What drives consumers to spread electronic word of mouth in online consumer-opinion platforms

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Abstract

The advance of the Internet facilitates consumers to share and exchange consumption-related advice through online consumer reviews. This relatively new form of word-of-mouth communication, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication, has only recently received significant managerial and academic attention. Many academic studies have looked at the effectiveness of positive eWOM communication, examining the process by which eWOM influences consumer purchasing decisions. eWOM behavior is primarily explained from the individual rational perspective that emphasizes a cost and benefit analysis. However, we felt there was a need for an extensive study that examines consumers’ motives for eWOM. In this paper, we focus on the factors that drive consumers to spread positive eWOM in online consumer-opinion platforms. Building on the social psychology literature, we identified a number of key motives of consumers’ eWOM intention and developed an associated model. We empirically tested the research model with a sample of 203 members of a consumer review community, OpenRice.com. The model explains 69% of the variance, with reputation, sense of belonging and enjoyment of helping other consumers significantly related to consumers’ eWOM intention. The results of this study provide important implications for research and practice.

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1. Introduction

With the advent of Internet technologies, traditional word-of-mouth communication has been extended to electronic media, such as online discussion forums, electronic bulletin board systems, newsgroups, blogs, review sites, and social networking sites [34,44]. Everyone can share their opinion and experience related to products with purchasing a new product or service [22]. In addition, 80% of those who plan to make a purchase online will seek out online consumer reviews before making their purchase decision [29]. Some consumers even reported that they are willing to pay at least 20% more for services receiving an “Excellent”, or 5-star, rating than for the same service receiving a “Good”, or 4-star rating [15].

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication has only recently received significant managerial and academic attention. Most academic studies have looked at the effectiveness of eWOM communication, examining the process by which eWOM influences consumer purchasing decisions. To date, the issue of consumers’ eWOM intention has received limited attention in the IS literature. We still do not fully understand why consumers spread positive eWOM in online consumer-opinion platforms. Among the few existing publications, eWOM behavior is primarily explained from individual rational perspective with the emphasis on cost and benefit. Consumer participation in online consumer-opinion platforms depends a lot on interactions with other consumers. We believe that it is necessary to further extend existing work by adopting a diverse theoretical perspective to explain this new social phenomenon focusing on antecedents to eWOM intentions. In the second section of this paper, we address the theoretical background. Then, we present our research model and hypotheses; and describe a survey study of users in an online consumer-opinion platform to empirically test the research model. Next, we discuss the findings of our empirical study. And finally, we conclude by describing the implications for both research and practice, the limitations of the study, and future research directions.
2. Theoretical background

Prior literature provides a rich foundation of theory on which to build a research model that explains why consumers are willing to spread positive eWOM in online consumer-opinion platforms. In this section, we first define electronic word-of-mouth communication and compare the concept with traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. We then describe the theoretical foundation of our research model.

2.1. Definition of eWOM communication

With the advent of the Internet, there has been a paradigm shift in word-of-mouth communication. Traditional word-of-mouth (WOM), which was originally defined as an oral form of interpersonal non-commercial communication among acquaintances [5], has evolved into a new form of communication, namely electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication. eWOM communication can take place in various settings. Consumers can post their opinions, comments and reviews of products on weblogs (e.g., xanga.com), discussion forums (e.g., zapak.com), review websites (e.g., Epinions.com), retail websites (e.g., Amazon.com), e-bulletin board systems, newsgroup and social networking sites (e.g., facebook.com).

eWOM differs from traditional WOM in many ways. First, unlike traditional WOM, eWOM communications possess unprecedented scalability and speed of diffusion. eWOM communications involve multi-way exchanges of information in asynchronous mode [27,28]. The use of various electronic technologies such as online discussion forums, electronic bulletin boards, newsgroups, blogs, review sites and social networking sites facilitate information exchange among communicators [33]. Second, eWOM communications are more persistent and accessible than traditional WOM. Most of the text-based information presented on the Internet is archived and thus, in many cases, at least in theory, is available for an indefinite period of time [28,37]. Third, eWOM communications are more measurable than traditional WOM. The presentation format, quantity and persistence of eWOM communications have made them more observable. Lastly, the electronic nature of eWOM in most applications may dampen the receiver’s ability to judge the sender and his or her message on factors such as credibility. People can only judge the credibility of the communicator based on the associated cues through online reputation systems (online ratings, website credibility, etc.).

2.2. Prior research on eWOM communication

The topic of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication is generating increased interest in business disciplines such as marketing, consumer behavior, economics, and information systems. Researchers have adopted various research approaches to examine this important phenomenon. Most of these different research approaches explore the impact of eWOM communication. However, research on why consumers engage in eWOM in online consumer-opinion platforms remains relatively limited. A prominent study of eWOM communication motives is by Henning-Thurau et al. [27]. They built on Balasubramanian and Mahajan [6], identifying five main motivational categories of positive eWOM communication: focus-related utility (concern for other consumers, helping the company, social benefits, and exerting power), consumption utility (post-purchase advice-seeking), approval utility (self-enhancement and economic rewards), moderator-related utility (convenience and problem-solving support), and homeostatic utility (expressing positive emotions and venting negative feelings). Sun et al. [39] also proposed an integrated model to explore the antecedents and consequences of eWOM in the context of music-related communication. They found that innovativeness, internet usage, and internet social connection are significant factors in eWOM behavior. Tong et al. [41] explored costs (cognitive cost and executional cost) and benefits (enjoyment in helping other consumers and enjoyment in influencing the company, self-enhancement, and economic reward) of consumer’s information contribution to online feedback systems. These studies provide a reasonable start to exploring further the motives behind eWOM communication in a way that does not necessarily approach eWOM behavior as individual rational phenomenon.

2.3. The public good

In the literature, information sharing is viewed as a public-good phenomenon. A public good is characterized as “a shared resource from which every member of a group may benefit, regardless of whether or not they personally contribute to its provision, and whose availability does not diminish with use” (p. 693) [11]. The fundamental problem of a public good is that any individual may consume a public good without contributing to a group. This results in a social dilemma, which occurs when an individual attempts to maximize self-interest over social-interest and makes a rational decision. In the online environment, anyone can access and consume knowledge without making a direct contribution back to it. It is very likely that individuals will free-ride [9,30]. Wasko and Tiegland [43] however urged that though public goods are subjected to social dilemmas, they are nonetheless created and maintained through collective action. In other words, public goods are still shared and contributed to voluntarily through cooperation of individuals. Based on the social psychology literature, we identified four perspectives that explain why consumers spread eWOM in online consumer-opinion platforms: egoism, collectivism, altruism, and principlism.

Egoism refers to serving the public good to benefit oneself. Researchers in psychology, sociology, economics, and political sciences assume that all human actions are ultimately directed toward self-interest. Rewards and avoidance are the most obvious self-benefits that drive individuals to act for the public good. Collectivism refers to serving the public good to benefit a group. The act for the public good is for the group’s benefit, as the self-shifts from personal self to collective self. This is the most widely accepted social psychology theory of group behavior. Altruism refers to serving the public good to benefit one or more others. The motive for the public good can be linked to empathic emotion. Empathy (feelings of sympathy, compassion, tenderness, and the like) is a source of altruism. Some researchers have shown that feeling empathy for a person in need leads to increased helping of that person [20]. Principlism refers to serving the public good to uphold a principle. The motivation is to uphold, typically, some moral principle, such as justice or the utilitarian principle of the greatest good for the greatest number. Gorsch and Orberg [24] found that in moral situations, people reported their intentions to act out of their sense of moral responsibility.

2.4. Knowledge self-efficacy

Prior studies [33] have demonstrated that knowledge self-efficacy is an important antecedent of knowledge sharing in the online environment. Individuals tend to provide useful advice on computer networks if they possess a high level of expertise [17]. Conversely, when they lack information or knowledge which is useful to others, they tend to make less contribution in knowledge sharing since, for example they believe that they cannot make a positive impact for the organization [30]. Insufficient knowledge self-efficacy also hinders individuals to share in web-based discussion boards [33].

This line of study suggests that people form beliefs about what they can do, predict likely outcomes of prospective actions, and set goals for themselves in order to achieve desired outcomes. In other words, the motivations of performing a behavior do not stem from the goals themselves, but from the self-evaluation that is made conditional on their fulfillment. Bandura [7] defines perceived self-efficacy as “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated
levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (p. 71). Self-efficacy is created through mastery experience. Success builds a strong belief in one’s self-efficacy and motivates an individual to continue the behaviors.

3. Research model and hypotheses

Based on the literature reviewed above, we develop a model of antecedents to eWOM intentions in online consumer-opinion platforms, depicted in Fig. 1. The antecedent variables are from four different theoretical perspectives as well as knowledge self-efficacy. Our focus is on intentions to behave as, however indeed a relationship between intention and behavior is well established [1]. In this section, the key components of the research model and their interrelationships are addressed.

