Positive and negative eWOM motivations and hotel customers’ eWOM behavior: Does personality matter?

Yaou Hu⁎, Hyun Jeong Kim

School of Hospitality Business Management, Carson College of Business, Washington State University, Pullman, WA, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
eWOM behavior
Personality trait
Positive eWOM motivation
Negative eWOM motivation

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of eWOM motivations on customers’ eWOM behavior in the hotel setting. Two independent samples (sample 1: positive hotel service encounter, n = 246; sample 2: negative hotel service encounter, n = 230) were collected online via MTurk (Amazon Mechanical Turk). eWOM motivations were divided into positive (self-enhancement and enjoyment, altruism, and economic incentives) and negative motivations (venting negative feelings, altruism, and economic incentives). Self-enhancement and enjoyment was the critical predictor of positive eWOM behavior whereas venting and economic incentives were prominent predictors of negative eWOM behavior. Further, this study examined the moderating role of the Big Five personality traits in the relationship between eWOM motivations and eWOM posting behavior. Notably, agreeableness and conscientiousness were found to interact with self-enhancement and enjoyment, and altruism (both positive and negative) motivational factors, leading to eWOM behavior. Discussion and managerial implications are provided based on findings.

1. Introduction

Word-of-Mouth (WOM) has received extensive attention from marketing researchers. The emergence of information and communication technologies has introduced a new form of word-of-mouth called the electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) (Buhalis and Law, 2008). eWOM refers to “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p.39). The popularity of searching information to shop online encourages customers to heavily rely on the sources of online information (Ho et al., 2012). Customers’ preference of the product increases along with the number of online reviews (Vigilia et al., 2014).

The impact of eWOM on a customer’s action is more salient for the service industry. The intangible and experiential nature of service increases customers’ perceived risk; thus, customers tend to search more information from previous customers who have actually consumed the service (Papathanasssis and Knolle, 2011). As a typical service industry, hotel companies intensively depend on eWOM because of its influence on room revenue (Ye et al., 2009), eWOM is also an important information source for hotel practitioners to understand their customers’ needs and wants and enhance their accommodation quality (Levy et al., 2012; Phillips et al., 2007).

As more customers are using eWOM, more scholarly efforts are made to answer fundamental questions, such as whether or not eWOM is more influential than other information sources (Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006), why customers use eWOM (Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006), which factors of information quality influence customers to adopt eWOM information (Filieri and Mcleay, 2014), and how eWOM influences potential customers’ perceptions and decision-making on product purchase (Sparks and Browning, 2011; Vermeulen and Segers, 2009; Wen, 2009). Customers trust eWOM, the third-party information from fellow customers, more than marketer-generated information (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Filieri, 2016).

Although a growing number of customers are engaged in eWOM communications, the gap between the number of users and the number of actual content creators remains large (Boo and Kim, 2013; Yoo and Gretzel, 2008; Yoo and Gretzel, 2011). To facilitate eWOM behavior and get the benefit from eWOM, hotel marketers need to better understand why some guests post eWOM while others do not. As part of this endeavor, prior studies have focused on antecedents of eWOM communications or eWOM intention in a variety of hospitality contexts (e.g., for foodservice, Boo and Kim, 2013; Jeong and Jang, 2011; Zhang et al., 2017; for hotels, Wu et al., 2016; for vacation trips, Bronner and De Hoog, 2011).

These previous articles, however, reveal the following weaknesses. First, eWOM intention has been frequently used rather than actual...
behavior itself as an outcome variable in the research model (e.g., Boo and Kim, 2013; Wu et al., 2016). Second, although eWOM motivational dimensions are available in the hospitality and tourism context, the dimensions are not evidently distinguishable between positive and negative (e.g., Bronner and De Hoog, 2011) or solely focuses on one valence, typically positive (e.g. Jeong and Jang, 2011; Yang, 2017). Because customers’ eWOM motivations depend on the nature of their consumption experience (positive vs. negative) (Jeong and Jang, 2011; Yang, 2017; Zhang et al., 2017), it seems reasonable to have a separate set of eWOM motivations by the valence of service experiences.

Last but not least, customers’ individual characteristics have been understudied, which may be responsible for explaining eWOM behavior. Some basic demographic effects, such as age, gender, and income, have been reported (e.g., Bronner and De Hoog, 2011). In addition to demographic factors, a small number of eWOM researchers made an attempt to connect personality traits, presumably more potent than demographic factors, with eWOM; these researchers have primarily examined direct relationships between personality traits and eWOM motivation or intention (Picazo-Vela et al., 2010; Yoo and Gretzel, 2011).

eWOM behavior is an integrative process initiated by a service/product experience (Dellarocas et al., 2010), triggered by a customer’s motivation, and eventually realized on online platforms (Yang, 2017). In this process from eWOM motivation to online posting behavior, we propose personality traits as indirect, moderating variables. It is different from previous articles highlighting direct relationships; in other words, customer dispositions and eWOM motivation will have joint effects on eWOM behavior. This conceptual model benefits both academics and practitioners by furthering the understanding of the eWOM behavioral process and elucidating which motivation interacts with which type of individuals for eWOM to happen. To fill the research gaps described above and make the study more comprehensive and solid, we divided eWOM motivations into positive and negative ones and utilized actual behavior rather than intention before postulating a series of moderation hypotheses.

