Who Does Generate e-WOM and Why? – A Research Proposal

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Abstract: E-WOM is a very popular topic among marketing researchers as it gives the chance for consumers to share their reviews almost totally freely. As more and more consumers' purchase decisions rely on the experiences of others shared on the Web, it has become more important to know what the motivation pattern behind the review writing activity is. There are three research questions in the focus of the present research proposal: (1) What kinds of personality traits are typical for those who generate e-WOM? (2) Why e-WOM is generated? (3) Can personality traits forecast with higher probability whether positive or negative reviews will be posted? The conceptual framework has been developed on an interdisciplinary basis: it is a combination of differential psychology and marketing. The big five personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience) are included in order to explain the intention to write electronic reviews. Moreover, a new variable called perceived informational effectiveness is introduced as a potential predictor of e-WOM generation activity.

Keywords: e-WOM; personality traits; perceived informational effectiveness; NEO-FFI

1 Introduction

In the WEB 2.0 world, word of mouth has been playing a more important role than ever before in influencing consumer decisions. The opinions of others, especially the opinions of reference persons and groups, have always played a significant role in these decisions, but now it is possible to know the opinion of hundreds and thousands of other, so-called everyday, people, people who consumers do not know personally or at all, who may well live on the other side of the world. Taking into account that cost of disseminating information online is regularly lower than offline, it is not surprising that people are ready to communicate and share information with others using the Web.

Therefore it is not surprising that marketing managers are interested in the nature of e-WOM from many different perspectives. One of these aspects is the question of how strong this informational source is, compared to the strength of

information received via conventional communication channels [1] [2]. Another potential aspect is whether there is a trade-off between these channels [3] or whether they can improve each other's efficacy [4]. The third group of questions occurs in connection with the valence of e-WOM: whether negative and positive e-WOM spread over the same or different paths, whether there are different life spans, and whether there are different influential effects [1]?

From the e-WOM generation point of view, the focus is on the motivation of customers to share their opinions on WEB. They can share their experiences with people who they know, e.g. on social network sites or via e-mail, and with people who they don't know at all, e.g. on brand sites as comments, in chat forums or on a personal blog. Experts [5] investigated the forwarding motivation of internet users, with a special focus on personality traits and on the amount of internet consumption. Moreover, product attributes (such as originality and usefulness [1]) have been examined from the point of view of the question of which attributes are more likely to generate e-WOM.

This article concentrates on the formation of e-WOM, especially from the perspective of the personality of the person who writes review on the Web and, not unimportantly, on the type of the reviews they write.

2 Literature Review

According to Henning-Thurau et al. (2004), the online word of mouth is "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or a company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" [6] Although services are not mentioned here, we can use this definition for service evaluations as well.

The two, easily measurable features of word of mouth communication, as determined by Harrison-Walker, are its amount (how many people how intensively speak about the product or company) and its valence (whether the message, the opinion is positive or negative, and how strong it is) [7].

Moldovan et al. [1] highlighted in their research that product originality, its uniqueness, is responsible for the amount of WOM, which can be either positive or negative, while its usefulness primarily determines the valence of WOM, though it can improve the amount of WOM communication as well. Therefore, they hypothesised that the higher the usefulness, the more positive the WOM is, and they found support for this relationship in their study that examined twenty new products including electronics, hedonic instruments and furniture. Another finding was that the more original the product, the higher the amount of WOM; however, it has no significant effect on the valence of WOM. The authors argue that "WOM is spread about original products because they are interesting and about useful products because they are important" [p. 116].

I would like to add that when consumer expectations are high due to active marketing communication that emphasizes the positive or outstanding features, i.e. the product or service's uniqueness, and then it cannot satisfy these high expectations in practice, this dissatisfaction and disappointment in turn will probably generate intensive WOM.

