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Motivations of User Engagement in eWOM of Chinese Microblog

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the motivations of user engagement in electronic word-of-mouth behavior through a netnography. The sample includes more than 2,000 posts from the Chinese microblog-Sina Weibo and 20 follow-up interviews about film reviews. 5 types of motivations were examined, including egoistic motivations, motivations for the reward, reciprocal motivations, altruistic motivations, and motivations in the sense of community. Results confirmed the effect of egoistic motivations, reciprocal motivations, and motivations in the sense of community for the increasing volume of eWOM. However, motivations for the reward and altruistic motivations were found less powerful. Hence, the reward was found to decrease the generation of eWOM. The findings would give implications for marketers to plan and leverage eWOM and help scholars understand eWOM in a microblog context.

Keywords: Motivations, eWOM, microblog, virtual community, netnography.

INTRODUCTION

The development of the internet is changing the environment of the virtual community and making the interaction between peer members more important than before (Kozinets *et al.*, 2010). A better understanding of the motivation for members to engage in eWOM of films is needed. Recently, microblog gathering a wide range of users from society has become an important social media platform for consumers to generate eWOM (Yoon *et al.*, 2017). Booming microblog users made microblog sites a primary source of news in China. The eWOM on microblogs is urgent to be studied for helping understand the culture in the new form of virtual community (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2015) .

Superior research has adequately verified the effects of eWOM on purchase decision-making and attitude change (Duan *et al.*, 2008). However, the other important aspect of eWOM -the generation of eWOM still lacks investigation (Liu *et al.*, 2017). For filling the gap in the literature, the study aims to explore the motivations of microblog users' engagement in eWOM of films on Chinese microblog—Sina Weibo.

We proposed 5 specific motivations and tested them in a netnographic research, including egoistic motivations, motivations for the reward, reciprocal motivations, altruistic motivations, and motivations in the sense of community. Online observation and online interviews were used as tools for this qualitative research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins by reviewing the development of eWOM theory and identifies the powerful effect of eWOM. It continues with the literature on virtual communities and motivations for engaging eWOM. It then reviews the eWOM in the specific context: the film industry, which is also the environment of the research. The gaps in the literature review will be included and considered as the guidance for the present study.

eWOM

Traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) was originally defined as an oral form of interpersonal commercial communication among acquaintances (Cheung & Lee, 2012). With the popularization of the internet, numerous venues provided for consumers to share their views and experiences, translating traditional WOM into a new form of communication, namely electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication. (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004) defined eWOM 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”. He suggested that knowledge on traditional WOM communication in the literature can also be used in the online setting.

The effect of eWOM was empowered with the advent of the Internet (M. Lee & Youn, 2009). eWOM has been proved to influence consumers' decision-making processes in prior literature (Seiler *et al.*, 2017). When measuring the effects of eWOM, volume and valence were used widely. The volume measures the total amount of eWOM communication while the valence describes the eWOM positive or negative. Many studies proved that volume is more significant relative to consumer purchase decisions because it increases the awareness of the product (Seiler *et al.*, 2017). Conversely, the discussion about the effects of valence varies a lot. Some studies asserted that valence has no effect on consumer behavior (Duan *et al.*, 2008). Others found that valence significantly affects revenue (Chintagunta *et al.*, 2010) .

Microblogging, catering to young people who prefer scanning brief messages during their fragmented time, generated a new type of word of mouth—microblogging word of mouth (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2012). The distinction of microblogging compared to other online communication platform lies in the convenience for updating by users with fragmented content. It enables information to spread rapidly (Kim *et al.*, 2014). Microblog also enables companies to promote communication and develop a mutually beneficial relationship with consumers (Kim *et al.*, 2014). The economic effects of Twitter have been proved in the music, movie, and game industries (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2015). While Twitter has achieved great attention when studying consumers' eWOM, Sina Weibo in China is still underestimated, although it has grown to be a key eWOM platform with its rapid growth and widespread. The cultural difference can play an important role in deciding consumers' behavior on microblogs. The specific motivations for Sina Weibo members to engage in eWOM of films in China are worth exploring.

Motivations of eWOM in Virtual Communities

Motivation is “an internal state or condition” which determines general behavior to a great extent (Reimer & Benkenstein, 2016). Although (Cheung & Thadani, 2012) developed a synthesized framework to study eWOM adoption as an integrative process, research on sharing eWOM still remains fragmented. Among them, (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004) made a great contribution by putting forward 8 explicit motives (i.e., platform assistance, venting negative feelings, concern for other consumers, extraversion/positive self-enhancement, social benefits, economic incentives, helping the company, advice-seeking) when studying consumers' engagement in generating eWOM on opinion platforms. However, a deeper understanding of members' motivation in virtual communities is still under exploring.

