Review Article

Motivations Behind e-WOM and Brand Engagement on Consumer Platforms : A Systematic Review

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to determine and examine the factors that influence customers' decision to use electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on consumer opinion platforms, as well as the impact of brand involvement on this behavior. This study synthesizes 21 peer-reviewed journal papers using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach informed by PRISMA guidelines in order to better understand the underlying elements that motivate consumers to express their thoughts online. The findings reveal that consumer participation in e-WOM is influenced by intrinsic factors such as altruism, self-enhancement, and community involvement, as well as extrinsic factors including financial incentives. Furthermore, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral brand engagement significantly contributes to the tendency to engage in both positive and negative e-WOM. The review also highlights that intense brand engagement can enhance loyalty while simultaneously increasing the likelihood of negative e-WOM when expectations are unmet. These insights suggest that the relationship between consumer motivation, brand engagement, and e-WOM is both complex and contextual, shaped by the digital platform in use, product category, and prevailing cultural norms. This study contributes theoretically to consumer behavior literature and offers practical implications for developing more personalized, participatory, and responsive digital marketing strategies in the age of social media.

Keywords: Brand Engagement; Consumer Motivation; Consumer-Opinion Platforms.

1. Introduction

The way consumers look for, assess, and disseminate information about goods and services has changed as a result of the development of information and communication technology. Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) is one of the most common modern commercial communication methods. The term e-WOM describes the online dissemination of consumer experiences shared via various platforms such as social media, product review forums, and community websites (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Unlike traditional marketing communications, e-WOM is considered more authentic, personal, and often has a powerful influence on consumer purchasing decisions (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

Consumer motivation to articulate their opinions online is not uniform. Some studies have shown that intrinsic drivers such as the desire to help others, gain social recognition, or express self-identity play a key role in encouraging participation in e-WOM (Bronner & de Hoog, 2011; Toubia & Stephen, 2013). On the other hand, extrinsic drivers such as financial incentives or company rewards can also influence such behavior (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). However, some consumers are reluctant to participate due to concerns about negative responses, lack of trust in the platform, or the perception that their contributions have little impact (Lee & Ma, 2012).

In addition to individual motivations, brand engagement is a crucial aspect that may affect consumers' intention to engage in e-WOM. Brand engagement encompasses emotional, cognitive, and behavioral interactions between consumers and brands (Hol-lebeek et al., 2014). Research indicates that the higher the level of consumer engagement with a brand, the greater the likelihood of them sharing both positive and negative expe-riences online (Dessart et al., 2015). However, not all forms of engagement lead to positive e-WOM. Highly engaged consumers may also become more critical and vocal when disappointed, potentially resulting in negative e-WOM (Balaji et al., 2016).

However, there is still no clear correlation between e-WOM and brand engagement. As a sign of loyalty, highly engaged consumers are more inclined to distribute positive information, according to research by Harmeling et al. (2017). Strong engagement, on the other hand, may potentially amplify negative feelings like anger or disappointment, ac-cording to Ladhari et al. (2019), which could result in unfavorable e-WOM. These con-flicting results necessitate a thorough analysis of the body of current research to thoroughly understand the driving factors behind consumers' online self-expression and how brand engagement moderates this behavior.

In light of this, the current study is to carry out a thorough literature review in order to determine and analyze consumer motivations for engaging in e-WOM through con-sumer opinion platforms and to examine the role of brand engagement in influencing such behavior. By understanding the motivational patterns and the dynamics of the consumer–brand relationship, this study intends to offer both theoretical and practical contributions toward developing more effective, consumer-oriented digital marketing strategies.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)

Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) plays a vital role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. It holds significant persuasive power, as recommendations from fellow consumers on social media are often perceived as trustworthy sources of in-formation. These recommendations shape consumer perceptions and ultimately impact their purchase decisions (Dellarocas, 2003). According to Electronic word-of-mouth, according to Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2008), encompasses any unofficial communication aimed at customers via internet-based technologies, con-cerning product usage experiences, service quality, or characteristics of a product or seller.

Therefore, e-WOM can be understood as the process through which consumers share their opinions, experiences, and recommendations regarding products or services via digital platforms, especially social media. Through e-WOM, consumers not only gain relevant information but also benefit from peer perspectives that may reinforce or alter their perceptions of a brand or product. Furthermore, Sernovitz (2009) emphasized that word-of-mouth becomes more effective when the source is perceived to have no vested interest, thereby increasing the receiver's trust.

2.2. Consumer Opinion Platforms

Consumer opinion platforms are internet-based media that allow consumers to share experiences, opinions, and reviews of products and services, functioning as a source of information for other consumers. These platforms, which include websites and forums where consumers post product evaluations, represent a key form of e-WOM that influences others' decision-making (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Motivations for leaving reviews include altruism, self-enhancement, community involvement, post-purchase dissonance reduction, and revenge for negative.