3.1. Egoistic motivation

A motive is considered egoistic if the ultimate goal is to increase the actor’s own welfare [8]. Individuals are deemed as egoistic when they aim at tangible or intangible returns after sharing information with others. Social exchange theory has been adopted to explain the action for the public good in terms of egoism in recent years [9,30]. Being rational, human beings try to look for returns (e.g. pay, prizes, reputation, and recognition) by maximizing their benefits and minimizing their cost during information exchange process with others [32].

This perspective has been widely adopted in many eWOM communication publications [27,41]. For example, reputation is often cited as an important determinant of information sharing behavior [16,17]. People share and contribute their knowledge because they want to gain an informal recognition and establish themselves as experts [43]. Similarly, we believe that if a consumer wants to gain a reputation in an online consumer-opinion platform, he/she has a higher tendency to spread eWOM. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H1. The perception of the opportunity to enhance one’s own reputation is positively related to one’s eWOM intention.

Another egoistic motivator of the act for the public good is reciprocity, which is also conceived as a benefit for individuals to engage in social exchange. When information providers do not know each other, the kind of reciprocity that is relevant is called “generalized” exchange [21], and the person who offers help to others is expecting returns in the future [32]. Prior research found that people who share knowledge in online communities value reciprocity [42], and it is this belief that drives them to participate and share. Thus, this leads to the following hypothesis:

H2. The perception of the opportunity for reciprocity is positively related to one’s eWOM intention.

3.2. Collective motivation

Collectivism is defined as the motivation with the ultimate goal of increasing the welfare of a group or collective [8]. In other words, individuals with a collective motive contribute their knowledge for the benefit of the whole group rather than personal return. In terms of action for the public good, collectivism can be linked to social identity theory, in which individuals gain social identity from the groups they belong to [40]. When individuals identify themselves as members of a social aggregate, they are more likely to define themselves in terms of their membership in that group [18]. Members have the feeling that others’ needs will be satisfied by the resources received through their contributions to the group [35].

Sense of belonging refers to a sense of emotional involvement with the group. When people identify themselves as part of the community and align their goals with those of the community, they will treat other members as their kin and they will be willing to do something beneficial to/for others that are not necessarily beneficial [26]. Lakhani and Von Hipper [32] also argued that committed electronic network members take part in knowledge sharing since they think such behavior is best for the community. Hence, people with this variant of intrinsic motivation will be motivated to participate in sharing activities and help their kinship partners.
H3. The opportunity for the sense of belonging is positively related to one’s eWOM intention.

3.3. Altruistic motivation

Altruism is motivation with the ultimate goal of increasing the welfare of one or more individuals other than oneself [8]. Individuals acting on altruistic goals are willing to volunteer themselves to contribute their knowledge to online consumer reviews without expecting direct rewards in return. For example, consumers may share purchasing experience just because others have a need for it [31]. When studied in terms of empathic emotion, individuals may have empathy toward a person in need and this increases helping of that person [8].

Enjoyment of helping has been acknowledged by researchers as an altruistic factor to explain individuals’ willingness to share knowledge in electronic networks of practice or online social spaces [27,30,41]. Though there is no apparent compensation, people in virtual communities still obtain intrinsic enjoyment and satisfaction by helping others through sharing their knowledge [4,31,42]. Hence,

H4. The opportunity to feel a moral obligation is positively related to one's eWOM intention.

3.4. Principilistic motivation

Principlism refers to the motivation towards the ultimate goal of upholding some moral principle, such as justice or the utilitarian principle of the greatest good for the greatest number [8]. The predictive power of principlistic motivation on behavioral intention has been supported by various empirical studies [24]. Action for the public good in terms of principlism can be explained by normative commitment, in which commitment is a sense of obligation to the organization [3,36]. With a strong sense of commitment to the community, individuals in virtual communities are more likely to feel obliged to help others by contributing knowledge [18]. They are willing to contribute their knowledge to the well being of the organization [36].

Moral obligation is derived from principlism. Commitment to online communities conveys a sense of duty or obligation to help others on the basis of shared membership [41]. In the context of an organization, people view their knowledge as a public good and they are motivated to have knowledge exchange with others because of moral obligation and community interest [3]. In online communities, individuals with a strong sense of commitment to the community are more likely to feel obliged to help others by contributing knowledge [43]. Therefore, we believe that when a consumer has a strong sense of moral obligation, there will be a higher chance for them to spread eWOM in online consumer-opinion platforms.