Egoistic motivations

Egoism is defined as one's self being the motivation of one's behavior (Fu *et al.*, 2015). Egoism is an outlet for consumers to release their emotional needs for self-enhancement, such as gaining attention, improving reputation, or asserting expertise and superiority (Yang, 2017). Meanwhile, social benefits, including self-enhancement, can be achieved easily through positive eWOM communication since online platforms face a large number of people and can leave the message existing for a long time (Tong *et al.*, 2007). Egoistic motivations have been widely found to be an antecedent for positive eWOM (Fu *et al.*, 2015; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). In addition, (Wallace *et al.*, 2014) studied Facebook fans suggested that self-expression can be relative to members' willingness to engage in the eWOM on the self-expressive medium such as Facebook.

Motivations for the reward

Rewards, including monetary incentives, were found to be effective tools for increasing the eWOM (Reimer & Benkenstein, 2016). For example, (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004) identified economic incentives as one of the primary reasons for consumers to engage in eWOM communication. However, in the context of virtual communities, (Wallace *et al.*, 2014) found that rewards or can reduce intrinsically driven behaviors on Facebook. (McLure Wasko & Faraj, 2000) explained that systems based on rewards can quickly turn moral obligation in the virtual community into self-interest, which weakens the motivation for members to engage. Likewise, (Sun *et al.*, 2017) also suggested that monetary rewards only work for members with few social connections. Furthermore, monetary rewards may even demotivate well-connected members to contribute to the virtual community.

Reciprocal motivations

Reciprocity was referred to the information exchanging that is mutual and supposed by the participant as fair in the context of eWOM (Kim *et al.*, 2014). The reciprocity explained the motivation for the valence of the eWOM. In specific, people who experience positive consuming experiences would generate positive eWOM due to the enjoyment in helping the company. On the other hand, the enjoyment of vengeance will motivate consumers to generate negative eWOM in return (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). Similarly, positive eWOM was identified as the motivation for consumers to ease the tension raised by product involvement, while negative eWOM communication was viewed as a response to recover losses caused by unsatisfactory products or services (Fu *et al.*, 2015) .

Altruistic motivations

Altruistic motivations have been proved to be important for consumers to engage in eWOM communication (D. Lee *et al.*, 2012). It was reflected in the desire to help others (Reimer & Benkenstein, 2016). People who are motivated by altruism share their own positive or negative consumption experiences for providing benefits to others without the expectation of reward (Tong *et al.*, 2007). In many research, the enjoyment of helping others was a primary motivation for people to generate eWOM (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004; Lee *et al.*, 2006) .

Motivations in the sense of community

The sense of community was referred to as the obligation or commitment to engage in knowledge sharing, which can benefit the community (Majali & Bohari, 2016). It closely relates to the concept of social identity, which is defined as “the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership” (Lee *et al.*, 2006). When individuals identify themselves as part of the group and line up their objectives with those in the group, they will be motivated to do something beneficial for others. Similarly, (Cheung & Lee, 2012) mentioned collectivism as motivation with an ultimate goal of increasing the welfare of a group when studying consumers' engagement in eWOM communication. The act for the public good is for the group's benefit, which is opposite to egoism.

eWOM in Film Industry

Since producing and marketing motion pictures can be desperately risky (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2007), Marketing research in this industry is fruitful. It has been found the volume of word of mouth at the end of the first week is the main driver of the long-term revenue (Roschk & Große, 2013). It suggested that prerelease weeks and opening week can be the critical period for film manufacturers to manage word-of-mouth marketing.

METHODOLOGY

Research Methods

Netnography was used in the research for studying virtual communities depending on the ethnographic research techniques (Brodie *et al.*, 2011). Since it develops from ethnography, one of its benefits is that the surroundings of the research environment are not created artificially. On the other hand, the online approach provides scope for studying a larger number of individuals (Wu & Pearce, 2014). Netnography is the most appropriate method to gain insight into word-of-mouth processes in virtual communities.

Research Planning

Since it is important to study the participants with the specific marketing research questions when choosing the research site, we followed criteria suggested by (Kozinets, 2002) as follows: (1) a more focused and research question-relevant segment, topic, or group; (2) higher “traffic” of postings; (3) larger numbers of discrete message posters; (4) more detailed or descriptively rich data; and (5) more between-member interactions of the type required by the research question.

Bearing the research questions in mind, three new films were chosen as the #topic# in the eWOM on Sina Weibo. With the help of the conditional filter function on Sina Weibo, we chose the Weibo posted from prerelease weeks to the end of the opening week of each film which was guided by (Roschk & Große, 2013).

The questions were designed from the heated questions to the core questions. It first asks the respondent to share the perspectives on eWOM of films on microblogs and to identify the social relationship in the virtual community. The specific motivation for the engagement was asked for when letting respondents interpret the eWOM they engaged in before. In the end, the following up questions were used to broaden the depth of the interview. The model of a general topic guide can be found in Appendix A. After each interview, the questions would be reconstructed after gaining a better understanding.

