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ABSTRACT

This content analysis looks at several trends regarding electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and how consumers engage in eWOM. 304 tweets were analyzed and numerous correlations regarding gender and time-of-day. This research will be beneficial to brands and companies seeking to launch new products or services using social media as a promotional avenue.

INTRODUCTION

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is defined as the act of exchanging marketing information among consumers; WOM plays an essential role in changing consumer attitudes and behavior towards products and services (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Taking the advantage of the popularization of the Internet, consumers are more willing to share their evaluation and their experiences with a product or service through different kinds of online platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Litvin (2005) developed the definition of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) as all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services (Jeong, 2011). In this case, the eWOM has a higher accessibility, making consumers easily reachable. The eWOM also allows consumers to express their opinions towards a product or experience more freely and in real time. Consumers can also obtain a large amount of product reviews from other consumers, who are from all over the world, instead of just from their limited amount of friends or families.

For the eWOM trend, researchers have found that during the past few years, the impact of eWOM communication was the most researched topic among consumer behavior. For the method of the studies in eWOM, researchers are more likely to use survey, secondary data and mathematical modeling as a research method. Prior to 2005, only a few eWOM research articles were published. But this amount increased dramatically from 8 articles in 2005 to 120 articles in 2011 (Yang, 2012). The increasing numbers of articles successfully attracted more scholars to pay more attention to eWOM.

In this study, the relationship about how a consumer spreads their experience with a product or service via Internet-based technology. Also their reaction to a company's product launch is analyzed through the observations of eWOM after the announcement and after the actual product was launched. As a result, a brand was selected as an example and a platform was also chosen to help the team search the response of consumers' eWOM around the date the brand's release of a new product.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Word-of-Mouth (WOM)

Success in a highly competitive American market is the cause of positive reviews as well as the level of consumer satisfaction. To measure the satisfaction of consumers, the decision to recommend products or warn their acquaintances on the negatives of the product is analyzed. The WOM is the process of conveying information from person to person and plays a major role in customer buying decisions (Richins & Root-Shaffer, 1988).

Traditional marketing is being replaced by WOM practices (Misner, 1999) because consumer studies find that indoor and outdoor advertisements are considered less effective than customer's testimonials on the products. Even as early as 1955 researchers, Katz and Lazarsfeld, found that WOM was seven times more effective in influencing consumers to switch brands. Stealing market share, or switching brands, is essential for acquiring new customers. In a 2005 survey, it was found that fewer than 40% of the people think that advertisements are the best way to learn about a new product, less than 59% of the people report that they buy products because of an advertisement and fewer than 49% of the people report that commercials are entertaining (Forrester.com). "Instead of tossing away millions of dollars on Super Bowl advertisements, fledgling dot-com companies are trying to catch attention through much cheaper marketing strategies such as blogging and [WOM] campaigns" (Whitman, 2006, p.B3A).

Electronic Word-of-Mouth

Through social platforms, WOM has transformed into electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), which is characterized by its unique ability to reach large audiences as well as being available to consumers for an indefinite amount of time (Hennig-Thuraum, 2004). The information provided through eWOM communication can be positive, negative or neutral and the statements can be contributed by current, former, or potential customers (Hennig-Thuraum et al., 2004). Every day consumers are using addition Web 2.0 tools such as discussion boards, social platforms, and consumer review sites, etc. to exchange product information (Lee, Park, & Han, 2008).

EWOM has created accessibility to a two-way forum between a consumer and a company. Companies are no longer using media for the primary purpose of digital advertisements and promotions, but also they handle customer service issues, as well as 'authentically' engage with customers (Solis, 2010).

Reports indicate that 83% of Internet shoppers make purchasing decisions based on other consumers' reviews of the products (Opinion Research Corporation, 2008), which make eWOM

especially important to companies that are in a red sea of competition. Brands are also finding ways to implement the consumer reviews in their future marketing plans, which is often referred to as 'crowdsourcing' and 'co-creation' within the marketing toolbox (Storbacka, Frow, Nenonen, & Payne, 2012; Wolny, 2009).