From the receiver side there are other important aspects of e-WOM. In a laboratory experiment Gupta and Harris (2010) attempted to analyze how the presence and the increasing amount of e-WOM recommendations combined with the level of motivation for information processing can influence product choice. Different methods of information processing can influence how people view e-WOM. According to Areni et al. (2000), "The amount of thought can range from diligent consideration of topic relevant information (the central/systematic route of persuasion) to the less cognitively taxing method of association of the focal object with some positive or negative peripheral/heuristic cue" [8, p. 1043].

Those respondents who showed a higher need for cognition spent more time on considering the different products; moreover, the more e-WOM available, the more time was spent on the consideration of the alternatives (they manipulated the amount of e-WOM at three levels: none, one or ten). In contrast, when need for cognition is lower for respondents, they can rely more on e-WOM than factual information; therefore they are ready to make suboptimal product choices. Moreover, e-WOM proved to be able to shift product choice from stated preference to another product attribute-level (in the study laptop screen size was manipulated). Interestingly, a change in preference was also experienced among those who had high motivation for information processing [8].

What are the features of a useful e-WOM? Wei and Watts (2008) found that review quality and perceived source credibility are the most important motivations for adapting to online information. [9] Racherla and Friske (2012) tried to answer this question by analyzing those who use these e-WOMs for decision making [2]. Not surprisingly, they determined that the features of intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability and inseparability increases the need for additional, and primarily experimental, information to ease decision making and/or reliance on online reviews to assess services prior to use [10]. The three types of services, with different level of perceived risk and uncertainty, analyzed in the study are: search, experience and credence services, based on the typology of Darby and Karni [11]. The authors differentiated message factors from source factors, and the latter is described by identity disclosure, expertise and reputation. The factors of the message investigated are: elaborateness and review valence [2]. After analyzing 3,000 reviews from Yelp.com, they found that the reviewers' reputation and expertise positively correlated with the perceived usefulness of the review. An interesting finding was that very negative or very positive reviews proved to be more useful than others, but the length of reviews did not significantly contribute to perceived usefulness [2].

Sen and Lerman (2007) tried to explore the relationship between product type, product rating valence and perceived usefulness of the review. Based on previous studies, they supposed that readers are likely to consider negative reviews more useful than positive ones for utilitarian products (e.g. printers and digital cameras) than for hedonic products (such as music CDs and fiction books). In addition, the authors hypothesised that in the case of negative consumer e-WOM, readers will be more likely to attribute non-product related or internal motivations to the reviewer of a hedonic product than to one reviewing a utilitarian product [12].

Ahluwalia (2000) turned attention to the two-phase nature of using negative or positive reviews in decision making: first, a visitor has to decide whether he or she will pay attention to and read the review. Second, the visitor has to make a decision on whether this review will be used for the original decision making intention. [13]

To understand the motivation behind forwarding online content, Ho and Dempsey (2010) tried to explore the personal traits that may explain this behaviour, the ones that can help us here to understand better the role of e-WOM. They used Schutz's Fundamental Interpersonal Relation Orientation model (1966) as a conceptual framework. In this three-dimensional model interpersonal communication is motivated by the need to belong to a group or attract attention (called inclusion), or concern for others (called affection) or to gain power in one's social environment (called control). According to the authors, "as more people rely on the Internet as a means of communication we surmise that young adults will need to share their media experiences, particularly if they anticipate future discussions" [5, p. 1001]. Forwarding online content can strengthen the opinion leader role of a person and can help differentiate himself or herself from others. Consumers are also motivated to forward content because they care for the welfare of others: for example they want to make the others well-informed or happy. Phelps (2004) proves that an altruistic attitude can motivate online communication. [14]. Feelings of competence, achievement, influence and accomplishment can as well be generated by sharing information [15]. Therefore, those who frequently forward online content use this as "a means of developing knowledge or expertise and will be motivated by a sense of personal growth" [5, p. 1002]. The results of the structural equation modelling proved the positive relationship between individuation, altruism and the frequency of forwarding online content. However, the hypothesised positive relationship between online sharing and the need to be a part of a group was not significant. More surprisingly, personal growth/control was a significant predictor of forwarding behaviour; it was in the opposite direction. Authors explain this contrary-to-expectation outcome with the measurement type they used or with the need for feedback, which may come more directly from face-to-face communication types than from electronic ones.

