Specifically, these include 10 predictors and 2 outcomes of eWOM, and 1 additional relationship between brand trust (BT) and brand loyalty (BL) (Table 25).

Table 25.Modified structural model (model 2) - results of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	S.E. (ß)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	Result
OBCeWOM motivations				
Brand assistance → OBCeWOM	0.319	5.059	***	Supported
Helping others → OBCeWOM	-0.033	-0.451	0.652	Rejected
Helping the brand → OBCeWOM	0.110	1.358	0.174	Rejected
Social interaction → OBCeWOM	0.224	3.193	0.001	Supported
Self-presentation → OBCeWOM	**-0.115**	-2.487	0.013	*Rejected
Social expression of opinions → OBCeWOM	0.376	5.714	***	Supported
Enjoyment → OBCeWOM	0.058	1.357	0.175	Rejected
Escapism → OBCeWOM	**-0.083**	-2.392	0.017	*Rejected
Expressing positive emotions → OBCeWOM	0.139	1.599	0.110	Rejected
OBCeWOM outcomes				
OBCeWOM → Brand trust	0.365	6.483	***	Supported
OBCeWOM → Brand loyalty	0.250	5.531	***	Supported
Brand trust → Brand loyalty	0.623	11.233	***	Supported
OBCeWOM antecedent				

Oppositional brand loyalty → OBCeWOM	0.030	0.821	0.412	Rejected

*Indicates a negative relationship

Results of model 2 do not largely deviate from the initial structural model (model 1), with almost all of the same relationships supported. However, contrary to the primary model, the model 2 does not provide support for the *expressing positive emotions* motivation → *OBCeWOM* path. Furthermore, the causal path from *oppositional brand loyalty* to *OBCeWOM* is rejected. This provides further support to the primary structural model (model 1), with oppositional brand loyalty hypothesised and supported as an outcome of *OBCeWOM*, which is consistent with the conceptual model presented in Chapter 6. Therefore, the next step includes the re-evaluation of the model 1 and are discussed in the following section.

9.2.3 Model 3

A closer look at the modification indices reveals that the initial structural model (model 1) can be substantially improved. In particular, the indices suggest estimation of a modified model which includes additional causal relationships. Thereby, the estimation of the current refined model (model 3) is driven by the results of the initial model (model 1). Specifically, the modification indices presented in the output of the SEM model 1 suggest that the model can be improved by adding additional causal relationships. The model is illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Modified structural model (model 3)
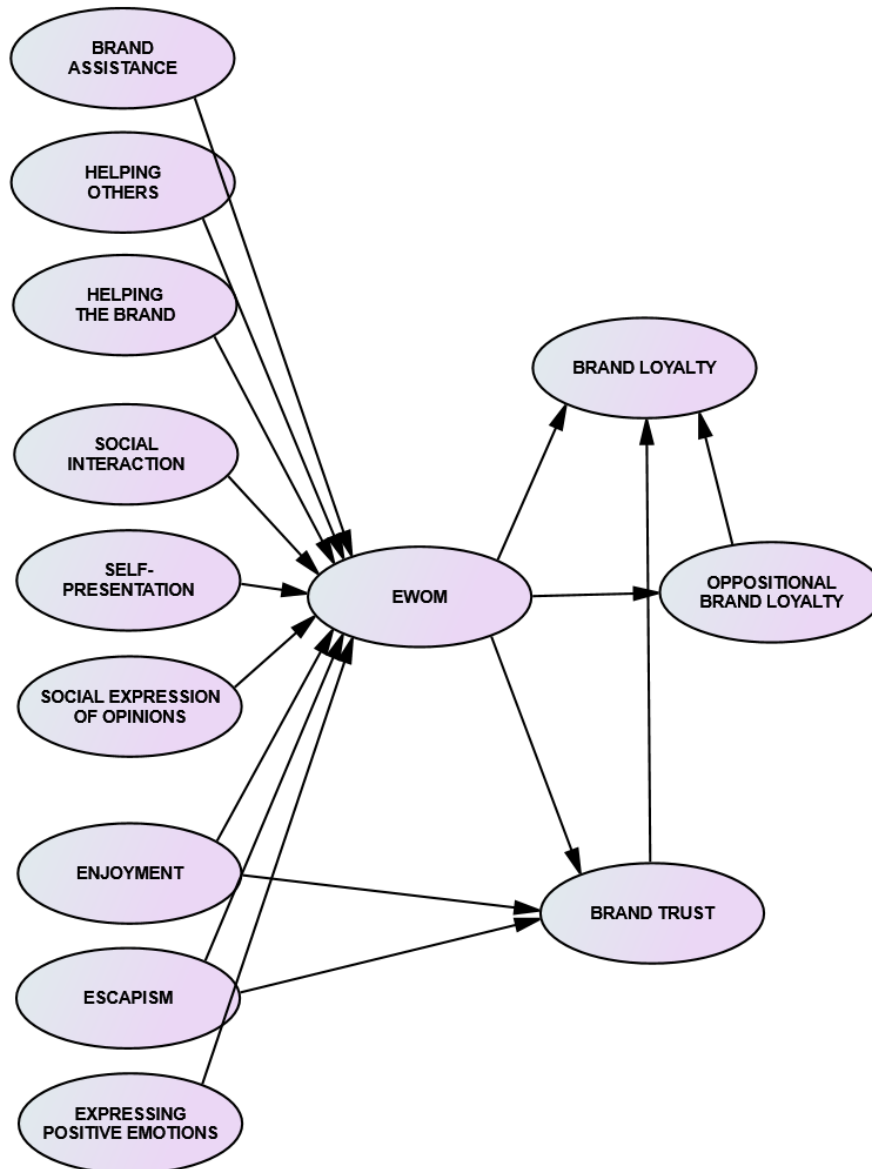
The modified model (model 3) includes 9 exogenous constructs and 4 endogenous constructs which are linked with 16 arrows capturing initial and additional relationships. Similar to the initial structural model (model 1), the modified model presented in the Figure 8 positions OBCeWOM in the centre and proposes 9 predictors and 3 outcomes of OBCeWOM. Additionally, 3 new relationships are added to the model, including a causal link from enjoyment *(ENJ)* and escapism *(ESC)* motivations to brand trust *(BT),* and from oppositional brand loyalty *(OBL)* to brand loyalty *(BL).*

Following the graphical depiction of the model and addition of new relationships, the model is run using the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) on the data same set of 402 respondents. The evaluation of model fit is conducted using chi-square tests (CMIN, CMIN/DF) and absolute (RMSEA) and comparative fit indices (TLI and CFI). The results of model fit of the modified model (model 3) are presented in Table 26.

Table 26. Final structural model (model 3) – model fit, N=402

Model fit indices	Values (N = 402)	Values (N = 250)	Criteria
CMIN	3403.181	2896.953	the < the better
CMIN/DF	2.213	1.884	< 2 – ideal, 2 – 5 – acceptable
TLI	0.900	0.886	> 0.9
CFI	0.907	0.894	> 0.9 – acceptable, > 0.95 – good
RMSEA	0.055	0.060	< 0.08, ideally < 0.05

The refined structural model is characterised by acceptable levels of fit with all of the indices producing satisfactory values. Specifically, although chi-square statistics tests are significant (3403.181, df = 1538, p = 0.000), CFI (0.907), RMSEA (0.055) and TLI (0.900) all produce satisfactory acceptable values. Importantly, the model fit indices in the refined model (model 3), signal improvement to the model fit, compared to the model 1. The model 3 is therefore accepted and treated as the *final* model, regarding which specific conclusions can be drawn concerning the hypothesised relationships.

The regression weights for the model 3 show support for the majority of hypothesised relationships. Results of hypothesis testing show that 11 out of the 16 proposed relationships are significant at the significance level p < 0.05, with 1 relationship receiving marginal support with p < 0.055. Specifically, the causal relationships concern predictors and outcomes of OBCeWOM and 4 additional relationships.

To confirm the validity of the final model, the research involved a cross-validation strategy, where the final model (model 3) was estimated using a separate set of responses (N = 250) (Byrne, 2013). This data set makes up a sub-sample of the main survey sample (N = 652), and it was previously used to develop the measurement scales for the study constructs (addressed in Chapter

8). Specifically, the exact replica of model 3 with 16 hypothesised relationships was reproduced and estimated on the independent second sub-sample.

The evaluation of the absolute and comparative fit indices and chi-square statistics provide partial support for the model fit (Table 26). Specifically, the CMIN values are significant (CMIN = 2896.953, df = 1538, p = 0.000), albeit the chi-square statistics produce improved values compared to the previous run of the model on the first sub-sample. Conversely, CFI (0.894) and TLI (0.886) values are slightly below the recommended cut-off values. Nonetheless, the RMSEA estimates are acceptable (0.060).

9.3 Results of hypothesis testing

The results of estimation of the final model (model 3) using the first (N = 402) and second (N = 250) sub-samples are presented in Table 27. These concern 9 predictors of OBCeWOM, 3 outcomes of OBCeWOM and 4 additional relationships.

Table 27. Final structural model - results of hypothesis testing

|	Hypothesis	Sample 1 (N = 402)				Sample 2 (N = 250)			
		S.E. (ß)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	Result	S.E. (ß)	C.R. (t-value)	P (Significance)	Result
		OBCeWOM motivations							
H1	Community advice search → OBCeWOM	Not tested due to the deletion of community advice search variable							
H2	Brand assistance → OBCeWOM	0.284	4.555	***	Supported	0.183	2.178	0.029	Supported
H3	Helping others → OBCeWOM	-0.042	-0.575	0.565	Rejected	0.178	1.710	0.087	Rejected
H4	Helping the brand → OBCeWOM	0.102	1.247	0.212	Rejected	0.072	0.565	0.572	Rejected
H5	Social interaction → OBCeWOM	0.242	3.452	***	Supported	0.013	0.102	0.919	Rejected
H6	Self-presentation → OBCeWOM	-0.114	-2.448	0.014	*Rejected	-0.136	-1.921	0.055	*Rejected
H7	Social expression of opinions → OBCeWOM	0.402	6.032	***	Supported	0.351	3.111	0.002	Supported
H8	Enjoyment → OBCeWOM	0.024	0.553	0.580	Rejected	0.038	0.550	0.582	Rejected
H9	Escapism → OBCeWOM	-0.051	-1.459	0.145	Rejected	-0.024	-0.392	0.695	Rejected
H10	Expressing positive emotions → OBCeWOM	0.164	1.917	0.055	**Supported	0.331	2.495	0.013	Supported
		OBCeWOM outcomes							
H11	OBCeWOM → Brand trust	0.180	2.871	0.004	Supported	0.191	2.238	0.025	Supported
H12	OBCeWOM → Brand loyalty	0.131	3.052	0.002	Supported	0.090	1.466	0.143	Rejected
H13	OBCeWOM → Oppositional brand loyalty	0.362	6.627	***	Supported	0.393	5.496	***	Supported
		Other relationships							
H14	Brand trust → Brand loyalty	0.654	12.983	***	Supported	0.691	9.501	***	Supported
N/A	Oppositional brand loyalty → Brand loyalty	0.290	7.058	***	Supported	0.252	4.691	***	Supported
N/A	Escapism → Brand trust	-0.304	-5.782	***	*Supported	-0.258	-3.883	***	*Supported
N/A	Enjoyment → Brand trust	0.397	6.362	***	Supported	0.568	6.804	***	Supported

*Indicates negative relationship; ** Supported at p <0.055

9.3.1 OBCeWOM motivations (H2 – H10)

The first group of hypotheses concerns the predictors of OBCeWOM reflected in 9 proposed OBCeWOM motivations. The majority of relationships are significant, albeit including both positive and negative effects. Specifically, when tested on the first sample (N = 402), out of the 9 motivations tested in the structural model 4 variables have a positive effect on OBCeWOM in line with the proposed hypotheses, whereas 1 variable has a negative effect on OBCeWOM. Results of model estimation on the second sample (N = 250) almost fully correspond to the findings of the first sample, supporting 3 of the hypothesised relationships concerning OBCeWOM motivations and producing 1 negative causal relationship.

Specifically, results of model estimation provide support for the H2 (sig < 0.001), H7 (sig < 0.001) and H10 (sig < 0.055). This is confirmed by estimating the relationships using the first and second sub-samples. Additionally, support is provided for the H5 (sig < 0.001) when estimated on the first sub-sample. Albeit estimation of the model on the second sub-sample does not evidence a significant relationship. Thereby, the results of hypothesis testing concerning OBCeWOM motivations establish that brand community OBCeWOM is significantly and positively affected by the following consumer motivations: brand assistance, social interaction (partial support), social expression of opinions and expressing positive emotions. Results of hypothesis testing also indicate that consumers' motivation to socially express opinions is the strongest predictor of OBCeWOM (ß = 0.402 / ß = 0.351) in both first and second sub-samples.

The results of model estimation, however, did not provide support for the H3, H4, H8 and H9, where the significance levels were above the cut-off value of 0.05. Thereby, results of hypothesis testing estimated on both samples suggest that helping others, helping the brand, enjoyment, and escapism motivations do not have an effect on OBCeWOM communication. Furthermore albeit H6 had acceptable significance levels in both samples (sig < 0.05 / sig < 0.055) the relationship between the self-presentation motivation and OBCeWOM was found to be negative, thus rejecting H6.

9.3.2 OBCeWOM outcomes (H11 – H13)

The estimation of the structural model on the first and second sub-samples offer partial support for the relationships between OBCeWOM and outcome variables. Results of hypothesis testing on the first sample indicate acceptance of all hypotheses concerning the outcomes of OBCeWOM. Specifically, H11 and H12 are supported at significance levels sig < 0.05, and H13 is confirmed at sig < 0.001. Nonetheless, when estimated on the second sample, only H11, and H13 are accepted at sig < 0.05 and sig < 0.001 respectfully. This result provides only partial support to H12 via the first sample. Thus, the results of hypothesis testing confirm the significant positive effect of OBCeWOM on brand trust, brand loyalty (partial support) and oppositional brand loyalty. The data analysis also indicates that OBCeWOM has the strongest effect on oppositional brand loyalty (ß = 0.362 / ß = 0.393), followed by brand trust (ß = 0.180 / ß = 0.191) and finally brand loyalty on the first sub-sample (ß = 0.131).

9.3.3 Additional relationships

The estimation of the structural model also offers support for 4 separate relationships on both first and second sub-samples. Specifically, in line with the proposed conceptual model, H14 is supported at sig < 0.001. Thereby the analysis confirms a strong positive relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty (ß = 0.654 / ß = 0.691) for the first and second samples respectfully.