Research Process

Data collection: 2000 Microblogs and 20 interviews

From April 4th to July 15th, a total of 2000 under the requirement in the research planning was collected. Among them, the microblogs presenting the motivations from the perspectives of egoism, reward, reciprocity, altruism, or sense of community would be used as data. One of the most representative eWOM was quoted as an example for the results. Their provider's information which is public on Weibo, was collected as the supporting data. Second, the members who engaged eWOM with a representative motivation of one type were invited to participate in the qualitative research

20 respondents were chosen to be interviewed. Then the whole process of communication in the interview would be recorded. A sample of the transcript of the interview can be found in Appendix B. The data were collected and interpreted by using their pseudonym after gaining approval from them. However, when starting to analyze the data, the pseudonym was removed and identified as the number.

Data analysis

This study adopted a manual approach to analyzing the data because the data set is reasonable in size, and the researcher is very familiar with the data context (Kozinets *et al.*, 2010). An established qualitative data analytic process was adopted. According to (Pierre, 2017), two main steps would be involved. First, codes were assigned to words or segments of words. Then we started to compare and contrast the coded material. In later phases, the criteria for analysis were devised based on the experiential knowledge and learning established from the research progression and prior studies.

The distinction of netnography decided the diversity of the data. Textual and graphics files, screen captures, online interview transcripts, and reflective fieldnotes all need to be analyzed and interpreted to explore the motivation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of Egoistic Motivations

Egoistic motivations in eWOM of films in Sina Weibo consist of four specific motivations, i.e., gaining attention, improving reputation, asserting expertise and superiority, and self-expression as the main driver for consumers to engage in eWOM were found in the research. Table 1 illustrates each motivation and examples of each motivation from the data.

Gaining attention

It has been found in many microblogs that gaining attention from other members in Sina Weibo can be a critical motivation for them to engage in. Members in microblog used #film# to create the topic and to gain attention from other members who were interested in the film. In addition, social interaction with celebrities and peer members was found as a big motivation for members to generate eWOM. The relative eWOM was mostly constructed with the “@” to gain attention, as presented below:

Xu (star) 's acting skill is so great @Xu! Have you guys watched the perfect film already (A, July 5, 2018) ?

“@” celebrity in eWOM can gain the attention not only from the celebrity but also from other members on Sina Weibo who would search the name of the celebrity. Asking the question, Informant A was expecting a reply from other members on Sina Weibo in the comments below their eWOM.

In addition, data collected showed that members used Sina Weibo to connect with their friends in daily life. For example: inviting others to watch the film together by @ them in the positive eWOM of films. Sina Weibo seems to combine the strong tie and weak tie at the same time. However, some respondents suggested that lacking social interaction can be the biggest motivation for them to generate negative eWOM of films.

“Compared to the WeChat, there are much fewer friends and colleagues on my Sina Weibo. I do not reject their invitation. However, I feel that people on Sina Weibo have a consensus that we should not involve others’ depressed emotions too much. It means there will not be too much concern or attention from others when you post something negative.” Respondent 6

The weaker tie in Sina Weibo makes members feel free to generate negative eWOM without concerning attention from people in the strong tie.

“Sina Weibo is more like a tree hole in my daily life. There are no colleagues and leaders. I don't have to be concerned about my negative words, which may affect my image in their impression.” Respondent 3

By using the “tree hole”, Respondent 3 described Sina Weibo as the secret place away from the attention gained by others.

Improving reputation

Improving reputation was found as a motivation for members who have a large number of followers when they generate negative eWOM. Especially when their eWOM was catering to their followers’ opinion and was considered organic. The example of the comment below the negative eWOM can explain the circumstance precisely:

The modeling of the film plagiarized Game of Thrones. The plot is bloated and unworthy of discussion. The special effect looks only cost five cents. The texture of the movie is similar to online games. The movie lasted 140 minutes in which they could not even speak the whole story. Ignoring the unclear story, the action design in fighting scenes was a disaster (B, July 13, 2018) .

[Comment: You are the only one telling the truth about the film. Other film critics I followed took the money and ridiculously recommended the film.]

Data showed that members with many followers mostly criticize the film for improving their reputation. However, the motivation was not found in members with few followers.

Asserting expertise and superiority

Sina Weibo can be considered as a place for members to present their expertise or superior status by sharing a special experience or advanced knowledge. For example, interpreting the film themes or uncovering the hidden stories in film production was widely found in eWOM in the research. To be regarded as an expert, Sina Weibo members were found to share knowledge from different perspectives to analyze the movie. Thus, this kind of sharing contributed to high-quality eWOM.

In addition, gaining higher status can also be found as a motivation for members to share superior experiences and film reviews. As an intangible consumption, superior experience such as VIP room in cinema was hard to be shared in the traditional WOM. However, microblog provides a sharing platform that can help members share their superior experiences. Sina Weibo members were found to post pictures of an IMAX or VIP room in the cinema when talking about their watching experience. Special occasions such as roadshows or premieres were the main superior experience mentioned by members in the research. As in the example shown below, members shared the experience in the roadshow with photos of the scene:

#Happy summer film#&#Dying to Survive# Hahaha, I met the cute guy Xu Zheng (star). It is one of the best Chinese movies in recent years, combining comedy and humanity, as well as social contradictions. I have been walking into the theatre with a smile, then walking out in tears. It is worth watching (C , July 5, 2018) .