The other explaining variable in the background of forwarding online content was the consumption level of electronic content, which was motivated by curiosity in

the conceptual model. However, based on the results, the effect of this personal trait was not significant at all. [5]

Another question is whether the e-WOM helps to improve synergy among different communication elements of the promotion mix or whether, instead, there is a trade-off between their effects. From a general point of view increasing advertising, using mass media can improve word-of-mouth via providing topics for it. Feng and Papatla (2011) argue that increased advertising, contrary to expectations, can be associated with a reduction in online consumer word-of-mouth [3]. This negative relationship was first identified by Graham and Havlena (2007): TV adverts reduce e-WOM for soft drinks and technology, and increasing the number of online ads decreased e-WOM for the travel category [16]. The potential explanations for this phenomenon are decreasing interest caused by the more active advertising (there is no need to get more information on the product) and the customer type attracted by the given source of information [3]. The model provided by Feng and Papatla is based on the theory of Dichter (1966), who distinguished between four different types of involvement: (1) product involvement, (2) self involvement – product related conversations can satisfy emotional needs – especially when it can contribute to demonstrate superiority, or when it can give confirmation to former judgements, (3) other involvement, when the communicator tries to give something helpful to others and as a consequence, make friends, earn praise or express care or love, and (4) message involvement, which is motivated by the communication activity of producers [3]. This typology can also be useful to understand the motivation and behaviour of those who generate WOM.

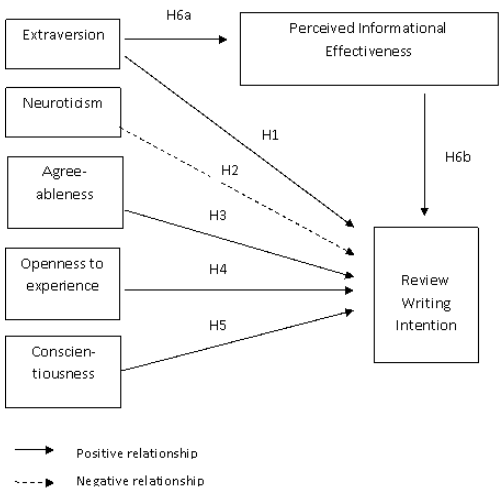

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework

3 Conceptual Framework

The results of the above mentioned studies conducted on e-WOM have raised numerous new research topics, both for companies and for consumer behaviour specialists. Here I would like to focus on the birth of these reviews.

Basically, we can differentiate three important aspects: (1) What kinds of personality traits are typical for those who generate e-WOM? (2) Why e-WOM is generated? (3) Can personality traits forecast with higher probability whether positive or negative reviews are posted?

3.1 Personality Traits

The personality traits are inevitably important antecedents of behaviour. In the differential psychological literature, experts define five dimensions of personality, called the 'Big Five', which provide a useful general framework for viewing human behaviour [17]. The elements of this construct are: (1) extraversion, (2) agreeableness, (3) conscientiousness, (4) neuroticism, and (5) openness to experience. Each domain has six facets ensuring the coverage of all aspects. The list of statements referring to neuroticism includes anxiety, hostility, depression, impulsiveness, self-consciousness and vulnerability. Warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, excitement-seeking and positive emotions are connected with the extraversion factor. Openness can be described via the terms of fantasy, esthetics, feelings, actions, ideas and values. Agreeableness consists of statements related to trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty and tender-mindedness. Finally, characteristics linked with conscientiousness are competence, order, dutifulness, achievement striving, self-discipline and deliberation. [18]

The significance of personal traits in connection with this topic is that opinions posted on WEB may show distortions due to the discrepancy of product users and review writers. Based on the five personality trait domains, 5 different hypotheses should be tested:

Hypothesis 1: The more extraverted the personality, (i) the more probable the e-WOM activity is, and (ii) the more positive the review is.