Furthermore, results of the final model estimation evidence 3 additional relationships (drawn during the model refinement process). As such, the data indicates the existence of a positive relationship between oppositional brand loyalty and brand loyalty, enjoyment motivation and brand trust, and a negative relationship between escapism motivation and brand trust. All relationships are significant at sig < 0.001. The discussion and implications of the findings are provided in the following chapter.

9.4 Chapter summary

This chapter was dedicated to the results of the final analytical phase of this research – Study 3. It has estimated and compared three structural models. The final model was characterised by the satisfactory model fit and was accepted for testing of the proposed causal relationships between variables. This procedure included estimation of the model on two sub-samples for cross-validation of the model. As such, Study 3 has confirmed the positive influence of brand assistance, social interaction, social expression of opinions and expressing positive emotions motivations on OBCeWOM. The positive influence of OBCeWOM on all of the predicted outcome variables was also supported. Study 3 thereby evidenced the positive impact of OBCeWOM on the individuals' trust, loyalty, and oppositional brand loyalty. Furthermore, the analysis revealed additional significant relationships between several study constructs.

Chapter 10: Discussion

10.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the study in the context of past literature. In doing so, it answers the research questions posed at the beginning of the thesis. Specifically, this chapter analyses how the findings of the current research relate to the existing state of knowledge on eWOM and OBC. To answer the identified research questions, the findings of all three studies conducted in this research are scrutinised. The chapter is divided into several sections, related to the three research questions, and to the discussion of additional findings revealed in the Study 3. Specifically, the chapter is structured as follows: first, RQ1 is addressed, including the overview of dimensionality and measurement of eWOM in the OBC context. Next, RQ2 is answered, where the identified motivations for OBCeWOM are addressed. This is followed by the discussion of RQ3 related to the identified outcomes of OBCeWOM. Finally, additional findings identified in the Study 3 are scrutinised.

10.2 Discussion of research questions and hypotheses

10.2.1 RQ1: What is the nature of eWOM in the context of OBC?

The first research question concerned the focal concept of this study – OBCeWOM. This was driven by several considerations. First, existing research has indicated the multiplicity of approaches to the operationalisation and measurement of eWOM, including studies measuring eWOM valence (e.g. Dellarocas, Zhang and Awad, 2007; Babic et al., 2015), the frequency of platform visits (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), or for example approaching the construct as an intention to share one's product or service experiences with others online (Cheung and Lee, 2012). This is furthermore associated with a multitude of online platforms where eWOM takes place and is studied, thus

further leading to the differences in the way it is approached conceptually. Secondly, to date, only a limited number of studies have focused on eWOM in the OBC environment, with even fewer studies looking into specific social media-based OBCs. Meanwhile, it is well accepted in the academic literature that a wealth of brand-related consumer interactions takes place in the OBC context (Relling et al., 2016). Concurrently, a growing stream of research looks into individuals' engagement in the OBC (Baldus et al., 2015; Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015; 2016), with studies addressing eWOM as a micro-element of behavioural OBC engagement (Hatzithomas et al., 2016). Despite the growing academic interest in the phenomenon, there is still limited focus on OBCeWOM as a focal construct in these studies, thus necessitating clarification of its conceptual boundaries. Finally, despite the wealth of academic research on eWOM in various contexts, the constantly evolving nature of the social media further requires ongoing exploration of eWOM's nature in this environment.

Study 1 (semi-structured interviews) and Study 2 (measurement development) were set to answer RQ1: *What is the nature of eWOM in the context of OBC?* The key findings from the two studies confirm that OBCeWOM is a multi-dimensional construct which encompasses both passive and active components. Furthermore, this multidimensional nature may be captured empirically, and Study 2 proposes a new measurement scale for the construct to capture the specifics of the OBC and social media environment.

First, results of the exploratory interviews with members of OBCs see to support findings in a stream of existing research which acknowledges that eWOM may be conceptualised as comprising three dimensions – reading, posting and sharing information (Chu and Choi, 2011; Chu and Kim, 2011; Yeh and Choi, 2011). Although eWOM has been previously approached as a three-dimensional construct in several studies looking separately in the social media (e.g. Chu and Kim, 2011), and on the bulletin boards OBC context (Yeh and Choi, 2011), to the researcher's best knowledge, this is the first study that specifically focuses on the nature of eWOM in the social media-based OBC context.

The three dimensions of eWOM in OBCs warrant consideration. *OBCeWOM reading* as a passive component of eWOM resonates well with existing eWOM research that identifies advice (Toder-Alon, Brunel and Fournier, 2014) or

opinion seeking (Chu and Kim, 2011; Lopez and Sicilia, 2014) as one of the core components of eWOM. Reading OBCeWOM constitutes passive consumption of consumer-generated communication within the OBC, similar to the concept of 'lurking' in the online community (Yang, Li and Huang, 2016) and OBC research (Madupu and Cooley, 2010). Madupu and Cooley (2010) further argue that lurking is a valuable part of OBC participation, where active lurkers still engage in WOM by passing on the information from the community to the other avenues.

The second conceptual dimension, *OBCeWOM posting,* represents an active component of eWOM, which involves contributing information within the boundaries of the community. This supports existing research identifying opinion giving (Lopez and Sicilia, 2014) or advice giving (Toder-Alon, Brunel and Fournier, 2014) as an essential component of eWOM communication. This involves both communication directed at other OBC members, as well as information directed at brands, as comments and posts made publicly on the OBC become visible to a large number of individuals within and outside the community. This research thus accepts the view communicated by Chatterjee (2011) who acknowledges that eWOM may be directed at other consumers as well as at firms. Current research further argues that by virtue of being generated by individuals, and being visible to the other members of the community, public comments about the brand and addressed to the brand within the OBC form an important aspect of OBCeWOM highlighted in the Study 1, and which as discussed further may have a significant impact on the other members of the OBC. Highlighting this aspect of OBCeWOM is also deemed appropriate and in line with the most widely accepted definition of eWOM by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004). Previously Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan (2008, p. 462) have discussed that eWOM includes information exchange between consumers and producers, albeit acknowledging it as "communication directed at consumers".

Finally, *OBCeWOM sharing* involves spreading the information outside of the community to one's social network. Results of the interviews uncover additional complexities around this component of the theoretical concept and show that sharing can be both intentional and unintentional, as well as can be initiated both publicly and privately. Specifically, intentional sharing of OBCeWOM involves the conscious transfer of OBCeWOM from the community to the outside environment, such as by publicly posting the content on one's timeline, or

privately sending a message to a friend on the SNS. Unintentional sharing is an unconscious activity enabled largely by the specifics of the SNS, where brand community members' posts become visible both to the other members of the community, as well as potentially non-members by virtue of them being 'connected' to the poster. Albeit the latter also arguably forms an aspect of posting dimension of OBCeWOM and as regards the measurement of OBCeWOM, it is captured under the posting dimension.

The results of Study 2 provide a significant headway with regards to the operationalisation of eWOM within the OBC context. The new measurement captures the multi-dimensional character of eWOM and its specifics within the OBCs embedded in social media. Specifically, results of the interviews are supported by the findings of EFA, necessitating the split of active OBCeWOM into two components – posting and sharing. This is also confirmed by results of the CFA. Furthermore, the measures are characterised by strong psychometric properties, including having satisfied several internal consistency tests, and assessment of face, content, convergent and discriminant validity. Using extensive procedures, the study proposes and validates empirical operationalisation of OBCeWOM scale, where the construct is measured as a second-order latent construct consisting of three dimensions.

10.2.2 RQ2: What are OBC members' motivations to engage in eWOM communication within the community?

The second research question concerned antecedents of OBCeWOM. This was driven by several considerations and gaps in the eWOM and OBC literature. First, although existing research offers a variety of possible motives for eWOM engagement, it is usually limited to either passive (e.g. Khammash and Griffiths, 2010; Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014) or active eWOM (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Abrantes et al., 2013), thus neglecting the complex nature of eWOM communication, where individuals may simultaneously take up several roles in eWOM (Toder-Alon, Brunel and Fournier, 2014). Secondly, most research to date has focused on eWOM outside of the OBC context, such as for instance SNS, online forums or opinion platforms not dedicated to specific brands (e.g. Hennig-

Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015). Concurrently, there is limited understanding of what drives OBC members to engage in eWOM, where existing research shows that motivations for eWOM differ depending on the media platform chosen by individuals (Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015).

To answer RQ2 two studies were employed – Study 1 (exploratory) and Study 3 (confirmatory). In Study 1, the answer involved themes emerging from qualitative interviews. Following the analysis of the results of the Study 1 (presented in Chapter 5), these exploratory findings were tested in the confirmatory setting in the Study 3. The sections below discuss the exploratory and confirmatory results in more detail.

Exploratory findings presented in the Chapters 5 provide initial and tentative evidence concerning important relationships between OBCeWOM and its antecedents. Specifically, results of the Study 1 suggest that OBC members engage in eWOM driven by 10 motivations. These include 4 functional motives, including community advice search, receiving brand assistance, helping others and helping the brand. Additionally, OBC members can be driven by 3 socially-oriented motives, such as social interaction, self-presentation and social expression of opinions. Finally, Study 1 also showed that OBCeWOM could be caused by entertainment-related motivations, such as enjoyment, escapism and expressing positive emotions.

These tentative relationships are further examined in Study 3. In this part of the thesis, exploratory findings and theoretical insights from the literature review have been formalised into an empirical model and tested using the quantitative data (discussed in Chapter 9). The results of hypothesis testing related to eWOM motivations are presented in Table 28.

The findings include both supported and rejected hypotheses. Additionally, whereas the conceptual model provided in Chapter 6 included 10 unique motivational constructs, only 9 were tested in the empirical model discussed in Chapter 9. This was driven by the results of the measurement development and evaluation in Study 2, which failed to provide support for the discriminant validity of the community advice search motivation. Consequently, the

associated hypothesis (H1) was removed from the further analysis and was not tested in the confirmatory stage (Study 3). All other relationships concerning OBCeWOM motivations (reflected in H2 – H10) are discussed separately in the following sections. In this part results of hypothesis testing on two samples are discussed.

Table 28. Results of hypothesis testing – motivations for OBCeWOM

Motivations		Result	
		N=402	N=250
H2	Brand community members' brand assistance motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.	Supported	Supported
H3	Brand community members' motivation to help others in the community is positively related to OBCeWOM.	Rejected	Rejected
H4	Brand community members' motivation to help the brand is positively related to OBCeWOM.	Rejected	Rejected
H5	Brand community members' social interaction motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.	Supported	Rejected
H6	Brand community members' self-representation motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.	*Rejected	*Rejected
H7	Brand community members' social expression of opinions motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.	Supported	Supported
H8	Brand community members' enjoyment motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.	Rejected	Rejected
H9	Brand community members' escapism motivation is positively related to OBCeWOM.	Rejected	Rejected
H10	Brand community members' motivation to express positive emotions is positively related to OBCeWOM.	Supported	Supported

*Indicates negative relationship

10.2.2.1 Brand assistance → OBCeWOM

Results of hypothesis testing in Study 3 confirm the positive relationship between brand assistance motivation and OBC members' eWOM communication. This is reflected in the results of model testing on two samples – the first sample (N = 402) adopted for model estimation, and the second sample (N = 250) applied for cross-validation of the model using a separate set of responses. Importantly, results of hypothesis testing indicate that brand assistance is the third strongest predictor of eWOM in the OBC.

This finding has important implication for the existing research. Specifically, to the researcher's best knowledge, the current study is the first to offer empirical support to the impact of brand assistance motivation on OBCeWOM. The existence of brand assistance motivation is indicated in the findings from the semi-structured interviews (Study 1), which tentatively show that brand community members engage in OBCeWOM to look for assistance and support from the brand on the OBC page; and are further confirmed by the analysis of the analytical survey results (Study 3).

There can be several explanations for this relationship. First, the prominence of this driver may be rooted in the specifics of the chosen research setting. Specifically, the current study has focused on the commercial or company-managed Facebook-based OBCs, where brand community members may engage in interaction with other members, and also with the brand's representatives, thus enabling the existence of this motivational factor. Existing research on eWOM motivations has previously largely focused on very different contexts, such as online opinion platforms (Hennig-Thurau and Walsch, 2003; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), online communities (Labsomboonsiri, Mathews and Luck, 2014) or travel review sites (Yoo and Gretzel, 2008) for instance. Future research could further look into this relationship within a different context beyond SNS, such as online communities or forums.

Secondly, this finding overall fits well with the evidence from the existing research on eWOM. Specifically, previous research has theorised platform assistance (or receiving support from the administrator of the online platform) as a predictive factor of eWOM communication (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015). Albeit existing studies provide conflicting empirical evidence regarding the impact of this motive on eWOM. For example, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) have found a negative relationship between platform assistance motivation and eWOM behaviour as measured by frequency of platform visits, and no significant relationship between platform assistance and number of comments written (a second variable measuring eWOM). Although the contradiction in findings can be associated with the measurement of eWOM, where this study has used self-reported measures of OBCeWOM communication composed of three different dimensions, including reading, posting and sharing eWOM as opposed to estimating the frequency of

visits and the number of posts. Nonetheless, evidence from more recent research is aligned with this study, providing support to the existence of a positive relationship between platform assistance and eWOM thus suggesting that individuals are motivated to post eWOM on online opinion platforms looking for support from the platform administrators (Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015).

10.2.2.2 Helping others → OBCeWOM

Unexpectedly, the relationship between one's motivation to help others and their OBCeWOM communication has not received support in the Study 3. The relationship was disconfirmed when tested on the first (N = 402) and second (N = 250) samples.

This result is surprising for several reasons. First, results of Study 1 have indicated that brand community members could be driven to engage in OBCeWOM to help others in the community as well as outside its boundaries within one's broader social network. Secondly, the lack of support for this hypothesis also contradicts the evidence from previous research on eWOM motivations, discussing one's motivation to help others or one's concern for other consumers as one of the primary drivers of eWOM (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Yoo and Gretzel, 2008; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Yang, 2013; Yen and Tang, 2015).

There may be several explanations for these contradictory findings. First, the lack of support for this relationship in the Study 3 may be associated with the fact that 'helping others' motivation was focused on the members of the OBC rather than on one's social network. Previous research showed that members of brand communities may be characterised by very limited interaction with each other, as well as little knowledge about one another (Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo, 2004; Sicilia and Palazon, 2008). Thus, it is possible that brand community members may experience weak social ties towards other members of the group (Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014). However, individuals may perceive stronger social ties towards non-members of the community but who

belong to their social network. Future research should compare the impact of motivation to help others on eWOM among individuals with strong and weak ties.