Positive, Negative or Neutral: WOM/ eWOM
In a study on consumer reviews on products (i.e., books) posted on Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com, Chevalier and Mayzlin found that "…an improvement in a book's review led to an increase in relative sales at that site and the impact of a negative review was greater than the impact of a positive one…" (2006). When the ultimate goal of a business is to make money, positive eWOM is essentially free marketing for the product or service. In other industries such as box office revenue found that whether the WOM is negative or positive it still increases performance (Liu, 2006). Similarly to negative WOM, negative eWOM, originates when consumers' consumption-related expectations are not satisfied (Anderson, 1998). The dissatisfaction can stem from a negative experience with the product or service or dismay with the product or service quality. Research questions were generated based on the curiosity of Twitter trends in regards to eWOM and the motivations of tweets in eWOM.

Negatively generated WOM actually produces positive outcomes to some extent because the availability of negative reviews ensures consumers that the positive reviews are not fabricated by the brand. If all of the user reviews were positive, skepticism would form in the mind of the consumer on whether the reviews are from actual consumers therefore; negative WOM enhances credibility (Doh & Hwang, 2009).

RQ1: When generating eWOM, what sentiments are expressed by the consumers?

Usage of emoji's when expressing eWOM
When interacting via the Internet, speakers find difficulty in conveying their emotions due to the absence of nonverbal cues such as facial expression and body language (Walther & D'Addario, 2001). A way for speakers to express their emotions is through the use of emoticons; graphics composed of ASCII text that represent expressive faces, e.g. :-) or :-(. By using emoticons or emoji, new graphic emoticons, serve as a relationally useful tool in Internet communication. This study does not focus on the investigation of emoji's, however when encoding a Twitter user's sentiment, emoji's must be taken into consideration.

Differences in eWOM based on gender
Gender differences are shaped by social expectations including demographics, geographic, psychographics and other attributes that shape the upbringing of an individual. For example, males tend to dominate public discussions, even when they possess less knowledge than a female counterpart, because they use conversation to establish status (Tannen, 1990). Marketing communication literature put forward that the gender variable might moderate stimuli processing (Lord, Putrevu, & Shi, 2004). This proposal can be verified during a eWOM communication exposure insofar as the gender seems to influence the processing mode of the eWOM (elaborated vs. heuristic) message.

Electronic word-of-mouth is not resistant to gender differences; however, the differences are based on psychological aspects rather than physical attributes. EWOM has a stronger impact on the decision of females to (Soonyong & Taesik, 2011) embrace the opinions of someone similar to them. Females also seek advice from product review platforms when making a purchase decision. Additionally, females like to act in a way that benefits their community. On the Internet, much like in real-life, females seek to obtain social support through cooperation and network-oriented collaboration (Miao & Fan, 2012). Males however, often use the Internet to improve and build social status by challenging, debating or arguing the opinions others express online. Similarly, males may be less inclined to trust the reviewer and more inclined to provide eWOM communication in order to challenge the information provided. Therefore research question and hypothesis is developed as followed:

RQ2: Are there gender differences in eWOM engagement?
H1: Females are more likely to engage in positive eWOM than males.

Differences in eWOM based on time of day
Previous research shows that people are more alert and best process information at their ideal time-of-day (Cavallera & Giudici, 2008; Kerkof, 1985), either at morning or at night. This notion might be linked to the research that says self-reported alertness is strongly related to either being a morning or evening person (Kerkof, 1985; 1998) such that the peak of the alertness curve in morning people occurs in the early part of the day, while in evening people it occurs later in the day. Negativity is highest in the late evening, followed by the early morning.

RQ3: Does the time of day a tweet is sent have an effect on eWOM being positive, negative or neutral?
H2: The later it is in the day; the more negative the content of the tweet.

METHOD
To address these research questions and hypotheses, tweets (via Twitter) were analyzed and evaluated based off of McDonald's announcement of their new All Day Breakfast Menu as well as the reactions post the release of the all-day breakfast menu. The McDonald's All Breakfast launch was chosen for analysis because the addition of this new menu was a direct response to consumer's feedback on social media. Following the announcement of all-day breakfast, McDonald's tweeted back to 88,000 users who had suggested McDonald's serve breakfast past 10:30am since 2006 (Wolf-Mann, 2015).