Hypothesis 2: The more neurotic the personality, (i) the higher the probability of the e-WOM activity is, and (ii) the more extreme the review is.

Hypothesis 3: The more agreeable the personality, (i) the higher the probability of the e-WOM activity is, and (ii) the more positive the review is.

Hypothesis 4: The more open the personality is (i) the higher the probability of the e-WOM activity, and (ii) the more positive the review is.

Hypothesis 5: The more conscientious the personality, is (i) the higher the probability of the e-WOM activity, and (ii) the less extreme the review is.

When somebody has a categorical opinion on something it is typical that he/she would like to share it if he/she extravert. Sometimes it is enough if he or she simply can add something to the ongoing discussion, giving the feeling that he/she is an "expert" in the topic, especially on forums which are organized for answering a specific question or problem from the visitors. This may serve as an explanation to our first hypothesis.

As neurotic persons can react to happenings in their surrounding impulsively, sometimes overreacting to situations, it is supposed that they will express their opinion as well via writing reviews. The sign of the review is also important – especially if there is a tendency toward posting negative reviews. On the product market, the typical sources of negative WOM are customer dissatisfaction, external media comment, competitor activity and competitive benchmarking (e.g. cost comparisons published online) [19].

As altruism was detected as a source of motivate for online communication [14], here the same direction is supposed with e-WOM activity. Conscientiousness gives the motivation to tell the truth and to share real experiences with others, and thus this trait can increase the probability of writing reviews on the Web. However, this personality trait forecasts a less volatile review pattern; they will not overreact to experiences and will probably avoid sharing exaggerated opinions with others.

3.2 Perceived Informational Effectiveness

This term is built on the construct of perceived consumer effectiveness, studied by several authors. Perceived consumer effectiveness was first examined by Kinnear, Taylor and Ahmed (1974) as the measurement of one's belief in the results of his/her own actions [20]. The intention and behaviour of a person is the function of his/her persuasion that the occurrence of an event depends on his activity. In our context it means that an electronic review-writer believes that with sharing his or her opinion/experience, the behaviour/decision of others will change. Practically, it is the judgment of the person about the way and the extent of the impact on the environmental of his own behaviour.

Several studies [20] [21] [22] show that consumer attitudes and their reaction to messages from their surroundings are a function of their belief in their ability to positively influence the solution to the problems. Ellen et al. (1991) hypothesized that PCE represents an evaluation of the self in the context of the issue. If somebody believes that the given environmental problem can be solved by a specific action, this belief will strongly influence his/her commitment to this activity, though it can not predict other types of behaviours [23].

In this conceptual framework, it means the feeling of relativity: whether an individual can have an effect on decision of others or not; is he/or she able to influence anyone with his/her opinion or not. Built on this logic, I define perceived informational effectiveness as a belief that by expressing one's own opinion in the electronic world, one can help others to make a better decision.

Hypothesis 6a: The more extraverted the personality, the higher the perceived informational effect is.

Hypothesis 6b: The higher the perceived informational effectiveness, the higher the e-WOM generating activity is.

4 Research Design

As I mentioned earlier, the relevance of WOM is higher when consumers want to make a decision on services; and especially when it is an experiment or credence service that is dominated by attributes can only be evaluated after use or that be verified even then [11]. That kind of difficulty can be explained by the different tastes of individuals and intangible nature of services. Knowing this, I have chosen a topic which is completely familiar to the Y generation, as surely all of them have experience regarding teachers: I will examine the formation of e-WOM in a higher education surrounding.

The question is very up-to-date for Hungarian higher education institutions as new legislation was enacted in January, 2012. Besides other changes in structures, financing changed a lot. For example, while in the previous year the government financed the studies of 4900 students in the area of economic sciences, from September 2012 only 250 students do not have to pay a fee for their studies.[1] As more students have to contribute to the chance for taking part in higher education, they probably will be more sensitive to quality, and one aspect of it is the evaluation of teaching staff.

