

## ***Factors that influence the people to provide an online review***

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### ***Abstract***

*Understanding the market in which companies operate is important for all business activities. Social media facilitate the customers to comment, create and share their opinions across online networks and exchange information, in addition to the ease of direct access to the companies, marketers, and brands. In marketing, social media plays an important role in achieving the company's business goals and reputation besides it's an integral part of our daily life. Social media make it easier for companies and businesses to contact their customers and know more about customers' needs. Therefore, social media make it easier to attract new customers. In this context, electronic word of mouth or online customer reviews are the favorable or unfavorable statements made by customers regarding product or services quality, price or other variables, made for other people.*

*If customers decide to buy intangible services or products, they rely on online opinions and experienced customers. The people not only share their experiences and information, but they also exchange ideas, attitudes, and suggestions. So, the online community motivates other people to experience traveling after listening to other people's stories and experiences. Online review communication in social media and customer opinion platforms is a vital e-marketing phenomenon.*

*In this paper, first, we explain the importance of electronic word of mouth for a company's marketing strategy. Second, we reflect on the motivation of the customers to create online content as regards a product, a service, or a company, presenting some factors that affect the individual intention to offer an online review.*

**Keywords:** *Electronic word of mouth, online review, factors.*

## **Introduction**

Social media has presented a unique feature to marketing strategy to help the customers to learn more about brands, cooperate and share brand contents (Bento, Martinez & Martinez, 2018). The companies now can know what others say about their brands, where customers are creators and distributors of the messages. Social media brand communities are online brand communities that support companies to realize better client loyalty and improve the relationship with the customers. These communities are considered as a comparatively inexpensive marketing-tool channel for promoting brands. They offer the chance for companies to begin conversations with the customers (Khobzi et al., 2019).

Managers can build a strong brand community through social media networks by inviting more people to share their brand experience and supply them with additional information needed; this will lead to encouraging other people to share data between friends, also rewarding these people with promotional offers for continuous involvement which in turn will increase the level of trust to the brand. Customers who feel that the company have a good reputation are willing to create positive online reviews and comments, and this will affect directly the long term of the brand's reputation. In order to improve the positive e-WOM, the managers should have a well- served strategies plan and transparent environment in their online platforms also by providing honest information and open discussions between customers; this helps them gain the trust of their customers.

In this paper we deal with concepts as e-WOM, marketing strategy, brand reputation, positive and negative review, digital environment, social media, etc. Finally, according to the literature, we explain some factors that affect the individual intention to offer an online review: age, gender, brand loyalty, e-WOM from other customers, affiliation to a company and the existence of a successful digital strategy in a company

## **Electronic word of mouth**

With the advent of the Internet, traditional marketing tools such as word of mouth communication extended to electronic and social media, online discussion forum, blogs, and reviews so that everyone can share their experience and opinion related to a product or service. This new form of marketing, called electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), is considered as one of the most critical factors in influential customer purchase behavior (Cheung & Lee, 2012) besides playing an essential role in the company's image and reputation (Torres & Singh, 2016). e-WOM is defined as any positive or negative explanation, made by potential or current customers about products, services, or brands, by using social media or any platforms on the Internet (Wang, 2016). It can reach a large group of people better than traditional word of mouth; any discussion on social media can become viral marketing (Mangold & Smith, 2012). Yan et al., (2018) argued that the companies (especially the platform designers), should care about their platform design to be simpler and more favorable for customers to provide an online review and to facilitate the discussions.

Although Wang (2016) argue there is no difference between WOM and e-WOM because people have the same motivations to use it, Banerjee et al. (2017) defend that there is a considerable difference between them in many ways, especially in the source of information, starting with the use of electronic technologies such as blogs, review sites, social media, or online discussion forums. Platforms in which customers can exchange their experience and information, facilitate exchange information between users (Loureiro & Sarmiento, 2019).

Many studies assure that e-WOM has a significant impact on potential customers purchase of specific product or services, for example, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media platforms, the way that can generate their values and increase their revenues (Muhammad, Dey & Weerakkody, 2018; Mihovsky & Naydenova, 2017; Aghakhani, Karimi & Salehan, 2018).

### **Motivation of the costumers to create on line content**

The provision of consumer on line reviews is voluntary, which means that users are entitled to decide if they want to leave comments or not. Sivertstøl (2018) mentioned six issues that motivate customers to create online content:

The availability of helping customers online.

Increase the awareness of customers.

General and societal advantages of products, services, and brands.

Receive feedback from the customers about negative issues.

Offering consultancy (ex: post-purchasing advice seeking).

Continuous improvements (problem-solving support).

Cheung & Lee (2012) agree with the previous researchers that enjoyment of helping others is a critical factor that affects others to share their experience, and add another element, which is the sense of belonging. It means that the people who have a high sense of belonging are more motivated to share a positive review of their experience. The main reason of creating a negative review about specific services or products is that the customer is unsatisfied by the recent purchase. This can happens to alert other people, while other people want to help other customers without any personal benefits by sharing both positive and negative comments (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014).