Twitter
The research was conducted using the social media site, Twitter. Launched in 2006, Twitter is a social media website where users send posts (known as tweets) to their followers. Tweets are text-based posts containing up to 140 characters in length (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel & Chowdury, 2009). As of June 30, 2015, Twitter has 316 million active monthly users sharing 500 million tweets per day. 80% of those tweets come from a user on a mobile device. Twitter's mission is: To give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers. Twitter is the largest microblogging site making it the perfect medium to look at eWOM.

Sampling

Due to the nation-wide announcement of McDonald's breakfast, this study focuses on two weeks preceding and following McDonald's launch of all day breakfast to ensure a large sample of tweets. In this research, the content analysis method is used to analyze the materials and data gathered. Content analysis is a standard method for systematically comparing the content of communications (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991).This research will focus on observing the trends and the content in word of mouth among the launch of McDonald's all-day breakfast. Looking at tweets immediately after the news release announcing the new initiative September 1st. Tweets from the two weeks following the announcement and tweets following the actual all-day breakfast product launch were analyzed using several factors.

Using Twitter's Advanced Search feature, the sample of tweets from two time periods: Breakfast announcement: September 1, 2015-September 15, 2015; and Breakfast launch: October 6, 2015-October 20, 2015 were compiled for analysis. Each tweet was analyzed consistently by three coders, each coder randomly selected 100 tweets from each of the three time periods generated using the search term "McDonald's breakfast, randomly selecting every 10th tweet from the Twitter search results. The total sample size was 304 tweets. An overall population was unable to be determined due to Twitter's advanced search set-up. Twitter Advanced Search does not populate a total number of tweets when you search. With the sample of tweets, through the method of content analysis, tweets were coded based on the Twitter user's sentiment. Sentiment included: positive, negative or neutral eWOM.

In order to answer the research questions and hypotheses, the time period of day, date, number of retweets, and favorites was noted. The use of emoticons, and presence of links, pictures, etc. was also noted. The tweeter's gender was determined, along with the sentiment of each tweet. Each coder determined if the tweet was positive, negative or was neutral, in terms of emotion. The main emotion of the tweet was also noted. Derived from (Waters, 2011) the main emotions expressed in tweets were: No emotion, excitement, happiness, fear, hope, humor and sadness. All analysis was compiled using the software program, Qualtrics. Using the content analysis will give us a more efficient scale to analyze the attitude of the brand's' followers. See Appendix for full codebook.

Examples of Positive, Negative and Neutral Tweets
Positive Tweets
- Rock Band 4 AND all-day breakfast at **McDonald's** coming on October 6th. Awesome. I've been wondering when the best day of my life would be.

- McDonald's starting to do the breakfast menu all day, best news ever

- "@ABC7: McDonald's launch all day breakfast starts Oct. 6 http://abc7.la/1L2fY0Q "OHH MAHH GAWD! prayers been answered

- Starting October 6th McDonald's is going to start serving breakfast ALL DAY. This is the best news EVER.

- October 6 can't come soon enough @McDonalds breakfast all day

Negative Tweets
- People act like McDonald's breakfast is the second coming of Christ, it's not that serious or good.
- McDonald's breakfast is overrated.
- @McDonalds is now serving breakfast all day? Instead of a 5hr old sausage biscuit, you can get a 10hr old one! #McSalesareMcFalling.
- why don't people validate before they start sharing, McDonald's isn't trialling all day breakfast, not in the UK

Neutral Tweets
- McDonald's is switching to all day breakfast. I don't know if this is good or bad

Coder Reliability

Prior to the complete analysis of tweets, a pilot study was conducted on the same 10 tweets by each of the three coders to determine coder reliability. Below are the results of the pilot study. The initial tweets were selected the same way as the 300 used for the main analysis. As a result, the coder reliability score for variables of Sentiments of emotions, Twitter users' gender, Domination of emotion were high with Krippendorff's alpha range from 0.73 to 1.00.

RESULTS

Twitter Users' Gender.

First, we observed the proportion of Twitter users who are female and who express a positive attitude towards the event of McDonald's all day breakfast in a 3 (Twitter User's Gender: Male or female or unknown) x 3 (Sentiment: Positive, Negative or Neutral). This analysis indicated that females were more likely to engage in eWOM than males. According to our observations eWOM was spread more often by female Twitter users, 52.3% ($n = 157$), than by male Twitter users 38.7% ($n = 116$) and 9% were of an unidentifiable gender ($n = 27$) (See Table 1).