ISO standards and accreditation processes at higher education institutes require the evaluation of teachers by students as a part of the quality assurance. However, in addition to these official evaluations, students have other possibilities in the Web 2.0 world to comment on their teachers. One of them is markmyprofessor.com, a Hungarian site for students attending higher education institutions.

[1] http://www.felvi.hu/pub_bin/dload/FFT2012A_AOF/FFT2012A_Tajekoztatas.pdf, accessed 28.10.2012.

Figure 2
Structure of markmyprofessor.com page

Based on a Sen and Lerman study [12], attending courses shows utilitarian rather than hedonic features. Although they analyzed products, the importance of e-WOM for services as source of a-piori information should be more useful. Therefore, it is expected that readers will find negative reviews more helpful than positive ones. Moreover, Hungarians are said to be a pessimistic nation, who likes complaining all the time, so it is expected that more negative reviews will be provided by respondents than positive ones altogether.

In connection with teachers, below expected lecturing performance and exam difficulty are the most typical reasons for generating negative WOM. Positive features might be the teachers' style, his or her helpful behaviour and easy exams. We have to emphasise that the editors of the page have the right to revise opinions if they are scurrilous.

4.1 Research Sample

Sometimes the usefulness of academic research articles is criticized on the student sample they use; however this is not the case when the research topic itself related

to Internet usage. There is a generation now that has a special attitude towards the Internet: they are called the Y generation and they form the majority of students in higher education institutes.

Members of Y generation (also known as Millennials) were born between 1980 and 1995[2]. According to Tari (2010), they are the children of the digital world. They get used to using different media at one time: they use the computer, a mobile phone, and the Internet on a daily basis, and it is almost impossible for them to manage their lives without these gadgets. They have to share their attention all the time and media addiction can be experienced by a not negligible proportion. They are open to technological innovations. Using social-networks (the most typical ones in Hungary are iwiw and Facebook) is the part of their everyday life. Writing blogs and sharing content is a form of social life. [24]

Therefore, it is not surprising that undergraduate and/or graduate student samples have been used in studies examining e-WOM [5], [8], [1], [12]. I also plan to ask undergraduate students from one Hungarian university. The planned sample size is 400 respondents. In order to gain comparable answers, I will choose students attending the same lessons in a given semester with the same teachers, and their providing different opinions on teachers despite the same experiences can be traced back to different personalities and, of course, to different expectations.

However, to get reliable and true answers, anonymity is crucial when students have to evaluate their teachers.

4.2 Variable Measurements

4.2.1. Personality Traits

As was mentioned earlier, the five personality traits which will be used as an antecedent of e-WOM generating behaviour are extraversion (E), agreeableness (A), conscientiousness (C), neuroticism (N) and openness to experience (O).

There are different operationalisations of their measurement. The most frequently studied version is the revised NEO Personality Inventory created by Costa and McCrae (1992). However, it comprises 240 statements, which would be really exhausting to evaluate by a respondent. Therefore, there have been numerous attempts to shorten the revised list further, while keeping its positive features and reliability. The NEO Five Factor Inventory [17] includes 60 items (12 items for each domain). [18] In this construct, there are different statements such as: ‘Most people I know like me’ (A), ‘I believe we should look to our religious authorities

[2] Generation Z (also known as iGeneration or the Internet Generation) will take part in higher education and the labour market in the near future, and their attitude toward eWOM should be investigated in the next phase of this research.

for decisions on moral issues' (O) or 'I often get angry at the way people treat me' (N), and the level of agreement with these statements is evaluated on a 5-point scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree.

Therefore, for measuring personality traits, I plan to use the 60-item list of the NEO-FFI.

4.2.2. Perceived Informational Effectiveness

As I mentioned earlier, this term refers to the belief that with expressing one's own opinion one can help others to make a better decision.