H5. The opportunity to feel a moral obligation is positively related to one’s eWOM intention.

3.5. Knowledge self-efficacy

In social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is a personal judgment of one’s capability to execute actions required for designated types of performances. It has a great impact on people’s intentions and behavior [7]. Derived from this line of study, knowledge self-efficacy can be served as a self-motivator for knowledge contribution in online platforms. Previous studies have already illustrated the importance of knowledge self-efficacy on people’s intention to share knowledge [30]. We also believe that a higher knowledge self-efficacy about a purchasing experience, leads to a higher tendency to spread eWOM in online consumer-opinion platforms.

H6. The degree of perceived knowledge self-efficacy is positively related to one’s eWOM intention.

4. Research method

The research model was examined using a sample of online consumer-opinion platform users from OpenRice.com. OpenRice.com, one of the most successful online communities in Hong Kong, shares information about 15,000 restaurants in Hong Kong and Macau. It is a good search tool with all restaurant information categorized in terms of the style of food, location of the restaurant, price ranges, and the like.

4.1. Data collection

In this study, the sample frame was individuals who have used OpenRice.com. A convenience sample was used by inviting volunteers to participate in this study. We posted an invitation message with the URL to the online questionnaire on a number of Facebook groups related to dining experiences in Hong Kong. To increase the response rate, entry in a lottery for supermarket vouchers was offered as an incentive for participation.

4.2. Sample profile

The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire based on their experience with OpenRice.com. A total of 203 usable questionnaires were collected in this study. Among the 203 respondents, 57% was female and 43% was male. A majority of our respondents (67%) were aged between 21 and 25. 78% of our respondents had their experience with OpenRice.com. A total of 203 usable questionnaires were collected in this study. Among the 203 respondents, 57% was female and 43% was male. A majority of our respondents (67%) were aged between 21 and 25. 78% of our respondents had an education level of university or above.

4.3. Measures

The constructs of interest in this study included consumers’ eWOM intention, reputation, reciprocity, sense of belonging, enjoyment of helping, moral obligation, and knowledge self-efficacy. We used established measures from previous literature (See Appendix A). All constructs were measured using multi-item perceptual scales and were carried out by a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

5. Data analysis and results

The Partial Least Squares (PLS) method was used to perform the statistical analysis in this study. PLS technique provides a better explanation for complex relationships [23] and is widely adopted by IS researchers [13]. Moreover, it is suitable when the focus of the research is on theory development. Following the two-step analytical approach [25], we first conducted the psychometric assessment of our measurement scales, and we then evaluated the structural model. Using this approach, we have a higher confidence that the conclusion on structural relationship is drawn from a set of measurement instruments with desirable psychometric properties.

5.1. Measurement model

The convergent validity and discriminant validity of the constructs in our model were examined. Convergent validity was tested using three criteria of all constructs: (1) the composite reliability (CR) should be at least 0.70 [13], (2) the average variance extracted (AVE) should be at least 0.50 [23], and (3) all item loadings should be greater than 0.707 [13]. Results of our analysis are shown in Table 1. All three conditions of convergent validity were satisfied in our data sample by having the CRs ranging from 0.89 to 0.96, and
the AVEs from 0.67 to 0.93. The item loadings were all higher than the 0.707 benchmark.

Discriminant validity is indicated by low correlations between the measure of interest and the measure of other constructs [23]. This validity can be assessed by having the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct higher than the correlations between it and all other constructs. As shown in Table 2, the square root of the AVE of each construct is located on the diagonal of the table and is in bold. A reasonable degree of discriminant validity obtains since each of them is greater than the correlations between it and all other constructs. We followed Segars and Grover’s [38] guideline and further tested the correlations between enjoyment of helping, moral obligation, and sense of belonging. First, a model imposing a correlation of 1 between the two specific constructs is run. Then, another model with a freely estimated correlation between the two constructs is run. Discriminant validity is demonstrated if the two constructs is set) and unconstrained models are run. Discriminant validity is demonstrated if the two constructs is run. Then, another model with a freely estimated correlation between the two specific constructs is run. Discriminant validity is demonstrated if the two constructs is set) and unconstrained models are run. Discriminant validity is demonstrated if the two constructs is run. Then, another model with a freely estimated correlation between the two specific constructs is run. Discriminant validity is demonstrated if the two constructs is set) and unconstrained models are run. Discriminant validity is demonstrated if the two constructs is set) and unconstrained models are run.