Table 1: Relationship between Gender and Sentiment

Twitter User's Gender * Content category Crosstabulation

Count

		Sentiment			Total
		Positive	Negative	Neutral	
Twitter User's Gender	Female	95	49	13	157
	Male	45	58	13	116
	Unknown	6	8	13	27
Total		146	115	39	300

Moreover, for Twitter users' attitude toward the McDonald's all day breakfast, 60.5% ($n = 95$) of female users had a positive attitude compared to 38.8% ($n = 45$) of male, for the gender of unknown people, 48.1% ($n = 13$) of them were more likely to have a neutral attitude in this research. What can be concluded from the research is that in Twitter, among people who talked about McDonald's all day breakfast, females were more likely to spread positive eWOM towards the new product release than male. For the research question 1, the team members found that female are more likely to engage in eWOM than male, the amount of tweets they post in this observation are larger than male, and they tend to be more likely to find social support through social media than male. As shown in Table 2, women are significantly more likely to engage in positive eWOM than men, $X^2(4) = 46.094$ ($p < .001$). In this case, it is similar to Miao's (2012) opinion that females seek to obtain social support through cooperation and network-oriented collaboration, and Hypothesis 1 which assumes *females are more likely to engage in positive eWOM than men* is supported.

Table 2: Chi-Square Tests about the Gender and Sentiment

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	46.094[a]	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	36.579	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	28.991	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	300		

a. 1 cells (11.1%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is 3.51.

Time of the Tweet

Our interests included the relationship among the tweets' time and twitter user' sentiment. The design was also a 6(Time of tweet: morning, early afternoon, late afternoon, evening, early night or late night) x 3(Sentiment: positive, negative, or neutral). In this case we analyzed the number of tweets in each time period and the sentiment of each attitude. As a result, among the 304 tweets, in most of the time period, people have more positive content than negative. Between the time (7am-11: 59am), 46.8% ($n = 30$) of the tweets were positive, 39% were negative ($n = 25$), and 14.0% ($n = 9$) were neutral. Between the time (noon-2:59pm), 49% ($n = 26$) of the tweets were positive, 41.5% ($n = 22$) were negative, and 9.4% ($n = 5$) were neutral. Between the time (3pm-4: 59pm), 49% ($n = 25$) of the tweets were positive, 27.4% ($n = 14$) were negative, and 23.5% ($n = 12$) were neutral. Between the time (5pm-7: 59pm), 53.8% ($n = 35$) of the tweets were positive, 35.8% ($n = 24$) were negative, and 11.9% ($n = 8$) were neutral. Between the time (11pm-6am), 57.6% ($n = 15$) of the tweets were positive, 34.6% ($n = 9$) were negative, and 7.6% ($n = 2$) were neutral. However, for the time period of early night (8pm-10:59pm), there are more people have more negative tweets than positive ones. In this period, 54% ($n = 22$) of tweets are negative higher than 34% ($n = 15$), which is positive. For the research question 2, the team found that during all day period, most of the time periods, there are more positive tweets than negative ones. In the time period of 8pm to 10:59pm, the negative tweets are more than positive ones. To prove the correlation between the time of tweets and the sentiments, the team also found that the statistic showed there was no significant relationship between the time of day and sentiment. As a result, in this research, the later in the night, there wasn't more people on Twitter post negative tweets about McDonald's all day breakfast. In this case, the Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Table 3: Relationship between Time and Sentiments

Time of tweet * Content category Crosstabulation

Count

		Sentiment			Total
		Positive	Negative	Neutral	
Time of tweet	(morning) 7:00 AM - 11:59 AM	30	25	9	64
	(early afternoon) noon - 2:59 pm	26	22	5	53
	(late afternoon) 3pm - 4:59 pm	25	14	12	51
	(evening) 5pm - 7:59 pm	35	24	8	67
	(early night) 8pm- 10:59pm	15	22	4	41
	(late night) 11pm - 6 am	15	9	2	26
Total		146	116	40	302