In general, perceived consumer effectiveness, which is used here as a 'benchmark', was measured by statements on Likert scales. PCE is typically measured as a general concept, not in connection with specific environmental problems and their solutions. Ellen et al. used a two-statement list: 1) There is not much that any one individual can do about the environment, (2) The conservation efforts of one person are useless as long as other people refuse to conserve [23]. Berger and Corbin used 3 items: (1) I feel personally helpless to have much of an impact on a problem as large as the environment, (2) I don't feel I have enough knowledge to make well-informed decisions on environmental issues, (3) I expect the environment to continue to deteriorate until it is almost unlivable before enough attention is paid to improve it. [21]

Taking into account the proven reliabilities of these scales, it is useful to use these statements for testing our hypothesis, of course, reformulating them to the given topic. Therefore, perceived informational effectiveness will be measured by the following statements: (1) There is not much that any one reviewer can do to inform others using the Internet (2) The review of one person is useless as long as other people don't post reviews on the same topic.[3] The level of agreement with these statements will be measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Keeping it in mind that these statements are negatively formulated ones, we will have to convert some results.

4.2.3. Dependent Variable: Review Writing Intention

I intend to measure review writing intention in two ways. The first way examines review writing activity in the past, and as a consequence, it gives a broader view on respondents' behaviour. The respondent will be asked to answer the following questions: (1) How often per month do you write reviews on the internet on products or services? (2) Taking into account your reviews written in the last year,

[3] One of the referees of this article suggested to use more than two statements for measuring perceived informational effectiveness, but it would increase artificially the Cronbach alpha of the measurement and therefore would result in a bias.

what proportion (%) of your reviews were negative? (3) What was the topic of the last review you wrote? (4) Was it negative or positive?

The second method of testing review writing intention in this study will be a simulation: the markmyprofessor.com page will be introduced to the respondent and (s)he will be asked whether (s)he wants to write a review on this page or not about her/his teachers in this semester. If the answer is yes, we ask the respondents to create this/these review(s). We provide as much time as needed for each respondent.

4.2.4. Review Writing Motivations - Perceived Intention of Others

Sometimes it is more appropriate to ask people indirectly about the research topic, especially when the topic is uncomfortable, intimate or burdened with lots of social expectations. A widely used technic for this is to reformulate the question in the third person because it is supposed that the answer is mainly driven by the thoughts of the respondent; eventually it is a projective technic. If the topic is not so uncomfortable or if the respondent does not feel under pressure, the difference between direct and indirect questioning remain unremarkable.

Sen and Lerman [12] measured a variable with very similar content, but those items reflected on a given review, not a general view on reviews posted on Web. Thus, to get to know the potential motivations behind review writing, two open-ended questions will be asked: (1) What do you think people share their negative experiences/opinions with others on the Web? (2) Why do people share their positive experiences/opinions with others on the Web?

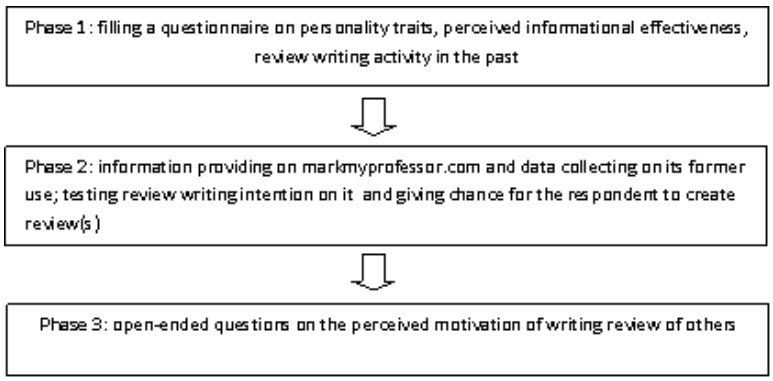

Figure 3
Planned Data Collection Phases

4.3 Data Collection Phases

Data gathering will take place in three consecutive phases. First, respondents will be asked to fill out the questionnaires on personality traits and on perceived informational effectiveness and to give information on their past review writing activity. In the second phase, we collect data on the respondents' knowledge of markmyprofessor.com and ask them whether they would like to add a review on one or more of their teachers based on their experiences in the given semester. If the answer is yes, we will ask them to create this review with the numerical evaluations as well as the open-ended part (if they want to add precise details). After this phase, respondents will be asked to share their views on the motivation of others to post positive or negative reviews on the Web.

