ISCTE ◈ Business School
Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

CONSUMER'S BEHAVIOR FACING WORD-OF-MOUTH AND THE IMPACT ON MARKETING POINT OF VIEW: EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS

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Resumo

Com o desenvolvimento da Web 2.0 e das novas tecnologias, apareceu uma nova forma de-boca a boca (BAB). Os consumidores têm um acesso mais rápido às informações e podem facilmente ler e partilhar opiniões sobre um produto ou serviço. Como as pessoas não confiam mais nos mídia tradicionais, as empresas devem entender essa nova ferramenta para desenvolver uma estratégia de marketing melhor. De forma a ajudar um comerciante a entender o comportamento do consumidor enfrentando o boca-a-boca eletrónico, uma tipologia para motivar o consumidor a ler opiniões on-line foi desenvolvido. Usando uma amostra on-line de cerca de 200 entrevistados, informações sobre a estrutura e relevância dos motivos dos consumidores para ler os comentários on-line foi gerado. A análise dos resultados sugere que as pessoas lêem feedbacks on-line antes de comprar um produto por quatro razões: reduzir a pesquisa e avaliação esforço, reduzir os riscos, conhecer os prós e contras e obter uma garantia social. Estes quatro fatores que levam ao comportamento do E-BAB são importantes, mas não exaustiva. As empresas devem prestar atenção às reações ao E-BAB, adaptar as suas estratégias de marketing e seguir algumas regras para implementar um bom comportamento do BAB entre os seus consumidores.

Palavras-chave: Boca-a-boca, boca-a-boca eletrónico, comportamento do consumidor, opiniões on-line.

Abstract

With the development of the Web 2.0 and the new technologies, a new form of word-of mouth (WOM) appears. Consumers have a faster access to information and can easily read and share feedbacks about a product or service. Since people no longer trust the traditional media, companies must understand this new tool to develop a better marketing strategy. To help marketer to understand consumer's behavior facing electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM), a typology for consumer's motivation to read online feedbacks is developed. Using an online sample of some 200 respondents, information on the structure and relevance of the consumers' motives to read online comments is generated. The resulting analysis suggests that people read online feedbacks before buying a product for four reasons: reduce search and evaluation effort, reduce risks, enact negativity bias and social assurance. These four factors leading to EWOM behavior are important but not exhaustive. Companies should pay attention to EWOM reactions, adapt their marketing strategies and follow some rules to implement a good WOM behavior among their consumers.

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List of Abbreviations

CBSEM	Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling
EWOM	Electronic Word-Of-Mouth
PLS	Partial Least Square
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
UGC	User Generated Content
VBSEM	Variance-Based Structural Equation Modeling
WOM	Word-Of-Mouth
WOMM	Word-Of-Mouth Marketing
WOMMA	Word-Of-Mouth Marketing Association

Sumário Executivo

Hoje em dia os consumidores estão constantemente a receber ofertas comerciais através dos mídias. Estes já não confiam nos mídia tradicionais e as empresas têm cada vez mais dificuldade em captar a sua atenção. Tendo em conta o sucesso das novas estratégias de marketing, o poder do marketing tradicional pode ser questionado. Uma dessas novas estratégias é o boca-a-boca (BAB).

A comunicação através do BAB tem provado ter uma grande influência na tomada de decisão do consumidor devido ao fato de que a informação é recebida de relações de confiança e evita as confusões comerciais. Com o surgimento da Internet e da Web 2.0, a técnica BAB tornou-se virtual e os consumidores passaram a ter um mais rápido acesso à informação. Assim sendo, não estão mais restritos à sua rede pessoal para fazer comentários sobre um produto, podendo mesmo obter recomendações de pessoas desconhecidas via Internet.

O BAB tem muitas propriedades. Ela afeta o comportamento de compra e é um dos mais fortes influenciadores na decisão de compra de novos produtos. Por causa de seu impacto significativo e alcance, boca-a-boca é comumente identificado como um motorista de vendas. Tornou-se uma ferramenta interessante que permite às empresas alcançar mais consumidores muito rapidamente. Por isso, as empresas precisam de entender o funcionamento do BAB para incentivar o seu uso e geri-lo corretamente.

Os comerciantes precisam de usar esta ferramenta na sua estratégia de marketing. De acordo com o modelo de fluxo de duas etapas, a primeira coisa a fazer, a fim de ter um bom marketing BAB é identificar indivíduos influentes nas redes sociais e de ligação com eles de forma a incentivar o movimento da mensagem BAB. Para incentivar os consumidores a falar, as empresas podem usar o *marketing buzz*, que é a forma mais comum de BAB.

Para desenvolver uma estratégia de marketing melhor em torno de fenómenos BAB, os comerciantes precisam de entender o comportamento do consumidor perrante esta ferramenta. É necessário estudar como as pessoas reagem ao BAB no ambiente web 2.0. As empresas não podem projetar uma mensagem de BAB eficiente se eles próprios não entenderem a motivação das pessoas para falar sobre um produto e por que razão lêem os comentários antes de comprá-lo.

Para ajudar os comerciantes a entender o comportamento do consumidor frente ao BAB, um estudo empírico é realizado com foco na motivação do consumidor para ler os comentários on-line. Usando uma amostra on-line de cerca de 200 entrevistados, a análise resultante sugere que as pessoas lêem feedbacks on-line antes de comprar um produto por quatro razões principais: reduzir a pesquisa e avaliação esforço, reduzir os riscos, conhecer os prós e contras e obter uma garantia social.

Após a realização de uma investigação sobre o marketing BAB, demonstrámos   claramente a importância e utilidade do E-BAB uma vez que a maioria dos consumidores lê opiniões antes de comprar um produto (87% dos inquiridos[1]). Os profissionais de marketing têm que saber como funciona o E-BAB e como lidar com esta forma de marketing. Existem algumas regras para ajudá-los a implementar uma estratégia de marketing BAB: perguntar, usar a mídia social, construir uma comunidade, monitorar a reputação, pagá-lo para a frent

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[1] See Appendix 5

I.   Introduction

A. Problem Definitions and Objectives

When a consumer decides to buy a product or a service, he must take a decision between several choices. Such decision rarely occurs without the influence from the external environment or personal predisposition. Indeed "no individual decision-making is completely independent of the social or collective framework in which it takes place" (Zeleny, 1982, p.92). Nowadays consumers are overwhelmed with commercial offers through many media (Godin, 2000). They don't know what information to believe and 70% of young people between 15 and 30 years old estimate that there are too much advertising in the street, TV and newspaper (Ipsos study, 2011). They no longer trust the traditional media and companies have more and more difficulties to catch the attention of consumers. The power of the traditional marketing can be also questioned considering the success of the new marketing strategies using different ways to develop the company's notoriety. Most of these new alternatives are coming from one of the most ancient phenomena in the history of human society: the word-of-Mouth (WOM).

Literature has agreed on the effectiveness of WOM defined as "an informal person-to-person communication between perceived non-advertising communicator and a consumer about ownership, or characteristics of a brand, a product, a service, an organization or a seller" (Landhari, 2007). The information from WOM has been proved to have a higher influence on the consumer decision-making than the information from the marketers through classical types of advertising or promotional activities, due to the fact that information is received from trusted relations and avoids the trade confusions (Engels, Keferreis and Blackwell, 1969; Katz and Lazarfeld, 1995).

With the emergence of Internet and the Web 2.0, consumers can have a faster access to the information. Consumers found new, easy and accessible tools to obtain and compare information about products and services with other people: the electronic-word-of mouth EWOM (Barreto, 2013). Consumers are no longer restricted to have information from their friends and family but also have from unknown people via Internet.

During the process of decision-making, consumers are not alone facing several choices but can have all the information about a brand, a service, and a product. EWOM is an informal

advice passed between consumers. It is another way to have information about products without the influence of brands. Lots of consumers take the decision of buying a product or a service after reading a positive comment. Companies need to understand and include the WOM in their marketing strategy to enhance their consumer's relationship. The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of consumer's behavior facing EWOM in order to help marketer to implement EWOM in their marketing strategies. In our study, we will focus our research on the consumer's motivations to read online feedbacks about a product before the acquisition. During our investigation, we will make sure to well understand the link between WOM and the decision to purchase for a consumer. What are the consequences from a marketing point of view? Correspondingly, we will enter in the web 2.0 to complete our understanding of consumer's behaviors while facing EWOM.

B. Course of Investigation

After conducting a broad literature review we will start this study by defining the WOM, the new opportunities of EWOM and their impact in the consumer's purchasing decision. In the same part, we will demonstrate the power of the WOM with their different properties and how it works for different types of decision makers in order to get an intelligible and unambiguous view of the literature findings. In the second part, we will establish a clear link between WOM and marketing implications by defining the marketing applications and the consumer behavior in the web 2.0 revolution. In the third part, we will conduct an empirical review by studying the consumer's motivation to read feedback on Internet. Finally we will conclude our study and give some managerial implications.

II.   The Power of Word-of-Mouth

A. Definitions

1.   Word-of-Mouth

WOM is defined as "interactions with members of one's social and professional network regarded the service encounter, usually by talking to family members, friends, relatives, fellow customers and the like. It refers to all communication concerning the evaluations of goods and services rather than to formal complaints to the organization or its personnel" (Zeelenberg and Pieters, 1999). The simple fact to give an opinion about a product to a friend is a form of WOM. Consumers are more trust in WOM than others forms of information because it is not influence by the brand. It results from real conversions with real people. WOM is an excellent tool for company because it can spread very quickly. For example, a person just discovers a very good restaurant. He talks about it to colleagues. One of them talks about the restaurant to his wife by email. The wife talks about it to a friend and this friend go to the restaurant. The friend talks about the restaurant to other friends during a party. One of them has a blog. He writes a post about the restaurant. A reader decides to test this restaurant and writes a good comments about it on the restaurant website. And so forth. WOM has an incredible power.

There are two types of WOM: positive WOM and negative WOM.
Positive WOM occurs when consumer is satisfied with his experience of a product, service or brand. "Positive WOM includes complimenting and relating pleasant and vivid experiences" (Ladhari, 2017). This type of WOM allows that consumer will recommend the product or service to other consumer. According to some theoretical researches, there is a positive relationship between WOM and consumer satisfaction: satisfied customers engage in greater WOM (Anderson, 1998). It can have several reasons to this positive relationship as "altruism (desire to help others), instrumentalism (a desire to appear well informed), ego defense and reduction of cognitive dissonance" (Anderson, 1998). Consumers want to talk about good news and positives comments to spread positive things in their life.
Negative WOM occurs when consumer is dissatisfied with his experience of a product, service or brand. "Negative WOM includes behaviors such as product denigration, relating unpleasant experiences, rumor, and private complaining" (Anderson, 1998). This type of

WOM allows that consumers will not recommend the product or service to other consumers and will talk negatively about it. According to some theoretical research, there is a negative relationship between WOM and consumer satisfaction: dissatisfied customers engage in greater WOM (Anderson, 1998). There are some theoretical reasons to this negative relationship: "to vent hostility, as well as reduce anxiety, warn others, or seek vengeance" (Anderson, 1998). Dissatisfied consumers are more willingness to talk about his negative experience with a product than satisfied consumers.

The literature shows conflicting evidence regarding the impact of consumer satisfaction and the level of WOM. The both type of WOM has an impact on the consumer decision-making. The positive WOM will convince consumers to buy and the negative WOM will convince consumers to not purchase the product.

2. Consumer's Behavior

Consumer's behavior can be defined as: "the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires" (Solomon, M. Russell-Bennett, R. and Previte, J, 2012)

Consumer buying decision

The buying decision's process is all the steps before a consumer buy a product. This process explains the behavior of consumers before the buying decision.

Figure 1: Decission Process (Kotlet et al. 2009)

The decision process is more and more complex for consumers. "The increasing numbers of consumers facing the issue of confusing by over-choice and disbelieving the claims of the product, cutting through advertising "clutter" with the message has never been more important" (Nawaz, Jolita and Rizwan, 2014). Consumers don't know which product to choose and in which source of information they can trust. WOM is involved in all the step of the process decision by convincing consumers to buy or not. Consumers ask others consumers in their decision process to be sure to make the good act of purchase.

B. New Opportunities of the Electronic Worf-of-Mouth

1. Electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWOM)

a) *Definition*

With the emergence of Internet, and especially of the Web 2.0, consumers have new tools at their disposal to search information. Internet has transformed the way we search for recommendation, how we interact with each other and, more importantly, the way we shop (King, Racherla and Bush, 2014). They can obtain and compare information about a product or a service with new, easy and fast tools with other consumers. As a result, consumers are no longer restricted to their personal network to have comments about a product or service, but they can also obtain recommendations from unknown people via Internet (Barreto, 2013). This new form of information seeking via Internet is called electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM). EWOM can be seeing as a recent extension of the traditional WOM by implementing the person-to-person communication into the new form of cyberspace. "EWOM allows consumers to socially interact with one another, exchanger product-related information, and make informed purchase decisions via computer-mediated conversation" (King, Racherla and Bush, 2014).

In deed based on the original definition of WOM by Westbrook (1987), electronic word-of-mouth can be considered as "all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers". This contains the communication between professionals and consumers (B2C) as well as those between consumers themselves (C2C). Both integrate the EWOM flow and are respectively differentiated from communications through mass media (Goldsmith, 2006; Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). The traditional WOM, as already said, was historically the most influential resource of information transmission but it also has some limitations due to its frontier restriction. With the new technologies the barriers are breaking down and the online social network represents nowadays a free of frontier world that allows a message to be transmitted to anyone. Comments and reviews regarding products can be found in many various online supports where people can express their opinion and provide experience-based information. (e.g., online discussion forums, consumer review sites, weblogs, social network sites, etc.). Then it appears natural that marketers look for managing

interpersonal influence and with the spread of new technologies, it is not surprising that virtual interactions among consumers have proliferated. So a second definition has defined the communication of 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 internet" (Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler, 2004). This second definition insists on the issue flexibility of the EWOM that is the base of its contagion. The WOM, which was targeted to a few friends, is now a permanent message visible to the whole wide world. Varadarajan and Yadav (2002) found four critical changes resulting of the EWOM introduction in the buying environment. First consumer has an access to the price and non-price attributes of the product. Second, a lot of alternative comparisons and evaluations based on buyers' considerations are available online. Third the quality of information is improved. Lastly the information is well structured and organized. These changes in the buying environment have occurred with the come out of the Web 2.0.

<p style="text-align:center;">b) Different Forms of EWOM</p>

The popularity of the Web 2.0 favors consumers to influence others through various platforms. The social medias are referring to the different activities integrating the technology, the social interaction and the content creation. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe the social medias as "a group of internet-based application that build on the ideological and technological foundations of the Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content". With Internet, it's possible to create content and share it with a multitude of Internet users and this rapidly and at a low price, that for example make easy the self-defense marketing. The term of *user generated content* (UGC) refers to the various forms of media content that users have created and publicized (Kaplan and Henlein, 2010). In these circumstances, the Internet users are no more consumers but become *prosumers*, that is to say consumers and producers (Tapscott and Williams, 2008). Consequently, instead of simply consume the end product, the consumers are able to participate in the design of goods and services by sharing their opinions. The Internet users are using different platforms enabling the sharing of content and where the watchwords are transparency, collaboration, sharing and globalization. (Tapscott and Williams, 2008). Several types of social media can be identified such as the collaborative projects, content communities, blogs, microblogs, wikis, social networks and virtual worlds. According to their characteristics, it's possible to classify the social medias as a function of their communication

scope and their level of interactivity. Some are more synchronous, like chat rooms or instant messaging, and others bring more or less people together (Hoffman and Novak, 1996).
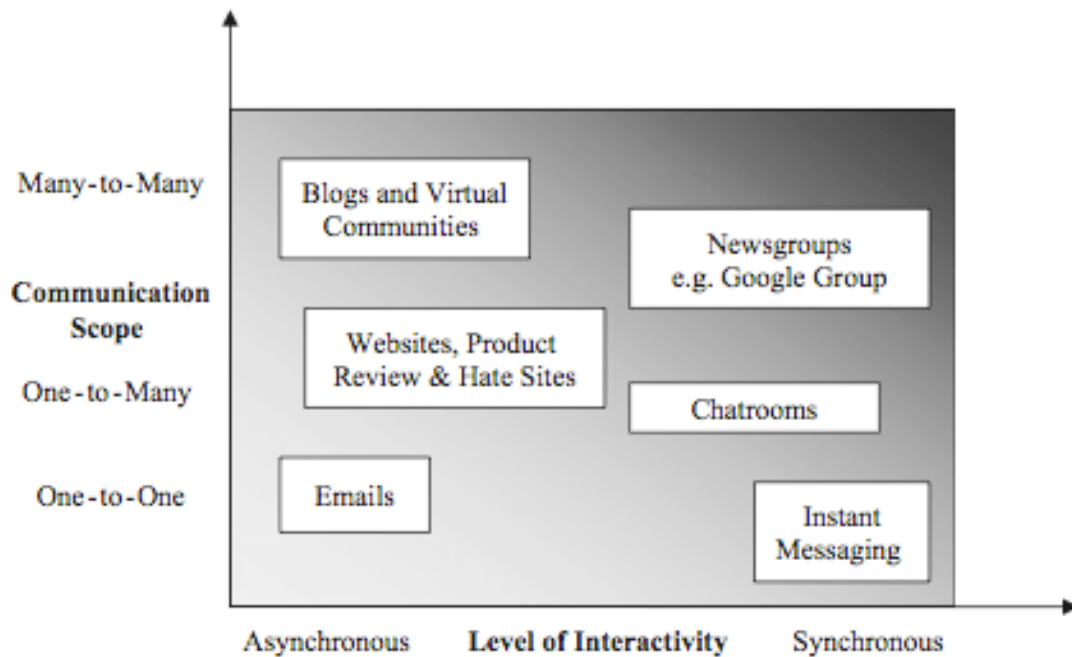
Figure 2: A Typology of EWOM Channels (from Litvina et al., 2008)

Furthermore Kaplan and Henlein (2010) build a model in order to make a first classification according to the media richness & its social presence degree and a second classification referring to the type of self-presentation and its degree of self-disclosure.