Secondly, none of the identified studies has looked into this motivation in the OBC context and how it relates to eWOM about a particular brand. For example, previous research has focused on eWOM between members of online opinion platforms dedicated to different products and services (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), eWOM in the form of travel reviews (Yoo and Gretzel, 2008; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011), or reviews of restaurants (Jeong and Jang, 2011). Thus, previous works largely discuss the situation from an individual perspective, where a consumer chooses to individually post their views about a product or a service outside of the community environment. The group dynamics in the OBC may create a different atmosphere that limits this driver for eWOM, where there may simply be fewer enquiries from other members or less appeal to help others. Contrary to the OBCs, the purpose of travel review websites, as well as online opinion platforms is for individuals to leave their views about companies, thereby bringing more prominence to this motivation.

Another reason for this finding may be associated with a different measurement of OBCeWOM in this research. Specifically, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) have measured eWOM with two variables – frequency of platform visits and a number of posts. Whereas this study has conceptualised OBCeWOM as a three-dimensional construct consisting of a passive dimension (reading), and two active dimensions (posting and sharing).

Furthermore, this study adopts a different measurement for the 'helping others' motivational factor. Whereas previous research has largely conceptualised this motivation as 'concern for others' and used statements with negative connotations that implied a negative experience with a product, including such words as 'warn' or 'save others' (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015). Contrary to the mentioned studies, this project has chosen to use neutrally valenced statements to measure this factor, approaching it as 'helping others'. It is also possible that individuals are more driven to help others when they have had a negative experience with the brand, which may be very rarely the case in the OBC, where traditionally individuals exhibit positive feelings towards the brand (Banerjee and Banerjee, 2015).

10.2.2.3 Helping the brand → OBCeWOM

The relationship between 'helping the brand' motivation and OBCeWOM communication did not receive confirmation in the Study 3. This result thereby does not support the findings from the qualitative Study 1 that evidences that OBC members engage in eWOM to help the brand they follow. The relationship is disconfirmed when estimated on two separate samples (N = 402, N = 250).

The lack of support for this hypothesis is also somewhat unexpected. Albeit this study is in line with the research by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) who have also failed to find support for the effect of this factor on eWOM in the context of online opinion platforms. Further studies nonetheless have provided evidence that individuals engage in eWOM in order to help the company with which they have had a good experience, thus promoting the brand and talking positively about it to others (Yoo and Gretzel, 2008; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Jeong and Jang, 2011; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015). For example, previous studies have identified that one of the reasons for vacationers to post eWOM is helping the travel company (Bronner and de Hoog, 2011). Similarly, Jeong and Jang (2011) have found that positive restaurant experiences encourage individuals to engage in eWOM to help the restaurant.

One of the reasons for the lack of relationship between one's motive to help the company and their OBCeWOM communication may be methodological. Specifically, previous research addressing this motivational factor has primarily focused on its effect on the active eWOM component, thus discussing that individuals' motive to help the company is positively related to eWOM posting (e.g. Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Jeong and Jang, 2011). In this research however eWOM has been measured as also consisting of a passive component, which may not be as affected by this motivation as active eWOM. In fact, previous research explains 'helping the company' motivation through the equity theory, discussing that individuals who are satisfied with a service may be willing to repay the service provider by providing positive eWOM about it (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Yoo and Gretzel, 2008). Thus it is possible that OBC members who wish to help the brand will be more likely to engage in active OBCeWOM by posting or sharing information about the brand.

Furthermore, the fact that the two motivations – helping others and helping the brand have been only supported in the Study 1 could be attributed to the differences in OBCs investigated. For example, recently Relling et al. (2016) have identified two types of OBCs – functional-goal, and social-goal communities, related to the participation aims of OBC members. It is possible that the majority of participants of Study 3 do not consider themselves belonging to functional-goal communities, and are thus to a lesser extent driven by information-related motivations. Future research should compare the importance of different motivations in different types of brand communities. It would also be interesting to specifically focus on the functional-goal communities and address the importance of each of the information-related motivations in generating eWOM.

10.2.2.4 Social interaction → OBCeWOM

The positive impact of social interaction motivation on OBCeWOM is partially confirmed in the Study 3. Specifically, whereas the results of hypothesis testing on the first sample (N = 402) support the positive relationship between social interaction and OBCeWOM, the validation of the empirical model on the second sample (N = 250) has failed to confirm the hypothesized path. The result on the second data set is unexpected and may be associated with the distribution of brand communities in the sample, where potentially a larger part of respondents reported membership in the functional-goal communities. Because of the random splitting of the main sample (N = 652) into two sub-samples discussed in Chapter 7, it is possible that certain variations in the brand community memberships have contributed to the differences detected in the two sub-samples. Future research should further estimate the relationship between the social interaction motivation and OBCeWOM by focusing on a single brand community, or alternatively on a single brand community type.

Nonetheless, the partial result further enhances the findings of Study 1 that identify social interaction as the second strongest predictor of OBCeWOM. Furthermore, this result fits well with the existing literature on motivations for

eWOM communication (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Abrantes et al., 2013; Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015) and OBC participation (Sicilia and Palazon, 2008).

Specifically, the dual support in the semi-structured interviews and in the analytical survey is in agreement with previous research identifying social interaction (Abrantes et al., 2013) and anticipated social benefits (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015) as potent motivational factors of eWOM. Furthermore, previous research has identified that eWOM communication can be driven by one's need to make friends (Oberhofer, Fuller and Hofmann, 2014). Results of this research are also aligned with the literature on social media that identify one's need for socialisation as an important driver of social media participation (Park, Kee and Valenzuela, 2009; Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011; Whiting and Williams, 2013) and also more specifically brand page engagement (Jahn and Kunz, 2012).

The particular prominence of social interaction motivation for eWOM in the OBC is also anticipated. Brand community literature stresses the social bonds that are often developed between the members of the group (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Hickman and Ward, 2007; Ouwersloot and Odekerken-Schroeder, 2008). Indeed, recent research also evidences the existence of social-goal communities, where individuals are primarily interested in social connections and communication with others (Relling et al., 2016). The embeddedness of OBCs within the SNS environment may especially contribute to the power of the social factor in inducing eWOM, where brand communities and one's social network may often overlap, potentially somewhat blurring the boundaries between the community and the rest of the social network. This finding advances the existing research on OBC and eWOM by evidencing the direct relationship between the social interaction motivation and OBCeWOM in the social media-based OBC setting.

10.2.2.5 Social expression of opinions → OBCeWOM

Results of hypothesis testing also confirm the positive relationship between the social expression of opinions motivation and OBCeWOM communication. This finding thereby supports the results of Study 1 that evidence that OBC members

are motivated to engage in eWOM communication in order to express their opinions about matters related to the brand, or perceived important issues discussed in the community. Importantly, results of hypothesis testing also indicate that social expression of opinions is the strongest predictor OBCeWOM. This effect is confirmed when estimated on both samples.

The prominence of this motivation in the OBC environment may be associated with several issues. First, previous research suggests that brand community members are often heterogeneous (Royo-Vela and Casamassima, 2011; Tsai and Men, 2013), and even though they share an interest in the same brand, their individual differences may inevitably result in varying opinions regarding the issues discussed in the community. Secondly, the specific context of investigation may be especially conducive to the strong support for this factor. Specifically, brand communities studied in this research are embedded in the social media environment. It is possible, that due to the interconnectedness of OBCs with the members' individual profiles on the SNS, OBC members are even more motivated to choose the OBC context, as they will potentially reach even a bigger audience – including the other brand community members, as well as their broader social network. Additionally, this finding also sits well with the previous research which evidences that individual's involvement with social media is largely related to the need to communicate one's views to others (Whiting and Williams, 2013).

Concurrently, it is also possible that the influence of this factor on OBCeWOM may be even stronger in certain types of communities, such as in OBCs dedicated to sports teams or political brands. Results from the Study 1 for example evidence the relevance of this motivation in the context of brand communities associated with football teams. Building on this finding, future research should compare the influence of the social expression of opinions motivation on eWOM in OBCs within different brand categories.

This finding advances existing research by evidencing the positive impact of a previously largely neglected motivation for OBCeWOM. Specifically, whereas Stephen and Lehmann (2009) have previously evidenced that individuals transmit eWOM driven by the need to share their opinions with others, to the researcher's

best knowledge, the current study is the first to empirically evidence the strong impact of this motive in the OBC setting.

10.2.2.6 Self-presentation → OBCeWOM

Possibly one of the most intriguing findings within the social group of motives concerns self-presentation motivation. First, the hypothesis concerning the positive relationship between the self-presentation motivation and OBCeWOM is rejected. On the contrary, results of the Study 3 illustrate a significant albeit *negative* relationship between one's need for self-presentation and OBCeWOM. This result means that the stronger one's willingness to present themselves in a specific way and communicate one's preferred image, the less they engage in OBCeWOM. This outcome of hypothesis testing is mirrored on both sub-samples (N = 402, N = 250).

The negative relationship between self-presentation and OBCeWOM is surprising. Specifically, existing eWOM research identifies self-enhancement as an important driver of eWOM (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), where eWOM may be triggered by one's need to be viewed as having knowledge or expertise in a particular product. Furthermore, it was anticipated that the effect of self-presentation motivation on OBCeWOM in this study would be similarly positive, such as the previously identified impact of one's reputation building motivation on eWOM (Cheung and Lee, 2012).

This finding provides interesting implications for the existing research. Overall although somewhat unexpected from a theoretical perspective, this finding may be rooted in the specific nature of the embedded brand communities. The overlap between one's profile on the SNS and their brand community membership creates an open environment with less prominent boundaries between the two contexts. In practice, this creates a situation where it may be challenging to limit the audience of one's OBCeWOM communication, as when generated within an OBC posts may be potentially visible to individuals outside of the community. The need for self-presentation thereby may be balanced by one's need for privacy, potentially diminishing the desire to engage in OBCeWOM.

Evidence from the Study 1 illustrates that brand community members are often very conscious of their OBCeWOM activity, and the contents and sentiment of their communication in OBCs, understanding their embedded nature within social media environment. Appreciating that OBCeWOM activity in Facebook brand communities can be potentially visible to a large network of individuals within and beyond the community; individuals are consciously selective of what they are willing to transmit to their social network. Furthermore, results from the Study 1 have revealed that OBC members are often concerned about how they are perceived by others, and what kind of image they are projecting when they share and leave comments about brands on the OBC pages.

Building on these arguments, future research should look into the effect of one's need for privacy and their OBCeWOM communication, and the relationship between privacy and self-presentation motivations.

10.2.2.7 Enjoyment → OBCeWOM

Finally, Study 1 has uncovered several motivations grouped under the entertainment category, including enjoyment, escapism and expressing positive emotions. Nonetheless, Study 3 has provided conflicting results regarding several entertainment motivations.

Specifically, Study 1 has indicated that members of OBC engage in OBCeWOM for *enjoyment* reasons, perceiving OBCeWOM as a fun and pleasurable experience. Evidence from the qualitative study further suggests that individuals take pleasure from reading eWOM posted on the OBC especially when it involves conflicting opinions or even more so funny negative comments. This finding is in agreement with the previous eWOM research, discussing that individuals engage in eWOM to enhance their mood (Abrantes et al., 2013) and achieve enjoyment (Okazaki, 2009; Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015).

Results of Study 1 also resonate well with the literature on social media and online communities. Specifically, findings of the Study 1 are in line with existing research discussing that individuals use social media for enjoyment reasons (Bronner and de Hoog, 2010), and are more likely to share content that is

entertaining or amusing for others (Taylor, Strutton and Thompson, 2012). Furthermore, it relates well to the online community literature which evidences that community members are interested in receiving entertainment value through participation (Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo, 2004).

Nonetheless, contrary to the findings from the semi-structured interviews with OBC members and evidence from the previous research, the positive relationship between enjoyment motivation and OBCeWOM did not receive support in the Study 3. This hypothesised path was disconfirmed when estimated separately on the first and second sub-samples.

There may be several explanations for this outcome. First, it is possible that the influence of enjoyment motivation on OBCeWOM depends on the type of OBC. For example, this motivation may be more relevant in the OBCs dedicated to entertainment brands, such as online games, or communities that use humour and entertainment to engage their members (Sicilia and Palazon, 2008).

Furthermore, it is possible that the social dynamics within the group may encourage or diminish the entertainment function of OBCeWOM, setting the tone of communication and interactions in the OBC. The relationships between the members and the strength of ties in the community, as well as the extent of members' knowledge about one another, may similarly result in different nature of their interactions and manner of communication. It is possible that investigating the influence of this motivation in 'friendship' or small-group brand communities (Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo, 2004) may yield different results.

Finally, this study has focused on the company-managed OBCs. Future research should investigate the influence of enjoyment motivation on OBCeWOM within enthusiast-run OBCs, with a potential for a comparison study between the two.

10.2.2.8 Escapism → OBCeWOM

Study 1 has also indicated that brand community members may be interested in engaging in OBCeWOM to escape from other responsibilities and worries. This extends the evidence from existing eWOM literature that discusses an indirect effect of escapism on eWOM (Abrantes et al., 2013). Results of Study 1 also fit

well with the UGT literature that identifies escapism as a prominent driver of both traditional and new media consumption (Grant, 2005; Hall-Phillips et al., 2016).

Nonetheless, despite the findings of the semi-structured interviews and evidence from existing research regarding the indirect effect of escapism on in-group and out-group eWOM (Abrantes et al., 2013), the hypothesis concerning the positive relationship between escapism motivation and OBCeWOM was not supported. This result was mirrored when estimated on two separate sub-samples. The lack of support for the positive impact of escapism on OBCeWOM in the Study 3 may have several explanations, associated with the specifics of methodology and sampling design.

First, the outcome of hypothesis testing may be methodological. Specifically, the conflicting finding may be related to the fact that OBCeWOM has been approached in this research as consisting of three components, including passive OBCeWOM (reading), as well as active OBCeWOM (posting and sharing). Concurrently, previous research discusses escapism as a driver of media consumption such as TV viewing (Henning and Vorderer, 2001) or reading news (Diddi and LaRose, 2006), whereas Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011) find that escapism only drives consumption of brand-related content, and not playing a role in driving the creation of and contribution to the brand-related content. Thereby past research stresses the importance of escapism in driving passive online and offline consumer behaviour.

Furthermore, this finding may be related to the differences in the OBC types, as this study has looked into OBCs across multiple brand categories. It is possible that certain OBCs may be more conducive to the escapism aspect of OBCeWOM. For example, previous research has indicated that members of a gaming brand community appreciate the escapism aspect of playing the game (Cova, Pace and Park, 2007). Future research could test the relationship between escapism motivation and eWOM in different types of OBCs.