According to a study conducted by Kamalinasab (2017), people who buy consequently from a specific company and feel so satisfied with their products and services, feel the desire to help the company with positive reviews and complement sentences. Also, an important

reason that encourages the customers to share their opinion is to help other customers with their feedback and open discussion about their experience on products, services, or brands. For example, if someone had a bad purchase experience with specific product or brand, and need advice to which brand to select, in order not to have the same bad experience this means the motivation to provide information is the request for help (Magalhaes & Musallam, 2014).

The managers should monitor and give management response to negative review beside applying strategies to respond to a customer review because these reviews influence the company reputation directly. Moreover, negative comments will provide managers with guidelines on how to improve their service quality. Additionally, Melián-González et al. (2013) argued that the comments provided from strangers are more trusted than communications coming from companies, and the buying desire increase depending on the quality and quantity of the number of these reviews. Managers can respond by sending an email with the link of review website, that will help the customers to know better about the importance of their participation, or maybe by providing free Wi-Fi so the customers can easily fill out a review before leaving the service place (Noroozi & Fotouhi, 2012).

### **Factors that influence the people to provide an online review**

Bento et al. (2018) found two important reasons that motivate customers to interact with the brand on different social media sites: brand affiliation and looking for motivations. In general, they exist when the people who have the aim to promote the brand has brand affiliation motivation. The researchers also indicated that the managers should take into account the difference between generations; when targeting a specific age, the content should be different, for example, for generation Y (the people who born between 1982 and 1994), the content should reflect their lifestyle and values. People from generation Y consider the cost is the most important thing when purchasing, so the content should contain offers, discounts, special prices, and also provide coupons and discount codes in online shopping besides they have higher intention to add online review comparing to generation X (people born between 1965 and 1979).

Bartosik-Purgat (2018) found in his study another factor that affects the online review and the managers must take into consideration, which is the gender. Women and men differ in their use of social media and the Internet (Rialti, Zollo, Pellegrini & Ciappei, 2017). Women use social media platforms more than men and spend more time on the Internet while men are more likely to use the Internet to shop or search for information about events, and they have a more favorable attitude according to online advertising (Ferreira & Barbosa, 2017). Additionally, they often share their opinion and provide online reviews more than women. While, women are more often to answer other reviews and comments. Rialti et al. (2017) argued in their study that females are more loyal to a specific brand they trust than males, in contrast with Liang & Dang (2015), who found males tend to show greater loyalty to a specific brand they trust and feel comfortable with them.

Customers choose their brands depending on prices and reviews. Choosing specific brands can be measured by asking other customers if this brand is offering good value for prices and money paid. Brand managers should be attentive to the online customer behavior and reviews, to improve their product or service quality, brand image, and customer satisfaction, which in turn reflects positively on the company's reputation. They can do that by being always prepared, active and open a conversation and dialogue with other customers asking about their opinions and reviews, to protect their brand image and equity (Callarisa et al., 2012). Also, by preparing incentive programs that encourage the customers to try their services and products in order to provide positive word of mouth, so the online review can be strengthened for the company (Liu, Hu, & Xu, 2017).

Online communities and social network services highly influence purchasing decisions and customer brand perceptions (Jacobsen, 2018). Customers use these services increasingly for collecting information, share opinions and read a trusted source of information. This challenge is an opportunity for many companies to build a relationship with new and current customers; these platforms and the social network became a competitive intelligence source. For example, Twitter provides a feature called retweets; it means that the user can forward the message again to their followers, and this creates a big opportunity for brands to build up e-WOM communication also it facilitates the spread of brand e-WOM, so the followers who have a strong relationship with their brands have a greater probability of retweet brand tweets to their followers (Kim et al., 2014; Litvin & Hoffman, 2012). Knowing what customers and potential customers say about the brand is the essence of e-WOM communication and Customer Relationship Management (CRM). Managers should put their effort into building a strong social network environment. Concerning brand management, the companies can try and start to use the e-WOM as a marketing tool to their brands, but once it begins, it will become out of control, and marketing managers will not manage the content flow and could become a threat for the company reputation instead of being a tool to improve it (Mihovsky & Naydenova, 2017).

Hu, Liu & Zhang (2008) found that some reviewers who wrote a negative review could be affiliated with other companies to destroy the reputation of the company and minimize its number of positive reviews. So, companies should identify the customers with good reviews and better reputation and try to promote their products and services to them in order to increase the favorable reviews on the online platforms.

Managing a successful online reputation requires a strong integration and coordination between corporate communication function, for example, public relation department, and business management function such as marketing, production, etc. Corporate communication managers must synchronize their work activities in social media with other departments. As a result of such integration, successful strategies regarding the appropriate online communication methods and building a strong corporate online reputation will be crafted. In

addition, they have to set the priority of investment in choosing the appropriate communication methods, and making the required improvements (Floreddu et al., 2014).

## **Conclusions**

e-WOM affect directly small and new businesses which are suffering from a lack of reputational advantages at early stages of brand reputation development. In some cases reviews could put the companies on the risk of reputation, which means life or death to the market. Managers have to take this into account to improve brand reputation. There are some motivations to write a positive or negative on line review, as to give advice to other potential customers or reflect their brand loyalty. In this context, the next step is to define some factors that influence the people to write an online review. According to the literature, the most important are: age, gender, loyalty to the brand, e-WOM from other customers, affiliation to a company and the existence of a successful digital strategy in the company.

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