		Social presence/ Media richness		
		Low	Medium	High
Self-presentation/ Self-disclosure	High	Blogs	Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)	Virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life)
	Low	Collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia)	Content communities (e.g., YouTube)	Virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft)

Table 1: Classification of the Web Platform's Content (from Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010)

These websites of which the users generate the content, have simply reinvent the way to use Internet. Called social media, these platforms are redefining how the web is working. Internet users have nowadays the option of posting comment, sharing pages, making connections and building a social network, a community (Smith 2009). When people are looking for information about a product, they usually find the best recommendation among the many online consumers' reviews. Thus the consumers' influence network became more important

and is no more limited to the close entourage of the person but is opened to strangers (Smith, 2009).

<div align="center">

c) *New Opportunities for Companies*

</div>

Internet has transformed the way people search for information. EWOM allows consumers to socially interact with one another and exchange product-related information (King, Racherla and Bush, 2014). With the development of social media that aim to encourage social interaction, WOM became an important and interesting phenomenon for companies. It is an important tool to reach more consumers quite rapidly and increase product sales. Therefore companies need to understand WOM to encourage and manage it. "Companies have become aware that they can also take advantage of the same online communication channels that have been changing consumers' information search habits and use them to encourage consumers to engage in WOM activities to the companies' own benefit" (Barreto, 2014). Thanks to the web 2.0, companies can establish a close relationship between their brands and consumers. They can build consumer loyalty and convert consumers into brand ambassadors and obtain new clients through positive WOM.

Comments on Internet are written to be read and analyzed by a multitude of consumers and companies. What consumers say about brands or products? What do they need? What don't they like? EWOM facilitates the understanding of consumers' need and help companies to learn how consumers feel about their brand, products or services. WOM is essential because it provides to companies real perceptions and attitudes of current customers and future ones (Silverman, 2001). It is important for companies to listen what people are saying online about their brand to be able to react quickly.

Another opportunity of the EWOM for companies is the advantage to reach audience at low cost and quickly. Companies no longer need to spend lots of money in advertising and promotion tool, they can broadcast information at low cost to a large scale and create new dynamics in the market (Basarani, 2011).

2. **Comparison With the Traditional Word-of-Mouth**

Even if the EWOM has some common characteristics with the traditional WOM, several dimensions gathered under 3 main differences haven been identified. The uncommon new scale, design and interactions of the EWOM are contributing to the uniqueness of this kind of

communication.

a)   *New Scale*

The scale is critical to the efficiency of the WOM networks by enabling novel applications. Effectively sellers care about EWOM only if they are persuaded that it might affect their future sales. That's the case only if a sufficient number of users are providing feedbacks regarding the product or service that can affect potential customers. According to the theory, a certain level of involvement in the WOM communities is required before assuring the cooperation inducing by the reputation's strength. After the fulfillment of this prerequisite, the power of EWOM instantaneously appears and an unprecedented scale achieved through the utilization of the Internet's low-cost for online information search and dissemination (Bakos and Dellarocas, 2002). With this low cost of access and information exchange, EWOM can create potential new dynamics in the market. It is more likely that consumers in online buying environments are simultaneously exposed to an abundance of EWOM and extensive objective product information. Consequently the large scale of the online feedback reinforces the relevance of the internet-based medias regarding to the traditional WOM medias, which become less effective devices. As with these latter, the dissemination of information occurs between a few individuals in synchronous modes through more immediate intimate dialogs or private conversation. It makes difficult the transmission of the information to people, who are not present at the time of the information exchange. On the contrary, EWOM uses the bidirectional communication property and unlimited reach of the Internet to involve multi-way exchanges of information in asynchronous mode. That's when information sender and receiver are separated by both space and time (Hung and Li, 2007). For example, users of forum can read and comment a post after the creation of the topic and not imperatively when the topic is being posted.

b)   *New Format*

Before Internet, the WOM saw the light of the day naturally and was difficult to control in the society. The Internet enables this puissant social strength to be precisely measured and controlled. By definition, EWOM communications are more persistent, accessible and carry more weight, thanks to its print format as compared to the purely verbal exchange of traditional WOM (Herr, Kardes and Kim, 1991). Most of the text-based information presented on the Internet is archived and thus would be made available for an indefinite period of time (Hennig-Thurau et. al., 2004; Sen, 2008; Park and Lee, 2009; Hung and Li; 2007). This new

format allows to find WOM information online far more voluminous in quantity compared to information obtained from traditional contacts in the offline world because investigators can easily get a multitude of EWOM information and examine their characteristics such as the number of emotional words, the style of the message and the number of likes etc. (Park et al., 2007). The abundance, the form, and the constancy of the EWOM messages have made them more observable (Chatterjee, 2001). EWOM exists in online space, which can be accessed, linked and searched. Therefore a control is possible by using technical of the information system to moderate feedbacks in the virtual social communities. These feedback mediators automatically are implemented to choose who can participate, what kind of information is needed from users, how it is assembled and what sort of information is made public etc. By designing these mediator tools properly, the system designers can control precisely different parameters that were difficult or impossible to drive in the traditional social environment. For instance, feedback mediators can introduce a large amount of various statistics to illustrate a person's feedback history, apply filtering algorithms to delete suspicious ratings and impolite comment or nuancing ratings depending on communicator's trustworthiness, reputation etc. This large possibility of control can affect the social communication and transformed the problem of social science in a designing technical problem. All the design possibilities have to be concerned before choosing the specific design and understanding the different impact on the social outcome.

c) *New Interaction*

The volatile character of the online world introduces some new challenges related to the understanding and use of EWOM. The major part of theses challenges is due to the subjective aspect of online feedbacks. The traditional WOM occurred in a context where numbers of cue are available to assist the receiver in the proper interpretation of the given opinions. Original WOM emanates from a sender who is known to the receiver of the information, thereby the credibility of the communicator and the message is known to the receiver. On the contrary, the electronic nature of EWOM in most applications eliminates the receiver's ability to judge the credibility of the sender and his or her message. For example the familiarity between both persons can be used as source of credibility or the physical expressions or appearance can provide inferences to be drawn. Many of these cues don't exist online. Internet users have to assess the feedback of complete strangers. This lack of familiarity between EWOM receivers and senders may heighten the potential for the posting and use of fraudulent EWOM (Hagel and Armstrong, 1997). However, the literature has proven that the homophily of online users

present in typical WOM exchanges is not necessary critical. On the contrary the shared group interests and mindsets are of higher value (Edwards, 2006; Mayzlin, 2004; Sussan, Gould and Weisfeld-spolter, 2006). Correspondingly, the concept of the strength of close ties in EWOM is not as much important as it is in interpersonal face-to-face interaction. Maybe it's better to see Internet as a "bridge" between people, but the honest interaction is created due to the specific shared interest existing in the forums, blogs or online review's topics (Kiecker and Cowles, 2001). Nevertheless one other part of challenges regarding feedback interpretations comes from the facility of changing online identities. This opens the way to different sort of strategic manipulation. For instance, some members can improve their reputation in a community by cheating others members and then disappear and reappear under a new clean identity (Friedman and Resnick 2001). Or they can create fake members' account to either support written feedbacks and try to ameliorate their online image or post dishonest feedbacks in order to affect their competitors. The unknown anonymous source of information in EWOM has the possibility of non-altruistic or profit-motivated communication exists (Dwyer, 2007). At the end, the nature of the online social mechanism point out the problem of trust regarding the Internet users and encourage the development of adequate defences to assure a trustfully EWOM.

After understanding and comparing the traditional WOM with the new one, it is essential to notice that both types of WOM can walk hand in hand. They are not substitutable, but complementary (Barreto, 2014).

C. A Powerful Tool

1. The Different Properties of WOM

WOM affects purchase behavior and is one of the strongest influencers on the decision of buying new products or services. Because of its significant impact and reach, WOM is commonly identified as a driver of sales (Meuter, Mccabe and Curran, 2013).

In his book, Silverman explain the different properties of WOM. According to him, it is important to understand these properties to better use this wonderful tool.

Property 1. Word of Mouth's Megapower

Everyone talk about the power of the WOM but no one knows how powerful it really is. Indeed "WOM is much more powerful than even the experts think it is" (Silverman, 2011). Silverman proof WOM's power simply by the fact that in everyday life, people are exposed to a multitude non-word-of-mouth communication in the forms of: TV ads, print ads in the street, radio commercials, product packaging, emails, salespeople, Internet banners… But most people respond to a commercial communication once every few days so this form of communication has a very poor impact. And Silverman adds to this argument that "the response is rarely to purchase. It's usually just to get more information". Contrary to this fact, if a friend calls someone and recommends a product or a service, the person will take his recommendation. People don't retain all the recommendation but approximately one out of two so this form of communication has a great impact. "Customers are thousands of times more likely to act on a recommendation of a friend, colleague, or trusted adviser than they are to a commercial communication. And this action is often to make a purchase, not just to get more information" (Silverman, 2001). The reason why people listen more friends than conventional marketing is the customized answers to questions that provide relevance, which in our society of overload information, is as important as truth.

Property 2. The Speed of WOM

The WOM is the faster communication tool. Indeed one person who likes a product will recommend it to some friends. At their turn, the friends (if they like this product) will recommend it. Before to recommend, the first person made two choices: the product is good enough and new enough to tell people about and the particular person is someone who is potentially interested to hear about it. A person doesn't recommend a good product to everybody. He is not going "to share his new information with people who have no use for it, people about whom don't care or people won't appreciate his informational generosity" (Silverman, 2011). This person does a real choice to recommend a product or a service to one person and not to another. In his book Silverman explains that new persons who have now the information about the product or service "have a better understanding and appreciation of it". The information will benefit them more because they are more concerning. As a result, "their message about the product (or service) is probably more articulate and emotionally engaging than the original message they received" (Silverman, 2011). So the content of the information gain in quantity and quality because it reaches and is spread by people who care about the content. According to Silverman "the quality, relevance, and enthusiasm of the information passed on through WOM can, under some conditions, actually improve through successive

iterations of transmission. In addition, the ability of people to transmit it to the right people often improves". To conclude we can say that WOM is a self-improving system. Silverman doesn't compare WOM to a viral growth but to an exponential growth of a nuclear chain reaction. "Both, WOM and nuclear chain reaction need to start with the right condition. They need critical mass, sufficient density and a jump start" (Silverman, 2011).

Property 3. Independent Credibility

The power of the WOM comes from its independency and objectivity. A consumer is more likely to trust an independent third party than someone who works in the involved company or has an interest to promote the product. "It is the credibility that gives WOM much of its power" (Silverman, 2011).

Property 4. The Hidden Advantage of WOM: Experience Delivery

This fourth property is the most powerful one. When a person asks a friend about a product or a service, he just wants to have the point of view of his friend who already has tried the product. "He has to know how the product really works in the real word. In other word, he needs experience" (Silverman, 2011). People can get experience in two ways: directly and indirectly. The direct experience is about trying the product. "It is the best teacher, but it is often the most costly in time, money, and risk of failure" (Silverman, 2011). The direct experience can have also negative consequences like confusion, uncertainty, feeling like an idiot and not sure about his own decision. So the direct experience can be a good solution to have information about a product or a service before the decision-making but it can be also a source of stressful situation. "With indirect experience, someone else is footing the bill and spending the time" (Silverman, 2011). The consumer is not alone anymore to choose a product or a service. He can deal with different experiences of his friends and compare them. The risk will be low and during the decision-process, the consumer will know which product to choose. According to Silverman, "indirect experience, that is hearing about other people's experience, is actually much better than direct experience in many ways".

Property 5. WOM is More Relevant and Complete

When a friend tells to another friend about a product or a service, he thinks that the information about this product could interest his friend. He knows his friend and he thinks that he would like to know his information and experience about it. He doesn't want to tell this information to a stranger but to his friend who he knows that he is interested in it. "When

someone recommends a product to a colleague, he is not giving a pitch. He is responding to questions, the ones the decisions makers themselves are asking" (Silverman, 2011). In consequence, consumers pay more attention to his recommendation because it is perceived as more relevant and more complete than any other forms of communication (Silverman, 2011)

Property 6. WOM Feeds on Itself

"WOM is self-generating and self-contained, and it wastes nothing. Further, it is amplified by fountainhead and leveraged influencers powerful enough to spark a chain reaction." (Silverman, 2011).

Property 7. WOM Itself Becomes One of the Product's Attributes

It is important for decision makers to know that a product is recommended by a friend or by experts. For example, before to go to the cinema, some people go to Allocine website and are looking for rate of the movie in number of stars. Then they can say: we can go to watch this movie because according to Allocine he has four stars so it is for sure a good movie. So the recommendation from friends or experts finish to convince the decision maker and it becomes a product attribute. In his book, Silverman explains "The 'recommended by' becomes one of the product attributes, often the most important one."

2. How Word-of-Mouth Works for Different Types of Decision Makers?

The decision process of buying a product or not is a complex process that we have explained in a preceding part. This process shows the different steps during the consumer's decision to buy a product or not. During the decision process, it exists five different types of decision makers. It is important to analyse these types because WOM affects them differently depending on which step of the decision process they are in, the kind of person they are talking with and their style in making decisions (Silverman, 2011). For a company choosing the right kind of WOM for each type of adopter is crucial to influence positively the decision process by transmitting relevant messages (Silverman, 2011).

The Innovator

Innovators need to be the first one to know the product and the first to adopt it. They need to hear that a product is new and that very few people have heard about the new product. According to Silverman, they need to hear things such as: "Did you hear that company X is

coming out with a new…? No one else has it." They are motivated by the idea that they are the first to try the innovation. WOM for innovator must be adapted and must tell about the technological advanced and the uniqueness of the product. "They are driven by the desire to be outstanding" (Silverman, 2011).

The Early Adopter

The early adopters are visionaries. They are attracted by the possibilities and potential of the product. For them, the WOM must be about the power of the product and its eventual advantages (Silverman, 2011). They are driven by the desire to be excellent.

The Middle Majority

The middle majority don't want to be the first to try a new product but don't want to be the last one. "They are more concerned with the practicalities of applying the product" (Silverman, 2011). They choose a product not because it is a new product but for its attributes such as price, delivery, service and terms. For them, the WOM must be about quality, consistency and ease of use. "They are driven by the desire to be competent" (Silverman, 2011).

The Late Adopters

The late adopters want to choose a product without any risk. They don't want to make mistake and to be sure to make the right choice. They want to hear that lots of people have good experiences with this product and they would not have any difficulties or problems with the product. "They are more concerned with issues of self-protection" (Silverman, 2011). WOM for late adopter must be adapted and speak about security, mature product, easy to learn and have collected positive feedbacks.

The Laggards

The laggards reject technologies and don't want to adopt a new product until they are forced to. They search safety. They will adopt a product only if they are no other choice. For them, the WOM must be about the reassurance that they are using it in the standard way (Silverman, 2011).

Consumer's Behavior Facing WOM

In his book, Silverman proposes to put together the adopter types with the decision stage in a decision matrix. In the following table, we can understand the differences between the types of adopters and better adapt the WOM according to them.