Table 4: Relationship between Time and Sentiments

Chi-Square Tests about Time and Sentiment

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.077[a]	10	.280
Likelihood Ratio	11.501	10	.320
Linear-by-Linear Association	.207	1	.649
N of Valid Cases	302		

DISCUSSION

The objective of this research was to analyze the correlation between gender and engagement in eWOM and to shed light on the effects the time of day has on user sentiment. The results indicate that female Twitter users spread positive eWOM more so than males. We assume that females tend to provide eWOM communication because they trust the reviews and feel that they can receive trust back by sharing their opinion to the community. If a female experiences extreme satisfaction with a product or company they will be more likely to spread eWOM. In reference to time of day more negative eWOM is expressed during the early night (8pm - 10:59 pm).

In terms of eWOM via Twitter, people who have already experienced McDonald's will be motivated to spread eWOM. Brand involvement is described as positive feelings of attachment to a brand regardless of context (Beatty & Kahle, 1988). Meaning that through environmental changes such as economy, geography, policy, trends, etc. the consumer's relationship with the brand is able to withstand changes (Dholakia, 1997; Pritchard, Havitz, & Howard, 1999). A well known the recession experienced in the United States in the year 2008. During financial instability consumers still managed to remain loyal to their favorite brands. In terms of WOM, Mangold, Miller, & Brockway (1999) found that consumers who are highly committed to brands are more likely to pass on positive messages therefore; brand commitment may be used to predict consumer behavior (Herr, Ahn. & Kim, 2011).

Other studies suggest that the involvement of a consumer with a product is indicative of their decision to inform others on their experience. The level of consumer satisfaction with a product is the main factor in determining WOM and eWOM engagement (e.g. Casalo, Flavin, & Guinaliu, 2008). When a consumer has a positive experience with a product they are more likely to recommend the product to their family, friends, and acquaintances because they feel the desire

to inform others on their experience with the product (Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000). Thus, a negative experience will generate negative WOM from that consumer.

The relevance of a product to a consumer is also a motivation for engaging in WOM practices. Relevance is determined by the consumer's behavior, how often does a consumer use a product, does it have multiple uses, what are the perceptions of using the products, etc. (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2006).

In many marketing campaigns, marketers use the release of new product to evoke consumers' conscious about the brand. This method help increase the brand awareness and the market shares of the company. Also, the impact of product promotion and advertising efforts is enhanced by eWOM. By the recommendation of product, more potential adopters would more likely to be influenced by current adopters through eWOM. In fact, the WOM could be used as the primary underlying behavior rationale in the development of innovation diffusion models of new product acceptance (Mahajan and Muller 1979). In this case, by using the social media and through the eWOM, this effect would be enhanced. Moreover, for the brand themselves, they can also choose to focus more on female eWOM users' and to make their advertising more concentrate on female when they want to receive a better response according to our research. On the other hand, marketers can also get to know about consumers about how much time is too much time for excitement to turn into dissonance.

The current research on attitudes in the context of gender and time of day are merely psychologically based. If the future research were to focus on persuasion tactics or consumer behavior research, one can use the information to determine the best strategic social media plan for their brand.

Limitations and Future Research
When using the emotions from (Walker, 2011) several emotions expressed from McDonald's breakfast fans and customers were not included as a choice. Analyzing the content analysis results, the most common emotions used that were not listed: disappointment, disgust, outrage and embarrassment. If the content analysis were to be conducted again, a wider range of emotions would need to be included. The emotions used from Walker, 2011 were geared more towards positive emotions than negative ones. A range of negative emotions needs to be more extensive. Further research in regards to dominant emotions can be done using survey.

Along with the wider range of emotions needed in the codebook, the actual analysis and determining of a dominant of emotion as well as if something is positive or negative, is somewhat subjective. Each variables reliability was acceptable, but each coder is a different ethnicity, their idea of each emotion is slightly different. The diversity of views can alter results. Another limitation has to do with the vast number of tweets sent out by users regarding McDonald's breakfast. With only three coders, content analysis is limited in the number of tweets that can be analyzed. In addition, as mentioned earlier, an overall population was unable to be determined due to Twitter's advanced search set-up. Twitter Advanced Search does not

populate a total number of tweets when you search. For further questions regarding eWOM with a product launch, other methods such as survey or interview should be used.

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