10.2.2.9 Expressing positive emotions → OBCeWOM

Finally, the last hypothesis within the entertainment group of motivations has been supported in both sub-samples samples. Specifically, Study 3 has confirmed the positive influence of expressing positive emotions motivation on OBCeWOM. This finding further strengthens the evidence from the Study 1 that indicates that OBC members satisfy the need to share their excitement about the brand by engaging in OBCeWOM.

This finding resonates well with the existing offline and online WOM research. Thereby, results of this study are in accordance with the literature on traditional (offline) WOM communication, which identifies the emotional driver as a potent factor triggering WOM (Ladhari, 2007; Ha and Im, 2012; Lovett, Peres and Shachar, 2013). Concurrently, this study also extends the findings from eWOM literature, which explain that eWOM can be driven by one's need to vent their negative feelings (Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015), or serve as a way of dealing with the psychological tension associated with increased positive emotions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Jeong and Jang, 2011).

Prevalence of this motivation in the OBC context is especially anticipated, and fits very well with existing brand community literature. Specifically, brand community research accepts that OBC members often experience a strong emotional connection towards the focal brand (Park and Kim, 2011). Findings from this study however further contribute to the OBC literature by evidencing that OBC members act on their positive emotions, and engage in OBCeWOM to share the joy of their positive experience with the brand.

To conclude the answer to the RQ2, current research confirms the impact of 5 motivations on OBCeWOM. These include the positive effect of 2 socially-oriented motives – namely, social interaction and social expression of opinions, and a negative effect of self-presentation motivation on OBCeWOM. Additionally, the positive impact of the information-related motivation of brand assistance and entertainment-related motive of expressing positive emotions are supported. The influence of all of the socially-oriented motivations on eWOM is noteworthy, especially considering the lack of support for the majority of entertainment-related and information-related motivations. This result brings

forward the social aspect of eWOM, where it is used as a way of making connections to others who share similar interests and potentially developing stronger links to the community.

10.2.3 RQ3: What are the outcomes of eWOM communication among the members of OBC?

The third research question concerned the outcomes of OBCeWOM in the social media setting. An extensive review of existing literature has identified several research gaps regarding this theme. First, whereas previous research for example discussed the impact of eWOM on consumers' attitudes towards products and services (Huang, Hsiao and Chen, 2012) or purchase intentions (Chih et al., 2013), the majority of research focused on the consequences of eWOM for the receivers of the message (i.e. the individuals who engaged in reading eWOM). Currently very little is known about the outcomes of eWOM for the individuals engaging in active eWOM (the communicator of eWOM), such as for example regarding their future relationships with brands. Additionally, existing research is yet to provide insights concerning the outcomes of eWOM in the OBC setting for individuals engaging in either passive or active eWOM communication.

To answer RQ3 similarly two studies were employed – Study 1 (exploratory stage) and Study 3 (confirmatory stage). The findings of the semi-structured interviews in the Study 1 have shown that brand trust, brand loyalty, and oppositional brand loyalty could be possible outcomes of OBCeWOM. The three outcomes were further analysed in relation to the existing literature and added in the conceptual model discussed in Chapter 6. In Study 3, the answer to the RQ3 involved a set of hypotheses (H11 – H13) proposed in the conceptual model and consequently tested in the empirical model (discussed in Chapter 9). The discussion below addresses both the qualitative and quantitative findings and compares them to the evidence from existing research.

The results of Study 3 provide strong support for the exploratory findings, and all of the expected relationships have been supported in the Study 3. Specifically, in line with RQ3, results of hypothesis testing confirm a significant and positive

impact of OBCeWOM on brand trust, brand loyalty, and oppositional brand loyalty. The findings of hypothesis testing concerning the outcomes of OBCeWOM are summarised in Table 29.

Table 29. Results of hypothesis testing – outcomes of OBCeWOM

	EWOM outcomes	Result	
		N = 402	N = 250
H11	OBCeWOM is positively related to brand trust.	Supported	Supported
H12	OBCeWOM is positively related to brand loyalty.	Supported	Rejected
H13	OBCeWOM is positively related to oppositional brand loyalty.	Supported	Supported

10.2.3.1 OBCeWOM → brand trust

The first hypothesis concerning the outcomes of OBCeWOM has been strongly supported, thus confirming a positive relationship between OBCeWOM and brand trust. This research consequently provides a dual support for the influence of brand community OBCeWOM on brand trust – through the results of the qualitative Study 1 and analytical Study 3.

Specifically, findings from the semi-structured interviews with the members of OBCs have indicated that brand community members experience trust towards the focal brand. Concurrently, Study 3 has conceptualised brand trust as a two-dimensional construct composed of reliability and intentions components (Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman and Yague-Guillen, 2003). Findings from the Study 3 thereby confirm that brand community members' beliefs in brand's promise delivery (brand reliability) and support from the brand in case of unexpected issues with the utilisation of the brand (brand intentions) strengthen with the increase in OBCeWOM.

The support for the positive effect of eWOM on brand trust is anticipated and fits well with existing research. Specifically, the findings of this research support and extend the evidence from the previous literature that discusses a positive relationship between online community participation and brand trust (Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2007). The findings are also in line with the eWOM literature, confirming the recent evidence established by Ladhari and Michaud

(2015) who discuss the increase in trust towards the hotel as a result of positive eWOM.

Overall the positive relationship between OBCeWOM and brand trust can be explained by the fact that through communication with other brand community members about the brand individuals become more knowledgeable and confident in the brand's reliability and intentions. Furthermore, by reading members' comments in the OBC, as well as being exposed to the communication exchange between the community members and the brand on the OBC, individuals are able to make more evaluated judgements about the brands' response or actions towards other consumers.

10.2.3.2 OBCeWOM → brand loyalty

Results of the semi-structured interviews provide tentative evidence that indicates a relationship between OBCeWOM and brand loyalty. The hypothesised positive relationship is partially confirmed in the analytical survey. Specifically, whereas the results of model testing on the first sub-sample (N = 402) are supported, the same procedure conducted on the validation sub-sample (N = 250) has failed to confirm the hypothesis. This lack of support on the second data set is unexpected and needs a further estimation of this relationship on a potentially larger data set.

Nonetheless, the support of this relationship on the first sub-sample permits making several conclusions. First, this finding extends the results of the Study 1 which seem to indicate that OBC members experience loyalty to the focal brand. Specifically, findings of Study 1 show that brand community members become more loyal to the brand through the exposure to the content within the OBC. Albeit it was not specifically clear in Study 1 whether OBC members experience stronger behavioural loyalty to the brand as a result of exposure to eWOM or as a result of exposure to the other types of brand-related content, the positive relationship between eWOM and brand loyalty was partially confirmed in Study 3.

Secondly, current finding resonates well with existing eWOM literature. Previous research has largely discussed the impact of brand loyalty on traditional WOM as well as eWOM (Yeh and Choi, 2011; Casidy and Wymer, 2015). This study also extends the findings of the past research which discuss the reversed relationship – where offline consumer interactions strengthen loyalty towards the brand (Roy, Lassar and Butaney, 2014). Furthermore, results from this research support previously identified the effect of eWOM on loyalty (Gauri, Bhatnagar and Rao, 2008; Garnefeld, Helm and Eggert, 2011).

Similar to the relationship between OBCeWOM and brand trust, the positive impact of OBCeWOM communication on brand community members' loyalty towards the brand may be explained by the constant exposure to the information about the brand originating from other community members, whereby by communicating with others in the OBC individuals help strengthen each other's decisions to choose the brand in question over other alternatives consciously. The findings from this research, however, are of even stronger interest for eWOM and branding literature, as they provide evidence that brand loyalty may be strengthened even further among the members of OBCs, who often already experience a sense of loyalty towards the brand (Hur, Ahn and Kim, 2011).

10.2.3.3 OBCeWOM → oppositional brand loyalty

According to the results of hypothesis testing, OBCeWOM has the strongest positive effect on oppositional brand loyalty. Specifically, Study 3 confirms that increase in OBCeWOM communication strengthens the feeling of oppositional brand loyalty among brand community members. This result is mirrored on both sub-samples.

The existence of oppositional brand loyalty may be associated with the types of brand communities, such as previously discussed automobile brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Kuo and Feng, 2013) or beverage brands (Muniz and Hamer, 2001). Similarly, results from the Study 3 illustrate that the majority of respondents belong to brand communities dedicated to food and beverage brands, but also followed by other major categories such as fashion, media and

entertainment, sports, and electronics. This finding also resonates well with the literature on sports brands that discuss the rivalry and schadefreude between the fans of rival sports teams (Dalakas and Melankon, 2012).

Results of this research advance the existing state of OBC literature by providing insight into how oppositional brand loyalty is fostered among brand community members. Specifically, the influence of OBCeWOM on oppositional brand loyalty can be associated with the groups' influence on individuals, where brand community members are constantly exposed to a large amount of positive information about their favourite brand, thus reconfirming and strengthening their loyalty towards it and potentially leading them to actively reject the rival brands.

Overall, this study is one of the very first attempts to empirically measure oppositional brand loyalty. It importantly sheds some light on the causes of oppositional loyalty in the OBC environment, identifying eWOM as an important factor. Future research should conduct further investigation into the roots of oppositional brand loyalty and how it develops. Potential outcomes of oppositional brand loyalty should also be addressed in the future studies.

10.3 Discussion of additional findings

10.3.1 Measurement of motivational constructs

The current study has also developed new measures for six motivational constructs, including community advice search, brand assistance, helping others, helping the brand, social expression of opinions, and expressing positive emotions. Results of the psychometric assessment of the scales have confirmed that the all of the new measures are valid and reliable.

Nonetheless, despite the overall evidence of reliability and validity of the newly developed measures, two of the variables have failed the discriminant validity test – the motivational factor community advice search and brand assistance. Existing research has previously identified advice search as a prominent motivational factor that triggers eWOM (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Kreis and

Gottschalk, 2015). Concurrently, results of the Study 1 have further evidenced that OBC members engage in eWOM in OBC to gain a response from the brand, which was identified as a separate motivational factor. However, the achieved discriminant validity results could be attributed to the fact that both of the factors address one's need to receive information in the OBC, where community advice search involves getting brand-related information from the other members of the OBC, whereas brand assistance involves receiving help or getting answers from the brand. It is possible that the boundaries between the brand and the community are less pronounced for the OBC members. A parallel can be drawn with the recent research on consumer engagement that emphasises consumers' simultaneous engagement with the brand, community and individuals in the community (Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2016). Future research should reassess the measures and potentially combine the community advice search and brand assistance motivations into a single factor.

10.3.2 Additional relationships

In line with existing literature, a positive relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty has also been proposed in the conceptual model discussed in Chapter 6. This was reflected in H14, which was tested and supported in the empirical model in the Study 3. Additionally, following the modification of the original structural model (discussed in Chapter 9), 2 additional relationships between several research constructs were established. These include a positive relationship between oppositional brand loyalty and brand loyalty, and enjoyment motivation and brand trust. Additionally, a negative causal path from escapism motivation to brand trust is uncovered. All of the relationships are significant at sig < 0.001 in both samples. The additional results based on the model modification process are presented in Table 30 and explained in the following sections.

Table 30. Additional causal relationships

Hypotheses / Relationships		Effect	
		N = 402	N = 250
H14	Brand trust → Brand loyalty	Supported (positive)	Supported (positive)
N/A	Oppositional brand loyalty → Brand loyalty	Positive	Positive
N/A	Escapism → Brand trust	Negative	Negative
N/A	Enjoyment → Brand trust	Positive	Positive

10.3.2.1 Brand trust → brand loyalty

The hypothesis concerning the positive impact of brand trust on brand loyalty has also been confirmed in the Study 3. This finding is well anticipated, whereby the relationship between the two concepts has been well documented in the academic literature. Specifically, this finding supports previous research that discusses the positive link from the brand trust to brand loyalty (Chanudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Matzler et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2015). In fact, this finding further accepts the view of Lee et al. (2015) who stress that brand trust is at the centre of customer-company relationships and is thus an important prerequisite of brand loyalty.

Furthermore, results from this research also support the evidence from the brand community literature by acknowledging that when OBC members' trust towards the brand increases, the loyalty to the brand is also increased (Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu, 2007; Laroche et al., 2012). Additionally, this research specifically confirms that the stronger the OBC members' beliefs in the brand's reliability and future intentions towards them, the stronger their loyalty towards this brand.

10.3.2.2 Oppositional brand loyalty → brand loyalty

Results of model modification support the positive relationship between oppositional brand loyalty and brand loyalty. This relationship is confirmed when estimated on two separate sub-samples (N = 402, N = 250). This finding

evidences that as brand community members' oppositional brand loyalty strengthens, so does their loyalty to the brand. This is an important contribution of the present research, as there is currently very little empirical understanding of oppositional brand loyalty and its interplay with other brand relationship concepts.

Existing literature discusses that individuals express their oppositional brand loyalty by actively identifying themselves as supporters of their preferred brand, and distancing themselves from the rival brands (Felix, 2012). Japutra et al. (2014) also discuss that oppositional brand loyalty may manifest when individuals challenge supporters of the rival brands to defend their preference. It can thus be derived that taken together, expressing negative sentiments and actively rejecting the competing brand (Madupu and Cooley, 2010), OBC members may reconfirm their allegiance to their preferred brand, and hence strengthen their loyalty towards it.

Finally, the prominence of oppositional brand loyalty and its consequent influence on brand loyalty may be amplified by the specifics of the social media-based OBC setting. Due to the embeddedness of OBCs on Facebook, individuals may have easier access to the competing OBCs established by rival brands. Potential exposure to the information about rival brands on the SNS may thus facilitate one's loyalty to their preferred brand.

10.3.2.3 Escapism → brand trust

The relationship between escapism motivation and brand trust was examined in the modified model, and was similarly evaluated following the results of the modification indices in the initial structural model. Results of the final model estimation evidence a significant albeit *negative* relationship between escapism motivation and brand trust. This is an interesting finding, considering that escapism was not found to be related to OBCeWOM.

To reiterate, the relationship between escapism motivation and brand trust was derived from the modification of the initial structural model, rather than from the existing theory. Therefore, the results should be evaluated with caution.

Nonetheless, the explanation of this finding may relate to the nature of escapism motivation. Escapism is associated with a state of psychological immersion that enables individuals to temporarily escape from any pressing concerns or responsibilities (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999; Abrantes et al. 2013). It is possible that individuals experience the need to avoid difficult or stressful tasks, and choose to deal with them by escaping to the OBC. As a result, driven by the need to temporarily avoid challenging and possibly somewhat negative experiences (as opposed to for instance being motivated by the needs for socialisation or expressing positive feelings), individuals' negative sentiments associated with these experiences may be unintentionally transmitted onto the brand, potentially explaining the diminishing effect on brand trust.

The direct negative relationship between escapism motivation and brand trust is interesting and novel and requires additional exploration. Previous research has already linked several motives for eWOM to specific behavioural outcomes, such as for instance the influence of one's motivation to obtain buying information and need for social orientation on consumers' purchasing behaviour and communication behaviour (Hennig-thurau and Walsh, 2003). Future research should examine the potential impact of escapism on other behavioural and relationship outcomes.

10.3.2.4 Enjoyment → brand trust

The final relationship between enjoyment motivation and brand trust was also introduced as a means to improve the structural model. The results of model estimation on the two sub-samples samples (N = 402, N = 250) demonstrate that the relationship between enjoyment motivation and brand trust is significant and positive. This means that the more the OBC members are driven by enjoyment motivation, the more they trust the brand. This outcome is especially intriguing as no relationship was found between the enjoyment motivation and OBCeWOM in Study 3.

One of the explanations for this finding may be rooted in the nature of enjoyment motivation. This motive for OBCeWOM refers to the need to experience pleasure, fun, and enjoyment (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999; Madupu

and Cooley, 2010). Results of Study 1 indicate that OBC members appreciate the funny, humorous and entertaining aspect of OBCeWOM exchanges in the community. In contrast to the escapism motivation discussed in the previous section, which may be associated with difficult or negative experiences that individuals wish to avoid or temporarily escape from; enjoyment motivation has a positive nature. It is possible that the positive sentiment associated with the expectation of enjoyable and entertaining experiences further contributes to the positive evaluation of the brand strengthening the trust towards the brand.

Additionally, it is also mentioned in the interviews that individuals often especially pay attention to negative or 'mean' comments posted by others. The focus on the humorous albeit potentially negative aspect of OBCeWOM may actually have a positive effect on one's perception of the brand's reliability and intentions. Specifically, OBC members may appreciate the existence of varying views and possibly sometimes 'balanced' discussions. Recent research, for example, has found that individuals perceive negative eWOM in functional-goal OBCs as more credible than positive eWOM, as it helps to make a more objective evaluation of the brand (Relling et al., 2016).

Albeit not initially hypothesised in the conceptual model, this finding provides novel insights regarding the potential factors affecting brand trust. Future research should build on this result by further examining the influence of enjoyment motivation on the trust towards the community, which would include other OBC members.

10.4 Summary

This chapter was dedicated to answering the three research questions stated at the beginning of this research. For this purpose, the results of the three studies were interpreted and related to the existing literature. The correspondence and deviations from the existing research were explained.

In line with RQ1, OBCeWOM communication in the social media-based OBC setting was confirmed as a three-dimensional construct, which included posting, sharing and reading components. A new measurement scale for OBCeWOM was

developed to reflect the specifics of OBC environment not captured in the existing scales.

With regards to the RQ2, Study 1 has identified ten motivations for eWOM communication in the OBC. Albeit, in the Study 3 only four of the motivations were confirmed as having a positive impact on OBCeWOM, whereas one motive was negatively related to OBCeWOM. As such, answering the RQ2, brand community members engage in OBCeWOM driven by the need to receive assistance from the brand, for social interaction with other members, to socially express their opinions about issues related to the brand, and to express their positive emotions about the brand. The need for self-presentation has a diminishing effect on OBCeWOM. Six new measures for motivations of OBCeWOM were also developed in the current research.

Finally, in line with RQ3, OBCeWOM has a significant positive effect on three outcome variables – brand trust, brand loyalty and oppositional brand loyalty. This is indicated in the findings of Study 1 and confirmed in Study 3.

Chapter 11: Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

This final chapter outlines the key contributions of the current research, its limitations, and future research avenues. The chapter is structured as follows: first, the key theoretical contributions are presented. This is followed by the overview of the methodological contributions. Next, the managerial implications and recommendations for marketing practice are presented. Finally, the chapter addresses the existing limitations of the current research. Future research directions are also outlined.

11.2 Theoretical contributions

The current thesis provides several contributions to the eWOM, OBC, and social media research. These concern the updated conceptualisation of eWOM in the OBC context, identification of four motivations for OBCeWOM communication and three outcomes of OBCeWOM.

Specifically, first and foremost, to the researcher's best knowledge, the current study is the first to empirically examine the *cause and effect relationship* of eWOM in the social media-based OBC setting. Importantly, by so doing, the current thesis is one of the few studies which connects the two key streams of research on consumer brand-related interactions. Existing research acknowledges that a considerable amount of information is potentially exchanged within the boundaries of OBCs, with members socialising and communicating with one another about the brand, as well as interacting with the brand (Dessart, Velousou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015; 2016). Nonetheless, this is mostly done implicitly, where very few studies have actually looked into the eWOM communication process as it occurs among the members of OBC.

Secondly, current study contributes to the growing literature on consumer engagement in OBC – one of the latest developments in the brand community research (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014; Baldus, Voorhees and Calantone, 2015; Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015; 2016). Studies in this area often conceptualise engagement as a multi-dimensional concept composed of emotional, cognitive and behavioural dimensions, thereby approaching it as a broader concept that includes various elements. Current research advances this literature by focusing on the specific aspect OBC engagement – eWOM communication, thus focusing on the micro-level of behavioural engagement.

In this regards, the third contribution of this study relates to the nature and conceptualisation of eWOM in the social media-based OBC. Specifically, whereas the current study is in agreement with the previous research which identifies eWOM as a multi-dimensional construct composed of reading, posting and sharing information (Chu and Choi, 2011; Chu and Kim, 2011; Yeh and Choi, 2011), it also extends these findings in several ways. First, this research evidences that eWOM in the social media-based OBC can be directed at other individuals and at the brands themselves. This finding has important implications for the conceptualisation of eWOM, as being rooted in the offline WOM research, and with the exception of a few studies, eWOM has so far largely been approached from a consumer-to-consumer perspective – considered traditionally as communication between consumers online (King, Racherla and Bush, 2014), or directed at consumers (i.e. online product or service reviews) (Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold, 2011; Lopez-Lopez and Parra, 2016).

Secondly, the majority of previous research that distinguishes between the passive and active components of eWOM has focused on the two dimensions – eWOM reading and eWOM posting (Ridings, Gefen and Arinze, 2002; Fong and Burton, 2008; Lopez and Sicilia, 2014; Toder-Alon, Brunel and Fournier, 2014). Past eWOM research has paid the least attention to the *sharing* dimension of eWOM, with Chu and Kim (2011) acknowledging that this dimension has been largely overlooked. This may be attributed to the fact that the majority of eWOM studies have been conducted in the context of online communities or online opinion platforms, which do not provide the interactive 'sharing' options supported by the SNS.

Albeit, several studies have confirmed the separate eWOM dimension that relates to passing along information outside of the community (Chu and Choi, 2011; Chu and Kim, 2011; Yeh and Choi, 2011). Nonetheless, sharing dimension identified in this research differs from the mentioned studies in several aspects. For example, in their study of eWOM in the context of SNS, Chu and Choi (2011) and Chu and Kim (2011) identify opinion passing as spreading information from one group of friends within the SNS to the other. This research identifies eWOM sharing as passing along information outside of the OBC, and this includes eWOM sharing further within the boundaries of the SNS, as well as to other places on the Internet. Admittedly, bearing strong similarities to the 'intention to pass information' component of eWOM in Yeh and Choi's (2011) OBC study, eWOM sharing dimension identified in this research nonetheless captures the specifics of social-media based OBC.

Another core contributions of this research is the identification of key factors that motivate OBC members to engage in reading, posting and sharing eWOM. To the researcher's best knowledge, this is the first study that specifically focuses on eWOM motives in the context of social media-based OBCs. Additionally, it adds to the eWOM research by concurrently examining the motivations for passive and active eWOM, also including a previously largely overlooked dimension – eWOM sharing. As such, current research derives 10 unique *motivational factors* which trigger eWOM in the OBC setting, and which relate to social, information-related and entertainment functions of eWOM. Admittedly, several motivations have been previously discovered in different contexts, such as online opinion platforms (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) or travel review websites (Yoo and Gretzel, 2008). Albeit, to the researcher's best knowledge, most of the identified motivations have not been previously examined in the OBC environment. These contexts are different to the brand community environment, where individuals share a common interest in a specific brand, and often feel an intrinsic connection to the community and to one another (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Additionally, findings from the current research advance the growing pool of knowledge on consumers' brand-related interactions on social media, and OBCs embedded in social networks (Laroche, Habibi and Richard, 2013; Habibi, Laroche and Richard, 2014; Dessart, Veloutsou

and Morgan-Thomas, 2016), where individual profiles coexist with brand community pages.

The results of the Study 3 further evidence that *social motivations* play the most important role in eWOM communication in the context of OBC. Indeed, the majority of supported eWOM motivations fall under the social category of motivations, with self-presentation motivation also having a significant albeit negative effect on eWOM. Furthermore, among all of the identified drivers of eWOM, social expression of opinions has the strongest positive effect. This has important implications for the OBC and eWOM research, illustrating that overall brand community members place more importance on the social value of eWOM over its information and entertainment aspects.

Additionally, current thesis identifies several unique relationships which have implications for the eWOM and OBC literature. First, results from the current thesis add to the existing literature on eWOM motivations by identifying a significant new factor triggering eWOM among brand community members. Specifically, to the researcher's best knowledge, this study is the first to empirically support the positive impact of *brand assistance motivation* on eWOM, further identifying it as the second strongest driver of eWOM within the OBC setting. Overall, findings from Study 1 and Study 3 further extend eWOM literature by providing evidence that individuals do not only look for brand-related information from other consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015), or in this instance from other brand community members (as indicated in the Study 1), but are also interested in receiving information from the brand itself. Albeit this research additionally shows that the environment of embedded brand communities offers a different platform for communication, where rather than looking for platform assistance (Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015; Yen and Tang, 2015), brand community members post their messages directly on the OBC anticipating a response from the brand.

Furthermore, the current study identifies the top driver of eWOM communication in the social media-based brand communities – *social expression of opinions*. This is an important contribution of this research, as to date there has been limited empirical attention to the identified motivation in the eWOM and OBC literature. The results of this thesis thereby extend the so far possibly only study

by Stephen and Lehmann (2009) who discuss that individuals largely engage in eWOM transmission for self-oriented reasons, driven by the need to relate their opinions to the others, and to find an audience that would listen to them. Nonetheless, previous research on eWOM motivations within the different environments has failed to identify this motivational factor, thus having important implications for the OBC research. As such, it potentially signifies that specifics of social media-based OBCs are especially conducive to expressing one's opinions about the brands compared for instance to other settings. The support for this motivation in the OBC setting evidences that individuals perceive company-managed Facebook-based brand communities as an appropriate platform to socially express their views about the brand.

Another contribution of this thesis is associated with a somewhat unexpected finding related to the *self-presentation motivation* for OBCeWOM. Specifically, this study illustrates that whereas OBC members are concerned about the way they are perceived by others, this does not translate into increased eWOM communication. On the contrary, this study proposes that the more conscious the individuals are of their environment and of how their eWOM activity may be interpreted by others, as well as conscious of what kind of image of themselves they are transmitting through eWOM communication, the more they limit this communication. This sheds a different light onto the existing literature on eWOM communication which has discussed that consumers engage in eWOM to show their expertise, and to increase their reputation by presenting themselves as knowledgeable individuals (Cheung and Lee, 2012). Current study thereby shows a different side of this factor, illustrating that it can serve as a barrier to eWOM rather than a driver.

Additionally, the current study identifies several key brand relationship *outcomes* of eWOM in the OBC setting. Importantly, previous research addressing eWOM outcomes has largely focused on the effect of exposure to eWOM on individuals, such as for instance effect of reading online reviews on the reader's attitude and trust towards the hotel (Ladhari and Michaud, 2015) or on their online purchase intentions (Erkan and Evans, 2016b). There has been limited understanding of the effect of eWOM on the communicator of the message. Whereas current research highlights a more holistic impact of eWOM through both passive and active eWOM engagement, evidencing that reading,

posting and sharing of eWOM communication can positively affect the sense of brand trust, loyalty and oppositional brand loyalty among the individuals who already experience a strong connection to the brand. It contributes to eWOM research by demonstrating the impact of eWOM on the individuals as they concurrently take on the roles of the communicator and the receiver of the message.

This further provides an important contribution of this research, as to date the concept of *oppositional brand loyalty* has overall received very limited empirical investigation. Additionally, to the researcher's best knowledge, this is the first study to confirm the positive relationship between eWOM and oppositional brand loyalty. Importantly, results of this thesis evidence that oppositional brand loyalty is the most significant outcome of eWOM in the OBC setting, potentially signalling the power of eWOM engagement on individuals. Specifically, brand community literature approaches oppositional brand loyalty as a sentiment that is different to brand loyalty, and that can also be experienced by brand community members in addition to brand loyalty (Japutra et al., 2014). Compared to the latter, oppositional brand loyalty has been discussed as an 'active rejection' of rival brands (Davidson, McNeill and Ferguson, 2007; Madupu and Cooley, 2010), that can manifest when individuals clearly acknowledge the specific brands they avoid, and share negative sentiments regarding the rival brands (Japutra et al., 2014). Finally, this study also advances the OBC literature by establishing a positive relationship between oppositional brand loyalty and brand loyalty in the social media-based OBC setting.

11.3 Methodological contributions

The current study also provides several methodological contributions, associated with the development of measurement scales for the core research constructs. Specifically, following extensive procedures this research developed a new measurement for OBCeWOM in the context of social media-based OBCs. Additionally, measures for six motivations for OBCeWOM were adapted using a combination of existing measures and insights from the qualitative data. All of

the measures have undergone reliability and validity assessments and could be applied in future studies within social media and OBC environments.

First, due to the lack of research focusing on eWOM within the social media-based OBC, and following the results of the Study 1, it has become evident that existing eWOM measures would not fully capture the specifics of the research setting. The new measures for OBCeWOM communication within the Facebook-based OBC were thus developed. Results of the EFA support the multidimensionality of eWOM with the items fitting perfectly on each respectful dimension. Furthermore, the newly developed measures have satisfied the face, content, convergent and discriminant validity tests, as well as internal consistency tests, thus confirming their validity and reliability. The development of new measures applicable to the OBC context is especially relevant due to the constantly changing nature of the social media environment, thus making it necessary to capture the real experiences of individuals. Additionally, social media environment represents one of the latest trends in the OBC research (e.g. Zaglia, 2013; Dessart, Veloutsou and Morgan-Thomas, 2015; 2016). This study thereby provides a valid and reliable measurement for eWOM communication in this growing context.