	Deciding to Decide	Weighing Information	Trial	Implementing	Expanding Commitment
Innovator					
Wants to be outstanding.	Wants to hear how "far out" the product is. *It's so new and unusual that no one's even heard of it or tried it. It works on a totally new principle. Most people wouldn't even understand it.*	There is little information to gather. He will have to investigate the product first hand. *It's so far out that there is nothing to compare it to. It's in a different class.*	Wants to be among the first to try. *It is so new that no one has tried it yet. You would be the first.*	Wants to be the pioneer who will lead the way for other people. *Now that you've tried it successfully, you can help others learn about it.*	Wants to push the envelope to the limits. *Have you tried the wild new things it might be used for?*
Early Adopter					
Driven by excellence.	Concerned more about possibilities han actualities. *Think of the possibilities. If this product*	Looking not so much for "hard" information as for a vision of what might be. *Here's how I*	Doesn't care that it hasn't been used in his situation. Just cares that it might be	Knows there will be problems, wants to know what they are and how they can be applicable.	Wants a major advantage for being at the beginning of the curve. *Here are the*
	really worked in your situation, it would change your life or give you a competitive edge.	*envision using the product. The other products are more ordinary. This one has possibilities.*	*This product doesn't work all the time. But when it does, wow!*	*Here is how to get the most out of the product and minimize the problems.*	*additional possibilities that will give you a competitive edge.*
Middle Majority					
Wants to be competent.	Concerned with practicalities. *This has been tried and really works in situations like yours in your industry.*	Wants comparisons about how it's working out in situations similar to his own. *Here is the practical information about how this is working out in the real world.*	Wants to verify that it will work in his situation without investing too much time or experiencing trouble. *The bugs have been worked out, and it is highly predictable.*	Wants to know that there is an easy way out if it doesn't work out. *Training, support, and guarantees are in place and reliable.*	Wants to know usage is getting pretty standard. *It is rapidly becoming the standard in our industry*
Late Adopter					
Wants to reduce risk.	Promise a good deal on a tried-and-true product. *It has become virtually a com-*	Wants to "shop around" and get the proven product with the best deal.	Trial tends to be not for product excellence, but centers around the support	Wants complete support for rolling out full usage of the product. *Company reps*	Wants to use what everyone else is using and the way that they are using it.

Table 2: Decision Matrix (from Silverman, 2011)

	Deciding to Decide	Weighing Information	Trial	Implementing	Expanding Commitment
	modity, and this product comes at a better price, delivery, service, and training.	I've checked out the pricing and service, and it seems to be the best product.	system. Check out how wonderful the company is to deal with. Everyone can fix your problems.	will come in and do it all for you.	Everybody is using it for everything.
Laggard					
Wants to be completely safe.	Wants reassurance that it is a safe product with which nothing will go wrong. *You'll get in trouble if you aren't using this.*	Wants to find the loopholes, problems, and negatives. If he doesn't find some, he will keep looking. *Here are the risks and how to negate them.*	Basically won't try anything new. Needs reassurance that the product is the standard product used in his industry and situation. *Try it, everyone else has and likes it.*	Implements only when he has to. *Adopt this product, or else.*	Wants reassurance that he is using it in the standard way. *That's the way we all use it.*

Table 3: Continued Decision Matrix (from Silverman, 2011)

After having a look at all the WOM's properties and how WOM can be adapted depending of the type of decision maker, we are now aware about its power and the necessity to for companies to use it cleverly in their marketing strategy.

III. Marketing Implication

A. Marketing Word-of-Mouth

WOM has become an unavoidable term in the marketing activities and a powerful tool for the marketing professionals (Lo, 2012). "The study of WOM can thus be said to be an important contribution in the marketing aspect of an organization and have been a profitable solution for the success of different companies" (Lo, 2012).

WOM Marketing (WOMM) is a type of marketing that "specifically promotes natural interpersonal communication in the most diverse ways" (Meiners, Schwarting and Seeberger, 2010). The American WOM Association (WOMMA), founded in 2005, defined it as "giving people a reason to talk about your products and services, and making it easier for that conversation to take place. It is the art and science of building active, mutually beneficial consumer-to-consumer and consumer-to-marketer communications" (WOMMA, 2008). WOMM becomes a generic term, including tactics such as viral marketing or buzz marketing.

Consumer's Behavior Facing WOM

"WOMM is accordingly not about generation conversations between consumers, but rather to encourage these conversations and to anchor them in the overall marketing strategy" (Meiners, Schwarting and Seeberger, 2010).

1. A New Pillar in the Marketing Strategy

With the development of new technologies, we assist in an evolution of the "4P" in the marketing activities. Lots of literatures speak about this mutation. In the book *Buzz marketing*, Stambouli and Briones (2002) explain these changes in each pillar of the marketing strategy.

P like Product

With these changes, products must have unique quality in the eyes of each consumer. Products must not appeal to "everyone" but must appeal to each consumer. A product must be created for one person and not for everyone (no matter which one). In their book, Stambouli and Briones argue the fact that society move from mass men phenomenon to a society of individualization. Companies must offer "made to measure" product to attract each person and offer a high range of customized possibilities.

P like Price

The pricing policy has changed. Price has become an important element of the product and consumers don't allow an uncertainty concerning the price anymore. They want information and the price must make sense and be justified.

P like place

With the arrival of new technologies, the concepts of space and time have taken new dimensions. This is no distributor that sets the place of purchase and the place of consumption but there is only a consumer. The usage of digital distribution channels and deployment of new delivery platforms tend to give the power to consumers. This explosion of geographical and temporal dimensions is a bargain for companies. Indeed it extends the act of consumption since new consumers can consume anywhere at any time.

P like Promotion

The mass advertising has shown its limits. It is replaced by a real dialog with the consumer.
The new goal for marketer is to build a personal and lasting relationship between the brand

and the consumer for better responding to consumer distrust advertising and constructing a loyal customer.

A New Pillar: Word-of-Mouth Marketing

A new pillar seems to be emerging for the professional of marketing: WOMM. "Marketers are particularly interested in better understanding WOM because traditional forms of communication appear to be losing effectiveness" (Trusov, Buckling and Pauwles, 2009). According to Stambouli and Briones, this form of interpersonal communication between consumer about their personal experiences with products or company is a powerful asset for marketer. Positive WOM increases the intentions of consumers to purchase innovative products. It helps to give a positive image to a brand or product, and can help to reduce advertising and promotional expenses. Therefore marketers support WOM's growth and spread. They use networks of influence, communication with opinion leaders and create distribution networks between consumers in order to build a complete WOMM strategy (Stambouli and Briones, 2002).

2. Application of the Two-Step-Flow Model to the Marketing

Regarding Katz (1955), the Marketing WOM is nothing other than the application of the two-step flow model to the Marketing, i.e. "identifying influential individuals in social networks and connecting with them in ways that encourage WOM message movement" (Smith, 2009). In this section, the focus will relate to the implementation of the influences models in the marketing perspective.

How companies can influence the WOM in order to control it or use it for marketing reasons? "One of the first possibilities consists for the firm to exploit the EWOM environment's change, by creating firm-to-consumer communications that look like consumer- to-consumer communications" (Mayzlin, 2004). But this cynic and risky approach can only be working on a small case. However this kind of practices, should not be neglected because thanks to the web 2.0 new ways are opened to be involved incognito in the online users' conversation. The second more recognized possibility is to establish a communication from the firm to the influencer, which should diffuse the message in its entourage. One question quickly arises: how to identify the influencer and assess their real influence?

For the marketers, the challenge is to position them on the common place. "We have all seen headlines suggesting that 1 in 10 Americans influences the opinions of the rest of the population" (Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins, 2007). The aim is to reach leaders in integrated groups with relevant tools. Regarding news products, Brooks recommends to inform opinions leader through private sales conducting by commercial agents. Indeed, this aggressive commercial effort can have a "starter" effect allowing the sought snowball effect. After that the author insist on the risky marketing implementation of the WOM marketing that can forget the contextual characteristic of the influence. Since opinion leaders are specialized by groups and by type of product, a marketing researcher should not attempt to find opinion leaders "in general" (Brooks, 1957, p. 161). The opinions leader should be researched in each strata of users of a particular product. Finally Brooks remembers the importance of the traditional media regarding the branding communication that should be addressed to the mass of individuals. In this perspective Horsky and Simon (1983) develop a diffusion model of a new production that use traditional advertising and WOM. Regarding to these authors, it's possible to control the sales among the time in the bank industry by modulating its communication strategy. The optimal strategy consists firstly in an intensive targeted advertising investment to inform the innovators about the product's existence. Then since the innovators, who are transformed in spokesperson, adopt the product, the advertising investment can be gradually reduced. In fact, the definition and delimitation of influential arise a problem. For example, Karlz and Lazarsfeld define as influencer women who can influences individuals. Similarly Coleman, Katz and Menzel (1966) consider doctors as influencer that influence three or four of their peers. More recently Burson-Marsteller (2001) estimates that one opinion leader has an influence on 14 persons on average. As to Keller and Berry (2003), they mark as influencer 10% of the population supposed to influence the 90% left.

As you can see above, a grand part of the literature support the affirmation of Katz (1955) that says the WOM marketing is the strict marketing application of the two-step-flow model. If the influence of interpersonal relationship model is not questioned, the opinion leader concept has been disputed in the recent past years.

According to Balter and Butman (2005), "everybody talks about products and services and they talk about them all the time. Word of mouth is not about identifying a small subgroup of highly influential or well-connected people to talk up a product or service. It's not about mavens or bews or celebrities or people with specialist knowledge. It's about everybody". This affirmation is reflecting through the example of the shoes brand Hush Puppies, which

know a growth of 5000% of sales without any advertisement when young trendy group from New York decided to wear it (Gladwell, 2000). The concept of "superinfluential" has been launched to designate these happy few able to rapidly promote a brand. According to Allsop et al. (2007) explains that "what is important is to understand how the specific social network in your category operates, and in particular, which individuals within that social network are most active in creating and spreading messages about your product category to others".

After getting a first look in the marketing WOM through its common mechanism of implementation and its natural propagation sources, we will study some rules to help marketers in the implementation of a WOMM strategy.

3. Rules to Implement a Word-of-Mouth Marketing Strategy

In his paper, Sujanto (2014) developed five rules to help marketers to improve their marketing strategy.

<u>Ask for it</u>

A good strategy to deal with WOM marketing is to ask for comments. Company must ask their consumers to give their feeling and opinion about their product. The principal reason why people are not giving referrals is because companies are not asking for, assuming that happy customers will naturally provide the comments (Sujanto, 2014). So company have to ask consumers to get feedback or even better referrals. It as simple as: "I grow my business through direct referrals from satisfied people like yourself. Please feel free to refer me if you think of anyone who could benefit from our services" (Sujanto, 2014). By asking, consumers will remember you and do it with pleasure. For example, the air flight company Air France send an email to all of their customers after a flight to ask them about comments.

Dear Ms Gabeur,

Thank you for choosing Air France on your recent flight AF1019 from Frankfurt, International Airport (FRA) to Paris, Charles de Gaulle (CDG) on January 29, 2014.

We invite you to share your feedback about this specific flight. This will help us to continuously improve your experience.

The evaluation takes most people 10 minutes to complete.

Take survey.

Thank you for your time and help. We ensure your feedback is handled both anonymously and confidentially.

Yours sincerely,
Air France Customer Insight and TNS NIPO

Figure 3: Mail of Air France

Use Social Media

According to Sujanto, leveraging social media can help foster WOM marketing. When companies have satisfied customer, they can ask to them to give an online comments. An online testimonial will help companies to get a positive WOM especially on platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or Youtube, which particularly viral. Sujanto explains that "It's one thing seeing a testimonial on the company's website, but a testimonial given by a real person – publicly – adds a new level of credibility to the referral." Personal reviews will highlight products and companies and how good they are. So companies have to make an effort concerning social media by being connected and interacting with the maximum of people. The real power of social media is reaching people online to make an impact offline.

Build a community

Building a community around the brand is crucial. Indeed a good community helps users to construct a global identity. It convinces them that buying their product are making them special member. By giving personal statements they can join special ranks. "This king of engagement is crucial as not only are the company receiving invaluable feedback about his business, this space also helps to encourage dialogue with your past and potential customers" (Sujanto, 2014).

Monitor your reputation

Marketers have to keep a watchful eye on the feedback and comments they are getting. Positive WOM is a wonderful tool for a company and can push the sales. But negative WOM can go downhill very quickly and bad reviews will easily outrank the good. So marketers must be reactive to explain and solve possible issues as soon as a negative review appears in a

social media. WOM marketing is largely based on customer experience so marketers have to make customer's experience a priority. They have to watch out for their reputation.

Pay it forward

WOM marketing is not just a one-way street. Company must be generous and give awards to good consumer when appropriate. For example a company can give to its customer a small gift in exchange for reviews. The gift will be appreciated and consumer will be more likely to speak about the product.

After explaining some rule to help marketers to implement a good WOMM strategy, we will now have a look on the concrete application of WOMM. Let's begin with the most formal form of WOMM: Buzz Marketing.

B. Buzz Marketing

1. Definition of the Traditional Concept of Buzz

A Type of Viral Marketing

The viral marketing is a phenomenon, which facilitates and encourages people to pass on a marketing message. This promotional message is so interesting and exciting that it raises stupefaction among the medias and consumers, who multiply its propagation (Hughes, 2005; Mohr, 2007). This phenomenon of euphoria is at the core of the viral marketing principle. Like in the case of viruses, people disseminate messages from person to person leading to the following definition of viral marketing supported by Mohr (2007) and Thomas (2004): "Viral marketing describes any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence." This marketing model appears then much more complex than the traditional one because the message control is left to the receiver. Moreover, the Internet has strongly increased the viral marketing potential due to its ease of transmission and the use of the social medias which happen to be excellent viral networks (Thomas, 2004; Sernovitz, 2011; Wheeler, 2009; Rosen, 2009; Penenberg, 2009). Therefore companies are actively looking for opportunities to take advantage from the power of this marketing channel in order to promote their products or services (Kozinets, Valck, Wojnicki and Wilner, 2010). However the concept of marketing buzz tends to supplant the one of viral marketing (Thomas, 2004).

Indeed, both involve people in the WOM campaign and the concerned organisation. They have a commercial goal of developing sales and positive behaviours towards the brand. Their common purpose is to create a noise regarding the brand, the product or service and to provide an exponential transmission of the message.

The viral marketing research has shown the importance of identifying the best ambassadors of the brand (as seen before with two-step-flow model). It's about using the existing ties between consumers. The influence is on one hand explicit through consumers' advice and on the other hand implicit through the simple consumption of the product. Consequently the viral marketing can be active but also frictionless.

As far as the buzz marketing is concerned, it is often compared to a "buzzing" and contributes to the viral marketing campaigns. This inexpensive method has a positive valence and allows companies to promote a new product in a great scope. According to Carles (2006), it's possible to observe positive as well as negative communication because the agents can be persons paid to talk about the brand, volunteers to test a new brand or totally independent people from the organisation. These relays are not passive to the extent that they can degrade the informational content of the message by reinforcing or weakening it. The communication process is more important than the source because a lot of conversations take place in the social networks during unplanned interactions. Stambouli and Briones (2002) distinguish also two categories of buzz. The first one, the "buzz image" regroups all the discussions between consumers regarding the brand image. The second one, the "buzz product" corresponds to consumer's reviews regarding the product's consumption.

Benefit

Even if the marketing buzz is legally risky (Steinman and Hawkins, 2010), the advantages for marketers are numerous. For instance, the marketing costs are decreasing because of the avoidance of the advertisement creation and media cost. In addition, the transmission through the WOM makes the message more credible and increases the brand visibility and differentiation. In Rosen's opinion (2009), the marketing buzz includes all activities organised with the aim of generating an enjoyable experience during a communication related to a product or service. This latter is particularly efficient if the product is fascinating, innovative, complex or observable. Because their interest for the product, people will speak about it and others are likely to listen in order to ameliorate their understanding. Some targeted markets are obviously more sensitive to buzz than others like teenagers, who are easily influenced by various opinions. Finally the buzz marketing is resulting from more and more carefully

operated marketing programs (Dye, 2000). It can be combined to any other marketing techniques giving that they support the same main strategy (Mohr, 2007). Nevertheless as attested by Bernoff and Li (2008), marketing belongs nowadays more to clients than before. The brands are more and more in the hands of the consumers. That's the *groundswell,* the transfer of power from companies to consumers and communities that can modify the corporate culture through the two-way communication. However, the first objective of the buzz is to create or renew the attention on the product, the brand or the organisation. It operates more on the consumer's behaviors and the perceived brand image. Furthermore the buzz helps to build a relationship with the customer but it is not immediate (Henry, 2003). The buzz is consequently complementary to traditional ways of communications of the organisation. For Rosen (2009), it's judicious to integrate it to the mix media in order to support the viral mechanism.

Basic Implementation

To describe the implementation of a buzz marketing strategy, the basic transmission through the viral ambassadors is suggested. An organisation willing to implement a buzz marketing campaign is well advised to make first of all inquiries about the information's sources used by the potential clients and also determine the motivations of individuals associated to brand (Rosen, 2009). Every activity allowing to identify, to discuss with, and to recruit the buzz agents is essential (Godin, 2000; Blackshaw, 2001) and should be included in the communication plan (e.g. sponsoring of cultural event, participation to festivals etc.). These procedures are more or less comfortable to the extent that people tend to communicate spontaneously with the company (Blackshaw, 2001). The setting up of a toll-free phone number or an email address facilitates these interrelations. To identify the leaders, the individuals can be asked to name their guiding persons or to assess themselves their influence level. (Vernette, 2006)

The attributes, related to the product or the message, are also important to touch the buzz agents. Indeed agents or non-agents are talking voluntarily about contagious products if they are original. The influencers' ties can be then used.

Influential hub

Organisation
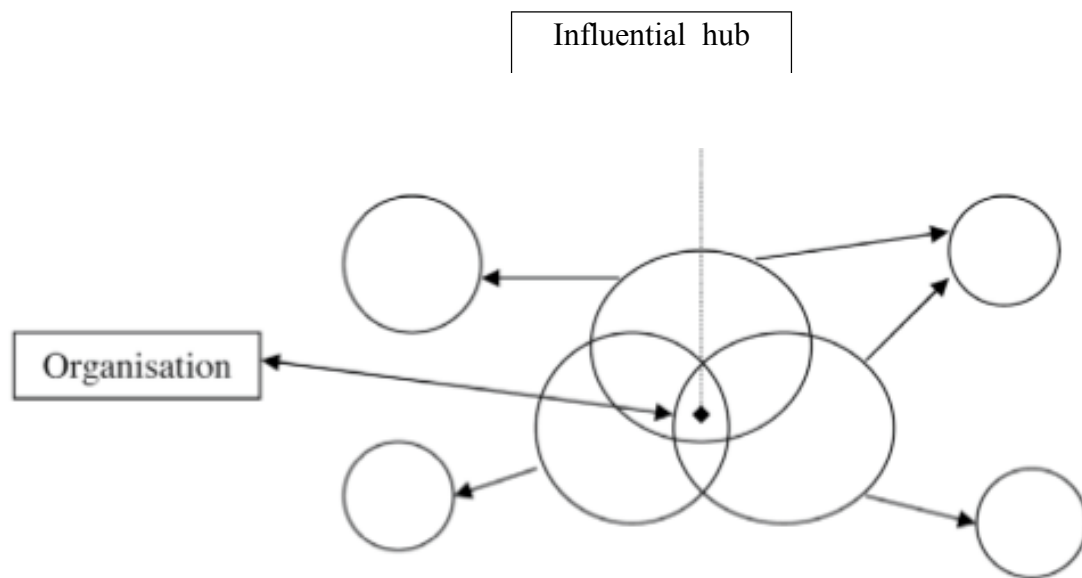
Figure 4: The Central of Influencer in the Networks (from Maunier, 2008)

The influencers are playing a central role in the networks because they enable the buzz to spread from a network to another. Consequently they should be treated as privileged clients, who will be informed in priority. The comparative or informative messages seem to be more adapted to their media consumption. The tests and reviews carried out by these individuals are also useful to encourage the WOM. They need recognition, even if the advised person has not been converted into a client. Technologies are combined to stimulate people to send the message effortless. Different tools are specifically proposed by Thomas (2004) to improve the impact of marketing buzz campaigns. The member's sponsorship is firstly beneficial to obtain a list of contacts. The C2C items allow then developing the notoriety and the image of the brand through the sending of virtual cards, videos or notifications (e.g. "recommend to a friend"). Things may be more controversial when it deals with blogs trying to put in touch the consumers and to give them an opportunity to resolve their problems together.

2. The Modern Age of Buzz Marketing

Buzz campaigns are not recent in the marketing environment. Marketers have attempted for a long times, to control and speed up the WOM. For example, the most famous clothing brands have been continually organizing fashion shows to exhibit their new creations and catch the consumer's attention. Multinational companies have also been sponsoring big sport events

such as the Champions League, the Olympic Games etc. Nowadays buzz campaigns diverge from traditional ones in various ways.

Parameter	Modern	Traditional
Scope	Broad	Narrow
Speed	Fast	Slow
Medium	Social journalists	Professional journalists
Focus	Relations	Consumer

Table 4: Modern vs. Traditional Buzz (from Mourdoukoutas & Siomkos, 2009)

Firstly, today's buzz campaigns are broader and spread all over the world. The most impressive example to illustrate this first change can be found in the teenagers market (e.g. Pokemon games and TV programme or Harry Potter books and movies etc.) Dye (2000) confirms that buzz marketing through the power of WOM "can lead to explosive self-generating consumer demand".

Secondly, todays buzz travels faster through the high-speed power of the Internet. The transmission of new technologies, the multiplication of brands, and the increasing incomes worldwide enable a broader participation in buzz. Online services (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) or usual websites (e.g. MySpace) give people the opportunity to share their live stories or passions using their smartphones or wireless devices. Similarly, many different websites stimulate customers to post blogs, sharing their lifetime and shopping experiences with friends and strangers, providing personalized information to consumers for making good choices. According to Blackshaw (2008), consumers have always had a much to tell about companies. Before they just did not express themselves because it was much more difficult, and time consuming, to share their message with a lot of people. Presently, have one's say is nearly as easy as have one breathe, and this is moving the rules of business around the world. The use of music, video or games in buzz marketing increases the pass-along, which can frequently reach 30% in some Buzz campaigns. That's around one person in three, who is forwarding the message to someone. 90 % of the Internet users are estimated to use an e-mail address and 50% to check it daily (Phelps, Regina Lewis, Lynne Mobilio, David Perry, and Niranjan Raman, 2004). The term of Viral Maven appears in the recent literature referring to a frequent e-mail user, who is able to send an email to a lot of his friends because it contains an exclusive video.

Thirdly, citizen marketers, filters and fanatics build today's buzz campaigns. Citizen marketers are usual people who are now take in charge the ownership of companies and brands. They illustrate the story of how amateurs and professionals cooperate to support this new form of ownership in companies or products. On this purpose, citizen marketers

represent the "marketing content". They provide marketing and advertising content taking into account people's beliefs, brands and organizations. They open the doors to others in order for them to participate to the marketing work. The filters are also everyday people but have a different role. They gather and combine the divided information in blogs and podcasts to make the reading of the product message easier. By collecting positive and negative reviews as well as fan creation related to a specific company or brand, they publish a regular stream of links, story summaries and observations. For their parts, the fanatics are true believers and do more than filtering but analyse the information to give recommendations. Their work may include filtering work but they love before everything to analyse the progress of brand, company or product.

Fourthly, today's buzz campaigns are targeting not only the relations between company and individual consumers but also the relationship between consumers so that their interaction gets quicker. In other words, the consumers are no longer at the end of the marketing process but are taking part of it, particularly if consumers are associated to a blog. Indeed, blogs are built on buzz and they build buzz. Marketers know the power of certain blogs in generating positive or negative WOM about brands. (Rosen, 2009) Therefore they are used to targeting blog owners to be engaged in a special type of influential marketing (see the following example of HP). To sum up, social rather than commercial medias provide the modern buzz. How to measure the buzz? Pete Blackshaw (2008) suggests eight measuring criteria of product buzz:

- Volume: How many people talk about the product?
- Content: How people talk about the product?
- Issue: What are the main points?
- Sentiment: Are people happy, angry?
- Dispersion: How far has buzz gone?
- Source: Where is the buzz from?
- Author: Who is the writer?

Regarding to this author, the volume and sentiment are the two most important and used assessments. He proposes to measure the volume with content-mining engines that collect together, organize and classify the buzz (e.g. Technorati, Blogpulse, Google etc.).

After explaining the present parameters of the buzz marketing, the following part will illustrate this strategy with two real applications.

3. Examples of Buzz Marketing

In this part, two examples will be explored. The first one concerns a buzz campaign directed by Carambar, which will result in the positive WOM communication. The second one relates to a negative WOM propagation due to the buzz of one comment concerning an incident committed by United Airlines.

The end of the Carambar joke

Carambar is a French brand, which belong to Mondelez. It is a very famous chewy caramel candy from France. Carambar is famous because of its jokes inside the wrapping. From adults to children, everybody know candy Carambar and its famous jokes.

At the end of March 2015, the brand of candy Carambar announced the end of its jokes, which accompanied each of its products. Its jokes would be replaced by some mini quiz of general culture and mathematical problems.

This announcement had the effect of a bomb. Everybody believed in it. This new created WOM because people talked between them about this big announcement: dissatisfaction, nostalgia… everybody had a word to say. Lots of reaction appeared in every source of communication and this news created a big buzz. The buzz did not limit itself to the web but all the big media relieved the information.

A few days later, Carambar have returned on its announcement by broadcasting a video in which they explained their operation of communication. The end of the Carambar jokes was the biggest joke of the year. In the Carambar's video we can see the buzz created by the brand: a huge numbers of tweets concerning this news, comments on Facebook, special mention on Wikipedia, extracts TV, radio programs etc. In France, everybody talked about this big buzz.

The Carambar buzz was a success because it's huge impact and the brand won "the grand prix stratégie 2014" for its campaign "#c'étaituneblague" (#itwasajoke).

Figure 5: Carambar Buzz: the End of Carambar Joke

United breaks guitar

In the spring of 2008, the Canadian band Sons of Maxwell were traveling to Nebraska for a one-week tour. Dave Carroll, a member of the band, was not allowed to bring his $3,500 Taylor acoustic guitar onboard. When changing planes at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, United Airlines' baggage handlers on the tarmac threw or dropped the guitar case, badly damaging the guitar. He discovered later that the guitar was severely damaged. "That turned into a nine-month ordeal of trying to get the airline to take responsibility for the damage, "Carroll recalled". And when they wouldn't take any responsibility and in fact shut down the conversation, I had two choices: to do nothing or to do something else." With his band he decided to write and produce a song about the experience with United Airlines and make a video to be viewed online by anyone in the world. He wrote a now-famous song "United breaks guitars" to tell his story.

Since being posted on July 6, the YouTube video has already had more than a quarter million views in only three days. The video earned a 5 star rating with more than 7,000 ratings and nearly 3,000 comments. "The matter was closed as far as they were concerned", Carroll said. "It's completely because of the video that they got back to me." Indeed, "United Breaks Guitars" turned into an unlikely breakthrough hit on YouTube and the EWOM has been working well.
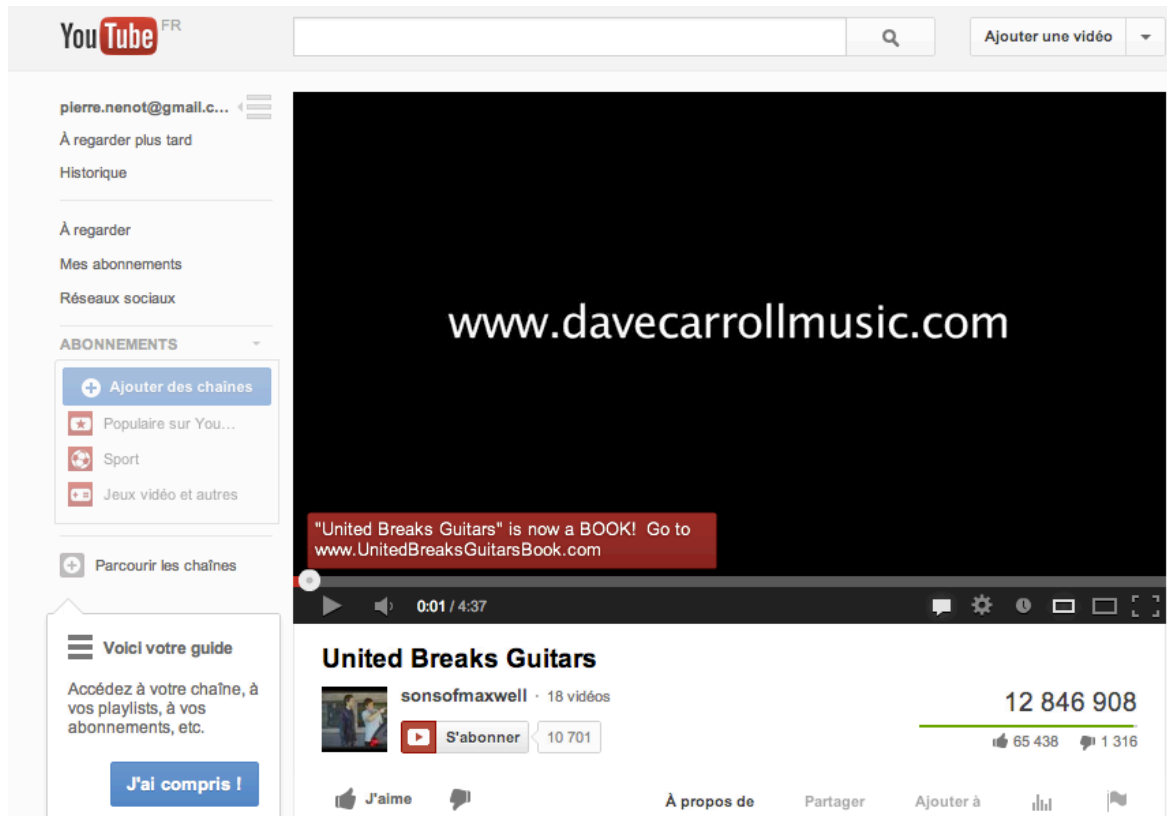
Figure 6: United Breaks Guitar Video (Youtube)

C. Understand Consumer Behavior in the Age of Web 2.0

To develop a better marketing strategy around WOM phenomena, marketers need to understand consumer behavior facing this tool. They need to study how people react with WOM in the emergence of the web 2.0. This part is helping marketers to understand the behavior of their customers in the age of Internet and new technologies.

1. Why People Speak About a Product or a Service

After showing that targeting of influencers seems to be the more obvious way to implement marketing campaigns we will now focus on the reasons that make influencers speak about a company. Companies can't design an efficient WOM message if they don't understand the people's motivation to speak about a product.

According to the literature review, it can have several reasons to the question why people talk. Sundaram et al. (1998) found eight motives for consumer WOM behavior (Hennig, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler, 2004). The 1st motives to talk for consumer is altruism: consumer just wants to give his opinion about his experience to help others in their decision process. The 2nd

one is product involvement: consumer has a personal interest in the product. Self-enhancement is another motive because consumer wants to be seen by other consumer as an intelligent buyer. Consumer can talk to help the company. The 5th motive is to reduce his anxiety: consumer had a negative experience with the product and he feels the need to speak about it to reduce his frustration. One more motive to talk is vengeance. Consumer wants to prevent others consumers about his negative experience and wants to create a bad image of the company. The last motive is advice seeking: consumer talks about his experience to have advice about his problem from others consumers.

Author(s)	Motive	Description
Dichter (1966)	Product-involvement	a customer feels so strongly about the product that a pressure builds up in wanting to do something about it; recommending the product to others reduces the tension caused by the consumption experience
	Self-involvement	the product serves as a means through which the speaker can gratify certain emotional needs
	Other-involvement	word-of-mouth activity addresses the need to give something to the receiver
	Message-involvement	refers to discussion which is stimulated by advertisements, commercials, or public relations
Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard (1993)	Involvement	level of interest or involvement in the topic under consideration serves to stimulate discussion
	Self-enhancement	recommendations allow person to gain attention, show connoisseurship, suggest status, give the impression of possessing inside information, and assert superiority
	Concern for others	a genuine desire to help a friend or relative make a better purchase decision
	Message intrigue	entertainment resulting from talking about certain ads or selling appeals
	Dissonance reduction	reduces cognitive dissonance (doubts) following a major purchase decision
Sundaram, Mitra, & Webster (1998)	Altruism (positive WOM)	the act of doing something for others without anticipating any reward in return
	Product involvement	personal interest in the product, excitement resulting from product ownership and product use
	Self-enhancement	enhancing images among other consumers by projecting themselves as intelligent shoppers
	Helping the company	desire to help the company
	Altruism (negative WOM)	to prevent others from experiencing the problems they had encountered
	Anxiety reduction	easing anger, anxiety, and frustration
	Vengeance	to retaliate against the company associated with a negative consumption experience
	Advice seeking	obtaining advice on how to resolve problems

Table 5: Motives for WOM Communication Behavior Identified in the Literature (Hennig, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004)

Based on advice given by Andy Sernovitz in his book *Word of Mouth Marketing: How smart Companies Get People talking* (2011), three main motivations explain the WOM communication.

- Company: That's the brand and the product that may be appreciated or detested.
- Reviewer: That's the person, who expresses himself because it does him good.

- Group: That's the community someone wants to belong to.

Company

People talk about a company manufacturing or selling a product. They love the way companies treat them or did something interesting. What matters is to encourage the consumers to speak about the company. The more interesting the society is, the more motivated consumers are. They will never love or hate your offer without any reasons. Briefly the company must raise a certain passion in order for people to start a positive WOM. Whenever a society has something people may enjoy, it should start from this fact. In case it gave them any reasons not to be satisfied, it is absolutely necessary to repair this fault before worrying about anything else. A good product is generally subject to passive recommendation. A company can get much more WOM when its products are worthwhile. The more the products are atypical the more chance they have to be in the center of conversations. The specific satisfaction people get with one product encourages them to recommend it actively. A product that merit recommendation is not necessarily expensive or complex. To give matter to people's talk, companies should be creative in the way they present their products, services or brand. The daily activity is not sufficient but something new is needed. Even the most enthusiastic fans need novelty to continue being interested.

Reviewer

The WOM is more often due to emotional motivations than to technical characteristics. Consumers are stimulated by their own feelings much more than by the company's propositions. The emotions that make people speak are simple. First of all, people want to look clever. A lot of people like to play the role of specialists as to their favorite subject and spread their knowledge. Some are doing well and everybody asks them for advice. With the blog and virtual communities, the phenomenon is becoming widespread. People post their knowledge on pages and invite their friends to share it. They play the role of assistants and answer any question a reader may have to ask. Secondly, the desire to look intelligent goes hand in hand with more honorable motivation: helping others. Some consumers are so enthusiastic that they want to share their passions with others to prevent them from buying the wrong brand or using a bad quality product. Some are able to propose spontaneously a product without any solicitation. For example, the fans of Apple have such an affective relationship with the brand that they would like to see everybody use this kind of machine. They really believe that Apple make life easier. Finally, the last motivation is related to

people who like to feel very important. The more advice they give, the more important they feel. It's pleasant for them to feel dominant. The brand should recognize these kinds of clients and ask for their opinions. The most important travellers are not always those who cover the longest distances. These clients will speak about a company because they can show their knowledge and claim to be privileged.

Group

The wish to belong to a group is one of the most persistent human emotions. People desperately need to integrate a network. To speak about products is a way to reach it. Their favorite pair of jeans, cars or frequented stores shows who they are. From an emotional point of view, consumers feel better when they share their enthusiasm with members having common interests. They have the feeling that people with the same favorite music band or sport team are strongly linked to them. The passion that provided by the membership to a group is easily translatable into WOM. The members of groups related to a brand, such as Harley-Davidson, Macintosh or Nutella, are people who will talk most often about these brand's products. Therefore companies should work on this motivation that means the recognition of such groups. It's a question of distributing t-shirts, caps, and stickers or organizing special meeting events. They should make sure that people are feeling like a family member.

2. **Why People Read Comments on Internet Before to Purchase a Product or a Service**

In the same way that it is essential for companies to understand the reasons why people speak online, it is vital for them to know the motives to listen EWOM in order to be able to influence the consumer's behavior.

Everyday in their life people have to do choice under uncertainty. They must choose between various options in order to fulfill the requirement of everyday living. They must choose one product between several products or choose one service and not another one. Some decisions are simple but some others are complex and people need information to help them to choose (Levy, 2012). With the emergence of the web 2.0, people have access to even more products. They also have access to more information, feedbacks and comments from company but also from consumers. The principal reason for consumers to search and read comments on Internet is that "consumers are rational and that they seek information to maximize social and

economic utility during the purchasing process" (King, Racherla and Bush, 2014). The key motives that drive people search information are (King, Racherla and Bush, 2014):

- To reduce search and evaluation efforts: with Internet, consumers can have a quickly access to the needed information. Reading online comments is a gain of time and effort for them (Dabholkar, 2006)

- To reduce risks: have access to several comments about a product confirm the consumer's choice. It is no longer risky to choice a new product because consumers know that others consumers try it before them.

- To find social assurance: "WOM communication has an impact on consumer attitudes" (Bailey, 2005). People search other opinions to be sure to buy the same product as them. "Consumers in their online auctions observed and used other's behavior as a guide to their own" (Bailey, 2005,).

- To enact negativity bias. For consumers negative comments are more influential than positive ones. Indeed negative feedbacks reduce the possibility that the information was posted by marketers or by someone who would like to promote the product. Giving more importance to negative comments is a way to avoid purchasing mistakes (O'Reilly and Marx, 2011).

However new theories explain that people seek information not only during the decision process but also "when there is not even a recognized need for a product. WOM conversations occur throughout the decision-making process and can be initiated upon exposure to an intriguing advertising message. Many times, WOM consumption may be serendipitous and not goal-directed" (King, Racherla and Bush, 2014).

3. The Research's Purpose

After conducting some theoretical researches we saw that WOM have an impact on the process of decision making of a consumer and can be a driver of sales for a company. Due to the several advantages of the tool, company must have a better understanding of WOM in order to improve their marketing strategy. The first thing to do for a company is to know and understand the consumer behavior facing WOM and the emergence of web 2.0. During the theoretical research, we found several studies about the reasons of consumers to speak about a product or a service but not so much about the reasons of consumers to listen comments and feedbacks. That's why we decide to focus our empirical study on the consumer's motivations to read feedbacks about a product on Internet.

We will conduct an empirical study to see if theory will fit with observations and reality. The aim of this research is to determine the consumer's behavior facing WOM on Internet in order to help marketer to improve their strategy. We will be looking to answer some of the following questions:

1. Is reduce search and evaluation effort is a consumer's motivation to read comments before to purchase product?

2. Is reduce risk is a consumer's motivation to read comments before to purchase product?

3. Is find social assurance is a consumer's motivation to read comments before to purchase product?

4. Is enact negativity bias is a consumer's motivation to read comments before to purchase product?

IV.   Empirical Study: Consumer's Motivation to Read Feedbacks on Internet

A. Data Collection

1.   Secondary Data

Secondary data is information that has been collected for a purpose other than our current research project but has some relevance and utility for our research (Grimsley, 2010). Secondary data can be divided between internal and external source. In this study, only external data were used. We have used publications from different authors in several scientific domains such as academic journals from Management, Marketing, and Advertising. Some books and other related dissertations were reviewed as well.

The literature review part allows to the researcher to build knowledge and understand research methodologies. It helps to focus on the current study and provides intellectual context.

In our empirical study the secondary data that we found in the literature review helps us to determine the four latent variables of our analysis. These four variables are the factors, which have an impact on the consumer's motivation to read feedbacks before purchasing a product.

The four constructs of our empirical study are: Reduce search and evaluation effort, reduce risks, find social assurance and enact negativity bias. The figure 7 shows the conceptual framework of our analysis.
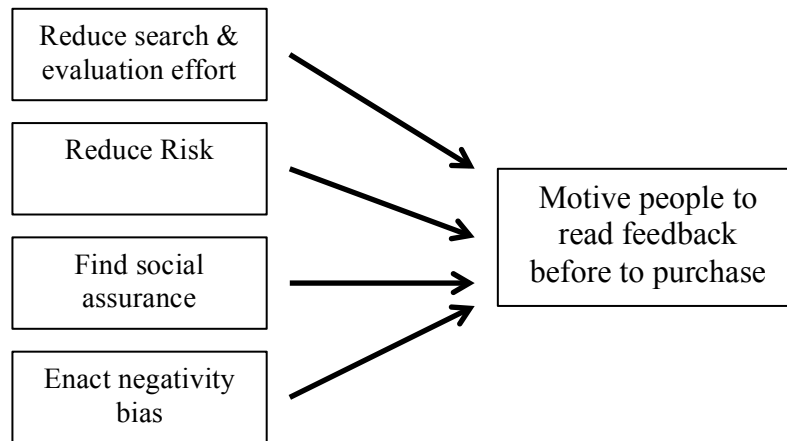
Figure 7: Conceptual Framework

Based on our theoretical framework, the four hypotheses of the study are:

H1: Reduce search and evaluation effort is a consumer motivation to read feedbacks before to purchase a product

H2: Reduce risks is a consumer motivation to read feedbacks before to purchase a product

H3: Find social assurance is a consumer motivation to read feedbacks before to purchase a product

H4: Enact negativity bias is a consumer motivation to read feedbacks before to purchase a product

2.   Primary Data

Primary data is information that we collect specifically for the purpose of research project. An advantage of primary data is that it is specifically tailored to our research needs. A disadvantage is that it is more difficult to obtain (Grimsley, 2010). It enables researchers to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes. Surveys are an interesting tool to obtain primary data source. Indeed they allow to have responses to a large number of questions and to collect fine quantitative data. Surveys can be administered by e-mail, Internet or by telephone.

In our study, to collect data, a survey (see Appendix 2) was used in order to understand what are the consumer's m!otivations to read feedbacks about a product before to purchase it. We

decide to use survey as a source of primary data because this method is the less expensive and faster one to obtain quantitative data.

B. Methodology

1. Collection Instrument & Procedures

a) *Collection Process*

After designing the survey (see Appendix 2), we select a tool to collect the data. Since our thesis is based on the EWOM, we decide to spread it online. After a short comparison between the most commonly used tools, we choose Google Docs as since it is fulfilling all the needed requirements for this survey.

The questionnaire is spread to a network of contacts that is relevant to the topic of research, via email and Facebook. We also publish our questionnaire on some forums and blogs connected to our topic. It was important to give a direct link to the questionnaire to facilitate the direct access to the survey[2] and increase the number of respondents. This questionnaire is spread during one month (July). In order to be more relevant for our study, we focus our sample on men and women between 18 and 50 years old. The sample is composed of French people.

b) *Variables & Measurements Scale*

The survey is divided into five parts allowing us to define the measurement scale and the different variables properly.

In the first part, respondent had to answer demographic questions: gender, age and educational level. Other questions are about the frequency of Internet usage and consulting feedback before purchasing a product.

In the second part, respondent had to answer to some questions related to the influence of the first variable: reduce search and evaluation effort. People are asked to express their agreement with several statements in a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The measurement from 1 to 7 is the same for all the parts (except for the demographic questions) in order to keep the consistency along the survey. Consecutively are the third, fourth and fifth

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[2] link to the survey: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1m4A4ufM7HjYhYk_UkAIKQ15Igp4-_9FB1brq8oRFaN8/viewform

part designed to test the influence of the selected variables on the motivation to read feedbacks before purchasing (i.e. reduce risk, find a social assurance and enact negativity bias). All the questions in this questionnaire are mandatory and the respondents are not allowed to pass to next sections or submit the questionnaire without answering all questions.

2. Questionnaire Structure & Questions

As already explained, in order to collect primary information, a questionnaire was designed. In this survey, we have mainly used closed-ended questions. A closed-ended question is a question format that limits respondents to a list of several possible answers. By using this type of questions, we have to associate a specific number to each possible response in order to proceed to our statistical analysis latter on. Closed-ended questions have their greater value when we need to obtain facts and specific pieces of information. By their nature they limit the respondent's field of choice and length of response (Spillers, 2014).

Several types of closed questions exist. In this thesis, two types are used: listing questions and interval scale questions. Listing question is when respondents have a list of answer and they must choose only one answer. In this survey, listing questions are used for demographic information (i.e. questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5).

The standard questions for a survey are normally interval scale questions. This type of question is allowing the respondent to rate his satisfaction on a 7 point scale, from dissatisfied to satisfied. In this survey we use mostly interval scale questions (i.e. questions 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19).

3. Statistic Study Method

In this study, the statistical analysis of the collected data is done in two steps.

The first step is to describe and understand the respondent's socio-demographic characterization and make a descriptive analysis of the questionnaire.

The second step is to use the variance based approach to structural equation modeling (VBSEM) to predict the different latent variables and their influences on the motivation to read feedbacks online before purchasing a product.

To better understand the global methodology used in this research study, a methodology summary has been designed in the figure 8.
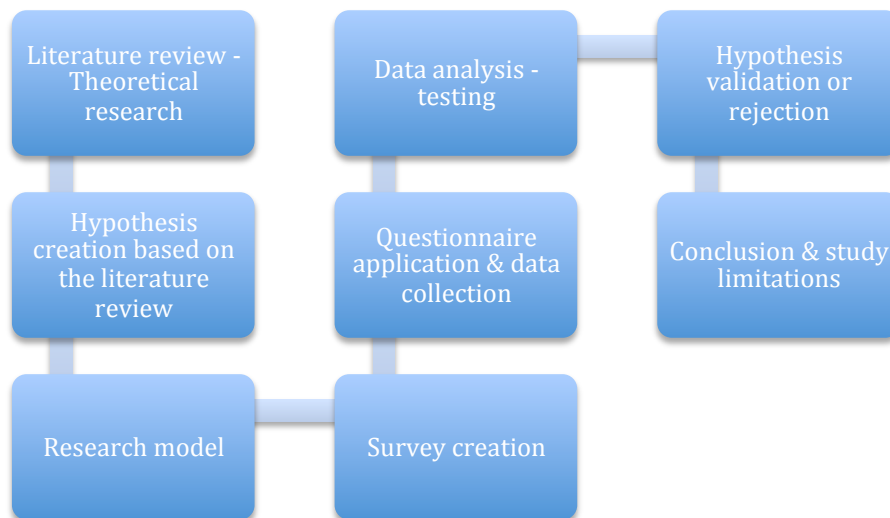
Figure 8: Methodology Summary

The structural Equation Modeling (SEM) can be seen as a tool explaining optimal behavior of consumers and anticipating their future behavior and performances. "It is a statistical methodology that undertakes a multivariate analysis of multi-causal relationships among different, independent phenomena grounded in reality" (Davcik, p.49, 2014). In our empirical analysis we try to understand consumer's behavior facing WOM. Therefore based on our theory finding, our statistical analysis tries to anticipate consumers' future behavior facing this phenomena.

SEM is divided in two methods. The first one is the classical SEM approach based on the covariance analysis (CBSEM). The second one is based on the variance analysis (VBSEM). In this study, we apply the least squares methods using the PLS algorithm with regression-based methods (Davcik, 2014).

In this empirical study we choose to use the VBSEM method for several reasons. The first one is that this model is based on theory (Davcik, 2014). Hypotheses are already determinate by the literature review. For our study the literature gave us the four principal components that motive consumers to read online feedbacks. Secondly VBSEM is data driven (Davcik, 2014). The goal of this model is to be predictive and to provide understanding about future consumer's behaviour. It is what we want to understand through the four consumer's motivation to read online comments. The third reason to use VBSEM method is "that it performs especially well with small sample sizes" (Ibrahim, 2014). Since our sample is only of 200 respondents, VBSEM method fits well with our study. Another reason is the character formative of our constructs. The constructs of our empirical study are not reflective because observes variables are not function of primary latent variable but the latent variable are linear

function of observes variables (Ibrahim, 2014). The last reason is that the model tries to understand the weight of each component. VBSEM "tend to maximise the explain variance" (Davcik, p.51, 2014). In order to get practical results from our research it is important for marketer to know which motivation has the most important impact on consumer's behaviour.

C. Results

Based on our survey data, our following analysis is divided in two parts. First the socio demographic characterization of the sample by conducting a descriptive analysis for each studied variables and secondly the application of the VBSEM method to validate our model and draw meaningful conclusions. During our analysis we have used two different software: SPSS and SmartPLS. Our present sample consists on a total of 200 valid respondents.

1. Descriptive Analysis

a) *Demographic Characterization*

In the current survey the information concerning demographic characterization is about gender, age and educational level. We choose to select these three characteristics because they seem to be the more relevant to our analysis.

(1) Gender

In the beginning of the survey (see Appendix 2), respondents were asked about their gender. The respondent had to choose between male and female.
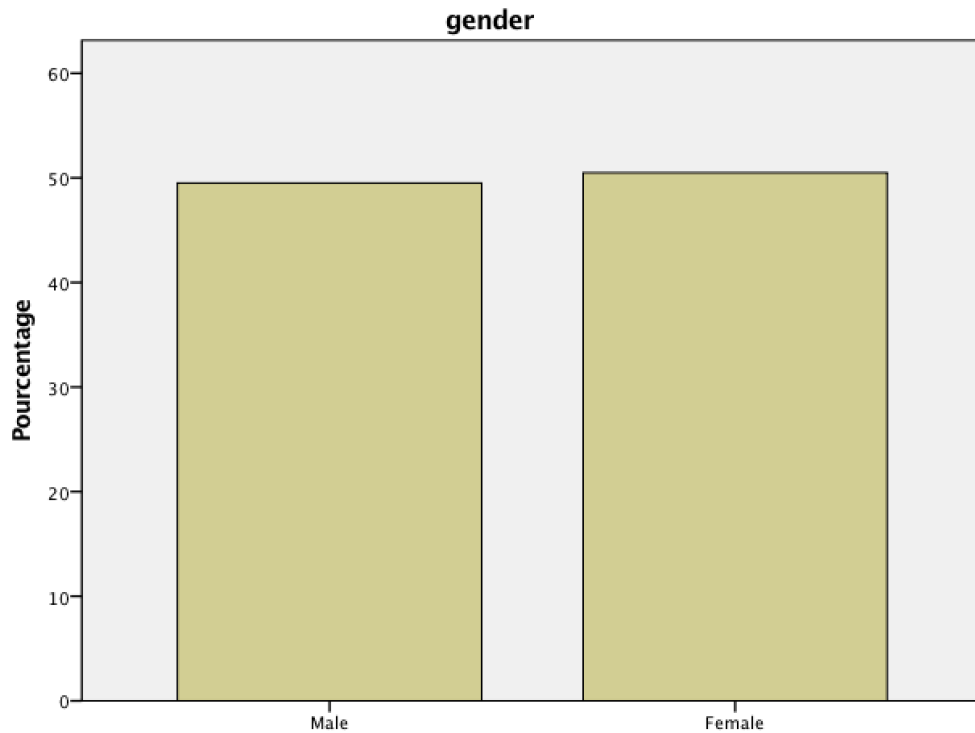
Figure 9: Bar Chart Gender

According to the figure 9 and the Appendix 3, the major of the respondents are women, with a proportion of 50,5%. It is corresponding to 101 of the 200 answers. The gender sample of the survey is a good representation of the population.

(2)   Age

The second question of the survey is about age (see Appendix 2). The resultant ages were grouped in age boxes: "under 20", "20-25", "26-30", "31-35", "36-40" and "Above 40".
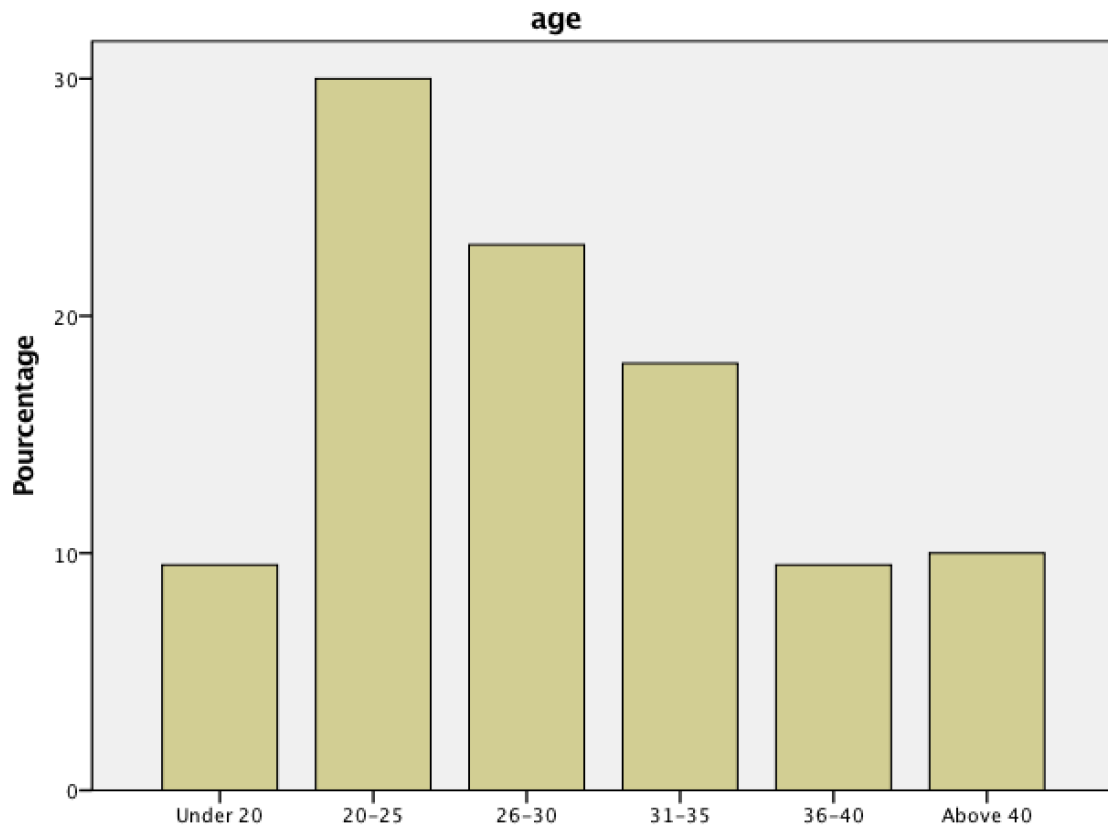
Figure 10: Bar Chart Age

According to the figure 10 and the appendix 3, the major age of the respondents is between 20 and 25 years old with a proportion of 30%. It is corresponding to 60 of the 200 answers. The second important age box is between 26 and 30 years old with a proportion of 23%. The less significant ages are under 20 years old and between 36 and 40 years old with a proportion of 9,5%. The medium age of the sample is 30 years old.

(3)   *Educational Level*

The last demographic question of the survey is about the educational level of the respondents (see Appendix 2). The educational levels were grouped in 6 categories: "completed elementary school", "high school graduate", "bachelor degree", "master degree", "doctoral degree" and "other".
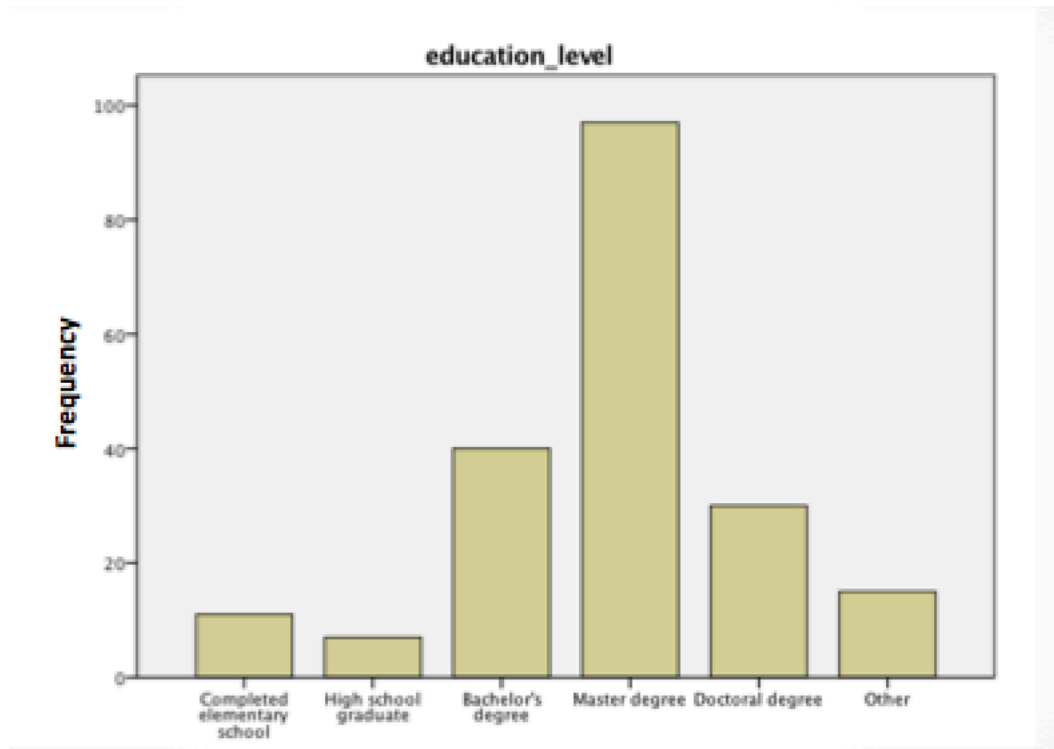
Figure 11: Bar Chart Educational Level

According to the figure 11 and the appendix 3, 48,5% of the respondents claims to have a master degree. It is corresponding to 97 of the 200 answers. It is the important majority. This majority is following by "bachelor degree" and "doctoral degree" with a proportion, respectively, of 20% and 15%. The less significant educational level is "high school graduate" with a proportion of 3,5%, being 7 respondents.

b) *Internet Habits*

To have more information about the Internet habits of the respondents, the survey asks them about the frequency of Internet usage in a week and if the respondent read reviews before to purchase a product.

(1) *Frequency of Internet Usage*

This question consists on the analysis of the Internet habits of the respondents, regarding the frequency of Internet usage in a week. This variable was coded in four categories: "1-5 hours", "6-10 hours", "11-20 hours" and "21 or more".
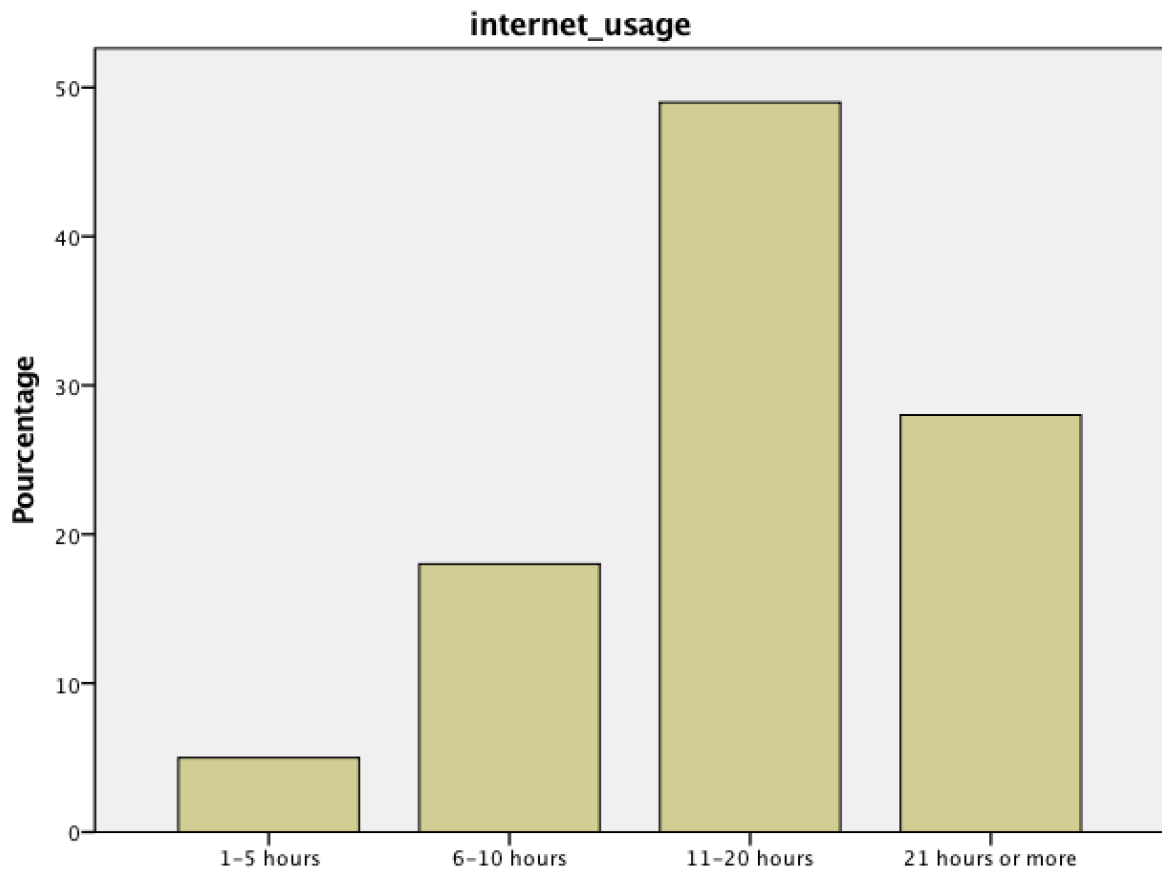
Figure 12: Bar Chart for the Frequency of Internet Usage

The figure 12 shows us that the majority of the respondents in the sample (49%) use Internet from "11 to 20 hours" in a week and that a considerable percentage (28%) of the respondents use Internet "21 hours or more". These results are good for the current study because the sample is adapted to the population that the thesis wants to study.

(2)   Do you Read Reviews Before to Purchase a Product?

The question was: "When you purchase a product on Internet, do you read feedbacks about the product before to purchase?" This question consists on the analysis of the Internet habits of the respondents, regarding if the respondents are used to read online reviews before to buy a product. To measure this question we decide to code this variable into 5 categories: "all the time", "often", "sometimes", "not really often" and "never". To a better analyze we code all the categories in following: all the time =100%, often = 75%, sometimes = 50%, not really often = 25%, never = 0%.
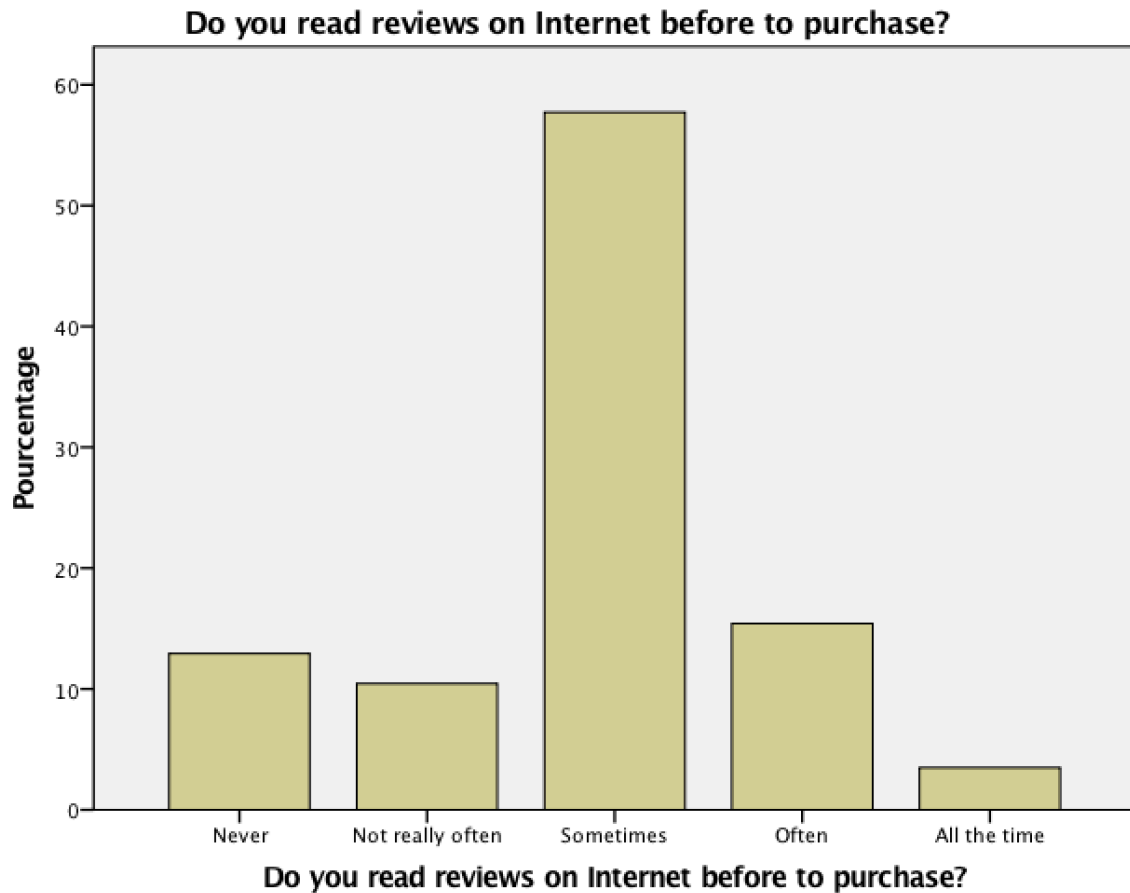
Figure 13: Bar Chart for the Review Reader

The figure 13 shows us that a considerable majority of the respondents in the sample read feedbacks about the product before to purchase it on Internet. 57,7% of the respondents read feedbacks sometimes before to buy a product on Internet. 15,4% read feedbacks often before to purchase and 3,5% of the respondents read feedbacks all the times. These results are good for the current study because the sample is adapted to the population that the thesis wants to study.

c) *Variables Description*

In the survey for each variable we decide to have 4 or 5 questions in order to have a good estimation of the hypothesized constructs. In his paper Davcik (p.53, 2014) explains that "Researchers usually use multiple measures because: first, most constructs can be measured only with an error term; second, a single measure cannot adequately capture the essence of the management phenomena; third, it is necessary to prove that the method of measurement is correct; and fourth it is necessary to use a minimum of

three indicators per construct in order to be able to identify a model in the SEM set-up".

(1)   Reduce Search & Evaluation Effort

This question aims to study if reduce search and evaluation effort is a reason for a consumer to read online feedback before to buy a product. The respondents were asked to declare their agreement's level with five sentences (see appendix 2) about the fact that read online comments about product reduce search and evaluation effort concerning the product. The answers were frames on a Likert Scale in which 1= strongly disagree and 7=Strongly agree.

Statistics

		Before to decide to buy a product, I always search for other's opinion on Internet	I thing online comments about a product is a good source of information	When I buy a product online, the reviews presented on the website are helpful for my decision making	Thanks to online review, I don't need to search other information about the product	Often when I buy a product I only search information on Internet to have reviews of other consumers
N	**Valid**	201	201	201	201	201
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Average		4,378	4,692	4,866	4,144	4,343

Table 6: Mean Profile of Reduce Search & Evaluation Effort Variable

The mean's sample profile for this question shows that, overall, the respondents manifested a good level of identification with the fact that one reason to read feedback concerning products on Internet is reduce search and evaluation effort. The mean values obtained for the sub-questions vary from 4,14 to 4,86. We can say that the respondents agreed with this reason.

(2)   Reduce Risks

The purpose of this question was to ask the respondents about their perceptions and opinions about the fact that reduce risks is a reason to read online feedbacks before to purchase a product. The respondents were asked to declare their agreement's level with five sentences (see appendix 2). The answers were frames on a Likert Scale in which 1= strongly disagree and 7=Strongly agree.

Statistics

		To have good reviews about a product, I turn to website who are highly credible to reduce my risk and uncertainty	Have different opinions from different consumers help me to be confident about my decision to purchase a product	If I don't read the comments of a product presented on the website when I buy the product online, I worry about my decision	I read comments about a product before to buy it to reduce the risk of a bad choice	It is important to read comments about a product on Internet to be sure of my purchase decision
N	Valid	201	201	201	201	201
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Average		4,577	4,572	4,214	4,488	4,403

Table 7: Mean's Profile of the Reduce Risks Variable

The mean's sample profile for this question shows that, overall, the respondents manifested a good level of identification with the fact that one reason to read feedback concerning products on Internet is reduce risks. The mean values obtained for the sub-questions vary from 4,21 to 4,57. The sentence that is the more correct for respondents is "to have good reviews about a product, I turn to website who are highly credible to reduce my risk and uncertainty". We can say that the respondents agreed with this reason.