Notes: CR—Composite Reliability, AVE—Average Variance Extracted.

5.2. Structural model

The structural model analysis was assessed based on the test of the hypothesized effects in our research model. Fig. 2 shows the results of the hypothesized structural model test, including the variance explained (R² value) of the dependent variable, estimated path coefficients with significant paths indicated by asterisks, and associated t-values of the paths. Bootstrap resampling procedure was used to perform the significant testing for each path.

An examination of the R² value demonstrates that the model explains a substantial amount of the variance in the outcome variable. In our model, it explains 69% of the variance in consumers’ eWOM intention. The significant antecedents are reputation, sense of belonging, and enjoyment of help, with path coefficients at 0.11, 0.41 and 0.33 respectively. This provides support for H1, H3 and H4.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Given the limited research in the area of consumers’ intention to spread eWOM in online consumer-opinion platforms, this study seeks to consider the factors that shape eWOM behavior. This section discusses the results of hypothesis testing of the research model, addresses the limitations of the study, and highlights the contributions to research and practice.

6.1. General discussion

The research model gains much of its theoretical foundation from the social psychology literature. The analysis shows that consumers’ eWOM intention is significantly related to three antecedents, reputation (marginal significance), sense of belonging, and enjoyment of helping. Sense of belonging had relatively the most impact on consumers’ eWOM intention. The result is consistent with previous eWOM marketing literature, where affective commitment (sense of belonging) is an essential ingredient that fosters loyalty and citizenship in a group [18]. In our case, consumers who have a stronger sense of belonging to OpenRice.com have greater citizenship intentions (e.g., sharing dining experiences with other consumers). This also illustrates the importance of including social factors in the current investigation. Our study also showed that enjoyment of helping others is crucial in affecting consumers’ eWOM intention. Intentions to write about dining experiences in OpenRice.com demonstrate enjoyment of helping others. Consumers can benefit other community members through helping them with their purchasing decisions. Specifically, this act can save others from having negative experiences when visiting substandard restaurants. Reputation is a marginally significant factor affecting consumers’ eWOM intention. Consumers spreading eWOM in online consumer-opinion platforms related to a desire to alter reputation. These consumer-opinion platforms have enormous potential for scale and reach. Some consumers are willing to contribute dining experiences because they may want to be viewed as an expert by a large group of consumers.

Reciprocity, moral obligation and knowledge self-efficacy did not demonstrate a significant relationship with consumers’ eWOM intention. Unlike internal knowledge sharing systems, members on OpenRice.com post their reviews based on their experiences in visiting specific restaurants. The opinion in these online reviews helps other diners to judge whether the restaurants are worth visiting. The experience they share does not necessary lead to a future request for knowledge being met. The results are consistent with some research which shows reciprocity does not influence the intention to use a knowledge mechanism [14]. In addition, as OpenRice.com is an informal consumer-based community, members may have sense of belonging, but the commitment to OpenRice.com does not necessarily convey a sense of duty or obligation to help others on the basis of shared membership. Providing consumer reviews is on voluntary basis, which means users have the right to decide if they would like to leave their comments. Principism might have more impact when the obligation is stipulated in explicit terms. For instance, the moderator of the platform should include the terms of use (e.g., with an emphasis on the obligation to share and help other users) during user registration. Finally, whether they are
frequent patrons or first-time diners, all are welcome to provide reviews about restaurants they have visited. Reviewers in OpenRice.com may bear no thorough understanding about the restaurants and may simply express their opinion based on the service quality they received. Thus, knowledge self-efficacy does not have a significant impact on consumers' eWOM intentions in online consumer-opinion platforms.

6.2. Limitations and future research directions

In interpreting the results of this study, one must pay attention to a number of limitations. Our review of prior literature indicates that research on consumer engagement in eWOM communication remains relatively new and has only received limited attention in the scholarly literature. To enhance the understanding of this phenomenon and contribute towards the developing of the existing literature in this area, we propose a theoretical model that explains consumers' eWOM intention. In the current investigation, we included only the key motives from each of the four perspectives of the social psychology literature. Though the explanatory power of our research model is high, we believe that future research studies should include some other related constructs (e.g., rewards, subjective norm, costs, etc.) to account for the remaining unexplained variance in consumers' eWOM intention. As prior studies have found that positive eWOM is more likely to occur than negative eWOM, in the current study, we only focused on consumers' intention to spread positive eWOM. In line with recent research showing the negativity bias in online consumer behavior [12], future studies should continue to explore the motives that drive users to spread negative eWOM.