4.4 Analysis

After checking and cleaning the database, the first step will be to test the reliability of the variable constructs. Then, a factor analysis for the answers for NEO-FFI statements will be conducted, to prove the five personality trait domains; and then, based on the factor values, the H1-H5, and H6b hypotheses will be tested. Discriminant analysis will be appropriate for testing review writing intention (categorical variable). At the next level, among those who will be willing to write a review, we can use the sign (valence) of the review as a metric variable to test the (ii) parts of H1-H5. However, to distinguish negative and positive evaluations on markmyprofessor.com, where a 5 point scale is given, we have to recode the students' evaluations: as 3 is the centre of the scale, it will be redefined as 0, 4 will be transformed to 1, 5 will become 2, and 2 and 1 will be -1 and -2. To test H2 and H5, where the extremity of these evaluations is in the focus, we will use the absolute value of the evaluation.

As we will measure the general e-review-writing activity as well, we have the chance to test H1-H5 and H6b also by regression analysis, because this dependent variable is a metric one (the frequency of writing reviews as times per month)

From our point of view, the detailed comments provided by students will not be analyzed based on their content; however a dummy variable will be defined as 0 if there are no detailed comments, and 1 if any details are given by the respondent.

Perceived Informational Effectiveness is a metric variable, and therefore H6a will be tested by regression analysis.

As the last step, we toned to code the answers for the open-ended questions on the motivation for others to write reviews on the Web. And after that, by creating cross tables we can check whether there is a significant difference based on the dichotomous variable (writes a review/does not write a review on teacher(s)).

Conclusions

The future results of this planned study can help researchers to understand the attempts to generate e-WOM. Its usefulness for practitioners can be to explore the background of potential distortion in opinions shared by the internet community.

The results may also help higher education institutes to manage positive and negative WOM, as it may become a very important informational source for choosing courses and universities in the near future. Although Williams and Buttle (2011) suggested conducting systematic WOM management, it gives the misleading feeling of controllability and, to some extent, drivability of WOM. [19] However, its very basic nature is that it cannot be controlled, only sometimes, partly at the starting point.

Including commenting habits in general into this study can help to understand more precisely why people are motivated to start e-WOM. Four aspects of commenting habits will be measured: frequency, on what topics and why they write reviews and what is the typical tone of it: negative or positive. However, it would be also useful to know what the after life of these comments can be: is it important for the reviewer to check how many people found his/her comment useful or what kind of reactions is generated from others. Unfortunately, the markmyprofessor.com page, which we are using for the research, gives no opportunity to rate the usefulness of the review.

Taking this question further, another question could be whether the existing reviews influence the content of the new review the person wants to post? Do previous evaluations of the teacher influence the new evaluation? Before adding a new comment on the page, do they check the previous evaluations and do they alter the original content of the review they wanted to add?

Another further aspect could be a comparison of the evaluations of teachers in the virtual world with the official evaluations of teachers made by the university itself. Its added value would be the possibility to recognize the distorting effect of opinions posted on the web, because questionnaires for official evaluations must be filled out by the students, but on web pages only people with special personality characteristics express their own opinion, which may represent the evaluation of the minority. However, not the same aspects are measured on markmyprofessor.com and in official questionnaires, which makes this comparison impossible directly. Perhaps the ranking order based on the average evaluations may be a good basis for this task.

From a marketing management point of view, e-WOM is a part of the communication channel mix, but it has two special features: first, it cannot be controlled all the time, only partly at the beginning, when company or brand creates the message. But in this case some distrust of suspiciousness can occur, especially when something positive is being said related to the product. Second, in general it is almost costless, so it is not surprising that its effectiveness is in focus.

If e-WOM is positive, then it can work as a source to convince potential new customers or to give evidence to confirm that they made a good decision when they chose the given product. If it is negative, the uncontrollability of this stream of WOM means the biggest threat.

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