Meeting the actors and directors in person can be seen as a superior experience. Respondent 5 also gave a similar reason for generating eWOM of the film:

“I reviewed it only for recording a special watching experience. It was the first time I saw the movie stars. I felt so excited. However, the film was just so-so.” Respondent 5

Although she did not feel involved with the film, she was motivated to record and show the superior experience on Sina Weibo for the social need.

Expressing oneself

Using Sina Weibo as the medium to express oneself was widely found in eWOM collected in the research. This kind of egoistic motivation was found in the eWOM on films which has a positive WOM online. Members were found to use positive words making themselves related to the film theme.

Dying to survive[film]# Nothing is more important than people’s health in our families. (I) will cherish the people around me. (I) will become stronger to protect them. All my loves, you have to be healthy and keep growing (D · July 8, 2018) .

By expressing the film reviews discussing the film theme, D expressed his/her attitudes toward life. Hence, posting selfies in the film reviews were found popular among Sina Weibo members as a tool to express themselves. Many film reviews consisted of simple words giving a general impression of the film (e.g., positive or negative) and a large portion of paragraphs describing their life record for the day. In the end, they will post pictures for each part, just as figure 1 shows.



Source: Sina Weibo.

Figure 1: expressing oneself.

The daily record can be an important function provided by Sina Weibo. When it comes to the fans of films, recording film reviews can be even more significant:

“I wrote the film review immediately after watching a film. It can record my feelings. After a while, you look back, and you can quickly recall the thoughts at that moment. It can witness your growth. Especially for those great films which are worth watching again, and again, you may have different feelings after watching them each time.” Respondent 3

“Online Diary” was used by 2 respondents when asked to describe the role of Sina Weibo in their daily life. Showing thoughts or selfies sometimes can be one of the important reasons for Sina Weibo members to generate film reviews online.

Table 1: Egoistic motivations.

Extrinsic	Motivation	Example from data
Egoism	Gaining attention	Xu Zheng (star) ’s acting skill is so great @Xu Zheng! Have you guys watched the perfect film already (A, July 5, 2018) ?
	Improving reputation	The modeling of the film plagiarized <i>Game of Thrones</i> . The plot is bloated and not worth to talk about. The special effect looks only cost five cents. The texture of the movie is similar to online games. The movie lasted 140 minutes in which they cannot even speak the story clearly. Ignoring the unclear story, the action design in fighting scenes was a disaster (B, July 13, 2018) . [Comment: You are the only one telling the truth about the film. Other film critics I followed took the money and ridiculously recommended the film.]
	Asserting expertise and superiority	#Happy summer film##&#Dying to Survive# Hahaha, I met the cute guy Xu Zheng (star). It is one of the best Chinese movies in recent years, combining comedy and humanity, as well as social contradictions. I have been walking into the theatre with a smile, then walking out in tears. It is worth watching (C, July 5, 2018) .
	Expressing oneself	# Dying to survive[film]# Nothing is more important than people’s health in our families. (I) will cherish the people around me. (I) will become stronger to protect them. All my loves, you have to be healthy and keep growing (D, July 8, 2018) .

Results of Motivations for the Reward

Reward motives vary in the film industry. The traditional economic incentives were not that attractive to consumers. While a new form of reward, such as superior experience, is more effective for engaging consumers into eWOM generation. Table 2 illustrates each motivation and examples of each motivation from the data.

Economic incentives

Limited data collected in the research present a motivation for gaining the economic reward. However, on Sina Weibo, economic incentives developed into a new form to employ members. Winning film tickets was found as a motivation for some members to repost eWOM generated by others:

#film Asura in theatre 0713# I have been a huge fan of magical movies. The Asura is just what I want. The movie configuration is a giant screen effect, and I believe that the special effects of this movie will be great. After watching the trailer, I meditated that the film must be watched in the giant curtain hall. Looking forward to being chosen (E, July 13, 2018) .

The example shows the Sina Weibo member's desire to be chosen for getting the free film tickets. In addition, this kind of behavior was found mostly generated by members who have a small number of followers and limited interaction with them. On the other hand, the economic incentives can be considered against the community norm by some members.

"A film review is a private feeling, not the exchange for making money. The most important thing for film critics is to have their own opinion. They should not follow suit or be bought off." Respondent 1

As expressed by Respondent 1, generating film reviews for the monetary reward can be seen as betraying, which may hamper some members' motivation.

Superior experience

Superior experience as a reward was also found in the result as a motivation for members to engage. As mentioned before, participating in special occasions can increase the members' perceived status in the community. When this kind of experience becomes a reward, some members were found motivated successfully to engage in film reviews:

@Sina film-watching groups @Film where are you going. The Asura was not satisfying. However, watching films in advance was fantastic. I will join if I get the chance next time (F, July 13, 2018) .

Informant F was chosen by Sina Weibo as a lucky audience to watch the film in advance. According to the regulation of the game, members have to generate the film reviews with their true thoughts after the experience, or they will lose the next chance for being chosen as the lucky audience to watch the new films previously forever. The superior experience of consuming films extended the range of rewards to engage members.

Table 2: Motivations for reward.