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2.4. Consumer Motivation

Consumer motivation refers to the psychological forces that drive individuals to satisfy their needs or desires through product or service consumption. It is defined as an internal drive that reflects goal-directed arousal, compelling consumers to act to fulfill their needs (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). According to Barbopoulos and Johansson (2017), consumer motivation can be classified into three types: (1) utilitarian (goal-oriented), (2) hedonic (emotion/pleasure-oriented), and (3) normative (ethics and social value-oriented).

2.5. Brand Engagement

As a strategic tool to increase customer value and comprehend modern marketing, consumer brand engagement has become a more significant notion in current marketing literature (Agyei et al., 2021). Customer brand engagement, according to Wang, Tai, and Hu (2023), entails the development of a close and significant bond between the client and the business. It shows an ongoing engagement that enhances the brand's emotional, physical, and/or psychological ties (Sadek & El Mehelmi, 2020). According to De Oliveira Santini et al. (2020), this method is a viable way to gain a sustained competitive edge and build durable client connections.

Scholars concur that brand engagement results in particular behavioral outcomes, such as online interactions (Kumar et al., 2010), recommendations, referrals, and word-of-mouth activity (France, Merrilees, & Miller, 2016). Consequently, brand engagement raises consumer attention and loyalty, as well as the time and money spent on a brand (Wolff, 2022). Additionally, brand engagement is defined by France et al. (2016) as a behavioral indicator that includes consumer activities to interact and cooperate with brands, businesses, or other users. Weerasinghe (2019) asserts that engagement entails developing intellectual and emotional ties with users.

3. Proposed Method

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach as outlined by Kitchenham and Charters (2007), which provides a structured framework to identify, critically evaluate, and interpret all relevant research findings related to a defined research question. This method enables researchers to systematically and transparently summarize scientific evidence in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of a specific topic.

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) standards were adhered to during the SLR process in this investigation. The Emerald database was used for the literature search, and 336 preliminary papers were found. There were still 336 articles after duplicates were eliminated. After screening 100 of these papers using titles and abstracts, 78 that did not fit the original inclusion criteria were eliminated.

Subsequently, 21 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility and were all included in the final synthesis stage. The flow of the literature selection process is presented in a PRISMA diagram and a simplified literature synthesis table, as shown in the appendix.
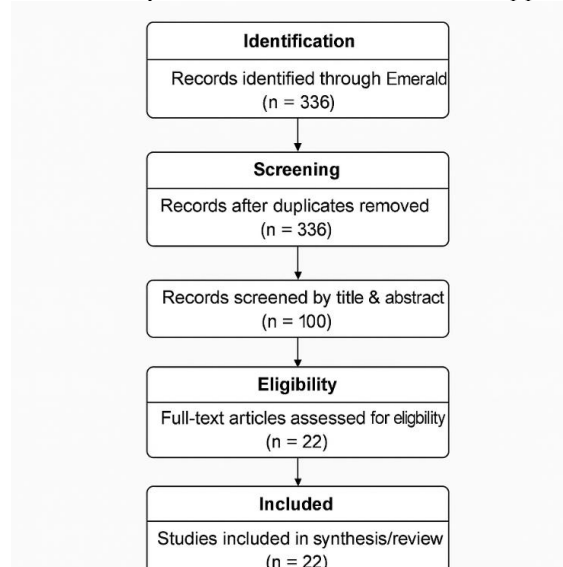
Identification
Records identified through Emerald (n = 336)

Screening
Records after duplicates removed (n = 336)

Records screened by title & abstract (n = 100)

Eligibility
Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n = 22)

Included
Studies included in synthesis/review (n = 22)

Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram

Table 1. Systematic Literature

Title & Author	Main Topics	Methods & Samples	Variables & Focus	Key Findings
Conceptualizing online fashion brand recognition (Rahman et al.,)	Brand recognition online fashion	Quantitative scaling & validation	Online brand recognition	Measurable scale for online brand recognition
Predicting customer loyalty to Airbnb… (Sallaku & Vigolo)	Customer loyalty on rental platforms	PLS-SEM of Airbnb users	Authenticity, Interactivity, Involvement, Engagement	All variables are significant to loyalty
Promoting university brand… (Vo et al.,)	Student co-creation & university brand	Quantitative online posting	Self-posting, Engagement	UGC strengthens brand image
Gamification in tourism… (Pasca et al.,)	Gamification in tourism	Systematic literature	Gamification elements	Trends and gaps: narrative, geographic distribution
Typology of trust in micro-health… (Schultz)	Micro influencer trust	Qualitative	Types of trust in influencers	Classifications reputation, expertise, relationships
Intention to share sustainability communication… (Garcia et al.,)	Destination sustainability communication	SEM tourists	Awareness, Perceived Value, Norm	Sharing is influenced by awareness & values
Building e-trust … perceived ease of use	E-trust & retention online shopping	SEM e- -commerce users	Web design, reliability, ease of use	Three factors influence e- -trust
Continued engagement intention… (Pandit)	Influencer engagement experience	Quantitative survey	Experience Intention	Experience matters for loyalty engagement