Another important contribution of this study is the development of measurement scales for several *motivational constructs*. Specifically, six variables were developed for this study, albeit using the 'adaptation' strategy rather than new measurement development process. The process of adaptation involved combining items from the existing measures with statements developed based on the results of the interviews. These variables included community advice search, brand assistance, helping others, helping the brand, social expression of opinions, and expressing positive emotions.

All of the discussed measurement scales are characterised by good psychometric properties, including face, content and convergent validity, and internal consistency. Despite the fact that most of the motivational constructs have been previously tested in the context of online opinion platforms (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) and more recently SNS (Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015), none of the identified motivations have been applied in the social media-based OBC

environment. Insights from Study 1 have allowed developing valid and reliable measures that capture the reasons for eWOM in the context of OBC.

11.4 Managerial implications

Finally, the current thesis has several implications for the marketing practice. These concern the identification of specific motivations for OBCeWOM, outcomes of OBCeWOM in the social media context, and new measurement of OBCeWOM.

First, this research identifies several key motivations which drive eWOM communication in social media-based OBCs. Specifically, it shows that overall social motivations are the strongest predictors of eWOM in firm-managed OBCs, being more important than either information-related or entertainment-related motives. Companies managing OBCs should focus on encouraging the communication and social interactions among the members, and developing a sense of community. Specifically, marketers should encourage the development of social-goal brand communities, where more importance is placed on the socialisation aspect of eWOM.

Secondly, current thesis confirms the importance of eWOM communication among the members of OBC, by illustrating its consequent role in strengthening their loyalty and trust towards the brand, as well as oppositional brand loyalty. It shows that through interactions with one another in the OBC as well as with the brand, individuals are able to experience and also witness the brands' exchanges with consumers, thus getting a fuller picture of the brand. By virtue of being embedded in the social media, communication happening within the OBCs can instantly appear on one's timeline, being constantly present even when one doesn't intentionally visit the community. Brands that wish to strengthen the relationships with their followers should embrace an active role as participants in the OBC, concurrently encouraging consumer-to-consumer interactions and exchange of brand-related information.

Additionally, results of Study 3 have evidenced that self-presentation motivation has a diminishing effect on eWOM communication in the social media-based OBC setting. This finding albeit unexpected may be rooted in the specifics of the

social media environment, which does not offer the same level of anonymity to the members as website-based OBCs. Brands willing to foster eWOM engagement in communities should also maintain the efforts to develop OBCs outside the SNS to cater to the individuals who strongly value the need for self-presentation, and may be otherwise discouraged by the openness of the SNS environment.

Finally, this study offers a new measurement scale for OBCeWOM in the social media environment. The developed research instrument estimates passive and active components of OBCeWOM by capturing three separate dimensions of eWOM communication – reading, posting and sharing. The new set of measures could be of value to brand managers, offering a reliable way of capturing a specific micro-element of behavioural OBC engagement.

11.5 Limitations and future research directions

Current research accepts several limitations which could be improved in the future studies. The first limitation is associated with the sampling approach used in the quantitative phase of this research. Specifically, it uses convenience sampling to collect the quantitative data by means of Amazon Mechanical Turk. Despite the growing acceptance of MTurk as a reliable source of data collection in marketing (e.g. Swimberghe, Astakhova and Wooldridge, 2014; Ballantine and Yeung, 2015) and also specifically brand community research (Minton et al., 2012; Baldus, Vorhees and Calantone, 2015), the adoption of non-probability sampling reduces the generalisability of the findings. Future research should replicate this study in a naturalistic setting, directly recruiting participants from OBCs.

Secondly, whereas qualitative sample included members of both enthusiast-run and company-managed OBCs, the quantitative phase focused solely on the latter. Future research should assess the relationships between the identified motivations, OBCeWOM and its outcomes within the enthusiast-run OBCs, with a further possibility of a comparison study.

Furthermore, recent research has uncovered two types of OBC – social-goal and functional-goal communities (Relling et al., 2016). The purpose of the current

research was to uncover different possible drivers of OBCeWOM, and it thus did not limit the scope of the investigation to one or the other type of OBC. Nonetheless, this thesis has provided evidence of the existence of both social and information-related motivations. Future research may uncover additional factors in the social group of motivations when focusing on the social-goal communities, whereas new information-related motives may emerge in the functional-goal OBCs. Furthermore, despite the findings of the Study 1, and in conflict with existing eWOM research (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Kreis and Gottschalk, 2015), results of Study 3 have failed to evidence the positive relationship between several motivational factors and eWOM. Specifically, future studies could reassess the impact of two information-related motivations – helping others and helping the brand in the functional-goal communities. Finally, depending on the goal of OBC members, additional outcomes of eWOM may be uncovered.

Additionally, as the purpose of this research was to explore the nature of OBCeWOM, and identify its multiple drivers and its influence in the social media-based OBC setting, this study encompassed brand communities within different product and service categories. As such, it is possible that some identified motivations and outcomes will be more prevalent in certain types of OBCs. Future research should replicate this study by focusing on a specific category of OBC, or comparing different OBCs, such as for instance communities dedicated to convenience products and fashion brand communities.

Furthermore, results of hypotheses testing have failed to provide support for several proposed relationships related to the motivations for OBCeWOM. This could be associated with the measurement of OBCeWOM tested in this study, where the construct included passive and active dimensions. It is possible that some of these motivations would influence OBCeWOM reading, posting or sharing individually. As such, another direction for the future research would be investigate the relationships between the motivations and each of the three OBCeWOM dimensions separately.

The current study has also uncovered an unexpected negative relationship between the self-expression motivation and OBCeWOM, which is in contradiction with existing research that discusses image building as a motivational driver for

eWOM engagement (Luarn, Yang and Chiu, 2015). Additionally, semi-structured interviews have illustrated that OBC members are conscious about how they are perceived by others, but also of the openness of the OBC by virtue of them being embedded in the SNS. Future research should investigate this relationship in a different OBC setting outside of SNS, where individuals do not necessarily reveal their real identities, and where eWOM communication does not spill outside of the OBC. Another exciting avenue for investigation would be to explore the barriers or factors limiting OBCeWOM – such as potentially one's concerns for privacy.

Overall it is possible that the specifics of the research context may play a role in the strength of relationships between the motivations and OBCeWOM. Specifically, it seems that Facebook may shape the way OBC members interact in the community, and their reasons for this communication. It is possible, that some relationships are rooted in the specific context of Facebook as a research setting, where brand pages are established and co-exist together with individual members and their social networks. This may have implications for the generalisation of results to other research contexts. As such, a potentially fruitful avenue for the future research would be to test the proposed conceptual model in a different social media setting, and examine the role of the specific platform in these relationships.

Additionally, the project uncovered several possible explanations or motivations for OBCeWOM, meanwhile rejecting a number of anticipated drivers. It is possible that other factors may contribute to the overall findings, associated with the nature of the communities. Specifically, the results may be to some extent conditioned upon the specifics of the group dynamics and relationships between the members, the levels of maturity of the community, or even specific individual characteristics and emotions experienced by the OBC members. As such, the strength of the proposed relationships may change with the development of the communities and the interactions between the members. Future research could try to capture and account for the specific features of the communities, and individual characteristics of their members, which can shape the nature of OBCeWOM in these communities.

Another limitation of this study is the failed discriminant validity test between the brand assistance and community advice search motivations. This means that participants perceive the two constructs as being very similar to one another. Future endeavours should develop a different set of measures for one or both constructs to ensure the strict division between these variables. Alternatively, it may be necessary to combine the two measures into a single factor, associated with the overall need for information in the community.

Finally, the current thesis is one of the few studies to empirically assess the concept of oppositional brand loyalty and its relationship with OBCeWOM. Currently however very little is known about the origins of oppositional brand loyalty, as well as its potential outcomes. Thus, additional research is needed to explore how oppositional brand loyalty emerges, and how it further influences OBC members.

11.6 Summary

The current thesis makes several important contributions to the OBC and eWOM literature. By connecting the two streams of research, it identifies the key drivers and outcomes of OBCeWOM and establishes additional aspects related to the nature of OBCeWOM in the context of social media-based brand communities. Additionally, it makes several methodological contributions, associated with the development of a new valid and reliable measurement scale for OBCeWOM, and the adaptation of measures for six motivational constructs. Findings from this research also illustrate the importance of OBCeWOM for the brands and provide several implications for the marketing practice. Finally, this chapter also identifies several limitations of the current study and offers avenues for future investigations.

Appendices

Appendix A. Semi-structured interview protocol

Introduction

The purpose of this interview is to understand how consumers communicate with each other about brands / with brands on Facebook brand pages.

Your name will be kept confidential. You will be provided with a copy of the results if you wish so. Would you mind if I audio record the interview for analysis purposes?

Warm-up questions
Could you tell me about a Facebook brand page that you like / are a member of?
Could you tell me more about how you have joined it? And why do you think you joined?
How do you usually find out about what is happening on this page?
Do you visit this brand page at all? If you do, for which reasons? How often?
EWOM activity and motives on the Facebook brand page
Thinking of this brand page, do you get involved in conversations about the brand on this page? How?
Could you remember when you were really involved in such a conversation? Why? With whom?
Could you think of 3 interesting posts that you have seen on this page? Why? Who posted?
Have you noticed a few people that are very active on this page? What do they do there?
Has it ever been the case when you wanted to post something / comment but didn't? What happened?
Are you also sharing something you see on this page to other pages / websites / SNS? Example?
Have you used the posts / information on this page in any other way? Example?
Could you give me some more examples of how you interact with others about this brand?
EWOM activity and motives on the personal page
Are you also talking about this brand on your *personal FB page*? Could you give me an example? Why?
Could you remember when you were really involved in such a conversation?
Are you also sharing something you see on the brand page to your personal FB page? Example?
What about when you have seen something on your newsfeed? Do you share it on your page? Why? Example?
What about something you see on other websites / SNS (about this brand)? Do you share this on your personal profile? Example? Why?

In general, where would you say you are most actively involved in conversations about the brand – on the *brand pages* or our *personal page* on FB? Why do you think so?
Effect of eWOM activity on the members' social life
Do you discuss this brand page with your friends on FB? Example? Why?
What about your friends' FB pages? Do you talk about this brand / brand page on the friends' personal pages / walls? Example?
What about your friends outside Fb? Have you introduced anyone to this page?
Do you know anyone personally, who is a member of this brand page? How did you meet them?
Have you got to know other people through this brand page or through conversations about this brand on FB? Example?
In what way do you interact with these people on this brand page?
In what other way do you interact with these people outside of the brand page? Example?
Outcomes of eWOM activity:
Has anything changed in your relationship with the brand since you have become a member of this brand page / started communicating on this page?
Has anything changed in your relationship with other (similar) or (rival) brands since you have become a member of this brand page / started communicating on this page?

Appendix B. Initial tentative framework
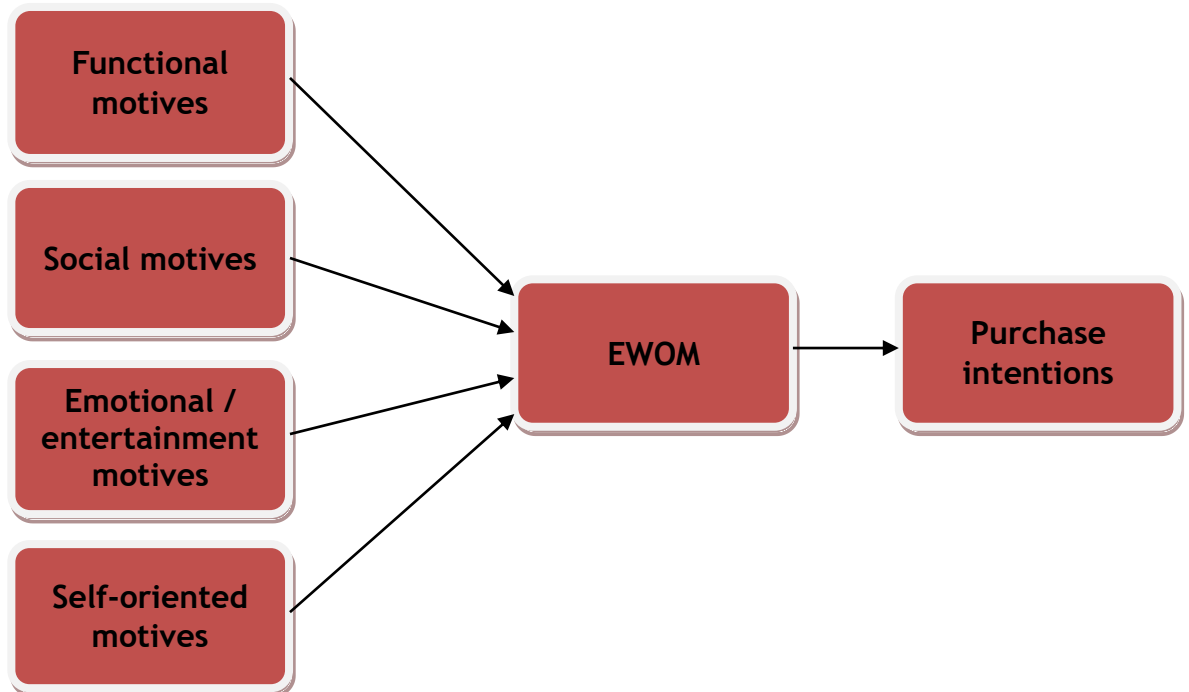
Appendix C. Example of thematic analysis

Theme	Sub-theme	Quote
Social	*Social interaction*	..it's called Breizh Cola. And yeah and I've seen one of my friends yeah, he shared something about it, and I commented it, but I don't really remember what it was about. And it was not to comment about the brand really, it was more to comment about this area in France, and about my friend, not about the product and the brand…
		….also just to stay in contact, yeah…
		it's important just you know spark a conversation and it's also kind of nice to yeah just start a conversation with people about that kind of thing, so yeah I do a lot of sharing with other people's pages of individual content.
		It's something that I like – I like socializing, generally you know scrolling down my newsfeed…
	Social expression of opinions	…there's always someone who's disagreeing, that's just part of like – there's just you know football, there's a lot of opinionated people, that will think they are managers or you know they have a very good understanding of the football club so… yeah there's a lot of people saying 'Oh I disagree with that' or 'oh..' you know '..I agree with that'.
		Yeah I do, I do comment on the fashion pages, when they are not suitable for me – clothes that I don't like, or the ones that I like, I comment why I like them, if it is because of the colour, whatever the colour is, the type of clothes – if it's a skirts, the pencil I like, I like skirts the most – so I comment about those ones…I feel that need, especially when they say something that I don't like – especially when they say something that I think I can react to – I have to react to it.
		I've commented on what people say, if I have my opinion towards what they are discussing about – I have to comment on it.
		For example I really like this thing - let it be like shoes for example I'm in love with these shoes, or even I have these ones, and someone writes 'oh it's …they are ridiculous' or something like this, so in this case I write 'no, really I like them they are very comfortable, modern, stylish – you don't understand anything in fashion stream'.
	Self-presentation	…but mostly I try to use my Facebook as strategically as possible, because I know that potential employers also look at it when you apply, so I'm trying to repost and I try to make smart comments on articles that

		are in relation to my work, and to my specialization.
		I think it will probably be like something good – like something positive. I don't really like to comment about negative stuff. Also because I don't like people to kind of like have the impression of me as a negative person or something, so I'm not commenting like negative stuff.
		…I think if you connect with a brand in this way – or you're making it – you're kind of making it part of you, because it's gonna be this brand or the message – that this brand is kind of like transmitting – it's gonna be part of the impression that these other people have of you. So it's kind of like a personal statement. Yeah I mean sometimes it will be bigger, sometimes people don't care, or they don't even think about it, but I think like as a whole – like when you do it a lot, then people start like getting ideas about who you are or what you like….it has to be like something that I feel identified with, because I think when you share something about a brand – it's you are also making a statement….if you are doing it in your personal page – I think you have to be even more careful – I mean like because it's a bigger statement.