(3)   *Social Assurance*

The purpose of this question was to ask the respondents about their perceptions and opinions about the fact that social assurance is a reason to read online feedbacks before to purchase a product. The respondents were asked to declare their agreement's level with five sentences (see appendix 2). The answers were frames on a Likert Scale in which 1= strongly disagree and 7=Strongly agree.

Statistics

		The number of product reviews affects my purchase decision when I have to do a choice between different brands	To ensure I choose the right product I often observe what others are talking about on Internet forum	If I know that other consumers bought the product, it convince me to buy the product	During my purchase attention process: knowing that expert people have positive thinking about a product make me feel confident about my choice	I often consult other people to help me to choose the best alternative available from a product list
N	Valid	201	201	201	201	201
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Average		4,408	4,498	4,478	4,517	4,174

Table 8: Mean's Profile of Social Assurance Variable

The mean's sample profile for this question shows that, overall, the respondents manifested a good level of identification with the fact that one reason to read feedback concerning products on Internet is social assurance. The mean values obtained for the sub-questions vary from 4,17 to 4,51. We can say that the respondents agreed with this reason.

(4)   Enact Negativity Bias

This question aims to study if enact negativity bias is a reason for a consumer to read online feedbacks before to buy a product or a service. The respondents were asked to declare their agreement's level with four sentences (see appendix 2) about the fact that read online feedbacks about product enact negativity bias concerning the product. The answers were asked on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Statistics

	Before to buy a product, I read comments to be sure to not doing mistakes in my product choice	Negative review are more significant for me than positive one, when I choose a product	Negative comments on an online forum about a product are more truthful	When I am looking for information about a product that I want to purchase, I pay more attention on the negative review
N Valid	201	201	201	201
Missing	0	0	0	0
Average	4,264	4,443	4,328	4,458

Table 9: Mean's Profile of Enact Negativity Bias Variable

The mean's sample profile for this question shows that, overall, the respondents manifested a good level of identification with the fact that one reason to read feedback concerning products on Internet is enact negativity bias. The mean values obtained for the sub-questions vary from 4,26 to 4,45. The sentence that is the more correct for respondents is "when I am looking for information about a product that I want to purchase, I pay more attention on the negative review". We can say that the respondents agreed with this reason.

2. Statistical Results and Validation of the Model

The description of the different variables is important to understand them and get a first insight about the possible results of the study. Nevertheless in order to take into consideration the weight of each construct, we have decided to use a VBSEM method.

Conducting VBSEM method means effecting two steps. The first one is a look at the measurement models. In this step we will study if the measurement model estimation shows satisfactory findings. The second step is to estimate the inner model and examining if the path relations are significant.

a) *Assessing a Formative Measurement Model*

As described before, we decide to perform a VBSEM with formative constructs. In a formative measurement model we don't need to analyse indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability and discriminant validity because the formative indicators are not highly correlated together (Wong, 2013). We have to interpret the model's outer weight and the collinearity of indicators.

Using SmartPLS software, we construct PLS diagram.
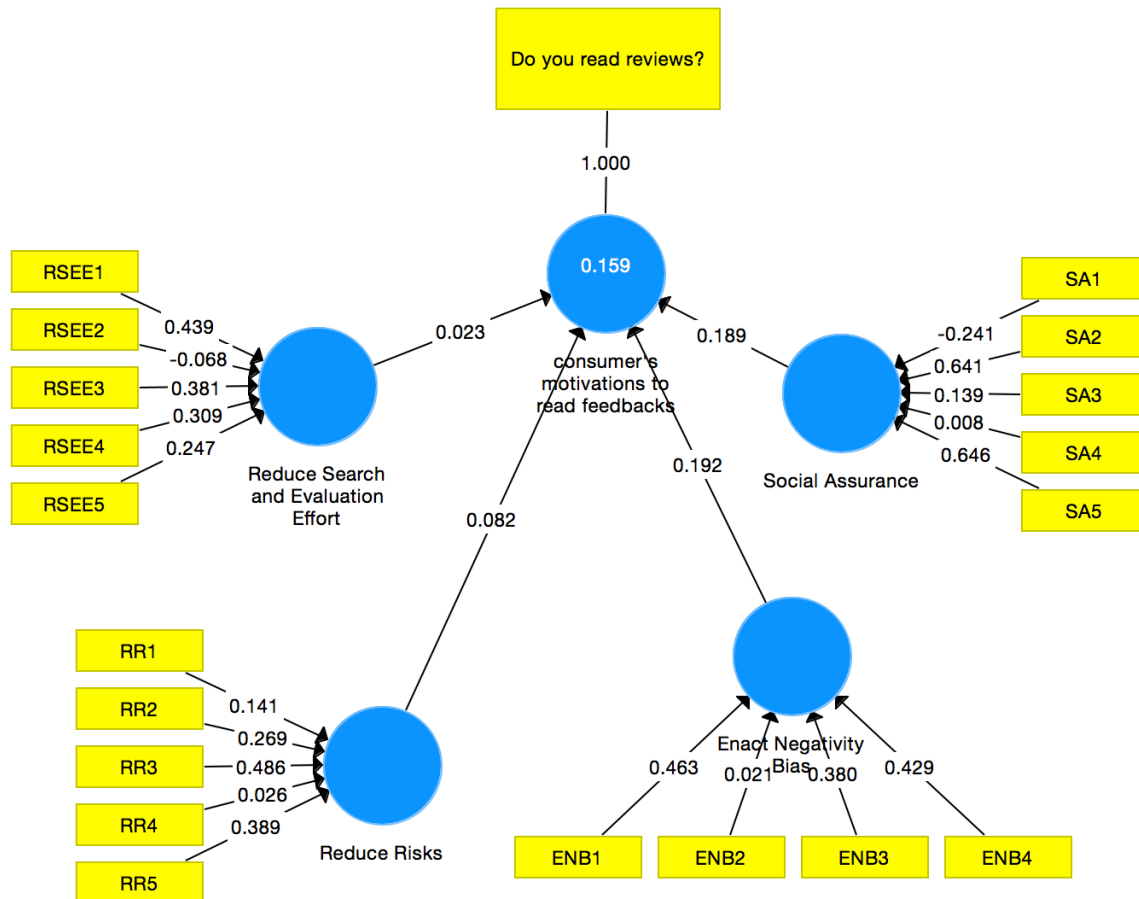
Figure 14: PLS Diagram (SmartPLS Software)

Numbers in blue disks show "how much the variance of the latent variable is being explained by the other latent variables" (Wong, 2013). Numbers on the arrow "explain how strong the effect of one variable is on another variable. They are called path coefficient. The weight of different path coefficients enables us to rank their relative statistical importance. We will analyse these numbers in the following part.

(1)   Outer Model Weight and Significance

To evaluate the model we have to examine each indicator weight to see the significance and relevance of each formative indicator. In order to get the outer model weight of our analysis, we perform a PLS algorithm. Then we use the bootstrapping option to determine the level of significance of each indicator weight. "Bootstrapping is a resampling technique that draws a large number of subsamples from the original data and estimates models for each subsample" (Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins and Kuppelwieser, 2014). We obtain a large number of model estimates. The significance of each indicator can be determined using T-values. An indicator is significant when his T-value is superior or equal to 1,96. "If a particular indicator's outer weight is shown as not significant, we check the significance of its outer loading. We only remove the indicator if both of its outer weight and outer loading are not significant. In our analysis, the results show that some indicators are not significant but their outer loading valid them (see Appendix 4).

(2)   *Collinearity of indicators*

To measure the collinearity of indicators, we use the variance inflation factor (VIF). The VIF measures the extent to which an explanatory variable is explained by the remaining explanatory in the model. We used SPSS software to obtain this factor.

Model		Non standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients			Confidence interval 95% for B		Collinearity statistics	
		B	Standard deviation	Bêta	t	Sig.	lower	higher	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constante)	-,357	,046		-7,747	,000	-,448	-,266		
	RSEE:reduce S	,045	,011	,234	4,082	,000	,023	,067	,574	1,742
	RR: reduce risk	,047	,011	,250	4,263	,000	,025	,069	,547	1,829
	SA: Social insurance	,045	,012	,232	3,782	,000	,022	,069	,500	2,001
	ENB: negativity biais	,048	,010	,266	4,760	,000	,028	,068	,603	1,659

Coefficients[a]

a. Dependent variable : Do you read reviews on Internet before to purchase?

Table 10: VIF

Looking at the Table 10, all of the indicators' VIF values are lower than 5. We can conclude that there is no collinearity problem.

b)   *Goodness-of-fit*

Once the validity and the collinearity of the outer model are checked, several steps need to be done in order to evaluate the hypothesized relationships within the inner model. "The assessment of the model's quality is based on its ability to predict the endogenous constructs.

The following criteria facilitate this assessment: Coefficient of determination (R^2), cross-validated redundancy (Q^2), path coefficients, and the effect size (f^2)" (Hair et al., 2014).

First we have to study the coefficient of determination (R^2). This coefficient is a measure of the model's predictive accuracy. It allows us to understand the exogenous variable's combined effect on the endogenous variable (Hair et al., 2014). In marketing research: R^2 of 0,75 is substantial, 0,50 is moderate, and 0,25 is weak. Since our R^2 is equal to 0.159, it shows a weak level of determination. Our 4 latent variables are explaining 15,9% of the variance of the consumer's motivation to read feedback.

Secondly we have to analyse the cross-validated redundancy, which is measured by the Q^2-indicator. Q^2 is a tool to evaluate the inner model's predictive relevance. We can find this indicator with smartPLS software. "Q^2 represents a fit between observed values and values reconstructed by the model. Q^2 values above zero indicate that observed are well reconstructed" (Davcik, p.64, 2014). In our study Q^2 is equal to 0.067, which means that the exogenous constructs have predictive relevance for the endogenous construct.

Then the path coefficients have to be evaluated. These coefficients represent the hypothesized relationship linking the constructs (Hair et al., 2014). Path coefficient values are measured on a range from -1 to +1. Coefficients closer to +1 are strong positive relationships and coefficients closer to -1 have strong negative relationship (Hair et al., 2014). As we can see in the table 11 (original sample column), the path coefficients of our empirical study are all above zero. They show a positive relationship with the construct.

	Original Sample^	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Error (ST	T Statistics (|O/ST|	P Values
RSEE -...	0.023	0.086	0.077	0.303	0.762
RR ->...	0.082	0.100	0.067	1.221	0.222
SA ->...	0.189	0.186	0.084	2.252	0.024
ENB ->...	0.192	0.193	0.060	3.196	0.001

Table 11: Path Coefficients Evaluation (SmartPLS)

Using bootstrapping tool we have to check the significance of these relationships. To be significant, T-value has to be higher than 1,96[3]. As we can see in the table 11 (T statistics column), two latent variables are above 1,96 but the two others are below 1,96. We can conclude that: enact negativity bias (ENB) and social assurance (SA) have (T-value respectively of 3,196 and 2,252) a significant relationship with the construct. But reduce

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[3] Significance level of 5%

search & evaluation effort (RSEE) and reduce risk (RR) have not (T-value respectively of 0,303 and 1,221) a significant relationship with the construct.

Finally we have to study the effect size of each path model, which is measured by the f^2 indicator. "Based on the f^2 value, the effect size of the omitted construct for a particular endogenous construct can be determined such that 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively" (Hair et al., 2014). If the f^2 is high, it means that the exogenous construct strongly contributes to explaining the endogenous construct.

	Consumer's motiv
Consumer's mo...	
ENB	0.028
RR	0.005
RSEE	0.000
SA	0.025

Table 12: Effect Size (SmartPLS)

In table 12, we can see that the effect sizes of our paths model are very low. The f^2 vary from 0 to 0,028. Enact negativity bias and social assurance have a small effect on the consumer's motivation to read online feedbacks before purchasing a product. Reduce risk has a very low effect on the endogenous construct and reduce search and evaluation effort has not effect at all.

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the consumer's motivation to read feedbacks on Internet before to purchase a product based on EWOM communication. Using a sample of 200 respondents, this study provided insight about the four different motivations that we found in the literature: reduce search and evaluation effort, reduce risks, social assurance and enact negativity bias.

We can conclude that the four motivations have predictive relevance to explain the fact that consumer read online comments. They have a positive relationship with the construct. However only enact negativity bias and social assurance variable have a significant relationship. Furthermore the effect sizes of their paths model are very low. The four motivations have only a small effect on the endogenous construct. Our four latent variables explained only 15,9% of the variance of the consumer's motivation to read feedback.

To summarize the reasons why people read online feedbacks about a product before to buy can be explained by these four motivations but it exists others reasons which have more impact on the consumer's behavior facing WOM. We can say that the four hypotheses are validated but some limitations exist.

V.   Conclusion

The results of our study provide a first view of users' EWOM motivations to read feedbacks. Identifying these motives enables company to have a better understanding about why people read one comment and not another one. It helps marketing workers to use EWOM in a more customer-oriented way. By orienting their EWOM they make consumers interested in their online comment.

After conducting an investigation about WOM marketing, it is clear that marketer have to manage this tool since the majority of consumers read reviews before purchasing a product. It represents 87% of the respondents in our study (see appendix 5). In the managerial implication part, we will refer to 5T to give some tips to take away.

A. Managerial Implication

To summarize, the mains points of the managerial implications may be collected with the simple 5 T model. According to Andy Sernovitz (2011), a successful WOM can result from a lucky unexpected event but also from a well-organized campaign. In both cases, there must be 5 elements. Each of these following 5 T refers to a critical question. It's always important for a company, to take some time for checking to what extent these elements are involved in the marketing campaign.

1.   Talkers: Who will speak about the company?

Companies need to look for influential opinion leaders, who will transmit information very effectively. They can be any kind of enthusiastic consumers or relation groups susceptible to relay the company's message. They are often called influencers or buzz agents. In the daily life, an expert's opinion often paves the way for others to follow. For their parts, the opinion leaders become the ones influencing the market since they possess specific knowledge about some particular products. As already mentioned, they could be any common persons, clients, friends, neighbours, bloggers etc. and play a critical role in the propagation of WOM by making transmission much easier and faster. The best agents may be closer than expected. For example, they can be the companies' best clients they are daily dealing with. Those clients could be waiting for closer collaborations opportunities. Otherwise, the companies can use specific tools to search for the active opinion leader in the online market place (e.g. trace the

number of forwarding e-mails of internet users via suitable tracking software). Once the right group of influencers has been identified, it's a question of giving them a suitable talking point.

2. Topics: What makes people speak about the company?

Any WOM begins by the creation of a message to transmit. A good subject consists firstly in being interesting. Indeed, nobody will speak about companies with unattractive products and boring advertising. Companies need to find something original if they want people to speak about their products. If they are boring, no conversation will deal with them and their WOM will fall flat. Before preparing an advertising campaign, launching a new product, or bringing new strategies on the market, they should ask themselves if anybody could speak about it in their friend circle. For example, in New York everybody recommends the restaurant Carnegie Deli with its 18-centimeter-long beef sandwich. These sandwiches would stay the best even if they had a normal size, but because of their huge size hundreds of tourists go there and speak about this curiosity around the world. Furthermore, making people happy will facilitate spreading the message. Happy consumers are the best advertisers. Companies should impress them, create surprising products, ensure an excellent service, resolve problems, and make sure that their jobs encourage people to speak about their performance. When people like a company, they want to share this passion with their friends. They feel like helping the company, supporting its activity and sharing with friends who could also benefit from it. To make people happy is the best way to obtain positive WOM. After founding an interesting issue, able to motivate people, the company should give them enough to "feed" the conversation.

3. Tools: How to make the transmission of the message easier?

The WOM starters get the best results if they provide the infrastructure allowing their message to be better passed on. In deed, the WOM is lazy. If companies want it to work, they have to make its job easier. First, they should find a simple message and second facilitate its propagation. To begin with, they have to find an idea easily memorisable in one short sentence. When Steve Jobs came back to Apple in 1996, he didn't develop an extraordinary operating system but had the great idea to sell computers with bright colours. Everybody spoke about it and had a simple and interesting talking point to share with friends. Once charmed by these colourful computers, people were prepared to have a look on their characteristics. Once they have the great idea of WOM, they have to search for a way that can

make its functioning easier. Several possibilities exist to make an idea communicable. An ad on a website or magazine will steadily remain while one in an email or social network will start a movement. The recent WOM explosion as marketing technique is mostly due to the development of conversation tools. For example, any sharing buttons dedicated to products, make messages be quicker and easier transmitted. A company can also decide to establish chat rooms to share users' experiences and provide smooth consumer's communication channel. Through sharing opinions in a discussion zone, receivers with prior knowledge and expertise can transmit information to influence more people. The chat can also be used to post irregularly new company information and offer specific products for members to use so that even more curious consumers are attracted there to get information. As a result the purpose of WOM communication is reached. After setting up the means stimulating the WOM, the point is to maintain the conversation by taking part to it.