Extrinsic	Motivation	Example from data
Rewards	Economic incentives	#film Asura in theatre 0713# I have been a huge fan of magical movies. The Asura is just what I want. The movie configuration is a giant screen effect, I believe that the special effects of this movie will be great. After watching the trailer, I meditated that the film must be watched in the giant curtain hall. Looking forward to being chosen (E, July 13, 2018) .
	Superior experience	@Sina film watching groups @Film where are you going. The Asura was not satisfying. However, watching films in advance was fantastic. I will absolutely join if I got the chance next time (F, July 13, 2018) .

Results of Reciprocal Motivations

Reciprocal motivations in eWOM of films explain the valence of eWOM of films. Celebrity endorsement and company endorsement were found accelerating the generation of positive eWOM. Conversely, terrible experiences, including false propaganda and unworthy high prices, made consumers feel deceived. The desire for vengeance motivated them to generate negative eWOM. Table 3 illustrates each motivation and examples of each motivation from the data.

Enjoyment in advocating the celebrity

Advocating celebrities who are involved in the film can be a major motivation for the fans of the celebrity to engage in positive film reviews.

I think Wu Lei (star) acted well in Asura. I was sprinting for my high school entrance exam when Wu Lei was also sprinting for his high school entrance exam. By reading his Sina Weibo, I feel supported. In the end, I succeeded. Thank you! @WuLei. No

more malicious followers criticize the film. Please! Those actors made a lot of effort in making the film. Wu Lei also made a lot of effort (G, July 14, 2018) .

As shown in the example above, reciprocity happens when viewers gain support from the celebrity and wish to give support back to the celebrity.

Enjoyment in helping the film succeed

Enjoyment in helping the film succeed was found as members' motivation to engage in positive reviews after watching a satisfying movie:

I will give the full mark. The movie will attack your heart like a needle. It is the yearly best movie (H, July 8, 2018) .

Not only giving a positive review with emotional words but also playing a role of advertising the films to other members. For encouraging more people to watch the film, many people used "worth" "equal the value" to describe the film. Furthermore, some members even encourage others to watch more than one time for contributing to the box office. The desire to help the film succeed can also be found when members asserting this movie should get many awards. Since the success of the movie lies not only in the box office but also depends on the WOM. The behavior of posting positive film reviews can be seen helping the film succeed directly.

Enjoyment in vengeance

After watching an unsatisfying movie, members were found to engage in negative reviews for revenge. Compared with describing a positive watching experience, members were found to tend to use "unworthy", "waste" to evaluate the film.

I cannot believe what the hell I watched in an IMAX cinema room. The guy beside me signed near the end of the film, (I) started to empty myself with the 3D glasses off and leaned on the shoulders of my friends when the story carried out for one and a half hours. #Asura##Asura (2018) [Films] rest in peace (I, July 15, 2018).

"IMAX" cinema was mentioned to emphasize the extra price Informant I paid for watching the film. The whole description of the frustrating experience suggested a dissatisfying consuming experience.

Interestingly, the negative experience was found not only produced in the watching experience. The improper valence of eWOM on Sina Weibo can also be the source of the negative impression, which may cause revenge from members.

"The flooded positive reviews generated by so-called "Sina Weibo influencers" who watched the film previously appreciating the films, however from superficial perspectives, made me sick. I bet that Hidden Man would fail in both the box office and word of mouth. So, when it was in the theatre, I went to watch it. Just as I said, Hidden Man is trash. So, I reported it on Sina Weibo and felt fair after doing that." Respondent 2

Sina Weibo helps connect the film critics and the film audience; however, it also provides the medium for the audience to give negative feedback to them. Venting the negative feelings on Sina Weibo can make members feel fair after watching an awful movie or being exposed to fake film reviews.

Table 3: Reciprocal motivations.

Extrinsic	Motivation	Example from data
Reciprocity	Enjoyment in advocating the celebrity	I really think Wu Lei (star) acted well in <i>Asura</i> . I was sprinting for my high school entrance exam when Wu Lei was also sprinting for his high school entrance exam. By reading his Sina Weibo, I feel supported. In the end, I succeeded. Thank you! @WuLei. No more malicious followers criticize the film. Please! Those actors really made a lot of effort in making the film. Wu Lei also made a lot of effort (G, July 14, 2018) .
	Enjoyment in helping the film succeed	I will give the full mark absolutely. The movie will attack your heart like a needle. It is definitely the yearly best movie (H, July 8, 2018) .
	Enjoyment in vengeance	I cannot believe what the hell I watched in an IMAX cinema room. The guy beside me signed near the end of the film, (I) started to empty myself with the 3D glasses off and leaned on the shoulders of my friends when the story carried out for one and a half hours. #Asura##Asura (2018) [Films] rest in peace. (I, July 15, 2018) .

Results of Altruistic Motivations

Altruistic motivations were found as reasons for consumers to engage in eWOM of films in Sina Weibo. However, motivation to help others avoid a negative experience with brief text less frequently appeared compared to motivation to help others get a positive experience. Table 4 illustrates each motivation and examples of each motivation from the data.