The sample size is relatively small and it is a convenience sample comprised mostly of students. This suggests that future research should include a more diverse sample of potential users in different age categories, professions, and usage experience with the consumer-opinion platforms. A larger sample size can also bring more statistical power for analysis. Finally, since only a single questionnaire was used to measure all the constructs in our study, common method bias may exist in the measurement. Further studies could test our model by using different research methods to overcome this weakness.

6.3. Implications

Though existing academic research has significantly advanced our understanding of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), much of it is focused on how online consumer reviews affect sales of products and services. Limited attention has been devoted to the antecedents of eWOM. In view of this, we attempt to investigate consumers' eWOM intention in the current study. We believe that this study contributes to the conceptual and empirical understanding of eWOM intentions in online consumer-opinion platforms. Implications of this study are noteworthy for both researchers and practitioners.

This study contributes to existing eWOM research in several ways. First, a lot of existing eWOM studies focus primarily on the impact of eWOM on consumer purchasing decision. There is a lack of understanding of how and why consumers are willing to spend their own time to share their purchasing experiences with other people in the online environment. This study enriches the existing literature by proposing a theoretical model that explains consumers' eWOM intention. Second, the research model gains its theoretical foundation from the social psychology literature and social cognitive theory. Particularly, we provided empirical support that social factor such as sense of belonging, also exhibits significant impact on eWOM intentions in online consumer-opinion platforms. The empirical investigation demonstrates the relative importance of various antecedent factors for consumers' eWOM intention.

The finding of this research is also useful for online consumer-opinion platforms' moderators in understanding their members'
behaviors. The results of this study show that sense of belonging to the community, reputation, and enjoyment of helping others are the most critical factors that encourage consumers to share their experiences with others in the context of online consumer-opinion platforms. Here are some guidelines for online consumer-opinion platforms’ moderators:

- Sense of belonging: To enhance consumers’ sense of belonging to an online consumer-opinion platform, platform moderators should allow consumers to create their own personal profile. Similar to social networking platforms such as Facebook, adding other users as friends and directly communicating with them may create a stronger sense of belonging to the group.
- Reputation: To encourage more consumers to share their opinions, online consumer-opinion platforms should apply reputation-tracking mechanisms to recognize contributors. Apart from the number of contributions, publicly visible cues such as length of membership and membership status should be incorporated into the platform design.
- Enjoyment of helping: Online opinion-platforms should provide a mechanism where members who have provided useful suggestions to other members are identified and informed that they have helped others. Connecting contributors and readers via person-to-person messaging/chat function can enable readers to show their appreciation for the reviews received.

In conclusion, electronic word-of-mouth communication in online consumer opinion platform represents new and important e-marketing phenomenon, we hope that it triggers additional theorizing and empirical investigation aimed at better understanding of eWOM communication in social media.

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Appendix A. Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reputation (modified from [42])</th>
<th>RP1</th>
<th>I feel that my participation in OpenRice.com improves my status in the profession. (Extremely disagree/Extremely agree)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RP2</td>
<td>I participate in OpenRice.com to improve my reputation in the profession. (Extremely disagree/Extremely agree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity (RC1-3: modified from [30]; RC4: modified from [43])</td>
<td>RC1</td>
<td>When I share my knowledge through OpenRice.com, I believe that I will get an answer for giving an answer. (Extremely disagree/Extremely agree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RC2</td>
<td>When I share my knowledge through OpenRice.com, I expect somebody to respond when I’m in need. (Extremely disagree/Extremely agree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RC3</td>
<td>When I contribute knowledge to OpenRice.com, I expect to get back knowledge when I need it. (Extremely disagree/Extremely agree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RC4</td>
<td>I know that other members in OpenRice.com will help me, so it’s only fair to help other member. (Extremely disagree/Extremely agree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of belonging (modified from [2])</td>
<td>SB1</td>
<td>I am very attached to OpenRice.com community. (Extremely disagree/Extremely agree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SB2</td>
<td>Other OpenRice.com members and I share the same objectives. (Extremely disagree/Extremely agree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SB3</td>
<td>The friendships I have with other OpenRice.com members mean a lot to me. (Extremely disagree/Extremely agree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SB4</td>
<td>If OpenRice.com members planned something, I would think of as something “we” would do rather than something “they” would do. (Extremely disagree/Extremely agree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SB5</td>
<td>I see myself as a part of OpenRice.com. (Extremely disagree/Extremely agree)</td>
</tr>
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References


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