4. Taking part: How can the company take part to the discussion?

Pretty often, the marketing professionals are scared by the idea of participating because once the discussion is opened; there is no way to close the conversation. However influencers are expecting the brand to participate in the spread of the message. If not, the WOM will not be sustainable or can become negative. Even if consumers are complaining, a company has to answer emails, accept comments on blogs and take part to discussions to understand the source of the dissatisfaction and find solutions. The best way to start a close relationship with their customers is to gain their confidence and respect. A non-respected company can't get positive WOM. Nobody speaks positively about it, if there is no inspiring trust. Nobody would recommend a brand that brings shame on its customers' basis. Companies should always be honourable, never forget the ethics, and be frank & fair regarding their entire clientele. They have to speak to them, be able to satisfy their needs and make the clients proud of telling their experiences to anyone they know. For example the company Southwest is one of the most valuable airline companies. Southwest knows how to deal with clients, avoid annoying them, and has an enjoyable trade policy. Their employees are treated with respect, receive decent salaries and do not get fired for any inconvenient reason. People love Southwest so much that after the 9/11 catastrophe, they sent money to support the company. A lot of people provide positive advertisements in favour of Southwest through the WOM. As soon as the dialogue starts, it's necessary for the company to follow the conversation carefully and understand what people are talking about.

5. Tracking: How to evaluate what people say about the company?

Companies should always listen and try to understand their own products being discussed online by consumers. Specific devices have been developed to understand how the WOM works and to keep the companies in touch with the consumer's opinions. Nowadays it's much easier for the brands to consult the comments dealing with them in blogs and chatting forums, as soon as they are posted. They have the opportunity to understand this WOM without paying anything. Moreover, many reviews posted by thousands of Internet users in various consumer forums. A regular observation of customer reviews can repair the damage and thus contribute to increase the quality of the goods and services. The benefit of examining and learning from customer's behavioural comment can be used in addition to improve new product development and innovation. Consumers can possibly be influencers and the opinions they give can be valuable to the brand. Indeed, thanks to the popularity of blogs and virtual communities, people write online anything they have in mind. The text-based C-to-C conversations are easy to assess, allowing brands to get immediate authentic feedbacks as to their products and marketing strategies. Comments and opinions are voluntarily offered online and express that way the true thought in the consumer's mind, since it is not biased by the direction and induction of a questionnaire. Then, the company must be able to interpret the feedbacks and learn from WOM to implement a better marketing plan and improve its business.

B. Discussion & Contribution

Through a broad overview of the existing literature along with an empirical study, this research aims at providing a comprehensive and explicit view of WOM as well as a first understanding consumers' motivations to refer to EWOM in their purchasing decision process. The thesis was divided into four main aspects.

First, we have focused our research on the power of the WOM. Towards understanding the power of this concept, we have started to explore the WOM phenomena and to analyse the opportunity of the EWOM thanks to the new supports offered by the Web 2.0. The scale, format and interaction of the traditional WOM have completely been changed because of this new type of media giving to WOM an incredible power.

Secondly, we have examined WOM phenomena for the marketing purpose. Indeed WOM became a new pillar in the marketing strategy and marketers have to control this lever to improve their consumer communication strategy. We have analysed a well know implementation of EWOM, the buzz marketing, the viral aspect of its diffusion through the 2-step-flow model and the important role of the influencer.

Marketers have to improve their marketing strategy to better understand consumer behavior in the age of web 2.0. In this part we have decided to explore two essential questions to get consumer behaviour facing EWOM: why people talk in Internet about a product? And why people listen? For the talking part, we found in the extended literature eight principal consumer's motivations to speak about a product: altruism, product involvement, self-enhancement, helping the company, reducing anxiety, talking about bad experiences and advice seeking. For the listening part, we have decided to further investigate this question based on few statement found in the narrowed literature. We found four principal motivations to listen:

- Reduce search and evaluation effort
- Reduce risk
- Social assurance
- Enact negativity bias.

The Third part of our study is an empirical review. The goal was to have a better understanding about the consumer's motivation to read online feedbacks before to purchase a product. A survey was done following by a data analysis.

Based of the answers of 200 respondents, we used a variance-based approach to structural equation modelling (VBSEM) to analyse the influence of the latent variable on the consumer's behavior facing WOM. The result was the four motivations have predictive relevance to explain the construct but only enact negativity bias and social assurance have a significant relationship with the endogenous variable. As a conclusion, we can say that the consumer's reasons to read online comments are explained by these four motivations but it exists others reasons which have more impact on the consumer's behavior facing WOM.

The final part of our study is about the managerial implication and how marketer can implement a good EWOM strategy. After conducting an investigation about WOM marketing, we have also clearly demonstrated the importance and usefulness of the EWOM

since the majority of consumers read reviews before purchasing a product (87% of the respondents[4]). Marketers have to know how is EWOM working and how to deal within a marketing way. Some rules exist to help them to implement a WOMM: ask for it, use social media, build a community, monitor your reputation, and pay it forward.

C. Limitation & Future Research Direction

The conducted empirical research has some limitations, as it happens with the majority of studies. These limitations can serve as recommendations for future studies on the same subject.

The first limitation of our study is that our four latent variables model are explaining only 15,9% of the variance of consumer's motivations to read feedbacks. Other important motivations exist. Other research have to be done to find these others motivation and get a more accurate understanding of the consumer's behavior facing EWOM.

Another limitation of the current study is the percentage of the respondents reading online feedbacks often or all the time (19%). The majority of the respondents read comments only times to times. Since the study is about the motivation to read online feedbacks, we attempt to get better results by increasing this number. For future research, it could be good to have a bigger sample in order to select more people who read feedbacks often or all the time. But since EWOM is a new phenomena (developed with the web 2.0), the attempt answer to this question will increase years after years.

Since this study is focused on consumer's motivations to read online feedbacks, examining motives for writing online comments about a product can be a good extension of our study to understand EWOM phenomena in a global dimension.

Another subject for future research could be about the negative WOM. In this thesis, we have more spoken about the positive impact of the WOM. WOM has a lot of advantages for a company but it can also lead to negative consequences. Consumers' negative feedbacks or comment can be spread very quickly. How to deal and react with such a negative WOM?

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[4] See Appendix 5

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Annexes

Annexe 1: Influence of WOM and Recommendations
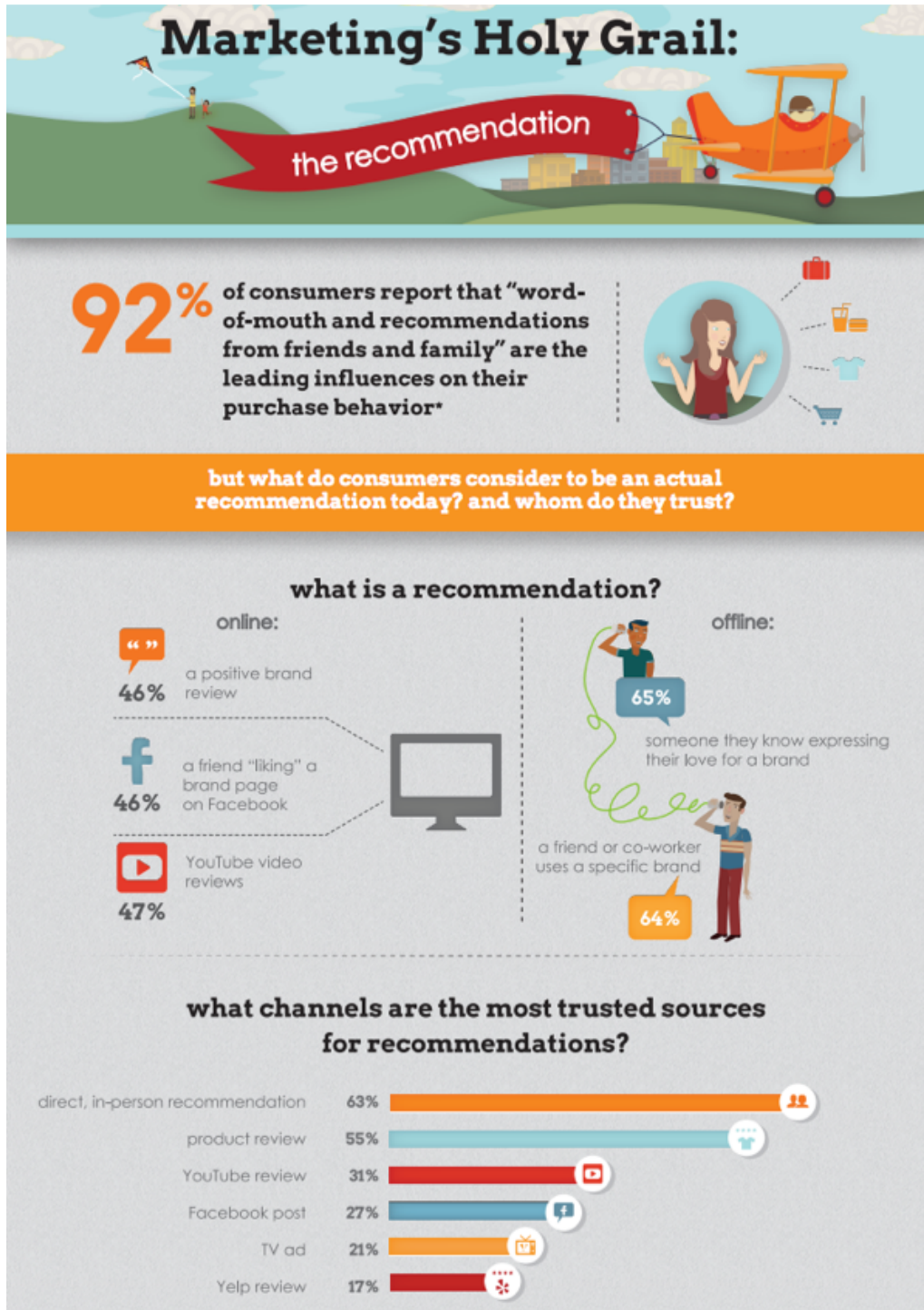
Annexe 2: Research study: Consumer's Behavior Facing WOM

Dear Participant,

The purpose of this research is to determine the consumer's motivation to read feedbacks about a product on the internet. You are invited to participate in this study as your responses will provide valuable insight to this relatively unexplored topic.

Your participation in this study will be completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. The questionnaire will take about 10 minutes of your time. Your responses will not be associated with your name or personal information. This survey is confidential. Only the researcher and the supervising faculty will have access to the information provided during the survey.

Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely.

*Obligatoire

Gender : *
○ Male
○ Female

Your age : *
○ Under 20
○ 20-25
○ 26-30
○ 31-35
○ 36-40
○ Above 40

Education level : *
○ Completed elementary school
○ High school graduate
○ Bachelor's degree
○ Master degree
○ Doctoral degree
○ Other

Frequency of Internet usage in a week *

○ 1-5 Hours

○ 6-10 Hours

○ 11-20 Hours

○ 21 Hours or more

When you purchase a product on Internet, do you read comments about the product before to purchase? *

○ All the time

○ Often

○ Sometimes

○ Not really often

○ Never

Reduce search & evaluation effort

Please answer the following questions (please select just ONE number on each line):

Before to decide to buy a product, I always search for other's opinion on Internet *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly agree

I thing online comments about a product is a good source of information *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly agree

When I buy a product online, the reviews presented on the website are helpful for my decision making *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly agree

Thanks to online review, I don't need to search other information about the product *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly agree

Often when I buy a product I only search information on Internet to have reviews of other consumers *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

Reduce risks

Please answer the following questions (please select just ONE number on each line):

To have good reviews about a product, I turn to website who are highly credible to reduce my risk and uncertainty *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

Have different opinions from different consumers help me to be confident about my decision to purchase a product *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

If I don't read the comments of a product presented on the website when I buy the product online, I worry about my decision *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

I read comments about a product before to buy it to reduce the risk of a bad choice *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

It is important to read comments about a product on Internet to be sure of my purchase decision *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

Social assurance

Please answer the following questions (please select just ONE number on each line):

The number of product reviews affects my purchase decision when I have to do a choice between different brands *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

To ensure I choose the right product I often observe what others are talking about on Internet forum *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

If I know that other consumers bought the product, it convince me to buy the product *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

During my purchase attention process: knowing that expert people have positive thinking about a product make me feel confident about my choice *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

I often consult other people to help me to choose the best alternative available from a product list *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

Enact negativity bias

Please answer the following questions (please select just ONE number on each line):

Before to buy a product, I read comments to be sure to not doing mistakes in my product choice *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

Negative review are more significant for me than positive one, when I choose a product *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

Negative comments on an online forum about a product are more truthful *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

When I am looking for information about a product that I want to purchase, I pay more attention on the negative review *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

Envoyer

Annexe 3: Descriptive Analysis (SPSS)

gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Male	99	49,5	49,5	49,5
	Female	101	50,5	50,5	100,0
	Total	200	100,0	100,0	

Your age :

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	20–25	62	30,8	30,8	30,8
	26–30	45	22,4	22,4	53,2
	31–35	37	18,4	18,4	71,6
	36–40	17	8,5	8,5	80,1
	Above 40	21	10,4	10,4	90,5
	Under 20	19	9,5	9,5	100,0
	Total	201	100,0	100,0	

Education level :

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Bachelor's degree	40	19,9	19,9	19,9
	Completed elementary school	11	5,5	5,5	25,4
	Doctoral degree	30	14,9	14,9	40,3
	High school graduate	7	3,5	3,5	43,8
	Master degree	98	48,8	48,8	92,5
	Other	15	7,5	7,5	100,0
	Total	201	100,0	100,0	

Frequency of Internet usage in a week

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	1–5 Hours	10	5,0	5,0	5,0
	11–20 Hours	98	48,8	48,8	53,7
	21 Hours or more	56	27,9	27,9	81,6
	6–10 Hours	37	18,4	18,4	100,0
	Total	201	100,0	100,0	

Do you read reviews on Internet before to purchase?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Never	26	12,9	12,9	12,9
	Not really often	21	10,4	10,4	23,4
	Sometimes	116	57,7	57,7	81,1
	Often	31	15,4	15,4	96,5
	All the time	7	3,5	3,5	100,0
	Total	201	100,0	100,0	

Annexe 4: Outer Weight and Outer Loading (Smart PLS)

Outer Weigh

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Error (ST)	T Statistics (|O/ST|)	P Values
Do you read re…	1.000	1.000	0.000		
ENB1 -> ENB	0.463	0.437	0.196	2.361	0.018
ENB2 -> ENB	0.021	0.015	0.250	0.085	0.932
ENB3 -> ENB	0.380	0.361	0.203	1.868	0.062
ENB4 -> ENB	0.429	0.422	0.192	2.240	0.025
RR1 -> RR	0.141	0.121	0.246	0.574	0.566
RR2 -> RR	0.269	0.249	0.288	0.934	0.350
RR3 -> RR	0.486	0.441	0.295	1.649	0.099
RR4 -> RR	0.026	0.032	0.268	0.099	0.921
RR5 -> RR	0.389	0.347	0.233	1.670	0.095
RSEE1 -> RSEE	0.439	0.382	0.321	1.369	0.171
RSEE2 -> RSEE	-0.068	-0.051	0.333	0.203	0.839
RSEE3 -> RSEE	0.381	0.311	0.319	1.195	0.232
RSEE4 -> RSEE	0.309	0.261	0.286	1.082	0.279
RSEE5 -> RSEE	0.247	0.213	0.349	0.708	0.479
SA1 -> SA	-0.241	-0.228	0.217	1.112	0.266
SA2 -> SA	0.641	0.606	0.222	2.892	0.004
SA3 -> SA	0.139	0.132	0.245	0.569	0.569
SA4 -> SA	0.008	0.009	0.233	0.036	0.971
SA5 -> SA	0.646	0.607	0.179	3.606	0.000

Outer Loading

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Error (ST)	T Statistics (|O/ST|)	P Values
Do you read re…	1.000	1.000	0.000		
ENB1 -> ENB	0.778	0.741	0.109	7.115	0.000
ENB2 -> ENB	0.676	0.639	0.143	4.735	0.000
ENB3 -> ENB	0.758	0.722	0.116	6.533	0.000
ENB4 -> ENB	0.788	0.751	0.119	6.638	0.000
RR1 -> RR	0.631	0.575	0.159	3.983	0.000
RR2 -> RR	0.724	0.658	0.161	4.499	0.000
RR3 -> RR	0.850	0.770	0.138	6.155	0.000
RR4 -> RR	0.639	0.579	0.162	3.959	0.000
RR5 -> RR	0.734	0.667	0.139	5.288	0.000
RSEE1 -> RSEE	0.784	0.676	0.176	4.457	0.000
RSEE2 -> RSEE	0.570	0.491	0.198	2.873	0.004
RSEE3 -> RSEE	0.755	0.649	0.184	4.105	0.000
RSEE4 -> RSEE	0.712	0.608	0.189	3.768	0.000
RSEE5 -> RSEE	0.752	0.647	0.206	3.658	0.000
SA1 -> SA	0.343	0.328	0.165	2.081	0.037
SA2 -> SA	0.770	0.727	0.101	7.643	0.000
SA3 -> SA	0.632	0.596	0.131	4.826	0.000
SA4 -> SA	0.518	0.490	0.146	3.560	0.000
SA5 -> SA	0.769	0.719	0.115	6.696	0.000

Annexe 5: Do you Read Reviews Before to Buy a Product?

75

Do you read reviews before purchase?

Yes	**175**	87.1 %
No	**26**	12.9 %