Appendix D. Data collection methods

Method	Purpose	Sample	Timeframe
Semi-structured interviews	Develop a new eWOM scale. Finalise the conceptual model	22 members of official and unofficial brand pages on Facebook	April – October 2014
Survey pre-test and Pilot test	Test respondents' understanding of the questions. Preliminary evaluate the internal consistency of the new eWOM measures	68 completed surveys, members of official Facebook brand pages	April – September 2015
Main data collection	Test the conceptual model	652 completed surveys, members of official Facebook brand pages (recruited through MTurk)	July – October 2015

Appendix E. Content validity results of motivational constructs

Source	Items	Expert validation		
		Delete	Edit	Keep
Community advice search				
Dholakia et al. (2009)	I want to get advice about the brand and its products or services.		X	
Interviews	I am interested in other people's thoughts about the brand.			X
Dholakia et al. (2009)	I can receive answers to my questions about the brand from other members of the brand page.			X
Interviews	I like to get ideas from other members about how to use the brand.			X
Brand assistance				
Jahn and Kunz (2012)	I want to get answers to my queries from the brand on this page.			X
Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009)	I can get information I need about the brand from the brand owners.			X
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	I can receive support from the brand about their products / services.			X
Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009)	I am willing to learn about the brand from the brand owners.			X
Jahn and Kunz (2012)	I want to give feedback to the brand on this page.	X		
Helping others				
Interviews	I want to assist others with my knowledge about the brand.			X
Alexandrov, Lilly and Babakus (2013)	I am willing to help others get the information they want / need about the brand.			X
Alexandrov, Lilly and Babakus (2013)	I help others form an opinion about the brand or related issues	X		
Interviews	I want to help others by sharing my own experiences with the brand.			X
Helping the brand				
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	I want to help this brand to be successful.			X
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	In my own opinion, this brand should be supported.	X		
Interviews	I am willing to support this brand with my activity on the page.			X

Interviews	I want to repay the brand for the good experience.			X
Social expression of opinions				
Stephen and Lehmann (2009)	If I have a strong opinion about something that is being discussed about the brand on the brand page – I have to comment on it.		X	
Interviews	I need to let others in the community know what I think about the brand and its products or services.			X
Interviews	I need to make it clear if I disagree with someone's opinion about the brand on the page.		X	
Interviews	I will make it clear if I agree with someone's comments about the brand on the page.	X		
Expressing positive emotions				
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	I like to express my joy about the brand.		X	
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	I feel good when I can tell others on the page about the brand.			X
Interviews	I like to share my excitement about the brand.		X	
Interviews	I have to get my feelings about the brand off my chest.			X

Appendix F. Pilot survey instrument

1. *** Are you 18 years old or above?**

    - Yes

    - No

    Indicates that the question is mandatory

If No———▶ *Disqualification page:* We are sorry but you must be 18 years old or above to take part in this survey. Thank you for your interest anyway!

You are invited to participate in a survey conducted by the University of Glasgow. In this study, you will be asked about your activity on a brand page that you 'like' (or follow) on Facebook. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept anonymous and confidential at all times. For more details about the study, please click here (this will open a link in a separate window). Don't forget to leave us your email address at the end of the questionnaire if you'd like to have a chance to win a £25 Amazon voucher (this is entirely optional, and is only for the fully completed surveys). By pressing 'next' you indicate your consent to take part in this study.

The following question is about your general Facebook activity.

2. **On average, how much time do you spend on Facebook per week?**
    - Less than 1 hour
    - 1 – 3 hours
    - 4 – 6 hours
    - 7 – 9 hours
    - 10 – 12 hours
    - Over 13 hours

3. **Please name one brand that you 'like' (follow) on Facebook.**

    _____

4. **How long have you 'liked' this brand's Facebook page?**
    - Less than 6 months

- 6 months – 1 year
- 2 – 5 years
- Over 5 years

5. How often do you come across the content from the brand's Facebook page (either visiting the page, or on the newsfeed)?

- Multiple times a day
- Once a day
- A few times a week
- A few times a month
- Less than once a month
- Not at all

6. Please choose a category which you believe this brand represents.

- Automotive
- Consumer electronics
- Fashion
- Food and beverage
- Hospitality and tourism
- Media and entertainment
- Beauty and personal care
- Social
- Sports
- Telecommunications
- Other (please specify)

  _____

Please complete the remaining part of the survey with this brand in mind.

7. The next set of questions is about your experiences with this brand.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly Agree
This is a brand that meets my expectations.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I feel confidence in this brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
This is a brand that never disappoints me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
The brand guarantees satisfaction.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
This brand would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns about its products or services.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I could rely on this brand to solve a problem I may have with its products or services.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
This brand would make any effort to satisfy me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
This brand would compensate me in some way if I have a problem with its products or services.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

8. Please indicate to which extent you disagree or agree with the following statements.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly Agree
I am loyal to this brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am committed to this brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I do not consider myself a loyal customer of this brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I always use this brand of products / services.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I buy only this brand of products / services.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I purchase this brand routinely and use it regularly.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
There is no way I will ever consider buying products / services of opposing brands even if they can better meet my specific needs.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I will actively express opposing views or negative opinions to products / services of opposing brands even if the products are considered better by other people.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I have no intention to ever try products	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

of opposing brands even if the products are widely discussed by other people.							
I will actively discourage others from buying products of opposing brands even if an opposing brand has new and better products.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The next set of questions is about your activity on the brand page.

9. **Most of the time I come across the content originating from this brand page, or visit the page:**

	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly Agree
I read what others have to say about the brand.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I tend to go through other people's comments about the brand on the brand page.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I seek out opinions of the other members of the brand page.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I look for any information that other brand followers may have about the brand.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I leave my comments about the brand when I think I have something to add.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I share new information I have about the brand if I have any.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I respond to what is posted when I have something to add.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I participate in discussions about the brand when I feel it is appropriate.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I post my product or service queries publicly on the brand page if I have any.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I share interesting information about the brand from the brand page to my personal timeline.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I share brand posts from the brand's Facebook page to my friends' Facebook timelines.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I pass along interesting information I see there either privately to my friends (e.g. private messages, emails), or to other places on the Internet (e.g. Twitter, blogs etc.).	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

10. **When I visit the brand's Facebook page, I feel that:**

	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly Agree
What is posted on the page is fun	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
What is posted on the page is exciting	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
What is posted on the page is pleasant	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
What is posted on the page is entertaining	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to meet other people interested in this brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to feel like I am a part of this group of people who are interested in the brand and visit this Facebook page.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can communicate about different things with other members of the brand page.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can stay in touch with people who are interested in this brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
If I have a strong opinion about something that is being discussed about the brand on the brand page – I have to comment on it so the others will see it.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I need to let others in the community know what I think about the brand and its products or services.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I need to make it clear if I agree or disagree with someone's opinion about the brand on the page.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to get advice about the brand and its products or services from other followers.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am interested in other people's thoughts about the brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can receive answers to my questions about the brand from other members of the brand page.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I like to get ideas from other members about how to use the brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to get answers to my queries from the brand on this page.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can get information I need about the brand from the brand owners.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can receive support from the brand about their products / services.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am willing to learn about the brand from the brand owners.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

11. **When I express myself on the brand's Facebook page:**

	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly Agree
I want to make a good impression on the people who see my posts.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to improve the way I am perceived by the people who see my posts.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I wish to present who I am to the people who see my posts.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am willing to present who I want to be to the people who see my posts.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to assist others with my knowledge about the brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am willing to help others get the information they want / need about the brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to help others by sharing my own experiences with the brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to help this brand to be successful.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am willing to support this brand with my activity on the page.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to repay the brand for the good experience.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can get away from what I am doing	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can escape from my responsibilities	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I postpone tasks that I should complete first	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can forget about my daily occupations	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to express my joy about my experience with the brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I feel good when I can tell others on the page about the brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I need to share my excitement about the brand with others on the page.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I have to get my feelings about the brand off my chest.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

12. **Which of the following devices do you use to access Facebook? (Check all that apply)**

- Desktop computer
- Laptop computer
- Tablet
- Smart phone
- Other (please specify)

_____

13. **What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male

14. **What is your age?**

- 18 – 24
- 25 – 34
- 35 – 44
- 45 – 54
- 55 – 64
- 65 – 74
- Over 75

15. **What is your level of education?**

- High school
- Technical / vocational training
- Professional qualification / diploma
- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate
- Other (please specify)

_____

16.   **What is your employment status?**

- Student
- Self-employed
- Working full-time
- Working part-time
- Out of work but looking for a job
- Out of work and not looking for a job
- Retired
- Other (please specify)

    _____

17.   **What is your country of residence?**

    _____

18.   **What is your nationality?**

    _____

Thank you very much for your participation! Your responses have been recorded.

Please leave your email address if you would like it to be entered into the prize draw for a £25 Amazon voucher.

    _____

Appendix G. Final survey instrument

1. *** Are you 18 years old or above?**

   - Yes

   - No

   *Indicates that the question is mandatory

If No ⟶ *Disqualification page:* We are sorry but you must be 18 years old or above to take part in this survey. Thank you for your interest anyway!

You are invited to participate in a survey conducted by the University of Glasgow. In this study you will be asked about your activity on a brand page that you 'like' (or follow) on Facebook. The survey should take 15 – 20 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. For more details about the study please click here (this will open a link in a separate window). By pressing 'next' you indicate your consent to take part in this study.

The following question is about your general Facebook activity.

2. *** Are you a member of any official brand page on Facebook?**

   - Yes

   - No

   *Indicates that the question is mandatory

If No ⟶ *Disqualification page:* We are sorry but you must be 18 years old or above to take part in this survey. Thank you for your interest anyway!

3. *** Please name an official brand page on which you are most active / where you participate the most.**

   _____

   *Indicates that the question is mandatory

4. **How long have you 'liked' this brand's Facebook page?**
   - Less than 6 months

   - 6 months – 1 year

   - 2 – 5 years

- Over 5 years

Please complete the remaining part of the survey with this brand in mind.

5. **The next set of questions is about your experiences with this brand.**

	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly Agree
This is a brand that meets my expectations.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel confidence in this brand.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This is a brand that never disappoints me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The brand guarantees satisfaction.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This brand would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns about its products or services.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I could rely on this brand to solve a problem I may have with its products or services.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This brand would make any effort to satisfy me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This brand would compensate me in some way if I have a problem with its products or services.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

6. **Please indicate to which extent you disagree or agree with the following statements.**

	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly Agree
I am loyal to this brand.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am committed to this brand.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I do not consider myself a loyal customer of this brand.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I always use this brand of products / services.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I buy only this brand of products / services.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I purchase this brand routinely and use it regularly.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
There is no way I will ever consider buying products / services of opposing brands even if they can better meet my specific needs.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will actively express opposing views or negative opinions to products / services of opposing brands even if	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

the products are considered better by other people.						
I have no intention to ever try products of opposing brands even if the products are widely discussed by other people.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I will actively discourage others from buying products of opposing brands even if an opposing brand has new and better products.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

7. **On average, how much time do you spend on Facebook per week?**

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 – 3 hours
- 4 – 6 hours
- 7 – 9 hours
- 10 – 12 hours
- Over 13 hours

The next set of questions is about your activity on the brand page.

8. **Most of the time I come across the content originating from this brand page, or visit the page:**

	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly Agree
I read what others have to say about the brand.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I tend to go through other people's comments about the brand on the brand page.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I seek out opinions of the other members of the brand page.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I look for any information that other brand followers may have about the brand.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I leave my comments about the brand when I think I have something to add.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I share new information I have about the brand if I have any.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I respond to what is posted when I have something to add.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I participate in discussions about the brand when I feel it is appropriate.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I post my product or service queries	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

publicly on the brand page if I have any.							
I share interesting information about the brand from the brand page to my personal timeline.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I share brand posts from the brand's Facebook page to my friends' Facebook timelines.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I pass along interesting information I see there either privately to my friends (e.g. private messages, emails), or to other places on the Internet (e.g. Twitter, blogs etc.).	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

9. Please choose a category which you believe this brand represents.

- Automotive
- Consumer electronics
- Fashion
- Food and beverage
- Hospitality and tourism
- Media and entertainment
- Beauty and personal care
- Social
- Sports
- Telecommunications
- Other (please specify)

_____

The next set of questions aims to explore your experiences on the brand page.