Helping others get a positive experience

Helping others was found as a motivation for members to engage in positive eWOM. Words such as “Highly recommend” or “must watch” were found frequently used in many Sina Weibo showing the altruistic standpoint of the writer, just as the example below:

Highly recommend *Dying to Survive*. You will not regret and have a better understanding of lives (J, July 8, 2018).

It was confirmed when Respondent 5 talked about the reason why she chose to repost the teaser posted by the film official on Sina Weibo.

“I think reposting the teaser of the film published by officials can let people know the general idea of the film more easily. I just added simple words to express my emotion after watching the film. It was not for generating a complete film review.” Respondent 5

Providing convenience and access for other members to choose films can be considered as an altruistic motivation for helping others to get good experience.

Helping others

In some eWOM, “Don’t go” or “not recommended” was found to warn other members to avoid the situation in which they were stuck.

I watched *Asura*, and I do not recommend watching it in the cinema. 2 hours, time-consuming and boring. (K, July 14, 2018)

However, this kind of eWOM is mostly constructed with few words and is seldom found in the research. Respondent 4 talks about the limited effect of eWOM he generated on Sina Weibo, which may explain the reason.

“I am not sure about the impact on my followers on Sina Weibo. But for my friends around me (in real life), it might help them avoid this film.” Respondent 4

The influence of the information sender on the information seeker was perceived as weak by the sender. Since the relationship on Sina Weibo has been found weak, it can explain the lacking altruistic motivation for eWOM engagement.

Table 4: Altruistic motivations.

Intrinsic	Motivations	Example from data
Altruism	Helping others get a positive experience	Highly recommend <i>Dying to Survive</i> . You will not regret and have a better understanding of lives (J, July 8, 2018).
	Helping others avoid a negative experience	I watched <i>Asura</i> , and I do not recommend watching it in the cinema. 2 hours, time-consuming and boring (K, July 14, 2018).

Results of Motivations in the sense of community

eWOM generation resulting from the sense of community was found in the research. Two kinds of obligation prompted users to show their own opinion. One of them is to protect the welfare of film creators, and the other is to protect the benefits of the audience. Table 5 illustrates each motivation and examples of each motivation from the data.

An obligation to protect the welfare of film creators

Appreciating a high-quality film and criticizing a low-quality film, some members were found to have an obligation to judge the film with justice for keeping the environment of the film industry fair for the film creators. The example shown below suggests the motivation for improving the environment for film creators:

The most important is the progress in the audience's abilities of aesthetic appreciation. Now the films are not only reviewed by fans of actors or paid posters. More and more people review films by evaluating criteria depending on the quality of the film. I hope that more people will walk into the cinema to watch *Dying to Survive* to support the domestic movie (L, July 5, 2018) . Since Sina Weibo mostly gathers users from China, the motivation for supporting domestic films was found relative to patriotism. The obligation for protecting the whole welfare of the community presented in protecting the welfare of film creators.

"I reviewed the film because I hold an expectation for Chinese movies. I think the realism films, which is a movie genre rarely be seen in the Chinese film industry, are worth taking attention to." Respondent 1

The desire to help the specific film be successful can also be interpreted as the desire to help the movie genre gain attention, which brings benefits to film creators of the movie genre.

An obligation to protect the benefits of audiences

Protecting the benefits of audiences by supporting people in posting their film reviews against the mainstream opinions was found as a motivation for some members to engage in relative eWOM.

Some online reviews say that "people who criticize *Dying to Survive* are stupid and evil. Don't you think the evaluating system becomes frightening? Now the majority of the audience who hold positive reviews do not allow different opinions to exist. We must be cautious of those harmful film reviews (M, July 4, 2018) .

Providing a free and fair discussing environment for films on Sina Weibo can be included in the community norm by Informant M. Supporting the opposite review when facing the pressure from the majority can be considered as the sense of community.

Table 5: Motivations in the sense of community.

Intrinsic	Motivation	Example from data
Sense of community	An obligation to protect the welfare of film creators	The most important is the progress in the audience's abilities of aesthetic appreciation. Now the films are not only reviewed by fans of actors or paid posters. More and more people review the films by evaluating criteria depending on the quality. I hope that more people will walk into the cinema to watch <i>Dying to Survive</i> , to support the domestic movie (L, July 5, 2018) .
	An obligation to protect the benefits of audiences	Some online reviews say that "people who criticize <i>Dying to Survive</i> are stupid and evil. Don't you think the evaluating system becomes frightening? Now the majority of the audience who hold positive reviews do not allow different opinions to exist. We must be cautious of those harmful film reviews (M, July 4, 2018) .

Discussion of Egoistic Motivations

Five motivations of the eWOM generation were examined in the research. Some new findings can develop the construction of motivations when analyzing consumer engagement.