Do social media marketing activities…? (Banerji & Singh)	SMM and e- -commerce loyalty	SEM -Indian e commerce users	SMM activities	Positive influence on loyalty
Perceived usefulness of word of mouth in public procurement… (Ismail & Changalima)	WoM in SME procurement	Survey on SMEs	WoM usefulness	WoM significantly drives adoption
Digital social responsibility's impact… (Amankona & Yi)	Digital social responsibility	SEM Gen Y	CSR, Brand loyalty, Purchase intention	Engagement & loyalty as mediators
Managing engagement journeys (Jaakkola)	Customer journey engagement	Conceptual	Engagement touchpoints	Framework for touchpoints
Online dating apps as marketing channels (Rita)	Dating apps as a marketing channel	Quantitative survey generation	Generation & advertising	Channel effectiveness depends on generation
Fostering consumer engagement with marketer-generated content (Yang)	Content marketers and engagement	SEM	Content devices, features	Device & features influence engagement
Effect of social commerce attributes… (Busalim)	Engagement & social commerce	Empirical	Attributes such as reviews, ratings	Important commercial social attributes
Consumers' self-report & brain responses… (Pozharliev et al.,)	Consumer reactions to IG ads	Experimental EEG & self-report	Followers, argument quality	Quality many followers in the brain
Engaging consumers through firm-generated content… (Naumann)	Negative content & dual valences	Experimental survey	Negative engagement	Increase engagement beyond positive
Frequency of use of online reviews… (Bevan-Dye)	Generation Y and online reviews	Survey	Frequency review	Generation Y trusts reviews a lot

Campaign participation…CSR effectiveness… (Bialkova)	CSR & e-WoM	Quantitative; campaign participants	CSR → e -WoM → Purchase	CSR optimizes sharing → sales
Motivations of guests contributing sWOM… Vietnam (Le & Thu)	Tourist sWoM motivations	Survey	Motivational factors	Altruism & self-enhancement dominant
Consumer motivations for CSR engagement on social media (Aguirre et al.,)	Social CSR Gen Motivation	SEM social media users	Social, economic motivation	Social motivations economic

4. Results and Discussion

Based on the synthesis of 21 articles using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this study found that consumer motivations to engage in e-WOM through consumer opinion platforms are highly diverse. These motivations include intrinsic factors such as altruism (the desire to help others), self-enhancement (enhancing one's self-image), and community involvement in digital environments. Studies such as Le & Thu (2021) confirmed that altruistic motives and the drive to share positive experiences are major triggers for voluntarily expressing opinions.

Findings also revealed that brand engagement plays a pivotal role in moderating consumer behavior in e-WOM. Studies by France et al. (2016) and Pandit (2022) showed that high brand engagement strengthens the intention to share experiences whether positive or negative de-pending on the quality of prior interactions. Emotional and cognitive engagement were found to have a significant influence on consumers' tendencies to recommend or criticize brands openly.

However, not all forms of engagement result in favorable e-WOM. Research by Ladhari et al. (2019) and Naumann (2022) indicated that intense engagement can amplify expressions of disappointment and trigger negative e-WOM if consumer expectations are unmet. Thus, the relationship between brand engagement and e-WOM is dynamic and dependent on the quality of consumer experiences and the specific form of engagement involved.

These findings reinforce the understanding that e-WOM is not merely driven by impulsive emotional reactions, but rather stems from complex and structured motivational forces. In the context of digital marketing, recognizing altruistic and self-enhancement motives is crucial, as these can be optimized to encourage voluntary consumer participation such as through us-er-generated content (UGC) campaigns. Consumers who feel acknowledged and valued are more likely to actively share positive experiences.

Brand engagement has been proven to be a crucial factor in shaping e-WOM behavior, though high levels of engagement do not always benefit the brand. Highly engaged consumers may also become more vocal and critical in the face of negative experiences. Therefore, brands must strive to build authentic and consistent interactions that sustain positive engagement, while also creating open communication channels to respond to feedback promptly and empathetically.

Moreover, the findings of this SLR suggest that the influence of motivation on e-WOM behavior may vary depending on cultural context, product type, and the digital platform used. For instance, studies in the tourism and CSR sectors show that social norms and ethical values are primary triggers, while in e-commerce settings, convenience and economic value are more dominant. This indicates that e-WOM strategies must be context-specific and cannot be universally applied across all market types.

5. Conclusions

This study concludes that consumers' motivations for expressing their opinions through e-WOM are influenced by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, including the desire

to help others, self-image building, and financial incentives. In addition, brand engagement plays a significant role in shaping the nature and direction of consumer e-WOM, whether in the form of positive promotion or sharp criticism.

Therefore, companies must actively foster healthy consumer engagement by implementing personalized, responsive, and relevant approaches to building brand experiences. Furthermore, deeply understanding consumer motivations can assist in designing communication strategies and digital campaigns that sustainably encourage active participation. This in turn can enhance consumer loyalty while constructively managing the potential for negative e-WOM.

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