10.   When I visit the brand's Facebook page, I feel that:

	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly Agree
What is posted on the page is fun	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
What is posted on the page is exciting	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
What is posted on the page is pleasant	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
What is posted on the page is	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

entertaining							
I want to meet other people interested in this brand.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I want to feel like I am a part of this group of people who are interested in the brand and visit this Facebook page.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can communicate about different things with other members of the brand page.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can stay in touch with people who are interested in this brand.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If I have a strong opinion about something that is being discussed about the brand on the brand page – I have to comment on it so the others will see it.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I need to let others in the community know what I think about the brand and its products or services.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I need to make it clear if I agree or disagree with someone's opinion about the brand on the page.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I want to get advice about the brand and its products or services from other followers.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am interested in other people's thoughts about the brand.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can receive answers to my questions about the brand from other members of the brand page.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I like to get ideas from other members about how to use the brand.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I want to get answers to my queries from the brand on this page.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can get information I need about the brand from the brand owners.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can receive support from the brand about their products / services.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am willing to learn about the brand from the brand owners.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

11. **Which of the following devices do you use to access Facebook? (Check all that apply)**

- Desktop computer
- Laptop computer
- Tablet

- Smart phone
- Other (please specify)

_____

12. **When I express myself on the brand's Facebook page:**

	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly Agree
I want to make a good impression on the people who see my posts.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to improve the way I am perceived by the people who see my posts.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I wish to present who I am to the people who see my posts.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am willing to present who I want to be to the people who see my posts.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to assist others with my knowledge about the brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am willing to help others get the information they want / need about the brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to help others by sharing my own experiences with the brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to help this brand to be successful.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am willing to support this brand with my activity on the page.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to repay the brand for the good experience.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can get away from what I am doing	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can escape from my responsibilities	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I postpone tasks that I should complete first	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I can forget about my daily occupations	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I want to express my joy about my experience with the brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I feel good when I can tell others on the page about the brand.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I need to share my excitement about the brand with others on the page.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I have to get my feelings about the brand off my chest.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

13. **How often do you come across the content from the brand's Facebook page (either visiting the page, or on the newsfeed)?**

- Multiple times a day
- Once a day
- A few times a week
- A few times a month
- Less than once a month
- Not at all

14. **What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male

15. **What is your age?**

- 18 – 24
- 25 – 34
- 35 – 44
- 45 – 54
- 55 – 64
- 65 – 74
- Over 75

16. **What is your level of education?**

- High school
- Technical / vocational training
- Professional qualification / diploma
- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate
- Other (please specify)
  _____

17. **What is your employment status?**

- Student
- Self-employed
- Working full-time
- Working part-time
- Out of work but looking for a job
- Out of work and not looking for a job
- Retired
- Other (please specify)

_____

Thank you very much for your participation! Your responses have been recorded.

Appendix H. Normality assessment

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
EWOM Reading 1	5.11	1.458	-.772	.264
EWOM Reading 2	4.83	1.644	-.572	-.448
EWOM Reading 3	4.35	1.783	-.320	-.859
EWOM Reading 4	4.62	1.683	-.535	-.526
EWOM Posting 1	4.71	1.767	-.552	-.604
EWOM Posting 2	4.51	1.742	-.490	-.608
EWOM Posting 3	4.74	1.734	-.625	-.482
EWOM Posting 4	4.74	1.691	-.719	-.314
EWOM Posting 5	4.32	1.788	-.375	-.854
EWOM Sharing 1	4.28	1.810	-.345	-.881
EWOM Sharing 2	3.83	1.896	-.060	-1.151
EWOM Sharing 3	4.39	1.792	-.479	-.742
Brand Trust Reliability 1	6.03	1.006	-1.422	2.976
Brand Trust Reliability 2	6.04	1.054	-1.516	2.949
Brand Trust Reliability 3	5.35	1.469	-1.033	.682
Brand Trust Reliability 4	5.56	1.313	-1.046	1.010
Brand Trust Intention 1	5.61	1.259	-1.088	1.297
Brand Trust Intention 2	5.60	1.312	-1.095	1.145
Brand Trust Intention 3	5.50	1.390	-1.157	1.269
Brand Trust Intention 4	5.33	1.482	-.940	.490
Attitudinal Brand Loyalty 1	5.59	1.351	-1.102	1.135
Attitudinal Brand Loyalty 2	5.56	1.378	-1.086	.916
Attitudinal Brand Loyalty 3	5.68	1.701	-1.319	.673
Behavioural Brand Loyalty 1	5.34	1.412	-.862	.467
Behavioural Brand Loyalty 2	4.07	1.892	-.097	-1.119
Behavioural Brand Loyalty 3	5.47	1.380	-.996	.696
Oppositional Brand Loyalty 1	3.35	1.861	.380	-.906
Oppositional Brand Loyalty 2	3.18	1.787	.401	-.902
Oppositional Brand Loyalty 3	2.87	1.777	.781	-.353
Oppositional Brand Loyalty 4	2.54	1.677	1.021	.150
Community Advice Search 1	4.50	1.617	-.478	-.452
Community Advice Search 2	4.94	1.576	-.686	-.163
Community Advice Search 3	4.98	1.478	-.755	.306
Community Advice Search 4	4.55	1.736	-.522	-.575
Brand Assistance 1	4.79	1.620	-.613	-.335
Brand Assistance 2	5.04	1.513	-.700	.019
Brand Assistance 3	5.03	1.470	-.712	.105
Brand Assistance 4	5.33	1.389	-.964	.885
Enjoyment 1	5.33	1.205	-.613	.618
Enjoyment 2	5.12	1.349	-.605	.206
Enjoyment 3	5.62	1.128	-.868	1.051
Enjoyment 4	5.33	1.301	-.761	.584
Social Interaction 1	4.28	1.782	-.269	-.803
Social Interaction 2	4.51	1.663	-.416	-.551
Social Interaction 3	4.71	1.597	-.635	-.105

| Social Interaction 4	4.50	1.719	-.428	-.616
Social Expression of Opinions 1	4.35	1.745	-.365	-.740
Social Expression of Opinions 2	4.16	1.779	-.198	-.898
Social Expression of Opinions 3	3.89	1.786	-.043	-.929
Self-presentation 1	4.33	1.674	-.402	-.511
Self-presentation 2	4.10	1.688	-.244	-.693
Self-presentation 3	4.36	1.726	-.408	-.708
Self-presentation 4	4.47	1.679	-.479	-.487
Helping Others 1	4.80	1.642	-.658	-.225
Helping Others 2	5.02	1.511	-.830	.268
Helping Others 3	4.87	1.655	-.727	-.219
Helping the Brand 1	5.14	1.531	-.761	.167
Helping the Brand 2	5.13	1.495	-.788	.308
Helping the Brand 3	4.71	1.582	-.528	-.227
Escapism 1	3.57	1.783	.040	-1.036
Escapism 2	3.17	1.806	.383	-.975
Escapism 3	2.87	1.720	.569	-.770
Escapism 4	2.92	1.761	.524	-.887
Expressing Positive Emotions 1	4.54	1.589	-.541	-.251
Expressing Positive Emotions 2	4.58	1.565	-.600	-.104
Expressing Positive Emotions 3	4.22	1.678	-.364	-.643
Expressing Positive Emotions 4	3.65	1.742	-.008	-.969

Appendix I. Results of factor analysis

Factor extraction – total variance explained (eWOM, N=68)

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.124	59.364	59.364	**7.124**	59.364	59.364
2	1.760	14.666	74.031	**1.760**	14.666	74.031
3	.733	6.105	80.136			
4	.611	5.088	85.224			
5	.412	3.437	88.661			
6	.302	2.518	91.178			
7	.255	2.126	93.304			
8	.242	2.017	95.321			
9	.188	1.566	96.887			
10	.165	1.378	98.265			
11	.120	1.003	99.268			
12	.088	.732	100.000			

Factor extraction – total variance explained (eWOM, N=250)

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.648	55.398	55.398	**6.648**	55.398	55.398
2	1.704	14.197	69.595	**1.704**	14.197	69.595
3	.895	7.455	77.050			
4	.579	4.821	81.871			
5	.436	3.629	85.500			
6	.394	3.286	88.785			
7	.294	2.450	91.235			
8	.262	2.184	93.419			
9	.230	1.920	95.338			
10	.224	1.870	97.208			
11	.189	1.578	98.786			
12	.146	1.214	100.000			

Factor extraction – scree plot (eWOM, N=68)
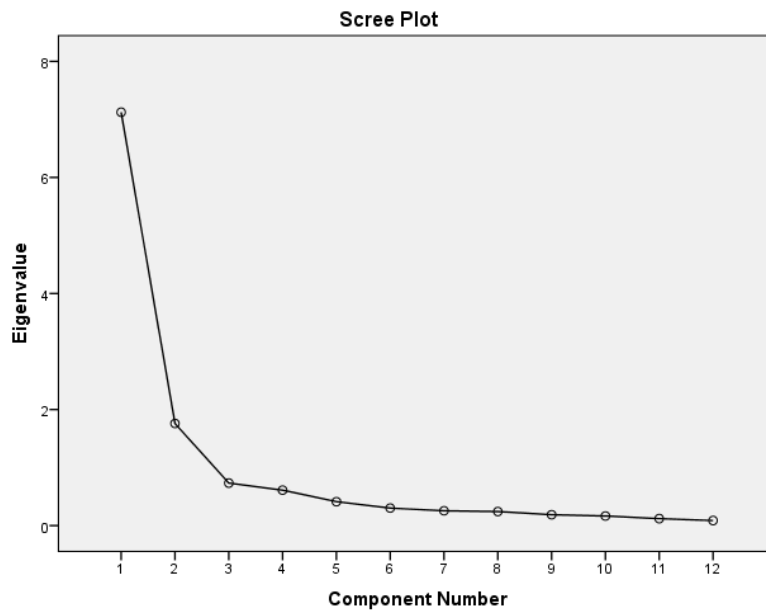
Scree Plot

Factor extraction – scree plot (eWOM, N=250)

Scree Plot
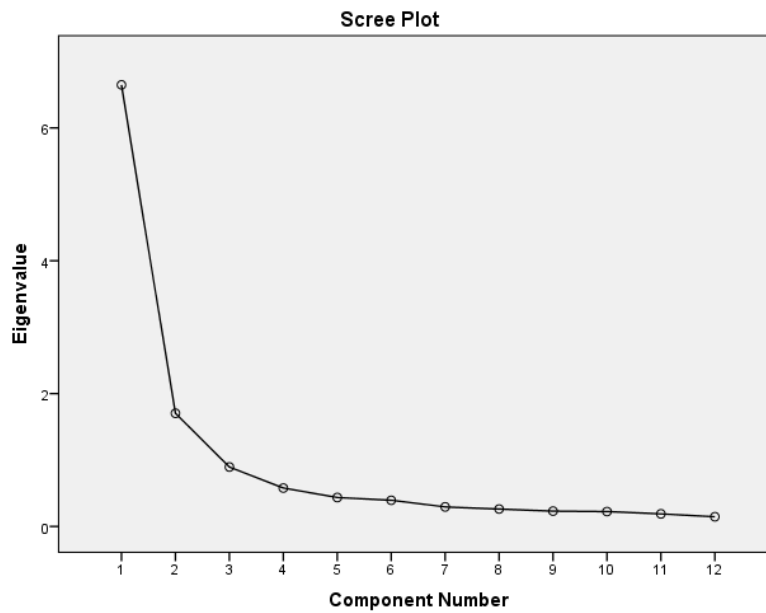
Factor extraction – component matrix (eWOM)

Item	N = 68 Component 1	N = 68 Component 2	N = 250 Component 1	N = 250 Component 2
EWOM Posting 1	.797		.815	
EWOM Posting 2	.841	-.357	.813	
EWOM Posting 3	.871		.848	
EWOM Posting 4	.882		.828	
EWOM Posting 5	.756		.674	-.333
EWOM Reading 1	.747	.454	.674	.555
EWOM Reading 2	.666	.638	.708	.559
EWOM Reading 3	.667	.593	.716	.507
EWOM Reading 4	.702	.542	.710	.499
EWOM Sharing 1	.805		.759	-.345
EWOM Sharing 2	.734		.700	-.347
EWOM Sharing 3	.740		.651	-.350

Rotated component matrix (eWOM)

Item	N = 68 Component 1	N = 68 Component 2	N = 68 Component 3	N = 250 Component 1	N = 250 Component 2	N = 250 Component 3
EWOM Posting 1	**0.871**			**0.823**		
EWOM Posting 2	**0.842**		0.346	**0.760**		0.318
EWOM Posting 3	**0.840**		0.337	**0.838**		
EWOM Posting 4	**0.858**		0.321	**0.797**		
EWOM Posting 5	**0.643**	0.300	0.309	**0.543**		0.509
EWOM Reading 1		**0.765**	0.381		**0.849**	
EWOM Reading 2		**0.886**			**0.858**	
EWOM Reading 3		**0.870**			**0.826**	
EWOM Reading 4		**0.847**			**0.824**	
EWOM Sharing 1	0.457		**0.718**	0.403		**0.756**
EWOM Sharing 2	0.305		**0.829**			**0.871**
EWOM Sharing 3	0.523		**0.606**			**0.772**

Factor rotation – total variance explained (eWOM, N=68)

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.124	59.364	59.364	**4.101**	34.176	34.176
2	1.760	14.666	74.031	**3.277**	27.307	61.483
3	.733	6.105	80.136	**2.238**	18.653	80.136
4	.611	5.088	85.224			
5	.412	3.437	88.661			
6	.302	2.518	91.178			
7	.255	2.126	93.304			
8	.242	2.017	95.321			
9	.188	1.566	96.887			
10	.165	1.378	98.265			
11	.120	1.003	99.268			
12	.088	.732	100.000			

Factor rotation – total variance explained (eWOM, N=250)

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.648	55.398	55.398	**3.384**	28.197	28.197
2	1.704	14.197	69.595	**3.247**	27.060	55.257
3	.895	7.455	77.050	**2.615**	21.792	77.050
4	.579	4.821	81.871			
5	.436	3.629	85.500			
6	.394	3.286	88.785			
7	.294	2.450	91.235			
8	.262	2.184	93.419			
9	.230	1.920	95.338			
10	.224	1.870	97.208			
11	.189	1.578	98.786			
12	.146	1.214	100.000			

Appendix J. Conference papers

Pasternak, O., Veloutsou, C. and Morgan-Thomas, A. 2013. External Brand Communication: A Literature Review of the Antecedents to Word-of-Mouth, In Grigoriu, N. and Veloutsou, C. (eds.) *Theoretical and Empirical Reflections in Marketing,* Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER), Athens, pp. 63-78. ISBN: 9786185065584.

Pasternak, O. 2013. Virtual brand communities: role of emotions in eWOM and brand tribalism. In: Reflecting On the Past, Celebrating the Present and Shaping the Future in Marketing Research, 19-20 September, Edinburgh, UK.

Pasternak, O. 2014. Towards identifying dimensions of and motives for electronic word-of-mouth within Facebook brand communities. In: Scottish Doctoral Colloquium, 28-29 April, Stirling, UK.

Pasternak, O., Veloutsou, C., and Morgan-Thomas, A. 2015. Identifying the nature of consumer's eWOM activity on Facebook brand pages: an exploratory study. In: 10th Global Brand Conference, AM SIG, 27-29 Apr 2015, Turku, Finland.

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