The egoistic motivations played a critical role in encouraging members to generate both positive and negative eWOM of films on the microblog. It explained the demand for social interaction from members and identified different roles in the virtual community. The results matched (Yang, 2017) that egoism is an outlet for members to release their emotional needs. Consistent with (Cheung & Lee, 2012), gaining reputation was found in eWOM generated by opinion leaders. The microblog was found as a good place for members to gain expertise status matching (Tong *et al.*, 2007), emphasizing the importance of the online platform. Furthermore, expressing oneself was found as a new motivation for microblog members to engage in eWOM. Earlier research (Wallace *et al.*, 2014) found that people were more willing to engage with a self-expressive brand on the self-expressive medium. The findings in this research gave further insight that self-expression can be a motivation for members to generate eWOM.

The results of motivations for the reward in the research didn't match (Reimer & Benkenstein, 2016) and (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004) that economic incentives act as an effective tool for encouraging members to engage in eWOM communication. On the other hand, consistent with (Wallace *et al.*, 2014), the economic incentives were found reducing members' intrinsic motivation to engage in eWOM communication. The results confirmed the suggestion by (Sun *et al.*, 2017) that monetary rewards are only motivating for members with few social connections and contributions in the virtual community. The reason was explained by Respondent 1 that engaging eWOM for economic incentives is against the community norm. In addition, it is worth noticing that other forms of reward, such as superior experience acting the same role of economic incentives, were found acceptable for members in the community as a motivation to engage in eWOM of films.

The reciprocal motivations were found consistent with members' perceived benefits from the film. It matched (Lin, 2007) that people consider the cost and benefits of the information exchange process. Earlier research found that product involvement can motivate consumers to generate a positive review for giving the emotional reward back. (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004) adopted it and transformed it into "helping the company". The results supported it, proving "Enjoyment in helping film succeed" as a similar motivation for giving back the positive impression to the source of the product or the service. However, it gave further evidence that celebrity involvement can also be a motivation for members to engage in positive eWOM communication. Microblog connects celebrities and consumers in daily life. Thus, the evaluation of benefits and cost starts earlier on microblogs than on other platforms such as consumer opinion platforms. The reciprocal motivation was also found when members generated negative film reviews. The result was showing members complaining about the dissatisfying product matched (Fu *et al.*, 2015) that consumers generate negative eWOM for recovering losses.

The results of altruistic motivations match (Reimer & Benkenstein, 2016) that helping others is a motivation for people to generate positive eWOM. However, it was not found a primary motivation which contradicts (Lee *et al.*, 2006) and (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). The reasons can be explained by the weak tie in virtual communities on the microblog.

The results of motivations in the sense of community showed members on microblog consider the environment as a collectivity and engage in protecting others' benefits. It matched (Cheung & Lee, 2012) that collectivism can be a motivation for members to engage in WOM communication. Consistent with (McLure Wasko & Faraj, 2000), members considered providing fair eWOM of films as the moral obligation which should be the community norm on the microblog. Earlier research (Kozinets *et al.*, 2010) found that most opinion leaders distinguish themselves from other members in the community since they generate WOM mostly motivated by communal interest. However, the findings showed that the communal interest has been attached to peer members on the microblog. The reason probably was the blurring boundary between opinion leaders and opinion seekers in a new form of virtual communities.

CONCLUSION

Conclusions and Practical Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore why microblog members engage in eWOM of films on Chinese microblog-Sina Weibo. By using the method of netnography, five motivations were examined, and new findings help companies, the film industry, and scholars to better understand the reason behind consumers' engagement in eWOM.

First of all, the egoistic motivations to achieve members' social needs found in the research suggested that a product or service company should consider this increasing demand of social interaction when developing the activities or advertisement for satisfying consumers' desire for social needs, which can increase the volume of the eWOM.

On the other hand, motivations for the reward in the research were found less likely to motivate members to engage in generating both volume and valence of eWOM. The reason can be explained by relating with one of the egoistic motivations found in the research. Since the microblog can be considered as a platform for self-expression, showing motivations of getting economic incentives can be seen as decreasing one's reputation, which would be avoided by most microblog members.

Similarly, the weak effect of altruistic motivations was found both in the volume and valence of eWOM. It can be explained according to the weak tie in the community. The diversity of the strength in the social tie on microblogs can weaken members' motivation for helping others which should be noticed by the managers of microblogs when developing the relationship in the community relying on information exchange.

However, the findings in reciprocal motivations gave the warning that abusing the marketing strategy can lead to a flood of negative eWOM. The interaction on the microblog empowers the peer consumers in the community, which should be emphasized in the market.

The motivation in the sense of community was found in a new perspective which can extend the theory of MWOM defined by (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2012). Combining a wide social relationship between film creators and film consumers, microblog can be considered as the ecosphere where members would concern about the welfare of the whole industry. In addition, the blurring boundaries between opinion leaders and peer consumers found on microblogs proved (Kozinets *et al.*, 2010) that the interaction between peer members should be paid much more attention.

In conclusion, the results of the research extended the knowledge of the virtual community of microblogs which can imply scholars, companies, and microblog platforms.

Limitations and Areas for Further Research

The study entails some limitations. First, the study can only interpret from members' text or narratives showing the motivations. Those motivations hidden by members would be hardly explored.