In summary, the objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to identify and categorize major eWOM motivations in positive and negative service encounters independently; (2) to examine the link between eWOM motivations (positive and negative) and actual eWOM behavior in the hotel service setting; and further, (3) to examine the moderating role of personality traits in the link between both types of eWOM motivations and actual eWOM behavior in the hotel service setting.

2. Literature review

2.1. eWOM in the hotel industry

eWOM is a new source of information to customers because it offers non-commercial, detailed, actual experiential-based, and up-to-date information via online (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Yoo and Gretzel, 2011). Despite the shared similarities with traditional WOM, eWOM possesses some unique features. First, eWOM enlarges the domain of influence because of eWOM’s easily referable and nonperishable nature (Schindler and Bickart, 2005). Traditional WOM originates from the face-to-face exchange of ephemeral oral or spoken messages between a source consumer and a recipient who communicate directly in real life (Sundaram et al., 1998). This communication disappears as soon as the face-to-face exchange is over (Stern, 1994).

On the contrary, eWOM, which adopts multiple forms, such as online forum, online community, social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, and Blogs), and online reviews could be revised and stored on the Internet; basically, eWOM transcends the spatial, temporal, and personal social network limits of traditional WOM, and exerts the continuing influence on a broad range of customers who are strangers rather than friends, relatives, or acquaintances in the traditional context (Dellarocas, 2006; Schindler and Bickart, 2005). Second, Internet facilitates customers to search and share information as well as to conduct transactions online; it has been found that eWOM has a substantial influence on hotel customers’ decision-making and purchase behavior (Vermeulen and Seeger, 2009; Wen, 2009; Ye et al., 2009).

In the hotel context, eWOM can take various forms (Phillips et al., 2017). Among them, online hotel reviews or comments in the consumer opinion sites (e.g., Online Travel Agencies, hotel official websites, and online travel communities) appear to be most important (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009). These reviews include product ratings and descriptions (Yoo and Gretzel, 2011), and the creation of these reviews are usually encouraged by hotels and online travel agency marketers. eWOM for hotels also exists as blogs, comments, pictures and/or videos on customers’ personal social media networks (e.g. Blogs, Facebook, and Twitter) (Yoo and Gretzel, 2011).

2.2. eWOM users and posters

Three types of customers are identified based on customers’ involvement in online information (Nonnecke and Preece, 2001; Yoo and Gretzel, 2011): (1) the first and most prevalent type is lurkers who are browsing and consuming eWOM but not contributing (Nonnecke and Preece, 2001); (2) the second type takes part in eWOM contribution only with regards to asking specific questions to fulfill their information searching needs; (3) the third type is eWOM posters who actively participate in information sharing, and contribute to eWOM, responding to others’ questions and engaging in social interactions.

eWOM’s diagnosticity are often dictated by the quality of information, customer ratings, overall rankings, review currency, review factuality and source credibility (Fillieri, 2015; Fillieri et al., 2018); readability (Fang et al., 2016); and reviewer characteristics such as expertise (Fang et al., 2016; González-Rodríguez et al., 2016). eWOM’s trustworthiness is influenced by the message content, writing style, valence, review extremity, and information source (Fillieri, 2016). Because eWOM users outnumber eWOM posters (Yoo and Gretzel, 2008), it is imperative for hotel practitioners to understand the characteristics of eWOM posters to stimulate the eWOM participation. By incorporating critical individual characteristics, such as personality traits, into eWOM behavior, this study attempts to offer further information on eWOM posters.

2.3. eWOM motivations

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) are pioneers of eWOM motivation research. In their seminal study on eWOM motivations, they integrated the motives for traditional WOM into the eWOM motives, and identified eight general motives for eWOM behavior using an online sample of some 2000 web-based opinion platform users: (1) platform assistance, (2) venting negative feelings, (3) concern for other customers, (4) extraversion and positive self-enhancement, (5) social benefits, (6) economic incentives, (7) helping the company, and (8) advice seeking. These motivations are more or less applicable to the hospitality and travel context.

For example, (1) enjoyment and self-enhancement, (2) venting negative feelings (and collective power), (3) concerns for other customers, (4) helping the company, (5) reciprocity and altruism, and (6) economic incentives (Yoo and Gretzel, 2008; Yoo and Gretzel, 2011); and (1) self-directed, (2) social benefits, (3) consumer empowerment, (4) helping vacationers, and (5) helping the company (Bronner and De Hoog, 2011) are identified as motives for writing online reviews in the travel community. (1) Concern for others, (2) expressing positive feelings, and (3) helping company (Jeong and Jang, 2011); (1) extraversion, (2) social benefits, (3) dissonance reduction, (4) altruism, (5) platform assistance, and (6) economic incentives (Yen and Tang, 2015); (1) egoism and (2) altruism (Yang, 2017); self-enhancement (Wu et al., 2016); and need for status (Yang and Mattila, 2017) are identified as motives for creating eWOM in the restaurant and hotel context. These
دریافت فوری
متن کامل مقاله

امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات