CONSUMER MOTIVATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH COMMUNICATION. THE CASE OF CUSTOMER REVIEW PORTALS.

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Abstract: From decades word-of-mouth communication constitutes a popular form of information exchange between consumers and attract attention of scholars as well as practitioners. In digital age, various online platforms allow consumers express their views and feelings to millions of users in only seconds. Information's spread by electronic word-of-mouth are perceived as more credible and have significant influence on customer attitude toward products, services or companies and customers' decision making. The present paper focus on the issue of electronic word-of-mouth on customer review platforms. Based on available literature, the author try to answer a questions why consumers participate in word-of-mouth communication on customer review sites like Yelp.com or Trip Advisor. Amongst the key consumer motivations to write a review can be find: helping other consumers, helping companies, social benefits. Consumers read online review mainly in order to reduce time spent searching a right product, to reduce the risk with regard to buying some product or service and to belong to certain online community.

Key words: electronic word-of-mouth, review portals, brand image

PRZYCZYNY UCZESTNICTWA W ELEKTRONICZNEJ KOMUNIKACJI NIEFORMALNEJ. PRZYKŁAD INTERNETOWYCH SERVISÓW OPINIOTWÓRCZYCH.

Streszczenie: Komunikacja nieformalna od dziesięcioleci stanowi popularną formę wymiany informacji pomiędzy konsumentami i przyciąga zainteresowanie zarówno naukowców jak i praktyków. W erze cyfrowej różne platformy internetowe pozwalają konsumentom w ciągu zaledwie kilku sekund wyrazić swoje poglądy i uczucia milionom użytkowników jednocześnie. Informacje przekazywane w ten sposób są postrzegane jako bardziej wiarygodne i mają znaczący wpływ na postawy klientów wobec produktów, usług lub firm oraz na podejmowanie przez nich decyzji. W niniejszym artykule skupiono się na kwestii elektronicznej komunikacji nieformalnej na platformach opiniotwórczych. Na podstawie

dostępnej literatury autor próbuje odpowiedzieć na pytanie, dlaczego konsumenci uczestniczą w komunikacji nieformalnej na stronach umożliwiających klientom publikowanie recenzji, takich jak Yelp.com czy Trip Advisor. Wśród kluczowych motywacji konsumentów do pisania recenzji można znaleźć: pomoc innym konsumentom, pomoc firmom, korzyści społeczne. Konsumenci czytają recenzje online głównie w celu skrócenia czasu spędzanego na poszukiwaniu odpowiedniego produktu (usługi), zmniejszenia ryzyka związanego z zakupem jakiegoś produktu (usługi) oraz ze względu na potrzebę przynależności do pewnej społeczności internetowej.

Słowa kluczowe: komunikacja nieformalna, serwisy opiniotwórcze, wizerunek marki

1. Introcuction

One of the oldest and prevalent form of communication between consumers that can result in purchase product or service is word-of-mouth (WOM). WOM is a channel of communication dominated by consumers and independent of the marketer (Crespo, Gutiérrez and Mogollón, 2015). In comparison to advertisement, information's proliferated between friends and family are perceived as more credible by people. Moreover, the use of WOM on marketing purposes is much cheaper than traditional advertising for example in television. Development of new technology, especially Internet, contribute to emergence of new opportunities to utilize WOM in new manner (Ahrens, Coyle and Strahilevitz, 2013). Different online platforms allow consumers express their views and feelings to millions of users in only seconds (Severi, Ling and Nasermoadeli 2014). Vast part of consumers search information about a brands, products or companies in social media properties before purchase. The others are willing to share information and own experiences with internet users. More often this information are more valuable for customers than information from marketers (Ahrens et. al., 2013).

Feng, Li and Zhang (2019) stated that there are number of evidence in available literature that user-created online product reviews play a very important role in making consumers' purchase decisions. An online reviews increasingly affect the commerce demand and transform the nature of the competition. An information from customer-generated reviews sites are today also important from the point of view of marketer decision making. It can help better meet the needs of customers (Hu, Dow, Chong and Liu, 2018). Companies specializing in offering online reviews for restaurants, doctors and other local businesses, offer millions of reviews on their websites and are able to attract millions of visits every day. The success of these platform depends on the quality of provided information and attractiveness of website (Wu, Che, Chan and Lu, 2015). Popular examples of such online review sites are Amazon Customer Reviews or TripAdvisor (Reyes-Menendez, Saura and Martinez-Navalon, 2019).

On the sites like TripAdvisor or Booking.com visitors can see hotels ranking within their competitive market (Torres, Singh and Robertson-Ring, 2015).

Present paper represents the issue of electronic word-of-mouth communication on the case of web-based opinion platforms. The author ask a question, why consumers participate in this type of communication and try to determine a consumers' motivations in available literature. First paragraph presents the issue of word-of-mouth communication and electronic word-of-mouth. Second part refers to motives for participation in electronic word-of-mouth on customer-review platforms. The text is ended with conclusions.

2. Word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth communication

Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication is a formal dissemination of ideas and opinions between at least two individuals (Sharma, Qiang, Wenjun and Qi, 2013). Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003) defined word-of-mouth as "all informal communications directed to other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services or their sellers". Sharma, Qiang, Wenjun, Qi stated that, "word-of-mouth is the informal transmission of ideas, comments, opinions and information between two or more individuals, neither one of which is a marketer". Although effected consumers and firms for many years, it was neglected by marketers for a long time (Sharma et al., 2013).

Word-of-mouth play a pivotal role in customers' decision-making process. It's a communication channel that allows people to share opinions and assessments of a company or its products. According to research from 2007 conducted by Nielsen, 78% of the customers depend on the online recommendation to make a purchase (Severi, Ling and Nasermoadeli, 2014). Thus, it can be said that electronic WOM is a powerful tool to influence consumer preferences (You, Vadakkepatt and Joshi, 2015).

Hornik, Satchi, Cesareo andd Pastore (2015) distinguished primary and secondary word-of-mouth. Primary WOM is information derived directly from consumer's experiences with product and secondary WOM is information that consumer heard about product from others. There is also positive or negative WOM communication. Positive WOM is disseminated by customers who are satisfied by the product or service (Hornik, Satchi, Cesareo and Pastore, 2015). Negative WOM is consequence of consumer dissatisfaction of product or retailer. Dissatisfied customer can switch the brands, making a complaint to the seller or telling others about bad experience with a product or retailer (Richins, 1983).

Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, Gremler (2004) investigated consumer motives for participation in word-of-mouth. Based on the literature review, they listed three following groups of motives: first - Dihter's motives, second - Engel's, Blackwell's, Miniard's motives and third Sundaram's, Mitra's, Webster's motives.

Dihter's group of motives contained: product-involvement, self-involvement, other-involvement, message-involvement. Dihter's motives are quite positive. Product-involvement is when customer is satisfied with the product so strongly that he wants to share the impression with the others. Self-involvement take place when the product meets some special for user need. Other-involvement refers to the need of message receiver. Message-involvement take place when is stimulated by advertisements, commercials or public relations.

Engel's, Blackwell's and Miniard's group of motives comprise: involvement, self-enhancement, concern for others, message intrigue, dissonance reduction. In comparison to Dihter's group, this classification has been expanded with negative motives. Involvement means that customer is interested in the discussed issue. Self-enhancement is when customer want to build own image and social status. Expressing opinions allow this person gain attention. Concern for others is a need of helping the other making better purchase decision. Message intrigue is related to entertainment and dissonance reduction is about mitigating the doubts associated with purchase decision.

Sundaram's, Mitra's, Webster's group of motives contained: altruism, product involvement, self-enhancement, helping the company, altruism as a negative WOM, anxiety reduction, vengeance, advice seeking. Altruism describes the situation when consumer wants to do something for others without any incentives or rewards. Product involvement take place when consumer is satisfied with the product and he wants to express the excitement with the product use. Self-enhancement is creating image of consumers that make wise decisions. Helping the company as the name implies is a need of help the company. Altruism, as a negative WOM, takes place when consumer want to prevent others from unsatisfactory product that he bought. Anxiety reduction is a result of anger and frustration towards unsatisfactory product. Vengeance is some kind of revenge after negative experience with a product. Advice seeking can be explained as searching advice from others how to resolve problem (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler, 2004).

In the area of computer-mediated communication, the commonly raised an issue is electronic word-of-mouth communication (Hornik et al., 2015). According to Ismagilova, Slade, Rana and Dwivedi (2019) electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is "a dynamic and ongoing information exchange process between potential, actual or former consumers regarding a product, service, brand or company". This information exchange is widely available for each individual as well as institutions via the Internet (Ismagilova, Slade, Rana and Dwivedi, 2019). Kietzmann's and Canhoto's definition assumes that electronic word-of-mouth encompass "every statement based on positive, neutral or negative experiences made by potential, actual or former consumers about a product, service, brand, or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (2013). Internet users exchange commercial experiences and product or service evaluations on discussion forums, electronic newsgroup, instant messaging, blogs, product review websites or virtual

communities (Hornik et al., 2015). So called electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) between current or potential customers play an important role in purchase decision making (You, Vadakkepatt and Joshi, 2015). Several studies gave prove that eWOM impact on consumers' intention to buy products or services (Ismagilova et al., 2019). Research carried out by Severi, Ling and Nasermoadeli (2014) show that the use of electronic WOM in social media enable companies create and improve brand equity of products or services and help attract customers. Information's spread by viral marketing are perceived as trustworthy and marketers should implement them as a part of advertising strategy. It is important to make sure that target audiences received the message at appropriate time and place (Severi, Ling and Nasermoadeli, 2014). Although dissemination of positive opinions can have an effect of free advertising, enhance brand recognition and drive sales, however eWOM can have also negative consequences. Negative eWOM can cause financial consequences and the other irreparable damages (Kietzmann, Canhoto, 2013). Companies should be aware of the risk related to the activities geared to influence online word-of-mouth. It is important for companies to understand that customers' opinions about product or brands placed on Internet are evaluated by the other customers (Brown, Broderick and Lee, 2007).

Kietzmann and Canhoto conducted a research in social media with use of questionnaire. The authors invited 58 participants (29 male and 29 female) from popular following platforms: Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Vast majority of respondents, namely 57%, admitted that post and read electronic WOM equally often. Little less (40%) read more than post and 2% post more than read. In terms of devices usage, 18% prefer mobile phone to read whereas 33% use computer. In order to write, 24% of participants indicated mobile devices and 30% computer. The results also show that Internet users are more likely to write about positively confirmed expectation about product or service on Facebook, especially when their needs ere exceed. In terms of negative experiences of product or services, customers prefer to share mostly on Twitter. Significant part of users admitted that they would not share their experiences if their expectations were confirmed. Respondents stated that are more likely to write about better experiences than bad ones (Kietzmann et al., 2013).

3. Consumers' motives to participate in eWoM on review portals

Present paper is aimed on answer a question, why consumers participate in word-of-mouth communication on customer review portals. Current literature offers several research in this field. Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler (2004) have recognized the important role of web-based consumer opinion platforms. The authors stated that communication articulated on platforms, e. g. Opinions.com or Consumerreview.com can significantly affect consumers because of worldwide reach, meaningful number of comments from other

consumers, ease of use and requirement of less Internet skills to obtain information. Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, Gremler assumed that consumer motives for participation in electronic word-of-moth are the same like in traditional WOM. They examined 11 motives for participation in web-based opinion platforms: concern for other consumers, desire to help the company, social benefits received, exertion of power over companies, post purchase active seeking, self-enhancement, economic rewards, convenience in seeking redress, hope that the platform operator will serve as a moderator, expression of positive emotions and venting of negative feelings. The research involved 2000 consumers actively participating in web-based opinion platforms. Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, Gremler divided consumers for 4 segments: self-interested helpers, multiple-motive consumers, consumer advocates and true altruists. The results show that the most important motivation, in every 4 groups, constitutes concern for other customers. In first segment, namely self-interested helpers, the most important factor that impact on customers (except concern for other customers) was economic incentives. This segment represents 34% of all respondents. In second segment, multiple-motive consumers, respondents were motivated by various factors and indicated equally all motives except for economic incentives. Second segment represents 21% of participants. In third segment, consumer advocates, participants chose one single motives as the most important, namely concern for other consumers. Third segment represents 17% of respondents. In fourth segment, named true altruists. Participants of this group stated that they are motivated to share opinions the most by helping other consumers and helping companies. Other items were less important for them. This segment constitutes 27% of participants.

To conclude, the results indicated that concern for other consumers, economic incentives, helping other consumers and helping companies are the most important motives to participate in web-based opinion platforms. The authors also suggest that to increase users' activity, platform administrator can include and develop discussion forums, separately from the product-rating sections. It can be also place for posting personal profile information, available for the others. These actions increase the sense of community with other users. Managers should adjust the platform to consumers' demands (Hennig-Thurau et. al, 2004).

Parikh, Behnke, Vorvoreanu, Almanza and Nelson (2014) investigated individual motives to generate a content on customer review sites. On the research purposes the authors chosen Yelp.com, one of the most popular review platform in United States. As estimated, the number of page views in 2014 reach 45 000 000, approximately 1 500 000 a day. This review site allow consumers to gather and share opinions about restaurants. Reviews placed by other consumers posted on opinion-sharing websites provide a lot of information that allows avoid the potential risk of dissatisfaction with consumption. The authors also stated that reviews generated by other internet users are seen as a reliable source of information and influence customer choices. Restaurateurs should be aware of the impact such opinions have on their businesses. In their study, the researchers used an online questionnaire that was posted on Yelp.com in the "conversations" section of the discussion forum. Because the forum is

divided on cities, the questionnaire was posted on the discussions assigned to the biggest 20 American cities. The authors collected 72 correctly filled in questionnaire. The sample was restricted because there were no possibility to collect more questionnaires via Yelp.com site. In the sample 56% of respondents were female and 44% were male. Almost all respondents had secondary or higher education (96%) and lived in cities or suburban areas (95%).

Questions in questionnaire were based on potential factors identifies in available literature. As potential user motivations for generating content on Yelp.com were indicated:

- Willingness to share an experiences with other consumers in online communities,
- To compare own judgment with others judgment,
- To help others with own positive experiences,
- To provide other consumers negative information about the restaurant,
- Willingness to provide positive information about the restaurant,
- For the benefit of other consumers,
- Willingness to retaliate against restaurants in exchange for bad experiences,
- To support favorite restaurants.

The results show that only two of the listed motivations have been identified in the case of Yelp.com. Users generate content on Yelp.com because: they are driven by the desire to share their experiences with other consumers in online communities and want to help others with their own positive experiences.

Men more often than women declared that they read and publish reviews. Moreover, respondents who declared higher income, saw more benefits from other users' reviews and were more willing to share their own experiences. Respondents with higher income levels also showed a greater willingness to mitigate the risk associated with a potential purchase. Respondents with higher education were more inclined to engage in "community life" and were motivated by the desire to save the search time for a suitable offer (Parikh, Behnke, Vorvoreanu, Almanza and Nelson, 2014).

Similarly Ghazi (2017) try to explore the motivations to generate reviews of hotels on Trip Advisor. Researcher used the technique of an online survey and collected 295 questionnaires. To the study were included users which wrote a reviews for Egyptian 5 star hotels in the last year. Based on the analysis of the collected questionnaires, Ghazi identified six motives for writing a hotel reviews on TripAdvisor: writing a review to help other consumers, writing a review to warn other consumers, because of a need of self enhancement, to gain social benefits, to help hotels, to venting negative feelings.

Among the respondents, 70% declared authorship of positive hotel reviews, 66% admitted that generated negative reviews. An important observation is also that the respondents, which wrote positive reviews, were guided by different motivations than respondents which generated negative opinions. Consumers are motivated to write positive reviews mainly by their willingness to help the hotels they have visited and by social benefits. The guests who are satisfied with their stay probably want to repay the hotel by spreading information about

the real advantages of the hotel facility. Consumers write negative reviews in large part to warn other consumers and because of the expected social benefits. Ghazi argued consumers are likely to punish the hotel for their unpleasant experiences and to do a favor for other consumers   by warning them against staying in the hotel.

It was found that only social benefits motivate both positive and negative reviews. In both cases, the greater the expected social benefit, the greater the motivation to write reviews. The conducted study also allowed to establish that hotel guests write positive or negative reviews on seven areas: hotel cleanliness, room comfort, quality of service and staff, hotel facilities, location, food and perceived value.

The analysis also showed that all these areas are important enough for hotel guests to stimulate the willingness to create positive and negative reviews on Trip Advisor. On the other hand, other areas influence the creation of positive opinions and others the creation of negative opinions. It has been shown that the quality of service and staff, the location and comfort of the rooms have the greatest impact on the willingness to write positive reviews by guests, while the cleanliness of the hotel and the comfort of the rooms have the greatest impact on generating negative reviews (Ghazi, 2017).

More recently, Mladenovic, Krajina, Milojevic (2019) carried out quantitative study aims to examine motives that navigate individuals to share opinions on review sites in the context of the travel industry. They reminded that Wang and Fesenmaier (2003) believe in the strong impact of eWoM on information flow and consumer behavior.

The authors focused on the context of an individual's post-vacation phase. Consumers compare their experience with their expectations and as a result, they generate an online reviews. The other Internet users perceive online opinion's produced in the post-vacation phase as valuable source of information. Mladenovic, Krajina and Milojevic used a self-administered online survey. The data was collected during six weeks period. Hyperlink to the questionnaire was sent by e-mail or direct message on social media. The purposive sample consist of respondents recruited from authors' contacts, TripAdvisor and Lonely Planet forum. The sample contain 52% women and 48% men. Majority of the participants are younger than 29 (55.5%) and 50% of them come from Southeast Europe. The goal of the research was to determine the motivation to generate customer review in travel industry. From the basic group of respondents (N=155), the authors extracted users who wrote an online reviews (N=74). Vast majority of the 74 respondents are younger than 29 (47%) and no older than 40 (43%). Meaningful part of subjects (42%) who leave reviews were coming from Southeast Europe. According to results, men (55.4%) are willing to post reviews more often than women (45%) (Mladenovic, Krajina and Milojevic, 2019). In general, consumers which took part in survey indicated following reasons to leave review on Internet sites: helping vacationers, to help providers/companies, consumer empowerment (the sense of possibility to exert influence on company), self-directed benefits (mainly concerned about themselves), social benefit (Bronner, De Hoog, 2011; Mladenovic, Krajina, Milojevic, 2019).

The most common motive is helping vacationers. This type of altruistic behavior that results in benefits for another customer whereas the lowest is related to customer empowerment. Both, age and nationality, did not influence the particular motive to feature an online review (Mladenovic et al., 2019).

Despite of importance of motives for participation in opinion platforms (write as well as read), it is also meaningful to know why people seeking information about product, service or company in this way. Based on the literature review, Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003) identified some motivations. One of them is a need of risk reduction with regard to buying some product or service. Customers also want to reduce of time spent searching a right product. Nowadays the market is saturated with wide range of product, services and information about them. Customers can have some difficulties with process and compare all alternatives. Even when consumers decided on buying some product, he often wanted to know offers that he rejected. On the other hand, consumers try to learn how product should be used and what products are new in the market. Moreover, many platforms offer some incentives for reading page content, in direct and indirect way. Another motivation to read opinions is related to the need of belonging to a virtual community. According to an online survey from December 2000 that involved 4 most popular German opinion platforms (Dayyoo.com, Hitwin.de, iao.com, Vocatus.de) and 2900 German users, online opinions more often influence on rejecting product. Negative opinions in comparison to positive opinions exert greater influence on customers' decision making. Consumers read the information content because it allows them to make better buying decisions in shorter time. The survey also led to conclusion that review sites sometimes play a role of "social positioners," what is mean that portal gather a virtual community that offers social and information benefits by helping consumers to compare and process their product experiences.

The authors noticed that remuneration cause a real dilemma. Users driven by various kind of rewards read platform's content without any impact on buying behavior. At the same time, they have significant, negative influence on personal communication. From the companies' point of view, web-based opinion platforms exert significant influence (positive as well as negative) on customer decision making. Consumer probably will buy a recommended product or service and rejected worse evaluated one (Hennig-Thurau and Walsh, 2003).

4. Conclusions

Nowadays, in brand building process companies are not alone because customers make their contribution by saying about brand to each other (Severi, Ling and Nasermoadeli, 2014). Customer communicate and exchange product or service experience by the Internet. This phenomenon, named word-of-mouth communication (WOM), attracts scholars as well as

practitioners. Electronic WOM communication can have significant influence on customer attitude toward products, services or companies and customers' decision making.

Present paper is aimed on answer a question, why consumers participate in word-of-mouth communication on customer review portals. To meet the assumed goal the author referred to some research available in literature. The key consumer motivations are gathered in table 1.

Table 1.
Consumers motivations to participate in WOM on review sites

Motives for creation consumer review	
Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, Gremler (2004)	- concern for other customers - economic incentives - helping other consumers - helping companies
Parikh, Behnke, Vorvoreanu, Almanza and Nelson (2014)	- to share experiences with other consumers in online communities - to help others with their own positive experiences
Ghazi (2017)	Positive reviews: - willingness to help the hotels - social benefits
	Negative reviews - to warn other consumers - because of the expected social benefits
Mladenovic, Krajina, Milojevic (2019)	- helping vacationers - help providers/companies - consumer empowerment - self-directed - social benefit
Motives for reading consumer review	
Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003)	literature review: - a need of risk reduction with regard to buying some product or service - customers also want to reduce of time spent searching a right product - because of difficulties with process and compare all alternatives - he often wanted to know rejected offers

	- to learn how product should be used - to learn what products are new in the market - some incentives for reading page content, in direct and indirect way - need of belonging to a virtual community
	Online survey: - to make better buying decisions in shorter time. - to belong to a virtual community

Note: Own elaboration.

Despite the progress made, the researchers still indicated the research gap and directions of future research in the field of the electronic WOM. Yet in 2020, Reyes-Menendez, Correia, Matos and Adap recommended further research due to the evolution of the industry and the consumers (Reyes-Menendez, Correia, Matos and Adap, 2020). Future research should also investigate the role of gender and cultural influences on electronic positive and negative WOM (Hornik et al., 2015). Brown and Broderick (2007) encouraged to compare evaluation of information obtained from Internet by experienced Internet users with unexperienced Internet users. Perhaps lack of experience may increase the credibility of information. It is also important to know how Internet users combine the information derived from Internet sources with information's from offline sources like magazines or advertisement (Brown et al., 2007).

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