Secondly, the microblog chosen by the research has a geographic restriction that can only approach Chinese users. Therefore, the motivations of the sense of community can be localized. For example, data showed the patriotism plays a critical role in

members' sense of community which may not exist on the international microblog-Twitter. Further research can test the effect on different platforms to generate a better understanding of the MWOM.

Last but not least, some relationship between different types of motivation is shown in the result presented. Future research can examine the relationship between each motivation and its effect on members' behavior.

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APPENDIX A: Topic Guide

Interview Questions:

1. Have you watched a film recently?
2. If yes, did you enjoy it? How did you know about the film? Do you believe the source of information? Which kind of recommendation do you identify as the most credible?
3. If not, when you want to watch films, what kind of recommendation do you mostly go for?
4. Will you engage with those recommendations on Weibo? Why?
5. Can you share with me the most unforgettable experience of film-watching? Did you review it online? Why did you choose to express your feelings or make the recommendation through...rather than...?
6. In what kind of circumstance will you engage with negative online reviews about the films on Weibo?
7. Let’s talk about the online review on...you posted on Weibo. Tell me about the factors that encourage you to engage with the review of it.
8. Why did you choose (the specific form of engagement) rather than other forms of engagement on Weibo?
9. What kind of role of Weibo in your daily life?
10. How much effect do you think your online review can make on your followers or visitors? What kind of role do you think you are playing when your followers or visitors seek advice on the film on Sina Weibo?
11. Did you discuss the film with your family or friends?
12. If yes, what difference is between the experience when you talk about the film with family or friends compared to doing those in Sina Weibo?
13. If not, why did you choose to express that online rather than family or friends?
14. Do you follow one Sina Weibo blogger who engages with the online review often on film?
15. If yes, do you think he/she is credible? What motivations do you think he/she have when engaging with the online review?
16. If not, can you describe a credible Sina Weibo blogger who makes the review on films? What characters he/she should have?

Follow-up questions:

1. Please tell me more about that
2. What you are sharing is important. Can you say more?
3. Could you say some more about that? What do you mean by that...?
4. Compared to your last experience, what is the biggest motivation this time for you to engage?
5. Tell me more about that experience when you chose to engage.
6. How do you see that in the future?
7. If you could change anything about that experience of engagement, what would it be?
8. Is there anything you would like to add?

APPENDIX B: Sample Transcription

(R: researcher, R5: respondent 5)

R: Have you watched the film recently? Do you like it?

R5: I watched *Dying to survive* recently; I love it very much.

R: How did you know the film?

R5: I watched the teaser of the film on Weibo posted by We-media and saw the reviews on Weibo from big V (Weibo influencer) who attended the testing screening. Then I decided to go and watch.

R: Do you believe the source of information?

R5: I don't trust the recommendation from big V, who only post-film critics. But I trust the reviews from big V who attended the International film festival in Shanghai where they watched the film previously.

R: Can you please share with me the most unforgettable experience of watching a film?

R5: The roadshow of Gold Buster in Chengdu. It was a testing screening with the main creators showing up in the cinema.

R: Did you review it online?

R5: Yes, I did. I reviewed it only for recording a special watching experience. It was the first time I saw the movie stars. I felt so excited. However, the film was just so-so.

R: Under what circumstance will you involve in negative reviews of the films on Weibo?

R5: After watching a total trash film. Last time, I watched Guilty of Mind. The plot was terrible, the acting of a starring actor was unqualified. The whole film was disappointing. So after watching it, I searched for the film on Weibo to see other audiences' feelings. When I found reviewers who hold similar opinions with me, I would "Like" or "comment" on their Weibo to show my agreement with them.

R: Ok, let us talk about your film review on Weibo. Can you tell me what encouraged you to review the Dying to Survive on Weibo?

R5: My Weibo got huge attention and reviews because I watched the testing screening of the film and generated the Weibo before it formally came out. It was a film with a realism theme which can be rare in the Chinese film market. I wished the film could be caught the attention of others on Weibo. And in that Weibo, I emphasized the impression for the acting skills of starring actors.

R: Why did you choose to repost the teaser published by the official film marketing account on Weibo and comment on it as a form of engagement rather than other types, such as writing original film reviews?

R5: I think reposting the teaser of the film published by officials can let people know the general idea of the film more easily. I just added simple words to express my emotion after watching the film. It was not for generating a complete film review.

R: Compared to the experience that you had before, what is the difference between these two experiences?

R5: The film I reviewed before was not a recommended one. I reviewed it only for recording a special watching experience. However, this time, Dying to Survive is the film that I highly recommend, so I emphasized the quality of the film.

R: What role does Weibo play in your daily life?

R5: Social media. It is a platform for me to quickly achieve the information that I seek. Most of the time, it is for killing time. Sometimes I would share some daily-life experience on it.

R: How much do you think your film review would affect your followers or visitors? What role do you play when your followers search for information about the films on Weibo?

R5: I would say I can provide a reference as the help for them to decide whether they should watch the film. Since I am still a common user without much influence or commercial value as those big V. My followers or the visitors would only see me as an acquaintance who watched the film before, it is more credible.